



Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities (JLAH)
Issue: Vol. 1; No. 7; July 2020 pp. 59-65
ISSN 2690-070X (Print) 2690-0718 (Online)
Website: www.jlahnet.com
E-mail: editor@jlahnet.com

Processes of Transmission and Circulation of Literary Texts of Black Female Authorship in Bahia in the 80S

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Abstract:

The literary production of black female authorship in Bahia in the 80s still needs to be studied, given the scarce information circulating in the academic environment on the mentioned subject. From the philological investigation, specifically the study of the processes of production, transmission and circulation of texts, the aim of this article is to present scenes of the literary production of three black writers who had their works published in the Bahian capital during the 80s, named: Valdina Pinto (Makota Valdina); Nivalda Costa and Aline França. Nailed on the pillars of democracy on philological critique and the sociology of texts, it is intended to verify how these women who were outside the big publishing market produced their literary statements, based on dissenting editorial practices, thus imprinting on the Bahian letters marks of black-female subjectivity. The rescue of these three writers enables the circulation of their works not only in the academic environment, but also in the context of basic education, bringing thus, aesthetic richness and diversity to Bahian letters.

Keywords: Philological Critique. Transmission and circulation processes of literary texts. Black Bahian writers in the 80s.

First Words

Given the diversity of activities arising from the theoretical field called Philology, it is necessary to explain in what terms this philological investigation takes place. Thus, this study departs from Philology as an auxiliary science of literature, for instance, which served for many years to ratify literary canons through the editing and review of literary works crystallized a given society. We understand here philological studies as a reading ethic for the exercise of democratic critique, as Edward Said invites us to reflect (2007). This exercise begins in reading, since this is an “indispensable act, an initial gesture without which any philology is just impossible” (SAID, 2007, p.83). This reading, however, must be active, thorough and, above all, non-excluding, non-silencing. The philological practice in contemporary times, then, must be an agent in the rescue and (re)construction of texts that do not integrate or did not integrate a privileged place because they were produced by individuals subordinated by other agents of hegemonically constituted discourses in some socio-cultural environment (SPIVAK, 2010).

From this perspective, the philologist must not bow his head to the power of history (NIETZSCHE 2003), must subvert it, pull other strands and bring to light other texts. This way, the philological reading that will be done about the transmission and circulation processes of literary texts of three black Bahian writers, during the 1980s, is partly unlinked from that philology considered as auxiliary discipline of history, linguistics and of literary critique, to undertake an investigation, understanding that:

Philology as a contemporary humanistic practice is an attempt to problematize the –ethnocentric-western tradition and to accept all the possibilities of humanistic critique, result of the breakthrough and onslaughts of feminist, black, latin american, asian and other non-Western cultural traditions. (BORGES; SOUZA, 2102, p.58)

Therefore, I intend to carry out this study, starting from this non-silencing notion proposed by Said (2007) and ratified by Arivaldo Sacramento de Souza and Rosa Borges (2012). In this perspective, guided by the feeling of rescue and valorization of other voices proposed by the philological critique that marks this work, I emphasize that the look at the literary production of black women in Bahia is based on the previous observation of the market models that has produced in Brazil some powerful book publishers, funded primarily by foreign investments. This fact promotes an even greater obstacle for the insertion of new writers in the Brazilian publishing industry. Giant publishers publish every day more and more foreign works and of a specific genre, they publish what they sell and nothing more than it. Thus, in the opposite direction to the logic of the large publishing market, the aim of this study is to show how black Bahian writers has made possible the transmission and circulation of their literary texts through the ghettos of Salvador, facing the recurrent closing process of the big book publishers for the production of these individuals.

Understanding the path of literary production of black women until it can reach their readers is also to understand how this individual-black woman produces her subjectivity through her texts, since:

In short, when I write, when I invent, when I create my fiction, I do not disentangle myself from a “living black-woman-body” and because this is “my body, not another”, I live and have lived experiences that a non-black, non-female body never experiences. (EVARISTO, 2009, p.1)

The experience of this black woman-body, occupying a social position as a writer, which has historically been denied her, is marked by challenges that starts from the time of writing to publishing, so this article will not shy away from reading the text and all its sociology, listing the various social determinants involved in the process of text transmission. As Conceição Evaristo points out, “Brazilian literature is full of Afro-Brazilian writers who, however, for many reasons remain unknown, even in school textbooks. Many researchers and literary critics deny or ignore the existence of an Afro-Brazilian literature.” (EVARISTO, 2009, p.27). I emphasize that in the context of production in the 1980s, this lack of knowledge and closure are even greater. Therefore, I consider Aline França, Makota Valdina and Nivalda Costa three examples of writers who paved the way for a black-female literature in the 80s Salvador, they set the tone, the color and dictated the verses of black writing in that decade.

SCENES FROM AN EBÓ WRITING: WOMEN WHO OPENED THE WAY

In a certain continent of the earth, many thousand years ago coming from faraway space arose a divine-looking black man,
with a mission to initiate the proliferation of a race that
would eventually become, in the history of this continent,
a component of relevant importance. He was Aleduma,
a Black God of superior intelligence coming from the planet
IGNUM, ruled by Goddess Salopia. (FRANÇA, 1981, p.7)

The context of production is the late seventies, the decade in which the Black Movement in Brazil emerges, in which there is a rising of the black people organized to continue to fight against a new kind of slavery: veiled racism, with the mask of racial democracy. The writer is Aline França, black woman, militant of the MNU (United Black Movement), through her writing, circumvents the barriers of the big publishing market and can very successfully publish *Woman of Aleduma*. The above excerpt marks the first lines of the novel that tells the story of the people of Aleduma Island. In an opposite dimension to what was practiced in the Brazilian literary works at the time, Aline França, in the wake of what Deleuze considers a health enterprise, “invents a missing people” (DELEUZE; GUATTARI 1997). The people of Aleduma Island are descended from the people of IGNU, a planet ruled by the Goddess Salopia who has the messenger, the old Aleduma as the one who will choose a place for the multiplication of his people, he, the Black God, “with feet turned backwards”, chooses the Earth and, after the terrible slavery that affects his people, has the island of Aleduma, former Coinjá, as a point of resistance, a place of refuge for those who fled from slavery and white domination. In this sense,

Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a missing people. It is up to the fabulous function to invent a people. It is not written with one's own memories unless we made from them the origin or the collective destination of a people yet to come buried in their betrayals and denials. (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1997, p.14)

This fabulous function of inventing a people that Deleuze and Guattari speak of can be experienced in Aline França's novel, since the people of Aleduma are descended from a people of superior intelligence:

IGNUM black people did not have typical nerve cells, but an electrically charged bag located in the brain that regulated all the sensations in the body, giving them a very high intelligence potential (França, 1981, p.9).

The people of Aleduma resist the domination of white people by preserving their beliefs, their worship of the black God, Aleduma, and the Goddess Salopia. Aleduma Island is the place on earth chosen for the "refuge of black people who managed to escape from the chains of slavery" (França, 1981). The "preto velho", kind of high priest of the local people, used to communicate with Aleduma and, in one of these messages, he decides to change the name of Coinjá Island to Aleduma Island. Aleduma's wife was a local woman who had the power to communicate with divine beings of IGNUM by diving into the "filha Doce" lake. The plot of the novel unfolds around the choice of a new virgin who would help Aleduma's current wife, Maria Vitória, to communicate with Ignum's deities by diving into "filha Doce". The girl would be chosen by Aleduma and the people would know she was the chosen one through the signs of the divine.

This type of writing that marks the black letters of the Bahian literary production in the 70's and 80's is what in this article, I call ebó writing. Ebó is an offering that is given to the orishas to open the way, to protect and to guide who made the offering. In this perspective, Aline França's narrative, for example, is the offering to open the way for a black-female literature in Bahia during this period. The function of paving the way, however, is shared with other women who, like Aline França, has ripped the mostly white and masculine literary space from Salvador scene and imprinted black women subjectivities in that space. For this article, I selected Aline França, Makota Valdina and Nivalda Costa, but this choir can be further strengthened with other voices as eloquent and strong as the ones I present here.

The second ebó writing comes from the lyrics of Valdina Pinto, "Black woman, teacher, community and religious leader, marked by the faith and struggle for dignity of all Afro-descendant Brazilians, especially black women" (ARAÚJO, 2005, p.74). In an interview to *Palmares Magazine*, when asked if she considered herself a "black wise woman," Valdina Pinto replies:

No, I consider myself an apprentice. They say I'm a wise one. Last week I was honored with a plaque as a master of popular knowledge. Then I say: the black woman I am, the human being I am, I am because I learned from my masters. My first teachers were my parents. My second teacher were the other blacks in Engenho Velho da federação community. At the first school I studied, my first teacher used to write the letters and numbers on a small stone, a wooden board. My pencil was also made of stone. Those black people, those black women and men from the community where I was born, grew up and live to this day, they were my first masters (PINTO, 2005, p.75).

Valdina Pinto's social role as a poet was published in 1982, in the second issue of CEAO's Art and Literature series, where she studied and was part of the first class of the Kikongo Language Initiation Course, between 1977 and 1978. It is from the Kikongo language that Valdina Pinto uses some expressions contained in the two poems published in this volume of the series, as we can see in one of these poems below:

MAAZA MA LEEMBA¹

¹Quicongo expression that means Águas de Oxalá (Oxalá's water). In the period in which it was produced and published this issue of the Art and Literature series, the ialorixá (High priest) Makota Valdina, at that time teacher from elementary school, studied quicongo and Yoruba at CEAO, UFBA. For this series, write two poems, using words and expressions learned during the course.

There we go
The Baana Nkisi
With our robes so white.
Whiteas the dove
With our carvings on our head
Singing mayaanga songs
Mayaanga from MAAZA MA LEEMBA
And in an undulating row
Of beauty of splendor
We carry water, each one of us
In a mystical, vibrant chant
Of worship, of love
In a ritual to the unusual Nkisi

MAAZA MA LEEMBA:
OXALÁ WATER:
Rite to a Nkisin
Who dresses in white
But "the white"
cannot exterminate it (PINTO, 1982)

Maaza ma leemba is the expression for the religious ceremony of *Águas de Oxalá*, in the Kikongo language. The “so white robes” make up the ritual scenography in which water is carried to the Nkisi (divinity), in that case, Oxalá, during the 16 days of celebration. Makota Valdina's political stance on racial issues is inscribed in the last three verses, by bringing the color in which the deity is dressed, the white: “Who dresses in white / But 'the white' /Can not exterminate it”. The white color, the color of oxalá, dresses the whole Terreiro (house of worship), all the members of the ceremony, but this “white” is also remembered as a symbol of the white man who, through slavery, promoted exploitation and sometimes extermination of black people, making unfeasible and disrespecting their religious roots. The white man there, materialized by the "white" in quotation marks, "cannot exterminate" the worship of Oxalá. Despite having perpetrated all kinds of violence against the black people and their beliefs.

The third representative of a Ebó writing is the writer, playwright and theater director Nivalda Costa. She developed two major artistic projects from studies and research: the first, in the seventies, called the “Series of Scenic Studies on Power and Space” and the second, between the eighties and nineties, entitled “Study Series on Brazilian Black Ethnotheatre”, a very rich and diverse production that integrates plays, screenplays, television program scripts, poetry and short stories¹¹. Part of his literary production in the 1980s was mainly circulated in two publications: Art and Literature Series (CEAO-UFBA) and the Exu Magazine (Jorge Amado’s House Foundation). Religiosity, reverence for the orishas, especially Oxalá, are the elements that also make up the poem Ogiyán:

Ogiyán
The forest
Dressed in Horizon
Orum and the infinity
Ride at Dawn
To
Firm
Air
Silver (COSTA 1982)

¹¹On Nivalda Costa's production, see Débora de Souza's Doctoral Thesis (2019), who organized and studied various theatrical productions of Nivalda Costa Collection.

Ogíyán is son of Oriniyan, founder of Ejigbó. His favorite food is yam. He is the young Oxalá. Considered a warrior of peace, he is the orisha of innovations and inventions, so much so that to taste his favorite dish, he invented the pestle (MENDES, 2007). His color is white, he carries with him a sword, a shield, and a pestle, all in silver: "To firm air silver." The strength and steadiness of the young warrior in the (white) glow of silver are contemplated in the poem to the young Oxalá. Ogíyán is the orisha who rules the 3rd Sunday of the ceremony of *Águas de Oxalá* (Osàgiyán pestle day). In this perspective, it is clear that poets bring their religiosities to the verses, dialoguing under the same cosmogony. Ethics and aesthetics of discourses of African and Afro-Brazilian texts are inseparable, as highlighted by Henrique Freitas (2016). Thus, in the aesthetics of Afro-Brazilian lyric, there is religious ethic, respect and reverence for the orishas, the worship of deities. In this context, the approach of these literary texts based on Eurocentered conceptual instruments is put in check, as Henrique Freitas points out:

categories Inherited of a formalist and / or structuralist experience based on systems (the very notion of literary system), as well as the dichotomies founded on the discursive fold inside and outside: author, reader, narrator, character, among others; or from a superstructural and infrastructural Marxist tradition that explains everything, in its (supra) historical impetus, still grounded in dialectics that conform a productive tension, culminate in dangerous simulacrum for the understanding of a text forged in cultures in which, many times, human ecology cannot distinguish, by the cosmogony that defines it, the social, formal pedagogical, political, cultural and religious dimensions (FREITAS, 2016, p. 94-5).

Thus, it is necessary to "forge the knowledge on the edges" (FREITAS, 2016, p.91), opening possibilities for another aesthetic, cosmogony, to a knowledge constructed and validated also in orality, disconnecting from grapho-centrism which rules the studies of theory, literary critique and even philological studies. The philological critique that I seek to undertake in these texts assumes the ethical commitment, of a democratic reading, which operates from a desire for the presence of bodies that were (are) silenced by the publishing market, literary critics and academia, that is, by social agents who have the authority to cancel canons.

From this perspective, based on this desire for the philologist's presence, to propose a philological reading, I could not avoid talking about the means in which these writings circulated. Understanding how the transmission process was done, that is, how these texts came out from the writers drafts until they reach their readers, which paths they have traveled, is important to enable a broader reading of them. Given the limited space to address these issues, I bring out as an example scenes from the process of transmission of the novel *Mulher de Aleuma*^{III}, by Aline França, which had its first edition published by the editorial label Fundação Clarindo Silva. According to Clarindo Silva himself, in an interview with our research group, the exclusionary circumstances in which the publishers during that time acted turned him into an editorial label. In the specific case of Aline França, after she had been searching for several editorial houses to publish her book, without success, she went to Clarindo Silva, who led the Cantina da Lua Cultural project^{IV} to ask for help, Clarindo Silva had access to the material she wanted to publish and sponsored the publication of the first edition of the novel *Mulher de Aleduma*. With a short print run, the novel was published with very little financial resources, a fact that reverberated in the layout of the cover, brackets, and writing materials. It is important to emphasize that the book's forms, materiality: cover, publishing, supports, etc., ended up bringing to it symbolic value and, consequently, meaning to the texts in a given society; This is why it is so important that we look at the possible materiality of black women's texts during the 1980s: It was publications of small editorial labels or independent ones, with restricted circulation, few copies, since the sale or distribution occurred primarily during the launch of the project, no matter if it was solo authorship books, collections or even anthologies.

^{III} It is important to say that the novel took Aline France's name to the international market. In 1985, the writer published the second edition, reaching international recognition and participation in various events and newspapers. The 1985 edition was made by Ianamá publishing house. About the book circulation process, see article by Elane Correia (IC scholarship holder) which will be published in the annals of the international women and literature seminar.

^{IV} The Cantina da Lua project was led and designed by Clarindo Silva, who became the owner of the Cantina da Lua Restaurant in Peulorinho in the late 70's and transformed it into a place of resistance of black culture in the city of Salvador. Book releases with independent editorial label, album release, lectures, and black intellectuals meetings were promoted in this place. The Cantina da Lua Restaurant, in the 80's, was an important stronghold of Salvador's mostly black intellectuals.

The literary texts of Nivalda Costa and Makota Valdina also circulated thanks to an action of the African Center for Afro-Oriental Studies (CEAO). CEAO's Art and Literature series, UFBA was an important space for the dissemination of black writings in Salvador during the 1980s. I emphasize, however, that the gender issue must be put on the agenda, because, according to the cataloging^v done by Ailla Aquino, who is a scholarship holder in a Scientific Initiation Project, there is a significant difference in the number of black women who could publish, even in these spaces of resistance, comparing to black men.

FINAL WORDS: THE WRITINGS THAT BROKE “THE DOOR OF THE PRIVATE CLUB ” IN BAHIAN LITERATURE

This writing takes off the veil, discovers itself and touches, through the words, its own body without concealing the conflicts of race and color, removes the masks of gender and race relations of the society in which it is inserted. Much more than that, it brings out the voice, the face (re) interpreted in emotions proper to register and self-represent in the territory of Literature. It chants a “counter-voice to a literary speech built in the cultural instances of the power of Brazilian literature” (Evaristo, 2005, p. 52) and breaks down the door of this private club. (ALVES, 2010, p.186)

The study of the process of production, transmission and circulation of texts by Bahian black women in the 1980s, coordinated by me at the Federal University of Bahia, aims to make a cartography of these writings that are closing the door of the private club of Bahian literature during this period. In this article I presented only three black women-individuals: Aline França, Makota Valdina, and Nivalda Costa. However, in a cartographic process, always under construction, there are still other women who join them to register themselves as individuals who write, who are present, blackening and subjecting females and even feminisms in the heteronormative space of Bahian literature in the 1980s. These writings alter, transgress the guidelines of male / hegemonic discursivity, sharing thus, “the ‘minority becoming’ (Deleuze-Guattari) of a feminine who operates as a paradigm of deterritorialization of regimes of power and capture of identity, standardized and centralized by the official culture ” (RICHARD, 2002, p. 133). They are *ebó* writings, therefore, because once put into circulation, they performed as an offering to the Bahian literary field in order to open ways for new utterances, establishing less Eurocentered discursivities and offering, with their texts, an ethic / aesthetic and other possibilities of existence.

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^vOn this cataloging, see the work of IC Ailla Aquino, scholarship holder, that will be presented at the international women and literature seminar and published in the Annals of the international women and literature seminar (2019).

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