

# AMBIGUITIES AND DOUBLE VOICES IN BARRAVENTO

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## Abstract

*Barravento* was directed by Glauber Rocha in Brazil in 1962. It constitutes a very significant example of Cinema Novo, an awareness-raising movement in the film industry. It presents a truthful account of cavalla fishermen living on the coast of Bahia. In *Barravento*, Rocha has tried to convey the real face of Brazilian impoverishment, which formerly was veiled behind the technological facilities in Hollywood-like Brazilian productions. In contrast to these Hollywood-like movies that satisfy the western world's nostalgia for primitivism and veil the wretchedness of so-called "uncivilized" men, Rocha depicts the sufferings and hunger of the cavalla fishermen while creating a revolutionary message. However, the way he conveys his message leads to controversy, since he presents *Candomblé* as both an impediment and a significant cultural value in the cavalla fishing community. *Candomblé* is an integrated religious tradition that comes from interaction with African Yoruba traditions, Roman Catholicism, and indigenous American traditions. It exerts considerable power and influence over its believers. In *Barravento*, *Candomblé* provides the cultural wisdom that determines the fate and future of the fishermen. Through his Marxist discourse, Rocha criticizes religion as a drug that discourages the fishermen from facing their real problems. At the same time, he presents *Candomblé* with respect and dignity. As a result, *Barravento* offers two contradictory perspectives about *Candomblé*, producing ambiguities and the coexistence of double voices in the film. This paper deals with the contradicting perspectives of Glauber Rocha and the original scriptwriter, Luiz Paulino Dos Santos, and discusses their aesthetic objectives under the subtitles "Hunger as Aesthetic" and "Religion as Aesthetic".

**Keywords:** Brazilian Cinema, Exú, Malandro, African Brazilian culture, African folklore, Cinema Novo.

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## Barravento Filmindeki Anlam Karmaşası ve Farklı Yaklaşımlar

Öz

Glauber Rocha'nın yönettiği ve 1962 yılında gösterime girmiş *Barravento*, film endüstrisinde farkındalık yaratma hareketi olan Cinema Novo'nun önemli örneklerinden biridir. Batı dünyasının ilkel insan için hissettiği nostaljik merakı karşılayan ve teknolojinin sunduğu imkanlar sayesinde sözde uygar olmayan insanın sefaleti ve çektiği zorlukları gizleyen Hollywood tarzı Brezilya filmlerinin aksine, devrim niteliğindeki Marksist yaklaşımı ile Rocha, filminde Bahia kıyılarında yaşayan balıkçıların açlık ve sefaletini yansıtmaya çalışır; ancak, Rocha'nın *Candomblé*'yi hem bir engel hem de balıkçı toplumun en önemli kültürel değeri olarak sunmuş olması filmde tutarsızlıklara yol açmıştır. *Candomblé*, Afrika Yoruba geleneklerinin yanı sıra Katolik ve Amerikan yerel geleneklerinin karşılıklı etkileşiminin sonucu olarak meydana gelmiş karma bir dini gelenektir ve inananları üzerinde büyük gücü ve etkisi vardır. *Barravento*'da bu din, balıkçı toplumun kaderini ve geleceğini belirleyen bir kültürel bilinci temsil eder. Bir yanda Marksist söylem ile Rocha, *Candomblé*'yi balıkçıları gerçek problemleri ile yüzleşmekten uzaklaştıran bir afyon olarak yerer, bir diğer yanda ise *Candomblé*'ye büyük bir saygı ve itibar gösterir. Sonuç olarak, *Barravento* bize *Candomblé* hakkında çelişkili iki görüş sunar ki, bu da filmin yorumlanmasında anlam karmaşasına yol açar. Bu makale yönetmen Glauber Rocha ile ilk senaryoyu yazan Luiz Paulino Dos Santos'un çelişen bakış açılarını irdeler ve onların estetik hedeflerini "Estetik Olarak Açlık" ve "Estetik Olarak Din" alt başlıkları ile ele alır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Brezilya Sineması, Exú, Malandro, Afrika Asıllı Brezilya kültürü, Afrika folkloru, Cinema Novo.

## Introduction

Cinema Novo was a cinematographic movement whose seeds were planted in "the film industry congresses held in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in 1952 and 1953" (Johnson, 1984, p. 97). It was an awareness raising movement that promoted "de-alienation" of the colonized. In its first years, the filmmakers of Cinema Novo aimed at presenting the underdevelopment in Brazil and the real face of the nation in order that they would excite attention to the Nation's problems and obtain a critical consciousness; hence, they took part in "the struggle for national liberation" and were engaged in creating "an authentic national culture in opposition to the interests of the colonizer" (Johnson, 1984, p. 100). That they promoted the religious themes and the cultural wealth in their productions also contributed to the discovery of African culture, which was historically muffled. They presented Brazilian society with a politicized vision in contrast to Hollywood-like Vera Cruz productions or *chanchada*, which were the musical comedies based on Brazilian carnival, but with Hollywood influence. Vera Cruz Film Studios, which modelled Hollywood studios, was established in Sao Paulo in 1949. With an improved technical quality, they aimed at conquering the world film market (Johnson, 1984, p. 102). The film company, therefore, brought the best film cinematographers from Europe who used Salvador's and Bahia's bright sunlight and Brazilian cultural practices to produce films conforming to standards of Hollywood film industry. Eventually, the films were "largely derivative of Hollywood," and represented "what Glauber Rocha called 'coconut milk in a Coca Cola bottle'" (Stam, 2004, pp. 215-216).

In the final years of Vera Cruz, a new attitude was developed among Brazilian producers. They rejected wasting money on the artificiality, and they place importance on independent productions with artistic features, which would give birth to Cinema Novo. The filmmakers of Cinema Novo were inspired by Italian cinema and French New Wave, whose productions were low budget and independent films dealing with current social issues. Their production was "an independent and inexpensive mode of production using small crews, location shooting, and non-professional actors. This was the first time in the history of Brazilian cinema

that such a mode of production was adopted by ideological and aesthetic choice rather than by circumstance" (Johnson, 1984, p. 102). In contrast to Hollywood-like movies, they dealt with political and social issues in Brazil for an economical reform. Hence, they chose backward areas of Brazil; such as impoverished fishing villages and slums, where the social differences were most explicit. Places like Salvador and Bahia held the attention of Brazilian filmmakers and took a significant place in various early 1960s Brazilian films. As in rephrased view of Antônio Risério, the charm and "mystique" of Bahia "rests on three 'legs': historical antiquity (Bahia as colonial capital), natural and architectural beauty (the ocean, the bay, the old and the new city), and cultural originality (the strength of Afro Brazilian culture)" (Stam, 2004, p. 205).

In brief, productions of Cinema Novo were such mirror images of the idealism for that period. Since the filmmakers intended to portray the real face of Brazilian impoverishment and constituting the truth of Brazilians, they rejected the improved studio technology masquerading the reality about the Brazilian life. Specifically for Glauber Rocha, cloaking the hunger with the technology would not hide the hunger they suffer from, but "rather only aggravates, its tumours" (Rocha, 1965, p. 70). In his 1962 film *Barravento*, Rocha makes no bones about screening the ugliness of poverty and screaming out the hunger of the cavalla fishermen, whose microcosmic Africa is based on *Candomblé*<sup>1</sup> conscience. In a highly stylized way, he depicts African Brazilian life and promotes cultural values such as *Candomblé*, *Capoeira*, samba, work songs and ritual chants, but on the other hand, he denounces these values in order to give his revolutionary message, which eventuates in contradictions in *Barravento*. In his film, Rocha presents *Candomblé* as an obstacle preventing the black fishermen from political struggle; hence, from their social progress. In this paper, I will discuss how the political aesthetics of the director, Glauber Rocha, and the religious aesthetics of the scriptwriter, Luiz Paulino Dos Santos, contradict in *Barravento*.

## Aesthetic Matters

The attitudes towards ignored African Brazilian religion and culture were changed and led to "the cinematic rediscovery of the cultural riches

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<sup>1</sup> *Candomblé*, meaning "dance in honor of the gods," is an integrated religious tradition of African Brazilians resulted from interaction with African Yoruba traditions, Roman Catholicism, and indigenous American traditions.

of Salvador, Bahia, in the early 1960s" (Stam, 2004, p. 205). *Candomblé* and African Brazilian culture became major subjects handled in Cinema Novo productions. *Barravento* is an important example of this movement portraying the hunger of the cavalla fishing community in their mystic world on the exotic beach of Buraquinho in the backward area of Brazil. In the film, Rocha replaces the current approaches of popular culture in that period with a constructed brand new one through his Marxist discourse; hence, he attributes a different interpretation to these exotic places contrast to previous Hollywood-like movies. As Stam puts it "instead of producing an exoticist ode to palm trees and tropical sunsets, Rocha created a hungry poem about oppression, within the spirit of what he later called an 'aesthetic of hunger'" (Stam, 2004, p. 226). Rocha depicts the aesthetic of hunger in the aesthetic of primitivism; however, his strong Marxist discourse leads up to controversies in critical analysis of the film. On the one hand, *Candomblé* is condemned as the biggest impediment in cavalla fishermen's liberation; on the other hand, it is portrayed as the aesthetic of the periphery and the essence of mystic life in the coast of Bahia.

Cultural manifestations like, *Samba*, *Capoeira*, and *Candomblé* gradually excited the attention of whites, blacks, and foreigners, which eventually contributed to the process of acculturation of the native elite, but similar to Franz Fanon's criticism about the tourism in Latin America, the exotic places were exploited for their own benefits of the filmmakers. In *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Franz Fanon states that the exotic places like Havana, Mexico, Acapulco, Copacabana and beaches of Rio meet the wishes of the Western bourgeoisie in the name of tourism; however, they become "the stigma of the deprecation of the national middle class." And "Because it is bereft of ideas, because it lives to itself and cuts itself off from the people, undermined by its hereditary incapacity to think in terms of all the problems of the nation as seen from the point of view of the whole of that nation, the national middle class will have nothing better to do than to take on the role of manager for Western enterprise, and it will in practice set up its country as the brothels of Europe" (Fanon, 1963, p. 154). Similarly, due to the Hollywood-like productions, the exotic places were used as a set that was cut off from its real people; thus, the real face of the whole nation was hidden behind the veil of the technology. According to Rocha, not only the wretchedness and hunger of Latin America are misunderstood by the rest of the world, but also they are

not truly conveyed by Latin Americans themselves. "While Latin America laments its general misery, not as a tragic symptom, but merely as a formal element in his field of interest. The Latin American neither communicates his real misery to the 'civilised' man, nor does the 'civilised' man truly comprehend the misery of the Latin American" (Rocha, 1965, p. 69). Thus, in his film *Barravento*, Rocha depicts the misery of the Latin American needing to be comprehended by both "the civilized man" and the Latin American himself.

In *Barravento*, *Candomblé* constitutes the cultural wisdom that determines the fate and future of the cavalla fishermen. They believe their destiny depends on the will of *Iemanjá*, the goddess of the sea, and they have to follow her orders to guarantee their survival. In the prefatory, it reads they "still worship" their *orixás*, the traditional deities, but the next elucidation implies the big change they are likely to undergo. With a high degree of probability, they will abandon their *orixás* for a social progress: "Iemanjá is the queen of the seas, the old mother of Irecé the master of the ocean who loves the ocean that protects and punishes the fisherman. Turning Wind is the violent moment when earth and sea are transformed when sudden changes occur in love, life and society" (Rocha, 1962). When we take prefatory of *Barravento* into consideration, it seems the controversy about *Candomblé* is settled; however, the depiction of *Candomblé* in the rest of the film puts the audience in ambiguity. In the very beginning, Rocha gets straight to the point that is *Candomblé* stands as an impediment in the way of social progress of the cavalla fishermen. They are so pacified by their religion that it prevents them from struggling against the capitalist boss, and hence mobilizing for a change: "On the coast of Bahia, live the cavalla-fishing black men whose ancestors came from Africa as slaves. Until this day, they continue to worship African Gods. And they're still dominated by tragic and fatalist mysticism. They accept their poverty, illiteracy, and exploitation with the typical passiveness of those who wait for a Godly Kingdom" (Rocha, 1962). Throughout the film, Rocha deals with *Candomblé* in a dialectical relation between religion and economy. He regards religion as a drug that paralyzes the whole fishing community. He states "I recognize black mythology according to the dialectics of religion/economy. Religion as the opium of the people. Down with the Father. Long live human beings fishing with nets. Down with prayers. Down with mysticism" (cit. in Stam, 2004, p. 219). Therefore, he makes some changes on the script accordingly, which promotes the ambiguity in the film.

I propose that the depiction of the *Candomblé* contradicts with prefatory in the rest of the film, due to the unlike objectives of Rocha and Luiz Paulino Dos Santos, the co-scriptwriter and the former director of *Barravento*. Both Rocha and Santos use *Candomblé* as an instrument of expression for the social inequality, but they portray two opposing perspectives of the religion. While Santos promotes the aesthetic of the black mystical traditions in the script, through an intellectual approach of Marxism Rocha redirects these values for his political aesthetic. In his Biocinegraphy *Estafeta - Luiz Paulino dos Santos* (Sampaio, 2008), Santos complains that the movie "missed the spell. And that enchantment is exactly in the mystical part [...] I also do not condemn religion by religion, I condemn religion by hypocrisy" (cit. in Nunes, 2009, p. 145). Clearly, the unlike objectives of the scriptwriter and the director play a significant role in *Barravento*, and the source of the ambiguity rests on this dissimilarity. While Santos concerns about African heritage as an aesthetic, Rocha is much more concerned with political interest as an aesthetic. When the script of Santos and the finalized film are compared, it "suggests that Rocha politicized the script by 'framing' it with a Marxist critique of religion and by introducing the 'revolutionary' character Firmino, but without completely discarding the core-thrust of the original" (Stam, 2004, pp. 221-222).

Robert Stam suggests that the reason why the film fosters this ambiguity is possibly the director Rocha is himself a white Protestant who grew up in Bahia, where he imbibed African Brazilian culture. Santos, on the other hand, had a black grandfather and "was more sympathetic to *candomblé* than the white Marxist Rocha" (Stam, 2004, p. 221). Similarly, Santos claims that the lack of direct contact with black culture caused "inversion of values because they did not understand;" therefore, the opposite approaches to *Candomblé* in *Barravento* ended up "falling into the truism, in the business of politics" (cit. in Nunes, 2009, p. 145). Due to the fact that Santos is from African Brazilian culture, he claims that by his direction the movie would have displayed the vision of the African Brazilian religion with more respect compared to the present one: "I am from within ..., only I could do" (cit. in Nunes, 2009, p. 146), and that is why Santos soon took the rest of the script referring to the mystical and religious themes and left the rest to Rocha: "And this, as the first Bahian film, I do not say the first negative burn film no. This was the first film framed in Bahian culture, right? So they began to suggest a political confrontation.

I said, 'I do not have to make the political confrontation, I have to narrate his values. ... I had to leave the movie, and the movie ... was completed ... by Glauber' (cit. in Nunes, 2009, p. 147). Santos also claims that Rocha had difficulty in completing the film due to financial and social implications, and considered about bringing in other directors. He told Rocha "No, it's really you. I do not accept another person" and "I (he) left the film in his (Rocha's) hand because it is not possible for me (him) to follow" (cit. in Nunes, 2009, p. 148).

I propose that as Stam touches on, the racial different backgrounds of Santos and Rocha is likely the key element of the ambiguity of the film. Having a grasp or full knowledge of a subject is crucial in deciding how the approach and handle it. It is argued that a person's academic discipline in the field, prior knowledge and experience plays an important role in understanding and interpreting information encoded in a text; however, according to Doris Sommer, the prior knowledge does have nothing to do with accurate interpretation of black narration, since the author intentionally leaves the reader outside the text and does not let him grab the message right away, or not at all. She acknowledges black texts as the resistant text requiring a "socially differentiated understanding" (Sommer, 1993, p. 409) that limits access to the text. Therefore, readerly incompetence is welcomed, since the reader is positioned as an outsider in a resistant text, or in a black narration. Indeed, this is the very theory of black narration tactics as Zora Neale Hurston asserts:

... We smile and tell him or her something that satisfies the white person because knowing so little about us, he doesn't know what is missing. The Indian resists curiosity by a stony silence. The Negro offers a feathered-bed resistance. That is, we let the probe enter, but it never comes out. It gets smothered under a lot of laughter and pleasantries.

The theory behind our tactics: "The white man is always trying to know into somebody else's business. All right, I'll set something outside the door of my mind for him to play with and handle. He can read my writings but he sho' can't read my mind. I'll put this play toy in his hand, and he will seize it and go away. Then I'll say my say and sing my song" (Hurston, 2008, pp. 2-3).

Hurston intentionally keeps the reader as an outsider and offers a story that entertains him/her. Certainly, Rocha is not a critic analyzing a black text, but he is a director interpreting a script that embodies African narrative features and motives. Thus, *Barravento* is his own reading

and interpretation of the script. Furthermore, it should be also kept in mind that the violence Rocha advocates in *Barravento* is not true for all other Cinema Novo productions. Cinema Novo, in general, presents the real face of Brazil in contrast to Hollywood-like productions. The changes Rocha makes in *Barravento* not only distinguishes the film from other examples of Cinema Novo, but also changes the course in what is oriented in *Barravento*.

### **Hunger as Aesthetic**

Compared to Hollywood cinema the originality of Cinema Novo resides in the hunger alarming, and rather than privileged Brazilian community, it presents characters that are starving, living in dirty places, eating dirt, stealing and killing to eat; therefore, it finds a living cell within just the margin of the film industry. It arises "themes of hunger" and the ugly side of the society, the reasons of which are understood neither by Europeans nor by the most of Brazilians. This hunger is perceived as "a strange tropical surrealism" by Europeans and as "a national disgrace" to be ashamed of by many Brazilians: "We understand that the hunger that Europeans and the majority of Brazilians have failed to understand. For the Europeans, it is a strange tropical surrealism. For the Brazilian, it is a national shame. He does not eat, but is ashamed to say so; and yet, he does not know where this hunger come from" (Rocha, 1965, p. 70); thus, Rocha aims at screening the poverty and the poor conditions of working class and making them conscious about their own misery, and while he presents their own wretchedness, he uses it as a cinematographic expression of his own manifesto: "... the hunger of Latin America is not simply an alarming symptom: it is the essence of our society. There resides the tragic originality of Cinema Novo in relation to world cinema. Our originality is our hunger, and our greatest misery is that this hunger is felt but not intellectually understood" (Rocha, 1965, p. 70). The critical reality phrased as "aesthetic of hunger" by Rocha, hence, has a political function since it expresses Brazilian movie as the other within world cinema. Certainly, hunger refers to the basic need of the human beings like food, social equality and justice, but in Cinema Novo it refers to hunger for art, culture and freedom of creation; thus, "aesthetic of hunger" becomes the conceptual basis of this movement. In brief, as he asserts "Cinema Novo is a project carried out in the politics of hunger," and in *Barravento*, this politics becomes an aesthetic, through which he delivers his message.

It is a fact that due to the shortage of financial capital for film production, the filmmakers of Cinema Novo could neither meet the cinematographic expenses nor hope to be equal to foreign films with regard to technical facilities; however, this scarcity of the financial capital was turned into such a "signifier" indicating under-development and wretchedness in Brazil. In sharp contrast to "digestive cinema", presenting rich wealthy people living luxury without any messages with merely industrial purpose, Cinema Novo had a commitment to just the "truth" and the real Brazil hidden under the veil of Hollywood-like productions. In accordance with this purpose, the filmmakers of Cinema Novo were able to generate a critical consciousness in contrast to an apathetic consciousness nurtured by Hollywood film industry. Thus, as Rocha's phrase encapsulates, "uma camera na mão, uma ideia na cabeça (a camera in the hand, an idea in the head)" (Hart, 2004, p. 8) constituted the essence of Cinema Novo, and owing to the new movement, they gave very good examples of auteur cinema. Furthermore, as Rocha asserts any technical materials and sets were not able to hide "the hunger", "poverty" or "moral wretchedness" rooted in Brazil: "We know - since we made those ugly, sad films, those screaming, desperate films in which reason has not always prevailed – that this hunger will not be assuaged by moderate government reforms and that the cloak of Technicolor cannot hide, but rather only aggravates, its tumours" (Rocha, 1965, p. 70).

In *Barravento*, Rocha spends a small budget and works with a non-professional crew. The blacks living in the fishing village constitute the cast of *Barravento*. As it is narrated in the prefatory titles, "the characters in the movie have no relation to living and dead people. Any similarities are coincidences but the facts are real" (Rocha, 1962). Even if the cast is fictional characters, the facts are real. Since artificiality is avoided, the cuts and shots are not perfected by the means of technology; therefore, the quick skips from one scene to the other and the missing or skipping parts in the songs are all the natural imperfectness of the film as in other products of Cinema Novo. As the theme of the film, he uses the imbalance between *work* and *hunger*. Yet, contrary to characters starving, stealing and living in dirt, *Barravento* presents hungry people of Bahia within exoticism and beauty of Afro-Brazilian culture, because Rocha aims at showing "underneath the forms of exoticism and decorative beauty of Afro-Brazilian mysticism there dwells a hungry, illiterate, nostalgic and enslaved race" (cit. in Stam, 2004, p. 219). No matter how hard they work,

they still struggle with poverty and hunger. The movie opens with a spectacular view of “*puxada de rede* (pulling in the net)” (Stam, 2004, p. 224) accompanied with music and drums. The collective labor of cavalla fishermen is depicted so ritualistically that it gives the impression of a utopian place in which their endeavor turns into rhythmic and musical performance. For the villagers, fishing is not just means of living, but also a way of living. While the film portrays the hunger and poverty of the cavalla fishermen, it also presents their cultural richness, their spectacular collective work and communal life style. Working and worshiping are tightly interwoven even in hard conditions of oppression. In brief, Rocha rebuts the “myth of the lazy native” (Stam, 2004, p. 130) by stressing the lyrical ritual of cavalla fishermen.

In the very beginning of the film, as the cavalla fishermen pull the net ritualistically, Firmino, a former resident of the village, arrives in. He is the most significant character, since he is a driving force for transformation coming outside the village. The cavalla fishermen struggle with poverty, however, they do nothing but accept their fate due to their religious commitment: “Hunger eats us down to the bones. We have to pray and hope for a miracle. But I think Aruã can solve it if he wants to. With Aruã fishing, the fish are guaranteed” (Rocha, 1962); therefore, it requires a “subversive individual,” Firmino, to revolutionize the cavalla fishing community against the oppression of the absentee capitalist, from whom they rent fishing net. Firmino has lived in the city long enough to experience a life different from the one in the village. His experience in the city teaches him the world does not turn around poverty, and the poverty does not have to be their destiny forever. He is aware the cavalla fishermen put all their effort just to make white men richer: “You pull nets every day, and for what? To make white men rich. They’re rich thanks to you. I won’t be exploited anymore. I work for myself, and I don’t have to punch a card. I run my risks, but I’m as free as the cavalla you fish. Only no one fishes me. You think the world turns around poverty!” (Rocha, 1962). Furthermore, as the fishing ritual presented in a spectacular aesthetic, that Firmino elucidates the vicious circle of poverty of the cavalla fishermen offers another verbal and visual aesthetic of the cavalla fishing community. The way Firmino speaks sounds quite poetic and with the wide shot of Firmino in the middle talking as the leading actor on the stage, the audience watching Firmino’s talking in rhythm and his *Capoeira* figures offers another spectacular aesthetic aspects of this community.

In Rocha's interpretation, Firmino contends that *Candomblé* masks the real social problems and is the very reason of their alienation. Their destiny does not depend on orixás but on themselves. Hence, soon after does Firmino arrive in the village, he becomes Aruã's worst enemy, because he knows the only way to change the fishermen's ill-fate is to eliminate firmed religious beliefs, specifically the ones attributed to Aruã. It is believed Aruã is protected by *Iemanjá*, the goddess of the sea "whose children are fish" (Stam 2004, p. 224), and he is expected to take over the *Mestre's* role. The *Mestre*, or Master, is the negotiator between the cavalla fishermen and the boss. He complains about the worn net to the boss, but since the boss does not agree to replace the net with a new one, he cannot provide a solid solution.

The white man: "Yeah, Mestre. The man said he wants his fish, no matter what. You can't retire the net. People want their fish, and down there, they sell it cheaper."

The Mestre: "He knows the net is old."

The white man: "No, save your excuses for later. He just cares about his fish and nothing else" (Rocha, 1962).

It is quite obvious the *Mestre* cannot make any contribution to solving the problem; on the contrary, he does not hesitate to take his share of the profit while the fishermen continue wrestling with hunger. There is only Firmino, who has the courage to fight against this social inequality. He stands against *Candomblé*. For him, conforming the religion will not help them survive, but keep them going around such a vicious circle of hunger. When the fishermen go out to the sea with the worn net Firmino watches them over the hill and says: "All work, no food! Not me, I'm independent. I'm done with religion. *Candomblé* won't solve anything! We have to fight, resist. Our time is coming, brother!" (Rocha, 1962). While Firmino is making his speech, he stands on the hill watching the fishermen walking down the beach in perfect line and carrying the net, which is presented in low angle shot indicating his strength and power over the community. He is strong and courageous enough to unite them to fight against the oppression of the capitalist.

In his prominent work *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), which was an inspiration for Algerians in the Algerian War, Fanon argues that under the mask of neo-colonialism, the Western bourgeoisie's role is replaced with the national bourgeoisie: "Seen through its eyes, its mission

has nothing to do with transforming the nation; it consists, prosaically, of being the transmission line between the nation and a capitalism, rampant though camouflaged, which today puts on the mask of neo-colonialism. The national bourgeoisie will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner" (Fanon, 1963, pp. 152-153). Similarly, but within in different circumstances, the *Mestre* resembles the native bourgeoisie who serves as the replacement of the oppressor. He serves for the need of white the master and takes more shares in proportion to other fishermen:

The *Mestre*: "It's all separated. 400 for the boss...4 for myself...and 5 for my fishermen."

The white man: "There should be more. We have plenty of clients. And the fish price is high. Can you pull some more tomorrow?"

The *Mestre*: "We can try, but there's no guarantee" (Rocha, 1962).

In the end of the film, when they come to take the net, they bring the guns with them and the *Mestre* asks them not to react, but just obey:

The *Mestre*: "Don't do anything. The police are with them."

Aruã: "We have to react. We came from Africa as slaves, but slavery is over."

The *Mestre*: "Poor men only have the right to work. We fish less with the raft, it's riskier, but the fish is ours. That's how it will be" (Rocha, 1962).

The close shot of Aruã clearly shows how reluctant he is to submit to the *Mestre*, but helpless to revolt against him.

According to Fanon the traditional weakness of the colonized people is not only the result of the oppressive colonial regime but also "the result of the intellectual laziness of the national middle class, of its spiritual penury, and of the profoundly cosmopolitan mold that its mind is set in" (Fanon, 1963, p. 149). The positions in business offices and commercial houses occupied by the colonizer should be taken over by the colonizer; however when native bourgeoisie take these posts, they just "step into the shoes of the former European settlement" (Fanon, 1963, p. 152). Likewise in *Barrevento*, the social status of the *Mestre* prevents him to stand against the oppressor. Certainly, he is not pleased with the system, but he is too selfish to change the order he gets more benefit. Over

the hill, the fishermen watch the net's being taken, Firmino attempts to spark a fight but the *Mestre* stands in Firmino way and stops the fight:

Firmino: "Who's man enough to scare these people off?"

The *Mestre*: "I said it once, and I won't repeat it: that's our business."

Firmino: "I'm your brother, too. I just want to help. In the time of need, everybody loses courage? The *Mestre* accepts everything. He's right, he's old. But even the strong ones are being cowards. Well, I, Firmino Bispo dos Santos...I am a man who doesn't like the police. I can scare those soldiers and their rifles away."

Aruã: "You're not going anywhere. The *Mestre* gives the orders."

Firmino: "Where's your independence? Take this!"

The white man: "They're killing each other over there."

The police officer: "The first one to come this way will get shot."

The *Mestre*: "Go away. If your father hadn't been a decent man, you'd be dead by now" (Rocha, 1962).

The *Mestre* does not let Firmino prove them against the white master. All he does is to throw them in the ring of fire as Aruã states: "Aruã: What are we to do, Jofio? The *Mestre* doesn't understand. He threw us in the ring of fire" (Rocha, 1962).

Indeed, Aruã subscribes to Firmino's judgment and is against the *Mestre*, but still acts accordingly:

Aruã: "They can't treat us like dogs."

The *Mestre*: "We need these people."

Aruã: "Right, but we're the ones pulling the net. When there's no fish, we're the ones who starve. The boss eats every day. And we have to share one fish among 100 people! Right, *Mestre*, I'll do whatever you want. But, in your place, I'd solve it with my fists" (Rocha, 1962).

He is not as submissive as the *Mestre*, and he does not hesitate to resort violence in need, but still, his commitment to the conventional wisdom of the village prevents him to take an action. Thus, Firmino targets on Aruã. For the reason that Aruã will take the *Mestre*'s role and lead the community, he is the first to change. Firmino, first, tries to cast a spell on Aruã, but his spell backfires and he fails in his attempt. Then he decides to cut the net to provoke and mobilize the cavalla-fishing black men, which will put the fishermen in danger of starving and their lives in threat. He perfectly knows that their stomach must ache with hunger so

that they scream: "Cota, deep down, I have a very good heart. I hang out with you because you don't conform. Aruã doesn't want to conform, but the *Mestre* dominates him. This is how these people live. And the people in the city know things will get better. That's why I cut the net. When their stomach is aching with hunger, they'll scream. To me, Princess Isabel is an illusion" (Rocha, 1962).

That Firmino cuts the net is a very significant event in the film, since it triggers the action they need. According to Rocha, "the noblest cultural manifestation of hunger is violence," and it is inevitable. After the net's being taken by the boss, the cavalla fishermen return back to their previous life-threatening fishing on *jangada*. Due to the violent act Firmino commits, they become conscious of the situation they are in. Yet Firmino does not give up his determination and provocations. Since it is believed that Aruã belongs to *Iemanjá* and he has to keep his virginity, Firmino has Cota seduce Aruã to demystify him in the eyes of the community:

Aruã made the entity angry! I saw what he did last night. He was with Cota when the turning wind tore everything. He isn't supposed to fool people, saying he's a saint! Is there such a thing as a flesh and blood saint? Chico thought he was protected, now he's dead. We have to change Aruã 's life. He's a man just like the others. He likes women, he's not a sea master. The *Mestre* is also guilty. Spells are for old-fashioned people. We have to stop with that! We have to stop with that! (Rocha, 1962).

Finally, the seduction puts an end to sacralized beliefs about Aruã and frees him from the pressure of the religious role assigned to him. Indeed, Aruã's committing adultery can be handled both Rocha's perspective and religious perspective. When Rocha's perspective is taken into consideration, the seduction is the initiator of *barravento*, or *turning wind*, "the violent moment when earth and sea are transformed when sudden changes occur in love, life and society" (Rocha, 1962). Even though Firmino serves as the "subversive individual," he is, indeed, a loyal character who cares about his community. He is the one that initiates the struggle against the oppressor. Without any hesitation, he disturbs the peace to obtain a *just order*.

In terms of *violence* Rocha and Fanon have the similar approach, and both promotes *violence* and claims it as the path to follow in independence. According to Fanon, "colonialism is not a thinking machine,

nor a body endowed with reasoning faculties. It is violence in its natural state, and it will only yield when confronted with greater violence" (Fanon, 1963, p. 61). Violence is an inevitable outcome of decolonization, and the solutions based on logical justifications will be useless for the Third-World revolutionaries in finding the way to their freedom, but "in and through violence" (Fanon, 1963, p. 86). The colonized native has two options: either to accept the situation and absorb the abuse, or give the colonizer a taste of their own medicine. To this respect, Fanon claims violence is the political tool they need to consult in decolonization struggles. Instead of entrusting their freedom to consultations between the native bourgeoisie and the colonizer, they have to be engaged in a political struggle against colonial repression unleashed by the colonizer. Fanon also claims "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" (Fanon, 1963, p. 35), and in colonized communities, the starving peasants are subversive "for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain." They are "the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays [...] The exploited man sees that his liberation implies the use of all means, and that of force first and foremost" (Fanon, 1963, p. 61). By the same token, Firmino is subversive, because he has nothing to lose, but gain:

Firmino: "I have no opportunity, as a friend of mine says. My situation with the police is very complicated. They've even invented a new word:-'subversive individual.'"

Cota: "It sounds important" (Rocha, 1962).

His violent acts change the future of cavalla fishermen, and as Cota states Firmino's being *subversive* is intentional but not a coincidence.

Rocha also argues that Latin America is still under the post-colonial regime, which is almost a complete substitute of the previous one:

Undeniably, Latin America remains colony a colony. What distinguishes yesterday's colonialism from today's is merely the more refined forms employed by the contemporary colonizer. Meanwhile, those who are preparing future domination try to replace these with even more subtle forms. The problem facing Latin America in international terms is still that of merely exchanging colonisers. Thus, our possible liberation is always a function of a new dependency (Rocha, 1965, p. 69).

It is quite clear that, in *Barrevento*, the life of the black fishermen is not different from the slavery years as Aruã stresses on: "We have to react. We came from Africa as slaves, but slavery is over" (Rocha, 1962).

Thus, Firmino constitutes a very important catalyst figure making Aruã realize that he has the courage he needs to take an action. In the end of the film, soon after the *Capoeira* fight between Firmino and Aruã, Firmino clarifies why he does not kill him but spares his life: "I'm going to spare your life so you can save our people! You have to follow Aruã not the Mestre! The Mestre is a slave!" (Rocha, 1962). He does not kill Aruã, because Aruã will be the person transforming the slave-like life of cavalla fishermen. The *Capoeira* fight, therefore, is a crucial moment in the film, as it brings a result for Firmino's evil deeds, since it makes Aruã comprehend the message Firmino tries to convey. Furthermore, *Capoeira* is a Brazilian martial art and dance, which emerged in the course of slavery in Brazil. African slaves developed this fight-like dance to deceive the slave master when they train themselves for an uprising. They trained in dance rhythms and routines. Thus, "Capoeira was a form of resistance but also a strength-building training for the African slaves, who also practiced it as a form of self-defence" (Akande, 2016, p. 36). In *Barravento*, there is not a long-term training for an uprising, but the fight between Aruã and Firmino is the moment when Aruã is determined to change the future of cavalla fishermen, which somehow initiates an uprising for their absentee capitalist. The film ends with Aruã's heading for the city in order to work for a year and buy their own net. In the end, we have the close shot of Aruã with a little low angle, which presents Aruã's determination to earn the money to buy their own fishing net. Then the camera slowly moves to the lighthouse, shown in low angle shot. Aruã is replaced with the lighthouse, which indicates his highly respectful future role as a guiding light.

In his article having the tone of Franz Fanon, Rocha claims that it is a normal behavior for the starving people to resort violence. It is not a primitive act; on the contrary, it is quite revolutionary: "From Cinema Novo it should be learned that an aesthetic of violence, before being primitive, is revolutionary. It is the initial moment when the colonizer becomes aware of the colonized. Only when confronted with violence does the colonizer understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits. As long as they do not take up arms, the colonized remain slaves; a first policeman had to die for the French to become aware of the Algerians" (Rocha, 1965, p. 70). He makes a reference to Algerian War and claims that Algerians are to kill the first police officer to kill their hunger for freedom and their recognition by the colonizer. Certainly, the

circumstances and the case of Algerians is different from what happens in *Barravento*, but in terms of dealing with the oppressor and asking for dignity, violence becomes the key factor and the initiatory step in attaining the solution to those problems. While Algerians were under colonial regime and were struggling for their freedom, in *Barravento* they are to deal with the problems of neo-colonialism. As Rocha states they need to face with oppression yet within a different circumstance.

When *Barravento* and *The Battle of Algiers* (Pontecorvo, 1967), a film based on the facts about Algerian War, are compared, *violence* becomes evident as a crucial step in the revolution. In the beginning of *The Battle of Algiers*, Ali, the NLF (The National Liberation Front) activist, receives a note giving instructions for the first act of violence. The note writes:

"There's a Moorish café on rue Randon, in the Casbah. Merabi, the owner, is a police informer. Every afternoon at 5:00, a French policeman stops by. He stays a few minutes, long enough to drink a coffee and get information. Then he leaves. You are to kill the policeman."

"Not Merabi?"

"No, the policeman" (Pontecorvo, 1967).

As Rocha remarks, it is a must that the police officer be killed, because killing the owner of the café, who is Algerian and an informer, does not serve their purpose and does not count, since the informer would be replaced with another one and their situation remains the same. Later on, they stop their bombing incidents and go on strike; however, Ali prefers using arms to going on strike. The NLF leader Larbi Ben M'Hidi tells him that committing violence is just an initiatory step to take: "Acts of violence don't win wars. Neither wars nor revolutions. Terrorism is useful as a start. But then, the people themselves must act. That's the rationale behind this strike. To mobilize all Algerians, to assess our strength" (Pontecorvo, 1967). Even if the strike does not succeed, it will at least make United Nations discern Algerians strength: "It may not do any good, but at least the UN will be able to gauge our strength" (Pontecorvo, 1967). Thus, in terms of recognition of their power and resistance, a violent act is a quite crucial action to take. As it requires the first French police officer's being killed in *The Battle of Algiers*, Firmino is to commit evil deed to mobilize the cavalla fishermen in *Barravento*. In brief, both the killing the police officer and cutting the net are the sparks kindling the fire of freedom and revolution.

Another important concept that Fanon deals is the creation of the new men in the process of decolonization. According to him, "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder [...] It brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men, and with it a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is the veritable creation of new men. But this creation owes nothing of its legitimacy to any supernatural power; the 'thing,' which has been colonized becomes man during the same process by which it frees itself" (Fanon, 1963, pp. 36-37). The disorder coming along with decolonization, brings forth a new man emancipates himself from enslavement or oppression. In *Barravento*, the disorder caused by Firmino leads the born of new courageous Aruã. He is the one helping Aruã to become a new man and a new leader promising hope for cavalla fishermen.

Aruã differs from the other fishermen in terms of resistance, but still, because of the role given, his hands have been tied waiting for Firmino to untie. In the end of the film, Aruã tells Naína to wait for him until he comes back: "You won't be alone. Spend a year with Mãe Dadá, if that's what you want. I'll go work in the city so we can have our own net. Firmino is no good, but he's right. Nobody cares about the Black and the poor. We have to fix our lives and everybody else's. I'm brave enough now" (Rocha, 1962). He goes out the sea and disappears along with the song that goes "I'm going to Bahia to see the money flows." Then the camera turns to the lighthouse, which indicates Aruã as the new and true *Mestre* that will light the way for the cavalla fishermen.

### **Religion as Aesthetic**

In the course of Bahamian Renaissance, due to promoting the religious themes and the cultural wealth, the ignored African Brazilian religion *Candomblé* was able to gain a global acceptance. *Barravento* deals with the spiritual world of Bahian people as well as their hunger; therefore, the religious aesthetic is as significant as aesthetic of hunger, and it cannot be overlooked. American anthropologist Mikelle Omari states, "*Candomblé* Nago offers Afro-Bahians a channel through which they may gain a significant measure of self-esteem, social solidarity, prestige, and social mobility in a system which celebrates African values, behavior and skin color" (cit. in Mitchell, 2006, p. 79). It is a fact that the filmic discourse of *Barravento* feels like accusatory for *Candomblé*, since within the frame

of Marxist thought the religion serves as a drug alienating them from facing their real problem, hence the solution; however, all the rituals are handled with a great respect and depicted with a dignity: "at a deeper level, the way in which the rituals are approached is one of respect and not of derision" (Sansi, 2007, p. 136). In spite of Rocha's preponderating criticism of *Candomblé*, the beautiful and religiously oriented life of blacks is enlivened within religious aesthetics.

*Candomblé*, originated in Bahia, is an integrated religious tradition processed in creolization of African Yoruba traditions with Roman Catholicism and indigenous American traditions. Due to the unceasing arrival of Yoruba religion with the enslaved West Africans in the course of the slavery, *Candomblé* preserved its strength and influence on black people. Additionally, the urban life the slaves encounter in the New World was "reminiscent of that from which they came –Yorubaland also being highly urbanized, with cities like Lagos, Ibadan, and Oio" (Stam, 2004, p. 205). Similar to African American slaves, African Brazilians underwent religious restraint, but the African Brazilian slaves were not subject to a systematic devastation in their beliefs and cultural values as much as African Americans. In the years of slavery, African Brazilians were forbidden to practice their religions; however, by making the pretence of worshipping Christian saints equating and corresponding each of their *orixá*, the spirits of Ifa divination, they managed to practice and survive their religion. While they perform religious service of Christianity, they secretly worship their own *orixás*. Thus, they were able to build a "'microcosmic Africa' (Bastide, 1978), where the philosophical and artistic essences of the continent are preserved" (Sansi, 2007, p. 2). Thus, the religious syncretism with the one having social power was survival tactics they applied. They preserved their "African cosmovision" and dignity in a hegemonic system, so they reconstructed a new identity as African Brazilian in the New World, which made "Afro Brazilians religions were a form of cultural resistance" (Stam, 2004, pp. 208-209). In other words, to preserve their religion "they changed everything, giving birth to Afro-Brazilian culture" (Sansi, 2007, p. 61).

*Candomblé*, indeed, figures as a contact zone "where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery" (Pratt, 2008, p. 7). In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt refers to human experience

expressed in the oppressor's terms; "autoethnography" or "autoethnographic expression," which are the "instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's terms" (Pratt, 2008, p. 9). In other words, it is the way of blacks' expressing themselves within the terms of the dominant culture. Similarly, Homi Bhabha also argues that living in margins constitutes condition of hybridity, which requires construction of new identity in order to resist and survive marginalization: "...the epistemological 'limits' of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices - women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexualities [...] It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing" (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 6-7). Similarly, within the boundaries of *Candomblé*, African Brazilians maintain their presence by integrating the disparate voices, ideas and beliefs into a religion, with which they present differential aesthetics of way of living. Thus, in terms of religious Aesthetic, *Barravento* praises *Candomblé* as an African religion and cultural heritage and exemplifies many detailed rituals as the contact zone. It screens the beautiful rituals of *Candomblé*, *Capoeira* and the collaborative work of the fishermen with the exotic coast of Bahia in the background. The film opens with the harmonious labor of fishermen along with the dance and drums providing a background of African rhythms. The songs, dances, rituals and drums have a very significant importance in the film, since they represent the African Brazilian culture.

Following the prefatory, we are immediately introduced the fishermen's ritual harmonized with a typical call and response *Candomblé* song, indicating how strongly their fishing ritual is influenced by their religion. "It hints at what image and dialogue will later make clear: their catch is regarded as the bountiful gift of Iemanjá" (Bruce, 1995, p. 291). Then we have the dark clouds foreshadowing the barravento (the turning wind) and the wide shot of the beach and the sea where *Iemanjá* lives. Now that *Iemanjá* decides whether to protect the cavalla fishermen or to punish them, they have to honor their deity. Stam states "Performance and the arts, dance and song and spectacle, are at the very kernel of African trance religions. If the drums don't play, the gods don't come. As Robert Farris Thompson points out, art participates in the ritual process not only by honoring the deities but also by calling them into presence and action" (Stam, 2004, p. 212). Therefore, the collaborative work

of cavalla fishermen constitutes the ritual of *Candomblé*, with which they honor their deity, and it is not a coincidence that the wide shot of beach follows the close shot of African drum and the drummer who performs his part enthusiastically. Then, we have the fishing ritual of the cavalla fishermen. The dance or the ritual of them emphasized with the close shots of their feet. Rather than the people and the faces, the camera is focused on the feet, which depicts both the labor and the ritual. Aruã, who has the significant role in the film, is the only one presented with a close shot, because in this scene rather than who performs what is performed is more important as it the case in music. One can argue that music used in *Barravento* has more part than dialogue due to the low budget, but as Graham Bruce asserts "it was an aesthetic as much as an economic decision" and "in the first half-hour of the film, it completely dominates its structure (Bruce, 1995, p. 291). Moreover, along with the music, the dances and rituals, composing *Candomblé*, are important religious elements that contributes the aesthetic of the film.

Clearly, the collaborative work of cavalla fishermen is expressed in sacralized harmony in which religion and everyday life constitute an art of living despite the hunger they struggle with. They lead a religiously oriented life in poverty, but still in harmony. In the film, the hunger and illiteracy of cavalla-fishermen are interwoven with the beauty of African Brazilian mysticism. Rather than presenting its rituals as insignificant and frenzied behaviors, they are illustrated as a powerful religion with a dignity: "The camera movements, the sound, the drums, highlight the beauty of the rituals—the *ialorixá* (high priestess) wielding her long-handled *adja* (metal bell) over the trembling body of Naína in trance; the *iao* (initiates) with their shaved heads; the *mãe de santo* summoning Ifá by throwing *búzios* (cowrie shells) on a lace cloth on the ground." (Stam, 2004, p. 224). The dance of the priestesses, playing drums, the ritual of Naína's honoring her entity and throwing cowrie shells, are significant and symbolic practices that are connected to Yoruba religion and culture.

In Ifa divination of Yoruba religion, there are sacred texts, which can be acknowledged as equivalent to *Bible* in Christianity, and in this system, sixteen palm nuts are tossed sixteen times and all configurations, or signs are interpreted into verses that the tossed numbers signify. The tossed palm nuts and their visual signs are known as "signatures of an *Odu*," which can only be read by the *Babalawo*, or priest (Gates, 1988, p. 10). *Babalao*, or "father of secrets," serves as the high priest with broad

knowledge of the Ifa Divination. While women cannot serve as a *Babalawo* and practice Ifa divination- unless the position cannot be passed on the son but the eldest daughter-, in *Candomblé* of Afro-Brazil culture, women can provide the same service as priestesses and do the same practice. Over the years, thus, across the Atlantic in Bahia, priestesses have assumed the role of *Babalawos*, and the palm nuts are placed with *jogo de buzios* (set of sixteen cowrie shells). As in the case with Ifa divination, with a reference to sacred texts, cowrie shells are tossed to provide a solution or an answer to a question: "Again, over time, priestesses assumed the role of diviners. Rather by using a different and not as detailed technique using cowrie shells and making reference to Yoruba proverbs to interpret the advice of the *orixa*, women marginalized the men's participation. *Babalawos* continued to be consulted if they were available on a freelance basis or to resolve a particularly contentious internal temple issue" (Alonso, 2014, p. 117). In the film, the High Priestess uses the cowry shells in order to communicate with their entity *Iemanjá* and get informed about her verdict for Naína. As Murrell explains "The priestess has the duty of communicating between *aie* and *orun*, 'the human realm' and 'the divine realm,' in this important ritual by interpreting the positions of the shells and giving the verdict of an *orixa*" (Murrell, 2010, p. 174). In the end of the ritual, the High Priestess informs the others that Naína belongs to *Iemanjá* and she has to spend a year in *Iemanjá's* service to honor her, but Naína is not willing to do so and runs away. Moreover, during the Naína's ritual the high priestess touches several spots on Naína's body with a cross in front of the Santos, and when she throws the shells onto the white lace cloth we see the same cross lying by the cowrie shells. Thus the close shot of the ritual clearly exemplifies how African beliefs are revived in a new form for as the contact zone.

When *Barravento* is analyzed in terms of its own cultural frame of reference, Firmino becomes prominent character requiring in-depth analysis. He distinguishes from the other characters due to his prophet-like mission. Even though, he expresses himself in materialist discourse: "You pull nets every day, and for what? To make white men rich," "One's freedom can free a million" (Rocha, 1962), his actions speak just the opposite and thus he contradicts himself. In fact, Firmino is not merely a Marxist character as rendered by Rocha, but a character having a great significance in terms of African Brazilian religion and beliefs. As Stam proposes Firmino is a representational figure of *Exú*, the trickster fig-

ure rooting back Africa: "Firmino perfectly fits Abdias do Nascimento's definition of *Exú* as 'the god of dialectical contradiction' [...] At diverse points, Firmino is musically and rhythmically associated with *Exu*. His spying at Cota's seduction of *Aruã*, for example, coincides with a chant of exaltation to *Exu*" (Stam, 2004, p. 223). That Firmino has contradictions is, indeed, the essence of the figurative narration used in the script. In Yoruba culture, *Exú* is the divine figure that intermediates between gods and human beings: "As José Gatti points out, Firmino is liminal, beyond Good and Evil, borderline characteristics with *Exu*: he too is a messenger between two worlds" (cit. in Stam, 2004, p. 222).

The theory of "The Signifying Monkey," coined by Henry Louis Gates, is a very important theory providing an insight into a black text or any black material based on African folk culture. The name of the theory is based on the poems of double-voiced or oxymoron Signifying Monkey, which is *Exú*'s "functional equivalent in Afro-American mythic discourse" (Gates, 1988, p. 13). The original trickster rooting back Africa is *Esu*, and across Atlantic "His New World figurations include *Exú* in Brazil, *Echu-Elegua* in Cuba, *Papa Legba* (pronounced *La-Bas*) in the pantheon of the *loa* of *Vaudou* of Haiti, and *Papa La Bas* in the *loa* of *Hoodoo* in the United States" (Gates, 1988, p. 5). Like *Hermes* in Western mythology, *Esu* is the messenger and interpreter of the gods: "*Esu* is the indigenous black metaphor for the literary critic, and *Esu-tufunaalo* is the study of methodological principles of interpretation itself, or what the literary critic does," (Gates, 1988, p. 9) a system of signification meant to "unravel the knots of *Esu*." It "is the figure of the double-voiced, epitomized by *Esu*'s depictions in sculpture as possessing two mouths" (Gates, 1988, p. xxv). As Gates emphasizes, the trope of Signifyin(g) is a crucial component in the rhetoric of the double-voiced *Esu*. *Esu*'s is the master of *ase*, or creating the meaning. In poems of *Oriki Esu*, the sacred texts of *Ifa*, it says "He [*Ifa*] borrowed *Esu*'s *ase* and put it in his own mouth to give a message to the supplicant." (cit. in Gates, 1988, p. 9). Thus a critic should bear in the mind one cannot trust what Firmino says, since he is a reincarnation of *Exú* and his discourse is double-voiced as an oxymoron. What he says and what he does is likely to contradict.

Furthermore, Henry Louis Gates explains that *Exú* is an outside force resolving the problems: "*Esu* is the *deus ex machina*, but also the *deus est mortali iuvare mortalem*, god who is the helping of man to man" (Gates, 1988, p. 31), and the opening shots of *Barravento* gives very

important hints for Firmino's serving as a "deus ex machina," that will resolve the problem of the cavalla fishermen. When Firmino appears on the screen for the first time, he gives an impression as if he descended from the sky. He jumps on the rocky shore by the Lighthouse, which foreshadows his role as a guiding light showing the right direction to go. He is the messenger *orixá* that incarnated in human characteristics to help his people: "Originally local culture heroes or deified ancestors, the *orixás* generally incarnate human characteristics: they marry, have children, quarrel, and have distinct preferences in terms of color, foods, drink, and rhythms, rather like the Greek gods" (Stam, 2004, pp. 209-210). In contrast to Marxist Firmino who stands against the religion, I propose that he himself is the religion. As Stam asserts: "although Firmino speaks a racially inflected materialist discourse...his actions imply that he too believes in the religion" (Stam, 2004, p. 222). In his deeds, Firmino always consults the religion. He asks help from *Mea Dea* for a spell, but she rejects him. Then he asks Uncle Tião to cast a spell: "I want a spell to ruin the net and destroy Aruã" (Rocha, 1962), which does not work. Lastly, by getting Aruã seduced by Cota, he makes *Iemanjá* angry, which will lead the *barravento* in the end of the film. In brief, when Firmino is analyzed in the light of the trope Signifyin(g), he is part of the convention, and he acts accordingly.

The African Diaspora widely broadcasts *Exú* as the deity holding the power to change fate, either good or bad. He "is the guardian of the crossroads, master of style and of stylus, the phallic god of generation and fecundity, master of that elusive, mystical barrier that separates the divine world from the profane" (Gates, 1988, p. 6). Furthermore, the *ase*, which Gates defines as creating the meaning in linguistic terms, is also defined as "the vital power, the energy, the great strength of all things"(cit. in Imhotep, 2012, para. 3) Asar Imhotep linguistically equates *ase* to a scepter: "A scepter is a classical African emblem of power...This same *ase*. 'scepter' in Yorùbá I equate, linguistically, to ... 'scepter, staff, rod' in ancient Egyptian [ ]"( Imhotep, 2012, para. 9). Horus, the god of sky and kingship is depicted with a scepter holding in his hand in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. Certainly, in *Barravento*, there is not such a reference to a king or kingship, but the pose Firmino strikes when he holds the fishing gaff he finds lying on the beach after the *Capoeira* fight with Aruã (Figure 1) resembles the hieroglyphic image of Horus with *ase*, the symbol of the authority that can change everything (Rocha, 1962). In the

film, it is Firmino, who has the power to change the fate of cavalla fishermen, and through his tricks, he accomplishes his mission. After *Capoeira* fight, Firmino says "I'm going to spare your life so you can save our people! You have to follow Aruã, not the Mestre! The Mestre is a slave!" (Rocha, 1962). Later he picks up the gaff, holds it for a few second then thrusts it into the sand, which I propose that it refers to handing over *the power* to Aruã, who will change the fate of the cavalla fishermen by obtaining a new fishing net of their own. Thus, the mission of leadership passes from Firmino to Aruã.



Figure 1: The sequence of Firmino (Antonio Pitanga) after the Capoeira fight with Aruã.

In Yoruba and across Atlantic, *Exú* is also depicted as a mischievous character. One of the best-known stories attributed to him "ascribes to Esu his principal function of the indeterminacy of interpretation" (Gates, 1988, p. 35). According to the story, a stranger with two-sided hat greets two lifelong friends, which later induces a dispute on the color of the hat between friends. While one claims the hat is white, the other asserts that it is black. *Exú* stops the quarrel and explains both are right about what they see, since the one side of the hat is white and the other side is black. Then he says, "I am the man who paid the visit over which you now quarrel, and here is the cap that caused the dissension...Are you not the two friends who made vows of friendship? When you vowed to be friends

always, to be faithful and true to each other, did you reckon with Esu? Do you know that he who does not put Esu first in all his doings has himself to blame if things misfire?" (cit. in Gates, 1988, p. 35). Indeed, they are both right and wrong, because the hat is neither white nor black. The sole ambition of *Exú* is to kindle a bone of contention, which will make them revise their friendship. As Johnson states "With discord, however, *Exú* also plants the seeds of movement and change." (Johnson, 2002, p. 39). Similarly in *Barravento*, due to the tricks Firmino makes, Aruã will be able to revise the situation, which will lead a great change for the cavalla fishermen. Firmino as a trickster figure plants the seeds for the action. He is not a malicious man, but a brother who wants to help his kinfolks: "I'm your brother, too. I just want to help" (Rocha, 1962). Throughout the film, Firmino is determined to demolish his power and demystify Aruã in the eyes of his community. He gives the feeling of that he is an antagonist and adversary, but at the end of the film, his antagonist behaviors fall into place.

When we take African Brazilian folklore into consideration, it can be argued that Firmino is not only the symbol of *Exú*, but also *malandro*. Paul Christopher Johnson states that *Exú* is "the paradigmatic Brazilian," "man of the street," or "*malandro*." Underneath the photograph (Figure 2) of a *malandro*, taken by Johnson and looking exactly Firmino, he explains that "This icon takes the form of a familiar type in Brazilian folklore, the *malandro*, a clever, dapper fellow who somehow always gets by without holding a job, simply by virtue of his slick elegance, silver tongue, and affable nature" (Johnson, 2002, p. 39). In Brazilian history, blacks were marginalized and obliged to live on low paid jobs, which led the birth of an urban myth of the *malandro* after the abolition of slavery. The *malandro*, regarded as petty criminals wandering in the big cities, is a witty black character that hustles and lives off illegal jobs, so the discourse such as a "street hustler or rogue, a gangster or samba player from the 1930s" (Sansi, 2007, p. 32) are attributed to him. Similarly in *Barravento*, Firmino fits the description of a *malandro* who is on the run: "I had to work hard, until the police came pouring down on me. I'm here to hide, since the police like the sunlight. (Rocha, 1962). He draws attention to the definition of himself coined by the police: "My situation with the police is very complicated. They've even invented a new word: '-subversive individual'" (Rocha, 1962). As it is stated earlier, that he is a "subversive individual" is not just a coincidence but really important as Cota implies.



Figure 2: The photograph taken by Paul Christopher Johnson (Retrieved from Johnson, 2002, p. 39)

Firmino is a member of this cavalla fishing black community, but his clothing, his oratorical manners and demeanor create an impression of his being out of place. In the very beginning of *Barravento*, the shots of the collective labor of the fishermen, Firmino and the *Mestre* present a distinctive isolation. While we have fishermen working in solidarity on one side, we have Firmino and the *Mestre* in separate juxtaposed shots on the other side. As it is discussed earlier, the *Mestre* acts as the replacement of the oppressor, so he stands out from the cavalla fishermen, but Firmino's solo shot indicates his role as *Exú*, or *malandro*. In the scene of collaborative work of the cavalla fishermen, a call and response work song accompanies; however, when the camera turns to the solitary figure of Firmino on the rocks, we hear a solo samba song. The music is an important part of the films as it presents the culture. Samba specifically, is a combination of African and Portuguese musical traditions and presents the hybrid culture of African Brazilians and life experiences of blacks in Brazil. "The *malandro*, 'rejecting demeaning manual work and challenging his inferior social position,' provided 'the greatest source of inspiration' for sambista, songs featuring *malandro* predominated during the twenties and thirties" (Bueno & Caesar, 1998, p. 240). Thus, the music

accompanies with Firmino's shots gives another hint for his function in the film.

Although the *malandro* seems to a malicious and illegal character violating the law and manipulating people, he does not take advantage of his people and never intend to harm them. On the contrary, he finds a way out of an unjust situation through wit. As Lisa Jesse asserts "the *malandro* is [...] opposed to the exploitation of his social class. He challenges any form of manipulating by the state, and thus is worshipped by the rest of the community. He does not want to become a middle class city dweller, preferring instead to indulge in small acts *malandragem*[...] The myth of the *malandro* had much more power than the real life spiv, and helped preserve the socio-cultural identity of his community." (cit. in Bueno & Caesar, 1998, p. 240). Even though the meaning of *malandro* "has been translated as spiv, wide-boy, rogue, hustle, pimp, black marketer, gangster, and so forth," (Bueno & Caesar, 1998, p. 227) he has been considered as a cultural hero, associated with Afro-Brazilian culture especially with samba, since the abolition of slavery in 1888, in Brazil. He has become the symbol of resistance for forced submission to dominant ideology and culture as Firmino. In the first half of the film, Firmino seems a destructive person, but as the story moves on it appears that he is the savior of cavalla fishermen, because he raises the social consciousness and unites them to resist the oppressor. Similar to *malandro* serving as a hero in black folklore, Firmino is a hero in *Barravento*.

The trickster figure in African tales is a very important character as he was always a liberator and hero for blacks, especially during the slavery years. He was the savior of the slaves and the enemy of the slaveholders: "in Brazil, in enslavement, black followers of Esu represented him as the liberator of the slaves and as the enemy of the enslavers, 'killing, poisoning, and driving mad their oppressors.' Esu, then, assumed a direct importance to the black enslaved, while retaining his traditional functions. This importance is affirmed by representations of the figure of Esu in both New World and Old World black literature" (Gates, 1988, p. 31). Manipulating the power relationships has always been the kernel of the African tales. As Lawrence W. Levine asserts "In large part African trickster tales revolved around the strong patterns of authority so central to African cultures. As interested as they might be in material gains, African trickster figures were more obsessed with manipulating the strong and reversing the normal structure of power and prestige" (Levine, 2007,

p. 105). It is true that in *Barravento*, the oppressor is absentee and our trickster figure Firmino does not confront the oppressor; however, with his tricks, he manipulates the fishermen and has them obtain the courage to change their financial power relation in the near future.

Firmino as a trickster figure plays tricks to help the cavalla fishermen, but the most crucial one is that he destroys sacralized beliefs about Aruã, which initiates the "barravento," which is the turning point for the future of the cavalla fishing community. Firmino asks Cota to seduce Aruã so that he will be no longer sacred chaste of *Iemanjá*: "No, they think I'm only barking. Aruã got off the raft, and the sea stopped. Now, they think he's a god. You have to stop this. You're going to end Aruã 's spell" (Rocha, 1962). Cota is a prostitute in the village and has a very close relationship with Firmino; thus, I propose that she functions as *Pomba Gira*, who is the female equivalent of *Exú*: "The female counterpart of Exu, *Pomba Gira*, often takes the image of the prostitute" (Sansi, 2007, p. 33). *Pomba Gira*, consorting *Exú* in Afro-Brazil culture, represents sexuality, beauty and desire. Similarly, in *Barravento*, Cota whose name also sounds similar to *Gira*, is a beautiful and sexy woman. She is a prostitute and an independent individual who does not conform: "Listen, I don't depend on anyone. There's no man in this town who won't come by and ask for me. I can get what I want. It's my body, and I set a price for it" (Rocha, 1962). Certainly, she cannot be replaced with Firmino, but without their collaborative work, Firmino cannot achieve his goal. First Cota rejects Firmino's proposal due to her fear of death.

Cota: "Any woman who touches him dies."

Firmino: "That's a lie! You can only die of hunger, bullet holes, whip strokes. That's what kills a person. My friend, there are many Black people suffering around the world. One's freedom can free a million. The sea is filled with hopeless fishermen. Only people like Aruã can solve that. If you like me, do it tonight" (Rocha, 1962).

Firmino does not hesitate telling lies as *Exú* does. He convinces Cota, but counter to Firmino's assurance, the following morning Cota and *Náina's* stepfather die mysteriously. Based on *Candomblé* conscience, it can be argued that Cota's death is an inevitable consequence. It is the revenge of *Iemanjá*, and Firmino is quite conscious what he does.

Furthermore, the seduction scenes are juxtaposed with the scenes from the initiatory blood ritual of *Náina* and three shaved head *santos*

(saints) in company with African drumming. Roger Sansi explains that the ritual of a *santo* is considered as the process of construction of a saint. In other words, *Candomblé* helps a *santo* to build his new social identity:

In this sense, the process of initiation can be seen as a process of construction of the person. After Goldman (1885), we could look at *Candomblé* as a dynamic system that builds persons. It not only tries to classify people through archetypes or reflect a repressed ego, as psychological interpretations of possession have often postulated, but its ritual practices also produce new social persons. If we see the person as an open process, we could say that the *santos* are active elements that collaborate precisely in the construction of a person who is always in the making (Sansi, 2007, p. 26).

Thus, the parallel montage juxtaposes not only building the new identity of Naína and *Santos*, but also Aruã's new social identity as a new leader. He is transformed into a courageous man who is determined to solve the problems of his villagers. Moreover, Aruã's having sex with Cota follows the scene of stormy weather and dark clouds foreshadowing the "barravento," or turning wind, that will lead the transformation in village: "Turning Wind is the violent moment when earth and sea are transformed when sudden changes occur in love, life and society" (Rocha, 1962). Thus, the title refers to the "barravento" that Firmino triggers: "I'm going to cause a turning wind with the tip of my knife" (Rocha, 1962). Thanks to Firmino, the trickster *Exú*, Aruã is transformed into a leader willing to transform the village for a better future. In the end of the film, when Aruã walks off the screen, the camera turns on the lighthouse, which indicates Aruã's taking over the role of leadership.

Stam argues that "He (Firmino) is a catalyst for mobilization, yet many of his individual decision backfire. Like the *barravento* itself, he appears suddenly and brings turmoil in his wake. He cuts the net as a provocation, but the dialectic is not advanced; the fishermen merely return to the old, dangerous ways" (Stam, 2004, p. 223). In contrast to Stam's argument, I propose that "barravento" is a signification for the new future of the villagers and the village. That they turn to their old days cannot be permanent, because Aruã is determined to work for a year and come back with a net of their own. Firmino is not a destructive character; on the contrary, as a trickster figure, he is the one telling what to do to the cavalla fishermen. As Stam argues "Firmino is riven by contradictions" (Stam, 2004, p. 223), which is in the nature of the black oral narrative

traditions. He tells lies and plays tricks on people: "I knew it was all a lie. I risked my self willingly. The net is torn because it was too old" (Rocha, 1962), and he is quite conscious about what he does. One of the conversations between Firmino and Cota goes:

Cota: "Nigger all dressed up like a doctor, huh?"

Firmino: "No way, woman. It's just for the weekend. You know my game, don't you?" (Rocha, 1962)

Firmino is there for just a specific purpose. When he accomplishes his mission he disappears as magically as he appears for the first time on the screen.

It should be borne in mind that even though Rocha made changes in the script, *Barravento* is created based on black narration roots back Africa. The metaphors created through rhetoric of Signifyin(g) offers a chain of puns on words, of which the black artist takes advantage of "figurative substitutions," and, as Gates states, "These substitutions in Signifyin(g) tend to be humorous, or function to name a person or a situation in a telling manner" (Gates, 1988, p. 50). As in the previous conversation, Firmino who represents both *Exú* and *Malandro*, can hide himself behind a figurative substitution. Therefore, I argue that the reason why Cota likens Firmino to a "doctor" is just an "arbitrary choice for figural substitution" (Gates, 1988, p. 137), with which meaning is created in the black double voiced utterance, and "'the masses,' especially in a multiethnic society, draw on "arbitrary substitution" freely, to disrupt the signifier by displacing its signified in an intentional act of will" (Gates, 1988, p. 51). The black narration does not offer the hidden meaning to the reader outside its culture, but resists as Doris Sommer asserts. It offers "figurative substitutions," which Hurston calls toys she puts in the hand of the white reader in order to keep him busy with it while she utters what she wants and sings her own song.

## Conclusion

*Barravento*, the foremost of Cinema Novo, offers a wonderful combination of aesthetic of exotic Bahian coast, mystic conventions of African Brazilians and the hunger the cavalla fishermen. The facts of cavalla fishermen are depicted by the imperfectness of Cinema Novo in a perfect harmony. It is an "ode to Africanized-indigenized mestiço communities," (Stam, 2004, p. 130); however, while the film presents a micro-

cosmic Africa, where they live in coherence with their *orixás* and their force, Rocha depicts African Brazilian religion, *Candomblé*, as an "opium" of the fishermen in a Marxist critical discourse. He aims at unveiling the real face of African Brazilian life in the coast of Bahia, and his strong Marxist discourse on hunger preponderates over or religious aesthetics. According to Santos, the more the value of *Candomblé* is affirmed, the more Rocha's *Barravento* is diminished, because the matter revolves around the non-acceptance of the religion that is part of the culture, and Rocha deals critically with a black theme as a non-black who does not recognize the essence of the black rhetoric. With regards to politics, both Santo's *Barravento* and Rocha's *Barravento* are political work, but in different perspectives and objectives. "For Paulino, a film that focused on black culture and its traditions beautifully was a political intervention in a Bahia of the aristocracy of cacao, full of prejudices" (Nunes, 2009, p. 150). Moreover, the new identity constructed in the New World through the religious syncretism is a form of cultural resistance, and it as significant as their struggle to make a living.

In conclusion, *Barravento* makes inroads into two contradictory resistances existing in one body, because the religious aesthetics stands contradictory what Rocha wants to provoke by his Marxist discourse. As far as the aesthetics of cinema concerned the film creates such a space to infuse not only a political manifesto but also a religious manifesto in favor of their liberation struggle. Therefore, as Stam states *Barravento* requires a spiritualist analysis as well as a materialist one: "*Barravento* is thus open equally to a spiritualist or a materialist reading" (Stam, 2004, p. 225), and it would be unfair to apply a single approach to *Barravento*.

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