

New images of pombagira in pop culture: current symbols, myths, and stereotypes¹

Novas imagens da pombagira na cultura pop: símbolos, mitos e estereótipos em circulação

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Abstract *This paper discusses ways in which the archetype of the wild woman survives and reappears in stereotypical constructions of the feminine in contemporary pop culture, especially in songs and music videos. To address this archetype, we approach the Brazilian image of pombagira, a symbol of a free, wild, sexy, and sexual feminine force. According to the theory of Warburg (2012), strong symbols reappear in art due to the recurring character of pathos, which he calls Pathosformel. Based on the study of three images of the feminine in the media star system as a free feminine, even though it has been ravaged by centuries of phallocentrism, we will show that it is resurging and manifesting itself in pop culture.*

Keywords: Pop culture; Pombagira; Valesca Popozuda; Lady Gaga; Azis

Resumo *Como o arquétipo da mulher selvagem sobrevive e ressurgue dentro de construções estereotipadas do feminino na cultura pop contemporânea, especialmente na música e nos videoclipes? Para tratar desse arquétipo, partimos da figura brasileira da pombagira, símbolo de uma força feminina livre, selvagem,*

¹ This paper is a result of the research project “The feminine from the Afro-Brazilian tradition to the Brazilian culture – study of the pombagira image, its portraits and media imaginary” (original title in Portuguese: “O feminino da tradição afrobrasileira à cultura brasileira– estudo da figura da pombagira, suas imagens e imaginários mediáticos”), supported by public notice MCTI/CNPq/MEC/CAPEs N° 43/2013.

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sensual e sexual. De acordo com a teoria de Warburg (2012), símbolos fortes ressurgem na arte devido ao caráter recorrente do pathos, que ele denomina Pathosformel. Mostraremos, com o estudo de três figuras do feminino no star system mediático, como um feminino livre, embora tenha sido devastado por séculos de falocentrismo, está ressurgindo e se manifestando na cultura pop.

Palavras-chave: *Cultura pop; Pombagira; Valesca Popozuda; Lady Gaga; Azis*

Based on the principle of communication as a means of culture circulation (MORIN, 2007), this paper aims to show ways in which the archetype of the wild woman survives and resurges within stereotypical constructions of the woman and the feminine in contemporary pop culture. The discussion is based on the Brazilian image of the *pombagira*, a symbol of a free feminine force, which is sensual and sexual, prior to the male domination of the phallogentric culture and based on a type of rationality of the sensitive: the one regarding the “nocturnal regime” (DURAND, 2012); the rationality created out of a feminine present on the woman’s body, whose vaginal emptiness does not constitute an absence, but its own strength. The strength of the one who contains, receives, understands; a continent strength, full of an emptiness that, far from being passive, constitutes a creative potentiality.

The archetype (JUNG, 2011) – an amorphous primordial image existing in the imaginary – is the strength and power for the creative action of men, an image of the nebulous collective unconsciousness that takes shape in art and religion. The notion of *Pathosformel* (WARBURG, 2012)⁴ allows understanding the way the symbols present in the images perpetuate through cultures, assuming different shapes, being original from the same passions. This way, it is not enough to identify the archetype, it is necessary to find the place of the *pathos*, which updates the archetype in art and perpetuates it into different, varied forms in several cultures. We will follow the trajectory from the archetype to the symbol in Brazilian Umbanda, through the way in which the primordial feminine strength is symbolized by *Igbadu*, the way it is present in the goddesses *Yemanjá* and *Oxum*, and the ways it is finally manifested in the *pombagira*. This trajectory will guide our comprehension of the presence of a media feminine that is stereotyped by pop culture, whose current discourse seems to recover the African archetype of the wild feminine: free, sensual and sexual. As Warburg in his *Atlas Mnemosyne*

⁴ On approximations and distinctions between the archetype, for Jung, and the *Pathosformel*, for Warburg, see SCARSO, Davide. “Fórmulas e arquétipos, Aby Warburg e Carl Gustav Jung” *Enciclopédia e hipertexto*. Available at: <http://www.educ.fc.ul.pt/hyper/resources/dscarso/> Access on: Jun 23, 2014.

(2012), we approximate images that are apparently disperse in various cultures.

We know the archetype is amorphous and it starts to take shape through mythical narratives, and thus it becomes a symbolic image. As they are determined by culture, those images are the object of several variations. We defend that the media representation, with the excess and the speed of images generated by the “iconophagic” system (BAITELLO Jr, 2005), produces stereotypes, means of degradation of the symbols and depletion of meaning of the images. However, the circularity of the signification process in the culture is complete when the archetypal force that has given rise to the stereotypes is rediscovered and reformulated. This is what Durand defends, as he asserts that:

Representation cannot constantly have weapons at hand in a surveillance state, under penalty of alienation. Plato himself knows it is necessary to go back to the cave, to take into consideration the act of our mortal condition and to have a good use of time as much as we can. Similarly, the psychotherapist recommends, in the ascending practice of waking dream, not to leave the dreamer on the peak of his ascension, but to bring him back progressively to his starting level, bringing him gently to his usual mental altitude”. (DURAND, 2012, p. 193) [Own translation from original text in Portuguese].

Some of these stereotypes will be approached, and we will see how, within a media universe of symbols which are “degraded” by excessive light, strong symbols reappear, as nocturnal resurgences. According to the Warburgian theory⁵, those strong symbols reappear due to the atavistic character of the pathos, which he calls *Pathosformel*⁶. This is

⁵ Aby Warburg has conducted comparative procedures of pictures without worrying about geographical and chronological boundaries, his model of analysis was carried out through non-linear, not representative / not symbolic traces of the image, a model that is expressed in the “obsession” and the “survival”, in reminiscence and reappearances of forms, namely, “by not knowing, by non-reflections, by unconscious time” as defined by Georges Didi-Huberman (2013, p. 25). For Charbel (2010), his method of working is opposed to purely formal analysis, he refused to address the images from a hermeneutics characterized by the interpretation of pictorial records of the past from keys found exclusively in paintings and / or the subjectivity of the analyst.

⁶ According to Roland Recht, in the opening essay of *Atlas Mnemosyne* (2012), the term *Pathosformel* was used for the first time in 1905, at a conference on Albrecht Dürer - *Dürer and*

what we will show with the study of three images of the feminine of the media star system: the North American, Lady Gaga; the Brazilian, Valesca Popozuda; and the Bulgarian, Azis. Three pop stars. Three symbols of the *pombagira* force in contemporary culture. A recovery of the feminine discourse in contemporary society, located in distinct cultural and geographical spaces. In the pursuit, therefore, of the trajectory of the feminine archetype of the wild woman and of the *Pathosformel* that expresses it, we will start out by the trajectory of the feminine in the umbanda cosmology and in the creation of the *pombagira* myth. We will discuss the way the phallogocentric culture has transformed this archetypal myth into the one of the whore and the way the media culture has produced images of those feminine symbols reduced to stereotypes of women as object. Lastly, we analyze how Lady Gaga, Valesca Popozuda and Azis recover the creative power of the Wild Woman. We identify the return of the *pombagira* in them, as an archetypal figure, as well as the return of the nocturnal regime of images.

1. From the archetype to the Afro-Brazilian myth

In the Afro-Brazilian symbology, *Senhoras dos Pássaros* (Ladies of birds, in free translation) or *Grandes Mães* (Main Mothers, in free translation) are the entity of maximum representation of feminine strength. They are represented by a large calabash formed by two halves, the so-called *Ig-badu* or “the universe calabash” (OXALÁ, 1998; SANTOS, 2001). The lower half – the receptacle – represents the feminine, whereas the upper half represents the masculine. What lies inside shall not be revealed. To separate both halves would mean to break the order of the mystery.

Apart from the mystery of the *Senhoras dos Pássaros* in the closed calabash, the *Orixás* manifest some of their aspects in the apparitions and actions in the world, with men and with nature. We have seen, in

Italian Antiquity to designate a figurative pattern that the Renaissance has taken from Antiquity as well as superlative form of expression of passions. For Didi-Huberman (2013), the *Pathosformel* would be a significant feature, traced in the act of anthropomorphic images of ancient and modern West, something through which, and by which the image pulses, moves, and flounders on the polarity of things.

a previous study⁷, the way “the powers kept and symbolized by the feminine *Orixás* are synthetized in original matrix power (*Nanã*), as wild and warrior power (*Obá* and *Iansã*), generation power (*Iemanjá* and *Oxum*), seduction power (*Oxum* and *Iansã*), and magic power (*Iewá*). [...] Even though we can determine the type of power that corresponds to each *Orixá*, it is a fact also that all are present in all feminine *Orixás*, constituting, maybe, one feminine strength in the universe, which gives life, generates it, transforms it, loves and creates”.

Iemanjá – maybe the most popular of the *Orixás* in Brazil, due to the importance of the sea in the occupation of the land in the country – is the goddess of sea, syncretized with the Virgin Mary. She is also the mother of all fish, or the spiritual mother of all men. *Oxum*, her daughter, equally popular in Brazil, is the major generator. Her element is the water of rivers, which represents the amniotic fluid where babies are generated. Her strength is love. It is necessary to explain that the African *Orixás* have gone through a process of adaptation and transformation to the local cultural conditions. This way, gradually, the sexual and lecherous character has been removed from *Iemanjá* and *Oxum*, due to their approximation with the Virgin Mary, as this character has been channeled towards the image of the *pombagira*.

In Brazil, there are few studies about *pombagiras*; however, a field research with people that are not adept reveals that the figure is present in the collective imaginary. Everyone has heard about it or knows something about it. In general, references to *pombagira* create astonishment reactions on people, who express themselves through laughter and mockery, or through monosyllabic responses or an uncomfortable silence. The name is immediately associated to the image of a prostitute, a woman of a free life, who is seductive and dangerous. By rule, all women have a *moça* [a young woman] (another denomination of

⁷ See the article “A formação das imagens do feminino na cosmologia da umbanda e sua manifestação no imaginário brasileiro” [The formation of images of the feminine in the cosmology of Umbanda and its manifestation in the Brazilian imaginary, in *Portuguese*], presented to the Work Group *Imaginário e Imagens Midiáticas*, at the XXII Encontro Anual da Compós, Salvador, in June, 2013.

pombagiras), some feminine men also have it. She is a type of companion who ensures femininity. Whereas some fear *pombagira*, thinking of her as dangerous, influent, evil, able of spells and witchcraft, other are fascinated by her seduction power by her witching knowledge which allows her to obtain anything in terms of love and relationship.

It is necessary to highlight that the experience of *pombagira* by Umbanda adepts is done through incorporation and concerns the emotional aspects of the lives of men and women at the worship site: their feelings, their relationships, their sexuality, their verbal and body expression. Some men do not like the incorporation of *pombagira* because she leads them to their feminine side, which they tend to deny. Other men, however, report they enjoy the opportunity of exteriorizing their feminine side, smile, speaking, laughing, and gesticulating as a woman. Indeed, *pombagira* laughs, sings, yells, curses, sometimes using vulgar language, she breaks all barriers, taboos, she expresses something that cannot be expressed, and she dances, and turns around to take her body out of immobility, inciting movement and action. In this sense, she can be considered a Dionysian type of the feminine. She likes mocking, laughing at everything that is imposed as a limitation to men and women. Her favorite field of action is the one of love relationships, and more specifically, the one concerning men and women's sexuality.

The *pombagira* acts, therefore, on the regions of the social life where the main taboos are located: love and sexuality. It may be possible to assert that the simplifying clichés that make *pombagira* a negative figure associated to the prostitute, to the hysterical woman, and the dangerous witch are the masks under which the feminine loves to hide to better preserve its creative, intuitive and caring power. Whereas she likes laughing and playing, she disregards civilities and prefers the freedom, if she is movement and action, it is not surprising that the *pombagira* plays and laughs with what destabilizes men the most: her sexuality; with what might be the main spiritual and material challenge of men: love.

We will see now the way our culture, dominated by patriarchal values has interpreted and transformed *pombagira* in some stereotypical images

of the whore, whose lust transforms it into a malign figure. Moreover, we analyze the way some feminine figures of the contemporary media pop culture make use of such stereotypes to create a discourse on the feminine that comes very close to the archetypal force of the *pombagira*.

2. From the Afro-Brazilian myth to the lights of the phallogocentric culture

In iconography and in the discourses of the Judeo-Christian culture, there are two manifested and opposed daytime patterns of the feminine. On the one hand, the pure Virgin Mary who, in the Revelation, is the “the woman adorned with the sun”, with the twelve stars on Her Head for a crown and Her feet standing on the moon. This Virgin Mary also takes other forms and she is the object of several versions of sanctity, perfection, and kindness. Above all, she serves as a moralizing model for women destined to be mothers, to see their sexual instincts repressed by the Christian notions of virginity and sanctity, to dedicate themselves to the education of their children, and to the good management of the home economy, etc. All Christian values that still nowadays dominate the reason and the moral of the patriarchal society.

In the same Judeo-Christian iconography, we find, on the other hand, the sinful woman who causes all the vices of Babylon: “the great prostitute, who sits by many waters” of the biblical Revelation who has had other denominations and has taken different forms throughout history. At first and going through all times, she is the whore, the woman whose desire and enjoyment are at the service of the desire and joy of men, since he has the power to buy them with money and / or take them by force. At other times, she is chased as the witch, the one who bewitches men, the sinner, taken by evil; therefore, in the rationalization process of beliefs and scientific revolutions, she becomes “the hysterical one”, whose evil can be treated by medicine, with electroshocks and admissions to psychiatric hospitals. Here we approach the whore who permeates all times.

a. The marginalized woman: the whore – nocturnal regime

It is worth to recover the trajectory of the whore in history, since she was relegated to the place of subordination and marginalization. The whore is an abject figure of society, placed in the space of moral condemnation and social exclusion; she is part of the excluded groups in society, such as the natives, the homeless people and the insane. However, there is also another contemporary validation of the whore imaginary: she is the voice of freedom; her activity is the solution to make way through a precarious situation of life.

For sex workers, the whore may be the setting of freedom and independence, embodied in moral transgression. This is what we see with the story of Gabriela Leite, author of *Filha, mãe, avó e puta* [Daughter, mother, grandmother and slut, in free translation], (2009). To be a whore means to have the voice that disregards all oppressive discourses, a voice of resistance, incarnation and the subsequent purging of the oppressed sexual freedom. The decision to become a prostitute may represent a choice, to the extent that, in economic, sexual and emotional terms, the exercise of prostitution can make possible for a woman to experience an autonomous condition. In the article *Sou feliz sendo prostituta: incidências de discursos governamentais e midiáticos sobre prostituição* [I am happy being a whore: incidences on government and media discourses on prostitution, in free translation], Alles and Cogo show the clash between this type of work choice (supported and legitimized by various institutions such as the *Brazilian Network of Prostitutes* and the *Association of Prostitutes* in several states) and the dominant discourse within the government and media circles, as in the occasion of the episode that took place in 2013, between the Ministry of Health and the movement of the prostitutes:

(...) in Brazil there is only one policy of tolerance regarding prostitution - even as a recognized occupation. The moral and police repression are frequent, as well as the intervention of agents and health authorities, but there is not really a choice between the abolition and regulation of the profession. (ALLES; COGO, 2013, p. 18) [Own translation from original text in Portuguese].

Since the early colonization years to the present, there has been a maintenance, in Brazil, of a negative imagery of the whore because, due to a strong Christian family heritage, our dominant colonized culture has always valued virginity, monogamy and patriarchy.

Interestingly, the word *puta* (Portuguese word for *whore*) can be approximated to the French verb *puer*, which means “to stink”, “to extract an extremely unpleasant odor.” The Latin verb *putere* means *pourrir*, “to rotten”, of which *putois* also originates, a French designation for an animal that exhales a strong odor, the skunk. This etymology only reinforces the idea that the image we have of the whore is strongly associated with the sinful woman who causes all vices, similarly to the whore of Babylon mentioned in the biblical Revelation.

With this, we can understand why the sexual potential of pombagiras is embodied in the figure of the whore as mockery of society and symptom of an excluding and tyrannical social system. Both make use of irony and sarcasm facing the Christian society, especially in Brazil, where the religious and moral discourses legitimize an oppressive, colonizer and patriarchal thought about women.

b. The pornographic woman: the whore – daytime

In the same territory where the whore circulates, in the marginal setting, there is also the luxury setting, after all, it is out of the same exalted, exposed and explored image of female sexuality that the media and the pornographic trade extract their contents, and it is where their growth is founded.

It is not novel information that the advertising market unrestrainedly explores the image of woman as an object of desire and establishes an explicit relation between body, sex and consumption. This market has benefited from what Dufour (2013) called “pornocracy” defined based on a logic of government operating under an ultraliberal system that constantly emits and propagates the command: “Enjoy!”

Regarding the history of images, it is no wonder that the female body has always been the object of adoration and significant visibility in

cultures, from the statues and paintings of the love goddesses, depicted in their naked body up to women on magazine covers. The entertainment market and the cultural industry, as its major ally, have adopted the game Forbidden versus Transgression as a sophisticated means to generate exorbitant profits. This way, a luxury market of prostitution is created: not far from us, escort sites offer women with the most diverse qualities, prostitutes with degrees, who speak more than one language, who own cars, who walk elegantly dressed and are socially presentable, thus contrasting with the low layers prostitutes.

The game between prohibition and the possibility of misdemeanor has been the main gain of the current capitalism that profits sophisticatedly from Christian coercive methods. Christianity has not a banned sin once and for all because it needed it to exult its sacred aspect, as stated by Bataille: “The sacred aspect of eroticism was the most important thing to church. It was the main reason for punishment. It burned witches and let low prostitutes live”. (2014. p. 162). This way, the church could assert the decay of prostitution, using it to stress the sinful character of a sexuality without the institutions of church, marriage and family.

The number of whores and prostitutes increases, heating the financial market, and inflating the desire for the improper, the sting of betrayal, the extramarital adventure. In every wife, there would be a strong desire to pervert their status as pseudo-holiness; in every husband, the constant wish to test the limits of his desire would lie; and every whore would have the idyllic dream of becoming a wife. The market is nourished by this eternal dissatisfaction, characteristic of the human being, by the hidden desires of consumers.

We live, therefore, in the midst of these forces, something Dufour calls “double constraint”, which makes us hostages of advertising that highlights perversion, addiction, youth and violence to extract the consuming effect out of this mess. Advertising comes to us under the guise of “point of satisfaction,” something that ends up in consumption:

We are in times of schism: provoking pictures of Lolitas can be found everywhere. They are so many that they are not even seen anymore. They

are constantly sending direct Sadean incitement, in the sense that they are addressing to those that contemplate them, turning them on, that is, sending a command that says, *Enjoy!* And, however, the spectator should use all his strengths to resist the temptation. In brief, he must know that the photo is just for him to buy the magazine and eventually give the exciting blouse used by the girl as a gift to his girlfriend. Nothing more than that (DUFOUR, 2012, p. 465). [Own translation from original text in Portuguese].

With all these incentives, we still have difficulties accepting the activity of the whore as work. The abject, however, from time to time, takes up the center of social life, on the images and on the screens. This is what we intend to show in the interpretative observations that follow.

3. From stereotypes of the phallogentric culture to possibilities of the media culture

We show here the way the three pop artists⁸ chosen make use of sex-related acts and pornography images – but also of the stereotypes of female desire and sexual pleasure – to create a new discourse on the feminine, the woman, the androgyny and all the ways that individuals find to identify themselves with the feminine, in a plurality of images that are sometimes daytime-related and compelling, sometimes nocturnal and enigmatic.

a. Lady Gaga

Whereas her musical style does not seem to introduce anything new, the music videos produced by the American singer Lady Gaga, as well as her stage performances, introduce an uncommon discourse and aesthetics that deserve our attention. These narratives mix several feminine

⁸ It is important to mention the selection of these three artists in this paper. Because they are “products” of the music industry and constitute themselves as pop culture objects, the three of them have around their respective images a *topos* of the sexual and liberating feminine, even when they reproduce the so-called “clichés” in their lines, catchphrases and musical arrangements already too widespread - elements that characterize the pop universe.

attitudes towards life, feelings and relationships. The submission attitude always overtaken and transformed into domination and self-control attitudes.

It is possible to identify a common thread to interpret the discourse by the singer Lady Gaga according to the lines of a *pombagira* chant (*ponto cantado*)⁹: *Juraram me matar com um copo de veneno. Se quiser matar me mata que beber eu bebo mesmo* [Someone swore to kill me with a glass of poison. If you want to kill me, just kill me, because I do drink – in free translation]. Lines of a *pombagira* chant that reflect a discourse taken to the last consequences of coping: death. Lady Gaga, similarly to *pombagiras*, faces her feelings with death to allow the rebirth of a new strength, based on the freedom of being what one really is.

The topic and the morbid aesthetics are recurring in her music videos and stage performances. Whereas Lady Gaga may present herself as a seductive, mainstream blond woman, in line with the dominant beauty convention, she rapidly assumes images of something weird, abnormal and even monstrous and morbid. This transformation also permeates all music videos. In them, Lady Gaga has different looks: a long, straight hair turns into a short shaggy haircut, extravagant models associating sexy black hair and burlesque square lines, long flowing dresses with tight pants and metallic bras, or white and colored dresses alternating with black and silver ones. Classic jewelry with sadomasochistic objects; several futurist fantasies or animal, burlesque ones. The constant change and versatility seem to be part of Lady Gaga's image, which can assume several faces, roles, and functions within her own narratives. The domination she has over others is always constant, though. Lady Gaga plays the role of a brave, sensual, seductive and dominating woman. Sometimes revengeful. Her victimization, as an object of desire of another seemingly stronger, always manage to be successful in overcoming, on the comeback or revenge.

Another *pombagira* aspect can also be seen in Lady Gaga's figure: *Ela tem peito de aço e coração de sabiá* [She has a steel chest and the

⁹ *Pontos cantados* are the chants sang at the worship sites to evoke certain entities.

heart of a songbird – in free translation]. The strength of the woman in the performances, videos or even in the documentary “monster ball” is not given without the process of overcoming one’s weaknesses. This is about a woman who loves, who has strong feelings, and who reaches her freedom through the transcendence exercise of what could be a source of destruction and failure: love relationships, weakness and helplessness feelings facing love. When you have the heart of a songbird, you must have a “steel chest,” say the *pombagiras* at the worship places and in the popular Brazilian imaginary, and Lady Gaga does the same on the pop culture stages worldwide.

Finally, in the media and art world of pop culture, dominated by the commercial logic, with a strong exploitation of pornographic images at the service of the imperative of enjoyment, Lady Gaga creates a discourse of autonomy of one’s body. The woman in her narratives is not for sale. She has value, frequently reminded by dollar bills with her face printed on; but there is not a buyer who is not able to reify her. She loves her success, she knows her own value, but she does not introduce herself as a consumer good. Her dance, her movements, the winding body she shows and hides or uses for provoking is not shown in order to seduce for the consumption of the woman-object, but to show full control of herself, a self-control that goes through the acceptance of the difference (*born this way*) and through the sale of another product: pop music. Regarding the use of the pornographic image, a great controversy was caused with the release of Lady Gaga’s single *Do What U Want*, because on the cover there was a picture of the singer’s butt. In an interview to the German TV station ProSieben, she explained why she used such an explicit image to release the single:

[It is] just another piece of ass for you to buy. You will not have my heart or my mind because you do not deserve it. I would give it to my fans because they would receive it kindly. When I see how society has changed, I feel this is a good time to show my ass, because that is all I decided to give it. (Lady Gaga *apud* SANTANA, 2014) [Own translation from original text in Portuguese].

With this, the pornographic image has a different meaning.

It is important to remember that Lady Gaga has started the most controversial phase of her career with the album *Born This Way* and with the adoption of the term “little monsters” to name her fans. A reaction to the imperialism of a type of beauty that is standardized and stereotypical. The resurrected monsters within the standards of pop and massiveness are the ones addressed by the singer Lady Gaga, making them reappear from within the depths of the nocturnal imagery: *my little monsters!*

b. Valesca Popuzuda

Just like Lady Gaga, Valesca asserts and reasserts her pleasure in being what she is: a woman with a body with curves and volume, a “hot” woman, as commonly said. She displays her beauty and particularly the body parts men desire the most: breasts, legs, butt, thighs; the sexy movements that men also appreciate: the way she moves her hips, the way she opens her legs, with an attitude of a “queen”, that is, the powerful woman, sitting on a royal throne surrounded by wild animals – the tiger and the hawk (*Beijinho no ombro*) [kiss on the shoulder - in free translation], which grants her power. This is a woman who does not allow herself to be dominated by male power (*Tá pra nascer homem que vai mandar em mim*) [a man to boss me around has not been born yet – in free translation], or by the power of a social elite (*Beijinho no ombro e Sou a diva que você quer copiar*) [Kiss on the shoulder and I am the diva you wish to imitate – in free translation].

Differently from Lady Gaga, Valesca was not born in the international phonographic pop industry, but in the *funk carioca*, a musical style of the peripheral area of Rio de Janeiro, seen in Brazil as one of the major mass phenomenon. Indeed, Valesca reached success previously with the band *Gaiola das Popozudas*, whose production were aimed for the *bailes funk* (funk parties) in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, and with her participation in the carnival in Rio. When she started her solo career, she achieved massive success with the music video *Beijinho no ombro*.

Valesca, in the documentary “Da favela para o mundo” [From the *favela* to the world – in free translation] (2014), asserts that she wishes to remain the funk singer and artist representing the favelas in the world and its people, especially the women. In her music video *Sou a diva que você quer copiar*, in a kitsch style, she plays the role of the housewife cleaning the house in a sexy way. The music video is sponsored by a brand of cleaning products (Veja): the colors pink and light blue, soap bubbles, furniture, and home decoration items are the symbols of the common domestic tasks. But the sensuality of the dance around the male object - a shirtless model, with a collar and almost static - says something about the power of dominating woman who sings: “Eu já falei que eu sou top, que eu sou poderosa, veja o que vou te falar: eu sou a diva que você quer copiar” [I told you I am top, I am powerful, listen to me: I am the diva you want to imitate - in free translation]. *Top* is, at the same time, the one on the top of the dominating representation of beauty, but it is also the dominating part in sexual intercourse (top x bottom). Valesca sings for the women, she addresses the women. In her feminine discourse, the “I” is constantly affirmed, in contrast to others, the “enemy” or the “fake” ones, the “repressed”, the imitators. Who is this “I” Valesca asserts and reasserts in all of her music videos? The “I” with which women of the favelas and the attendees of funk parties identify themselves with and from which they build, in turn, their own identity affirmation? This “I” of a feminine that needs to assert itself for being dominated for so long by a phallogentric culture? This “I” of women who need to compete against one another to be dominant? Just like the queen in the story of Snow White, who cannot stand the existence of someone “fairest in the land”? But this woman who has to be the most beautiful one, is she really in a competition against other? Or is she just taking part in a women’s game, in which the sense of competition in pursuit of the power provided by the beauty is just a discourse to the dominant male?

It is possible to bring Valesca’s discourse close to the discourse of pombagiras regarding this feminine game. When they call themselves “Gold

Queen” and called the other “silver owner” or “losers”, they are weaving a web of relationships and using a language that might have a masculine sense and a feminine sense, both going towards different directions. What beauty are they talking about? What power? The *pombagiras* laugh and mock everything. They offer senses to be interpreted and they laugh, as someone who reveals secrets that were kept in secrecy. They follow a non-phallogocentric logic, a female language on the feminine and for the feminine, necessarily nocturnal and enigmatic. They are always proposing something different from the mainstream. Their words and actions are also more enigmatic. Popular knowledge says that when *pombagiras* laugh, one must be cautious. Because their laughter follows the nocturnal regime of cycles, of astrobiological dramas, the textile industry and not the daytime regime of weapons technology. *Pombagiras* weave intricate and resistant fabric: secrets. Their veiled discourse cannot be interpreted by a male daytime logic. They like to offer themselves as enigmas. And perhaps that’s where lies the main clue of a new female discourse on the feminine, assumed not only by the *pombagiras* at the Umbanda worship sites, but also by their new representatives in pop culture.

c. Azis

The Bulgarian singer Azis subverts the order and normativity, his pop aesthetics does not only talk about the feminine, nor about the masculine. The artist moves around on the limit line, in the region in between, a notion that is useful for us when we also need to reflect on a feminine that is manifested in the masculine body. The border is a place of relation, a region of encounter, crossing, and confrontation: “It separates and, at the same time, brings into contact cultures and groups. A police zone is also an area of transgression and subversion”. (LOURO, 2008, p.19).

There is a certain parody element in the performance and music videos by Azis, that is why we designated him a border character. In his imitation of the feminine, not excluding his masculine face, it is

almost a drag queen, metamorphosing into an offender and at the same time being strange and rowdy. Aziz introduces himself as a character out of order and standards, which causes discomfort, curiosity and a fascination.

Unlike international pop representations and differently from female figures who dominate the music industry, the singer has little global exposure, although he is a strong example of active cultural industry in Northern Europe. His music video available on *Youtube*, *Saint Tropez* (Azis - Сен тропе)¹⁰ has had over two million seven hundred thousand views.

According to Soares, the pop is characterized by gathering a:

set of practices, experiences and products guided by the media logic, which has as its genesis the entertainment; anchors, largely from production methods linked to cultural industries (music, film, television, publishing, etc.) and establishes forms of enjoyment and consumption that permeate a sense of community, belonging and affinities sharing that place individuals within a transnational sense and globalizing. (SOARES, 2014, n.p) [Own translation from original text in Portuguese].

According to this perspective, Aziz prints all typical elements of pop culture, carrying in the midst of his performance that wild feminine, typical of the pombagira. The singer may have never heard of the Afro Brazilian entity, but updates in the mainstream forms of expression that are quite common in the image and the imaginary of the pombagira

The *pombagira* “summarizes the most shocking aspects that the female sexuality can take facing the moral and good habits” (Augras, 2009, p.18). Thus, we can consider that Azis also assumes certain aspects of pombagira in his male body: to be lustful, sensual, sexy, and free in a body that can be a male or female one. It is important to say that the embodiment of *pombagiras* does not happen only with women, men also embody them.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjSgQFcpLqo>; Access on Sep 30, 2014

What is seen in Aziz videos is lust, several references to spaces of perversion and sex-related activities, such as nightclubs, saunas and brothels. His narratives are related to the world of prostitution, drugs and luxury, with a strong criticism of the Hollywood phonographic market. Sometimes, the images turned in to narratives in Aziz's music videos seem to be telling us that if a woman can be eroticized and made into a good to the consumption desire and the imperative of enjoyment, then it is possible to do the same with the image of the gay man. Thus, it is no longer the woman who is the objective of pornography, but the feminine. The discussion on the place of the feminine shifts from women to men. It is not about the nature of a woman who is lascivious, dangerous, and subversive, as we saw in the whore. The body of the singer, extravagant in its masculinity turned into feminine, thus displays a sensual plastic, acting under a not established or identified logic, covering an unfitting territory and mixing and disrupting previously defined categories. As a drag queen, Aziz indicates that the boundary between masculine and feminine is an open space, which can be visited at any time.

The drag queen assumes the transience; she is satisfied by unexpected juxtapositions and mixtures. The drag is more than one. More than one identity, more than a genre, purposefully ambiguous in their sexuality and their affections. Deliberately made of excesses, she embodies the proliferation and lives adrift, as a post-modern traveler (LOURO, 2008, p. 21). [Own translation from original text in Portuguese].

Aziz, however, does not seem to be adrift. He assumes, with his parodies, the safe role of the criticism of a standardized and stereotypical pop culture. Instead, he stands as a subversive pop, assuming the language, the lights and pop culture clichés so to say something else.

It is possible to state that, since they are governed by the flow of femininity and their *anima*, the artistic manifestations of pop culture are also queer¹¹. They talk about a strange being, but a stranger who “questions,

¹¹ A theory that has emerged in the US in the mid-80s, the queer theory refers to gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites and drags - subjects of deviant sexuality. The queer connotes what is strange, rare, strange, extravagant and extraordinary.

discusses, disputes all well-behaved forms of knowledge and identity” (SILVA *apud* Louro, 2008. p. 48). At the same time, it is a territory that refers to a feminine that exists in all nature, and whatever its configuration might be – androgynous or predominantly male or female – it is present in everyone. When manifested with all the visual strategies of pop media spectacle, the feminine also assumes a gay appearance, subverts and challenges the established values, but above all, embraces the discourse of otherness. As such, the male fans of Lady Gaga and Valesca Popozuda are, in their majority, gays. With Azis, the situation is the same. He assumes female forms to speak of and for a gay universe in response to everything that names, classifies, oppresses and excludes. The gay whore – the abjection of the abjection – stands out in the center of the scene.

Concluding Remarks

In the search of the return of the Wild Woman archetype, we found, in the three feminine pop figures studied, discourses that seem to question the audience and that - perhaps - justify the success of these singers. Each one of them in their own world: the North-American with her global reach provided by a cultural industry of international potential; the Brazilian, coming from the favelas of Rio de Janeiro to be nationally projected, even though she is also strongly criticized by a local elitist and conservative discourse; the Bulgarian, drawing attention from the gay scene of Northern and Southwestern Europe, causing equally strong controversy in his country.

The three discourses share the same rhetorical resource: assuming the evil - or what can be considered as evil according to a dichotomous moral perspective - to create something new from inside his own situation; in this case, a new feminine. Or perhaps, rather than new, we should qualify this female as atavistic, primal and eternal, because it is an authentic female in its wild and instinctive dimension, no longer pruned by moral, no longer repressed by any measure of social control. A feminine in a way to liberation, whose cries cause discomfort for being

subversive cries of an order imposed by outdated values, but still deeply rooted in the moral of the phallogocentric society.

However, in the analysis of the three cases presented lies the way the archetype of the free, seductive, sexual and wild woman reappears as surviving forms in body performance, gestures and lyrics of the singers. In the manner of *Pathosformel*, this expression of the feminine offender is asynchronous, anachronistic and atopic, manifested both in the worship sites of Umbanda as in the pop culture universe.

The *pombagira* is contemporary, just like the three singers studied. She takes on the narratives that, for being historically marked, are present in the suffering of women and men who live the repression of their suppressed womanhood. From this suffering, she transcends through the pain of being deliberately bad: being a whore, or a gay whore, being sexually active in the control of her actions and, above all, of her desire. And – the sin of all sins - of knowing how to use this desire at her service and not for the male who wants to dominate her; knowing how to live her own hysteria, her own sensuality, her own sexuality and being, ultimately, creative and free.

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