

The Nagô Heart and Its Reinvention: Orikis in Brazil Today / O coração nagô e a sua reinvenção: orikis hoje no Brasil

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to read a text in the book *O poço das marianas* [The Well of the Marianas], by Eliane Marques. By perceiving it as an *oriki*, a text typical of the *iorubá* world, that pays tribute to the head. It may be written for any being: people, animals, *orixás*, and even for cities. I understand that, to listen to it, I need to start to thinking as *nagô* does. I explore this way of perceiving the world through some theorists like Muniz Sodré and Leda Maria Martins. With them and others, I notice the importance of the body in African perceptions of the world and understand it is fundamental in reading or listening to the *oriki*, which can be done as if it was a ritual. By doing so, I find a *nagô* heart that mixes with the heart of the writer to reinvent itself in literature. I relate this recreation to the *Exunouveau* mode of writing, a term coined by Edimilson de Almeida Pereira.

KEYWORDS: Listening; Reading; *Nagô*; *Oriki*; Ritual

RESUMO

Este artigo lê um texto presente no livro O poço das marianas, de Eliane Marques, como sendo um oriki. Em iorubá, orí é cabeça e kî é saudação. Oríkî é um texto que faz uma saudação à cabeça. Pode ser escrito para qualquer ser: pessoas, animais, orixás, até para cidades. Para conseguir escutá-lo, entendo que preciso começar a pensar como os nagô. Faço uma entrada nesse modo de perceber o mundo a partir de alguns teóricos como Muniz Sodré e Leda Maria Martins. Com eles e outros, noto a importância do corpo em percepções de mundo africana e entendo que ele é fundamental na leitura ou escuta do oriki, que pode ser feita como se fosse um ritual. Ao fazê-lo, encontro um coração nagô que se mistura ao coração de quem escreve para se reinventar na literatura. Relaciono essa recriação com o modo de escrita Exunouveau, termo cunhado por Edimilson de Almeida Pereira.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Escuta; Leitura; *Nagô*; *Oriki*; Ritual

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<i>The water</i>	<i>unhears</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>sings as hen</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>memento as the lark</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>hammer blow as exile</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>operculated amid spittles</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>giantess who holds nestlings in eyelids</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>pit for those drowned to be stirred</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>bird to be downed with a shot</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>washer</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>honeysuckle rig</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>ton-ton with basin-hands</i>
<i>The water</i>	<i>melinean troop</i>
<i>Oh water</i>	<i>pilgrimess</i>

Oh water
wide water

they threw mud on the islands' chest
then muted up with their all-too-black headband

Eliane Marques¹

When trying to get closer to this poem from the book *O poço das marianas* [The Well of the Marianas] (2021, p. 38), by Eliane Marques, beautifully translated by Adriano Moraes Migliavacca, I heard music in the water. They, the marianas, moving the chest of the islands with mud, deep water soup, saluting: oh water. A work chant? An *oriki*? I don't know exactly what the marianas or Eliane Marques are doing in that well, I feel there was a rhythm of women's voices working. In the first poem, there are oysterers and "the marianas as thirsty as the oysters they eat"² (Marques, 2021, p. 9). Among its lines, you must dream, imagine the marianas. The lines: eyelashes opening and closing, shaking the page drop by drop, often laconically in the well, lines of water. I dream that the

¹ In Portuguese: "A água / desouve / A água / canta como a galinha / A água / memento como a cotovia / A água / golpe de martelo como exílio / A água / operculada entre salivas / A água / gigante que suporta a ninhada nos cílios / A água /fossa para que afogadas se aflijam / A água / ave que se derruba com um tiro / A água / lavadora / A água / velame de madressilvas/ A água / tantã com mãos-bacias / A água / tropa melínia / Ô água / peregrina // Ô água / vasta água // elas lançaram lama sobre o peito das ilhas // depois emudeceram com suastiaras negríssimas."

² In Portuguese: "as marianas tão sedentas quanto as ostras que comem."

marianas work for self-sustenance in the well and beyond. Perhaps not women, just beings with a feminine pronoun.

Water is a fundamental element in this place that was or still is a “womb” (Marques, 2021, p. 29). Food and birth. It is necessary to salute her and, in the lines above, this happens through an exaltation of the specific characteristics of this water. In addition to a work chant, I feel like I’m listening to an *oriki*, a text from the *iorubá* world addressed to someone or another being who lives, most of the time, valuing their attributes.

In *iorubá*, *orí* is head and *kì* is greeting. *Oríkì* is a text that salutes the the head – the notion the of head for the *iorubá* is very particular and much more complex than the Western concept. It can be written for any being, people, animals, *orixás*, even for cities. Every child that is born receives an *oriki*-name, or even three, states Anthony Risério (2013, p. 35) bringing information from historian Bólánlé Awé, for whom the *oriki*-name unfolds into *oriki*-poem. These are epithets that will be expanding to larger texts, with lines that resemble verses, with words that arise from speech and not from writing. In the *iorubá* world, *oriki* is fundamental and present in all spheres of life. They are made to be heard. When performed by someone, the *oriki* immediately runs towards the being for whom it is made. “The objective of *oríkì*, in the Yoruban tradition is, therefore, that of ‘*kì*’, that is, ‘to salute in a special way’ the *orí* (the inner head), considered as the essence of a person yorubana,” states Félix Ayoh’Omidire (2020, p. 188).³ The researcher and professor of Portuguese-Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Latinamerican literary, ethnic-racial and cultural studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, emphasizes the importance of differentiating *kì* from *kí*. While the latter refers to a special, complimentary greeting, the former verb means a simple greeting, such as saying good morning to someone. He also explains that there are different types, including the “*oríkì*s of long text” (Ayoh’Omidire, 2020, p. 191), within which is the *oríkì orixá*. As the name suggests, they are texts to greet the *orixás* in an original way.

The *oriki* that I now reproduce is a transcreation of Antonio Risério, from a text collected by Pierre Verger in 1957, and carefully translated by Adriano Moraes Migliavacca, who worked very well with the sound of the words:

³ In Portuguese: “O objetivo do *oríkì*, na tradição yorubana, é, pois, o de ‘*kì*’, isto é, “saudar de forma especial” o *orí* (a cabeça íntima), considerada como a essência de uma pessoa yorubana.”

Oriki Yemoja

Yemoja who expands in broadness
Ayaba who lives in deep water
Makes the bush become a road
Drinks schnapps in calabash
Remains whole in the face of the king.
Yemoja swirls when the whirlwind surges
Swirls and spirals around the town.
Yemoja burdened burns bridges.
Eats in the house, eats in the river.
Mother lady of the weeping breast.
Thick hair in cunt
Cunt dried up in sleep
As parched yam.
Sea, lord of the world, one who heals anyone
Old owner of the sea.
Female-flute wakes up in chords in the court of the king.
Rests anyone on any earth.
Here on earth, hushes – on water's edge, utters.
Risério, 2013, p. 153⁴

Water that varies. Sea that is a multitude but stays in the same place. Yemoja. Sometimes I for a swim in the morning, she is calm and transparent one day, agitated and stirred the next, at the same time. But it doesn't just change from one day to the next: its waters will be transforming over 24 hours. I'm not just talking about the movement of the tides, but it also changes in temperature, color, sound and smell. I know this is not any novelty – I am just impressed as I swim in the sea for the first time and feel the *oriki* passing through me until it enters my ears. I try to remove the water, I can't, *oriki* dives deeper and deeper into the well of my body. I move away, I don't want to touch deep waters. I come out of the well that is me – or I just believe that I do. I don't know how to talk about or with the *oriki* that remains within.

“The African ancestral conception includes, in the same phenomenological circuit, the divinities, cosmic nature, fauna, flora (...) conceived as desires of a needed

⁴ In Portuguese: “Yemanjá que se estende na amplidão/ Aiabá que vive na água funda/ Faz a mata virar estrada/ Bebe cachaça na cabaça/ Permanece plena em presença do rei./ Yemanjá se revira quando vem a ventania/ Gira e rodopia em volta da vila./ Yemanjá descontente destrói pontes./ Come na casa, come no rio./ Mãe senhora do seio que chora./ Pêlo espesso na buceta/ Buceta seca no sono/ Como inhame ressequido./ Mar, dono do mundo, que sara qualquer pessoa./ Velha dona do mar./ Fêmea-flauta acorda em acordes na casa do rei./ Descansa qualquer um em qualquer terra. Cá na terra, cala – à flor d'água, fala.”

complementarity, in a continuous process of transformation and becoming,”⁵ I listen to Leda Maria Martins (2002, p. 84). In the Yemoja’s *oriki* there seems to be a meeting of worlds. And there is much more, my body says, although I still need to learn to listen so to, then, be able to speak. I read Antonio Risério:

To these frankly spectacular, extraordinary traits the imagetic features are added. The galloping images, as I usually say. They are broad, dazzling and forceful images. Stone-image of a lightning strike. Rather than through control or prudence, the *oriki*’s imagery focuses on the unusual, the grandiose, the extravagant (Risério, 2013, p. 45).⁶

The images still gallop me. I kept silent for a year about the *oriki* made for Yemoja, the mother of all heads. My attitude began to change when I read the chapter *Exu* invents his time from the book *Pensar Nagô*, by Muniz Sodré, and I made an *ebó* for my aching head. In *iorubá*, the word means “offering or sacrifice made to the deities,” as stated in Beniste’s dictionary (2016). In *Candomblé* [Afro-Brazilian religion derived from a multiplicity of African groups, like the *Iorubá*], the *orixás* are the ones who communicate in the game of *buzios*, indicating how the offering should be prepared. It usually involves preparing food for the *orixás*, baths and specific diets for whom the *ebó* will be done. Is it a cult leader who performs the oracular consultation and prepares the offering, as well as places it in strategic places so that it is received. Along with the offering, some specific *orixás* are fed and the person for whom the *ebó* was made has many spheres of life rebalanced. In my case, I needed harmony for the pain to subside. I felt very connected to the energies of the *orixás*, especially *Exu*. It’s also what the *ebó* does. The *Nagô* make up the *iorubá* people kidnapped from Benin, Nigeria and Togo to be enslaved in Brazil during the 19th century, before the end of the Transatlantic trafficking, and were destined especially for Bahia. Reading the book, I realized that, to learn how to listen to an *oriki*, it wasn’t enough to move to Bahia and swim in its waters,

⁵ In Portuguese: “A concepção ancestral africana inclui, no mesmo circuito fenomenológico, as divindades, a natureza cósmica, a fauna, a flora (...) concebidos como anéis de uma complementariedade necessária, em contínuo processo de transformação e de devir.”

⁶ In Portuguese: “A esses traços francamente espetaculosos, extraordinários, somam-se os rasgos imagéticos. O galope das imagens, como costume dizer. São imagens amplas, coruscantes e contundentes. Imagens-pedras de raio. Antes que pelo controle ou pela prudência, a *imagérie* do *oriki* se pauta pelo insólito, o grandioso, o extravagante.”

I needed to learn to think *nagô*; to receive scraps of images that come in a collage of many attributes, as Risério (2013, p. 44) writes.

It is part of the *nagô*'s perception of the world to think about living and not "living thinking" (*Nagôs [...]*, 2015, np).⁷ As a good Westerner, I have always thought, making my head a lid, separating it from the rest of my body, closing the well. Muniz Sodré establishes this differentiation and explains it in a very beautiful way in a class from the UERJ Communication Program, available on YouTube. There are other ways of living, like that of the *Nagô*, who think while they live, that is, the thought is not separated from common life and is not subject to a logic of common sense that "only reproduces the visible of everyday life representations"⁸ (*Nagôs [...]*, 2015, n.p.), as is the logic of a certain Western way of living imposed on the colonized territories. Sodré defines:

The very concept of 'West' (repeated by the elite of the colonized population, who unintentionally or alienly see themselves as 'Western') is a geographical metaphor for a narrative intended to consolidate the claim to imperial (cultural and civilizational) dominance of Europe over the rest of the world (Sodré, 2017, p. 9).⁹

In the *oriki* for Yemoja, the power belongs to the sea. In Eliane Marques' text, the water, which is from the mud and the sea – there are oysters, conchs, salt, mar-ianas –, receives, among others, an attribute of strength: "giantess who holds nestlings in eyelids" (Marques, 2021, p. 38). The narrative here is not Westernized. Beings without men do not subjugate themselves, but rather they grow as they take care of their strands of eyelashes, in a mix of strength and delicacy.

I listen to Muniz Sodré: "If the world is bigger than you, the real is not lacking, it is overflowing"¹⁰ (*Nagôs [...]*, 2015, np). Yemoja advances along all the edges that may exist, including mine, which allegedly try to resist. I believe, and the *nagô* thought gives me hope, that I can do something else with my body so that it can show me different paths and that these other routes can be taken, changing me. I want a more overflowing and less

⁷ In Portuguese: "viver pensando."

⁸ In Portuguese: "só reproduz o visível das representações cotidianas."

⁹ In Portuguese: "O próprio conceito de 'Ocidente' (reprisado pelas elites dos povos colonizados, que inadvertida ou alienadamente se dão como 'ocidentais') é metáfora geográfica para uma narrativa destinada a consolidar a pretensão de domínio imperial (cultural e civilizatório) da Europa sobre o resto do mundo."

¹⁰ In Portuguese: "Se o mundo é maior do que você, o real não é faltante, ele é transbordante."

limiting body, so therefore, closer to what is real. We (Westerners) should stay away from the West that we are not and look for the well.

“Once, when I started reciting an *oriki* of Oxóssi, *filha de santo* [woman initiated in the religion] of the *orixá* left the room where we were, with a mixture of respect and fear,”¹¹ writes Anthony Risério (2013, p. 42). It is a hearing that requires a lot of care, including of people who don’t have their thoughts together, like me. Making up your head is starting in the *Candomblé*, going through a rite that creates a deep relationship between the person and their *orixá*, and with the *terreiro* [*Candomblé*’s sacred ground] in which the ceremony takes place. In the process, which is long and involves several phases, the *orixá* is seated in the *ori* of the initiated person. There are many sacred forces mobilized during and after, when someone becomes a daughter or son from an *axé* house (*terreiro*), forming a family that is also spiritual. Spoken *orikis*, sung to *orixás* are also capable of mobilizing energy and are usually uttered in rituals in the *terreiros*.

If she spins and destroys bridges, Yemoja also brings rest to beings. If there is crying, there is also healing. If it lives in deep water, it also comes to dry land. If you speak in one place, in another you silence – music is made too. *Oriki* is like a composition of sound waves which, when greeting the mother of heads, shows its spread throughout the spaces while differentiating. The road, the village, the bridges, the king’s house are being taken by the cosmic mass that constitutes Yemoja. Sodré (2017, p. 176) teaches us that the *orixás* are precisely “elements detached from the cosmic ‘matter-mass.’”¹² They bring us a little more universe and so, perhaps, we become a little less fixed (supposedly separated) from the 25% of the planet’s land and more displaced to the 70% of water that forms planet Earth or even the cosmos in general.

In some way, this is what happens in several demonstrations that crossed the Atlantic and reinvented themselves here. “The subjects of the rite (...) sing and dance the memory of Africa, a place lost and found, perennially transcreated by ritual performance,”¹³ writes Martins about the *congados* (2002, p. 70). I believe the statement is also valid for many other rituals recreated here, such as those that take place in *terreiros*.

¹¹ In Portuguese: “Certa vez, quando comecei a recitar um *oriki* de Oxóssi, uma filha-de-santo do *orixá* se retirou da sala onde estávamos, com um misto de respeito e receio.”

¹² In Portuguese: “elementos desprendidos da ‘matéria-massa’ cósmica.”

¹³ In Portuguese: “Os sujeitos do rito (...) cantam e dançam a memória de África, lugar perdido e achado, transcriado perenemente pela performance ritual.”

According to Martins (2002, p. 72), these rituals are “memory environments,”¹⁴ bringing “vast repertoires (...) restored and expressed in and through the body.”¹⁵ In and by the body, they take place in performances that “transmit and establish knowledge.”¹⁶

“In the Brazilian case, the rites of African descent, religious and secular, reterritorialize one of the most important philosophical and metaphysical African conceptions, ancestry,”¹⁷ states Martins (2002, p. 83). This is also what sustains Sodré (2017, p. 109) when writing about the trauma of the diaspora, worked through a restoration that brings ancestry, defined by him as “the ethical validity of the speech of the group’s founding, in which origin and end are intertwined.”¹⁸ It is then established the continuity of what he calls *arkhé*, which is origin. This is how Sodré explains:

“That is, the origin or *Arkhe* constitutes the temporality that grants existence and meaning to facts, not as an ineffable source of realities or as a structure that confirms the validity of existential acts, but rather as a ‘disposition’ that is historically constructed in the diaspora. Materially, the *Arkhe* doesn’t exist, but it is – What? A ‘heart’, an original protodisposition (...) generating affective tones (...)” (2017, pp. 96-97).¹⁹

With each new contact with the *arkhé*, unveiled by the ritual, there is a new rebirth. The *oriki* is present in some *nagô* rituals, such as when someone is born or dies. It can also be said in rituals in a *terreiro* or in other places and in other ways. Here, I invoke Sodré once again, when he tells us about the importance of word in the *Nagô* rite: it is “a singular trace of an origin and a destiny, waiting for apprehension as a musical phrase, that is, by resonance and not by semantic literality – it is image and music”²⁰ (Sodré, 2017, pp.138-139). It’s impossible not to relate immediately with the *orikis* which even

¹⁴ In Portuguese: “ambientes de memória.”

¹⁵ In Portuguese: “vastos repertórios (...) restituídos e expressos no e pelo corpo”

¹⁶ In Portuguese: “transmitem e instituem saberes.”

¹⁷ In Portuguese: “No caso brasileiro, os ritos de ascendência africana, religiosos e seculares, reterritorializam uma das mais importantes concepções filosóficas e metafísicas africanas, a ancestralidade.”

¹⁸ In Portuguese: “vigência ética do discurso de fundação do grupo, em que se enlaçam origem e fim.”

¹⁹ In Portuguese: “Ou seja, a origem ou *Arkhe* constitui a temporalidade que outorga existência e sentido aos fatos, não como uma fonte inefável de realidades ou como uma estrutura que confirme a validade dos atos existenciais, e sim como uma ‘disposição’ que se constrói historicamente na diáspora. Materialmente, a *Arkhe* não existe, mas é – O quê? Um ‘coração’, uma originária protodisposição afetiva (...) geradora de tonalidades afetivas (...)”

²⁰ In Portuguese: “traço singular de uma origem e de um destino, à espera de apreensão como frase musical, isto é, por ressonância e não por literalidade semântica – é imagem e música.”

when they are not part of a specific ritual, are image and music, thus containing more than one semantic meaning, an “emotional power”²¹ (*Nagôs* [...], 2015, np).

Henrique Freitas (2016, p. 55) calls “terreiroo-literature”²² that which “is connected to the epistemes that circulate in Afro-Brazilian religions and, primarily, refer to the productions originating from these spaces that are linked to a dimension not only oral, but diasporic multimodal.”²³ In these spaces, and in this multimodal dimension, there is no differentiation between life and literature. Art is the practice itself, it is not represented, everything is presentation, updating, life doing and remaking itself, words mobilizing and strengthening a way of being alive and which has to do with a way of being that affirms life (Sodré, 2017, p. 109).

The *xirê* [means circle in Iorubá, a counterclockwise dance ceremony to invoke the *Orixás* that take place at terreiro] is this organization that “transforms into existing a supposedly non-existence”²⁴ (Sodré, 2017, p. 100), bringing a new “subjectivation, in which the symbolic experience of the world, the rhythmic primacy of existing, the emotional power of words and actions (...)”²⁵ (Sodré, 2017, p. 100). According to Freitas (2016, pp. 37-38), *xirê* (“and its anti-teleological rotations”²⁶) governs the terreiro-literature, being the “stone that exu throws out of the linear time of historiography, theory and criticism.”²⁷ In *xirê*, the *arkhé* appears and takes over the body – the hearts start beating to the rhythm of the drums without needing hands to play them like the *Ogans* do. It is the sacred that touches and makes its tides in bodies.

Still according to Sodré (2017, p. 118), the “individual-body”²⁸ is double for the *nagô*, being both in the Earthly world, where we live, and in the “ultra-human,”²⁹ invisible to us, where the *orixás*, ancestors and other beings are. The universe is composed of these two worlds, which come to coexist in the rites of the *Candomblé* terreiros. I believe we

²¹ In Portuguese: “poder afetivo.”

²² In Portuguese: “literatura-terreiro.”

²³ In Portuguese: “está conectada às epistemes que circulam nas religiões afro-brasileiras e, prioritariamente, refere-se às produções oriundas destes espaços que se vinculam a uma dimensão não só oral, mas multimodal diaspórica.”

²⁴ In Portuguese: “transforma em existente um suposto inexistente.”

²⁵ In Portuguese: “subjetivação, em que ocupam um primeiro plano a experiência simbólica do mundo, o primado rítmico de existir, o poder afetivo das palavras e ações (...)”

²⁶ In Portuguese: “e suas rotações anti-teleológicas.”

²⁷ In Portuguese: “pedra que exu lança para fora do tempo linear da historiografia, da teoria e da crítica literária hegemônica.”

²⁸ In Portuguese: “indivíduo-corpo.”

²⁹ In Portuguese: “ultra-humano.”

should bring some *terreiro* gestures to the reading of *orikis*. Perhaps bringing reading closer to a ritual, this “proper place for full expression and expansion of the body”³⁰ (Sodré, 2017, p. 129). It’s a little like what I feel when my body begins to have a relationship with the *oriki*: it stops being just a vessel that receives things passively, like a good Christian body, that is, a “body without itself”³¹ (*Nagôs* [...], 2015, np), which only rests when it receives nothing, just like a “empty receptacle”³² (Sodré, 2017, p. 102), and fills (moves) when it receives content without realizing that deep waters, since forever, no longer make it empty.

Sodré (2017, p. 102) explains that, according to *Nagô* thought, there is a “bodily self,”³³ an “affective power of action in a dimension that is not verbose”³⁴ (*Nagôs* [...], 2015, np). It is also a self-awareness, common to the *nagô* body. I think something of a “self” is awakened in me in these readings, as I really feel a strength that is quite destabilizing: sometimes it feels like my body is falling into an abyss; other times, it is hit by a flood, but it is not a negative experience. In the flood, there are no homeless people and my body spreads because the water spread is necessary for those people who hold their heads escaping the relationship with the multiplicity that is the world. It’s difficult to write precisely because I’m very accustomed to making my body a container and my head a lid and, also because, as the enlargement occurs, the word tends to disappear.

It is a memory that arrives in prayer, the water: “memento as the lark” (Marques, 2021, p. 38). The *oriki* wants to do like her, who is a bird and becomes a song as the tide fills up to the “eyelash,” and then retreats and advances again on the “island,” rising until the “very black tiaras” – this is the movement of the lines saluting the water. It’s music that is heard. At another point, whoever listens learns that the marinas “they composed the bird’s song”³⁵ (Marques, 2021, p. 22); It doesn’t matter if it the lark’s song or not, it’s not about deciphering but about listening, letting the body move. It is important to recognize the waters and rhythms of the marianas in line with everything that lives,

³⁰ In Portuguese: “lugar próprio à plena expressão e expansão do corpo.”

³¹ In Portuguese: “corpo sem si mesmo.”

³² In Portuguese: “receptáculo vazio.”

³³ In Portuguese: “si-mesmo corporal.”

³⁴ In Portuguese: “potência afetiva de ação numa dimensão que não é palavrosa.”

³⁵ In Portuguese: “compuseram o canto do pássaro.”

creating life together, with mud and music, until words are just sound vibrating like waves.

I want to understand my body and *oriki* helps me in this process, the marianas too. What's more beautiful is that the *oriki* was already making me a little *nagô*, a lot although I hadn't realized it yet. It is Muniz Sodré who makes me understand. It's that *oriki* works on the body and, in this dimension, knowledge is not acquired, but rather incorporated, as Sodré remembers (*Nagôs* [...], 2015). Until today I had only learned to acquire, never to incorporate.

Sodré (2017, p. 116) states that the body, in the *Nagô* world, is an “active object,”³⁶ as it is made by a mixture of different elements, animals, vegetables and minerals, sharing with them, and with the deities, a common condition. It's subject, it's object. As an object it is a “unit of resistance to variation (...) an irreducibility that guarantees the permanence of *Arkhé*.”³⁷ Each person is made by materials that are collective, “coming from divine entities and ancestors,”³⁸ and individual.

The head, for example, is not simply a physical apparatus. It precedes the body and is chosen by us, individuals, before we got here. It's a deity, just as the *orixás* are, and we must worship her. To better understand the body in the *nagô* world is essential for us to continue. According to Sodré:

The body is made up of two inseparable parts, which are the head (*ori*) and the support (*aperê*). Man is an individual-body with unique and non-transferable elements in their head, linked to their personal destiny. The support holds the mobilizing and ensuring forces of individual existence, which differentiates and develops thanks to a cosmological principle (Exu), housed in the individual's own body (*Bara-aiê*), with which it is confused. Exu is also the intermediary between men and the *orixás*, generally transporting the offerings aimed at appeasing them (Sodré, 2017, p. 117).³⁹

³⁶ In Portuguese: “objeto ativo.”

³⁷ In Portuguese: “unidade de resistência à variação (...) uma irredutibilidade que garante a permanência da *Arkhé*.”

³⁸ In Portuguese: “procedentes das entidades genitoras divinas e dos ancestrais.”

³⁹ In Portuguese: “O corpo compõe-se de duas partes inseparáveis, que são a cabeça (*ori*) e o suporte (*aperê*). O homem é indivíduo-corpo com elementos singulares e intransferíveis na cabeça, ligados ao seu destino pessoal. No suporte se guardam as forças mobilizadoras e asseguradoras da existência individual, que se diferencia e se desenvolve graças a um princípio cosmológico (Exu), alojado no próprio corpo do indivíduo (*Bara-aiê*), com o qual se confunde. Exu é ademais o intermediário entre os homens e os *orixás*, geralmente transportando as oferendas destinadas a apaziguá-los.”

There is in the body an original opening to other possible or imaginable worlds. According to Sodré (2017, p. 121), “the human body is permeable to a historical world and mythical cosmos, ritualistically displaying this singularity,”⁴⁰ It was while reading Herberto Helder for my master’s degree that I realized that my body was permeable and my opening, until then compressed, began to want movement. Now, with the *orikis*, this process becomes irreversible: they awaken my fainted *Exu* with the action of that lid covering the well.

The mobilizing and ensuring forces of my individual existence, which are stored in my support, how are they affected by my *Exu* while the *oriki* travels through my body? “shells incarnated in the rock/ is there knife that assents to cutting them?,”⁴¹ the poetry of Eliane Marques (2021, p. 19) asks, the poem of number 10. Delving into it, Prisca Agustoni writes:

If we replace shells (symbols that are so present in the universe of the black diaspora in Brazil, both in the iorubá and Bantu lineages), the words that serve as a bridge between the concrete universe (rock) and that of representation, is there is a ‘knife’ that manages to separate the symbols of this world in constant metamorphosis, of overlapping cultures and violence, of their words? How can we possess a transparent, objective, diaphanous language to speak of what has always been dissimulated, baroque, unstable, exusiac? (Agustoni, 2021, p. 14).⁴²

There is no possible cut, I agree with Agustoni, the heart is well protected, however, it is not unattainable. I see the bridge as shell holes through which the sounds of the well reach us, bringing armored words. To listen to the heart of the rock through the shells incarnated in them: this is how one penetrates the rock, with the ears. By feeling the rhythm that maintains life, our *Exu* is nourished; and it is essential to be patient. When he arrives, the metamorphoses also come: the body starts to twist. Only in this way it appears possible to communicate with the *orikis* and the marianas.

⁴⁰ In Portuguese: “o corpo humano é permeável a um mundo histórico e cosmo mítico, exibindo ritualisticamente esta sua singularidade.”

⁴¹ In Portuguese: “conchas encarnadas na rocha / há faca que assinta cortá-las?”

⁴² In Portuguese: “Se colocarmos no lugar das conchas (símbolos tão presentes no universo simbólico da diáspora negra no Brasil, tanto na linhagem ioruba quanto na bantu), as palavras que servem de ponte entre o universo concreto (rocha) e o da representação, existe ‘faca’ que consiga separar os símbolos desse mundo em constante metamorfose, de culturas e violências sobrepostas, de suas palavras? Como termos uma linguagem transparente, objetiva, diáfana, para falar daquilo que desde sempre é dissimulado, barroco, movediço, exusíaco?”

This is how, in the ritual of listening to an *oriki*, it must be possible to find a heart. *Exu* moves and we move with him, causing rebirths, breaking placentas between the head and the rest of the body. There is water. You must try to constellate yourself between images and music, as the sun and the sea do before the star makes its definitive passage for the day. They fill up together, body and *oriki*. There is a brightness.

“*Exu* killed a bird yesterday with the stone he threw today,” states the iorubá aphorism, which is also an *oriki*. The movement of *O poço das marianas* is like that of *Exu*, according to Eliane Marques and if this orixá opens an event, inventing his time, as Sodr  (2017, p. 188) states, the well with these marianas also does this. As “the waters/beads abandoned”⁴³ (Marques, 2021, p. 48), I begin to create another time together with my *Exu* who first infected me in the *eb * made by Father Edinho in Liberdade, Salvador. During this process, I had to meet with the pai de santo several times and, in one of them, we made an offering especially for *Exu*. When I got home and lay down, I felt something I couldn’t remember feeling before: a bubbly joy circulating through my bloodstream, that just didn’t tickle me because it did not want to bother me; I just wanted to let that sweet pleasure spread throughout my body. My heart was kindly bombarded. That’s how it was, and I believe that something manifested itself there and made my body grow, wanting life: it was *Exu*. My heart was becoming *nag *.

I feel this bodily manifestation when reading and rereading *orikis*. What they throw at me destroys a previous semantics that inhabited me, and another emerges with which I still have difficulty communicating. When reading/listening to *orikis*, it is common for joy to come accompanied by bewilderment. As Edimilson de Almeida Pereira writes (2017b, p. 65), *Exu* “can destabilize our convictions about the clarifying function that language plays or, to put it another way, to be aware that the rhapsody of *Exu*’s speech contrasts with the grammatical Cartesianism of the official Portuguese language,”⁴⁴ It is worth remembering that *Exu* swallows the world and then regurgitates it, transforming it.

Yemoja turns me over, the marianas are of some dry agony, sometimes wet: they lubricate the chest of the islands and then become silent (drying themselves?) “with their

⁴³ In Portuguese: “as  guas / contas abandonadas.”

⁴⁴ In Portuguese: “pode desestabilizar nossas convic  es sobre a fun  o esclarecedora que a linguagem desempenha ou, dito de outra maneira, cientes de que a raps dia da dic  o de *Exu* se contrap e ao cartesianismo gramatical da l ngua portuguesa oficial.”

all-too-black headband” (Marques, 2021, p. 38). The *oriki* bends towards the water, the marianas are as important as the water they move, and, at the end, the text opens up for them. Often thirsty, they salivate and dry out. They dry up and salivate the well that, according to Eliane Marques, it is:

ancient womb that moves like that Transatlantic sea but that does not fit into officialdom, it falls outside this officialdom and, therefore, (...) the well is dry; it is muddy at the same time because our life of humans, non-humans, almost humans, is dry and muddy at the same time time, it is always bi, tri something, there is no room for unity, for officialdom (Papo [...], 2021, np).⁴⁵

Marques’ words seem in line with Pereira’s. There is a speech that accompanies the well and the marianas, which are not restricted to one unit or to a meaning; that constantly deconstructs and constructs the meanings without being possible to establish a single, official one. The multiplicity of *Exu* and his creative power make you notice and feel. Eliane Marques finds an *arkhé* in the well that has been deafened in the Western world, and it hits again. In exuistic action with words, the *nagô* heart awakens and does the same to whoever reads, listens to the attributes of this water that is also Nanã. Whether or not it is made for deities, there is something ancestral about “verbal music”⁴⁶ (Risério, 2013, p. 46) which is all *oriki*.

However, there is something more, because there are the Marianas. To the *nagô* heart, they cross with it, equally musical:

the puddled-feet copy those of sister lidwyne
of such huge puddles
puddle-sea
where the rebenque cracked the likoualá likoualá
where the ofá echoed what time did not last

osa-feet to the beleño rhythm of the thighs

Marques, 2021, p. 18 ⁴⁷

⁴⁵ In Portuguese: “ventre antigo que se movimenta como esse mar transatlântico, mas que não cabe numa oficialidade, descabe desta oficialidade e, por isso, (...) o poço ele é seco; ele é lodoso ao mesmo tempo porque a nossa vida de humanos, não humanos, quase humanos, é seca e lodosa ao mesmo tempo, ela é sempre bi, tri alguma coisa, não há espaço para unidade, para oficialidade.”

⁴⁶ In Portuguese: “música verbal.”

⁴⁷ In Portuguese: “os pés-de-poça copiam os da irmã lidwyne / de tamanhas poças/ poça-mar onde o rebenque estalou o likoualá likoualá/ onde o ofá ecoou o que não durou o tempo // pés-de-ossá ao ritmo beleño das coxas.”

Instead of children or tears, I notice threads of saliva on the Marianas' eyelashes. spilling up to the feet in verse: a strangeness, something that escapes, that goes beyond the the languages that *Exu* knows and that cannot simply be translated. There is a poetic language that sounds difficult but which, according to Pereira (2017b, p. 150), is “integral part of our everyday experiences.”⁴⁸ Eliane Marques' writing is part of this language that may seem distant, but is close: “I am from the dynasty of *planchadeiras*, laundresses, cooks, these women who picked up something and looked and managed to produce a life”⁴⁹ (Papo [...], 2021, np).

They produce sea pools where they dance: they reinvent the *nagô* heart from the aspects of daily toil in a world in which the feminine pronoun shows life being created in mud, a well of deep water – it is worth remembering that “A cosmological myth attributes the origin of the body as protomatter to mud,”⁵⁰ as writes Sodré (2017, p. 117).

The recreation of the *nagô* heart takes place through an “oyster language,”⁵¹ such as Agustoni (2021, p. 18) well attributed it to Eliane Marques' writing: “the bending to within the language, like a shell or an oyster, and refusing the one-way path, the Cartesian epistemology as a magnifying glass for decoding society, its symbols and values”⁵² (Agustoni, 2021, p. 18). On the wet floor of the marianas, there are the beats of the leather whip used by the gauchos (“rebenque”) and the *Oxóssi* bow and the that they hold, without hurting, the one that a Cartesian epistemology wants to make ephemeral, mute, the *nagô* heart that crossed the ocean from Africa to Brazil, kidnapped.

The “ossá feet” transfigure this Earth, reinventing the *nagô* heart in a mar-iana manner of being, living and making the world. Shell feet that open and close. *Ossá* is one of the 16 main *odus*, signs that make up *Ifá*, an African oracle of *iorubá* origin. Each *odú* (word in *iorubá*), or their combination, shows the destiny, a person's path. In the consultation, shells or palm seeds are used, which, when thrown, form *odus*. *Ossá* has nine shells (*buzios*) opened by nature and seven closed. It is linked to *Iansã*, *Yemoja* and

⁴⁸ In Portuguese: “parte integrante de nossas vivências cotidianas.”

⁴⁹ In Portuguese: “eu sou da dinastia das *planchadeiras*, das lavadeiras, das cozinheiras, essas mulheres que pegavam uma coisa e olha e conseguiam produzir uma vida.”

⁵⁰ In Portuguese: “Um mito cosmológico atribui à lama enquanto protomatéria a origem do corpo.”

⁵¹ In Portuguese: “linguagem-ostra.”

⁵² In Portuguese: “o dobrar-se para dentro da linguagem, à maneira de uma concha ou de uma ostra, e recusar o caminho de mão única, a epistemologia cartesiana como lupa de decodificação da sociedade, seus símbolos e valores.”

Ori (our head is our first divinity). There's water, there's fire. It brings strong mediumship and commands the blood – I remember here an aphorism that states, “Blood is red water.” These are the inventive feet of the marianas, creating their own path with shells in a deep water “oyster language”: threads of saliva on the shells' eyelashes; red, perhaps. They are thirsty for their own ways of perceiving the world, of living the well, to wet feet and islands. In this regard, Eliane Marques' language in the *oriki* that opens this text, it comes close to the way of making literature that Pereira called *Exunouveau*. The poet, theorist and teacher explains:

In general terms, the Exunouveau way takes us back to the question of re-enchantment of the world that Exu devours and recreates. This question is relevant to the subject of poetic making, especially one who, as the “lord of the paths,” fertilizes the soil of language with his metaphors and word games, albeit knowing that these and others communication instruments are precarious. It is evident that each poet, in her own way and for her reasons, and depending on her historical - social, can consider – more or less - the interference of this issue in the creation process. Specifically, the Exunouveau bias – which relates to the conditions of creation and maintenance of the human being, and all other beings and objects – this question is necessary, given the close relationship that has long been established between the sacred and poetic discourse, whether in the domain of iorubá epistemology or other cultural domains. (Pereira, 2017b, p. 149).⁵³

In this way of writing, *Exu* does not need to literally appear to to make himself present. His characteristics blend with the body of the person writing, re-enchanting the words, which I perceive as being precisely a crossing of hearts: the *nagô* and the other from whoever writes. From this blend, a reinvented *nagô* heart is born, a new *Exu* writing the text. There are infinite ways to do it, the *Exunouveau* way of Eliane Marques and her marianas are through this “oyster language,” that fertilizes the soil with “puddle-sea” – in another text, “they are drunk and sleeping with boots on.”⁵⁴

⁵³ In Portuguese: “Em linhas gerais, o modo Exunouveau nos reenvia à questão do reencantamento do mundo que Exu devora e recria. Essa questão é relevante para o sujeito do fazer poético, sobretudo aquele que, como o “senhor dos caminhos,” fertiliza o solo da linguagem com suas metáforas e jogos de palavras, embora saiba que esses e outros instrumentos da comunicação sejam precários. É evidente que cada poeta, à sua maneira e pelas suas razões, e a depender de seu contexto histórico-social, pode considerar mais ou menos a interferência dessa questão em seu processo de criação. De maneira específica, o viés Exunouveau – que se relaciona às condições de criação e de manutenção do ser humano, e de todos os demais seres e objetos – essa questão se impõe, haja vista a estreita relação que há muito se estabeleceu entre o sagrado e o discurso poético, seja no domínio da epistemologia iorubá ou de outros domínios culturais.”

⁵⁴ In Portuguese: “estão bêbadas e dormem de botas.”

Edimilson de Almeida Pereira himself composes *orikis* that are part of this writing that produces new *Exus*, reinventing the *naqô* heart in a very particular way, like Eliane Marques. In book *E*, in which the perception of the iorubá world is made always present, Edimilson writes four *orikis*, one different from the other, and new hearts are connecting, joining together. One of them makes use of a common feature of the *orikis*, the erotic and the natural way in which he composes texts, without fuss or separation between purity and impurity. André Capilé's incredible translation is worth a listen:

Oriki of salvation

Long live the world's asshole
Long live the world's asshole
To those who bite the clit
and the emmet.
Long live those who steal
the must of families.
Those who fuck outdoors.
Long live the heart of death.
In the absence of corners
it's the days that bend
and we, against the grain.
Hostages to the world's worst
wound, we salute you..
It's the fatal right, if
They've stolen our safety
and gaiety.
Long live the moon over the fraternal
cunt,
to the well-hung sunset.
Long live, in this falling garden,
Is not just words
in quotes.
Long live the tissue that sutures
the skin,
to the body inside the body
– with no place for itself.

Pereira, 2017a, p. 73⁵⁵

⁵⁵ In Portuguese: “Oriki de salvação. Saúde ao cu do mundo / a quem morde o grelo / e a saúva. / Saúde ao que assalta / o mosto das famílias. / O que fode a céu aberto. / Saúde ao coração da morte. / Na ausência de esquinas / o que se dobra são os dias / e nós, a contrapelo. Reféns da maior entre as / chagas, saudamos. / É o direito fatal, se / nos furtaram a segurança / e a alegria. / Saúde à lua sobre a buceta / fraterna, / ao sol posto caralho. / Saúde, nesse jardim em queda, / não são palavras /entre aspas. /Saúde ao lenço que sutura /a pele, /ao corpo dentro do corpo / – sem lugar para si.”

The attributes of this salvation do not matter so much, but rather salute it by making reverence to the health it seems capable of creating. Salute to the life that still exists on the streets, alleys, to open-air pleasures in a wounded Brazil, with destroyed hearts not by the insect commonly called the *barbeiro*, but by Necropolitics. Salute to the ways of making a world that remain, despite the “falling garden”; that swing in Oxóssi’s bow, making rocks hear through shells stuck to them and recreating corners with *Exus* and other languages, sometimes oysters (Eliane), others convex (Edimilson). That the reading of an *oriki*, and not the disease, is a good reason for a heart to change size, modifying itself, becoming *nagô* and aquatic and splashing in puddles and outside of itself. Long live “to the body inside the body.” To the marianas, to the waters – thirsty, salivating.

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Reviews

Due to the commitment assumed by *Bakhtiniana*. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [Bakhtiniana. Journal of Discourse Studies] to Open Science, this journal only publishes reviews that have been authorized by all involved.

Review I

This article complies with the journal's guidelines and has academic relevance in line with the proposed theme. I suggest some adjustments or modifications and explanations of some terms used in the text, for better understanding by the reader. APPROVED

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