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Axé Literature and Audiovisual

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Abstract From the critical analysis of expressions such as myth, itan, oriki, quizila, among others, we seek to elucidate the concept of axé and “Axé Literature”, expanding it to other arts. To this end, the comparative method is also used, establishing dialogues with literary and audiovisual works, with a view to demonstrating the existence of the concept in works of the artistic languages. By proving the existence of axé literature and audiovisual, the importance of the mythology of orixás, inquices, voduns, caboclos and ancestors for cultural diversity is put into debate, and, therefore, also of literature, cinema and other axé arts. At the same time, the possibility of changes to the concept is admitted, considering the continuity of research.

Keywords Axé, Axé Literature, Axé Cinema, Afro-Brazilian mythology, Afro-Brazilian literature, Afro-Brazilian culture

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1. Introduction

Explaining what axé literary and audiovisual arts are could be summarized as stating the need for the existence of narratives, axé myths, composing and being reinvented within the respective works of art. Obviously, axé arts are not restricted to cinema and other narrative texts, see the sculptures of Deoscóredes Maximiliano dos Santos — better known as Mestre Didi —, who I understand to be one of the precursors of axé literature. However, the examples and brief comparative exercises proposed here address only narrative literary texts and cinema.

Nevertheless, some adversities may arise due to the nature of any condensation. When one intends to be synthetic, as in the first sentence of this text, one may be embarrassed to believe that not only the meaning of “literary and audiovisual arts”, but also the content of the word axé is common knowledge. In general, regarding “literary and audiovisual arts”, we will consider that the expression of beauty through writing, orality and audiovisual productions such as cinema are the domain of all readers of this text. As for the Yoruba word axé and some of the implications required for its understanding, we recognize the need for more statements that can elucidate what axé is, thus arriving at the definition of Axé Literature and axé arts.

Although the content responsible for creating the concept “Axé Literature” — expanding to other arts — is as old as itans, orikis and other narratives and poetry of black ancestry, I have been working on the idea of the definition for some time. Therefore, in this writing, I will present another exercise, which is intended to clarify what constitutes Axé Literature and, by extension, other axé arts. A question that may come to the reader's mind would be why I speak about literature and audiovisual. The answer is that both are narratives, and although axé is broad, the focus here will be on literature and audiovisual, which is sometimes constructed by novelistic adaptations.

Resuming the statement of the indispensability of elucidating what axé is, and therefore the adjective that qualifies literature and other arts, a script was created explaining some terms necessary to understand axé as a qualifier of arts. The first and perhaps most important word to address is “myth”, after all, without understanding the meaning given to Afro-Brazilian mythology, it will not be possible to arrive at a correct approach to the concept. Positive and negative otherness (Chauí, 1993), beliefs, stereotype, racism, blackness from the perspective of Aimé Césaire (2010), cultural blackening, racism, cordial racism, taboos, quizilas, itans, orikis, iurobaianidade, “being of the waters”, place of speech and its possibilities of movement, axé music, people of saint and people of axé are other discussions necessary to define literature and other axé arts. Amid the explanations, works of art are called into comparative dialogue, including the proposition of a list of quizilas — recommendations — necessary for the classification of literature and other axé arts.

2. From myth to literature, audiovisual and other axé arts

It is not uncommon for the term mythology to be questioned and/or used in association with lies, a possible meaning used in different situations. Thus, we ironically have provocations such as “the myth of perfect love” to affirm the imperfection of the sublime feeling, or that anything impossible to be real, acceptable, believable would be a myth, which could vary between jokes and burlesque, as the lines are tenuous. Rightly, Everardo Rocha (2012, p.7) states that

Myth is a narrative. It's a speech. It is a way for societies to reflect their contradictions, express their paradoxes, doubts and concerns. It can be seen as a possibility to reflect on existence, the cosmos, situations of “being in the world”, or social relationships.

In the same line of thought, according to Gildeci Leite (2007), myth is not a lie, it exists and can be endorsed or deconstituted by other discourses, never ignored. Movements with the aim of making this or that culture doubtful and/or smaller may also be based on actions that can be called mythological, some presenting themselves as the oldest, most reliable, unique truths. Thus, it is worth briefly reflecting on what would be true, because if a narrative is used to deconstruct another narrative, the figurative meaning of myth — lie — appears. Preserving its meaning of truth, the myth or narrative will always be legitimate or illegitimate according to desires and power relations.

The proposed path is that of positive alterity, according to Marilena Chauí (1993), the right to difference without exclusions. After all, narratives in general will always be targets of criticism, whether constructive and/or destructive, and affected by other narratives. Therefore, the one who would fail to tell the truth would be the other, the target of decomposition. The other can be constructed as an impostor or a legitimate representative of the truth, depending on the intention of the “I”. Not infrequently, for a materialist, mythologies linked to spirituality, i. e. not

proven from their perspective of understanding the world, are called falsehoods or; to use a very common derogatory term in this context, they would be “beliefs”. Among the supporters of the use of the semantic field of (common) “belief” are included not only those who defend that existence is explained through physical matter as the only reality, but also totalitarian religious discursive practices, which disregard contributions from non-hegemonic human feelings, the other to be destroyed presented as a liar by totalitarianism. Even embracing purposes of deconstructing or disallowing certain ways of being and being in the world, those who act in this way cannot be fully indifferent to the other, because to deny what is different it is necessary to know something about what is being refuted or at least pretend to be aware of what you dispute. Coldness when inferiorizing and insensitivity towards other people's truths are weapons used to attempt homogeneity and repression.

Depreciating the diverse reveals/hides the traps of the stereotype and its fixities, such as the Brazilian proverb stating “pau que nasce torto nunca se endireita” (literally, “a stick that is born crooked never straightens”, an approximate equivalent of the English “as the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined”). Who would be the crooked ones? Were they really defective? Why crooked or bent, and how is that defined? The crooked would be the ones considered imperfect, deviating from what is hegemonically understood as natural, accepted, beautiful: the other to be fought against. Speaking specifically about racism — manifested through hatred of blackness —, oppression undoubtedly becomes more evident when the racist perceives the black phenotype in the face of his own suffocating existence, which he considers ethnically and culturally exclusive. In addition to the phenotype and always linked — associated, addressed — to it, individuals who have a lower melanin component can also be victims of racism due to the possibility of cultural and/or religious blackening. Hence Césaire's (2010, p. 109) statements about blackness: “It is an awakening; awakening of dignity. It is a rejection; rejection of oppression. It is a fight, that is, a fight against inequality. It is also revolt.” The individual who is enchanted by the path of cultural blackening can also suffer racist actions, although his peace will be preserved when disassociated from the black world, after all, his degree of blackening does not make him definitively a black person, but a blackened person. The existence of the blackened individual can oscillate between being seen as someone who, for example, is initiated into an Afro-Brazilian religion and may thus be a victim of religious racism, and on the other hand when outside of that context being able to exercise their non-black freedom of movement without the mishaps caused by racism. Obviously, at the slightest recognition of one's affiliation with the black world one will be treated as blackened, so a non-black person initiated into Candomblé¹ will suffer some consequences for embarking on that path of blackness.

The cultural blackening addressed here has a certain relationship with assuming oneself to be black, as stated in *Tornar-se negro [Becoming Black]*, by Neusa Santos Souza (1983), without the requirement that the “I who wants to be black” (Bernd, 1988) be physically and epidermally black. Thus, Souza (1983) draws attention to the impositions made on black minds, which in order to be accepted are forced to agree with white ways of being and being in the world: “[...] being black is not a given condition, a priori. It is a becoming. Being black is becoming black” (Souza, 1983, p. 77). While Souza's (1983) argument denounces mechanisms and reasons why black men and women on social mobility are forced to deny their ancestries and mythologies, the concept of cultural blackening emerges as a response to the impositions of whitening black people and society. The counter-coup is gentle and does not propose totalitarianism: in cultural blackening there are negotiations in the manner of Oxum, for example, who at the right time knew how to make women sterile so that men were forced to listen to women when making decisions about the destinies of the world – see the myth reproduced in *Mitologia dos Orixás [Orixá Mithology]* (Prandi, 2001). After all, without heirs, men would not prolong their names after death. Therefore, to improve the explanation: to blacken culturally is to incorporate aspects of black culture without misappropriation, without authorial erasure, assuming the origin of one's belongings, of what one also wants as one's own, reciprocating with at least the assumption of blackness which one embraces, making one's black ancestry evident. Consequently, becoming black is not accompanied by intellectual dishonesty and/or the emptying of black content and meanings. That said, samba will always be samba, even associated/mixed with other rhythms, and it will always be black, having had a black origin, being a black creation. Evidently there is a movement based on black thinking that transforms non-black culture. An example is Carnival, blackened by our demonstrations. This movement builds other cultures, generally referred to with the Afro prefix. It is worth highlighting the defense of freedom for black people to be, for example, Buddhist, Christian, and to assume cultures originating from other ethnic groups.

¹ An Afro-Brazilian religion from the region called Recôncavo Baiano, a concave area which includes the capital Salvador and several surrounding cities of the state of Bahia.

It is a good idea to state that not all disbelief is based on disrespect, so that, in relation to Afro-Brazilian mythology, more intense disrespect has been observed coming from other religious forms of being in the world and less from those who base their existence on disbelief in spirituality. Therefore, while avoiding the risks of stereotypes, and understanding the dynamics of human relationships, the existence of black people will not be despised in non-black religions and the same will be true about non-black people in black religions. To a certain extent, a Christian black would be a whitened black; however, even obtaining certain advantages through a type of mulatization, say, by taking advantage of the proximity of non-black archetypes in order to climb social mobility — in the way denounced by David Brookshaw (1983) –, black remains black. Thus, in the current Brazilian context, an evangelical black person, strategically with the Bible under one of his/her arms or protected by other forms of Christian identification, has more possibilities of acceptance in the job market, for example, than a black axé person, who is sometimes forced to hide under their shirts the representations of orixás, inquices, voduns and caboclos which they normally wear around their neck. Admiration and/or repulsion occur in the same proportion when it comes to literature and other axé arts, as they are based on black mythology. The chances of success, therefore, are not determined by professional and/or artistic qualifications. The mythology that prevails in several situations is one that constructs and propagates black demonization, even though the devil is not part of African pantheons. Hence the affirmative content of literature and other axé arts, as they reinvent, reproduce and affirm black culture through enchantment.

Those movements of disrespect, with coordinated attacks aimed to destroy the black other, can be understood as cultural and/or religious racism carried out in a more or less aggressive, more or less veiled or open way. Jean-François Dortier (2010, p. 532) draws attention to the existence of “cordial racism”, referring to “[...] a survey carried out by DataFolha, in 1995,” in which “[...] 88% of non-black interviewees claimed to 'have no color prejudice', however 87% of these same interviewees confessed, at another point in the interview, to having felt prejudice against black people in some situation.” As a mythology of ethnic inequality, racism can be based on both cultural and religious aspects. Therefore, within our present scope, the attacks would be on black beauty, including all aspects of culture, religion, narratives. This would justify the peaceful acceptance of works of art based on Nordic mythologies, for example, and the depreciation of axé arts containing black stories and black mythological characters. Thus, it is common to accept artistic productions based on the beautiful Nordic Thor and at the same time attacks on Xangô. Although the myths have similarities, the first is white and Xangô is black, therefore from axé.

That said, it will not be surprising that the meaning of the word myth as a primordial narrative is often denied in order to mistakenly and harmfully attribute nonsense to black narratives, whether African, Afro-Brazilian and/or those of other Afro-descendants. It is still possible to witness people denying the use of the word myth in order to protect the group of black narratives, perhaps because they consider that, in a significant part of popular understanding, myth appears as a synonym for lie. However, the same population that understands myth as nonsense suggests knowing the power of this word when referring admiringly to personalities from the arts, sports and politics as myths. Thus, if in a joking way “perfect love” is a myth, Michael Jackson, singers and composers Maria Bethânia, Dona Ivone Lara, Riachão, Roberto Carlos, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, stars of the TV-show Big Brother Brasil, funk singer Anitta and countless politicians are positively myths. All of these are treated as myths by their admirers, with enormous positive potential.

I may even commit a sin by excess, repeating what for many is obvious and what I have already said in other publications, after all, myth is also a primordial narrative. Even being redundant, I do not sin due to lack of emphasis, although absence and excess are perfectly questionable, since the greatest desire is the one that always puts us in the right measure. The balance is the perfect myth — the perfect narrative —, such as Xangô, who even in an unjust war knew how to be fair, sparing the captured soldiers, an example that his opponents, defeated by the orixá of justice, did never practice.

XANGÔ IS RECOGNIZED AS THE ORIXÁ OF JUSTICE

Xangô and his men fought an implacable enemy.

Xangô's warriors, captured by the enemy,

Were mutilated and tortured to death, without mercy or compassion.

The atrocities no longer knew limits.

The enemy ordered his men to be handed over to Xangô in pieces.

Xangô was desperate and enraged.

Xangô climbed to the top of a quarry near the camp

And from there he consulted Orunmila about what to do.
 Xangô asked Orunmilá for help.
 Xangô was angry and started hitting the rocks with his oxê,
 Hit with his double ax.
 The ax drew sparks from the stones,
 That lit hungry tongues of fire in the air,
 That devoured enemy soldiers.
 The lost war was turning into victory.
 Xangô won the war.
 The enemy chiefs who had ordered
 The massacre of Xangô soldiers
 Were decimated by a bolt of lightning that Xangô fired at the height of his fury.
 But the enemy soldiers who survived
 They were spared by Xangô.
 From then on, Xangô's sense of justice
 Was admired and sung by everyone.
 Through the centuries,
 The orixás and men have resorted to Xangô
 To resolve all types of pending issues,
 Adjudicate disagreements and administer justice.
 (Prandi, 2001, p. 245)

The narrative makes up a set of myths that value Xangô's balance, honesty and sense of justice. On the other hand, colonial thinking produced several depreciations of the king of the city of Oiô. After all, why would the colonizer allow another king to be worshiped besides his own monarch, who invaded territories in Africa and the Americas? All of this reinforces the relevance of axé arts: black, beautiful and affirming.

Speaking of sin — a common semantic load in Brazilian society —, I call on Christian mythology to build an argument in this text, that intends to talk about axé literature and mythology. This would not be an absence, nor excess, but the assumption that mythologies can meet, breaking or respecting taboos, quizilas.

Obviously, the choice of the word myth may be questioned, suggesting classifications from the Bantu, Fon and/or Yoruba worlds to name Afro-Brazilian narratives. Any narratives can be called myths if they are such. The proposal is to take advantage of the potential of the Portuguese language, after all, they made the black people cross the sea and we ended up here. Many believe in the possibility of using semantic potentials such as itans — “each of the mythical accounts of the Yoruban tradition” (LOPES, 2004, p. 349) — or orikis² and myths in a complementary way. There is the example of the consolidated expression in Portuguese “povo de santo” [people of saints] to designate people of Afro-Brazilian religions, but I prefer people of axé, making the middle ground between the Portuguese language and Yorubaianity — the reinvention of Yoruba culture in Bahia —, a concept coined by Félix Ayoh'omidiré (2020). It may seem inconvenient to admit a certain preference for the word of Yoruba origin, which could lead to accusations of nago-centrism. What accusation would fit the choice of the expression “people of saints”? This path will always be thorny, perhaps that is why it is worth remembering a caboclo song, in which it is said that the rose bush is shaken to remove the thorns.

I shook my rose bush to get it out of the way.
 I shook my rose bush to get it out of the way.
 In the village of Boiadeiro, you don't step on thorns.
 Step, caboclo, very slowly!

² “A type of psalm or song of praise from the Yoruba tradition, usually recited to the rhythm of a drum, composed to highlight tributes and achievements of an orixá, an individual, a family or a city.” (LOPES, 2004, p. 499)

Tread, warrior, tread softly!³

The thorns are inconveniences, but they accompany the desired roses. The prize, the affection represented by the flowers, goes alongside the uncomfortable thorns. It is up to the researcher to know how to swing the rose bush correctly, following the teachings of the mythology of the caboclo Boiadeiro. Thus, this article is interested in readings of being, and being in the Afro-Brazilian world, imbued with axé, which overflow in literature and audiovisual, and from literature and audiovisual, composing literatures and other arts of axé. We admit the double contribution, the typical feedback of axé with its quizilas. Quizila, as it is spoken and written in axé communities in Bahia or in the form of its origin in Kimbundu — kijila —, means prohibition and consists of a set of positive laws, which imply certain taboos (A. Pereira, apud Lopes, 2004. p. 555). Nei Lopes (2004, p. 555) explains that the word means ritual prohibition, of food or otherwise, chastity, fasting, and also points its origin to the Quingua language — Kizila. It may be strange to say that a prohibition can be characterized by a set of positive laws, after all, at first glance the stereotype of those who prohibit is to become negative, reactive. The question is fruitful, since it is stated that the word “no” has the power to mean “yes”, as in the following: “[...] Temba Ndumba (civilizing heroine of the Ambundos) imposed the kijila that in Kimbundu means 'prohibition' and which consisted of a set of positive laws, which implied certain taboos, such as abstinence from pork, elephant and snake meat” (Lopes, 2004, p. 555). In the audiovisual production *Cidade de Deus* (2002), Exu, incorporated as an Umbanda priest⁴, gives the character Zé Pequeno an amulet, an axé protection. He tells the pupil not to have sexual relations while wearing the beads/necklace, as this would break the protection. Zé Pequeno commits two major mistakes, because in addition to raping his opponent's loved one, he commits the crime with the beads/protection around his neck. Breaking or non-compliance with the quizila led the offender to collapse and death.

In the case of Brazil, and more specifically the state of Bahia, different origins of African cultures come together in some joint, aggregating meanings, also including aspects of popular Catholicism and indigenous traditions. Paraphrasing the main character from the film *Cafundó* (2005), João de Camargo, when questioned and attacked by another black man during his period in prison due to mixtures he produced with orixás and Catholicism, there are waters between the African continent and Brazil – the waters that divide and unite us also characterize us in our similarities and differences, in our positive and negative alterities, the former aggregating and the latter segregating, according to Marilena Chauí (1993). Amid varied definitions and multiple African cultures of and in Bahia, it is important to understand their differences and varied belongings, but without giving up understanding their resignifications in Afro-Bahianity, in Afro-Brazilianity. Using the voice of axé, hence of the set of black Brazilian existences, to a certain extent expanding our view to other Afro-diasporic cultures, we can understand the importance of being from these or those waters. After all, being from the water's means being from the territory, the origins, the traditions, the belonging; having affiliation or, to use the already consolidated expression, being from certain waters is having a place of speech.

In Candomblé, for example, regardless of whether it is an orthodox house — thus intending more distance from mixing with non-black traditions and between black traditions — or adhering to heterodoxies — thus with more crossovers —, the existence of multicultural relationships will be inevitable. Starting with the word Candomblé — of Kimbundu origin, a language of the Banto family (Castro, 2005, p.196) —, the mixtures are consolidated and add traditions of orixás (jeje-nagô), of inquices (Banto), of Vodum (of the Fon people), and of caboclos (indigenous people with Catholic training) in their respective nations, and sometimes different traditions are mixed in the same house. However, if the word candomblé is taken comprehensively, bringing together different waters, as it designates “[...] place of worship and Afro-Brazilian religious practices in Bahia” (Castro, 2005, p.196) and in places where Bahia exported those practices, it is the word axé that can represent several Afro-Brazilian territories, Candomblé, other religions, and even broader cultural aspects.

Axé is a Yoruba word, which for Bahians generally has the meaning of positive energy. However, even for Bahians, currently those hierarchically and/or affectively closest to Candomblé and other religions such as Umbanda or Jarê⁵, for example, axé is energy that can be fed in a positive or negative way. Actions intended to feed axé itself can be rituals called ebó or offerings and sacrifices of axé again. Sometimes, as a way of explaining only what is necessary, the priest or priestess may say, “the axé has already been done”, therefore it is the axé energy that feeds and makes the axé energy itself emerge and resurface. Yes, in other Afro-Bahian traditions there are other words used with the

³ Lyrics from the Candomblé songbook of Bahia and other Afro-Brazilian religions.

⁴ Umbanda is an Afro-Brazilian religion that mixes African, Amerindian and Kardecist aspects.

⁵ An Afro-Brazilian religion from the region called Chapada Diamantina, in the state of Bahia.

same or similar semantic content, such as *aueto*, which in the Candomblé orthodoxy of the Angola Candomblés of Bahia tradition is the way of blessing the other. However, even in the arts, such as the aesthetic and cultural movement that emerged in Bahia in the early 1980s, it was the word *axé* that predominated.

Axé music is a term created in a pejorative way by journalist Hagamenon Brito in an article published in the newspaper *A Tarde* in 1987 and given a positive meaning by the media and fans of *axé* music (Leite, 2017). Also in the arts, *axé* may be negative or positive and guarantee positivity through Nietzsche's idea of active becoming. On November 31, 1992, the same Hagamenon Brito (1992), on the cover page of *Caderno 2* (a supplement to *A Tarde*), admitted the resignification of the term.

Probably the *quizilas* were duly respected in the mix: in the resignification of concepts and expressions of Afro-Brazilianness, *axé* imposed itself, becoming representative of sets of black manifestations, alongside meanings coming from other Africanities such as the terms *candomblé* and *quizila*. We defend the use of the same term for the literary text and other arts, which are constituted from Afro-Brazilian mythology and *axé* memories. I have been proposing that for some years now, whenever possible and/or necessary, stating that the use of the Yoruba term suggests no hierarchies to contemplate the range of literary and artistic Afro-Brazilian forms. I repeat, if that were mistakenly intended, how would the expression “*povo de santo*” be classified to designate initiates in different nations of black religions? *Orixás*, *inquices*, *voduns*, *caboclos*, *eguns* — spirits of the dead —, are they saints or are they *orixás*, *inquices*, *voduns*, *caboclos*, *eguns*? The question already comes with the answer. Therefore, the choice of the word *axé* is not *nagocentrism* or a hierarchy that would place Brazilian *jeje-nagô* traditions as the center and guide, but complementarily.

The word *quizila* appears here and deserves a more detailed explanation. Originating from another black ethnic group, different from the one responsible for the word *axé*, it has the same level of importance as the Yoruba term, because to have *axé* you must also respect the *quizilas*. What may seem complicated is significant, because in Bahia there are many mixtures and forms of blackness. If *sin* is primarily not a part of black people's conceptions, the *quizila* can be considered its possible counterpart, first determining what cannot be done, then presenting a positive to-do list, something like the *dos* and *don'ts* of the biblical ten commandments – we resolve everything by following the *quizilas*, which are not fixed numerically and can vary from person to person. For the *Terreiro de Umbanda Mensageiro dos Ventos*, located in *Morro do Chapéu* in the semi-arid region of Bahia, one of the prohibitions or *quizilas* is including coriander in the food. In Candomblé, there are *quizilas* related to each person's *orixá*, *inquire* and *vodum*, and also to the ruling deities of each house. Thus, *quizilas* – a word of Kimbundu origin etimologically closer to Bahian Candomble tradition of Angolan root – dictate the conduct of all black *axé* traditions in Bahia and Brazil. In addition to food prohibitions, there are also vocabulary prohibitions, which explain, for example, the use of the word “*Bernardo*” instead of stating that someone or a family is going hungry. Still the use of the expressions “*Lá ela*” or “*Lá ele*” to replace some undesirable situation or avoid the word ‘*grace*’ with the prefix ‘*dis*’.

Regarding the expression “*Bernardo*” and its use to designate hunger, it is of great value to read the short story “*Visitante indesejado*” [Unwanted Visitor], from the book *Sete Histórias de Negro*, by Ubiratan Castro de Araújo (2006). In the literary narrative, the interdict would prevent famine from expanding its territory. This is also the case in real life: upon learning that one of the family members is experiencing social vulnerability, the black and family protection network is activated, which includes following the tradition of not saying the word “*hunger*”.

In Jorge Amado's novel *Teresa Batista Cansada de Guerra* (2008, first published 1972) [Teresa Batista: Home from the Wars, Canadian English translation 1975], when prostitutes decide to face the economic power of the real estate market that forced sex workers to transfer their place of work and housing, *Exu Tiriri* imposes his orders: the women of the lower red-light district were supposed to remain in “*closed quarters*”, that is, abstain from sexual activity during the war period. The expressions “*Lá ele*” or “*Lá ela*”, currently common in humorous scenes throughout Brazil and sometimes confused with homophobic voices, are used in a similar way. In *Exu Cavaleiro da Encruzilhada*, by Zora Seljan (1993), the character *Exu* tests the friendship of two friends, proving that the inspiration for the dramatic text emerged from Afro-Brazilian mythology.

3. Conclusion

As stated along the present article, to have *axé* it is necessary to fulfill the *quizilas*, in addition to knowing and understanding the primordial narratives, especially those told by the elderly and/or cataloged by various researchers. In other words, literature and other *axé* arts are based on aspects of Afro-Brazilian mythology, and may expand to other black mythological expressions, respecting the origins of their various constituent elements.

Therefore, we propose a list of quizilas to be fulfilled – a list which may be changed as this and other research develops. In whole or in part, our list of quizilas may be verified in artistic productions, such as those mentioned previously, in the literary arts and in the plastic arts of the aforementioned Master Didi. We can also check what is said in the poems of Wesley Correia, Landê Onawle, and Anajara Tavares, in the poetic, dramaturgical and other narrative productions of Ildásio Tavares or in the short stories of Muniz Sodré. There is a vast production that can be classified as axé arts! Here are the quizilas:

- 1) It is necessary to know Afro-Brazilian mythology and/or other black mythologies, whether through publications and/or real-world knowledge, and to understand them based on criteria of decolonized thinking. Therefore, there is no point repeating that Xangô is the stone thrower and associating the act of throwing stones with the biblical context, hierarchizing cultures, placing Afro-Brazilianness in subordinate conditions. Being a stone thrower is one of Xangô's warlike qualities to ensure justice.
- 2) Although religious initiation is not mandatory, there is a probability that those initiated into axé religions will have a better understanding of mythology and will be able to have better information for artistic creation. However, in all situations, and especially for initiates, the commitment to awô, the secret, must be reaffirmed. The commitment to secrecy preserves artistic creation, the artist and the viewer of the work of art, guaranteeing the absence of proselytism, as rituals and alterities must be protected, even when described and reinvented. Certainly, in the eyes of an initiated fan, literary writing and/or the result of other artistic expressions of axé will have more meanings based on Afro-Brazilian traditions and will tell more secrets to those who possess a better knowledge of connections with mythology. Axé authors, when appropriating axé to construct their works, should only say what should be said. In the case of figurative language, other interpretations will be possible based on Afro-Brazilian mythology, and the author cannot and should not control recreations by readers of other backgrounds. They must question and combat racist actions. The initiation mentioned has also occurred only through affection and permission to access some codes and information, transcending book reading and without necessarily having been subjected to religious rituals.
- 3) The authorship of axé is determined by self-belonging duly connected to the correct appropriation of themes and representations. In this way, the criterion of exclusiveness of skin color is denied in favor of compromise, of cultural blackening. The logic of self-belonging and mobility of the place of speech is thus reinforced. After all, even as victims of racism, capitães-do-mato (black slave hunters) are black people, who reject and oppress blackness.
- 4) Positive alterity, as advocated by Marilena Chauí (1993), should guide all axé artistic creation. Beauty and enchantment will be the main weapons associated with denouncing stereotypes and injustices, avoiding writing that replaces one absurdity with another.
- 5) The diverse black African and Afro-diasporic cultures must be recognized, named and explained, establishing their differences, similarities and intersections, even if they are called axé literatures and arts.
- 6) A big challenge will be to do everything without transforming the artistic production into a pamphlet, observing balance between creativity and information. I understand the importance of political representation, however, by making art. Thus, even admitting the importance of a pamphlet, which can be filled with art, it will predominantly be a pamphlet, a verbal or non-verbal work, more concerned with what to say than how to say it. In this way, axé arts must be arts with axé, which does not prevent there from being axé in non-artistic productions with the important social function of propagating axé energy throughout the world.

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