


Amefricanizing the *cuir*

ARTIGO

José Henrique de Jesus Silvaⁱ 

Universidade Federal de Sergipe, São Cristóvão, SE, Brasil

Urânia Santos das Chagasⁱⁱ 

Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana, Feira de Santana, BA, Brasil

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Abstract

There are a thousand words to refer to queer, but which words would be reflected and used by us, Latino-Americans? Queer studies delve into our territory, producing a range of important connotations for understanding our pluralities, but where does queer fit? We start by presenting the paths that lead to what we call queer theory and then, thinking from the body-territory, explore the variations that queer is delineated in territories where it does not belong. In this way, we problematize *cuir* and the way of reading from the Global South that is woven through a language variation from queer to *cuir* as another way of thinking about the concept through a recontextualization of difference

Keywords: *Cuir* Theory. Amefricanity. Fugitivity

Amefricanizando o *cuir*

Resumo

Existem mil palavras para se referir ao *queer*, mas quais palavras seriam refletidas e utilizadas por nós latino-amefricanos? Os estudos *queer* adentram em nosso território produzido uma gama de conotações importantes de compreensão das nossas pluralidades, mas onde fica o *cuir*? Começamos por apresentar os caminhos que levam ao que chamamos de teoria *queer* e logo depois, pensando a partir do corpo-território, as variações que o *queer* é delimitado em um território que não é seu. Assim problematizamos o *cuir* e o modo de leitura sul global que é tecida sobre uma variação de linguagem do *queer* ao *cuir* como um outro modo de pensar o conceito sobre uma recontextualização da diferença.

Palavras-chave: Teoria *Cuir*. Amefricanidade. Fugitividade.

1 Introduction

This text seeks to emerge the black Amefrican *cuir* narratives, in order to decentralize the hegemonic narratives that subalternize and stifle the Amefrican *cuir* experiences. Drawing on the thoughts of Pinã Narváez, Yos (Erchxs) (2017), abigail Campos Leal (2021), Lélia Gonzalez (2022), Jota Mombaça (2021), Fred Moten and

Stefano Harney (2024), Sayak Valencia (2023) and Val Flores (2010), we discuss the conceptions of the intertwining of *cuir* and amefricanity..

It is a work resulting from reflections that are being formed from the presentations and epistemological disputes carried out daily in our *sudacas* experiences, mediated by queer/*cuir* theories and their monstrosities and racial studies¹. These discussions dispute our experiences as black dissident bodies in the transits of gender and sexuality that we experience on a daily basis, as well as the racial dimensions that cannot be excluded in the construction of these debates.

To carry out this discussion, we delved into queer colors studies and their analytical approaches to the claims of black epistemologies, as well as their agencies for normalizing bodies that disrupt the instances of good manners and challenge cis-hetero-patriarchal binary logics. In this context, we align ourselves with Audre Lorde's thinking in *Sister Outsider* (2021). We will seek to reflect on a black *cuir* perspective, based on a Latin American understanding that highlights how racism impacts black subjectivity and its repressions, in light of the consequences of a colonized society, according to the contributions of intellectual Lélia Gonzalez in *Por um Feminismo Afro-Latino-Americano* (2021).

Thus, we aim to highlight an understanding of *cuir* through a racialized lens that allows us to problematize the whitening processes often associated with queer/*cuir* theories. Analyzing the notion of *cuir* from the perspective of *Amefricanidade* enables us to delineate how the lived experiences of *bixas* (feminine gay men), *sapatonas* (butch lesbians), travestis, and Black transmasculine individuals have subverted theoretical frameworks that exclude racialization in discourses across Brazilian and Amefrican

¹ By highlighting the place of the *cuir*/queer in a *sudaca* contextualization, we reflect in this work the thinking of Susy Shock (2021) and Hija de Perra (2015) when they think about the queer context from another perspective of thinking about the experiences of the body as a transvestite and a queer.

contexts. It also reaffirms the presence of these dissident identities in the broader struggle for social justice.

It is through a radical Black perspective that we question and reflect on the condition of an *Amefrican cuir* conception. By considering its epistemologies as escape routes from the essentializing categories imposed by whiteness, we explore the modes of subversion we create as Black dissident experiences—an act of desertion from the colonial world as both resistance and survival, aimed at transfiguring the world and the place of imposed determination to which we are subjected.

Amefricanidade is a key concept developed by the Black Brazilian intellectual and philosopher Lélia Gonzalez in her reinterpretation of colonial models of subalternization in the histories of colonized societies. According to Gonzalez (2020), *Amefricanidade* emerges from the lived experiences of Black women, Black men, and Indigenous peoples in resistance to colonial domination. Based on this perspective, we broaden our view beyond the binary determinations of male-female relations to consider how *Amefricanidade* manifests in Black experiences that rupture the binary connotations of cis-heteronormative thought.

Thus, we emphasize the place of subalternization as embodied by those who, through the lens of intersectionality, seek to open possibilities for rethinking the conditions of social justice experienced by dissident Black individuals (Collins, 2020). Accordingly, this work emerges from a sub-place and a repositioned methodological stance aligned with the *undisciplined submetodology* (submetodologia indisciplinada) proposed by Mombaça (2016). This model resists colonial fixations and provocatively deviates from normative standards, redirecting the modes of knowledge production from the perspective of the “sub”—a position shaped by the subaltern condition of marginalized subjects.

To remain consistent with this approach, which inscribes itself within the undisciplined submetodological model, we employ a bibliographic review process wherein the sources emerge as narratives voiced by the subaltern, in line with the proposition made by Spivak (2010). We turn to materials that denounce the conditions of marginalization and subalternity imposed by the colonial world. Based on this foundation, we develop a

theoretical framework that enables a reading of *cuir* through the lens of *Amefricanidade*, understood as a structure that opens space for articulating and expressing new dimensions of *cuir* within a specifically Latin American context.

2 Between queer and *cuir*

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At first, we must present possible pathways to understand the meanings that compose the term *cuir*, which we take as a critical dimension for reflection grounded in *Amefricanidade*. This leads us to formulate several questions: Where does the rewriting of this word originate? What distinguishes *cuir* from *queer*? Is it merely a trend, as some scholars in queer studies suggest? We begin here in order to reflect on *Amefrican cuir* and its implications, addressing from the outset the necessity of thinking *cuir* through territorial expressions that are already imbued with racial connotations. It is a matter of deeply understanding what it means to conceptualize *cuir* rooted in Latin American soil.

In considering the emergence of the term *cuir*, we revisit the relationship that *queer* has established in our territories. To grasp this relationship, however, we must first return to its etymological dimension in order to begin disputing the frameworks we seek to activate. According to Sayak Valencia (2023), in the article *From Queer to Cuir: Geopolitics of Strangeness and Epistemics of the Global South*, the term *queer* displays a range of genealogies traced back to 1922, when it first appeared as a derogatory term for homosexuality. From this temporal marker and through the subsequent developments of queer studies, the articulations of *cuir* began to emerge.

To reflect on the space of *cuir* as a conceptual formation, it is necessary to understand the multiple manifestations that a potential concept may exercise. Based on this premise, we reflect on the variation from *queer* to *cuir* in light of what the French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (2010, p. 30) express about the nature and function of concepts:

[...] concepts accommodate one another, overlap, coordinate their contours, and compose their respective problems; they belong to the same philosophy, even if

they have different histories. Indeed, every concept, having a finite number of components, will branch into other concepts — composed differently, yet constituting other regions of the same plane — responding to interconnected problems and participating in a co-creation. A concept does not require only a problem under which it reconfigures or replaces previous concepts, but rather a crossroads of problems through which it connects with other coexisting concepts (Deleuze; Guattari, 2010, p. 30).

When we consider *cuir*, we find ourselves before a new network of meanings, expressed through a shared sound, even as it generates distinct effects on the notions of *queer* and *cuir*. Thus, in reflecting on *cuir* and its variations, we conceive a space of recontextualization: we understand *cuir* through territorial difference, recognizing its deterritorializations as queer practice and the reterritorializations that emerge, multiply, and transform at the crossroads they encounter — always as an open, fluid, and rhizomatic condition.

At this crossroads of meanings, we reflect on the shift from *queer* to *cuir*, and the space of co-creation and coexistence that simultaneously brings them closer together and sets them apart. Sayak Valencia (2023) notes that one of the first thinkers to use the term *queer* in a foundational way is the Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa, in her work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Later, in 1991, the Italian scholar Teresa de Lauretis introduced *queer* as a theoretical framework. Initially, Lauretis proposed *queer theory* as a possible condition for rethinking traditional categories of sexual identity, suggesting a more fluid understanding of identity itself.

Throughout this process, *queer* studies have brought forth a range of authors who dispute and reshape the implications of *queer theory* from the standpoint of projecting new concepts that emerge from the body-territory of the subjects themselves. This is evident in the works of authors such as Gloria Anzaldúa (2021), Susy Shock (2021), and Hija de Perra (2015), whose narratives are crafted in a *deslenguada* (unruly, untranslatable) form, turning existential restlessness into an erotic and poetic act of rupture (Flores, 2010). Their writings move like serpents, projecting a “wild tongue” in defiance of normative models of linguistic domination and embracing monstrosity as a form of alterity inherent to dissident lives.

Tracing the outlines of queer theory leads us to works that underpin part of the process of constructing queer as theory both within and beyond academic centers. According to Miskolci (2016), the theoretical implications of this field began to take shape in the 1990s, particularly through studies by Teresa de Lauretis in her essay *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, which together laid the groundwork for what we now call queer theory.

In investigating the genesis of what we learn in universities under the label of theory, we also witness an expansion beyond this initial terminology, allowing for the emergence of new meanings. Beyond the authors who established queer theory within academia, we identify a range of thinkers who rewrite alternative paths for this theory, engaging in a logic of co-creation — as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari — through processes of conceptual differentiation and approximation. It is within this context that *cuir* emerges as a Ladino-Amefrican connotation, one that exceeds queer while maintaining affinities in terms of struggle and resistance.

Sayak Valencia (2023), in her study of the uses of the terms queer and *cuir*, demonstrates how the concept has become a site of contention between Latin American and U.S.-based scholars. It is important to consider the critiques voiced by authors from the Global South, who argue that the linguistic context in which queer is expressed in our territories carries distinct meanings. However, we must not overlook the affinities and solidarities that queer struggles have helped to amplify, particularly in understanding our narratives.

abigail Campos Leal (2021), in *Ex-orbitâncias: os caminhos da deserção de gênero*, highlights the relationships that queer theory establishes with our South American (sudaca) experiences, and the need for a critical desertion from its use — through an ontographic rupture that breaks with a grammarology that fails to account for us as Amefrican subjects. This grammarology, marked by a whitening perspective, was incorporated into queer theory in ways that silenced our specificities. Although authors such as Teresa de Lauretis and Judith Butler pointed toward the intersectional condition of queer multitudes,

their works still proved limited, as debates around racial categories remained largely marginalized.

Thus, in reflecting on how the notion of *cuir* arrives in Latin America — as a new etymological projection and a differentiation from prevailing definitions of queer — Valencia (2023, p. 31) makes the following remarks when describing the place of *cuir*:

Cuir brings visibility and gives voice to the linguistic politics of survival and alliance among trans people, border-crossers, mestizs, *queers* (*bixas*), *lesbians*, *cross-dressers* (*vestid*s*), sex workers (*put*s*), and people with disabilities. *Cuir* represents a form of estrangement (*ostranenie*; defamiliarization) from the term *queer* — that is, a de-automatization of the reading perspective — marking a geopolitical inflection toward the Global South, emerging from the peripheries as a counteroffensive to colonial epistemology and Anglo-American historiography. Thus, the shift from *queer* to *cuir* refers to a locus of enunciation with both playful and critical decolonial inflection. (Valencia, 2023, p. 31).

Valencia (2023) highlights the geopolitical shift of *cuir*, situated within a decolonial locus as part of its conceptual co-creation. In this sense, we emphasize not only decolonial inflection, but also a triad articulated through anticolonial and countercolonial thought, which guides the displacement of this concept toward a new grammar grounded in political, ethical, and ontological foundations. This grammar enables the inscription of other territorialities — territorialities that are simultaneously deterritorialized and reterritorialized through our acts of enunciation.

In thinking about the place of *cuir*, one perceives a “tongue-less” form of writing, as Flores (2010) suggests — a co-creation shaped as a sublingual membrane, a proletarian insolence marked by Black, brown, and Indigenous majorities. It constitutes a mode of self-naming beyond colonial paradigms, rubbing language against the linearity of grammatology, and revealing a rupture between labels and the determinations of dissident, disorderly subjectivities (Flores, 2010). Thus, *cuir* emerges as “the language of dissidence breathing through the pores of the enemy.” Its somatic disturbance shatters the entire “pact of control,” as it constitutes a silent insubordination operating in the guts of a racist and heteropatriarchal world—a movement of destruction.

In this way, we return to reflect on the considerations that Valencia (2023) outlines regarding *cuir*.

Beyond these debates and the complexity involved in translating or transliterating the term into other geopolitical contexts, it is essential to state that *cuir* refers, above all, to those who manage to circumvent interpretative unidirectionality—to be unintelligible at first glance; to those who exist outside the frameworks and simplified markers of Western hegemonic and binary representation. It refers to those who refuse to play the game of the disciplinary State against the neoliberal State, because they recognize that both are mechanisms of the same heteropatriarchal and bloodstained system. It refers to those who expose the fact that both the preservation and the destruction of corporeality obey a geopolitical system that determines the distribution of vulnerability across peripheral bodies (Valencia, 2023, p. 32).

It is within the sphere of marginalization and the space of monstrosity that *cuir* manifests itself. Rooted in indisciplinaryity, we reclaim spaces that were stolen through a politics of disruption. These politics allow us to break from the unidirectional logics imposed upon our existences, thereby generating effects of astonishment and chaos in the face of the silent ruptures we orchestrate as a mode of survival against the colonial models that discipline and essentialize the *cuir* body (Mombaça, 2021; Moten; Harney, 2024).

In this regard, Valencia (2023) offers insights into the use of *cuir* and its expansive dimension, which goes beyond what was proposed by queer theory:

[...] *cuir* is a movement of (self-)critique and radical agency that forms alliances with (trans)feminisms and with various minoritized processes marked by ethnicity/race, functional diversity, migration, age, class, etc., and which acknowledges the achievements and historiography of other movements for social transformation, such as the queer multitudes of the U.S. Third World, as well as diverse feminisms: Indigenous, ecological, cyber-activist, etc. In sum, *cuir* is a (geo)political and ethical project, not merely an aesthetic and prosthetic one (Valencia, 2023, p. 33).

In conceiving *cuir* as a form of self-critique and radical agency, we reflect on its political, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions through the lens of the *Amefrican* thought of Gonzalez (2020). It is a form of self-critique that recognizes the centrality of race as a foundational axis, enabling the projection of an intersectional engine for understanding *cuir* and its implications within the *ladino-Amefrican* territory. It constitutes a condition for

interrupting the mechanisms of functional interculturality and the modes of multiculturalism shaped by capitalist logics, which commodify marginalized bodies and sustain a false narrative of inclusion.

Thus, by proposing the *Amefricanization* of the *cuir* conception, we envision the preservation of Black life — *cuir* and non-*cuir* alike — as a strategy of escape and survival, grounded in the disruption of racism, heteronormativity, and the neocolonial models that continue to operate as subtle mechanisms for maintaining historical privilege.

2.2 A *deslenguada* amefricanity

By bringing *Amefricanity* to bear on the concept of *cuir*, we aim to highlight the dimension of self-critique that *Amefricanity* exercises in understanding the experiences of a colonized society. Based on this, we consider this concept to be of utmost importance for the debates surrounding anticolonial, countercolonial, and decolonial fronts to assume and rethink what Latin America and its entire construction mean in relation to its territorialities.

We find it pertinent to foreground Gonzalez's (2020) notion of *Amefricanity* due to its ancestral character linked to Black and Indigenous resistance against the colonial matrix of oppression. The author reveals that the category of *Amefricanity* has manifested in various forms since the colonial period; therefore, establishing it as an objective is to recall an entire past of Black pride and struggle, as the author exposes:

Even during the slaveholding era, it manifested in revolts, in the development of cultural resistance strategies, and in the creation of alternative forms of free social organization, whose concrete expressions are found in quilombos, cimarrones, cumbes, palenques, marronages, and maroon societies, spread across the diverse regions of the entire continent (Gonzales, 2020, p. 125).

Thus, amefricanity represents a reconnection with survival strategies that precede us, in the face of multiple attempts to suppress non-white existences. One of these strategies that deserves emphasis is cultural resistance as a space for maintaining our diversities and survivals. In this work, by reclaiming our amefricanity, we bring forth in *pretuguese* and the conception of *América Ladina* the African matrix in language as

potentialities for desertion from the colonial world — as an act of defiance and survival toward a transfiguration of the world and the place of determination to which we are conditioned (Gonzalez, 2020).

Grounded in ancestral Black strategies, emphasizing amefricanity becomes essential to encompass these *cuir* existences — strange, oppressed by colonial shackles that have been updated and continue seeking to produce our non-existences. It is a response, a possible escape route that once led to quilombos, and today can lead us toward other possibilities.

Gonzalez (2020), in bringing the debate on amefricanity, portrays the contributions of African languages as an imprint within the process of constructing Brazilian society and the extended colonization process in what we call Latin America. It is on this basis that Gonzalez (2020) weaves another conceptual connotation to highlight, in writing, the political and ethical construction processes experienced by colonized peoples and, consequently, a differentiation of the territorial mark imposed on us. Thus, through the author's ideas, we expand our considerations on the American *cuir* in an exercise of reflection and systematization to think about Latin America and Améfrica Ladina, with a reconfiguration of life for amefrican *cuir* existences. In the words of Gonzalez (2020), we can reflect on this reconfiguration:

This is a new and creative perspective on the historical-cultural formation of Brazil which, due to geographical reasons and, above all, the order of the unconscious, is not what is commonly asserted: a country whose formations of the unconscious are exclusively European and white. On the contrary, it is an African America whose Latinity, due to its inexistence, replaced the **T** with a **D** to finally have its name fully assumed: *Améfrica Ladina* (it is no coincidence that Brazilian cultural neurosis finds its quintessential symptom in racism). In this context, all Brazilians (and not only the “pretos” and “pardos” as classified by the IBGE) are Ladino-Amefrican. For a proper understanding of the machinations of the racism characterized above, it is worth recalling Freud's category of *denial* (Verneinung): “A process by which an individual, while formulating one of their desires, thoughts, or feelings—previously repressed—continues to defend themselves against it by denying that it belongs to them.” As a denial of our Ladino-Amefrican identity, “Brazilian” racism turns precisely against those who are living proof of it (Black people), while simultaneously claiming it does not do so (the Brazilian “racial democracy”) (Gonzalez, 2020, p.115).

We perceive that Gonzalez (2020) is proposing a reinterpretation of how Brazil's cultural and historical context is permeated, as well as highlighting the ongoing clash between queer and *cuir*, and the persistence of a still Anglo-Saxon, U.S.-centered European unconscious dominating over our heads. It is within these considerations brought forth by the category of *amefricanidade* that we reflect on what Narvéaz (2017) provokes when she speaks of her condition as a travesti. Moreover, other dissidences inspire us precisely because they do not fit within the conventional prism of what is commonly understood as queer, nor within categories that emerge from an academicism that continues to exclude their dissident Black bodies from spaces of knowledge production. As subversive intellectuals, they remain a discomforting presence — a bitter dose that whiteness still resists accepting and that does not fully align with the proposals of traditional queer.

By problematizing *amefricanidade*, we place ourselves in the position of *deslenguada*, reflecting on linguistic forms that have already been recreated as processes of co-creation and new modes of subversion against colonial categories. It is in this context that we adopt the concept of *produção deslenguada* as defined by Flores (2010), for whom “the word is the fate of the one who refuses, captivity.” It is from this place of escape that we conceive *amefricanidade*: a flight from essentialization, an evasion of the very same oppressive axes, a flight from captivity understood as a form of fugitivity that defines an expression of form and potentiality so that Black women and proletarians can produce meanings for an overflow. This flight is configured as a vital axis and survival strategy within another category of mundanity, as the Black intellectual from Sergipe Beatriz Nascimento (2018, p. 73) points out: “escape is a necessity for resistance and not for accommodation.” It is from this condition of movement that we understand fugitivity as a way to produce life amid living-dead bodies.

It is in the overflow of language that Gonzalez (2020) enables us to think about what defines Latin America and how it is defined, as present in her position as a Black woman. It is in this transit of overflow, as an act of freedom to escape, to dirty, to soil, to devastate, that we comprehend the meaning of *amefricanidade* as a *deslenguada* that

suppresses the silencing that white men wrote, freeing us from the place of “captivity of a racist language” over our bodies.

We rewrite histories that were erased and soil those that are meant to be kept sanitized. Thus, we reflect, as Flores teaches us (2010, p. 69): “Against all linguistic hygiene, the proletarian contaminates herself with the most turbulent airs of imaginations.” It is through these politics of imagination that we construct a movement of self-critique against the norms that hang Black and *cuir* bodies in *amefricanidade*, gestating new language policies.

The language policies driven by *amefricanidade* allow us to think of other ways to build and speak *pretuguês*. Alongside it, we highlight *pajubá* as a form of *deslengua* against the white, cis, heteropatriarchal amefrican moral order. As Araujo (2019, p. 40) notes, “*deslenguada* establishes connections with *pretuguês* and *pajubá* through a peripheral and countercurrent consciousness, positioning itself against white morality.” It is in this transit of reflections proposed by these fissures that we recognize *amefricanidade* as a motor of articulation and action when thinking about *cuir* between *pretuguês* and *pajubá*.

It is by reflecting on subversions through language that we write our own subversion, producing ruptures as a form of expansion and organization. Producing language through a crisis of language itself allows us to destroy spaces sustained by racist and hygienist policies — that go beyond the very condition of language — and enables us to think through the categories of de-ontologization and re-ontologization of the amefrican *cuir* body.

3 Final considerations

We arrive at the final confluence of this flow of interpretations in its eccentricities, which help us to conceive new restitutions regarding the advances of our struggles and subversions. Here, we bring together dissident Black authors who today transform anticolonial, decolonial, and countercolonial models into fugitive writings as a critical exercise, blending theory and data into imagetic politics, employing poetics as a projection

of new sonority that conveys struggle and life, marking the trajectory of ideas launched in response to the discussed concepts.

At first, we reinforce the transits that will be reflected upon through queer, *cuir*, and *amefricanidade* as axes of overflow in writing. Connections between the authors are established, a symbiosis of fabulations and a desertion from the colonial world is emphasized—as a political epistemological connotation of the end of the world—demonstrating and challenging normative and hygienist models in the face of white morality and its narcissistic pacts, as well as the subversion of our acts through language.

Language presents itself as a central axis of conflict. When we question the relationships between queer and *cuir*, we are led to think not only about these concepts but also to stretch the very concepts of Latin America and América Ladina concerning ethical, political, aesthetic, ontological, and existential orders different from the hegemonic. Thus, we problematize how colonial language penetrates our Ladino-Amefrican experience in a process of de-consciousness of the colonizing movement that forbids our conscious and unconscious through myths, suffocations, and subalternizations.

It is by reflecting on forms of reinterpretation that we trace pathways to build possible readings and notions about *cuir*, especially when questioned from a perspective proposing a *cuir* of distinct sonority that dialogues with an already established queer theory but triggers reactions and disputes among scholars and those seeking to delimit what is and what is not. Thus, we understand *cuir* and its effects of monstrosity manifested in performativities as a haunting of colonial normative codes, projected against dissident, disorderly, and Black bodies.

Highlighting the intertwinings of *amefricanidade*, we envision it as a fundamental theoretical engine for *cuir* to constitute itself as an effect of amefricanization, capable of problematizing whitening policies and whiteness that operate as forms of association. It is from this amefricanization of *cuir* that we conceive the manifestation of an American *cuir* body-territory, promoting a rupture against colonial effects and logics, making evident the multiple ways racism manifests.

These were the considerations put forth by this article as a form of conceptualization of what we define as *cuir* in an amefrican proletarian and *deslenguada* assertion, problematizing models of fabulation and imagining struggles. It is a gesture of responsibility and engagement in the battles that cross our bodies, days, and nights. Among the thoughts of *bixas*, *sapatonas*, *travestis*, non-binary and transmasculine individuals, we reflect on the paths of the amefricanization of *cuir* as a restitution of a struggle marked by affections that bleed, soil, and embrace bodies wounded by everyday battles.

This article arises as a free writing by an interior Black *bixa* and a Black *sapatonas* from the Recôncavo Baiano, who see in language forms of transformation, fabulations capable of operating as expressions of healing within subversive models of disorderly and fugitive lives.

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i **José Henrique de Jesus Silva**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2926-6963>

Mestrando em Educação no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Federal de Sergipe. Pesquisador no Grupo de estudos *queer* e outras epistemologias feministas (ConQueer/CNPq).

Author contribution: Autoria e concepção das ideias.

Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/8616293071835492>.

E-mail: errique.silva34@gmail.com

ii **Urânia Santos das Chagas**, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-6994-6194>

Mestranda em Educação no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana. Pesquisadora no Grupo de Pesquisa Corpo-Território, Educação e Decolonialidade (CNPq).

Author contribution: Autoria e concepção das ideias.

Lattes: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/9296265967873649>.

E-mail: urania0111@gmail.com

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