



Protagonisms of Dissident Corporealities: creative processes for the project *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...*

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ABSTRACT – Protagonisms of Dissident Corporealities: creative processes for the project *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...* – This text presents fundamental principles of the decolonial perspective in possible intersections with the arts of the body. A brief critical reflection is made on the artistic-pedagogical activities that made up the cultural project *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...* (Decolonizing Scenic Practices...), held in 2021, which central objective was to praise dissident subjects and their effective elevation to the status of protagonists of authorial videoperformances. Some of these works are analyzed using concepts and practices that permeate the performing arts, the decolonial turn and gender and sexuality studies.

Keywords: **Arts of the Body. Coloniality. Gender. Sexuality. Videoperformance.**

RÉSUMÉ – Protagonisme des Corporites Dissidentes: processus de création Du Project *Décoloniser les Pratiques Scéniques...* – Ce texte présente les principes fondamentaux de la perspective décoloniale dans des intersections possibles avec les arts du corps. Une brève réflexion critique est menée sur les activités artistico-pédagogiques qui ont constitué le projet culturel *Décoloniser les Pratiques Scéniques...*, réalisé en 2021, dont l'objectif central était de faire l'éloge de sujets en dissidence et de leur élévation effective au statut de protagonistes de performances vidéo d'auteur. Certaines de ces œuvres sont analysées à l'aide de concepts et de pratiques qui imprègnent les arts de la scène, le tournant décolonial et les études sur le genre et la sexualité.

Mots-clés: **Arts du Corps. Colonialité. Genre. Sexualité. Vidéo performance.**

RESUMO – Protagonismos de Corporeidades Dissidentes: processos de criação para o projeto *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...* – Este texto apresenta princípios fundamentais da perspectiva decolonial em possíveis interseções com as artes do corpo. Elaboram-se uma breve reflexão crítica de atividades artístico-pedagógicas que compuseram o projeto cultural *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...*, executado em 2021, cujo objetivo central foi o enaltecimento de sujeitos em dissidência e sua efetiva alçada ao *status* de protagonistas de videoperformances autorais. Analisam-se algumas dessas obras por meio de conceitos e práticas que permeiam as artes performativas, o giro decolonial e os estudos de gênero e sexualidade.

Palavras-chave: **Artes do Corpo. Colonialidade. Gênero. Sexualidade. Videoperformance.**

For more than a decade, I have been conducting theoretical and practical research that includes issues concerning the identity of artists or students as the basis for performative creation in the various possibilities of the arts of the body, considering geo-historical-political issues as a *sine qua non* condition for a complex dialogue between art and society. From this perspective, my personal projects, whether artistic, academic or pedagogical, tend to reflect desires that permeate the critical debate about the politics of the colonized body. Through this text I propose to develop a brief reflective analysis of certain artistic-pedagogical activities contained in the cultural project *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas: processos formativos em artes, gêneros e sexualidades no Rio Grande do Sul*¹, which I coordinated in 2021 and which was carried out in two main stages: the free online workshop entitled *Arte, Gênero & Sexualidade* and the virtual festival *Plurais*², which artistic program included 21 video performances produced by students on the course, as well as talks with guests and political debates. All the activities of this cultural project were marked above all by their formative nature and their transdisciplinary approach between the fields of arts of the body, the decolonial turn and gender and sexuality studies, considering the intersection of these theoretical fields in South American contexts.

From a decolonial perspective, thinking and making art in Latin America and, in this specific case, in Brazil, presupposes that we consider our condition as a *sudaca*³ guided by a geo-historical-political logic that has ostensibly relegated us to ontological and epistemic marginality, as Larissa Pelúcio (2016, p. 132) elucidates:

In the anatomized geography of the world, we often refer to our place of origin as the ‘butthole of the world’ (*cu do mundo*), or we have been systematically located in these peripheral confines and, in a way, we end up recognizing this geography as legitimate. And if the world has a butthole (*cu*), it is because it also has a head. A thinking head, which is above, to the north, as heads should be. This anatomical metaphor draws a political order that marks out where knowledge is produced and where the spaces for experimenting with those theories are produced.

Notice that Pelúcio’s discursive elaboration makes us reflect on the colonizing processes of our country; not only a colonization of bodies, but also of imaginaries, subjectivities and ontologies – a colonization perpetuated by centuries of discourses based on the ego-politics of knowledge⁴. Wal-

ter Mignolo (2009) Walter Mignolo (2009) defends that modernity has accustomed us to think that there is only one univocal way of understanding reality, whereas the *decolonial option* would be the way that emerges from the diversity of the world and local histories, assimilating that the central problem lies in the colonial matrix of power. That is why, for the decolonial option, the problem lies in the decolonization of knowledge and being: “[...] knowledge that maintains and reproduces subjectivities and understandings and that are maintained by a type of economy that feeds institutions, arguments and consumers” (Mignolo, 2009, p. 254). Mignolo reinforces that decolonial thinking is an (decolonial) option of (ethical, political and epistemic) coexistence of conflict, as well as of claiming the right to re-exist in all orders of thinking and living. So, I have emphasized these aspects in my praxis as an artist-researcher-teacher, developing decolonial dialogues and reflections on the Latin American body in creative processes. Here I return to the project-theme of this text: in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which boycotted most of my work, the realization of the project *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...* was the perfect opportunity not only to be paid for my work, but also to be able to hire dozens of professionals, mostly from the LGBTQIAP+ community, and to provide hundreds of people with free access to decolonial thinking, authorial artistic processes and, consequently, in-depth critical debate. And more than that: it was the ideal circumstance – read *loophole in the system* – that I found to accentuate non-hegemonic protagonisms based on geo-historical-localized discourses and thus help dissident subjects to glimpse “another-mode or mode-other of life”, to paraphrase Catherine Walsh (2015).

As a case study, this article aims to analyze some of the video performances produced by students from the Arte, Gênero & Sexualidade workshop, and made available at the Plurais Festival, the artistic-pedagogical activities that made up the aforementioned project, as a critical reflection on possible processes of performative creation in Brazil that recognize the colonial differences of subjects in dissidence to, from them, elevate these subjects to the status of protagonists of their own artistic narratives. For now, however, before we even get into the analysis of the works, I believe we need to elucidate some of the concepts and issues surrounding the perspective of decoloniality and, more than that, we need to establish the bridges

between decolonial struggles and research involving the arts of the body in contemporary Brazil.

What do we mean when we use the terms decolonial turn and dissident corporealities?

[...] If we are in Latin America, how are we going to account for our geographical and historical location in our artistic and political practices? Surely not by deifying referents whose artistic-political productions obey a Eurocentric vision (Castelli; Cavalero, 2012).

With these words, Rosario Castelli and Lucía Cavalero (2012) call us, albeit indirectly, to an epistemic performative turn in favor of decolonial actions, so recurrent in Latin America in recent decades. When I write *decolonial actions*, I am referring to those whose perspectives denounce the mechanism of *coloniality* that extends to the present day and refer to “[...] a pattern of power that operates through the naturalization of territorial, racial, cultural and epistemic hierarchies, making possible the re-production of relations of domination” (Restrepo; Rojas, 2010, p. 15), in a perpetual centralization of specific subjectivities and corporealities – here understood as hegemonic – to the detriment of so many others who are gradually pushed to the peripheries of the modern/colonial world system – consequently recognized as marginalized or subalternized. It seems clear to me, therefore, that the precarious condition in which these peripheralized subjects are inserted is a colonial construction produced with purposefully exclusionary objectives, rooted in historical processes that mark all subjectivities. Note that the idea of *coloniality*, in this context, refers to a complex, long-lasting and uninterrupted process in which we continue to exist, in which the racialization of power relations consists of a global standard invented by Europeans.

The Latin American collective Modernidade/Colonialidade (M/C) was organized in the mid-1990s, with proposals that touched on colonial processes in three ways: the colonialities of power, knowledge and being. Argentine philosopher María Lugones (2014) relates the notion of the *coloniality of being* to a whole process of dehumanization of colonized subjects and recalls that the dichotomous categorical logic, essential for capitalism, is expressed in the separatist hierarchy that distinguishes between the human

and the non-human, imposed on colonized bodies by European countries since the colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean, and which was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical discriminations, including that between men and women. If, on the one hand, there was the stigmatization and animalization of the original peoples of the Americas, as well as enslaved Africans, who were all classified as non-human at the time, on the other hand, the *bourgeois colonizing white cis-heterosexual monogamous Christian couple* combo from *Europe* was established as synonymous with humanity and civility. Within this distinctive, hierarchical and segregating thinking, *animals* were divided into males and females, with the former being associated with perfection, while females were understood as an inversion and deformation of the male; and, in dissent from this gender binarism, we see that “hermaphrodites, sodomites, viragos and the colonized were all understood as aberrations from male perfection” (Lugones, 2014, p. 937) – a category into which transvestites and trans subjects were also colonially placed. Lugones therefore conceptualizes *gender coloniality* as what is established when there is an accentuation of gender oppression, with special attention to intersectional issues which, according to her perspective, allude to the combination of the processes of racialization, colonization, capitalist exploitation and heterosexism. We can say with this, that the cis-heteronormative regime, so often defended as something univocal and innate, is therefore one of the discursive structures that sustain the colonial and patriarchal hegemonic system in which we live(survive). Realizing this structure, denouncing it and resisting it is a decolonial practice.

When we intend to specifically discuss sexualities and genders marginalized by this colonial structure, we will often be co-opted by the queer discourse as a theoretical tool for critical debate. However, without wishing to belittle the successes of American queer theory, we need to problematize the ways in which this movement has been assimilated in Latin America, so that it does not further invisibilize already marginalized subjectivities and *sudacas* existences. Understanding that queer “does not have the same resonance everywhere” (Ochoa as cited in Pelúcio, 2016, p. 126), Larissa Pelúcio set out to think about some epistemic possibilities regarding the twists of the theory in Brazil, since the “universalizing pretension” (Pereira as cited in Sousa Júnior, 2014, p. 56) of queer concepts proved to be insuf-

ficient when confronted with the context of practices in Brazil. For this reason, the researcher suggests a new name for queer: *cu theory*, a geopolitically situated epistemology:

Assuming that we speak from the margins, from the unseptic edges, from the orifices and interdicts becomes much more embarrassing when, instead of using the politely sonorous queer, we assume ourselves to be *cu* theorists. [...] Talking about a *cu* theory is above all an anthropophagic exercise, of nourishing ourselves with these impressive contributions from thinkers from the so-called North, of thinking with them, but also of locating our place in this ‘tradition’, because I believe that we are contributing to generating this abundant knowledge about bodies, sexualities, desires, biopolitics and geopolitics too (Pelúcio as cited in Pelúcio, 2014, p. 31).

Thinking about a *cu* theory implies admitting our historical and cultural marks – read *colonial wounds* –, which play a fundamental role in the territorialization of discourses from the South as peripheral to the hegemonic knowledge system, so that we can think outside the dichotomies that exalt certain parts of the body (head) as *truth-organs* to the detriment of other parts (*cu*) and which politically perpetuate subjective and symbolic inequalities, as I discussed earlier. I cite Larissa Pelúcio here as a reference, but in fact the queer discussion has taken on other proportions in Latin America, highlighting a sexual-political territory of conceptual friction: researchers and artists such as Érica Sarmet, Pêdra Costa, Tertuliana Lustosa, Bruna Kury, Thy Angel and Sara Elton Panamby are also examples of subjects dedicated to the conceptual and empirical discussion through which the clash between queer theory and the neologisms *cuir/kuir/tropicuir* has moved. The use of such neologisms is configured as a political strategy to denounce the hygienist character propagated by queer theory in Latin America, especially in academic contexts, and highlights what Jota Mombança (2015) has called “phenomena of body-political dissidence in the tropics” and which brings to mind aspects discussed by Felipe Rivas San Martín about the notion of “sexual dissidences”, which

[...] removes us from this innocuous multiculturalist logic, which is now very close to the discourse of the State, and it is also not simply a repetition of a North American discourse of the queer, of a hegemonic metropolitan discourse. At the same time, dissidence is post-identitarian because it does not talk about any particular identity but emphasizes critique and political and critical positioning (San Martín as cited in Colling, 2019, p. 16).

For the Chilean author, sexual dissidence is located on the margins of the margin, at the radical limits of a sexual periphery that risks approaching the space reserved for the norm, at the center of colonial power. The “Sexual Dissidence” used by the researcher corresponds to the name under which a series of political, aesthetic and critical practices are articulated and, nevertheless, was borrowed by Leandro Colling (2019) in the conceptualization of what the author called the “artivism of sexual and gender dissidences”, considering that the concept of artivism should be understood as a “cause and social claim and simultaneously as artistic rupture” (Raposo as cited in Colling, 2019, p. 13). Colling (2019, p. 31) recognizes the frank effervescence of the artivisms of sexual and gender dissidence over the last decade in Latin America and, despite the differences in the work of collectives and artists from the activist scenes in question, the author notes that, in such artivism “[...] the body of the artists is not a support for the art – the body is already their art” or, to put it another way, the artistic production of sexual and gender dissidences use the body and gender performativity of activists as a fundamental argument for creation.

In terms of categorization, I like Colling’s proposal of thinking about an activist scene through the lens of sexual and gender dissidence, because I see artivism in a sense that understands art as a manifesto directly linked to its surroundings, through a complex art-society relationship that characterizes it as a liminal practice, because, as Ileana Caballero (2011, p. 22, author emphasis) argues, “[...] I’m interested in insisting on liminality as an anti-structure that puts statuses and hierarchies into crisis, associated with interstitial or marginal situations, always on the edge of the social and never in community with institutions”. I appropriate these concepts and seek links with Pelúcio’s invitation to (re)think a *cu* theory that comes from our dissident condition as cucarachas. Beyond aestheticism and elitism, the arts of the body can – and should! – opt for the decolonial turn and connect with dissident corporealities in order to collaborate in the proliferation of insurgent protagonisms and in the re-signification of spaces and power relations.

Some possible crossings between the decolonial option and the arts of the body in Brazil

[...] I see the art of theater as a tool for self-knowledge: a body that is scrutinized, that dares to know itself, to caress itself, to know what gives it pleasure and what repulses it, is a living body, a touching body. [...] It is a sensorial and subjective communication vehicle and, precisely for this reason, subversive (Cassapo, 2021).

Elisa Belém (2016a; 2016b) is one of the Brazilian researchers who has been thinking about feasible bridges between the arts of the body and the decolonial turn. For the author, the decolonial approach seeks to distance the perspective of coloniality from a geo-politics of knowledge and erects a critical vision of the processes of defining colonialities of power, knowledge and being, which interfere in subjectivity by establishing themselves as a background of relations in society, evidenced by the colonial wound. Belém states that the colonial wound is a consequence of the discourse on race and is intertwined with a sense of inferiority instilled in colonized peoples, silenced for centuries by European control of knowledge and subjectivities, and that reversing the processes of exclusion and silencing may firstly involve making visible the coloniality of power that constitutes these processes; something that can be promoted by the performing arts, given that they “[...] work precisely with practices that privilege affective actions, helping the individual or society to recognize what restricts human expression and communication, that is, possible silencing” (Belém, 2016b, p. 122) – silencing that can even deal with issues of gender, sex and sexuality.

Reflecting on the training activities of the *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...* project, we can see that they were planned with the aim of minimizing this “sense of inferiority” (Belém, 2016a), against this historical process of silencing bodies and subjectivities, as we can understand in the critical-reflexive analysis of some actions that made up the first two artistic-pedagogical activities of the project itself – the workshop and the festival. The *Arte, Gênero & Sexualidade* workshop was conceived based on my previous experiences as a teacher-artist-researcher and on the inter-relationship between performance practices and gender and sexuality studies. When I say that I research *performative practices*, I mean to emphasize in my work the notion of *performativity*, which “[...] acts directly on the heart and body

of the performer's identity, questioning, destroying, reconstructing his or her self (*moi*), his or her subjectivity, without the obligatory passage through a character" (Féral, 2009, p. 207); a notion that is essential for the execution of contemporary stage arts. The workshop consisted of 12 interdependent meetings held between May and June 2021, always virtual and online, and taught mostly by me, with the help of Hênrica Ferreira as my monitor and with the special participation of four guest lecturers, namely: Elena Trindade, Silvana Rodrigues, Thais Fernandes and Xico Tuchtenhagen.

The workshop class was made up of 40 participants from various Brazilian cities – including some from abroad – all chosen through an open selection via the internet. The fact that the students came from different locations was important, because I firmly believe that the geo-historical-political situations in which each subject in the class was located helped to deepen the decolonial debate in an essential way, since each participant was able to (re)territorialize themselves in order to elaborate their discourses from their own locus of enunciation⁵, considering their existences situated in the places where they live(survive) as a *sine qua non* condition for understanding the body-political power involved. It is extremely important to remember that the notion of the body-politics of knowledge, so dear to the decolonial turn, presupposes that all knowledge is situated and that this situationality confronts power relations inscribed in the subject's body, as Ramón Grosfoguel (as cited in Restrepo; Rojas, 2010, p. 140) elucidates when he defines that

[...] we always speak from a particular place in the structures of power. No one escapes the class, sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographic and racial hierarchies of the 'modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world system'.

Taking up Grosfoguel's statement, I provoked all the workshop participants, at our very first meeting, and right after we talked about the academic texts indicated to the class for reading, to present themselves to others, starting with the supposedly simple question: "Who are you?", but challenging that the answer should be given not as a verbal rhetoric, but as a performative manifestation, lasting approximately two minutes. Most of the students then chose to present their work on video at the next meeting and I was already surprised by the discursive and decolonial aspects raised (criticism of hegemonic masculinity, gender and sexuality oppressions, Eurocen-

tric privileges, to name a few examples), as well as the stylistic characteristics used in the videos, some of them with exquisite technical skill. In this first provocation, we were introduced to very plural debates, which covered topics such as femininities, memories, dissident sexualities, gender violence, religion, disabled bodies and other subjects. Most of the class proved to be very aware of the *colonial differences* that have marked their experiences for decades; by *colonial differences*, I mean the concept that is configured as the result of the logic that consists of categorizing groups of people and identifying them in their faults or excesses, which determines *difference* and *inferiority* in relation to those who classify. And more than that: the collective was willing to experiment with practices based on *inhabiting* these differences, an expression I borrow from María Lugones (2014, p. 942), when she explains that *inhabiting oneself* refers to the act in which the subaltern subject begins to inhabit a *fractured* locus, “[...] constructed doubly, which perceives doubly, relates doubly, where the ‘sides’ of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized entity in a multiple relation”. The author emphasizes the *fracture* in the locus of enunciation because it comes from the active subjectivity of colonized people against the colonial invasion through their presence, which resists. *Inhabiting the colonial difference*, for me, establishes a viable way of overcoming this difference, or at least making visible the power relations hidden behind the demarcation of such differences, in an individual process in which each student recognizes themselves as a possible protagonist of their narratives; a protagonism eclipsed by centuries of silencing, invisibilization and marginalization of bodies that do not conform to the colonial logic. Some of the performances presented were revisited and further developed in the final work that was part of the Plurais Festival, as I will explain below, as was the case with Carla Cassapo’s *Ovos Moles*, an experiment shown in embryonic form at the second meeting. Cassapo recognizes the discursive and thematic points that underpinned her work, both in the initial phase and during the workshop, when she notes that

[...] I am a European immigrant and I come from a country with which I identify in various cultural aspects and which, at the same time, was the (ir)responsible for the colonization/invasion of Brazil. [...] The *Ovos Moles* performance was my self- challenge to talk about concerns that are present at this moment in my life [...]: exposure, Portuguese identity, mainstream

sexuality/pornography, religion, colonization, appropriation, abuse, pleasure and the use of humour on stage (Cassapo, 2021).

Through Carla's words, we can recognize and exemplify how much the performative exercise proposed with the question "Who are you?" was able to generate reflections and reverberations about the privileges and inferiorities to which certain subjects are territorialized in this modern/colonial world system, even if they are part of certain privileged categories. It is important to point out that Carla's observation was presented in a similar way in the speeches of other workshop participants, as explained by the class in a conversation at the second meeting, which allowed the group to observe and identify itself within this colonial system, generating empathy among everyone.

Protagonisms of dissident corporealities at the *Plurais* Festival: 21 bodies in 21 video performances

At the end of the workshop, all the students were invited to produce authorial video performances that considered the theoretical contributions and practical references used during the 12 meetings, from which each participant was able to re-evaluate their day-to-day experiences. These videos were included in the program of the *Plurais* Festival, a virtual space consisting of debates, chats and an art exhibition. The production of authorial video performances was the sole responsibility of each creator, and they were also given the freedom to choose whether or not to produce the videographic material. The guidelines defined by the group for the production of each video performance stipulated that the works should: 1) be based on the concepts covered in the workshop; 2) reference the fractured loci of each author; 3) last a maximum of three minutes; 4) comply with the rules of the YouTube website, in relation to copyright issues, nudity or sexual content⁶. The 21 video performances produced by the class were: *Auto – "P" – see-yah*(RS), by Alexandre Azevedo; *Como eu vim parar aqui* (RS), by Mariana Rizzo; *M.Á.E.* (RS), by Fernanda Possamai; *Ame, Sobreviva, Repita* (MG), by Flavio de Mesquita Guimarães and Lorene Vilaça; *Receita* (RS), by Bruna Pavan; *O João Freire chora (mas também ri)* (RJ), by João Freire; *Tempo Solo Solo Tempo* (SC), by Taís Mattos; *butterfly* (RS), by Denis Gosch; *Anjo* (RS), by Jackson Reis; *Paredes* (RS), by Lucas Tegner; *Ovos Moles* (RS), by

Carla Cassapo; *Mulher Porca* (RS), by Maiara Cemin; *Sede* (RS), by Julio Zaicoski; *O Avesso do Corpo-Caixa* (RS), by Clarissa Brittes; *Dicotômica* (RS), by Sarah Baes; *BRAZIU* (MG), by Pablo Abritta; *QUIBOLDOBOM* (RS), by Ketelin Abbady; *Naquele Lugar* (RS), by DIONNY; *Não consigo ver seus ossos* (RS), by Eva Carpa; *Fluidos* (RS), by Darlan Gebing; and *Eu não sei costurar, lembra?* (MG), by Gabriel Bittencourt.

Considering the testimonies and interviews with workshop participants, I could see that the Festival's main objective – to highlight dissident protagonisms – was broadened, with the decolonial debate intertwining with themes such as public policies, health, education, accessibility, blackness, among others. Although I would like to describe all of the Festival's activities, I will choose to dedicate myself to a brief analysis of some of the 21 videoperformances, because I believe that the art show can be considered a synecdoche of the Festival, which, as DIONNY (2021), one of the artist-creators, rightly points out, “[...] gave space to bodies, stories and themes that the media (and not only the media) has not given space to. I cannot fail to mention the beautiful work of Jackson [Reis], who also talks about the sexuality of people with physical disabilities. It was the first time I had seen a work with this theme”. This statement refers to the video performance *Anjo*, by Jackson Reis, in which the artist both criticizes the ways in which society infantilizes, asexualizes or even sanitizes disabled bodies, and manages to open our minds to the fact that these bodies also have the right to enjoy their sexualities as they please, whether they are hegemonic or not.

Not to focus exclusively on the benefits brought to the Festival by *Anjo*, it is important to note that at *Plurais* we had 20 other works, whose profusion of themes and aesthetics only strengthened the pluralistic characteristic aimed for the event. Each work dealt autonomously with aspects that were urgent in the experiences of the artist-creators and, as a result, we obtained a unique diversity of protagonists, discourses and themes, such as: the issue of memory and ancestry as driving sources for creation (seen in the works *Como Eu Vim Parar Aqui*, *Paredes* and *Eu Não Sei Costurar, Lembra?*); criticism of the conservative and violent former federal government (*BRAZIU* and *Mulher Porca*); aspects relating to women's bodies, whether from the perspective of motherhood (in *Tempo Solo Solo Tempo* and *M.Á.E.*), from the perspective of female sexuality or the objectification of

women (in *Mulher Porca*, *Ovos Moles*, *QUIBOLDOBOM* and *Dicotômica*), by the parameters of social standards (*Eu Não Vejo Seus Ossos*) or even by the topic of freedom of choice, which is often forbidden to these subjects (in *Receita* and *O Avesso do Corpo-Caixa*); some aspects relating to the performativities and subjectivities of effeminate *bixas* (seen in *butterfly*, *Sede*, *Naquele Lugar* and *Eu Não Sei Costurar, Lembra?*); or even highlighting sexual or gender-based violence (in *Paredes*, *Sede*, *butterfly* and *Dicotômica*), among many other decolonial themes that we could list and which problematize the *colonial differences* that each performer has decided to confront.

As Maiara Cemin (2021) recognizes: “Video performances have given space to identity agendas in art, creating a place to be occupied by minorities in rights. [...] they are affirmative and representative creations, which become resistance in the current Brazilian context”. Notice that Maiara points out how the discourses worked on by the artists in the show are intrinsically connected to public policies in contemporary Brazil, highlighting an energetic critique of the colonial impositions defended by the Bolsonaro government in force at the time. I conclude, then, that the individual performative self-recognition, which enabled each artist to produce their video performance, was a fundamental element in the geo-historically situated social critique. What is most powerful, however, is the fact that these bodies in dissidence had the opportunity to recognize their colonial differences, like some of the aforementioned ones, so that, from there, they could rise artistically against the system, because “rethinking the modern/colonial world from the perspective of colonial difference modifies important assumptions in our paradigms” (Grosfoguel, 2006, p. 30). This is why the artist-creators of the videos were encouraged to delve into their own memories, ancestry and individual experiences, as a neuralgic point for decolonial performance art creation.

One of the most important aspects for understanding how these dissident bodies played a leading role in the production of the video performances is precisely the procedures that conditioned their creations. Beyond a thematic reflection, it was important for us to recognize the liminality involved in each of the processes in question, given that all the performers reflected on their colonial differences and exposed their own corporealities and subjectivities as the main element of the videos, greatly influenced by

the activities developed during the course. When Lucas Tegner, for example, articulates the video *Paredes*(Walls) about the remnants and marks of a sexual abuse he experienced as a child, albeit in a very lyrical and visually delicate way, we are in fact confronted with interstitial spaces in which art and life dialogue and propel each other, elevating the artist to a liminal status par excellence and prompting various questions about gender oppression and sexual violence, especially if we consider his transmasculine body, a colonial difference that keeps him inferior to the hegemonic norm.

Here we need to think about the ways in which the notion of dissidences encompasses both the gender and sexuality artivisms, as well as embracing other categories that go beyond these *boxes* and open to the intersectionalities that punctuate the existence of certain subjects. If we agree with Atilio Rubino (2019, p. 62-63), who understands sexual dissidences as “[...] those expressions of sexuality that question the heteronormative regime and the heterosexual matrix. But also to those normative manifestations of non-heterosexual sexuality, that is, homonormativity”, we will probably be instigated to make new analogies of this thought with other social categories, which mark corporealities in their social differences and which, because they also question the hegemonic standard and the devices of power, could perfectly well be considered dissidents: fat bodies, old bodies, HIV-positive bodies, bodies with disabilities and so forth, an infinity of subjects and subjectivities. And it is in the fair recognition and empowerment of these colonial differences that the basis of the performative work of protagonization takes place for these bodies in dissidence.

Of course, developing an analysis of all the video performances would require a lot of text that I unfortunately do not have now, but I will settle for the possibility of referencing some of these works as examples of protagonisms in dissidence, in terms of aspects of genders or sexualities. I invite you to watch all the works, which are still available on YouTube, and draw your own conclusions, letting yourselves be carried away by the sensations, reflections and emotions that the plural experience can give you. For now, I would like to point out that when Taís Mattos, for example, says that what drove her to create her final work entitled *Tempo Solo Solo Tempo* was “a crazy desire to shout that there is no romanticization or beauty in being an overburdened woman” (Mattos, 2021), it should be noted that this dis-

course is not only reflected in the artist's political choices, in thinking about a work with a high feminist content, expressed even in the text spoken in voice-over (we hear: *I'm nothing of a saint, but I look like a saint in the eyes of my children*). as well as in the aesthetic choices, which include the photography of certain scenes in black and white, the framing and takes chosen, which favor images of freedom, or even the use of discourse in the soundtrack that closes the video, the song *Minha Força* (My Strength), by Kaê Guajajara (we hear: *Ah, if I always knew the strength I carry, I'm like a horse without understanding the strength I have*). Practically all of Taís' aesthetic-linguistic choices in the production of her work direct our perception towards the protagonism of a solo/mature woman/mother who does not intend to romanticize clichéd aspects reinforced by the media and capitalism about motherhood or the standards required of a middle-aged woman, which seems to me to be in line with the activism of invisibilized and inferiorized groups described by Stela Fischer (2017, p. 20) in her thesis, made up of indigenous, Black, Latina, mestiza, immigrant and peripheral women who "[...] appear in decolonial thought as fundamental categories in the confrontation with colonialities". The very fact that we are witnessing the protagonism of a cisgender woman, a non-young Latin American solo mother, who challenges the age-discriminator norms preserved by the status quo and by media-semiotic devices, is already something extremely relevant for us to renew our gaze on the corporealities present in the audiovisual materials we often watch. Taís herself observes, when taking stock of the dissident protagonisms found in *Plurais*, that what stands out would be "[...] exactly this desire to bring out such sensitivity, tired of proving strong, in the face of an oppressive society, which condemns and massacres those who are not like everything they think is right!" (Mattos, 2021). Note that the artist highlights social aspects that she herself recognizes as characteristic of a colonial society over non-hegemonic bodies.

Based on Taís's words about "what they think is right", surely one of the most deviant aspects for our cis-heteronormative society concerns dissident sexualities, a theme used by DIONNY to guide his work, entitled *Naquele Lugar* (In that place). In this video, the artist exposes his own homosexuality, confronting it above all with the colonial segregation of bodies preserved by evangelical discourses, which we can see in the artist's evoca-

tion of memories of an oppressive period in his life: “I remembered when I was a child and when I was pushed into a model of hegemonic masculinity, and also how I suffered from that, how it reflected and still reflects on me” (DIONNY, 2021). To conduct his critique of Christian impositions on dissident bodies, the artist uses resources such as audios of pastors uttering powerful words, the re-signification of sacred images and narrative texts in voice-over, reinforcing the imposition of a *bixa*-body as the protagonist in the exorcism of catechizing impositions that have reverberated since the European invasions of our territory. The protagonism of the *bixa*-body in *Naquele Lugar* is established as a performative twist to the stigmatization that effeminate men suffer in Brazil, taking into account that the Brazilian average still segments men who engage in homoerotic relationships into two groups: a first encompassing the *man*, epitome of the *real* man, active subject of the relationship, the anal penetrator; and another group encompassing *the bixa*, effeminate and passive subject, the doll, the one who is penetrated through the butthole (*cu*). And worse: “likes it!”. Of course, this binary and antagonistic distinction eclipses a wide variety of other possibilities for gender identities and sexualities, revealing a direct correlation with the standard man (active subject) and woman (passive subject) – and all the hierarchical power relations contained in this cis-heteronorm spread by common sense. Hence the importance of the symbolic reversal of this colonial pattern that inferiorizes feminine subjects or, more than that, that execrates everything that refers to femininity itself.

Regarding the *bixa*-body, another work whose emphasis is on the performance of dissident masculinities is *butterfly*, by Denis Gosch, in which the artist reflects on hegemonic masculinities in Brazil, using his *colonial difference* as a *bixa* subject, like DIONNY – the video itself begins with three dictionary definitions for the English word *butterfly*, among which the term *effeminate* stands out. In order to punctuate his critique, the artist takes as a reference all the ideas contained in what Paul B. Preciado (2018, p. 131) called “[...] some semiotic-technical codes of white heterosexual masculinity belonging to the post-war pharmaco-pornographic political ecology”, such as: “Bruce Willis, Operation Desert Storm, speed, terrorism, sex for sex’s sake, getting a hard-on like Ron Jeremy, knowing how to drink, making money, *Rocky*, Prilosec, the city, the bar, the whores, boxing,

the garage, the shame of not getting a hard-on like Ron Jemery, Viagra, prostate cancer”.

I have listed just a few of these codes above but be aware that the Spanish author lists many others with the intention of establishing – and mocking at! – a pattern that is characteristic of male hegemony in our society; a pattern that is very much naturalized by the US media imperialism and taken for granted. In his video performance, Denis recites all the codes listed by Preciado in voice-over, while presenting his own body through close-ups and framing that are very reminiscent of mainstream pornographic aesthetics, especially in the initial images, in which we cannot distinguish which parts of the body are being shown (Image 1), as well as the emphasis on the purple, purplish viscous liquid dripping down the performer’s face and body, which also alludes to the cum shot, one of the most crucial shots in commercial pornography, centered on the active subject throwing semen over the body of passives. However, it seems clear to me that the artist’s intention is to carnivalize the porn aesthetic in order to present a political counter-proposal to it, one that provokes rather than explains, that questions rather than affirms, through an effeminate corporeality that problematizes the semiotic codes of masculinity, reiterated even in the song that permeates the entire video performance: *Guri* (Boy), by César Passarinho, sung *a capella* by Beta Ribeiro, evokes the gaucho tradition that usually praises standardized norms of masculinity. At the end of the video performance, Denis pulls off the purple liquid that has already hardened on his skin, as if he were *changing his skin* or getting rid of everything that has been thrown at him, like an act of transmutation. And we remember the third definition of *butterfly* presente dat the beginning of the video: *transmuting*. Gosch’s *bixa*-body asserts that no matter what is done, the butterfly will always come out of its cocoon, in becoming-metamorphosis, to finally be able to fly freely. *butterfly* represents, from a traumatic passage in the performer’s personal life – school *bullying* – a powerful artistic work about the symbolic blossoming of self-acceptance of the effeminate *bixa*, despite the social violence daily suffered.



Image 1 – Frame of *butterfly*, by Denis Gosch. Source: Author's collection.

A final example we can cite here is the creative process of the artist Maiara Cemin, since her *Mulher Porca* (Sow-Woman) arose from various problematizing aspects of her daily life, as she herself explains:

The current Brazilian political context, along with the misogyny and patriarchy of our society, were the main annoyances that permeate my existence as a woman-artist- mother-historian-feminist, and which served as inspiration for the critique present in the video performance. I also tried to bring a different aesthetic to what is considered beautiful (causing confusion in the viewer as to what attracts them sexually), thus dealing with women's sexuality when it is limited to an object, much of which is explored in pornography (Cemin, 2021).

Maiara presents a provocative work, which criticizes the Bolsonaro government in a direct but debauched way, structuring textual *metaphors* that are never spoken by the *sow-women*, since they only know how to grunt (here is a clear sarcastic allegory proposed by the actress, as if to say that the macho context does not believe that Brazilian women are capable of formulating comprehensible speeches, corroborating the “heterosexual somatic fictions” proposed by Preciado (2018), which determine that cis women, in our patriarchal society, have the duty to close their mouths and open their legs). In the work, we are confronted by a hybrid corporeality, which mixes a woman's body with a porcine head-mask, wearing a dark swimsuit and performing movements that remind us of the image of a stripper sensualizing for the camera, sometimes using a swing to perform

her grotesque choreography, sometimes sniffing the camera itself, like an animal that wants to recognize something by smell. The sow-woman performs her freaky show through dances, grunts, eroticized poses and political speeches that would be incomprehensible if it were not for the subtitles that translate them. The main decolonial observation that we can highlight in Maiara's proposal is perhaps the artist's perceptible criticism of the dehumanization of subalternized subjects that is typical of the colonial structure, expressed here in symbolic form: the female body appears synthesized in a bizarre figure whose hybridity with the sow reminds us of the ways in which society *consumes* both one body and the other, as well as the symbolic-political inferiorizations imposed on certain existences. The video performance is also a metaphor for colonial reality and carnivalizes Brazil, transforming it into a circus of horrors in which the president is a clown and the audience is complicit in the show being performed. But the Sow-Woman, a despised subject, an allegorized colonial difference, advocates with enviable political lucidity, in her lascivious-repulsive performance, that "when the sows are finished, there will be cows. After the sows come the cows", a metaphorical omen for the *cattle* that believe they are safe from being *devoured* by the colonial system.



Image 2 – Frame of *Mulher-porca*, by Maiara Cemin. Source: Author's collection.

Analyzing all 21 video performances would be the work for a more in-depth research, since, as I said, they present the most diverse aesthetic-linguistic tools, but I believe that, with the perception of the works de-

scribed here, we can already see the importance of the decolonial debate in the production of such artistic works, as well as how much each performer has managed to inhabit their fractured locus to impose themselves as protagonists through the arts of the body, thus occupying certain spaces of power that have historically been denied to them. In fact, one of the reasons why I chose these four performances for analysis is the fact that the quartet of creators opted to center the aesthetic discourse of the works on their own bodies⁷, putting their bodily marks and markers in the frame, as the epitome of their ideas about the notion of dissident protagonism. Through the four works analyzed, we can reflect on body-political epistemes in insurgency, whose discourses and individual experiences dialogue with the decolonial debate and reverberate in the aesthetic and narrative choices of each video performance, as described above.

I need to record, however, that is notorious the absence in the show of video performances of subject-creators and speeches that set out to discuss issues related to aspects of race or transgenerity. Although the workshop had a small percentage of students who declared themselves to be black or transgender, most of these people – or almost all of them! – were unable or not willing to complete the workshop or even had no interest in producing the final work, even though they had contributed to debates about blackness and transexistences during the classes. But unfortunately, these issues are absent from practically all the works that make up the *Plurais* art show, which marks the invisibility of black or transgender protagonists at the festival, with perhaps the exception of the video *Paredes*, in which trans artist Lucas Tegner recalls processes of sexual abuse in his childhood (in fact, however, discussions about transgenerism are not on the agenda in the work).

Conclusions-tides before an ocean of decolonial possibilities

The body is colonized. The colonization of the mind first involves the body, how it behaves and how it is domesticated. The standard starts from what can be seen and touched. The body is subversive. From the moment it is assumed in its existential totality, it becomes a threat to conservatism. Art is the space we can occupy with the body, to attack the colonizing system and thus problematize, transform and welcome different bodies and existences (Cemin, 2021, s/p.).

Although textually recording these experiences from the *Decolonizando Práticas Cênicas...* project is of vital importance for an in-depth debate on the topics discussed here, we cannot forget that every word written down here refers to experiences and practices that took place in the bodies of various people symbolically territorialized in the *butthole of the world*; people who, in many situations, have been belittled, silenced or even made invisible and who, for the reasons mentioned here, have managed to rise to the status of artist-protagonists of their works and their own reflections, in line with what Leandro Colling has labeled the artivisms of sexual and gender dissidences. There were so many activities in a single cultural project that their textual records would not fit into a few pages of an article – even more so if we consider the complexity that exists in reflecting on the experiences and subjectivities that emerged in the encounter between so many people, even virtually – which is why we chose to highlight specific moments as a way of understanding the paths that the project took. There are no limits to this kind of performative turn, which takes something out of the margins and makes it realize its value, even in an apparently ephemeral way. It was extremely stimulating for me to witness each participant recognizing and valuing themselves, inserted into a perverse system that constantly makes them feel like *crap*. As an artist in the scene who has been working for two decades in the *butthole* of Brazil (even though the *south* of Brazil colonially feels like the *head* of it...), I cannot conceive of an artistic endeavor that does not go through these liminalities and these *loopholes in the system*. Considering protagonisms other than those perpetuated by Eurocentric theater and, more than that, thinking up strategies that provide space for such dissent, in my opinion, becomes a primordial condition for art to maintain its role in society and to continue dialoguing with all possible types of audiences and not just those to whom the arts have historically been made available. What I have often thought, researched and written about in recent years is that artistic practices that derive from the margins of the system are usually also configured as *practices of existence*, a notion that I have sampled from Larissa Pelúcio, an author who realizes that the powers of Latin American productions are managed in the ambiguity of the margins, in “being here and there at the same time” (Pelúcio, 2016, p. 132), given that the marginalized subjects who conceive them are bodily – and ontologically, I

would add – imbued with their precarious conditions. In the 21st century, it is no longer up to us to inferiorize such artistic expressions; on the contrary: we need to break the center, to allow the margins to invade the spaces they have been denied. And if we have somehow been placed in this subalternizing condition, may we have the strength, courage, lucidity and power to rise up against everything that wants to keep us in this situation of inferiority. I believe that my role as an artist-teacher is to encourage all student-artists to enhance their corporealities by making visible the colonial game that constantly holds each of them back or even knocks them down. That is why Maiara Cemin's text, inserted at the beginning of these conclusions, is so impactful, because it makes us realize that, in order for coloniality to be threatened, it becomes urgent and essential that the body be assumed in its power of subversion and, as Maiara rightly said, this is where the arts can – and must! – work. Thinking about artistic achievements focused on the protagonism of dissident corporealities presupposes a change of viewpoint not only of our hegemonic standards of bodies, but also an ethical-political shift in our understanding of what it means to produce art here in Latin America. Valuing other cultures and knowledges that are on the periphery of the canonical logic of Eurocentric civilization can contribute, in the specific case of Brazil, to transformations in race relations, the reversal of processes of subalternization and the broadening of cultural belonging, as Elisa Belém argues. I would also include a contribution to changes in gender relations and sexualities, which could be extremely important given the high rates of sexual and gender-based violence in Brazil.

I believe that producing a project that has been funded by a private company, albeit under a federal law, does not necessarily constitute an experience of subjection to the capitalist schemes so characteristic of the colonial world. On the contrary, I see this opportunity as a way of recognizing certain cracks in the system itself to privilege precisely those subjects who would not have benefited if the project had not received the funds provided for in the law. Through the video performances, the debate with special guests, the classes taught by qualified professors and this affectionately written text, which is now being read by you, the decolonial debate has been brought to hundreds of subjects and has certainly set off sparks of disquiet in various imaginaries, knowledges, corporealities and experiences. And this

movement is only the beginning of infinite and future revolutions, whether individual or collective. If there really is an ocean of decolonial possibilities as opposed to a tiny creek of hegemonic norms, let there soon come a tsunami capable of turning the colonial game upside down.

Notes

- ¹ *Decolonizing Scenic Practices: formative processes in arts, genders and sexualities in Rio Grande do Sul*. The project in question was carried out between April and September 2021 through the Edital Criação e Formação Diversidade das Culturas (Creation and Training Diversity of Cultures Call for Proposals) with funds from the Law Aldir Blanc nº 14.017/20.
- ² All the virtual Festival activities are available for free on the following YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/DanielColinDr/videos>.
- ³ *Sudaca* would be a stigmatizing term instilled on South American people, but it has been reappropriated by certain subjects as an affirmation of marginalized difference for an anti-colonial critique.
- ⁴ The notion of the *ego-politics of knowledge* refers to the idea of epistemological centralization in a universal, disembodied and de-historicized subject, capable of producing and appropriating knowledge from a non-place. For more information, read Restrepo and Rojas (2010).
- ⁵ The concept *locus of enunciation* can be understood as the geopolitical and body-political location of the speaking subject, according to Ramón Grosfoguel (2006).
- ⁶ This item was widely discussed in our meetings about the limits between censorship, artistic freedom and the cultural market, but we chose to look for stylistic strategies that would allow us to use the YouTube platform to broadcast the works.
- ⁷ I say this because some of the 21 works at the Festival use other stylistic strategies, such as the video performance *BRAZIU*, for example, in which artist Pablo Abritta's body barely appears in the frame. Abritta focuses on presenting random images and sounds from popular demonstrations to problematize the political situation in Brazil under a far-right government.

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