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 structure\(^2\)–\(^4\).

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 technologies\(^3\) that function in the continuous formation process of cultural identities\(^2\) 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 processes\(^4\).

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 representations\textsuperscript{10}. 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 baía 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 established\textsuperscript{11}. 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\textsuperscript{11,12}, was internalized even by northeasterners\textsuperscript{10}.

It was through the forró music recorded by Gonzaga that Brazil constructed a representative image of the Northeast\textsuperscript{11}. Thus, forró acquired the status of a Northeastern cultural symbol\textsuperscript{13}.

By way of other influences and socio–historic changes, forró has undergone various transformations, and can be divided into the following phases\textsuperscript{13}:

- 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, Zê 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 feminity, 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.
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 occurred. 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 Althusserian\textsuperscript{16} 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 works\textsuperscript{17} (p.26).

When we consider that the performances of gender(s) directly relate to the power and ideology that mold social reality\textsuperscript{7,18}, and that “every social practice has cultural or discursive conditions of existence”\textsuperscript{4} (p.33), we find a favorable panorama for the analysis of discourse, utilized here following the French school\textsuperscript{19} 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”

\textsuperscript{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 intê 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 intê 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
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 planters\textsuperscript{20}. 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 Region\textsuperscript{21}.

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 \textit{coronelismo}\textsuperscript{ii} and by an inventive war of values between the traditional Northeast and the modern South/Southeast. They created another reductionist hierarchical binary\textsuperscript{22} 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 xenophobia\textsuperscript{10} 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

\textsuperscript{ii} \textit{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 forró of Miss Joaninha
No Caruaru In Caruaru
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 dancemos 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

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 assassin With the face of a murderer
Partiu pra Jesuíno Made straight for Jesuíno
Tava feito o sururu And all hell broke loose

[...]

Dance, animation, “forgença” (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 capita5,10,21.

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 gender\textsuperscript{24}.

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.

“Attention, long-haired men
A big “square” is going to vent now.
A guy with big hair
Skinny waist
Well-fitted tight pants
Thick sideburns
High-heeled shoes with buckles
A guy who wears a bracelet
A medallion around the neck
A guy who is this way
In the backlands of my Godfather
A guy like that has no place
Has no place there, no
Has no place there, no
In the backlands of the tough guys
Who fought with Lampião\textsuperscript{iv}
Fought with Antônio Silvino
Who confront the battalion

\textsuperscript{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 Ciço  
To pray for Father Cicero

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.

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
De dançar chorinho
De dançar forró
De brincadeira lá na gafieira
Varo a noite inteira
Gosto de xodó
Tiro de letra um bolero, um tango
Um xaxado, um mambo
Mando bem no pé
Tenho estampado aqui no meu rosto
Sou pra qualquer gosto
Sou de A e B
Anjo da noite, bandido”

Look here, man, this is my way
Of dancing chorinho
Of dancing forró
Having fun at the dance club
I pass the whole night
I like a little affection
I’ll master a bolero, a tango
A xaxado, a mambo
I’m good on my feet
It’s written on my face
I’m good for any taste
I belong to A and B
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 changes. 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.”

Chorinho is a mostly instrumental Brazilian music genre.
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
Vá fazendo o teu último pedido
É na faca é na foice é no estampido
É no verso é na rima e sem demora
Já que tu vai correr comece agora
Que no fim da peleja esta Maria
Vai levar das minhas mãos a luz do dia
Que só sendo jagunço em qualquer lida
Pode o cabra possuir tudo na vida
E entregar a uma mulher toda alegria
Trem a terra e o trovão se arrebenta

Zé Tulão, your hour has arrived
Go on and make your last wish
With knife, with sickle, with shots
It’s in the verse and the rhyme without delay
Since you are going to run, start now
Because at the end of this fight, this Maria
Will take from my hands the light of day
Because being a hired gun in any kind of work
A guy can have everything in life
And deliver every joy unto a woman

The Earth shakes and the thunder bursts

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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
Every time that a cowboy gets angry
Mãos pro céu se levantam numa prece
Hands raised to the heavens in prayer
Corre o fraco e o forte não se aguenta
The weak run and the strong can’t withstand it
Para o rio o mar não se movimenta
The river stops, the sea does not move
E se então é por amor a luta dobra
And if it is for love, it’s twice the struggle
Pois coragem de amar tenho e de sobra
I have courage to love, enough to spare
Se acabou Zé do Cão prepara a cova
It’s all over Zé do Cão, prepare your grave
Que eu te pego te aleijo e dou-te sova
Because I’ll catch you, cripple you and beat you
E te faço rastejar pior que cobra
I’ll make you crawl lower than a snake

É o inferno no meu canto de guerra
There is hell in my war-cry
Pois consigo arrancar da pedra o pranto
Because I can draw tears from a stone
O meu nome é temido em todo canto
My name is feared all over the place
Onde voam as aves sobre a terra
Where birds fly over the earth
E se existe um amor atrás da serra
And if there is love across the mountains
Não há nada que feche o meu caminho
There is nothing that will stand in my way
Eu enfrento a vereda e todo espinho
I’ll face every path and every thorn
Ouve bem Zé Tulão segura o tombo
Listen well, Zé Tulão, and don’t fall over
Que eu te capo te esfolo caço e zombo
Or I will castrate you, fleece you, hunt and mock you
Sou leão e tu és o passarinho
I am a lion and you are little bird

Se é o inferno no teu canto de guerra
If there is hell in your war-cry
É no inferno o meu canto de paz
There is hell in my song of peace
Por amor eu derrubo Satanás
For love I would defeat Satan
Bem e mal são a luta desta terra
Good and evil is the struggle of this land
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 society. 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 world.

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 neoliberalism.

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
Por detrás das montanhas lá da serra
Abro a porta e sinto o cheiro da terra

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mas comigo o que é mal a lança fera</td>
<td>But with me, the spear wounds what is evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corre Cão Pé de Vento e Lúcifer</td>
<td>Run – Dog, Lazybones, and Lucifer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corre todo diabo que vier</td>
<td>Run, every devil that I see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelo bem desse amor digo e não nego</td>
<td>For the sake of this love, I say, I won’t deny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eu enfrento um batalhão e não me entrego</td>
<td>I will confront a battalion and not surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zé do Cão tu pra mim é uma mulher”</td>
<td>Zé do Cão, to me, you are a woman.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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When the rays of the sun come shining
From behind the mountains on the horizon
I open the door and feel the smell of the earth
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do poleiro do quintal canta o galo</td>
<td>The rooster sings in the chicken coop in the backyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boto a sela no lombo do cavalo</td>
<td>I put the saddle on the back of the horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E depois de tomar meu café</td>
<td>And after my coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Com carinho, amor e muita fé</td>
<td>With love, care, and much faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vou tocando minha vida de gado</td>
<td>I go on living the cattle life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sou vaqueiro, e vivo apaixonado</td>
<td>I’m a cowboy, I live in love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por forró, vaquejada e mulher</td>
<td>With <em>forró</em>, rodeos, and women</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Portuguese</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O que vejo de belo no sertão</td>
<td>What I find beautiful in the backlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>É o gado comendo na colina</td>
<td>Is cattle eating on the hillside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O sorriso na boca da menina</td>
<td>The smile on the face of a young girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E o segredo que tem seu coração</td>
<td>And the secret in your heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meu forró e as festas de são João</td>
<td>My <em>forró</em> and the parties of St. John’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santo Antônio, São Pedro e São José</td>
<td>Saint Anthony, Saint Peter, and Saint Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O meu vício você já sabe qual é</td>
<td>And my vice, you already know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me perdoe se isso for pecado</td>
<td>Forgive me if it is a sin</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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
E eu já gastei mais de um milhão
E quando ela foi me conhecer ela disse:
Tá liso, quero não.

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão’
Não precisa ser gatão
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão
Não precisa ser gatão

Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão
Não precisa ser gatão

Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara
E eu já gastei mais de um milhão
E quando chamou pra passear ela disse:
A pé? Vou não.

Look here, I have a real expensive cute chick
I already spent more than a million
And when she met me, she said:
You’re broke, I’m not interested.

But if money is in the hand
You don’t need to be handsome
But if money is in hand
You don’t need to be handsome
But if the money is in hand
You don’t need to be handsome

Look here, I have a real expensive cute chick
I already spent more than a million
And when I go pick her up to go out, she says:
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
Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara
E eu já gastei mais de um milhão
E quando chamou pra viajar
De ônibus? Quero não.
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão
Eu só ando de jatinho
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão
Eu só ando de jatinho
Mas se o dinheiro tá na mão
Avião é pobre
Olha que eu tenho uma gatinha muito cara
E eu já gastei mais de um milhão
E quando chamou para um motel, ela disse:
De graça? Tá louco?

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
Look here, I have a real expensive cute chick
And I already spent more than a million
And when I pick her up to travel
By bus? Not me, I won’t go
But if the money is in hand
I only travel by private jet
But if the money is in hand
I only travel by private jet
But if the money is in hand
Airplanes are for poor folks
Look here, I have a real expensive cute chick
And I already spent a million
And when I go to take her to a motel, she says:
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 women, 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
se a mulher for avião.
Vida de playboy é uma coisa maravilhosa,
Não falta mulher gostosa no meu carro turbinado
E o som arregaçado
só querendo curtição.
Estar na minha casa é somente alegria,
mulherada e cachacaça,
Uma grande putaria, sacanaagem de montão
só querendo curtição.

I’m a forrozeiro, 100% party animal
But I only spend my Money
If the woman is hot.
The life of a playboy is a marvelous thing
My turbocharged car has no lack of hot women
With the sound turned way up loud
Just wanting a big party.
Here at my place it’s only joy
Women and much drinking
A big fuckfest and fooling around
Just wanting a big party
Forró e vaquejada, 
Procuro mulher safada, 
Que na hora da trepada 
Me chame de gostosão. 
Mulher raparigueira 
Que na hora da zueira, 
Aguente e passe a noite inteira 
Pra matar o meu tesão. 

Sou forrozeiro, 100% biriteiro, 
Mas só gasto meu dinheiro 
se a mulher for avião 
Sou playboyzinho, 100% mauricinho 
Só pego piteuzinho, sou tremendo “garanhão” 

The term “trepada” 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.

“I’m a hunter, I live in the city 
I’m always armed, paying attention

“Sou um caçador moro na cidade 
Só ando armado prestando atenção

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From the verb “trepar” (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) 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.

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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 behaviors27,28.

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 climate5,10. 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 masculinity\textsuperscript{31}. 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 hostilities\textsuperscript{30}.

The hegemonic gender stereotypes that form the basis of the construction of regional and gender identity for the northerner 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 conventions\textsuperscript{32}. 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 dealings\textsuperscript{34}. Although their types and significations are different\textsuperscript{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” them\textsuperscript{37}.

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 rate\textsuperscript{38}, 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\textsuperscript{39,40}. 
The gears of patriarchal society prescribe standards and normalize them via the techniques of training, which consist of monitoring and punishing. 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 masculinities. The Yearly Report on Homosexual Homocides 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 masculinities, then the symbolic violence that puts women in a condition of vulnerability is the same that seeks to annul the neutral, ambiguous, or borderline, 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 tradition\textsuperscript{23}.

In this way, based on the concept of technologies of gender developed by Teresa de Lauretis\textsuperscript{1} and the formation process of cultural identities described by Joan Scott\textsuperscript{2}, we look at the lyrics of \textit{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 (\textit{forró}) that acts in the construction of men and women, although it appears to simply reproduce the culturally current (pre)conceptions.

\textbf{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.

\textbf{References}


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