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Cinematic Black Territories in São Paulo: Viviane Ferreira's *O dia de Jerusa* (2014) and *Um dia com Jerusa* (2020)

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Abstract: Written and directed by Black filmmaker Viviane Ferreira, the 2014 short film *O dia de Jerusa* and the 2020 feature film *Um dia com Jerusa* explore material and symbolic elements of Black culture in São Paulo's Bixiga neighborhood, a space typically associated with Italian culture in dominant cultural imaginaries. Drawing from work in cinema studies, urban geography, and Black feminist philosophy in Brazil, I examine how Ferreira seeks to recuperate Bixiga as a Black territory in São Paulo by centering the experiences of Black women in ways that challenge the stereotypical representation of Black communities in Brazilian cinema. Through close analysis of the aesthetic differences that change the tone and meaning of scenes adapted from the short film into the feature film, I examine how Ferreira makes visible the shared experiences of Afro-descendant communities creating a cinematic territory articulated through Black subjectivity and film aesthetics.

Keywords: Cinema studies, urban studies, Brazil, cinematic territories, aesthetics

Written and directed by Black Brazilian filmmaker Viviane Ferreira, the 2014 short film *O dia de Jerusa* and the 2020 feature-length film *Um dia com Jerusa* explore the relationship between everyday life for Black residents of São Paulo's

Bixiga[1] neighborhood and intergenerational memory of the area's longstanding Afro-descendant population. Ferreira employed a predominantly Black cast and production team to make both films, which were independently produced by Odun Formação e Produção, a production company cofounded by Ferreira.[2] The marketing and press for *Um dia com Jerusa* have emphasized that it is only the second mainstream feature-length film directed solely by a Black woman to be released in Brazil, after Adélia Sampaio's *Amor maldito* (1984). Shot in Bixiga, a neighborhood traditionally associated with Italian immigrants in São Paulo's cultural imaginary, both films explore material and symbolic elements of Black culture within public and private spaces of the city. Ferreira cinematically centers experiences of everyday life for Black residents in the present in ways that disrupt the stereotypes of Afro-Brazilians that have long circulated in Brazilian cultural production. Through a close reading of changes in the tone and meaning of scenes that are adapted from the short film into the feature film, I examine in this essay the ways that each make visible the shared, intergenerational experiences for Afro-descendant communities. I suggest that Ferreira opens a cinematic Black territory through the form and content of the films, an affective visual epistemology that cites previous contributions of Black cinema in Brazil while simultaneously recuperating the Bixiga neighborhood as a dynamic Black space in São Paulo.

Despite its common association with Italian culture, Bixiga has long been a center of Afro-Brazilian culture in São Paulo, beginning with the Saracura Quilombo founded along the river of the same name in the late 1700s by formerly enslaved Africans in what were then the outskirts of the colonial city. Since that time, there has been a constant material and cultural "whitening" of the area—through state-sanctioned police raids against the Afro-Brazilian population; government-aided increases in immigration from Italy in the 1920s and 1930s; the construction of the famed Minhocão elevated highway in the 1970s that destroyed a large section of the neighborhood; the calculated destruction of informally built

[1] Known originally as Bexiga, this neighborhood in the Bela Vista area of São Paulo is commonly referred to by both spellings. I use Bixiga, as employed by Ferreira to refer to the neighborhood in the films and interviews.

[2] In addition to founding Odun to focus on the production and distribution of films by Black directors, Ferreira is the founder and former president of the Associação de Profissionais do Audiovisual Negro (APAN) and currently serves as president of SPcine. Ferreira's leadership role in all of these areas of film production serves as an excellent example of what Reighan Gillam has recently examined as the importance of Black ownership and control in Afro-Brazilian cultural production to challenge the racist stereotypes that dominate the media landscape in Brazil.

cortiços largely inhabited by the Black population and the forced relocation of most of these residents to housing projects in Cidade Tiradentes in the 1980s; and the renewed turn to gentrification via real-estate speculation in São Paulo's downtown neighborhoods in recent years.[3] Despite the attempts to eliminate Afro-Brazilian culture from Bixiga by both the state and private capital accumulation, the area remains what Raquel Rolnik calls a "território negro em São Paulo" with "comunidades afro-brasileiras fortemente estruturadas e circunscritas a territórios particulares" (10).

This is echoed by Márcio Sampaio de Castro, who, in his ethnographic study on Black culture in Bixiga, argues that "o fenômeno da Saracura constituiu-se em uma impressionante marca de territorialidade no interior de uma cidade que insiste historicamente em não reconhecer suas especificidades negras" (91). Through his detailed investigation of present-day Afro-Brazilian cultural practices in Bixiga, such as the Vai-Vai samba school, candomblé terreiros, and the annual "lavagem da Rua da Mentira" by the Bloco Afro Oriashé—the performative washing away of the "false abolition" on Rua 13 de maio, named for the date of the abolition of slavery in Brazil—Castro makes visible the continued resistance by Black communities in the neighborhood, showing how "os processes de eliminação física ou simbólica … não são suficientemente eficientes diante … da realidade das pessoas que estão vivas, interagindo com o cotidiano e produzindo cultura" (93).

Both *O dia de Jerusa* and *Um dia com Jerusa* contribute to the continued cultural practices of Afro-descendant communities in Bixiga by cinematically centering Black experiences within the material spaces of the neighborhood, transforming Rua 13 de maio and Rua da Abolição from symbolic echoes of the past into spatial inscriptions of everyday life for Afro-Brazilian residents in the present. The short film focuses on the experiences of two Black women from different generations: Sílvia (Débora Marçal), a young woman originally from Bahia who works for a company that conducts surveys related to laundry detergent, and Jerusa (Léa Garcia), a seventy-seven-year-old resident of the neighborhood who lives alone with little communication from her family. The scenes juxtapose the activities of both women: we see Jerusa setting the table in her home and preparing a meal for a planned birthday party with her family, and we follow Sílvia as she walks to work; is scolded by her supervisor for being late and is told to

[3] See Rolnik; Castro; Stevens and De Meulder.

complete the surveys as quickly as possible; and deals with sexual harassment by a man she is asking to participate in the survey. The lives of the two women are brought together when Sílvia rings Jerusa's doorbell, and most of the film takes place in Jerusa's home in Bixiga. Jerusa parries the data-seeking questions of Sílvia's survey with meandering answers related to her family history, invoking such themes as resistance by enslaved women, old age, and solitude. Despite Sílvia's initial feelings of frustration when Jerusa's slow-paced banter disrupts her assignment to complete the survey quickly, Sílvia and Jerusa ultimately make a strong, unexpected connection and spend the rest of the day together, before saying goodbye on the dusk-filled street with a warm embrace and tender smiles.

The feature film largely maintains the same storyline as the short, and contains many of the same scenes and dialogue, albeit in expanded form. However, the feature develops Sílvia's character much more, notably with the additional storyline of her sexual identity as lesbian, the loss of her father to an "accident," and multiple fantasy sequences where she closes her eyes to see an unnamed woman fleeing from someone on her bicycle. We are also provided with more details of Jerusa's life, particularly the way that she uses photography both as an artistic practice and as a mnemonic device for personal and collective memories in Bixiga. The length of the feature also provides space to directly refer to Black history and cultural practices in the neighborhood that are merely alluded to in the short film. This includes more engagement with the importance of the Saracura River for the Black community; the symbolic washing of the "Rua de mentiras" on May 13; the impact of the Vai-Vai samba school as a localized site for Black cultural practices in dialogue with transnational Black movements for human rights; and the direct rejection of the dominant discourse of Bixiga as an Italian neighborhood by the Black communities that live and work in the region today.[4] In this way, Ferreira takes advantage of the extra space in the feature film to expand upon the myriad historical and present-day cultural practices of the Black community in Bixiga that contribute to its status as a Black territory in São Paulo.

Both of Ferreira's films put into practice many of the ideas outlined in Jeferson De's manifesto *Gênese do cinema brasileiro (Dogma Feijoada)*, which calls for a centering of Black directors, writers, and actors in the creation of a Black cinema

[4] I discuss these themes more thoroughly in my book project on recent cinema in São Paulo, examining the relationship between spatial practices and film in the symbolic and material production of the city.

that counters the stereotypical representation of Afro-Brazilians in mainstream Brazilian films.[5] We can clearly see a dialogue with these ideas in the work of Ferreira, who wrote and directed *O dia de Jerusa* and *Um dia com Jerusa* and consciously chose to cast Black actors and work with a Black production team—tapping Allan Abbadia for the original musical scores in both films, Elcimar Dias Pereira as producer of the short film, Lílis Soares as director of cinematography for the feature film, and Larissa Fulana de Tal as assistant director of the feature. It is crucial to note that Ferreira goes beyond De's manifesto by centering the experiences of Black *women* in both the profilmic and the production of these films, disrupting the gendered discourse in De's manifesto and a stereotypical representation of Black women that has been present in his own films, such as *Bróder*. In other words, the mode of address and the cinematic form—the filmic language used represent Black experience—is just as important to disrupting stereotypical representation of Black communities in Brazil as the visibility of a Black director and production crew of a given film. As I explain below, drawing from work by Ceiça Ferreira and Edileuza Penha de Souza, this is particularly evident in the way that Ferreira's films articulate the affective relationships among residents of the Black community in Bixiga—especially the intergenerational relationship between Black women.

Here we see the importance of putting approaches related to the notion of *lugar de fala* into filmmaking practice. Recently gaining broader public visibility in Brazil through Djamila Ribeiro's *O que é o lugar de fala?*, the concept has existed in multiple social contexts and academic fields since at least the 1970s. However, as Ribeiro herself notes, "não há uma epistemologia determinada sobre o termo lugar de fala especificamente, ou melhor, a origem do termo é imprecisa" (33). That said, Ribeiro's implementation of the concept clearly builds on the foundational work of Black Brazilian feminist theorist Lélia Gonzalez—in dialogue with other Black feminist scholars inside and outside of Brazil (e.g. Sueli Carneiro, bell hooks, Rosane Borges, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis).[6] Ribeiro emphasizes that "O falar não se restringe ao ato de emitar palavras, mas poder existir. Pensamos lugar de fala como refutar a historiografia tradicional e a

[5] See De and Carvalho; Carvalho and Domingues.

[6] I do not have space to review the theoretical concepts of all of these scholars here, yet their contributions are fully present in the work of Ribeiro and the other Brazilian scholars working on race and cinema cited throughout this article.

hierarquização de saberes consequente da hierarquia social" (36–37). This approach to thinking through the concept of *lugar de fala* echoes Gonzalez's work, cited in both the initial epigraph and the final sentence of Ribeiro's book, which includes the defiant line "neste trabalho assumimos nossa própria fala. Ou seja, o lixo vai falar, e numa boa" (Gonzalez 226). Ribeiro's use of Gonzalez's essay "Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasilieira" (1980/1984) as the foundation for her expansion of the notion of *lugar de fala* is important, in that it emphasizes a genealogy of Black feminist thought in Brazil—and written in Portuguese—that is often elided in anglophone Brazilian cultural studies.[7] Gonzalez's essay, in addition to offering an early dismantling of the myth of racial democracy in Brazil, identifies and critiques the social roles into which Black women in Brazil were forced beginning with slavery ("Trata-se das noções de mulata, doméstica e mãe preta" [224]) and the ways that Black women have actively resisted the foundational racism and sexism of Brazilian society that continues to guide dominant social imaginaries and practices, such as cinematic production. The conceptual foundation of Ribeiro's development of *lugar de fala* can be found in the initial section of Gonzalez's essay:

> O *lugar* em que nos situamos determinará nossa interpretação sobre o duplo fenômeno do racismo e do sexismo. Para nós o *racismo* se constitui como a *sintomática* que caracteriza a *neurose cultural brasileira*. Nesse sentido, veremos que sua articulação com o sexismo produz efeitos violentos sobre a mulher negra em particular. Conseqüentemente, o lugar de onde falaremos põe um outro. (224)

However, it is not merely the act of speaking from a nonhegemonic site of speech or giving voice to Black women that is important for Gonzalez and Ribeiro, but also the ways that inserting nonhegemonic language into social discourse "provoca e desestabiliza a epistemologia dominante" (Ribeiro 18) through "diversidade, teoria racial crítica e pensamento decolonial" (Ribeiro 34). As Flavia Rios notes,

[7] Gonzalez's work has become increasingly more visible in anglophone academic and activist circles, especially her development of the notion of *amefricanidade* and Améfrica Ladina, which served as the theme for the 2019 Latin American Studies Association Conference and is now cited as a foundational concept in BIPOC decolonial feminism throughout the Americas. See Gonzalez; Pinho et al.

"for Gonzalez, cultural language had to be subverted, since sexism, classism, and racism were the deep marks of the culture of colonial domination" (76). In other words, the notion of *lugar de fala* alluded to by Gonzalez and recently articulated by Ribeiro offers more to film and cultural studies scholars than the public debate surrounding the term in Brazil in response to Daniela Thomas's 2017 film *Vazante*.[8]

While the public response to the film made the issues of stereotypical representation of Black men and women in Brazilian cinema and the lack of subjectivity for Black characters in visual culture production in Brazil more visible to the broader population, these critiques were already present in Gonzalez's scholarly work in the late 1970s. This led her to contribute to film and theater productions that sought to subvert the racist and sexist foundations of Brazilian society, such as serving as an advisor to Cacá Diegues during the production of the 1984 film *Quilombo* (75).[9] Gonzalez's influence is evident in the work of Brazilian cinema scholars such as Ceiça Ferreira and Edileuza Penha de Souza, who cite Gonzalez's argument that racist and sexist stereotypes are circulated and strengthened through "discursos midiáticos e simbólicos por meio de narrativas nas quais os femininos negros são representados carregados de preconceitos e equívocos" (Souza and Santos 73). Both authors draw from Gonzalez—in dialogue with scholars such as bell hooks and Jaqueline Bobó—to develop critical practices related to the circulation of stereotypical depictions of Black women in Brazilian culture, and to examine the subversion of these cultural representations by Black filmmakers such as Viviane Ferreira, through a "cinema negro afirmativo" (73) that emphasizes "práticas de amor, afeto, cumplicidade e felicidade compartilhadas" (74) in Black communities in Brazil—such as is portrayed in *O dia de Jerusa*.

In this sense, *lugar de fala* is not an essentialist category of Black feminist thought, but rather a dynamic theoretical practice that opens a space for diverse expressions of experience in nonhegemonic languages; an opening and recognition of a multiplicity of experiences of Black communities in Brazil that are relational and collective. These approaches are central to Viviane Ferreira's films through

[8] See Dennison 104–6 for a summary of this debate.

[9] This is ironic, given that Diegues critiqued the notion of *lugar de fala* in 2017 as "nothing more than university nonsense, which can only serve to restrict freedom of expression" (quoted from Dennison 106). This is the exact opposite of what Gonzalez and Ribeiro's development of the term intends to do.

modes of addressing spectators and use of cinematic aesthetics that draw from a genealogy of Black cinema in Brazil, using traditional genres (such as melodrama) while subverting these frameworks with performances and technical approaches that articulate Black experiences and produce new cinematic Black territories from/through which to speak. Both *O dia de Jerusa* and *Um dia com Jerusa* insert a nonhegemonic cinematic epistemology into the representation of Black communities in mainstream Brazilian cinema. Ferreira's films not only center intergenerational Black experiences through the story and acting, but also articulate these experiences via the collaborative technical work of a production team largely formed by Black women. The films guide spectators via a Black cinematic mode of address—producing a visual aesthetic and narrative construction that disrupt stereotypical representations of Afro-Brazilians while simultaneously creating new ways of looking for spectators to engage with Black culture outside of the discourse of whiteness in mainstream Brazilian cinema that has been overwhelmingly projected by white directors, producers, and audiences throughout its history. Echoing hooks's foundational work on Black female spectatorship, subjectivity, and oppositional cinematic gazes, Ferreira's films "do not simply offer diverse representation, they imagine new transgressive possibilities for the formulation of identity" (hooks 130).

C. Ferreira and Souza have recently argued that there is a lack of critical work on the production and reception of cinema by Black women in Brazil that links feminist and cultural studies.[10] While both scholars dialogue with anglophone Black feminist theorists, they also construct a genealogy of Black feminist critique in cinema and cultural studies in Brazil written in Portuguese. C. Ferreira builds on Diony Maria Oliveira Soares's notion of the "Síndrome Zilda" (2008)—the types of roles that Black women have been pigeonholed into in mainstream Brazilian cinema and television that echo the three social roles identified by Gonzalez (*mulata*, *doméstica*, *mãe negra*), where they are often presented as background characters that lack affective relationships or are presented as erotic/sensual objects. C. Ferreira explains that the stereotypical representation of Black women as sexual objects or as maids highlights the "tendência de aprisionamento dessas personagens, em consonância com as mulheres negras, em um *território* de subalternidade ainda constante na carreira de atrizes negras

[10] See C. Ferreira; C. Ferreira and Souza; Souza and Santos.

precursoras, como Ruth de Souza e Léa Garcia, e também de atrizes más jovens, como Taís Araújo e Camila Pitanga" (177; emphasis in original).

In both *O dia de Jerusa* and *Um dia com Jerusa*, Viviane Ferreira challenges this stereotypical representation of Black women in Brazilian culture by creating a narrative that is precisely based upon the affective relations between two Black women from different generations—not from a place of subalternity, but as a cinematic Black territory that articulates collective experiences of Afro-Brazilian communities in Bixiga. The importance of Léa Garcia's role as Jerusa emphasizes the nonhegemonic epistemologies of Viviane Ferreira's films, which draw from Black cinema aesthetics and performance practices in Brazil and globally. Garcia was known for many roles that could be considered within the "subaltern cinematic territory" alluded to by C. Ferreira, from her role as Serafina in *Orfeu negro* (1959) through multiple roles in *novelas*, such as playing Rosa in the 1976 television adaptation of Bernardo Guimarães's novel *A escrava Isaura*. However, Garcia also participated in experimental theater troupes and social justice activism related to Black communities throughout her career, and one could argue that she was able to insert subversive performances that challenged the stereotypical roles into which Black actresses have been cast in mainstream cinema and television in Brazil. The inclusion of Garcia in the role of Jerusa is a key example of what Souza calls "cinema negro no feminino"—a concept of cinema that emerges from "territorialidade e dos princípios de coletividade e da comunalidade, [que] possibilita às diretoras negras recriar os espaços territórios silenciados pelo racismo e pela hetereonormatividade" (Ferreira and Souza n.p.). Echoing Gonzalez and Ribeiro, C. Ferreira and Souza argue that short films by Black women directors such as Viviane Ferreira, Renata Martins, and Larissa Fulana de Tal tell stories "a partir de seus lugares de fala, de suas vivências e identidades raciais e de gênero. São narrativas do cotidiano, de rompimentos, de superação e afetos, construídas sobre o zelo de um fazer cinema que humaniza e plenifica as subjetividades da população negra" (n.p.).

We can build on the work of C. Ferreira and Souza by focusing on the cinematic form through which these experiences are articulated in both the short and the feature film. If the goal is to focus on the ways that *cinema negro no feminino* recuperates sites of subjectivity that have been silenced by racism and heteronormativity, then we need to examine the specific cinematic techniques, modes of addressing viewers, and citations of Black cinema used by Viviane

Ferreira to converse with diverse audiences. This is especially true when considering the feature film, which had the goal of reaching a wider range of spectators both within Brazil and in the international film festival circuit while simultaneously centering Afro-Brazilian experiences within mainstream cinema frameworks. The importance of these formal elements is evident in interviews with Ferreira, such as an in-depth discussion with Brazilian film scholar and curator Janaína Oliveira following a screening of the feature film as part of the 28th African Film Festival in New York in 2021.[11] Nearly half of the forty-five-minute-long discussion is dedicated to the cinematic form and production of the feature, the influence of Zózimo Bulbul and Abderrahmane Sissako on the camerawork, pace, and mode of addressing spectators, and the mix of experimental theater performances with melodrama in the film. The focus on the formal elements of these films is important, as the recent focus on documentary or social-realist testimony in cultural studies approaches to Brazilian films often elides how directors seek to engage with spectators through specific cinematic techniques. These approaches often consider films by Black or Indigenous directors within anthropological or sociological analyses that largely echo the expectations of film festival audiences for a cinema of the "other" dealing with violence, inequality, political activism, and other stereotypical themes in recent mainstream Latin American films. This often leaves aesthetic or narrative innovations by Black directors such as Viviane Ferreira outside of academic analysis, ignoring how modes of addressing the spectators function to create complex, metacinematic reflections on power relations and representation that actually produce more thought-provoking and critical meanings than the spectatorial "witnessing" of testimonial truth-telling films.

Janaína Oliveira has made excellent critical contributions in this area, arguing for an engagement with "a panorama of oppositional aesthetic possibilities (as hooks writes) in a way that would avoid the expected and conventional frameworks of black experiences in film, wherein the themes historically consecrated as 'properly black' correspond to the paradigm of verisimilitude between black lives and cinema" ("With the *Alma no olho*" 35). It is important to examine how directors utilize and subvert existing cinematic structures and practices to engage with spectators within the diverse and often contradictory relationships in the

[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zk7k_LcP3aM.

production of meaning of a film's content. So, while I agree with Souza and Santos that Viviane Ferreira "resgata a sua história, construindo um cinema como ato político antirracista e contra-hegemônico" through "uma construção imagética que apresenta novas representações sobre as mulheres negras" (73), this antiracist and counterhegemonic political act may not be perceived as such by spectators. It is precisely the "construção imagética" that needs to be examined in more detail, to explore how Ferreira articulates this political act through the contradictory meanings and interpretations that spectators can draw from these "political" images, which, as Jacques Rancière has argued, is never a straightforward relationship between representation and action.[12] In the following sections I engage in close readings of two particular sequences that appear in both the short and the feature film—one in the public space of the street and one in the private space of the home. My goal is to examine how Ferreira's *cinema negro no feminino* employs filmic techniques, citationality, and modes of address to open up a cinematic Black territory that dislocates the stereotypical portrayal of Black communities in Brazil.

Scenes of Place in Bixiga in O dia de Jerusa and Um dia com Jerusa

In the first sequence of the short film, spectators see Jerusa walking down the street while pulling a shopping cart, with "Léa Garcia" appearing next to her image, immediately capturing the attention of the audience with the presence of this well-known actress. The image of a Black woman dressed in what appears to be maid's uniform while pulling a shopping cart immediately activates the stereotyped Zilda as the primary representation of Black women in mainstream cinema in Brazil, before later being subverted in the film. The silence of the initial shot, which visually focuses on Jerusa with faint noises of the city in the backdrop, is then sonically interrupted by a man yelling and making police siren sounds, and the image cuts to a *catador* attempting to slow down his cart full of cardboard while descending Rua da Abolição in Bixiga. There is then a cut to a homeless man, Kleber (Majó Sesan), who is shouting seemingly nonsensical verses and making the sound effects of police and gunfire, erratically moving his hands, rubbing his

[12] See Rancière for further discussion on the relationship between politics and aesthetics in film.

head, and guiding imaginary people to safety from the police—observed by both the *catador* and Sílvia, who is hurriedly walking to work.

Kleber continues to recite what spectators now understand are pieces of a poem—significantly, two verses of the poem "Minha mãe," written by the Black abolitionist poet Luiz Gama about his mother Luísa Mahin, a leader of the Malê Rebellion by enslaved people in Bahia in 1835. There is a cut to a shot of homeless couple having sex under a blanket as Kleber continues to recite "Minha mãe"; they briefly pause to exchange smiles with the catador, Sebastião, before returning to their lovemaking on the street. The camera then cuts to the final shot of the scene, with the homeless man lying on the ground, looking up a set of stairs toward the camera, as he slaps his hand on the ground while finishing a line from the poem: "Negra a cor da
escravidão"— contrasted with the joyful samba soundtrack that has played over the entire scene.

By placing the homeless couple, the shouting man, and the *catador* on Rua da Abolição on the fictional screen, filmed on this real street in Bixiga, Ferreira links the cinematic city with the built environment in São Paulo. She connects Gama's literary depiction of abolition and the resistant figure of his mother with the symbolic Rua da Abolição, while simultaneously inscribing the systemic violence that Afro-descendant populations continue to face today on this very street in Bixiga. This is amplified by the aesthetic depiction of Kleber, who is dressed in ragged clothes and is barefoot—a wardrobe choice that spectators immediately recognize as the clothing worn by thousands of homeless people they pass by daily on the streets of São Paulo. This, coupled with the realistic performance of dementia by Sesan and the final shot of Kleber lying on the stairs and gazing pleadingly toward the spectators as the line "Negra a cor da escravidão" is spoken, serves to emphasize the connection between the physical, mental, and systemic violence of slavery and the continuation of this racialized violence under another name experienced by Black communities today. At the same time, Souza and Santos note that Ferreira's depiction of the homeless couple making love, the *catador*, and Kleber recall bell hooks's notion of love as an act of transgression by marginalized people in a racist and capitalist society, attending to emotional needs as well as material as an act of resistance (71). They maintain that the scene "quebra estereótipos, humaniza e devolve a subjetividade que históricamente foi negada ao povo negro, nas telas e na vida real" (72). I would add that this sequence

also marks a diversity of experiences and material conditions in the present among Black residents of Bixiga, as both Jerusa and Sílvia offer a class distinction from the other protagonists in the scene that creates a more layered engagement for spectators with the community represented in the film.

There are multiple formal elements employed by Ferreira in this sequence that disrupt the expectations of spectators related to racialized violence in Brazil and produce an alternative cinematic space to articulate the lived experiences of Black Brazilians. The cheeky samba music extradiegetically laid upon the scene contrasts with the content of the verses being recited by Kleber and the images of the disturbed man. This disrupts the anthropological view of a marginalized "other" and the spectatorial witnessing commonly expected at film festivals, initially addressing audiences within these stereotypical tropes and then subverting their expectations and initial reactions to the scene. This is augmented by the comical smiles exchanged between the *catador* and the homeless couple having sex, taking this scene beyond the testimonial narrative of "verisimilitude" critiqued by Oliveira and instead producing a humorous tone for spectators that disrupts the cinematic discourse of empathy through victimization predominantly used in the depiction of homelessness. In this way, while the images indeed reflect the violent effects of systemic racism on the everyday lives of many Black Brazilians, the performative "overacting" by Sesan —and the later recognition that he is reciting lines from "Minha mãe"—exceed the visual stereotypes presented on screen. In other words, Ferreira does not employ a hegemonic approach that intends to document and denounce racial and economic injustice in this scene. Instead, she poetically alludes to these issues via a playful cinematic form, while engaging spectators through a more displaced mode of cinematic address that subverts what Lúcia Nagib calls the "illusionistic catharsis" of "reality effects" (109) typically expected of social-realist films focused on the experiences of Black communities in recent Brazilian cinema.

This plays out even further in the feature film, in which Kleber is not portrayed as a disturbed homeless person being observed by the other characters and the spectators. Instead, he is presented as an eccentric poet and artist—talking directly to the camera at times and reciting poems by two different authors in multiple scenes. The scene that parallels the initial sequence of the short film begins with a shot of the homeless couple having sex under the blanket, with the same cheeky samba tune playing in the background as in the short film. As the images of the

homeless couple appear, the audience hears the distant intradiegetic voice of Kleber reciting verses from "Minha mãe." At the exact moment that Kleber finishes the line "Os alvos dentes nevados / Da liberdade eram mito," there is a cut to Sílvia walking hurriedly down the Rua da Abolição, and this is the image the audience sees as Kleber then delivers the line "Negra a cor da escravidão." The emphasis of this line with an image of a seemingly middle-class Sílvia, as opposed to the senile homeless man in the short film, changes the meaning for spectators. Instead of visually connecting a homeless Black man as an effect of slavery and systemic racism in the present, in the feature film Sílvia appears as a visual counter to the verse—an articulation of resistance and perseverance by a Black woman despite racial and gendered violence stemming from slavery into the present.

In contrast to the short film, Kleber is wearing a shawl with multiple designs embroidered upon it—visually presenting him as an eccentric artist instead of a homeless man in rags. In the feature, Kleber recites "Minha mãe" as he stands with open arms in front of the Military Police Station 190. This allows Ferreira not only to make an explicit critique of police brutality against Black Brazilians in the present, but also to emphasize the historical origins of the Military Police committing violence against enslaved and free Black men and women during slavery[13]—set by the police station on the Rua da Abolição that marks the "false abolition" of slavery for Black communities in Bixiga (and throughout Brazil). While in the short film we observe Kleber as an almost hidden voyeur, accentuating his senility, in the feature film, spectators are brought directly into the action by Sesan's performance. Kleber steps into the shot and looks directly at the camera, involving the audience in a performative gunfight with police by pointing his fingers and shooting at us. There is then a cut back to a shot of Kleber being hit by several imaginary bullets, pushing himself up against the wall of the police station as he shouts dramatically and "dies" with his arms raised in an imitation of a Hollywood shoot-up sequence. The direct engagement with the camera and the "overacted" performance of Kleber in the scene disrupts the sociological witnessing that audiences stereotypically expect of the depiction of homelessness and violence in Latin American cinema. By looking into the camera in a close-up shot, and shooting imaginary bullets at spectators, Kleber does not allow us to be innocent observers of the violence depicted on the screen. Instead,

[13] See, for example, França; Jean.

Ferreira places spectators within the police/systemic violence being performed by Kleber; we contribute to his death against the police station. At the same time, no weapons, blood, or gory violence are depicted in this scene. Instead, Ferreira draws from these hegemonic images circulated about violence in Black communities in Brazil to then critique the spectacularized nature of these images and their consumption by film audiences through Kleber's performative murder by police/slavecatchers/audience—highlighting spectatorial complicity in systemic violence.

Sesan's performance of Kleber in the feature film clearly evokes Zózimo Bulbul's performance in his 1973 short film *Alma no olho*, what Janaína Oliveira has called "the inaugural gesture of black Cinema in Brazil" ("With the *Alma no olho*" 32) that serves as "uma das referências centrais para a juventude negra que se aventura a fazer cinema no país" ("Kbela" 647). Souza and Santos also refer to Viviane Ferreira as the "herdeira de Zózimo Bulbul" (72) in their discussion of the short film, but the cinematic citation of Bulbul's *Alma no olho* is much clearer in the feature film. In her interview with Oliveira, Ferreira mentions that Bulbul is the major influence for the mode of addressing spectators in the feature film. In Bulbul's performative short film about the experiences of Black communities in Brazil from slavery to the present, he looks directly into the camera to engage with spectators multiple times, "sometimes in complicity, sometimes with irony, but always defiantly" (Oliveira, "With the *Alma no olho*" 32). Oliveira connects this with hooks's notion of the oppositional gaze as an act of resistance for colonized Black people, and then emphasizes the aesthetic importance of the film and the need for engagement with Black cinema in the present beyond "verisimilitude"—the importance of recognizing the multitude of aesthetic and narrative approaches by Black directors beyond stereotypical notions of what spaces Black cinema should occupy within traditional cinema frameworks. The complex presentation of Kleber as a speaking subject "beyond verisimilitude" in the feature film is amplified in a second scene, where he is reading lines from the poem "As mãos da minha mãe" by Black feminist poet Lívia Natália. This sequence immediately undoes any previous interpretation that the spectators may have had from the initial scene in which Kleber represents an uneducated homeless man portraying the material, corporeal effects of systemic racism, and, instead, inserts the agency of Black poets and artists to engage with Black experiences through varied aesthetic approaches. Kleber is not presented as a subaltern subject who needs to be saved,

but rather as an active subject who speaks directly to the audience and, importantly in the film, Jerusa.

Kleber's voice in this performance is soft and sweet, with a different tone than the initial scene—emphasized in the beautiful articulation of the word "feminino" at the end of the verse. The performance is presented through a series of cuts, repetitions, and various camera angles—including a medium close-up shot taken by Jerusa herself that makes it seem as if Kleber is speaking directly to both her and the audience. Kleber's facial expressions and hand gestures emphasize the lyrics while performing for the audience on the public street. This starkly contrasts with the observational perspective of Kleber that spectators are presented with in the short film, opening an epistemological subjectivity within Bixiga itself—a cinematic Black territory—for the character that is missing from the short film. The sonic and visual tones of these scenes force spectators to listen to the content of the poem and connect it with the affirmative depiction of Kleber as a Black artist articulating lived experience to a Black audience within the diegesis (Jerusa) and the Black and non-Black spectators of the movie—rather than focus on the performative act of insanity and homelessness articulated in the short film. The fact that Jerusa directly engages with Kleber in this scene also allows us to connect the performance and the content of Natália's poem with the intergenerational relationship between Jerusa and Sílvia developed in both films.

Intergenerational Communal Relationships at Home

The majority of both films takes place within Jerusa's home, focusing on the intergenerational dialogue between two Black women who have inherited and resisted the systemic violence of the "false abolition" in different ways. This is clearly made evident in the stories told by Jerusa, such as how her grandmother escaped slavery and used cunning and skill to gain employment as a free woman—an allusion to the Saracura Quilombo—and how her mother spent her days washing the laundry of seven white families, alluding to the continuation of slavery under a different name after abolition. Especially important in both films are the different rhythms of everyday life that collide when Jerusa meets Sílvia. Time moves slowly in Jerusa's home, accentuated by her measured movements as she pulls a cake out of the oven, sets the table, and makes her way to answer the doorbell. The meandering answers to Sílvia's survey questions are full of pauses

and silences, where both the audience and Sílvia note the clock ticking in the kitchen. Souza and Santos suggest that it is through these stories that Jerusa guides the intergenerational connections with Sílvia, "representante de uma geração imersa no cotidiano apressado, em um mundo que se automatiza … com escassos momentos para diálogos profundos" (77). The disjunction between the quick, data-driven survey questions designed to quantify every aspect of human experience and the affective, memory-laden narrative answers offered by Jerusa mark what Henri Lefebvre refers to as a "eurhythmic" encounter between human bodies through physical, discursive, or emotional interactions, and the relationships between these bodies and the socially normed rhythms of the city that affect human practices in urban space. In both the short and the feature, the interaction between contradictory social rhythms articulated through the intergenerational dialogue between two Black women produces a change in their relationship to time and space within the private realm of a home in Bixiga, which radiates into a collective articulation of shared experience by the Black community in the neighborhood.

Near the end of the short film, Sílvia reads in the newspaper that she has been accepted to university, and she returns from the bathroom to share the news with Jerusa. It is here that the audience notices a change in Sílvia's demeanor, that Jerusa's stories about her family and experiences created a connection and a desire to share details of her own life.[14] Jerusa, sensing that Sílvia has grown weary of her stories, filled out the survey while she was in the bathroom and asks her to leave. Sílvia, who along with the audience has sensed Jerusa's loneliness and that her family would not show up for her birthday, grabs her hand and sings her a version of a birthday song that she learned while growing up in Bahia, leading to a montage sequence of Sílvia and Jerusa celebrating. They continue to sing together with the muffled voices diegetically heard by spectators, while a samba soundtrack is extradiegetically laid over the scene at a louder volume. In the montage, spectators observe a series of cuts between different activities that confuse the chronology of events as they drink coffee, eat cake, blow up balloons, blow out candles, and dance with one another—creating a sequence where past, present, and future sonically and visually appear simultaneously. This is punctuated by the last shot of the sequence, which returns to the initial image of the pair singing the Bahian birthday song that began the montage, ending in a

[14] This connection has been noted by others such as Dennison and Souza and Santos.

joyful, cathartic embrace that emphasizes the importance of affective human relationships that cannot be clearly categorized, placed in rhythmic order, or analyzed by the market logic of the survey.

The feature film contains many of the same interactions and dialogue between Jerusa and Sílvia within Jerusa's home, but adds more depth to their shared intergenerational experiences as Black women. The feature also offers a stark change in tone and cinematic techniques in the scene that parallels the montage sequence in the short film. As Sílvia heads to the bathroom, Jerusa completes the survey, just as in the short film. However, there is a cut to a shot that places spectators above Jerusa's shoulder, looking down at the clipboard with her. She pulls out a polaroid photo of a child laying their head in her lap as melancholic music is extradiegetically laid over the scene. Jerusa looks at the photo, brings it close to her chest in an embrace, and then attaches it to the clipboard with the survey. This moment accentuates her loneliness and the absences of her family in a much more serious tone than the one expressed in the short film, employing a melodramatic aesthetic to communicate the sadness and solitude felt by Jerusa. The use of melodrama to accentuate the affective relationship between Jerusa and Sílvia is key in both films, disrupting the Zilda stereotype by activating this familiar mode of address to emotionally connect spectators with the characters. This echoes Laura Podalsky's argument that film genres such as melodrama can "adapt to local conditions and speak to contemporaneous needs that are not only ideological or social, but also 'sensible'" (32).

Sílvia returns from the bathroom to share the news of being accepted into the university to find Jerusa slumped over on the couch, holding the clipboard with the completed survey and the photo. This moment is marked sonically with the whistling noise that accompanies Sílvia's fantasy sequences throughout the film—extradiegetically overlaid over the entire scene— alluding to a possible connection between the person in the photo and Sílvia's visions. Sílvia sits down next to Jerusa, and gently lays her head in her lap, beautifully echoing the image of the child in the photo. Eschewing the light-hearted montage sequence seen in the short film, here Ferreira emphasizes the intergenerational connection between Sílvia and Jerusa by inverting the care shown by Jerusa to the child in the image, as Sílvia takes on the role, comforting a community elder. Sílvia touches a mark on Jerusa's arm, referencing an earlier conversation about the branding of enslaved people—and then Sílvia takes a pen and draws a mark on her own arm, marking a corporeal

connection to shared experience across generations of Black communities in Brazil. The connection between the two is not accentuated by a montage mixing past and present time, but with the younger generation adapting to the temporal practices of Jerusa, living in the moment of their shared human connection—and especially the shared mental, physical, and emotional experiences as Black women in Brazil. The somber yet powerful mood of the scene differs greatly from the festive tone in the short film, addressing spectators through a melancholic shared experience that lingers after the scene ends. This echoes the lingering violence of enslavement on multiple generations of Black Brazilians, and how Jerusa and Sílvia simultaneously hold on to this traumatic past while experiencing joy, love, and intergenerational community in the present.

Conclusion

Centering the experiences of Black actors articulated by a Black production team to depict everyday life for Black communities in Bixiga, both *O dia de Jerusa* and *Um dia com Jerusa* insert a radical contestation of the projected whiteness of São Paulo typically circulated through visual culture. By recuperating Bixiga as a Black territory, the films transform the neighborhood into a physical and symbolic *lugar de fala* for a multigenerational, collective experience among Black women. In this way, Ferreira evokes the dialectic between consciousness and memory for Black women in Brazil articulated by Lélia Gonzalez, where consciousness (e.g., hegemonic thought) is an exclusionary "lugar do desconhecimento, do encobrimento, da alienação, do esquecimento e do saber" (226) that enters into a complex and necessary tension with the inclusiveness of memory (as a nonhegemonic practice), "o não-saber que conhece, esse lugar de inscrições que restituem uma história que não foi escrita, o lugar da emergência da verdade, dessa verdade que se estrutura como ficção" (226). Ferreira traces the collective consciousness and memory of Black culture in Bixiga through the affective relationship between two Black women from different generations with a shared connection to the Afro-Brazilian cultural practices in the present largely erased from the social imaginary of São Paulo.

At the same time, Ferreira creates a cinematic Black territory in both films, articulating Black experiences in Brazil beyond the stereotypical themes of poverty and violence through cinematic techniques that address spectators in different

ways. The short film goes beyond testimonial narrative of Afro-Brazilian experiences by utilizing an ironic tone to create a separation between spectators and the depiction of systemic violence in the initial sequence, while also humanizing the working poor and the homeless members of the community. This mode of address is repeated in the parallel sequence in the feature film, while adding further subjectivity to Kleber's character and emphasizing his capacity to speak to and challenge the unconscious stereotypes that viewers may hold through an artistic performance that cites prior contributions of Black cinema in Brazil—especially the work of Zózimo Bulbul. The montage sequence at the end of the short film upends the normalized social rhythms that seek to quantify the relationships between human beings and urban spaces by emphasizing the resistant, eurhythmic gesture of a shared experience between Black women from different generations. Conversely, time is not confused but rather slowed down at the end of the feature film, and the audience is not provided with joyous catharsis but rather asked to dwell on the melancholic—yet powerful—shared experiences of Jerusa and Sílvia. In both cases, Viviane Ferreira inserts a new cinematic Black territory into the discursive whiteness of the filmic apparatus of mainstream Brazilian cinema, citing prior Black cinematic practices while echoing the work of Black feminist thinkers in Brazil such as Lélia Gonzalez and Djamila Ribeiro, to "romper com a epistemologia dominante … desestabilizar e criar fissuras e tensionamentos a fim de fazer emergir … discursos potentes e construídos a partir de outras referências e geografias" (Ribeiro 50).

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