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## “Our Body Is Our Weapon”: Rhythmic Performativities and Decolonial Bodygraphies in the film *Swingueira*

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## Abstract

This article develops an analysis of decolonial and performativity corpographic practices based on the enunciation of individual and collective identities of *swingueira* dance. The analysis of the documentary *Swingueira* (2021) allows us to investigate the contestation and inscription strategies of insurgent bodies, who begin to experience music and dance from escapism strategies that occur on the edges of popular culture and national and regional imaginaries of authenticity. The goal is to interrelate images and narratives present in the construction of these bodily identities from categories such as territoriality, trauma, and escape. The results allow us to understand how *swingueira* intends, beyond an artistic movement, the self-inscription of experiences, violence, and disputes in dissident bodies that contest the colonial and racialized representation regime.

### Keywords

Decoloniality; *Swingueira*; Performance; Dance; Body.

## Introduction

Sweaty, wet bodies, bare feet, black, marginalized, dancing according to stereotypically-gendered models. Such an image enunciates identities and individual and collective subjectivities of groups of young people who confront one another and fight for belonging and authenticities in local competitions of *swingueira* in the projects of the city of Fortaleza (located in the state of Ceará, in the Northeast of Brazil). The visibility tactics of these moving bodies materialize in a conspicuous cartography of visual and normative confrontations (Ferreira da Silva, 2020) which must be thought as how the subordinated subjects can withhold the control of their own symbolic representations and senses. The act of relating to the visible and the image, in its capacity of inhabiting the dissension in the aesthetic systems (Lloyd, 2019), has been a question implicated in the domain of the political culture of representation in the field of activist-art studies (Lindgaard, 2005; Gonçalves, 2012; Rosa, 2015). As the system of representation for non-self-inscribed bodies “regulates the process and the rhythm in which the subjects get represented” (Lloyd, 2019, p. 43), the questions that concern to the action of exposing oneself without being exposed (Ferreira da Silva, 2020) broaden the questioning of art as confrontation where subjects become public while also risking to be exposed or reduced to the formal relations of expropriation of their bodies (Campos; Abalos Junior & Meirinho, 2021).

The validations of their narratives as it concerns the choreographies, production design, costume design, and dramaturgy are a part of a mediatic representative naturality as how the projects are represented in the samba parades or fighting for their belongings in June square dances, as well as in competitions between bois-bumbás in the state of Amazonas (situated in Brazil’s North region). The body which comprehends a complex contemporary articulation of conflicts associated with the social, gender, race, sexuality, geolocation, and multiple places of subjectivities forces us to comprehend the normativity and violence in representation systems (Hall, 2016; Lloyd, 2019). The national conservative imaginaries follow a perverse logic of place (Sodré, 2018), providing a body in a state of exuberant image, which coopts, classifies, and commercializes local experiences in what bell hooks (2008) calls “commodification of differences”.

The hip movements, the butt and crotch shaking present other ways of experiencing the imaginary of a controlled and ordered body, which seeks to contest the fantasies of a harmonious social body, demarcated by binary structures of gender, race, sexuality and social class. Their presences, competing in the projects of one of the most violent urban centers of Brazilian Northeast, choreograph the truculent action of how the police treat marginalized bodies. With cardboard replicas of firearms, the dancers perform the symbolic force of discipline and accuracy which has defined the daily life in the projects to upkeep and control. The *swingueira* groups’ competitions are dance and choreography spectacles that question national imaginaries of the signification of performativities and bodiliness, having inhabited the fringes of the phonographic and mediatic industries. Reinventing an idea of aesthetic norm of presence and authenticity is confronting a country that still hasn’t been able, or has never been interested, in comprehending the subordinate other.

Also known as *pagode baiano* or *quebradeira* (depending on its location), *swingueira* is a beat done by the young, created in the urban projects of the city of Salvador (located in the state of Bahia, in Brazil’s Northeast region), in the 1990s, which draws attention due to the performance of simulating erotic-sexual gestures through dances (Rodrigues, 2020). The documentary *Swingueira* (2021), directed by Bruno Xavier, Roger Pires, Yago Gurjão and Felipe de Paula, portrays the contests of a dance championship, while also complexifying the life conditions and physical violence materialized in their presences, inequalities and social invisibility. The question of “is *swingueira* art?”, is a demarcation of discontinuities in which young people of the projects evoke other ways of survival and escaping (Bona, 2017), intercrossed by the bodygraphic experience of dance.

Thus, this article discusses the still-existing relations regarding colonialities and pedagogies of marginalized bodies which permeate the documentary, in the construction of how the bodyographies can be thought of under another aesthetic sense (Tlostanova, 2011; Mignolo, 2010). *Swingueira* (2021) brings forth several issues in ruptured spaces and colonial traumas which are present in the daily lives of these subjects – and which constitute an urban and musical scene filled with stereotypes of sexualization and dehumanization of these bodies. The film is an invitation to think about how the body structures itself in a state of dissentious image (Lloyd, 2019), by way of its non-normative costumes, movements, poses, and choreographies.

The documentary *Swingueira* (2021) is the empiric object of this article due to its potentialities on how the performances of the bodies and voices of these young people activate questions that intersect their gender, class, race, location and sexuality issues. The displacements which have impacted the visibility policies constitutive of these subjects allow us to ponder over certain practices and aesthetics. To this end, methodologically speaking, the documentary is discussed from three categories which, by all means, reflect the nuances of these dancing bodies. The categories are territoriality, trauma, and escape.

Thus, this research stems from the question: how can *swingueira* be thought of as a performance which seeks to constitute an identity process on resistance, and fighting of these marginalized bodies? As such, in a theoretical framework of musical scenery, decoloniality and performance, authors like Denise Ferreira Silva (2020), Fernando Rodrigues (2020), Grada Kilomba (2019), Jota Mombaça (2020), Ledson Chagas (2016), María Lugones (2014), Will Straw (2013), among others, have been employed to comprehend the aforementioned issue, in dialogue with concepts here gauged.

## Swingueira and the dancing body

From the hip-shaking to the choreographies which make the entire body tremble, *swingueira* is a cultural movement that was born in the projects of the city of Salvador and gained notoriety in the 90s, especially thanks to the success of the group Gera Samba, renamed afterward as É o Tchan! (Rodrigues, 2020). The erotic and debauched senses inscribed in *swingueira* are related to the ludic discourses “strictly attached to the tradition of percussive-rhythmic expressions cultivated by the population of several cities of Recôncavo Baiano [in the Northeast of Brazil], expressed in the circle samba” (Rodrigues, 2020, p. 93). Groups and artists such as Harmonia do Samba (1993), Pagodart (1998), Parangolé (1998), and, the more recent ones, Psirico (2003) and Leo Santana (2014) have been composing the phonographic industry with their melodies and bodies in movement through dancing.

Like *bregafunk*, *arrocha*, *funk*, *sertanejo* and *pagode*, one of the aspects of this movement is the musical jovialness (Soares, 2012) and the marginalized contexts of the urban suburbs (Rodrigues, 2020). Such music scenery, according to Straw (2013), is the result of continuing experimentations in the cities’ cultural lives, which reflect in the identity construction of subjects who live in that context. “In their oft-agitated movement, the scenes inscribe the broadest story of social shapes in the city’s geography and its spaces” (Straw, 2013, P. 14). In the projects, such a perspective arises as an exchange of affections, belonging and resistance which imagine, fabricate, reinvent, create and propagate their identities to themselves and to the world.

The dancing in *swingueira* is a demarcation of bodies and subjects through a communicative/body language that intertwines marginalized spaces and territories present there. The facets, the aesthetics, and the performances that communicate their desires, their concerns, and their feelings are wide and varied. The June square dance in the city of Campina Grande (in the state of Paraíba, Northeast of Brazil) (Santos, 2018), the *bregafunk* in the state of Pernambuco (also in the Northeast of Brazil) (Soares, 2012), the *funk* in the state of Rio de Janeiro (Southeast of Brazil) (Vianna, 1990) and the boi-bumbá in the state of Amazonas (North of Brazil), among other scenes, each one unveiling places, perceptions and readings

of the world regarding issues and thoughts undergone in these territories and daily lives. The rhythms and dance performances are key to culturally-indicative readings in which territories and bodies are displayed as references that mobilize people and interpret silencing ruptures (Kilomba, 2019).

The first-person narrative, done by a young Isaac Charada, from the projects in the city of Fortaleza, is presented through his own voice, his world-building. Utterances like “not speaking of policemen and projects is something impossible” and “use our body as a weapon” highlight the body as an important place, central, polysemic, and belligerent, which connects to a proposition of decolonial aesthetic (Tlostanova, 2011; Mignolo, 2010). The challenge to demolish this colonial truth stems from “actions of wandering subjects, who risk the urban streets of major urban centers governed by sterilizing necropolis” (Leblanc and Amorim, 2019, p. 2).

As a way of undermining this control, *swingueira* acts as an intermediate of this negotiation, allowing the creation of new collective imaginaries. These performances resonate, according to Mombaça (2021), from a restaging, which evokes these bodies’ precariousness and potencies, of the traumas experienced from a redistribution of violence, of the historical silencing which goes through these subjects.

At the same time, being in *swingueira* is more than participating in a competition: it is all at once sociabilities, acknowledgment, experiences, redemption, and communion. Their presences articulate themselves and are presented in the film as local celebrities who have full mastery over their own images as warriors and amazons in combat.

This perspective helps us to understand the experiences and diversities present in this analysis. In *Swingueira* (2021), as we will see further, the characters and subjects performatize their traumas, violences, and existences by way of dancing as an embodiment form. “The street’s all ours, man”, says one of the characters. It is there where they are free, in a recreating movement of territories and living spaces. Outside this scope, however, they need to face police violence, racism, and social inequalities, in what Bona (2017) calls “capturing devices”. The street, evidently, is a sort of shelter and creative escape from this violence and the trauma experiences in hostile spaces as a means of sharing experiences and oppressions (Mombaça, 2021).

Denise Ferreira da Silva (2020), when thinking about art as confrontation, questions the representations and limits which evince the aesthetical thinking. By rendering visible this performance (and thence dialoguing with dance), these bodies and *corpas*<sup>1</sup> think and act as counterpoints, not only as a rupture to perception and regulation of feeling but of a collective re-existence. In this concern, we wonder: in what way can art confront? Lepecki (2013, p. 11) answers us: “Dance (...), even if participating in this plot, has an incredible potential to expose this farce. Dance can be thought of as an active criticism of the silent stage of colonized bodies.”

In this perspective, dance is a result of social practices experienced in daily lives by these black and marginalized bodies. bell hooks, when analyzing the rap phenomenon in the United States, explains that cultural movements often come from the social and cultural conditions experienced by these young people. The rap music scenery, in this context, is an escape for those who generally “(...) are silenced and ignored. It arises in the streets - outside the confinement of a molded domesticity (...) by poverty, outside enclosed spaces where young black people’s bodies need to be contained” (hooks, 2019, p. 88).

In Brazil, other cultural movements emerged in the projects, dynamizing the experiences and visibilities of these groups, performatizing their issues through their bodies, as in the case of *bregafunk*, in Recife (PE), and *funk*, in Rio de Janeiro (RJ). Both demarcate, through the *passinho*, the dissidences, the senses, and the complexities of culture and the spaces which produce meanings (Fernandes et al., 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, the use of the expression *corpa* is made “[...] as a twist of the word ‘body’, it is a transgression to the prevailing manliness of the Portuguese language and a subversive act from the language starred by transexual and sexual dissident activists and/or researchers from the Brazilian gender” (Borges; Reinaldo, 2021, p. 90)

Silva (2018, p. 18) inquires: “What happens in the non-hegemonic contexts which dance?”. To think about these worries is to analyze, from this position, the silencing of these subjects and bodies deviating from norms, when they question this universal and individual vision of a violent and inhuman coloniality (Mombaça, 2021).

## “In *swingueira* everyone is free to be what they want”

In its different phases, *swingueira* portrays this mediatic linearity regarding gender production and commercialization, going through the hybridization in several different music forms. Ever since its emergence, it has hybridized with other musical and cultural rhythms, movements and scenery, gaining modulations and strategies of cultural absorption in different territories and contexts. Nevertheless, it is still the reflections of these bodies which use the cultural movement as interaction and demarcation for these sociabilities (Chagas, 2016).

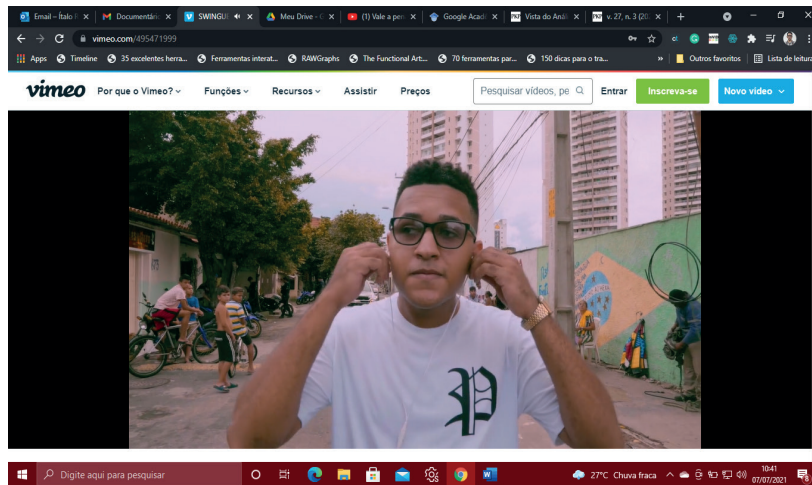
In the state of Ceará, there are state and intercity *swingueira* competitions where dance groups fight the so-called battles in search of first-place validation, in a competitive format very close to the bois-bumbás in the state of Amazonas. Throughout the whole state, in the cities’ projects, there are dancers who rehearse in a committed way to reach the highest place in the podium in male, female and mixed categories. Judges analyze charisma, choreography, costume, and production design. Each group has to present a style, a story and a staging, having as background, obviously, *swingueira*. It is in this concept where the documentary *Swingueira* (2021) emerges and enunciates the staging which presents the music and dance’s potency which has already been explored in Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca’s film *Swingueira* (2019), Brazil’s representation in the 58th Venice Biennial, questioning a normative division of gender by presenting bodyographies of transexual women, queers and non-binaries, as well as cisgender boys who conform to the hegemonic image of masculinity and femininity in their choreographies.

As in other parts of Brazil, *swingueira* had its boom in Fortaleza (CE) in the 2000s. In Ceará’s capital, in its peak, Bahia’s rhythm rendered dancing popular in high and middle-class families. Such a phenomenon has not lasted long. “Around here, tents located in Praia do Futuro began to promote presentations of music and dance groups, popularizing the genre. (...) When the stir began to decrease, (...) *swingueira* recoiled itself back to its place of origin: the projects’ heart” (Santana, 2018, online). The reason for this, according to the author, was due to the success of university *sertanejo* taking over the current scenery.

Within normative standards, *swingueira* is considered as vulgar art because of the lyrics’ double entendre, the erotic beat, the bodies’ sensuality (Chagas, 2016). Certainly, the logic operating over the colonialism of marginalized and subordinated bodies complexifies these subjectivities regarding the images which direct the aesthetic thinking. This discussion seems troubling to us, of what culture is and is not – of what is valid or seen as standard, as beautiful. In a certain part of the documentary, Isaac Charada (screenshot 1), the plot’s narrator, brings forth the question: “*Swingueira*, to lots of people, is invisible, they say our art is not art, they say that we are not people” (Charada, 2021, verbal information).



Screenshot 1 – Isaac Charada, narrator of *Swingueira* (2021)



Source: *Swingueira* (2021)

When Mignolo (2010) discusses the operability of the perceptions on feeling normalized by modernity (the beautiful and the ugly, for instance), he aims to trace a rupture that displaces this discussion based on an *aesthesis*, returning to a position that does not go through this duality. This intention comes with the meaning of a thinking which, for a very long time, engendered notions on the validity of hegemonic concepts of the feeling, of the seeing. *Swingueira*, within this scope, would be outside this center, in an opacity that renders it invisible (Glissant, 2008). Thus, in a decolonial reading, Mignolo (2010, p. 14, our emphasis) views that this “(...) cognitive operation has constituted (...) a colonization of the *aesthesis* by the *aesthetics*; (...) the *aesthetics* is a version or particular theory of such sensations related to beauty.”<sup>2</sup>

As such, to think of *swingueira* as a key to decolonial thinking is to analyze, in a contemplative way, this social, processual production and languages which overtake pedagogies on normative bodies. This decolonial thinking which maps out bodies from a normative place complexifies an epistemological border, where it is formulated “(...) knowledges from perspectives, cosmovisions or experiences of subordinate subjects” (Bernardino-Costa & Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 19) in a connection between the place and the implicated thinking.

Chagas (2016), complexifying these questions, develops a dialogue regarding the formative processes of subjectivities and taste in *swingueira*, which permeates a colonial view on this construction of standards. Elitist representations of such kind, says the author, reflect on these popular rhythms several different designations of negative effects. When thinking of a border epistemology, Dussel (2016) reminds us that the subjectivity of feeling and pleasure is an aspect of political resistance. According to him, it is necessary to view this place as an analytical stance, to go beyond Eurocentric questioning.

These spaces evidently silence these discussions about who has the domain and the power over these demarcations. In this sense, Kilomba (2019) takes a stance by searching the need to understand why these bodies create a disturbance, whether it is through their speech, through their presence, or even through their existence. This universality is thought of as a non-validation of these subjects. *Swingueira* unleashes a series of reflections on the representations, the languages, and the presence of these subordinate bodies (Hall, 2016). In Kilomba’s view (2019), it is increasingly more necessary to sever these spaces of symbolic violence, performatizing new knowledge and stances.

<sup>2</sup> “Esta operación cognitiva constituyó (...) la colonización de la *aesthesis* por la *estética*; (...) la *estética* es una versión o teoría particular de tales sensaciones relacionadas con la belleza.” (Mignolo, 2010, p. 14)

To think of *swingueira* in this connotation is, simultaneously, to analytically assume this process of criticism to modernity. I am going to explain. To talk about coloniality is to think about these structural questions as practices. In the instance of slavery, modernity's rhetoric, so to speak, concealed other practices, as Mignolo explains (2017, p. 5): "Economic practices dismiss human lives, and knowledge justifies racism and inferiority of human lives, which are naturally considered disposable". Silva (2018, p. 17, author's emphasis) also corroborates this issue, affirming that: "By approaching coloniality, we recognize the wisdom generated by subordinated subjects which supersede dispossessions and disembodiment." Thus, as a position, this decoloniality reflects on the human and non-human, producing new knowledge and subjectivities.

## Methodological course

As a mediatic product, the documentary is a partial slice of a certain reality stemming from the narrator's immersed and implicated perspective. Our approach, of a qualitative model, permeates by an analysis both narrative and discursive which allows us to understand the *swingueira* performance beyond its cultural manifestation. As a starting point, we seek to analyze these artistic practices (audiovisualities), intertwined in the issues we have exposed in this article, from the perspective of the young Isaac Charada, the documentary's narrator. As such, when reading these dislocations from an *aesthesis*, we analyze the perceptions of these subjectivities.

This decoloniality, here considered, stems from criticism of the formation of standardized subjects, in issues regarding gender, race and class, for instance, which dehumanize and objectify these bodies as disposable or non-human beings. According to Lugones (2014), this oppression remains central. Therefore, it is necessary to consider these concerns as social practices, beyond this homogenous and colonized vision.

As an analysis of this narrative, we seek to interconnect images from the documentary's narrativity. Here we start from Genette's (1976) concept and notions regarding this narrative. According to him, "(...) it designates, even, a happening: not anymore, however, the one which reports, but the one which consists on somebody reporting something: the act of narrating taken in and of itself" (Genette, 1976, p. 24). Hence, this analysis reflects on a given ensemble of actions and situations which allows us to understand the discursiveness and meanings present there.

In this regard, images are contextualized through the documentary's narrator's viewpoint. As such, we have selected extracts and lines that dialogue with the theme and purpose of this article. This choice, by all means, is of subjective criteria, but, in a certain way, comprehends the exposed issues. For a better scope, we seek in Isaac Charada's narrated scenes the experiences associated with the way of being *swingueira* – and its impact and relation in the community. Hence, we propose to analyze three categories that resonate from the documentary's dialogues, which are: (1) territoriality; (2) trauma and (3) escape.

To think about these categories, from the documentary's perspective, is to reflect on performances that embody such issues. Thus, *swingueira* is circumscribed by a transition that reflects the violence suffered by these bodies and which restages traumas experienced in these territories. Such demarcations have surely acted as practices emerging, according to Castiel Brasileiro (2020), on this racial trauma in this spacetime of daily life which is at all times remembered – and not forgotten. This escape, according to Bona (2020), opposes itself to the emptiness of this livingness.

## "This is *swingueira*": territorialities

*Swingueira* (2021) begins with images in slow motion, mainly focusing on the dancers' bare feet and hips in movement. Like other rhythms which have surfaced in the projects, the feet are protagonists,



demarcating belongings in time and space (Fernandes et al., 2020). It is in this aspect where we think the first category of the analysis, the territoriality – which makes itself present in the experience of placement of feet, in this afrodiasporic intercrossing, from connecting elements between body and territory, dimensionalized by the ancestrally rhetorical meaning, from the belonging and the tradition. Thus, we can think of an aesthetic that experiences, under the feet, the feeling and perception of the world about the world.

These images guide, from the framings, the territorialities constituted by the performance in action on the film. The body discourse develops from the combats of their dissident bodies in the streets and the resulting bodygraphs of this presence and existence, producing a way of erasing the spaces of circulation in these bodies. *Swingueira's* beat, in the background, is not simply a soundtrack for setting up the mood for the content. On the contrary, the documentary view is the protagonist. These musical scenes, by all means, constitute the frontiers and territorialities which make up the operating logics about this belonging and being in the world (Pereira de Sá and Janotti Junior, 2013).

It is in the street where these young, black, marginalized bodies are made present, dancing and redrawing their subjectivities and liberties. Sodré (2002) explains that dancing is a re-elaboration of the space “which breaks away from the limits forged by the dominant territorialization” (2002, p. 135).

The narrator Isaac Charada (2021) goes directly to the encounter of this decentralization of territorialities, by explaining the *swingueira* way of being. This territoriality, according to Pinheiro (2009), is the relationship which exists in these spaces, stemming from the constitution of identities, of belonging, extrapolating certain border limits, from the codes there associated. “The relationships between individuals are thought through the territory specificities (...). It appears as a necessary data to the formation of the group/individual identity, (...) experienced as an expression by excellence of a given culture” (Pinheiro, 2009, p. 4). There, in that environment full of social issues, it is, simultaneously, a space of dreams, of other possibilities and alternatives.

Here in Fortaleza, we made history because of the dance. It was simple, we blasted the boom box, we created choreography, there were people coming, we didn't know, but there was a huge movement growing. People who work, study, have children, y'know how it is. There's our style, our swingado. In *swingueira*, everyone's free to be whoever they want. That's *swingueira*, it's facing every challenge, showing our life and culture. *Swingueira* makes us dream (Charada, 2021, verbal information).

According to Muniz Sodré (2014), it is also by way of this musicality, based on the affection logic, that certain social groups have the power to influence changes in the spaces where they live, “(...) as they modify, albeit momentarily, the territorial hierarchies, stimulating the expressive power of the body to the point of producing their own images of liberation and self-realization” (Sodré, 2014, p. 18-19)

To this end, enters Isaac Charada, presenting, himself, the place where he lives – while images of favela alleys are shown on screen. The narrator, therefore, guides the plot, approaching, initially, the place from where he speaks and of his enunciation (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel, 2016), to dialogue about *swingueira*. Speaking about *swingueira* is also speaking about traumas and violences surrounding urban territories while “combat places of authorized and non-authorized bodies to life's full fruition” (Leblanc and Amorim, 2019, p. 2). The processes of constitution of symbolic territory are erased by how the choreographies present and disclose acts of violence that are constantly triggered towards their bodies by the truculent police violence and devices of control and repression which pedagogize marginal insurgent bodies.

Here's my hood. (...) I was born here, I know every person and alley of this place. Like every favela, it's fucked up right, lots of hardship, but we make do, right man? (...) every alley here has a story, and in each one of them, there's a person. And it was like this that we've built our community (Charada, 2021, verbal information)

The narrator's language is youthful, with slangs and specific gestures: You up? Right, man? My brother! This bifurcated language, according to Mombaça (2018), reflects a logic that operates in ways of speech through wordplay, irony, trickery, identity disputes, acting upon the ambivalence before the silencing of these bodies. "It is the bifurcated language, the rascal intelligence (...) so present in Brazilian popular culture which is retrieved in Jota's project, not only as creative aesthetics but also as a way of resistance and political existence (...)" (Sales and Lança, 2019, p. 23). Beyond these languages' demarcations, there is also the favela as a scenery, between the walls which separate the buildings in the affluent area of the projects, relegated to open-air sewage and the precariousness of the urban inhabiting infrastructure. "The building is theirs (the elite's), but the street's all ours" (Charada, 2021, verbal information)

In this antithesis, *swingueira*, as a performance, expresses new territorialities from the body itself – which speaks, expresses itself, and communicates different notions regarding the issues experienced in the social, economic, political, and cultural field. It is what Sodr  (2002, p. 135) conceptualizes as "body-territory": "Every individual realizes the world and its things through himself, from a place which is his own and which is summarized, as a last resort, to his body. (...) The freer a body feels itself, the bigger the reach of its power". That same territoriality is surrounded by freedom, oppression, violence, and violations.

## "We talk about what we live": traumas

Analytically, it is interesting to ponder on the signs that the body produces in the scene or the ones which are produced stemming from them. What succeeds them, what anticipates them and what surrounds them is in the critical understanding of the signs of the portrayed characters' experiences, as well as the exploration requests and silencing which remain crystallized in the social imaginary. They are interruptions in the inertia representative of the cultural dynamic which seeks to conceal the multiplicity of presentation practices affecting the cultural relations in the country. The existence of the sign on the choreographies in the *swingueira* competitions allows to unveil and render visible existence modes and callings to the perception and consciousness, as they are usually not seen, or one pretends not to see them.

Thus, we think of the second category of the analysis, the trauma. The black marginalized body is also a racial demarcation which, surrounded by the coloniality perspective (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel, 2016), removes it from several subjectivities.

Based upon this imaginary, the other (with no determinate religion, no writing, no history, no development, no democracy) has been seen as outdated in regard to Europe. (...) Besides this classification system of the world's populations, there has also been a process of dissimulation, forgetting, and silencing of other knowledge forms which dynamize other peoples and societies (Bernardino-Costa and Grosfoguel, 2016, p. 17-18).

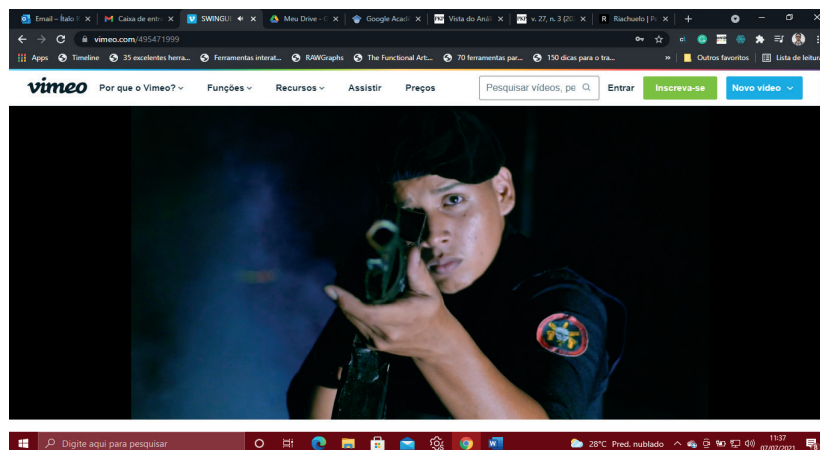
The men and women interviewed reported their traumas and their failings through their performances. But also the freedom which they experience when dancing. The body is the expressive and strategic vessel for survival in an environment of fighting, invisibility, and disappearing which vehemently refuses the condition of labor, sadistic, affective and sexual objectification. The energy of their bodies in movement and in combat attests to the vitality and authority of a counterattack strategy of subjects who experience new political dynamics of representativity which seek to recreate the aesthetic experience through the deconstruction of Eurocentric beauty standards. It is similar to the lesson of self-accepting, inseparable from the Brazilian black marginalized youth's political conscience which articulates an artistic poetics seen in the city of Salvador's *Batekoo* parties, in *bregafunk* and in the city of Recife's *maloka passinho*, or in the city of Bel m do Par 's devices parties.

The body is a part of this race experience, this trauma navigates over certain uncertain zones which are proliferated through surveillance apparatuses. For that reason, Bona (2017) inquires, this

form of resistance is an act of insurgency in the face of these violations that murder and traumatize these marginalized bodies. This trauma, according to Kilomba (2019), acts as an “Otherness” state, in this relationship of subordination and barbarity. “Apparently, the irrationality of racism is the trauma” (Kilomba, 2019, p. 40).

Such violence and violations suffered by the black population in the country realize a historicity that accuses a relation of excluding forces and that, simultaneously, aims for a killability of these bodies. The 2020 Violence Atlas<sup>3</sup>, for instance, shows that the number of homicides of black people has grown 11.5% in 11 years. The risk of a black man being assassinated is 74% higher than a white man; as for black women, the rate is 64.4%.<sup>4</sup> “In the biopower economy, racism’s role is to regulate the death distribution and render possible the assassin functions of the State” (Mbembe, 2018, p. 18). It suffices to also remember specifically the killing spree in the favela of Jacarezinho, which took place after a police action in the city of Rio de Janeiro, in May 2021 (during the covid-19 pandemics). On a whole, 28 victims – at least 13 killed had no ties whatsoever with the investigation, and another 11 have not even been identified.<sup>5</sup> The police kill in the name of the State, while the population remains at mercy of public politics.

Screenshot 2 – Young man performatizes in dancing the police’s truculent action in the community



Source: Swingueira (2021)

The documentary focuses on scenes circumscribed in the *swingueira* environment (like balls and street parties), showing the patrolling police action and surveillance of these events. Such scenes are of explicit violence, unmotivated, and without any particular reason. “Speaking of the projects and not speaking of the police is something impossible. (...) Why am I a threat? The only way to resist is with our dance, with our body, with our art. And that’s also *swingueira*.” (Charada, 2021, verbal information). This complexification regarding police violence, by all means, is a part of an inherent representation of our country’s history, ever since slavery times, “(...) when the ‘black element’ and its cultural manifestations were seen with suspicion by authorities” (Oliveira, 2018, p. 176).

<sup>3</sup> INSTITUTO DE PESQUISA ECONÔMICA APLICADA; FÓRUM BRASILEIRO DE SEGURANÇA PÚBLICA (Orgs.). (2020). Atlas da violência 2020. Brasília; Rio de Janeiro; São Paulo: IPEA; FBSP.

<sup>4</sup> Vasconcelos, C. (2020, August 27). Número de homicídios de pessoas negras cresce 11,5% em onze anos; o dos demais cai 13%. El País. Retrieved on July 12, 2021 from: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2020-08-27/numero-de-homicidios-de-pessoas-negras-cresce-115-em-onze-anos-o-dos-demaiss-cai-13.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Betim, F.; Oliveira, C. (2021, May 7). Mortos na chacina do Jacarezinho sobem para 28. Ao menos 13 não eram investigados na operação. El País. Retrieved on July 12, 2021 from: <https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2021-05-07/maioria-dos-mortos-na-chacina-do-jacarezinho-nao-era-suspeita-em-investigacao-que-motivou-a-acao-policia.html>.

Isaac Charada is a part of *Uz Patifez*, from the city of Fortaleza. Like other groups (*Tommy Swing*, *Stylo Muvuk*), whose challenge is to take to the competition a theme as a background to the performance, there is a complexification of the day-to-day experiences of these young people from an artistic point of view. As in the case of police violence (screenshot 2).

We talk about what we live. No group could do it better than us, we're the most favela group from Fortaleza. The groups prefer to fantasize about the idea and insert a more fictitious theme. But we talk about discrimination, drugs, and what happens on our street. When we're caught in the middle of the street, even if we haven't done anything [we suffer violence], I am not generalizing it. The great part [of the police] which acts in the favela here, is the same thing. (Charada, 2021, verbal information).

By performing the police actions, these groups activate new perspectives regarding these violences. It is a space of denunciation, using in *swingueira* the same body considered subordinate and marked by the police. This body, therefore, transforms itself into confrontation, according to Ferreira da Silva's words (2020), as a healing to these racial and cisnormative traumas.

## *Swingueira* as escape

Escape, as Bona (2020) reminds us, is a codification of this refuge, of a tactic that is, simultaneously, representations of resistance. Dance, as envisioned here, operates in this escape logic/strategy as a metamorphosis cycle through a negotiation that leaks out to the real. "Escaping is not being forced to run away; on the contrary, it is (...) operating endless variations to prevent this capture. The dream is a matrix to creative resistances, for it opens in the gray of daily lives the rainbow of possibilities" (Bona, 2017, p. 6). As Fred Moten and Stefano Harney (2013) inform, this escape is not necessarily about a physical territorial condition of escape, considering it as subjective and as a strategy of life and fugitive subjects' existence, in an effort to escape from controlling commands and pedagogies of disciplined normative bodies.

*Swingueira* groups from the state of Ceará organize themselves through a collectivity in which are welcomed differences, singularities, and thoughts through *aquilombamento*<sup>6</sup> strategies, acknowledged as an ancestral technology of resistance and existence by Brazilian marginalized black youngsters (Nascimento, 2006). Subversion and confronting strategies against racism and cisheteronormativity of the bodies inverts the binary opposition of race, gender, and sexuality inserted in the Brazilian patriarchal context.

Clearly, in several scenes, it is perceptible the search for this escape, negotiating other perspectives beyond that territoriality. This perspective takes place primarily through the representation of other characters, like Elizângela Oliveira, from the group *Stylo Muvuk*, who performatizes her body as a sort of escape from itself and from the social issues (like drugs) that the community where she lives has to face. Or Tiago Oliveira, from *Tommy Swing*, who potentialized dance as a tactic for existing. The documentary portrays these several escapes from day-to-day life – also thought as a survival possibility from this reality. As Bona (2020, p. 47) tells us: "Escape is not an illusionary transgression towards a transcendental outside, but a secretion from a subterranean version – clandestine and heretic – from reality".

Each one of these characters is charged with a historicity that dialogues at every moment with the way of living. The documentary touches on points that go through these bodies, like drugs, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, and violence. But it also covers their dreams and, above all, the joy of being *swingueira*. This is the narrative's contrast and, at this point, there is no romanticizing regarding it. On the contrary, the difficulties are also visualized without, by any means, constructing a stereotyped image regarding the rhythm and the narrative's young protagonists.

When the several groups unite in the following year and decide to dress up as ninjas, Isaac Charada

<sup>6</sup> "Aquilombamento" is a word stemming from the noun "quilombo", which were the slave communities where fugitive or freed slaves reunited during the times where slavery was legal in Brazil.

(2021, verbal information) inquires us: “What does that have to do with *swingueira*?”. This question stems from the performance as an escape from this day-to-day racial trauma and from the search for survival in this multiplicity of logics and resonances. That is the beauty and the *aesthesis* of the way they deal with dance and the problems which act as beacons of their daily lives. “Considering the body as a privileged sphere of construction of identities, we learn to perceive the danced gesture through the expressive engagement of the movement, developing autonomy and amplifying our possibilities of re-existing” (Silva, 2018, p. 19).

In his last line, Isaac Charada (2021, verbal information) reminds us that being a black marginalized body is being a subject whose rights and guarantees are denied. And they claim to be acknowledged as a society, beyond this daily escape under the guise of the *swingueira* way of being.

When you have no education, no job and no sewage, you see your dreams crushed by society. And you even doubt yourself. There's a time when all you want is simply to exist. If you're from the projects like me, you know what I'm talking about. And there's no moment where I feel better than when I'm dancing. Right then, there's nobody changing sidewalks or locking up cars when I walk through. Because it's there in *swingueira* where me and my friends live. And it is there where my dream lives. (Charada, 2021, verbal information).

## Final remarks

The film *Swingueira* (2021) is an invitation to the spectator to pay attention to the body in a movement and visibility state through its choreographic, scenic, marks, and narrative ways which make them present in the most diverse of symbolic territories.

Analyzing the present work under the decolonial perspective is, in a certain way, comprehending the different perspectives which surround the *swingueira* way of being. More than a cultural manifest, dancing is resistance, confrontation and identity. And that is made present in the voices of each one of the documentary's interviewed subjects who, despite the hardships and joys of life, resist the violations which they have to face. This decoloniality thought stems from the subjects' communicative experiences by way of their subjectivities which do not dialogue with the hegemonic regime. These perceptions, intertwined by *swingueiros'* feet and hips, are recordings of this *aesthesis* which reclaim a longed and expected freedom to these subjects – reflected here under the analytical categories which we have proposed: territoriality, trauma and escape.

*Swingueira* (2021), as a documentary, complexifies the different nuances and displacements which go through this territory. Furthermore, it shows the integrality of dance alongside other daily life experiences, an interconnection that resonates about the context and scenery of *swingueira*. The street, while also a space for escaping, is as well for violence and traumas. These communicative experiences resonate in these discourses. Thus, this movement is understood as a social practice that makes it possible for new decolonial arrangements and crossings.

This reterritorialization which the bodies perform transforms the documentary into another dimensionality. By reflecting upon these bodies, we realized how these practices are layers that constitute historicities already demarcated and demand cogs, reverberating voices which have been silenced and removed according to the space and time. The speeches from the narrator, the young Isaac Charada, are present in these places. For that reason, the constructed narrativity allows the spectator to also partake in that knowledge, personifying wisdoms constructed there. These bodies dance so they can survive and exist.



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