



Simpósio Linguagens e Identidades da/na Amazônia Sul-Occidental
VIII Colóquio Internacional “As Amazônias, as Áfricas e as Áfricas na Pan-Amazônia”

Southern Italian populations is extremely problematic, as it ignores the traditional local tendency to accommodate homosexuality identified by Dall’Orto under the notion of “Mediterranean homosexuality” (DALL’ORTO, 1990). Mediterranean homosexuality is, among other things, described by Dall’Orto as a paradigm diffused in Latin America and, in particular, Brazil (DALL’ORTO, 1990, p. 796).

In this paper, we seek to explore the hidden and silenced queer masculinities of the global peripheries, which pre-exist and outlive anthropologic and ethnographic incursions and the discursive assignation of an ancestral homophobia and a stubborn machoism to the populations that inhabit these places. We present two case studies from the domain of popular music, namely: the song *Maruzzella*, interpreted by Gennaro Cosmo Parlato in John Turturro’s film *Passione: Un’Avventura Musicale*; and *Porque homem não chora*, interpreted by Pablo.

2. *Maruzzella*: Gennaro Cosmo Parlato’s unstable (*femminiello*) whiteness

The song *Maruzzella* (BONAGURA & CAROSONE, 1955) was composed by Renato Carosone to lyrics by Enzo Bonagura. It was released in 1955 by Carosone with his quartet. The song quickly became a classic of Neapolitan music and was covered by various artists, including Claudio Villa (1956) and Lina Sastri (1990). It has also featured in various films, such as the eponymous film *Maruzzella* (1956), *Nella città l’inferno* (1958), and *I vesuviani* (1997).

The lyrics of *Maruzzella* see the male auteur blame a woman for the destabilising effects of his lust (or love?) for her:

Maruzzella, Maruzzella / you put the sea in your eyes / and left sorrow / in my heart. / You make this heart shake / stronger than the waves when the sky is dark. / First, you say “yes” / then, you gently let me die / Maruzzella, Maruzzella. / Hey! / Who’s going to help me? / If you don’t come and help me? / Hey! / I’ve just got / a burning desire to kiss you. / Come here, sweetie / and give me your dainty mouth / that, in order to poison me / becomes sugar (BONAGURA & CAROSONE, 1954)⁴

⁴ “Maruzzella, Maruzzè / t’hê miso dint’a ll’uocchie ‘o mare / e mm’ê miso ‘mpiett’a me / nu dispiacere / Stu core mme faje sbattere / cchiù forte ‘e ll’onne / quanno ‘o cielo è scuro / Primma me dice “sí”, / po’, doce doce, mme faje murí / Maruzzella, Maruzzè / Oé! / Chi mm’ajuta? / Si tu nun viene a mm’ajutá? /



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The woman is represented as a frivolous and unstable femme fatale, who changes her mind very easily and literally undermines the steady and “burning” passion he feels for her. The blue eyes suggested by the image of the woman who “put the sea in her eyes” imply a commentary on white femininity both as archetypal, “zero-point” (AHMED, 2007) beauty and as object of lust. This paradigm returns vehemently in the film *Maruzzella* (1956), where the female protagonist, interpreted by the Piedmontese actress Marisa Allasio, is a blond, tall woman of Nordic appearance, with a “pure” Northern Italian accent that sounds extremely artificial next to the “amusing” Neapolitan characters that populate the film.

In his recent performance of this song in *Passione* (2010), however, Gennaro Cosmo Parlato counters the unreflective (white) masculinity of this received narrative by embodying the resurgent de-colonial figure of the Neapolitan queer:⁵ the *femminiello*.⁶ This unstable and disorienting queer performance gives rise to a critical *sotto/terrone'd* economy of allied souths which bring into focus the (disavowed) caucacentric “cleansed” mirror) of *terra d'amore* vision/epistemology.

Parlato's performance of *Maruzzella* takes place within a broader *sotto/terrone'd* sea-quence, i.e., a non-linear sequence within *Passione* in which unstable, queer Southern Italian figures re-turn to “the sea”. Whilst the brooding cityscape of Naples' Arabic-Baroque quarters dominate throughout its linear sequences (BERNARDI, 2015), *Passione's* sea re-turns destabilise the tropic economy of whiteness pervading *terra d'amore* representations.

First sea-quence: a female Neapolitan voice sings against a black screen. The camera focuses our gaze on the striking figure of a *femminiello* (a Neapolitan

Oé, / mm'è venuta / na voglia ardente 'e te vasá. / E vieneténne oje bella / e damme 'sta vucchella / ca, pe' mm'avvenená, / e zùccaro se fa”

⁵ For the sake of completeness, it is important to mention that both Anna Magnani's performance of *Maruzzella* in *Nella città l'inferno* (1958), and Lina Sastri's cover of the song (1990), also subvert the machoistic assumptions contained in the original song. A rare TV performance of the song by Sicilian gay icon Giuni Russo also exists, which unfortunately we were not able to access.

⁶ However, the first transfiguration of *Maruzzella* as a *femminiello* appears in the package film *I vesuviani* (1997), where a transgender character is called *Maruzzella* and frequents an X-rated picture house in the area of Naples (TABANELLI, 2008).



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and proceeds to blame her for having caused the end of their relationship. Right from the incipit, the lyrics seem to prescribe a very strict model of masculinity:

I'm leaving, my suitcase is already out there, / I'm leaving you, I'm leaving you,
/ Please don't implore, as a man doesn't cry, / And doesn't apologise, and
doesn't apologise. [Alternative translation: And (please) don't apologise, and
(please) don't apologise].⁷ (RONI DOS TECLADOS, 2012).

The prescribed impassibility of the non-crying (and perhaps non-apologising) man implies that crying (and perhaps apologising) are activities only acceptable for women, due to their alleged “weakness”. Following a notorious patriarchal formula, this weakness implies guilt, as per biblical tradition and the original sin (GELEDÉS, 2015):

You are the guilty one if our love is ending / You, who destroyed my life / You,
who crumbled my heart and made me cry / And left me in a dead end (RONI
DOS TECLADOS, 2012)⁸

Importantly, here the adjective *culpada* (“guilty”) is, in line with standard Portuguese grammar, in its feminine singular form. This leaves no doubt as to the association between womanhood and guilt. While in this section of the lyrics the representation of feminine guilt is exaggerated to a grotesque point (“You, who destroyed my life”), the impassibility of the non-crying man is undermined by the singer’s admission that his partner actually made him cry (“You, who crumbled my heart and made me cry”). In Paixão Aguda’s subsequent production, this apparent masculine impassibility is further translated into fragility in the song *Homem chora sim* (“A man does cry”), which says “who says that a man doesn’t cry? Here is the (counter)proof because I’m crying now” (PAIXÃO AGUDA, 2015).⁹

Rather than as an accepted model, then, the idea of the non-crying man appears to be understood as a social protocol that the singer nominates as a known obstacle to his urge to cry. While the man’s apparent impassibility is thus partially

⁷ “Estou indo embora, a mala já está lá fora / vou te deixar, vou te deixar / por favor não implora, porque homem não chora! / e não pede perdão, e não pede perdão”. Here the ambiguity of the last reported line lies in the form of the verb *pedir* (“ask”): *pede* is both the 3rd person singular of the present indicative (“he/she/it asks”), and the 2nd person singular of the imperative.

⁸ “Você foi a culpada desse amor se acabar / você que destruiu a minha vida”.

⁹ “Quem disse que homem não chora? Aqui está a prova porque estou chorando agora!”



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refuted, it is important to note that the model of the guilty woman seems to be accepted unproblematically. Therefore, here the masculine protagonist seems to be represented as a double victim: firstly, he is a victim of the woman, and secondly, he is oppressed by the social norms that prevent him from crying freely.

This double victim-ism narrates a fragile masculinity troubled by the dominant misogynistic norms of hegemonic masculinity (CONNELL, 1995), undoubtedly persisting throughout all the covers of the song. We attempt to unveil how Pablo’s 2014 cover of the song and the related 2015 video produce further tension with the model of apparently impassible masculinity discussed above.

Pablo’s understanding of the song seems more or less coextensive with that of Paixão Aguda, in that he recognises that the model of the non-crying man is not evoked seriously in the lyrics:

[The song] tells the story of a man who doesn’t want to admit that he’s suffering, that he’s crying, right? That he suffers... Generally, men don’t want to admit that they suffer for love, so this is the song, “a man doesn’t cry”, but obviously men do cry, undoubtedly (PABLO & SOARES, 2015).¹⁰

However, Pablo actively employs a variety of additional performatic¹¹ elements in order to resist to this masculine model. The first of these elements is his extraordinarily high-pitched voice, which arguably even exceeds the range of a typical countertenor. An unfamiliar, or lay, listener here could easily mistake Pablo’s version of *Porque homem não chora* to be sung by a woman.

In the video (PORQUE HOMEM NÃO CHORA, 2015), Pablo appears with a rather flamboyant and camp “George Michael-esque” beard, a larger-than-life pompadour haircut, and a noticeable amount of eye-makeup. The images consist of a montage of shots of Pablo recording the song in the studio, with the camera lingering abundantly on the singer’s clothes and facial features and frequently focusing-in on his

¹⁰ [A música] conta a história de um homem que não quer admitir que está sofrendo, que está chorando, né? Que sofre... geralmente o homem, ele não quer admitir que sofre por amor, então a música é isso, “homem não chora”, mas claro que o homem chora, sem dúvida.

¹¹ In this work, we differentiate the adjective “performatic”, referring specifically to the sphere of artistic performance (HUNTER, 2008), to the adjective “performative”, which has a broader meaning and describes the faculty of a symbolic trace to perform an action while uttering it.



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