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ON SURPRISE AND APOCALYPSE IN THE FILM *BACURAU*¹

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the film *Bacurau* released in Brazil, in September of 2019, focusing on its surprising, revelatory and apocalyptic narrative. *Bacurau* has many references of different cinematographic genres, such as western, action, drama, science fiction and horror, and its narrative portrays the Brazilian *sertão* backlands at some point in the future, “a few years from now...”. The film uses elements of magical realism in a plot with a lot of violence and blood, about the struggle and resistance of a small-town community that takes part in an extermination game. There is a lot of surprise and revelation in the events of *Bacurau*’s apocalyptic narrative, which is precisely the object of study for this paper.

KEYWORDS: *Bacurau*; surprise; apocalypse.

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BACURAU 17km.
IF YOU GO THERE, GO IN PEACE

1 INTRODUCTION

Similarly to history and the law, cinema is a narrative craft. Narrative deals with the timing of events, organizing it. It deals with the temporality of the human experience, which takes place somewhere and within a plot. Robert Cover (2004, p. 95; 2016, p. 187) says that “no set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that place them and give them meaning”. François Ost (2004, p. 24) says that “the law comes from the narrative”. Our world is made of narratives intertwined, whose plots are developed by the actions of people in given times and places. In this paper, it is of our interest to analyze cinematographic narrative, or rather, a specific example, the film *Bacurau*, directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles, which says a lot about the Brazilian countryside and its surrounding areas. The movie plot moves from regional to global, rural to urban, past to future, domination to resistance.

The film *Bacurau* was released in September, 2019, in Brazil. Its genre is a mixture of western, scientific fiction, drama, action, and horror. It portrays the Brazilian backland (called *sertão*) sometime in the future (“some years from now”, as it states), and it uses a good deal of magic realism elements to constitute the plot with bloody events, about the fight and resistance of a small town that is chosen for an extermination game.

Bacurau has plenty of references to other movies and directors, as well as other aesthetical forms (music, visual arts, literature)⁴. It shows a

⁴ For example, Glauber Rocha (Cinema Novo movement), Godard (*Week-end or Alphaville*), Tarantino (*Pulp Fiction*), Guimarães Rosa (the novels *Grande sertão: veredas* and *Sagarana*), Euclides da Cunha (the novel *Os sertões*), Caetano Veloso (*Tropicália* movement), Geraldo Vandré (politically engaged songs).

dystopian space-time – even though the revelation and the surprise are brought from a *non-place* and a *time outside time*.

Therefore, our purpose with this paper is to acknowledge the film and its complex plot, emphasizing what it presents of surprising, apocalyptic, and revealing. The events in the narrative are thus studied considering the three different categories mentioned before: surprise, apocalypse, revelation.

2 SURPRISE AND APOCALYPSE

Narrative. It is what links the law to history and the apocalypse, but not only that. The *surprising* narrative trait of each of these events also puts them together. When we refer to something that is surprising, we specifically deal with the concept of apocalypse, which is revealed and surprises the narrative and those who search for meanings in it. This paper (and its narrative) is about the apocalypse and the narrative surprise.

For that, we seek for support in the production of a traditional philosopher, Hegel, and his *Logic*. He states that the purpose of philosophy is to get to know the truth of what happened and to understand the event as such. According to him, more than narrating events, philosophy differentiates mere happenings from pure events⁵. It is not about substituting the narrative of a happening for a kind of ontological meaning, as some may believe, but rather it is about emphasizing the eventual aspect of the event⁶ and conceive the *evenire* of truth beyond its *eventus*⁷.

⁵ In “Of the concept in general”, from the second volume of *Science of Logic* he states: “But philosophy ought not to be a narrative of what happens, but a cognition of what is true in what happens, in order further to comprehend on the basis of this truth what in the narrative appears as a mere happening” (Hegel, 2010, p. 519).

⁶ The emphasis is not on what happens, but on the very fact that it happens; it is about the event and not the simple advent (Nancy, 2000, p. 161).

⁷ While *evenire* is the verb that comes from the inflection of the term *ēveniō* – from the Latin form *ex* (to), together with *venio* (come), which translates the idea of an event –, *eventus* means not only an event but also a result. For Nancy, it is a matter of thinking the event of the truth beyond what is true, the truth beyond the truth itself (Nancy, 2000, p. 161).

In *Logic*, Hegel considers the idea of appearance and from it thinks the happening as such, in its essence (not its substance⁸) and revealing as surprise. The concept – which is precisely what Hegel talks about – is the element through which the appearance reveals itself as a manifestation of essence⁹: it is the phenomenon that becomes truth. Here lies the essential surprise to the concept.

Here, we agree with the interpretation developed by Jean-Luc Nancy (2000, p. 164), when stating that the “correct era for Hegel in philosophy, the modern opening / closing period, consists of this surprise: a secret anxiety about the event”. Therefore, surprise of the event and internal surprise of the Hegelian thought itself (Nancy, 2000, p. 164)¹⁰. What Hegel intends, after all, is to think of essence in a logic of the event instead of a logic that understands essence as a substance. In this logic, the essence is not something given or fixed, but it is in a constant state of agitation – it happens.

Purposely, *Geschehen* is the term Hegel uses when describing the event. It means more than a simple episode (which is precisely what Hegel denies in his *Logic*) or a process, words that have more precise equivalents in German. Here, he refers to the event in its active, verbal meaning, as a sudden precipitation or movement, that is: a surprise.

⁸ In the introduction of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel states that, for him, it all depends on grasping the truth not only as substance (Hegel, 1977, p. 10). The substance problem is part of the criticism of Spinoza’s metaphysics and does not consist of a simple substitution of the substance for the essence, but rather an “overcoming or supersumption (*Aufhebung*), that is, as the negation-conservation-elevation of a concept into its logical successor” (Orsini, 2018, p. 82). Hegel states, in this sense, that the only true refutation of Spinozism is the verification that the relationship of substantiality, considered only in itself, leads to its opposite: the concept (1977, p. 512). The concept is the unity of essence and Being, which are moments of its becoming (Hegel, 2010, p. 508). In *Science of Logic*, he states: “The objective logic, which treats of being and essence, constitutes in truth the genetic exposition of the concept. More precisely, substance already is real essence, or essence in so far as it is united with being and has stepped into actuality. Consequently, the concept has substance for its immediate presupposition; substance is implicitly what the concept is explicitly. The dialectical movement of substance through causality and reciprocal affection is thus the immediate genesis of the concept by virtue of which its becoming is displayed” (Hegel, 2010, p. 509). The substantiality relation itself, therefore, stems from the nature of the essence (Hegel, 2010, p. 511).

⁹ “It is precisely in the concept that the manifold is sublated inasmuch as it pertains to intuition as opposed to the concept, and that through the concept the subject matter is reduced to its non-contingent essentiality; the latter does enter into appearance, and this is why appearance is not something merely essenceless but is the manifestation of essence” (Hegel, 2010, p. 521).

¹⁰ According to Nancy, “thinking the event in its essence as event surprises Hegelian thinking from the inside” (2000, p. 164).

The quality of what is possible in the event arises from surprise. Surprise is more than what happens, insofar as it is the happening as an event, a certain time that is not marked. That is why the happening as such is only being-happening, an event of the Being, which is necessary for the Being to be. Talking about a happening as something that simply is – and not as something that happens – means preventing it from its eventual, surprising aspect.

For Jean-Luc Nancy (2000, p. 167), talking about the surprise of the event is indeed a tautology, since where there is no surprise, there is no event whatsoever. When something expected happens, it is not really an event, *ēveniō*, but a mere advent, a result, *eventus*. Event takes place precisely where the unexpected or surprising of a happening takes place, at the moment of presence / non-presence of the happening present. As it stands out from everything that had happened before, it is not inscribed in time, it is time itself. It is the time of the unexpected arrival¹¹, time itself in its appearance: emptied time, the emptiness of time, empty as time (Nancy, 2000, p. 170).

Event, or surprise, is time in its negativity, as a rupture not of a continuum time, but as time itself, a time that does not admit assumption. This time of the event, empty time, is a rupture from nothing, tension of existence, creation. That is:

“Empty time,” or the articulation of the *nihilquid* as nonsuccessive, as the happening or coming of something in general, is time itself, in that it is not successive, but that which does not succeed and is not permanent substance. One would have to say it in the following way: it is permanence without substance, the present without presence; rather than the coming [*la venue*], it is the unexpected arrival [*sur-venue*] of the thing itself. It is neither (successive) time, nor (distributive) place, nor (extant) thing, but rather the taking place of something— the event. To use a word that is heavy with the weight of an enormous tradition, [...] it is *creation* (Nancy, 2000, p. 168).

¹¹ The unexpected arrival is nothingness that stretches to the point of rupture and departure from arrival, the point at which presence is presented (Nancy, 2000, p. 170). It is worth noting that the event is presence of the present as negativity, because as a result of its event, it is non-present, presence without present. It is still not presentable, as the non-representable of the present that structures the present itself (Nancy, 2000, p. 168 and 173).

The logic (of surprise) in Hegel's *Logic* is at the heart of philosophy: "Since the beginning of philosophy to its end, which reorders its beginning again, this surprise constituted the sum of what was at stake [...]" (Nancy, 2000, p. 166). This is because philosophy is the surprise of thought itself, a surprise that surprises thought (inseparable from the event of thinking) and that must be the object of philosophical knowledge. Surprise, then, as a form and as an end of the philosophical practice.

It should be said that philosophy for Hegel is a System and it is not possible (nor is it our intention) to reduce the narrative of History, of the Law, and of Apocalypse to such a system with its categories, and attempting to do so would lead to failure due to several reasons. However, the dialectic of categories in Hegel's thought (the truth of appearance is the essential relation and appearance must thus be understood as appearing, that is, happening, as what is revealed) shows us that a moment of surprise is there, agitating and moving the logical system.

That is, the surprising of the surprise is what is, perhaps, there, both in the logical system of Hegel, as in literary or cinematographic narrative, and this is what interests us for analyzing hereby.

The surprising trace is also the element of tension; that is, the surprising tone of existence, the tension of the arc of existence¹². It is possible to say that the intertwining between philosophy, history, law, literature or cinema is in itself the tensioned arc.

Readings that insistently attempt to un-tension the philosophical arc may be as uninteresting as they are totalitarian. As for Hegel, in his Logical system, we are tensioned by a non-simplistic and non-totalitarian totality, but a complex and contradictory one, or even (in)tense, surprising, and revealing. But Hegel is just a shortcut towards the revelation, which we intend to talk about, after all.

From Greek, *apokálypsis*, reaching moderns and contemporaries as what leaps and surprises in the event. What time is this revelation time? A time that is neither preceded nor succeeded by anything, since in its origin

¹² In its negativity (in the rupture of nothingness, in time without time), the event tensions the Being, because nothing exists without something and something only exists from its own existence, from becoming present, from its event. Nothing just is, but it happens. Surprise itself is not anything given, but the leap in existence, a leap that surprises itself in the absence of the being-present (Nancy, 2000, p. 171 e 173).

there is no determined time, but its absence. We could say that it is an empty time, a time without time, the time of urgency, of the event. That time, or the event, is what is happening while/as such. In other words, the event is time itself as a happening that, in its urgency, is a time without time; apocalypse.

3 BACURAU AND APOCALYPSE

Referring to Hegel, to the concept of surprise, and to the apocalypse were the preparation for our reading of the film *Bacurau*. Released in August 2019, in Brazil, the film was written and directed by Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles won the jury award in Cannes, besides other awards. The title is the name of a nocturnal bird common in Brazilian backlands. Bacurau is also how people call the last night bus in the city of Recife, or it can be used to qualify someone who appears to have stayed awake throughout the night.

The film *Bacurau* received several critiques – mostly positive ones, with a few negative reviews – and it has a plot that intertwines different perceptions and intersection of topics. Only to mention a few, among the topics discussed in the movie are: the concept of non-place, the city is not on maps and is outside any localization, any coordinates of any order; the traditional oligarchic domination in Brazil, especially in the countryside; technological domination, since there are guarding drones ; marginalized resistance (criminals and gays); organized resistance (community); rurality and urbanity unmeasurable, since connected in their disconnection (cellphone networks, vehicles, vaccines, and drugs have different codes).

There are, as previously stated, several references to films and directors, in short, there are several possible readings from *Bacurau's* plot, and all of them are instigating. In addition to the themes already mentioned, we could speak, for example, of dystopia, because that is what the action in *Bacurau* immediately causes, with scenes of a place without possibilities, of a despairing, worn-out Brazil. However, our reading is about revelation or apocalypse.

What does *Bacurau* reveal, then? What is the surprise in its narrative? Since the opening scene, with the coffins lying on the road that

leads to this city where one should go “in peace”, the plot causes discomfort and expectations about what will happen next. The coffins, the city entrance sign, the vigil that gathers its inhabitants, the sciolist mayor, the flying saucer that is not a flying saucer, the costumed bikers: everything gives clues without, however, revealing the happenings – or the events – of the movie.

Bacurau is about surprise (although it is also about permanence). As remnants of a past that refuses to pass, there are the figure of the politician who only updates the instruments of oligarchic domination with his sound car, the neglect of the public power, the prejudice of the Southeast and the South in relation to the Northeast, of Europeans and North Americans in relation to the Brazilians, racism, conservatism, indifference to the Brazilian countryside and the small towns. But even when talking about what is familiar to us, about the portraits already known on the museum wall, *Bacurau*'s narrative does it in a surprising way. Between the permanence and the time full of time – but that does not seem to pass – what leaps is the rupture, the surprise, the apocalypse.

Both at birth and at death, what is surprising is not the event as a natural consequence of the facts, but the rupture with the ongoing process, be it pregnancy or life itself¹³. In *Bacurau*, what is surprising is what is not predictable or presupposed, which does not happen as yet another episode in the flow of events, but, in its happening, breaks with the process, breaks the expectation. In its surprise, it may not surprise (us) that this narrative has so much death and so much life – “would you rather live or die?”, quoting what Damiano says to an injured foreigner woman.

Since the beginning, the movie narrative in *Bacurau* creates an uneasy feeling for the audience. It is not just a thriller, but it is so. Feelings of suspense and suspension are there, but it is not only a resource to raise the tension toward a climax. The plot had already given out aspects of the

¹³ In *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel states that “just as the first breath drawn by a child after its long, quiet nourishment breaks the gradualness of merely quantitative growth – there is a qualitative leap, and the child is born – so likewise the Spirit in its formation matures slowly and quietly into its new shape, dissolving bit by bit the structure of its previous world, whose tottering state is only hinted at by isolated symptoms” (Hegel, 1977, p. 6).

ending, but these aspects are contradictory and confusing for the audience. In the words of the co-writer and co-director Kleber Mendonça Filho: “My films have conflicts that nullify one another. I think it is important to build a sense of confusion in film narrative” (Rodrigues, 2019). It is not about slowing down the narrative flow in order to make the audience wait for an expected finale. *Bacurau* has a lot of thrilling suspense, but it goes beyond that.

Contradiction signs and confusing story hints contribute for the surprising element of the movie. At different times does the suspense fall apart, right after having been built up, it is not restrained to the finale. The road sign that reads “if you go there, go in peace”, the flying saucer in the sky, the motor bikers who seem to be ingenuous tourists: it is all confusing and surprising. Rupture with no assumptions, broken expectations, these elements stir and agitate the plot.

Also, it is surprising how the small town and its dwellers are represented on screen. The very motivation for the movie seems to come from the lack of satisfaction regarding the way these people used to be represented in Brazilian movies. According to Kleber Mendonça Filho (2019a):

We had the idea [of making *Bacurau*] at the Brasília Festival in 2009, with the premiere of *Recife Frio* [a 2009 short film directed by Kleber]. We saw a series of films that started to make us think about some issues related to the way people from distant places are portrayed in Brazilian cinema, including very well-intentioned films. There was also a strong burden of urbanity against people from the countryside, simple people. That was the initial spark for producing *Bacurau*.

In the small town named Bacurau, water is scarce, medicines are expired, and the recurrent idea that countryside people are ignorant and apathic does not make sense. No-one is ignorant or apathic there. The community organizes itself the way it can in order to get whatever they need – medicine, hideout from the mayor, defense against the slaughter... And if the lack of water, the expired medications, the mayor Tony Jr. may represent a poorly developed Brazil, from a past that does not pass, the same cannot be said about the inhabitants of the town. In the small municipality in the countryside of the Pernambuco state, students study

Geography on tablets, everyone has internet connection on their smartphones, the healer is able to tell the difference between a fake flying saucer and a real one, and a child promptly answers to the intruder motor biker that those who are born in Bacurau are people indeed. Especially, nobody buys the idea of a conservative Brazil, hateful of differences: the resistance in Bacurau is led by women, black, LGBT people, as well as marginalized whores and burglars¹⁴.

In Bacurau, the countryside people lead a technological game of life and death, with the constant presence of equally invasive flying objects. On the other hand, it is curious that the technological attacks are accompanied by weapons of an old model and that the resistance is organized around the city museum and the weapons exhibited there. It is even possible to say that in *Bacurau's* narrative, the past and the future¹⁵ are confused – and confusing. But to speak of the past and the future is to speak of a full, successive time. And that is not what we are talking about.

In this different time frame, this timeless time in which the event and the apocalypse take place, it does not matter what came first and second, but the present happening, the surprise of the event. For those who had seen the film (and, from now on, for those who had not too), the seemingly most apocalyptic scene is when one of the native characters, in the game of killing foreigners, is about to be executed, and, suddenly, the perfect opposite happens, in a completely surprising way. The victim-to-be, in the most of vulnerable situations, drugged and naked, surprises everyone with an old-fashioned weapon, a blunderbuss.

¹⁴ Even the negative criticism of Bacurau recognizes this aspect of the film. In the words of Isabela Boscov: “Bacurau is a poor village, but not a backward one. It has a competent doctor (Sonia Braga, who played in *Aquarius* with Mendonça) and numerous cell phones and tablets. There is a museum to be proud of and its mayor is in fact a professor; prostitutes are respected and people of a fluid gender, like Lunga himself, are respected too. When the venal candidate goes there to campaign and donate expired food, everyone closes the doors and leaves him talking to himself. But the Brazilians from the southern regions consider them inferior (“The South is very different – it is rich, we have Italian and German immigration”, says the a young man, who is a member of the Judiciary). And for the foreigners, the town’s residents are barely human beings” (Boscov, 2019).

¹⁵ For Rodrigo Guimarães Nunes, professor of Philosophy at PUC-Rio, *Bacurau* is really about the future: “What the film does is to take a trace of the present and extend it into the future – which is, after all, where it takes place. The result is a very lucid projection of an increasingly possible scenario, in which the borders and their violence proliferate and can appear in (almost) anywhere at any time” (Nunes, 2019). As for Joana Oliveira’s criticism, although it has a story that takes place “in the future”, “a few years from now”, *Bacurau* (the film) resonates, in fact, the old Brazil of 2019” (Oliveira, 2019).

The surprise, lacking any kind of romanticism, pushes further the violent plot of *Bacurau*. If this scene seems to be the most apocalyptic part of the plot (it is when the audience manifests more enthusiastically at the movie theater), for us, the most essentially apocalyptic art is when silence takes place. It is when the town of Bacurau seems to be deserted, an abandoned set of personal and communitarian urgencies, from local and global origins, with the inhabitants camouflaged on the ground, like the nocturnal bird whose name is on the title¹⁶. This is when the most real and angry, silent and urgent, resistant and vindictive aspect of the film manifests and is completely surprising. Thus, apocalyptic.

3 BACKLANDS, RESISTANCE AND THE POST-APOCALYPTICAL

Kleber Mendonça Filho and Juliano Dornelles (2019), as well as the Brazilian writer Guimarães Rosa (1980), write about the backlands, or *sertão*, where they were born, in northeastern Brazil. *Bacurau* was shot in the border area between the states of Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba. According to actress Bárbara Colen (Mendonça Filho *et al.*, 2019b), who plays the character Teresa, “this possibility of being inside the backland area, which is a physical place that changes you deeply, the weather, the silences and stuff, and being surrounded by the people from that place”. Guimarães Rosa, through his character Riobaldo, says something similar: “The backlands are good. Everything here is lost, and everything here is found... All that was is the beginning of what is to come, we see ourselves on the edge all the time” (1980, p. 237, translated). So, the *sertão* backlands, as an edge, a crossroads, can also be seen as a non-place. An origin as a non-place, and its time as a timeless time. A worn-out fabric that keeps everything tight by letting all loose: blood, powder, friendship, love, water, dead plants, God, the Devil, men who are women.

It is at a non-place and a timeless time that an event takes place, within the space that opens up for time, the breach of nothingness, creation. Therein lies the surprise: the non-presence of the being presence, the tension of existence that constitutes the event as negativity.

¹⁶ The bird called Bacurau is commonly found on the ground, where it is camouflaged under leaves.

In *Bacurau*, it is also at the non-place and the timeless time that resistance occurs. It is an uncharted city, emptied, abandoned, silent, which resists. It is a drugged, naked man, the man who is a woman, the burglar who had abandoned crime, people who are not even there (because *there* does not really exist). The counter-attack can be seen where one less expects it to be, which surprises the narrative and the invaders from abroad.

This disagreement between the Being and existence, the placing of what is not there, is what constitutes the event and its absolute surprise. The reaction of Bacurau, from a non-existing place and people who are not there, in a time emptied of time, is, thus, its leap into existence and the most surprising and apocalyptic trace of the film's plot. According to Nancy:

The tension or extension of the leap, that is, the spacing of time, the discord of Being as its truth: this is the surprise. The *Spanne*¹⁷ is not surprising in that it comes to trouble or destabilize a subject that was there, but in its taking someone there where he is not, or insofar as it overtakes him, seizes him, paralyzes him insofar as he is not there. This "not being there" is exactly the most appropriate mode of "being there," since it is a matter of "leaping into Being," or a matter of existing. "Not to be there" is not to be already there, but to be the there itself (which is the principal existential condition of *Dasein*).

The "there" is the spacing of the tension, of the extension. It is space-time; it is not space, not time, not a coupling of the two, not a source-point outside the two, but the ordinary division [coupe] and chiasm that opens them up to one another. The surprise is the leap into the space-time of nothing, which does not come "before" or from "elsewhere"; as such, it is the leap into the space-time of space-time "itself." It is the taking place of place, of the there that is not a place "for" Being, but Being as place, being-the-there. It is not present Being, but the present of Being insofar as it happens, and therefore insofar as it is not (2000, p. 173).

As in the novel *Grande Sertão*, it is through urgency that the apocalypse can be seen, in the rough, silent scene, in the image of that silent city that screams with such merciless silence, and cruelly, aggressively, resists. This is the extremely tensioned arc of the film – and

¹⁷ *Spanne* is the word used by Heidegger to refer to the spacing of present that takes place and allows the appearance of existence, this spacing that constitutes an openness to time.

it is when the negativity of the event shows itself as an affirmation of the tension of existence. Here Brazil reveals itself, shows its “hard neck” as Riobaldo says, when everything suggests the opposite: the expired vaccine, the closed water dam, the image of the coffin that is filled with water, the dead biker fallen on the precarious asphalt, the load of mortuary coffins scattered on the floor, the municipal school in ruins, the water truck pierced by bullets, the dishonest local politician... There is a moment of resistance, essential and violent, portrayed in the film.

As in the event (and in the surprise), resistance mixes negativity and creation: it is the defense against a strike, the opposition to a state of affairs, and it is also a creative power that is not attached to reality (or to the Being). The situation that the residents of Bacurau are subjected to is unsustainable, unbearable: excluded from the map, erased from existence, marked to die. It is in the urgency of these circumstances that Bacurau’s reaction is organized, creating what is most surprising and apocalyptic in the film. Against all odds, against every expectation, the small-town community articulates and finds in creativity its instruments of resistance.

The killers from abroad would never think of an organized resistance blooming in the town, as they thought themselves superior with their weapons and technology, as well as their human breed (the killable lives are Latin, non-white, “low-bred”, and not even the southern people who saw themselves as white people escaped such logic). The silent, emptied city seems to them a signal of weakness and vulnerability of their targets, and it actually reveals the creative potency of the people from Bacurau, as well as their strong communitarian strength. Inside the museum the intruder motor bikers had mocked, the counter-attack begins, with weapons they took from the exposition walls, using the memory of previous rebels.

The time of the event and the apocalypse is the time of the unexpected coming, and Bacurau has several of them. The narrative begins with an arrival: the desired coming of someone who had not been there for a long time, along with the water truck and medicine within the expiration date; and then the drunk doctor’s arrival at the funeral, causing an uproar. There are also the unwanted and noisy arrivals of

mayor Tony Jr., which every time trigger the alert for the population of the city to hide. In addition to these, the arrival of the drone, the bikers and the foreigners, threatening the community; the coming of Acácio to the refuge of Lunga warning about the attack, and the arrival of Lunga in Bacurau as the articulator of the resistance. To a larger or smaller extent, all these comings create surprise (even the mayor's arrivals were never expected).

The most surprising coming, however, is not exactly an arrival. If in the examples mentioned above one always arrives from somewhere, the arrival to which we refer does not come from anywhere. It is from the non-place and the empty time that Bacurau's resistance happens, and it is only by happening that Bacurau is. This unexpected and silent arrival of its inhabitants, who are and are not there (in this time of presence and non-presence, which is the time of the event and the revelation), surprises existence, and surprises the foreigners. The apocalypse, the revelation, is also about the unexpected coming and, in the case of the film, it is this arrival / non-arrival that symbolizes Bacurau's resistance

The post-apocalyptic can be the severed heads, the blood-spilling extravaganza, the punishments inflicted onto the villains, the lysergic trip, the peripheral that becomes central, the minorities that take the lead in the plot. As in *Grande Sertão*, the characters of *Bacurau* bring in their bodies, in the color of their skin, in their sexuality, in their passion, the struggle, the resistance, and a certain idea of community. As Professor Ivana Bentes of UFRJ says, in *Bacurau* “the most important thing is the community and the common. The leaderships are multiple, decentralized: the transgender fighter, doctor Domingas, the teacher, the spiritual leaders. Many heads and one body” (2019, translated).

The post-apocalyptic is Brazil revealed in its essence¹⁸, that which Riobaldo had already narrated in *Grande Sertão*. Men who are not men, women who are not women, “Ah, I think I really didn't want anything, so much that I just wanted everything. One thing, this thing: All I ever wanted was – to be!” (Rosa, 1980, p. 318, translated).

¹⁸ Essence as Hegel means it, that is, not "what is", but "what happens". Essence, thus, as a manifestation, as the event of appearing that produces difference in relation to that essence.

4 FINAL THOUGHTS

Carimbanda, the night bird
Was sadly singing on the taboa tree
I'll go tomorrow, I'll go tomorrow
(Luiz Gonzaga)¹⁹

The song by Luiz Gonzaga is about a girl (a damsel named Rosabela) who hears the Bacurau singing at night (the bird is also known as carimbanda²⁰) near a hunted lake. She goes into the lake and never returns. The Bacurau keeps singing: I'll go tomorrow, I'll go tomorrow. The song narrative, as in the movie named after the same nocturnal bird, is somewhat apocalyptic, has some surprise and some revelation.

The post-apocalyptic time, that moment when time takes its course and returns to being full of time (and also the moment when the lights of the cinema turn on and we return to follow the course of time in our own lives), leave us a lot to think about. After the surprise, we are left with the task of understanding the truth of the happening (or the event) and what was revealed. Narrative – as the one that unites law, history, literature and cinema (and music) – reveals something – sometimes a lot.

For the law, Bacurau's cinematic and apocalyptic narrative reveals something quite uncomfortable, as if from its inside one could see its meanings²¹. As in other films of the same genre²², in *Bacurau* the government institutions (represented in the movie mainly by mayor Tony Jr.) collaborate to the extermination of the poor, countryside population. The strength of the State in Bacurau is pure violence, to which the community resists and reacts. Its residents, some of them fugitives from the police, mobilize weapons (machetes and old firearms), outside the law, which presents itself as another element of threat. Resistance which, in

¹⁹ Translated from the original: “A carimbanda, ave da noite / Cantava triste lá na taboa / Amanhã eu vou, amanhã eu vou”.

²⁰ *Curiango*, *amanhã-eu-vou*, *ju-jau*, *mede-léguas* and *acuranã* are other names given to the bird.

²¹ David Ritchie analyzes law and justice in American western movies, and states that “by exploring narratives in popular media such as movies and television about law (and the rhetorical practices of those who make these films and shows) we can understand more about the institution of law as a social and cultural phenomenon” (2009, p. 851).

²² The film is often referred to as an example of “Brazilian western”.

turn, is also violent. Perhaps this is the biggest annoyance of *Bacurau* for all those who, like us, have drawn resistance scenarios less *Bacamarte*-like, less apocalyptic, over the last twenty-eight years plus three (of constitutional democracy in Brazil).

Bacurau starts with the song by Caetano Veloso *Unidentified*, in the voice of Gal Costa, a simple, Brazilian song, a romantic yeah-yeah-yeah, a sentimental anti-computer, to record on a flying saucer, as an unidentified object, alone, in love, under the sky of a country town, and it ends with the song by Geraldo Vandré, *Réquiem para Matraga*²³: I came here just to say / No one will shut me up / If someone has to die / May it be for the better / So much life to live / So much life to end / With so much to do / With so much to save / You who did not understand me / You've got it coming²⁴.

It may seem strange to have started this text with Hegel, but there is an irony in the fact that in *Bacurau* the post-apocalypse is the burial of the foreigner, of the German (the character Michael, played by Udo Kier). On the land of *Bacurau*, this system (foreign, Hegelian) may reveal something to us.

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²³ The title of the song refers to the nickname of the character Nhô Augusto, in the short story “*A hora e vez de Augusto Matraga*” from the book *Sagarana*, by Guimarães Rosa. The character represents the figure of the typical colonel and the nickname is the result of the combination of the words *bad* (*má*) and *bring* or *inhale* (*traga*).

²⁴ Translated from the original: “Vim aqui só pra dizer / Ninguém há de me calar / Se alguém tem que morrer / Que seja pra melhorar / Tanta vida pra viver / Tanta vida a se acabar / Com tanto pra se fazer / Com tanto pra se salvar / Você que não me entendeu / Não perde por esperar”.

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