

**A Bluesman's Beards: A Sign of Black Resistance in Bahian Rap / As barbas de um Bluesman: um signo de resistência negra no rap baiano**

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**ABSTRACT**

Beards are an indication that man has reached maturity. It is with this idea in mind that the songs from the second album by artist Baco Exu do Blues, *Bluesman*, are analyzed. At the early age of 22, in his act of creation, Baco criticized the conditions of socioeconomic inequality and racism imposed on people of African descent, acting as an ideological sign in the construction of a Black Consciousness. As a symbol of insurgency, Baco also used mythical language to compose an identity and format his rap, creating a hero. Hip hop criticizes racial capitalism, established in Brazil with the colonization and the arrival of enslaved Africans. The compositions are analyzed as cries of resistance to necropolitics – a call to perform acts that relate ethical values and poetry when doing politics.

**KEYWORDS:** Act of creation; Baco Exu do Blues; Necropolitics; Ideological sign

**RESUMO**

*As barbas são um indício de que o homem alcançou a maturidade. Com essa imagem, são analisadas as canções do segundo álbum do artista Baco Exu do Blues, Bluesman. Com apenas 22 anos de idade, em seu ato de criação, Baco criticou as condições de desigualdade socioeconômica e o racismo impostos ao afrodescendente, atuando como um signo ideológico na construção de uma consciência negra. Como um símbolo de insurgência, Baco também se utilizou de linguagem mítica para compor uma identidade e formatar o seu rap, criando um herói. O hip hop critica o capitalismo racial, instaurado no Brasil com a colonização e o sequestro de africanos escravizados. As composições são apreendidas como gritos de resistência à necropolítica - um chamado para a execução de atos que relacionam valores éticos e poesia ao fazer político.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ato de criação; Baco Exu do Blues; Necropolítica; Signo ideológico

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## Introduction

Born in the city of Salvador, in 1996, and a phenomenon at the age of 20, producer, rapper and composer Diogo Álvaro Ferreira Moncorvo, known as Baco Exu do Blues, produces in his music an aesthetic language that streamlines the negotiation of marginal agencies, becoming a political actor. Baco only studied until the sixth year of elementary school, because he felt that it was an oppressive and racist system. In the song ‘Suicídio’ [*Suicide*], composed in 2016 with rapper Diomedes Chinaski and which launched him in the Brazilian music scene, there is the emergence of the inclusion of Northeastern rap in the national scene, dominated by rappers from the Southeastern region of the country.

Coming from hip hop, a postmodern and urban cultural movement that aims to dissolve oppressive systems, mainly the capitalist and racist one, rap configures the musical language chosen by Baco Exu do Blues that we highlight as an *act of aesthetic creation by cultural resistance and identity affirmation*, based on a reality that exposes him to the very ailments that inspire his writing. Making himself a myth, the rapper-bluesman is a representation of Black empowerment in the Brazilian music industry.

Baco Exu do Blues has proved to be a versatile and multifaceted artist, as his stage name indicates, alluding to the Greek god Bacchus, to Orixá Exu, of African origin, represented in Afro-Brazilian cults, and to the African-American blues rhythm. The rapper uses sample - electronic technique that uses excerpts from other songs - and male and female vocals. In addition to hip hop and blues, the rapper also takes references from musicality from Bahia and Rio de Janeiro, as well as to classical and Latin music, besides rhythm and blues or soul and Candomblé percussion. A self-taught composer, Baco Exu do Blues is a demonstration of cultural resistance and Black identity affirmation in Bahian music, which has solidified this narrative throughout a long process, since in 1974, with the debut of the afro block *Ilê Ayê*, in the city of Salvador. Baco operates with traditions in the choice of his artistic repertoire.

In this study, we propose to have a look at a product of Afro-Brazilian popular culture by analyzing the discursive practices of emancipation inscribed in the diaspora. A dialogue is articulated between several studies related to the dynamics between culture, language and the ideological sign, seeking to produce knowledge by means of a notion about the interface between politics, rhythm and Black poetry by Baco Exu do Blues. The

artist's work is analyzed as a cultural product that uses, to a great extent, texts that argue about a reality that needs a revolution. Baco's work inscribes an ideology of emancipation and appreciation of the potential of Afro-descendants looking at the construction of an inclusive and anti-racist counterculture and seeking to interfere in the arrangement of the necropolitics so evident in our society.

## 1 The Context of the Aesthetic Repertoire and Politics in Art

Honored at several music awards, and by conveying messages both from the experience of a political minority inserted in the periphery and from his own *locus* as a Black Brazilian Northeasterner, Baco Exu do Blues evokes the overcoming of social stigmas. He was nominated for the 2017 *Troféu da Associação Paulista de Críticos de Arte* [Paulista Association of Art Critics Trophée], APCA Trophée 2017, in three categories – new artist of the year, song of the year and album of the year –, with the romantic and erotic hit ‘*Te amo desgraça*’ [‘I love you disgrace’]. He became also Best Rap Music laureate by the Genius website, through the *Prêmio Genius Brasil de Música 2017* [Genius Brasil Music Awards 2017], and *Música do Ano* [Song of the Year] by the *Prêmio Multishow the Música Brasileira* [Multishow Brazilian Music Awards], the same occasion when Baco was awarded as the *Artista Revelação do Ano* [Best New Artist of the Year]. His first solo work, *Esú*,<sup>1</sup> was voted as the fifth best Brazilian album of the year 2017 by *Rolling Stone Brasil* magazine.

In *Bluesman*, album released in 2018, there are claims that samba, funk and rap are equivalent to blues, relating these four musical genres to the empowerment and visibility of people of African descent, also deeply linked to speeches of political order and cultural belonging. The short video entitled *Bluesman*, directed by Douglas Ratzlaff Bernardt, which includes three songs from the album, won the Gran Prix at the *Cannes Lion* festival in 2019, surpassing the mega production of Beyoncé and Jay-Z. The same video was awarded in the category Direction of the year, in the Superjúri [*Superjury*] of the *Prêmio Multishow 2019*. That same year, Baco released singles in partnerships, and created the phonographic label 999, which promoted Black artists. In 2020, he interrupted

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<sup>1</sup> In Yoruba: Orixa Exu.

the production of his third album entitled *Bacanal* [Bacchanal], due to the Covid-19 pandemics, and released a nine-track EP, '*Não tem bacanal na quarentena*' ['There's no bacchanal in quarantine'].

According to Brandão (1999), Bacchus, in Greek *Bákkhos*, and its derivatives *Bákkhe*, *Bacante* and the verb *bakkheúein*, which means “to be taken by a sacred delusion,” does not have a definite safe etymology, as well as its equivalent Dionysus. God of transformation, wine, orgies and “disruptions,” the persecution, from a political angle, can be explained by the serious and longstanding opposition to the penetration of the cult of this god into the aristocratic *polis* of ancient Greece. Presenting himself as the least political of the Greek gods, in his cult, bathing in the sea or river was a common purification act before orgies, in addition to the existence of a sacrificial victim and homage to the dead. “Unlike Apollo, there there has never a national Dionysus nor a priestly Dionysus. Immortal God, Semele's son might have been more human than Greek men themselves” (BRANDÃO, 1999, p.125).<sup>2</sup>

Orixá of communication, demonized by Western culture, Exu brings along the revelation of the mysteries that lead human beings to the Candomble deities. According to Sàlami (King) and Ribeiro (2015), it is an Orixá of a controversial nature, a neutral entity between good and evil that accomplishes human wills. Its character entails discipline, demanding order and organization. According to Prandi (2001), one of the African myths says that Exu, once, walked through the lands of the Yoruba peoples looking from village to village for the solution to the problems that afflicted men and the Orixás. Exu was advised to listen to all the dramas experienced by human beings, deities, animals and all other beings. All narratives should be taken into consideration, from those that reported glories to those that dealt with misfortunes. The messenger should also be attentive to the reports on the measures taken and on the offerings given to the Orixás when thanking them for fulfilled wishes. According to Prandi (2001), Exu gathered a countless number of stories that concentrated all the necessary knowledge to explain the mysteries about the origin and the government of the world of humans and nature. All this knowledge was given by Exu to the diviner Orunmilá, who passed on the knowledge to his followers - the priests of the Ifá Oracle.

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<sup>2</sup> In Portuguese: “Ao contrário de Apolo, jamais houve um Dioniso nacional e nem tampouco um Dioniso sacerdotal. Deus imortal, talvez o filho de Sêmele tenha sido mais humano que o próprio homem grego.”

Baco Exu do Blues imprints, with the insignia, the power evoked by two deities considered “pagans” who represent chaos in Western society. Blues is no exception. In his lyrics, the rapper usually addresses his non-conformity with dominant dogmas, as in the song ‘*Kanye West<sup>3</sup> da Bahia*’ [‘Kanye West from Bahia’], in which he states: “Jesus, I have beaten Jesus/ When I saw him crying, screaming, saying/ That he claimed to be white, to straighten his hair /And put on lenses to look the same/ As the image you created.” (BLUES, 2018a).<sup>4</sup> Also, the choices of the Greek god Bacchus and the Orixá Exu reveal the link of human values to what is revealed as divine, on the part of the artist. According to Aranha and Martins (1993), the personified god is characterized by being able to suffer and act like humans, but acts in different ways. Its multiple names express different aspects of its nature, its power and its efficiency.

According to Abal and Trombetta (2011), in the 1920s something new appeared in the phonographic market – derived from the descendants of Southern United States slaves – which became an important influence for musicians in the next ninety years: the blues. The precarious conditions and the financial and loving difficulties were the favorite inspirations of the composers, who wrote about devil, sex, loving betrayals, the situation of poverty and social helplessness. According to scholars, the blues were characterized as music that came from Blacks, the poor and the marginalized. The white elite, who saw Blacks as inferior, soulless and dehumanized, found themselves facing lyrics that exposed the daily lives of poverty, pain and hurt feelings, made by Blacks and for Blacks, with no intention of pleasing their former “masters.” Abal and Trombetta (2011) highlight that the blues represented a rupture within a religious, racist and oligarchic society like the one in place at the time, not being subject to the imposed restrictions, and bringing about a divide in the existing order.

For Postali (2010), like the blues, hip hop,<sup>5</sup> which emerged between the 1960s and 1970s in the Bronx, New York, is the result of the process of cultural hybridization in which various peoples in contact created new cultural practices. Mingling with the American cultural elements, Jamaican music has become what is now known as rap:

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<sup>3</sup> Refers to the American rapper Kanye West.

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: “Jesus, eu espanquei Jesus/ Quando vi ele chorando, gritando, falando/ Que queria ser branco, alisar o cabelo/ E botar uma lente pra ficar igual/ A imagem que vocês criaram.”

<sup>5</sup> Postali (2010) lists that the main elements that make up hip hop are: DJ, graffiti, rap and break. Dance is not restricted to break, but includes other modalities. The element that sustains all the others is knowledge. According to the scholar, hip hop makes use of several elements that combine in order to disseminate ideas.

rythm and poetry. It is characterized by poetic improvisation on a fast musical beat made by digital sounds, with oral expression as the most important element of music.

Postali (2010) clarifies that the cultural practices of blues and hip hop are part of a history marked by the battle of Afro-descendants against their social situation in the diaspora. The insistence on finding a credible place where segregation has affirmed its presence is part of the struggle of Blacks to achieve recognition as a group belonging to countries that had previously exploited them in slavery. According to the scholar, as a way of easing the feeling generated by the problems endured since the arrival in the American continent, an attempt was made to restore the African cultural structure, having music as a pillar of cultural manifestations. This is because, through memory, culture was the only possible sample to be transported during the slavery period. However, in American lands, any original African behavior was prohibited. Postali (2010) explains that, in this way, hip hop started to be considered the precursor of marginal resistance in the second half of the 20th century, initiated by the blues at the end of the 19th century. Like the blues, hip hop seeks to demonstrate resistance to the social system that kept Afro-descendant groups in secondary conditions.

In an interview with singer and songwriter Caetano Veloso, Baco Exu do Blues (2019a) states that he has the proposal of not bowing to the music industry that reproduces standardized and repetitive models. Baco says he understands that his success is due, in part, to welcoming a white and elite audience, but that he will not change his art to please this niche, as he will continue composing so that people who do not go through the experience of being a people of African descent can know and understand this context. According to Blues (2019a), the issue of racism is experienced by himself fully, every day, despite having already achieved fame. In Brazil, this issue is usually camouflaged. The artist claims that the daily lives of women and men of African descent prove that there is still a lot of prejudice, making it virtually impossible to choose another Black president, as with the case of Barack Obama in the United States.

Gilroy (1993),<sup>6</sup> on analyzing the music of Black Atlantic corresponding to a diasporic culture includes hip hop. The historian describes Black Music as an insurgent narrative that discursively articulates a counterculture from the diaspora. It is both the production and the expression of that “transvaluation of all values” precipitated by the

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<sup>6</sup> GILROY, P. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London; New York: Verso, 1993.

history of racial terror in the Americas. Gilroy considers that the movement's critical acuity includes, but also surpasses, anti-capitalism, in fact subduing racial capitalism. Hip hop articulates what might be called the *politics of fulfilment* around demands for goals such as non-racialized justice and the rational organization of production processes. The historian describes another kind of politics that is not coextensive, since it operates in a different field relating other values. According to Gilroy (1993),<sup>7</sup> the question of how utopias are conceived is more complex, mainly because they continually insist on escaping the reach of the merely linguistic, textual and discursive. Still:

The invocation of utopia references what, following Seyla Benhabib's suggestive lead, I propose to call the *politics of transfiguration*. This emphasises the emergence of qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association within the racial community of interpretation and resistance link between that group and its erstwhile oppressors. It points specifically to the formation of a community of needs and solidarity which is magically made audible in the music itself and palpable in the social relations of its cultural utility and reproduction. [...] The wilfully damaged signs which betray the resolutely utopian politics of transfiguration therefore partially transcend modernity, constructing both an imaginary anti-modern past and a postmodern yet-to-come. This is not a counter-discourse but a counterculture that defiantly reconstructs its own critical, intellectual, and moral genealogy in a partially hidden public sphere of its own. The politics of transfiguration therefore reveals the hidden internal fissures in the concept of modernity (GILROY, 1993, pp.37-38; emphasis added).<sup>8</sup>

Gilroy (1993)<sup>9</sup> thus claims that the politics of fulfilment includes the notion that a future society will be able to fulfill the social and political promises that the present society has left unfulfilled, “the politics of fulfilment is mostly content to play occidental rationality at its own game. It necessitates a hermeneutic orientation that can assimilate the semiotic, verbal, and textual” (GILROY, 1993, p.38).<sup>10</sup> In turn, the politics of transfiguration seeks the sublime, striving for a utopian need to repeat the unrepeatable and present the unrepresentable. It has as hermeneutic focus advancements towards the mimetic, the dramatic and the performative. Basically, it is desired to conjure up and institute new modes of friendship, happiness and solidarity resulting from the overcoming

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<sup>7</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>8</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>9</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>10</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

of racial oppression on which modernity was based and its antinomy of rational, western progress, as excessive barbarity. Gilroy (1993)<sup>11</sup> points out that, through their aesthetic expressions, particularly music, Blacks have related ethical values to political making, an elementary historical acquisition in the processes of emancipation by cultural and political representation. It is in this perspective that Baco Exu do Blues can be an emblematic manifestation.

Although they are not coextensive, both forms of action described reinstate their agents from the point of negation of subordination that has been attributed to them since European colonization, the dehumanization of individuals and their exclusion from political experience and free cultural expression. According to Gilroy (1993),<sup>12</sup> the expressive cultures developed in slavery continue to preserve, in their artistic form, the needs and desires that go beyond the satisfaction of material demands. In opposition to what was supposed by Enlightenment, that of a fundamental separation between art and life, these expressive forms reiterate the continuity between both, celebrating aesthetic grounding on other dimensions of social life.

The dehumanization of African peoples, which began with the European colonization from the 16th century onwards, culminated in a great massacre and in the prototype of racial capitalism. Rebellious slaves were killed; transatlantic transportation and housing conditions were unsanitary; bastard children were murdered as babies; women were raped and suffered mutilations caused by their jealous ladies, etc. These are necropower practices. In fact, Mbembe (2003)<sup>13</sup> defines necropolitics as a terrorist action, designed according to military technology which takes individuals as animals to be dominated for that reason their massacre is not considered a crime. It is a European control technique aimed at sovereignty, developed during colonization, and brought to its last consequences with Nazism and Stalinism. It is a modern state policy that has the depersonalization of subjugates and their death as a means to the maintenance of power. A fiction is created about the existence of an absolute enemy, which is useful to justify combat. The political thinker exemplifies the establishment of necropower with the Apartheid in South Africa, which denied citizenship to the locals, in their own territory.

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<sup>11</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>12</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

<sup>13</sup> MBEMBE, A. *Necropolitics*. Translated by Libby Meintjes. In: *Public Culture*, vol. 15, n.1, winter 2003, pp.1-40.



Mbembe (2003)<sup>14</sup> also mentions that a decorrence of necropower is a form of violence that constitutes the original roots of law. The state of exception provides the structure of sovereignty and the application of various technologies that instate physical and geographical control. In this context, there is the production of a wide reserve of cultural imagery that justify the institution of different rights for different categories of people, relating the dominated ones to disposable objects. Daily life is militarized. According to the theoretician, necropower is associated with the market economy, functioning as a company in states where urban militias, private armies, armies of regional lords, private security and armies of state proclaim the right to exercise violence or killing. For the oppressed, who experience an entanglement of boundaries that blur resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and the attainment of freedom, self-immolation is a forced choice, and killing can become the only way of survival.

In the *Atlas da Violência 2020 [Atlas of Violence 2020]* (2020), the deepening of the process of racial inequality was found in the indicators of lethal violence in Brazil. According to the survey, the Northeast region has the highest homicide rates for Afro-Brazilians. In 2018, Blacks represented 75.7% of homicide victims in Brazil, with a homicide rate of 37.8% per 100,000 inhabitants. Young Blacks figure as the main homicide victims in the country. Likewise, Black women represented 68% of the total number of murdered women. In 2018, the homicide rate of Blacks per 100 thousand inhabitants in Bahia was 50.8%. The study concluded that this group is vulnerable to violent death and the situation, of course, demands public security policies and actions to guarantee their rights.

Brazilian society, according to Chauí (2011), is “violent and authoritarian.” Still:

Police action can sometimes be considered violent, being called ‘slaughter’ or ‘massacre’ when, at once and for no reason, the number of murdered people is very high. The rest of the time, however, police murder is considered normal and natural, as it is about protecting ‘us’ against ‘them’ (CHAUI, 2011, p.348).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For reference, see footnote 13.

<sup>15</sup> In Portuguese: “A ação policial pode ser, às vezes, considerada violenta, recebendo o nome de ‘chacina’ ou ‘massacre’ quando, de uma só vez e sem motivo, o número de assassinados é muito elevado. No restante das vezes, porém, o assassinato policial é considerado normal e natural, uma vez que se trata de proteger o ‘nós’ contra o ‘eles’.”

Blacks, necessary subjects to police violence, are not recognized as alterity in their autonomy and discretion. Thus, rap is inscribed in the sociocultural plot as an articulator of an emancipation movement around a dominated collective memory. For Chauí (2011), violence is opposed to ethics because it denaturalizes rational and sensitive beings, endowed with language and freedom. To treat individuals as if they lack reasoning, will, freedom and responsibility is to treat them as a thing, not as human beings. According to the philosopher, the resemblances of a primitive Western Society that was rooted in slave colonialism transform differences and asymmetries present in the Brazilian culture into inequalities that reinforce a command-obedience relationship.

In a similar perspective, Nascimento (1978) warns that “racial democracy” corresponds to a metaphor to designate Brazilian racism. It is not a type of exclusion as obvious as racism in the United States or legalized as Apartheid in South Africa, although it varies merely in terms of degree and appearance of the symptom. According to the activist, racial discrimination in Brazil comprises an institution at official levels of government being diffused in the social, psychological, economic, political and cultural fabric of society:

From the gross classification of Blacks as savages and inferiors, to extolling the virtues of blood mixing as an attempt to eradicate the ‘black spot’; the operability of religious ‘syncretism’; [...] Brazil’s unofficial history records the long-standing genocide that has been perpetrated against Afro-Brazilians. [...] The word – password to enter this imperialism of whiteness and capitalism inherent to it – responds to bastard nicknames like assimilation, acculturation, miscegenation; but we know that under the theoretical surface the belief in the inferiority of the African and his descendants remains untouched. In addition to the organs of power - the government, the laws, capital, the armed forces, the police - the white ruling classes have powerful implements of social and cultural control at their disposal: the educational system, the various forms of mass communication - the press, radio, television - literary production; all of these instruments are at the service of the interests of the ruling classes and are used to destroy the Black as a person, and as the creator and conductor of his own culture (NASCIMENTO, 1978, pp.93-94).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In Portuguese: “Da classificação grosseira dos negros como selvagens e inferiores, ao enaltecimento das virtudes da mistura de sangue como tentativa de erradicação da ‘mancha negra’; da operatividade do ‘sincretismo’ religioso; [...] a história não oficial do Brasil registra o longo e antigo genocídio que se vem perpetrando contra o afro-brasileiro. [...] A palavra - senha desse imperialismo da branquidão, e do capitalismo que lhe é inerente, responde a apelidos bastardos como assimilação, aculturação, miscigenação; mas sabemos que embaixo da superfície teórica permanece intocada a crença na inferioridade do africano e seus descendentes. Em adição aos órgãos do poder - o governo, as leis, o capital, as forças armadas, a polícia -

In this sense, Nascimento (1978) draws attention to the fact that cultural whitening corresponds to another strategy of genocide against Black people in Brazil, as part of a process that is masked. In view of the need for this discussion in the scope of the production of the imaginary and the analysis of Brazilian culture, “no academicist rhetoric can erase the fact that Afro-Brazilians are exterminated in the diffuse, disguised, subtle and paternalistic meshes of the most cruel genocide of our times.” (NASCIMENTO, 1978, p.96).<sup>17</sup> Baco Exu do Blues experiences, writes and sings resistance to this violent configuration.

## **2 The Incarnation of a Heroic Sign in the Act of Creation and The Cry of Resistance**

An ideological product is part of social reality, as well as a physical body (VOLOŠINOV, 1973).<sup>18</sup> It is, in a way, a production instrument or a consumer product, but, unlike these, the ideological product also reflects and refracts another reality, which is external to it. According to the philosopher: “Everything ideological possesses *meaning*: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself. In other words, it is a *sign*. *Without signs, there is no ideology.*” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.9; emphasis by author).<sup>19</sup> Each ideological sign is not only a reflection, a shadow of reality, but also a material fragment of that reality, so that every phenomenon that functions as an ideological sign has a material incarnation, whether as sound, physical mass, color, body movement etc. Each sign is opposed to another sign, and consciousness itself can only arise and assert itself as reality through the material incarnation in signs. Vološinov (1973)<sup>20</sup> also defines that understanding a sign consists of bringing the apprehended sign

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as classes dominantes brancas têm à sua disposição poderosos implementos de controle social e cultural: o sistema educativo, as várias formas de comunicação de massas - a imprensa, o rádio, a televisão - a produção literária; todos esses instrumentos estão a serviço dos interesses das classes no poder e são usados para destruir o negro como pessoa, e como criador e condutor de uma cultura própria.”

<sup>17</sup> In Portuguese: “nenhuma retórica acadêmica pode apagar que o afro-brasileiro é liquidado nas malhas difusas, dissimuladas, sutis e paternalistas do genocídio mais cruel dos nossos tempos.”

<sup>18</sup>VOLOŠINOV, V. N. *Marxism and Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik. New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973.

<sup>19</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>20</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

closer to other signs already known, that is, understanding consists of a response to a sign through signs.

For Vološinov (1973),<sup>21</sup> therefore, the true place of ideological creation is the particular social material of signs created by humanity. Its specificity lies in the fact that the ideological is found among organized individuals, being the means of their communication. Signs can arise only on *interindividual territory*. It is essential that individuals are socially organized, that they form a group, a social unit, so that the system of signs can be constituted. “Consciousness becomes consciousness only once it has been filled with ideological (semiotic) content, consequently, only in the process of social interaction” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.11).<sup>22</sup> The philosopher explains that the reality of ideological phenomena is the objective reality of social signs, and the laws of that reality are the laws of semiotic communication, directly determined by the set of social and economic laws.

Also according to Vološinov (1973),<sup>23</sup> although there are ideological signs that are not replaceable for words, such as, for example, a pictorial representation or a musical composition, each of these signs, at the same time, is supported by words and is accompanied by them, like singing and the musical accompaniment to it. For this philosopher, no cultural sign remains isolated when understood and endowed with meaning, as it becomes part of the *unity of the verbally constituted consciousness*, that is, consciousness has the power to address each sign verbally when it is understood, regardless of its nature. In addition,

*The word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence. The entire reality of the word is wholly absorbed in its function of being a sign. A word contains nothing that is indifferent to this function, nothing that would not have been engendered by it. A word is the purest and most sensitive medium of social intercourse (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, pp.13-14, emphasis by author).*<sup>24</sup>

Highlighting the relationship that exists in the valuation of what is culturally accepted, because it is White, and what is rejected for being Black, in the lyrics of the

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<sup>21</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>22</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>23</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>24</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

song *Bluesman*, the namesake of the second album by Baco Exu do Blues, the following words stand out:

Oh, yeah/ Woo/ Everything, everything/ Everything's gonna be alright this morning [...] I am the first rhythm to form rich Blacks/ The first rhythm that made Blacks free/ Ring on the finger in each of the five/ Wind in my face, I feel alive/ From now on I consider everything blues/ samba is blues, rock is blues, jazz is blues/ funk is blues, soul is blues, I am Exu do Blues/ Everything that was Black was from the devil/ And then it turned White and was accepted, I'll call it blues/ Yeah that, understand/ Jesus is blues/ I said/ I love the sky with the warmest color/ I have the color of my people, the color of my people/ Young Basquiat, my world is different/ I am one of the few who does not hide what you feel/ I cry whenever I remember people/ Tears are just drops, the body is flooding/ Exaggerated, I'm in a hurry for the urgent/ I don't accept your arrest, my madness understands me/ Baby, not every poet is sensitive/ I am the greatest enemy of the impossible/ My passion is captivity, I am captive/ Is the world slow or am I hyperactive, oh? [...] Listen to me who you think is a thief and a prostitute/ Are you going to tell me that it doesn't remind you of Christ? [...] (BLUES, 2018b).<sup>25</sup>

Baco protests against the whitening of Black Culture and its mischaracterization in “White” cultural capital. He defends that the culture produced by Black individuals, in this way, is subjugated. However, through the pride of the roots, it is indeed possible to recover the power anthropologically conceived for each culture. Although whitened, the signs mentioned by the artist and the stereotypes of domination can acquire a new rhetoric at the threshold of the ambiguity of every sign. Vološinov (1973)<sup>26</sup> exposes that in every ideological sign contradictory indices of value are confronted, so that the sign becomes the arena where the class struggle develops. This makes this sign the most plentiful feature of its social plurivalence. According to the philosopher, in fact, the intersection of the

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<sup>25</sup> In Portuguese: “*Oh, yeah/ Woo/ Everything, everything/ Everything's gonna be alright this morning [...] Eu sou o primeiro ritmo a formar pretos ricos/ O primeiro ritmo que tornou pretos livres/ Anel no dedo em cada um dos cinco/ Vento na minha cara, eu me sinto vivo/ A partir de agora considero tudo blues/ O samba é blues, o rock é blues, o jazz é blues/ O funk é blues, o soul é blues, eu sou Exu do Blues/ Tudo que quando era preto era do demônio/ E depois virou branco e foi aceito, eu vou chamar de blues/ É isso, entenda/ Jesus é blues/ Falei mermo/ Eu amo o céu com a cor mais quente/ Eu tenho a cor do meu povo, a cor da minha gente/ Jovem Basquiat<sup>25</sup>, meu mundo é diferente/ Eu sou um dos poucos que não esconde o que sente/ Choro sempre que eu lembro da gente/ Lágrimas são só gotas, o corpo é enchente/ Exagerado, eu tenho pressa do urgente/ Eu não aceito sua prisão, minha loucura me entende/ Baby, nem todo poeta é sensível/ Eu sou o maior inimigo do impossível/ Minha paixão é cativo, eu me cativo/ O mundo é lento ou eu que sou hiperativo, oh? [...] Me escuta quem cê acha que é ladrão e prostituta/ Vai me dizer que isso não te lembra Cristo?”*

<sup>26</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

value indices makes the sign alive and mobile, and is also the ability to guarantee its evolution:

The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign uniaccentual. In actual fact, each living ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to many other people as the greatest lie. This inner *dialectic quality* of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crises or revolutionary changes. In the ordinary conditions of life, the contradiction embedded in every ideological sign cannot emerge fully because the ideological sign in an established, dominant ideology is always somewhat reactionary and tries, as it were, to stabilize the preceding factor in the dialectical flux of the social generative process, so accentuating yesterday's truth as to make it appear today's (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, pp.23-24; emphasis by author).<sup>27</sup>

Despite the necropolitics that haunts Afro-Brazilians with death from violence and a life of psychological suffering, the anguish is overcome by the immortality that the alterity created by Baco assumes. Its value can be recognized as inferior, but, in his words, simplicity made it bigger. On his empowerment as an Afro-Brazilian artist, Baco Exu do Blues expressed in the song '*Preto e prata*' ['Black and Silver']:

Affectionate Faction, hey, hey/ We live for silver tatata tatata/ We kill for tatata tatata silver/ We protect tatata tatata silver/ We Blacks are tatata tatata silver [...] I'm full of hate and you can't imagine [...] They want me to kill and die for gold/ They want me to kill and die for white women/ They want me to kill and die for my ego/ But, brother, I just kill and die for my bankroll/ I don't believe in your God white/ I believe in Exu do Blues, I believe in Bacchus/ Wanting gold only made me weaker/ The rap game is white cocaine, addictive and kills us/ I will become immortal in accepting, my skin is silver/ I will become immortal in accepting, my skin is silver (BLUES, 2018c).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>28</sup> Portuguese: "Facção Carinhosa, ei, ei/ Nós vive pela prata tatata tatata/ Nós mata pela prata tatata tatata/ Protegemos a prata tatata tatata/ Nós negros somos prata tatata tatata [...] Eu tô cheio de ódio e você nem imagina [...] Eles querem que eu mate e morra pelo ouro/ Querem que eu mate e morra por mulheres brancas/ Querem que eu mate e morra pelo meu ego/ Mas, irmão, só mato e morro pela minha banca/ Eu não acredito no seu Deus branco/ Eu acredito em Exu do Blues, eu acredito em Baco/ Querem o ouro só me fez mais fraco/ O rap game é cocaína branca, vicia e nos mata/ Virei imortal ao aceitar, minha pele é prata/ Virei imortal ao aceitar, minha pele é prata."

Baco Exu do Blues evokes Afro-Brazilian traditions in rhythmic composition and in mentioning the complicity that exists between the colored brothers in the song ‘*Minotauro de Borges*’ [‘Borges’s Minotaur’].<sup>29</sup> He exposes the police persecution suffered by Afro-descendants and his trajectory as an artist:

Black running from the police with expensive sneakers/ Usain Bolt type of Puma I don't stop/ Running faster than cars/ I wasn't made of clay/ Stepping in the sky while they ask themselves: How does this Black man not fall?/ They say the sky is the limit/ They wonder: Why doesn't that Black man fall?/ I made punk circles with the angels/ I painted Eden black/ I was Beethoven's ghost rider/ I wrote several sonnets/ I cut my wings/ See my scars/ I saw God in depression/ I helped him with his crises/ After I died with a bullet in the head/ Whenever a Black man makes money he shouts: Baco lives, Baco lives [...] (BLUES, 2018d).<sup>30</sup>

The song ‘*Minotauro de Borges*’, composed with the influence of Candomblé musicality, narrates a myth. According to Bastide (2001), music is extremely important in Candomblé ceremonies. Dance and songs are representations of fragments of myths that tell about the Orixás, evoking certain episodes in the stories of the deities that are recollected by at least three songs. The strength of the imitation of the choreography gestures confers the enchanting power of the spoken word. Burke (1993)<sup>31</sup> describes myth as a story with a social function with a stereotyped moral, as it is used by psychologists, anthropologists and literary theorists. According to Burke, it is enlightening to define a myth in terms not only of functions, but also of recurring forms or “plots,” as it is inscribed in the meaning of the Greek term *mythos*. Oral and written narratives, including those that narrators consider to be the pure truth, contain archetypal, stereotypical or mythical elements.

The imminent danger of death is a challenge constantly tested in the plots of a Black man who experiences the pain of a people. In the compositions cited, as examples, fidelity and communion with the Black Consciousness have the character of leading to

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<sup>29</sup> Minotaur is the character of Greek mythology that has a bull's head on a man's body. He lived in the center of a maze and devoured human beings.

<sup>30</sup> In Portuguese: “Negro correndo da polícia com tênis caro/ Tipo Usain Bolt<sup>30</sup> de Puma não paro/ Correndo mais que os carros/ Eu não fui feito do barro/ Pisando no céu enquanto eles se perguntam: Como esse negro não cai?/ Dizem que o céu é o limite/ Eles se perguntam: Porque esse negro não cai?/ Fiz roda *punk* com os anjos/ Pinte o Éden de preto/ Fui *ghost rider*<sup>30</sup> de Beethoven/ Escrevi vários sonetos/ Cortei minhas asas/ Vejam minhas cicatrizes/ Eu vi Deus em depressão/ O ajudei com suas crises/ Depois que eu morri com um tiro na cabeça/ Sempre que um preto faz dinheiro grita: Baco vive, Baco vive.”

<sup>31</sup> BURKE, P. *History and Social Theory*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1993.

redemption. For Burke (1993),<sup>32</sup> a myth, regardless of its possible shades of meaning, will always be a product of culture, a conflicting system of shared meanings, which corresponds to a production of intellectual life or to human cognition. This is evident in the articulations of popular resistance to a given current system, through creativity, a mental category structure. According to the historian, culture corresponds to an object to be “built” or “constituted” as a social fact, therefore dynamic. The relationship between culture and society must be considered in dialectical terms, at the same time, active and passive, determinant and determined. According to Burke, “tradition,” or “cultural reproduction,” is related to the processes of transmission of culture, the result of the efforts of agents involved in socialization processes.

In an interview hosted by actor, presenter, filmmaker and writer Lázaro Ramos, Baco Exu do Blues (2019b) affirms that his existence is the Black Struggle, and that he suffered racism on the part of his maternal family, who is white. He uses his aggressiveness to declare war on stereotypes that spread racist ideas. Baco recalls that his mother, a literature teacher, enriched him culturally, as did his father, the first *Tai Chi Chuan* teacher in Bahia, a self-taught man who died early. Baco Exu do Blues (2019b) confesses to suffering from depression and talks about the difficulty he felt in dealing with the situation for fear. The song ‘*En tu mira*’ [‘In your view’], from the album *Esú*, is one of his compositions that reflect his attempt to overcome that. His songs, according to the artist, bring as one of his themes the lack of decent conditions of survival, including psychological issues, which people of African descent have experienced since childhood, developing a tendency to suffer from depression regardless of social class or individual qualities.

The intent to take his own life, due to a depression, is present as a way of venting in some compositions, despite the artist's self awareness of his intellectual capacities and his background of ideological sign of resistance. Such psychological suffering results from the necropolitics, as already mentioned. In ‘*Minotauro do Borges*’, this context is described in a tone of despair, evoking the politics of fulfilment, as he emerges as a winning artist in the phonographic industry, and the politics of transfiguration for using archetypes recognized by the Black brothers. Still:

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<sup>32</sup> For reference, see footnote 31.



Museums are looking for black marble/ To make a statue of me [...] 150 an hour, name engraved in history/ Immortal in your memory / King of slag poetry/ [...] Like Britney<sup>33</sup> in 2007/ Misunderstood/ I killed myself in recording/ I can do it live/ I drink from depression/ Until it overflows/ Winning made me a villain/ I am Minotauro de Borges/ [...] I live in depression/ I drink, yes, always, every day/ I'm totally breaking up/ You kill me or I kill myself first (BLUES, 2018d).<sup>34</sup>

Vološinov (1973)<sup>35</sup> explains that in every statement, although insignificant, the living dialectical synthesis between the psychic and the ideological, between the inner life and the outer life, is renewed. In every act of speech, the subjective mental activity is dissolved in the objective fact of the enunciation performed, while the word enunciated is subjective in the act of decoding which should cause a codification in the form of a replica. According to the philosopher, psyche and ideology are impregnated mutually in the unique and objective process of social relations, as the word, an exterior and interior sign, reveals itself as the product of the living interaction of social forces. In other words, and emphasizing the cognitive factor of the linguistic phenomenon, “*word functions as an essential ingredient accompanying all ideological creativity whatsoever,*” in the sense that the language, in its practical use, is inseparable from its ideological or life-related content (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.15; emphasis by author).<sup>36</sup>

In one of his manuscripts, cataloged as a summary for a philosophy of the act, Bakhtin (1999)<sup>37</sup> intended to establish an analysis about a possible, and ideal, mediation between the act lived and its aesthetic representation. The philosopher postulated that *special answerability*, since it contains the meaning of a given moral act, which only represents, constitutes a cultural phenomenon. The ideal is realized when culture is articulated as an intersection, and necessary extension, of *moral answerability*. The latter, for philosophy, is a concept-object that represents the center that radiates the real and absolute becoming of Being. The philosopher understands that an act must acquire a

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<sup>33</sup> Britney Spears [1981-] had an outbreak in 2007, caused by the persecution of the paparazzi. She shaved her head on the street and tried to hit a paparazzo with an umbrella.

<sup>34</sup> In Portuguese: “Museus estão a procura de mármore negro/ Pra fazer uma estátua minha [...] 150 por hora, nome gravado na história/ Imortal na sua memória/ Rei da poesia de escória/ [...] Como Britney em 2007/ Meio incompreendido/ Me matei em gravação/ Posso fazer isso ao vivo/ Bebo da depressão/ Até que isso me transborde/ Vencer me fez vilão/ Eu sou Minotauro de Borges/ [...] Vivo a depressão/ Bebo, sim, sempre, todo dia/ Tô me acabando por inteiro/ Você me mata ou eu me mato primeiro.”

<sup>35</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>36</sup> For reference, see footnote 18.

<sup>37</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.

singular unitary plane in order to be able to reflect in both directions. Thus, in its sense or meaning and in its being, the act experienced must acquire the unity of double answerability: both for its content, or special answerability, and for its Being, endowed with moral answerability. According to Bakhtin (1999),<sup>38</sup> the product of aesthetic activity does not correspond, in relation to its meaning, to the real Being in the process of becoming. This cultural product corresponds to the being that comes into communion with Being through *a historical act of effective aesthetic intuiting*, because it is in communion with the unique unit of Being in process, whose becoming is the absolute practice of ethics, which the philosopher defines as *actively answerable*. The work of Baco Exu do Blues, in the perspective adopted here, is emblematic of that.

In reinforcement, Chauí (2011) defines ethics as the set of rational and conscious acts, practiced by an agent who can freely decide on his choices, and who is able to take responsibility for his actions. Ethical actions vary according to their socio-historical context, based on ideas that define virtues, for example. This whole complex presupposes the individual's autonomy, in the sense that he will be able to standardize his own acts, not being obliged to obey orders or pressures. According to the philosopher, the conflict between the individual's will and social norms can be resolved if he, as an ethical agent, recognizes the moral values of the society in which he lives as his own.

According to Bakhtin (1999),<sup>39</sup> the lived act, under the aspect of its performance, in some way, has the being of the unitary and unique life, and is oriented within that being. The act performed contemplates a unique context, to which it refers both in its own sense and in its own factuality. The answerability of the act may be recognized by considering its validity of meaning, and its realization in all its concrete historicity and individuality. As the philosopher exposes, from the inside of its meaning and its factuality, the act performed tries to responsibly update the unique individual truth, both of the fact and of the meaning of its concrete unity. Thus, the act performed becomes actively answerable. Still for Bakhtin (1999),<sup>40</sup> the immanent expression of an act performed and the expression of Being in unique and unitary becoming, in which this act is performed, require the fullness of the word in its integral form: the word as a concept

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<sup>38</sup> For reference, see footnote 37.

<sup>39</sup> For reference, see footnote 37.

<sup>40</sup> For reference, see footnote 37.

in its meaningful aspect. The word becomes an image in its palpable-expressive aspect, and the intonation of the Word, its emotional-volitional character.

Highlighting the importance of the intonation of the word for the acts performed, as a function that encompasses its real stated value, Bakhtin (1999)<sup>41</sup> argues that every experience is endowed with an emotional-volitional tone, an inalienable moment of the act actually performed; although in the most abstract thought, insofar as it is actually updated in the process of becoming. According to the philosopher, the roots of active answerability is the intonation of the word - the ballast of fidelity to a real conscience. The unity of the world in the aesthetic view, in its concreteness, is impregnated with the emotional-volitional tone, being closer to the unitary and unique world of the lived act than any other cultural sphere, analyzed in isolation.

In this context, Baco Exu do Blues talks about being an Afro-descendant and the remains of a colonial culture present in the mentality of Whites and Blacks, in the song *Kanye West da Bahia*:

I don't bow my head, I won't obey you/ Not being a Black pet, I prefer to die/ Little sir I change punch never went running/ Close your eyes I saw God being born/ I saw myself being born, I saw you being born/ So free that even the police cannot arrest me/ Your words will not offend me/ Turn off the light try to understand me/ Feel Africa to understand me/ Tense to understand me/ Do not fear death to understand me/ As long as you have a limit, no will understand me/ Every Black leader is killed, can you understand?/ I have received letters talking/ The next is you [...] Being Black is not just having skin/ Something that jeweler understands/ My culture is my fever/ Me I am the explanation for those who do not feel [...] Why these whites love to call the police/ Why do these Blacks look at me with such malice/ Why do we learn to hate others/ Their envy does not let me be the same as before/ If success pisses you off, I'm an annoying guy/ Don't call me handsome Black/ Smart Black/ Polite Black/ Just feet it sounds important/ Your label doesn't touch my poetry [...] (BLUES, 2018a).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For reference, see footnote 37.

<sup>42</sup> In Portuguese: “Eu não abaixo a cabeça, não vou te obedecer/ Ser preto de estimação não, eu prefiro morrer/ Sinhozinho eu troco soco nunca fui de correr/ Feche os olhos eu vi Deus nascer/ Eu me vi nascer, eu te vi nascer/ Tão livre que nem a polícia pode me prender/ Suas palavras não vão me ofender/ Apaga a luz tente me entender/ Sinta a África pra me entender/ Transe ao máximo pra me entender/ Não tema a morte pra me entender/ Enquanto cê tiver limite, não vai me entender/ Todo líder negro é morto, cê consegue entender?/ Tenho recebido cartas falando/ O próximo é você [...] Ser preto não é só ter pele/ Coisa que joalheiro entende/ A minha cultura é minha febre/ Eu sou a explicação pra quem não sente [...] Porque esses brancos amam chamar a polícia/ Porque esses negros me olham com tanta malícia/ Porque aprendemos a odiar os semelhantes/ Sua inveja não me deixa ser o mesmo de antes/ Se o sucesso te irrita, sou um cara irritante/ Não me chame de preto bonito/ Preto inteligente/ Preto educado/ Só de pessoa importante/ Seu rótulo não toca na minha poesia.”

Baco, in this way, brings the representation of an Afro-Brazilian hero in his compositions, with the power to overcome the stigmas, stereotypes and misfortunes faced by his people. In the text entitled “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” Bakhtin (1990)<sup>43</sup> describes the situation of the relationship established between the author and the hero that becomes, in part, the hero's relationship with himself. Thus, the hero undertakes to determine himself, when the author's self-projection has become embedded in the hero's soul and in his words – the *autobiographical hero*. The philosopher explains that, with the assimilation of the author's self-projection, which ensures the completion of this hero, there is the incorporation of the author into his own creative experience and an overcoming. In the global reaction that assures him of a form, the hero is insubstantial to any internal finish. In this sense, the created hero exists as if infinite for the author, that is, he is always reborn and always demands new forms of finishing that he himself destroys with his self-awareness. It corresponds to the hero of romanticism, where the romantic author fears to betray himself through his hero and leaves him a kind of vent, where the hero can escape to transcend his own finish.

According to Bakhtin (1990),<sup>44</sup> the author reflects his hero's emotive-volitional position and not his own attitude towards the hero; as for the latter, the author will have concretized in an object that cannot be analyzed as a reflective experience. For the philosopher, in short, involving different aspects of what happens in a simple psychoanalytic projection, the author's active reaction in the act of creation conditions and manifests itself in the structure of an active vision of the hero perceived as a whole, either in the structure of his image, whether in the rhythm of its revelation, in the structure of intonation, or in the choice of the significant units of the work of art.

According to Deleuze (2006),<sup>45</sup> the act of creation, in any technical area, is performed by a necessity, polished through the development of the technologies that fit it. The flash of an idea presumes scholarship. According to the philosopher, aesthetic creation should not be understood as an act of communicating information, since information refers to the controlled system of slogans that take place in a given society.

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<sup>43</sup> BAKHTIN, M. M. Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity. *In: Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov and K. Broston. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990, pp.4-256.

<sup>44</sup> For reference, see footnote 43.

<sup>45</sup> DELEUZE, G. What is the Creative Act? Translated by Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina. *In: Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. Los Angeles: Semiotexte, 2006, pp.312-324.

The State, for example, is the one that informs through the regulation of civil conduct to be controlled, policed. There are types of discourse that can be understood as counter-information, contradicting official state information. However, according to Deleuze, the work of art is not realized in any of these natures, since *the work of art is an act of resistance*:

A work of art has nothing to do with communication. A work of art does not contain the least bit of information. In contrast, there is a fundamental affinity between a work of art and an act of resistance. It has something to do with information and communication as an act of resistance. [...] This act of resistance in the music ends with a cry. [...] The act of resistance has two faces. It is human and it is also the act of art. Only the act of resistance resists death, either as a work of art or as human struggle (DELEUZE, 2006, pp.323-324).<sup>46</sup>

As a cry of resistance to the stereotype imposed by the dominant society, Baco Exu do Blues composed the following verses:

They want a Black man with a gun up/ In a clip in the favela screaming: cocaine/ They want our skin to be the skin of crime/ That Black Panther just be a movie/ I'm a f\*\*\* from Mississippi Burning/ They're afraid to d\*\*\* from an upcoming Obama/ Racist son of the b\*\*\*, nobody here loves you/ F\*\*\* Jerusalem, I'm looking for Wakanda, ah [...] (BLUES, 2018a).<sup>47</sup>

In the song *BB King*, Baco Exu do Blues describes what it's like to be a Bluesman:

1903/ The first time a white man observed a Black man/ Not like an aggressive animal, or a handless force without intelligence/ This time, you can see talent, creativity, music!/ The white world had never felt anything like the blues/ A Black man, a guitar and a pocket knife/ Born in the struggle for life, born strong, born pungen / Due to the real need to exist/ What is it to be a Bluesman?/ It is to be the reverse of what others think/ It is to be countercurrent/ Being the force itself, its own root/ It is knowing that we were never an automatic reproduction/ Of the submissive image that they created/ F\*\*\* the image that you created/ I am not legible, I am not understandable/ I am mine God himself, my own saint, my own poet/ Look at me like a Black Canvas, from a single painter/ Only I can make my art/ Only I can describe

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<sup>46</sup> For reference, see footnote 45.

<sup>47</sup> In Portuguese: “Eles querem um preto com arma pra cima/ Num clipe na favela gritando: cocaína/ Querem que nossa pele seja a pele do crime/ Que Pantera Negra só seja um filme/ Eu sou a p\*\*\* do Mississipi em chamas/ Eles têm medo pra c\*\*\* de um próximo Obama/ Racista filha da p\*\*\*, aqui ninguém te ama/ Jerusalém que se f\*\*\*, eu tô à procura de Wakanda, ah.”

myself/ You don't have that right/ I don't have to be what you are hope/  
We are much more/ If you don't fit what you expect/ You are a  
Bluesman (BLUES, 2018e).<sup>48</sup>

Baco Exu do Blues takes advantage of its media reach to elicit reflections that must be extended as acts of public life for each person. His speech demonstrates intimacy with the situation of his listeners, who are also Afro-Brazilians. The created hero is available to everyone. Just think and act politically, taking on yourself a responsibility to recognize yourself as a capable being. It is a call for a Black Revolution through music. In this sense, Hall (1992)<sup>49</sup> argues that Black Popular Culture, in the so-called “global postmodern,” acts as a voice from the margins with a transforming power. The Black people use their diasporic ethnic discourse as a result of the cultural politics of difference. In this movement, there is a shift in the dispositions of power, although this peripheral culture continues to be policed and regulated, as the hegemonic culture resists aggressively. It is a space in which control over narratives and representations passes into the hands of established cultural bureaucracies, sometimes even without resistance, rooted in popular experience and, at the same time, available for expropriation.

Despite the existence of some White artists, rap has not been whitened or has come to defend a bourgeois ideal. It continues to be produced mostly by Black people who want to change the reality of oppression, arguing that being an Afro-descendant cannot be a death sentence. According to Hall (1992),<sup>50</sup> by definition, Black Popular Culture is a contradictory space and a place of strategic contestation, but it cannot be explained in terms of simple binary oppositions. According to the critic:

In its expressivity, its musicality, its orality, in its rich, deep, and varied attention to speech, in its inflections toward the vernacular and the local,

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<sup>48</sup> In Portuguese: “1903/ A primeira vez um homem branco observou um homem negro/ Não como um animal agressivo, ou força braçal desprovida de inteligência/ Desta vez, percebe-se o talento, a criatividade, a música!/ O mundo branco nunca havia sentido algo como o *blues*/ Um negro, um violão e um canivete/ Nasce na luta pela vida, nasce forte, nasce pungente/ Pela real necessidade de existir/ O que é ser um *Bluesman*?/ É ser o inverso do que os outros pensam / É ser contracorrente/ Ser a própria força, a sua própria raiz/ É saber que nunca fomos uma reprodução automática/ Da imagem submissa que foi criada por eles/ F\*\*\* a imagem que vocês criaram/ Não sou legível, não sou entendível/ Sou meu próprio Deus, meu próprio santo, meu próprio poeta/ Me olhe como uma tela preta, de um único pintor/ Só eu posso fazer minha arte/ Só eu posso me descrever/ Vocês não têm esse direito/ Não sou obrigado a ser o que vocês esperam/ Somos muito mais/ Se você não se enquadra ao que esperam/ Você é um *Bluesman*.”

<sup>49</sup> HALL, S. What Is This “Black” in Black Popular Culture? *In: Social Justice*, vol. 20, n. 1-2, 1992, pp.104-114.

<sup>50</sup> For reference, see footnote 49.

in its rich production of counternarratives, and above all, in its metaphorical use of the musical vocabulary, Black Popular Culture has enabled the surfacing, inside the mixed and contradictory modes even of some mainstream popular culture, of elements of a discourse that is different - other forms of life, other traditions of representation (HALL, 1992, p.109).<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, Hall (1992)<sup>52</sup> exposes that the people of the Black Diaspora have found the deep structure of their cultural life in music, using the body as their only cultural capital. Diasporic culture is the result of the transmission of heritage and hybridizations, the result of negotiations between dominant and subordinate positions - an act of meaning. This manifestation should not be heard as a simple recovery from a lost dialogue that carries an indication for new musical productions. It is not enough, in terms of action, the Black signifier as an identity factor, because, in this game of forces, the politics undertaken interfere with the culture. According to the Hall, therefore, Black Popular Culture can be defined as:

[...] adaptations, molded to the mixed, contradictory, hybrid spaces of popular culture. They are not the recovery of something pure that we can, at last, live by. In what Kobena Mercer calls the necessity for a diaspora aesthetic [...] 'Good' Black Popular Culture can pass the test of authenticity - the reference to black experience and to black expressivity. These serve as the guarantees in the determination of which Black Popular Culture is right on, which is ours, and which is not (HALL, 1992, p.110).<sup>53</sup>

Finally, Gilroy (1993)<sup>54</sup> points out that denials, not only of Black Cultural integrity, but also of Blacks' ability to sustain and reproduce any dignified culture, produce important effects. The place referred to for Black Cultural expression is an important factor in the hierarchy of creativity generated by the metaphysical dualism that identifies Blacks with the body, and Whites with the mind. The historian considers that there is a need to project a coherent and stable racial culture as a means of establishing the legitimacy of diasporic politics and the recurring notions of ethnic particularity.

The cruel reality perpetrated against Afro-Brazilians is engendered as a product of racism. To think about the dialectical dynamics that occurs in the field of language,

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<sup>51</sup> For reference, see footnote 49.

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<sup>53</sup> For reference, see footnote 49.

<sup>54</sup> For reference, see footnote 6.

especially that which occurs from cultural products that are inserted in the political scenario as resistance to the materiality of the oppressive conditions of ethnic-racial relations, is to enable reflection on the reality of exclusion. Racism and the phrases that disseminate injuries against the Black people circulate in symbolic productions, reinforcing stereotypes that lower individuals with full autonomy, responsibility and freedom, but without concrete opportunities outside the performance of movements of political and cultural resistance. The depression of Baco Exu do Blues is a reality that affects millions of young people, causing suicides or a vegetative life. According to a survey conducted by the *Ministério da Saúde* [Health Ministry] (2018) on suicide deaths among Brazilian adolescents and Young Blacks, between 2012 and 2016, Young Blacks are among the most vulnerable to suicide, due to prejudice and racial discrimination, often imputing guilt over their own suffering. The death rate in 2016 reached 5.88 per 100 thousand individuals, increasing by 12% in relation to 2012, and for every 10 suicides in adolescents and young people, approximately six were Black. The study warns that, as a violation of rights and unspeakable crime, institutionalized racism generates effects that directly affect the behavior of people of African descent, usually associated with racial humiliation and self-denial, which can lead to suicide. Access and permanence in education are identified as social determinants that influence Black adolescents and young people about their perspectives in relation to life, so that they are protective factors against death by suicide.

## **Final Considerations**

Disseminating an ideology and demarcating a place of speech, Baco Exu do Blues is a voice for the search for social justice and the empowerment of people of African descent, towards their effective freedom, in addition to discussing and provoking knowledge of the problems that afflict them. The analyzed compositions demonstrate that, in his second album, although so young, the rapper-bluesman bears the beards that carry with him the task of preserving the resistance of an ancestry. The emotional-volitional tone concerns the life and desires of a political actor who maintains an active answerability with racists, and assumes the responsibility for crying against the dominant system.



Baco Exu do Blues is a myth, facing the genocide of Young Blacks in urban peripheries all over Brazil. It is no different in the city of Salvador, where the artist resides and the population calls for justice regarding the massacres and abuses caused by the State itself, through the police, mainly, and the other public institutions, in a structural way, in their performance and/or omission. The implementation of public policies and the mobilization of society around these aspects, as well as the attention to psychological illnesses that lead to suicide among vulnerable citizens, are issues of urgent nature. Building empowerment narratives, as well as denouncing the system that operates by disfavoring and annihilating lives that matter, constitutes the first step towards building a democratic society in terms of an anti-racist ethic.

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**Declaration of Authorship and Responsibility for Published Content**

We declare, for due purposes, that the author Camilla Ramos dos Santos had access to the research corpus and actively participated in the discussion of the results. Author Marlúcia Mendes da Rocha and author Isaias Francisco de Carvalho actively participated in the discussion of the results, reviewed and approved the final version of the article.

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