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From the constitution of difference to the indifference of dying: productions and counter-productions about trans deaths (and lives)

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Abstract

The productions that address the violence that affect transgender people contribute to the social configuration of imaginaries about these bodies. From this point of view, we present in this article the constitution of gender dissidence from the differences inscribed in a matrix of subalternization, created within the colonial and modern project of power, in order to reflect how such dynamics cross the violence to which these individuals are subjected daily. In addition, we observe nuances in the productions, as well as counter-productions that promote a confrontation, in order to understand the disputes that are present in this context of violence.

Keywords

Introduction

Although images, discourses, and meanings about violence are appropriated by the media all the time, this appropriation does not occur in the same way. Deaths are not mourned in the same way: there is not an equal distribution of mourning (Butler, 2015). When it comes to dissident bodies, violent death even takes on a pedagogical character, since it shows the consequences of daring to resist the norm. This is what happens most of the time with the murders of transgender people: the media framings, which reproduce what is in the police reports, blame the victims, seek justifications for the crime in their conduct, highlight the dissidence and, with this, expose the normative logic that makes these deaths even desired, as a purge. This occurs because difference is operationalized in order to define desirable and undesirable conducts, which must be prevented, extinguished. On the other hand, there are counter-productions that confront these imaginaries, seeking to restore the ethical bond of care with the Other, to stress this arbitrary appropriation of difference that responds to colonial and modern power regimes. What we have, therefore, is a dispute that mobilizes the same violence, with different purposes. These are the questions that mobilize us in this text.

The present article is part of a broader research that sought to investigate the disputes of meaning in productions that address the murders of transgenders in Minas Gerais in 2017 and 2018. The fragment presented brings, mainly, our concerns about the constitution of difference within the colonial matrix of subalternization, which allows us to observe how the violence to which these bodies are subjected is closely linked to such dynamics.

For this, we begin the text with reflections on gender and coloniality, seeking to understand how gender dissidence is configured from a logic of hierarchization of difference. Soon after, we advance in the debate about violence, not only to identify it as a constant presence in the lives of dissident bodies, but also to understand it as a result of a denial of the ethical call of the Other (Butler, 2011) to accountability (Kilomba, 2019), which is present in media productions that address such violence, from which we take images that make our argument explicit. Still in this vein, we advance in the reflection on nonviolence, in order to glimpse possible confrontations.

Moreover, in order to discuss the counter-productions that resist, we bring the survey of murders carried out by the *Associação Nacional de Travestis e Transexuais (ANTRA)*, with the annual dossiers[1] that not only compile data about this context of violence, but also bring together debates, demands, and reflections that are configured as a cry of "STOP KILLING US!"

The survey of murders has been conducted by *ANTRA* since 2017. The document not only organizes the data from the Murder Map[2], but also exposes issues related to the violence to which transgender people are subjected. Structurally, the dossiers are composed of analyzed and categorized murder data, as well as graphs developed from this data on victim and crime profiles, and academic articles on the topic.

As stated in the dossier released in 2020, the methodology used follows the international standard of the *Transgender Europe NGO (TGEU),* using mainly news about the crimes as a source, but also data reported by activists and the community itself. Currently the data collected and organized by *ANTRA* in the dossiers is used as a source for the Atlas of Violence produced by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security.

This is not intended to be a systematic analysis of the images conveyed by the media and the material produced by *ANTRA*, but to present and discuss them based on the concerns that mobilize us in this study.

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1 Retrieved March 14 2022 from : https://antrabrasil.org/assassinatos/

2 As of 2020 ANTRA removed public access to the map where they cataloged the murders throughout the year. Currently it is available only upon justified request.

Difference, gender dissidence and coloniality

When discussing the ways in which gender norms constitute the experience of bodies, it is fundamental to insert this body in its relational dimension, that is, to think of it in relation to the Other. And it is exactly in this encounter that difference is configured. Far from being a given, a descriptor, difference is an instrument that can be used to subordinate certain subjects and experiences, and, consequently, be appropriated as an argument for resistance. In this sense, decolonial studies offer us an important contribution when it comes to understanding differences from colonial and modern matrices of power.

The current of decolonial studies bases its discussions on the questioning of the forms of knowledge that have always served as our epistemological basis. Such bases are historically Eurocentric, therefore, geographically located, however, they are presented as propositions that encompass issues from all over the world, including the so-called global south. The valorization of this supposedly hegemonic and universal knowledge creates patterns in our ways of seeing the world, the European epistemic subject of modernity stands as neutral, serving as a measure to determine the universal standard in opposition to other forms of knowledge - and also to other subjects. Oppositions such as objective/subjective; universal/specific; neutral/personal, are much more than mere semantic categories: they establish power relations that define hierarchical positions and qualify speech, knowledge, and the epistemological place of each subject, ultimately defining who gets to speak (Kilomba, 2019).

A very important concept for the current is race, which, besides being only an identification of phenotypic differences, was used to subordinate subjects, having whiteness as the measure. Thus, appearance data is identified, these bodies are brought together, creating differences, and then hierarchizing them under the pretext that they are based on biological, scientific, and true data. Therefore, there were no blacks before slavery, nor indigenous people before the invasion: such a characterization is forged in function of the social places of subalternization assigned to them.

The idea of coloniality, central to decolonial studies, can be conceptualized as referring to economic, political, and social dynamics that were created with colonization, but that endure to the present day, centuries after the end of the colonial system. Aníbal Quijano (2005) understands coloniality as a strategy of modernity that contributes to the strengthening and maintenance of capitalism. This strategy developed as a way to maintain European dominance through a hierarchical understanding of race and class differences. The process started with the invasion of the Americas, with the domination of the American peoples and the imposition of European knowledge, understood as superior. In this way, it is exactly the difference that serves as an argument that will legitimize domination, in a logic that has always been articulated with gender issues. Here gender, race, and class are articulating elements of the colonial meanings attributed to the rationalities of the hierarchies. Beyond the inferiorization of races, Quijano states that the control of labor and its relations around capital and the market contribute to the establishment and maintenance of this form of power. María Lugones (2008), when dialoguing with Quijano's work, makes explicit the coloniality of gender. That is, capitalist exploitation, racialization, and genderization are inseparable in the colonial system and remain in coloniality.

According to Grada Kilomba (2019), the subject is, by design, relational. There is no substantiality, the subject only exists from the relationship of the individual with society. It is on this basis that we see difference emerge as a category that turns into hierarchization. The difference always starts from the one who has the power to be defined as the norm: he is the parameter. Since in the dynamics of power it is not enough for the Other to be different, but he must necessarily be inferior, a hierarchization that is justified by the difference occurs. Thus, it is the incomplete subjects that become the Other, and the process of incompleteness and inferiorization is, therefore, permeated by power. It is when prejudice is joined to power that racism is created.

Decolonial studies, therefore, present an understanding of the operationalization of racial

difference as a form of domination-exploitation, as well as demonstrate how coloniality is closely related to capitalism, that is, race and class enter into the discussion. Still in this vein, María Lugones (2008) departs from Aníbal Quijano's (2005) discussion on the coloniality of power, according to which power is structured in relations of domination, exploitation and conflict of a colonial and Eurocentric nature, to propose a reflection on gender within this framework, since Quijano not only does not advance in this line, but when he presents the gender problem he does so from a patriarchal and heterosexual conception. After acknowledging Quijano's contributions and limitations, Lugones (2008) argues that biological dimorphism, heterosexuality, and patriarchy are characteristic of the clear/visible side of colonial and modern gender organization. She adds: "biological dimorphism, the male/female dichotomy, heterosexuality, and patriarchy are inscribed with capital letters and hegemonically in the very meaning of gender" (Lugones, 2008, p. 78, our translation).

Lugones (2008) seems to invite us to rethink both the idea of a biological dimorphism and the gender dichotomy between men and women from a decolonial matrix, which allows us to understand that such relations and structures are based on a modern European model of seeing and analyzing the world, therefore, far from a universal way of understanding. For her, "problematizing biological dimorphism and considering the relationship between biological dimorphism and the dichotomous construction of gender is central to understanding the scope, depth, and characteristics of the modern colonial gender system" (Lugones, 2008, p. 93, our traduction). With this, she shows us that there is a colonial gender system, which is configured from a modern notion of gender and the social positions linked to it, that operate according to the logic of modernity and its institutions. Thus, we can understand that binary gender relations, which make transgender bodies undesirable dissidences, offer the legitimacy that modern institutions need to continue functioning in the same way, reiterating domination schemes of which the traditional heterosexual and cisnormative family is one of main cogs.

In a more recent text, Lugones emphasizes that "the dichotomous and hierarchical categorical logic is central to modern capitalist and colonial thinking about race, gender, and sexuality" (2014, p. 935, our translation). And she invites us to see that there was an internalization of the dichotomy men/women in the process of construction of the social norm that defined civilization, citizenship, and membership in civil society, a process that is constantly renewed.

> The materiality of the coloniality of power, and also of gender, demands a joint resistance, from within, that makes it possible to see a new way of understanding the world and living in it, from the relationship, from sharing, from recognition. Instead of dichotomously divided beings, understand the subjects in society as people in relation, and not fragments hierarchically ordered in a violent way (Lugones, 2014).

Rejecting imposed dichotomies also helps us understand power and its logics beyond a binary linearity, such as oppressed/oppressor, for example. If we understand power in a reticular way, the processes of domination and subalternization are more complex, they do not presuppose an excluded that will be placed outside the system, since there is not one outside the system, just as there is not one dominant figure so well determined that subjugates the others. There are networks of power that entangle us daily, there are disputes. Thus, dominant and subordinated become more complex categories, historically, geographically, socially, culturally, and politically constituted and situated. There is, therefore, no easy way out to identify the articulations of the mechanisms of domination.

It is also in this sense that Grada Kilomba (2019), when exposing and analyzing everyday cases of racism, highlights the importance of a collective awareness, "for a society that lives in the *denial*, or even in the *glorification* of colonial history, does not allow new languages to be created. Nor does it allow for accountability, rather than morality, to create new configurations of power and knowledge" (Kilomba, 2019, p. 12-13, our translation, emphasis added). Thus, difference can operate in ways that liberate us from a morality that imposes on us the need to care for everyone else - after all, the idea that we are all

equal makes invisible the diverse processes experienced by subalternized subjects, with whom we must effectively hold ourselves accountable.

In the moralizing and not the accountability path, there are no subalternized subjects that have the right to name their own histories (hooks, 1989); there are objects that have their history defined by others. It is the non-subaltern that defines how we, as a society, will take care of this Other that suffers so much, as in a kind of paternalism that has nothing liberating about it; on the contrary, it is based exactly on the permanence of subalternity. Using Spivak's (2010) terms, subalterns cannot speak because their voice will never be heard by the oppressor; this is the difficulty of speaking within the repressive regime of racism and colonialism (Kilomba, 2019). The absence of the subaltern's voice at the center is emblematic in demonstrating this difficulty in speaking, since one speaks on his behalf, seeking to reclaim his point of view, romanticizing his place of resistance at the margins, permanently at the margins.

From this perspective, we see that coloniality not only promotes the hierarchization between the global north and south, but internally, in the very countries that went through colonization, it produces and reinforces dynamics of center and margin, through the reproduction of the same parameters of civilization and barbarism, desirable and undesirable, that served to measure us. To be on the margin is not to be outside, there is no outside, it is to be part of the whole, but to be outside the main body (hooks, 1989). Grada Kilomba (2019) talks about racism, coloniality's main operation of power, but we can broaden our gaze and talk about other subjects also subalternized by the logic introduced by coloniality, which concerns race, class, and gender and the articulations between them that come from normative regimes. By proposing that we think about racism in its structural dimension, which promotes a disadvantage in the structures of society; institutional, from an unequal treatment in institutions; and everyday, settling in everyday life, the author provides us with a lens to see the dynamics that operate on dissident bodies in these three fundamental instances of life in society, and allows us to understand that power is also about enabling and making accessible access to structure, food, education, health, and media.

Bringing this reading to our research interest, it is possible to unveil the operations of transphobia also in these three instances. Our understanding of transphobia goes through the understanding that it is structural, that is, it is impregnated in any and all social structures, it is a presupposition. Moreover, these subjects are subjected to institutionally constituted vulnerabilities, since dissidence will always be notoriously demarcated. As far as daily life is concerned, the ways in which these experiences are continuously questioned on a daily basis are evident; they break with normality, they stand out even in the simple act of a transgender going to the bakery to buy bread for breakfast, in the glances that chase the deviant body through the aisles, that distrust, that silently attack. And this is how equality falls apart: there is no "we are all equal" when a transgender walks in the city in broad daylight.

Thinking about the Other in violent logics

The problematic of the relationship with the Other also elucidates important questions about the processes of construction of stereotypes that make certain bodies more vulnerable than others, as is the case of transgender people. It allows us to deepen the movement of de-essentialization, allowing us to reflect on the relational dimensions that constitute our identities, sociabilities and, consequently, the media frames used to understand the phenomena. It is necessary to highlight that the Other is not only the one who causes us strangeness, with whom we clash culturally, or who makes us confront our moral maps. The Other is the one who is presupposed in any relationship, evidencing the ethical dimension in which we are implicated and allowing a better understanding of our response to the summons of this Other.

Therefore, if the media allows diverse images of the Other and their vulnerabilities to reach us, it becomes fundamental to understand the logic of the configuration of these images. It is important

to question, thereby, what they are saying, to whom, and for what purpose. But, more than that, it is necessary to move forward, to investigate the representations themselves, since simple visibility is not even remotely enough to guarantee accountability to the call of the Other.

The photo that presents part of Paola's bloody body makes this emergency explicit (Image 1). The call of that body evokes the precariousness, in Butler's terms (2015), of that life to the extent that we know nothing more about it, only its outcry emerges. From the moment the story[3] tells us that it is a transsexual woman, found in a place frequented by prostitutes, with a condom beside her, this outcry dissolves into a framework of culpability. The only responsibility for Paola's death is her own, we are exempt from accountability.

Image 1: Photo of the article about Paola's murder

Source: G1

It is possible, then, to question what exactly breaks this ethical call from the Other, which should impel us to take care of this life, to be indignant with any violence she suffers. The prohibition to mourn Paola's death, which is not a coercive prohibition but an obstacle to the constitution of the ethical bond, is a continuation of the violence to which she was submitted: we keep on violating Paola, inserting her death in interpretative frames of guilt and dissidence. The rupture with her ethical call occurs to the extent that dissidence takes the place of outcry, dehumanizes the victim. The operationalization of dissent, in this context, comes from the colonial and modern hierarchical logics that constitute difference itself, that is, the death of the dissenting body is desirable, not a life to be cared for. The death of the subject that deviates only matters to the extent that it demonstrates the consequences of deviating: in this sense it is hypervisibilized and undifferentiated in its singularity.

In representation, humanization and dehumanization occur continuously (Butler, 2011). This is because neither representation, nor even self-representation is a guarantee that humanization occurs, since the way representation is configured and emerges is defining for such humanization or dehumanization to occur.

If, on the one hand, invisibilization completely prevents humanization, there are also movements that hypervisibilize certain aspects of the victim in order to dehumanize her. Thus, if we remain in the invisibility argument, we cannot see when the culprit for the vulnerability is exactly who promotes the excess of specific visibilities. This is what happens with Larissa, a travesti killed in Governador Valadares. In

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3 Retrieved January 9 2022 from: https://g1.globo.com/mg/centro-oeste/noticia/2018/07/23/corpo-e--encontrado-em-araujos-mg.ghtml

the article[4] that narrates the case, besides the emphasis on the fact that she had a police record and used drugs, we find two photos of Larissa, a more current one, in which she shows shoulder length hair, and another of her own ID, which shows a very young person, apparently a teenager, with male markers. The excess here means more than what is explicit: it is a hypervisibility of deviation, also textually demarcated in the insistence on using masculine terms to refer to her and in omitting her new name.

Something similar occurs with the story[5] about Paulete's murder (Image 2). The blurred images of the body have one more detail: a black stripe covering the genitals. The blame for her own death emerges as a unique signifier.

Image 2: Pictures from the Paulete murder story

Source: Portal Minas

On the other hand, the photos present in the articles about Fábia (Image 3)[6] and Sophia (Image 4)[7] are of beautiful and smiling young women, creating an image of these victims that contributes to a humanization. In other words, when we look at these productions, we see a complex network of images and discourses. Even though in many cases what we find is a dehumanization of the victims, the guilt that is in the nuances, there are also counter-production movements that offer distinct frames of intelligibility of these bodies, raising them to the rank of victims, of lives that were lost and that deserve to be mourned. It is in this sense that there are visibility regimes that potentiate the clamor and others that stifle it.

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4 Retrieved January 9 2022 from: https://aconteceunovale.com.br/portal/?tag=travesti-morto-em-gover-nador-valadares

5 Retrieved March 14 2022 from: https://www.portalminas.com/news/corpo-e-encontrado-em-estrada--de-terra-em-nanuque-mg?uid=85030.

6 Retrieved January 9 2022 from: https://www.manhuacunews.com.br/2018/11/27/manhuacu-travesti--e-morta-a-pauladas-no-santa-terezinha/

7 Retrieved January 9 2022 from: https://g1.globo.com/minas-gerais/noticia/policia-investiga-morte-de--travesti-em-contagem-na-grande-bh.ghtml
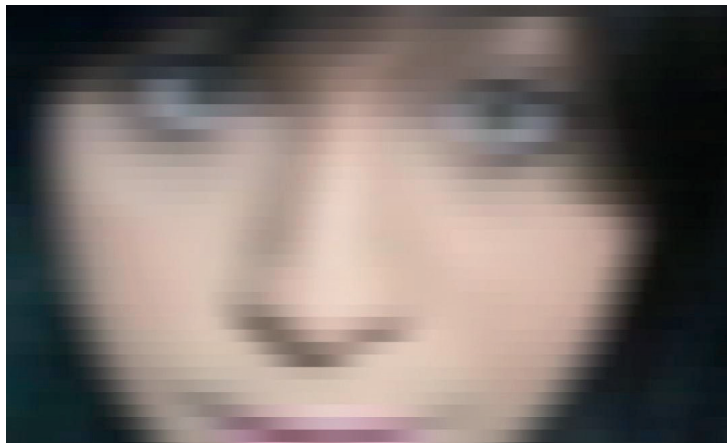
Image 3: Photo by Fabia

Source: Manhuaçu News

Image 4: Sophia's photo

Source: G1

The process does not end with media productions. When they are launched in the social world, the meanings about deaths (and lives) start to be disputed. "Something that has already emerged in the realm of appearance needs to be disputed as recognizably human. [...] The task at hand is to establish public modes of seeing and hearing that can respond to the clamor of the human within the sphere of appearance" (Butler, 2011, p. 29, our traduction). As we see occurring with the dossiers on the murders produced by *ANTRA*, which present a discursive counter-production that will serve as a basis to confront the hegemonic discursivities that stigmatize and make such bodies vulnerable.

Butler's (2011) propositions are part of our reflection on the production and activation of difference because they help advance the line of thought that articulates the networks of power and gender. From them, it is possible to understand how the conflictual relationship with the Other is determinant for the production of vulnerabilities and precariousness, which become part of the social. The constitution of dissidence is closely linked to normativities and power, operating in the relationship between subjects and complexifying the call to accountability. Thus, it is possible to ask: if I am ethically bound to the Other and his call must inexorably reach me, how does the rupture with this binding occur? What forces are involved in this disruption? And how do the productions and counter-productions that emerge within these relations operate in the discursive production of this call and of this Other?

Moving forward on the path of nonviolence

Butler (2015) starts from the understanding that nonviolence is a call that brings us closer to responsibility. Responsibility as an ethical practice is intended to preserve life rather than destroy it, something very different from moral sadism that urges us to be nonviolent through a kind of persecution, something along the lines of what Grada Kilomba (2019) also suggests about accountability.

The call to responsibility, to accountability, is one of the main expressions of nonviolence. Thus, the bonds that are at stake are social, the way we behave towards others says something about this interdependence, as well as about the hierarchies constituted by power. It is not a matter of choosing not to violate someone who directly threatens me, but of conceiving the social bonds that are inherent to our existence as a priority, assuming the radical interdependence to which we are subjected ,and thus making ourselves responsible for the maintenance of the Other's life.

The creation of these bonds does not occur through unconditional love for one's neighbor nor through the daily exercise of turning the other cheek, despite the frustration of Christians. There is no need to erase conflicts, to appease differences, but to recognize that we all depend on each other radically, "a condition under which we are rapturously united: in an angry, desirous, murderous, and loving way" (Butler, 2015, p. 256-257, our translation).

If nonviolence is a call that does not extend only to those we know personally and with whom we share life experiences, the call of the Other must reach us. Which makes it necessarily mediated in order to have a response, an accountability. In this way, the appeal "depends on the frames through which the world is given and the domain of appearance is circumscribed" (Butler, 2015, p. 252, our translation). One of the most obvious forms of mediation is the media; however, it is necessary to move beyond an abstract image of the media as something that behaves as a channel. Both the socially configured threats and the call for accountability are organized mediationally from certain conditions of production, the result of power disputes. Thus, the framings that allow the intelligibility of subjects from multiple matrices of meaning emerge and reveal various aspects of the processes of precarization, vulnerability, and marginalization.

In order for the claim on life to be made and heard, it needs to be mediated. It seems to us that this is the role of the work done by *ANTRA* in mapping the murders and producing dossiers with the analysis of the data collected annually. This initiative not only produces an appeal for the life of transgenders, but also confronts other texts that circulate socially and contribute to the marginalization of these subjects. The dispute of meanings is an important tool, allowing a kind of counter-narrative to be produced, a cry of "*STOP KILLING US!*" is part of the exercise of non-violence, of dissent that confronts the frames of intelligibility with greater social adherence that marginalize and kill. It is part of the exercise of nonviolence to denounce the violence naturalized as truths about bodies.

The close relationship between the media and society - with the dynamics of power and resistance that constitute it - means that certain deaths receive more careful media treatment than others, with a follow-up of the entire process of investigation and trial, which does not occur when the victims are already invisible people, as is the case of transgenders. The logics of marginalization are also present in the narratives about violence, even if not explicitly, often in the very approach to the event. Thus, there are at least two ways of challenging these reductionist approaches to violence in the case of the victims we are dealing with here:

1) By invisibilization: she is just one more victim among so many others;
2) By disciplinization: look what happens to those who try to break with the norm.

One does not exclude the other, on the contrary, they are complementary and cross both social life and media appropriations, together, feeding each other.

However, beyond what we understand as traditional media and with an important potential of scheduling, some strategies have been adopted in order to give visibility to these violences that,

precisely because they are repeated daily, show a broader reality, a systematicity. Social networks, with their own logics, allow discourses about violence against certain bodies to emerge and go viral, drawing attention, constituting another event through its reverberation, often reappearing as denunciation in the traditional media itself. It is not our intention to investigate these flows of resistance in social networks, but it is important to point out that, beyond what is understood as media, an understanding that is often circumscribed to traditional media, there is a multiplicity of visibility claims that promote a shared indignation, which tensions and problematizes the daily representations of systemic violence.

The emergence of narratives that confront the reductionist ways of approaching traditional media demonstrates that, more than demanding visibility, it is fundamental to reflect on what kind of visibility we are interested in when it comes to violence against minorities. The visibility of suffering is a topic addressed by Angie Biondi (2016) in a discussion surrounding what the author calls mediatized suffering. Attentive to the complexities surrounding these visibilities, Biondi investigates the expressive capacity of the suffering body in photojournalism, highlighting the moral evocation, the power relations, and the very state of suffering that involve these bodies in their expressions and in the regimes of visibility that configure them.

Biondi (2016) defines three ways in which the suffering body appears in photojournalism, a characterization that seems powerful and helps us discuss the possibilities of visibility of these bodies that are in a certain situation of vulnerability. The first is the torture, in which the suffering body is subjected to the causalities of the world; therefore does not demand accountability or indicate guilt for that suffering. In the second case, the body being subjected undergoes a process of subjection that involves both resistance and submission. In this process, the body is no longer seen as a passive object subject to causal forces, but rather as an agent actively participating in the process of subjection The third, that of the slaughtered body, refers to the murdered body, biologically and/or existentially de-potentiated, like what we see in the images of Paola and Paulete.

In all three cases, the articulation with power is clear: each one is configured from specific modelings of power, expressed plastically in the images that the author analyzes. If the first concerns a punishment that does not carry guilt, the second represents a confrontation with normativities and the third makes explicit the difference between ways of life (Biondi, 2016). These varied strategies to promote the visibility of the body that suffers demonstrate that the ways in which the media appropriates suffering in its productions are closely linked to operations of power, varying according to various criteria, such as conformity to the norm, fragility, culpability, morality, among many others. This context is much more complex than a simple submission to logics of economic order and search for an audience, just as the dynamics of power itself is complex in society.

Thus, the starting point is to understand that visibility regimes are already complex in themselves (Biondi, 2016). In our own daily lives, walking through the city, we encounter several subjects, notoriously suffering bodies, which we will see according to our own references and the imaginaries we share. It is evident that the media plays an important role in shaping these ways in which we see the other, but it is not the only one. According to Biondi:

> Everyday, suffering continues to question us in some way, but now its conceptions are permeated by media visibility, through what the press offers in the situations it exposes, by the coverage that expands or reduces what is known about its events, in short, by the strength of its openings or its constraints. (Biondi, 2016, p. 41, our translation).

Thus, what exists in fact is a complexification of the regimes of visibility when they intersect with the media, since in what we call media there are institutional logics, production routines, and editorial lines of their own. For example, the way in which this visibility is configured mediatically changes as the type of vehicle changes: the approach for television is very different from the productions that will be

broadcast online, on the radio or in a podcast, the appeal of the images changes, the structure of the verbal text (written or oral) changes. All of these specificities end up affecting the ways in which this suffering will become visible or perceptible to people, and will still intersect with the frames of reference of each of the readers and viewers, their life experiences, the regionalities, the culture in which they are immersed. We could extend this list to exhaustion, however, what seems most important to us is to highlight that there is a whole complexity that involves both the definition of a media approach - with respect to areas such as institutional, ideological, and political - and the appropriation by the public with respect to that production.

The power of counter-productions

By calling attention to the violence and risks to which their bodies are submitted daily, which reaches its peak with murders, *ANTRA* - and other associations that make up the social movement dealing with transgender issues and doing similar work - operationalizes the meanings of violence and death, turning them into a kind of counter-production tool. In other words, while socially transgender people are stigmatized, understood through a lens that understands these bodies as a risk to society, subjected to superficial readings that place them in a context of marginality, the dossiers will construct them as victims, issuing a sobbing cry that says "stop killing us!" to remove these bodies from the context of strategic invisibility in which they are inserted and transform them into lives amenable to mourning (Butler, 2015), so that they are conceived as lives indeed.

This effort does not just serve the dead but is a strategy for reshaping the frames of meaning that accompany those who are alive, contributing to public recognition of the vulnerabilities of these precarious lives. "In the recourse to deaths, the lives of the dead are squared away in aid of the lives of the living. Lives and deaths, thus, find themselves dialectically compromised," Roberto Efrem Filho (2016, p. 317, our translation) tells us.

Institutional documents such as those produced by *ANTRA* become actors in these disputes between social movements and the State. They cease to be a mere static and stable record of deaths and crimes and start to operate a third network of meanings. There is no neutrality, on the contrary, there is the activation of specific frames of meaning for the reading of these deaths. Each line of these documents condenses issues that pulsate in social relations, and with each appropriation of these records by institutions and movements, a new layer of meaning is formed.

When activated by the social movement, violence becomes an instrument of political agency, as well as a discursive strategy that supports the fight against homotransphobia. In the case of the transgender population, death as the apex of violence, as well as the constant number of homicide cases, becomes the central agenda, the great urgency to be faced, as highlighted in the text of *ANTRA's* 2018 dossier:

> It becomes more and more difficult to fight for any right if the main one, which is the right to life, is being denied to the trans population. Currently, the biggest struggle is survival. This argument will become explicit with the numbers of this report: today we can't even survive! (Benevides & Simpson, 2018, p. 7, our translation)

The social movement's claim to violence makes physical violence the main demarcator of urgency, due to its mobilizing power. What occurs is a protagonism of the apex of violence that prevents the survival of marginalized populations, that is, even if it is combined with other agendas, survival has a centrality in the movement's claims. Thus, the dossiers become a fundamental tool to support this struggle, not only by providing legitimacy through the data gathered and presented, but also by highlighting the details of the crimes, naming the victims, and removing the cases from the invisibility to which transgender existences are systematically subjected.

We understand, therefore, that violence, brutality, and death are used by the social movement as a way to legitimize the need for politics (Efrem Filho, 2016). They are operationalized discursively as a way to prove the necessity of the struggle. Thus, the images and descriptions of brutality that we find in the dossiers, in the occurrence reports and police records and in the stories, contribute to the construction of the political subject of the movement itself. Brutality becomes a discursive resource, a strategy for defining these bodies as victimized (Efrem Filho, 2016). We realize then that there is a dispute between social movement and certain spheres of the State: on one side the struggle for the legitimization of these deaths, on the other a continuous delegitimization, fed daily by stigmatizing discourses that circulate socially. In this vein, hate crime does not even appear as a possibility for public security professionals, while the social movement seeks to expose the subtleties of LGBTphobia and its specific derivations.

Thus, we understand that both the victim and the cause of the murder are not objectively given; they will be the result of a narrative dispute. On the one hand, the social movement will highlight, for example, that the fact that Paola was killed with 12 stab wounds is an indication that it may have been a hate crime, due to the large number of blows that were delivered against the victim; or that the travesti found drowned in the Arrudas River[8] with signs of stoning and gunshots through her body, which means brutality, was the target of an attack that seems to have had a homophobic motivation. On the other hand, the police seek justifications for his death in the victim's life, often raising suspicions about his involvement with prostitution and drug trafficking, which shows the fact that these people cannot even occupy the place of victim without being questioned about their deserving to be called so. This guilt appears many times in the very stories that deal with the murders, being strengthened by the media. The presence of this type of framing in the varied reports (by the police and the media) about these killings shows how certain social conventions of gender and dissidence are strongly naturalized and have to be disputed by the social movement.

> The brutalities are disputed and constructed inch by inch, blow by blow, report by report. However, here, the domain of the inexplicable loses space to the Movement's political onslaughts. Homophobia is what guarantees intelligibility to the crimes. And this, unlike what happens with the Hollywood serial killer character or the satanic sect. If homophobia does not explain the inexplicable diameter of the stabbings or stonings, it minimally offers clues of the connections of these violences with sexuality. (Efrem Filho, 2016, p. 328-329, our translation).

In this sense, the case of the dossiers is emblematic, because they aim to give visibility to the deaths in a constant struggle for life while using as a source of data journalistic reports that often start from a stigmatizing view that contributes to the context of vulnerability and violence in which these bodies are inserted. These journalistic productions provide a certain credibility and truthfulness to the data presented in the dossiers, so they end up helping the central objective even if the textual productions prove to be problematic. This shows that the textual materiality that ends between the headline and the period is not enough for us to fully understand the dynamics of journalistic productions that address transgender people, making it necessary to broaden our view to also encompass the dynamics of the social movement.

Final remarks

The lives of transgenders are involved in a very broad network of vulnerabilities, such as discrimination, expulsion from home and family abandonment, lack of education, difficulty in entering the job market; all so articulated that there is no other possibility for these people but to insert themselves

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8 Retrieved January 9 2022 from https://g1.globo.com/minas-gerais/noticia/corpo-de-travesti-e-encontra-do-no-ribeirao-arrudas-em-bh-com-sinais-de-agressao.ghtml

in places and situations that put them at risk, in confrontation with the system. And it is exactly the confrontation with the law and the permanent relationship with risk that justifies their death, often making it even desirable. Thus, trans people do not die for being trans: this vulnerability is constructed and reiterated in different social spheres from other matrices of meaning. The justifications are varied: "he died because of a program", "he died for a drug debt". However, this is not only the cause of death; these causal factors are fragile and only highlight the operations of the gender norm to make vulnerable the subjects that do not correspond to it, that is, to operationalize the difference for the reinforcement of the norm itself.

The initial exercise involves, therefore, breaking with the idea that normativity is, in itself, violent, so that it is possible to investigate the violence operationalized by normativity, as well as the resistance. Although we are formed to some extent by violence, by the violent imposition of the norm, being it of gender or other social categories, it is necessary to return to the conception of power that, far beyond being punitive, is also productive and creates the terms of resistance. In this way, more than stating that we are the result of violent processes of normative imposition, it is interesting to question how such processes are linked to the conditions of recognition and intelligibility of the subjects, to the production of framings that insert certain subjects in a condition of vulnerability and precariousness. Therefore, it is fundamental to articulate violence and power.

In this scenario, media productions disseminate knowledge and senses, producing such frames about the bodies. On the other hand, it is in this same network of information flows that counter-production, meaning the discursive production of dissident subjects that confront hegemonic normative discourses, can also be more easily disseminated. This is what we see in initiatives such as *ANTRA's*. The result is a tangle of voices, of normative production and dissident counter-production, which show the dispute of meanings so present when it comes to bodies, their identities and desires - and that finds as some of its most visible points of emergence the media (which often reproduces police records) and social movements.

Thinking about the counter-production performed by resistance, which is also a result of the productive dimension of power, is a way to glimpse possibilities beyond discipline, punishment and death, a kind of necessary breath when we spend too much time looking at data on murders. These reflections arise from a need to look beyond systemic violence, but also as a mechanism to escape from a simplistic view of power and normativity, which permeate and constitute media environments. It is as if we were calling attention to the fact that dualities never account for themselves, there is not an oppressor in one pole and an oppressed in the other, the dynamic is not uniform in this way, nor are the poles symmetrically positioned.

In this sense, decolonial studies and the denunciation made by authors who also turned their attention to the constitution of difference and the need for accountability, which we brought here, allow us to look at this context of death, this social emergency experienced daily by transgenders, in a more complex way. It is possible, then, to see not only the dynamics of power, the production of difference, and the determination of dissidence from hierarchical logics that are explicit in media approaches, but also to observe the nuances and subtleties of confrontation present there in addition to the more direct clashes promoted by the social movement. Production and counter-production are, therefore, imbricated in what refers to violence and non-violence, as well as discipline and resistance, not in a dichotomous way, but multiple, as confrontation should be.

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