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COSMOCOLOURS – A PERFORMANCE WITH FILMS OF BRAZILIAN INCORPORATIONS AND A CONVERSATION WITH THE SPIRIT PRETA VELHA VO CIRINA²

ABSTRACT

During the performance *Cosmocouleurs* (*Cosmocolors*), presented at the exhibition *La Bête et l'Adversité* (*The Beast and Adversity*), in Geneva in 2015, the French anthropologist Barbara Glowczewski proposed a visual experience, confronting her 1979 films of Australian rituals (*Totemic Becomings*, São Paulo, 2015 and *Desert Dreamers*, Minneapolis, 2016), with umbanda rituals that she filmed in Brazil, in 2013 and 2015. She invited Clarissa Alcantara – Brazilian performance artist, philosopher and also squizoanalytical therapist trained in Deleuze and Guattari studies– to create a performative dance, where images made during a session of Exu (with a recording of dances by the participants in a state of incorporation by Orixás and other entities) would be projected onto her, such as might be done onto an animated screen.

keywords

Performance,
Umbanda, Florianopolis,
Anthropology
of Performance;
Schizoanalysis.

1. All my gratitude to Clarissa Alcantara for her inspiration, translation and dance.

2. Translation from Portuguese to English by B. Glowczewski Special thanks to Milari Barker and Nidala Barker for their proofreading.

The film maker Sandra Alves filmed this part of the performance, a 6' video *Cosmocores* here provided³. The second part of the text is a transcription of a conversation between the anthropologist and the spirit Vó Cirina (Grandma Cirina), an old Black woman (Preta Velha) incorporated in Abílio Noé da Silveira, the babalorixá of the Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina in Florianópolis (Brazil), who accepted the process of the Geneva performance.

On the other hand, (...) a more “post-modern” position might insist that the ethnographer or anthropologist can only *hope to* “represent” native words and life in his texts, whilst trances and possessions aim more to present a force rather than to represent a substance. In this case, it could be replied that the rapprochement between those different modes of learning could precisely help us to escape from the representationalist empire, which post-modern thinkers, themselves, have pointed out as anthropology’s limit. (Goldman, 2015: 24)

figure 1

Barbara
Glowczewski,
IANSÃ,
Cosmocouleurs/
Cosmocolours,
Geneva, 2015.
Filmed by
Sandra Alves.



3. <https://vimeo.com/208347518>, password cosmocores2017*

The performance *Cosmocolours* that I proposed for the exhibition *The Beast and Adversity* (Geneva, 2015) is a step in a long process of questioning that has haunted my work as an anthropologist since my first fieldwork in Australia, in 1979, when I filmed desert Aboriginal rituals. Until then I was using an intermittent mode to record frame by frame the 16mm film strip, so as to produce experimental films working on rhythmic superimpositions and flickering pulsating lights: a music for the eyes and a visual exploration for our senses. In place of narrative, the fabrication of discontinuous images working on perception so as to interrupt the continuity of movement. Inspired by the movement of independent cinema and promoted at the University of Paris VIII (in the forest of Vincennes, near Paris) by the film makers Claudine Eizykman and Guy Fihman, this research was aiming to produce a dis-narrative effect with a material, and sensory perceptual effect of discontinuity, by playing with the 24 frames per second scrolling of the 16mm film roll. Personally, apart from the aesthetic and sensory dimension, I was also looking for a way to provoke altered states of consciousness arising from these subliminal stimuli. Such experimentations were echoing experimental films made at the beginning of cinema by artists like Maya Deren (1947-53), an anthropologist, who was also questioning how to render forces at play in rituals and trances that she observed, particularly in Haiti.

To film in the central Australian desert in 1979, I used a little Pathé Webo 16mm camera, which only fitted 3 minutes cartridges. My shots were not even longer than a quarter of a second each, and with many superimpositions created by rewinding the camera to re-film on images previously shot. This process created effects of superimposed images at different rhythms, mixing (in the same frame) close-ups with zooming movement and wide angle shots with the line of the horizon displaced as a diagonal and flickering scintillating rhythms; the Warlpiri women, whose rituals I had filmed, were not really convinced by my attempt to transpose in that way their relation to what they call *Jukurrpa* and which they translate in English as “The Dreaming(s)”. To help the viewers to capture something of this Aboriginal cosmovision of the dreaming process, I had assumed, mistakenly, that I could suggest the condensation process characterizing dreams, by “retranslating” it through visual experimentations – constrained by the possibilities of a mechanical camera. Well, the Warlpiri specialists of dream – that is, women who use their dreams to communicate with ancestral totemic animals, plants, rain or wind– asked me to film “normally” so as to respect the right “rhythm” of their dances, where they are said to “become” particular ancestral totemic forces. In those days, in the 1970’s, the Warlpiri women were not familiar with films based on special effects which were going to be globally popularized later on. So I filmed “normally” (Glowczewski 2014) and it is 15 minutes of those “normal” images (16mm, silent) that I presented at the performance in Geneva.

Like Maya Deren, who did not find in the dreamlike apology of surrealism a response to the transmission of spiritual experiences (Sullivan 2001), I was asking myself how to render and make feel the “presence” of a ritual, with its affects and effects, in a way that would escape the reduction induced by any commented representation of a filmed sequence. Anna Barseghian’s invitation to participate in her exhibition project *The Beast and Adversity* stimulated me to try a visual experience that would confront my images of Australian rituals with the Umbanda rituals that I had recently filmed in Brazil⁴. I was motivated by the desire to make (others) feel that beyond the diversity of these rituals, there is something that feels “common”, that is, the specific intention of these types of cosmovisions to facilitate, through the collective assemblage, the emergence of a multiplicity of becomings in each of the participants that desires so: in Australia, totemic becomings of the Dreamings, ancestral forces shared by humans, animals, plants, wind or rain; in Brazil, ancestral becomings of African divinities, the Orixás, and spirits of Caboclo, Preto Velho, Beijada, Exu e Pomba-Gira.

After witnessing hundreds of Aboriginal totemic rituals in which people “become” the totems that are given as their “dreamings” since birth or initiation, I was surprised to see in Brazil some episodes in the Umbanda rituals that seemed to present certain features that I thought were specific to Australia. In fact, both kinds of ritual respond in their own way to Guattari’s definition of “I is another, a multiplicity of others, embodied at the intersection of partial components of enunciation, overflowing individuated identity and the organized body in all directions.”⁴²

I met many Brazilians who have been at least once to a *Candomblé* or Umbanda house of a *pai* or *mãe de santo* (father or mother of saint) for a divination with cowrie shells and stones to find out which Orixá (sometimes two or more) they carry “inside” them as a virtuality that may or may not be actualized. It takes a relatively long initiation for the “medium” to be ready for his/her Orixá to manifest during the cult. Certain people choose not to engage in this process, while others, even after initiation may never experience it. In other words, “becoming orixá” appears different from the notion of a body being passively possessed as the vehicle for an Orixá. People talk about being incorporated, receiving a shade or “working” as a medium. (Glowczewski 2015: 36)

4. I was invited, from February till July 2013, by CAPES and CNPq to give a course (in anthropology) at USFC and to give conferences at other universities: USP, PUC-SP, UFRGS, UFG, UFPE, Fundação Joaquim Nabuco in Recife, UFMS, UFSCAR e UFPEL-RS. Special thanks to all these Brazilian institutions for the opportunity to carry out this research.

When I went back to Brazil, in 2015, I asked Clarissa Alcantara (2011) – performing artist, philosopher, squizoanalytical therapist trained in Deleuze and Guattari studies⁵, involved, for many years, in the type of rituals I filmed in Brazil – if she would accept to collaborate with me for the presentation in Geneva. The proposition was to create a performative dance, where images made during a session of Exu (with a recording of dances by the participants in a state of incorporation by Orixás and other entities) would be projected onto her, such as might be done onto an animated screen. The movement of her body, that already had lived through and embodied different states of incorporation as a medium, would allow to “reflect” in a real and figurative sense different aspects of the multiplicity incorporated in the filmed people. Clarissa, responded enthusiastically to this proposal that brought together art, anthropology, philosophy and the sacred, an assemblage that also corresponded to her own research, as explained in her post-doctoral project:

... at the intersection of different fields of knowledge, taking as a motto a research started in 1988, called *Teatro Desessência*, the Theatre of “de-essence” and my relation with the image and the oblivion, I will investigate now the framework of an anthropological perspective. This research is made of combinations rising between art, philosophy, literary theory and psychological clinic, from the invention of a practice of performance, the “act/process” (*ato/processo*), and my devices (*dispositivos*) for producing image in the process of corporeal, visual and sound language, articulated with pragmatics of *squizoanalysis*, as proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. (Alcantara 2014: 3)

We went together to talk with the Father of saints Abílio Noé da Silveira, Babalorixá of the Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina in Florianópolis, the “Spiritual tent” located in his private house where I had filmed sessions of incorporations,

5. We met in Uberaba, at the International Congress of Squizoanalysis and Squizodrama organized by the Fundação Gregorio Barenblitt, in 2013. I invited Clarissa Alcantara to participate in the event I was organising at UFSC, with Miriam Grossi, as part of my research program TransOceanik (an Internacional Associated Laboratory between the CNRS and James Cook University in Australia) : *Blurred Interfaces: questioning norms, classifications and the primacy of language/Interfaces borradas : Questionando normas, classificações e primado da linguagem*, 27-29 May 2013, UFSC – Florianópolis, Brasil. This meeting also allowed the creation in the Lagoa Theatre of a joint workshop “Teatro Surdo + Teatro Desessência”, of Clarissa Alcantara and Olivier Schetrit, a French born deaf actor, film maker, then student in anthropology (PhD 2016). <http://transoceanik.paginas.ufsc.br/programme/> C. Alcantara was invited for a another TransOceanik Conference, *L'envers du décor : émergence des formes et agencements d'existence*, Jan. 2014, at the Collège de France, in Paris.

every thursday, from February till June 2013. With generosity and confidence, he accepted the project. I filmed, in February 2015, three other sessions of incorporations and called the project in French *Cosmocouleurs* (*Cosmocolours*), referring to the different colours that characterize each of the Orixás (red for Iansã, yellow for Oxum, green for Oxóssi, blue for Yemanjá, etc.), and for each of the phalanges (*falange*) of spirits: red and black for Exu, white and black for Preto Velho (Old Black people), green for Caboclos (Indigenous people and their descendants of mixed ancestry), pink and light blue for Beijada (children). The colors of the clothes of the mediums correspond to the entities that they prepare themselves to incorporate; and the fabrics that cover the *atabaque* drums also relate to specific Orixas. All these colors translate heterogeneous spaces that constitute the cosmos of those Orixás, but who manifest and multiply themselves simultaneously through several mediums, in each terreiro, as the place for such events. The term *Cosmocolours* translate these cosmopolitics that connect heterogeneous spaces with a given place and moment. An event which has its own time, in the ritual, deterritorializing and reterritorializing the participants.

figure 2

Incorporation of Caboclos, Tenda Espirita Vó Cirina, Florianópolis, 2013. Filmed by Barbara Glowczewski.



figure 3

Incorporation of Beijada during Caboclo, Florianópolis, 2013. Filmed by Barbara Glowczewski.



The performance *Cosmocolours* that took place in the room Le Commun (BAC – Bâtiment d'Art Contemporain) in Geneva, on the 21 of August 2015, unfold over two hours and a half, in four stages. First, images were projected on Clarissa Alcantara; secondly, images of Umbanda filmed in 2013 were projected on a wall; thirdly, an image filmed in 2015 was projected on another wall, at an angle with the images of the first wall; during the whole time of the projection I told a story, standing in the dark of the room to accompany the images of the Umbanda sessions (Beijada, Preto Velho, Caboclo e Exu) and interviews with Father Abílio. During the fourth stage, I commented the Warlpiri women rituals that I had filmed, without sound, in the central Australian desert in 1979; the images were projected alone on the first wall. Finally, there was a half an hour conversation with all the audience. After the event, back in Paris, I edited with Dominique Masson a 26' version of the performance (that she filmed): *Cosmocouleurs – Incorporations* can be seen through Vimeo, on the website of the curators of the exhibition *La Bête et l'Adversité* (Glowczewski 2017).

For this issue of GIS, I chose the first part of the performance, with Clarissa Alcantara dancing for 7 minutes, as filmed by the Brazilian film maker Sandra Alves. Clarissa's white cloak, like a long veil and dress spread in front of her body, served as a screen for the projection. I trailed her, projector in hand. The first experimentation of this setting (*dispositivo*) was done with Clarissa, in March 2015, at the *terreiro* of Babalorixá Kabila Aruanda⁶, now called Nação Livre de Culto aos Orixás Korrente da Alegria de Aruanda, located in Embu das Artes, a couple of hours from São Paulo. Clarissa Alcantara saw my films of the Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina and selected for the performance a sequence of a session of Exu and Pomba-Gira: ancestral spirits of dead people, men and women linked with pleasure and lust, who (after death) turned themselves into messengers between Orixás and humans.

6. Clarissa Alcantara invited Kabila Aruanda with other Brazilian artists, film maker Sandra Alves, musician Ive Luna and ten *iaôs* (sons and daughters of saint), artists of the Usina da Alegria Planetária – UAP, a collective created by Kabila–, to participate to the Geneva exhibition *The Beast and Adversity*, by making together a performance Act/process-ritual Fury, on the 22 of August 2015. The day after, Kabila talked about his experience and collective mode of existence in Aruanda (Alcantara 2016).

figure 4



figure 5



figure 6



figure 7



figure 8



figure 9



During the performance in Geneva, Clarissa kneeling head down rose very slowly to dance. In the dark, a few meters away, carrying the projector at different heights, sometimes squatting or walking closer to Clarissa, I tried to make the the beam of the twirling movements (*giros*) of Exus and Pomba-Giras coincide with her own movements. Sometimes a close shot of a face would cover all her body, other times an entire silhouette would turn like her, or a group of different entities would multiply on the white outfit of the dancer, including *ogãs*, that is people who do not enter a trance, but help the entities and can also beat the *atabaque* drums. It is important to note that the film presents an angle of vision chosen by film maker Sandra Alves, who moved around to film, creating a point of view different from the angle adopted by Dominique Masson, who was posted just behind me: these two angles are also different from the one I had, or from the diverse ones observed by the people sitting on my right or left in the room of the BAC. In other terms, the experience of projected images on the costume of the dancer that looked like a series of veils in movement—very strongly felt in each instant by myself as well as Clarissa and the audience— belongs to the moment of the performance event that filming cannot give back to feel in the same way. Similarly, according to the public, the story that I improvised along the images projected on the wall stimulated, a *presence effect* which would be difficult to produce with a simple commentary in the film.

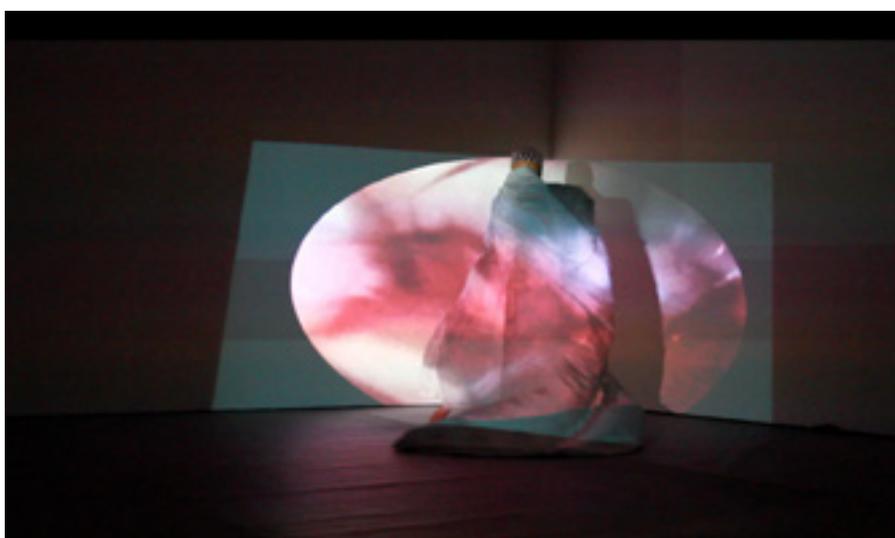
In August 2016, when we worked on this paper, Clarissa summarized her experience in this way:

The dance proposed by Barbara in *Cosmoscores* (*Cosmo-colours*), did not happen, for me, only like a performative dance. Art is sacred, intensified by the proposed device/arrangement (*dispositivo*), forced a passage to another type of opening. A new dimension was introduced, developing the performance: the sacred was materialized in a subtle state of incorporation. The long white cape chosen by Kabila Aruanda, that he had made especially for a ritual of *bombogira* Dona Maria Gertrudes, the founder of his terreiro, served, not just as a screen for the projection of the Exus and Pomba-Giras images, but also as a vehicle for the vibration of a feminine Orixá, Iansã: the proper force of the winds, lightning, tempests, that also govern and guard the universe of all Exus. In the absence of a ritual symbolic mediation, it is thanks to the strange mystery of mediumnity, that Iansã, anonymous and imperceptible to the others, embodied herself there, penetrating her vibratile force in each breath of my body. During *Cosmocores*, in fact, she was the one dancing.

figure 10



figure 11



figures 4-11

Clarissa Alcantara dances in front of images of Pomba giras, Exus and Malandros incorporations filmed in Brazil and projected on her by Barbara Glowczewski in Geneva (2015).
Extracted from *Cosmocores*, film by Sandra Alves.

For me, the beauty and strength of Clarissa's performance in Geneva created a presence allowing in its own way to recreate the presence of multiple becomings, suggesting the effective co-existence and the capacity to affect those who were attending. During the performance, as images were projected on her, I felt that our interaction was lifting her breath to another space-time. I allowed myself, then, to be sucked into a sort of vortex, materialized by the luminous beams that I projected on her. She seemed to merge herself within the projected image, as much as the people that I had filmed in a state of incorporation were starting to live and animate her silhouette by multiplying her presence. I had a strange conscience of the presence of the public, a little bit as if I was feeling them not behind or next to me but from the point of view of what was animating itself in front of us, as if we had all crossed the mirror of the projection. It is only when Clarissa covered herself in the corner of the walls (under the frame of a new film projected from the ceiling) that I recovered my own feet on the ground to carry me to give her my hand to lift her up and take her out of the dance floor. The words that came to me afterwards so to accompany the images from the *terreiro* Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina came naturally, without having been prepared in this way. During the final debate, The public expressed how they very receptive to all that had happened.

figure 12

Cosmocolours
installation with films
by B. Glowczewski:
on the left, Patrícia,
daughter of saint of
the Tenda Espírita
Vó Cirina, Umbanda
Almas de Angola,
2013; on the
right: daughters
and sons of saint
of the Terreiro,
2015. Geneva
2015. Filmed by
Dominique Masson.



Back in Florianópolis in September 2015, Clarissa Alcantara and Sandra Alves visited Father Abílio at the Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina to show him the filmed images of the performance and ask him if he consented to their free access on Internet. He showed genuine happiness and interest in seeing the images. Then quickly accepted their release.

A year later, on Thursday the 11th of August, I went back with Clarissa to the Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina to attend a new session of Preto Velho. There I was delighted to meet the old sons and daughters of Father Abílio, as well as a big number of new participants, notably many young ones. Abílio was very busy giving consultations every day of the week. I booked an appointment for Monday to consult with the guardian spirit of the Tenda house, the Preta Velha (Black old woman) Vó Cirina. We talked for an hour and a half. I tried to ask my questions in Portuguese, though making many mistakes. Clarissa helped me to clarify my questions and translate the responses of Vó Cirina. Shortly after, Clarissa transcribed the conversation and adapted my (recorded) questions in proper Portuguese, from which I chose the various extracts proposed below.

It was a very rich teaching exchange. Most of all it showed how the Vó Cirina spirit interpreted my spiritual and anthropological questioning so as to give a response that was a non intellectual response, but revealed to be at the same time anthropological and philosophical. Thus, from the spirit's point of view, it was obvious that my relation with religion since my childhood and my shared experience with "índios" (Aboriginal people) of Australia, was connected to a feeling of the sacred and of socially grounded cosmological relations (cosmopolitics) with the earth and its forces – common to the experience of the sacred, revealed by the Orixás – that was different from Christianity. This declaration comes close here to a form of theoretical position that disagrees with various current theories which, since the beginning of the discipline of anthropology tend to oppose Australian totemism and cults of trance, such as Afro-Brazilian ones, as two forms of religion or ontologies with non compatible forms of logic. It is obvious that Indigenous rituals and Afro-Brazilian ones are different. Each of them in its particular way carries its own singularity, not just as an indigenous ritual or as an Afro-Brazilian ritual, but also with different rituals for each of the many Indigenous peoples (in Brazil as well as in Australia), or for each of the specific *terreiros* (Umbanda Angola or not, Candomblé or other) while each performance of these rituals is unique. However, a transversal trait of singularity seems to connect them.

I was deeply struck when I saw for the first time, in 2013, the incorporations of Orixás and spirits of dead in Umbanda, feeling it as something familiar. My observation was that this feeling was producing a sense of

“common” with what I had lived in Australia during the rituals (dances, songs, paintings on the body) that mapped totemic becomings of the Warlpiri Dreaming lines. I understood later that this insight of “common” is specifically articulated around the valorisation of heterogeneity and multiplicity that manifest themselves both in Brazilian cults of African matrix and in Indigenous Australian experience of totemic becomings.

During the discussion that followed the *Cosmocolours* performance in Geneva, several people shared their impressions in relation to this multiplicity and the experience of a “common”, which is at the same time social and spiritual.

One thing that I found really beautiful in these Brazilian ritual dances – as you said, despite the fact that there is a type of image of the Brazilian society as perfectly mixed, that would be perfect, in practice we understand that there is a blatant inequality between different populations – here (in the rituals) differences are highlighted, but in fact, without hierarchy, everybody is accepted. But, in fact, in this multitude, there is also – at least in my eyes – a type of unity because everybody is accepted, this is what touched me a lot.” (Mucyo Karemara, Swiss young man, PhD candidate in Physics, *Cosmocolours*’ debate. Geneva, 21 August 2015)..

The multiplicity in constant becoming is also at the heart of Deleuze philosophy and the ecosophy developed by his thought companion, Félix Guattari, who accompanied my research (Glowczewski 2015). I must admit that the experience of such a transversal complicity with the spirit of the Black old woman, Preta Velha Vó Cirina, (who defines herself as an Orixá, because she helps everybody), brings me joy.

It is not important if Vó Cirina exists or not as a spirit, she does exist as affect and effect in the relations with the people who consult her. Such relations are to be seen partly as the desire of each person. In this sense, she reveals a reality that cannot be proved according to a scientific mode, it is a “real” that cannot be named. But we can try to transmit the ethnographic presence using sentences of our conversation, inviting the readers to live a subjective reading situation. An experience that reveals, beyond any image, another order that does not assume a discursive order, nor any form of symbolic language.

figure 13
Vó Cirina da Praia
in consultation,
Florianópolis,
May 2013. Photo
by Barbara
Glowczewski.



CONSULTATION OF BARBARA WITH VÓ CIRINA (EXTRACT)

August 15, 2016

B - When I was 24 I went to Australia and met Australian Indigenous people.

VC – What I am going to say for start, is that her level is the same as that of the “Indians”, I do not talk about the Indians? I talk. Because she brings an energy of persons who already left, Tupi-Guarani, Guarani... Therefore, you have everything at the spiritual level, you can even watch (Christian ritual), but you are not going to feel well. Because Vó (the spiritual grand-mother) and the Souls (Almas) of Angola, which are Umbanda, have Candomblé, but the foundation of all of it comes from the source which is God alone. Only the fact that you did not accept this level (of Church), accept this spiritual level, why? Because you came over already with that mission since a little girl to assume it... this is why it could not be done (that you become a nun).

B – When I met these people called Warlpiri, who have a very strong spiritual relation (ligação) with animals, with the wind, with the mountain, with the

water, and they call this dreamings (sonhos, sonhares). In their language, these relations/connections with animals, winds, plants, are called dreams. They celebrate, sing the travels of ancestral beings, a mixture of human and animal or plant people, wind people and rain people, and all travel from place to place. Creating places, rocks, waterfalls, springs and waterholes.

VC – And like Vovó says: you talked about the waterfall, it's the energy of Oxum. They are Orixas that live in the waterfall. You talked about the wind. Wind, what works with the wind? It is Iansa. You talk about rocks. Xango. Xango vibrates at the beginning of the waterfall, in the middle of the waterfall where Oxum lives. Only inside our ritual of the Souls of Angola do we hold two qualities for Oxum, we have Oxum Apa Apará, (...?), and Oxumaré. Why Oxumaré? Because during six months it's a man, and during six months it's a woman. You talked about the waters, there is Yemanjá. All that you heard here, our talks, it all has to do with your Self it is your own spiritual level, my daughter. There is nothing wrong. You talked about the beast (*bicho*), the animal...(Vo Cirina sings)

“Oxossi is the hunter, I love to see hunting.

Oxossi is the hunter, I love to see hunting.

In the day he hunts in the forest, in the night he hunts in the sea”

Why? Because he is a hunter, he kills to eat. The forest is where Oxossi lives, who is an Orixa who never incorporated in a human being, for this (reason) he comes as Orixa. If it was like me, I already lived on the earth, I am an *egun*, evolved from light. Caboclo is *egun*, Beijada are *egun*, but they are evolved. But the rest of our saints are Orixas, they are brought they were born inside the waterfall. I have the foundations (fundamentals?) that has a Vo, I have the knowledge of a Vo, *né* (isn't that so), my daughter, there are things that I cannot answer. There are mysteries of life, that's it.

B – *For Aboriginal people, the “índios” of Australia, every child when it is born embodies (incorpora) the spirit of a place that links her/him to an animal, a plant or wind, etc. all new-born children. This revelation shows in a dream.*

VC – Really! When Jurunata, who is an Indian man, who came in the head of my son the first time, the first time he incorporated in my son. Jurunata, who is an Indian man, was born in Uruguay (and lived) until 21, then for reason of fight over land they hurt him, *né*, he disincarnated. When he arrived on the strip (*terreiro*) for the first time, he asked to plant a stem of a tree, the one here on the front, *araçá*, this red *araçá*, you know? These two stems that are here, are his, they were planted in his name, because he lives from the energy of the green leaves, when he came in the head of my son for the first time, and the stem here is

his. And it can be removed from here chopped only when my son is no longer here. This is his.

B – *What is the link of this spirit with Vó Cirina?*

VC – when I opened my house, my son opened it with me with mother Yemanjá, and we needed another spiritual person that works with leaves. Then, in this space (*arraial=terreiro*) the Vó made a *ponto* (*ponto riscado*, a special “cross out” design on the ground) of Oxalá here in the middle and sang so that he would show up and visit my house. In that prayer what showed up was this Indian (*índio*), it could have been another one, *né*, it could have been the Seven Arrows (*Sete Flechas*), it could have been Ubirajara, it could have been Pena Azul, but the one who came then, is he (*Jurunata*) who came to us, the *Tupã* who is the bigger, who is the God for them, he sent this Indian (*índio*) so he makes the work of healing (*cura*). So, a person who lies down in my *terreiro*, here in the middle –you can participate one day if there is a sick person- she is covered with leaves, and Indians and Caboclos work around that person. Many people have already been cured here, those “balls” (*bolas*, breast nodules) here, and other things inside here (VC shows her belly). The doctor can’t do it (*não deu jeito*), but he (the spirit) can.

His name is *Jurunata* that was given to him by his tribe. He comes just to cure. The people stay under the leaves, entirely covered, lying on a mat, under a white sheet. He already did a lot of good things. He only does it when I ask, when I request to do so, when there is a necessity. When I can cure with a candle, a prayer, he does not come. And he comes for the gyration (*gira*), then he sings (*curimba*) a little bit, he smokes his cigar. Because the cigar is to make the smoke go out, the smoke is relief, that’s why Vó smokes. My son does not smoke, but when I smoke here, I puff on this pipe, relieving illness, evil, jealousy, the big eye, breakdown, all these things.

B – *Another question. I felt very well with Aboriginal people because I was feeling a familiarity with this spirituality of all places and all that exists. But in those days, 30 years ago, one family that had this religion also was Christian, because the people had translated the Bible in their indigenous language. A “syncretism” with the Baptist Church. They continued their old rituals of singing, dancing and painting the body. But they also sang Christian songs in their language (Warlpiri) and painted their body in the Church (with a Christian cross), only some families. Other Aboriginal people said that it is not possible to mix the spirituality of their ancestors with Christianity.*

VC – I consider it to be wrong to do so. I consider it wrong. When they paint, they trace their actual root. Now, when they go to the Church and paint themselves, they trace the root of others. I do not accept, such a

division. What they are painting on themselves and dancing, is for their space (*barracão*). If they meet with another religion, it is not that it is wrong, but Vó does not accept thus, we are going to divide for this and that. It's their root, the painting that belongs to them cannot be lost, they have to continue forever.

B – Now, after thirty years, ‘índios’ (Aboriginal people) of Australia are more often Christians, and, for them, the traditional religion is also important. Some Warlpiri men and women say that they hold an ancestral spirituality that is very important for life, and to maintain connections with all of nature, but they have to go to Church to experiment a connection with Jesus, because it is the religion of the Whites, which, since the colonisation of Australia, has power. It's not a mixture, it's not a syncretism, but their existence is twofold. They have a connexion with nature, with dreams, but also, some people go to Churches, because for them the Bible is the power of the Whites, of colonisation, that have transformed their lives, ever changing since. With this power they have to compromise and negotiate; they understand the power of the Whites so to appropriate it for themselves to be free.

VC – That is the case. These Whites make a brainwash of Índios, saying that their God, of the Whites, is bigger, that it is equivalent to theirs. They (indigenous people) make their mindset and they pass over to that religion. Vó does not accept this either. If they are like that, they have to follow their father Tupã (primary figure for Guarani people, in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay). When they were in the bush did they not cultivate father Tupã? Who is father Tupã? It's the same God. Therefore, the White is (*esta*) only today... Many people who come here in my house to develop themselves, evolve spiritually, when they come out from here, today they are Church believers. Believers are the Assembly of God, Evangelics (Evangélicos). And when they get there, what are they going to say about us? That we are no good, only things of the demon. Everything... These men, these pastors are completely wrong, my daughter.

They invent things, they brainwash people, because these pastors, according to Vó Cirina, make a Church to pick up money (“*patacas*”) from everybody so to live from it. It's not that I do not like it. Me, I am Vó, no my son (*não o meu filho*), I do not accept this level. And my son does not go to this type of Church, his mission is inside my faith. Ask yourself it is not a lie that they heal people? Here came a person who had the sickness of blood (Aids - SIDA). Vó prayed for her and I removed this thing (she points to the kidney); “your problem is serious, you have a stone of calcium and you have blood...” “But how Vó? I did not even feel anything?”. “You go do an examination”. She went there (to the doctor), and it was confirmed that she has a disease. She came back here terrified, crying, having her hands burning (*ralando*), all the body.

Jurunata came, we did a healing work, she found herself cured of all her wounds, but it continued inside her. She went to this Church that is called Universal. “Oh, Vó, I would like to see there if a man (the pastor) is going to cure me. I told her, “oh, my daughter, then go”. That’s what I desire, né, I desire good for others. She went there. She gave her *bicho de fogo* (fire animal, or car), he told her not to take any more medicine, he took her house, everything... In less than fifteen days the woman disappeared, she died. The lying took her. What cures is God, my daughter. What cures is the spiritual level. I cure, because God gives me the light to cure people. At the moment, the family is very preoccupied, she gave her fire animal (car) to him, they made a confusion, they came here to talk again with Vó. She gave because she wanted to. We did a “head” (*mente*, made of wax) of this person. It cured her, I cured her, then she left.

People will give anything. People who give their house, who leave work ... For whom is it? And the pastor, that man, eats the best, my daughter.

B – *What is different in Umbanda de Angola from syncretism, the relation of Orixás with the saints of the Catholic Church, like Jesus and other saints?*

VC – This here (she points to the images/sculptures of the Catholic saints exhibited on the altar), nothing of it needs to be here inside. Just one cross, here in the middle (would be enough).

When it was the time of slavery (*Senzala*), and the master (*senhor*) of cane fields, in the coffee plantations (*cafezal*), we had a “*ronkó*” (ritual space), an *ibegi* (altar), there in a little corner (*cantinho*). For the master to admit that we play there our tambourines (*tamborzinho*), what did we have to do? We had to tell a lie to the master saying this is all for the Church. We would arrange those saints and place them on top of tree stumps (*tocos*). In that way the master ended up (*passou*) believing this. From this came, that to each of the Orixás we give a name of a saint. Because of this we keep them here. But at the spiritual level, in Umbanda, in Almas de Angola (Souls of Angola), Candomblé does not use these things, they are dishes, Orixás are in dishes, that Vó also accepts.

So, it is from there that we have the right to nurture (*cultivar*) for people who come from far, who come from abroad (*fora*), so they will feel good because of the saints. But if you take away everything, you put only the cross that corresponds to the Almas de Angola. The cross is the Souls, Angola is what comes from Africa. It is the difference (*defeito*) of these Almas de Angola for the Umbanda, accordingly: my son is going to lay down (*deitar*) a person for a saint, he is pure (without incorporation), he will crown the saint. The Umbanda which is done by Preto Velho, the Congo King (Rei Congo), the Vó... The Orixá makes the saints incorporate, this is

the difference, and the rest is all the same, the song, the foundation, all is same. There is an Umbanda Branca (White) also that does not beat the drum (*tambor*), does not kill animals, works only with herbs (*ervas*).

B – *And why at beginning of every session you say the prayers Our Father and Ave-Maria?*

VC – This ritual of Almas de Angola was born in Rio de Janeiro and a Caboclo, the famous Caboclo Lamparina, who was a man who started all that, that we do now in Santa Catarina, said: the Vó does not really know, she started like that, she nurtured this, the prayer. And in Umbanda before it was no like that, they do not kneel down, they make a song of Oxalá standing up, for Exú, at the opening, all standing up. Here no, here people have to kneel down for Jesus, like he humiliated himself for God. Kneeling down and humiliate oneself for Him, *né?* To make our prayer. It's better, it holds more energy. But I like to do that. But if you don't wish to do it, you don't have to do it. Like in Candomblé, it's not necessary to do it.

If you wish, it's possible just to sing for the Almas and Exu and start twirling (*tocar a Gira*). But we feel good in doing a prayer of Our father (*Pai-Nosso*) and Ave-Maria, we find it better, we vibrate more for God, and what we desire, light, truth, then, it's for this that we do the praying. But if you do not wish to do, you do not need to.

figure 14
Abílio Noé
da Silveira
incorporated
as Exu Ricardo,
2013. Film
by Barbara
Glowczewski.



B – Exu. *There are many different Exus.*

VC – Exu, has a lot of qualities (types of Exus) and they are very different from one another. Exu, for me, is an Orixá. Exu, for me, is not like the one that is customary said to have a twig (*galho*), a bullock foot, and called “*tibinga*” the demon, not to mention... They are not like that, my daughter, the people who invented that, people invented that, ; he is an Orixá of all the the less evolved, why? He drinks at night, in nightclubs, with street women, those women that are lost, others that became pregnant and took out the child, they ended up losing their own light.. Thus, they became women of darkness. Thus, they come as Pomba-Gira. Each of them has her own name. Sete, who works (*trabalha*) with my sons, he got into fights in a club, so he lived from these things, in a complete mess , but his name is not only Sete, his name is Ricardo. Why is it Sete, that he brought this thing of Sete? Because in this time he does not have a place, any hole to enter, he used to enter underneath a fig tree, there he was buried. And since the matter of the earth is consumed, thus he come, he lives where it is dark. Therefore, Sete Sombras (Sete Shadows). But in one year, two years, or more, he can evolve and turn into a Preto Velho. Then he is no longer Exu, he can change. And practice good.

B – *Many Exus in Umbanda have names of demons of Christianity.*

VC – Why? This is something invented, my daughter, all invented by the priests (*padres*), invented by men of earth. They came to a house, saw an Exu drinking, with a black cape. Ah! It is a demon!. They would already, this is a demon. It’s a nickname, they gave a nickname and it continues like that.

B – I was talking about demons, but there are also names in the esoteric tradition of Christianity. They have particular names, a list of first names of different demons that exist in Christianity. And priests do exorcism. Here, in Umbanda, these names appear as Exus.

VC – Demons and Exu, this for me was entirely invented. Priests practice exorcism, they are being pressured at a spiritual level. All priests are spiritists, my daughter. They have a *ronkó* (ritual space), they go through this thing fo going to their little room, to gain strength to keep away. Since I do not believe in these things, the Vó does not believe. Devil is a sort of person that is bad (*ruim*), that come here on the earth, does evil, will pay for it. When he disincarnates (*desencarna*), he is going to find himself where? On earth he is an Exu, suffering, will drink cachaça (*marafa*, a type of Brazilian rum) in any place. Until he finds a place, I make mistakes, then he changes, then he is going to be an Orixá like the Vó. Because I am a Preta Velha (Old Black Woman), but I consider myself an Orixá, because I help people, I have no malice (*maldade*). Vó does not believe in demons. Demon is a bad person, that is born bad, that desires to draw others to do bad.

ABOUT DIVINATION WITH *BÚZIOS*, CAURIE TYPE SHELLS AND *PONTOS* CHALK DESIGNS

VC – If the drop/throw of shells (*cair*) has seven “open” (*aberto*), this person is an ideal person. If the drop has seven “closed” (shells turned with their opening against the table), this person is honest and sincere. If in the drop all shells are closed, it’s inside a saint, you are a daughter of Obalu-aê. Conform to what drops here, the quantity of them, I (then) know the names of the Orixás, the sickness, the work, the result of the entrance exam (*vestibular*). Vó discovers all that we are going to do, evoke here to see from here, thus we are going to ask... (She gives an example) Oxóssi controls this person, who is son of Oxóssi with Iansã, and what are we going to do? Give food for Oxóssi and Iansã, this person is going to make a request and we are going to make her succeed the exam. If it is a sickness, it’s the same. Each quantity of *búzios* that are dropped, either closed or open, thus I know the problems of the person.

I will explain. I will draw the *búzios* for you (on the table). I call for the Orixás, from Iansã, here talked Iansã, but I desire to know the *ponto* (*riscado*) and for me not to forget that the Vó does this (she draws a ray with a chalk), Iansã, you are a ray (of lightning), *né?* If Ogum gives, I make (the design of) Ogum, if for Oxóssi, I make Oxóssi. Therefore, I know what drops, and for me I do not forget what I said. Any Father of Santo is the same thing. And the stones are energies of Orixá: white Oxalá; bejada; Xangô de Nagô, Xangô da pedreira; Iansã, Oxum, Obalu-aê, Oxóssi, Ossanhã, who has those leaves, Caboclo, Oxóssi is one thing, Cabloco is another thing, and those Almas (Souls). All this draws energy.

All of this is placed now Vó does not mess anymore with this, these stones are placed inside a tray with *boldo*, you know *boldo*? It’s a herb of Oxalá. You place all inside the *boldo*, let wash, wash everything real well inside the *boldo*, so then they can work, because if one messes with this today it’s not going to work. The person has to leave this mixture moist. In other places, houses of *terreiro*, the owner, father of Saint, learns the *búzios* to play, but my son does not wish to learn. I am the one to play. He can also learn, with other people, there are books. He leaves everything in my hands.

[Last questions]

All people who come here always like me because I am honest with my stuff thanks to God. Some things, I cannot talk about, you know? The daughter knows that all has a mystery, not my daughter (Vo turns towards Clarissa),

7. “*Peumus boldus*”, the only species in the genus “*Peumus*”, is commonly known as Boldo: medicinal properties. (cf Linguee online and wikipedia)

the spiritual level has a mystery level. But my function is to help people. They come with evil, I send them away, and I do not assist. They look for another place. Because my son does not live for this, he lives for the saint. Someone helps to do... On October 20 it's going to be my little feast, everybody wishes to help a little bit, Vó accepts. To give added value, to charge for a work of cure, no. I came for free, I have to give for free, my daughter. Even if my son is alive, here on earth, and he is going to last many years, until he's 90 years old, I am still here, when he goes away, I have to arrange another "equipment/device" (*aparelho*). But where? It can be here, it can be in another world. Because the world is very big.

The August 2016 consultation confirms, in its own way, how Vó Cirina actualizes a multiplicity of becomings. Multiple levels of becomings cross the frontiers of life and death, the body and the spirit, the masculine and the feminine, the human and the non-human, all with blurred frontiers. The crossing (*travessia*) of these limits does not stop to actualize becomings and to virtualise possibilities (*possibles* in French), not only for the incorporations of the mediums, but more subtly for slipping movements in life which resonate (*ressoam*) in different situations. Like Clarissa in her dance in Geneva, in interaction with me and with a flow of images of incorporations of Umbanda, at the beat of drums.

figure 15
Abílio Noé da Silveira with three anthropologists (Antonella Tassinari, Mariquian Ahouansou and Barbara Glowczewski, on the right) and daughters of saints, Cristiane and Beatriz Pereira (on the front), Florianópolis, May 2013.



During my consultation with Vó Cirina, she embodied the becoming of her Preta Velha spirit that refers to the becoming of her life as a woman of 140 anos (when she died by the sea), but also the becoming of her spiritual life after her death. When she answered my questions, she was sometimes one, sometimes the other. Vó Cirina expressed also a becoming-woman and a becoming-Black of her “son”, her medium the babalorixá Abílio, to whom she referred many times in the course of the extracts which are transcribed here and at other moments too. She also mentioned other becomings that inhabit her son, like the caboclo Jurunata, the spirit of a Tupi-Guarani man, who died in Uruguay at the age of 21, and who today is a spirit that makes healing rituals (*cura*). Similarly, his Exu Sete Sombras, called Ricardo, is a spirit of a man of the night, an outlaw (*fora da lei*) who, according to her, in one, two or more years, can evolve and incorporate as Preto Velho. “Just practice good” (“É só praticar o bem”), says Vó Cirina.

The spiritual guardian of the *terreiro* was happy with my visits in her house and also with those of the people I brought. She asks for news about anthropologists from Florianópolis, France, and Australia and, also, about my youngest daughter that she knew. She showed herself satisfied with the work I did in her house and with the fact of spreading her knowledge outside. Her son Abílio accepted that we perform the experience *Cosmocolours* in Geneva, but was not interested in how the work was received by the public or in the artistic context. He found himself busy enough with another becoming, of the sons and daughters who, growing in numbers continue to attend every Thursday session, as well as consultations during the week. In any event, this form of virtuality drew for me a possible road to follow, which opened in respect to all those “enchantments” (*encantamentos*, name sometimes given to the spirits) another reality to “present”, instead of “represent”.

The text proposed here shifts through agency of multiple actors, human and nonhuman, so to experiment an “editing” (like a photo-montage) of multiple entries: my analysis, that of Clarissa Alcantara, citations, and an interview with the spirit of Vó Cirina, my photos and those of Sandra Alves and finally, the film *Cosmocores* of Clarissa’s dance with my images of the Umbanda Almas de Angola from the Tenda Espírita Vó Cirina projected in Geneva. The blurring of frontiers, colours, languages, and names accompanies the smoothness of the surface of perception upon which various spatio-temporal dynamisms are produced. A Cosmopolitics of an “indisciplined” anthropology outlines, between distant spaces and times, the design of a multiplicity of lines, a network in which some traits can be perceived to be common. Like my first experimental films, which superimposed discontinuous rhythms and pulsations to produce a rupture in perception for new emotional stimuli, so also the becoming of this current research, disrupts some of the continuity of a supposed

translation

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movement. The Warlpiri Dreamings, Orixás and spirits of dead, anthropology, philosophy, the sacred, art, and everything else joined in composition of the possibility of a singular dance superimposing bodies and images in a Cosmocolour-becoming.

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