

# The Experience-Cinema as a Curriculum: Mapping Dissident Masculinities in *Boi Neon* (2015)

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In the wild of the Pernambuco countryside in Northeast Brazil, a male body moves in the middle of a territory of intensities, which provokes shocks in how gender and sexuality identities are constructed. To map the processes of subjectivation of masculinities that escape the hegemonic models and inspired by the contributions of the philosophy of difference, visual culture, and post-critical theorizing of education, I cast my eyes and give space to my "vibrating body" (Rolnik, 1989) to read some scenes from *Boi Neon* (*Neon Bull*; 2015). The film, directed by Gabriel Mascaro, and one of the representatives of the new Pernambuco cinema, tells the story of Iremar, a cowboy who dreams of becoming a stylist. The argument developed in the text is that an experience-cinema is powerful for promoting encounters that de-subject us, making us prove affirmative existences. As final considerations, I understand that the neon ox, a magical figure that appears in the film's narrative, symbolizes Iremar himself, who, amidst the colorful patches and the rubble of the fashion dump, emerges with its transforming power in everyday worlds, even if protected in the location of an existence read as insignificant. Iremar is the neon ox of the Pernambuco countryside, the one who, through his natural body, his apparently unbreakable armor, reveals the sensitivity and tenderness of a male way of life in his *becoming-woman*.

**Keywords:** cinema, masculinities, visual culture, curriculum, cartography

## A Experiência-Cinema Como um Currículo: Cartografando Masculinidades Dissidentes em *Boi Neon* (2015)

Em meio ao agreste pernambucano no nordeste do Brasil, um corpo macho se coloca em trânsito no pleno movimento de um território de intensidades, o que provoca abalos nos modos como são construídas as identidades de gênero e de sexualidade. Com o objetivo de cartografar os processos de subjetivação das masculinidades que escapam aos modelos hegemônicos e inspirado nas contribuições da filosofia da diferença, da cultura visual e da teorização pós-crítica da educação, lanço meus olhos e dou espaço ao meu "corpo vibrátil" (Rolnik, 1989) para ler algumas cenas de *Boi Neon* (2015), filme dirigido por Gabriel Mascaro e um dos representantes do novo cinema pernambucano, que narra a história de Iremar, um vaqueiro que sonha em se tornar estilista. O argumento desenvolvido no texto é o de que uma experiência-cinema é potente para a promoção de encontros que nos dessubjetivam, fazendo-nos provar existências mais afirmativas. Como considerações finais, entendo que o boi neon, figura mágica que surge na narrativa do filme, simboliza o próprio Iremar, que em meio aos retalhos coloridos e aos destroços do lixão da moda, emerge com sua potência transformadora de mundos cotidianos, ainda que resguardados na localização de uma existência lida como insignificante. Iremar é o boi neon do agreste pernambucano, aquele que por meio do corpo bruto, da couraça aparentemente inquebrável, revela a sensibilidade e a ternura de um modo de vida masculino em seu *devir-mulher*.

**Palavras-chave:** cinema, masculinidades, cultura visual, currículo, cartografia

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## Introduction

The Brazilian social imaginary has historically produced a series of representations about bodies and identities in the Northeast region. Amid geography built around the meanings of dryness, poverty, and human underdevelopment, men and women are thought of, named, and classified as mirrors of this raw and unhealthy reality. Looking at this creative discursive context, we learn from historian Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr. (1996) that there is a "geography that marks and demarcates us" (p. 139) and that the Brazilian Northeast is something fructified by history, an invention of the early 20th century marked by a composition of political and economic interests to delineate possible and impossible territories in Brazil.

But behold, a seed of a vigorous plant that spreads even in the most inappropriate conditions appears in ignoble regions. Shaken by the technological and economic changes of the 20th and 21st centuries, from the Northeast, mobilizing forces of new ways of life emerge, captured by the images of Pernambuco director Gabriel Mascaro in the film *Boi Neon* (*Neon Bull*; 2015). In the harsh Pernambuco, tradition mistrusts modernity, and the intercultural encounters promoted by cosmopolitanism spill over into the models of subjectivities available in the confluence of consumption and possible ways of life. Iremar, a character played by Juliano Cazarré, represents for us this subjective inflection, giving life to a brusque cowboy who dreams of becoming a fashion designer, something unthinkable in the stereotypes linked to northeastern men of yesteryear. In this narrative of gender dilation, as Mascaro (2017) well states, the representations gain diluted borders, blurred, sometimes presenting themselves in the feminized strength of the masculine body of our cowboy, sometimes in the life of Galega, played by Maeve Jinkings, in the freedom of her truck.

In this article, I highlight the power of thinking the visual culture as a space marked by aesthetic nuances that celebrate differences creating unexpected cracks in rigid identities, promoting reflections about our being and being in the world. Iremar, in his *becoming-woman*, seduces us to fray the masculinities that insist on selling themselves as natural expressions of already finished bodies, as a "metaphysics of substance" (Butler, 1990/2018) that operates through causalities, as irrevocable destinies for certain creatures.

The experience-cinema emerges as a place of learning where philosophical and pedagogical situations can cause ruptures in the norms of gender and sexuality, producing what I call here a becoming-woman in man: ways of being/being in the world that, through an encounter with the other, provided in this text by aesthetic-cinematographic experiences, dwell in the gaps, in-between places, promoting fugitive creativities as to a regulating heteronormative matrix. Thus, to map the subjectivation processes of masculinities that escape hegemonic models, and inspired by the contributions of the philosophy of difference, visual culture, and post-critical theorizing of education, I cast my eyes and give space to my "vibrating body" (Rolnik, 1989<sup>1</sup>) to read some scenes of the film *Boi Neon* under the argument that a cinema-experience is potent for the promotion of encounters that desubjectifies us, making us prove affirmative existences.

## The Machinery of Visual Culture: Cinema as a Place of Learning

In the alchemy made possible by cultural studies in all its post-anti-trans disciplinarily and by post-critical<sup>2</sup> theorizations of education that assume a path of experimentation not bound to a-historical truths, thinking the visual culture artifacts as places of learning requires understanding the capillarization of power through cultural practices. To this end, Michel Foucault's (1983/1995, 1975/2014b) contributions on power inspire us with many analytical possibilities. For the French

philosopher, power exists only relationally, amidst social practices that call into existence certain governed ways of life. According to Foucault (1983/1995), this exercise of power "is a mode of action of some over others" (p. 242), not presenting itself as an ontological entity with an appearance independent of social relations, and is therefore not the target of conquest, as Marxist perspectives argue.

As capillary forms of manifestation that spread in society amidst the most varied discursive and no discursive practices, power relations are modes of the government of behaviors, of action over the action of others (Foucault, 1983/1995), taking on delineations, so that certain models of subjectivation are achieved. Also, according to Foucault (1975/2014b), we can mention this force that productively pervades relations in the collective of a *diffuse technology of power* or *microphysics of power* "put into play by apparatuses and institutions, but whose field of validity is somehow placed between these great workings and the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces" (p. 30).

By operating in this theoretical field, we can detail how we are not only mentioned, or rather, interpellated but also enter a symbolic system of enunciations. Enunciations are intertwined in the organization of meanings for the world through what the French philosopher calls discursive formations (Foucault, 1969/1997). In the capillarization of power that spreads in the smallest everyday attitudes, detaching itself from a traditional reference to molar entities such as the State, for example, we see a series of investments that organize visualities for the production of subject positions, taking advantage of a certain centrality that both culture and image acquire in aspects of life in society. For Stuart Hall (1997), "culture is now one of the most dynamic - and most unpredictable - elements of historical change in the new millennium. Then, it should not surprise us that power struggles are increasingly symbolic and discursive" (p. 20).

At this point and facing an increasingly spectacularized picture of the value given to images, visual culture, as a research field, stands out in all its analytical power by problematizing the representations present in the most different artifacts and the very visualities in play. I follow Maria Emilia Sardelich (2006) when arguing the power of information and communication technologies in our daily lives, because, "nomads in our own homes, we capture images, often without a model, without a background, copies of copies, in the intersection of countless meanings" (p. 452). A routine permeated by media incitements that put before us "images to delight, entertain, sell, that tell us what to wear, eat, look like, think" (Sardelich, 2006, p. 452).

From here arises the importance of also reflecting on the construction of *visualities* themselves, that is, the way we establish relationships of meaning with what we see, with the cultural codes that become frames of reference for the images that reach us. To put visualities in question is to denaturalize looks, not taking them as a pure transparent expression of biology, of the body's cognitive and recognition capacity, but to signal that "culture influences our visual experience in often seemingly unsuspected ways" (Sérvio, 2014, p. 199). By claiming a non-essentialist position of reality, but a constructionist take through the markers of language, a territory of investigative possibilities opens up, politicizing our daily lives, our looks, and our experiences as a body that interacts with the world, with its surroundings. Still, according to Pablo Sérvio (2014):

for the authors who work with Visual Culture, images matter because, instead of simply reflecting reality or a context (as common sense usually understands), our relationship with images affects/constructs perceptions about the world and about ourselves, influencing our actions. Therefore, images are intrinsically connected to politics and power relations. (p. 201)

Images are loaded with representations of the world. They are constructed straightforwardly to meet certain demands, especially when we talk about maintaining an order that governs the world. This order, which Michel Foucault calls the "order of discourse", functions as setting boundaries of

what is possible for a certain historical time and reveals the changes that overlap in enunciative layers in the composition of acceptable ways of life. According to Foucault (1970/2014a), "in every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose function is to conjure up its powers and dangers" (p. 8). The philosopher complements this by talking about the control of events and materialities. However, when highlighting *powers* and *dangers*, he reinforces that this order of discourse is only sustained through the exercise of power in the most micro spaces of life in society to contain the dangers, that is, the existences that escape the standards, the instituted models, the hegemonies that insist in consensual hierarchies and inequalities. In the images that are grouped around us daily, a series of representations of the *norm*<sup>3</sup> become evident; however, as in every power relation, there is resistance (Foucault, 1983/1995), being a condition for the relationship not to be taken as an exercise of violence, foci of liberation from the framings also reveal themselves, populating social imaginaries and crowning the plurality of life with possibilities.

For Gilles Deleuze (1986/2005):

the last word of power is that *resistance has the upper hand* [emphasis added], insofar as power relations are preserved entirely in the diagram, while resistances are necessarily in a direct relationship with the outside, from which the diagrams came. So that the social field resists more than it creates strategies, and the thinking of the outside is a thinking of resistance. (p. 96)

This "thinking outside the box" does not follow the paths chosen by the hegemonic groups that I want to highlight in this text through the film *Boi Neon*, as I will try to deepen in the next topic. As part of the new crop of Pernambucan<sup>4</sup> cinema productions, the film operates in this double situation between the tradition of a geography marked by calcified representations of social identities, such as gender and sexuality, and the modernity that takes over territories without asking permission. We see emerging before the canvas the meeting of waters, the embrace, not always harmonious, between the forces that insist on the maintenance of norms, of the conservatism of family lines, and those that break the dawn in the will to affirm life, to displace the established meanings, and to produce fields of joy. We see there the manifestation of a certain *diagram*, a concept brought by Deleuze under the inspiration of Foucault, which tells us a lot about the connections that can take place amidst distinct natures, whether human or non-human, producing new forms of subjectivation. For Deleuze (1986/2005), "the diagram, while determining a set of relations of forces, never exhausts force, which can enter into other relations and within other compositions" (p. 96).

As part of this visual culture that I have been discussing here, cinema is evidenced as a place of learning (Ellsworth, 2005), where a pedagogical force manifests itself by teaching certain habits, provoking experimentation of various kinds. In all its narrative and imagetic charge, in the splendor of a moving image, cinema is a cultural curriculum, where a text can be read during its discursive construction, operating in the positioning of subjects, in the inspiration of other ways of life. A *cultural* curriculum, because, as Marlécio Maknamara (2020) argues, "when information, learning, feelings, and thoughts are articulated, one is composing the text of a curriculum" (p. 59).

By highlighting the *experience-cinema* as a philosophical and pedagogical event, I want to refer to Jorge Larrosa's (2001/2002) invocation of experience as a "territory of passage". That is, "the way the world shows us its readable face, the series of regularities from which we can know the truth of what things are and master them" (Larrosa, 2001/2002, p. 28), but also a philosophical situation, in the words of Alain Badiou (2015), "an encounter, a junction. A meeting of terms aliens to each other" (p. 31). Cinema is this event of the connection between heterogeneities because images in their force of spectacle, inquiry, critical reflection, displacement of common sense, can propel us to discover new territories. Being in front of the moving images of a film, such as *Boi Neon*, disconcerts us to the point of reflecting on ourselves and understanding that the paths we have

taken can be different.

The possibility is opened exactly through the *daily* encounter with the *imaginary*, since the power of the image frees us, even if temporarily, from the chains that bind us to the subjective crystals that insist on naturalizing themselves. It is what Suely Rolnik (1989) calls "existential crystallization", this "more or less stable configuration, repertoire of gestures, procedures, figures that repeat themselves, as in a ritual" (p. 27). Thinking of cinema as a curriculum, that is, as a practice of signification, opens us to differentiated analytics of the image, to non-school machinery that assigns "meanings to places, things, phenomena, practices, and subjects" (Maknamara, 2020, p. 60). As a visual art, cinema is a real double, "an art of the masses, because it triggers powerful mechanisms of identification" (Badiou, 2015, p. 39). Through this imagetic composition loaded with desires and dreams, we are transported, shaken, restless, mobilized to a deterritorialization, including identity, opening us to the difference and the possibility of a certain *between*, an assigning becoming.

## A Becoming-Woman in Man: Masculinities Out of the Ordinary in *Boi Neon*

*Boi Neon* (2015), as already mentioned, stands out among the productions of Pernambuco cinema that gained strength in the late 1990s, supported mainly by public policies to encourage culture in the state, as well as by the warm reception of the public in alternative cinemas in the city of Recife, capital of Pernambuco. In the words of Aline Lisboa (2018), we see how this new phase of Pernambuco cinema "shows itself as something visceral and authentic, exploring different genres and languages, transgressing narratives in particular scenarios of Brazilian cinema, urban and rural Pernambuco" (pp. 106-107). Narrating the story of a group of cowboys who cross the state taking oxen to the *vaquejadas* (rodeo) shows, director Gabriel Mascaro casts a sensitive look at one man in particular. Inspired by the real story of a cowboy who divides his time between his work with the animals and making clothes in the industrial pole in the state's interior, the character of Iremar emerges. Commenting on the script of *Boi Neon*, Mascaro (2017) recalls that "this was the starting point for creating a fictional character who accumulates this double journey that mixes in the craft the strength and delicacy, bravery and sensitivity, violence and affection" (p. 4).

The life of a northeastern cowboy in his *becoming a stylist* already mobilizes us to think about the gender dislocations proposed by the filmic narrative. We are confronted, at every moment, with an elusive representation of northeastern masculinities through Iremar's life and the femininities of the characters, although this is not the focus of this text. It is interesting to note that the emergence of other ways of life in the Brazilian northeast harmonizes with the decadence of sugar production, the economic and cultural source for Pernambuco society. In the film, we have the strengthening of a clothing industry that arrives deconstructing the old social patterns established with the sugar patriarchy, the mill lords, and their submissive women. From a life based on well-defined existential territories of gender, we have the rupture of a social and cultural crisis, showing metamorphosis. This scenario is analyzed by Albuquerque (2005) when referring to the novel *Fogo Morto* (1943) by the Paraíba writer José Lins do Rêgo. In the book, we find the decay of the sugar economy in the lives of three male characters, which provokes Albuquerque (2005) to point out that a crisis of the traditional patterns of northeastern masculinity has since begun to be mobilized. For the author:

it is the discourse on the crisis of a hegemonic way of being a father, a husband, a man, a male that was being made impossible by the development and progressive hegemony of urban patterns of sociability and by the mutations in gender relations brought about by modern society. (Albuquerque, 2005, pp. 155-156)

In this context, *Boi Neon* stirs us to the metamorphosis of the social machine produced in the couplings in new cultural scenarios, inciting other subject positions that no longer conform to old

practices resistant to the state of sensitive openness contemporaneity. In scene 1, **Figure 1**, below, we see the first displacement promoted by Iremar's existence. In the first image, after the cow race, the character devotes himself to the task of taking care of the animals, storing them in the corral with a tired, discouraged look on his face. Then, he goes to a large space, a fashionable garbage dump where scraps of colorful fabrics are thrown. Collecting them, as if seeing wealth and dreams where many see only rubble, Iremar also picks up pieces of mannequins used by the local clothing industry (**Figure 2**). For him, affirming life through colorful debris becomes a line of escape.



**Figure 1.** *The double in Iremar's life* Source. From *Boi Neon* (00:02:47), by G. Mascaro, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Gabriel Mascaro.



**Figure 2.** *The double in Iremar's life* Source. From *Boi Neon* (00:06:05), by G. Mascaro, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Gabriel Mascaro.

In this first scene, the existential territory linked to the hegemonic masculinity of the northeastern man, which organizes the forms, the looks, the dispositions, the desires, is swayed by a differentiated line of affection. The diagram of forces that I begin to draw through this scene shows us a certain "intensity operator" (Rolnik, 1989), a will to remove the social masks that, insistently, are placed at our disposal at the most tender age as an irrevocable destiny. Iremar, even though he still lives in a family territory culturally dedicated to him, decides to trace escape routes, open paths that give him back the life movement<sup>5</sup>. I perceive a deterritorialization in the sense of state

taking oxen to the *vaquejadas shows* - *fashionable garbage dump*, a desire that "also consists of a continuous movement of disenchantment, in which, as new affections emerge, effects of new encounters, certain masks become obsolete" (Rolnik, 1989, p. 33).

A man removed from any representation of the feminine. That would be a short definition of hegemonic northeastern masculinity, someone who does not cry, who is violent, who is always ready to provide for his family, not given to the details of private life, to the sensibilities of the world, and who experiences his (hetero)sexuality in the potency of a virile male. Iremar, in the face of an overwhelming and stereotypical male context, manages to explore in detail a whole becoming-woman, that is, moving in between gender identities, which is even more powerful when we think that this becoming explodes in a body intelligible as a male: strong, virile, hairy, not effeminate.

In scene 2 (Figure 3), Iremar, in his becoming-stylist, takes the measurements of Galega, the truck driver who transports the oxen for the cowboys — yet another gender dilation promoted by director Gabriel Mascaro. Here we see a man who does not objectify the woman, even in intimate contact with her body. In analyzing northeastern electronic *farró* songs, Maknamara (2011) shows us how gender regulations that sometimes affirm continuities, sometimes discontinuities, are pedagogies that teach us ways of being men and women in the Northeast. In the case of the songs analyzed by the researcher, we can still perceive in electronic *farró* traces of masculinity linked to sexual performance and sexual adventures linked to a man's honor. As for Iremar, we see a subject gradually diluting the stereotypes attributed to the northeastern man, giving way to new models of subjectivity brought about by contemporary social demands. The film at all times signals us to the gender ruptures both among men and among women, evidencing the philosophical situation caused by cinema, as Badiou (2015) argues.



**Figure 3.** *Iremar's becoming-stylist* Source. From *Boi Neon* (00:07:56), by G. Mascaro, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Gabriel Mascaro.

In another moment of the film, scene 3, Figure 4, while his friend Zé was sleeping in a hammock, Iremar picks up a pornographic magazine and starts scribbling an outfit design over the naked body of the woman after getting angry with his colleague, because the pages of the magazine were stuck together, probably due to post-masturbation sperm. Destitute of a behavior that would desire the model's nudity, he covers and dresses that body, assuming another facet of his masculinity in his becoming-stylist. Even if seen as an unimportant practice for many, this positioning shows us that the masculine socialization that produces men in all their sexual freedom, teaching them to objectify women's bodies, is not free of resistance and can occur in everyday practices, the glimpses of private life. According to Zoboli et al. (2018):

in the popular imagination, erotic or pornographic magazines are associated with masturbation, especially common in the social universe of masculinity. The practice of onanism is historically marked by an endless number of taboos, including some medical treatises were written with the intention of regulating the behaviors linked to the contingency of this sexual practice deviated from its functions linked to family constitution through procreation. (pp. 445-446)



**Figure 4.** *Drawing your wishes Source.* From *Boi Neon* (00:26:27), by G. Mascaro, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Gabriel Mascaro.

As Foucault (1976/1998) argues, sexuality is a regulating device of conduct, ways of life, and inclinations of desire. However, inscribed in a historical framework, it can be deconstructed, revised, and demobilized towards other territories, as the example above tried to locate. Even heterosexuality can be reconsidered, assuming other ways of desiring and experiencing pleasures. Such reflections suggest that regardless of how much the masculinity pedagogies or the image cultural curriculum reflect a will to govern behaviors, in this case, the will to position men in a comfortable and naturalized situation to the heterosexual model and all the stereotypes stemming from it (virility, potency, gluttony, and sexual freedom), there is always the possibility of a dispute of forces in this subjectivizing diagram. In the case discussed here, cinema operates as a disruptive event because, "in front of a film, we experience a particular contact with the 'other'" (Fischer & Marcello, 2016, p. 17), inspiring us in new ethics unleashed amidst the images.

Throughout the film, we see the contrast between the masculinity expected of a northeastern cowboy and that experienced by Iremar. His work is not well seen by his coworkers, who mock him at every opportunity. In scene 4, shown in [Figure 5](#), while mending a garment, he is questioned by another cowboy who says that he sews like a woman, after having complained in previous scenes that Iremar had used the pornographic magazine that had cost him money to draw on top of naked women's bodies. We see the operation of what Guacira Lopes Louro (2001) calls "pedagogies of gender and sexuality", for both gender and sexual identities are "composed of and defined by social relations, they are shaped by a society's networks of power" (p. 11). We learn how to be men and women, including the professions understood as appropriate for one gender or another, through rituals of socialization that are not only learned in school, family or church, but also in movies, soap operas, advertisements, the fashion of the season, among many other artifacts of visual culture. In the macho Northeastern Brazilian context of *Boi Neon*, therefore, being a fashion designer was outside the hall of intelligible possibilities for a man. A cowboy in his becoming a fashion designer would be a point out of the curve worthy of problematization and suspicion.



**Figure 5.** *Alternations between the lines of masculinities Source.* From *Boi Neon* (00:44:00), by G. Mascaro, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Gabriel Mascaro.

However, before we move on, I would like to emphasize that we experience our subjectivities in contingent, not rigid ways, also being foci of negotiation, of dispute. In the same scene mentioned above, when Iremar's colleague questions him because he is sewing, he replies with a homophobic outburst: "but I'm not the one who drinks and takes off my clothes, you *frango*!". There we see that for a moment, Iremar positions himself in the traits linked to hegemonic masculinities, trying to establish the greatest possible distance from homosexuality: the danger, the amazement for the maintenance of heterosexuality. To keep the heterosexual matrix intact, or rather, the coherence between gender identity and sexuality (Butler, 1990/2018), Iremar makes use of the power of language, since, in his daily social practices, we could confer to him approximations with the female or homosexual cultural universe, with the codes and the naturalized meanings for these bodies. Thus, I emphasize, along with Jeffrey Weeks (1996/2001), that "the sexual codes and identities that we take as given, inevitable, and 'natural' have often been forged in this complex process of definition and self-definition, making modern sexuality central to the way power operates in modern society" (p. 42).

I notice the film shows these alternations, the contrast between the masculinity of a northeastern man and that presented/ lived by Iremar, either more openly or explicitly, as in the desire to be a fashion designer or the preference for the colorful patches and mannequins, to the aggressiveness of the ox in the *vaquejadas*, and more subtly (Figure 6), but very meaningful, as we see the pink towel Iremar uses for self-care when he gets up. In Brazil, the statement "boys wear blue and girls wear pink" gained enormous proportions when it was festively declared by Damares Alves, evangelical pastor and minister of Women, Family and Human Rights of the ultraconservative government of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro (G1, 2019). On that occasion, the minister declared that Brazil was entering a new era, which signals reactionary confrontations to policies to combat gender inequalities and promote respect for sexual differences.



**Figure 6.** *Boys wear pink* Source. From *Boi Neon* (00:37:38), by G. Mascaro, 2015. Copyright 2015 by Gabriel Mascaro.

The statement "boys wear blue and girls wear pink" is a function of existence, according to Foucault (1969/1997), gaining space through connections in historical and social games. For the author, "there is no enunciation that does not suppose others; there is none that does not have, around itself, a field of coexistences, effects of series and succession, a distribution of functions and roles" (Foucault, 1969/1997, p. 114). I say this because I understand that these statements are not isolated, and they gain productive force because they are grouped with others in the most different discursive and non-discursive practices. An example of this is the research conducted by Natália Belarmino (2015) when analyzing school notebook covers of girls and boys from Recife, capital of Pernambuco. According to the researcher, there are marks of the discourse of gender and sexuality in these cultural/visual artifacts, and "it is also through the statements that are on these covers, products, packaging that children are invited to give senses and meanings to their identity constructions" (Belarmino, 2015, p. 117). Also, according to Belarmino (2015), "with a quick look at school notebooks, we see two colors stand out: pink color in the girls' materials and blue color in the boys' materials" (p. 118). I bring this to point out that Iremar experiences a line of escape from northeastern hegemonic masculinities, digging paths to affirm differences and joyful affections in search of new ways of acting, according to Spinoza (2019).

Finally, Mascaro uses a surrealistic atmosphere in the film to compose a scenario of experimentations of gender and sexuality in the characters' ways of life. One of the beings that appear is the ox itself, which if in some scenes shows itself fulfilling the expected role in the arenas of the *vaquejadas* in a manly, brave, robust way, in others, it appears with neon colors, shining, standing out like a mirage, an unexpected ghost, a magical figure in the middle of the dark night, shining life, strength, difference. According to the director of the film:

although the registration code is close to the documentary look, this is a completely fictional film, where the aesthetic surrealism present in the film is part of the culture of excess, and sometimes normalized as if registered in an "observational" look. Sometimes the spectator wonders if *Boi Neon* really exists, if the attendants comb the horses' hair... The surreal aesthetic has merged with the excesses of the culture of spectacle. Not knowing where one world ends and another begins is the game of suspension that the film provokes. (Mascaro, 2017, p. 4)

This suspension, or labyrinth of the imaginary, emerges as a carnivalesque force, an unexpected release of multiple meanings that can only be built in connection when distinct ways of life come

together and sing something new. The neon ox symbolizes Iremar himself, who, amid the colorful scraps and the debris of the fashionable garbage dump, emerges with his transforming power of everyday worlds, even if sheltered in the location of an existence read as insignificant. Iremar is the neon ox of the Pernambuco hinterland, the one who, through his natural body, his apparently unbreakable armor, reveals the sensitivity and tenderness of a masculine way of life in his becoming-woman. For Félix Guattari (1981/1985), a man who "detaches himself from phallic disputes, inherent in all power formations, will engage, according to various possible modalities, in such becoming-woman. Only under this condition will he be able to become animal, cosmos, letter, color, and music" (p. 35).

## Final Considerations

The film *Boi Neon* (2015), directed by Gabriel Mascaro and fruit of the new crop of Pernambucan cinema, shows us the power of visual culture artifacts as curricula, as practices of meaning that teach ways of life. Breaking through the institutional walls of the schools, we learn not only enclosed in the classroom but in front of images, fashion, film narratives, the scripts of a novel, the verses of a poem, the conflicts of a novel. We learn how to be men and women and even how not to recognize ourselves in these identity boxes through many cultural artifacts, visual pedagogies that operate subjectivities, ways of being, and being in the world.

Iremar, the main character in *Boi Neon* (2015), teaches us that we live in a territory of disputed meanings that construct our femininities and our masculinities, operating the gender dilation thought by Mascaro for the film. If what is expected (and desired) for a northeastern man is the safe shelter of his virility, his strength, his violence, Iremar presents us with another possibility of existence, revealed in the movement of his becoming-woman. Amidst the *vaquejadas* of the harsh Pernambuco, he prefers the garbage dump of fashion, the colorful patchwork, dreaming of becoming a fashion designer despite the conditions that, at every moment, invite him to the expected and the recommended for a northeastern man. Thus, as a symbol of this century's social and cultural changes, *Boi Neon* invites us to rethink the displacements of contemporary masculinities celebrated by unexpected encounters, by rhizomatic forces that meet, by deterritorialized experiences promoted by the transits of bodies.

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## Notes

1. For Rolnik (1989), a vibrating body is one "sensitive to the effects of the encounters of bodies and their reactions: attraction and repulsion, affections, simulation in matters of expression" (p. 26), opening up to what passes invisible to our eyes, that which is of the order of affections.
2. According to Marlucy Paraíso (2004), "using a language that receives influences from the so-called 'philosophy of difference', post-structuralism, postmodernism, queer theory, feminist and gender studies, multiculturalist, post-colonialist, ethnic, ecological studies, etc., post-critical theories perform, in the Brazilian educational field, substitutions, ruptures, and changes of emphasis concerning critical research" (p. 284).
3. For Judith Butler (2004/2014), it is important to differentiate between norm and rule since the former term operates more implicitly. According to the author, "norms may or may not be explicit, and when they operate as the normalizing principle of social practice, they usually remain implicit, difficult to perceive and more clearly dramatically discernible in the effects they produce" (Butler, 2004/2014, p. 252).
4. "Marked by the presence of three great cinematographic cycles – the Recife cycle (1923-1931), the Super-8 cycle (1970 to the mid-1980s), and the so-called resumption phase, with the premiere of the film *Perfumed Ball* (1997) by Lírio Ferreira and Paulo Caldas – the film market in Pernambuco presents a favorable scenario for productions by medium and small production companies" (Lisboa, 2018, p. 106), as is the case with *Boi Neon*.
5. When talking about territory, I am referring to the zones of gender intelligibility that we are accustomed to transit through in the midst of culture. In Iremar's case, the life of a rough northeastern man connected to the world of *vaquejadas* would be an unquestioned path, unlike the lines of escape that the character begins to trace in his life.
6. Regional music style, forró, marked by substitutions of traditional musical instruments, such as the flute and the zabumba, for the sax and drums, respectively, presents a faster rhythm (Maknamara, 2011). It is very common in northeastern college parties.
7. Frango is a pejorative expression used in Pernambuco to refer to a homosexual.

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