Brazilian Migrant Women as Killjoys: Disclosing Racism in "Friendly" Portugal*

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Abstract

In this article, we place Ahmed's notion of the "feminist killjoy" into dialogues with feminist migration studies and decolonial studies, to explore how Brazilian women in Portugal become "killjoys" by challenging their construction as a "colonial body" and unveiling the fallacious narrative of Portugal as a non-racist country. Guided by a feminist decolonial approach and using virtual ethnography together with an in-depth interview, this study examines the digitized resistance of Brazilian migrant women in Portugal against discrimination and prejudice. Evidence is drawn from an analysis of the 541 posts published between July 2020 and July 2021 by the Instagram account of the "Brasileiras não se calam" project, along with an interview with the project's coordinating board.

Keywords: Brazilian women, colonial body, feminist killjoy, resistance

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Introduction

> Let's take this figure of the feminist killjoy seriously. Does the feminist kill other people's joy by pointing out moments of sexism? Or does she expose the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced, or negated under public signs of joy?
> (Ahmed, 2010b:582)

Brazilian women's encounters with prejudice and discrimination in Portugal have been widely discussed in the literature (Cunha, 2005; França; Padilla, 2019; Gomes, 2013a; Novaes; Rossi, 2018; Padilla, 2007b; Pontes, 2004; Queiroz; Cabecinhas; Cerqueira, 2020). Intersecting with racism and sexism, coloniality plays a central role in shaping the experiences of Brazilian women in Portugal and reinforcing their construction as a hypersexualized "colonial body" (Gomes, 2013a; Padilla, 2007b). According to Mariana Gomes (2013), coloniality has survived into the present day in Portuguese society, supported by the enduring legacy of Freyre's ideas of Lusotropicalism (1933), which portrays Portugal as a tolerant country that is open to diversity, and in which racism, if not non-existent, is a minor problem (Araújo, 2013).

Over the last decade, due to the increasing digitalization of feminist activism worldwide (see Edmé, 2020; Freire, 2016; Khamis, 2016; Paulino; Paulino, 2019), Brazilian migrant women in Portugal have been using social networks to denounce the daily stigmatization and marginalization they face in the country. For instance, in 2012, they created the "Manifesto on prejudice against Brazilian women in Portugal" [*Manifesto contra preconceito contra mulheres brasileiras*]. In 2013, in the context of the elections to the Council of the Students' Association at the University of Coimbra (UC), a group of young students engaged in a campaign against "Xenophobia and all forms of discrimination". More recently, in 2020, the project "Brazilian women don't stay quiet " [Brasilieras não se calam, BNSC] was launched online. Coordinated by an anonymous group, the project gathers together accounts by unidentified Brazilian women of their encounters with discrimination and prejudice abroad. However, with the exception of Gomes (2013a), Gomes and Beatriz Padilla (2016), and Jéssica Rossi and Larissa Silva (2015), who analysed the "Manifesto", and Padilla and Thais França (2019), who investigated the campaign against "Xenophobia and all forms of discrimination", studies remain scant into how Brazilian women use social media to resist and tackle the prejudice and discrimination they face in Portugal.

In this paper, we adopt a feminist decolonial approach, and bring Sara Ahmed's (2010b) notion of the "feminist killjoy" into dialogues with migration studies to explore Brazilian migrant women's online resistance to discrimination and prejudice in Portugal. Through a thematic discourse analysis, we examine the Instagram page of the project BNSC. Our methodological approach was guided by a feminist decolonial perspective. The fieldwork consisted of an in-depth interview with the project's coordinating board and a netnography of the Instagram posts (Kozinets, 2009). We began by tracing the project back to its starting point, then explored the discursive content of the BNSC Instagram posts themselves. Specifically, we examined the intersectional discrimination and prejudice they unveil, mirroring the marginalization these women experience in Portugal. In our analysis, we argue that by creating a safe space in social media where Brazilian women can publicly disclose their encounters with racism, sexism and coloniality in Portugal, the project becomes a "collective feminist killjoy" – a troublemaker that reveals the "flaws" in the widely desired "happiness discourse" that fallaciously depicts Portugal as a non-racist country (Ahmed, 2010b). Building on Gomes' (2013b) taxonomy of the subjectivation modes via which Brazilian migrant women in Portugal resist stigma and re-exist, we frame BNSC as a form of "collective combative resistance" that collectively defeats Brazilian women's subaltern position as a colonial body (Fanon, 2007; Gomes, 2013b). We conclude by emphasizing the need for support to be give to the digital activism of "Brazilian killjoy migrant women", both by offline feminist, antiracist and decolonial collectives, and by academia.

Brazilian migrant women in Portugal as a colonial body

Brazilian women are a statistically significant group in Portugal. In 2020, they accounted for the largest proportion of the women migrant population (31.5%), and represented 55.8% of all Brazilians living in the country (SEF, 2021). In addition, the two countries' shared colonial past means Brazilian women hypervisible in the Portuguese media, academic and political discourse (França, 2012; Padilla, 2007a; Pontes, 2004).

Women from the former colonies have been tied to the colonialist, political, physical and discursive construction of the colonial body. During the colonial era, discourses about the colonized people's body were fundamental to supporting racism by transforming their bodies into "objects" (Mbembe, 2012). Colonialism linked the body of colonized people to a "racial identity" invested with dehumanizing attributes (abnormal, unnatural, uncivilized, dirty, etc.), hypersexualized, and considered different from the white body. The colonial body was marked by both excess (sensuality, sexuality) and absence (discipline, self-control) (Fanon, 2008). As such, it could not "be brought into the realm of culture" (Ahmed, 2002:47) and needed to be known in order to be regulated and disciplined. The obsession to know the "truth" about the colonial body of women from the colonies created a knowledge system that negates it by sexualizing and racializing it as a "deviant" body (Ahmed, 2002).

Gomes (2013b) shows how the Portuguese colonial empire discursively constituted Brazilian women as a colonial body, and how this social construction continues to operate up to the present day in Portuguese society. According to Gomes, Portuguese colonial narratives and images frequently referred to and exposed the nude bodies of women from the colonies, underpinning an erotic, promiscuous and primitive notion of these women. Brazilian women therefore embodied the articulation between race and sex in colonial narratives (Piscitelli, 2008a, 2008b). For Homi Bhabha (1983:19), this articulation is "crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practice of racial and cultural hierarchization" in the construction of the colonial subject.

Adriana Piscitelli (2014:279) further argues that "the notion that the Portuguese colonizers found in the tropics "a land with no king and no law" played a significant role in the emergence of Brazil's racialized sexual imagery". Hence, the process of racialization and sexualization to which Brazilian women abroad are subjected, is traversed by the picture of Brazil as an exuberant, paradisiacal and exotic country, creating an image of its women as tropical and erotic "mestiças" and "mulatas", regardless of their skin colour (Malheiros; Padilla, 2015; Piscitelli, 1996, 2008a). Nationality also therefore intersects with race, gender and coloniality to shape the experiences of Brazilian women abroad. Their racialized and sexualized bodies convey the image of a sensual woman, naturally available for sex and having the propensity to engage in the commercialized sex market. At the same time, this perception is paradoxically tied to a notion of Brazilian women as beautifully feminine, submissive and devoted wives and caring mothers (Padilla, 2007b; Piscitelli, 2008b). The colonial body of Brazilian migrant women thus encompasses two contradictory imaginaries: repulsive lust and nurturing virtue.

It is worth noting how Brazilian women living abroad navigate this ambivalence. Although embedded in a process of sexualization and essentialization, this image occasionally "could also facilitate worthy resources in marriage and labour markets" (Padilla, 2016:256). According to Piscitelli (2008b:787), the "notions about Brazilian femininity that mark it with sensuality but also with the valorization of domesticity and an interest in motherhood" endow Brazilian women with a particular "value" in the marriage market. In a similar vein, Brazilian women capitalize on the essentialized social features that are assigned to them – sensuality and beauty – to endorse their performance as professionals and experts in particular labour niches, namely the beauty *filière* (Lidola, 2015; Malheiros; Padilla, 2015; Novaes; Rossi, 2018). Thus, by mobilizing their bodies as a social and aesthetic–corporal capital and exalting what is the root of their marginalization to invert the hegemonic discourse, they engage in an "affirmative resistance subjectivation mode" (Gomes, 2013a).

The case of the "Mothers of Bragança" (Mães de Bragança) is an emblematic example of the gendered power practices that surround the experience of Brazilian women migrants in Portugal. In

2003, a group of Portuguese women named the "Mothers of Bragança" built a movement to expel the Brazilian women living in the town, arguing that they were seducing and enchanting their husbands (see Pais, 2010). This case illustrates how Brazilian women are racialized as a hypersexualized and deviant body in comparison to the supposedly immaculate and superior Portuguese and white European women (Gomes, 2013). In addition, it exposes the stereotypes of Brazilian women as "man-hunters", "husband-stealers", depraved individuals or prostitutes (Padilla, 2007b; Pontes, 2004). Although the case of the "Mothers of Bragança" can be considered extreme, experiences of discrimination and prejudice are the norm in the daily lives of Brazilian women in Portugal.

From colonial bodies to feminist killjoys: the resistance of Brazilian migrant women in Portugal

In "The Promise of Happiness", Ahmed (2010b) expands her discussions about "happiness" and "feminisms", arguing how killjoy subjects disrupt social consent by disclosing the existing dynamics of sexism, heterosexism and racism. Killjoys are seen as troublemakers because they expose the fact that the happiness of the community rests on bodies who are historically oppressed and silenced. She introduces four categories of the killjoy: the feminist killjoy, the angry black woman, the unhappy queer, and the melancholic migrant. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the feminist killjoy and the melancholic migrant.

Feminist killjoys are those who refuse to perpetuate the silence in our gendered society, and are therefore perceived as always causing trouble. By constantly exposing sexism, unfair gendered power practices or other inequalities in situations in which their statements may foster bad feelings and discomfort, they "kill" the community's "happiness". In Ahmed's words, a feminist killjoy "brings other[s] down, not only by talking about unhappy topics such as sexism but by exposing how happiness is sustained by erasing the signs of not getting along" (Ahmed, 2010b:56).

In a similar vein, Ahmed notes that migrants who disrupt the host country's "happiness scripts" are also seen as a hazard to the "joy" and "social cohesion" of a community (Ahmed, 2010b). These so-called "melancholic migrants" "refuse to participate in the national game", and expose the oppressive dynamics of a society. By "noticing racism as going on and ongoing", they foster unhappiness in the host community. Because they overtly denounce their encounters with discrimination and prejudice, they are seen as "creating rather than describing a problem" (Ahmed, 2010a:7). As such, they oppose the widespread Western understanding of migrants as being "fortunate" people who should be grateful for being able to escape from their "unhappy" developing countries (Ahmed, 2010:142). In this affective configuration, they too become killjoys.

Racism and its consequences – prejudice, discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, and so on – have always been a minor topic on the Portuguese academic and political agenda (Maeso, 2019). After the Carnation Revolution in 1974, Portugal saw itself relegated to the role of a peripheral, poor and under-developed European country. Building on the Lusotropicalist discourse, Portugal created its own mythological narrative regarding its colonial conviviality and the exceptionalism of benevolent Portuguese colonialism (Araújo, 2013; Castelo, 2011). This narrative places Portugal at the centre of the Lusophone world as a bridge between the former colonies and Europe (Almeida, 2008). The "new" official discourse portrays Portugal as a harmonious, "multicontinental" and multiracial nation, and suggests that Portuguese people were "gifted" to mix with other races (Araújo, 2013). These narratives depoliticized colonialism by ascribing the mythical "gift" of interculturality to the Portuguese nation, thus evading any critical confrontation with racism and disentangling it from the colonial project (Maeso, 2019). In this way, Portugal's nationalistic colonial project has been reframed through a narrative that pictures Portuguese colonialism as a friendly interracial/intercultural coexistence, while racism is reduced to an individual "skin-colour prejudice" (Araújo, 2013). It is against this backdrop that Brazilian women in Portugal are expected to follow the "happiness" script by leaving unaddressed their encounters with racism, sexism and coloniality, so that Portuguese society does not feel offended or uncomfortable about the legacy of its colonial past.

Methodological Path

Our twofold methodology allowed us to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the BNSC project. The netnographic part of our research sought to explore how BNSC embraces the figure of the feminist killjoy (Ahmed, 2004) by publicly denouncing on social media the prejudice and discrimination faced by Brazilian women in Portugal, thus challenging the myth of Portugal as a non-racist country. Ethnographic in nature, as a methodological tool for internet studies, netnography enables researchers to investigate social dynamics and cultural behaviours in the online world (Amaral; Natal; Viana, 2008; Kozinets, 2009). In addition to this, the supplementary interview allowed us to better grasp the project's potential to foster an organized feminist collective voice for Brazilian women in Portugal against discrimination and prejudice, as well as to reflect on our interpretations of the themes we identified while analysing the posts (Tracy, 2010).

Adopting a feminist decolonial approach, this study places the voice of Brazilian migrant women at the centre of our analysis (Curiel, 2015). This framework provides a critical understanding of the entanglement of the coloniality, sexism and racism that shape their encounters with discrimination and prejudice in Portugal. Thus, we reflect on reports of intersectional oppression that are posted by the Brazilian women themselves. Inspired by Grada Kilomba (2015), we aim to identify persistent racist and sexist practices that coloniality has functioned to silence, but which still traverse Brazilian women's experiences in Portugal. Moreover, we aim to deconstruct the image of women from the Global South as a submissive colonial body lacking in agency (Curiel, 2020) by giving visibility to their "collective combative resistance" as feminist killjoys.

We acknowledge that science is a subjective and situated activity, and recognize the notion of embodied knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Löwy, 2000); thus, our biographies as feminist Brazilian women researchers living abroad (in Portugal and Germany, respectively) also form part of our analytical background. By disclosing our positionality, we commit to "transparent knowledge", as Haraway (1998) argues.

Following the principles of ethnography, netnographic research has allowed us to grasp BNSC's virtual dynamic and to extract rich information from small data sets. Our online fieldwork covered the period from July 2020, when the Instagram profile was launched, up to September 2021. By passively engaging with the campaign (observation only – no comments, replies or reactions to the posts were made by the authors), we aimed to record spontaneously occurring data in a direct yet inconspicuous manner (Christou; Janta, 2019; Kozinets, 2009). We screened each of the 802 posts denouncing discrimination and prejudice published on the Instagram profile. This allowed us to identify and analyse 541 posts describing incidents of discrimination and prejudice that took place in Portugal; the others referred to events occurring in other countries. While we fully acknowledge that examining the respective Instagram threads of comments attached to these posts might yield further insights into the transformative power of social media, we made the pragmatic decision to limit our analysis to the posts alone, as they constitute the main corpus of the project. While some were long posts carefully detailing the incidents concerned, others were short and objective – in some extreme cases, only comprising a single sentence. In some instances, no specific event was referred to; instead, an overall feeling of frustration, sadness, or humiliation was shared.

For the interview, the coordinating board of the project was contacted via e-mail, the purpose of the study was presented to them, and their written consent was obtained. The interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality with regard to their identities, and assured that the interview would be used only for academic purposes. The interview was conducted online via Zoom. Taking into account the fact that the Instagram profile has received many threats, to further ensure the protection of the informants' identities, neither demographic questions nor questions regarding their migration trajectory were asked. Although an interview script was drafted, the interview was largely informal and some questions were spontaneously added as the informants spoke, as in a conversation. The interview lasted 58 minutes. It was conducted in Portuguese and the audio recorded. Afterwards, this was transcribed verbatim. The questions asked covered four broad themes: the motivation behind the project; its affinity to feminist and anti-racist activism; its links to other movements in Portugal and Brazil; and the organizers' perceptions concerning the prejudice and discrimination faced by Brazilian women in Portugal.

The analysis of the data followed the principles of "reflexive thematic analysis" (Braun; Clarke, 2021). After reading and re-reading the posts with the aim of familiarizing ourselves with the data, we generated initial codes (i.e. shared feelings, disqualification, verbal offences, dismissal). Next, we began to identify possible themes (e.g. hypersexualization, exoticization, inferiorization, racialization). These were reviewed continuously to define the final themes (explicit prejudice and discrimination, implicit prejudice and hidden racism/sexism, physical sexual harassment). Lastly, the most emblematic posts were selected. A similar process was followed to analyse the interview. After refining the codes that emerged from it, the final themes defined were: killjoy, unhappiness and resistance.

The project

In July 2020, the project "Brazilian women don't stay quiet" was launched anonymously on Instagram. Currently, its social media presence also encompasses a Facebook page and a website. The social media profiles work as platforms for denunciation, to which Brazilian women can submit accounts of episodes of discrimination and prejudice they have faced abroad, in any country of the world, either as migrants or as travellers. The reports are published anonymously, in both Portuguese and English. Although Instagram is mainly a photo-sharing network, submissions are only shared in the form of imageless texts that are presented in very colourful template formats. The Instagram account has 41,200 followers, and up until the date this paper was written, it had published 1,034 posts. Of these, 802 were denunciation posts; the content of the remainder was of various types (messages of repudiation or support, meeting invitations, calls for artistic content, etc.). The average number of likes per post was around 1,500. The majority of the posts report episodes that took place in Portugal, but reports from Germany, the USA, Russia and other countries can also be found (see Brasileiras não se calam, 2021). In addition to providing a platform for these denunciations, the project also offers psychological and juridical support for Brazilian women who have faced discrimination and prejudice in Portugal, a space for Brazilian women in Portugal to organize meetings, and a channel for advertising accommodations for rent, job vacancies and professional services. All activities are carried out on a voluntary basis. The project has gained a lot of media attention, both in Portuguese newspapers such as *Público*, *Correio da Manhã* and *Jornal de Notícias*, as well as in Brazilian media such as *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*, and *Universa UOL*[1], to name a few.

Similarly to the "Manifesto" and the campaign at the UC, we frame the project BNSC within the context of the growing feminist activism occupying the digital space (Ferreira, 2015; McCaughey; Ayers, 2013; Padilla; Gomes, 2016). Indeed, BNSC's coordinating board states that although "[they] knew the [#metoo and #elenao] movements, they were no direct inspiration" for the launch of the Instagram profile, and they were not aware of either the Manifesto or the UC campaign. Nevertheless, we argue that the global rise of feminist digital activism, from #metoo and #niunamenos to #elenao, provided momentum for Brazilian women abroad to connect and break their silence. Thus, BNSC occupies a space for denunciations that was established by the Manifesto and the UC campaign, following the increasing centrality of social media as a key site for feminist intervention, but which happened to have become dormant since due to the latter two initiatives having faded away, being limited to specific demands (see Padilla; Gomes, 2016; Padilla; França, 2019).

[1] All news were accessed in September 2021 throughout the writing of this article and they are available in the following links:
Público: https://www.publico.pt/2020/08/07/p3/noticia/brasileiras-nao-calam-estao-cansadas-assedio-preconceito-1927196
Correio da Manhã: https://www.cmjornal.pt/sociedade/detalhe/movimento-brasileiras-nao-se-calam-expoe-centenas-de-relatos-de-assedio-e-xenofobia-em-portugal
Jornal de Notícias: https://www.jn.pt/nacional/elas-sao-brasileiras-e-nao-se-calam-mais-perante-a-discriminacao-e-o-assedio-12530624.html?fbclid=IwAR0QZNDAO1at8d2WS4ci5jh4KVtRtH5U9vhYn5WtiE0tY-YxRl6rq_zfDIY
Folha de São Paulo: https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2020/08/grupo-de-brasileiras-expoe-centenas-de-casos-de-assedio-e-xenofobia-em-portugal.shtml
Universia: https://www.uol.com.br/universa/noticias/redacao/2020/07/30/brasileiras-denunciam-assedio-e-preconceito-no-exterior.htm

Brazilian Women Disclosing Their Encounters with Coloniality, Racism and Sexism in Their Everyday Lives in Portugal

In the first part of our analysis, we look at the situations described in the posts and how they contradict the narrative of Portugal as a non-racist country. Next, we analyse how BNSC embodies a "collective feminist killjoy".

The reports of discrimination posted by the BNSC Instagram account correspond to the new configuration of feminist digital activism (McCaughey; Ayers, 2013). As a social practice (Lazar, 2007), this social media discourse fosters alternative forms of engagement with, and belonging to, Portuguese society, since it opposes the passive and subaltern colonial imaginary imposed on Brazilian women. The published denunciations disclose and challenge Portugal's denied dynamics of discrimination. Furthermore, they indisputably show that race, gender and coloniality function as axes of intersectional oppression shaping the experiences of these women in Portugal. Consequently, "intersectionality" theory (Brah, 2006; Lugones, 2008) substantiated our analysis, which unfolds in three categories: explicit prejudice and discrimination, implicit prejudice and hidden racism/sexism, and physical sexual harassment. For each category, we include three representative posts.

Explicit prejudice and discrimination

Some of the encounters with prejudice and discrimination experienced by Brazilian migrant women in Portugal are blatant. The insults and verbal assaults described in the posts reflect forms of symbolic, psychological and moral violence that expose how Portuguese society is still marked by racial and sexist hierarchies and coloniality.

> Post 1
> "An elderly Portuguese woman wanted to enter the shop and due to the limit on permitted persons, I asked her to wait. She said: 'You Brazilian women come here thinking that you will find a rich man to marry. Then you do not succeed and have to work here, in these little shops. You will never get a Portuguese passport because I will not let that happen.' Her friends started applauding."

> Post 2
> "I went to this café to get tested, and the owner asked me how I made ends meet over the last four months, without a job. I told him that I had saved some money, and then he said to one of the clients: 'It is impossible that she has all this money. I mean, she is Brazilian, right? She is a prostitute for sure.'"

> Post 3
> "I had a urinary infection and when I went to the doctor, she said: 'This is what happens when you do not close your legs.' The doctor was a woman, which upset me even more."

In post 1, a situation of inverse power relations, in which a Brazilian woman prevents a Portuguese woman from doing what she wanted to do, provokes a reaction of verbal aggression from the latter. In a sequence of stereotyped allegations aimed at re-establishing her own superiority, the Portuguese woman diminishes the Brazilian woman, claiming that her decision to move to Portugal was related to a desire to find a Portuguese husband. In the context of increasingly restrictive migration policies, including transnational marriage regulations (Moret; Andrikopoulos; Dahinden, 2021), the rise of marriages between Brazilian women and Portuguese men has gained visibility in the Portuguese media (Oliveira; Cabecinhas; Cunha, 2011). Given this situation, the colonial imaginary of Brazilian women, portraying them as "naturally and gaily sex-prone". (Piscitelli, 2008b:8) and with a particular erotic and seductive power over Portuguese men, casts suspicions on their motivation to migrate to Portugal, while simultaneously upholding their perceived association with the sex market. Lastly, the clapping support of the other Portuguese women after the insults against the Brazilian woman exemplifies the "us versus them" dynamic that positions Brazilian women as the racialized and sexualized "other" (Said, 1979).

This stereotype also emerges in post 2, in which the owner of a café implies that Brazilian women have to prostitute themselves in order to be financially stable amid the pandemic. In fact, as post 3 subsequently illustrates, insinuations about the promiscuous sexual behaviours of Brazilian women are made constantly – even under professional circumstances, such as during a medical appointment. This reasoning resembles the observations made by Frantz Fanon (2008) regarding the construct of the colonial body that functions to separate the supposedly superior Europeans from the colonized people, who were perceived as being unable to control their sexual instincts. In a similar vein, Verena Stolke (2006) reveals how, during colonial times, the control over white women's bodies that was exercised by their husbands, the church and the State, linked them to virtues, purity and cleanliness, while the sexual exploitation of black and indigenous slaves by colonizers associated them with depraved, perverted and immoral behaviours. This duality continues to be reproduced today, bolstering the sexualization of racialized women.

Implicit prejudice and hidden racism/sexism

Other encounters with prejudice and discrimination faced by Brazilian migrant women in Portugal are less evident. The racism and sexism that underlie the protagonists' view of Brazilian women often appear in a subtle form, disguised as compliments, jokes or mild statements. Resembling the racial microaggression construct presented by Dan Sue et al. (2007:271), these subtle harassing comments "communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults". In the case of Brazilian women in Portugal, these comments frequently objectify their bodies by reducing them to the status of sensual, beautifully feminine and approachable persons without agency of their own.

> Post 4
> "I was leaving the gym and wearing workout clothes. When I bent down to pick something up, a group of men approached me and asked if I needed help. I declined, and they replied: 'One can tell from afar that you are Brazilian, this little body does not leave any doubts.'"
>
> Post 5
> "I was sixteen and accompanied by my parents when a man stopped us and asked my father how much it would cost to marry me. He said that, thanks to him, I would get Portuguese documents, that I am a very 'hot' and pretty Zuca[2], and would consequently make a good wife."
>
> Post 6
> "I was with two Brazilian friends in a bar, and we met a Portuguese man who told us: 'You Brazilians should be happy. It was us, the Portuguese people, who created that hot mix that you are today'."

Post 4 reports a common situation involving Brazilian women in Portugal, who often find themselves exposed to racialized and sexualized comments disguised as compliments. These "harmless" and "courteous" comments reproduce the stereotype and the colonial imaginary of Brazilian bodies, which are purported to have especially feminine and sensual features (Gomes, 2013b; Padilla, 2007b; Piscitelli, 2008b). Due to the commonly inappropriate sexual content of these so-called "compliments", they can be regarded as unwelcome sexual advances. Overall, the presumption in Portugal that a woman is Brazilian, often based on the appearance of her body, frequently mobilizes either invasive behaviour from Portuguese men, who assume that she is "easy" and sexually available, or derogatory remarks that she does not correspond with the classic image of "Brazilian beauty".

This view is also reflected in post 5, in which an unknown Portuguese man is reported to have approached a young Brazilian to express his interest in marrying her, after acknowledging that she meets the qualities he looks for in a potential wife: that she is a "hot" and pretty Brazilian. This reproduces the racialized and sexualized image of Brazilian women as good "marriage material" due

[2] *Zuca* is a Portuguese term for Brazilians. It can, but does not always, have a pejorative connotation, depending on the context.

to their alleged domestic, submissive and caring nature, as well as their looks and "outstanding" sexual performance, as argued by Piscitelli (2008b). The offer to grant her Portuguese documents relates to the idea that Brazilian women are by default irregular migrants, and therefore inherently aim for marriage as a strategy to regularize their residence. Another common stereotype about Brazilian migrants in Portugal is their relationship with illegal or deceptive activities, portraying them as "tricksters" (Machado, 2003). Against this background, both the question regarding the woman's price and the assumption that Brazilian women would agree to marry in exchange for Portuguese documents demonstrate the continuing legacy of the Portuguese colonial social order, according to which colonized women were objectified and treated like products that can be purchased, sold and exchanged in the market.

Post 6 is a good illustration of how memories of the colonial past are approached with glorification in Portugal (Castelo, 2011; Almeida, 2008). In line with what Marta Araújo (2013) and Silvia Maeso (2019) have observed, the man interprets Portuguese colonialism as a gift to the colonized, which has enabled Brazil to become a culturally diverse and exotic melting pot of beautiful people – and the expression "hot mix" should therefore be taken as a compliment. According to this reasoning, Brazilian women should be grateful to the Portuguese people for the benevolence and ethnically enriching endeavours of their ancestors, which have served to "enhance" their beauty and sensuality. This reproduction of the unique "miscegenation" of people during Portuguese colonialism evades acknowledgement of the violence perpetrated by the colonizer against women from the colonies (Carneiro, 2003), exposing how the mythological narrative regarding Portugal's colonial conviviality is still alive (Maeso, 2019).

Physical sexual harassment

Sexism and racism against Brazilian women in Portugal also appear in the form of undesired, violent, physical, sexual encounters both in public and in private places. The inappropriate touching of women against their will, as reported in the following posts, can be regarded as aggressive acts of male power, to which Brazilian migrant women are particularly vulnerable in Portugal (Campos et al., 2018; Dias; Ramos, 2019). The physical and psychological violence of these acts of physical sexual harassment serve to threaten, unsettle and intimidate women, ultimately affecting their well-being.

> Post 7
> "Once, I took the really crowded subway to meet my husband during the lunch break, and it was winter. A man stuck his hand into my pocket to touch my vagina. I was super embarrassed and told him to get away from me. He played dumb, but a lady who was about to get off offered me her seat. At the same time, an old lady asked 'Why is the Brazilian complaining though? You guys like that!'"

> Post 8
> "I did an internship at a hospital, and my supervisor would always give me long hugs and kisses when greeting me. He always touched my arms and said how much he liked to have Brazilian interns. I felt constrained by this situation, I was repulsed when he was near me, and this happened often. One day, I said that these gestures made me feel uncomfortable. He got angry with me and said that if I wanted, I could quit the internship, but that he would be my best chance for professional recommendation. I was 24 years old, and he was 60."

> Post 9
> "I once had an emergency surgery and had to stay in a private hospital for three days. On the last night of my stay, I was awakened by feeling the hand of a nurse on my breast, under the sheet. When I opened my eyes, he said: "You Brazilian women are so delicious. What a breast!" I have never had the courage to tell anyone. This is a trauma that I will carry for the rest of my life."

The accounts presented above expose how Brazilian women's bodies are considered "available" to Portuguese men. The three posts above report situations, occurring in different environments, in which Portuguese men have assaulted Brazilian women's bodies. While in post 7

the assumption is made that Brazilian women do not mind sexual molestation, post 8 illustrates how the reinforcement of power hierarchies is still used as an abusive tool to "discipline" Brazilian women's bodies. Lastly, the description of an incapacitated body being attacked in post 9 clearly illustrates how the bodies of Brazilian women are regarded as a colonial territory to be exploited under any circumstance.

Portrayed as hypersexualized, submissive and available for sex, Brazilian women frequently have their bodies violated by undesired groping, touching, caressing or clutching. During colonialism, "sexual violence was a gendered and raced tool of colonial dominance" (Carneiro, 2003; Jordan, 2021). Sexual exploitation of Black and indigenous women encompassed various practices. Typically, colonizers would buy young women, separate them from their families and exploit them as sexual and domestic servants. In addition, slave owners would use rape and abuse as a practice to control, punish and discipline their female slaves. However, in Portuguese colonial narratives, this violence tends to be rendered invisible, romanticized and framed as the beginning of the "multiracial" and "multicultural" Portugal (see Araújo, 2013; Costa; Lacerda, 2007; Maeso, 2019). Furthermore, this historical context also feeds the myth that women from the colonies were sexually lascivious, lustful and perverted. This colonial narrative, which continues to be reproduced by the media, as well as in political and educational discourses (see Araújo, 2013; Pontes, 2004), normalizes and legitimizes the sexual assaults that Brazilian women often experience in public spaces in Portugal.

In the next section, we will argue how by gathering and publishing these denunciations, BNSC – as an example of feminist digital activism – represents a "collective feminist killjoy" act, seeking to unmask the sexism, racism and coloniality embedded in the daily experiences of Brazilian women in Portugal, but which is denied by the narratives "benevolent colonialization" and tolerant conviviality.

"Brasileiras não se calam": "digital killjoy" and collective combative resistance

We argue that although the posts published by BNSC do not reflect immediate reactions to the colonialist, sexist and racist attacks that Brazilian women experience daily, by gathering and showcasing these denunciations on social media, the project embodies a 'collective combative resistance' (Gomes; 2013) and becomes a "digital killjoy".

Embracing the figure of the killjoy, a member of the coordinating board of the project states: "I feel that the whole of Portuguese society ends up silencing us, they do not want us to talk about it [racism, sexism, coloniality]… I think we do fall silent quite a lot, but this is starting to be talked about". This position embodies an active refusal to allow the wounds inflicted by Portuguese colonialism to be reframed as a "happy ending" to the story. Reinforcing this position, they continue: "From the moment we talk about it, even if we don't show our faces, we prove that this [racism, sexism and coloniality] exists and happens here".

BNSC thus disturbs the Portuguese myth of a "harmonious and diverse country" by speaking up about "the bad feelings that get hidden, displaced or negated" by this happy narrative (Ahmed, 2010b). It exposes the inadequacy of the fallacious idea that racism in Portugal is an individual prejudice and not an endemic societal problem resulting from its colonial legacy (Araújo, 2013; Maeso, 2019). Consequently, the project is seen by many Portuguese people as sabotaging the community's happiness (Ahmed, 2010b:66), because it "talk[s] badly about the country", explains the coordinating board.

A month after the BNSC Instagram profile was launched in July 2020, the Portuguese newspaper *Público*[3] published an article entitled "Brazilian women don't stay quiet and are tired of harassment and prejudice", framing the project as a collective response denouncing the situation of Brazilian women in Portugal (Flor, 2020). Unsurprisingly, readers' comments about the article discredited the project by dismissing the way in which Brazilian migrant women in Portugal are unhappily affected by racism. For example, one comment stated: "What nonsense! But it's in

[3] *Público* is a Portuguese national newspaper of general information, offering analysis and opinions on politics, culture and current affairs. In 2020, it published 50,822 printed copies and 24,112 digital copies.

fashion, everyone wants to create an identity cause to call their own and go viral on the internet". Likewise, the coordinating board also referred to having received messages that portray them as the cause of their own "unhappiness": "[You] live here at the expense of the government, so why are you still complaining?". In such narratives, Brazilian women are presented as "melancholic migrants" who are unable to fit in, and self-exclude themselves by referring constantly to racism, which the narratives claim does not exist in Portuguese society. Ahmed (2010b) argues that migrants are seen as having have a duty to be happy, and may only talk about what is good in their 'new life', while they must not feel hurt by their daily encounters with oppression. Indeed, this corresponds exactly to widespread expectations regarding Brazilian women's behaviour in Portugal, as our interviewees explain: "People say… yes, this happened, but the show must go on. Don't let it affect you, carry on with your life".

In clear opposition to this common discourse, the BNSC collaborators refuse to minimize or deny their encounters with discrimination, and instead to speak about the unhappiness that surrounds Brazilian women's routine experiences in Portugal. Hence, the project breaks the rule that the colonized should live according to the colonizer's happiness script (Ahmed, 2010a), rebelling against the silenced position imposed on Brazilian women as a submissive colonial body.

As a collective act of resistance, BNSC further unveils the colonial imaginary of Brazilian women as sexually available and uncivilized beings (Padilla, 2007b; Piscitelli, 2008b), which has up until now underpinned the Portuguese discourse with regard to Brazilian women. Given that "Brazilian woman" in Portugal is not a substantive noun but rather a social, discursive, and performative construction (Gomes, 2013a), the fact that the BNSC project does not have a "face" makes it even more symbolic of the experiences of such women.

The posts disclose how the "happiness" myth of a diverse, tolerant, and anti-racist Portuguese society has always relied on the silence of its colonized subjects. For Ahmed (2010a: 8), this "refusal to look away from what has already been looked over" is a style of politics we acknowledge in the BNSC project. It fosters "resistance as re-existence", as Brazilian women engage with the construction of a combative resistance subjectivation mode (Gomes, 2013a; Lugones, 2003).

The coordinating board also refer to their intention to create "a space [for women] to tell their stories and feel (…) less lonely by meeting other women who have been through a similar situation". By enabling a collective recognition of "alienation from happiness", BNSC emerges as a feminist site of struggle. As such, it conforms to an "emotional space[s], in which the experience of solidarity is hardly exhaustive" (Ahmed, 2010a:4). Lastly, as a true collective of killjoys, the BNSC coordinating board declares: "Enough. [We] won't stay quiet any more. No, we are going to talk about it (…). People will have to know that this [racism, sexism and coloniality] exists".

Food for thoughts for future feminist killjoys possibilities

This paper has explored Brazilian migrant women's digital activism against discrimination and prejudice in Portugal and its resemblance to Ahmed's killjoy subjects (Ahmed, 2010). Based on netnographic research on the BNSC Instagram profile, and an in-depth interview with the project's coordinating board, our findings suggest that BNSC embodies the figure of the killjoy and performs an act of collective combative resistance (Gomes, 2013b) by using the social media space to denounce, disclose and challenge Portugal's denied dynamics of coloniality, racism and sexism. As the locus of feminist activism has spread across cyberspace, social media platforms reflect an accessible site of resistance for migrant women to become killjoys and disclose the oppressions they experience locally, and to foster transnational solidary.

As pointed out by Ahmed (2010), happiness within a "host community" has always relied on the silence of marginalized bodies. BNSC stands in direct contrast to these oppressive power dynamics, which shape the experiences of Brazilian women in Portugal. The project enables Brazilian women to confront their construction as a colonial body and to expose the inadequacy of the fallacious narrative that depicts Portugal as an open, non-racist and diverse country. BNSC brings to the surface "unhappy topics" with regard to the country's "(post)colonial legacy of 'race'" (Araújo, 2013:43) and gender. In doing so, it "kills" the fantasy of Portugal's exceptionality with regard to racism and diversity.

Moreover, while BNSC undisputedly causes discomfort in the Portuguese society, the project has also contributed to the untangling of Brazilian women's naturalized categorization in the country as a colonial body without agency. BNSC exposes Brazilian women's active refusal to continue remaining silent about their encounters with prejudice and discrimination. Thus, it promotes a shift in the submissive and passive position occupied by Brazilian women within colonial narratives, as it represents their refusal to conform to the "happy" colonial body. To use Ahmed's word, BNSC is a "willful" statement. We therefore expand on the reflections by Gomes (2013b) on the subjectivation modes of Brazilian women in Portugal by framing BNSC as a form of collective combative resistance. We argue that the project not only promotes the deconstruction of the hegemonic Portuguese discourse with regard to Brazilian women – demonstrating the possibility of multiple forms of "Brazilianness" – but it also fosters solidarity and creates a "collective consciousness" regarding the common violence experienced by these women.

Indeed, this killjoy positionality does not boost the popularity of Brazilian women in Portugal, as it provokes "bad feelings" and affront within Portuguese society and challenges the country's positive view of itself. In fact, it can even make their lives in Portugal more problematic, as it leads Brazilian women to be seen as troublemakers, sabotaging the public comfort and making Portuguese people feel uncomfortable about the injustices within their society. However, Brazilian women do not deliberately choose to move to Portugal in order to become killjoys, or to disclose the dynamics of racism, sexism and coloniality that are in place in the country. Rather, it is the violent effect of the discrimination and prejudice they experience in their daily lives that draws their attention towards the grievances they suffer within the Portuguese social order, and mobilizes them to embrace the role of killjoy.

Migrant women face particular challenges in organizing offline collective actions, given the implementation of increasingly restrictive migration policies, as well as work- or family-related limitations on participating in the public sphere. We therefore emphasize the need for support to be given to Brazilian women's digital activism in Portugal and elsewhere, by offline feminist, antiracist and decolonial movements. In addition, we also believe that academia must further engage with the online collective actions performed by Brazilian women migrants, and should address their critiques against coloniality, racism and sexism in order to help disrupt the narrative of the colonial body (Araújo, 2013).

Despite of our positive view of the potential of BNSC to transform the dominant narratives, discourses and imaginaries concerning Brazilian women in Portugal, we acknowledge the limits of digital activism, which we view as a complementary struggle to political activism and grassroots movements in the field. Scholarship has disclosed how online activism can dilute the potential for offline activism, as well as questioning the extent to which online activism can sustain collective action. It has pointed to the risks of glossing over the paramount role of offline activism to provoke real social change (Harlow, 2012; Harlow; Guo, 2014).

Our study used an innovative approach to shed light on the experiences of Brazilian migrant women in Portugal; however, we acknowledge certain limitations. Given that such research would go beyond the scope of this paper, we were unable to interview the women who commented on the posts, which would definitely offer first-hand findings regarding the impact that the BNSC campaign had on them. Moreover, we did not analyse posts relating to experiences in countries other than Portugal, nor did we examine the transnational reach of the project by looking at reposts, likes, etc. Analysing the popularity of the posts according to the number of "likes" and "comments" would also have endowed us with an innovative perspective on the most sensitive topic among Brazilian women abroad. Despite these limitations, this study provides relevant considerations concerning the transformative potential of BNSC as an embodiment of a "collective feminist killjoy".

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