

Media visibility on the formation of female celebrity: Catarina, a virgin for auction

A visibilidade midiática na celebração feminina: Catarina, uma virgem à leilão

La visibilidad mediática à la formación de la celebridad femenina: Catarina, una virgen para la subasta

*Lígia Campos de Cerqueira Lana*¹

Abstract *This article analyses the role of media visibility in the rise of Catherine Migliorini's celebrity, famous after putting her virginity up for auction on Internet. The history of the case and its main events, texts written by experts, images and statements of Catarina are investigated from the perspective of women's visibility transformations. Although it was criticised by the media, Catarina's celebration displayed expected abilities of women in media visibility, such as the possession of a sexy, young and assertive body, able to be used as capital.*

Keywords: *Media visibility; Celebrity; Capital of visibility; Female celebrity; Feminism*

Resumo *Este artigo analisa o papel da visibilidade midiática na celebração de Catarina Migliorini, famosa depois de ter participado de um leilão de virgindade na internet. Os antecedentes do caso e suas ocorrências, textos de especialistas, imagens e declarações de Catarina são investigados à luz das transformações da visibilidade social feminina. Apesar de criticada pela mídia, a celebração de Catarina deu a ver habilidades esperadas de mulheres na visibilidade midiática, como a posse de um corpo sexy, jovem, assertivo e apto a ser usado como capital.*

Palavras-chave: *Visibilidade midiática; Celebridade; Capital de visibilidade; Celebridade feminina; Feminismo*

¹ PhD in Communication UFMG – Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais – Federal University of the State of Minas Gerais. Post-doctoral student and professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ, Macaé, RJ, Brazil; ligialana@gmail.com

Resumen *Este artículo analiza el papel de la visibilidad en la aparición de Catarina Migliorini, famosa después de poner su virginidad a subasta en el sitio Virgins Wanted. La historia del caso y sus eventos, los textos de expertos, imágenes y declaraciones de Catarina son investigados desde la perspectiva de la transformación de la visibilidad femenina. Aunque criticada por los medios, la celebridad Catarina mostró habilidades esperadas de las mujeres en la visibilidad, como la posesión del cuerpo sexy, joven y enérgico, capaz de ser utilizado como capital.*

Palabras-clave: *Visibilidad mediada; Celebridad; Capital de visibilidad; Mujeres celebridad; Feminismo*

Date of submission: 09/04/2013

Date of acceptance: 22/05/2013

Nowadays any person can open or participate in an auction over the internet. Items such as cars, mobile phones and domestic electrical appliances are daily negotiated on sites such as *Mercado Livre* [*Free Market*]. Less usual objects are also auctioned: in 2008, a scarf the actress Scarlett Johansson used was sold at an auction on *eBay* for US\$ 5,300. Other unusual auction modalities offer anonymous persons as products for sale. In England, a betrayed husband decided to auction his adulterous wife, who, when she got to know that she was being sold, took legal proceedings against her husband. In Germany a couple put their baby up for sale; rapidly denounced, the parents lost their son's care. Virginity is part of this unusual list of virtual auctions. Since 2005, there has been news about women who decide to put their virginity up for sale on the internet. Generally the information propagated by the media in these cases deals with the motivations alleged by the girls to accomplish the auctions – to help their families, to pay off their debts or simply to do good business. A notorious auction was that of the North-American Natalie Dylan who, after her graduation in *Women's Studies*, sold her virginity in order to pay for her master's degree in the same domain².

The most recent mobilisation around virginity auction on the internet occurred at the end of 2012. Described by the Brazilian media as one of the events of the year, the auction which was promoted by *Virgins Wanted*, created by the Australian Justin Sisely, sold the virginity of two young people on October 24th. A Brazilian woman, Catarina Migliorini, got US\$ 780,000 for her virginity; a Russian man, Alexander Stepanov, US\$ 2,600. On the contrary to former auction sales, it was not the young people who ventured on their own on the internet to announce the sale of their virginities. *Virgins Wanted* was responsible for the recruitment of the participants, the organisation of the events and the propagation of the results, aspects which marked the original character of the auction.

² According to the text-manifesto "Why I'm Selling My Virginity", published in *The Daily Beast/Newsweek*. Mews about other auctions can be accessed on the entry "virginity auction" of *Wikipedia*.

The project was created at the beginning of the year 2009, announcing the search for virgins. Characterised by Justin Sisely as a social documentary to portray the transformations which occurred to people after they had lost their virginities, the project abandoned its bias of documentary experiment, when it began to be the news of mass media in September 2012. Since then *Virgins Wanted* has made efforts to augment the exposition of the very project. In the team's initial filming, in Bali, various television channels and journalists carried out interviews with the participants, drew their psychological profiles and explained the context of the case, the rules and curiosities of the auction. On *Facebook*, Justin Sisely's and *Virgins Wanted*'s pages propagated the news about the case in publications such as *Grazia UK*, *ABC News*, *Time*, *New York Magazine*, among others. Foreseen for November 2012, the date of the execution of the transaction was delayed once more. The Australian government forbade the execution of the business on its national territory, which served to capitalise even more attention – the producers announced that they would charter a transcontinental flight to shelter the young people's first night.

The product sale over the internet uses technical visibility in order to augment the field of view of possible buyers, who start accessing items they do not find locally on distance selling. In the case of *Virgins Wanted*, technical visibility played a double role. Initially, as on any other sales site, it made the business available to a larger number of buyers; secondly, due to the mobilisation it caused, it expanded the visual width of the very auction. The visibility attained by *Virgins Wanted* transformed the young people into mediatic characters, elevated to the category of celebrities for some moments. In this moment, the auction went beyond the investigations which are linked to the present conjuncture of virginity, to labour law of sex professionals or to people trade and put into perspective the visibility regimes in contemporary societies, which more and more perform common people's celebrization.

The discrepancy between the values which auctioned the two virginities indicates that Catarina Migliori is the great celebrity of the episode. By getting a much higher bidding, she was the protagonist of the media

reports. The statuses of female and male virginities help to explain this difference. Biologically male virginity cannot be demonstrated, in the contrary to female virginity, which is normally associated with the presence of the hymen. During the auction, a medical certificate of virginity of Catarina Migliorini was propagated, which would certify the product for sale. Without medical certificate, Alexander Stepanov appeared as a shy young man who has relationship difficulties, a narrative effort to prove his virginity.

From the cultural point of view, the preservation of virginity until marriage was only an obligation for women, an incumbency which has generally been overcome in the occidental world after the sexual revolution of the 1970s. Catarina Migliorini presented this argument a couple of times, “it is my body and I do with it what I want to”. This is to say that she can continue being a virgin out of her own choice (and not because of cultural obligations) and she can as well opt to sell her virginity over the internet. To be the commander of her desires allows Catarina to use her body freely and to execute a business in which money will buy sexual intercourse. In houses of prostitution this kind of auction is very common and very often practiced with minors. Thus Catarina Migliorini enters the group of female roles surrounded by taboos: she is the “public woman”³, prostitute, who haunts the night and is sexually free. For quite a long time, this woman was the opposite of the “home angel”⁴, who was a virgin when she married and, devoted to her family, was maintained in the domestic space.

Although the transaction involves the sale of sexual intercourse with Catarina Migliorini, she cannot be considered a prostitute. She can only register for the auction because she is a virgin. The posters for the invitation to the participants, propagated on the internet and put up in public spaces in Australia, had Virgin Maria’s picture, emphasizing the

³ In Michelle Perrot’s words (1998, p. 7), “the woman also says to be the ‘prostitute’ – public is a ‘creature’, a common woman who belongs to everybody. (...) The public woman constitutes the shame, the hidden part, dissimulated, nocturnal, a vile object, passage territory, appropriated, without individuality of her own..”

⁴ Virginia Woolf (2012, p. 11-12) defined the home angel with the following words: “she was extremely sympathetic. Immensely charming. Totally altruistic. Excellent in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself every day. When they had chicken, she ate the leg; if there was cold air, she used to sit there”.

image of purity of the candidates. In January 2013, the magazine *Playboy* made fun of the situation and in its editorial it reproduced the medical certificate propagated by *Virgins Wanted*, which would attest Catarina Migliorini's virginity, the front cover model of that edition. "It is for you, incredulous reader, who has any doubt about the girl's virginity that we publish in this *Entre Nós* [*Between you and me*] a proof signed by the Australian doctor Nihad Jackson. You must believe what people say!" (*Playboy*, p. 10, January 2013).

The mediatic visibility is the instance which regulates this ambiguous mixture of representations. Catarina Migliorini knows the elements which are necessary for her integration into the media space. The benefit of more than a million Reais [Real, plural Reais, is the currency of Brazil] with the sale of her virginity and with the sensual rehearsal for *Playboy* shows that she strategically manages her visibility capital by constructing a moment of starring. By involving herself in a project created by the media and accumulating capital on her own image, Catarina Migliorini is famous for being famous, according to Daniel Boorstin's definition of celebrity (1992) and she receives an acknowledgement which is manufactured by the media and which is different from heroic prestige. In her case, the significance of fame indicates the ways in which the visibility regimes intervene in the construction of the individuals' public relevance nowadays by means of the celebration processes.

By discussing about the visibility story in occidental societies, Nathalie Heinich (2012) analyses the transformation of public figures' formation processes after the expansion of mediatic systems. Until the 20th century, the exploits, the miracles and the individuals' names were primarily acknowledged so that they were attributed faces afterwards. Heinich proposes that mediatic visibility inverted this trajectory: a face becomes acknowledged without the necessity of a previous name. Thus it is not only the increase of the diffusion of visible pictures (which actually occurred in the course of the 20th century), but it is a new acknowledgement logic brought by the regimes of mediatic visibility. Visibility, which was the consequence of merit before, now precedes it, which generates a new dividend for the construction of public figures – visibility

itself, which becomes a sort of capital that is used as value for money to gain public acknowledgement.

In the case of women, the pre-mediatic modality of acknowledgement, in which the name preceded the conquest of the face, did not occur recurrently. The exploits which were considered worthy of the attribution of face were mostly masculine: politicians, geniuses, heroes, warriors, religious leaders, in the course of the occidental history, are men. Until then, even if they were acknowledged, women played an assistant role and they normally belonged to the noble classes. From the 20th century on, the ideal of equality changes the fixity of a moral order which limited the acquisition of acknowledgement to specific individuals and groups, according to Virginia Woolf's pioneer statement.

Until the beginning of the 19th century, the famous woman was invariably an aristocrat. She was the grand dame who commanded, wrote letters and had political influence. Among the immense middle class, few women reached outstanding positions and this anodyne condition did not draw the same attention which was given to the splendours of the rich and to the miseries of the poor. (WOOLF, 2012, p. 53).

Common women consolidate the chance to reach social nomination at the same moment of the inversion of the trajectory of the public figures' acknowledgement. Exposed on the displays of mass media, an uncountable variety of women, from vamps to pin-ups, mark the 20th century – it must be improbable that someone does not know Marilyn Monroe's picture. The *Celebrity Studies*, researches which have dedicated themselves to the study of celebrities since the 1980s, neglect the consequences of these transformations for the formation of female public figures. Leo Braudy (1997), for example, analyses half a score of famous figures in the course of twenty centuries and he quotes very few women without examining or questioning this inequality of conditions. The preponderance of visibility in the formation of some other logic of acknowledgement of public figures in the last years, when women start inscribing their names in social life, represents the most fundamental aspect for the understanding of female fame.

The visibility of the case *Virgins Wanted* celebrated a common woman. Different from a heroin endowed with traditional merits that had maybe never existed in a story narrated by men, Catarina manages her visibility capital by updating the meanings of the dividends which are dear to the construction of a female public figure in the present times. The way in which she strategically uses her visible body in the media is associated with two important topics for the post-feminist reflections: sexuality and the expansion of erotisation in culture.

From the point of view of the do-me feminism, sexual version of *Girl Power*, the auction would be an act of empowerment, because female sensuality must be consciously used in order to obtain any aspirations. The exposition of the woman's body does not "objectify" her because there is the politicisation of the inequalities through the re-articulation of sexual identity, used as a power weapon, very often ironically. Catarina knows this argument pro-sex and uses it in her favour. According to Stéphanie Genz's and Benjamin Brabon's (2009) analyses, the pro-sex version of feminism must be criticized, because it treats the ideas of feminine liberation and sexual revolution as synonyms. Besides this, there is an ideological backlash if you preach a power deriving from sexual tricks that are intrinsically feminine and disconnected from social life. The ideas of "weapons" and "strategies" create a belligerent paradigm for the relationships between men and women.

Nevertheless the two perspectives, pro-sex and sex critical, have in common the ascertainment that there exists nowadays and increasing erotisation of culture, which has its largest expression in the media. Conclusions as those of Erving Goffman (1979) with regard to the inferiority of female positions in advertising in the 1970s reveal to be more and more insufficient for the researches in that area. Bashfulness and the sympathetic smile analysed by Goffman are being substituted by the assertive, sensualised woman, who relies on the exhibition of her own body and who constructs femininity by means of the sensual presentation of herself. As Rosalind Gill (2007, p. 91) analyses it, the woman's sensitivity nowadays is no "more associated with behaviours such as bashfulness and passivity or with maternal or domestic abilities, now she is defined in

advertising and in all the media as the owner of a young, strong, heterosexual and sexy body.”⁵ The celebrity Paris Hilton, for example, famous after the publication of sex videos with her boyfriend on the internet, arranged her pictures almost ignoring topics such as women’s sexual pleasure or the fetish of voyeurism. Her fame was established by means of the propagation of tips for the creation of a convincing sensual appearance, in which the woman becomes “foxy” so that her corporal posture has saleability and commercial appeal. The thematic topicality of sexuality was substituted by the investment in the construction of visibility, in which the woman is inserted on the successful body market (GENZ; BRABON, 2009).

By correlating two polemic topics, prostitution and the fetish of the virgin woman, the virginity auction would obviously promote a controversial event, susceptible of moral criticisms of the female and male behaviours. The case went beyond this – the visibility, that it had, celebrated a woman whose grandeur would be destitute of the attributes which are traditionally considered as meritorious to reach fame, in consonance with the acknowledgement trajectory in the media era. Catarina’s celebration was quite criticised by the media; anyway, the case existed and it personified the way of functioning of visibility as female capital.

Newspapers, magazines, weekly magazines, and television programmes vehiculated various subject matters, reports and interviews concerning the virginity auction between October 14th and 27th, when the final biddings occurred. When the sale was finished, Catarina Migliorini was still cover of the magazine *Playboy* in January 2013.⁶ The virgin celebrity was constantly stimulated to talk by the media, she gave interviews, she posed for photographs and she related about her participation in the case.

⁵ “No longer associated with psychological characteristics and behaviours like demureness or passivity, or with homemaking and mothering skills, it is now defined in advertising and elsewhere in the media as the possession of a young, able-bodied, hetero-sexual, ‘sexy’ body.”

⁶ The empirical data capture was carried out on December 18th 2012 on sites of large audience Brazilian publication. We found circa 25 reports, signed articles and interviews.

By relating her personality and her desires, Catarina presented herself as a “young girl”. In one of her first declarations in the media, she explained: “it was on impulse that I, a young eighteen-year old girlie, decided to register” (*Folha de S. Paulo* [a daily newspaper based in São Paulo] p. C8, September 26th 2012). The young adventurer did not minutely plan her candidacy for the project; her registration was done as a young girl’s joke. In the same interview, she remembered that the project would be a reality show and not pornography. “It is not porn, otherwise I would die of shame [laughs].” Ashamed, Catarina would be “a very, very romantic girl”, who would not know sexual practices. She declared to *Playboy* that she had “a good theoretical notion of how it will be, but no practical notion” (*Playboy*, p. 184, November 2012). When she was asked about the reason for being a virgin at the age of 20, she said that she did not think that she was “abnormal” because of this.

The young girl’s image is complemented by her social origin; coming from a middle class family, Catarina would count on her parents’ help who, even if they did not agree with the sale of their daughter’s virginity, would go on sustaining her. “The auction has nothing to do with any financial difficulty. On the contrary. The girl from Santa Catarina, a Southern Federal State of Brazil, says that her family always gave her all she needed (and even more) so that she could have a good life” (*Estadão.com.br*, 24 out. 2012 [*Estadão – Estado de S. Paulo, a daily newspaper based in São Paulo*]). The young girl would not have to worry about adult life’s attributions such as job, salary and paying bills. The auction money would not be necessary for her survival. On the programme *Superpop*, the reporter Luciana Gimenez asked Catarina Migliorini how her family reacted. “My parents, I cannot say that they are in favour of it, but they love me and they are on my side.” (*Rede TV*, October 4th 2012). Catarina demonstrated that she counted on her family’s affection, support and presence in her life.

When she was being interviewed, Catarina was very often criticised by the auction. She defended herself in some occasions by quoting writers and philosophers, who would corroborate her opinions. She would read “Fiódor Dostoievski, Ernest Hemingway and Albert Camus, be-

sides the philosophers Socrates, Rousseau and Seneca” (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 23, October 25th 2012). In the interview which accompanied the sensual rehearsal at *Playboy*, she declared:

(...) there is a sentence of a philosopher called [Henry David] Thoreau, which says the following: “an alien opinion is a weak tyrant if we compare it to our own opinion.” I think that the person who likes to require ethics and morals of other people, does it because he/she actually does not have either one nor the other thing. (*Playboy*, p. 86, january 2013).

Catarina attempts to show her good educational training, which is a value that is considered positive by the middle classes. She formulated other answers linked to the people who criticised her and reacted ironically to difficult questions. In the programme *Mais Você* [something like: “it’s more you”: TV programme, with interviews, chats, gastronomy, sports, etc.], Ana Maria Braga asked Catarina about her reasons to do business with her virginity, which had already been a “question of honour” for women. According to the reporter, Catarina would be “marked for ever” by the event. The virgin reacted: “who has too much morals should also participate in an auction, you don’t think so” (*Globo* [Brazilian TV broadcasting channel], November 8th 2012) and she closed the interview with elevated self-esteem.

Thus the middle class virgin girl lives side by side with a mature and rational woman. When Catarina assumes a position with regard to the market procedures of the auction, the young adventurer adopts the position of an adult person. The sexual intercourse, surrounded by rules and medical analyses, would only be performed by means of payment. She alerted: “the money has to be transferred on my bank account before any other larger involvement. Otherwise nothing will happen” (*Playboy*, p. 183, November 2012). At this moment, it is convenient for Catarina to emphasise the fact that she is over 18. “I am 20 years old, I am responsible for my body and I do not harm anybody” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, p. C8, September 26th 2012).

In an interview she gave to *TV Record* [Brazilian TV broadcasting channel], she said, smiling, that she was “a merchandise” for sale and

that she would not bother, since it would only be for one night. “But for sure it would bother me to be merchandise as a woman.” (*TV Record*, October 24th 2012). This affirmation uses again her young virgin profile in an ambiguous way: since she is a pure girl, who will only be deflowered in a unique sexual intercourse, she does not think that she is an exploited woman. The site of the auction illustrated Catarina’s condition as a merchandise: a red stripe with “sold” on it was put on the picture of Catarina’s body which characterised the sale of her virginity as a commercial transaction of any product. Next to the picture, there was the information about the values of the biddings of the auction (Figure 1). Disseminated beyond the site of the project, the picture was reproduced in television programmes and in various printed texts.

The magazine *Veja*, which published the event on the cover of the issue of November 21st 2012, also characterised Catarina Migliorini as merchandise. The magazine published a photograph of the virgin; it was not possible to visualise her face, a bar code was inserted on her hip (Figure 2). Next to it, the text in high relief asks if “everything can be bought?” associating the auction with other kinds of negotiations such as the purchase of parliamentarians’ votes.



Figure 1. Picture of the site *Virgins Wanted*.



Figure 2. Cover of *Veja* on November 21st 2012.

[She sold her virginity. Are we becoming a society in which everything can be bought? Vote – parliamentary support – citizenship – justice – blood – kidney – babies...]

In general, in the printed pictures Catarina's body appears naked, with few clothes, following the pattern of sensual beauty of advertising – Catarina is white, slim, she has long fair hair – that is shown in situations of pleasure, smiling, on beaches. The rehearsal at *Playboy* plays with the female virginity fetish using objects such as plush bears, infantile dressing-tables and complete depilation of the vagina. On the pictures the content which was conveyed for her celebrity image, her sensualised body is the same as that of most of the women of the “top list” in today's media – who figure in small number on the list of the richest and influential people, but predominate on the list of the sexiest people.

The profile of the Catarina celebrity was also delineated by psychologists, social scientists, among other specialists, who appeared in newspapers and magazines and explained the unusual situation. Initially the specialised opinions contribute to form the Catarina celebrity just because they were published, because they gave more visibility and importance to the case. By analysing the different points of view, we could identify two big understanding perspectives of the auction, which consequently also indicated explanations for Catarina's celebration.

The first perspective adopts the idea that the virginity fetish and myth are relevant topics of human sexuality and therefore they motivate the interest in the auction. The psychoanalyst Contardo Calligaris presented the opposition virgin/whore as an attraction for men to buy virginity to such a high price. "Many men are divided between two types of woman: the 'whore' whom they desire but whom they cannot love and the virgin they love passionately, but they cannot desire (she is beautiful, pure and untouchable, like the mother)." Catarina was able to accomplish "a powerful fancy: to succeed, finally, in lovingly honouring an immaculate body, but without renouncing to maculate it with her desire" (*Folha de S. Paulo*, p. E12, October 18th 2012). In an article of the daily newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, the psychiatrist Carmita Abdo and the historian Mary Del Priori pointed out that the high value for the purchase of Catarina's virginity was caused by the "rarity" of the existence of women who are virgins nowadays. The anthropologist Débora Diniz associated the event with pornography, from some feminists' point of view it would be degrading for women. "Catarina's 'auction' reflects the moral order in which women's sex is male propriety" (*O Estado de S. Paulo*, p. 155, September 30th 2012). According to Débora Diniz, since the case did not challenge the norms or did not question the sex taboos, it played with the hegemonic morals.

The historical processes which are linked to gender inequalities qualify Catarina's celebration on the basis of a broad socio-cultural context. From the perspective of sexuality, the extraordinary aspect of the image of the virgin celebrity converts itself into a signal of the times: the precocious loss of virginity, the financial exploitation of sex taboos, the eroti-

sation of culture, etc. From this perspective, sexuality becomes a much more complex motivation for the case when we compare it to the comprehension of the media texts, which simply condemn the trade of the body, or to Catarina's arguments; she does not think that there is sexual exploitation (but a juvenile adventure).

Another possible explanation of the specialists concerns the search for fame and for mediatic systems; it relates the audience success of the case to an individual "daring" performance on Catarina's part. For this second perspective, the Catarina celebrity is the product of the individual aspiration of someone who is obsessed about fame. The journalist Nina Lemos criticised the clothes brand that invited Catarina to walk on the catwalk during the *Semana de Moda do Rio* [Fashion week of Rio de Janeiro]. The virgin would be "a kind of Gisele Bündchen of today, Wednesday, end of the world", a person who reached the star position and who banalised "such an intimate thing." (*Blogs.estadao.com.br*, November 7th 2012). The editorial of *Folha de S. Paulo* on December 3rd 2012 used again a fact which was correlated with the event: motivated by *Virgins Wanted*, Rebeca Ribeiro, a young girl from the inland area of the State of Bahia who was facing precarious living conditions, decided to put her virginity up for sale in a video on *Youtube*. "As well as money, the thirst for rarer merchandise – celebrity – can justify the commercialisation of one's own body, in the first case. Once the precedent had been established, the imitation spirit and the lack of perspective contributed to the second version" (*Folha de S. Paulo*, p. A2, December 3rd 2012). In *O Globo*, Patrícia Kogut compared Catarina Migliorini with the character of Morena of the soap opera *Salve Jorge*. The heroin would not be innocent like Brazil's "namoradinha" [girl in love]; Morena is a fighter and she can make mistakes. "This is the value: the enterprising spirit." Catarina Migliorini would also be enterprising, but "she goes the opposite way (...) besides being a virgin, she uses methods which are not conventional in order to earn her living." (*Globo.com*, October 25th 2012).

By discussing the search for fame, the specialists do not point out the producer Justin Sisely's responsibility or the ethical and legal implications of *Virgins Wanted* and of the reality shows. We disregard that the

“experiment” *Virgins Wanted* is not subscribed to an innocent documental register of the beginning of virgin individuals’ sexual life. Since the virginity auction was not done autonomously by the two young people, it assumes the form of people’s sexual exploitation, which is a crime in Brazil. In the interview with Catarina Migliorini, Ana Maria Braga explains that Justin Sisely already invested money in the project and will not receive anything for the auction – but he will make a large profit with the film – without problematising his responsibility with regard to that. Since it is not considered as an undertaking of media producers, but as an individual entrepreneurship of an unscrupulous person who aims at starring, the social perspective disappears. The specialised analysis of the lucrative reality show *Virgins Wanted* could have reflected the more important claim for the sex professionals nowadays: the regulation of the profession, with the descriminalisation of the institution of prostitution, the creation of cooperatives and the access to labour rights.

When they discuss the notion of fame, the specialists do not analyse either the fact that Catarina’s self-reliance and shamelessness, when she shows her face and her sensualised body in a controvert case, provoke repercussion due to her social origin. Belonging to a middle class family, the “good girl” exposes herself in a case which involves the sex taboo, using her naked body and being rationally conscious of the market laws, which becomes visibility capital for somebody who would not have to effectuate this kind of performance in order to survive. The money that was engaged and the attention she got are the consequences of her non inhibited and enterprising investment in visibility. In *Folha de S. Paulo*, Catarina Migliorini comments what she thinks of the fact to give interviews concerning the auction in “media of the whole world”. “She said that she ‘understood the monotony of people’s lives’ and she attributed the great interest about her ‘exciting life’ to this” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, p. C6, October 27th 2012). Catarina’s exciting routine is due to the visibility capital she gained with the auction, different from most of the people who are interested in their own lives, anonymous and therefore, deprived of resources.

As Nathalie Heinich points it out the contemporary phenomenon of celebrities is not reduced to the celebrisation of mediatic pictures, since

these characters inaugurate a new logic of social nomination. Celebriation involves a new process of acknowledgement, which can suddenly generate singular people within a global anonymity contingent. The star position which was reached some times without previous merits of the apparition of the face in the media, can be worth more than money, because, in case of there being a good investment, celebrity (“a rare merchandise”, as *Folha* explains it) potentially has the power to multiply the financial capital.⁷ Mediatic visibility does more than producing visible faces; it also accumulates dividends together with its celebrities.

Catarina uses her body as a visible capital like any other celebrity does. To be visible is Catarina’s merit, a fact which displaces the criticism about the exposition of the face in the media – which will inexorably occur, due to the new trajectory of social nomination – towards the meanings which specifically stimulated her investment in visibility capital: the announced juvenile adventure, the good knowledge of the visibility rules, the shamelessness by using the sensualised body, cultural education and the prolonged middle class youth.

In the denouement of the case, Catarina Migliorini announced in January 2013 that she would renounce to offer her virginity to the auction winner, alleging that she had received a better proposal from a Brazilian and that she was in love. Even without receiving the US\$ 780,000, Catarina and *Virgins Wanted* had no prejudice because they had already earned a generous part of the benefit: celebrity was formed. By renouncing the auction, Catarina signalled the bet on the possible maintenance of her fame and she attempted to redeem herself from the condemnation she suffered. Since she was no more the merchandise of one night only, Catarina attempts to prolong the short moment of her celebrity, which might occur or not. In case this happens, the consolidation of Catarina Migliorini’s fame will be associated with the fact of inequality between men and women in public experience, which must always be taken into consideration in the reflection concerning female celebrities.

⁷ In 2007, economists created the “Gisele Bündchen index” that reunites the capital gain of brands associated with the model’s name, the values of which had increased more than the double of the *Dow Jones* index.

References

- ARAN, E. Desvirginando 2013. *Playboy*, São Paulo, n. 452, jan. 2013. Entre Nós, p. 10.
- BOORSTIN, D. *The Image*. A guide to pseudo-events in America. Nova York: Vintage Books, 1992.
- BRASILEIRA que vai leiloar virgindade abre o jogo no SuperPop. *Rede TV*, São Paulo, 4 out. 2012. Programa Superpop.
- BRAUDY, L. *The Frenzy of Renown*. Fame and its History. Nova York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- CALLIGARIS, C. Quanto vale uma virgem? *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 18 out. 2012. Ilustrada, p. E12.
- CANCIAN, N. É só um negócio. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 26 set. 2012. Cotidiano, p. C8.
- CARDOSO, Daniel. Japonês vence leilão de virgindade de jovem catarinense. *Estadão.com.br*, São Paulo, 24 out. 2012. Available on: <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,japones-vence-leilao-de-virgindade-de-jovem-catarinense,950234,0.htm>. Access on: 31 mar. 2013.
- CASTRO, B. Catarina Migliorini. *Playboy*, São Paulo, n. 450, nov. 2012. Entrevista, p. 182-184.
- DINIZ, D. Procuram-se virgens. *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 30 set. 2012. Aliás, p. 155.
- GENZ, S.; BRABON, B. *Postfeminism*. Cultural Texts and Theories. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- GILL, R. *Gender and Media*. New Hampshire: Polity Press, 2007.
- GOFFMAN, E. *Gender Advertisements*. Nova York: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- HEINICH, N. *De la Visibilité: Excellence et Singularité en régime médiatique*. Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2012.
- KOGUT, P. As novelas atuais refletem um novo padrão de heroína. *Globo.com*, Rio de Janeiro, 25 out. 2012. Available on: <http://kogut.oglobo.globo.com/noticias-da-tv/critica/noticia/2012/10/critica-as-novelas-atuais-refletem-um-novo-padrao-de-heroína-471891.html>. Access on: 31 mar. 2013.
- JOVEM que leilou virgindade garante que ato ainda não foi consumado. *Globo*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 nov. 2012. Programa Mais Você.
- LEMOS, N. Socorro! Menina que leilou a virgindade é estrela de desfile da Fashion Rio. *Blogs.estadao.com.br*, São Paulo, 7 nov. 2012. Available on: <http://blogs.estadao.com.br/nina-lemos/fim-do-mundo-menina-que-leilou-a-virgindade-e-estrela-de-desfile-da-fashion-rio/>. Access on: 31 mar. 2013.
- LIKE a virgin? *Playboy*, São Paulo, n. 452, jan. 2013. Ensaios, p. 78-99.
- PERROT, M. *Mulheres públicas*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 1998.
- QUANTO vale uma virgem. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 3 dez. 2012. Opinião, p. A2.
- THOMÉ, C. Virgindade de jovem é vendida por R\$ 1,5 mi. *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 25 out. 2012. Caderno Vida, p. 23.
- VIRGINDADE de brasileira é arrematada por R\$ 1,5 milhão. *Rede Record*, São Paulo, 24 out. 2012. Programa da Tarde.
- WERLE, J. Empresário quer 'se promover' com afirmações, diz virgem. *Folha de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 27 out. 2012. Cotidiano, p. C6.
- WOOLF, V. *Profissões para mulheres e outros artigos feministas*. Porto Alegre: L&PM, 2012.