



To Dance Wrong Side Out: Artaud, Mbembe and dance as a visceral insurgency of the body without organs

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ABSTRACT – To Dance Wrong Side Out: Artaud, Mbembe and dance as a visceral insurgency of the body without organs – The aim of this work is to investigate the question of body (and of dance as a possible way of overcoming the automatism of the body). For this purpose, a broad concept of contemporary dance is introduced, taking Artaud and his concept of body without organs as a starting point. In a second moment, the discussion expands with the necropolitical reading of the present times, carried out by Mbembe, who deepened biopolitics by developing concepts such as mortification, reconstruction of oneself and viscosity. Through literature review, the conclusions obtained point towards the body – especially the body that dances – as a possibility of insurgence of the so-called visceral resistance.

Keywords: Antonin Artaud. Achille Mbembe. Body without Organs. Necropolitics. Contemporary Dance.

RÉSUMÉ – Pour se Danser à l’Envers: Artaud, Mbembe et la danse comme insurrection viscérale du corps-sans-organes – La question du corps (et de la danse comme possible dépassement de ses automatismes) est ici investiguée. Pour cela, le concept large de la danse contemporaine est présenté en prenant Artaud et le concept de corps-sans-organes comme point de départ. Dans un deuxième temps, la discussion s’élargit avec la lecture nécropolitique du présent, menée par Mbembe, qui a approfondi la biopolitique dans des concepts tels que la mortification, reconstruction de soi et la viscéralité. Enfin, la méthodologie utilisée est celle d’une revue bibliographique et les conclusions atteintes pointent vers le corps – notamment le corps qui danse – comme une possibilité d’insurrection de la soi-disant résistance viscérale.

Mots-dés: Antonin Artaud. Achille Mbembe. Corps sans Organes. Nécropolitique. Danse Contemporaine.

RESUMO – Para se Dançar às Aversas: Artaud, Mbembe e a dança como insurgência visceral do corpo-sem-órgãos – Investiga-se aqui a questão do corpo (e da dança como superação possível de seus automatismos). Para tanto, apresenta-se o conceito alargado de dança na contemporaneidade, tendo Artaud e o conceito de corpo-sem-órgãos como ponto de partida. Em um segundo momento, a discussão se amplia com a leitura necropolítica da atualidade, realizada por Mbembe, que aprofundou a biopolítica em conceitos como mortificação, reconstrução de si e viscerabilidade. Finalizando, a metodologia utilizada é de revisão bibliográfica, e as conclusões alcançadas apontam em direção ao corpo – sobretudo o corpo que dança – como possibilidade de insurgência da assim chamada resistência visceral.

Palavras-chave: Antonin Artaud. Achille Mbembe. Corpo sem Órgãos. Necropolítica. Dança Contemporânea.

After all, isn't the body of the dancer precisely a body dilated along an entire space that is both exterior and interior to it? (Foucault, 2006, p. 232).

Introduction

First, it is necessary to say that we think of dance here in a broad sense, within an expanded scope that the 20th century would see. Already in the *avant-garde* poetics of Antonin Artaud, one can perceive the urgency of a scenic language capable of conceiving the body and its possibilities in an expanded field. *Theater* becomes, for him, a plural field, which expands from the performer's body, and can branch out through gesture, thought, scene, and sound – the exercise of life itself. It becomes, as we shall see, an aesthetic exercise of life, of life *freed from chains* and, by extension, an exercise of theater and dance *freed from chains*, that is, delivered from the limits imposed on them by tradition.

If the body is the *sine qua non* condition for dance to happen, it is worth asking: which body is this and which dance is this? In this article we have in mind contemporary dance in its multiplicity, a dance that necessarily comes after classical dance (such as *ballet*) and modern dance and that already appears as something that is totally open to difference, to different aesthetics and different bodies, as well as to other arts, blurring borders. The 20th century, with the *avant-garde* movements, opened space for the hybridization of dance with other languages, resulting in the expansion, re-reading and transformation of the field, eliminating barriers between the arts in the direction of an expanded scene. At the same time that dance, in contemporary times, has opened itself to performance art, it has also abolished technical virtuosity and the stereotyped bodies of *ballet* in favor of flow, rhythm and intensities, trying to approach life in its contradictions. As Eliana Rodrigues Silva puts it (2008, p. 33):

And how was the body configured in modern dance? Around the beginning of the 20th century, against the insipidity and academicism of the classical school. The world was facing the First World War and it was no longer possible to dance about a world of fantasies, fairies and princes, but about the real human condition, its victories, failures and anguish. [...] Post-modern dance today is not [anymore] interested in presenting perfect bodies, unified by form, nor delineated by aesthetic or sexual imperatives. Everything is allowed. Dance seems to want, in fact, to express the corporal multiplicity

made of muscles, bones, nudity, imperfections and qualities of the human being, talking about themselves, for an audience that identifies with what they see.

Thus, we think of dance here in its corporeality and in a broad sense, a sense that could only emerge during the 20th century and its profound transformations. These transformations include the understanding of the body (and its role in the contemporary scene¹) also by the questioning of the control mechanisms of the bodies in contemporaneity, as we will see. In this context, we investigate here, by means of a literature review, the question of the body – the body that dances – based on the relationship between authors who are initially disparate, such as Antonin Artaud and Achille Mbembe.

For Artaud, the question of the body (as a body that wants to deliver itself from all its automatic reactions and control mechanisms) is central. This question will be incessantly addressed and reformulated through his work, from the proposition of a Theater of Cruelty in his first book (*The Theatre and Its Double*, 1958) to its complete transcreation through the concept of “body without organs”, which emerges only in the final years of Artaud’s work (in *To have done with the Judgement of God*, 1988). This concept, in the discussion undertaken here, will be fundamental for us to discuss dance in contemporaneity in its possibilities of freedom and biopolitical healing.

To expand the concept, we will establish a dialogue with the current necropolitical reading by Mbembe, who deepened the biopolitics in the search for lines of flight that permeate concepts such as mortification, reconstruction of oneself and the politics of viscosity, making the body the focal point of the processes of a resistance that the author calls visceral and that makes us wonder if it can happen through the body that dances.

It is worth noting that, although both authors have a specific consolidated theoretical framework, studies that correlate their works² are still rare, and even fewer studies correlate the concepts in question to think about dance³ in contemporaneity.

The body without organs as an *wrong side out dance*: the dissolution between theater and dance in Artaud

Antonin Artaud was an outstanding figure of the forefront in the early 20th century, acting in several fronts as actor, writer, playwright, scriptwriter, director, and researcher. The relationship with corporeality permeated all his work, both in his artistic investigation and in his own life, in a direct relationship between body and power. Allied to the desire for renewal, the avant-garde movements had as their main motivation the criticism of the constitution of modern life, which aimed at industrial progress and economic development, with rationalism as its worldview. Artaud's participation in this climate of insurgency (as in the Surrealist movement, in which he was active in its early years) enabled exchanges that will echo deeply in the manifestos for a new language for the arts, for the body, and for the Theatre of Cruelty⁴.

It was sought, therefore, an artistic making that broke with the idea of showing something to an audience and that was able to provide sensory experiences to the audience to, from that, also affect life. The body on scene, for Artaud, should exist independently of any theatrical text, just as the voice does not need to be linked to the recitation of a text, because he sought the expression of new states of the body that could physically connect the artist/dancer/actor with everything around him, putting him in relation with the other, with the world.

The book *The Theater and Its Double* (1958) is composed of several texts written between 1931 and 1936 that aimed to map out the issues that Antonin Artaud considered fundamental, presenting the 1st and 2nd Manifestos of the Theatre of Cruelty. This vision opposed the traditions of the dramatic theater and all the psychologism of the scene in a search for the awakening of the artist so that it would be possible to contaminate the audience, for the sake of a scene that encompassed existence.

In the traditional theater scene (and even in *ballet*, in a sense), the body plays roles. However, Artaud wanted to eliminate acting from the theater, to do away with all psychologism on the stage, to diminish the separation between stage audience. He wanted the performer's body, transformed into a hieroglyph, to become a pure expression of meanings that could nev-

er be reduced to words. We see here a parallel with what will also occur in contemporary dance, centered on the presence of the body and its possibilities. As Derrida puts it (2001, p. 294): “the theater of cruelty is not a representation. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable”.

Among the factors that inspired the emphasis on corporeality in Artaud’s theatrical proposal, the contact with the Bali Theater(-dance) and its creation matrixes stands out, as well as the experience with the Ciguri ritual⁵, with the Raramuri people⁶ in Mexico.

According to Mèredieu (2011), Artaud’s contact with what he called “Bali Theater” came as a spectator through a visit to the Colonial Exhibition that took place in Vincennes, France, in 1931. The oriental artist’s attentive and prepared body and his energetic consciousness offered an open field for the sowing of a new artistic posture. Thus, a physical language would find its expression through signs, making the actor’s body a kind of hieroglyph, that is, something capable of capturing forces/flows and transforming them into signs through movement. Artaud considered that the Balinese dancers were actors. Something that could be considered a mistake, in fact, turned out to be a great success and contributed to the scenic revolution of the 20th century: the increasingly blurring of the boundaries between theater and dance.

What Artaud admired in the Balinese actor-dancers is that “these actors with their geometric robes seem to be animated hieroglyphs” (Artaud, 1958, p. 54). Artaud was not being metaphorical when he compared actors to hieroglyphics: he attributed the same symbolic character of the oriental languages to what he called “the pure theatrical language”. What impressed Artaud was the immediacy of the presence of the *actor-dancers*, the realization that their dance was not an act of re(-)presentation, but a kind of “pure presence”, relative to a physical and gestural language that Western art had somehow lost.

From the contagion with the *Bali (Dance-)Theater*, Artaud begins to unfold his research by the increasing bias of corporeality, gestuality, and the sacred through a listening that does not necessarily use hearing, but a listening of the body, which is sensorial and sensorially affected and, this way, is also able to share signs, states, sensations, and feelings. When sharing his experience with the Bali Theater, Artaud (1958, p. 57-58) tells us:

Here is a whole collection of ritual gestures to which we do not have the key and which seem to obey extremely precise musical indications, with something more that does not generally belong to music and seems intended to encircle thought, to hound it down and lead it into an inextricable and certain system. In fact everything in this theater is calculated with an enchanting mathematical meticulousness. Nothing is left to chance or to personal initiative. It is a kind of superior dance, in which the dancers were actors first of all.

In fact, for Oliveira (2010, p. 10-11), it can be said that “[...] in the Theater of Cruelty the old collusion between dance and theater is recovered, between becoming and necessity; respectively, between flowing and acting”. According to the author, Artaud’s aesthetic contact with the body of the dancing actors was in fact one of the great boosters that awakened the desire to rethink the relationship between theater and corporeality, to which the author continues: “[...] therefore, the dance of gesture reasserted itself, lubricating the movements and inserting the body on the cosmic, symbolic, and poetic plane of cruelty. It inserted it again in the dramatic and dangerous rhythm of creation”.

In the West, the understanding of artistic languages is historically fragmented, with theater and dance as distinct languages. What Artaud identified in the Bali Theater was a fluidity between these instances, in which dance added new possibilities of expression to the theatrical action, generating a feedback. Such an encounter only reinforced in the artist the desire to create a language connected to the ritual, exploring the gestures in connection with the inner dimension through the pulsions, which, in turn, permeate the body and its creative processes. Artaud’s search for this *body language* would take him further and further away from the West and from Western logic: whether towards the interior of the Mexican canyons, towards a culture in which theatrical practice had not yet detached itself from ritual towards text, or towards itself, its psychological states and its so-called madness.

A very famous (and controversial) point in Artaud’s bibliography is the psychiatric hospitalizations he underwent between the years 1937 and 1946, right after his return from Mexico and until shortly after the end of World War II. During this process, Artaud had to shift the needs of artistic expression to himself and his states, whether they were physical, “metaphys-

ical” or psychological, connecting the needs of this body that would become, at the same time, charged and deprived of creative drive so that his manifestations and creations would take place through singing, dancing, writing and his drawings.

Much of this process, through which Artaud would try to regain possession of his own body and his sense of identity, would be recorded in his notebooks, the famous *Rodez notebooks*, which, according to Mèredieu (2011), yielded hundreds of diaries over the period of 15 months, in which the artist recorded his various poetic practices: writings, drawings, intensities and perforations while scribbling on paper. Many of these records accompany physical processes of retaking himself and his own body, since the artist was subjected to dozens of electroshock sessions, generating memory loss and several physical and mental sequels.

Thus, it is worth noting that the body – or the organism, as he often refers to it – can be considered a transversal (and fundamental) theme in his questionings about the construction of his Theater of Cruelty and the paradigmatic perspectives it opens for the arts of the body. The question of the organism is present and takes different approaches throughout his life. For example, in *The Theater and Its Double*, Artaud understood the organism (the body) as a place of passage of forces for the actor’s expression, as it can be extracted from the text *An Affective Athleticism*, there present (Artaud, 1958). For Artaud, the body is the place of passage of affections, to the point that actors (and also dancers and performers, if we update the term) have what he calls a “kind of affective musculature”. He continues:

The actor is an athlete of the heart. [...] and his is the affective sphere. *It belongs to him organically*. [emphasis added] [...] What the athlete depends upon in running is what the actor depends upon in shouting a passionate curse, but the actor's course is altogether interior (Artaud, 1958, p. 133).

Artaud seeks to bring to the body an autonomy lost in the Western world. The arts of the body were relegated, in general, to the background in the history of art due to this inferiorization of the body⁷. In *The Theater and Its Double* (1958), what was perceived was a more optimistic perspective, in which the body can be the place of healing for Western society. In a Western culture, that has always separated body and soul, locating emotions as something that happens organically in the body was a precursor in many ways.

However, after the years of internment in several psychiatric hospitals, the focus on the body, precisely, as a place of control and imprisonment (to be overcome) will prove decisive in Artaud's work. The imprisonment and control imposed on his body in the regimes of the many institutions he passed through are evident in his physical and mental deterioration. In his experiences, Artaud will arrive at the concrete perception of how, in Western societies, the organism had necessarily become maladjusted, unbalanced, composed of organs that he will consider *defective* or *contaminated*: parts that no longer account for the whole, even when put together.

It seems to arise the perception that the body is much more than the sum of its parts (or its organs) and needs to be understood as much more than its merely anatomical description, rather in its intensities and forces. Even Artaud seems to try to answer Spinoza's (1954) question, echoed later by Deleuze and Guattari: *What can a body do?*, even if he did not necessarily put the question in those exact terms. In a sense, this is still a central question that seems to echo in many researchers of body arts and dance.

André Lage, in an article about Artaud's notebooks written in the sanatoria of Rodez and Ivry, tells us that Artaud would have left, in total, 406 notebooks written during his hospitalizations⁸ and that they, despite their marginal character (they were not written by the author with the intention of being published), would have in general “an extremely primordial theme that emerges from Rodez: the reinvention of anatomy” (Lage, 2009, p. 316), in what could be called:

[...] a '*picto-choreography*' ([in allusion to] Derrida), which configures itself, little by little, in an unstable, fragmented, anarchic and multiple way. They [...] perform some recurrent themes in his later writings, namely, the struggle against god and the 'father-mother', the revolt against the 'misery of the human body' and its bad anatomical constitution, the power of magic, and the revolutionary claim of a new human body, a body infinitely potential (Lage, 2009, p. 313).

Lage (2009, p. 314) marks this relationship between body, drawing, and writing in Artaud's thought, since they would evoke a double anatomical reinvention, capable of “engaging the whole body”. For Penido (2018, p. 1475), what Artaud does with this “intimate picto-choreography in process” would be to seek a way:

[...] to give concreteness to thought, that is, to reconstitute the body emptied by conceptual illusory practices. To search for a body passes, paradoxically, through the leakage of the threshold of the unrepresentable, that which remains beyond any possible representation, hence the need for the act and the body. Because the body, corporality itself, raw and unassigned, as Artaud seems to think, is the threshold of the unrepresentable (Penido, 2018, p. 1480).

In the radio broadcast *To have done with the Judgement of God*, recorded in 1948, the year of his death, Artaud develops a sensorial and rhythmic text, crossed by the power of his voice and breathing, which is considered a milestone both in the sense of engaging the whole body in an artistic creation and in the sense of trying to reach the threshold of the unrepresentable. Thus, Artaud makes the body the privileged place of the poetic happening, precisely in that it shows itself as “the threshold of the thinking experience” (Nunes, 1986, p.261). Artaud also criticizes the constitution (political and corporal) of modern man, also addressing a critique to the North American (United States) geopolitics, the ritual experiences he had with the Raramuri people, and provocatively confronts the great enemy of this last phase: “god”. By first putting there the question of the body without organs, Artaud tells us:

or you can tie me up if you wish,
but there is nothing more useless than an organ.
When you will have made him a body without organs,
then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions
and restored him to his true freedom.
Then you will teach him again to *dance wrong side out*
as in the frenzy of dance halls
and this wrong side out will be his real place (Artaud, 1988, p. 571, emphasis added).

When Artaud says that “there is nothing more useless than an organ” and that only with a body without organs the human being will find the “true freedom” and will get rid of “all his automatic reactions”, this is because what is being criticized is the mechanistic view of body as “organic organization of organs”, in Deleuze’s words (Deleuze; Guattari, 2005, p. 158), in which the organ is a form of organization of the body for a certain purpose, and this anatomical instrumentalization of the body is what Artaud criticizes. On the contrary, the body without organs escapes from all

organization and representation. Artaud seeks to deconstruct the merely anatomical view of the body and thus allow the body to “dance wrong side out”: with his picto-choreography⁹ leading it to the threshold of the unrepresentable.

Thus, we believe that, through the conception of the Theater of Cruelty and the development of a picto-choreographic writing of the self, Artaud sought to contaminate and encourage others to discover the proper and radical functioning of each body, moved by the desire to be, a perspective that was reinforced in the final phase of his life. As André Lage puts it, the reinvention of anatomy proposed by Artaud is: “[...] a reinvention that passes through the body, the rhythm, the voice, the explosion of this ‘vibrating, spasmodic and methodical verb’ that places the theater within the body and makes the human body the privileged place of the theatrical act” (Lage, 2009, p. 316).

In this way, the human body becomes, by extension of meaning, the privileged place of any artistic event, the privileged place of the poetic act. The body of anatomical description and rational understanding is the body of everyday automatisms. This representational body needs to be overcome. Thus, the body that *dances wrong side out* can be the body that frees itself from its automatisms, organized in representations and extracts, towards the unrepresentable and becomes art: this had always been Artaud’s search.

It is not by chance that *anatomical* rigidity, expressive and excessive standardization of movements, and the disconnection between art and life were not, precisely, some of the latent questions for the emergence of contemporary dance? The perspective of a *wrong side out dance*, launched by Artaud, opens ways for us to think of contemporary dance as the one capable of identifying what these automatisms are and, thus, investigate and instigate subversions within the unique functioning of each body in its search for freedom through gesture and movement, promoting insurrections.

However, we must ask: what are these automatisms and what is this liberation? To answer these questions, we will turn to the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe¹⁰ in order to formulate a hypothesis-question: can dance in the contemporaneity be a political instrument of insurrection (and resistance) against the ways of exercising power, violence and control (characteristic of contemporary capitalism, creator of automatisms and *anes-*

thesias) through the reinvention of bodies with new compositions of the self that arise, precisely, as one tries to translate the unrepresentable into new representations?

Between Artaud, Mbembe and Deleuze: the body without organs meets the Necropolitics

From such hypothesis, we wonder if Artaud's life/work, in a certain sense, can be emblematic to think about biopolitics and necropolitics in their actions on bodies and control mechanisms today. This is where Achille Mbembe comes in, who has a thorough research on the effects of power and its deadly implications¹¹ on bodies and, based on this, presents us with a possibility of reinvention that comes from the viscera, from the core of the life that pulsates in these bodies. Thus, this research unites authors who are at first disparate, but who can be approached – even if in a preliminary and innovative way – because the final objective is an “wrong side out dance” capable of potentiating the search for forms of reinvention and liberation of the bodies through new compositions of the self, as we will now see.

In order to investigate it further, we also propose here a brief dive into the radio broadcast *To have done with the Judgement of God*, from 1948, in order to point out the echoes between Artaud, necropolitics and contemporaneity – even to inspire perspectives of resistance centered on the body. What we intend here is to bring Artaud's final denunciations – about his own body and the bodies as a whole in the polarized West of the post-World War II Cold War environment – closer to the necropolitical perspective so, in the next sub-item of this article, it will be possible to approach possibilities of conceiving new free bodies in dance in the face of the worlds of death that Achille Mbembe presents.

As Mbembe (2019a, p. 92) point it:

[...] I have put forward the notion of necropolitics, or necropower, to account for the various ways in which, in our contemporary world, [...] *death-worlds* [are created], unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the *living dead*.

The key theme of a *mortification* is developed by the author as a way to use and extract the potency from bodies. It is believed that the concept of necropolitics is able to demonstrate this concrete action that not only deals with the theft of the potency of life, but also points to a common reality: the exploitation, control and decimation of bodies, identities, cultures and nature, capitalism's main tool for exploitation and expropriation since modernity. Mbembe delves into the relationship between war and biopower to continue the investigation started by Michel Foucault¹², focusing now on the closer relationship between politics and the exercise of death in an analysis that is not only contemporary, but also that retraces the historical course of the processes of domination.

Thus, the Cameroonian philosopher starts from the understanding that the colonial enterprise (the basis of the modern Western world, as decolonial studies have shown¹³) has the principle of segregation at its base and war becomes its operative mode. Artaud, in the broadcast, criticizes the American economic power, addressing the problematic of war and the post-World War II era by saying: “[...] and they want at all costs and by every possible means to make and manufacture soldiers with a view to all the planetary wars which might later take place” (Artaud, 1988, p. 555). He exposes, thus, a vision that demonstrates one of the purposes for which bodies were destined in this constant warlike context that also marked the 20th century.

In Artaud, we can find a denunciation of this same mortification caused by colonial and capitalist ways of life, also considered by him as automatism, which empty the body of its potential. In the initial text of the radio broadcast, in an ironic way, Artaud addresses the incessant need for production by saying that, after all, “[...] one must produce, one must find a major field of action for human inertia, / the worker must have something to keep him busy, / new fields of activity must be created” – incessantly. (Artaud, 2020, p. 556). From this speech, the capitalist production seems to place itself in this function of creating an infinity of activities related to work, whose main objective is to generate profit, but that, for this, acts in a way to disconnect the person from oneself through a kind of mortification – and automation of the body – in favor of incessant productivity and profit.

Mbembe points to the enslavement of the people of Africa for forced labor as one of the first actions of biopolitical domination through the *plantation* system, the large monoculture latifundia of the colonial period. Next, the author defines the life of the enslaved person as a “death in life”. The question of colonization is also addressed by the philosopher as a space for violent experimentation that, from a historiographical perspective, would also culminate in the Nazi episode, and he says: “the colonial conquest revealed a hitherto unseen potential for violence” (Mbembe, 2019a, p. 76).

Therefore, in order for us to investigate the constitution of bodies in contemporary Western societies, it is necessary to understand how the history of mortification creates automatized and dead in life bodies – precisely because of this, perfect for exploratory work.

It is worth mentioning a warning made by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2005) about the experimentations of the body without organs: just as there are bodies without organs that are full of creative power (exactly what we try to create through dance in contemporaneity), there would also be other bodies without organs, empty and emptied, which also proliferate themselves in constant affectation. About this, the authors say:

A BwO [Body without organs] of money (inflation), but also a BwO of the State, army, factory, city, Party, etc. If the strata are an affair of coagulation and sedimentation, all a stratum needs is a high sedimentation rate for it to lose its configuration and articulations, and to form its own specific kind of tumor, within itself or in a given formation or apparatus. The strata spawn their own BwO's, totalitarian and fascist BwO's, terrifying caricatures of the plane of consistency. It is not enough to make a distinction between full BwO's on the plane of consistency and empty BwO's on the debris of strata destroyed by a too violent destratification. We must also take into account cancerous BwO's in a stratum that has begun to proliferate (Deleuze; Guattari, 2005, p. 163).

If we think from the necropolitical condition denounced by Mbembe (2019a), we can easily identify, in our present time, several existences of such emptied bodies without organs that are denounced by Deleuze and Guattari, either as “totalitarian and fascist” or else as “cancerous in a stratum made proliferating”. In this way, it is possible to identify, in both authors, a warning about the existence of other forms of resistance that are not beneficial to the collective, which should not be disregarded and, because of

this, the need for artistic creations that can generate positive affective experiences of life is reinforced, including in these bodies.

The bodies without organs denounced by Deleuze and Guattari seem to reflect, then, the agents that constitute the context of necropolitics. In situating the issue from Artaud's radio transmission, the authors point out:

The extraordinary composition of *To Be Done with the Judgment of God*: he begins by cursing the cancerous body of America, the body of war and money; he denounces the strata, which he calls 'caca'; to the strata he opposes the true Plane, even if it is only peyote, the little trickle of the Tarahumaras; but he also knows about the dangers of a too-sudden, careless des-tratification. Artaud was constantly grappling with all of that and flowed with it (Deleuze; Guattari, 2005, p. 163).

From the reflection of the authors above we realize that one subject Artaud dealt with in his transmission, even if in his limitations, was to denounce the strata of capitalism and how they create bodies emptied of potency (like the workers and exploited soldiers previously mentioned), necessary for the maintenance of money and war, despite being (or precisely because they are) devitalized, mortified bodies, dead in life.

Is it possible to overcome all this? To Adeilton Silva (2021, p. 202-203):

[...] what Artaud discusses [...] are the evils of the colonizing and supposedly civilizing processes. The origins of the necropolitics that today permeate technological society lie exactly there. What we witness nowadays is an explosion of historical tensions, in which traditionally subjugated and excluded groups decided to react. The foundations of necropolitics are being confronted.

It is the possibility of this confrontation that interests us here when thinking about dance in contemporaneity. Deleuze and Guattari propose the idea of a deterritorialization in which, starting from the knowledge of the territory in which we were constituted, we must search for "an advantageous place on it, [to] find potential movements of deterritorialization, [and] possible lines of flight" (Deleuze; Guattari, 2005, p. 161). Can the body that dances be the body that, going beyond necropolitics and established worlds of death, finds such deterritorialization, such a line of flight toward not negation but the affirmation of the potency of life? Can dance in contemporaneity therefore be able to confront and heal the violence of mortified, cancerous, or even totalitarian and fascist bodies, since it can take them beyond their emptiness toward new picto-choreographies as compositions of the self?

The potencies of dance and visceral insurgency

In order to reflect on the relationship between the body without organs, dance, and resistance, confirming the hypothesis proposed before, we will now seek to carry out an approximation between a “writing from the viscera”, as suggested by Daniel Lins (1999) when talking about Artaud’s notebooks, and the “visceral struggles”, pointed out by Achille Mbembe (2019b) as a form, centered on bodies, of possible resistance to the necropolitical scenarios of capitalism today – potent, and not empty of life, even in its contradictions. In order to approach the reconstruction of the body without organs, echoing fundamental issues of the theater of cruelty, it is understood the need to weave, in life, a new relationship with language. Daniel Lins (1999) makes an interesting approximation as he understands that it is possible (and necessary) the existence of an “artisan of the body without organs”, that is, an artist capable of reconstructing his body in its potency in a handcrafted way.

To experience is also to experiment nomadic thoughts, to produce *a writing from the viscera*, to elaborate concepts pregnant with events and to work with quotations inserted in the universe of contamination and not of copy, thus creating a new language that smells like life [...] (Lins, 1999, p. 8, emphasis added).

The perspective of a visceral resistance gains a central space to conceive this line of flight from the mortified and automated body, where the author believes that it is “[...] in the total subjectivity of the viscera that language and, as a consequence, the singular reality of things, rests” (Lins, 1999, p. 12). We believe, then, that it is of utmost importance to propose the search for new forms of corporal writings and inscriptions, or picto-choreographies: that do not suffocate or erase their singular reality, their pains, their territory, their multitude and even the impossibility of speaking of things in an institutionalized manner, assuming the limits of the cognizable and of representation in a poetic act. The viscera predate the organs of modern anatomy and the reason. Thinking of a language that emerges from the “viscera” is not related to a division of the body into watertight categories or organs. Semantically and metaphorically, viscera seem older and more vital than organs, charged with vital potency.

Artaud's notebooks, during his hospitalizations, seemed to become the stage for these visceral expressions and, when dealing with the matter, Lins points out that it is through this body language in his picto-choreography that Artaud wants to “wake the living dead to life”, to which he continues:

Against inert language, Artaud claims the marks of a disease of style: the text must bear the traces of laceration and anguish, striations and ribbing, marks of a second, third, infinite skin tattooed both by the needle that penetrates them and by the sweat that *drips from the viscera and makes the hot, salty liquid the ink that sets fire to the world of the living dead, waking them to life* (Lins, 1999, p. 13, emphasis added).

The ways of developing a “language of the viscera”, as suggested by the studies on the body without organs, can be countless, expressing pain, celebration, culture, and memory. The body that dances free, beyond its daily automatism, would be the body that rediscovers its own viscosity and reconstructs itself.

Mbembe also defends a “revolution of the viscera” through concepts such as “visceral resistance” and “visceral struggles”, which he mentions in an interview called in Portuguese *Quando o poder brutaliza o corpo, a resistência assume uma forma visceral* (“When power brutalizes the body, the resistance takes a visceral form”, 2019b)¹⁴. When defining what these “visceral struggles” might be, Achille Mbembe presents them as “insurrections” that are positioned in the face of a well-defined scenario: the brutalization¹⁵ of the nervous system.

Power brutalizes bodies (and the nervous system) to control them. Ana Kiffer (2020, p. 19), alluding to Mbembe, states that our time is marked, *par excellence*, by the sign “of destruction and brutalism”. Peter Pál Pelbart questions the effects of biopower and brutalism on societies, highlighting the centrality of the body in these processes: “[...] in any case, never before has the extent to which life and the body are at the center of the hurricane been so clearly exposed, where biopolitics, war and capitalism are inextricably intertwined” (Pelbart, 2020, p. 9). How to oppose this completely brutal system of annihilation and control? It is this brutalization of the nervous system, mentioned before, that leads precisely to apathy and “death in life” and whose purpose would be to mold our bodies forcibly to work, leaving them docile and compliant.

For Achille Mbembe: (2019b, p. 18):

There is an emergence of small insurrections. These micro-insurrections take a visceral form as a response to the brutalization of the nervous system typical of contemporary capitalism. One of the forms of violence of contemporary capitalism consists in brutalizing the nervous system. As a response, new forms of resistance emerge, linked to the rehabilitation of the affections, emotions, passions, that converge in what I call ‘politics of viscosity’.

The rehabilitation of the affections can be what, precisely, fills the body emptied of its potency, automated in daily relationships almost always inserted in a capitalist and exploitation scenario, in which human beings are nothing more than labor – and sometimes even disposable labor. How to dance from the understanding that more and more (and quickly in contemporary society) the body becomes the target of a process that seeks to turn it into an object shaped by coercion, violence, and fear? What is the most visceral thing in us that is capable of delineating itself as resistance?

Having all this in view, it is understood that the body without organs, when filled in its potency – when filled by life in its contradictions, even in what “life has of unrepresentable” – is the one capable of denouncing the naturalization of contemporary deaths, whether physical or symbolic, and that they are constant in the constitution of the bodies and the territories that form them through the cultures that exist there. What we intend to continue investigating is the capacity that dance has to help in overcoming a specific type of stratum: the brutalization of the nervous system. How can one act physically against the increasing brutalization of bodies? How can the scenic gesture of the dancing body also heal? Simple (yet complex): as a visceral insurrection, contemporary dance is capable of rehabilitating affects and awakening powers in its search for freedom through gesture and movement, promoting insurrections – Mbembe’s¹⁶ visceral insurrections – capable of awakening even the “living dead bodies”.

For Hélia Borges (2021, n. p.)¹⁷, the actuality assists:

[...] the emergence of bodies brutalized in their nervous system because of neo-capitalistic forces. However, we witness in the uprisings, in the insurrections, the strength of struggle and resistance to the established. This fragmentary and collective movement, paradoxically, is the fruit of the politics of viscosity that occur from the practices of rehabilitation of the sensory

body triggered by the affections, by the passions (such as, for example, the experience of the fall in contemporary dance).

Aiming at a language inspired by viscosity, that is, the rehabilitation of the sensory body through dance, dialogues with the proposal of a “writing from the viscera” (Lins, 1999), mentioned before. This rehabilitation of the affections is above all political potency, because it seeks to give voice to the issues of the body, which is also a voice that represents collective causes. It is worth, then, to synthesize that the processes of deconstruction and reconstruction proposed by the experience of the body without organs (from the perspective of taking care of oneself in order to take care of others) find in the poetics of dance a way to rehabilitate the affections, new compositions of the self capable of going against the brutalization of bodies and, for this very reason, also a way of visceral resistance.

For Hélia Borges (2021, n. p.), the “uprisings” (as she refers to visceral resistance) are necessary “from predefined places of the alienated [and] expropriated human”, or, as she also puts it, from “a human that constituted itself as a dead body”. For them, dance allows “the return to life from a state of death”, since dance “[...] sets in motion a dynamic of desire, [...] a path [that] is realized through sensitization: the awakening of the body that returns in the form of a new habit in the obscurity of automatisms”. Moreover, this would be “[...] a political perspective because it provokes a displacement and a perceptual detachment, by producing new forms of the sensitive and the visible against that which is consensus, reconfiguring the experience of the common”.

Thus, visceral resistance opens itself as a field of possibility for the body without organs, “reconfiguring the experience of the common” through esthetics. The body without organs and full of life is an energetic body, a body of possibility: a body that dances in its hieroglyphics, moves between representation and the unrepresentable, and opens itself to new compositions of itself. Thus, an element identified in the body without organs by Deleuze and Guattari is precisely the possibility of generating individual and collective transformations, of making affectations possible. To make these affections possible, in a brutalized collectivity, is a form of resistance. With this, dance in contemporaneity can open a horizon of (micro)political overcoming, even if it can be collective, of necropolitics.

This generates inquiries: how can we dance together in favor of reconfiguring our personal and collective pains? Where does this creation unfold physically? What creative actions regarding musculature, fluency, weight, rhythm, and disruption might be necessary? These are just some examples of questions, since the perspective of the body without organs, by definition, would never propose to answer an exact procedure, although they are possible questions for future investigation.

Final considerations

When we think about Achille Mbembe's necropolitics, the rehabilitation of the affections proves to be fundamental against the brutalization of the senses resulting from contemporary capitalism, making us propose dance as a sphere of (micro)insurrections, since it is capable of "waking up" the brutalized body, taking it out of its apathy and daily automatisms and rehabilitating its affections by taking it to "dance wrong side out": to dance beyond (and even "backwards", in the sense of "in the opposite direction") of its survival mechanisms and automatisms. In other words, if we think of dance, at least dance in contemporaneity, as a place of creation, the body that dances becomes a subject, escaping its mere objectification.

As Debora Saccol (2014, p. 02) puts it, "the body becomes the subject of dance" and, by becoming a subject, instigates a whole critical reflection especially regarding its discipline and control and the way it is modified (and codified) in the contemporary scene. Thus, it becomes a body that experiences itself through art, a body that surrenders itself to gesture, that revives itself by making itself on the threshold of representation – a body that insurges. After all:

[...] dance is the body that experiences itself through art. When dancing, the body surrenders to the gesture, to the encounter, to the vertigo of aesthetics. It throws itself into the instant, into the event, undoes time and space, and undresses itself of movements to become sensitive. A life that does not exist outside encounters and events, because the body that dances becomes itself an event when it finds something that potentiates the sensitive and casual experience into a necessary experience, into an experience of the thought, into a condition of existence as an effect of the capacity to act and think. To dance then can be to dismantle, to denude, to unmark the space, to disappear in the space-scene. To think, to feel, to travel. To express poetically the

potency of life. To find a potency for life that makes it become art. Life as a work of art. Dance as becoming (Munhoz, 2011, p. 29).

In this article, we intended to think about dance in contemporaneity as an enlarged concept and in an expanded field, above all through the notion of visceral resistance, manifested in the confrontation of Antonin Artaud's concepts of the body without organs and Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics. As we have seen, this article revolved around a hypothesis-question: whether dance, in contemporaneity, could be a political instrument of insurrection (i.e. resistance) in the face of the global scenario of necropolitics. Even though this is not a full conclusion, the answer is yes, and such insurrection would occur through visceral resistance, which proposes, through dance, the reinvention and the awakening of bodies, subjected and asleep by the modes of exercising power, violence and control (biopower) characteristic of contemporary capitalism and its anesthetizing and brutalizing power of the senses.

In this context, the “wrong side out dance” presented itself as a possible dialogue between contemporary dance and the deconstruction of a body full of automatisms, of a pre-formatted body and movements shaped and limited by the interests and expropriation of the capitalist, colonial and patriarchal world. In this way, the potencies of dance in the contemporaneity can also be shown in its power of micropolitical agency if its experimentations are born out of the overcoming of violence and the brutalization of the senses (thus characterizing itself as visceral resistance). This article, however, is far from exhausting the theme, quite the contrary: much can still be researched and experimented regarding the reverberations between biopolitics, necropolitics and dance¹⁸.

As a main contribution, there remains the perception that dance in contemporary times can show itself not only as an artistic practice or as a category open to philosophical discussion, but, above all, as a political – or micropolitical – instrument. For Suely Rolnik (2018, p. 131), a staunch critic of capitalism and its colonization of the unconscious and of the bodies (causing automatisms): “[...] what moves the agents of micropolitical insurrection is the will to persevere with life, which in humans manifests itself as the impulse to ‘announce’ worlds to come, in a process of creation and experimentation that seeks to express them”.

If the dance in the contemporaneity can, in fact, constitute itself as a political instrument of insurrection (and resistance) in face of the automatisms and anesthesia, characteristic of contemporary capitalism and its ways of exercising power, violence and control that create world becoming, then this “wrong side out dance” necessarily involves the reinvention of the bodies through new compositions of the self, new picto-choreographies of subjects who assume themselves as agents of (micro)insurrections.

We conclude here that, in the confrontation between dance and necropolitics through a key concept like *visceral resistance*, a piece of new ground has emerged. On this piece of land, new seeds can be sown and come to blossom: they seek, above all, a visceral connection between each person and his/her own body, between bodies and communities, between communities and territories, and so on. In this way, autonomies and affections are awakened, creating senses that dance, emerge and are able to propose “new worlds” or even, who knows, allow us to dream new “possible futures”, as Ailton Krenak (2019) would say.

Notes

- ¹ As Débora Saccol (2014) points out, the precursors of modern and contemporary dance – such as Isadora Duncan and Loie Fuller – had already been, since the beginning of the 20th century, proposing experimentations and rethinking various aspects of dance, especially criticizing its stiffness and standardization. Throughout the 20th century, transformations that are even more expressive would take place and would be proposed by different artists and scholars. Furthermore, when thinking in this article about an expanded scene in contemporary dance, we must also and above all refer to the innovations proposed by Pina Bausch (Cabral; Santos, 2019), one of the milestones of 20th century dance, whose proposal of a dance-theater revolutionized and redefined the notion of dance.
- ² In 2021 Adeilton Silva published an article that relates not only Artaud’s work but also that of José Saramago to the theme of necropolitics, even though it does not address the theme of dance or theater, it proposes a reflection on human degradation in general (Silva, 2021). In this context, it is worth noting that an initial effort was made by the authors of this article in the dissertation entitled *O corpo sem órgãos como resistência visceral: atravessamentos a partir da*

revolução corporal de Antonin Artaud, authored by the first and supervised by the second. The dissertation in question was defended at the PPGAC/UFOP/BRAZIL, in 2022, and sought to contemplate the approximation between Artaud and Mbembe in their denunciations and announcements, aiming at the possibility of an embodied language as something capable of a visceral resisting to Necropolitics. (Silveira, 2022).

- 3 The approximation between necropolitics and dance is still sparse in literature. Regarding biopolitics, it should be noted that there are some studies that investigate its dialogue with creation in dance. For instance, the approximation between butoh dance and the mechanisms of power and biopolitical control of life has been explored in Brazil by the scholar Eden Peretta: we can quote the analysis, co-authored with Gabriely Lemos (2022), of the dance-theater performance *Zoé: restos de uma vida nua*, by the Coletivo Anticorpos (2018). More specifically, a rare but significant contribution could be found in the article *Mestiçagens de um butô negro: colorações afro-brasileiras na dança de Marco Xavier* (Tonnetti; Corradini; Mello, 2021), which investigates the relationship between butoh dance and necropolitics.
- 4 Artaud's thought is so fruitful that it would inspire different artistic movements, even inside contemporary dance. For Samantha Marenzi (2019), one of the main examples of Artaudian influence on 20th century dance would be, precisely, the already mentioned (in the previous notes) butoh dance, which emerged in post-World War II Japan.
- 5 Ritual guided by the use of peyote. Peyote is a cactus used in Mexico since pre-Columbian times with a long tradition of both medicinal and ritual use. Native to parts of Mexico and United States, this cactus contains several alkaloids, including mescaline. During his nine-month visit to Mexico in 1937, Artaud participated in Ciguri and lived with the Tarahumaras for about a month. It would profoundly change his relationship with his own body and his psyche (Dias, 2021).
- 6 Also known in literature as “Tarahumaras”, a modification of the original name by the Spanish colonizers.
- 7 We can cite here, for example, Le Goff and Truong (2006), who address in depth the tensions and crises that the western Christianity has had with the body since the Middle Ages, deepened by the duality body / soul, in which the soul in general is divinized and glorified, and the body, debased and humiliated, seen as a sin and an error. Few will oppose this view, even in modern times. Descartes himself will see the body as no more than an “autonomous” con-

trolled by the rational soul. One of the few exceptions in this scenario is the philosophy of the body of Baruch Spinoza, philosopher of Jewish origin, persecuted by Jewish and Christian religious authorities in the 17th century, from which we can extract a statement that Deleuze will return to countless times when referring to Artaud's body without organs: "For what the body can do no one has hitherto determined, that is to say, experience has taught no one hitherto what the body [...] can do [...]. For no one as yet has understood the structure of the body so accurately as to be able to explain all its functions" (Spinoza, 1954, p. 131). For Espinosa, there would be neither superiority between the instances of body and mind, nor separation between the psychic and the physical. For Deleuze and Guattari (1999), influenced by Espinosa and Artaud, the body will be a composition of forces, a potency of affections, and a mode of knowledge to which a ready-made definition is not appropriate. We will come back to this later. With this brief digression, what we intend to bring here is that Artaud has a precursor character in his approach to the body, as pointed out by Deleuze himself.

- ⁸ More specifically, according to Mèredieu (2011, p. 780), from his 406 notebooks, a hundred would have been written during the Rodez period (when the electroshock treatments ended approximately two years after Artaud's arrival), and the rest would be written after his return to Paris and during his residence at the Ivry sanatorium.
- ⁹ The term *picto-choreography* is used by Derrida (1994) to refer to the way Artaud's notebooks were written, scribbled, burned and filled with holes, forming true pictograms, almost as magical symbols. Written in strokes that are sometimes spasmodic, sometimes blunt, they display a performative rhythm of their own.
- ¹⁰ Philosopher and Professor Achille Mbembe was born in the Republic of Cameroon in 1957, a western region of Central Africa. His thinking has been relevant to discuss and comprehend politics and hierarchization of the world by addressing the theme of necropolitics (2019a), which develops the concepts "control of bodies" and "biopower" from biopolitics, towards others such as: state of exception and politics of death, performing a thorough analysis of the modes of exercising power in the contemporary capitalism, their violence, and their conflicts.
- ¹¹ Achille Mbembe (2019a) coined the term *necropolitics*, politics of "death", which unfolds and develops biopolitical studies and proposes to rethink the his-

tory of Western dominations through the lens of death and exploitation technologies that go back mostly to the processes of colonization and *plantation*.

- ¹² Biopolitics is the term coined by the philosopher Michel Foucault (2003), that defines the means used by capitalism to manage public life through the submission of bodies: classifications, punishments, imprisonments, determinations of subjectivity etc.
- ¹³ We recommend the reading of Walter Mignolo's seminal work (2003), *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*.
- ¹⁴ This interview (by Pablo Lapuente Tiana and Amador Fernández-Savater) was published in Brazil in the book *Poder brutal, resistência visceral*, organized by N-1 edições (Mbembe, 2019b).
- ¹⁵ We recommend Achille Mbembe's book *Brutalismo (Brutalisme)*, in which the author takes a concept drawn from architecture as a starting point to think about political relations, questioning: "[...] on the other hand, what is the political but an apprehension of elements of every order to which one tries to give shape, using force when needed, an exercise in twisting and reshaping par excellence?" (Mbembe, 2021, p. 11).
- ¹⁶ In the interview previously quoted, Mbembe, when asked about the possibility of resisting necropolitics, points out that "[...] contemporary forms of resisting necropolitics and necroeconomics [...] are very diverse, as they depend on local situations and contexts" (Mbembe, 2019b, p. 16). For the authors of this article, dance in its possibilities undoubtedly could be one of these forms of resistance.
- ¹⁷ The text by Hélia Borges (2021) on the experience of the fall in contemporary dance was published in a Portuguese online magazine with a wide circulation (but not strictly academic) and is one of the few references that scratch the surface of necropolitics from the perspective of dance, even if in passing.
- ¹⁸ As the sparse bibliography demonstrates. For instance, a next step – to be undertaken in future research – could be to explore new creative processes in contemporary dance that can have the "writing from the viscera" presented by Lins (1999) after Artaud in the context of Mbembe's visceral struggles (2019b) as a starting point.

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