

On Amefricanity in Black Literary Discourses: Cartographic Perspectives on Technodiscourses about Lélia Gonzalez and Carolina Maria de Jesus / *Da amefricanidade nos discursos literários negros: perspectivas cartográficas em torno dos tecnodiscursos sobre Lélia Gonzalez e Carolina Maria de Jesus*

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the potentialities of Lélia Gonzalez's thought for studies of the multiple discursive expressions of/about Black people in Brazil. To do so, we employ two analytical strategies divided into two parts. First, we map out Gonzalez's key concepts that manifest her seminal theoretical reflections on culture, gender, and language, arguing that her theorizations on Amefricanity, Afro-Latin American feminism, and Portuguese form a conceptual archive for the analysis of black (con)texts. Then, we examine the technodiscursive production related to Carolina Maria de Jesus and Gonzalez, exploring how these writers and their trajectories are named, narrated, and remembered on different digital platforms. The methodology involves building a research corpus through posts on the authors in various languages and the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the themes present in the tweets. In so doing, we unearth the sociohistorical meanings, voices and counterpublics that emerge around them, broadening the understanding of contemporary black experiences.

KEYWORDS: Amefricanity; Lélia Gonzalez; Black literary discourses; Black feminism; Technodiscourses

RESUMO

Este artigo investiga as potencialidades do pensamento de Lélia Gonzalez para os estudos das múltiplas expressões discursivas de/sobre pessoas negras no Brasil. Para isso, empregamos duas estratégias de análise divididas em duas partes. Inicialmente, cartografamos os conceitos-chave de Gonzalez que manifestam suas reflexões teóricas seminais sobre cultura, gênero e linguagem, argumentando que suas teorizações sobre amefricanidade, feminismo afro-latino-americano e português compõem um arquivo conceitual para as análises de (con)textos negros. Em seguida, examinamos a produção tecnodiscursiva relacionada a Carolina Maria de Jesus e González, explorando como essas escritoras e suas trajetórias são nomeadas, narradas e lembradas em diferentes

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plataformas digitais. A metodologia envolve produção de corpus de pesquisa com enunciados sobre as autoras em vários idiomas e a análise quantitativa e qualitativa dos temas presentes nos tweets. Assim, recuperamos os sentidos histórico-sociais, vozes e contrapúblicos que emergem em torno delas, ampliando a compreensão das experiências contemporâneas de pessoas negras.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Amefricanidade; Lélia Gonzalez; Discurso literários negros; Feminismo negro; Tecnodiscurso

This article explores the theoretical potential of Lélia Gonzalez's thought for the study of the multiple literary and linguistic expressions of black people in Brazil. Considered one of the most representative and innovative thinkers in the tradition of Afro-Brazilian intellectuals, Gonzalez was a pioneer presence of black people in academia, challenging from the outset, through research, the "social niche predestined for the black population" (Ratts; Rios, 2021, p. 36).¹ At a time when there were few Afro-descendants in the teaching and student bodies of Brazilian higher education institutions, Gonzalez dedicated a significant part of her intellectual energy to critical reflection on issues of race, gender, and class.

What was the main impact of this organic intellectual's epistemological legacy? According to Raquel Barreto, Gonzalez "was an interpreter of Brazil, who chose culture as a privileged space for observation and analysis of the Amefrican character of our identity" (Barreto, 2018, p. 16).² Thus, Gonzalez dared to (re)think Brazilian culture and society based on her experience as a black woman, and, therefore, she is a crucial reference for discussing the ethics of poetics, the texts of contexts, and the politics of criticism.

If "the literary objects we examine are never merely literary, and attempts to see them as such constitute a dehistoricizing and depoliticizing of literary texts that should be scrutinized for their ideological content, role, and function" (West, 1998, p. 56), then black literature demands theoretical perspectives derived from anti-essentialist critiques of contexts in which multiple ethnic, racial, and sexual identities are formulated. It is, therefore, a literature that "brings to the forefront points of view that shake the very idea

¹ In Portuguese: "lugares sociais predestinados à população negra."

² In Portuguese: "foi uma intérprete do Brasil, que elegeu a cultura como um espaço privilegiado de observação e análise do caráter amefricano da nossa identidade."

of the national, since it also problematizes the very idea of us, offering us, readers, a past not constituted in submission and silence” (Felisberto; Miranda, 2023, p. 220).³ From critical and creative re-readings of this Afro-identified past, spaces for reflection and provocation emerge that are conducive to the articulation of innovative theories and discourses.

Gonzalez directly contributes to expanding the decolonial gesture of questioning Eurocentric concepts and advancing forms of thought consistent with African and indigenous historical agencies. How does the affirmation of this Amefrican ancestry indicate new epistemic paths for literary and linguistic research?

In the cartography of this article, we recognize Gonzalez’s relevance for studies of black literature based on her key concepts that manifest the scope of her seminal theoretical reflections on culture, gender, and language. We argue, in the first part, that her theorizations of Amefricanity, Afro-Latin American feminism, and Pretuguese⁴ compose a conceptual archive for the operationalization of analyses of black (con)texts.

In the second part, we analyze the technodiscursive practices that name, reference, and cite Lélia Gonzalez and Carolina Maria de Jesus on Twitter – rebranded as X in July 2023 – as forms of intervention and struggle over historical, social, and cultural meanings, highlighting clashes over race, gender, and class. We use the perspective of digital discourse analysis to think about the discourses surrounding the two intellectuals as arenas for the formation, deconstruction and dispute of meanings on society, culture, and memory in Latin Amefrica.

1 The Poetics of Amefricanity

By coining the term *Améfrica Ladina*, Lélia Gonzalez (2020) theorized the territory where she was born and lived to emphasize the relevance of African and indigenous heritages in the (trans)formation of multiple cultures and diverse identities throughout the history of the so-called New World. This land, brutally invaded by colonizing forces with an agenda of subjecting life to the power of death – as Achille

³ In Portuguese: “vem trazer à cena pontos de vista que abalam a própria ideia de nacional, já que também problematiza a própria ideia de nós, oferecendo a nós leitoras e leitores um passado não constituído na submissão e no silêncio.”

⁴ Neologism: *Pretuguês*, which is a mixture of *Preto* [Black] and *Português* [Portuguese].

Mbembe (2016)⁵ demonstrates well when revealing the continuation of this necropolitics in contemporary times – was given the name America by European armed necropower, in honor of Amerigo Vespucci, the Italian explorer who symbolized the systematic aggression of the colonial system against the ancestral lands and lives of black and indigenous people. The employment of terms such as *Africas* and *Abya Yala* to (re)signify, respectively, the continents bathed by the Black Atlantic, decolonizes necropolitical legacies by underscoring the pluralities of the ancient civilizations that inhabit(ed) those territories long before the European invasions.

As someone who “inaugurates a creative and innovative way of doing the essay in Brazil and presents new interpretative keys to the nation” (Rios, 2021, p. 400),⁶ Gonzalez rethinks the colonial syntagma by decolonizing the signifier and the signified in the proposition *América Ladina*. This creative and conceptual innovation Africanizes the understanding of the Americas, articulated as *América* (the F borrowed from Africa) *Ladina*. The replacement of the T by a D in *Ladina* manifests the truth about a nonexistent Latinity. *Ladino* was an adjective used in colonial Brazil to refer to Africans and indigenous people who Europeans considered acculturated, but, ironically, the same adjective denotes cunning and cleverness. The term also refers to the Judeo-Spanish or Spanish-Sephardic language, that is, imprinting the racialization of the Jew. In other words, *Ladino-Amefricanity* is a proposal for the decolonization of the mind that allows us to see the Americas in their democratic and transnational totality, going beyond the limits of geography, language, and ideology. This decolonial perspective centralizes the contribution of black and indigenous people and institutions in the historical process of creating new ways of being, living, and thinking, breaking with the logic denounced by Frantz Fanon that “it is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject” (Fanon, 2004, p. 2).⁷

The unexpected gesture of renaming the territory in which we live based on semantic reconfigurations engendered by the subjectivities of the subaltern rehistoricizes the existence of people and institutions that were relegated to processes of historical

⁵ MBEMBE, Achille. *Critique of Black Reason*. Translated with an introduction by Laurent Dubois. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017.

⁶ In Portuguese: “inaugura uma forma criativa e inovadora de se fazer ensaio no Brasil e apresenta novas chaves interpretativas para a nação.”

⁷ FANON, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Translated by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove Press, 2004.

oblivion and erasure by colonial oppression. By discrediting Vespucci's name with Am  rica, the renaming proposed by Gonzalez goes beyond   douard Glissant's (2020)⁸ trichotomy, which keeps the name America intact in meso-America, Euro-America and neo-America. For Glissant (2020),⁹ there would be three types of Americas: the Meso-America of the indigenous peoples; Euro-America, which preserved European practices, customs and traditions; and Neo-America, which would be the America of creolization, with Africa predominating. The retention of America as the head in the three nominal syntagmata underscores the strength of this noun, around which other elements were added to theorize a poetics of diversity inspired by a new way of being and thinking, established precisely by those presumed to be the losers of history. Thus, in a way not foreseen by the enslaving powers, the enslaved African subject "has made something new on the basis of the only memories, that is to say the only *trace* thoughts, that he had left: he has created on the one hand the Creole languages and, on the other, art forms that are valid for everyone" (Glissant, 2020, p. 7).¹⁰

To describe the same potentialities of what Glissant treated as neo-America, Gonzalez needed to affirm the African character of her own identity. Brazil, in her understanding, "is an African America, whose Latinity, yet inexistent, had its T replaced by a D so that its name could be assumed with all the letters: Am  rica Ladina. [...] In this context, all Brazilians (and not just the 'blacks' and 'browns' of the IBGE) are ladino-Amefricans" (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 127).¹¹ Cognizant of the destructive effects of institutionalized racism in the narrative of the fallacious Brazilian racial democracy, the theorist proposed to enter the political arena of the power of discourse: "The risk we assume here is that of the act of speaking with all the implications. Precisely because we have been spoken to, infantilized, [...] that in this work we assume our own speech. In other words, the trash gon' talk, plain and simple" (Gonzalez, 2020, pp. 77-78).¹²

⁸ GLISSANT,   douard. *Introduction to a Poetics of Diversity*. Translated by Celia Britton. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

⁹ See footnote 8.

¹⁰ See footnote 8.

¹¹ In Portuguese: "   uma Am  rica Africana, cuja latinidade, por inexistente, teve trocado o T pelo D para, a   sim, ter o seu nome assumido com todas as letras: *Am  rica Ladina*. [...] Nesse contexto, todos os brasileiros (e n  o apenas os 'pretos' e os 'pardos do IBGE) s  o ladino-amefricanos."

¹² In Portuguese: "O risco que assumimos aqui    o do ato de falar com todas as implica  es. Exatamente porque temos sido falados, infantilizados, [...] que neste trabalho assumimos nossa pr  pria fala. Ou seja, o lixo vai falar, e numa boa."

As a political-cultural category, Amefricanity deviates from the Eurocentrism of history's official version to incorporate "an entire historical process of intense cultural dynamics (adaptation, resistance, reinterpretation, and creation of new forms) that is Afrocentric" (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 135).¹³ Under the lens of Amefricanity, Afro-diasporic cultural aspects are amplified. By centralizing the historical experience of black African people, racial and cultural hierarchy is challenged through a process of constructing an ethnic identity that recognizes the importance of Afro-ancestral heritages for the formation of Amefrica, seen as a totality that breaks down geographical, linguistic, and ideological barriers.

In our reading, Amefricanity emerges in the work of Elizandra Souza, whose poetry echoes the experiences of black women who live on the margins of power, but who give new meaning to their lives based on an Afro-identified subjectivity. In her poem *Afiando as facas*, poetry serves as a weapon to confront the destructive effects of forms of racism in Brazil.

I will bow to my insult...
At the feet of ignorance
With the sharp sickle...
That cuts and blinds even their eyes...
An exile offering by an African woman... (Souza, 2012, p. 84).¹⁴

The poetic voice enters the ethical arena of ethnic-racial relations in Brazil, insulted by the ignorance of racism. This disadvantage does not prevent it from reconnecting with the artefacts of its African heritage, symbolized in a sharp sickle. This instrument signifies the knife of Èṣù, which has an ethical function in Yoruba culture and in its diasporic expressions (Santos, 2016, p. 185). At the crossroads of survival, the knife that emerges from Èṣù's head symbolizes the power of the word to generate new opportunities for existence, signaling the birth and lifecycle of all living beings. As the divinity that confounds the arrogant, Èṣù deceives the careless and causes the powerful to stumble. In the symbolism of Christian traditions, the image of a sharp sickle also has an ethical connotation.

¹³ In Portuguese: "todo um processo histórico de intensa dinâmica cultural (adaptação, resistência, reinterpretação e criação de novas formas) que é afrocentrada."

¹⁴ In Portuguese: "Curvarei o meu insulto.../ Aos pés da ignorância/ Com a foice a fio.../ Corta e cega até os olhos.../ Oferenda de exílio de mulher africana..."

In Souza's poetry, this ethical sharp sickle is capable of cutting and blinding the evil of racist eyes. As the ultimate symbol of the survival of the Amefrican woman, the knife represents the strength and beauty of the black female body. This Afro-identified poet(h)ics is described as an offering from exile by an African woman. By identifying with Afro-descendants, the poetic voice reconstructs its historical ties with a (re)imagined Africa, underscoring the power of African heritage as a cultural weapon to combat racism and reconstruct narratives of black identities. In this way, one can identify in this poem an aesthetic expression of Amefricanity.

For Evaristo (2010), poetry constitutes an act of narrating and transgressing the official versions of history. In a decolonial movement, poetic art not only writes, but also interprets history, drawing on the personal and collective agencies of those situated at the base of the pyramid of the social order bequeathed by colonial powers. With this appropriation of poetic expression, the power to narrate translates into aesthetic power, capable of recreating worlds through the hands of subjects aware of their historical relevance, which characterizes the Amefrican condition itself.

2 Afro-Latin American Feminism: A Literary Expression

Gonzalez's anti-essentialist and decolonial critique engenders a feminist perspective that is sensitive to the experiences of women who suffer the most from the consequences of various forms of social inequality. By focusing on an analysis of the racial and gender exclusion of black and indigenous women, Gonzalez (2020) argued that Afro-Latin American feminism demands attention to the interplay between the racial, gender, and class discrimination faced by these women. It is precisely this recognition of identity that strengthens liberation struggles, opening space for ethnic feminist movements, such as black feminisms. The Afro-Latin American feminist perspective embraces the cultural and sociopolitical potential of women descended from African and First peoples in the process of transforming their realities of injustice.

Alongside thinkers such as Beatriz Nascimento and Sueli Carneiro, Gonzalez became a pioneer of black feminism in Brazil. We also need to recognize Gonzalez's legitimacy as one of the global pioneers of the concept of intersectionality – even though she was not the creator of the term coined by the American theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw

(1989) – because, as Flavia Rios and Alex Ratts state in the article entitled “A perspectiva interseccional de Lélia Gonzalez,” “the articulation between race, class, and gender is at the core of Lélia Gonzalez’s thought” (Rios; Ratts, 2016, p. 297).¹⁵

Afro-Latin American feminism can be mapped in literary texts by numerous black women writers, including the poet Cristiane Sobral, who considers literature a “cry for freedom” and understands that when writing, “she puts together a puzzle in an exercise of imagination and sensitivity” (Côrtes, 2014, p. 257).¹⁶ With her poetry, Sobral explores the experience of being a black woman with consciousness and attitude, demonstrating the use of creative writing as a weapon to achieve the power to (re)signify subaltern realities.

If Sobral’s poetry “is part of a search for the wholeness of the feminine being” (Ferreira, 2011, p. 510),¹⁷ then her poem “Não vou mais lavar os pratos” [I’m done washing the dishes] offers an epic lyricism to narrate the process of individual rupture with the social structures that oppress black women.

I’m done washing the dishes
Not even gonna dust off the furniture
Thanks, but no thanks
I’ve started to read (Sobral, 2016, p. 16).¹⁸

Only regulated in 2015 in Brazil by *Lei Complementar Nº 150* [Complementary Law No. 150], domestic work is one of the most lasting legacies of slavery. Gonzalez (2020) emphasizes that this form of work is the result of the physical and symbolic violence suffered by black women in the Casa Grande. In addition to their usual domestic tasks, they were violently forced to provide sexual services to their enslavers, hence the meaning of *mucama* as an enslaved lover. “As for the domestic worker,” Gonzalez states, “she is nothing more than the permitted mucama, the one who provides goods and

¹⁵ In Portuguese: “a articulação entre raça, classe e gênero está no centro do pensamento de Lélia Gonzalez.”

¹⁶ In Portuguese: “grito de liberdade”; “monta um quebra-cabeça num exercício de imaginação e sensibilidade.”

¹⁷ In Portuguese: “se inscreve na vertente de uma busca pela inteireza do ser feminino.”

¹⁸ In Portuguese: “Não vou mais lavar os pratos/ Nem vou limpar a poeira dos móveis/ Sinto muito/ Comecei a ler”

services, that is, the packhorse that carries her family and the families of others on her back” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 81).¹⁹

By enunciating a kind of antiracist and antisexist manifesto, Sobral’s poetic voice reverberates a deep sense of consciousness and identity, as if responding creatively and directly to the following axiom: “The place in which we stand will determine our interpretation of the dual phenomenon of racism and sexism” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 76).²⁰ This version of Afro-Latin American feminism is configured as a poetic declaration of independence from a subject who faces the persistence of the destructive effects of a structurally racist and misogynistic society: “I abolished/ I no longer wash the dishes [...] The golden law has been decreed” (Sobral, 2016, pp. 17-18).²¹

In her epic against the racist domesticating forces that are the poem’s subtext, the heroine finds in reading the most powerful weapon to achieve the grandeur of a transition from a state of non-being to a state of being, thus transforming the poetic self-expression of black women into a site for articulating their identities. The *Lei Áurea*, which made Brazil the last country in the Western Hemisphere to abolish slavery in 1888, is re-narrated by the agency of a black female subject who proclaims the emancipation of subsequent forms of domination of her body, as well as the legitimacy of her autonomy, vis-à-vis all subtextual forms of heteronomy. Therefore, Sobral’s poetics confirms the veracity of an ethnographic note by Gonzalez: “black women do not perform the submissive gender” (Gonzalez; Hasenbalg, 2022, p. 46).²²

3 Writing in Pretuguese

Amefricanity also carries a linguistic power, as can be observed in the Portuguese spoken in Brazil. For Gonzalez, the marks of Africanization of Brazilian Portuguese modified the colonizer’s language to the point of creating a black language, which the theorist conceptualizes as Pretuguese, that is, a black Portuguese.

¹⁹ In Portuguese: “Quanto à doméstica”, constata Gonzalez, “ela nada mais é do que a mucama permitida, a da prestação de bens e serviços, ou seja, o burro de carga que carrega sua família e a dos outros nas costas.”

²⁰ In Portuguese: “O lugar em que nos situamos determinará nossa interpretação sobre o duplo fenômeno do racismo e do sexismo.”

²¹ In Portuguese: “Aboli/ Não lavo mais os pratos [...] Está decretada a lei áurea.”

²² In Portuguese: “a mulher negra não faz o gênero submissa.”

This is the case of its tonal and rhythmic aspects and the absence of consonants such as L or R. The African influence on Brazilian Portuguese is visible “in the vowel-rich pronunciation of our speech (*ri.ti.mo, pi.neu, a.di.vo.ga.do* [rhythm, tire, lawyer]), in our syntax (tendency not to mark the plural of the noun in the nominal syntagma *os menino(s), as casa(s)* [the boy(s); the house(s)]), in the double negation (*não quero não* [I do not want not]), in the preferential use of proclisis (*eu lhe disse, me dê* [I you told; me give])” (Castro, 2011, p. 1).²³ Nei Lopes (2012) also demonstrates the presence of thousands of words of African origin in Brazilian Portuguese. The fact that this Africanized Portuguese is predominant in Brazil reinforces Gonzalez’s thesis on the subversive power of Amefricanity.

The lead role of *Mãe Preta* (Black Mother) in the Africanization of Brazilian Portuguese represented a powerful form of linguistic decolonization in the face of oppressive normative standards, since “it was up to the black mother, assumed as a compendium of knowledge, to Africanize the Portuguese *spoken* in Brazil (the ‘Pretuguese,’ as Portuguese-speaking Africans say) and, consequently, the Africanization of Brazilian culture itself” (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 54).²⁴ Thus, by Africanizing Portuguese, Mãe Preta carried out a form of decolonization of the language, making Pretuguese a more intimate and familiar language compared to the almost unattainable standards of the so-called *Norma Culta* (standard variety). However, the articulation of Pretuguese by black people generates a form of linguistic discrimination, which “is in fact a path of racial prejudice in the country, in its linguistic character” (Nascimento, 2019, p. 55).²⁵

As a linguistic expression of Amefricanity, Pretuguese influenced the style of Afro-Brazilian authors, such as the pioneer Carolina Maria de Jesus, whose writing is read as an act of “insubordination,” precisely because it “violates the ‘standard variety’ of the language” (Evaristo, 2020, p. 54).²⁶ De Jesus emerged with the publication of *Child of dark: the diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus* in 1960, which portrays her condition as a

²³ In Portuguese: “na pronúncia rica em vogais da nossa fala (*ri.ti.mo, pi.neu, a.di.vo.ga.do*), na nossa sintaxe (tendência a não marcar o plural do substantivo no sintagma nominal *os menino(s), as casa(s)*), na dupla negação (*não quero não*), no emprego preferencial pela próclise (*eu lhe disse, me dê*).”

²⁴ In Portuguese: “coube à mãe preta, enquanto sujeito suposto saber, a africanização do português *falado* no Brasil (o ‘pretuguês’, como dizem os africanos lusófonos) e, conseqüentemente, a própria africanização da cultura brasileira.”

²⁵ In Portuguese: “é de fato uma via do preconceito racial no país, em seu caráter linguístico.”

²⁶ In Portuguese: “fere ‘as normas cultas’ da língua.”

black woman in a favela, or, in her words, “the backyard where they throw the garbage” (Jesus, 1962, p. 35).²⁷

One of the key characteristics of this discursive agency is the employment of a language that can be identified as Pretuguese – even treated by a paratext written by an editor of her work as “grammatical errors” that “provide greater realism” (Jesus, 2018, p. 194).²⁸ Attributing the literary articulation of language to an erroneous use of the standard language constitutes linguistic discrimination precisely because her literary text expresses its narrative diction through Pretuguese syntax: “I am living in a favela. But if God helps me, I’ll get out of here. I hope the politicians tear down the favelas” (Jesus, 1962, p. 25).²⁹ In addition to being a form of linguistic discrimination, it is also a mistake in critical reading, as Gabriel Nascimento notes, because “rather than reading the cohesion and coherence of her text, the way her characters speak and are constructed, they instead inscribe Carolina within a deviation created by the racist notion that only one way of speaking Portuguese is correct” (Nascimento, 2023, p. 9338).³⁰ To explain this denial, Gonzalez deploys the pragmatics and semantics of Pretuguese in her essays, achieving her own diction.

Influenced by Gonzalez, the Angolan writer Kalaf Epalanga, in his *Minha pátria é a língua pretuguesa* [My Homeland is my Pretuguese Language], makes the following prognosis: “The future of the Portuguese language will be Brazilian and African; in other words, the future of the Portuguese language will be black” (Epalanga, 2023, p. 189).³¹ Gonzalez’s essays emanate from Pretuguese, as “her own style” presents “a textual composition that blends the erudite and the popular, the Bantu and the Portuguese, academic and traditional knowledge” (Rios, 2021, pp. 399-400),³² offering a reflective diction as distinctive as the narrative diction of Carolina Maria de Jesus.

²⁷ JESUS, Carolina Maria de. *Child of Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*. Translated by David St. Claire. New York: Print Signet Classics, 1962.

²⁸ In Portuguese: “erros gramaticais” que “conferem maior realismo.”

²⁹ For reference, see footnote 27.

³⁰ In Portuguese: “[a]o invés de lerem a coesão e coerência de seu texto, a forma como suas personagens conversam e são construídas, passam a inscrever Carolina num desvio criado pela impressão racista de que apenas uma forma de falar português é correta.”

³¹ In Portuguese: “O futuro da língua portuguesa será brasileiro e africano; trocado por miúdos, o futuro da língua portuguesa será negro.”

³² In Portuguese: “seu próprio estilo”; “uma composição textual que mistura o erudito e o popular, o banto e o português, o conhecimento acadêmico e o tradicional.”

4 A Technodiscursive Perspective on Lélia Gonzalez and Carolina Maria de Jesus: Amefrican Counterpublics in the Digital Sphere

We present a research experience that we consider illustrative of the power of Lélia Gonzalez and Carolina Maria de Jesus' thoughts and trajectories, based on the delimitation of clashes in digital discourse, exploring discursive practices of naming intellectuals and writers. We understand the practice of naming them, the narration of their trajectories, their citation, following the considerations of Valentin Vološinov, from the Bakhtin Circle, as forms of struggle. "The sign," states the author, "becomes an arena of the class struggle" (Vološinov, 1986, p. 23).³³ For Volóchinov, the sign is part of the social dispute, "differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign," which makes it alive and changeable (Voloshinov, 1986, p. 23).³⁴ We contend that the discursive practices that mention Carolina Maria de Jesus and Lélia González seek to intervene in disputes about society, Ladino-Amefrican cultures, and the legitimate forms of knowing and narrating the memory of the 20th century in Brazil and the Amefricanas and their individual and collective meanings.

We study the technodiscursive production surrounding these intellectuals, adopting the technodiscursive analytical perspective, which considers that discursive practices and digital universes develop reciprocally, in such a way that discursive practices transform the digital environment and are transformed by it (Paveau, 2021). We understand the technodiscursive practices surrounding González and Jesus, from the perspective of digital discourse analysis, not simply as a thematization of the life and trajectory of these intellectuals, but exploring the social, racial, and gender rules that define who, from what place, for what purposes, in what digital social spaces, is capable of naming, remembering, and referencing González and Jesus (Deusdará; Rocha, 2021). We consider that the digital discursive practices surrounding González and Jesus concern the encounter between the textual and the institutional, the constituted forms, the social, generic and racial hierarchies that structure the platforms, but also the forces at play, the forms of resistance that emerge within the platforms (Deusdará; Rocha, 2021). Our proposal for a cartography of the meanings surrounding these black women authors aims

³³ VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986. p. 23.

³⁴ For reference, see footnote 33.

to trace analytical horizons in a way that binds us ethically and politically, in order to emphasize the dimension of processuality (Deusdará; Rocha, 2021). The concept of counterpublics, coined by feminist thinker Nancy Fraser (1990), is important because it implies thinking about a multiple and proliferating public sphere, in which alternative, subaltern and subordinate publics are capable of formulating alternative meanings, expanding the possibilities of contestation (Fraser, 1990). This is how we should think about the digital discourses surrounding them, as arenas for the formation, deconstruction, and dispute of meanings about society, culture, and memory in the Amefricas.

5 Methodologies of Corpus Capture on Digital Platforms

The extraction was done using Twitter Academic Search, launched in 2021, which allowed collecting tweets in a historical arc, from 2009 to 2023, in multiple languages. We collected tweets using Twarc, a Python package for collecting Twitter data developed by Documenting the Now (<https://github.com/DocNow/twarc>). We extracted a total of 51,692 tweets in Portuguese, 961 tweets in Spanish, and 1,920 tweets in English about Lélia González. The posts date from July 2009 to May 2023. About Carolina Maria de Jesus, we collected a total of 112,061 tweets in Portuguese, 21,210 tweets in Spanish, and 2,282 tweets in English. The posts date from April 2009 to May 2023, when the platform ends academic access.

For processing, we used quantitative and qualitative methods in Wolfram Mathematica, a programming language that enabled us to construct programming architectures capable of operating in Spanish and Portuguese, allowing critical decisions to be made regarding the computational processing of the data. In addition, we utilized Pandas, a Python library, to process the large documents through its interface in Jupyter Notebooks. We performed a topic modeling technique in order to visually map the most relevant topics in the tweets in different languages about de Jesus and González. To do so, we followed these steps: 1. we encoded the words according to terms considered significant for the corpus; 2. we “cleaned” the corpus of links, usernames, and other non-alphanumeric characters; 3. we eliminated a list of stopwords (“empty words”) in Portuguese and Spanish (frequently removed in computational processing of natural

language text);³⁵ 4. we implemented an algorithm capable of obtaining the roots of words in Portuguese and Spanish,³⁶ from which we create a function capable of obtaining the most common term from a class of terms with the same root for each language.

Subsequently, we used the topic modeling technique called Nonnegative Matrix Factorization and Probabilistic Latent Semantic Analysis (PLSA). We used a package created for Wolfram Mathematica to map the topics of a collection of documents (Antonov, 2020). We generated 10 topics per author and language and selected the 5 most relevant for our objectives, manually giving them a title.³⁷ With the generated topics and their titles, we generated word networks in the form of graphs which show the 20 most relevant words in each topic. It is important to emphasize that we do not consider topic modeling techniques as an objective taxonomy of the analyzed data (Goldstone; Underwood, 2014; Josiowicz; Deusdará, 2022). We are aware of our role, as researchers, in the production of the corpus and in the creation of a cartography that allows us to explore (partially, given the restrictions of the data under analysis) the power of the meanings surrounding González and Jesus.

Following ethical considerations of best practices suggested in studies of social media and specifically Twitter (Bergis; Summers; Mitchell, 2018), we protected users' privacy by not revealing names or pseudonyms of individual accounts and avoiding identifying specific users. Furthermore, in the case of references to tweets, we chose to share the tweet links (Freelon; Mcilwain; Clark, 2016).

³⁵Available at <http://snowball.tartarus.org/algorithms/portuguese/stop.txt> and <http://snowball.tartarus.org/algorithms/spanish/stop.txt>.

³⁶Available at <http://snowball.tartarus.org/algorithms/portuguese/stemmer.html> and <http://snowball.tartarus.org/algorithms/spanish/stemmer.html>.

³⁷For a bibliography on topic modeling techniques with tweets, see Steinskog *et al.* (2017); Wang, Liu, and Yalou (2016).

6 Technodiscourses on Carolina Maria de Jesus: Stories of Struggle, Writing and Resistance

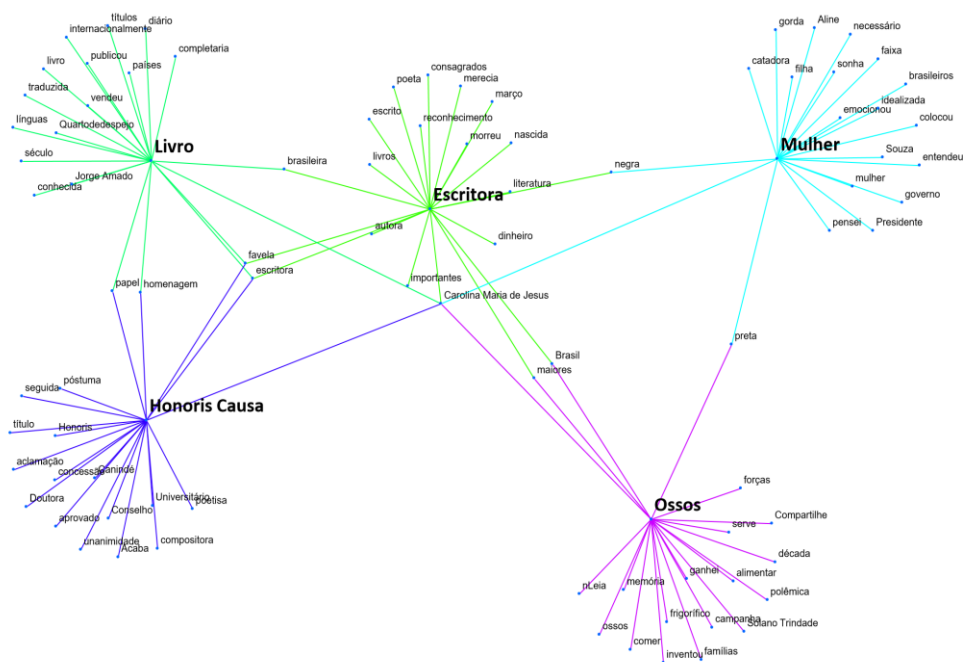


Figure 1. Topic modeling of tweets about Carolina Maria de Jesus in Portuguese. *Source:* the authors and Mathematica.

Among the most relevant topics about Carolina Maria de Jesus in Portuguese (figure 1), we have the topic Writer, which highlights her role as a writer, composer, poet, and author of numerous books. The topic Book cites *Quarto de despejo* [Child of the dark] as central to the author's work and details her international recognition, the work sales success, and its translation and circulation. The topic Woman draws parallels between Jesus and Aline Souza, the woman who handed over the presidential sash to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The tweets bring Jesus to the present as a witness to cultural transformations in Brazil. We read in one post: "The scavenger, Aline Souza handed over the sash. Carolina Maria de Jesus cries with emotion in her ancestry and so do I. Brazil, for the third time, will be presided over by someone who has already gone hungry. #LulaPresidente."³⁸ The post invokes the ancestral presence of Carolina Maria de Jesus, imagining her emotionally moved by the scene. It establishes a link between the ancestral

³⁸ In Portuguese: "A catadora Aline Souza passou a faixa. Carolina Maria de Jesus chora de emoção na ancestralidade e eu aqui também. O Brasil, pela terceira vez, será presidido por alguém que já passou fome. #LulaPresidente." In: https://twitter.com/cruz_elianalves/status/1609649973280534528.

vision of the writer, emotionally touched, and the enunciating subject, “*e eu aqui também*” [and me here too], connecting ancestry with the present, the individual and the collective.

In turn, the topic *Honoris Causa* celebrates the unanimous approval of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by UFRJ to Carolina Maria de Jesus, with more than 4,800 tweets on the subject, commemorating the posthumous academic honor. The counterpublics celebrate the transformation of academic curricula and the inclusion of Carolina Maria de Jesus in a new intellectual canon, which considers the social function of the university. The topic Bones concerns a series of posts from 2021 and 2022, which quote Jesus: “I went to the Refrigerator, I got some bones. They’re good enough. I make soup. So my stomach doesn’t stay empty, I tried to survive on air. I started to faint.’ Carolina Maria de Jesus, Brazil, 1960. But it could be 2022.”³⁹ In the post, the persistence of social inequalities in Brazil emerges – life with hunger, with bones –, in which, however, an active subject arises, one who fights, resists, and denounces.

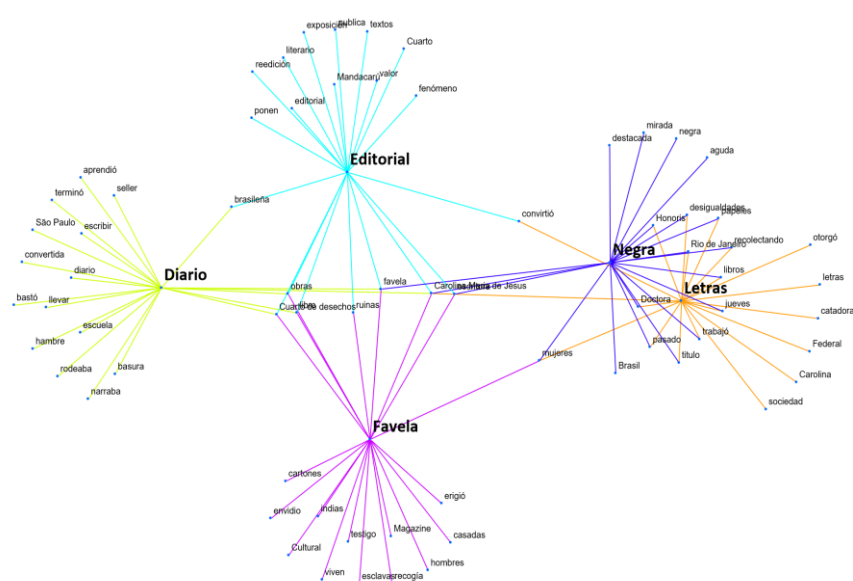


Figure 2. Topic modeling in Spanish about Carolina Maria de Jesus. Source: the authors and Wolfram Mathematica.

Among the most relevant topics about Carolina Maria de Jesus in Spanish (figure 2), we have the Editorial, which highlights the author as an “*fenômeno editorial*” [editorial phenomenon] and a bestseller. This is a series of posts that publish articles and exhibitions

³⁹ In Portuguese: “Fui no Frigorífico, ganhei uns ossos. Já serve. Faço sopa. Já que a barriga não fica vazia, tentei viver com ar. Comecei a desmaiar.” Carolina Maria de Jesus, Brasil, 1960. Mas poderia ser 2022.” In: <https://twitter.com/FaquiniLuciane/status/1534687170400866306>.

about her work and career. In this topic, the word *Mandacaru* appears, which refers to the new edition of her diary, along with other works, by the alternative publisher of the same name in 2021. The topic Favela is the centerpiece of a series of tweets that seek to raise awareness about feminicide through a quote from Carolina Maria de Jesus, in which she criticizes marriage as being marked by a violent, repressive, and enslaving logic for women.⁴⁰ The topic Literature highlights the appointment of Carolina Maria de Jesus as Doctor Honoris Causa of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), contributing to transform the literary canon in the subcontinent. The topic Diary indicates the importance of her diary, *Cuarto de desechos* – the title of the Spanish translation – for the construction of a narrative about social inequalities in Brazil and Latin America. Finally, the topic Black draws attention to Jesus as a black writer from the favelas, and promotes a new edition of her best-known work, along with other writings, published by an alternative publisher in Spain in 2023.

Figure 3. Topic modeling of tweets about Carolina Maria de Jesus in English. *Source:* the authors and Wolfram Mathematica.

⁴⁰ <https://twitter.com/feminicidio/status/930118181452238850>.

biographical and intellectual profile of the author. We also have the topic Invention, featuring a group of posts that mobilize a quote from the author in which she values the book as part of the intellectual life of human beings and, specifically, of people living in favelas, thus breaking stereotypes: “Reading *Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus* (diary of a woman living in the favelas of São Paulo, 1950s). ‘I don’t know how to sleep without reading. I like to leaf through a book. The book is man’s best invention so far’ ❤️.” The heart emoji and the quote point to the book as an emotional axis and a form of resilience. In turn, the topic Story highlights the importance of the writer’s life and trajectory and signal the transformative nature of Carolinian writing, both individually and collectively. The topic also brings together a series of posts celebrating International Black and Caribbean Women’s Day, from collectives dedicated to honoring and citing the works of black women, such as Cite Black Women. Carolina Maria de Jesus’ role as an intellectual, black woman, and Ladino-Amefrican woman is highlighted, making visible a trajectory and work that have historically been erased by global intellectual and literary canons. Finally, the topic Writer seeks to make visible and publicize a series of digital artworks about the writer, created in March 2023.⁴¹ A photograph by Carolina Maria de Jesus forms part of a collage, on a black background, with green colors and a red moon, in which the author writes in red ink, an emblem of struggle and intellectual work, as well as resistance.

⁴¹ <https://objkt.com/tokens/KT1BQxiUgk7p1nTedFR2ym5WM7mZ4FQgiWd5/10>.

7 Lélia Gonzalez and Afro-Latin American Feminism in the Digital Sphere

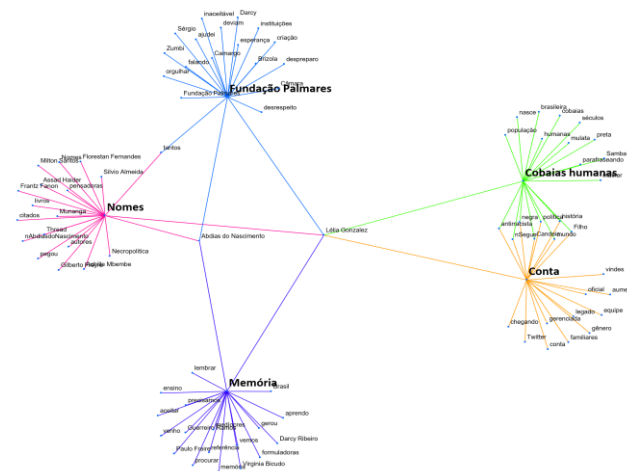


Figure 4. Topic modeling of tweets about Lélia González in Portuguese. Source: the authors and Wolfram Mathematica.

Among the most relevant topics about Lélia Gonzalez in Portuguese (figure 4), we have the topic Account, which announces the creation of a Twitter account by Lélia Gonzalez's family, with the aim of encouraging events, speeches, and actions on the platform about her. Another topic, Human guinea pigs, contains a tweet by the novelist Eliana Alves Cruz, shared 3,500 times and with 13 thousand likes, which underscores the persistence of racism, paraphrasing González: "Shall we talk about human guinea pigs? Well, paraphrasing Lélia Gonzalez, the guinea pig gon' talk, plain and simple, because we, the black population, have been the world's guinea pigs for centuries."⁴² This is a set of tweets by the writer with references to Gonzalez, serving as an affirmation of the importance of black intellectuals' voices in addressing the meanings that intertwine science, health, and racism in Brazilian history, denouncing the reification of black bodies. The paraphrase of the famous phrase "the trash gon' talk, plain and simple" (Gonzalez, 2020, p. 78),⁴³ previously cited, is fundamental because it reinforces the intervention of the black intellectual and writer in this controversy. The topic Memory, in turn, calls for the need to remember and recover Gonzalez's legacy for today's Brazil, together with other intellectuals such as Paulo Freire, Guerreiro Ramos, Darcy Ribeiro,

⁴² In Portuguese: “Vamos falar sobre cobaias humanas? Pois bem, parafraseando Lélia Gonzalez, a cobaia vai falar e numa boa, pois nós, população negra, somos as cobaias do mundo há séculos.” In: https://twitter.com/cruz_elianalves/status/1375821424556978186.

⁴³ In Portuguese: “o lixo vai falar, e numa boa.”

Virginia Bicudo, and Abdias do Nascimento. In a similar direction, the topic Names works by accumulating and citing the names of intellectuals who are fundamental to Brazilian social thought on race, racism and antiracism: alongside Lélia González, there are Silvio Almeida, Milton Santos, Abdias do Nascimento, Florestan Fernandes, Achille Mbembe, Assad Haider, and Frantz Fanon.

These are posts that list, accumulate, and contribute to the construction of an antiracist library on the digital platform, reconstructing the intellectual canon. Another topic, *Fundação Palmares* [Palmares Foundation], contains terms from a post by Benedita da Silva, a black intellectual and Federal Congresswoman for the Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers' Party] (PT) – in Rio de Janeiro, who states: “It is unacceptable that unprepared people attack institutions like Fundação Palmares, which I helped create. They should be proud. Out, Sérgio Camargo! And take your hatred, unpreparedness and disrespect with you. Long live Zumbi, Lélia González, Abdias Nascimento, and so many others. #BlackLivesMatter.”⁴⁴ González, together with Zumbi dos Palmares and Abdias do Nascimento “and many others” form a potentially expandable library of Brazilian antiracist thinkers, mobilized in the direction of criticizing the actions of the then president of the Palmares Foundation and his policies.

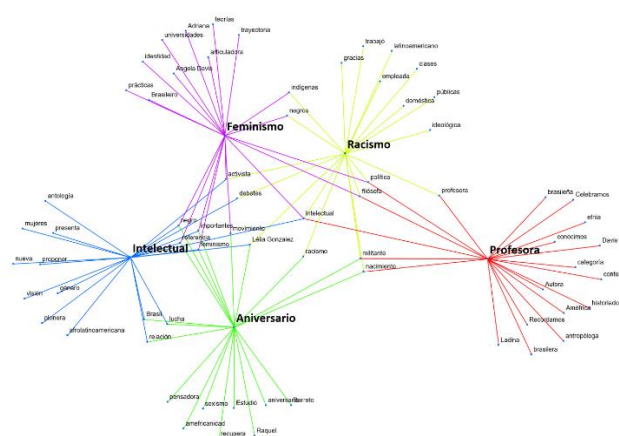


Figure 1. Topic modeling of tweets about Lélia González in Spanish. Source: the authors and Wolfram Mathematica.

⁴⁴ In Portuguese: “É inaceitável q pessoas despreparadas agriam instituições como a Fundação Palmares, q ajudei na criação, deviam se orgulhar. Fora, Sérgio Camargo! E leve junto seu ódio, despreparo e desrespeito. Viva Zumbi, Lélia González, Abdias Nascimento e tantos outros. #VidasNegrasimportam.” In: <https://twitter.com/dasilvabenedita/status/1268176408217518082>.

negro” [transnational black feminist solidarity].⁴⁵ The topic Publishers brings a series of criticisms about the lack of publication by Brazilian publishers of black female authors from Brazil such as Gonzalez and Beatriz Nascimento, highlighting the lack of editorial attention they have historically received. Closely related to these posts, the topic Ethics includes tweets that narrate Angela Davis’s visit to Brazil on the occasion of her publication in Portuguese, quoting her words: “Why do you need to look for a reference in the United States? I learn more from Lélia Gonzalez than you do from me.”⁴⁶ Angela Davis’s quote produces an act of subversion of geopolitical hierarchies by citing Gonzalez, a peripheral intellectual, as a source of knowledge and learning for a US intellectual. The topic Birthday brings together posts that celebrate Gonzalez’s birthday and make her work visible to the English-speaking public, as well as her antiracist activism and work as a teacher, theorist, and anthropologist, with several quotes from her work translated into English. In turn, the topic Latinity gathers a series of posts that question the use of the term Latinity and mobilize the concept of Amefricanity coined by Gonzalez.

Conclusion

We present the experience of building a research corpus around Lélia Gonzalez and Carolina Maria de Jesus, which we consider illustrative of the meanings, the clashes and the voices that emerge around their figures, based on their circulation on digital platforms in several languages. In the case of Carolina Maria de Jesus in Portuguese, we see that her work and trajectory offer a vocabulary for understanding the history of Brazil, the persistence of social and racial inequalities, but in which there is room to establish links and connections between ancestry and the present, the collective and the subjective. The trajectory and the work of Carolina Maria de Jesus also points to the transformation of academic curricula and the emergence of a new intellectual canon. In Spanish and English, there are movements that promote the reading, re-edition and translation of the author’s works as a reference for black feminist thought in the Americas and Europe.

⁴⁵ <https://twitter.com/citeblackwomen/status/1412388358496661509>.

⁴⁶ https://twitter.com/Jairo_I_Funez/status/1585611654582222851.

Regarding the technodiscourses about Lélia Gonzalez in Portuguese, it becomes possible to discuss the persistence of racism in Brazilian society and to reactivate a library of intellectuals who are central to the social thought of América Latina on race, racism, and antiracism. In English and Spanish, we also see interest in the translation and publication of her work, the citation of her thought, and the author's mobilization towards a decolonial feminist thought, central to formulating critiques of the idea of Latinity.

These critical assessments of discursive representations and practices significantly expand the understanding of the experiences of black people in contemporary society, reaffirming the epistemological power of Amefricanidade in literary discourses by/about black people and their technodiscourses.

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We declare that the two authors contributed fully in all the following aspects: 1. Conception and design and analysis and interpretation of data; 2. Writing of the article and relevant critical review of the intellectual content; 3. Final approval of the version to be published. 4. Responsibility for all aspects of the work in ensuring the accuracy and integrity of any part of the work

Research Data and Other Materials Availability

The contents underlying the research text are included in the manuscript.

Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso* [*Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies*] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review

The article demonstrates alignment with the proposed theme, presenting an explicit and coherent objective that develops throughout the text. The research shows conformity with the proposed theory, integrating up-to-date knowledge and relevant references. In an original way, the reflection offers significant contributions to the field of knowledge on studies of Black Brazilian women theorists/authors, fostering relevant academic discussions on the intersections of race, gender, and class. The language used meets the standards required for scientific work.

I have no suggestions regarding the content, which I consider appropriate. I have only made corrections to specific words, highlighted in “yellow” in the file. APPROVED

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