Theatricality and performativity in Glauber Rocha's *cinema novo* films

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Résumé : Dans cet article, je réexamine l'esthétique et la poétique de Glauber Rocha, figure de proue du cinéma brésilien moderne, sous l'angle de la théâtralité de ses films du Cinema Novo, depuis *Barravento* en 1962 jusqu'à *Antonio das Mortes* en 1969. Rocha a été le fondateur et le cadre théorique du mouvement Cinema Novo avec son manifeste *Esthétique de la faim* en 1965, et c'est lui qui a envisagé un nouveau contexte postcolonial pour le cinéma brésilien dans les années 60. L'article donnera un aperçu de la manière dont Rocha a utilisé la théâtralité pour souligner le récit révolutionnaire et anticolonial présent dans ses films. Dans *Barravento*, nous assistons à une rare utilisation négative de la praxis performative traditionnelle et ethnographique de la région brésilienne de Bahia, avec une représentation théâtrale des rituels de capoeira et de candomblé. Dans son film phare, *Black God, White Devil*, le réalisateur met en scène les processions "noires" du mouvement pseudo-religieux des beatos, tout en utilisant la performativité des duels poétiques connus sous le nom de desafios. Enfin, lors de la clôture du Cinema Novo et de la démocratie brésilienne, Rocha a présenté le film *Antonio das Mortes*, rempli de la théâtralité d'un public interne qui assiste aux duels, aux processions, aux acclamations et aux desafios. Toutes les stratégies employées par Rocha pour concevoir un pouvoir révolutionnaire et sanglant du mouvement Cinema Novo doivent beaucoup à la théâtralité et à la performativité imprimées au cœur de ces trois films.

Mots-clés : théâtralité, performativité, Rocha, Cinema Novo, postcolonial, révolutionnaire

Abstract : In this article I re-examine the esthetics and poetics of the seminal figure of modern Brazilian cinema Glauber Rocha from the perspective of the theatricality of his Cinema Novo films starting with *Barravento* from 1962 and finishing with *Antonio das Mortes* from 1969. Rocha was a founder and theoretical frame giver for the Cinema Novo movement with his manifesto *Aesthetics of Hunger* in 1965, and it was he who envisioned a new postcolonial context of the Brazilian cinema in the 60's. Article will provide an insight how Rocha employed theatricality to emphasize the revolutionary and anti-colonial narrative present in his films. In *Barravento* we witness the rare negative employment of the traditional and ethnographic performative praxis of the Brazilian Bahia region with theatrical representation of the Capoeira and Candomblé rituals. In his seminal *Black God, White Devil*, the director stages the "black" processions of the pseudo religious movement of the beatos while also using the performatives of the poetical duels known as desafios. Finally, in the closing times of Cinema Novo and Brazilian democracy Rocha presented the film *Antonio das Mortes* filled with theatricality from the ongoing inner audience witnessing duels, processions, acclamations and desafios. All the strategies that Rocha employed to design a bloody and revolutionary power of the Cinema Novo movement owe a great deal to the theatricality and performativity stamped in the core of these three films.

Keywords : theatricality, performativity, Rocha, Cinema Novo, postcolonial, revolutionary

Glauber Rocha is a seminal figure in Brazilian modern art, especially if we consider his 1965 revolutionary and anti-colonial manifesto of the *Cinema Novo* entitled *Aesthetics of Hunger* (*Eztétyka da fome*). In this manifesto, he envisioned a new, progressive Brazilian cinema reaching towards the liberation of "the oppressed" in a nation divided by economic, political, and ideological turmoil. This manifesto puts forward the new aesthetics of the Brazilian cinema, inspired by Frantz Fanon's anti-colonial advocacy of using violence against the oppressor/colonizer, as exemplified in his book *Wretched of the Earth* (*Les Damnés de la Terre*), published in 1961, at the time Rocha shot his debut feature *Barravento*.

Fanon's violent and revolutionary philosophy left such a deep mark on Rocha that he discarded the tradition of the *indigenismo* (ideological and cultural congruence between the state, the Indigenous and the minorities)[1] embedded in a large part of contemporary Latin American art. Instead, he created and produced striking and heavily theatrical films, the purpose of which was to emphasize the Brazilians who were part of the "oppressed nation" and who should, according to Rocha, master their own fates (Rocha, 6-7). To do so, Rocha conceived his films as large-scale, theatricalized works, in which the performative elements were striking and Brechtian in their ambition to incite rebellion in the supposed oppressed audiences.

This article will focus on three Rocha's films that are still relevant in terms of theoretical and aesthetic framework of post- coloniality : *Barravento*, *Black God, White Devil* and *Antonio das Mortes*. These films have been widely explored in academic literature in the context of ideology, race, anti-coloniality and subaltern theories. This article, however, offers a distinct perspective ; one which relies on the theatrical and performative features of these films. The article lays emphasis on Rocha's anti-colonial oppositional strategies. In the first part of the article, I analyse and deconstruct the ethnography and the rural traditions represented in *Barravento* using Derridean pharmacology and Marxist philosophy. In the second part, I give insight into new perspectives with a comparative analysis of the seminal *Cinema Novo* film *Black God, White Devil*. Although indebted to Fanon's philosophy of violence, the film can be observed through its dramaturgy conceived by usage of sequences of processional theatralization and performances with metatheatrical meaning. Metanarrative and meta visual elements can be viewed as an innovative use of the theatrical tools which aim to shake up, disturb, and entice the viewers to take actual political or social action. *Black God, White Devil* exemplifies the true nature of what Quijano calls the *coloniality of power* (*colonialidad del poder*). The different performative elements used in the film : *desafio*, processions, sermons and rituals all emphasise colonial agency in fortifying binary oppositions. The last part of the article deals with role playing and the theatrical decorum in *Antonio das Mortes*. This film has become Rocha's best-known work in the West and owes its popularity there to Western-like aesthetics and the topics of revenge and solitude that are also omnipresent themes in the classical Western genre. Dramaturgy constructed by theatrical devices and performance acts that started with *Black God, White Devil* is further expanded in *Antonio das Mortes*. We observe different characters represented in the film by means of numerous perfor-

[1]For the fuller understanding of the *indigenismo* ideology see Manuel Gamio's book *Forjando la patria*,Ed Porrua (Mexico) ; Edición 3rd (1 enero 1982)

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mances and theatrical roleplaying, individually woven into the screenplay of the film but connected with the main theme of survival. Rocha's obsession with witnessing, mimicking, and theatricality, although tackled differently in the three films analysed below, still serve the same purpose : the revolutionizing of the oppressed masses through his uncanny didactics and the uncompromising viciousness of his vision.

1 *Barravento ;* futility of ethnography and infirmity of Marxism

Barravento is an anomaly within Rocha's work since it was edited by another great Brazilian filmmaker : Nelson Pereira dos Santos (the director of the seminal *Barren Lives* from 1963). He had his own revolutionary approach which differed from Rocha's in that he didn't share his advocacy of violence and Fanon's philosophy. Rocha himself renounced *Barravento* after publishing the manifesto *Aesthetics of Hunger,* as he felt the film did not correspond with Fanon's theoretical traits and with the concurrent inauguration of *Cinema Novo* poetics elaborated in the manifesto (Rocha, 80). *Cinema Novo* is a movement proclaimed by Rocha that encompasses Brazilian auteur films that moved away from previous neo-realism period and who were shot during the socialist government of João "Jango" Goulart (1961-1964). A large number of *Cinema Novo* films (excluding film of Pereira dos Santos and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade) employ Fanon's acceptance of violence as a means of fighting against the oppression and exploitation of the various subjects portrayed in the films : indigenous people, women, peasants, servants, children, etc.

Despite Rocha's renouncement, analysis of the ethnographic, ritual, and social performances evident in *Barravento* repositions the revolutionary importance of the film. The representations of traditional ethnography can be read as a way of using Brechtian theatricality as a tool to produce resistance among the audience. A key issue in *Barravento* is the ways in which Rocha deconstructs the traits of two overwhelmingly Afro-Brazilian traditions : "Candomblé" and "capoeira." Both traditions are theatrical and performative in their nature, and native to Bahia, a Northeastern region of Brazil inhabited mostly by the Afro-Brasileiro population (ancestors of the African slaves imported to Bahia region from the beginning of the 16th century). Candomblé is a religious ritual that includes the mantras, female dancers and male fishermen who are escorted to grand-scale ocean hunt. Capoeira is a hybrid of martial arts and choreographed performances employed to settle the differences between two (mostly) male antagonists. Rocha was also a native of Bahia, born in its third largest city Vitória da Conquista, so his obsession with the region and its history is largely reflexive. He moved from Vitória da Conquista to Salvador de Bahia with his family when he was 9, and in Salvador he later became involved with the Brazilian radical leftists, namely ardent Marxist followers which predominantly shaped his future political stance.

The narrative of *Barravento* is intricately linked to the Guinean-Brazilian tradition of Candomblé and to the Afro-Brasileiro fishing community Buraquino in Bahia. The main characters include Arua – a young and handsome male and a future "Mestre" (chieftain of the community) whose name is identical to the male deity from the Candomblé religion and Iemanja – a main female in the community whose name recalls the Candomblé deity of the sea. The plot begins with the arrival of Firmino,

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a womanizer dressed in urban clothes (all other characters in the film wear ordinary peasant clothes) who returns to Buraquino after being employed in Salvador de Bahia (a metropolis of the Bahia region). Firmino reveals himself to be an ardent Marxist (clearly a reflection of Rocha himself) whose goal is to impose a new and supposedly liberating Marxist paradigm to the community, which he believes to be oppressed by the despotism of Mestre and O Dono (a white overlord who is a fish trade mogul). Firmino argues that O Dono takes 90% from the fish trade, which he sees as a clear exploitation of the Afro-Brasileiro majority. This brings him into direct conflict with Arua who is keen to protect his predetermined position of the future Buraquino Mestre and its benefits. What follows is the capoeira duel in which Firmino defeats Arua, but contrary to all rituals and ethnographic traditions (in which the winner is glorified), the winner of the battle is cast out from the community and the loser is proclaimed chieftain. This false and unjust treatment of Firmino's victory is staged as a denunciation of the Marxist ideology, giving a striking example as to why Marxism cannot take hold within these types of communities.

In the film, Candomblé is represented as a paternalistic system in which the caring females escort their male partners to the big fishing endeavour with mantric songs and shamanistic narratives uttered during the circle dance. The main roles are performed by the experienced matriarchs, known as Ialorixás priestesses, which underlines the strict hierarchy of the ritual. The matriarchs perform the roles of Orixás, the saints from the Candomblé religion, while the deities are reserved for the males, especially for Arua who is regarded as a future chieftain – mirroring his eponymous deity. The main ritual and religious purpose of Candomblé is the ongoing initiation of the new members of the community that have come of age and are ready to be consecrated. For this purpose, the Orixas invoke the deities to possess the soul of the initiated so he might achieve fishing glory.

Rocha starts to deconstruct and point out the futility of this religious praxis through parallel and rhythmic montage sequencing which simultaneously shows Candomblé being performed, and the drowning of the fishermen in the "barravento" (an ocean storm). He even goes as far as to use Eisenstein's montage of attraction[2] to further stress the futility and needlessness of the ritual (jump cuts of dead bodies, waves, Orixas, drums and sunken boats are all juxtaposed to this effect). In the long shots of dancing and singing, Rocha uses his signature theatrical feature of spectators/-bystanders (mostly extras in the film) who watch and do nothing (these are mainly *aldeão*; villagers who do not take part in the big fishing ventures) provocatively reflecting the position of the bourgeois cinema audience. The Marxist Firmino, is also seen watching from afar but during the juxtaposed jump-cuts we find out that he cut off the fishing nets deliberately to create a disaster - both in terms of the death of the fishermen and the unsuccessful Candomblé. Obviously, the film represents the irreconcilable clashing of multiple ideologies : first, Firmino's Marxist opposition to Candomblé, second, his failure to connect with the community despite the relevance of his narratives of oppression, and third, the apparent futility of Candomblé's power for

[2]Sergei Eisenstein (1898-1948) was a seminal Soviet filmmaker whose innovative usage of montage principle changed the aesthetics and poetics of cinema, especially his usage of montage attractions by which an audience is moved emotionally, psychically, and politically by sudden bursts of aggressive movement of camera and of the shots.

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the wellbeing of the community. Another deliberate deconstruction of Candomblé's vitality and importance is achieved by usage of the out of sync audio heard during the ritual ; we can see the Orixas dancing and singing but the audio track is lagging a bit and revealing the extradiegetic audio track recorded elsewhere. This, as Graham Buce argued in his article on the subject, enables Rocha to exhibit the visual narrative and then to give it a subversive audio annulment with the out of sync approach (Bruce, 291-292).Extradiegetic music and out of sync audio can also be viewed as a deliberate subversion of the performance of traditional rituals and ceremonies.

The theatricality of *Barravento* lies both in the ever-present signs of mute bystanders watching the plot unfolding, but also in the treatment of the performative utterance performed by the antagonizing parties : Firmino and the community leaders – this is clear in the performing of "Bahia, Bahia" samba song scene in which we can hear different narratives being uttered by different characters. This is further elaborated by the awkwardness of the capoeira duel. The performative traits of capoeira include acrobatics, martial arts, singing and dance. A focal point in every capoeira battle is usually the contestant who performs the best "ginga" and "aú batido" sequence – a rocking tri-step rhythm followed by a handstand with a flying leg kick. In *Barravento* this is achieved by Firmino who uses "aú batido" to defeat Arua. Firmino's victory, awarded with banishment, is a deliberate subversion on behalf of Rocha, portraying the futility of capoeira as a fighting method, but also the futility of the individual going against a mass. Rocha's deliberate usage of Brechtian epic theatre methods intends to provoke offense within the audience as the winner is being cast away and the loser becomes the master - which is thus a criticism of Candomblé and capoeira as unifying communal traditions.

Another way to observe the narrative of Barravento is through Derrida's concepts of "pharmakos" and "pharmakues." We can observe Candomblé as the "pharmakos" for the community - something ancient that, used in a ritual, has the effect of a drug or medicine, something outside the logical world (Derrida, 99). The double-edged nature of the "pharmakos" is that the ones who believe in it (Arua, the Buraquino community) take it as a remedy while the ones that don't (Firmino and Rocha) see it as a poison and a clear rupture from the community (Derrida, 130). Firmino is seen as a "pharmakeus" by the community ; the one that acts like a poisoner against traditions and communal life. Derrida marks Socrates as the first ancient "pharmakeus," an individual who goes against the prevailing politics and ideology. Firmino does precisely this, publicly announcing the Marxist agenda and trying to impose it on the Buraquino community. His fate becomes like that of Socrates – he is isolated and banished because of his public actions. Rocha's message is that the 'backwardness' of Candomblé and the infirmity of Marxism offer very little potential for the liberation of the oppressed Afro-Brasileiro community. Rocha subversively implies that neither Afro-Brazilian traditions nor class ideology can be an answer to oppression, but only violent and revolutionary resistance against the oppressor/colonizer. This message becomes more overtly evident in his subsequent film *Black God, White Devil*.

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2 *Black God, White Devil* and the coloniality of power

Unlike *Barravento* that presented the coastal fishing community of Bahia and its rituals and traditions, Rocha's next film, the seminal *Black God, White Devil* takes place in the inland part of Bahia called Sertão, inhabited by various "Sertanejos" (heterogenic inhabitants of Sertão wasteland). Sertão is known for its different and specific traditions and diverse communities, which creates a much more complex social scene to *Barravento*. The English translation (*Black God, White Devil*) of the original Portuguese title *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol* doesn't quite imply the context present in the original title as God and Devil in The Land of the Sun. Omitting the Sun gets rid of the omnipresent reality connected with the Sertão region : boiling temperature, lack of vegetation and shade, and gruelling, almost desert-like conditions. Precisely because of this, the characters, and their destinies in the film are all equally linked to the cruelty of Sertão, almost in a geological sense. The beginning of the film clearly implies this with the opening aerial shot of the Sertão wasteland ending in the close-up of a dead cow's head eaten by flies and ants, echoing Salvador Dali's painting "Geológico destino" (Geological Destiny) from 1933.[3]

Rocha filmed *Black God, White Devil* in situ, casting local Sertanejos as the stock characters, in concordance with Brazilian neorealist aesthetics that emerged in the 50's. But unlike the neorealist films of the previous decade (most notably *Rio Zona Norte* by Pereira dos Santos)[4] that were social commentaries or socially engaging films, Rocha's film is a direct visualisation of Fanon's violent and revolutionary anti-colonialism, as presented in *The Wretched of the Earth. Black God, White Devil* abandons the Brechtian didactics and Derridean ambivalences evident in *Barravento* and opts for a striking and unambiguous revolutionary agenda aimed towards the liberation of the oppressed. Rocha's film anticipates the subsequent theory developed by Peruvian philosopher Aníbal Quijano known as "colonialidad de poder" (coloniality of power) and its deconstruction of theories based on "otherness" (rooted in religious, gender, race etc. differences amongst societies or social groups and classes). Quijano argues that the only real and omnipresent coloniality still present in the world is the one ruled by power and hierarchy achieved through enslavement, unavailability of education and acculturation of different cultures by dominant hegemonic culture (Quijano, 201-209). Quijano's argument is vivid and strikingly represented in *Black God, White Devil,* where the whole narrative structure relies on the struggles between power and weakness.

To understand this theoretical framework, I must briefly introduce the narrative and the plot of the film, especially because of the diverse social and ideological strata that it encompasses. The film is broken down into three temporal and spatial parts that deliver different and contrasting representations of power/weakness dichotome.

[3]Rocha was acquainted with surrealism, especially with Dali. He writes about two types of surrealism in his essay "Tropicalism, Anthropology, Myth, Ideography" from 1969.

[4]Nelson Pereira dos Santos (1928- 2018) seminal Brazilian filmmaker and one of the key directors in both neorealism and Cinema Novo. He was the editor of *Barravento* but after the release of the film he broke his affiliation with Rocha for good.

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1. In the first part, we track the lives of Manuel and Rosa, a couple working as *penhores* (landless peasants) for the local landlord Coronel Morais who is also a *jagunço* (local sheriff). Manuel comes into conflict with Morais as Morais slays his cattle. Manuel kills him, and Moraise's adjutants kill Manuel's mother in retaliation.

2. The second part narrates Manuel's admittance into the pseudo religious cult of *beato* (self-proclaimed saint) Sebastião (an Afro-Brazilian) who becomes his Master. Because of the widespread popularity of Sebastião's cult, local *jagunços* hire the assassin Antonio das Mortes who kills most of Sebastião's flock of followers, while Rosa kills Sebastião in an outburst of jealousy.

3. In the third part, Manuel and Rosa search for a new Master and find him in the character of Corisco, who is a "cangaçeiro" (the term used to describe a social bandit in Sertão). Corisco refuses to become Manuel's Master and rather challenges him into a poetic and philosophical duel called *desafio* in which he reveals himself as The White Devil (contrasting Sebastião as The Black God, hence the English translation of the film's title). Corisco's growing popularity is ended again by Antonio das Mortes who kills him and finishes his contract with "jagunços". The film ends with an aerial shot of Manuel and Rosa, who, deprived of all Masters, run aimlessly through Sertão.

We witness the circularity of the film's narrative, since the establishing shot is the aerial shot of the barren Sertão and the closing shot also happens to be an aerial shot of the same place. We can argue that the dead cow's head from the beginning anticipates the possible death of Manuel and Rosa in Sertão and thus the notion of geological destiny mentioned earlier.

Ismail Xavier (preeminent scholar of *Cinema Novo*) scrutinised almost every aspect of Rocha's work[5], especially the social conditioning and ideological ruptures present in *Black God, White Devil*. The focal point in my research is confined within the theatricality and performativity used by Rocha to nullify and deconstruct all ideologies and theories of salvation present in the film. I already mentioned the importance of witnessing and observing (spectators and bystanders in the actual film) as a way of building a theatrical decorum within the film itself through meta visual and metanarrative procedures. In *Black God, White Devil* the real theatre starts with Manuel and Rosa arriving at *beato* Sebastião's sermon in the Sertão desert. Lured by his theatrical performance, especially his hand gestures, body language and pathos, the crowd/bystanders are easily incorporated into his pseudo religious cult. The mimetic quality of these performances is emphasized by Rocha's usage of handheld camera movement, specifically through the rhythm of close-up shots.

Sebastião and the crowd act out the dramatic theatrical performance that is conceived to look like a religious ritual. Following this mass scene (22 :24 - 24 :30), subsequent shots (45 :15- 49 :40) retrospectively show the processional performance of Manuel

[5]See Ismail Xavier's books *Sertão Mar : Glauber Rocha e a estética da fome*, EMBRAFILME/Secretaria da Cultura/MEC, 1983 *and O desafio do cinema : A política do estado e a política dos autores (Brasil, os anos de autoritarismo)* J. Zahar Editor 1985

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carrying a heavy stone to the barren hilltop accompanied by Sebastião. Sebastião utters a mantric sermon in which we find out that this procession is an initiation ritual for Manuel who must purify himself from the sins of his past. The structure of these processional shots is interrupted by jump-cuts of Rosa with noticeably growing hate towards Sebastião's exploitation of her lover (hence the motif for killing the *beato* afterwards). Using the power of processional environmental theatre Rocha constructs an intense version of social drama[6] ending with the arrival of Antonio das Mortes and the killing of the Black God. We, as an extradiegetic film audience (or the outer one) but also the intradiegetic one (crowd/bystanders) witness the destruction of this pseudo religious cult ending in total annihilation. Xavier argues that Rocha deliberately uses violent and striking imagery to demystify any kind of messianic ideology which, instead of liberating the Oppressed only reproduces envy and oppression (Xavier, 142-143).

Further theatralization in *Black God, White Devil* is evident in the third part when Manuel and Rosa find Corisco, and in the ensuing performance of the *desafio*. Corisco's character is based on the life of the famous historical "cangaçeiro" Lampiao, who was killed by the police in 1938 along with his accomplices. Cangaçeiro and his gang can be seen as a type of Hobsbawm's "social bandits". Hobsbawm coined the term "social banditry" to describe a primitive class struggle and resistance in the pre-industrial and frontier societies - Sertao being a fine example with jagunços acting as local sheriffs on the frontier (Hobsbawm 13-16). The theatricality and performances in *Black God, White Devil* are also noted and present in João Guimarães Rose's 1956 novel *Grande Sertão : Veredas.* The novel explores "O pacto com o Diabo" (Pact with the Devil), the self-proclaimed ideology of the local "cangaçeiros"in Sertão as a special kind of rural phenomenon (Guimarãesa Rosa, 27, 48). Unlike the pseudo-religious cult of Sebastião (Black God), "O pacto com Diabo" is reflected in Corisco (White Devil) who opts for violence and social banditry as a way of opposing the political and economic hypocrisy of contemporary Brazil. Corisco refuses to initiate Manuel (1 :29 :40- 1 :31 :00) who is seeking another Master, instead challenging him to a poetical and philosophical duel to reveal to Manuel the individual liberties inscribed by the "O pacto com Diabo" and ideology of social banditry .Rocha masterfully directs the *desafio* like Shakespearean dramatic duels (echoing the duels of Polonius and Hamlet and Claudius and Hamlet). Desafio in Portuguese means a challenge, in the context of the film it's a rhetorical and poetical battle between two oppositional characters. Rocha uses the circular movement of the handheld camera that cuts-in and out of protagonist's close-up and facial shots with intense usage of rhythmic editing. The inner audience/crowd is now reduced only to Rosa who acts as a Shakespearean bystander. *Desafio* becomes a series of oral performances uttered with pathos and declamation on Corisco's part and with melancholy and absence on Manuel's part. The abrupt arrival of Antonio das Mortes stands for the"deus ex machina" theatrical device that violently annihilates the unresolved issues of the "desafio".

Black God, White Devil is an example of the unmasking of the "coloniality of power", especially in its striking and visceral representation of the hegemonic and hierarchical system of modern Brazil. The social banditry and the independence of the rural Sertão

[6]Social drama in the context of anthropological theory of Van Gennep and Victor Turner.

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"cangaçeiros" witness the importance of this phenomenon that was widespread in Northeast Brazil for almost a hundred years. Theatricality and performative nature of this phenomenon are a clear argument that social banditry tried to establish a distinctive ideology in opposition to the Government and the Catholic Church.

3 *Antonio das Mortes* – the end of the road

Known in the West as *Antonio das Mortes* (lit. Antonio who brings death) the original Portuguese title of the film *O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro* is more self-explanatory as The Dragon of Evil Against the Holy Warrior. The title reflects the legend of Saint George and Cappadocian text dating back to 11th century, which recalls the deeds of Saint George (an early Christian saint from the 3rd century) and the taming and slaying of the Dragon that demanded tribute and sacrifice from the peasant villagers[7]. Saint George is an extremely important patron and saint in Brazil especially because it has been identified with Ogum – the saint from Candomblé religion - thus important to Afro-Brasileiro and racially mixed communities on the frontier. The narrative of the film is double coded : it is tied to both the *Golden Legend* of Saint George and to Rocha's own finale of the so-called Sertão trilogy (which includes *Black God, White Devil* and *The Entranced Earth*) in which he deconstructed and redesigned the histories of local social banditry and "cangaçeiro" movement that shaped the political and social history of the inner Bahia region.

The narrative of *Antonio das Mortes* is a reflexive and nostalgic ending of the whole *Cinema Novo* movement that Rocha inaugurated back in 1965 with his manifesto[8]. It retells the whole story of the Sertão and "cangaçeiros", but from a completely new perspective to the one given in *Black God, White Devil*. The story tracks the black "beatos" who survived and who gather under the leadership of female shaman Dona Santa and the self-proclaimed "cangaçeiro" Coirana to form a local veneration of the Saint George cult. They threaten the local village under the control of Coronel Horácio who hires Antonio das Mortes to kill Coirana and to end any possible resurrection of the "cangaçeiro" movement. Antonio fatally wounds Coirana but the experience changes him, as he refuses to kill him and instead demands that Horácio treats villagers with dignity and humility. Horácio in turn hires a new assassin to kill the disobedient Antonio but the latter, with the help of his friend Professor, kills the hired "jagunços" while Coirana's disciple kills Horácio. The film ends with Antonio walking by the road, looking at the emerging industry and trucks around him, and sensing he is now obsolete, a remnant of the old regime that disappeared with the urbanisation following World War II. This is precisely a finale of the frontier and pre-industrial Brazilian society that Hobsbawm preached through the theory of social banditry .

[7] For more information on the precursors and Christian iconography of the legend of Saint George see Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson, Robert K. Upchurch (eds.), *Saints' Lives in Middle Spanish Collections* from 2004.

[8] The corruption in Brazilian government and the widespread resentfulness towards leftist filmmakers from the previous decades forced Rocha to exile ; he ventured from Spain (but left soon because of Franco's dictatorship) to Chile and France, and finally settled in Portugal.

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Unlike his previous films that were set in the late 19th or early 20th century, *Antonio das Mortes* is set after WWII when Brazil went through massive urbanisation. Millions of unemployed peasants and "Sertãnejos" fled to the big cities, creating a demographic and economic rupture in Brazilian history. *Antonio das Mortes* starts as a bizarre example of social banditry that fuses pseudo-religious cults, outlaws, rural scenery, and anarchy in which local bandits (in this case "cangaçeiros" or "jagunços") act like messiahs for the peasants and the oppressed (Hobsbawm, 14-16). But the ancient regime is shattered by Antonio and his choice to not execute Coirana. The context henceforth shifts from banditry to social drama through Antonio's experience. As a well-established anthropological theory, social drama, as analysed by Victor Turner, is a mechanism that elaborates social interactions and disputes by structuring an individual's path within the community into four stages : breach, crisis, redressive action, and reintegration or schism (Turner, 33).

Social drama in *Antonio das Mortes* starts with the character of Coirana.

1. Coirana creates a breach by refusing to succumb to the will of Coronel Horácio and restarting the rebellious "cangaçeiro" movement.

2. The crisis starts with Antonio's refusal to finish off Coirana, raising questions about where his loyalties and ethics lie (unlike the similar plot evident in *Black God, White Devil* where Antonio never shows any kind of emotional engagement with other characters, especially his victims).

3. Redressive action is employed here by the Saint George/Ogum cult followers who further escalate the crisis by not succumbing to Horácio's will. They paradoxically perform this action together with Antonio das Mortes who wounded their leader, but they unify to finish Coronel's tyranny.

4. Finally, there is a schism that occurs because of the power of redressive action that disables possible reintegration. Furthermore, the whole community is taken down, so any possibility of reintegration is futile. For Antonio, the schism means the end of the road because the old regime is crumbling down, and the new industrial and urban world emerges.

The traditional liminality of Antonio's position as an assassin during the social banditry epoch of the Sertão shifts towards his abandonment of his profession in the new world (similar nihilism is evident in Luis Garcia Berlanga's black comedy *El Verdugo* from 1963). Binary oppositions of this shift between liminality and liminoid are proposed by anthropologist Richard Schechner who distinguishes the obligatory context of the liminality that is usually connected with traditional communities and the liminoid one's characterized by the voluntary action of the individual in the modern /urban communities (Schechner, 64, 99).

Antonio acts as a performer in a long and theatrical duel with Coirana, which once more includes double audiences : one, where the on-screen audience takes up role playing by interacting and cheering for Coirana, and the other, where the audience shows up as uninterested bystanders and simple observers. Antonio wins, but refuses

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to kill Coirana ; instead, he goes into contemplation and philosophical dialogue with his friend Professor. Antonio here employs what Schechner calls “restored behaviour” to his advantage. Schechner uses this term to describe the performer’s state as : “the self can act in/as another ; the social or trans individual self is a role or set of roles” - meaning the symbolic and reflexive essence of the performance experience for every individual performer (Schechner, 36). Antonio’s performances were the killings and assassinations that he carried out so masterfully in *Black God, White Devil*. His behaviour and experience during previous killings could be characterized as cold and professional. The unfinished murder of Coirana made an impact on him because for the first time he recognised the futility of his profession - the old tyrant will be replaced by a new one and the circle will never be broken unless there’s a schism. His final assignment opens a space, not for him, because he is obsolete, but for the oppressed and the subalterns to speak up, which they finally do by taking their fate into their own hands..

This, on the other hand, does not mean that Rocha is favouring these anarchic and provincial policies. His sympathy lies with Antonio whose departure into the unknown is emphasized by the incoming truck carrying tubes for the future sewerage system. A new urban world with new rules deposes the social banditry and shifts Sertão from the Old West kind of place towards modernity and its problems : capitalism, liberal trading, elitist society, corruption, and negligence towards the poor.

4 Conclusion

In this work I analysed and theorised the importance of theatricality and performativity used by the seminal Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha in his three films. In *Barravento,* Rocha deconstructs and dismisses both Afro-Brazilian ritual and the potential of Marxism in coastal Bahia. The negation of “Candomblé” and “capoeira” principles is a striking social and political critique of what he considers to be the reactionary and backward essence of both traditions. Rocha’s ingenious usage of double audience system started with *Barravento,* where it was also doubled by subversive usage of out-of-sync extradiegetic soundtrack to further diminish the importance of traditionalism.

Black God, White Devil, the first in the Sertão trilogy is analysed and deconstructed by using the Derridean pharmacology system showing that the same thing is both a remedy and poison for the different social entities. The narrative core of the subordinate couple in their everlasting search for the new Master is compared with Quijano’s theory of the coloniality of power and with the question of how the hegemonic hierarchy always resumes power. This is done by elaborating the importance of performances and processions evident in the film ; from sermon and processions to biblical references in scenes with *beato* to anarchy and self-governance proposed in the *desafio* by the social banditry of the *cangaço* movement.

Finally, the last film *Antonio das Mortes* becomes an epitome for the *Cinema Novo* as a movement but also for the old-school banditry and regional policies present in Brazil for the most part of the 19th and the first part of the 20th century. The liminality of its heroes, groups and communities is supplanted by industrial, capitalistic, and

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urban Brazil symbolically emerging at the end and replacing the obsolete Antonio das Mortes.



Fig. 1 : Capoeira - *Barravento*. Copyright : Versátil Digital Filmes



Fig. 2 : Candomble - *Barravento*. Copyright : Versátil Digital Filmes



Fig. 3 : Desafio with Manuel and Corisco - *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*. Copyright : Versátil Digital Filmes

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Fig. 4 : Antonio kills Corisco - *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol*. Copyright : Versátil Digital Filmes



Fig. 5 : Duel with Coirana - *Antonio das mortes*. Copyright : Versátil Digital Filmes

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