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Construction of the stereotype of “Northeastern macho” in the Brazilian forró songs

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The objective is to understand the process of construction and evolution of male gender identity in Brazilian Northeast, based on study of forró songs. Based on analyzes of the lyrics as a semiotic territory, the corpus of research was composed of letters of iconic representatives of each period of forró from the Brazilian composer Luiz Gonzaga to contemporaneity, organized in the following categories ‘Nordestinidade’ (to be from the Northeast), ‘male imagery’, ‘female imagery’ and ‘gender violence’. From the analysis emerged that cultural identity of Northeast was historically consolidated through patriarchal principles. Forró lyrics discourse showed how these principle were adapted to the market laws of a globalized world, progressively perceiving women as a commodity thus legitimizing their subordination. In this context it is emphasized the importance of understanding cultural symbols and their role in the construction of male and female subjectivities in Brazilian Northeast.

Keywords: Gender identity. Culture. Violence against women.

INTRODUCTION

“If money is in hand, the panties are on the floor.” This is how gender relationships have been treated in the lyrics of *forró*, which has contributed to the persistence of stereotypes of a violent masculinity, in spite of the public policies established in Brazil.

Sustainable measures for confronting gender-based violence demand that we break free of the trap of a masculine-feminine binary. Such dichotomies reinforce the power relations and prevent remedial possibilities. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss the hegemonic stereotypes of gender with the aim of deconstructing and resignifying them^{1,2,3}.

Masculinity – like femininity and even sexuality itself – does not represent a mere cultural formulation of a natural fact. There are different models of masculinity constructed in accordance with the insertion of men in the social, political, economic, and cultural structure²⁻⁴.

The identity of the Northeastern man is structured by reiterating the image of the crude, harsh, and violent Northeast. Internalizing entirely the characteristics of the land, this man becomes hostile, arid, and dry. Violence becomes a strong component of his subjectivity: forged daily in a specific sociopolitical situation, based and perpetuated on the principles of patriarchy^{5,6}.

In this context, the discourses of different social technologies³ that function in the continuous formation process of cultural identities² and gender performativity^{7,8} cannot be ignored. Neither should the historical changes, capable of shaking the traditional frames of reference responsible for the feeling of belonging, and to coalesce in the construction of identity processes⁴.

Music operates as a form of cultural production that greatly influences the construction of identities,⁹ and *forró* is a musical style that accompanied historical and

cultural changes since the 1940s, preserving a broad public conception of the North and Northeast regions, among all age groups and social classes, with lyrics strongly characterized by hierarchical gender representations¹⁰. This article sets out to understand the construction and modification of the masculine gender identity of the Northeast, based on a study of the lyrics of *forró* in its different phases and decades.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological plan requires a brief clarification regarding the insertion of the lyrics into the melodies of *forró*. Influenced by aesthetic standards established in the Southeast of the country in the 1940s, Luiz Gonzaga “created” the *baião* song genre, moving away from the characteristically instrumental norm of northeastern music of the era. Since then, the parameters that characterized his *forró* as “traditional” and “roots” were established¹¹. The music of Gonzaga, associated with other social technologies such as the regional literature of the 1930s, contributed to the creation of an idiosyncratic image of a singular and atemporal Northeast which, although it had never existed^{11,12}, was internalized even by northeasterners¹⁰.

It was through the *forró* music recorded by Gonzaga that Brazil constructed a representative image of the Northeast¹¹. Thus, *forró* acquired the status of a Northeastern cultural symbol¹³.

By way of other influences and socio–historic changes, *forró* has undergone various transformations, and can be divided into the following phases¹³:

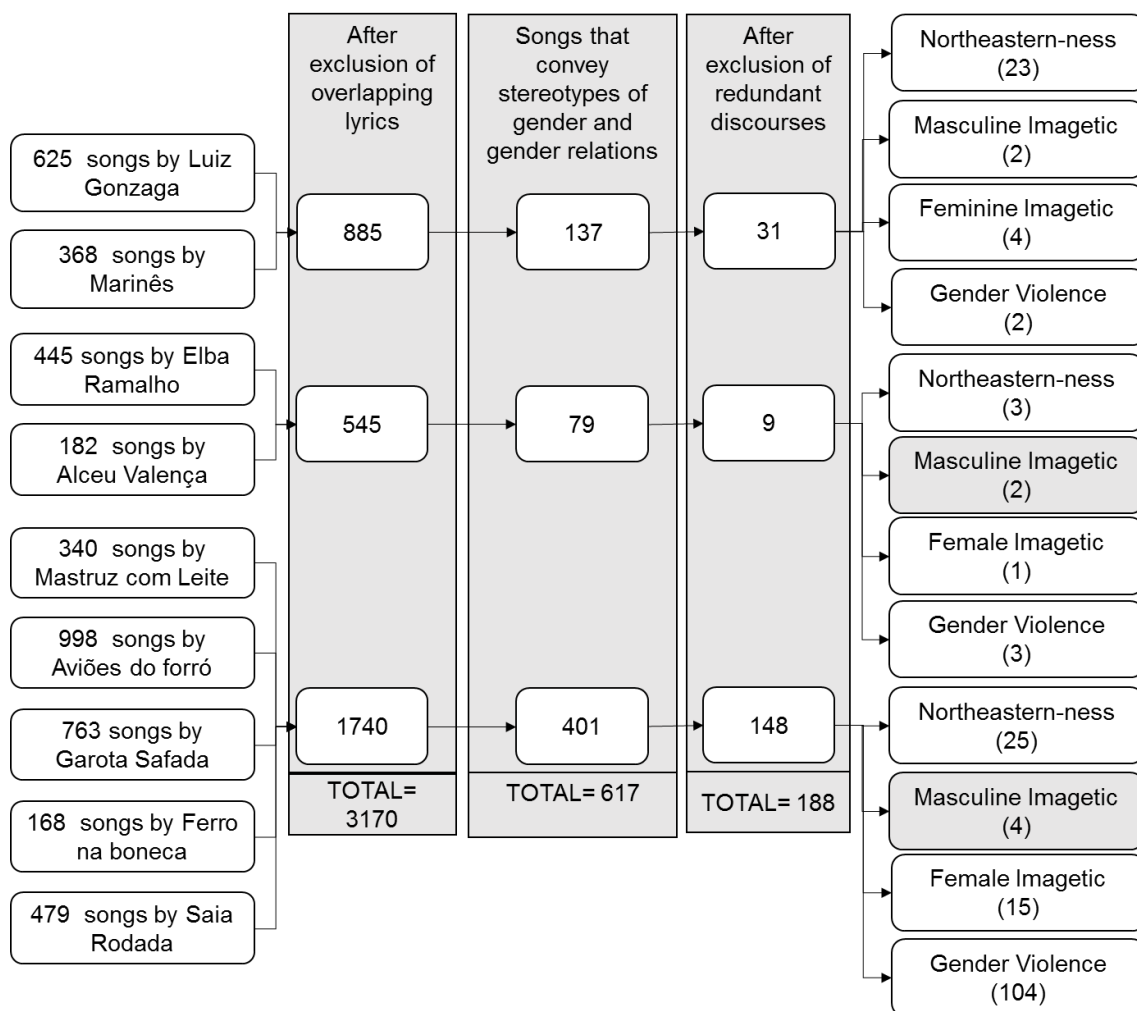
- Traditional *forró*: beginning in the 1940’s with Luiz Gonzaga, followed by Marinês and Jackson do Pandeiro, among others.
- “University” *forró*, itself divided into two phases. The first began around 1975, represented by Alceu Valença, Zé Ramalho, Elba Ramalho, Geraldo Azevedo, and Nando Cordel. The second phase began in the 1990’s, with groups comprised only of men, such as Falamansa.

- Electric *forró*: various bands comprised of musicians, vocalists of both sexes, and dancers

Understanding the songs as a semiotic territory, the *corpus* of the research was composed of the lyrics of iconic representatives of each period, always seeking to hear a feminine voice, which resulted in the exclusion of the second phase of “university” *forró*. The coexistence of these phases avoided a time gap.

We compiled all of the songs recorded by Luiz Gonzaga and Marinês (traditional *forró*), Alceu Valença and Elba Ramalho (first phase of “university” *forró*), Mastruz com Leite (precursor of electronic *forró*), Aviões do Forró, Garota Safada, Saia Rodada, and Ferro na Boneca (contemporary electronic *forró*). The selection of songs occurred after an exhaustive examination of the lyrics guided by the analytical constructs that referred to the models of masculinity and femininity, and to the relations between the genders. 617 songs were selected, organized by time period and grouped into the categories Northeastern-ness, Masculine Imagetic, Feminine Imagetic, and Gender Violence. After the exclusion of redundant discourses, 188 songs remained. The selection now presented to us was restricted to eight songs selected in the category Masculine Imagetic and one song in the category Northeastern-ness (“*Carcará*”). The latter was added with the aim of contributing to the contextualization of the others. In accordance with each period selected and included in this study, the refinement process of 617 songs for a total of 188 is described in Figure 1. For clarification, it should be noted that this compiling process took a period of six months to complete.

Figure 1. Fluxogram of the selection process of the research *corpus*.



The lyrics were read, the songs listened to, and the videos, when available, watched on average 20 times. Each lyric was segmented into units of signification, from which we began a detailed process of interpretation, articulating them among themselves and within the socio-historical and political context in which they occurred¹⁵. We then worked with the discursive formations, relating them to the ideology of the subject in order to interpret them using the meanings of the realized, imagined, or possible discourses.

The understanding of “ideology” used in this essay calls upon the Althusserian¹⁶ thinking found in the theoretical construction used by Stuart Hall:

By ideology I mean the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works¹⁷ (p.26).

When we consider that the performances of gender(s) directly relate to the power and ideology that mold social reality^{7,18}, and that “every social practice has cultural or discursive conditions of existence”⁴ (p.33), we find a favorable panorama for the analysis of discourse, utilized here following the French school¹⁹ that articulates the linguistic with the socio–historical and the ideological, placing language in relation to the modes of social production. Considering that the way of saying something has a direct relationship with the meaning attributed to discourses, we opted to make the lyrics available in the same way that they were conveyed to the public, in spite of recognizing the frequent disregard for the formal rules of the Portuguese language.

RESULTS

VIOLENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE REGIONAL IDENTITY OF THE NORTHEASTERN MALE

In 1964, the song “Carcará” by João do Vale and José Candido was released, rerecorded as a *forró* by Marinês.

“Carcará

Carcaráⁱ

ⁱ Translator’s note: a *carcará* is a bird of prey found in northeast Brazil.

Lá no sertão
É um bicho que avoa que nem avião

É um pássaro malvado
Tem o bico volteado que nem gavião
Carcará
Quando vê roça queimada
Sai voando, cantando
Carcará
Vai fazer sua caçada
Carcará come inté cobra queimada
Quando chega o tempo de invernada
Carcará mesmo assim num passa fome
Os burrego que nasce na baixada
Carcará
Pega, mata, e come
Carcará
Num vai morrer de fome
Carcará
Mais coragem do que home
Carcará
Pega, mata e come
Carcará e malvado, é valentão
É a águia de lá do meu sertão
Os burrego novinho num pode andá
Ele puxa o imbigo inté matá

Carcará

There in the backlands
Is a beast that flies just like an
airplane

It is an evil beast
It has a hooked beak just like an eagle
Carcará
When he sees the burnt earth
He takes off flying, singing
Carcará
Going for his hunt
Carcará even eats the burned snake
When the dry season arrives
Even then Carcará does not go hungry
The lamb born in the lowland
Carcará
Captures, kills, and eats
Carcará
Will never die of hunger
Carcará
More courage than man
Carcará
Captures, kills, and eats
Carcará is evil, he's a bully
He's the eagle of my backlands
The new lambs can't even walk
He hauls them by their belly and kills
them

Carcará

Pega, mata e come	Captures, kills, and eats
Carcará	Carcará
Num vai morrer de fome	Will never go hungry
Carcará	Carcará
Mais coragem do que home	More courage than man
Carcará	Carcará
Pega, mata e come	Captures, kills, and eats”

The bird of prey is transfigured into the northeastern oligarchy, which “invented” the image of an exclusively dry Northeast, with the goal of maintaining its political and economic power after the shift of the national economic axis to the Southeastern coffee planters²⁰. The backlands came to synthesize the imagetic of a new and unified Northeast, in a perennial state of calamity, ignoring the geographic and climactic diversity of the Region²¹.

The dry and poor Northeast became the banner of the regional elites under which they asserted the continuous influx of resources. Their political power, meanwhile, was guaranteed by *coronelismo*ⁱⁱ and by an inventive war of values between the traditional Northeast and the modern South/Southeast. They created another reductionist hierarchical binary²² that defined the imagetic of the Northeast for the rest of Brazil, characterized the sentiment of belonging of the northeasterners themselves, and created an imagetic–discursive elaboration replete with xenophobia¹⁰ that reifies and traverses regions.

Exposed to an exploitative situation, northeasterners of all regions – the beach–dwellers, the fishermen, the cowboys, the cotton growers – identify with this stereotype of the arid, rough, and naturally aggressive Northeast, valorizing above all the attributes that guarantee survival in these circumstances, including courage. More than intrepidity and

ⁱⁱ *Coronelismo* (or boss-ism) refers to the political system by which the rural oligarchy maintained power through patron-client relationships during the First Republic (1889-1930), elements of which persist to the present day.

confidence, courage is synonymous with bravery and fearlessness, attributes easily confused with aggressiveness. There is no honesty in the *Carcará*; there is courage, ill-will... violence.

The naturalized violence in the discourse and life of the northeastern male is confirmed in “*Forró de Caruaru*” (1955) by Zé Dantas, recorded by Luiz Gonzaga.

“No forró de Sá Joaninha	At the <i>forró</i> of Miss Joaninha
No Caruaru	In Caruaru ⁱⁱⁱ
Compadre Mané Bento	My friend, Mané Bento,
Só faltava tu	All it lacked was you
Nunca vi meu cumpadi	My friend, I’ve never seen
Forgança tão boa	A party so good
Tão cheia de brinquedo	So full of amusements
De animação	And animation
Bebendo na função	Drinking at the event
Nós dançamos sem parar	We danced non-stop
Num galope de matá	Killing it on the dance floor
Mas alta madrugada	But in the middle of the night
Pro mode uma danada	Because of a damned woman
Que veio de Tacaratu	Who came from Tacaratu
Matemo dois sordado	We killed two soldiers
Quatro cabo e um argento	Four corporals and one sergeant
Cumpadi Mané Bento	Friend Mané Bento
Só fartava tu.	We only lacked you.
Meu irmão Jesuíno	My brother Jesuíno
Grudou numa nega	Grabbed hold of a black woman

ⁱⁱⁱ Caruaru is the largest city in the interior of Pernambuco, and widely considered the birthplace of the *forró* style.

Chamego dum sujeito	Some man's sweetheart
Valente e brigão	He was a troublemaker, ready to fight
Eu vi que a confusão	I could tell that trouble
Não tardava começar	Was about to begin
Pois o cabra de punhá	Because the guy with the dagger
Com cara de assassín	With the face of a murderer
Partiu pra Jesuíno	Made straight for Jesuíno
Tava feito o sururu	And all hell broke loose
[...]"	

Dance, animation, “*forgança*” (regionalism for the world *folgança* or pass-time, characteristic of the “*folgado*” or carefree person) and murder, all on the same level, serving the mesh of micropower that is interlaced through all spheres, bringing together men with no possession with power holders by way of violence and arbitrariness. The motivation for the crimes, “because of a woman,” reveals the transformation of the woman into an object possessed by men and the stereotype of the female as a traitorous, destabilizing being. Nevertheless, the masculine force will be the force of order, naturalizing violence as an element to enforce order²³.

Northeastern pride was introjected the characteristics that the cultural artifacts projected as innate¹⁰. This reading of a naturalistic/deterministic base contributed to a culturally constructed system of references, that converges for the creation of a homogenous image and a sentiment of belonging to the Region, in a context of intense inter-regional conflicts and power struggles with the capital^{5,10,21}.

The patriarchal structure is not the exclusive provenance of northeast Brazil¹⁰. The particularity of the northeastern patriarchy, however, is in the context in which it is strengthened. Abolition of slavery, ascension of the Republic, industrialization, and the political transformations at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century – these events counterbalance the decadent power of the northeastern oligarchy. This oligarchy,

for its part, treated these processes as “social feminization,” minimizing the impact of an emerging crisis of masculinity based on a hierarchy of the races, classes, and gender²⁴.

The binary of northeastern masculinity versus the “feminization” of the South became incorporated into the regional identity invented for the northeastern male, being personified in “Xote dos Cabeludos” (Dance of the Long-hairs” (1967) by José Clementino and Luiz Gonzaga, recorded by Luiz Gonzaga.

“Atenção senhores cabeludos	Attention, long-haired men
Aqui vai o desabafo de um quadradão	A big “square” is going to vent now.
Cabra do cabelo grande	A guy with big hair
Cinturinha de pilão	Skinny waist
Calça justa bem cintada	Well-fitted tight pants
Costeleta bem fechada	Thick sideburns
Salto alto, fivelão	High-heeled shoes with buckles
Cabra que usa pulseira	A guy who wears a bracelet
No pescoço medalhão	A medallion around the neck
Cabra com esse jeitinho	A guy who is this way
No sertão de meu padrinho	In the backlands of my Godfather
Cabra assim não tem vez não	A guy like that has no place
Não tem vez não	Has no place there, no
Não tem vez não	Has no place there, no
No sertão de cabra macho	In the backlands of the tough guys
Que brigou com Lampião	Who fought with Lampião ^{iv}
Brigou com Antônio Silvino	Fought with Antônio Silvino
Que enfrenta um batalhão	Who confront the battalion

^{iv} Lampião was a famous bandit of the northeastern backlands in the 1930’s. Regarded as a figure somewhere between Robin Hood and Jesse James in popular culture, he terrorized both the rural oligarchy and the poor, but made accommodations with both to sustain his gang over many years. Lampião was ambushed and killed by police in 1938, and his gang’s severed heads put on display.

Amansa burro brabo	Tame the wild donkey
Pega cobra com a mão	Catch a snake by the hand
Trabalha sol a sol	Work from sun-up to sundown
De noite vai pro sermão	At night they go to the sermon
Rezar pra Padre Cicho	To pray for Father Cicero ^v
Falar com Frei Damião	To speak with Friar Damião
No sertão de gente assim	In the backlands of people like that
No sertão de gente assim	In the backlands of people like that
Cabeludo tem vez não	The long-hair has no place, no
Cabeludo tem vez não	The long-hair has no place, no
Cabeludo tem vez não	The long-hair has no place, no”

All the attributes of the “macho guy” are represented by courage mixed with aggressiveness, the disposition for work, and religiosity. Any image that deviates from this is rejected, such as in the expression “man with this *jeitinho*,” the diminutive way of saying “this way” which ridicules the image of a man with characteristics taken as feminine.

ADAPTATIONS AND RESISTENCES OF THE PATRIARCHY

During the processes of modernization in the country in the 1970s and 80s and the advance of the feminist movement, there emerged new and subtle mechanisms of control, as described in “Anjo do Prazer” (Angel of Pleasure, 1985) by Jaguar and Tadeu Mathias, recorded by Elba Ramalho.

^v Both Padre Cicero and Friar Damião figure prominently in the popular religiosity of the northeastern poor at the beginning of the twentieth century. Devotees regarded the former as a miracle-worker, and both are still widely venerated by the many northeasterners who make regular pilgrimages to where they once ministered.

“Olha bem nego nesse meu jeitinho	Look here, man, this is my way
De dançar chorinho	Of dancing <i>chorinho</i> ^{vi}
De dançar forró	Of dancing <i>forró</i>
De brincadeira lá na gafieira	Having fun at the dance club
Varo a noite inteira	I pass the whole night
Gosto de xodó	I like a little affection
Tiro de letra um bolero, um tango	I'll master a bolero, a tango
Um xaxado, um mambo	A <i>xaxado</i> ^{vii} , a mambo
Mando bem no pé	I'm good on my feet
Tenho estampado aqui no meu rosto	It's written on my face
Sou pra qualquer gosto	I'm good for any taste
Sou de A e B	I belong to A and B
Anjo da noite, bandido”	Angel of the night, bandit”

Already in the title, the feminine voice self-identifies as an “angel of pleasure,” a title reflecting sensuality and expressing the singer’s freedom in relation to her body, behavior, and sexuality. She occupies the external space – the club – and permits herself to enjoy “a little pleasure”, openly expressing her desire.

The tradition, however, is essentially conservative and is also present in the periods of historic changes²³. The apparent freeing from the masculine dominance and abuse regarding female sexuality hides another type of submission. “I’m good for any taste,” she affirms, after listing for the “man” a series of qualities about her aptitude as a dancer and her voluptuousness. In a subtle way, she places herself as a product, whose packaging is compatible with the function on offer, wherein she has it “written on her face” that is she is “for any taste.”

^{vi} *Chorinho* is a mostly instrumental Brazilian music genre.

^{vii} Dance associated with the northeast.

The prepositional clause “belong to,” with its implicit sense of possession, was chosen by the personage to declare she belongs to “A” and “B,” which dispels the notion of her supposed liberation, assuming that she can only belong to one owner, to someone hierarchically superior. In the song in question, the woman does not belong to a man, she belongs to “A and B.” The letters of the alphabet, like unknown variables in a mathematical equation, suggest a non-specificity, corroborated by the connective conjunction “and,” suggesting that she belongs to men in general, which makes her an “angel of the night, bandit,” just like women who allow themselves to express their sexuality and occupy an environment different from the home were considered.

While female sexuality continued to be regulated, violence was still celebrated as a masculine trait, as we can observe in the song “Martelo a Bala e Facão” (*Martelo*^{viii} with the Bullet and Machete”(1974) by Sérgio Ricardo, recorded by Alceu Valença.

“Zé Tulão é chegada a tua hora	Zé Tulão, your hour has arrived
Vá fazendo o teu último pedido	Go on and make your last wish
É na faca é na foice é no estampido	With knife, with sickle, with shots
É no verso é na rima e sem demora	It’s in the verse and the rhyme without delay
Já que tu vai correr comece agora	Since you are going to run, start now
Que no fim da peleja esta Maria	Because at the end of this fight, this Maria
Vai levar das minhas mãos a luz do dia	Will take from my hands the light of day
Que só sendo jagunço em qualquer lida	Because being a hired gun in any kind of work
Pode o cabra possuir tudo na vida	A guy can have everything in life
E entregar a uma mulher toda alegria	And deliver every joy unto a woman
Treme a terra e o trovão se arrebenta	The Earth shakes and the thunder bursts

^{viii} The *martelo* is a variant of the 10-line *décima* poetic form originating from the Iberian Peninsula. It is common in the *cordel* chapbook poetry of the northeast and the *repentista* tradition of singer-guitarists who challenge each other to verbal duels, of which this song is an example.

Toda vez que um vaqueiro se enfurece
Mãos pro céu se levantam numa prece
Corre o fraco e o forte não se aguenta

Para o rio o mar não se movimenta
E se então é por amor a luta dobra
Pois coragem de amar tenho e de sobra
Se acabou Zé do Cão prepara a cova
Que eu te pego te aleijo e dou-te sova

E te faço rastejar pior que cobra

É o inferno no meu canto de guerra
Pois consigo arrancar da pedra o pranto
O meu nome é temido em todo canto
Onde voam as aves sobre a terra
E se existe um amor atrás da serra
Não há nada que feche o meu caminho
Eu enfrento a vereda e todo espinho
Ouve bem Zé Tulão segura o tombo
Que eu te capto te esfolo caço e zombo

Sou leão e tu és o passarinho

Se é o inferno no teu canto de guerra
É no inferno o meu canto de paz
Por amor eu derrubo Satanás
Bem e mal são a luta desta terra

Every time that a cowboy gets angry
Hands raised to the heavens in prayer
The weak run and the strong can't withstand
it

The river stops, the sea does not move
And if it is for love, it's twice the struggle
I have courage to love, enough to spare
It's all over Zé do Cão, prepare your grave
Because I'll catch you, cripple you and beat
you

I'll make you crawl lower than a snake

There is hell in my war-cry
Because I can draw tears from a stone
My name is feared all over the place
Where birds fly over the earth
And if there is love across the mountains
There is nothing that will stand in my way
I'll face every path and every thorn
Listen well, Zé Tulão, and don't fall over
Or I will castrate you, fleece you, hunt and
mock you

I am a lion and you are little bird

If there is hell in your war-cry
There is hell in my song of peace
For love I would defeat Satan
Good and evil is the struggle of this land

Mas comigo o que é mal a lança fera	But with me, the spear wounds what is evil
Corre Cão Pé de Vento e Lúcifer	Run – Dog, Lazybones, and Lucifer
Corre todo diabo que vier	Run, every devil that I see
Pelo bem desse amor digo e não nego	For the sake of this love, I say, I won't deny
Eu enfrento um batalhão e não me entrego	I will confront a battalion and not surrender
Zé do Cão tu pra mim é uma mulher”	Zé do Cão, to me, you are a woman.”

In spite of the many criticisms of the hegemonic model of masculinity, unlocked by the advance of the feminist movement and the modernization of relations between the genders, its association with virility, competition, and violence still persists.

VIRILITY, CONSUMERISM, AND MASCULINITIES IN TIMES OF GLOBALIZATION

The feminist achievements of recent decades modified the balance of household economies, altering the inter-family and social relationships of knowledge/power and the prescribed standards of family and society²¹. In contrast, there emerge a series of discourses seeking to control female emancipation and preserve the basic characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, adapting it to a globalized world²⁵.

Ignoring the social structures in flux, the songs illustrate a new stereotype: a man – increasingly an urbanite – that adapts the strength and virility of the traditional cowboy to the laws of consumerism and the demands of globalization and neoliberalism⁹.

Let us look at “Vida de Vaqueiro” (Life of the Cowboy, 1993) by Ednir, recorded by the band Mastruz com Leite.

“Quando o claro do sol vai despontando	When the rays of the sun come shining
Por detrás das montanhas lá da serra	From behind the mountains on the horizon
Abro a porta e sinto o cheiro da terra	I open the door and feel the smell of the earth

Do poleiro do quintal canta o galo

The rooster sings in the chicken coop in the
backyard

Boto a sela no lombo do cavalo

I put the saddle on the back of the horse

E depois de tomar meu café

And after my coffee

Com carinho, amor e muita fé

With love, care, and much faith

Vou tocando minha vida de gado

I go on living the cattle life

Sou vaqueiro, e vivo apaixonado

I'm a cowboy, I live in love

Por forró, vaquejada e mulher

With *forró*, rodeos, and women

Sou vaqueiro, e vivo apaixonado

I'm a cowboy, I live in love

Por forró, vaquejada e mulher

With *forró*, rodeos and women

O que vejo de belo no sertão

What I find beautiful in the backlands

É o gado comendo na colina

Is cattle eating on the hillside

O sorriso na boca da menina

The smile on the face of a young girl

E o segredo que tem seu coração

And the secret in your heart

Meu forró e as festas de São João

My *forró* and the parties of St. John's Day

Santo Antônio, São Pedro e São José

Saint Anthony, Saint Peter, and Saint Joseph

O meu vício você já sabe qual é

And my vice, you already know

Me perdoe se isso for pecado

Forgive me if it is a sin

Sou vaqueiro, e vivo apaixonado

I'm a cowboy, I live in love

Por forró, vaquejada e mulher

With *forró*, rodeos, and women

Sou vaqueiro, e vivo apaixonado

I'm a cowboy, I live in love

Por forró, vaquejada e mulher

With *forró*, rodeos and women"

In the first and third stanzas, the bucolic scene relays a fantasy that ignores the structural power that underpins life on the farms, serving only to emphasize concepts

associated with the idealized image: strength and courage. The refrain, however, uncovers the central idea: “I’m a cowboy, in love with *forró*, rodeos, and women,” reinforcing the ideals of strength, courage, and virility, attributes of masculinity.

In this context, the imagetic of the woman not only aids the commercialization of a series of products, she herself becomes a product for sale, as in the song “Dinheiro na Mão, Calcinha no Chão” (Money In The Hand, Panties On The Floor, 2005), by Jailson Nascimento, recorded by the band Saia Rodada.

“Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara	Look here, I have a real expensive cute chick
E eu já gastei mais de um milhão	I already spent more than a million
E quando ela foi me conhecer ela disse:	And when she met me, she said:
Tá liso, quero não.	You’re broke, I’m not interested.
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão’	But if money is in the hand
Não precisa ser gatão	You don’t need to be handsome
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão	But if money is in hand
Não precisa ser gatão	You don’t need to be handsome
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão	But if the money is in hand
Não precisa ser gatão	You don’t need to be handsome
Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara	Look here, I have a real expensive cute chick
E eu já gastei mais de um milhão	I already spent more than a million
E quando chamou pra passear ela disse:	And when I go pick her up to go out, she says:
A pé? Vou não.	On foot? Not me, I won’t go.

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

Eu só ando de carrão

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

Eu só ando de carrão

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

Eu só ando de Hillux

But if the money is in hand

I only ride in a big car

But if the money is in hand

I only ride in a big car

But if the money is in hand

I only ride in a pickup truck

Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara

Look here, I have a real expensive cute
chick

E eu já gastei mais de um milhão

And I already spent more than a
million

E quando chamou pra viajar

And when I pick her up to travel

De ônibus? Quero não.

By bus? Not me, I won't go

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

But if the money is in hand

Eu só ando de jatinho

I only travel by private jet

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

But if the money is in hand

Eu só ando de jatinho

I only travel by private jet

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

But if the money is in hand

Avião é pobre

Airplanes are for poor folks

Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara

Look here, I have a real expensive cute
chick

E eu já gastei mais de um milhão

And I already spent a million

E quando chamou para um motel, ela disse:

And when I go to take her to a motel,
she says:

De graça? Tá louco?

For free? Are you crazy?

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

A calcinha tá no chão

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

A calcinha tá no chão

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão

A calcinha tá no chão”

But if the money is in hand

The panties are on the floor

But if the money is in hand

The panties are on the floor

But if the money is in hand

The panties are on the floor.”

The massification of the stereotype of the gold-digger moves to the totality of women²⁶, supporting of prejudices and violence that, in a process of feedback with the sexual division of labor and women made responsible for domestic activities, comprise the structures that sustain patriarchal power. In “Vida de Playboy,” (Life of a Playboy, 2006,) written by Wesley Safadão and recorded by his band Garota Safada, the commercial relationship is exposed without euphemisms, requiring no further explanation:

“Sou forrozeiro, 100% biriteiro,

Mas só gasto meu dinheiro

I’m a *forrozeiro*, 100% party animal

But I only spend my Money

se a mulher for avião.

Vida de playboy é uma coisa maravilhosa,

If the woman is hot.

The life of a playboy is a marvelous thing

Não falta mulher gostosa no meu carro turbinado

My turbocharged car has no lack of hot women

E o som arregaçado

só querendo curtidão.

With the sound turned way up loud

Just wanting a big party.

Estar na minha casa é somente alegria,

mulherada e cachaçada,

Here at my place it’s only joy

Women and much drinking

Uma grande putaria, sacanagem de montão

só querendo curtidão.

A big fuckfest and fooling around

Just wanting a big party

Forró e vaquejada,	<i>Forró</i> and rodeos
Procuro mulher safada,	I look for a fast woman
Que na hora da trepada	Who, when it comes time to fuck
Me chame de gostosão.	Calls me sexy
Mulher raparigueira	A slutty woman
Que na hora da zueira,	Who when it's time to make some noise
Agente e passe a noite inteira	Can stay up all night
Pra matar o meu tesão.	To satisfy my lust.
Sou forrozeiro, 100% biriteiro,	I'm a forrozeiro, 100% party animal
Mas só gasto meu dinheiro	But I only spend my money
se a mulher for avião	If the woman is hot
Sou playboyzinho, 100% mauricinho	I'm a playboy, 100% preppy
Só pego piteuzinho, sou tremendo "garanhão"	I only screw hot babes, I'm a tremendous stud

The term "*trepada*"^{ix} refers to a merely physical act that seeks the full satisfaction of the male consumer, while the woman is depersonalized and subjected to this ideology wherein, because "there's no lack of hot women in my turbocharged car," there is complacency and acceptance, caused by the internalization of the dominating discourse by the dominated.

Homophobia also appears in the lyrics of *forró*, as illustrated in "Caçador" (Hunter, 2013) by Dorgival Dantas and performed by the band Ferro na Boneca.

"Sou um caçador moro na cidade	I'm a hunter, I live in the city
Só ando armado prestando atenção	I'm always armed, paying attention

^{ix} From the verb "trepas" (to climb), this is a euphemism for fornication.

Olhando pra frente pra trás e pro lado	Looking in front, behind, and to the side
Não tem quem escape da minha visão	Nobody escapes my vision
De todas as caças que eu já cacei	Of all the game that I have hunted
A mais complicada eu vou lhe dizer	The most difficult, I'll tell you
Se chegar perto e ela corre	If you come close, and it runs
Pode ter certeza que é o veado	You can be certain, it's a deer
Corre veado,	Run, deer
Corre veado	Run, deer
Se não eu te como	If not, I will eat you
Cozido ou assado...	Cooked or roasted..."

As deer do not live in the city, the place where the “hunter” resides, and thus the term “*veado*” does not refer to an animal, but instead is a jocular reference to male homosexuals. Alongside this moral and psychological violence, we can observe the naturalization of physical and sexual violence, expressed in the association of the verb “comer” (to eat)^x with the warning “run, deer,” reflecting the homophobic nature of non-recognition of diverse masculinities, with them delegated to an abject position.

The prejudices are inherited from the past and from tradition, and even faced with dramatic cultural changes they conserve innumerable preconceived cultural factors. In a culture where to be “macho” is at the heart of men’s identity construction, the fundamental characteristics that define them (strength, violence, possession of a woman), mixed with those of the globalized man (vain and free of social obligations) are not lost. To the contrary, when they are in jeopardy, they resurge even stronger and more aggressively, culminating in symbolic and concrete violence.

^x “Comer” (to eat) is also a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

DISCUSSION

A specific and single standard of masculinity does not exist. Different cultures, in different historical periods, will establish different manifestations and expressions of “being a man”²⁷. In every social, political, economic and cultural structure, however, there emerges a model of “hegemonic masculinity” that establishes a series of attributes, values, and specific behaviors^{27,28}.

The regional identity of the northeastern male begins with a construction that has at its heart the hegemonic masculinity structured in the western world over the years. The political and economic scenario that has been established in the region, however, provided a favorable panorama to the strengthening of dichotomies, with the valorization of northeastern masculinity in detriment to the supposed “feminization” of the south⁵.

In the model of hegemonic masculinity in the northeast, we can perceive an exponential and excessive valorization of all the characteristics traditionally attributed to the masculine. If violence is a characteristic traditionally associated with the concept of hegemonic masculinity²⁹, in the northeast it is reinforced by the culturally constructed identification of the northeastern male with the dryness of the scrubland and the aggressiveness attributed to the region’s climate^{5,10}. Aggressiveness emerges not only as an indispensable attribute for his survival, but as an inherent quality of the nature of the fearless man of the countryside, possessed of a native roughness.

However, even the hegemonic models sanctioned by society are constantly in (re)construction. If, in commonsense thinking, to be a man is to not be a woman, then at every resignification of the role of women in society there emerges a crisis in the hegemonic model of masculinity³⁰.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the French *Précieuses* and English feminists; the French Revolution; economic and social changes provoked by industrialization and the urbanization in Europe and the United States at the end of the

nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century – all these periods were characterized by feminist advances and by identity crises of masculinity³¹. This was no different in the feminist advances begun in the 1960s; in all these periods, the reaction to the drive for female emancipation is characterized by hostilities³⁰.

The hegemonic gender stereotypes that form the basis of the construction of regional and gender identity for the northeastern were not subdued by the feminist advances, they merely adapted. If the 1970s and 1980s saw the continued valorization of masculine aggressiveness and the growing disqualification of the woman who sought her agency, beginning in the 1990s these events found reinforcement in the globalization of neoliberalism, with the reduction of labor obligations and social conventions³². In a period in which the woman gained the right to external spaces and remunerated work, the strength of sexuality as a reference of biopolitical function emerges even more robust.

In this framework, violence is not a natural phenomenon, but belongs to the political realm of human dealings³⁴. Although their types and significations are different^{35,36}, a primordial condition is emphasized in acts of violence: the hierarchical relationship “command–obedience,” in which the perpetrator of violence does not recognize the other as a subject, “thingifying” them³⁷.

It is not a coincidence that the growing exposure of the female body as a product – as something that women should be and that men should have – is accompanied by the exponential increase in the number of deaths of women related to gender issues. Between 2009 and 2011, Brazil recorded 16,900 femicides, with the northeast being the region with the worst rate³⁸, which makes violence against women an important challenge for Public Health, intersectional networks, and civil society.

In a world governed by laws of the market, economic power – or rather, it’s the ostentatious show of it – supplants physical force and combines with virility as important mechanisms for the maintenance of hierarchical power structures and of the feeling of belonging of men to the hegemonic model^{39,40}.

The gears of patriarchal society prescribe standards and normalize them via the techniques of training, which consist of monitoring and punishing⁴¹. The masculine model promoted is that of a strong, virile, powerful, and promiscuous man that needs a woman-object to faithfully exercise her role. To show off virility, more than a guarantee of belonging to the group of “northeastern men,” comes to signify insertion into a group of “privileged northeastern men,” given the symbolic commercial value attributed to the woman-as-product. Culture plays an important role in this point, in sexualizing the female body and fragmenting it.

In spite of the coexistence of different models of masculinity, the hegemony of one of them sustains and legitimates different forms of violence against the peripheral masculinities⁴²⁻⁴⁴. The Yearly Report on Homosexual Homocides⁴⁵ reported 312 murders of gays, transvestites, and lesbians in Brazil in 2013, which corresponds to one murder every 28 hours. According to this report, the northeast is the region with the greatest concentration of homoaffective deaths, with 43% of the total, demonstrating the non-recognition of alternative masculinities.

Assuming the principle that the matrix that structures homophobia is the same one that socially defines acceptable masculinities⁴⁶, then the symbolic violence³² that puts women in a condition of vulnerability is the same that seeks to annul the neutral, ambiguous, or borderline^{7,8}, and which by the same mechanisms sustains violence against women: by way of quips, jokes, and disqualifications. The patriarchal institutions always relativized the morality of the patriarchy depending on the gender of the person, carried out in contemporary society and in the lyrics of songs.

(NON)FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Understanding the vulnerabilities to which women are exposed uncovers the face of violence to them, naturalized, unmasked, without blind spots. To prove, analyze, and criticize the hegemonic discourses and the different “technologies of gender” that

contribute to the reification of being a woman and is urgent to the degree in which one fights against prejudices sustained by the force of tradition²³.

In this way, based on the concept of technologies of gender developed by Teresa de Lauretis¹ and the formation process of cultural identities described by Joan Scott², we look at the lyrics of *forró* – a social technology of significant importance in the construction of cultural identity of the northeastern people – elements that sustain the asymmetry of relations between the genders, being a cause of violence or legitimating it, therefore acquiring a pathological character. The analytical focus consists in the technology of gender (*forró*) that acts in the construction of men and women, although it appears to simply reproduce the culturally current (pre)conceptions.

Contribution of the authors:

All of the authors participated in the discussion of the findings, and the revision and approval of the final version of the article.

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