



From Oríkì to Elinga: Black-Brazilian principles of acting and staging

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ABSTRACT – From Oríkì to Elinga: Black-Brazilian principles of acting and staging – The purpose of this article is to present reflections that seek to system Black- Brazilian principles of dramatic performance and staging. The studies presented aim to demonstrate the need for theoretical-practical thinking in the performing arts focused on an anti-colonial perspective, as opposed to a hegemonic Euro-referenced vision. Thus, the concept of dramaturgy is problematized as part of a colonial device to control subjectivities. The theoretical-practical studies and the underlying arguments of this text were systematized with a basis in counter-hegemonic scenic experiments investigated in workshops, courses, and classes in which creative processes were developed, which do not separate the languages of dance, theater and performance.

Keywords: **Corporeities. Dramaturgy. Oríkì. Coloniality. Afro-Indigenous Cosmoperceptions.**

RÉSUMÉ – De l'Oríkì à l'Elinga: principes afro-brésiliens de la représentation scénique et de la mise en scène – L'objectif de cet article est de présenter des réflexions qui cherchent une systématisation des principes afro-brésiliens de représentation scénique et de la mise en scène. Les études présentées visent à démontrer la nécessité d'une réflexion théorique et pratique dans les arts de la scène orientée vers une perspective anticoloniale, par opposition à une vision hégémonique euro-référencée. Ainsi, le concept de dramaturgie est problématisé comme faisant partie d'un dispositif colonial de contrôle des subjectivités. Les études théoriques et pratiques et les arguments sous-jacents de ce texte ont été systématisés sur la base d'expériences scéniques contre-hégémoniques étudiées dans des ateliers, des cours et des classes dans lesquels des processus créatifs ont été développés, qui ne séparent pas les langages de la danse, du théâtre et de la performance.

Mots-clés: **Corporeités. Dramaturgie. Oríkì. Colonialité. Cosmoperceptions Afro-Indigènes.**

RESUMO – Do Oríkì à Elinga: princípios negro-brasileiros de atuação e encenação – O objetivo deste artigo é apresentar reflexões que buscam uma sistematização de princípios negro-brasileiros de atuação cênica e encenação. Os estudos apresentados visam demonstrar a necessidade de pensamentos teórico-práticos nas artes da cena direcionados para uma perspectiva anticolonial, em oposição a uma visão hegemônica eurorreferenciada. Problematiza-se o conceito de dramaturgia como parte de um dispositivo colonial de controle das subjetividades. Os argumentos *suleadores* deste texto foram sistematizados a partir de estudos teóricos e de experimentos cênicos contra-hegemônicos investigados em oficinas, cursos e aulas nos quais foram desenvolvidos processos criativos que não separam as linguagens: dança, teatro e performance.

Palavras-chave: **Corporeidades. Dramaturgia. Oríkì. Colonialidade. Cosmopercepções Afro-Indígenas.**

1. My Head, my Guide, my *Orí*: the divine strength of words

Until the lions tell their own stories, the hunters will always be the heroes of hunting narratives (African proverb).

Laroyê!! We begin this article by praising¹ the Orixá Exu, Lord of Communication and Master of the Body. Agô! Therefore, we ask permission to organize our thoughts in words to communicate with you, readers, beyond the rational and denotative understanding of a possible discourse. Ah! Our writing is collective so it will be written in the first-person plural. After all, we are never alone.²

The idea defended here is to subvert any hierarchical and Eurocentric organization of the relationship between thought, word, and body. In African cosmoperceptions, the sound of words gains performative power when they are read, spoken, and danced; they look for paths and reverberations in other bodies. At this moment, the words, which are formed by letters when they are typed, grouped on a screen, materialize as writing before our eyes and seek meaning in the encounter with each one of you. In this conversation that will be guided by corporal sensations and experiences sketched in this text, we intend to place you in an unfinished universe, ordered by corporal actions connected by the vibrational and enchanted energy of words.

Therefore, we kindly ask that during our ephemeral encounter, as you read this article, you open your sensory-affective perceptions so you can hear other voices. These vibrations of sound, ancestral resonances that in the African diaspora crossed oceans, forests, and deserts and still inhabit the Americas today with great resilience, evoking an enchanting function. Radiated by the wind, these rhythmic pulsations blow dances into our ears. So let us enter what musician/researcher José Miguel Wisnik (2017, p. 19) described, when commenting on the vibrational force of sound: “We know that sound is a wave, that bodies vibrate, that this vibration is transmitted to the atmosphere in the form of a wave propagation, that our ear is capable of capturing it and that the brain interprets it, giving it configurations and meanings”.

Following the thought from Wisnik (2017), we hope that the words presented here will be felt and danced like sound waves connected with the readers’ here and now. Word here is movement, rhythm, singing, it is body,

pulsating life, enchanted energy, it is poetry permeated by silences that travel between the visible material world and the spiritual immaterial world. Through its physical form, its sound and its philosophical complexity, the word that is body connects man to the surrounding world. When blown into the universe, its breath spreads enchantments, as African traditions demonstrate. Ah, we still need to say that the word was always a word before it was a written word, after all, it was spoken, pronounced. It is in a context delineated by the written word, the body in movement and the power of orality in cultures of African origin that we will discuss the idea of action, which in this study is understood as *elinga* or drama. Our intention is to problematize the concept of drama in the performing arts considering Black-Indigenous aesthetic-philosophical principles³. Therefore, we propose a systematization of these principles of dramatic acting and staging, to demonstrate the need for theoretical-practical thinking in the performing arts focused on an anti-colonial perspective, as opposed to a hegemonic Euro-referenced vision.

That said, before opening this round of conversation, we will organize the paths of the letters that design the textual architecture of reflections on our “lived experiences” (Bakhtin, 2017) during the production of *choreo-cenic*⁴ actions. For this article, two questions marked the paths of our investigations: Is it possible, based on a logic determined by the body and the rhythmic organization of the *oriki*(s), of Yoruba origin, to dismantle the Greco-Roman concept of dramaturgy⁵ that was originally linked to literature? How can we establish other ways of thinking, doing and systematizing scenic actions committed to questioning the devices of colonial rule that control relations of power, knowledge and feeling? The philosopher Giorgio Agambem, when outlining reflections based on Michel Foucault's ideas about how devices exercise a concrete function of dominating our relations of power, knowledge and subjectivation, states:

I will literally call device anything that somehow has the ability to capture, guide, determine, intercept, model, control and ensure the gestures, conduct, opinions and speeches of living beings (Agambem, 2009, p. 40).

Therefore, we consider the argument set out above as the basis for our research that aims to complexify the phenomenon of language as a colonial device of power. In the creative processes that we have transcreated⁶ from Black-Indigenous artistic-cultural practices, the idea of action is protago-

nized by the body. The body is the place of origin of all lived experience. The semantization of life, of the everyday universe, is corporal. In other words, the word is understood as part of the body, it is the breath of life⁷, the air that turns into breath and gains a rhythmic sense as it materializes in the universe through movements, sounds and corporal gestures. “The gesture does not transcribe anything, but figuratively produces the messages of the body” (Zumthor, 2010, p. 220). Our choreocenic experiences do not search for a narrative logic that is Aristotelian, linear, with a beginning, middle and end. The body indicates the events. It is the rhythm of the actions that determines its figures without a discursive concern, necessarily. We investigate scenic possibilities of another order, creative processes that are anti-colonial experiences, that disobey the Greco-Roman concept of dramaturgy.

Undoubtedly, the subject is complex and we aspire, within our limitations, to open up symbolic fields that indicate other hermeneutic commitments to our creations. The questions presented above do not aim at absolute answers, but rather trace gaps, strategies, and principles of construction of other aesthetic identities that enhance our Afro-diasporic and Indigenous symbolic forces. We seek an interval in poetic syncopation, a place where we can penetrate the universe of language and circumvent these devices of power and construction of subjectivities, mentioned by Giorgio Agamben. Our intention with this anti-colonial approach to language is to reflect with you on our subjectivities, on the way that language and other languages are compromised by this colonial process. Finally, we believe that, consequently, our artistic creations and our aesthetic readings are constantly permeated by the notion of “coloniality of power”, as the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2005) warns us.

The studies examined here discuss the subjugation of our creations to a linguistic, semiotic and epistemological logic consolidated by the primacy of a Euro-referenced aesthetic notion, which gives greater importance to intellect and reason and denies the body as a decisive component for the invention of other realities. We consider three aspects of paramount importance for a better understanding of the reflections presented: 1) The non-separation between the languages of theater, dance, music, visual arts and performance. For the operational effect of our artistic-cultural intentions, these languages merge during the dramatic event; 2) We begin with

diversity, with regard to the meaning of what is(are) Black theater(s), Indigenous theater(s), Black dance(s), Indigenous dance(s) (s), Black art(s), Indigenous art(s), Black performance(s), Indigenous performance(s). In other words, our understanding is plural and counter-hegemonic, we do not consider that there is a single way of expressing oneself through these dramatic practices; 3) The proposals for ordering narrative actions, spatiality, temporality and Euro-referenced corporality do not account for the operational needs of the dramatic expressions based on artistic-cultural practices with African and Indigenous matrices that we address.

The article is divided into three parts. In this first one we discuss the importance of *orí* in Yoruba culture, its complexities as a deity and the importance of words in the sociocultural practices of these African societies. In the second, our conversation is about orality and the body as a sensory-affective experience in the production of what we understand as the potentiation of presence. In the third part, we reflect on what we call *corpoemas*, a set of movements combined by rhythmic intensities that aim to produce choreocenic actions, whose creative basis is the rhythmic composition of *oríkì(s)*⁸. The creative processes for dancers, actors and performers, dramatic artists were carried out from movements and gestures of capoeira, from the ancestral sounds of *oríkì(s)* to the synthesis of haiku and the symbolic-sonorous stimuli of nature, of Indigenous cosmoperceptions and dances of African origin.

The intention is to stimulate generators of corporality as potent materials that challenge a notion of *dramaturgy* of resistance or counter-dramaturgy with Black-Indigenous characteristics. In this sense, we take the concept of the body as a powerful medium for artistic creation and composition, whether in the context of the African diaspora, in which the body has become an archive for the production of resilience and resistance strategies, or in the current political-cultural context, in which corporal movements are transgressive forces, opposing a Cartesian, linear and literary logic imposed via the colonial, Greco-Roman, and Euro-Western system of organizing scenic actions. By valuing the elaboration of corporalities as the genitor of the organization of possible non-linear narratives, performing artists investigate a complex and intense sensory-affective network in which the text of the body and the body of the text produce other forms of order-

ing dramatic actions in opposition to what is understood as the idea of a universal dramaturgy.

That said, let's move on to a brief introduction on how the struggles against colonial domination take place on this ground in Brazil and directly influence our reflections. The resistance and resilience of African peoples in the condition of enslavement and the reconfiguration of their memories in the African diaspora determined the establishment of procedures, techniques, knowledge, *saBences*⁹ that for centuries have been transmitted by the body. We also contemplate in our scenic experiments some Indigenous cosmogonic principles because we understand that there is a proximity between their philosophical, aesthetic, religious and political perceptions with those of the African peoples brought to Brazil.

The guarded secrets of Nago-Yorubá, Jejê-Fon and Bantu-Angola culture were preserved for many years in Candomblé *terreiros*¹⁰. Although we are aware of the complexity in the cultural formation of the Brazilian black population, we will approach *orikí* as a Nago-Yorubá literary genre¹¹. For Black Africans violently uprooted from their lands by colonizers and brought to America as slaves, the struggle against colonialism and for their freedom was built through a language inscribed in bodies, in incorporated rhythms, “gestured” and evoked in the *orín*, chants, in the verses blown as *orikí(s)* and in the *adurás*, prayers. The vibrations propagated in the cosmic universe by words, drums and their bodies are configured as symbolic actions of resistance for the nagôs. *Orikí*, *Orín*, *Adurá* are sacred verbal constructions which until today are understood by some people of Candomblé to be part of the same poetic category of Yoruba culture, and it was through the *terreiros* that these poetic expressions of enchantment have resisted and reached our days. These verbal constructions are composed of verses and serve as a communication link with the orixás. In this sense, what differentiates these forms of evocation is the context, the intention in which these verses are used.

The magical power of words is recognized in Yoruba culture as a conductor of energy, as Babalorixá Marcio de Jagun (2015, p. 26) demonstrates:

She is a conductor of energy and has strength. Prayers, incantations, and invocations are, at the same time, transmitters of myths, beliefs, history, emotions and, also, the force for realization. The word is endowed with en-

chantment, as it is capable of involving the elements in energy or even transforming the energy they hold. Along with the word, breath is emitted, a sacred element for the orixás. Therefore, a cosmic parcel is added to it.

This quote reveals the importance and relationship of words with nature, that is, with the dynamics of the cosmos. The author reminds us that the oral tradition is a philosophical way of re/producing and disseminating ancestral knowledge. Before taking a more specific approach to *orí* (head) *ki* (salutation) as a poetic genre of Yoruba culture, we will briefly explain the importance of *orí* to Yoruban thought. Jagun (2015) shows us that this term, head, gains other dimensions in this African ethnic group. That is, in Yoruba culture, in addition to its idea as one of the parts of the human body: “The head is the first part of the body that comes into the world, opening paths for the others” (Jagun, 2015, p. 29). Recognizing its importance, the Yoruba divided it into *orí odé*, physical head, and *orí inú*, inner head. They deified it and recognized it as a god.

The Yoruba recognized Orí as one of the gods of their pantheon. In fact, in a certain sense, Orí can be considered as the most important god above all others (except Olòdúmaré). The Orí of every human being is recognized as their personal god, who is expected to be more concerned with their interests, far more than the other gods who are considered to belong to everyone. As a god, Orí is worshiped and propitiated by the Yoruba, and the gods themselves have their own Orí, which directs their daily affairs in life [...] (Abimbola *apud* Jagun, 2015, p. 31).

In this sense, Jagun uses the words of Nigerian researcher Wande Abimbola to show us the divinized importance of *orí* to the Yoruba. In other words, to respect the head is to deify it, to praise it is an obligation. The head must be nourished to remain in balance with the surrounding nature. The researcher Síkírù Sàlámì (1991), in his studies on culture and religion states that in the head (the physical *orí*) resides the inner head (*orí inú*), which constitutes the essence of the human being, as it is the spark of life. Therefore, Yorubans consider *orí* to be our greatest guide. The word *orí* is present in other words in the Yoruba language, such as: *ori/n* (song), *ori/shah* (lord of our head) and *orí/ki*¹² (poems of praise or evocation).

Now that you have been introduced to *orí*, we will enter the central theme of our conversation, which is about the use of *oríkí(s)* as a basis for creative processes in the performing arts in general (dance, theater, performance). It is important to emphasize that the Yoruba language is a tonal

language and the meaning of a word can change with its accentuation. Tonal accents in the Yoruba language indicate the tone that each word has, and the accents are: low, medium and high. Intonation with the proper pronunciation is what allows correct understanding of the spoken word. Since contact with European settlers, grammar books and dictionaries were produced to formalize Yoruba as a written language. We observed that in the process of the African diaspora in Brazil, the *saBences*, understood here as the set of knowledge brought by African peoples, were disseminated bodily. This can be seen in the comment of researcher and writer Leda Maria Martins (2003, p. 77) about the combination of body and orality, in which she uses the concept of orality¹³:

The oral-literature signifier, in the way I present it, does not refer us univocally to the repertoire of cultural forms and procedures of verbal tradition, but specifically to what in its performance indicates a residual, stylistic, mnemonic, culturally inscribed trace of the body in motion, and in vocality. [...] Oral writing belongs to the realm of performance, its anchor; a spelling, a language, whether designed in the performing letter of the word or in the volleys of the body.

Leda Martins, by expanding the concept of *oralitura*, opens a perceptual field for us to understand that cultures of oral tradition, in addition to the word, the vocalization of words, also inscribes, and designs knowledge with their bodies. That is, the notion of orality should not be understood only as an action of the voice.

We will now move on to the second part of the text in which we will talk about the sounds of *oriki(s)* and discuss the production of scenic actions based on a system of organization that makes use of the sound tonalities of words, drums¹⁴, berimbaus and intrabody and extracorporeal sonorities. The Bahian researcher Muniz Sodré (1998, p. 20), when commenting on the importance of rhythm in African culture, tells us:

Sound, whose tempo is ordered in rhythm, is a fundamental element in African cultures. [...] Sound is a conductor of *axé*, that is, the power or force of realization, which makes the realization of existence possible. [...] Sound results from a process where a body is present, dynamically seeking contact with another body to trigger *axé*.

As Sodré indicates, sound is a conductor of *axé*. Sound is the element that makes possible the power of realization of existence in the cultures of

African matrix. African philosophy tells us that culture and nature are inseparable. Our phenomenological perception of this event allows us to identify in the corporal expression of African peoples a polyphony that generates movements, and actions that oppose the Aristotelian idea of dramaturgy. The power of action is in the instant lived pragmatically by the certainty of the irreversibility of death.

2. The Enchanted Presence: the words that inhabit our body

Orality is not limited to the action of the voice. [...].Orality implies everything that is addressed to the other: be it a silent gesture, a look (Paul Zumthor, 2010, p. 217).

Linguist Paul Zumthor (2010) affirms the importance of thinking of orality as an extension of the body. Text is body and is in the body. Gesture is understood as textual action. Zumthor also affirms that: “Gestures are defined in terms of distance, tension, modeling more than the system of signs” (Zumthor, 2010, p. 220). We appropriate Zumthor's indications, as we believe that enunciation is defined in the same way. Thus, our objective is to intertwine the tonal, rhythmic force of juxtaposed words to build an *oriki* produced by the composition of bodily movements ordered as actions from their intensities, their rhythmic pulsations that can come from elements of nature or from combinations generated by written or oral verses. Our challenge is to establish a rupture with Aristotelian hegemonic patterns regarding an organization of possible scenic actions. The purpose is to establish other points of view, other logics about the idea of “dramaturgy” that has always been presented to us and that does not account for our choreocenic needs.

The body is the singular element in the differentiation between what is understood by dramaturgy from a Euroreferenced literary perception and this, our other form of organization, based on Afro-Indigenous cosmoperceptions. The ordering of corporalities, sonorities, silences, movements and gestures is what defines the course of actions. Corp.oral movements that are culturally read as unsaid gestures, unsaid utterances, are determinant to the integration of choreocenic strategies of insertion, composition of actions and the presential expansion of our bodies during the dramatic event.

Thus, the rhythmic intensity of the movements establishes another way of thinking about the ordering of actions in the present moment. A form based on corporalities and not on literalities. Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (2017, p. 58), when commenting on the relationship between practice and theory as a philosophical perspective of action, as an unrepeatable act affirms:

Starting from the action-act and not from its theoretical transcription, there is an opening aimed at its felt content, which is entirely admitted and included from within this act, since the act really develops in existence. [...]The unique singularity cannot be thought, but only lived in a participatory way.

For Bakhtin, the action-act must be constructed in the “eventness”, in the unrepeatable that presents itself as a horizon of the probable at the moment of the dramatic event, which allows us to dialog with his reflections, in the light of African philosophies. In the experiences developed in this study with dance, theater, and performance during creative processes with dramatic artists¹⁵, the production of presence is associated with the physicality of the dramatic actions that are produced beyond the body and expanded by the vibration and materialization of *axé*.

In the procedures used in our creative processes, the term drama was replaced by the African word *Elinga*¹⁶, which in the Umbundu language means action. The choice of this term, when we began this research in 2015 and 2016, allowed us to distance ourselves from a Eurocentric concept of action and drama. We observe that language, as part of a colonial device to control our subjectivities reduces our field of action. Thus, our dramatic compositions seek to detach themselves from a notion of dramaturgy based on text-centered Aristotelian principles of organization of actions, and turn to the basic senses of listening to the body, from experiences lived coexistentially through language. The idea of language to which we refer is based on ancestral cor.poexistential experiences of groups subalternized by a perverse historical process of colonization of the Americas.

The theoretical-practical actions in our studies aim to dismantle the Greco-Roman concept of dramaturgy as a device of Euro-Western control of our subjectivations. We look for other sensorial, communicative and performative logics with other perspectives on the creation of worlds. Empirically, we analyze in our practices the obscurantism of a dramaturgy that uses verbal

syntax as the organizational logic of its narratives, and denies the synesthetic power of the body as an enunciative territory with multicorporality¹⁷.

In our investigations, the body is the place that produces, receives, and rhythmically conducts the dramatic actions. Rhythm is determined in the connection of these actions with the present moment, there is no search for a narrative logic in the Western sense of a congruent ordering of the dramatic actions; the internal coherence of these corporal actions is linked to other criteria and meanings, there is no determining linear space-time logic. The overlapping, the coupling of the sensations of the body in movement delineate fields of images traced in space by emotions. These emotions are guided by a musicality technically produced in the rhythmic figure of syn-copation. This perspective of inscription in the world based on African matrices determines the specificities of the creative processes studied here, and differentiates them from European forms of acting and producing phrasal possibilities, whether musical, verbal and/or corp.oral.

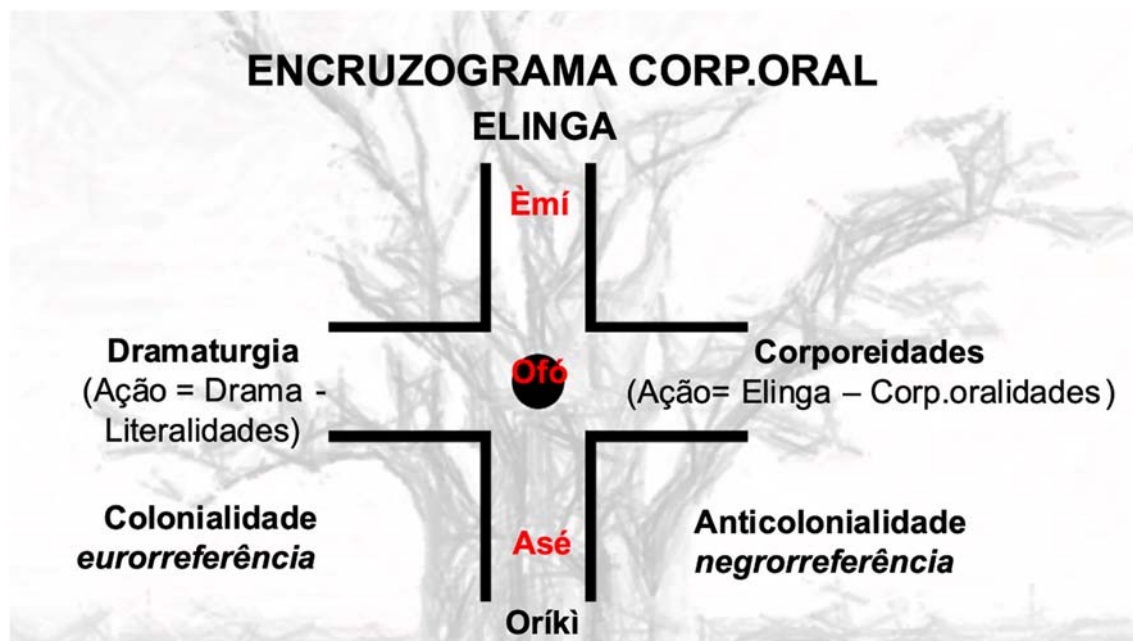
What presents itself as a creative act in our experiences is part of theoretical-practical activities *orí*-ented by the body, composed of performative pluriversalities based on African and native peoples' cosmogonies. The structural and structuring elements of the dramatic actions that we produce in the creative processes are in constant dialogue with the material, visible world, and the immaterial, spiritual world. They are personal *oríkì(s)* produced during the development of our creative processes. Our *orí*, ancestral energy, is therefore connected to the rhythms, the sounds that inhabit our body, which in turn are connected to the cosmic rhythms and sounds that travel through the surrounding space.

Therefore, in our investigative processes, words, movements, actions, and gestures must be organized and combined to subvert directions and deconstruct the Cartesian and continuous meaning of Aristotelian dramaturgical principles. The intention is to establish a rupture with the pre-established semantic-syntactic sequential meaning of the sentences, whether corp.oral, literary and/or musical. Our purpose, and we recognize the complexity of our objectives, is to formulate anti-colonial alternatives to confront the technologies of power in the creative processes in the performing arts in general in Brazil. In a reflection on the anti-colonial struggle made by the thinker Frantz Fanon (2021, p. 166), we identified an important challenge implicit in the thinking that we developed in this paragraph: "It is

not possible to distance oneself from colonialism without, at the same time, moving away from the idea that the colonized makes of himself through the filter of colonialist culture”.

The challenge we raise, as Afro-Brazilian artists/researchers, when conducting the studies presented here, has us reflect on how to deal with Fanon’s provocation regarding the possibility of a possible “distancing” from colonizing actions that we suffer daily. In doubt, we continue at a “crossroads of maybes”, as announced by Lima Barreto, looking in the space-time of an anti-colonial *inside game*¹⁸ for new perspectives for the organization of our histories, and of our corporealities. When conceiving the order of the dramatic actions that we research, a field is opened for the creative interference of forces of another order that step away from the logical and deterministic rationality so present in Euro-Western culture.

The experimental character of our discoveries leads us to cross with the poetic creation of *oríkì(s)*, poetic-sound inventions with the symbolic capacity to transform, in the *exusiac*¹⁹ sense, the aesthetic, philosophical and cultural discourse that was presented to us by the name of dramaturgy and its applicability to produce narratives. Thus, *oríkì* as a poetic genre does not envision the idea of being a narrative text. *Oríkì* is the action itself! It is a kind of montage of attributes of what it thematizes, what it comments on (Risério, 2017). The image below presents a graphic representation of the ideas discussed in this article. They are traces drawn within a symbolic perspective of a crossroads as a place of events. It is an illustration of the discussion about the conception of Greco-Roman dramaturgy based on literality, as opposed to the idea of a counter-dramaturgy based on corp. orality.



Note Translation: ELINGA CORPORAL INTERSECTION Dramaturgy (Action = Drama = Literalities) Corporalities (Action = Elinga – Corporalities) Coloniality *eurorreferência* Anticoloniality *Blackreferência*

Figure 1 – Corp.oral Intersection Resource: Author's himself (2022).

Below I explain the African terms that are in the intersection and that were *transcreated* for use in our studies:

Elinga = Action – Umbundu language.

Èmí = Breath of life (breathing) – Yoruba language.

Ofô = Enchantment, intentionality – Yoruba language.

Asé = Strength, power, materialization of action – Yoruba language.

Oríki = Evocative and celebratory poems of Yoruba origin.

The idea of narrative that we present is that of a poetic form that operates from the juxtaposition of sound blocks (verbal or non-verbal) and corporalities that do not seek to organize narratives with a beginning, middle and end, that is, they present themselves without a linear logic. They are fragmentary actions, sound and corporal groupings synaptically connected, which are born and die continuously without the obligation to tell a story. What underlies our intentions is the production of a rhythmic and sensorial-affective energy field that is established during the creation and continuous reorganization of movements, sounds, words, and actions in the dramatic environment. Yoruba poetic texts are classified by extratextual criteria (Risério, 2017), attributed to the oralization techniques of Yoruba poetry. Among these criteria, rhythm is the potent element for our studies and has

become a key argument for thinking about what it is to think-act during a creative action. In this sense, a reflection by the Mexican poet and language researcher, Octavio Paz (2019, p. 11), corroborates our studies:

Rhythm is not only the oldest and most permanent element of language, as it is not difficult for it to be, prior to speech itself. In a certain sense it can be said that language is born of rhythm, or at least that every rhythm implies and prefigures a language.

It is necessary to note in this statement a confluence with cultures of African origin, in which the rhythm of drums, enchanted words, dancing bodies, gestures and swing determine the potency of these resilient transcultural actions, even before they are identified as performative languages. Leda Maria Martins, a researcher and professor from Minas Gerais, identifies the complexity and abundance of this knowledge stored like archives in Black-Indigenous bodies:

In this sense, what is repeated in the body is not repeated only as a habit, but as a technique and procedure for inscribing, transmitting, recreating and reviewing the memory of knowledge, be it aesthetic, philosophical, metaphysical, scientific, technological, etc. In the scope of Afro-Brazilian rituals (and also those of Indigenous matrices), for example, this conception of performance allows us to apprehend the complex plethora of African knowledge that is restored and reinscribed in the Americas, recreating an entire gnosis and various epistemes (Martins, 2003, p. 66-67).

The recognition of other epistemes, of other aesthetic perspectives, which envision pluriversal dramatic realities, allows us to open the perceptual field for operations that establish a rupture with old colonial values and with modern colonizing strategies. Our objective is to inquire about other points of view for “dramatic production”.

We observe that since the 1960s and 1970s, through performance studies (Ligiéro, 2012) and the use of semiotics as a methodology for analyzing performances, the concept of dramaturgy has expanded, encompassing other dramatic functions and languages: dramaturgy of dance, corporal dramaturgy, dramaturgy of actors, dramaturgy of light, etc. In other words, it assumes extra-literary attributions, distinct from those that it historically performed as a foundational element of theatrical text. Nevertheless, the Cartesian, Aristotelian, Eurocentric logic, determined by linear narratives,

continues to be the predominant one for analyzing, creating, and thinking about ways of ordering actions.

During our investigations and creations, we call the combinations of actions, songs, words, and corporalities — that juxtaposed generate gestural compositions — *orikìcoreocenes*. These combinations, in constant movement, are ordered in spaces traced on the floor, traced points, localities²⁰, places of affirmation of a multiplicity of conflicts driven by the relationship between the sensible and the intelligible, the impulse and rhythmic pulsation of the body, the material and the spiritual.

The symbolic elements of Yoruba culture and some aspects of the intersection with other related African ethnicities help us to think about the potency of a possible *dialectic of malandragem* – or trickery²¹, understood here as an act of resistance by the African diaspora in Brazil. This is a peculiar way of behaving, a Black-Brazilian way of subverting colonial values.

During our creative processes, we experiment with swing, swaying of the body, gestures, and corporal accents to invent choreocenes based on what we understand by a possible *Pilintra aesthetic*²². The body, in this sense, acts, produces other presential ways of being-in-the-world. In other words, it establishes another *modus operandi* of acting, feeling, dancing, and making oneself present. Finally, to produce enchanted corporalities and potentiate the presence of the artistic performer during the dramatic events. In the theoretical-practical exercises we used sinuous thoughts (non-linear), corporalities-intersections, ancestral songs and musicalities, production of *orikì(s)* and *orikais*²³ that are part of a bag of *saBenças*²⁴ with plural enchantments, which are sketched on the Brazilian ground. We dare say that these other forms of organization of being-in-the-world strengthen their daily presence, after all, the cosmogonies used in our research do not separate their aesthetic and ethical practices from their daily realities.

We will now, readers, move on to the third part of our *terreiro*²⁵ *conversation*, if I can call it that. So, if you want to, take a break, have some water. To begin, we suggest that after reading our initial information, you close your eyes. Sense your internal rhythms, separate the low sounds from the high sounds. Notice the tone of your breathing. Try to establish an interplay between your inner sounds and the rhythms you hear outside your body. Gradually, try to randomly combine the deeper sounds with the

higher ones. At times, seek silence. Combine internal and external sounds with subtle movements, feel the impulses that move some parts of your body. Play with this rhythmic variation. Evoke your existence!

We hope that these brief indications have awakened you sensorially to the intra and extra corp.oral sounds that are present, at this moment, in each person's personal environment. This experience that we proposed here was developed from listening games that we conduct to contribute to the perception of the present moment, aiming at the creation of *oríkì/oríkai(s)*. It is interesting to point out that the *oríkì/oríkai(s)* invented in the creative processes are corporal, musical-sonorous and verbal phrases that operate substantially for the combination of dramatic actions. Finally, as the writer Antonio Risério (2017, p. 40) affirms, "Everything that exists here and in the other world can be rewarded with the composition of an oríkí". Let's follow our thoughts...

3. Corporem: Dancing Oríkì, Praising Life

Dancing, orality, and the giving of flesh did not mark or 'represent' the outcomes, but created the outcomes they celebrate (Schechner apud Zeca Ligério, 2012, p. 80).

Our intention in this section is to continue with some reflections on the study of *oríkì(s)* already indicated in the course of this article. For this conjunction between the notion of *oríkì* and the methodology applied in these studies to occur, we connected with the thoughts of Michel Thiollent (1986), one of the precursors of action research methodology in Brazil. Thiollent tells us that in his studies with action research, he does not work on others or for others, but always with others. Thus, what brings us closer to this methodological stance is the possibility of studying, investigating, and creating scenic actions in combination with the individual and collective ancestry of the participants during the theoretical-practical meetings that took place in workshops, seminars, courses, classes, etc.

In the first section of the article, we commented in a footnote on the etymological origin of the term scene: from the Greek *skena* which is derived from the term *skiá*, which means shadow or spirit of a dead person in Portuguese, and which in our studies is understood as an ancestral shadow that accompanies us. This discovery produced the neologism *choreocene*, a

conceptual element that we created to define what was configured as a line of actions in the experiences undertaken.

We gradually substituted the word choreography and, consequently the term dramaturgy in our practices because they do not account for the results. This revelation brought us even closer to African and Indigenous philosophical conceptions when we were faced with the philosophical and religious *sensation* that we are never alone or dance alone. Therefore, we embrace the idea that we coexist with our ancestral shadows. Ney Lopes and Luiz Simas (2020, p. 36) showed us that for some African traditions, our physical body lives accompanied by another body, which can be understood as a shadow:

This body, according to some conceptions of African origin, lives accompanied by a shadow, which is its irradiation to the outside and which also disappears with death. In addition to the physical body, the person has a spiritual and invisible essence that survives death and is accompanied by a double.

This quote allows us to return to the beginning of the text, when we discussed the importance of *orí*, the spiritual energy that we carry inside our physical heads, which keeps us connected with our ancestry and with nature. By composing, singing, telling, setting to music, performing and dancing an *oríkì*, we are establishing a direct contact with these spiritual energies, that is, we place ourselves in a balanced relationship with the cosmos. We move our energies to meet a Black-Indigenous imaginary that materializes in the gestural physicality of the dramatic event in a ritual experience of sensory-affective exchange with otherness. We establish a kind of *ebó aesthetic*²⁶. After all, for African and Indigenous peoples, nature is not separated from its cultural manifestations. In other words, a Black-Indigenous body in movement, in the dance situation, presupposes a *corpoexistential* experience guided by the relational dimension between two worlds: the material and the spiritual.

The combination of verbal and non-verbal sounds and corporalities aims to generate the composition of *oríkìcoreocenes*, founding elements for the creation of choreocenes. The rules that determine these creative processes are anti-colonial and interfere directly with the condition of the presence of this body. Its movements induces dramatic actions that trigger radiations projected through the emission of corporal-vibrational sounds, in the surrounding spacetime.

The human body is composed of various internal rhythms, procreated by the life that circulates inside it. Therefore, we understand that the human body is musical, *per se*. During the investigations, we assimilated the internal electrical-musical pulsations that substantiate the rhythms of this body. By dividing the word impulse into: in (inside) and pulse (beat), we discover that the pulsations from within the body, when externalized in a dialogue with the bass, medium and treble tonal perceptions, help us to structure, order and dynamize in space and time the *orikicoreocenes* and, consequently, our choreocenes.

Therefore, the scenic, choreocenic actions, in our practices, arise from a relational connection between the creative impulses of the dramatic artists and an idea of spacetime that is determined by the rhythmicity of the bodies of these artists in activity, during a profile of the lived moment, poetically systematized. This dramatic composition is manifested through the creation of *orikis*, *orikais*, *corpoemas*²⁷, gestural phrases that function as a poetic synthesis of corp.oral and sonorous movements, that is, musical arrangements embodied and articulated by low-mid-high tonal variants. Our written and/or drawn annotations are *captured cartographies*²⁸, conceived through the crossing of improvisation games, bodily actions, rhythms, sinuous movements and musical impulses internal and external to the body. Each individual moves through space at a certain tempo and a limited number of movements or actions, determined in advance. These limited numbers of moves or actions are usually a multiple of seven.

The *orikicoreocenes* must be created, a priori, by the agglutination, and juxtaposition of movements and sounds, there is no syntax that subordinates the artists to logical meanings, defined by a need to build linear syntagmatic narratives. The binary relationship of strong and weak sounds, and strong and weak, slow and fast gestures follows the continuum flow of existential binarism: life and death. The exercise of synthesis, of profiling an instant just for its sonorous and synesthetic impulses, without an obligation to produce any type of mythological narrative, disfigures in our experiences the idea of a Euro-referenced dramaturgy.

We understand, therefore, that one of the strategies to overcome the notion of “coloniality of power” (Quijano, 2005) is to re-discuss the concept of language as a technology of power that permeates us and influences each day in our creative processes. Moving towards the final considerations

of this article, we raise other questions that help our investigations during the scenic experiences: What are the colonial barriers that prevent us from transforming our symbolic ancestral trees into potent anti-colonial creative manifestations? Would it really be possible to break with the devices of colonial domination in which language operates as a protagonistic device of the action of power?

We know our propositions are complex. We also understand the speed of absorption and co-optation by the system of anti-colonial propositions. However, we believe in the political need to use Black-Brazilian principles of acting and drama to modify in our creative processes the quality and condition of dramatic presence of the dramatic artists. Finally, the didactic-pedagogical basis used in the *experience-Actions* with *oríki(s)*, which is defended as a thesis in this text, envisions decolonizing, anti-racist and anti-colonial creative processes in the performing arts. We struggle against a project of modernity that constantly produces rules of exclusion, oppression and slaughter of Afro-Indigenous populations.

We continue to swing, in the syncopated step that positions our ancestral bodies in the circle of life, in a fight that is an interplay of life and death. Nevertheless, we believe that Afro-Indigenous philosophical principles open a field of possibilities for dramatic artists to combine ancestral Afro-Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian principles in a performative, anti-colonial way, based on epistemological and aesthetic values of freedom, equality, and the right to live. Our body is political by nature, our action is always political and reverberates aesthetic actions that assume the visuality of ideograms, of secular African adinkras. The adinkra of the Sankofa bird tells us that: "*When you don't know where to go, look back and see where you came from.*" Therefore, we continue to give thanks and look at the paths traced by our elders. Each morning we continue to swing, reinventing ourselves, resisting the colonizing and oppressive attacks that constantly permeate the languages we use to produce our Brazilian, Latin American dramatic creations. *Exu, Mojubá!*

Notes

¹ *Laroyê* is a greeting to the orixá Exu, therefore, it is considered as an *oríki*.

- ² Part of the content presented here was shared at the *Congresso Científico Nacional de Pesquisadores em Dança* [The National Scientific Congress of Dance Researchers] (Santos, 2021).
- ³ In most African cosmoperceptions, aesthetic principles are not understood to be separate from the behavioral forms of which their social body is a part. Nature and culture, in this case, are complementary existential forms, they are not understood separately as in Western culture.
- ⁴ Term created by Lau Santos to demonstrate that, in addition to recording movements in space, a body in movement is always acting; even if it is alone, its shadows accompany it. This statement is supported by the Greek word *skiá* which means shadow, spirit of someone dead, and is related to the origin of the word *skena*, scene. We observe that African cosmoperceptions warn us: we are always accompanied by our shadows, by our ancestors. Therefore, the term *coreocena* does justice to the relationship between the Greek word *skiá* and the notion of ancestry of *black-indigenous* philosophy.
- ⁵ We are aware of the complexity of our studies. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the Greco-Roman concept of dramaturgy discussed in this article is part of a profile/perspective that is based on the idea of action as a creative power organized from the body and its corporeities. For the purposes of our investigations, aspects such as characters, climax, mimesis, rhapsody, catharsis, etc., are not valued, which are considered as categories, in short, lexicons of drama.
- ⁶ Concept coined by Haroldo de Campos.
- ⁷ For more information on the notion of breath of life as a potency of Afro-presence, read the article: *Èmí, Ofò, Asé: The Elinga e a Dança das “Mulheres do Àsé”* [*Èmí, Ofò, Asé: The Elinga and the Dance of the “Mulheres do Àsé”*] (Santos, 2020b).
- ⁸ We observe that in the Yoruba language the term *oriki* is not pluralized in the way we are presenting it. Pluralization happens contextually, it depends on the semantic organization of phrases.
- ⁹ In Portuguese this term means set of knowledge. Lau Santos uses the term knowledge as a concept that is potentiated by the union of the material world with the immaterial world, because for this author the word *saBenças* is constituted by knowledge and “blessings” (blessings). Therefore, in our conception, it is blessed knowledge.
- ¹⁰ *Terreiro* is one of the names for a place where the rituals for the Orixas are performed.

- ¹¹ The three countries in Africa where the Yoruba people live today are: Nigeria, Benin and Togo.
- ¹² *Oriki* can also be understood as a name given to a child at birth. This name (*oriki*) will be related to an event that took place at the time of delivery. An *oriki* can also be a poem written for an important person in the community, or a reverence to an orixá, as presented at the beginning of this text, the reverence to the orixá Exu.
- ¹³ Term coined by the Haitian writer Ernest Mirville. A neologism produced to oppose the concept of literature to “oral literature”. Mirville refers to a Haitian literature that is based on the “Creole” language spoken by the black population of Haiti. Leda Maria Martins expands the concept to discuss the verbal and non-verbal memories created by the body.
- ¹⁴ The atabaques [a type of drum] used in candomblés and in African-based dances in Brazil are divided by their tonality registers: atabaque with a low register (Rum), atabaque with a mid-range register (Rumpi) and atabaque with a high register (Lé); so are the records of the Berimbau in capoeira circles: Berimbau Gunga (bass), Berimbau Médio (mid-range), Berimbau Viola (high), just like the tonal sonority presented by the Yoruba language.
- ¹⁵ Dramatic artists include: actors, actresses, dancers, dancers and performers in general. We do not separate the performance languages, they merge during dramatic events, the situation determines the “doing” on stage.
- ¹⁶ *Elinga* is also the title of a postdoctoral study carried out at the Graduate Program in Dance (PPGDANÇA) of UFBA. The project authored by researcher Lau Santos took place for 22 months between 2018 and 2019. *Elinga* is also the name of the workshops taught by Lau Santos.
- ¹⁷ The term used here has its meaning linked to a multiplicity of bodies: spiritual and physical.
- ¹⁸ Capoeira game in which the corporal dialogue between the players is of great skill and proximity. A game of question and response, blow and counter blow, in a minimal space-time as if one body enters the space of the other's body.
- ¹⁹ The term *exusiatic* is an adjective that we use to emphasize the virtues of the orixá Exu. The word Exu, in Yoruba, can be translated as circle, sphere, universe, or that which is infinite, which has no beginning or end, the beginning of everything, the force of creation, birth.
- ²⁰ Term defined in our investigations from the idea of an intimate and symbolic relationship produced in a specific place during the creative processes undertaken by each artist of the scene.

- ²¹ Expression used as the title of an article by the writer and critic Antônio Candido to define and characterize the urban novel “Memórias de um Sargento de Milícias”, a work of transition between realism and romanticism, by Manuel Antônio de Almeida. For more information, see the analysis of Antônio Candido’s article by Everton Barbosa Correia (2017), *A Malandragem como categoria representativa do Brasil, consonante Antonio Candido*.
- ²² This expression is present in Lau Santos’s article (2020a), *A Filosofia do Malandro: Estéticas de um Corpo Encantado pela Desobediência*. (The Philosophy of the Malandro: Aesthetics of a Body Enchanted by Disobedience).
- ²³ The term is a written fusion of the words *oríkì* and *haikai*. That is, it is a cross between the Yoruba *oríkì* literary genre with Japanese *haikai* poems. The use of the synthetic operational form, 3 verses and 17 syllables, a profile of the present moment, produced by Japanese haiku, with evocative tonal musicality, in the form of juxtaposition of *oríkì* sounds, is a determining factor for us to think about ordering *choreocenic* actions in our creative processes.
- ²⁴ The term is spelled with the letter “b” in capital letters to emphasize that this set of Black-Indigenous knowledge, studied here, must be understood from a relational perspective that encompasses the material world and the spiritual world.
- ²⁵ The meaning we give to this expression is analogous to the image of neighbors who talk sitting in a circle, with their chairs placed on the sidewalks, at the doors of their houses. Currently, these actions are increasingly rare and consequently we lose the flavor of this type of *corpo.oralidade*. We use this expression to establish a closer encounter with you, albeit with words.
- ²⁶ *Ebó* is a concept typical of Yoruba culture, an African-based ritual created to rebalance aspects of an individual's life. In it, offerings are made to feed the *ori*. There are several aspects that must remain in balance to organize our lives, according to the Nagô. In this sense, the idea of establishing an “*ebó aesthetic*” is linked to the need to understand the artistic “doing” as an anti-colonial socio-political action that aims to establish a harmony between artistic expression and the crossings caused by the “*coloniality of power*”.
- ²⁷ We use this term as a concept that traces a spatio-temporal synthesis of the exercises created during the composition of the *oríkìscoreocenes*. Psychoanalyst, playwright and philosopher Antonio Quinet (2010) uses the term to justify the role of the actor in the theater: “a place where you can transform your body into a poem, a *corpoem*”.

²⁸ *Cato.grafia*. (freely translated *capt.graphy*) is a neologism that we created for noting or designing in workbooks the corp.oral combinations produced by the dramatic artists.

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