

Bodies, words, and afro-queer sounds: towards a poetics of intersectional subversion

ARTICLE

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Abstract

Afro-Queer poetics emerges as a form of resistance against norms that have historically marginalized racialized and queer bodies. This article examines how Black queer artists, through music, visual performance, poetry and spoken word, subvert dominant structures of gender, sexuality and race. The study maps how these creators challenge colonial and heteronormative expectations, shaping an Afro-Queer space that redefines dissident identities. Their work reveals body and voice as political tools to confront narratives of silence and erasure. Artists such as Linn da Quebrada and Jota Mombaça exemplify this struggle, using their bodies as agents of social and political transformation. By also engaging with the work of Mel Duarte and Bia Ferreira, the article underscores the role of Afro-Queer art as a force of liberation and affirmation, highlighting its relevance in confronting structural racism and coloniality and in shaping plural modes of subjectivity.

Keywords: Languages. Afro-Queer. Interseccionality.

Corpos, palavras e sons afro-queer: por uma poética de subversão interseccional

Resumo

A poética afro-queer emerge como forma de resistência às normas que historicamente marginalizam corpos racializados e dissidentes. Este artigo analisa como artistas negras queer, por meio da música, performance, poesia e palavra falada, subvertem expectativas de gênero, sexualidade e raça, criando espaços de expressão que rompem com a colonialidade e a heteronormatividade. Suas produções revelam como corpo e voz se tornam estratégias políticas para enfrentar silenciamentos e reinscrever identidades plurais. Artistas como Linn da Quebrada e Jota Mombaça exemplificam esse embate ao utilizarem o próprio corpo como dispositivo crítico e transformador. Ao incluir também obras de Mel Duarte e Bia Ferreira, o estudo evidencia a arte afro-queer como ferramenta de liberação e afirmação, ressaltando sua potência na construção de subjetividades múltiplas e na luta contra o racismo estrutural.

Palavras-chave: Linguagens. Afro-queer. Interseccionalidade.

1 Introduction

Afro-queer poetics emerges as a force of contestation and resistance, challenging dominant norms that have historically marginalized racialized and queer bodies and identities. The concept of the Afro-queer not only brings together the struggles for the visibility of Black and non-heteronormative bodies, but also reframes these identities within the field of artistic expression. To be Afro-queer, in this context, is to subvert the invisibility imposed by coloniality and by patriarchal and heteronormative structures, creating new ways of being, feeling, and existing through art.

The aim of this article is to investigate how Black queer women artists, working across different spheres of artistic production, subvert norms of gender, sexuality, and race through their creations. By analyzing expressions ranging from music to visual performance, as well as marginal poetry and spoken word, we seek to map the ways in which these artists confront colonial and heteronormative expectations, creating an Afro-queer space that reframes dissident bodies and promotes new subjectivities.

Art, particularly in its Afro-queer dimension, emerges as a crucial field of resistance, where the body and the voice become tools to confront narratives that insist on rendering people invisible or silent. The birth of the Afro-queer within artistic expression is deeply rooted in historical struggles against racism and homophobia, and it is through subversive works that these artists break with exclusionary logics, establishing a new territory for decolonial resistance.

Dissident bodies that challenge binary gender norms and the racist structures that permeate society find in Afro-queer art a powerful voice of resistance. Afro-queer artistic expression not only creates a space for the racialized and queer body to exist, but also places it at the center of a narrative that demands to be heard. These bodies are not passive. On the contrary, they are agents of transformation that subvert colonial and patriarchal discourse by reconfiguring what is considered “normal” and “acceptable” within society.

This cry of dissidence is a form of political art, in which subversion occurs in the very act of existing and expressing oneself through the body. Performers such as Linn da

Quebrada and Jota Mombaça, for example, use their racialized and queer bodies as tools of resistance, challenging the expectations imposed by a society that insists on silencing those on the margins. Their performances overflow with political meaning, and the presence of their bodies on stage is itself a subversive act that disrupts the norms that regulate the bodies, sexualities, and identities of Black and queer people.

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Within the Afro-queer performance field, the body becomes a territory of dispute, where questions of gender and race intertwine and intensify one another. The Afro-queer, as both an artistic and political movement, allows dissident voices and bodies to become protagonists of their own narratives, challenging the boundaries imposed by colonialism and Western normativities. In this sense, Afro-queer art stands as a powerful tool of expression and resistance, functioning as a space for creating and deconstructing plural identities and subjectivities.

Art, in this context, becomes urgent. It is more than aesthetic expression; it is a form of resistance that goes beyond traditional academic or activist discourse, occupying spaces once neglected as legitimate sites of struggle.

The relevance of investigating Afro-queer artistic expressions, therefore, lies in the need to understand how these productions subvert not only gender and sexuality norms but also deconstruct the structural racism and coloniality that shape Black bodies.

The Afro-queer space of resistance is not confined to an abstract discourse. It is lived and experienced in the performances, songs, and poems of artists who make their bodies and voices instruments of social change. By examining figures such as Linn da Quebrada, Bia Ferreira, Mel Duarte, and Jota Mombaça, this article seeks to demonstrate how these expressions not only resist but also create new possible worlds in which Afro-queer bodies are valued in their plurality and power.

Afro-queer art not only deconstructs oppressive narratives but also builds new ways of seeing, hearing, and sensing the world, opening space for subjectivities that insist on existing despite attempts at erasure.

Afro-queer poetics of subversion, therefore, is not merely an aesthetic. It is a politics that directly confronts coloniality and heteronormativity, creating a fertile terrain for reflection and resistance. Thus, this article aims not only to map these expressions but also

to highlight the importance of art as a tool of liberation, capable of transforming the margins into the center and racialized and queer bodies into protagonists of their own narratives of resistance and subversion.

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In this process, this article is characterized as a qualitative study with a theoretical-analytical approach, grounded in the fields of cultural studies, queer studies, Black feminisms, and decolonial studies. The construction of the analysis stemmed from a mapping of artistic productions by Black and queer women artists such as Linn da Quebrada, Jota Mombaça, Mel Duarte, and Bia Ferreira, selected for their relevance within the Afro-queer artistic and political landscape in Brazil.

The sources that support this study include musical compositions, performances, poetic texts, interviews, documentaries, and audiovisual records of these artists, understanding art as a device for the production of knowledge and resistance. The analysis was conducted in dialogue with theoretical frameworks such as Crenshaw (1989), Collins (2000), hooks (2018, 2019), Butler (2003), and González (2020), articulating conceptual reflections with critical readings of artistic productions.

The methodology adopted is therefore grounded in the analysis of poetic, musical, and performative narratives, considering them as practices of subversion, resistance, and the production of Afro-queer subjectivities. This methodological path is committed to a decolonial perspective that values situated, insurgent forms of knowledge produced from the margins.

2 In the interstices of afro-queer intersectionality

The notion of the Afro-queer, which brings together Black and queer identities, emerges as a complex web that interacts with the dynamics of race, gender, and sexuality. This concept is not merely a simple intersection; it reveals the intricate threads that shape the experiences of racialized and non-heteronormative bodies within social and artistic contexts. To grasp the depth of this web, it is essential to consider the concept of

intersectionality formulated by Crenshaw (1989), which highlights the idea that experiences of oppression cannot be understood in isolation but rather in their interrelations.

2.1 Weaving Queer Blackness: the Perspectives of Crenshaw and Hill Collins

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Intersectionality, as proposed by Crenshaw (1989), is a critical lens that enables the analysis of how different forms of discrimination overlap and interact. Crenshaw emphasizes that the experiences of Black women are often rendered invisible in debates that focus exclusively on race or on gender.

Collins (2000) complements this view by discussing how racial, gender, and sexual oppression are interdependent, forming a matrix of domination that must be challenged. Drawing from these theories, queer Blackness is woven not only as an identity but as a form of resistance that reframes Black bodies within artistic and cultural contexts. These voices and experiences are not confined to academic discourse; they also manifest in the arts.

Music, dance, and performance become spaces for the affirmation of Afro-queer identity, where the Black queer body is valued and where norms and stereotypes seeking to reduce these identities to limited categories are challenged. In performances and artistic works, artists such as Linn da Quebrada and Mel Duarte use their voices and bodies to express the richness of the Afro-queer experience, fostering a critical reading of the social structures surrounding gender and race. In this way, the Afro-queer web becomes a vibrant space of resistance and struggle, in which the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality are explored and celebrated.

2.2 Between worlds: gender, race, and art

In the context of artistic expressions, intersectionality proves to be an essential tool for understanding the complexity of Afro-queer narratives. Art is a space where identity construction and the affirmation of marginalized voices intertwine. The dialogue between race, gender, and sexuality allows Afro-queer artists to create new narratives that challenge

the normativities imposed by oppressive social structures. Through art, these voices emerge, bringing to the surface profound questions about belonging, resistance, and visibility.

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Artists such as Jota Mombaça use their visual work to explore the intersections between race and gender, challenging representational norms and creating a space in which Afro-queer voices can be heard. Their works not only reflect personal experiences but also articulate a critique of the colonial system and the heteronormative expectations that have historically marginalized non-white and non-heteronormative bodies. Thus, Afro-queer art reveals itself as a fertile ground for the construction of new narratives and forms of resistance, offering a multifaceted view of the lived experiences of these individuals.

Afro-queer performances emerge as an artistic practice that not only questions cultural norms but also redefines what it means to exist in a body that is simultaneously racialized and queer. This practice is rooted in the idea that the act of performing is not merely a representation but a form of activism that challenges the limitations imposed by a society intent on categorizing and controlling.

Butler (2003), in her work on performativity, argues that gender and sexuality are social constructions that can be challenged and subverted through action and performance. For Butler, the repetition of performative acts can lead to the deconstruction of social norms that define what is considered “normal” or “acceptable.” This idea is particularly relevant in the context of Afro-queer art, in which artists use their performances as a form of resistance that reconfigures the perception of the queer body.

Afro-queer performances, then, not only express identities but also become acts of resistance. By occupying public spaces with their performances, artists such as Linn da Quebrada challenge invisibility and silencing, promoting an activism that asserts the existence and dignity of queer and Black bodies. This visibility is not only political but also deeply personal, allowing these artists to share their stories and experiences in an authentic and impactful way.

bell hooks (2018) offers a critical reflection on the use of aesthetics and performance as forms of resistance and empowerment. In her work, she argues that visual

and performative arts have the potential to act as means for social transformation, providing a platform through which marginalized voices can be heard and new narratives can be constructed. The notion of “aesthetics of the margin,” proposed by hooks, suggests that these artistic expressions, far from being relegated to the periphery, can assume a central role in cultural discourse, contributing significantly to the construction of a more just and equitable society.

Afro-queer performances, aligned with hooks’s perspective, not only claim space but also create a new aesthetic that celebrates the diversity and plurality of identities. Through art, Afro-queer artists challenge stereotypical representations and offer new ways of seeing and understanding the lived experiences of both Black and queer people. In this context, performance emerges as a space of affirmation and resistance, in which art becomes inseparably intertwined with political and social struggle. Thus, Afro-queer artistic expressions not only contest dominant cultural norms but also reimagine and reinvent narratives, fostering a critical dialogue around the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality.

3 Words in motion: afro-queer poetics in sound and body

Afro-queer art reveals itself as a vibrant and multifaceted field in which musicians, poets, and visual artists use their voices and bodies as instruments of resistance and empowerment. Through music, poetry, and visual arts, these artists challenge social norms, question stereotypes, and articulate the complexity of Afro-queer experiences. In this section, we explore the artistic expressions of Linn da Quebrada, Bia Ferreira, Mel Duarte, and Jota Mombaça, analyzing how their works reflect and amplify the struggle against marginalization.

3.1 Rhythms as response, sounds that break norms: Linn da Quebrada

Linn da Quebrada is a multifaceted artist who stands out at the intersection of music, performance, and activism. Her bold lyrics address themes such as gender identity,

sexuality, and Blackness, questioning established social norms. In the documentary *Bixa Travesty* (2018), Linn's narrative is presented not only as a personal story but as a representation of the lived experiences of many people who find themselves at the margins of society. Linn's body—exposed and celebrated—becomes a symbol of resistance, a cry against the violence that permeates the lives of Black and queer individuals.

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The documentary, by capturing her explosive and provocative performances, reveals how art can serve as a space for empowerment. Linn's music, marked by vibrant rhythms and incisive lyrics, challenges heteronormativity and provides a safe space for the affirmation of Afro-queer identity. Each of Linn's performances is an act of subversion in which performance becomes a celebration of diversity and a refusal of the oppressive norms that attempt to silence these voices.

Bixa Travesty stands out as a fundamental piece in the discussion of Afro-queer marginalization and resistance, presenting an authentic portrait of Linn da Quebrada's life. By exploring the complexities of identity and performativity, the documentary reveals the layers of oppression that affect queer Black people. Through her performances, Linn provokes a dialogue about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, demonstrating how these factors intertwine in everyday experiences.

Beyond being a means of personal expression, *Bixa Travesty* also serves as a platform for discussing urgent social issues. Through art, Linn not only asserts herself but also invites the audience to reflect on their own conceptions of identity and belonging. The documentary transforms the pain of marginalization into a narrative of empowerment, highlighting the importance of art as a tool of resistance and transformation.

3.2 The Black song that denounces and trans(forms): Bia Ferreira

Bia Ferreira, in turn, brings a new dimension to Afro-queer music by articulating themes of racism, LGBTQIA+phobia, and social injustice in her compositions. In what she calls her "Black woman's music," Bia uses her platform to denounce inequalities and

promote awareness. Her music is not only a form of artistic expression but also a political act aimed at dismantling structures of oppression.

Through incisive and poetic lyrics, Bia Ferreira transforms pain into struggle and resistance. Her songs address intersectionality in ways that resonate deeply with her listeners, offering a voice to those who are often silenced. In doing so, Bia creates a space in which music becomes a vehicle for social transformation, highlighting the lived experiences of Black and queer communities.

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3.3 Verses at the margin and the word as resistance: Mel Duarte

Mel Duarte, poet and slammer, is one of the leading voices of Brazilian marginal poetry, bringing to light the lived experiences of Black and queer women. Her work is a powerful affirmation of Afro-queer identity, using poetic language as a means of resistance. Mel creates new spaces of expression that challenge social and cultural norms, transforming pain into art.

Mel Duarte's poetry is filled with evocative imagery and intense emotions. She uses her voice not only to tell her own story but also to amplify the voices of other women who face discrimination and violence. Through her verses, Mel articulates the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality, revealing the complexities of Afro-queer experiences and the importance of being heard.

In Mel Duarte's work, language becomes an act of rebellion, challenging the oppressive structures that attempt to silence marginalized voices. Her poems address themes of love, pain, resistance, and empowerment, constructing a narrative that reflects the daily struggle of queer Black people. Each poem is a call to action, an invitation for her listeners to rise up and claim their spaces.

Through her art, Mel Duarte not only expresses her identity but also creates a space of belonging and solidarity among Black women. Her poetry is a testament to the

strength and resilience of the Afro-queer community, demonstrating that art can be a powerful tool for social transformation.

3.4 Bodies in performance: Jota Mombaça

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Jota Mombaça is a visual artist and writer who explores questions of race, gender, violence, and decoloniality in her performances. Mombaça uses her racialized and queer bodies as tools of resistance and subversion, challenging the colonial and heteronormative norms that shape the lived experiences of Afro-queer people. Her performances provoke a profound questioning of what it means to exist at the intersection of these identities, revealing the visible and invisible wounds that mark this experience.

Jota Mombaça's work invites audiences to reflect on the complexity of Afro-queer identity, using art as a space for reflection and dialogue. Her performances are intense and impactful, capturing attention and challenging spectators to confront their own conceptions of race and gender. In this way, art becomes a battleground in which resistance manifests in multiple forms, creating new possibilities for being and existing.

4 De(s)colonizing norms, bodies, and identities

Afro-queer artistic expressions emerge as powerful tools of resistance and social transformation, challenging heteronormative and colonial norms that have historically marginalized nonconforming identities. Artists such as Linn da Quebrada, Bia Ferreira, Mel Duarte, and Jota Mombaça not only question the expectations imposed by society but also lay claim to the right to exist fully within their multifaceted identities. In this sense, art becomes a form of rebellion in which each performance is not merely an artistic act but a vibrant manifesto that affirms the diversity and richness of Afro-queer experiences.

Subversion manifests itself in various ways in these artists' works, ranging from the deconstruction of racial stereotypes to the affirmation of diverse sexualities, challenging a

system that frequently seeks to silence their voices. The body, in this context, becomes an instrument of resistance that contests oppressive structures.

For example, Linn da Quebrada uses her aesthetics and performances to shock and provoke reflection on gender and sexuality, breaking barriers and confronting stigma. Through her music and visual presence, she celebrates the diversity of human experience, promoting a space in which plurality is valued.

Furthermore, in her lyrics, Bia Ferreira not only addresses issues of racism and LGBTQIA+phobia but also opens a dialogue about intersectionality, demonstrating how different forms of oppression intertwine (Crenshaw, 1989). In doing so, she not only reframes popular music but also invites listeners to reflect on their own experiences and prejudices, provoking a transformative effect on her audience.

The Afro-queer body presents itself as a territory of resistance and empowerment in which sexuality is not merely a characteristic but a means of expression that challenges the status quo. Artists such as Mel Duarte use poetry and slam to communicate messages that transcend superficial representation, challenging not only social norms but also the historical narratives that seek to silence the voices of Black queer women.

The language of the body in Afro-queer arts unfolds in multiple forms—from dance to performance, and through poetry and music. Each performative act becomes a declaration that the body is not only an object of desire but a sacred space in which the complexity of identity is revealed. By transforming sexuality into art, these artists not only celebrate their identities but also offer new paradigms of empowerment and self-affirmation.

In this sense, Jota Mombaça, through her visual and written performances, challenges conventions of gender and race, using her body as a medium to express the resistance and pain of marginalized communities. Her works provoke deep discussions about the violence and oppression faced by racialized and queer bodies, transforming her personal experiences into a collective narrative that resonates with many other voices.

Afro-queer artistic expressions are intrinsically connected to the concept of “aesthetics of the margin,” as articulated by bell hooks, in which the peripheries are not

merely sites of marginalization but vibrant centers of knowledge production and resistance (hooks, 2019).

The voices that emerge from these margins challenge dominant narratives, offering new perspectives that enrich our understanding of human diversity and question the hierarchical structure of culture. Within this context, Afro-queer artists not only contest cultural hegemony but also generate knowledge that arises from their unique experiences.

Each performance and each work reveal the intersection of oppressions and the celebration of achievements, functioning as a space of resistance that not only illuminates injustices but also honors the resilience of communities.

Afro-queer art, therefore, becomes a vital means of resistance that transcends mere representation; it is a space of dialogue and reflection that challenges hierarchical forms of knowledge. By giving voice to narratives that are often silenced, these artists not only expand the understanding of Afro-queer identities but also create new possibilities for belonging and self-affirmation in a world that frequently seeks to marginalize their existence.

The intersectional dialogue, as addressed by González (2020), highlights how race, class, gender, and sexuality intertwine in the experiences of Afro-queer artists, allowing their voices to resonate in authentic and meaningful ways. The discussion surrounding Afro-queer artistic expressions reveals the importance of subverting dominant norms, recognizing the body as a territory of resistance, and embracing aesthetics of the margin as forms of creating subversive knowledge.

Artists such as Linn da Quebrada, Bia Ferreira, Mel Duarte, and Jota Mombaça invite us to rethink our conceptions of identity and belonging, expanding the horizons of what it means to be Afro-queer. Art is not only a form of expression but also a powerful tool

for social transformation that challenges marginalization and celebrates diversity in all its forms.

5 Songs of afro-queer resistance

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Afro-queer artistic expressions play a fundamental role in redefining and reconfiguring narratives about identity, race, and sexuality, promoting a rich poetics that emerges from the margins. This article has highlighted how artists such as Linn da Quebrada, Mel Duarte, Bia Ferreira, and Jota Mombaça not only challenge established social norms but also create new spaces for the appreciation of plural and marginalized identities. Through their performances, works, and artistic manifestations, they offer a song of resistance that resonates deeply within Afro-queer communities, underscoring the importance of inclusion and diversity in the arts.

These artistic expressions have a significant impact on the construction of new subjectivities, allowing individuals to recognize and affirm themselves in their complexity. By celebrating the diversity of human experience, Afro-queer art challenges hegemonic narratives and proposes new forms of resistance that not only oppose oppression but also create spaces of empowerment and visibility.

Through art, new voices emerge, fostering dialogues that enrich discussions on gender, race, and sexuality, challenging the limitations imposed by society and expanding the understanding of what it means to be Afro-queer.

Beyond its impact on the arts, Afro-queer poetics has the potential to influence other fields, such as education and cultural policy. By integrating Afro-queer art into pedagogical practices, for example, it is possible to promote a more inclusive and critical education that values diverse experiences. The recognition of Afro-queer expressions in

cultural policies can not only ensure space and visibility for these voices but also foster an environment in which diversity is celebrated and respected.

In this way, Afro-queer art becomes a powerful agent of transformation, contributing to the construction of a more just and equitable society in which all identities are acknowledged and valued.

For future research, it is suggested that the intersections between Afro-queer art and other disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, be explored in greater depth to better understand how these artistic expressions can impact the emotional and social well-being of communities.

Moreover, investigations into the reception and impact of these works across different cultural and geographical contexts can provide a broader view of the influence of Afro-queer art. Studies examining the relationship between new technologies and Afro-queer artistic practices—especially regarding dissemination and accessibility—are also promising areas that deserve attention.

Thus, the song of Afro-queer resistance reverberates not only within the communities directly affected but also resonates throughout society, challenging us to rethink our perceptions of identity, art, and resistance. The impact of these artistic expressions is an invitation to reflection and action, instigating a continuous movement toward inclusion and the appreciation of diversity in all its forms.

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