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TO FAN THE FIRE

Presentation of the Special Issue

“Black and Peripheral Poetics in the Latin America context” -1

MANTER VIVA A ATIVIDADE NO ABANO

Apresentação do Dossiê “Poéticas Negras e Periféricas no contexto da América Latina” - 1

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To fan the fire:

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In “*A Chixi world is possible: Essays from a Present in Crisis*,” Bolivian Aymara intellectual and activist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2024) points out that Aymara has four grammatical people rather than three (I, you, he/she). According to her, the fourth person, *jiwasa*, is not considered “a plural self, but a singular and collective person” (Cusicanqui, 2024, p. 104). Similarly, in “*A terra dá, a terra quer*,” Brazilian philosopher, poet, writer, quilombola leader, and activist Antônio Bispo dos Santos (2023, p. 32) states that “when we talk about the individual, we are talking about unity. We are saying ‘one,’ but this ‘one’ is part of the whole, of the universe.” The effort of relating Cusicanqui and Santos contains a genuine desire to delineate the power of a thought about “*pueblo sin piernas, pero que camina* [nation with no legs that still walk forward].” The spirit of this special issue involves fabulating this encounter by a great river on a cold night warmed by the fire. Exercising curatorial imagination organized a large circle around the campfire and put ideas into play. In dialogue, the voices that make up this issue strengthen the chorus that has, for years, announced a present in crisis full of possibilities for reinventing new worlds. Around this bonfire, we also claim our inequalities and contradictions and refuse to give up an existence that excels in involvement despite the expanse of developmentalist ideas.

This special issue grows from the meeting of thinkers, people who make art by making worlds, and those who think about the world via their art-making in performance, in the scene, in the game, in the rite, in play, in performativity, in all forms of affirming life. The great beauty of this encounter around the fire, its singularity, affirms what Blackness invents, fables, and grows across Black lives in the world. This special issue also grows from the meeting between Altemar Di Monteiro and Anderson Feliciano in the Negrras Research Group, a space to gather Black researchers at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais who have sought to think about what Blackness does in the world as a collection of knowledge. At the invitation of Professor Nina Caetano, we thought of an issue that articulates a large portion of the debates we have undertaken in that research space, weaving the relationship between the theoretical and practical studies we have experienced in only a portion of the large collection of Black researchers across the Latin Americas.

Many intellectual and aesthetic productions make Blackness a polyphonic place full of strands, confluences, and convergences, which definitely shows that there exists no single Black and peripheral poetics obedient to a norm and fixed in itself. What we see, as per Édouard Glissant (2021), is a relationship poetics that is woven into a broad collectivity in the African diaspora, in its recreations in the Americas, in peripheral inventions, and in the circulation of singular ways of producing knowledge in the encounter for the encounter, alive from the crossroads, from the flame alight in every encounter. The number of approaches, proposals, poetic experiments, and theoretical fabulations rendered it impossible limiting this special issue to a single issue. The large



number of received articles excited us and entailed the effort to divide them into two issues.

The first volume of our special issue gathers investigations and experiments that, although from different geographies and languages, all affirm Black and peripheral poetics as practices of reexistence, critical fabulation, and creation of worlds. The texts, encompassing theater, dance, music, literature, visual arts, and education, make the body the central axis of aesthetic, political, and pedagogical elaborations. Between rituals, performances, improvisations, archives, flashes, and darkness lies a sensitive listening to Black diaspora memories and pedagogies that have grown since the emergence of Black experience. The uniqueness of this volume lies in its articulation between art and thought, in which each study makes creation a field of emancipation and learning, evincing modes of existence anchored in ancestry, collectivity, and the invention of the future.

Anne Quiangala opens the special issue with “*Is There Justice in Violent Family-Related Crimes?*” Its analysis approximates the Greek tragedy *Oresteia* and Nalo Hopkinson’s Caribbean tale *The Glass Bottle Trick* to discuss historical continuities between blood crimes and femicides. The author articulates intertextual elements that put Clitemnestra and Beatrice in dialogue, connecting eras and geographies marked by gender and racial violence, reflecting on retributive justice and countercolonial consciousness, and opening the special issue to a work of transfluence between times, territories, and languages.

Then, in this game of making relationships grow, Ana Beatriz Coutinho Rezende and Lara Barbosa Couto’s “*Margins that shift the center*” brings the practices of Rosângela Silvestre, Astrid González, and Kettly Noël to the scene. Their analysis shows how these artists elaborate spiral bodies that mobilize ancestral and contemporary knowledge, creating bodily technologies of resistance and reinvention. Between tradition and contemporaneity, their work affirms the Black female body as a poetic and pedagogical territory, producing other temporalities and epistemologies in Latin American art.

In this scope of the theories that grow in Black feminisms, Maria Fernanda de Oliveira Ruas proposes a study of Racionais MC’s’ music. Dialoguing with authors such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, and Saidiya Hartman, in “Black Men Through Black Women’s Lens,” the author reflects on peripheral voices as producers of thought and political consciousness. The text shows how the group, narrating violence and urban resistance, formulates a discourse of critical fabulation, evincing hip-hop as a space for the existence and collective elaboration of Black experiences, especially in Brazilian peripheries.

In this flow of thinking about the word and continuing the studies on the peripheral scene, in “*Enchanting the language*,” Natana Coelho examines the experiences of young Black and peripheral poets at a school soirée. Her research, carried out with participant observation and narrative interviews, shows marginal poetry as a symbolic weapon against erasure and invisibility.

To continue this reading, the text by Marcone Loiola dos Santos and Natalino Neves da Silva turns to the party and the Afro-carnival music of the Angola Janga block in Belo Horizonte



to understand rhythm as an element of Black popular education. In their “*Education in ancestral rhythms*,” participant observation and narrative interviews evince the percussive atmosphere as a practice of recreating African and Afro-Brazilian ancestral knowledge, articulating corporeities, sensibilities, and emancipation.

In direct dialogue with this formative and bodily dimension, the special issue includes an interview with theater teacher and babalorixá Gustavo Melo Cerqueira. This dialogue, in “*Improvisação e Saberes de Axé*,” sought to articulate the intersections between improvisation, theatrical pedagogy, and axé knowledge, themes dear to Altemar Di Monteiro’s new book: “*Jogo Negro no Mundo*.” The conversation, marked by listening and critical reciprocity, articulates improvisation as Black intelligence built in the relationship with the repertoires of memory and the body. The spiral pedagogy, inspired by Makota Valdina Pinto and terreiros, constitutes a way of existing and making learning.

In this broad mosaic of the relationship between art and knowledge of axé, Bianca Andrade Tinoco and Daniela Felix Martins’ “*Partial connections between ritual and performance in Bori*” follows the trail of Afro-Brazilian ritualities to analyze Ayrson Heráclito’s work. It understands performance as a space of mediation between art and religion, in which the ritual of offering to the ori gains an aesthetic and museum dimension. The authors highlight the play of analogies and the subtleties of the performance process that articulate memory, ancestry, and creation, furthering the debates on representation and ritual transposition in contemporary art.

Gildete Paulo Rocha thinks about theater in “*Rrrrraça Cabaret, Olodum Theater Group*.” Based on the *Bando’s* work, the study deems laughter a mechanism to cope with racism, finding it a body-laughter-Black-corporeality and a space-time crossroads. It discusses racist and anti-racist laughs, debating what the author defines as decolonial laughter.

By reflecting on the relationships between history, memory and playwright, Marcos Antônio Alexandre and Junia Pereira, present and discuss the creative process of the one-person show (*im*) *possible memory* in (*im*) *possible memory: personal and collective history in the playwright creative process*. Based on Pereiras’ recollections, the show addresses issues related to family memoirs and the right to access one’s origin history, lost within the violent process of formation of the Brazilian State.

Another decolonial study, “*AmazonAfricas: literary engagement, creolization, and self-movement in Amílcar Cabral and Bruno de Menezes*,” comparatively analyzes the work of two artists to understand how their works express resistance to the cultural hegemony imposed by the colonality of power. José Guilherme dos Santos Fernandes, Sylvia Maria Trusen, and Rayane Tamborini Martins show that, although in distinct spatial and temporal contexts, both poets construct a poetics of confrontation with colonial structures, resignifying the language of the colonizer by means influenced by the decolonial struggle, whether in the urban periphery of the Pará Amazon or in the torrid Cape Verdean island landscape.

Then, Luciane da Silva proposes a sensorial displacement in “*Deep listening*,” a practice that



understands attention and sensitivity as paths that criticize hegemonic forms of perception. Inspired by Pauline Oliveros and the recreations of Anikaya Dance Theater, the author discusses listening as an embodied and educational gesture. Articulating dance, The African diaspora, and imagination, the study proposes to inhabit darkness as a space of interdependence and transformation.

Around our campfire, Mapuche researcher María Moreno Rayman broadens the geographical and affective horizon of this special issue by reporting on the Kurüche Festival in the ancestral territory of Wallmapu in southern Chile. In “*Territories of effusion*,” the author describes the festival as a space for self-representation and visibility of Mapuche and Afro-descendant corporalities. Woven as bodily memory, the study evinces the political and creative power of these presences in constructing a field of coexistence and multiverse effusion.

Closing the special issue, Valdimere Pereira de Souza presents “*Movements of Venus: Abundance, Fascination, and Spell (Ensemble 2018–2025)*,” which intertwines memory, archive, and image. By proposing a set of essays-photographs as a reliquary of Afro-Brazilian lives and histories, the author projects possibilities of existence fabled by celebration and continuity. Its creation invites reflection on the power of reconfiguring the past and imagining futures in which we are capable of loving, being loved, and being happy.

The flame of this meeting, rather than going out, continues to burn. Observe the sparks of the embers, the heat that emanates from contemporary Black thought. Feel the shadows of the darkness that surrounds us. Let us allow its traces to move us, grasping the burning possibility of another world in each movement. Still in the exercise of radical imagination after this long journey, sitting with Cusicanqui and Bispo dos Santos around the fire and activating deep listening, all we have got left to do is feed those around the flames. As Itamar Vieira Júnior says: save the fire! Or, as sung by Clementina de Jesus in one of her work songs, fan the fire before it goes out.



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