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PRESENCE AND PERFORMANCE OF WOMEN IN CULTURAL SPACES IN RIO DE JANEIRO OF THE 19th CENTURY: What is allowed for women in festivities?

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Abstract

This article presents a historical survey of stories about the presence and performance of women, especially black women, in festivities in Rio de Janeiro in the 19th century. We seek to (re)architect scenes of social interaction, in order to highlight the temporary subversions of “subalternized” positions of black culture and women in festive moments. Thus, we seek to contribute with more in-depth reflections in the field of urban cultures, considering the peculiarities of the historical experiences of minority groups than in the artistic and musical performances of a politically engaged profile in contemporary times. In view of the cultural scenes linked to the current feminist agenda, we seek to highlight the historical presence of women in the city’s cultural processes.

Keywords

Feminism; Festivity; Urban Cultures.

Introduction

The festivities of Rio de Janeiro in the late 19th and early 20th century are marked by a thrilling cultural environment with the opening of ports, the consequent movement of immigrants and goods and the establishment of the royal family in the city. In this context of acceleration of the urbanization process, the festive scenario is intensified, especially in the poorest regions of the city where festivity and meeting spaces between free slaves, workers, migrants from other states and immigrants who have come to work in Rio de Janeiro are fabricated. The establishment of the royal family stimulated the arrival of many foreign travelers who came to Brazil to know the peculiarities of the customs of the country. In this sense, it is possible to find many stories about the perception of these travelers with respect to Brazil's social life in 19th century.

The stories, chronicles and newspaper articles we have found inform moralistic, racist and misogynistic positions of the time, and, at the same time, present information about the presence and performance of women in their most everyday festivities. In meticulous texts that are attentive to the details of ordinary actions, travelers set up a "hostile chronicle that provides us with precious information" (Guinzburg, 2017, p. 5). Travelers, who are engaged in the description of everyday life, recreate in detail the sounds, smells and images presented to them in the city space. Among the scenes described, the presence of a dense descriptive material about the street festivities organized outside the models of the official culture and the stories about the presence and performance of women in these festive spaces caught our attention.

Thus, following the field of everyday life as a fundamental perspective of the city (Certeau, 1994), the stories we have selected highlight not only the friendly and sometimes conflicted coexistence of unofficial festive scenarios, but, above all, they move the female corporalities from a passive and submission place to that of performance and presence in festive environments, allowing us to paint less essentialist pictures of social reality when performances that are developed in the interstices of everyday life are considered.

This non-essentialist perspective is deviated from the binary logic fabricated by modern speeches and narratives, which bring us closer to the perspective of Duvignaud (1983), for whom festivities can be spaces of violation and transgression, not only a space to perpetuate and legitimize social rules, values and norms of an era. Festivities can be experienced as the search for "full contentment," which is the effect of the fulfillment of desires and enjoyments. From experiencing moments of rupture and subversion in relation to established cultural standards. According to the author,

The structure or the culture make up a group whose strength rests only on the consensus, which is rejected at any time. When we say that the festivities are a form of "transgression" of the established norms, we refer to the mechanism that, indeed, undermines these norms and often dissociate them (...) Festivities are concerned with disturbances from outside the system, a discovery of appeals which are active on man by external means to the power of the institutions that keep him within a structured group. Therefore, the "transgression" is stronger (Duvignaud, 1983, p. 233) because it is foreign to norms and rules and the intention to violate them is not explicit.

The case of the descriptions of women in festivities in daily chronicles of the 19th century is a striking example of how observers of the time failed to understand the "transgression" movement set up by those bodies in a situation of "subalternity." Chronicles seem to wonder all the time why bodies in precarious conditions¹ celebrate. Would women have reasons to celebrate? This questioning, in turn,

¹ We propose to reflect this concept from contemporary urban studies, specifically those based on cultural geography such as Rogério Haesbaert's researches. According to the author (2005, p. 36), "If there is no social exclusion, as many authors argue, because no one is completely devoid of social ties, and if there

seems to us to be more and more current in debates about contemporary musical and cultural scenarios that share politically engaged narratives.

Investigations regarding dissenting scenarios (Ranciére, 2009); the musical activism (Herschmann & Fernandes, 2012); the bastard cultures (Rincón, 2016) and the political dynamics of the streets (Butler, 2018) are gaining strength, due to the significant increase in the number of groups and the diversification of their practices, as well as the visibility that the engaged musical and cultural groups become to have in the city by appropriating content production and dissemination networks (Barbalho, 2013).

This article intends to show that the traces and marks of the gestures and actions of the female bodies in festive situation, mentioned in the narratives of the chronicles of the time, are present in the activities of the contemporary groups of the cultural collectives. That is, we point out that there is an intense dialogue between contemporary cultural practices and those already existing in the city for a long time, which marks the historical presence of festive scenarios of a dissenting nature, especially in Rio de Janeiro.

The intense participation of women in batuques, congadas and street festivities in the 19th century demonstrates that “subalternized” cultural expressions were and are in fundamental contrast to the moral and political structures of their time. Emphasizing particularly the performance of black women from lower classes of the 19th century in the production and cultural expression in the city, we seek to emphasize the importance of analyzes that consider the historical survival of music and art scenarios of each city. In the case of Rio de Janeiro, which is currently experiencing an intense scenario of collective and engaged cultural production in public spaces, in particular the articulation of feminist cultural collectives (Hollanda, 2018), we seek to point out the historical survival of women’s performance in the city’s gaps as the main founder of the city itself and its contemporary scenarios.

Before we begin: a note on the notion of “subalternity”.

From post-structuralism, postcolonialist studies reflect on social issues by implicitly establishing the deconstruction of certain terms, such as the notion of “subalternity” (Bhaba, 1998; Spivak, 2010). The quotation marks in the words “subalternity” or “subalternized” throughout the text indicate the consideration of this deconstruction process which the theme of this article is based on, as it reflects on female position in festivities in the 19th century.

The act of deconstructing, according to Derrida (2001), does not mean denying or rejecting the existence of an idea or even reversing positions, transforming, in the case of the concept of “subalternity”, a dominated object into a dominant object and vice versa.

Deconstructing “subalternity” relations is part of an effort to view them as relations of reciprocity, obviously not as a peaceful, conciliatory, and orderly data, but rather in considering the existence of transgression, action, and position taking lines in these relationships. The notion of “subalternity” we present in the article proposes to consider the coexistence with the paradoxical position, what Derrida calls “undecidability” of “subalternity” relations with respect to women in the 19th century. This means

is no territorial exclusion or deterritorialization in absolute sense, because nobody can subsist without territory, there are, however, increasing forms of social precariousness that often involve processes of segregation, separation/“apartheid” – or, as we prefer, territorial seclusion, a seclusion, as the whole process of deterritorialization (always dialected), within the dominant capitalist logic, involves much more than the territorial control and social comfort of a minority, the lack of control and the social and spatial precariousness of a majority (...). If the increasing multiterritoriality of our days reveals the degree of mobility and “fluidity” to which we are subject, we should not forget that, parallel to the cultural hybridity, multi-functionality and overlapping of “governance” that characterize this multiterritoriality, we also have, paradoxically, the intensification of territorial precarious conditions (or, in a certain sense, of deterritorialization), often in the form of territory-enclosure, closed, both as a way of self-confinement (of hegemonic groups) as of seclusion in the strict sense, imposed by those who defend a certain sense of “freedom” (sometimes confused with simple mobility), try to control the territory of others, from the outside in.”

introducing the unpredictable, unusual and unexpected in actions and social reactions, breaking the construction of meanings and processes of static and usual subjectivation.

The social actions that are constituted by the crossing of force and rupture lines, which are present in the in-between places (Bhaba, 1998) show concrete and localizable narratives and social practices of the deconstruction of the idea of subalternity. The process that constitutes the feminine in the experience, as we will show below specifically in festive experiences, composes force lines to deconstruct essentialist notions of gender, thus highlighting the identity procedural actions. The historical experience of the feminine in festivities is revealed as a fundamental

(...) in-between place where a real and virtual space-time is fabricated, is characterized as a threshold, a boundary that unites and separates, encompasses and delimits, which opens horizons and restricts possibilities. It happens as a meeting and passage space-time, that allows the emergence of the multiple, polyphonic, of the difference - which is deconstructed as a stereotype and as a subalternization and it is reconstructed as a possibility to resignify history, everyday life, relations, subjectivities" (Aziribeiro, 2003, p. 4).

Festive and musical scenarios: hybridity and heterogeneity in the 19th century

The records related to festivities of the time were made mostly by white men, foreign travelers, which alerted us, at first, to possible softening of speech and loss of visibility. We were caught by surprise when we realize that in the writings, especially of the newcomers, the black and lower-class workers festivities and the women's presence are recurrent and described in detail. Woman's position

(...) in their different roles in everyday life, they were fade away to the inhabitants while they awakened the interest of the visitor. The comparison with the equivalent situation in her place of origin allows a less partial perception consciously or unconsciously (Queiroz, 1988).

The willingness to music and festivities in Rio de Janeiro is mentioned quite extensively in the documents we have approached. By focusing on multiple festive practices, foreign travelers tend to differentiate the festivities for wealthier layers such as balls, operas and orchestras, from black, workers' and immigrants' festivities. The description of music for richer layers and nobility's salons was well regarded and praised by travelers, marking the perception of a progress of Brazilian civility toward European musical models:

(...) music, among Brazilians, and, especially in Rio, cultivated with more taste, and a certain perfection will probably be reached. The Brazilian has, like the Portuguese, fine talent for modulation and harmonic progression, and the singing is simply based on guitar accompaniment. The guitar, as much as in southern Europe, is the favorite instrument; the piano is one of the rarest furniture and it is only found in wealthy homes. One part of the popular songs, which are accompanied by guitar, originates from Portugal, and the other part is inspired by the indigenous melody. (...). The Italian opera, so far, is not presented as anything perfect, neither on the part of the singers, nor the orchestra; a particular band of vocal and instrumental music that the crown prince formed by people indigenous and black mestizos, strongly indicates the musical talent of Brazilian people. D. Pedro, who seems to have inherited a remarkable taste for music from his grandfather D. João IV, often conducts this orchestra, and as it is stimulated, it seeks to perform the pieces with great perfection. The favorite disciple of J. Haydn, the gentleman Neukomm, was then the director of Paço's Chapel, in Rio. For their masses, however, composed entirely in the style of the most famous German masters, people's musical culture was not yet fully mature." (Martius & Spix, 1981, p. 57).

Von Rango and Von Leithold, newcomers, mention that music was a leisure largely enjoyed by “educated people” as well as by slaves. However, the presence of black music, resounded to them in a particular way, so that it is possible to hear “at all times the monotonous chant of black people accompanied by instruments constructed by themselves, and when three of them meet even in the most rude works, there is always one who sings or makes the strings sound” (Leithold & Rango, 1966, p. 151).

The musicality of the streets - *batuques, canções de moda, congadas*, viola circles and the street festivities - are presented in a more detailed and extensive way. When new ways of dancing, singing and gathering around the music are faced again, travelers spend more time on the description of the festive scenarios they witness on the street contaminated by the discriminating and moralizing strangeness, as well as by the delight of this social experience, as shown below:

By the song and the sound of the instrument, the Brazilian is easily stimulated to dance, and expresses his joviality in educated societies with delicate contra dances; in lower classes, however, it is expressed with sensual gestures and contortions like those of the black people. (Martius & Spix, 1981, p. 57)

We also found musical entertainments herein, where we could least expect to find them. (...). On the backs of mules, he carried a viola, violins, trumpets, music stands. With joyful confidence, we attack Pleyel’s oldest quartets. (...). And indeed, the musical spirit hung over our attempt; musicians and listeners were delighted, and you, excellent music lover, João Raposo, you will always live in my memory, with your features inspired by triumphant exaltation (Martius and Spix, 1981, p. 54)!

The heterogeneous presence of the musicality in the social environment indicates that music and festivities are historical components of sociability and a mark of the different levels of social interaction and expression in the city in Rio de Janeiro. The historian Marcos Napolitano emphasizes, with respect to music in Rio de Janeiro at the beginning of the 19th century, that musical spaces are revealed as spaces-synthesis capable of summarizing the complexity of existences and ways of life in the city, where

the musical line polka-choro-maxixe-batuque represented a social and cultural map of musical life for those who were born and raised in Rio de Janeiro: domestic event-theater, magazine-street-pagode and popular- festivities at slaves’ house. Often, the musician had participation in all these spaces, and he became a kind of cultural mediator fundamental to the synthesis nature that Brazilian music was acquiring (Napolitano, 2002, p. 46).

Among stories about the festivities in Rio de Janeiro, the leading role of the descriptions of the black festivities is notorious. Rugendas, a German designer who came to Brazil on a scientific expedition, was one of the first to bring drawings of the country’s customs to the world. In a story about a *batuque* in the interior of Rio de Janeiro, the traveler describes in detail the ritual of the festivity where primarily

some black people gather, and soon the paced beat of the hands is heard; it is the call sign and a provocation to dance. The *batuque* is conducted by a figurant; it consists of certain body movements that may seem too expressive (Rugendas, 1998, p. 157).

The surprise with respect to black festivities is mainly revealed in the meticulous details of body movements: “it is mainly the hips that shake, while the dancer makes his tongue and fingers snap, accompanying a monotonous melody” (Rugendas, 1998, p. 157). Other descriptions, such as that of Carl Seidel on a marriage of black people he had attended, mark the discriminatory position with regard to clothes, music and, above all, the black body:

It was barely noon, the expected guests appeared, mostly black and mixed white and black people, usually dressed in multicolored rags and all sorts of trinkets. (...). The music was accompanied by a shout of joy, much worse than that of a thousand parrots in the Brazilian virgin forest, and threatened to disrupt the hard tympanum of the ear.

Imagine the most obnoxious muscular contortions, without pace, the most innocent swing of the half-naked legs and arms, the bolder heels, the fluttering skirts, the most disgusting mimicry, in which the most raw carnal lust was revealed - such was the dance in which, from the beginning, the graces were transmuted into libidinous furies (apud Schwarcz, 2001, p. 613).

Batuque is the festive practice by which travelers mark, informed by their cultural formation, the encounter with another record of the body. The repeated descriptions amazed by the corporeal movement, its forms and curves highlight the position of the foreign body before the black festive scenes. The restraint of the body and its movements is part of the European civilizing process, where, based on Christian morality, layers of restraint of the body were unleashed: separation of body and spirit, guilt of body, sinful flesh, untouched body (Soihet, 2003):

Batuque is danced by a single male dancer and a female dancer, and they click their fingers and show disjointed movements and unrestrained pantomimes, sometimes they get close and sometimes they move away from each other. The main charm of this dance for the Brazilians is the rotations and artificial contortions of the pelvis, in which they almost reach the Fakirs from East Indies. It lasts sometimes, to the monotonous chords of the viola, several hours without interruption, or alternating only improvised songs and national modinhas, whose subject corresponds to their rudeness. Sometimes dancers also came dressed as women (Martius & Spix, 1981, p. 180).

According to the description of black music, travelers emphasize the mediocrity of this musicality that would be characterized by “monotonous chords of the viola”, “wild harmony”, “whose theme corresponds to their rudeness.” Another argument is the lack of civility and erudition of the songs that could be mistaken as “a shout of joy, much worse than that of a thousand parrots in the Brazilian virgin forest.” Black dances are seen as “body movements that may seem too expressive”, “dissolute movements and unrestrained pantomimes” through which “muscular contortions”, “obscene feature of dance” and finally “the rawest carnal lust” were presented.

The image of a festive and musical people was gradually being set up by travelers’ stories. While the descriptions of the black festivities were infused with moral and discriminatory judgments, they also signal, by virtue of the richness of detail and the volume of stories found, the position of rapture and perplexity of the travelers before the festive scenes that they witnessed.

Despite the obscene appearance of this dance, it is spread throughout Brazil and everywhere and it is preferred by the lower class of the people, who are not deprived of it, nor by prohibition of the Church (Martius & Spix, 1981, p. 180).

Golbery, a foreign traveler, in his story on his experience in the country, makes a reflection on the festive space as a space for the protection and maintenance of the cultural bonds destroyed by slavery, where

(...) enduring the harsh law of slavery, black people have lost nothing of their love for their exercise of predilection; they have maintained the use of all the instruments of their own nation. (...). *Batuque*, which alternately expresses the repulses and pleasures of love; capoeira in which a combat is rehearsed; lundu, which even in the theater is danced, and whose grace consists mainly of a particular movement of the lower parts of the body, (...) all those passionate dances that a thousand times have been described by travelers (Denis, 1980, p. 156).

The festivities, as an experience in which the people “do not deprive of it, nor by prohibition of the Church”, perhaps of the authorities, find their gaps throughout the history of the city, which forms an essential urban narrative. Ferreira de Rezende, who is a memorialist of the 19th century, extensively mentions the social life mobilized by the festivities. In a certain story about a *batuque* in Catumbi, he tells

about the presence of Africans and “chilled out priests” and police chiefs in the celebration. Frightened by the scene he had witnessed regarding the interaction of priests, police chiefs and Africans, the memorialist asserted, in a position of judgment and astonishment, that the priests and police chiefs did not back down “not even before the greatest scandal”; “they behaved with such indecency and disproportion that could not be described”; “they danced like the most furious of the dancers, staying there the rest of the night”.

Regarding these stories that include us in the daily scenes of Rio de Janeiro of the 19th century, we note that the festivities are a communication vector which is essential to understand not only the positions of hierarchy and exclusion, but also the resistance practices, the survivals of the African matrix, the diversity of modes of expression, the social interaction, the plurality of aesthetic languages and the contradiction narratives². This communication vector, represented herein by the festivities, blurred the static picture of urban dynamics in Rio de Janeiro divided into those who oppress and those who are oppressed. Through the stories of foreign travelers who stood “at the street level” - with all their Eurocentric baggage, we see a heterogeneous city in its practices, stage of conflicts and tensions that communicate, through their festive vocation, contradiction dynamics.

Among the contradiction dynamics of the musical and festive scenes, the performance of black and white women in the festivities is a fundamental counterpoint in the blurring of the portrait of their inert position or of little activity of the feminine in the city. The blurring of this picture is intended to show that even if the greatest social, economic, physical, and subjectivist violence on women are assumed, moments and experiences of resistance and criticism of the meanings and practices of the official culture have been present (Soihet, 2003).

Tias Ciatas, Tias Sabinas and Jingas de Angola: The festive women yesterday and today in Rio de Janeiro

The black festivities are an essential part of Brazil’s civilizing process. Tinhorão (2012) tells that they often were combined with the Iberian Catholic festivities. It was possible to note the “intrusion of profane note in official devotional events,” where certain symbols of the black festivities were part of the white religious festive practices.

One of the little studied aspects of Brazilian Africanization is precisely the re-creation, within the black confraternities, of ethnic identities brought from Africa within the black community of slave Brazil. Throughout the festivities, men and women from oral cultures built their identities, codified speeches on difference, defended themselves from white people’s audacity, and, in short, left a testimony of a remarkable cultural resistance (Reis, 1996, p. 4).

Congadas are a result of the encounter of Angola and Congo cultures which were resignified in Brazil when they were intensively merged into catholic manifestations. *Congadas* of colonial Brazil were expressed in a plural form: sometimes they were masked as an Iberian religious festivity, sometimes they were shown as the most potent of the African festivities. As in an urban game of hide and seek, black festivities, while putting their identity narratives into practice, were also protective and careful to survive within a highly oppressive regime. Therefore, ways of existing were created; tactics through which African community and cultural ties in convergence with Iberian religious practices were translated into (Reis, 1996).

² From Rancièrè (2009), we understand that contradictions emerge at a time when subjects considered invisible in a given community become visible when they express themselves on common themes of social life. The contradiction is a conflict capable of mobilizing communities of ethical and aesthetic sharing that shake the shared certainties, thus explaining the cracks and gaps of the social body perceived as fixed and unchanging.

In *congadas*, participants walk as in a procession, singing and dancing in honor of the King of Congo and Queen Jinga of Angola. The devotion to the African queen was stimulated by *congadas* throughout Brazil, and it is constituted as an important signal of the feminine in African festivities (Mussa, 2007). The myth of Jinga of Angola in *congadas* is a symbol of strength, haughtiness and pride represented in the character of a black woman:

Quilombola communities from Angola / Even though I was defeated, I unified the nations / I am proud of a race / History that travels on the slave ship / Dream of a people / Lady of worship places [terreiros] / I come in the force of the wind / I burn like fire / I own maracatu / My sword is of gold / I am midnight light / My courtship will pass / I am queen of conga³.

The female character in black festivities is markedly linked to symbols of strength and wisdom. The “ladies of worship places” and “owners of *maracatu*” are fundamental characters in the process of protection and translation of African ties in Brazil. Charles Expilly, a French traveler, when contemplating a festive scene at Campo da Aclamação in Rio de Janeiro, describes the surprise about the leadership position and fury of a celebrating black woman. The traveler tells, by showing astonishment, the situation in which a group of *negros de ganho* sang and danced happily, and during this festivity, a black woman who was in charge of doing the laundry for her owners, “threw herself at the head of her bondage companions” and began to dance” possessed by the dance demon.”

One day, when I was condemned to cross Campo da Aclamação, I saw a troop of *negros de ganho* that was walking and singing. At the sound of this wild harmony formed by the chord of voices, marimbas and sprinkler nozzles, a black woman who was doing the laundry for her owners, left her wooden washer aside and threw herself at the head of her bondage companions. She was possessed by the dance demon and she jumped up, shook in peace, at the head of the spine, and her face turned towards her companions. She walked all over the square, walking on her back, and her fervor did not seem to diminish (Expilly, 1862, 52).

In this story, our attention is firstly brought to the disapproval associated with work relationship. According to the traveler, it is unthinkable to leave the chores aside to enjoy the festivity. This position is relevant to European civilizational processes of separation from the work world to the leisure world, unlike African cultural matrices and pre-capitalist societies (Soihet, 2003), where work and pleasure were combined practices within the dynamics of social life. Management time for black women and men who were slave was odd to foreigners, because they were contaminated by the rigid work structure of factories.

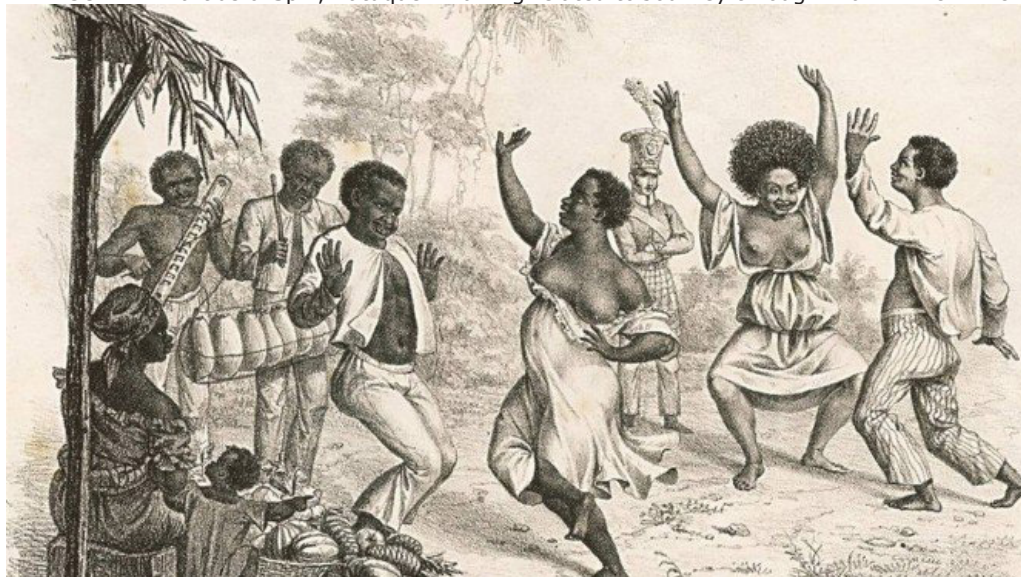
The festivities that last until dawn and the “fervor [which] did not seem to diminish” widely revealed to foreigners other records of time and body. The festive timing associated with the enjoyment of the slow time and the speed at which the bodies were pronounced is a mark in travelers’ stories, especially with regard to woman’s position. Within a structured regime for the submission and obedience of the black body, the viscosity, force and energy at which these corporalities are pronounced are showed as an incomprehensible paradox in the stories of the foreign travelers. After all, how a black body and above all, a black woman body dares show such vigor and impetuosity in a structure that was thought to be of resignation and economic, political and subjective submission of these bodies?

Still thinking about the peculiarities of the narrative of the foreign look with respect to festive body of the woman, we can emphasize the recurrence of the sexual aspect. “Shaking hips,” “sensual contortions,” and “libertine fevers,” are mostly characterizations directed at the narrative of black women who irresistibly spelled the European with “their seductive forms and the smell of their armpits” (Expilly, 1911, p. 107).

³ Part of the samba theme of Império da Tijuca (2006) that tells the story of Queen Jinga of Angola composed by Márcio André, Djalma Falcão, Ito Melodia, Grassano and Jota Karlos.

In a well-known drawing by Spix and Martius⁴ on a dedicated expedition known to Brazilian music and festive manifestations in the 19th century, travelers represented black women at festivities with bowed arms, exposed breasts, open legs and mouths, and a clear expression of pleasure and joy. Again, the paradox between the dominated body and the highly expressive body becomes clear in this image. Contrary to the modest and submissive behavior expected of the female character, black women are represented in the center, taking on a corporeality which is contradictory to social rules.

FIGURE 1. Martius & Spix, Batuque. Drawing related to Journey through Brazil in 1817-1820.



Source: MARTIUS and SPIX (1981, p. 191).

The various black festive scenes witnessed and sometimes experienced by foreigners and white people intensified the processes of cultural exchange, shocking many travelers. This is the case of Freire Alemão (1859), who comments that, at a batuque he attended “ladies often came to the dance circle, as well as men, and watched with pleasure the hybrid dances and grotesque jumps of black people.”

In the survey carried out, references to slave and free black women practicing street vending are also recurrent⁵. With their troughs and trays on their heads, female street vendors walked around the city selling several types of food which were indispensable for the festivities of Rio de Janeiro. Among the many references of the time to female street vendors, we highlight the stories about the performance of Sabina, a seller of oranges in the neighborhood of the Center of the city:

In the last twenty-odd years, Sabina was a real celebrity to the doctors educated at universities of this court. Every day she stood at the school door with a fruit tray, knives, and stools. During class breaks, the pupils came to her, and since there was fewer stools, although they were more appreciated than the ones of the school, they stayed as in Sé, some seated, and others in foot, and they were delighted to suck oranges and limes, an occupation that was certainly more pleasant than attending the beginning of chemistry class and chloroformizations of surgery class (Diário de Notícias, January 10th, 1889, p. 1)

In the same year, the female street vendor was forbidden to sell the oranges in front of the Medicine School of the Parish of São José. The students and other female street vendors set up a protest

⁴ Retrieved, November 16th, 2019, from: <https://glo.bo/2B18i35>.

⁵ See: “As negras quitadeiras no Rio de Janeiro do século XIX pré-republicano: modernização urbana e conflito em torno do pequeno comércio de rua” (Freitas, 2016).

which was called the Procession of the Oranges, where they paraded in front of the school with banners of fruits, plates and shouts of exaltation to Sabina. The prohibition was revoked and years later, in 1902, Artur Azevedo composed a song to honor the conquest:

My name is Sabina / I am found / Every day / There on the sidewalk / Of the medicine /
academy / A deputy police chief / A very rustic man / Ordered two soldiers / To remove
my tray, oh! Monkey can run out of bananas / Monarchs do well without chicken soup
/ But medical students / Can never / Run out of Sabina's oranges! The boys arranged /
A great march / Thus, they showed / How what is ridiculous kills, oh!

There are many stories about the participation of *tias* in the cultural activities of Rio de Janeiro in the late 19th and early 20th centuries⁶. Whether in the position of candy sellers or hostesses of samba and *modas de viola*, *tias* mobilized important popular cultural dynamics in the city, such as the emergence of urban samba and carnival. *Tias* were recognized by the unofficial leadership and have established spaces of protection and creative production of the popular sectors. The mentioned "leadership" is articulated in a very particular way, unlike vertical structures of power or the dynamics of social movements that begin to emerge at the time with fishermen's association and other work sectors (Moura, 1995). The African heritage, the symbolic field of the ancestry and the knowledge emphasized in the orality indicated the outstanding position of the ladies coming from Bahia, Minas and the interior of the State. Specifically, in the so-called Little Africa, which was the main port of slaves of the capital of the country, cultural manifestations such as *candomblé*, carnival associations and modern urban samba were formed. In this context, *tias* are famous characters who arrange festivities, *giras* and *batuques* at their houses, and also organize blocks and associations.

The work of Roberto Moura (1995), "*Tia Ciata e Pequena África*", details the trajectory of the Bahia's community in the port area, using as representation Tia Ciata's houses as the epicenter of cultural activities to reaffirm black culture and expressive creation. Moura specifies the various uses, spaces and flows of people at Tia Ciata's house to construct a metaphor related to the process of cultural exchanges and inventions in the early 20th century in Rio de Janeiro.

Still referring to the happy image of Tia Ciata's house, other authors such as Rachel Soihet (1998) and Monica Pimenta Velloso (1988) locate the festive manifestations of Little Africa as the founding expressions of 1) alternative organizations to the daily factory, 2) spaces of protection and cultural expression, and, finally, 3) embryos of the popular culture of Rio. *Tias* embodied "the recognition and legitimacy of the black community" and, thus, they ensured "a cultural space that would have fundamental importance in the social history of Rio de Janeiro. Therefore, the embryo of popular culture in Rio de Janeiro is born from this black community" (Velloso, 1988, p. 14). Along the same path, Soihet (2003, p. 19) emphasizes the fundamental role of spaces of creation and cultural invention, where the "houses" [of the *tias*] were centers of cultural resistance, core from which the bases of the carnival and popular music were spread, predominant in Rio de Janeiro."

Tia Ciata's group and Bahia's community are investigated by recent historiography (Gomes, 2017) in an effort to reconstruct the trajectories of "subalternized" groups and their alternative organizations to the institutional structure. We highlight "Tia Ciata and her friends" as one of the dimensions of alternative cultural processes established in the city in the 19th century, as a counterpoint to urban project, as a fundamental part of a collective and widespread invention of popular culture. The value of the wisdom accumulated in the experience of years of maintenance of the African culture in the city mobilizes, around the *tias'* characters, cultural spaces of fundamental counterpoint to the eurocentric modernization

⁶ See Velloso (1990): "As *tias* baianas tomam conta do pedaço: espaço e identidade cultural no Rio de Janeiro" e Moura (1980): "*Tia Ciata e a Pequena África do Rio de Janeiro*".

processes, to the example of Pereira Passos reform (Soihet, 2003).

Penha's Festivity had been for decades the second most popular festivity in Rio de Janeiro, behind only the carnival. The festivity was initially organized in a Lusitanian and religious way, and it began to become popular, and it was pointed by some authors as the main diffusion element of urban samba (Lopes, 2001; Tinhorão, 2012).

And it is at this moment that this festivity is becoming more and more the festivity of bambas ("cappadocians", for some), of those who love choro, samba, carnival blocks, music contests, to be the great diffusion pole of Brazilian popular music, until the 50's. At this time ox carts ornamented with bamboo and bright-colored bedspreads, carrying pilgrims with straw hats and threaded strings around their necks and shoulder straps were no longer seen. The festivity had lost its way from Minho. There was no longer so much adstringent "binho verde" [green wine]. But the auctions and food stalls persisted. But now, there was much more samba and choro than anything else. (Lopes, 2001, p. 188).

The festivity, during the post-abolition period, becomes a hot space of the black music scene. There was the participation of con artists, Portuguese merchants, market stall owners, capoeira practitioners [capoeiristas], tias who sold home-made candies and young people of the lower classes (Facina & Palombini, 2016). *Tia Ciata's* group was known for "testing" and disclosing sambas at Penha's Festivity, which turned the festivity into a fundamental showcase of music produced in the poorest regions of the city.

The text by Moritz Lamberg (1895), a foreign traveler, describes the participation of poor white women at the festivities, specifically at Penha's Festivity. According to the traveler, the low education of these women is the key to justify the delivery of their bodies to the festivities:

The lower-class girl, who learns to read and write only in rare cases, grows in absolute freedom and is completely abandoned to her natural instincts. (...). Music, singing, dancing, carnival and also the popular festivities of the church make them really lose their minds (Lamberg, 1895).

There are many stories about the performance and participation of women in the festive scenes in Rio de Janeiro in the 19th century. The highly precarious, stigmatized and oppressed black culture from the point of view of power structures was spatially popularized in the city in the port region, at Penha's Festivity, carnival associations, congadas and batuques. The position of the woman, in the same way, despite the structural violence, remained active and visible in the festive spaces.

The investigations that examine the framework of satisfactions and pleasures of the city are potentially revealing, once they add complexities to the social, economic and political relations. In the case of Brazil, as Duvignaud points out, the festivity is the experience that "breaks into fragments" essentialist ideas of domination and submission by developing actions of position taking, visible action and transgression, as we pointed out, in the body, dance and music experienced by women in the 19th century.

The festivity... It cuts a sequence. It breaks a trigger for events that European historical ideology presents as logical and overwhelming. However, in anthropological or sociological practice, we prove that collective life is realized with the unpredictable and the ineluctable, and that common experience breaks up into fragments, in time and space, beautiful unitary, structural, or functional constructions (Duvignaud, 1983, p. 24).

The organization of stories about the festivities of Rio de Janeiro, with emphasis on the mentions to black festivities and women, provides us with a fundamental material for understanding the current scenario of production and artistic creation in the city. The traces and survival of nonconsensual festive

culture are based on the reflection on the contemporary urban cultures. In this sense, it is essential to recognize that contemporary activities related to music and art emerge through specific dialogues between practices that have been present in the city for a long time and the global flows of culture.

Final Considerations

We have analyzed several stories that focus on the participation of women in the social dynamics of the city. In particular, the festivities widely reveal a series of paradoxes of the female character according to foreigner's look. The movement of bodies, the vigorous and pulsating presence, the centrality of their position, the pronounced clothes and the joy of singing. All these aspects are paradoxical, considering the position, especially of the black woman, in the domination structure of slavery. The astonishment before these scenes turns into judgments oriented by the Christian and eurocentric civilizational formation that considers that these manifestations are fruit of the lust, the sin, the imbecility, the incivility, the indiscipline and the savagery.

So, how can a highly socially oppressed body express itself so powerfully in festivities? This dilemma is interesting to us, because it justifies a research goal for which we believe it is fundamental to understand social life according to everyday life. If we reflected on the 19th century, from its legal, political and economic structure, we would undoubtedly reach superficial conclusions about the dynamics of cities, where the whole potent set of black festive manifestations, for example, would be invisible. The broader understanding of the black women condition in 19th century necessarily requires us to delve deeper into the "street level." The dissolution of the paradox between a dominant structure and contradictory actions is only possible in listening to the daily stories of the city: routine stories, urban stories, visuals, music, and cultural life from day to day.

The festivities have a participation as a narrative, among others, of themselves and of a group. In facing the festivities as a daily experience capable of telling an identity in process, we find a way out of this apparent paradox. The black festivities are the narrative by which the processes to recover body expression, its cultural languages and its community bonds are expressed. We see in these daily narratives, expressed by the body, dance and music, that the festive atmosphere is a temporary moment to blur the structures of violence and oppression, where historically precarious groups will temporarily break with the positions of subordination that are imposed on them.

The festivities are historically composed of experiences that highlight women procedures - in movement, non-essentialist and diffuse - and this is a fundamental data to understand the artistic and musical practices linked to current gender issues. The narratives that we analyzed represent nonconsensual forms of women experiencing the city and it is possible to affirm that these tactical forms (Certeau, 1994) are reflected in the history of the city.

We note that recent formations of women's cultural groups linked to the feminist agenda, since the 1950s, but with more intensity since the 1980s, have put the idea of the "universal woman" in check. By perceiving the crystallization of a specific type of woman (white, middle class and heterosexual) against the female heterogeneity, contemporary movements break into fragments the notion of gender when facing it in its procedures.

In this context, we propose here to emphasize that the female procedures are historical, and they may be identified, among other experiences, in festive moments. Women of the past, in their nonconsensual practices, broke gender boundaries from the experience procedures. Therefore, these and other women experiences in history provide us with research guidelines on the survival of these small uprisings, of the "endless gestures" or "drives of freedom" (Didi-Huberman, 2017) of women in historical time helping us to answer what, after all, women in festivities are allowed to do nowadays?

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