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Between Gentlemen, *Sambas* and Beers: the discursive construction of the *easy mulatto woman* in Brazil

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ABSTRACT – Between Gentlemen, Sambas and Beers: the discursive construction of the *easy mulatto woman* in Brazil – This article aims to undertake a reading of the discourses that deal with the imaginary about *easy mulatto woman* in Brazil (Freyre, 2006 [1933]), considering its historical and semiological density. That aim is based on statements that emerge on that *mulatto woman* in slavery period, discussing how it is put to the test during the twentieth century and, finally, analysing the updates and appropriations of that memory nowadays. The starting point is a discourse analysis derived from Michel Pêcheux, but also incorporates the contributions of Michel Foucault, as well as current discussions undertaken by Jean-Jacques Courtine, especially those concerning to the Historical Semiology.
Keywords: **Discourse. Semiotics. Memory. Enslavement. *Easy Mulatto Woman*.**

RÉSUMÉ – Parmi Messieurs, Sambas et Bières: la construction discursive de la *mulâtresse facile* au Brésil – Cet article vise à entreprendre une lecture des discours qui traitent de l'imaginaire sur la *mulâtresse facile* au Brésil (Freyre, 2006 [1933]), compte tenu de sa densité historique et sémiologique. Ce but est lancé à partir des déclarations qui émergent sur cette *mulâtresse* au période d'esclavage, de discuter la façon dont elle est mise à l'épreuve au cours du XXe siècle et, enfin, analyser les mises à jour et des appropriations de cette mémoire de nos jours. Le point de départ est une analyse du discours dérivé de Michel Pêcheux, mais intègre également les contributions de Michel Foucault, ainsi que les discussions actuelles menées par Jean-Jacques Courtine, en particulier celles qui concernent la sémiologie historique.
Mots-clés: **Discours. Sémiotique. Mémoire. Asservissement. *Mulâtresse Facile*.**

RESUMO – Entre Senhores, Sambas e Cervejas: a construção discursiva da *mulata fácil* no Brasil – O artigo tem por objetivo empreender uma leitura dos discursos que versam sobre o imaginário da *mulata fácil* no Brasil (Freyre, 2006 [1933]) considerando sua densidade histórica. O intuito é partir dos enunciados que irrompem no período escravocrata sobre essa *mulata*, discutir a forma como ela é colocada à prova no decorrer do século XX e, por fim, analisar as atualizações e apropriações dessa memória na atualidade. Para tanto, parte-se de uma Análise do Discurso derivada de Michel Pêcheux, mas que incorpora as atuais discussões empreendidas por Jean-Jacques Courtine, principalmente aquelas que dizem respeito à Semiologia Histórica.
Palavras-chave: **Discurso. Semiologia. Memória. Escravização. *Mulata Fácil*.**

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Esse branco ardido está fadado
porque não é com lábia de pseudo-oprimido
que vai aliviar seu passado.
Olha aqui meu senhor:
Eu me lembro da senzala
e tu te lembras da Casa-Grande
e vamos juntos escrever sinceramente outra história
Digo, repito e não minto:
Vamos passar essa verdade a limpo
porque não é dançando samba
que eu te redimo ou te acredito:
Vê se te afasta, não invista, não insista!
Meu nojo!
Meu engodo cultural!
Minha lavagem de lata!
Porque deixar de ser racista, meu amor,
não é comer uma mulata!
(Lucinda, 2006, p. 184-185)

In an interview with *El País Brasil* in July 2016, the researcher and activist Djamila Ribeiro talks about the need to discuss why black women comprise the highest number of rape victims in Brazil[1]. It is about questioning not only the male chauvinism (as if it was very little thing), but chauvinism combined with racism: instances that work together in maintaining a discourse that objectifies and hyper sensualizes the body of the black woman, in an attempt to justify the violence that it suffers.

According to the researcher, the data pointing to this reality denounce not only a phenomenon or an isolated event, but an entire structure: a structure that has its roots in the way the relations between masters and black slaves during the 300 years of slavery in Brazil were organized: "[...] in the slavery period, black women were raped systematically by slave masters. When we talk about rape culture, it is necessary to make this direct relationship between rape culture and colonization" (Ribeiro, 2016, online).

The reflection proposed by Djamila Ribeiro (2016) is entered, therefore, on a discursive and historical perspective. It is in the plots of history that the discourse – including those problematized by the researcher – are built, maintained, and updated. In this occasion, this article aims to analyze how the relationship between African women and settlers, in landlord context, gave birth to the image of the *easy mulatto* in Brazil, using the expres-

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sion of Gilberto Freyre (2006 [1933]), and take a reading of statements that, after the slavery period, preserved and seized on this memory, opening doors for her to still find emergency conditions today.

Therefore, this article is organized into four parts. The first one concerns the theoretical and methodological tools that we will use in the project proposed here. It is a brief discussion about Discourse Analysis founded on Michel Pêcheux, and more specifically, about the discussions currently undertaken by Jean-Jacques Courtine regarding the Historical Semiology. Subsequent to this discussion, the analysis of three sequential historical moments will be in focus: first of all, we will present how the image of the *easy mulatto* was created and verbalized during the colonial period, reportedly surrendered to the master's wishes. Then, we will be interested in beauty contests promoted by black associations throughout the twentieth century, which put into question this image and appear in an attempt to build another place for black women. Finally, in a scenario of affirmative actions, we will analyze the updates of these discourses, how they are set in contemporary media, and the effects of meaning produced from the body of black woman.

As a *corpus* to be analyzed in each of these steps, we will use not only newspaper ads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also visual statements, taken here as preterit performances. About it, although they are, considering the time period when they developed, only "[...] poor reflection, deafened echo of a pleasure staunched forever" (Medeiros, 2005, p. 165), we will take them as representativeness condition of a scenic expression, able to put into play the rapprochement between life and the art mediated by the body. Such representation is in communion with the functions held by Schechner (2003, p. 39) for performance, including: "select or change identity, make or encourage a community". Thus, among the statements analyzed here and artistic performances, we can find the centrality of the body, the (re) construction of identities, as well as the production, maintenance and update of speeches can be found.

It is following the steps of performative records of a certain *easy mulatto* that this article is presented, noting a plot that involves continuities and discontinuities. We go to it, then.

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From Discourse Analysis to Historical Semiology

Considering that our purpose requires a retrospective look at the way that black women body was transformed into discourse in Brazil, for the purposes of analysis, we will use the theoretical and methodological perspective pointed by Michel Pêcheux and, especially, the updates brought by Jean-Jacques Courtine. In this confluence of thought we hope to find support to analyze the meanings attributed to the body of the black woman in its historical dimension, as well as in its semiotic and performative composition, given the instance of the body.

The foundation of discourse analysis takes place during the 1960s in the heart of French structuralism. The new field was made up as a current of interdisciplinary studies involving language, subject and history, in a tense relationship with Saussure (by rereading Pêcheux), Freud (reread by Lacan) and Marx (by constant influence of Althusser). Linguistics, Psychoanalysis and Historical Materialism were therefore at the heart of a project aiming to build a *materialist theory of discourse*, as well as a political project that would intervene in *class conflict* (Braga, 2013). The aim was to analyze the effects of meaning produced by written political discourse, considering the subject-position occupied by the one who produced it.

So, to discuss Michel Pêcheux's project would be, first of all, to keep in mind the link established, in its epistemological basis, between science and politics. According to Maldidier (2003, p. 57), in a first moment, from 1969 to 1975, the theory appeared directly governed by politics, and Pêcheux led, with the Althusserians, the theoretical and political struggle against reformism. For this reason, while it was possible to glimpse a mutation in French politics during the 1980s, a transformation in theory also became urgent. At that time, a supposed crisis in Linguistics emerged, as well as an irreversible crisis in Marxism and Structuralism.

The 1980s is, in the words of Courtine (1999), the time to remove *Marxism* from the linguistic theory and humanities in general. It is when it will appear a new configuration of political message: as a result of social, political and technological turbulences, the *verbal corpora* collected and analyzed in the 1960s were changing, and the partisan discourse was no longer reduced to verbal language. The incorporation of advertising language into

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political language and a discursive composition increasingly heterogeneous implanted another discourse as they offered new ways to say and to make sense. The mainstream media was protagonist of this process: the primacy of images was settled, so texts received a syncretic treatment: more than listening to their word, it was necessary to see (and to make mean) their images. The verbal discourse, that received privileged place since the emergence of Discourse Analysis, gave rise to texts of many types (Braga, 2016). It was necessary to be careful, in short, with

> [...] a truly audio-visual revolution, with the exponential of media that installed the *reign of images*, and of syncretic texts that amalgamate several materialities (linguistic and visual). It was time to incorporate to the analysis the *wind language* of media, the ordinary discourse, and the new materiality of the *post-modern* world that materialized in the discourse (Gregolin, 2008, p. 27).

To undertake a discourse analysis from the 1980s would mean, then, to consider not only its initial steps, with regard to its alliance between Linguistics and History, but would mean, above all, to consider the theoretical discontinuities articulated in its scope, and the political rearrangements that happened at that time. It was from crisis states that it was necessary to insist on the project of an analysis of political discourse and to rethink it from restrictions that were significant in the theory of discourse. New configurations of political message, especially regarding to its fugacity, its multimodal composition, and its transmission by the most rapid and varied media supports, interrogate us about a theoretical basis to defy these changes. How can we understand them and, especially, how can we analyze them considering their historical importance? To Courtine (2006), if we want to keep the project of a discourse analysis that restores to the discourse its historical dimension, Discourse Analysis can no longer limit the scope of its sight, undertaking analyzes that articulate discourses, images and practices (Braga, 2016).

> It seems to me, particularly, that this project can manage the analysis of representations composed by discourses, images and practices. The transmission of political information, currently dominated by the media, is presented as a total phenomenon of communication, an extremely complex representation where discourses are connected to nonverbal practices, where word cannot be dissociated from body and gesture, where language expression is

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> connected to facial expression, where text becomes unreadable out of context, where one cannot separate language from image (Courtine, 2006, p. 57).

To look over the image becomes, in this scenario, something fundamental. The role of new media and audiovisual technologies in the process of production and circulation of syncretic texts sharpens, definitively, the need to examine how images produce meaning nowadays. About this, Courtine (2011; 2013) will point a possible way, the search for a semiotic apparatus to discourse studies in order to give the field a methodological perspective to assist it in the analysis of discourses composed of syncretic, multimodal texts, consisting of different semiotic systems, as the political discourse is presented nowadays. Courtine calls this perspective Historical Semiology (Braga, 2016).

This Semiology makes necessary a discontinuity regarding to the attachment of the textual dimension of discourses. The imminent arrival of the images reign was celebrated, so that the change of discursivities, attracted by the development of audiovisual apparatus, could be seen. Therefore, it would be necessary to consider that the textual materialization process occurs through a variety of means, manifesting itself in the words of Piovezani (2009), in a *multisemiotic* way. According to the author, a possible definition for textual unit could be a "[...] symbolic unit that is formulated in one, two or in more languages, in the form of a given discursive genre, produced in certain historical production conditions and materialized in a support" (Piovezani, 2009, p. 208). Therefore, it is necessary that we, discourse analysts, consider, in our analysis, the textual dimension by the languages in which it is founded in order not to produce analyzes based purely on text snippets (Braga, 2016).

Moreover, the historical dimension that Courtine links to the semiologic dimension does not represent a mere *attractive syntagma,* in the words of Piovezani (2009). Integrating the historical character to Semiotics, Courtine intended to expand the reach of the discourse look, offering new life and new challenges to the project that proposed to restore to discourse its historical density, opposing to a trend of discourse *grammaticalization*, mainly because this density has been present since the foundation of Discourse Analysis. Having in mind, however, the relationship between sym-

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bolic production and historical dimension, the Semiology proposed by Courtine also establishes the rescue of this sphere (Braga, 2016).

> Based on the postulates of Courtine's historical Semiology, we aim at a certain rehabilitation of the historical density that goes through each discourse, in order to inscribe our object of reflection and analysis at the intersection of multiple durations of history and consider, even briefly, the historicity of memories that it updates, the resources it uses for its formulation, and the shape of the cultural object through which it manifests itself materially and circulates in society (Piovezani, 2009, p. 204).

Thus, we could say that the proposal of a Historical Semiology, before being attached to the foundation of a discipline, is linked to the construction of a theoretical perspective that suggests the desire not only to review the historical density of discourses, but, likewise, to consider a textual unit based on the syncretic character that builds it (Braga, 2016). According to Courtine (2011, p. 152), we must always consider this perspective when we want to ask ourselves "[...] about what makes sense in the sign and look fields for individuals in a given historical moment, every time we try to rebuild what they interpret of what they see, but also what remains invisible to them". Also, according to Courtine (2011, p. 152), it is still the perspective offered by the historical Semiologia that appears as an alternative "[...] every time we ask ourselves about the historicity of images" (Braga, 2013).

Thus, it is based on this scenario and these theoretical and methodological notes that this article is presented, in an attempt to analyze, in a historical and semiotic dimension, the discourses that speak about the body of a mulatto woman supposedly *easy*: it is a look that goes beyond the textual surface and the immediacy of current events. In short, it is a look concerned about the effects of meaning produced by the performative expression of the body in a historical chain. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, we will be held at how discourses emerge during the slavery period and how they are later woven by history, in a plot that involves memories, exclusions and recaptures.

The Emergence of an *Easy Mulatto*

First, we need to think about what was constituted as domain of discourse within the slave system: how was the body of the mulatto, bought

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and used as a sexual object, enunciated in the plots of enslavement? How did it produce sense? We will see.

Speaking about Brazil is speaking necessarily about a miscegenation that goes beyond physical attributes. The black presence in Brazil is not only visible in body, but in body and soul, as Gilberto Freyre would say (2006 [1933]). It is in *all true expressions of life*: in our drumbeats, in our religion, in our language, in our dishes. We all have – in the body, blood, soul or memory – a little of the black slaved woman who softened life before offering it, sugared, to the mouth of the *young master*[2]. From food to words, every taste was chewed by the black woman, hence the sweet Portuguese developed here: '[...] words that almost disintegrate in our mouth", for example, *dodói*, *bumbum*, *papá*, *mimi*, *cocô*... (Freyre, 2006 [1933], p. 414). It was among the maid's arms that the white boy met affection and docility, strange feelings for the European people (Braga, 2013).

> Many Brazilian boys of the slavery period were entirely raised by maids. One not breastfed by a black woman was something rare. One who did not learn to talk more to the slave than to his father and mother. One who did not live among black boys. Playing with black boys. Learning naughtiness with them and with the black women of the kitchen. And losing his virginity early. Virginity of the body. Virginity of the mind (Freyre, 2006 [1933], p. 433).

According to Freyre (2006 [1933], p. 367), it was the contact with the black woman that offered to the white boy "the first full sense of being a man": the principles of physical love in a system that discursively created *the imaginary of the easy mulatto*, surrendered to the master's whims and desires. He was instigated to begin sexual life early – since a *chaste son* was not good for the *casa-grande*[3] – and the lust for sex since adolescence, incited him to the search for black boys and pets. It was a prelude to *the great problem of flesh*. Freyre (2006 [1933]) tells cases not only about predilection for the color, but exclusiveness also: marriages where the man could not be satisfied with his white women, or consecrated marriages where the man needed to be provided with clothes of his black lover in his married evenings (Braga, 2013).

There are many places where we can glimpse, in this context, the emergence of a discourse about the *easy mulatto*. Relations between *young*

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master and black slave – so intense and so fleeting – were spoken, for example, by many popular songs that accompanied the slave labor: *Meu branquinho feiticeiro/ doce ioiô meu irmão/ adoro teu cativeiro/ branquinho do meu coração// Pois tu chamas de irmãnzinha/ a tua pobre negrinha/ que estremece de prazer/ e vai pescar à tardinha/ mandi, piau e corvina/ para a negrinha comer* (Freyre 2006 [1933], p. 424). It is from statements like this that we can pay attention on probable incestuous relationships in that period. The presence of terms such as *brother* and *little sister* refers to an eroticism that exceeds the limit of the flesh. In this song, they are, possibly, people of the same blood loving each other: the white son and his mulatto stepsister, accusing the wide offspring of illegitimate children within the system (Braga, 2013).

The scene portrayed by the song was recurrent in slaveholding Brazil. Accompanied by black and mulatto women since early, the boy learned in childhood about the pleasures – and the facilities – of flesh. Motivated by personal *status*, the *young master* noticed immediately the body of the mulatto in the kitchen, and saw in procreation with slaves a way to cause profitability to the system. Illegitimate children were many, incestuous relationships, sexual witchcraft, crimes of jealousy, and even the spread of syphilis: all excessively (Braga, 2013).

And it is worth mentioning that not only the masters made use of these established power relations. Priests and friars, beyond an alleged religious moralism, '[...] roll up their cassocks for the performance of almost patriarchal functions and even for libertine excesses with black and mulatto women" (Freyre, 2006 [1933], p. 532). The sexual life of religious figures, for example, in the lithography below (Figure 1), by Henry Fleiuss and dating from 1871[4] (Braga, 2013).

Figure 1 – Henrique Fleiuss. *Father Morales flirting with a mulatto*. Source: Moura (2000, p. 561).

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"Often behind the most seraphic names of this world – Divine Love, Assumption, Mount Carmel, Immaculate Conception, Rosary – [...] flourished formidable stallions" (Freyre, 2006 [1933], p 532.). The scene above shows (and denounces) this practice. Characterized by both the title of lithography and the cassock, the presence of the Father is presented as a satire, a critique and, at the same time, a denunciation of the behavior of that period. In a rural environment perceived by its vegetation, far away from any sacralized place, the religious with his back to the viewer, is flirting with the mulatto, accompanied by a tool. With a slight smile, the mulatto woman, lying in a hammock, is also facing the religious, as someone who is accepting his approach (Braga, 2013).

In the expression of the bodies, we must also notice the gesture that the mulatto suggests with her dress: while one of her hands suspends and holds her face, the other holds the dress and suggests to lift it, leaving a glimpse of her foot and leg, in an supposed attempt to attract one who *is flirting with her and singing about her*. On the right side of the statement, at the same time the scene is developed, there are at least two faces peering out from behind the trees the probable couple. One of them, much larger than the printed proportions in lithography, suggests the wide eyes of a society that was alert to the event, suggesting the fact that it was current and known, the relationship between priests and mulatto women, shown as lovers without any shame. Not coincidentally, Freyre (2006 [1933]) points out that the power of the Religious Company never interceded in favor of the black woman, it never objected to their irregular conditions of sexual life, as it did for the Indian women (Braga, 2013).

The behavior suggested by the scene and by the song previously mentioned, is also in the Brazilian newspaper's advertisements of the nineteenth century. Considered by Gilberto Freyre (2010 [1963], p. 84) as "our first classics", they are impregnated by the country's daily life and, of course, by the intense market of black and mulatto slaves for sexual purposes. Because of the requirement of gender and the type of trade proposed, we can find advertisements showing excessive concern for the physical description of the slaves – without, however, speaking openly about their sexual life. But there are also the ones suggesting immediately their "good services" (Braga, 2013).

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In 1830, the *Diário de Pernambuco* published: "Any single man who is in circumstances of needing a servant for all needed service [...]" (*Diário de Pernambuco*, 01/30/1830)[5]. And in 1859: "For sale a female slave who is good cooker, irons and soaps well, with a 3-year-old child, very beautiful piece, good for pampering her [...]" (*Diário de Pernambuco*, 04/28/1859)[6]. And until the late nineteenth century there were advertisements in which slaves for sale were described as a *beautiful figure*, *a healthy body*, *with no defects*. Beside these ones, there were also those reporting the search for fugitive slaves: these ones were also a *beautiful figure*, able to be kind and good cook, leaving in the announcement the vestige of a wishful master (Braga, 2013).

> Some mammy or *mumbanda* of 'pretty figure', raised almost free and that ran away perhaps with the mulatto of her passion, leaving the white master alone, missing her affection, kindness and delicacies. It is about the little black girl Luísa, with thin lips, large eyes, small feet, tall body, standing breasts, who ran away in 1833 from Ruas das Violas, here in São Cristóvão (*Jornal do Commercio*, 01/08/1833 apud Freyre, 2010 [1963], p. 112).

Thus, understanding that, in the period the advertisements were produced, they were more concerned with describing the slave's body than with her ability to work, we can say, as Freyre underlines (2006 [1933]), that there was a process of eugenic and aesthetic selection for obtaining slaves. The preference has always been for slaves with beautiful body and face, tall and with all teeth. Slaves from Guinea, Cape and Sierra Leone, for example, although having the fame of bad slaves, were among those considered with the most beautiful body, especially the women. Not coincidentally, they had preference when it came to slaves for domestic work. "It is easy to imagine – emphasizes Freyre (2006 [1933], p 384.) – that also for concubines or simple love of master and slave in which colonial patriarchy was made" (Braga, 2013).

Therefore, the accurate selection of slaves for the work in the *casa-grande*, the promiscuity suggested in the relationship between masters and slaves, a number of illegitimate children around the system, the white blood mixed with black sweat, the jealousy of the ladies, as well as the crimes committed in the name of competition, these are factors making up the same picture: it is the picture of the relationship between white and black

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people in a slavery Brazil, which was always crossed by body, sex and imagination of the *easy mulatto*. Following we will see how the twentieth century will work this memory (Braga, 2013).

The Reeducated Mulatto

Following the *Lei Áurea* [the Law that decreed the end of slavery in the country] in 1888, it would be necessary to analyze the way the memories produced earlier were kept or discarded, that is, the way the twentieth century organized them, separating them as subject of contestation, maintenance or finally, oblivion. The purpose was then to inaugurate a new moment for the black population of the country: numerous newspapers and African-Brazilian recreational associations claimed, then, a second abolition. In this context, we can hear the voice of a black person to another: with political, educational and aesthetic concern. It was necessary *to reeducate the people*, put an end to the stereotypes attributed to black people by the previous centuries. An appeal to morals and good habits, cultivated at that time, was becoming visible. As a symbol of this *counter-image* proposed, we can mention beauty contests organized by the black population, which helped to build a concept of black beauty, and also presented themselves as a response to the image of the promiscuous mulatto, built in the slavery period (Braga, 2013).

At that time, in many beauty contests promoted, what we see is a concept of beauty based on the precepts of morality: the goal was to reward the *lady* who best represented the *civility codes* dictated by time. To portray this period, we could cite a number of contests held throughout the twentieth century: *Concurso de Belleza*, offered by the newspaper *O Menelick* in January 1916; contest to elect the *Rainha Negra*, promoted by the newspaper *A voz da raça* in March 1934; election of the *Rainha das mulatas*, promoted by the *Teatro Experimental de Negros* in September 1947; or contest *Miss Progresso*, by the newspaper *Progresso* in January 1930. Unable to present all of them, we will take as an example the contest *Boneca de Pixe*, promoted by the *Teatro Experimental de Negros* in May 1950.

The edition number 9 of *O Quilombo* (Figure 2), published in May 1950, brought *Caty Silva – Boneca de Pixe* on the cover, with a broad smile

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for her victory. In a big article, the newspaper highlighted the black beauty crowned on that May 13 (Braga, 2013).

Figure 2 – Catty, the '*boneca de pixe* de 1950'. Source: *O Quilombo* (1950).

During the *unprecedented spectacle* that was the ball for electing the *Boneca de Pixe* of 1950, there was a crowd of enthusiasts without any class distinction, so that it was possible to find from housekeepers to writers and sociologists, as well as poets, journalists, photographers, conductors, actresses, dancers, and lawyers. The event peak, however, according to *O Quilombo*, was the candidates' presentation: a total of 12 women, and each one received the sympathy of the audience, not only because of their *black beauty*, but also because of the clothing they were wearing (Braga, 2013):

> All had beautiful dresses, also highlighting in elegance the ladies Nely Santos, who designed and made her own 'soiré', Nina Barros, another competent dressmaker who dressed herself with rare taste; Catty Silva presented a simple but of great beauty model, unique of the renowned fashion designer Lucila, Eunice attended wearing a beautiful garnet model, followed by the refined 'soirés' of Iracilda and Elohá (*O Quilombo*, 1950, p. 6-7).

The elegance made possible by the costumes also appeared in the analyzed scene, as a voting criteria. Indeed, many other criteria – beyond physical beauty, or *black beauty* – were at stake. In this regard, Nascimento (2003) points to the fact that, in these contests, although a space of self-esteem conquest was offered to the black woman – so weakened by the dominant standards – it was a consensus among organizers that if the requirement was only physical beauty, it could bring out the stereotypes against which the movement was struggling. In the author's words: "[...] it did not escape to the organizers that the problem of physical beauty could

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be linked to other factors, such as the stereotype of easy, 'hot', and sexually available woman" (Nascimento, 2003, p. 297). Not coincidentally, recounting the voting rules, the *Teatro Experimental de Negros* underlines the *standards of morality* as a characteristic element of a black beauty (Braga, 2013).

> The candidates for the title *'Boneca de Pixe* de 1950' were introduced, beautiful and worthy young ladies, representatives of the black beauty of our land. The event, aiming to promote the social appreciation [sic] of color woman could not just focus on the physical beauty of the candidates, moral quality, intelligence, grace and elegance were also required (*O Quilombo*, 1950, p. 6).

It was then based on these criteria that after four and a half hours of counting, Catty Silva was announced the *Boneca de Pixe* of that year, reason for which she received, from the hands of the engineer and industrial Jael de Oliveira Lima, the prize of Cr$ 10,000 offered by him as, according to *O Quilombo*, a way of "[...] effective support to the movement of social uplift of our people of color". After speaking about it, the donor "[...] also decided to offer the first four placed a souvenir of the contest, with the delivery taking place in this newspaper office" (*O Quilombo*, 1950, p. 7) (Braga, 2013).

In the same way, all other events promoted by black associations kept their strength to create, in a class society, a discussion about black aesthetics that claimed a concept of beauty built between body and moral, creating also spaces to socialize it. This shift operated by contests move away from the image of a black woman sexually enslaved and available, and approaches a conception of beauty that, according to Lipovetsky (2000, p. 121), lasted until the eighteenth century: "[...] it had as a fundamental feature to not separate physical beauty of moral virtues. As a reflection of moral goodness, beauty in traditional cultures has no autonomy, it is the same thing as a good". It is this conception that seems to be taken up again when a *beauty* contest is announced specifically, and when the candidate that best embodies the prevailing moral precepts is elected. *Moral qualities and intelligence predicates* used as voting criteria are proof of this.

However, along with all these contests, as a counterpoint to all this discursive construction about a re-educated and politicized body, there are

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at least two aspects that denounce the maintenance of a discourse about a black body of heightened sexuality. The first one concerns the musical production of the period. As an example, we can highlight the song by Alberto Castro Simões da Silva (Bororó), that at the end of the 1930s sang about the *wet* and *scandalizing kisses* of a brunette *of the color of sin*:

> *Esse corpo moreno cheiroso e gostoso que você tem/ É um corpo delgado da cor do pecado/ Que faz tão bem/ Esse beijo molhado, escandalizado que você me deu/ Tem sabor diferente que a boca da gente/ Jamais esqueceu/ E quando você me responde umas coisas com graça/ A vergonha se esconde/ Porque se revela a maldade da raça/ Esse cheiro de mato tem cheiro de fato/ Saudade, tristeza, essa simples beleza/ Esse corpo moreno, morena enlouquece/ Eu não sei bem por que/ Só sinto na vida o que vem de você/ Ai....Ai....*

Besides Bororó, João Gilberto, in 1959, sang about a mulatto good at samba and with no compassion: *Olha, essa mulata quando samba/ É luxo só/ Quando todo seu corpo se embalança/ É luxo só/ Tem um não sei quê/ Que faz a confusão/ O que ela não tem meu Deus/ É compaixão*. In 1960, Elizeth Cardoso, in a composition by Ataulfo Alves, referred to a *mulata assada / Que passa com graça/ Fazendo pirraça/ Fingindo inocente/ Tirando o sossego da gente!* Already in 1979, the same Elizeth Cardoso, in a composition by João Nogueira, cried the malice of a *joyful mulatto*: *Ah, Olha quem está chegando/ é a mulata faceira/ Que vem na cadência do samba/ empunhando a bandeira/ Vem com o seu valor/ que é só pra mostrar como é/ a malícia da cor, a ginga/ e o dengo da mulher* (Braga, 2013).

Thus, together with the beauty contests held during the twentieth century, it would emerge in the repertoire of our Brazilian Popular Music (MPB) the continuity of a discourse referring to the heightened sensuality of a black body. The statements were intended to remain in the memory of our culture, beyond *re-education* suggested by black associations, as well as the beauty contests promoted by them.

Besides musical productions, the second aspect of this period to be underlined would be, for example, the numerous assumptions that sought to frame the behavior of black women, especially regarding their sexual behavior, aligning it to the quest for marriage. Resuming the article *Breviário da Mulher*, published in the newspaper *A voz da raça* in March 1934, Domingues (2007, p. 367) will say: "The woman shouldn't be flirty, but have romantic relationships with the prospect of marriage; 'to sin for being

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maiden like, not for being shameless, because there is nothing that fits her better than modesty'" (Domingues, 2007, p. 367). It is a concept – of which we are, somehow, heirs – that puts in the women the responsibility for marriage: she would have a modesty behavior and constitute a family. After all, a sexual conduct expressed in excess could even "[...] delight certain men, but most women will not be very indicated for mothers of their children, the reason why some ladies find a fiancé but not a husband", as proclaimed in the article (*A voz da raça*, 06/1936) (Domingues, 2007, p. 367). Then, it was necessary to be covered with shame and decorum in order to undo the idea sung by Bororó: that there was an *evil in the race*, able to intoxicate men by the seduction of a *black, scented, hot, delicate body,* that has *sin* associated with its *color* (Braga, 2013).

It is important to note that, when advertisements attempting to *control* the sexual desire of a given body are published, we denounce, at the same time, the continuity of a discourse about this hypersensuality: it is precisely the permanence of statements talking about a *naughty mulatto* that makes necessary the publication of models of conduct. In this way, not only the songs produced during the period, but also the educational advertisements denounce the maintenance of a discourse pointing to the black woman as the owner of an uncontrolled sexuality. We will see, from here, how these memories are made in a moment of affirmative policies.

The Memorized Mulatto

In the last step proposed here, it will be interesting to analyze the current context, impregnated with the advent of affirmative policies incorporated by the Brazilian State and destined to the black population. At this point, we will need to reflect about the updating of previously produced discourses, in an action that discusses the place occupied by the imaginary worked in this article, in a context of self-assertion and respect for diversity. On the one hand, it is possible to envision the demarcation of an affirmative discourse that changes the look of the black people about themselves, as affirmative policies, identity policies, and affirmative actions are used in national context. Hence the emergence of statements as *black is beautiful, 100% negro, 100% black*, *curly is beautiful.* On the other hand, we know that this *statement* comes from the memory that – how to deny? – still tells

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us about a mulatto *of the color of sin*, a body sculpted by lust, in a sexual freedom allowed by the Carnival, by samba, and by advertisements of beer, music etc.

In order to demonstrate how these discourses emerge in our everyday lives, we will look at two representative statements of this moment, considering the discursive genre they belong to – publicity – and the thematic they approach. We will see.

Figure 3 – Outdoor of the *Escola de Samba Pérola Negra* in the carnival of 2007. Source: Webpage of Clube da Criação (2013).

In an outdoor for Carnival 2007 (Figure 3), *Pérola Negra* says: *you will lose the shame over time. Our mulattos, for example, don't really care to be naked. Parade on Pérola Negra, ensure your costume*. We have, in the scene painted here, a mixture of traits representative of the Carnival revelry, a time when we are all immersed on the same rhythm: someone sells booze, someone plays the guitar, someone plays the samba in the *surdo*, someone sweeps the streets, someone is wearing a costume of a rascal, a pig, a clown... In the ends of the picture, two women, somehow, stand out. On the left, a supposedly blonde woman, with green eyes and costume of Angel: in this composition, the color of her eyes and wings stand out in the crowd. On the right, the mulatto introduces herself: naked, wearing only a sandal, brings her lips marked by red lipstick, highlighting them as a sign of her beauty and her identity: they are natural lips, without botox, because "lips and butt are black stuff!" (Silva, 2007, p. 34). The red of her lips joins the sculpture of her body in the composition of a subjectivity that is op-

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posed, as announced in the outdoor, to the image of modesty: *our mulatto, for example, don't even care to be naked* (Braga, 2013).

In this context, it is necessary to analyze the invitation made to the public: *Parade on Pérola Negra, ensure your costume.* With DaMatta (1986), it is possible to think about the exchange held during the Carnival between uniforms and costumes. Now, if we spend the whole year being limited by a uniform that, as its name suggests, aims to standardize our bodies, to keep them in the same routine and under the same Government; at the Carnival, on the other hand, the costume allows the interference of creativity and, above all, freedom: we can be a dinosaur, a ballerina, a comic book character, a film actress, an astronaut. It is no coincidence that in Brazil we do not use masks, but costumes. According to DaMatta (1986), our fantasies go beyond the masks in two respects: first, masks hide your identity, your face, your nose; in addition, the Portuguese word *fantasia*, is ambiguous: can be related to something we want while the routine is imprisoning us (fantasy), but can also be related to the clothes that we wear only in Carnival (costume). In this second meaning, costume, according to DaMatta (1986, p. 75), "[...] allows us to be everything we wanted, but that 'life' did not allow. With it – and never in uniform –, we have achieved a kind of compromise between who we are and who we would like to be" (Barnes, 2013).

So, perhaps this is the *freedom of identity* which features the character of the outdoor: naked body, smile, and samba. Here, the composition of the statement – especially the costume of the mulatto (or its lack) – makes a clear reference to the stereotypes of the black women since the slave period, especially those about eroticism and lust. Although the twentieth century assigned moral and familial precepts to the imaginary of the mullato, it is clearly perceptible, even today, the continuity of this discourse, which occurs at the same time as a denial of the *moral discourse*: *you will lose the shame over time* (Braga, 2013).

In addition, through DaMatta (1986), it is still possible to think about the relationship between women and food. On the one hand, we have the modesty image exalted by the twentieth century: the model of mother, housewife, wife, religious, whose sexual practice is sacred and performed solely for reproductive purposes. On the other hand, the *mulatto that does not even mind to be naked*: the street woman, offered to the eyes of those

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who desire her "[...] food for all [...] delicious in its hidden and passionate digestion", as the author points out (Da Matta, 1986, p. 60). It is in this second sense, therefore, that the production of meaning of the scene in question is supported, symbol of a given preterit performance (Braga, 2013).

Beyond this outdoor, and also in order to analyze how these discourses are now in our imagination, we could also read the advertisement of the beer *Cerveja Devassa*[7], published in 2010 (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Advertisement of *Cerveja Devassa.* Source: Rolling Stones Magazine (2010).

There is, above, the advertisement of *Cervejaria Devassa*, made by *Rolling Stones Magazine* and published in December 2010: *It is by the body that one recognizes the true black woman. Devassa negra. Full-bodied, dark ale of high fermentation style, creamy and with roasted malt aroma*. Associating in its entire line of production the image of women to the image of beer, *Devassa* uses ambiguity in order to confuse the two fields. Even the beer's name is an attempt: after all, *what is the Devassa*, or *who* is the *devassa*? Noteworthy is that all beers produced in this line receive female names and are called sisters: *a very unusual family, all sisters are tasty*, as the official product page says[8]. We present thus the *Blonde*, the Redhead, the *Black*, the *India* and the *Sarará*: *but not everyone can handle 4 on the same night*, affirms the webpage (Braga, 2013).

The environment created to the publicity of the *black Devassa* is a mixture of brothel and tavern. The latter is present, for example, in the tiles that form the image background: in more traditional taverns, especially those dating back to the mid-twentieth century, in the best Portuguese

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style, the tiles – when they are not the typical Lusitanian tile decorated with floral or abstract shapes – are accommodated in the form of lozenges, overlapping two color tones, as it shows us the scene. Associated with the tile, there is the beer image: draft beer or *long neck*. While the bottle is presented – ice-cold – for the reader taste, the draft beer, in customized glass, overflows its foam, such as someone who has just been taken: both ready for consumption, offering themselves to the consumer's eyes and taste (Braga, 2013).

Competing with this *Devassa*, however, it is presented – greater! – the black woman who spreads along the rest of the advertisement. She is the counterpoint to the *long neck* bottle or the draft beer. Similarly, it is she who puts in scene the image of the brothel already commented: she is seated, with thighs exposed, high heels, low-cut dress (carefully designed), one rose tied to her arm, a tiara, and finally a look that is meant to seduce whoever sees the scene. In contrast to the green tiles, the black woman is wearing red, in an atmosphere of passion and lust. In typical costumes of a concubine, her body has its back to the viewer: her arms rest on the floor and her face is shown. It is from this angle that we can see the biggest neckline of her clothes: she undresses her shoulders and her back, while threatening to show her breasts and suggesting, under her costume, the design of her buttocks. Simultaneously, the verbal language signals: *it is by the body that one recognizes the true black woman*. Beyond suggesting a simple *justification for* nudity, the phrase in question brings back a memory and reminds us of the process of buying and selling slaves in warehouses, time when the buyer used to touch the women for sale, as if he was seeking in their body the reasons for such a purchase, a clear allusion to the acquisition of women slaves destined exclusively to work in the *casa-grande* and bought for the patriarchal desires (Braga, 2013).

A reading of the statement in its historical density will tell us, therefore, that the *true black* woman here is, actually, a discursive event that updates the memory of a sex slave. The *true black woman* has an exposed body and offers it to the eyes of those who observe, brings a half-open mouth (as if ready to surrender to the kisses of those who want), wears seductive clothes (that show more than hide) and has a look that reveals a supposed *evil of the race*, as Bororó sang in the 1930s. And otherwise it could not be:

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it is by the body that we recognize her, it is through her curves that we can identify her, the same as the buyer of slaves used to do (Braga, 2013).

Not coincidentally, the advertisement in question caused chain reactions and led the *Secretaria de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (Seppir)* [Department of Policies for Racial Equality Promotion] to open a judicial process in the *Conselho Nacional de Autorregulamentação Publicitária (Conar)* [National Council for Publicity Self-Regulation]. In March 2012, the agency replied the process determining that the group responsible for producing *Devassa* should change the advertisement, understanding that it reinforced the process of racism and spread stereotypes about the sexuality of the black population (Braga, 2013).

To this accusation, *Devassa* group seems to answer citing the joy and creativity of the Brazilian people. On their website, they made available, at that time, a *Manifest* alluding to *Devassa* as synonymous of freedom, authenticity and relaxation: *to show who we really are* and *to do what we feel like doing* are some of the possibilities presented by the beer, because *those who drink Devassa are looking for freedom. Don't make faces, don't pretend to be what you're not*. Thus, the meaning produced leads us to conclude that the advertisement they released aimed to offer visibility and space for the black woman to be exactly who she is and finally assume her identity. If we want to go back to the parameter made by Da Matta (1986, p. 60) between women and food, in detriment of a black woman who was shaped by a social discourse that imposes control over her identity, conduct and sexual appetite, *Devassa* would keep the idea of the *true black woman* as "food for all" in the author's words, or, perhaps, "drink" for all (Braga, 2013).

This parameter – of a black woman *food or drink for all* – and especially the ambiguities present in the advertising proposal of the magazine – the names of the beers, the way each of them is introduced, and the lush scenery provided on its website – that will offer us the confusion purposely established between the product offered in the advertisement and the advertisement girls. After all, who is this *Devassa*: the black woman who is spread on the advertisement or the beer that is introduced, discreet, at her side? What does the advertisement is really offering: the woman's *body* or the dark beer, *full-bodied* dark ale style? One or the other, it is certain that, ac-

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cording to the advertisement, the "*devassa*" side of the black (woman or beer) would only be noticeable by her/its body (Braga, 2013).

Conclusion

From the project proposed here – the one that suggests to discursively analyze how the image of the *easy mulatto* emerges in the slavery period and is later woven by history –, we conclude that this sensual character attributed to the black body travels through Brazil's history adopting either an explicit exposure, either a denial (although this denial has been betrayed by MPB), either a resumption theoretically camouflaged by affirmative actions, advertisements, music, or even by a certain tone of humor.

Let's see: the image of the *easy mulatto* built in the slavery period offered, to the black body, the signs of eroticism, lust, and exacerbated sensuality, especially regarding to slaves chosen for housework, meant to satisfy the patriarchal desires. After all, resuming the interview with Djamila Ribeiro mentioned at the beginning of this paper, "[...] since an early age the boy was raised to be a male, to be the provider, violent, aggressive" (Ribeiro, 2016)[9], even if it meant, since always, to maintain a rape culture addressed in this case, particularly, to the black woman.

From the nineteenth to the twentieth century, as opposed to the moral appeal made by African-Brazilian associations that defended an *honorable life style* governed by rules and codes of civility, granting the woman only the role of prudish mother, housewife and good wife, the MPB songwriter left no doubt about the continuity of this speech, especially when it comes to the performances embodied by the mulattos of the carnival, samba, slum (Braga, 2013).

Concerning the present moment, in addition to affirmative action policies, that recommend an exaltation speech to a positive image of black people, is not the discourse about the *easy mulatto* that appears in the *outdoor* of *Escola de Samba Pérola Negra*? *You will lose the shame over time. Our mulattos, for example, don't really care to be naked.* Beyond the rupture with regard to the social status of these women, isn't it about the pleasure of a mulatto that the scene deals with? It is considered a valid discourse, retained by our memory and appropriate, currently, by the cultural sphere of our country: the mulatto, samba and carnival (as we know) are signs of our *Bra-*

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zilian way. Not surprisingly, the songs we spoke about are still recorded nowadays.

With this, we want to show the articulation of a history that moves as it refreshes memories, keeping them and updating them. The marks of an *easy mulatto* built in the Brazilian slavery period are spread out in the MPB, created during the twentieth century. Following, the marks of this sensuality overrun the Brazilian imagination and come to our advertisements, with our music, our carnival. They are speeches that cross time and keep they strength, as they work in their maintenance in the dispersion of historical time.

The purpose of this article was, therefore, to think about the necessity of breaking these discourses. In this sense, it seems to be already a horizon: we are finally discussing the racist content of our carnival songs; we have a black Miss Brazil after 30 years; black feminism is gaining visibility throughout the country; *Globeleza* is no longer announcing carnival naked... In sequence, we will need to denature some practices, guiding discussions that deal with the empowerment of black women, in an attempt to claim another history to be written about their bodies.

Notes

[1] Data of the Violence's Map of 2015.

[2] T. N.: "young master" is an approximate translation for the Portuguese word "nhonhô". This word refers to a young master of slaves, but it also has a sentimental charge in it.

[3] T.N.: "casa-grande" is a Portuguese word that means, literally, "big house". In the Brazilian slave period, it referred to the house where the master of slaves lived.

[4] Originally published: *Semana Ilustrada*, Rio de Janeiro, ano 11, n. 572, 26 nov. 1871, p. 4572. Currently cataloged in Moura (2000, p. 561).

[5] Freyre (2010 [1963], p. 170).

[6] Freyre (2010 [1963], p. 166).

[7] T.N.: the Portuguese word "devassa" is an adjective that refers to a libertine woman.

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[8] Available at: <www.devassa.com.br>. Accessed on: 11 December 2012.

[9] Electronic reference, no page.

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