



The Performance *Leite Derramado*: challenging the controlling images

Rodrigo Severo¹

¹Universidade de São Paulo – USP, São Paulo/SP, Brazil

ABSTRACT – The Performance *Leite Derramado*: challenging the controlling images – The article proposes to analyze the performance *Leite Derramado* (2013) by artist Ana Musidora from the perspective of the representation of the Black mother. In this regard, we investigate the concept of controlling images by American sociologist Patricia Hill Collins and the images invoked to define black women in Brazil, by Anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez. We reflect on how *Leite Derramado* explores critical layers on the images/historical representations sorted according to patriarchal and slavocratic values on Black women.

Keywords: Controlling Images. Representations. Black Performance. Decolonized Aesthetics. Black Women.

RÉSUMÉ – Performance *Lait renversé*: défier les images de contrôle – L'article propose d'analyser la performance *Lait renversé* (2013) de l'artiste Ana Musidora à partir de la représentation de la mère. J'étudie le concept d'images de contrôle, défini par la sociologue américaine Patricia Hill Collins, ainsi que les images invoquées pour définir une femme noire au Brésil, par l'anthropologue Lélia Gonzalez. Je cherche à mettre en lumière comment *Lait renversé* explore différentes couches d'analyse critique d'images et de représentations historiques de femmes noires ordonnées selon les valeurs patriarcales et esclavagistes.

Mots-clés: Images de contrôle. Représentations. Performances Noires. Esthétique Décolonisée. Femme Noire.

RESUMO – Performance *Leite Derramado*: desafiando as imagens de controle – O artigo propõe analisar a performance *Leite Derramado* (2013) da artista Ana Musidora a partir da representação da mãe preta. Para isso, investiga-se conceito de imagens de controle, da socióloga estadunidense Patricia Hill Collins, e as imagens invocadas para definir a mulher negra no Brasil, da antropóloga Lélia Gonzalez. Reflete-se como *Leite Derramado* explora camadas críticas sobre as imagens/representações históricas ordenadas segundo os valores patriarcais e escravocratas em torno das mulheres negras.

Palavras-chave: Imagens de Controle. Representações. Performance Negra. Estéticas Descolonizadas. Mulheres Negras.

Introduction

Black scholars have debated how male discourses produced by the White¹ and slavocratic patriarchy were responsible for shaping regimes of racist visibility applied to Black women. Such discourses were intended to keep them in designated and subordinate places within the social structure, reflecting the interests and worldviews of the White, male hegemony. It is necessary to struggle for new orders of representation and new regimes of visibility that challenge all the controlling images instituted as a result of racial stereotypes (Collins, 2000; Gonzalez, 1984). The objective of this article is to analyze the performance *Leite Derramado* (2013) by artist Ana Musidora considering its representation of the *Black mother*.

Firstly, the concept of controlling images is discussed to explain some of the main representations of Black women that the concept encompasses, based on studies by American sociologist and feminist Patricia Hill Collins. We then focus on the images invoked to define Black women in Brazil, based on studies by Brazilian, Minas Gerais-born anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez. Secondly, aspects of the performance *Leite Derramado* (2013) by artist Ana Musidora are discussed: including how its program of action, title, and aesthetic choices problematize the figure of the Black mother as an example of a submissive woman, a symbol of unconditional fidelity and of absolute servility to the slaveholder class.

Finally, a reflection on how the performance *Leite Derramado* explores the critical layers of ordered historical images and representations according to patriarchal and slavocratic value to help dismantle the discourses of coloniality and racism that have dominated Black women since the slave period.

Controlling Images

In the book *Black Feminist Thought: knowledge, consciousness and the politics of empowerment* (2000), American sociologist and Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins highlights the category of *controlling images* as one of the main themes of Black feminist thought. These racialized Black womanhood images, which originated by an external definition, act to perpetuate slavery — in its ideological terms of dominance — whilst ignoring the complexity of Black women's existence and their infinite possibilities of being. These images

are permeated with negative stereotypes applied to African-American women in their core, and re-update the colonial and slavocratic records on Black women's capabilities. In that regard, as suggested by Collins, it is necessary to examine the new forms of control in a transnational context where selling images in the global marketplace has increased in importance. Collins (2000, p. 72) argues that the dominant ideology of the slave era “fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group’s interest in maintaining Black women’s subordination”. Images play a crucial role in defining and controlling the political and social power to which both individuals and marginalized groups have access (hooks, 2015 p. 21).

Such that these controlling images “[...] are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life” (Collins, 2000, p. 69).

Collins developed the concept of controlling images founded on the notion of Black women’s objectification as *the Other*, which keeps them in a subordinate condition. This position — which ideologically justifies the oppression according to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality — is related to the logic of binary thinking. According to the author, this kind of thinking characterizes people, things and ideas according to the differences that exist between them, a distinction that is defined in oppositional terms. It implies relations of inferiority and superiority, of hierarchical bonds, hence [...] “in binary thinking, one element is objectified as the Other, and is viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled” (Collins, 2000, p. 70).

The domination system always involves attempts to objectify the subordinate group as a form of control, exploitation and surveillance of Black Woman’s bodies. Hence, if as subjects people have the right to define their own reality, establish and name their own history, “[...] as objects, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity created by others, one’s history named only in ways that define one’s relationship to those who are subject” (hooks 1989, p. 42 apud Collins, 2000, p. 71).

The mammy is the first controlling image applied to Black women described by the author and spread in the U.S., while in the Brazilian context it is similar to the figure of the Black mother [*mãe preta*]. This is the image of the faithful, obedient servant, responsible for the care of white people

and who, “[...] by loving, nurturing, and caring for the White children and ‘family’ better than her own, the *mammy* symbolizes the dominant group’s perceptions of the ideal Black female relationship to elite White male power” (Collins, 2000, p. 72, author's emphasis). She is the one who neglects her offspring to take care of the White children.

The mammy is not suited to have leadership positions, best jobs, and career opportunities in White power structures. We are faced with a controlling image “created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women’s long-standing restriction to domestic service” (Collins, 2000, p. 72). Often represented as a fat, dark-skinned Black woman, who has no partner, no family of her own, is asexual, and lacks a particular history, as the mammy lives within the White homes. The ideological goal of this controlling image is the submission and the logic of confining Black women to domestic work.

If the mammy is the image of the *good* Black mother in White homes, the second controlling image is characterized as the maternal figure in Black homes: the Black matriarch. This image is used to justify the persistent poverty of Black persons. Collins cites that, in the US government report entitled *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (1965), the Black matriarchy thesis argued that African-American women who failed to fulfill their traditional “womanly” duties at home contributed to social issues in Black civil society. That is, mothers could not properly supervise their sons and daughters because they spent too much time working away from home, contributing to their children's failure at school. From the dominant group’s perspective, they symbolized “[...] a failed mammy, a negative stigma to be applied to African-American women who dared reject the image of the submissive, hardworking servant” (Collins, 2000, p. 75, author's emphasis). The image diverts attention from political and economic inequalities that increasingly characterize global capitalism and suggests that anyone can rise from poverty if he or she only received good values at home.

This image is also used to hold responsible and blame Black women, essentially Black mothers, for the precarious and miserable conditions of Black populations, for not being at home dedicating themselves to their children and teaching them the proper values for the development of their citizenship. Shifting the accountability for the issue of structural vulnerabil-

ity that characterize the current situation of black populations to Black women is a comfortable narrative and justification for exempting the State from the responsibility of social reparation concerning Black populations in structurally racist and sexist societies.

[...] [the Black matriarch] image is actually important in explaining the persistence of Black social class outcomes. Assuming that Black poverty in the United States is passed on intergenerationally via the values that parents teach their children, dominant ideology suggests that Black children lack the attention and care allegedly lavished on White, middle-class children (Collins, 2000, p. 76).

The third image described by Collins is of the mother dependent on the State (welfare mother), also labeled as a *bad Black mother* and *failed mammy*. The stereotype arose when Black American women acquired political power and demanded equity rights in social welfare programs. It is designed as a controlling image with a class bias for poor Black working class women who use the social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law. Because of their access to welfare programs provided by State policies, “she is portrayed as being content to sit around and collect welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values to her offspring” (Collins, 2000, p. 79). According to the author, creating a controlling image that represents a single, lazy, welfare mother, “[...] stigmatizing her as the cause of her own poverty and that of African-American communities shifts the angle of vision away from structural sources of poverty and blames the victims themselves” (Collins, 2000, p. 80).

The fourth and last image described by the author is that of jezebel, the prostitute or “hoochie,” corresponding to the figure of the mulatto women [*mulata*] in Brasil. These are representations of Black female sexuality as deviant. They stand for an excessive sexual appetite, a sexual savage, closer to animals than other human beings. These are images that present black sexuality as a *natural* sign of racial inferiority, constructed and fed back by White patriarchy: “The image of jezebel originated under slavery when Black women were portrayed as being, to use Jewelle Gomez’s words, ‘sexually aggressive wet nurses’” (Collins, 2000, p. 81). According to Collins, the primary function of this image was to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women, providing a justification that authorized the frequent sexual assaults of White men reported by enslaved

Black women. According to the author, if Black women were represented as having an excessive sexual appetite, the result would be an increase in their fertility. That indeed is what occurred as the result of the rape inflicted by the White slaveholder, authorized by the negative stereotypes in the collective imaginary about their existence in the world

By suppressing the nurturing that African-American women might give their own children which would strengthen Black family networks, and by forcing Black women to work in the field, “wet nurse” White children, and emotionally nurture their White owners, slave owners effectively tied the controlling images of jezebel and mammy to the economic exploitation inherent in the institution of slavery (Collins, 2000, p. 81,82, author's emphasis).

Although the concept of controlling images was developed by Patricia Hill Collins, this analytical category was already very present since the mid-1980s in the discussions propounded by scholar Lélia Gonzalez about the images invoked to define Black women, shaping all aspects related to domestic, artistic, servile, and sexual activities.

In the text *Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasileira* (1984) [Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture], Gonzalez argued that within Brazilian society, the image of the Black woman in Brazilian society is confined to the figures of the *mulatto women* [*mulata*], *housemaid* and *Black mother*. These three images would be found in the roots of the word *mucama*. Gonzalez detected that the function of this idiom, which originated in Kimbundu language, is presented — according to the Dicionário Aurélio da Língua Portuguesa [Aurélio Dictionary of Portuguese Language] — only as a provision for domestic services performed by enslaved Black women. The hidden function is that they were also those responsible for providing sexual services, subjected to constant sexual violence from the White men, turning them into the object of their lust.

According to Gonzalez, the concealment of one of the *mucama*'s functions was not completely carried out, given the fact that the sexual exploitation of Black women is being updated in the image of the *mulata* that remains in our daily lives, “[...] with her disturbing sexy sway (*malemolence*). And, the privileged moment in which her presence is manifested is the very same seen in the mythical exaltation of the *mulatto women*, on the in-between brackets that is carnival” (Gonzalez, 1984, p. 230, our translation). Regarding the male commentators of the carnival party, the author notes

that the words describing the objectification, the fragmentation of the bodies, and the male gaze towards the Black female body is equivalent to those used to “look over the merchandise”:

All under the command of the rhythm of the percussion beats and the sway of the *mulata* who, say some, are off the charts. ‘Look at that group on the floats over there. What thighs, boy.’ ‘Check out that dancer coming; what an ass, oh my God! Look how she moves her belly. I wish she’s as hot as that on my place, horny.’ ‘They drive me crazy, man.’ And off they go, swaying and smiling queens, blowing kisses as if they were blessings to their avid subjects in this fairy show [...] (Gonzalez, 1984, p. 227, our translation).

Regarding the image of the housemaid, according to Gonzalez, it is nothing more than the allowed *mucama*, the one also authorized by the colonial system. She is daily in the role of organizing and caring for the home of the White bourgeois or for the petty-bourgeois family. She is “[...] the one who provides goods and services, that is the beast of burden that supports her and the others’ family load on her back”. According to Lélia Gonzalez (1984, p. 230, our translation)

Hence, it is the opposite side of exaltation; because it is day-to-day life. And it is in this day-to-day life that we perceive that we are seen as housemaids. The best example of this is the increasingly growing cases of discrimination against middle-class Black women. It is useless being ‘polite’ or being ‘well dressed’ (after all, ‘good appearance,’ as we see in job advertisements, is a ‘White’ category, only attributable to ‘white’ or ‘light-skinned’ women). The doormen of the buildings force us to enter through the service door, obeying instructions from the building doormen (the same ones who ‘ogled voraciously at them’ in carnival or in others life parties).

The third figure mentioned by Gonzalez is of the *Black mother*. She is a wet nurse, responsible for executing maternal functions, for the care, and socialization of White children and the domestic work of the noble families. It is the moment when, in the racist White imaginary, Black women are seen as a positive image of kindness and tenderness for being forced to breastfeed the White children of the master’s big house. According to Gonzalez, the *Black mother* would not even be an example of a submissive, dedicated and loving woman, a symbol of “unconditional fidelity” and of “absolute servility to the lordly class” (Roncador, 2011, p. 130, our translation), as represented by the White supremacy gaze, as she was not the “[...] traitor to the race, as some Blacks, hastily on their judgment, want” (Gonzalez,

1984, p. 235, our translation). It should be considered that the Black mother developed particular forms of resistance in her day-to-day life. It is a notion of *passive resistance*, because, whilst exercising maternal functions and the educational, cultural and symbolic references that initially constitute and are mediated by the mother-child relationship, she was the one responsible, consciously or not, for passing categories of Black-African cultures, of which she was a representative, on to white children. She was the one who Africanized the Portuguese spoken in Brazil, turning it into “pre-tuguês” [blacktuguese] and, consequently, in Brazilian culture “[...] we understand why, nowadays, nobody is quite interested anymore in Black nannies, only the Portuguese ones are of worth. But it is a little late now, isn’t it? Because the sweep kick had already hit it” (Gonzalez, 1984, p. 236, our translation).

The tragedy of controlling images is that they reduce the plurality of what it means to be a Black woman, reducing them to overly rigid significances established as universal. If what makes us human is to be plural, such images subordinate Black women and deprive them of humanity, since they imprison them in pre-established meanings and senses, controlling them in various manners, and interdicting their range of possibilities of existence and being in the world. They inform the role and social place that they can occupy within the social framework, fundamental for the reaffirmation of the belonging of the hegemonic groups and maintenance of social hierarchies. As stated by Patricia Hill Collins (2000, p. 70):

[...] as the ‘Others’ of society who can never really belong, strangers threaten the moral and social order. But they are simultaneously essential for its survival because those individuals who stand at the margins of society clarify its boundaries. African-American women, by not belonging, emphasize the significance of belonging.

Controlling images as a power device restrains people's participation in political life, and also restrict the exercise of an active citizenship for Blackness. These images are part of a generalized ideology of socioeconomic domination that reflects the interests of White elites to produce processes that lead to the dehumanization, status reduction and mockery of these women; and to guarantee that people who socially pass as White become subjects/agents that are suitable to decide and participate in public life and in the government. Conversely, Black women are excluded from the labor

market, formal education, political representation, and several other spheres of society.

Challenging the controlling images through performances has been a theme for many Black artists in Brazil, including: Ana Musidora, Priscila Rezende, Olyvia Bynum, Renata Felinto, Val Souza, Ana Flavia Cavalcanti, Tina Melo, and Luanah Cruz. In terms of the diversity and multiple subjectivities that each performance provides, a common aspect that deserves to be highlighted is the interrelation between body, aesthetics and politics, producing critical reflections on intersectional oppressions (race, gender, sexuality, class) directed to Black women. In this examination, I intend to analyze how the controlling image of a Black mother is addressed in the performance *Leite Derramado* [spilled milk] (2013), by Ana Musidora.

Ana Musidora: *Leite derramado*

Musidora is a visual artist and cultural manager who graduated in 2016 in Communication of the Arts of the Body with a major in Dance from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (PUC/SP). Since 2020 she is a specialist in Contemporary Cultural Management in Itaú Cultural, focusing on the Expansion of the Poetic Repertoire to the Construction of Collaborative Teams. She is trained in oriental body practices — such as Seita-ho, Tai Chi (Do In and Pai Lin), Butô, and Moxa. Later, she became interested in performance as a language, with emphasis on “experiences that sensitized me to the study of the radical presence of Black bodies in artistic expressions,” which enabled her to guide creative processes in projects such as *Intervenções Urbanas em Atos* [urban interventions in acts] (#PratoàModaDaCasa), at Senzala restaurant, and *Manifestação de Rua* [street manifestation], at *Coletiva 8M na Quebrada* (Musidora, 2020). She is also the creator, curator, and producer of the projects *PistasParaUmaEducaçãoNãoBinária* — a set of creative workshops for poetic sensitization of trans bodies — and *Arqueologia Viva do Corpo Mítico* [Living Archeology of the Mythical Body], and also offers guidance on creative processes for bodies-installation.

The artist carries out studies on the interrelation between dance and performance, investigating the memories of her body as healing possibilities, and the deconstruction of hegemonic narratives concerning Black

women: “Every element I bring to the scene and gesture provoke/tense the shift of visual, sensory, racial and gender perception” (Musidora, 2020, our translation).

Musidora says that performance is an open field where it is possible to compose by drawing from multiple references, envisioning the reinvention of new existences, new worldviews, “other forms that are not fit to us”. According to her, performance is a new form of communication because theater and dance took into account her existence as a Black and peripheral woman. Her art presents a strong desire for an aesthetic focused on the contemporary and concrete reality itself, on how black women are still perceived in imprisoning roles within society. In this sense, performance is important to her because “[...] shifting established signs/senses and everything naturalized by aesthetic regimes; the domestication/assimilation of beauty in formal education spaces for dance; the humanity exclusive of White bodies, which makes them ‘immune’ to violence” (Musidora, 2020, our translation).

From her perspective, Black performance is grounded on a radical presence of the body which, connected to historically marginalized realities, becomes a space of Black (re)existence that challenges cultural hegemony. Her understanding is that her experience with this artistic language has nothing to do with representation as a fictional mask, or a representation of one's own history, but it is about the possibilities of “[...] real and tangible changes that we bring forward/make possible to our communities when we reposition ourselves from the reserved/captive subalternized place in the master's big house” (Musidora, 2020, our translation).

Themes such as work, fetish, sexuality and pleasure, which permeate her social experience as a Black woman, guide the creation process in her performance that seeks imagetic strategies to break with the subaltern positions aimed at racialized bodies: “I began working as a receptionist at 15 years of age, and, moving around between centers and outskirts, I started to understand who my body was in the master's big house” (Musidora, 2020, our translation).

As the images were crucial for the constitution of the stereotypes, and for the subaltern *locus* of Black women, Musidora understands that they can also be employed as a category of transformation and liberation from atavis-

tic imaginaries. One of the controlling images of Black Brazilian womanhood established by the colonial gaze is that of the Black mother or wet nurse. This image is within a positive register as it represents the expectations of White slave-owning elites in relation to Black women: perpetual servitude. This precise image is problematized by Ana Musidora in the performance *Leite Derramado* (2013).

Her aesthetic agency is organized based on the policies of invisibility, drawing from the silenced and hidden pains instilled in the historical reality of women deprived of possession of their own bodies, who were obliged to nurture the White children of their captors with their milk. This reality, hidden behind monolithic representations, is governed by power relations in the maintenance of gender, race and class inequalities.

First of all, it is necessary to say that I speak about women deprived of their bodies, affections, forced to abandon their children to nurture a relationship of love and care with the sugar mill lords' children and families. We don't have any reports regarding these women in the official History of Brazil, only records of the dominant narrative through photographs (*souvenir-portraits*), perpetuating in the popular Brazilian imaginary the stereotype of a subaltern love, which reiterates and updates the farce of a servile love, subdued to the compulsory servitude in the slave system, appeasing the complexity of interracial and gender relations within the processes of racialization of bodies (Musidora, 2017, our translation).

In the performance *Leite Derramado* (2013), Musidora disputes memories and visual narratives against/with the images authorized by the colonial system regarding the Black womanhood condition, leading to reflections on slavery and gender relations in the history of Brazil. She produces, in this performance, critical layers that break up ties of romanticization and the logic of the myth of acceptance of subordination instilled in the image of a Black mother: “In *Leite Derramado* I speak about the invention of love in interracial relationships, of how we learn to be loved with violence and subalternity in this structure. And how this paradigm continually mediates the relationships of affection, work, and friendship of racialized bodies” (Musidora, 2020, our translation). The artist describes the program of *Leite Derramado* (2013) as follows:

I welcome the public already dressed and positioned in a *costumes-scenery*. I assemble this body-installation myself, using meters of fabric (I usually use satin and white voile to convey a milky texture). I model and overlap the

fabric, structuring in the form of a mighty river. It's a kind of a long petticoat skirt that drops down from my lower abdomen, hiding my legs. From the waist up I create something like a dress top, using lace (also white) that completely covers the whole face. I'm in a squatting position above the audience. On this installation I apply objects that refer to the memory of my family, photographs, my grandmother's prayer to Santa Ana, pearls, shell, a *quartinha* [a small clay amphora], a *mano figa* amulet, and pebble stones. People enter and I remain motionless until an initial atmosphere of silence is established. I have some improvised pockets in the installation where I keep the objects that I will use during the action. With my head down, with my right hand helped by a pair of scissors I open cut the fabric starting on the lower abdomen up to the throat, exposing my torso. Still using my right hand I take out the left breast, pushing away the fabric that still covers it, exposing it, as in the gesture of breastfeeding. I take 9 needles from a pocket and pierce through the skin of the areola 9 times; then, I make the breastfeeding gesture again with the other breast. I sew a pearl button with a suture needle on the right breast. After this action is completed, I recite a poem I wrote:

a free womb carries conditional love/
love
of
the
Black
with
mutilated
chest
blinded breast that still feeds the child who cries and the Black mother does not see
for all spite
for all spilled milk
clogged plundered
injected into your marrow
– mouth that blasphemes, your blood does not deny!
nor silence the womb uprising
of the *pretas* tits
armed
flooding everything with milk
After reading the poem, I rest statically and in silence until everyone leaves (Musidora, 2020, our translation).

The process of creating the work began with an iconographic research of *souvenirs*-portraits of wet nurses, in order to analyze the construction of

Black women's images authorized by the colonial system that went viral in the Brazilian social imaginary. Subsequently, the artist set up a database with some artistic productions that referred to the image of the Black mother to build up the performance in which she also employs photos and objects belonging to her personal and family archives, and also drawing from her motherhood experience to formulate gestures of disobedience in relation to colonial imaginaries. Her enquiry is: If these women in the images could make their way across the frames, the photography, the touch, the time and matter, what would they say about work relationships and their "supposed owners"?

The performance's title refers to the popular expression "don't cry over the spilled milk" [*não chore sobre o leite derramado*] that circulates in the Brazilian social imaginary and means that it is not worth regretting something that is in the past, something bad that has already happened. However, within Ana Musidora's aesthetic, it is worth claiming and proposing disputes over imaginaries and visual narratives on the wet nurse or the Black mother, since these established representations do not elucidate the point of view *of* and *for* Black women (Collins, 2000), but, rather, provide the dominant White men's point of view on Black womanhood. Associated as a symbol of loyalty/passivity and absolute servility to the lordship class, it is closely intertwined with political and economic factors of the patriarchal slavocratic society, in which the violence of Black motherhood, and the cruelty of this practice of transferred motherhood, are systematically neglected.

The constructed images of wet nurses alongside White children were widely produced throughout Brazil from the mid-19th century. They represent the White gaze of the foreign travelers of that time, and the *litterati* and cult artists' gaze, expressed in dramaturgy, prose and poetry, engravings, photographs, oil or watercolor paintings, printed on stone, metal and paper, as symbols of an intimate and harmonious relationship between masters and enslaved women.

Historian Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro Carneiro, in her research on how it would be like to be a wet nurse in 19th century Rio de Janeiro society, recalls that the images of wet nurses — despite appearing in different materials, forms and genres, in the romantic, realistic, symbolist or modernist expression — were detected in the literary and bibliographic production of female writers of this period. According to Carneiro (2006, p. 15-16, our translation)

Wet nurses are historically and socially constructed images/representations: designated identities displayed and signified upon captives' bodies, — i.e., bodies that were not theirs — apt to breastfeed. Therefore, wet nurses enunciate female bodies, enslaved, procreators, and breastfeeders recognized for not nurturing their own children but the children of their owner's families. Generally, those African descendant bodies were — as the properties that they were — in the proper age for lactation and designated as such due to the possibility of enjoyment of their compulsory labor by other bodies — owners, landlords, tenants — in their breastfeeding practice, classified by the recently born medical knowledge as 'mercenary'

Tracing wet nurse Black mother images in the works of Gilberto Freyre, Caio Prado, and Emília Viotti da Costa, among others, Carneiro argues that the use of these racialized images are an instrumental narrative element to qualify the existence of an ideology of softening slavery, that is, the slave system would have been more "harmonic," "mild," "moderate," or "benign" in Brazil. The author states:

Now as a figure, the 'Black nanny' is invoked as if she incorporated and made explicit in herself the multiple — and perhaps not always so good and tender — experiences of the female slaves busy with maternal care. Women deprived of their own expression, including the political one, deprived of their bodies and destinies, who, also from a Marxist perspective, reappear as a singular image, accentuating the 'softening' feature of life's struggles — of class, race and ethnicity [...]. Smelling like delicious snacks, the Black image of woman-mother appears on the stage undermined by class conflicts, and pours affection into the imaginary, making the weight and yoke of slavery lighter and softer in the social memory (Carneiro, 2002, p. 44- 45, our translation).

Rafaela de Andrade Deiab (2006), in investigating the social representation of the Black mother in Brazilian literary productions from 1880 to 1950, found that writing between the end of the Second Reign and the beginning of the Republic was a privilege, reserved for some and not others, that is, mostly for the White intellectual elite which started to create these representations. In the literary texts investigated by Deiab, being a Black mother means being an "affective mother," a "foster mother," or a "milk mother," but never a "natural mother," since this "is a term that finds its counterpart in the White child, who, due to the phenotype's discontinuity of colors, was not the child of her own womb" (Deiab, 2006, p. 112, our

translation). Therefore, the Black mother image is always associated with the White and patriarchal family core.

According to Deiab (2006, p. 52, our translation), “[...] the Black mother literary versions are not self-representations, but constructions produced by a literate, White and eminently male elite”. As noted by journalist and sociologist Muniz Sodré (2015, p. 276, our translation), to mention the elite “[...] is to designate groups and institutions with different kinds of access to power-generating mechanisms”. In other words, the privileged descendants of European patrimonialism in Brazil, who function as a kind of “[...] technical group for imagination, responsible for the absorption, re-elaboration and retransmission of an active collective imaginary in social representations” (Sodré, 2015, p. 278, our translation). These are the same members of the ruling classes, who were part of great patriarchal Brazilian families that, in a very recent past, were the lords and owned enslaved people.

The Black mother is configured as a symbol of manorial nostalgia in several literary and visual artworks of Modernism, such as those by Tarsila do Amaral, Lasar Segall, Alfredo Volpi, Di Cavalcanti, also in the poems of Cassiano Ricardo, Raul Bopp, Manuel Bandeira, Jorge de Lima (Roncador, 2011). It is the commitment of authors and artists to their class of origin, their attachment to the values of an aristocratic past that remains present in their works. There is a customary commitment to the *status quo*. We are talking about the monopoly of representations created by White people over Black people. In other words, the Western White men epistemic privilege of producing exclusionary access to hegemonic knowledge over various bodies and realities, defining what is true, what is reality, and what is best for other existences.

The persistent slavocratic representation of the Black mother produces essentialist, reductionist and naturalization effects. Being founded on fantasy, projection and idealization of Black women confined to the role of maternal servants of the retrograde manorial family, it is one of the elements that compose the symbolic alphabet of power of the slave patriarchy from the past and today.

In this context, Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro Carneiro (2006) states that, through the images produced and disseminated in Brazil after the Independence and, particularly during the Second Reign, the proslavery and pa-

triarchal society of Monarchic Brazil intended to build an imaginary, on itself and on the history of the country, and also on wet nurses, as they were represented as a device that would also act as a form of “unifying power” of the idealized Brazilian social imaginary. These are images imbued with ethnocentric, naturalistic, scientific or deterministic notions towards black people, in which wet nurses “[...] serve, this way, to compose the iconographic alphabet that configures and serves as a guide for actions and exchanges of everyday life in the tropical, monarchical, and slave society” (Carneiro, 2006, p. 345-346, our translation).

Rafaela de Andrade Deiab (2006) supports the hypothesis that the figure of the Black mother, whether as an official, popular or common sense memory, “[...] enable us to make peace with the recent slavery history that could be forgotten, it could at least be remembered in its most intimate, affective, and also heartbreaking feature” (Deiab, 2006, p. 24, our translation). As Deiab points out, the memory regarding these racialized images that became incorporated in literary productions relied on some sort of “memories and various forgettings” because the process of building up this memory implies a selection that re-elaborates certain images (the ones permeated by affection, holiness, gratitude) despite of others (which evoke violence, conflict). In this regard, American writer Toni Morrison (2017) adds a crucial issue. According to her perspective, there are too many “[...] literary attempts to “romance” slavery, to render it acceptable, even preferable, by humanizing, even cherishing, it” (Morrison, 2017, p. 9). Due to this romanticization, slavery was not challenged, there was no questioning about its morality or moral judgment, but it was just accepted as a fact, something natural. From this point of view, the use of the Black mother image serves to establish real affective bonds between hierarchically distant positions, hiding a culture of violence, oppression, and exploitation that constitutes the slavocratic patriarchy.

It is not about an ancestry representation that strengthens Black women, but about one of the controlling images forged over Black women, crucial to their dehumanization and the exploitation of their work (Collins, 2019) when taken as reality. The image of a Black mother or wet nurse articulated by the White discourse set in motion a straitjacket in relation to Black womanhood and disregards the multiple experiences of women of African origins or Afro-descendants enslaved in Brazil, building a fixed Black

female identity embedded in slavery relations for building up useful, docile bodies, and the ideal of maternal love (Carneiro, 2006). We are talking about a body to which Whiteness attributes value for its capacity to breast-feed, and for its predisposition for hard and domestic work. Such that, in the images of enslaved Black women depicted in paintings alongside small White children, in most cases, those women had no identity preserved — such as name, surname, age or origin —, unlike White children, who, in most cases, are identified.

Philosopher Angela Davis notes that, on challenging the context of extreme violence and dehumanization of the institution of slavery, Black women were able to develop strategies of struggle, resistance, and agency against slavery. Actions such as: poisoning of executioners, sabotage, rebellions, revolts, escapes, infanticides, abortions, suicides, and other more subtle activities — such as clandestinely learning to write and read and transmitting such knowledge to others — are interpreted as acts of heroism by those who maintained a tireless opposition to the sheer inhumanity of the slave system.

This bears repeating: Black women were equal to their men in the oppression they suffered; they were their men's social equals within the slave community; and they resisted slavery with a passion equal to their men's. This was one of the greatest ironies of the slave system, for in subjecting women to the most ruthless exploitation conceivable, exploitation which knew no sex distinctions, the groundwork was created not only for Black women to assert their equality through their social relations, but also to express it through their acts of resistance (Davis, 1983, p. 27).

Considering the above, why and for whom does this Black women representation — from the subservient perspective of extreme self-abnegation, of maternity committed to the White children of the manorial family — make sense? This is a very important image because it represents the ideal relationship between Black women and Whiteness: warm, affectionate, submissive, faithful and obedient, loved and cherished by the White family. In other words, it maintains the subjugation of Black people. Hence, it represents the White imaginaries of what being a Black woman means. They are image policies that are re-updated and function to keep the *Other* being other. Even though slavery no longer exists, it is through this racist logic that people are continuously trapped in those founding images, because it falls through the

mathematics of domination and control of Black bodies. Dominators remain dominating and, more than that, maintain the cultural apparatuses that justify why they occupy that place. We are once more talking about an image that reiterates the place of the other and reinforces the exclusionary and racist structures in Brazilian society, determined by the colonial, White, European racial strategy. As stated by Maria Carneiro (2003, p. 4, our translation), we face an “insistent, negative, inverted projection, but one necessary for supporting that portion of citizens” who recognized themselves as White, male, slaveholders who “survived on their income, their ‘goods and crops,’” above all, on the work of enslaved people.



Image 1 – The performance *Leite Derramado* photographed by Mônica Cardim.
Source: Ana Musidora’s archives.

Ana Musidora regains the controlling image of the Black mother with critical intelligence, political refinement, rooting it on historic grounds in order to produce highly sophisticated images that blur and make her explode, as she demonstrates — through her skin — what those images hide, misrepresent and silence the representations authorized by the colonial system: ‘disqualified beings’ as people, but qualified to provide services, including breastfeeding, as good ‘mothers,’ producers of good milk” (Carneiro, 2006, p. 360).

Without forgoing the complexity and ambiguity of her aesthetic, Ana Musidora rejects the stereotypes of colonial representation, since nothing seen on stage conveys docility and tenderness. Her aesthetic option breaks up with the atmosphere of kindness and tenderness, as she employs the body piercing procedure as one of the central points of her performative action. By puncturing the areola of the left breast with nine needles and sewing a white pearl on her right nipple, she institutes zones of instability and a deep silence on the public, enabling the colonial referential being tossed around, as the artist herself would say: with the “imaginary of love through the act of serving” breaking up with the subaltern love narrative within interracial relationships. The actions produced show, for those who do not want to see, the Black female objectification, the forced work, and demonstrates the brutal, racist nature of the slave system. They invoke, through the poetic experience, little-known stories of pain, of women whose voices were silenced, made invisible and covered up by the White imaginaries on the Black mother. Seeing the artist pierce her breasts with needles is an aesthetic strategy that refutes the idea of the Black mother as an example of racial harmony in Brazil, of the romanticization of these images by some White families, in order to unveil through artistic experience, that a Black mother also experienced the effects of racial domination.

From one point of view, the aesthetic option of the White cloths on the floor forming a milky river can be understood as a metaphor for the amount of milk extracted from the Black female body to nourish White children. As we will see later, this was evidenced in newspaper advertisements for rent and sale of enslaved wet nurses during the Imperial period in Rio de Janeiro, in which the expressions “with very good milk” or “having very good milk” constantly appeared. On the other hand, it is also possible to think about the milky river as an example of *passive resistance*, which is, as stated by Lélia Gonzalez, the organization of forms of resistance drawing from everyday practices. Most importantly, these women were positioned as the mothers in charge, responsible for the upbringing and education of White children, and passed on to them the categories of Black African cultures of which they were representatives, imprinting in their speech marks of Africanization and transforming the Brazilian spoken Portuguese into *pretuguês* [Black Portuguese]. In other words, this milky river can also be

thought of as the central mark of the African presence in the Brazilian cultural fabric.

Leite Derramado pierces through the nostalgia of manorial families when they place Black women within the subordination framework, in the place of the *Other*, in a position of inferiority, of a *disqualified* social position and of their subjectivity rendered invisible. The work leads us to think about the inhuman trade of Black female bodies throughout lactation. Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro Carneiro (2006) examined several advertisements for the purchase, sale and rent of enslaved persons, amidst the supply and demand of movable and immovable property published daily in the pages of the newspaper *Jornal do Commercio* that circulated in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Imperial Brazil. In those ads, wet nurses appeared successively in diverse categories, such as age, breastfeeding status, and health, and the color/race category appears as a fundamental requirement for the purchase or rent of women for the service of nurturing the offspring of the White patriarchal family: “[...] A very young, healthy and mature brown slave is for rent as a wet nurse, without her offspring, born two months ago; business dealings in the warehouse at rua da Alfândega n. 29 A. 9 [...]” (*Jornal do Commercio*, 1869 apud Carneiro, 2006, p. 218, our translation). Another passage reads “[...] A little brown nanny, 16 years old, with very good milk, is for rent at rua Cosme Velho n. 26, Bica da Rainha (Laranjeiras)” (*Jornal do Commercio*, 1872 apud Carneiro, 2006, p. 221, our translation). In addition, finally:

[...] A good slave is hired to be a wet nurse, having very good milk, very healthy and is of the first birth: this slave, in addition to serving as a wet nurse, is also very gifted and knows perfectly how to iron, wash, sew, cook, and take care of the house; to examine and further business dealings, attend 12 Bom Jardim St. [...] (*Jornal do Commercio*, 1872 apud Carneiro, 2006, p. 223, our translation).

As seen above, although these newspaper ads point in two directions, they end up with the same vision. It is noticeable that, on the one hand, they do not even mention the existence of the baby from the wet nurse's womb, and, on the other hand, they emphasize “without the offspring,” resulting in the denial of motherhood in relation to their own children². This shows that the brutal and cruel separation of the enslaved women from the life of the newborn child was a strategy of the slave owners/masters, interested in in-

creasing their earnings and growing their business by renting these women as maids. This happened because the lessees were willing to pay triple the amount for the temporary and exclusive services of the wet nurse without her own baby. Economically exploiting the breastfeeding capacity of Black nannies advanced slaveholders to a different and superior status, because they could then enjoy a much more profitable business. The masters leveraged the slaves' lactation period to rent them to more than a single family. Their bodies were a source of income to their owners, lessors, and traders, and also a factor for the White supremacy wealth accumulation in Brazil.

Leite Derramado performs the Black woman's selfless motherhood, which in her enslaved condition implied her own sacrifice and the suppression of motherly affection and care towards her own Black children due to her forced removal to raise the sons and daughters for the "Brazilian homeland".³ Musidora performs the story of women deprived of their maternity to exercise another, as wet nurse of the sons and daughters of their owners and renters, since being able to breastfeed a White child required that Black women became pregnant, therefore also bearing children of their own. Those children, in case they survived, were often sold, offered to be raised by means of the rental of the mother, or even sent by them or their owners to the *Roda dos Expostos* [foundling wheel], a device through which care institutions anonymously received newborns to be cared for. Her performance shows, as stated by Rafaela Deiab (2006), that the figure of the wet nurse does not only imply a celebration of the affective relationship with the lord's White children, but an alert as to the inflicted cruelty to they were subjected when separated from their own children. In her aesthetic discourse, Ana Musidora elucidates the words of historians Elizabeth K. C. de Magalhães and Sonia Maria Giacomini, saying that:

[...] the existence of the Black mother reveals another aspect of the slave quarters expropriation by the big house, in which the inevitable consequences were the denial of slave motherhood and the mortality of their children. If a slave ever became the Black mother of a White child, it blocked her chances to become the mother of a Black child. The proliferation of *nhonhôs* [masters] implied the abandonment and death of their brats. By incorporating Black woman into the reproductive cycle of the White family, slavery reaffirmed the impossibility for slaves to constitute their own reproductive space (Magalhães; Giacomini, 1983, p. 80, our translation).

Musidora's face, covered in white lace, makes a precise reference to the woman's body, reduced to her breast milk production, to the objectification of Black female bodies. In the condition of "woman-commodity, advertised labor" (Carneiro, 2003) of the socially disqualified bodies for the European and bourgeois standards of "civility," the wet nurses were subjected to compulsory work, to the orders and abuses of their owners and renters, who used them in multiple ways. In addition to "[...] breastfeeding bodies for their children or bodies used/abused for sexual satisfaction; they were bodies for enjoyment that sometimes had to be hidden, sometimes properties that needed to be displayed, to evince their owner's status" (Carneiro, 2003, p. 7, our translation).



Image 2 – The performance *Leite Derramado*, photo by Mônica Cardim.
Source: Ana Musidora's archives.

The work dismantles hegemonic images and narratives produced from the perspective of the master's big house, which inscribes Black women in subordinate places, disturbing the image of the Black mother as a symbol of a *more benign version* of Brazil slavery. One of the symbols of the romanticization of Brazilian racial violence and domination is unmasked; the stereotype of servile love disseminated in the image of the iconic *Black mother*, which minimizes the slavery violence in the social memory and acts as a way of controlling the body, health, and motherhood of Black women. This

controlling image that keeps Black women tied to housework falls apart through an aesthetic point of view. As sharply expressed in the words of feminist Lélia Gonzalez (2020, p. 54, our translation) “[...] we do not accept such stereotypes as ‘faithful’ reflections of a reality lived with so much pain and humiliation”.

Certainly, this aesthetic brings into focus the violence and exploitation inscribed in the relationship between the enslaved nanny and the White children, which challenges nostalgic visions of the fallacious affection and devotion of enslaved women towards their White masters, in the context of the domestic slavery — ideally sweet and benevolent — which would have been circumscribed in the domestic setting of the master’s big house. This vision masks tensions and violence inherent to slavery; humiliation, physical and verbal aggression by their tormentors, sexual attacks, rapes which resulted in unwanted pregnancies, several forms of surveillance, lack of privacy, denial of motherhood rights, and the impossibility of constituting affective and reproductive ties.



Image 3 – The performance *Leite Derramado*, photo by Mônica Cardim.
Source: Ana Musidora’s archives.

Final Considerations

Leite Derramado, as a performance, according to Diana Taylor (2003, p. 187) “[...] works in the transmission of traumatic memory, drawing from and transforming a shared archive and repertoire of cultural images”. Here, the performance produces contestation images that absorb maternal stereotypes within White families, raising self-critical views and perspectives, through the artistic field, on the controlling images over Black womanhood from the past and present. Hence, Musidora’s images — authentically designed by and for Black women — can be understood as a possibility of creation of new images and imaginaries that contribute to the constitution of a Brazilian history based on Black women’s perspective. As noted by visual artist Rosana Paulino (2016, p. 9, our translation):

Images are not dead elements. They actively participate in the construction of the social places occupied by individuals. In this case — analogous to the homeopathic precept according to which ‘like cures like’ — we can think that, metaphorically, ‘images cure images,’ considering that the look we cast at people and objects imbues them with the most diverse characteristics, good or bad. Stereotypes are created or reinforced when we are bombarded daily with images that embody prejudices and instituted places. Rethinking these places implies rethinking the images that symbolically founded the country [...].

Therefore, it is by means of Ana Musidora’s performative program that the very decolonization process is triggered. Since its aesthetic enables propounding new questions and critical reflections on historical images/representations, ranked according to patriarchal and proslavery values, it helps to dismantle colonialism and Brazilian slavocratic discourses on Black women. Thus, Musidora decolonizes the White imaginaries built upon and identified with the colonial past. However, such White imaginaries are established and still circulate in the Brazilian social milieu, causing tensions needed for the debate of racial issues. In conclusion, the images produced in her performance, as mentioned by Brazilian writer Conceição Evaristo, are not like “a lullaby for those from the big house, but for disturbing them while they sleep the sleep of the unrighteous” (Evaristo, 2007, p. 21, our translation).

Notes

- ¹ In *Memories of the Plantation: Episodes of Daily Racism* (2010), Grada Kilomba complexifies the notion of patriarchy based on the categories of race and gender. According to the author: “[...] the classic notion of patriarchy to various colonial situations is equally unsatisfactory because it cannot explain why Black males have not enjoyed the benefits of white patriarchy. [...] “Black men, writes bell hooks, ‘could join with white and black women to protest against white male oppression and divert attention away from their sexism, their support of patriarchy, and their sexist exploitation of women’ (1981: 87-8). Still, the patriarchal system in the realm of racial difference is more complex, as is the position of Black males and females within racial patriarchy. [...] “As Barbara Smith writes: ‘Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we struggle with Black men about sexism (Smith 1983: 275)’. (Kilomba, 2010, p. 61).
- ² Based on the study of historian Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro Carneiro on wet nurses in 19th century Rio de Janeiro society (2006), in which she notes that the owners themselves could be the parents of those foundlings, as was the case of many enslaved children. According to Carneiro, some of the abandoned children could be considered bastards, as a birth outside marriage was morally and socially reprehensible — mainly but not exclusively — in the world of those who had freedom and possessions. Also following the orders of the lord and father, the children would end up deposited in the Foundling Wheel.
- ³ Rafaela de Andrade Deiab (2006), investigating the social representation of the Black mother in a poem by Cyro Costa, among others, analyzes interpretations of this image associated with the figure of Nossa Senhora Aparecida [Our Lady of Aparecida]: “Also a Black woman and a mother, especially a mother sacrificed by the holocaust of her own child to save humanity, she is the patroness of the homeland of the free and mixed-race, that is, the Brazilian homeland” (Deiab, 2006, p. 140, our translation). On the subject, see Deiab (2006).

References

CARNEIRO, Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro. “Procuram-se amas-de-leite na historiografia da escravidão: da ‘suavidade do leite preto’ ao ‘fardo’ dos homens brancos”. **Em tempo de histórias**, Brasília, v. 5, p. 29-63, 2002.

CARNEIRO, Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro. “Corpos que nutrem: mulheres procuradas e oferecidas para aluguel e venda na capital federal da Corte Imperial”. **Em Tempo de Histórias**, Brasília, v. 7, n. 6, p. 15-46, 2003.

CARNEIRO, Maria Elizabeth Ribeiro. **Procura-se “preta, com muito bom leite, prendada e carinhosa”**: uma cartografia das amas-de-leite na sociedade carioca (1850-1888). 2006. Tese (Doutorado em História) – Programa de Pós-graduação, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília 2006.

COLLINS, Patrícia Hill. **Black Feminist Thought**: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment. 2nd ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2000.

COLLINS, Patricia Hill. **Pensamento Feminista Negro Conhecimento, consciência e a política do empoderamento**. Tradução de Jamille Pinheiro Dias. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2019.

DAVIS, Angela Y. Davis. **Women, Race, & Class**. First Vintage Books Edition. New York: Random House, 1983.

DAVIS, Angela. **Mulheres, raça e classe**. Tradução de Heci Regina Candiani. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2016.

DEIAB, Rafaela de Andrade. **A mãe-preta na literatura brasileira**: a ambiguidade como construção social (1880-1950). 2006. Dissertação (Mestrado em Antropologia Social) – Programa de Pós-graduação, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo 2006.

EVARISTO, Conceição. Da grafia-desenho de minha mãe um dos lugares de minha escrita. In: ALEXANDRE, Marcos Antônio (Org.). **Representações performáticas brasileiras**: teorias, práticas e suas interfaces. Belo Horizonte: Mazza, 2007. P. 16-21.

GONZALEZ, Lélia. Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasileira. **Revista Ciências Sociais Hoje**, São Paulo, Anpocs, p. 223-244, 1984.

GONZALEZ, Lélia. **Por um Feminismo Afro-Latino-Americano**: Ensaios, Intervenções e Diálogos. Rio Janeiro: Zahar, 2020.

GROSGOUEL, Ramón. A estrutura do conhecimento nas universidades ocidentalizadas: racismo/sexismo epistêmico e os quatro genocídios/epistemicídios do longo século XVI. **Sociedade e Estado**, Brasília, v. 31, n. 1, p. 25-49, 2016. Disponível em: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69922016000100003>. Acesso em: 02 fev. 2020.

hooks, bell. **Black Looks**: race and representation. New York: Routledge, 2015.

hooks, bell. **Olhares negros**: raça e representação. São Paulo: Elefante, 2019.

KILOMBA, Grada. **Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism**. Münster: UNRAST-Verlag, 2010.

KILOMBA, Grada. **Memórias da plantação: episódios do racismo cotidiano**. Rio de Janeiro: Cobogó, 2019.

MAGALHÃES, Elizabeth K. C.; GIACOMINI, Sônia Maria. A escravizada ama-de-leite: anjo ou demônio? In: BARROSO, Carmem; COSTA, Albertina de Oliveira (Org.). **Mulher, mulheres**. São Paulo: Cortez; FCC/DPE, 1983. P. 73-88.

MORRISON, Toni. **The Origin of the Others**. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017.

MORRISON, Toni. **A origem dos outros: seis ensaios sobre racismo e literatura**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019.

MUSIDORA, Ana. **Portfólio da performance Leite Derramado**. São Paulo, 2017.

MUSIDORA, Ana. **Entrevista com Ana Musidora**. Entrevistador: Rodrigo Severo. São Paulo, 2020.

PAULINO, Rosana. **Diálogos Ausentes, Vozes Presentes**. São Paulo: Itaú Cultural, 2016. Disponível em: http://d3nv1jy4u7zmsc.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/di%C3%A1logosausentes_rosanapaulino-rev.pdf. Acesso em 24 jan. 2021.

RONCADOR, Sônia. O mito da mãe preta e o imaginário literário de raça e mestiçagem cultural. **Estudos de Literatura brasileira contemporânea**, Brasília, n. 31, p. 129-152, 2011. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.unb.br/index.php/estudos/article/view/9437>. Acesso em: 26 maio 2022.

SODRÉ, Muniz. **Claros e escuros: identidade, povo e mídia no Brasil**. 3. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2015.

TAYLOR, Diana. **The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas**. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

TAYLOR, Diana. **O arquivo e o repertório: performance e memória cultural nas Américas**. Tradução de Eliana Lourenço de Lima. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2013.



Rodrigo Severo is a multidisciplinary artist and professor of Theater and Performance. He is currently completing his PhD in Performing Arts at Universidade de São Paulo (PPGAC/USP). He is a founding member of the Coletivo Preta Performance.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2798-3476>

Email: rodrigosevero2007@yahoo.com.br

This original paper, translated by Melina Valente and copyedited by Roberto Candido Francisco (Tikinet Edição Ltda.), is also published in Portuguese in this issue of the journal.

Received on January 31, 2022

Accepted on June 06, 2022

Editor in charge: Celina Nunes de Alcântara

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International. Available at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.