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Viso.

**Lentes potentes e empoeiradas:
violência e resistência em Bacurau**

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RESUMO

Lentes potentes e empoeiradas: violência e resistência em Bacurau

Este artigo é sobre Bacurau, filme de Kleber Mendonça Filho e Juliano Dornelles. Ele discute algumas de suas possíveis referências, como o movimento tropicalista, a literatura de Guimarães Rosa, o Cinema Novo de Glauber Rocha e a obra de arte de Helio Oiticica, a fim de enfatizar o encontro entre o primitivo e o popular, a tecnologia e a cultura de massa. Apesar da radicalidade das dimensões biopolítica e necropolítica e de seu desdobramento em uma espécie de necro-capitalismo, este artigo tem como objetivo propor algo mais sobre a violência infringida pela comunidade de Bacurau: primeiro, a idéia de violência literal ou imanente, principalmente ao lançar nova luz sobre a noção de violência divina de Benjamin; segundo, passando da violência imanente à ação e resistência. A resistência como um movimento extraordinário e comum, realizado individual ou coletivamente pela comunidade de Bacurau. Considerando que Bacurau não é apenas uma comunidade local no sertão do nordeste do Brasil, mas pode ser qualquer outra comunidade no globo, concluímos de maneira não conclusiva, com a noção de “devir índio” de Viveiros de Castro como aquilo que Bacurau nos incentiva a fazer.

Palavras-chave

Bacurau; Tropicalismo; biopolítica; necropolítica; violência; resistência; Walter Benjamin; Tornar-se índio

ABSTRACT

Forceful and Dusty Magnifying Glasses: Violence and Resistance in Bacurau

This article is on Bacurau, a film by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles. It discusses some of its possible references such as Tropicalism movement, Guimarães Rosa’s literature, Glauber Rocha’s New Cinema and Helio Oiticica’s work of art in order to stress the encounter of the primitive and the popular, of technology and mass culture. Despite the radicality of biopolitical and necropolitical dimensions and their unfolding into a kind of necro-capitalism, this article aims at proposing something else concerning the violence infringed by Bacurau's community: first, the idea of literal or immanent violence, mainly by throwing new light into Benjamin’s notion of divine violence; second, moving from immanent violence towards action and resistance. Resistance as an extraordinary and ordinary movement performed individually or collectively by Bacurau’s community. Considering that Bacurau is not just a local community in the Backlands of northeast Brazil but can be any other community in the Globe, we conclude in a non-conclusive manner taking Viveiros de Castro “Indian-becoming” as that which Bacurau encourages us to do.

Keywords

Bacurau; Tropicalism; biopolitics; necropolitics; violence; resistance; Walter Benjamin; Indian-becoming

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E o que estou contando não é uma vida de sertanejo,
seja se for jagunço, mas a matéria vertente.
Riobaldo, *Grande sertão: veredas*

– Precisamos resistir e eu preciso cantar.
Paulo, *Terra em transe*

– E quem nasce em Bacurau é o quê?
– É gente!

The Foreigner (Karine Toles) asks and the boy answers, *Bacurau*

1. Before *Bacurau*: Caetano, Rosa, Glauber, Vandr e e Oiticica

1.1. Unidentified Object

Bacurau begins with Caetano Veloso’s beautiful song *N o identificado*: “Eu vou fazer uma can o pra ela/ Uma can o singela, brasileira/ Para lan ar depois do carnaval/ Eu vou fazer um i -i -i  rom ntico/ Um anticomputador sentimental/ Eu vou fazer uma can o de amor/ Para gravar um disco voador/ Uma can o dizendo tudo a ela/ Que ainda estou sozinho, apaixonado/ Para lan ar no espa o sideral/ Minha paix o h  de brilhar na noite/ No c u de uma cidade do interior/ Como um objeto n o identificado”.¹ This song marks *Tropic lia* [“Tropicalism”]², an aesthetic, political and (counter) cultural movement that took place in 1960s and exposed the contradictions of a country deeply divided between urban centers and rural areas. Such division opposes modernization and stagnation, future and past, the acceleration and retraction of time.

The Brazil of slavery, colonialism, extreme poverty, authoritarianism and numerous lacks, becomes visible and appears more clearly in the rural regions, especially the backlands [*sert o*] of the northeast. *Tropic lia*’s representation of the backlands’ regional culture and its popular values is opposed to those of the great centers and their international references. However, *Tropic lia* does more than simply show these contradictions. It does not exactly establish a dialectical relation between them – for there is no synthesis – but rather exacerbates its conflictual experience, an endless experience to which Derrida³ refers as the experience of aporia. Unlike the

cultural movements of the time, which defined themselves aesthetically by referring to local and popular values against the values of modernization (values of the market and of easy consumption, imported from experiences elsewhere), *Tropicália* made an appropriation of both. It took popular values and the values of modernization and deconstructed them. Like a *parangolé*⁴, it refused to choose between cultural regionalism and modern engaged art by producing its own original aesthetic in music, cinema, literature and the fine arts, in which regionalism, popular folklore, and nationalism reappear in the experience and spectacle of big cities; their world, and their underworld.

In mingling the popular and the primitive with new technologies and mass culture, Tropicalism became an experience of aporia, which, as Derrida⁵ characterizes it, is a non-road [*non-chemin*]: its access is given by its inaccessibility. According to Pedro Duarte⁶, *Tropicália* “was simultaneously thinking and consumption, politics and fashion, criticism and pleasure, scholarship and pop, art and spectacle, Brazilian and cosmopolitan”.⁷

In their new film *Bacurau*, Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles revisit this tropicalist atmosphere, with its encounter of the primitive and the popular, of technology and mass culture, but add something new to it. The outcome is a place which is the whole world like the sky of a city in the countryside and an unidentified object, where not by chance the action begins and ends.

1.2. The backlands [*sertão*] is the whole world

The film starts with an image of a city in the countryside of Brazil, in the Brazilian backlands [*sertão*]. It was filmed on the border between Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba. Like Guimarães Rosa, the directors narrate the backlands [*sertão*] from its own location. The backlands [*sertão*], which is (in) everywhere⁸ – literature, cinema, music, the fine arts – is a space and a time that contains in itself all the elements that

make the great universal dramas, with their battles between life and death, between good and evil.

By referring to the universe of Guimarães Rosa, *Bacurau* exposes that which characterizes *Grande Sertão: veredas*⁹: the plot of opposites in a certain dialectic without *Aufhebung*, so to speak. The opposites are in tension all the time, in every word, in every action, as well as (in) their affections. It suggests aporetic rather than dialectical relations:

Everything is and isn't... [...] love, in itself, is a kind of regret [...]. God exists even when they say He doesn't. But the devil does not need to exist to be. [...] How is that you can enjoy the true in the false? [...] To strive for exactitude, wrongs us [...]. That, the same, always being [...] "God or the Devil" [...] Backlands is good. Here everything is lost and everything is found [...]. All that has been is the beginning of what is to come, we are forever at a crossroad.¹⁰

According to Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira¹¹, Brazil's backlands [sertão] defines and delimits the country as a nation both in Guimarães Rosa's as well as in Glauber Rocha's works. *Grande Sertão: veredas* and *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* narrate the backlands by the (dis)entanglement of voices that are in these two narratives.

Glauber Rocha's Cinema Novo films, especially *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* and *O dragão da maldade contra o santo guerreiro*, are present in *Bacurau*. Rocha's (and also Rosa's) fascination with the universe of mercenary [jagunços] and bandits [cangaceiros] represent the outlaws who took part in the process of occupying the Brazilian national territory since the beginning of the twentieth century, accelerating the time of colonization with its own rhythm of action and violence. The law of the outlaws is its own law, an exceptional law. Force is what is at stake in this law – for the law, after all, requires force, it has to be enforced – yet the law and the force of the outlaws leads to violence and outlaws itself.

Guimarães Rosa, in the short story *A hora e vez de Augusto Matraga* (whose narrative served as the basis for the

homonymous film, produced by Roberto Santos, in 1965) tells the story of the moral conflict faced by a violent farmer (Augusto Matraga) who, after being saved from death by a local black couple, regrets his bad behavior and tries to live a life devoted to doing good. However, when confronted with the violent leader of a gang, he is faced with the dilemma of whether or not maintaining his moral conversion, given his attraction to life and death conflict.

Guimarães Rosa's short story and Roberto Santos film's narrative inspired Geraldo Vandré's song *Requiem para Matraga*: "Vim aqui só pra dizer/Ninguém há de me calar/Se alguém tem que morrer/ Que seja pra melhorar/ Tanta vida pra viver/ Tanta vida a se acabar/ Com tanto pra se fazer /Com tanto pra se salvar/ Você que não me entendeu/ Não perde por esperar".¹² During Brazil's civil-military dictatorship, this (engaged) song became, in its turn, an icon of the political songs of resistance of the sixties. By employing the song, *Bacurau* connects the past to the present and to the rise of fascist and extreme right wing political movements in Brazil, making perfect sense to say that *no one will shut me up/ if someone has to die/ let it be to improve*.

Jagunços, outlaws, marginalization and violence, the world taken inside out, its underworlds, are a constant presence in Guimarães Rosa's literature, in Glauber Rocha's Cinema Novo and in the marginal cinema of the sixties, in Geraldo Vandré's music, as well as in Hélio Oiticica's works of art, in his *parangolés* where action happens and multiplies itself. In Oiticica's art there is no synthesis either. It is an "open work of art with inventions that walk through deconstruction/construction, irreverence and appropriation, and that, finally, realize a poetics of the instant in the affirmation of the inaugural gesture".¹³ In his art, the underworld, the world of the bandit and the marginal hero, gives meaning to his aesthetics and bases an experience that puts into question (and does not submit itself to) the market and the establishment.

In Bacurau, signs are reversed, displacing the city itself from any location. It is somewhere and nowhere. It is in the *sertão* where Brazilian countryside traditional oligarchical domination violently entangles with global technological domination, i. e., the technological surveillance of nowhere. On the other hand, Bacurau is also the place of resistance to expired vaccines, to the lack of water, to books that are useless, to erased coordinates from the map, to drones and to what else is there to attack its population (even being an *unidentified* place). The rural and the urban are connected in the violence that Bacurau experiences.

After this *excursus* that ties the reader to the plot of possible references that appear in *Bacurau*, we move on to what we want to highlight in the film, that is, a new configuration of resistance that moves between the singular and the universal, the peripheral and the central, the domestic and the external, and that deals with two types of violence: literal violence and the reflective image of violence. The kind of resistance that is either ordinary (in everyday life) or extraordinary calls attention for that which Viveiros de Castro names *becoming Indian*, that is, other forms of life, through/against this very modern form we are engaged in modernity.

2. Violence

Bacurau speaks of the outrageous, aporetic and irreconcilable relationship between violence, life and politics – one of the main topics of political philosophy and philosophy of law. In fact, the narrative of the film can be easily and immediately identified as an apology to violence. A glamourization of violence in the face of the lack of alternatives. It can also be identified with the failure of institutions and, finally, with an incentive to take justice into one's own hands (suggesting a rather old-fashioned understanding of the plot). In fact, *Bacurau* has an embarrassing and disturbing cathartic effect: one can hear people inside the movie theater clapping hands for severe punishments inflicted on the villains and their shocking deaths. Some critics have accused the film of instigating violence, of

being pessimistic, of offering nothing else but outrageous brutal violence as a kind of solution to the problems Bacurau and its inhabitants have to face. As a matter of fact, the narrative of violence moves the plot.

However, there is a biopolitical or more particularly necropolitical dimension of violence in the film, a most brutal dimension of institutional violence. The film's plot is wholly entangled by this brutal violence. *Bacurau* shows the future radicalization of violence through biopolitics and necropolitics on the borders between capitalism and the State. Institutional politics appears in the narrative of the film through the action of the town's absent mayor, a traditional politician who manages local politics with old patronage resources, conditioning the well-being and life of Bacurau's community to its support for his government. At the same time, the mayor says he is open to dialogue, that he will solve the problem of the water supply, that he will take care of and meet the needs of the people. He literally plays with the community of Bacurau by offering a tradeoff between solving the basic problems of the community – such as the lack of water, of medicine pills, of food and of books – and the support for his future candidacy, but the water truck either never arrives or, when it does, there is no water inside it as it was pierced by bullets; a truck dumps in front of the community a bucket full of old and not very useful books; someone distributes expired antidepressant drugs to the community without a doctor's prescription. The action of the mayor expresses the exercise of biopolitics in the community of Bacurau. He just plays a brutal (biopolitical or necropolitical) game.

By taking the path of biopolitics and following what Duarte and Cesar called "*pharmaco-biopolitic*"¹⁴, Bacurau's narrative shows how it is not simply a matter of satisfying the community with water, medicine, food and culture, but of calming down the moods of its members and diminishing their political hostility. However, if the abuse of power by the mayor is obvious in the film, it is also a fact that the inhabitants of Bacurau do not let themselves be easily governed: they resist, they say no, they

organize themselves in an agreed manner, they hide in their homes, organizing a kind of movement (of resistance) in order to act and to confront him.

The community of Bacurau becomes part of an extermination game without knowing it. Necropolitics is, hence, another path in the film's narrative, perhaps the one that better leads to the core of its plot. They become competitors in a game of life and death. It is a game (or an experience) of brutal and extreme violence to which an international organization submits the people of Bacurau, scoring each time someone is killed in the city. Well defined extermination rules and strategy, killing techniques and technology shift the narrative from biopolitics to necropolitics which ends up gaining strength and autonomy in the plot. As highlighted by Sayak Valencia in her book *Gore Capitalism*, contemporary violence is the new commodity of the current stage of hyper-consumption in neoliberal capitalism system. Having in mind the life on the borders of Tijuana, the culture of drug trafficking, the militias in Mexico and the capitalist order that feeds this circle, Valencia states that death has become the most profitable business in existence.

Well, how can a community like Bacurau act, resist and govern itself? A community that is being attacked and extinguished by *guts and blood* capitalism? This bloody capitalism that is also a cultural construction implies the use of extreme violence which explicitly moves the plot of film. The violence and pain inflicted against the bodies of the inhabitants of Bacurau attracts much of the audience's attention by involving them in (scenes of) extreme actions. But at the same time violence paralyzes the audience, it also frees it. In this sense, we can, on the other hand, think of a violence of resistance as suggested by Ivana Bentes, a kind of violence that means a *necro-empowerment*. The violence that lubricates the engine of neoliberal capitalism accelerates the competition, in an aggressive and merciless way, exposing the already vulnerable bodies to the risk of superfluity and death. At this point, rights no longer have any effect, and another type of violence is added to it – the violence

of religious fanaticism, invariably conservative, prejudiced and racist.¹⁵

Despite the radicality of biopolitical and necropolitical dimensions and their unfolding into a kind of necrocapitalism, we would like to propose something else concerning the violence infringed by Bacurau's community: first, the idea of literal or immanent violence, mainly by throwing new light into Benjamin's notion of divine violence; second, moving from immanent violence towards action and resistance – resistance as an extraordinary and ordinary movement performed individually or collectively by Bacurau's community. Considering that Bacurau is not just a local community in the backlands of northeast Brazil but can be any other community in the Globe, we conclude in a non-conclusive manner taking Viveiros de Castro "Indian-becoming" as that which Bacurau encourages us to do.

2.1. Literal/immanent violence

We will consider violence perpetrated by Bacurau's community neither as a didactic metaphor about something that must be done, nor as a kind of ultimate solution for a certain problem. Literally, violence is not instructive so it does not give lessons for anyone. According to Nunes¹⁶, if one projects a little bit of political economy on Bacurau, it becomes much less metaphorical and much more literal. The past, present and future violence that the film avenges is that which exists on the borders of capitalism and the State. It is the violence to which those who, without ever being fully included in public services or the market, are exposed; those who can at any moment become objects of political power or economic interest. A kind of violence that is not foreign to the order and that does not allow us to make a difference between the actions of the mayor (the order/the law) and the actions of the extermination group (the outlaws).¹⁷

This violence which is not metaphorical is present in Bacurau. But it is also present in some indigenous communities, in the

cities' outskirts, in *quilombola* communities, even though we hardly see it (or prefer not to see it). The bloody T-shirt hanging on the clothesline we see in the film is the everyday life in Brazil. We could mention the case of a student who was "accidentally" killed by the police last year in Rio de Janeiro, or Marielle, the city councilor, and her driver, Anderson, who were killed by Rio de Janeiro's militia. Taking place in the near future, *Bacurau's* narrative indicates a temporality that accelerates and radicalizes the immanent dimension of violence. In other words, an acceleration of violence in the temporality of the now. This immanence of violence is the experience of a violent response, here and now, to the intolerable, the unbearable.

Violence committed by the citizens of Bacurau may all too easily lead us to conceive a moral dilemma, as it has been approached by many interpreters of the film. Instead, we consider violence as an immanent realism to be faced. That is the reason why most of the characters have no moral nuance. The audience can without effort identify the good or the bad guys. *Bacurau* is not a suitable movie to discuss moral impasses, since it carries no complexity of good and evil characters. That seems to be a deliberate decision of Juliano Dornelles and Kleber Mendonça Filho, the latter being an expert and very talented filmmaker: violence is rather portrayed here as an untransposed realism that compels us to act. It is, instead, an ethical dimension that calls our attention in *Bacurau*: ethics as a compulsion to act. In this sense, Lunga (Silvero Pereira) is called by the community only to carry out the counter-attack in face of the imminent danger of extermination facing the community. Pereira's character puts forward a rebellious resistance struggle to snatch life from imminent death. He calls neither for a revolution, nor for a glorification of death, nor even for the outright trivialization of violence. It is all about a form of existing in Bacurau, in the backlands. Violence is the only immanent way to avoid likely extermination. The community appeals to Lunga whose life is constituted by violence as an expression of the community's own *re-existence*.

In order to move violence from realism and immanence towards action and resistance, we may consider Benjamin's divine violence. We will particularly relate with the notions of performance, history and perspectivism. In some recent readings of Benjamin's divine violence, it is common to interpret this violence almost in terms of a moral dilemma. Despite the quite divergent approaches of Žižek¹⁸, Butler¹⁹, and Critchley²⁰, their readings of Benjamin's divine violence remain around the same questions: whether or not allowing the use of violence to stop violence in the face of its lack of foundation. They consider divine violence mainly into a question of the limit of permitting violence against violence. They seem all to still operate in terms of normative/moral grounds. For instance, Butler²¹ takes divine violence not only as the basis for a critique of legal violence but mainly as the condition for a theory of responsibility that has at its core an ongoing struggle with violence.

If we take Benjamin's²² notion of "not indirect" [*nicht mittelbar*] function of divine violence²³ to be understood as a mere manifestation of violence itself, it could mean that this stage is prior to the very articulation of language itself, one that could rationalize and standardize (in terms of norms) the event of violence. "This 'not indirect' function of divine violence's manifestation is not grounded, but not as if nothing relies underneath it. It is rather the very condition of possibility of all future differed differentiation, a point of indeterminacy, from where language could derive from as the orientation/meaning of every differentiation [*der Sinn jeder Unterscheidung*]"²⁴. One can identify the pure immanent dimension in Bacurau's violence as a non-indirect experience of a community that faces a necropolitical threat of its immanent extermination.

This violence as simple manifestation is not only "not indirect" [*nicht mittelbar*], but also "non-communicational" [*nicht mitteilbar*]. According to Benjamin, "divine violence as much as mythic violence are opposite to one another, but both are immediate 'manifestations' of violence itself"²⁵. Each is the absolute negative of the other. Nevertheless, it is easier to recognize when mythic violence comes to pass, as the traces

left behind are too visible (State's violence), which is not the case when considering divine violence. "They (mythic and divine violence) are differentiations of a "not yet differentiated", this most original condition of possibility that is necessarily presupposed in every differentiation of violence".²⁶

In Benjamin's *Critique of violence*, "only a philosophical analysis of the origins (or *die Idee ihres Ausgangs*, the idea of its production/its output in its historical dimension) can determine the possibility of a critique in the first place".²⁷ Looking at Bacurau's immanent radical violence in facing extermination allows us to say that "the critique of violence is the philosophy of its history". This particular statement by Benjamin means the singular engagement of the critique of violence with its temporal data. The relevant feature of Benjamin's divine violence at this point does not aim to produce an ontology of violence, but rather to concentrate on the historical dimension that determines the critique of violence. As such, in its most critical endeavor it constitutes its own origin at the moment of its very performance. The interplay between critique and performativity, collapsing every distinction between method and content, turns out so that the subject of a critique of violence is critique itself.²⁸ It is not by chance that Benjamin²⁹ abruptly ends his essay stating that "the critique of violence is the philosophy of its history".³⁰ It is "the 'philosophy' of this history, because only the Idea of its starting point [*Ausgangs*] makes possible a critical, cutting [*scheidende*] and decisive [*entscheidende*] perception of its temporal data".³¹ Benjamin claims the need to broaden our vision "contrary to the short-sighted approach that is only able to perceive the dialectical comings and goings of law-positing and law-preserving violence. His claim is not a matter of intention and it is not at all dependent on will, but it is the consequence of a deeply critical perspectivist approach to critique itself".³²

Benjamin does not mention coerciveness as a characteristic of mythic violence in opposition to divine violence. Divine commandment is not non-coercive, but indifferent to coerciveness. It does not lack coercive force. It is exactly the

opposite. The Jewish God has no need for coercion as an enforcement tool of violence because God's justice is immediate and incommensurable. One can assert that the critique of divine violence can be immanently approached in the perspectivist performativity of its data history.³³

3. Resistance

3.1. Do we need eyes to see resistance?

Resistance in *Bacurau* might be ascribed through the lethal and brutal reactions against the extermination of vulnerable populations. It ratifies violent resistance. It is hard not to see in this *caboclo western*, as formulated by Ivana Bentes³⁴, a complex kaleidoscope of a necropolitical agenda as much as a whole new outburst of majorities, minorities and transgender people violently resisting to survive. We highlight a sort of spatial perspective of resistance, such as cities' borders and outskirts or refugee camps (all peripheric spaces) where communities exercise self-government and take outlaw actions. *Bacurau's* characters, in expressing their resistance, embrace a new arrangement of post-colonialist societies and also of contemporary insurrections.

Despite its radical biopolitical dimension, *Bacurau's* community cannot simply be described as clandestine and poor, as wild minorities surrounded by a dominant power and entrenched in reactive self-defense. Rasmi³⁵ calls attention to such stereotyping vision imposed by the dominant point of view of the settler (of his/her State, his/her morals, his/her property). This colonized view prevents us from seeing the way in which the people from *Bacurau* empower themselves.³⁶ By the way, as also Rasmi³⁷ puts it, the colonizer him/herself – barricaded in his/her fort – is always surrounded by a free multiplicity of lives that he/she would like to govern and reduce to a unity by his/her rules and his/her force. More often, one looks at vulnerable populations and only sees the capture, the fragility and biopolitics they are subjected to. At some point in the film,

there is an image of an old and shot police car and Michael, the foreigner (Udo Kier), immediately affirms: “Who cares? It is just an old car!” This scene in which the leader of the extermination group expresses his contempt towards “just a scrap of a shot police car” indicates the underestimation of precarious people’s potency.³⁸ Small signs of resistance such as the old police car, but also the museum of old firearms from the backlands, DJ Urso (Jr. Black) and his sound-equipped van, the *repentista*, and so many others signs are invisible for most of the people who are, somehow, in power (the extermination group, the Mayor, the two “tourists” from São Paulo, and the audience of the film as well). Resistance in Bacurau is likewise silent and urgent, albeit nonviolent. It brings into the picture the representation of enclaves, tribes, dystopian and utopian communities inventing themselves.

It is crucial to explore the triad resistance, identity and community in order to approach meaningful alternatives of resistance articulated in the film. As well put by Popineau:

Some say that Bacurau is a class of resilience, this, because, within the little that it has, there is: a church without priests, a carefully protected museum (and a source of pride for the population), a cabaret and a school—with figure of a wise teacher and one of the best libraries in the region. How much symbolism! So many lessons! In the city, ‘people’ citizens form the social body—the collectivity being the main character of the plot—which organizes itself to react, motivated by the need for cohesion and by the state of anomie that affects them.³⁹

Performance here is not limited to a grammar of individual corporealities. *Bacurau* shows many expressions of political and aesthetical common performativity, but this performativity happens only when each one decides to take part in a particular action of resistance. Each subject in his/her singularity engages in actions as far as they are meaningful to him/her to the whole community. The film shows a rich aesthetics of empowering corporealities, a kaleidoscopic of bodily political subjectivities, singular and common prowess and gestures.

The expression of singularity and sense of community keep open the space for diversity and divergence. A good example is the dialogue that takes place in front of the closed catholic church. Someone asks Domingas (Sônia Braga) and Plínio (Wilson Rabelo) why the church is closed, to what they answer: "It was never closed... You can make use of it. What is good for one is good for everyone". It indicates a constant possibility of new political performativities by reframing uses, meanings and needs by the singular as much as by the common.

In terms of political specialities related to subjectivity, *Bacurau* creates a surface ambiguity easily taken merely as flat Center-Periphery perspective. There is much more than just a dualist caricature of Northeast-Southeast Brazil and Northern-Southern hemispheres. As the film develops, the contrast between where is the center and where is the periphery, as well as who pertains to which, starts to blur. Insofar as *Bacurau* brings techno contemporary rural-global characters, it opens up a diversity of political subjectivities unfolding at once a double singular-common dimension. Accordingly, the city portraits communality and singularity with and beyond identity politics, pictured arguably neither as a single body community nor as small islands of uncommunicated identity politics. As Bentes⁴⁰ has remarked, the movie uncovers diverse collectives, carrying on in their bodies a Brazil that emerged and improved visibility. Men and women, black men and black women, LGBTQIA+, sex's workers, pimps, *caboclos*, native peoples etc. – the protagonists – express a variety of political subjectivation between the affirmation of each one's singularity and a common sense of belonging. *Bacurau* is encircled by indigenous peoples colonized by the Portuguese and intersected by African tribes mutilated by slavery. Many other protagonists mirror also left-wing activists and self-organized groups of citizens, fenced and suffocated by threats and violence from the Brazilian State. Often, despite being endangered by violent government or the absence of any sort of social right from the State, the community of *Bacurau* embodies astonishing inventive experiences of resistance in a picture of contemporary Brazil.⁴¹ Even so, the film by no means suggests

an idealized vision of a compact and undivided community. Instead, *Bacurau's* characters expose spaces for quarrels and dysfunctional behaviors, unveiling failures and divergences among its inhabitants.

Many original and inspiring alternatives to face State violence or statelessness can be pointed out in the film. Collective rituals, such as the matriarch Carmelita's (Lia de Itamaracá) burial, entrench a collective powerful political mourning (the potency of Brazilian blackness, *quilombos* and indigenous peoples). In terms of political spatiality, underestimated as a local place of eccentric poorly primitive folk-art, Bacurau's museum reveals the presentification of memories of resistance, a meaningful space of political common empowering narratives. The film has also shown several illustrations of cultural performativities of a common agenda of resistance. Places of rituality such as the play of *capoeira* (Brazilian back kind of martial art) and its symbolism of art as struggle. An aesthetics of *capoeira* through which Bacurau's community has collectively prepared itself to fight. Likewise, there is resistance by singing, the popular figure of the guitar player (Rodger Rogério) and composer of treble verses, very common in Brazil's Northeast. Inventing and re-creating satirized and threatening songs concerning the outsiders, according to the circumstances, the singer (*repentista*) is present in many crucial scenes. As Duarte and Cesar stress, "(a)s he sings his improvised verses, he shows them their teeth, in an attitude halfway between threatening aggressiveness and burlesque mockery".⁴²

Resistance may involve violence. Nevertheless, performances of resistance in Bacurau are played out by locals or groups of locals embracing different forms of activity mostly nonviolent (re)actions (yet sometimes violent) to their invisibility. After all, Bacurau is not on the map. The everyday resistance performed by the community of the small and invisible town is the human existence resistance which challenges and produces power. It is a matter of life and death. By playing out resistance, the community of Bacurau becomes a collective subject of

resistance and each inhabitant of the small and invisible town becomes a subject of resistance. To resist becomes to exist for the people of Bacurau. Either the organized communitarian resistance or the marginalized, queer resistance express “people’s understandings of their situation and their comprehension of ‘now’, as well as their future. Thus, resistance must be understood through how it is intertwined with power, affects, agency, temporalities, spaces and other forms of resistance”.⁴³

Individual or collective resistance in Bacurau as everyday resistance (different from organized resistance) is done in a more complex way. No one is called to organize a massive resistance but there is a sentiment of self-preservation and that is what organizes resistance. Everyday resistance⁴⁴, a kind of resistance that is not as spectacular and visible as revolutions or other kinds of organized movements, is what *Bacurau* is about. The people of Bacurau turn resistance into everyday acts: Plínios, Lungas, Pacotes, Domingas, Teresas, Damianos are some of the characters who, in living their life, turn resistance into an everyday experience. The extraordinary becomes ordinary, the exception becomes the rule. As we said before, to live in Bacurau means to resist. It is in a small town where everyday, dispersed and not so visible acts put into question traditional domination as performed by the mayor and who else gets advantages, benefits, profits from the needs of a small population of Brazil’s backlands.

At a first glance, as soon as the film begins and actions takes place, it seems that the people of Bacurau are just like any “subaltern” population of a poor small town in Brazil’s backlands. For a minute, the audience (and us) identifies Bacurau and its people with foot-dragging, escape, passivity, laziness, or theft. But the film’s plot shows precisely the opposite. Women, gay/queer people, a teacher, outlaws, children, in a sort of small-scale resistance, manifest their dissatisfaction and indignation towards traditional power and domination.

But everyday resistance is just part of the story. The plot offers much more excitement, adventure and organized resistance, after all. Decapitations, bullets all over and psychotropic drugs violently break out in order to redeem the honor and faith in life of Bacurau's people.

4. A last word...on *Indian-Becoming* at Bacurau

The scenes of Damiano (Carlos Francisco), the local sorcerer, and his wife walking naked in their clay house, chatting with plants, living in an extended temporality, with mystical powers and a cosmovision, as underlined by Bentes⁴⁵, bring in an original chapter on Bacurau's resilience. Those symbolisms, as remarked by Rasmi, lead us to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's idea of *Indian-becoming*. The Brazilian anthropologist concludes one of the chapters of the introductory text to an English edition of the work of Pierre Clastre with the statement: "We are all likely to be confronted, at one time or another, in reality at each moment, with having to choose between *becoming an Indian* – living in the margins, living on the edge of the fence [...] – or staying in the fortified centers, comfortably identified with the colonizer".⁴⁶ As Rasmi also calls attention to, the invocation of *Indian-becoming* repels portraying Amazonic Indigenous communities as exotic islands of survival circumscribed by (western) modern civilization. Viveiros de Castro's allusion, still on Rasmi's remarks, leads to a sort of searching for other forms of life, through/against this very modernity.

"Indians", a word which applies to all kinds of minorities mentioned in the film (and many others to come), do not signify a proper name, but rather a diagonal becoming, which indicates a multiplicity of subjects diverging from interests and codes of our unitary instituted sovereignties. Damiano calls the community to join a sort of collective *becoming Indian*. Besides, Damiano plays another role. He is the person at the community in charge of preparing homemade psychotropic pills made from the maceration of hallucinogenic plants. The whole community uses his pills in order to open new "realities" (in Carmelita's

burial) and to face their fears (to fight/kill the strangers). Damiano embodies arguably the shamanic reference. The Shaman (*Xamãs*) is the figure who provides those new realities. He is the signifier able to cross worlds, to translate worlds. Amazonian shamanism can be defined as the ability manifested by certain individuals to deliberately cross bodily borders and adopt the perspective of allo-specific subjectivities, to manage relationships between them and humans.⁴⁷ Since the shamans are masters of cosmic schematism dedicated to communicating and managing cross-perspectives, they are always there to make the concepts sensitive or the intuitions intelligible. Damiano embodies the managing and communicating capacity to present and translate the *indian* (past and future) at the edge and once at the center of the anthropocene, as crucial to humanity; Amazon as the crucial center of the world.⁴⁸

But, after all, *Bacurau* is a very *tropical* film, or better, it is a film about *Tropicália*, psychotropic drugs, a place, a space which receives more direct sunlight than the rest of the Earth, and is hotter and wetter as well. But it also includes deserts, backlands. The word “tropic” comes from the Greek *tropē*, meaning “to turn” or “change direction”. *Bacurau* is about changing directions: the game of killing the population played by the mayor and foreigners invaders turn to be a spectacle of resistance, cutting heads and imprisoning the invader. An old firearms museum, an abandoned water-tank, and small streets and alleys become sites of resistance.

Bacurau is the “desert” in a tropical experience of subjective and communitarian, local and global urgencies. It is Brazil. That which Riobaldo had already narrated in *Grande Sertão* where men have to have *hard neck*. As in *Grande Sertão*, characters of *Bacurau* bring in their bodies, in the color of their skin, in their sexuality and in their affects, the struggle, the resistance and a certain idea of community. It is where it is urgent to become *Indian*. *Bacurau* entangles us in a more-than-necessary plot of action and resistance in face of the necropolitics of our present time.

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¹ Unidentified: I'm going to make a song for her/ A simple, Brazilian song/ To release after carnival/ I'm going to make a romantic yo-yo/ A sentimental anti-computer/ I'm going to make a love song/ To record a flying saucer / A song telling her everything/ That I'm still alone, in love/ To release in outer space/ My passion shall shine in the night/ In the sky of a city in the countryside/ Like an unidentified object.

² VELOSO, 1997, p. 188 and MOTA, 2000, p. 154. The name *tropicália* refers to an installation art by Hélio Oiticica. According to Caetano Veloso (1999, p. 188) the musical movement had no name, but Luis Carlos Barreto suggested to name it *tropicália* because of the affinities with Oiticica's work. The installation was a labyrinth, or kind of snail, with wooden walls with sand on the floor so that people could walk barefoot on it. In the end of the maze there was a TV showing the regular schedule. For Nelson Motta (2000, p. 154), Brazilian music in the sixties was so far very good but it needed change, just like the country, which was experiencing hard times with the military dictatorship paranoia. Caetano and Gil subverted Brazilian music by using electric guitar and other electrical instruments, creating a contemporary, popular and provocative "universal sound".

³ DERRIDA, 1993, p. 16.

⁴ *Parangolés* (1964-1965) is a work of art by Helio Oiticica, or as the artist once said, an anti-art, an environmental program, a collective happening. According to Oiticica, *Parangolé* does not intend to establish a new morality or something alike but rather to destroy all moralities as far as they tend to a stagnant conformism. They also standardize opinions and build non-creative concepts (OITICICA, 1967 and JUSTINO, 1998, p. 44-45).

⁵ DERRIDA, 1999, p. 947.

⁶ DUARTE, 2018, p. 24.

⁷ The reference to Pedro Duarte's book and the mention to the local/cosmopolitan reference of *Tropicália* was made first by Andre Duarte and Maria Rita Assis Cesar in: DUARTE, André; CESAR, Maria Rita de Assis, 2019.

⁸ ROSA, 1980, p. 9.

⁹ ROSA, 1980.

¹⁰ ROSA, 1963, *passim*. See also CHUEIRI, 2013, p. 244. Guimarães Rosa original words are: "Tudo é e não é..." (ROSA, 1980, p. 12); "o amor, já de si, é

algum arrependimento” (ROSA, 1980, p. 34); “Deus existe mesmo quando não há. Mas o demônio não precisa de existir para haver. [...] Como é que se pode gostar do verdadeiro no falso? [...] Pelejar por exato, dá erro contra a gente” (ROSA, 1980, p. 67); “Aquilo o igual, sempre sendo” (ROSA, 1980, p. 157); “Deus ou o Demo” (ROSA, 1980, p. 319); “Sertão é bom. Tudo aqui é perdido, tudo aqui é achado... [...] Tudo o que já foi, é o começo do que vai vir, toda a hora a gente está num cômputo” (ROSA, 1980, p. 237).

¹¹ PEREIRA, 2007, p. 52-53.

¹² I came here just to say/No one will shut me up/ If someone has to die/ Let it be to improve/ So much life to live/ So much life to end/ With so much to do/ With so much to save/ You who don't understand me/ wait and you will see.

¹³ JUSTINO, 1998, p. 7.

¹⁴ DUARTE; CÉSAR, 2019.

¹⁵ BENTES, 2019.

¹⁶ NUNES, 2019.

¹⁷ Nunes allusively remarks: “It is not, therefore, a mere allegory of imperialism taken from the 1960s, but something else. What the film does is to take a trace of the present and extend it to the future – which is, after all, where it takes place. The result is a very lucid projection of an increasingly possible scenario, in which borders and the violence that accompanies them proliferate and can appear in (almost) anywhere at any time. In which there are more and more pockets of people left on the margins, without access to the benefits of development, but always subjected to a last drop of profitability extracted from them (the cut water supply, the human safari as a luxury service)” (NUNES, 2019).

¹⁸ ŽIŽEK, 2008.

¹⁹ BUTLER, 2006.

²⁰ CRITCHLEY, 2012.

²¹ BUTLER, 2006.

²² BENJAMIN, 1965.

²³ All the insights on Walter Benjamin's approach on divine violence in this paper are developed in Rafael Rolo's and Bethania Assy's working in progress paper: “Not Just A(nother) Critique of Benjamin's ‘Critique of Violence’” (See ROLO; ASSY).

²⁴ “The use of “nicht mittelbar” instead of “unmittelbar” should spark some debate, supposing that Benjamin's choices are meaningful. What is at stake, then, would not be a simple dualism (direct/indirect, mittelbar/unmittelbar), but a much broader range of possibilities that opens up when Benjamin asserts the negative value of an indirect function of violence without asserting the positive value of a direct and diametrically opposite function. What is alluded must lie somewhere in between” (ROLO; ASSY, work in progress).

²⁵ “It is important to consider this opposition. Mythic violence is structurally defined as being legislators, limiters, guiltiness and compensating, threatening, bloody [*rechtsetzende, Grenzsetzer, verschuldend und sühnend, drohend, blutig*], while divine violence is defined as being right-destructive, boundless, expiatory, striking, bloodlessly lethal [*rechtsvernichtend, Grenzenlos, entsühnend, schlagend, unblutige Weise leta*] (BENJAMIN, 1965)” (ROLO; ASSY, work in progress).

²⁶ ROLO; ASSY, work in progress.

²⁷ ROLO; ASSY, work in progress.

²⁸ ROLO; ASSY, work in progress.

²⁹ BENJAMIN, 1965, p. 63.

³⁰ “Die Kritik der Gewalt ist die Philosophie ihrer Geschichte”.

³¹ “Die Kritik der Gewalt ist die Philosophie ihrer Geschichte. Die ‘Philosophie’ dieser Geschichte deswegen, weil die Idee ihres Ausgangs allein eine kritische, scheidende und entscheidende Einstellung auf ihre zeitlichen Data ermöglicht” (BENJAMIN, 1965, p. 63). ROLO; ASSY, work in progress.

³² ROLO; ASSY, work in progress.

³³ ROLO; ASSY, work in progress.

³⁴ BENTES, 2019.

³⁵ RASMI, 2019.

³⁶ ASSY, 2016.

³⁷ RASMI, 2019.

³⁸ ASSY, 2016.

³⁹ POPINEAU, 2019.

⁴⁰ BENTES, 2019.

⁴¹ Also remarked by Duarte and Cesar (2019), “Carmelita was the matriarch of a family composed by simple workers but also doctors; by people who live in the backlands and by people who live in southeast Brazil or Europe; by musicians, hookers and male prostitutes, but by no bandit. Here is well described the rich, complex and diverse character of this queer community. A deviating from hegemonic behavioral norms”.

⁴² DUARTE; CESAR, 2019.

⁴³ LILJA; VINTHAGEN, 2018, p. 212.

⁴⁴ SCOTT, 1985.

⁴⁵ BENTES, 2019.

⁴⁶ VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2019.

⁴⁷ ASSY; ROLO, 2019.

⁴⁸ VIVEIROS DE CASTRO, 2011, 2015.