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Summary

“Argentinians descend from ships”, but... from which ones? Notes on the (in)-visibilisation of River Plate negritude in the contemporary artistic practices

If epistemic or knowledge colonization is the most difficult to displace from our subjectivities, one can understand that in Latin America –one of those “others close to the West”– a western thinking system still dominates, as being residual from the past colonization. This thinking, heir to European modernist reductionism, entails in itself a fundamental basis: *racism* –as the poet and politician Aimé Césaire stated in his *Discourse on Negritude* (1987) and other theoreticians picked up later on. If dominant Eurocentrality begins with modernity – in the midst of Latin America colonisation– and then continues with its humanist school, the persistence of its influence as the prevailing system of thinking should not be surprising, notwithstanding the practical and intellectual efforts made to counteract it for decades.

In the young Argentine Republic of the nineteenth century there was a clear political will to spread the idea of whitening and Europeanization. In fact, social imaginary had been formed, according to which there were no more “black” Argentinians, and this had only been an (extinguished) episode of the Spanish colony. From the hegemonic discourse of power, from education and intellectuality in general, black and autochthonous roots (of native peoples) were denied, with the exception of few patriotic folklorisms. Thus, the collective imaginary would say that the supposed “national identity” was composed of a “melting pot of races”, coming mostly from the great European migration. Realizing this, a Mexican writer ironically stated that “while Mexicans descend from the Aztecs, Argentinians descend from ships”, echoing a common phrase that expresses an ingrained mythology, especially in Buenos Aires. Jorge Luis Borges would add to this that “Argentines are foreign-born Europeans”, shielding the myth against the idea that slave ships from Africa would also land in the port of Buenos Aires