

Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead

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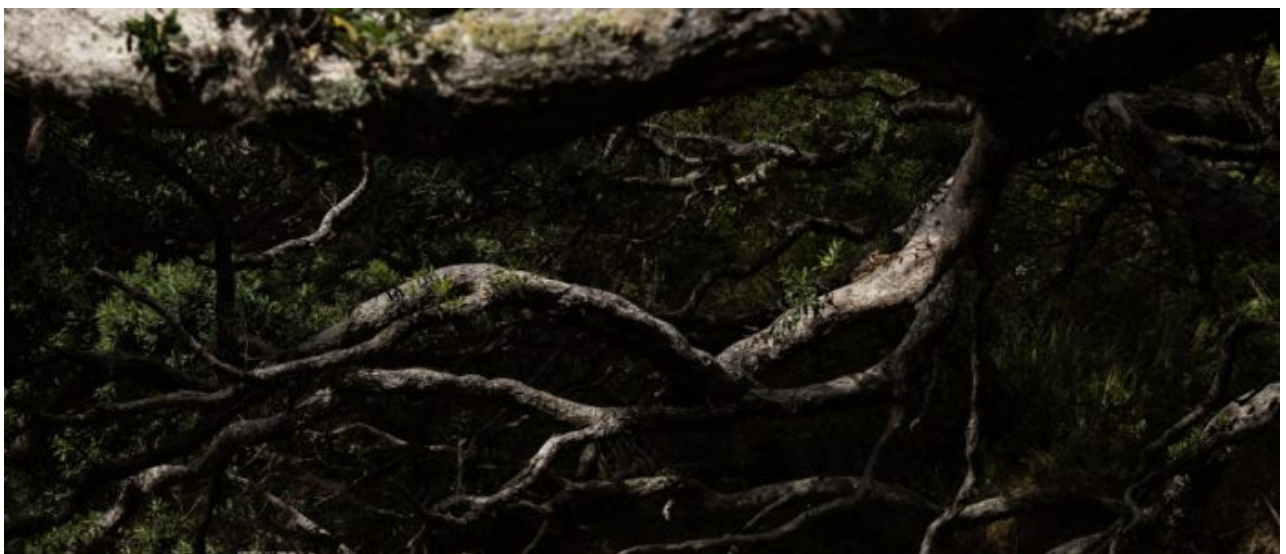
Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to discuss some ideas behind the creative process of *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead*. This is a short art video created as part of the JUNTA programme, an international contemporary dance festival that takes place in Teresina, Brazil. Our intention with the video is to talk about how fiction, art, science, philosophy and all forms of creative expression may work together in an effort to postpone an imminent end of the world. Living in such uncertain times, among the overwhelming and hopeless consequences of the Anthropocene, demands not just practical solutions, but ways to think and imagine as well, where storytelling and art-making occupy an important political position.

Keywords: Anthropocene; art; dance; fiction; performance

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É o juízo final
(It is the final judgement)
A história do bem e do mal
(The story of the good and the bad)
Quero ter olhos pra ver
(I want to have eyes to see)
A maldade desaparecer
(The evil disappears)
Nelson do Cavaquinho, 1973

Still Right Here
Nine Inch Nails, 2020

PROLOGUE

The year is approximately 2152 in the abandoned biblical calendar. The year might also be called the Age of the Hunting Dogs in the current calendar. A day does not mean 24 hours as in the past. What exists now is a fragmented time with no hours, days or years. There are only days and nights; that does not mean anything at all. It is not known exactly. It seems there was a cold camp in the North where a witch doctor said this time was the Age of the Hunting Dogs. Then some people started to use this designation.

This is also a story of a specific existence, an otherwise human creature and now an enchanted one called João. João was only 'he' in biblical time, already extinct. Nowadays, he is also 'she' and 'they' as well as a bunch of things that are pretty hard to explain. He or/and she or/and xe and/or they or it; that does not matter in that future. Sometimes João has a gloomy and low-pitched voice. It sounds similar to vinyl spinning on a broken record player. In the present time, it is still possible to find some of those rare objects, record players or vinyl, in good or bad condition. There are not too many, but you might be able to find them if you are in the mood to walk through old, abandoned and yet tediously boring cities. They were destroyed by metal smoke in the past. It is said that among all the ruins, there is a vampire couple, part of The Leftovers, living in Detroit, who have a priceless vinyl collection and perfectly working record players.

João, in the time that was gone, had never even heard about vampires. Once (in the past time) he had seen a movie on his mom's 14-inch TV. And it is so. That was in 1980 of the eradicated sacred time. Besides that, João had not known anything about Detroit. Once, however, in the present time, João went to a tiny rural city full of zombies called Centerville. There was an accidental meeting with an old man called Hermit Bob. That encounter was so fruitful that João also decided to wander the entire region around Centerville and by chance discovered Detroit. It was a great adventure, especially because Hermit Bob was pretty similar to the old João of the past, the other João, when he was just human, not an enchanted one.

According to the decrepit mentality and laws of the past (they were pretty strict), João was (like Hermit Bob) a kind of vagrant who had lived in the rural zone of the state of Piauí, located in the extinct country Brazil. The name of the city was Amarante. João had been working in temporary jobs, delivering stuff or fixing small electronic devices. The money acquired was used to buy alcoholic drinks, and it is so. With such free time, fortunately, he had used his leisure time going to Reisado [1] celebrations in that region or just singing in the forest, accompanied only by non-human figures such as the dry vegetation of hinterlands, animals and the sharp and fresh wind of that landscape.

One day, like any other, when the political and social situation in the world was deeply miserable, the sky fell over the land. It happened at 2 p.m., with the sun at its highest peak, the day turned into night immediately. The world was destroyed on such an insane scale, a great variety of living creatures disappeared among the toxic smoke with no colour. It is said humanity had dug so much into the land seeking gold and other metals that the pillars of the sky broke. João did not know what had happened and what happened specifically to him once he survived such a tragedy. However, he was able to feel since then that he became a different kind of living being. It seemed he was not a human being anymore. João became an enchanted creature.

Another day, after the end of the world, João found a book that explained what had happened. The name of the book was *O Corpo Encantado das Ruas*; [2] they guessed it was a kind of history and an ancient magic book that had some kind of connection with the world today. The author was called Luiz Antonio Simas,

which seemed to be a Brazilian name. What happened was something like what he had seen in the past, especially in a *quilombola* community near Amarante called Mimbó. The enchanted ones, according to the book itself, 'are not the spirits of the dead, they are people or animals that lived, but did not actually die; they suffered the experience of the invisible before: they went to the dawn of the unseen'. [3] Exactly what happened to João. Absolutely accurate.

At the present age, that of the Hunting Dogs, life was still brutally difficult and precarious, but it was also quite different. João, now an enchanted one with no real important mission, finally decided to leave his hometown Amarante to travel in what was left in the rest of the world. On this journey, two things were very clear right away: all those things that had survived, including themselves, were strictly linked to the land and liked to dance, even if it was over the bones of all the dead.

PREVIOUSLY ON DANCING OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD...

For us, *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead* is a complex thing. It is pretty difficult to explain it or even say something explicit about it. Firstly, it is a two-minute-long video posted on YouTube like any other video. It was created to be part of the JUNTA programme in 2020. JUNTA is an international contemporary dance festival that takes place in Teresina, a small Brazilian city, in the middle of nowhere. At that time, at the peak of a pandemic, we were kindly invited to create a contemporary dance video for an entirely online festival edition.

Also at that time, we were living in strange situations. Once long-time partners in artistic collaboration in Teresina, we were almost completely separated and living different realities. Raylanne Leal was in Brazil, a country in which a far-right and denialist government has been responsible for the worst response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Caio Silva was living in New Zealand, a place where the authorities had made decisions quite fast that helped avoid thousands of deaths, which led to the country becoming an example to the rest of the world. Caio also started his Ph.D. research in New Zealand, and Raylanne finished her master's in Literature. We were having, as we had been in the past, several conversations about all kinds of questions including pandemic life, politics, future, our lives as artists originating from the Global South, both from the same small city, both far from the economic centre, weighed down by a pile of arduous challenges related to surviving as artists and intellectuals. The question basically was: 'what can we do to minimally improve our communities through art?'

We saw the invitation as an opportunity to connect our experiences as multidisciplinary artists and young scholars, the questions surrounding our studies (especially Caio's recently begun Ph.D. in Anthropology), our artworks, our different realities and the challenging current context. We can remember that the primary image that emerged during our first discussions was a tree. We wanted to create a piece of art (specifically a dance piece) in which our bodies would try to grow various dimensions and spread branches, exactly like a plant. But why? There are earthly issues at stake nowadays. It seems what we call the world is truly ending (after the COVID-19 pandemic, that feeling is beyond undeniable). At this point, before any further development of this chronicle, we have to bring in our background, as we both grew up among the northeastern lower working class in Brazil. Now that one half of our long-term partnership is living in the diaspora, outside of Brazil, we think this feeling of the end times has been worsened by the combination of

two factors: the pandemic itself and the catastrophic Brazilian ‘government’ led by someone named Jair Messias Bolsonaro. So when we were asked to create a video, we wanted to open up the possibility of talking about all this in as many ways as possible, without completely losing sight of a horizon to seek. We felt a great urge to throw in all these questions, hesitations, fears and a little hope, taking our experience and stories as the main guidelines. For us, it seems, with the definitive acceleration of the Anthropocene through the pandemic and Bolsonaro’s anti-democratic policy, we have been living the end of the world since the very beginning of our lives. And this is our starting point as creative individuals.

So we may consider, based on its intentions, consequences and places, *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead* is also a piece of art. However, as we have said, we see it mainly as an intricate thing; we have attempted to build something with several dimensions and breaches. Why? We wanted to create something through which it might be possible to talk about such an event. We have awoken to the fact that a great quantity of interesting pieces of art (and the world itself) comes at us with several pertinent and curious questions, and to how most of these questions are about what kind of life we are living, imagining and dealing with, especially nowadays, living in such uncanny times. With this essay, we intend to discuss some of these points and describe our creative processes and experiences, attempting to put into practice exactly what we stand for: support for a world rich in stories, rich of ecologies, rich in fertility, rich in richness and ethical purposes. Then, together with the current text, *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead* (we will call it DOBOD) tells João’s story, and it also contextualises several anxieties and dreams about how to live in our uncertain times (especially for people like us, from the periphery of the Global South). Is anyone feeling comfortable about the world nowadays? Of course, art is a tricky concept, a slippery idea. It never works when we attempt to delimit it (Wark 2020), and this is the reason why we are saying repeatedly that it is complicated to talk about it. To be honest, we hope the video itself can reach some stage beyond any comprehension – that would be great. You may have watched the video or not. It is always incredible when a piece of art speaks independently, without explanatory interference. Anyhow, here or there, our most basic intentions are to imagine João’s life and what kind of world they (which is also us) are living today and tomorrow, and how to create it differently.

EVENT: THE FALLING SKY, CAUSA-MORTIS, THE ANTHROPOCENE

The world as we knew it is dead. And this is the place where our character lives. Even though the death of the Earth has already happened, some dead things would still be alive. At this point, however, something was curiously unusual. This was not just any ‘end of the world’, it was a very specific one. Our world has ended due to a sort of cosmopolitical prophecy. The prophecy in question has been said by Davi Kopenawa, a shaman of the Yanomami people, in the book *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman* (Kopenawa and Albert 2013). It is a super elaborate and marvellous text about Kopenawa’s biography, [4] his experience surviving against colonialism and why it is important to protect the Amazon rainforest, the place where he and his ancestors have lived since the very beginning of the world. He explains how crucial it is to protect the forest and each living being there. According to Yanomami cosmology, in the forest, non-humans and non-living things have souls. The life of the entire Earth then depends on the balance of these intricate pieces in the forest, and this is why it is extremely important to protect it. As a shaman, Kopenawa has great responsibilities and works hard as something of a diplomat among worlds, walking through the spiritual

realm, the plant realm, the animal realm, the human realm, keeping ecosystems alive, avoiding evil spirits and entities – in general, greedy miners, big capitalist companies which exploit ‘cheap nature’ (Moore 2016), earth-eaters and the modern populations with their insane obsession for consumerism. They can quickly destroy everything without any wisdom or meditation before doing that.

Yet if there are no more shamans left in the forest, it will soon burn up until it becomes blind. Finally, it will suffocate and, becoming ghost, will suddenly start falling onto the earth. Then we will all be carried away into the darkness of the underworld, both the white people and the rest of us. [...] There is only one sky and we must take care of it, for if it becomes sick, everything will come to an end. This may not take place right now, but it could happen later. Then it will be our children, their children, or the children of their children who will die. This is why I tell the white people these words of warning that I have heard from very great shamans. Through them, I want to make them understand that they should dream further and pay attention to the voices of the forest’s spirits (Kopenawa and Albert 2013: 409–10).

What Kopenawa is brilliantly describing in his terms may also easily have a western, modern and scientific name: the Anthropocene (also Capitalocene, AnthrObscene, Plantationocene, etc. – it is always impressive how the West is obsessed with naming everything). Talking about the Anthropocene is no easy effort. McKenzie Wark (2020) says the Anthropocene is a clumsy elephant in a tiny room; there is no situation as uncomfortable as that. Nobody knows how to deal with it (we consider this description slightly smarter and more colourful than Timothy Morton’s [2013] hyperobjects theory, although they have similar intentions). To put it in simple terms, it is said that the Anthropocene is our current age in which human action is the force that drives the planet. Humans are now equipped with enough power to change, especially in a bad way, all life on Earth.

There are plenty of good explanations and theories about that age. Most of them say that modernity with its fossil fuels and commodification of life is directly responsible for such a tragedy. We partially agree with this, preferring to be with Kopenawa and scholars like Zoe Todd (2015) when she says colonisation (in the sixteenth century) was the very beginning of that age. Colonisation has brought modernity and its ideological apparatus together with massive violence against populations, trees, animals, ecosystems and especially the idea of commodification (or capital). Modernity itself has been criticised as a very problematic historical period as well as an ideological paradigm for a considerable time, from Karl Marx’s (1867/1976) *Capital* to Mark Fisher’s (2009) *Capitalist Realism*, from Gabriel Tarde’s (1895/2012) *Monadology and Sociology* to Bruno Latour’s (1991/1993) *We Have Never Been Modern*, from Michel Foucault’s (1975/1995) *Discipline and Punish* to Paul B. Preciado’s (2008/2013) *Testo Junkie*, from Isabelle Stengers’ (1997/2010) *Cosmopolitics* to Davi Kopenawa and Bruce Albert’s (2013) *The Falling Sky* itself. Kopenawa’s version of that critique, however, is a radical one, exactly what the world really needs (and as we would say, the most poignant and strangely beautiful as well). It is a criticism that sharply explains how the world will completely end because of not only our actions but due to our pitiable thoughts. There is a question beyond any rationality at stake, our vision of the world is the very problem. ‘The white people, they do not dream as far as we do. They sleep a lot but only dream of themselves,’ he says harshly (Kopenawa and Albert 2013: 313). Kopenawa is advising his readers about the complete exhaustion of the anthropocentric way to conceive life. And this is our very starting point as creators. How can we talk about such exhaustion through art?

Our spirits are already talking about all this, even if the white people are convinced all these words are lies [...] If you destroy the forest, the sky will break and it will fall on the earth again! [...] They will perish in their turn, crushed by the falling sky. Nothing will remain. It is so (Kopenawa and Albert 2013: 406–07).

HAVING NO END IN THE END

Returning to João, this is the world where our dancer character, enchanted wanderer (maybe even anthropologist) lives. It is a sort of post-world-as-we-knew-it, after the fallen sky. Talking about the end of the world is not something new. This has been a constant topic throughout western societies, for example. The main point now is the fact it seems the end of the world is not only imaginary, [5] it is a scientific fact; there are plenty of scientists affirming this. The reality of the Anthropocene has surpassed our imagination. This version of the real end of the world is currently deeply amalgamated with 'mythical' and fictional versions. As Danowski and Viveiros de Castro (2016) point out, there are some ways to imagine the end of the world. According to them, it is possible to affirm that there is a world without us (of which Alan Weisman's [2007] bestseller *The World Without Us* is the most prominent example nowadays), there is us without the world (on which Cormac McCarthy's [2007] *The Road* is our favourite reference), and there also is a version of no world, no us, complete extinction (examples can go from philosophy with Ray Brassier's [2009] *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* to cinema with Lars von Trier's [2011] *Melancholia*).

These are versions where there are no more traces of humanity. However, our version (like many others, it is important to affirm) is a different one. We have taken inspiration directly from the legendary Russell Means speech *For America to Live Europe Must Die*:

The natural order will win out, and the offenders will die out, the way deer die when they offend the harmony by over-populating a given region. [...] American Indians are still in touch with these realities – the prophecies, the traditions of our ancestors. We learn from the elders, from nature, from the powers. And when the catastrophe is over, we American Indian people will survive (Means 2014: 5).

The world in which we are building and speculating on is not a dream though. It is mainly a miserable place with great difficulty to survive. There is no happy ending. The damage caused by the Anthropocene (and the impact of the fallen sky) is endless. It will take hundreds or even thousands of years to get some recovery, exactly as Cormac McCarthy has predicted:

Will the dam be there for a long time?

I think so. It's made out of concrete. It will probably be there for hundreds of years. Thousands, even.

Do you think there could be fish in the lake?

No. There is nothing in the lake (McCarthy 2007: 5).

However, there is still something else. Donna Haraway (2016: 134–68) has developed an exercise called *The Camille Stories* in which there is a broken and destroyed world, which is, however, kept alive and under healing by resilient communities such as the Zapatista movement, the Mazahua, resilient trees, butterflies, refugees, renegade scientists and all sorts of supporters of the Earth's cause (this curiously seems like the present itself?). It is interesting to note that it is also something close to Marisol De La Cadena and Mario Blaser's (2018) provocations regarding whether it is possible to create a thought that joins the history of the Zapatista movement and Paul Crutzen's theory about the Anthropocene. Is it? What kind of stories is it possible to tell in such a collapsing present?

For us, the strongest argument for storytelling comes from an indigenous thinker: Ailton Krenak. He wisely suggests that what is seen as thinkable, doable (and consequently which stories are possible to be told) is dictated by a sort of small and specific club that calls itself 'humanity' at the exclusion of all those communities whose ways of living have not been brought under its dominion.

For UNESCO, 2019 was the International Year of Indigenous Languages. But we know all too well that every single year, or half a year, another of these mother tongues, these original native languages spoken by small, forgotten fringe groups, becomes extinct. The few who still insist on remaining embedded in the land are those who were forgotten on the fringes, brushed to the riverbanks and shorelines of Africa, Asia, or Latin America. They're the riverine communities, the Amerindians, Quilombolas, Aborigines – in a word, 'sub-humanity', those not even on the Humanity Club waiting list, because they live a life that is, shall we say, romantic. But there is a more savage, rustic, organic layer of these subhumans who cannot be torn away from the earth (Krenak 2020: 17).

Krenak is not just standing for these 'border people' – this 'subalternity' as Saidiya Hartman (2019) points out – there is more to his speech. These peoples need dignity, rights and their lands back; they have been living at the end of the world for 500 years. They hold massive wisdom about survival, and we need to learn from them more than ever, but we also have to create and keep telling stories about them and with them. Such 'response-ability' (Haraway 2016) raises the following simple questions: what kinds of stories might that non-humanity tell us? And how can we tell these stories with them? This is the imagination exercise we are proposing here with DOBOD. Krenak argues that the only way to postpone the end of the world is to keep telling such stories:

There are hundreds of narratives told by Indigenous peoples who are still alive, who still tell tales, sing, travel, talk, and teach us more than this humanity cares to learn. We're not the only interesting people in this world; we're just part of the whole. Perhaps knowing that can put a dent in the vanity of the humanity we claim to be and reduce the lack of reverence we show toward our fellow travellers on this cosmic journey (Krenak 2020: 20).

Stories must be exactly like the things and the peoples of the world, having no end even beyond the end itself. One humanity, one story: these ways of thinking are far too narrow. There needs to be an infinitude of stories and humanities. 'It matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with' (Haraway 2016: 12). It is with that ethical response-ability in our minds and bodies that we have decided to make *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead*.

‘THEY WON’T KILL US NOW’ [6]

Thus *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead* as a fictional piece is deeply connected with that ethical concern. It is made by our passions, studies, references and our commitment to stand for the Earth stories. In the video, we call the resilient communities and lives The Leftovers. Bruno Latour (cited in Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2016) calls them Terrans, as they are the antithesis of the Human, opposed to western and super-Human exceptionalism and unquestionable rationality (of course, the question is not so black and white, this is just the beginning of the conversation). Literally and metaphorically, they are the peoples with their feet grounded in the land. Latour has difficulty naming them, keeping his approach too ethereal for any clearer understanding. Why is it so difficult to map them? Danowski and Viveiros de Castro do not hesitate, however, to talk about what they consider to be part of that Terran resistance, where the indigenous peoples are only its strongest base, the main frontline. In general numbers, the Terrans (or The Leftovers in our creative lexicon) might be a broad part of the population.

From the kinship systems and totemic maps of Australian aboriginals to the horizontal organization and the defensive Black Bloc tactics of alterglobalist movements, from the forms of production, circulation, mobilization, and communication created by the internet [...] to the organizations who protect and exchange traditional seeds and plants in zones of peasant resistance all over the world, from efficient extra-banking financial transfer systems like hawala to the differential arboriculture of the Amazonian indigenous and to Polynesian stellar navigation, from the ‘experimental agriculturalists’ of the Brazilian semi-arid [...] to hypercontemporaneous innovations such as ecovillages, from the psychopolitics of technoshamanism to the decentralized economies of social currencies, bitcoin, and crowdsourcing. [7] Not every technical innovation key to the resilience of the species needs to go through the corporate channels of Big Science or the very long human and non-human networks mobilized by ‘cutting-edge’ technologies (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2016: 93–94).

Culture, art, science are full of Terrans, in cinema, music, anthropology, theatre, biology, poetry, literature, graffiti, comics, and in many corners of the world. It is not difficult to find them, the list is endless. Reflecting on what she learned with the Aboriginal peoples and their experiences in the world, Deborah Bird Rose opened her breathtaking book *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (2004) by observing that we were living in dark times. Almost twenty years later, times are even darker today. That is why such a sense of urgency has to be even stronger than a few years ago. The Terrans are important participants in that sense. In what creative ways might art, science, culture, storytelling and other creative processes and modes of practice tell stories about them and with them? Almost any form of making here seems vital.

The Terrans and their stories have been our deep passion for years, and this is the reason why we have decided to present them as the core of our narrative (where João is the main figure). We have thought that a good way to talk about what we want to say is celebrating some of the Terrans in the video. And here there is a quite personal (artistic?) decision. This being part of a fictional creation, we have decided to put into our story the most passionate inspirations in art and the real world (actually, they are not so different) which we have got. All the references that appear in DOBOD have changed our lives in a certain way, all of these inclusions are based on very emotional decisions. These sources are a vital part of our approach. It is a

double movement; they help us to think about the world while we also use them as our creative characters. This essay is an additional place to present them.

Starting with Davi Kopenawa himself, the Amazonian shaman, he is our main inspiration and example by far. In the video, we come across the flying foxes recalling Deborah Bird Rose's work with such lovely animals. The same occurs with mushrooms; they have come to us via Anna Tsing's (2015) work *The Mushroom at the End of the World* and the beautiful book *Entangled Life*, written by the scientist Merlin Sheldrake (2020). The name *The Leftovers* (Lindelof and Perrota 2014) is an explicit reference to the TV show with the same name which discusses the daily damage of such a global tragedy like the end of the world. Pukekos are a reference to a strange bird native in New Zealand since the video was recorded in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The witches are based on the powerful Silvia Federici (2004) work *Caliban and the Witch* and all the recent feminist horror movies such as *The Witch* (Eggers 2015), *Hagazussa: A Heathen's Curse* (Feigelfeld 2017), *The Other Lamb* (Szumowska 2019) and *The Nightingale* (Kent 2018). The wanderer spirits are a tribute to all the ghosts and spirits across the world, especially those dwelling in Asian houses, forests and caverns. Thailand's cinema here has a strong influence of which the director Apitchapong Weerasethakul is the most famous case (we might also recommend a film called *Manta Ray* [Aroonpheng 2018] and anthropologist Alan Klima's [2019] work in which an Asian ghost makes ethnography). The witch doctors at the centre of the world are a direct reference to the African nations and their myriad of peoples which have influenced impressive cultural movements such as Afrofuturism and African Jujuism (we might recommend movies such as Mati Diop's *Atlantics* [2019] and the literary works of Marlon James, Nnedi Okorafor and Namwali Serpell).

The vampires (who are mentioned in the video and in João's story here) are characters from Jim Jarmusch's films. Jim Jarmusch is a special reference for us. When we were recalling our influences and artistic passions, we realised that Jim Jarmusch was the first artist we both recognised as attempting to create Terrans as main characters in his films. It seems each of his characters is a Terran. There are countless examples. We can say the most famous are the super-intellectual vampiric couple in *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013). They are not violent creatures, as is the vampire stereotype; on the contrary, they are sensible, very concerned about nature, different types of knowledge and art (it seems their antithesis is our current anti-vax reality, is it not?). We have also mentioned Hermit Bob, from Jarmusch's last film *The Dead Don't Die* (2019). Bob is a hermit living in a local forest who can predict human decadence and the end of the world just by reading how ants (and farmers) behave.

Even the name chosen contains a clear reference for us. Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (2019) has significantly struck us as an example of how it is possible to combine fiction, activism, mystery, natural history, non-human spirituality and a Nobel Prize. Tokarczuk's Janina is a great Terran.

At the end of the video, there is a tribute to Donna Haraway's *The Camille Stories* (2016) with a reference to girls who have antennae moustaches and the forests, the places where most of the Terran thoughts come from. We could have spoken here for a whole day quoting these Terran living beings and events. The decision to make them our fictional characters is also a way to share our real-life experiences, since we consider ourselves Terrans as well. Being artists and scholars from the Northeast of Brazil makes almost every aspect of life harder. Historically, the region is known to be the place where sugarcane plantations were located during colonisation. Slavery, poverty, misery, dispossession, political corruption, environmental

destruction and historical erasure are still a great part of the colonial heritage there. Also, not by chance, the region is today recognised as being the main opposition centre against Bolsonaro's government. To us, art and knowledge-making are ways to find ourselves politically and spiritually, and this is why we have decided to choose the current approach in our dance video.

At this point, some new thoughts emerge to make us develop our ideas even further. Living in the Anthropocene (with the monster of the end hovering above our poor heads) is changing the way that we see the world, for better or worse. This makes the relationship between art (the category where we believe *Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead* is included) and the age, the present, even more complicated and intricate. We know it is quite difficult to create any consistent explanation in such a moment, but it is also strictly important to keep working on 'what we see as the colossal effort of contemporary imagination to produce a thought and a mythology that are adequate to our times' (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2016: 109–10). Part of such an effort necessarily involves how we create things in this world (among which art is included).

Art basically is a way to create and imagine new worlds, which is exactly what we need and what we are looking for. Now, art and life in the Anthropocene are getting closer and closer than ever (Guzzo and Taddei 2019). Living while the world is deteriorating requires ways not only to heal our current world but also to create new worlds, which is what art does too: creating possibilities to imagine, believe and dream.

According to Tsing et al. (2017), the great challenge of the Anthropocene consists in the fact that such an event blurs all the boundaries that we know (it seems we have lost our ground, our land). It is almost impossible to precisely recognise what is art, philosophy, biology, anthropology, science or just survival. Thus, to fill that massive gap in understanding, it is rigorously necessary to work in collective ways: peoples, scientists, artists and all sorts of thinkers, together. They call it 'arts of living on a damaged planet'. How is it possible to live when we have reached the point of no return? This is necessarily a collective effort to discuss and attempt to find ways to rebuild our world, not only physically, but also imaginatively, making stories infinitely. Storytelling is our reality as well; what we create and what we live are not different fields, they are strictly connected, we see both art and life struggling together in this damaged world. As Kopenawa wisely has been advising us, the sky is close to our heads. The art of living in a damaged world is about this collective struggle among peoples, creatures and ways to imagine.

Dancing Over the Bones of the Dead has been created based on all these thoughts, as a collaborative effort to join art, video, dance, science, anthropology and the wish to be alive beyond any possible end. Talking about all the current political situations in the world in general and in Brazil, her homeland (and our homeland as well), aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the artist Jota Mombaça has declared: 'THEY WON'T KILL US although they are killing us already' (Mombaça 2021: 3, our translation). Mombaça's urgent statement harmonises with Kopenawa's words: 'I do not want to die again' (Kopenawa and Albert 2013: 93). This is the story behind the violent combination of anthropocentric ways of living and brutal politics, and this is why we just cannot do this piece and our video any differently.

Our intention here is to humbly mix personal experience, creative process and serious questions about our age and our experiences, combining all to speculatively dwell together. Our deepest wish is to imagine a world which is fictional and real, peaceful and deeply violent, alive and dead, anthropological and artistic, natural and cultural, human and non-human, a tribute and an independent piece, Brazil and New Zealand,

dance and video, simple and complex. Everything at the same time, just as our times and lives.

EPILOGUE

At some point in the present time, which was also the future, João completely disappeared. ‘Even the enchanted ones are not eternal,’ someone said. Again, nobody knew exactly what had happened with João. It does not matter, actually. It is said they were visiting a place as usual. It is also said that the place probably was an isolated island (like their hometown) otherwise called Aotearoa. They thought the land had beautiful landscapes and the birds sang louder than normal. João decided that this was the right time to depart. Then they just flew towards the sky, and nobody ever saw them again. Full of buried matter, the world was still there, after all. Not only the deadly world, its creator-beings were also still there.

ENDNOTES

[1] Reisado is a traditional celebration in Brazil that mixes elements of Catholicism, indigenous and African practices. The celebration is most common in the Northeast.

[2] Our translation: *The Enchanting Body of the Streets*

[3] Our translation. Extract from *O Corpo Encantado das Ruas* (2019) by Luiz Antonio Simas.

[4] The book is written in collaboration with the French anthropologist Bruce Albert.

[5] Here it is interesting to point out Mark’s Fisher (2009: 7) important phrase saying, ‘it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism.’

[6] This is an urgent statement made by the Brazilian artist Jota Mombaça (2021: 3), clarifying the current socio-political context in the country. Our translation.

[7] We have to acknowledge that both bitcoin and crowdsourcing do not fit as examples of how the commodification of life and the Anthropocene can be resisted. We have decided to keep these two instances as part of the quotation to show how the monster we are fighting against is complex. Both bitcoin and crowdsourcing, when Danowski and Viveiros de Castro wrote the book, were seen as promising social improvements. However, nowadays they are considered integral parts of the neoliberal status quo, both heavily co-opted by capital. This also illustrates how every knowledge has boundaries and gaps to be filled.

DANCING OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD

Conception: Caio Silva and Raylanne Leal

Direction and photography: Caio Silva

Editing and Voice: Raylanne Leal

Music: DJ Barão

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