

“Rio de Janeiro is a Land of Vain Men: Women, Masculinity and Money among The *Baile Funk*”*

Mylene Mizrahi**

Abstract

Departing from the nexus between gender and materiality we take money as an aesthetic object in order to elicit the relationality of the male funk person. We bring to the fore money as adornment, as articulator of relations and as substance. Woman, in some accounts described as being objectified, reveals the feminine powers engendering male personhood. We reconceptualize the body and the person as non-discrete entities, rethinking together the notion of "object." We also bring a new meaning to the notion of “ostentation”, avoiding a moralizing approach to consumption.

Keywords: Money, Materiality, Ostentation, Gender, Body.

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** Professor of the Education Department and of the Post-Graduate Program on Education of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil.
mylenemizrahi@gmail.com

Introduction

Funk carioca is a genre of electronic music originating in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, derived from New York soul and hip hop, as well as from 1970s Miami bass. A singular rhythm, distinct from its initial influences, strongly associated with the young inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro *favelas* and periphery. If these young people are often seen as its primordial producers and consumers, funk is, on the other hand, widely and massively consumed, without being attached to any one social group.¹ Funk has produced its own aesthetic, one not circumscribed to the musical genre, which is translated not only into lyrics and sonority, but into the active and meaningful use of clothing objects.²

In this article, I use ethnographic data gathered in my doctoral research in order to set gender and aesthetics in relation to one another within the bounds of two specific conceptual questions. On the one hand, I wish to continue my exploration of the understanding of the *person* by bringing into the discussion not only their constitutive relationships, but especially the material and aesthetic objects they mobilize, an exercise that will enable me to elicit the relationality of the male funk person. On the other hand, I wish to explore money in its materiality, considering it not only in its role as an abstract measure of value or means of purchase, or as a pure symbol of power or wealth. Rather, I wish to emphasize its dimension of adornment, without abandoning its meaning as a symbol of power and wealth. I will apprehend money, therefore, as an ornament and aesthetic object, whose meaning also results from the elaboration of the legacy of its representation.

¹ All drawings and images were made by me. I am solely responsible for their use. Following the request of my field interlocutors, I have kept their original names, except for the person I designated as Luizinho. I also received authorization from Mr. Catra to reproduce his image. Lastly, I note that, due to space limitations, the song lyrics included in the article were partially transcribed.

² It is, however, possible to describe stylistic differences that stratify the genre's consumption, but that is not my goal in this article.

This text follows the trajectory I have plotted by apprehending aesthetic objects, whether consumer goods or artifacts, as prosthesis, as defined by Strathern – things “that are at once of the person and more than the person” (Strathern, 1991:76) – and that contribute to the production of form. I thus apprehend aesthetics as an *assemblage* made through objects retrieved from the market and to which specific meanings are attributed through consumption. I view consumption as a creative and transgressive movement through which subjects impart unforeseen meanings to goods through how they use them. Consumption is, therefore, also an *input* that enables the production of styles and the materialization of tastes.

The ethnography I present in this article results from my research among the network of relations that comprise the singer Mr. Catra, a very well-known and successful figure in the Brazilian pop culture who belongs to the first generation of *funk carioca*, a rhythm that emerged in the 1980s. Catra, a black man in his fifties, began his career in funk within his relationships with the heads of drug trafficking in *favelas* located around Tijuca, a neighborhood where he lived in a middle-class home. Catra was simultaneously raised by his adoptive white father, who owned the house he lived in, and his biological black mother, the family’s maid.³

Mr. Catra is a complex figure and this complexity is translated not only into his affiliation to funk but also in his movements through other musical rhythms – he sings samba, MPB, dub, hip hop, *forró* – and between different social environments.

³ Over the course of eighteen months, I followed Mr. Catra, his family members, friends, and creative partners. I carried out my field work in the recording studio, following his performance schedule and in his family home. I also followed the women of his family nucleus in their shopping excursions and trips to hairdressers. To these data, I add the results of my master’s research, conducted over the course of another eighteen months of field work in a *baile funk* in Rio de Janeiro. I followed a group of young people at the party and as they bought clothes, visited barber shops, produced their visuals prior to the party, both in their own homes and at their places of work.

In this article, I will focus less on the artist as a person, as I have done on other occasions (Mizrahi, 2009; 2012b; 2016b), and will instead take Mr. Catra as a guide to unveiling the processes that engender the constitution of masculinities in Rio de Janeiro. I note that, though I develop my reasoning based on funk, this does not mean I will essentialize my analysis. In this article, we will see intersections between funk singers, heads of *jogo do bicho*⁴ and of drug trafficking.

The aesthetic objects I am interested in are those that compose different looks and have as their focus a type of exemplary masculinity, associated with older men – the *funk godfathers* – and to the male ethos of the heads of drug trafficking in the *favelas*. These “objects” may be a bundle of cash, a rifle, jewels, as well as sneakers, clothes and hats. But beyond the material objects, there is the “woman” with whom the “man” surrounds himself in parties and who is a recurring presence in his everyday utterances. In this setting, women, who may be perceived as objectified, are also one of the ornaments that enable men to view themselves as men. The woman and her constitutive role contribute to our understanding of the relational aspect that defines the notion of male person I term funk. If the material objects are viewed as *ornaments to the person*, making the “man” emerge as a social person, the woman is an ornament that empowers the man. These “identities”, as we will see over the course of the text, are neither fixed nor defined, so that the woman, in particular, will continue to occupy different positions.

The male universe we will unveil requires that the woman be recurrently mobilized in order to describe the man, revealing a notion of person that strongly contrasts with its female counterpart. The latter is produced as its own self, independent from men, something significant in a universe that is recurrently classified as sexist. Funk, as I hope to show, allows us to see female agency, more than female subjugation by a dominant male in

⁴ An illegal, but highly prevalent, form of gambling (Translator’s note).

representations that are considered to demonstrate a “sexist culture”, an idea that reflections regarding BDSM practices (Gregori, 2015; McClintock, 2003) will help me to clarify. By exploring, through the articulation between people and things, gender relations more properly defined within a heterosexual register, I wish to present a reflection that contributes to masculinity studies, a field that has been especially productive in studies concerning homosexual relationships, such as, for example, Simões (2011) and França (2012).

Lastly, it is worth noting that the dialog I establish between gender and materialities is part of an exercise of rethinking notions of object, body and person based on the dilution of their borders. I began this exercise in a close dialog with Amazonian theories of the production of body, person and Amerindian arts (Lagrou, 2007), which helped me to formulate the idea of an “artifactual body” (Mizrahi, 2014). I have dedicated myself more explicitly to this reconceptualization of body, person and object in different articles (Mizrahi, 2012a; 2014b; 2015a), having the person emerge as an aggregate of all of these instances. In this exercise, two notions are central: Latour’s (2005) notion of *actant*, in which the social actor is an aggregate of human and non-human instances and agencies, and Melanesian theories of person, such as those introduced above through the notion of prosthesis.

Money and its visible presence

It was already dawn and, after performing six shows, Mr. Catra proposed that we attend the *baile funk* at the Mangueira *favela*, in São Cristóvão, in Rio de Janeiro’s North Zone. That night, instead of all traveling together in a single car, as we did when we took a van, we drove across town in four different passenger cars.⁵

⁵ When we traveled in a “bonde de carros” (“motorcade”), either I drove my own car or one of Mr. Catra’s “security guards” did so. I invariably took with me other members of the artist’s entourage.

We arrive at Mangueira. Mr. Catra parks his car near the street that leads to the *baile* and we park just behind him. As I leave the car, I ask him if he will pay the man who is guarding the cars at that moment and how much he would pay. I wanted a parameter and to know what to do with regard to my own car. Without saying a single word, he removes from his pocket a thick bundle of cash, made up of other, smaller bundles of cash, bound together by two elastics. Holding the bundle of money in one hand, and without worrying about hiding it, he pulls out a fifty reais note with his other hand. He then asks the man if he has thirty reais for change and pays for both his car and my own.

We walk toward the entrance to the *baile*, which takes place outside, along a regular street, whose sidewalks are occupied by four different, subsequent sound crews: walls of speakers playing the funk songs chosen by each of their DJs.⁶ The beginning of the street is empty and on each side there are three boys, each lined behind the other, spaced a few meters apart. They are selling drugs. They offer, yelling, "baggies of five and seven". In one hand, each one is holding a transparent, colorless plastic bag that allows us to see the results of the night's monetary transactions. The other hand is free to deliver the drugs and take the money, which is then inserted into the bag from which they also retrieve change. Mr. Catra stops in front of one of these boys, brings out his bundle of cash once more and repeats the operation he used to pay the man who was guarding the cars.

⁶ *Bailes funk* most commonly take place in sports courts, whether located in *favelas*, communities or clubs. The latter are usually obsolete and located in the formal city.



This visible presence of money and its recurring presentification is the object of this article. In the two previous paragraphs, we see money being exhibited with no compunction, which is intriguing, especially in Rio de Janeiro, a city where prudence dictates that objects of value be used discreetly, so that displaying a bundle of money and then putting it in one's own pocket is a terrifying act. The same applies to the bags of money being held by the boys selling marijuana, cocaine and the like. Why should they be transparent? They could just as well be opaque and impermeable to the gaze, as is perhaps common in other contexts.

The invisibility of money, according to Graeber (1996), is directly connected with its almost magical powers, with its capacity, once removed from circulation, to reveal its potential of commensurability. But the point among the subjects of this ethnography seems to be precisely the opposite. The power of money results precisely from its exhibition and simultaneous

⁷ I am the author of, and solely responsible for, all photos and drawings.

visualization. The magic of money is exercised in close proximity to the possibility that it may be seen. It thus works in an aesthetic register that is closer to that described by Strathern (2013) in *Learning to see in Melanesia*. Money participates in the production of an aesthetic within a performance that produces an adequate, appropriate form so as to extract from the other a particular level of attention. And, in this process, the person reveals and brings to the fore their internal potentialities. Money, in this perspective, has the role of provoking the other's gaze and attracting the spectators' gazes to itself, causing the social person to emerge. The person is effectively seen, known, when adorned and decked out. But it is also the gaze of the other as a spectator that contributes to producing the adequate form. And here, money, even if accumulated and stored, must be spent and exhibited. This happened on a third occasion, one afternoon when I was visiting Mr. Catra's wife, Sílvia, whom I had visited in order to wish her a happy birthday.

Mr. Catra was about to leave for yet another of his night tours and Sílvia, calling me “*nem*”, short for “*neném*” (baby), a term of endearment used both with children and adults when one wishes to address a delicate topic, asked me if I would accompany her cousin Verônica to the bank. That way, Sílvia explained, her husband would have more time at home before leaving for work. I answered that yes, it would be fine.

Around thirty minutes later we leave for the bank. In my car are Verônica and I, in addition to four children nestled in the back seat, while Mr. Catra follows alone in his vehicle. At the bank, he leaves his car, moves toward the ATM and returns with a bundle of cash in his hands. Verônica, to whom Mr. Catra would deliver the money to be given to Sílvia, was sitting next to me, in the passenger seat, so that the expected course of action would be for Mr. Catra to deliver the money directly to her through the passenger window. But no. Instead, he went around the front of my car and, standing next to me, seemed to count the notes he was holding. He then put his jewel-adorned hand through my

window, stretching it before my eyes, and delivered the bundle of cash to his relative.



Some further concepts

In another article (Mizrahi, 2016), I further elaborated on the different meanings that money may acquire and that are not exhausted in monetary measurement, nor are they exclusively concerned with the utilitarian character of social life. Here, I want to take the presence of money and its marked exhibition seriously, so as to derive from it other meanings. Meanings that extrapolate the value of money as a means of exchange or as a vehicle for storing wealth. Money, rather than disrupting social life, reveals itself to be a node of relations, as well as an articulator of other relations.⁸

⁸ The perspective of money as a disruptor of social relations is present from Marx (1983) and Simmel's (2004) analyses to those of more recent authors, such as Taussig (1980). This perspective has been questioned by the new economic sociology and anthropology, of which Viviana Zelizer is one of the most active names. With regard to gender relations, my interest in this article, I would like to

The notion of “thing-concept”, as coined by Henare, Holbraad and Wastell (2007), seems to contain a productive path for the intended exploration. Money will not only be the guiding line of my investigation, in a perspective one could call Maussian and which is closer to Appadurai’s (1986) proposal. And, if its agentic aspects will certainly be present in my descriptions, I will not privilege the notion of agency (Gell, 1998; Latour, 2005), but rather regard money as a device that opens *alter* worlds insofar as it establishes the possibility of reconceptualizing notions whose meanings are stabilized. This reconceptualization will enable us, among other things, to bring another perspective to the idea of “ostentation”, usually attached to a mistrusting view of the marked exhibition of objects. Vianna’s (1988) seminal work already enables us to anticipate the power that consumer goods will acquire in national pop parties, a logic updated not only by contemporary funk and its many offshoots, but also by electronic *forró* (Marques, 2015) and by *tecnobrega* “equipment parties” (Lemos; Castro, 2008), among others.

In particular, the goal is to call into question the conjunction between women, money and goods that we also see in other Brazilian contexts. It therefore involves the effort of breaking with a certain naturalization of their symbolism as self-evident or self-explanatory mobiles in the constitution of heterosexual masculinities, often explored in the life of crime (Feltran, 2011; Grillo, 2013). The fascination with “brand” goods is even present in the constitution of homosexual masculinities, as França (2012) has noted. Based on the notion of style – which she refines through Facchini’s (2011) interesting proposal of taking style as the aesthetic and visual translation of codes that embody the acting force of social markers of difference –, the author, through

highlight her contributions concerning money in its domestic uses and in the sphere of intimate relationships (Zelizer, 1989; 2009; 2011), as well as Piscitelli’s (2004, 2013) and Piscitelli, Assis and Olivar’s (2011) reflections regarding prostitution and the international circulation of persons.

consumer objects, delineates different styles of self-presentation, which correspond to distinct masculinities experienced in night-time leisure and homoerotic sociability settings.

By elaborating on money and the nexus that articulates it to other objects of desire, I advocate for an approach that recognizes the constitutive role that materialities play in conforming particular subjectivities and social worlds, as Miller (1987) defended in his pioneer work. And, if peripheral youths' consumption of objects of value has been addressed based on identity logics (Pinheiro-Machado, 2012), as the expression of class tensions (Caldeira, 2014), or as positional goods (Trotta; Roxo, 2014), I seek, within funk, another path, one that pushes this consumption away from a representational key, in order to think about the fascination exerted by consumer goods.⁹ In continuity with a previously formulated discussion – by showing that the attraction brands exert on young male funk fans expresses a tense relationship with alterity, a relation at once of disdain for and fascination with the “playboy” (Mizrahi, 2007b) –, here I take money as an entry point for elaborating on what I have termed *funk masculinity*.

A type of masculinity that is relationally defined and in which money, taken as the main node of this article's articulations, contributes to focus, specifically, the gender relations that are equally inscribed in other male aesthetic objects. Other markers of difference, such as “race” and “class”, even if present in the world we will unveil, are implied in the problematic that is our focus. “Class” and “race”, interestingly, are markers present in the relations with the encompassing society. “Class”, as I show in my exploration of female hair (Mizrahi, 2012b; 2015a), is defined less by income than by taste, thus accompanying Bourdieu's (1984) reconceptualization of the notion of class. The same may be said with regard to “race”, since all consider themselves to be “of

⁹ For a more specific analysis of ostentation funk and its chain of image production, see Pereira (2012).

color”¹⁰, even if Mr. Catra is a very dark-skinned black man, Sílvia, his wife, is a “*morena*”¹¹ with “lighter skin”, as she herself described it, and Cíntia, a friend of the couple, who could be considered “white”, but claims not to be white.¹² Lastly, I draw attention to “sexuality”, an important marker in the world we will unveil. For, based on the relationships I analyze, and only on these relationships, we see a markedly heterosexual world in action.¹³ And if we will see relationships that are based on sexual dimorphism – a dimorphism that is also reiterated in the native utterances –, we will also see the male-female opposition be attenuated by gender relations.

In this article, money, in a way, plays an analogous role to that of the *slave band* in McClintock’s (2003) fascinating intersectional analysis of S/M relationships. But if the scenario

¹⁰ The exception is Luizinho, who will appear later on in the text, to whose statements I did not have access, who looks white and has different tastes.

¹¹ Literally “brunette”, often used to describe lighter-skinned Brazilians of African descent. (Translator’s note)

¹² Mr. Catra masterfully explores the relationships between “whites” and “blacks” in his musical parodies (Mizrahi, 2009; 2012b; 2016b). The production of female hair, on the other hand, allows us to access, through aesthetic, silent discourses that are created in the intersection between race, class and gender (Mizrahi, 2012a; 2015a). In summary, I argue, along with my field friends, that the valued style of female hair is neither “straight”, as that of “white women”, nor does it meet the crystallized representation of “black” which, in Brazil, is superimposed over “race” and “class”. The valued hair is curly and *ambiguous* and affords fluidity to the female funk person, potentializing her circulation in the city without reflecting an attempt to “become whiter”, all while avoiding the association with a fixed image of what it means to be black in Brazil.

¹³ As a way of destabilizing this so markedly heterosexual image that my material brings, it is worth remembering the dancer Lacreia, a light-skinned, very tall, thin, elongated man who accompanied MC Serginho in his performances. Dressed in short skirts and tops that left her abdomen exposed, with bleached short hair, high platform shoes and heavy make-up, Lacreia not only danced but also kissed young men who went on stage because they would supposedly receive something around R\$ 50.00. Lacreia passed away in 2011 and the family did not reveal the cause of death.

described by the author is marked by “extreme inequalities” (McClintock, 2003:20), our case involves financial asymmetries and the power asymmetries that derive from the power of money, as well as those of gender, which express differences not necessarily operated by “class” or “race”. By dislocating money from its meaning as a means of exchange and highlighting its dimension of adornment, I also wish to make it a point of articulation in order to elaborate on the “types of possible actions in situations of extreme inequality” (McClintock, 2003:20).¹⁴ Thus, I privilege the dialog with the feminist literature that enables me to bring to the fore woman’s potency and female agency without requiring that women’s narratives in the funk universe be dictated by an agenda of equality and symmetry that belongs more to liberal feminism.¹⁵

Let us thus explore the meanings of money in a funk world.¹⁶ Meanings that flow from uses and modes of handling that, while seeming markedly visible, take place side by side with a certain economy in the use of words and body gestures. As Cíntia, another good field friend, showed me, in yet another party night, by bringing into discussion the “*presepeiro*” (“rascal”) and the “*escandaloso*” (a man who “makes a scene”).

The rascal, the man who makes a scene, words and things

We were waiting for *Negão*, our casual nickname for Mr. Catra, in front of a club in Ipanema, located in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro and one of the city’s most highly valued

¹⁴ Other crucial references to an intersectional approach are Brah (2006) and Piscitelli (2008). I privilege McClintock’s analysis in this text to the extent that it is in line with my desire to reflect on these articulations with material objects, consumption and aesthetics.

¹⁵ See, for example, Gomes (2015) and Lyra (2016) for works that seek to highlight the powers of the feminine in funk by attributing to its agents a “feminist” agenda.

¹⁶ For an analysis of the articulation between money and romantic relationships based on song lyrics, specifically early 20th century samba, see Oliven (2014).

neighborhoods, where he would perform. Afterwards, we were all to go together to Luizinho’s birthday party. Luizinho is the fictional name I have chosen for a friend of Mr. Catra’s who was involved with *jogo do bicho*.¹⁷ The celebration would take place at *The Week*, a large night club located in the city center, originally geared towards the gay public and that had become a cosmopolitan stronghold of electronic music.¹⁸ Mr. Catra was also going to perform a short show at that club.

Mr. Catra takes longer than we had expected and Cíntia and I decide to wait in my car while we talk. She sits in the driver’s seat and asks me to take some photos for her to post on a social network profile. She says she will “look rich”. Cíntia is a light-skinned woman whose skin turns a golden shade when she tans. I had always thought she was “white”, a classification she undid when, on a Christmas Eve, I gave her a red lip gloss precisely because I knew, as they had taught me, that women with “black lips” avoided lip gloss in that shade, choosing lighter shades instead. This was when she set the record straight and, raising her lip, showed me she had dark gums. As she would later say to me, she is “the color *gringos* like”. She was, as they said, “of color”.

She describes Luizinho, a man I had seen only once at a show at the Gávea Jockey Club, an elite club located in a likewise elite neighborhood. I had a clear image of him in my mind: a white, bald, burly man, slightly overweight and who, with a cigar in his hand, gestured frantically toward the stage where Mr. Catra performed. It is precisely Luizinho’s gestures that Cíntia highlights, saying she does not like “dangerous men”, adding that he is a type who “makes a scene”. She describes the latter trait in contrast with the “rascal”, which would be Mr. Catra’s type, and who, according

¹⁷ In accordance with my interlocutors’ requests, I have used their real names, except for Luizinho. In this case, the decision to use a fictional name was a precaution to protect the identity of someone whose life is closely connected with an illegal activity.

¹⁸ For an ethnography of *The Week*, see França (2012).

to her, acts like he is “the man”, someone who is sure of himself. A difference that resides not only in the gestures, but also in the manner of manipulating material objects.

Cíntia continued her description

If you ask Catra “give me five bucks so I can buy something to drink”, he will “unravel all that money” [and Cíntia mimics him calmly shuffling through the money], preferably in a way that his hands, rings and money are before your eyes.

Exactly as he did with me when he gave Verônica the money that was meant for Sílvia.

Catra [Cíntia continues] does all this, unravels all that money, to get a ten reais bill and give it to the person so they can buy the drink they want themselves. The man who “makes a scene”, on the other hand, [she continues], would yell for everyone to hear that he is buying you a drink. [She then imitates Luizinho, who would say, loudly and clearly]: “go get your drink, sweetie!”. Or he would call the waiter: “hey, waiter, bring her a drink!”, gesticulating, pointing to the girl and “yelling”.

Luizinho, perhaps because he does not fully control the meaning and powers of “objects”, resorts to words and gestures in order to make an excessive and loud affirmation of his power. This contributes to the realization that the way money greeted us when we arrived at the Mangueira *favela* was not so exceptional. Let us return to that night.

We climb the street where the *Baile da Mangueira* is taking place and Mr. Catra asks Cíntia to roll him an untaxed cigarette. In addition to assisting Sílvia during her pregnancy when she was expecting Silvinha, the couple’s third biological child, Cíntia was also a sort of right-hand woman to Mr. Catra.

We reach the center of the party. It is almost six in the morning, it is light out and the street is packed. Mr. Catra left the

pinstripe hat he had worn over the course of the night in each of his shows in the car. His dark, shiny pate makes it easy to follow him with one’s gaze. The clothes he is wearing are a variant of his usual night-time tour outfit: extremely baggy dark jeans and an equally large long-sleeved white t-shirt. He is wearing a necklace, whose chain is made up of alternating gold hexagons and six-pointed stars, framing, at the center, the face of a lion. The six-pointed star is a “Star of David” and the face at the center of the necklace is a “Lion of Judah”, a reference to the fact that he is a “Hebrew”.¹⁹ On his left wrist, he wears a large golden watch, possibly made of solid gold. On his right wrist, he wears a bracelet made up of the same hexagons and six-pointed stars as the necklace. His fingers are adorned with multiple rings, always in gold, such as the one carrying a large Star of David set with shiny white stones, worn on his index finger, or the one that reproduces the face of a lion, worn on the ring finger of the same hand.



Mr. Catra’s clothes, as those of many funk MCs, are inspired by outfits worn by North-American hip hop artists and NBA players and by skate fashion, resulting in very baggy clothing. Even more so than the already baggy clothes worn by young *funkeiros*²⁰ and

¹⁹ For Mr. Catra’s relationship with religion, see Mizrahi (2007a).

²⁰ Male funk fans. (Translator’s note)

young MCs, usually inspired by surfers. Unlike the women, who produce their own fashion²¹, men update, on their own bodies, a global trend.

At Mangueira, while we dance, drink, and enjoy ourselves, we observe the movement at the *baile*. We do this surrounded by funk music, by the cigarettes that circulate, and by “whiskey and Red Bull”, a famous drink made by mixing the Scottish beverage with the energy drink.

A young man walks intermittently up and down the street, with his “beak pointing up”: he is holding his rifle at the ready. He is one of the “fifty buck security guards” who circulate through the *baile* “just to say *é nós*”. Saying “*é nós*” indicates belonging to the *Comando Vermelho*, the faction that controls the Mangueira community, and the visible exposure of weapons, as well as money, gold, and drinks, affirms the faction’s power while simultaneously making it more powerful. It warns that “the crew is strong”, as we may also see in videos posted in image-sharing websites that show weapons, money and packages of illicit substances, accompanied by *proibido* songs, a funk sub-genre that addresses the relationships between drug dealers and the police. But the upright rifles also cause a *frisson* and compose the party.

Next to us, a “drug trafficking manager” dances surrounded by two women, both of whom wear sparkling colorful eye shadow and black eyeliner and mascara. The young man has light skin and gray curly hair. He is strong and is wearing dark, baggy jeans, though not as baggy as those worn by Mr. Catra, in addition to being a different cut. They are close to the “semi-baggy” or “carrot-cut” style, with a high, fitted waist and baggy legs that taper down at the ends. His torso is naked, which is not rare among the muscular young men who attend the *baile*.

²¹ In another text, I discuss the demands of a funk body and its influences on clothing patterns. For the structuring traces of female funk taste, see Mizrahi (2007b, 2011, 2017).



Over his defined torso, KC wears a “necklace” whose appearance and thickness is similar to that of steel cable. Made of a golden material, the necklace wraps three times around his neck. From it hangs a rectangular medal, around ten centimeters long, five centimeters wide, and one centimeter thick. His initials are inscribed by small, brilliant, colorless stones. In one of his hands, he is also wearing a style of ring that originated in punk fashion, also known as “brass knuckles”. This type of ring consists of a bar onto which two or three rings are affixed. The fingers are introduced into the rings and, thus, remain close to one another and immobilized. KC’s brass knuckles bring together four of his fingers, leaving only his thumb free, and are made of a golden metal, unlike the silver version worn by punks. His arms, perhaps because of the tensing effects that physical exercise produces on muscles, are slightly flexed and his fist, due to the reduced mobility that the brass knuckles impose, is closed.



Further on, there is another muscular young man. On his torso, he wears only a large round medal made of a golden metal, around nine centimeters in diameter. Its entire circumference is adorned with small cabochons of a colorless, translucent crystal. In its center, the letter C is engraved, which may be an allusion to his personal name or to the “*Comando Vermelho*”, or simply “*Comando*”. Wearing a large C as a pendant is common among those who “are in” with the aforementioned faction, even if their own initials are different.



The sun was already high over Mangueira and I wanted to leave, but Cíntia wanted to wait for Mr. Catra and “the children”, his two oldest sons, in order to “send them home”. She says she is concerned with Mr. Catra “and all that gold”. But soon we leave. Mr. Catra goes home with his children and Cíntia and I leave for Ipanema, so I can drop her off before going back to my own home, in Botafogo, also located in the South Zone. In the car, she tells me, satisfied, that Mr. Catra paid her her wages for the week, explaining that he gave her the money “with talent”, discreetly, without making a scene. And, joyful, she compliments him, saying that he acts as her “godfather” so that she, in turn, may act as his daughter’s “godmother”. With the money he gives her, she can buy the gifts she gives to her goddaughter and maintain the godparent/godchild relationship that ties her to the family. The expression “with talent”, used by Cíntia, once again shows this economy of gestures and words that coexist with, and seems even to be complementary to, the marked visibility of objects and of ways in which they are employed.

The relational male person

The young men sporting naked torsos and “semi-baggy” pants we saw at the Mangueira *baile* dress like the “beefcakes” of the *baile funk*, with one small, but significant, difference: the jewels they wear, instead of being made of silver metal, as is usual among the “beefcakes”, are made of gold, so as to denote power, including financial power, as do the cars, whiskey, money bills and women by whom they are accompanied. This financial power, in turn, is not disconnected from sexual potency. In this perspective, if tight-fitting clothes and showcased bodies express female potency, male power – which, according to Mr. Catra, resides in the “dick”, in their sexual organ – is reinforced by financial power, which in turn is objectified by money bills and other objects with which they surround themselves, including women. Women, according to that logic, do not simply desire money, but the potency it embodies, including sexual potency. It is for this reason that in the *baile funk* the “*putaria* hour” is also the “ladies hour”, because they are the ones who have fun dancing and singing narratives that address, at times explicitly, sexual and romantic exchanges.²²

In the song *Mercenária* (Mercenary woman), Mr. Catra tells us of the ambiguous way with which he and other men relate to the attraction that monetary power exerts over women.

[So, my friend. Please, pay attention. We fucking suffer, planting, running around... and she comes along and takes the

²² In the *baile funk* in *favelas* – increasingly rare, partly due to the arrival of Pacifying Police Units (UPPs, in Portuguese) in these communities – playlists alternate between “*probidos*” and “*putaria*”. The first may be briefly defined based on references to violent police attacks on the community, which unfold in the fight with local drug traffickers and the fights between different factions. “*Putaria*”, on the other hand, is essentially about romantic and erotic relationships, mentioning genitalia either explicitly or figuratively.

profits! She takes the money bag, brother. So, please... please, DJ,
please...]

Brothers, watch out...

[She likes Bob's meals. Bob's meals, she wants it all the
time, Bob's. She wants to go to *Mirante* all the time! A hundred
and fifty the suite!]

That she wants your money bag/ What she
wants/She wants your money bag

Activity, my brother/ Humbly/I have freed myself!

Mercenary woman/Mercenary woman/I am not a
kangaroo/ And you are not in Australia

She's a bloodsucker/She's ready to pounce on you/
I'm gonna tell you straight/She's eying your money bag

She's all turned on/Dying to do it/When she comes
across/Your gold pieces

Libido without/ Naughtiness is her lot/And she gets
all wet/ When she smells gasoline

Mercenary woman/Mercenary woman/I am not a
kangaroo/ And you are not in Australia

Pay attention, good man/She empties out your pockets/ And
only dumps you once she's cleaned you out

Naughty/She'll fuck until she bleeds/Just so she can
buy/That *Gang* outfit

It's okay, it's okay/It got ugly, it got
ugly/If you go down/ She'll abandon you in jail

Mercenary woman/Mercenary woman/I am not a
kangaroo/ And you are not in Australia²³

It is worth noting that the term “pieces”, which in the lyrics refers to the gold jewels such as those worn by Mr. Catra, KC and others, is also a denomination for firearms. The association established in the song is between financial power, sexual potency and military might. Mr. Catra’s song is old – from around fifteen years ago –, but the association remains. More recently, another song, from a different author, which was a hit in the *bailes*, has a chorus based on the same analogy: “it’s just violent *pentada*”. “*Pentada*” derives from gun clips (“*pentes*”, in Portuguese) that are unloaded in rifle shots or, analogously, activities by the male sexual organ. A “right clip” (“*pente certo*”) may designate a furtive, occasional sexual encounter. And before the “*pentada*”, there was the “*toma*” (“take it”), present both in the “erotic” and the so-called “violent” songs, associations that may also be considered based on their continuities.

All these metaphors speak to us of a male power that is made visible in the continuity between financial power, sexual

²³ *Mercenária*, by Mr. Catra. Original lyrics: [Então, meus amigos. Por favor, prestem atenção. A gente sofre pra caralho, plantando, correndo pra lá e pra cá... e ela vem e leva o lucro! Leva o malote, irmão. Então, por favor... por favor, DJ. Por favor...]/Irmãos, cuidado... [Ela gosta de lanche do Bob’s. Lanche do Bob’s, quer toda hora, Bob’s. Quer ir pro mirante, toda hora! Cento e cinquenta suíte!] Que ela quer o seu malote/O que ela quer/ Ela quer o seu malote/ Atividade meu mano/ Humildemente/ Eu me libertei!/ Mercenária/Mercenária/Eu não sou um canguru/E você não está na Austrália / Ela é sanguessuga/ Tá pronta pra te dar o bote/Eu vou te dar um papo/Tá de olho no seu malote/ Fica toda excitada/Doida para dar no couro/ Quando bate de frente/Com tuas peças de ouro / A libido sem/Safadeza é sua sina/E fica molhadinha/ Quando sente cheiro de gasolina/ Mercenária/Mercenária/Eu não sou um canguru/E você não está na Austrália /Se liga sangue bom/Ela raspa o seu bolso/E só te larga depois que te deixa no osso /Danadinha/Dá até sair sangue/Só pra comprar/Aquele traje da Gang /Tá bom, tá bom/Ficou ruim a coisa ficou feia/Se tu rodar/Ela te abandona na cadeia/ Mercenária/Mercenária/Eu não sou um canguru/E você não está na Austrália.

potency and military might, in contrast with a female power that also resides in the sexual organ. A power that resides “in the pussy”, as the also famous funk singer Valeska yells as she goes on stage, but that unfolds onto the body and personal beauty, instead of guns, money and the opposite sex. The parallel expression of the potency of the different genders may be noticed through Mr. Catra’s subversion of one of Valeska’s own songs. From time to time, the two artists perform together and she gives an ode to the “little skirt” – the miniskirt that, by drawing attention to and highlighting the body, seduces the other at the same time that it affirms and composes the female potencies – he substitutes it for the “little machines”, in reference to poker and slot machines present in many clandestine casinos controlled by *bicheiros*, that is, the heads of *jogo do bicho*, and that effectively produce money. They generate a large part of their controllers’ income and reinforce the masculine. For if he who is “the man” and he who is the “*bicheiro*” – equivalent to the “rascal” and the man who “makes a scene” – have different tastes and gestures, the way in which both relate to women and money is not so different. In the following song, Mr. Catra, in addition to substituting the “little skirt” with the “little machine”, honors different “contraveners”, emblematic figures of the *jogo do bicho* culture in Rio de Janeiro, some of whom are personal friends of his.²⁴

I wrote this song/Missing João Ratão, Seu Miro/ And Castor
de Andrade

I’m gonna tell you/You have to
persevere/A crime is a crime/ A contravention is
a contravention

A crime is a crime/ It’s not a contravention/ That’s the

²⁴ As Cavalcanti (2009) shows, “*bicheiros*” and the patronage they engage in are important to the way the Rio de Janeiro carnival functions.

regime/ Respect and perseverance

You have to be disciplined/ So you can
enjoy/ Imported cars/ And many bundles to spend

Because everyone has his harem/ But without overdoing it/
Profits are guaranteed/ In the book,
in the little machine

Pay attention, dude / Respect, you better watch out/ Now
I am a *bicheiro*/ And nobody’s gonna hold me back

I wrote this song/Missing João Ratão, Seu Miro/ And Castor
de Andrade

I’m gonna tell you/You have to
persevere/A crime is a crime/ A contravention is
a contravention

My little machine/ Now I’m a *bicheiro*/ And
nobody’s gonna hold me back/ Show some respect²⁵

²⁵ *Contravenção*, by Mr. Catra. Original lyrics: Eu fiz essa canção/Com a maior saudade/Do João Ratão, Seu Miro/E do Castor de Andrade / Vou te dar um papo/Cê tem que ser blindão/Crime é crime/Contravenção, contravenção/ Crime é crime/Não é contravenção/Esse é o regime/Respeito e blindão/ Tu tem que ser disciplinado/Para poder desfrutar/Dos carro importado/E vários fardo pá gastar/ Pois cada um tem seu harém/Mas sem perder a linha/O lucro é garantido/No talão, na maquininha/ Se liga sujeito/Respeito é bom se ligar/Agora eu sou bicheiro/E ninguém vai me segurar/ Eu fiz essa canção/Com maior saudade/Do João Ratão, Seu Miro/E do Castor de Andrade/ Vou te dar um papo/Cê tem que ser blindão/Crime é crime/Contravenção, contravenção /Minha maquininha/Agora eu sou bicheiro/E ninguém vai me segurar/Olha o respeito

Mr. Catra sings that one must be disciplined, “have perseverance”, behave appropriately in order to manage so much money and so many women. In short, he says, it is not so easy to take on the responsibility that the life they chose involves. And this narrow behavior – the “conduct” that dictates how one feels it is correct to act – is accompanied by an aesthetic which, in their perspective, is ascetic, especially when it comes to the hairs that adorn heads and faces. If older men appreciate the “fully bald” style – in which the head is totally shaved – accompanied by beards and goatees, the main trait of young men’s aesthetic is the adorning hair, styled with many drawings, cuts and colors. Bleaching and cutting hair, as well as wearing earrings, is a style that is specific to young men and despised by older men (Mizrahi, 2007b, 2012c).

The rhetoric that ties together masculinity and relations with multiple women is present in many songs. One of them has become a classic in the *bailes*.

You’re a faithful woman/Thanks, a source of
pride/ But you messed with our mistresses/ I’m getting
into this fight

Listen to what I’m saying/Which is so
interesting/A real man/Has to have
a mistress

The *baile* is packed/Things are getting hot/If there’s
a married woman/I’m running from neuroses

Everyone knows me/ They know my motto/ What
I want is a solution/ I’m running from problems

It’s neurotic talk/ It’s all
nagging/ I’m a real man/ I really enjoy
a mistress

Who builds you up/At four in the

morning?
Gotta have/ Gotta have a
blow job

The woman is bad-ass/ Works it out on her knees/Gotta
have gotta have/ Gotta have a blow job

Stoned at the end of the night/ I don't want to know
anything/ What would we be/ If it wasn't for
blow jobs²⁶

Within the logic of images and counter-images that rules funk, MC Mascote's song provoked a female “response”, produced by the singer Valeska. This response is highly valued by young women at the *baiões* because it takes on their perspective, defending them from men who “*esculacham* women”.²⁷

The friend told us something/That is so
interesting/ He said that a man/Must have
a mistress

²⁶ *Tem que ter uma amante*, by MC Mascote. Original lyrics: Tu é uma mina fiel/Valeu, o maior orgulho/Mas tu mexeu com a nossa amante/Eu tô comprando esse barulho / Se liga no meu papo/Que é tão interessante/Um homem de verdade/Tem que tê uma amante/ Baile tá lotado/A chapa tá fervendo/Se tem mulher casada/De neurose eu tô correndo/ Geral já me conhece/Já sabe o meu lema/O que eu quero é solução/Tô correndo de problema / Se tem mulher solteira/Aceite esse convite/Vem junto com o Mascote/Eu tô pagando uma suíte/ É um papo neurótico/Papo de trique-trique/Sou homem de verdade/Gosto muito de uma amante /Quem é que fortalece/Às quatro da madrugada? /Tem que tê tem que tê/Tem que tê uma mamada / A mina é sinistra/Desenrola ajoelhada/Tem que tê tem que tê/Tem que tê uma mamada/ Chapadão no fim da noite/Não quero saber de nada/O que seria de nós/Se não fossem as mamadas

²⁷ Something like “to abase”, “*esculachar*” a woman broadly means to defile her image. This may be done through either verbal or physical aggressions.

Pay attention, girlfriend/ To what the *Gaiola* is
gonna say/ A real woman/ Wants a sucker to pay her bills

He gets to the *baile*/ With a necklace and
cellphone/ When he sees a hot woman/He runs over
to flirt

But at the end of the day/ He's a sucker to
pay her bills/But at the end of the day/ He's a sucker to
pay her bills²⁸

In the first song, the singer states that a “real” man must have “many mistresses”, listing other categories of women, such as the “faithful woman”, the “single woman” and the one who “gives blow jobs”. He thus recreates classifications that separate women into different types related to roles that must not be accumulated. Because married women do not receive social permission to behave in the same way as a man, for whom speaking about multiple relations is both allowed and valued. On the other hand, if women have relations outside the marriage, they must act discreetly, without sharing in conversations with other women, because relations outside the marriage are transgressions. It is perhaps the “slut” who has a similar freedom to that enjoyed by men. “Sluts” must be differentiated from “prostitutes”, a term that denotes sex workers. “Sluts”, on the other hand, make use of their bodies based on individual motivations.

²⁸ *Um otário pra bancar*, by the group *Gaiola das Popozudas*. Original lyrics: O amigo deu papo/Que é muito interessante/Ele disse que um homem/Tem que tê uma amante/ Se liga aí amiga/No que a Gaiola vai falar/Mulher de verdade/Quê um otário pra bancá/ Ele chega no baile/De cordão e celular/Quando vê uma gatinha/Ele corre pra azará /Mas no final das contas/É um otário pra bancá/Mas no final das contas/É um otário pra bancá

MC Mascote's song reiterates the notion of relational masculinity that I have thus far sketched out, at the same time that it affirms the greater freedom men enjoy in comparison with women. But if the man is allowed to have many women, if the power of money belongs to men and, in a more hegemonic view, so does a greater freedom, men are left with a dependence of always making themselves *in relation* to women. Here, power does not tell us only of hierarchical relations, or at least not in a simplistic manner, but helps us to note how power asymmetries and gender inequalities do not always mean the subjugation of one part by the other. An idea that Gregori's (2015; 2016) discussion of *dangerous pleasures* helps me to refine.

In the universe of S/M and BDSM practices, the relationship between dominator/dominated, master/slave, is not only not unequivocal, but it is also not restricted to a dominator who freely exercises their power to exclusively satisfy their desire. Putting oneself in the position of dominator involves developing the necessary skills to service even the person being dominated. As the author puts it, "the attributions of Queens, Masters and Mistresses are many" (Gregori, 2015:257). They must have seemingly unlimited "energy" because a "top who shows limits is not even considered a true dominator" (Gregori, 2015:258). It is not for nothing that, in the universe she describes, the presence of dominators is significantly smaller than that of the dominated. And if pleasure, in that context, derives from the subjugation of slaves to their masters, the latter submit themselves at the same time that they exercise the power to, through manipulation, obtain what they want from the dominated, putting them at the service of the dominator's desires.

The different categories of women that funk songs render visible explain the universe with which we are dealing. The "woman" I accompanied in her beautifying incursions – to the beauty salon, but also in the moments preceding the parties or in everyday situations – is shown to be constructed as its own self. She does not make man present in her everyday utterances, nor is he a crucial driver of her beauty transformations, an idea I began

to explore in Mizrahi (2014b). For these women, it is not being accompanied by men that causes a great visual impact, as is the case for men.

Men have a particular taste for arriving at parties surrounded by two women, one in each arm. For women, on the other hand, what causes a “shock” is arriving at the party looking beautiful, in an imposing car, surrounded by her *entourage*, preferably her female friends. In this composition, the man often plays an analogous role to that of the driver, secretary or security guard. At the same time, there are women whose role at the parties is defined as that of accompanying men. This, however, does not mean that men are crucial to their constitution as a person. The “real man”, as Valeska’s response warns, may just be another “sucker to pay her bills”, someone who is delusional and who, if he believes he is desired, may be subjected to the wishes of women, who “empower” him to do as they desire.

We thus see the opposed perspectives – that nonetheless show commonalities – that men and women have regarding their encounters. For in the funk party, the woman who is viewed by the man as a potential lover may also be the woman who uses him to get what she wants and who leaves him at the end of the night. But, as Mr. Catra shows with the image of the “mercenary woman” – the gold digger who establishes relationships with men in order to obtain the material goods she desires –, men are relatively aware of the way they may be used by women. They grasp the female perspective but, because they depend on women, they subject themselves to the game. They know that, potentially, they may be just another “sucker to pay her bills”. Or, as Mr. Catra puts it, though he states that he “freed” himself from the “mercenary woman”, he does so laughing at himself, stating that “everyone has his mercenary woman”.

The exploration of gender relations shows, in a way others do not, that, in the funk universe, the person does not have a fixed place. Which is not the same as denying the coercive power that power asymmetries, including financial ones, may generate. Rather, it is a matter of bringing nuance to these relations,

highlighting both sides' different agencies and potencies. For the man may, clearly and explicitly, be husband, lover, "dog" and "easy", all at once. However, these roles may be, and effectively are, mixed together, even if often in a veiled manner. Some women, thanks to their abilities in maneuvering this terrain, gain greater freedom in managing their romantic relationships, as does the "*piranha*" ("slut"), a category that is often used as a synonym to "lucky" or "privileged". So that the godmother to the young daughter may also be the mature girlfriend to the teenage son and simultaneously work at a massage parlor, roles that are not always reiterated or made explicit, but that are far from being unknown.

One final image

Marilyn Strathern, to whom I often turn in attempting to solve the traps funk sets for me, tells us, in "The ethnographic effect" (Strathern, 2014) of particular field images, which also take the shape of events, that, in a way, wander around our minds, and whose meanings grow deeper, but are not necessarily closed off, each time we return to them in writing. I began this article with one of these images: the comings and goings of jewels and money paraded in front of my eyes, as if, and perhaps in fact, deliberately. I now turn to another of these images, which imposes itself insofar as discussing money inevitably led me to gender relations and the way in which the power relations they involve are experienced.

It is another afternoon at the Catra household and Sílvia, looking dignified, comes down the stairs leading from her bathroom, after taking a shower. She is perfumed and her long, curly, coppery hair is wet, combed and loose, as well as darkened by the water. Sílvia is in an intermediary period in her pregnancy and alternates loose dresses with shorts and pants she picks up from her husband's wardrobe. But, this afternoon, she is wearing a sleeveless white shirt, which, because it is tight around her large belly, is bunched up around her abdomen. She is also wearing, in lieu of shorts, boxer-type, cream-color underwear, probably belonging to Mr. Catra, with an external elastic band around the

waist. The piece is adjusted to her body. It covers her hips and her belly below the navel.

Sílvia sits down at the head of the dining table, lights her artisanal cigarette, opens her laptop and calls me to see some photos. The wallpaper of her home screen is the same photo multiplied nine or twelve times, making up a single picture. A refracted image, as if holographic, but whose parts are identical. The black-and-white photo shows Sílvia and Mr. Catra from the waist up. He is wearing a dark t-shirt and is not especially adorned. Sílvia is not adorned either. She is not wearing the hair extensions that typically make up her hairdo, her jewelry, or her exuberant clothes, nor is her body in evidence. She also does not seem to be wearing high heels, because she seems to be the same height as her husband, who is not especially tall by male standards. Sílvia, on the other hand, may be considered a tall woman. They are both standing side by side, close to one another, but not hugging each other. One positioned diagonally from the other, perhaps touching at the shoulders, serious and not smiling. She, especially, has a slightly challenging air about her.

I bring up this image, which I have explored on another occasion (Mizrahi, 2014b), for two reasons. On the one hand, I believe that it was precisely this simultaneous equality and asymmetry that Sílvia wanted to communicate. She wanted to convey how, in this context, difference was not synonymous with inequality, of domination by one and subjugation by the other, something that the everyday life unfolding in front of me helped me to intuit and that the dialog between gender and materialities allowed me to refine.

This image is also precious to the extent that it enables me to return to aesthetic objects, to ornaments, which, in this context, are also wealth goods. For, if Sílvia reinforces the point I made when closing the previous section – that dominator/dominated relations are not reduced to the simplistic subjugation of one by the other –, she also shows us the power that objects have to communicate the person's potency. As in *Learning to see in Melanesia* (Strathern, 2013), the naked body, in the domestic space, reveals little of the

person's potencies. If the moralizing gaze we cast toward consumption, as Miller (1994; 2013) argues, tends to take the surfaces of bodies and the objects that adorn them as elusive and as covering the *self's truth*, the funk world shows us precisely the opposite. It is by taking as guides the objects with which people adorn themselves, especially at the moment of exhibition and exchange made possible by parties, that it becomes possible for us to bring to the fore the social person and the potencies of which it is made. It is through the ornamentation of the body's surface that these potentialities are exhibited, revealing that there is nothing elusive in what appearances communicate.

It is therefore from this perspective that I take money as an ornament in this article, as something that brings to the fore the potentialities of the male funk person, which are not disconnected from financial power, nor sexual potency, let alone from their relation to women. By taking money in its materiality, I also conceive of it not only as made up of relations, but as producing relations, as we saw with the godparent/godchild relationship that unites Cíntia to the Catra family, supported by the money she earns from them and with which she buys gifts for her goddaughter. And, lastly, money may be thought of as a substance, an aspect I will now render explicit.

In the ethnography we have followed, “money” presents to us a fundamental problem, one which Carsten's (2004) discussion of substance helps us to elucidate. For, on the one hand, we see in the utterances of the funk subjects a certain essentialization of the male body, expressed in the power that the “dick”, as a biological given, possesses in constituting masculinity. An essence that forges masculinity and that is contained within the body, more precisely, within the genitals. It is for this reason that men “cannot” wear tight pants, because, if they did, they would end up with a “tangerine dick”. Their sexual organ would be deformed by the limited space. Clothes, in this case, are not related to a conventional symbolic aspect that sets men in opposition to the feminine, but meet the demands of a “male” body, defined by its biological nature. On the other hand, as this ethnography equally

shows, man is only made relationally. From this perspective, there is nothing intrinsic defining him. It is only in his relation with his gendered counterpart that he is made man.

This is where money understood as substance, in Carsten's (2004) terms, helps us, allowing us to conceive of the male potency as partially innate – the power of the genitals – and partially acquired – the power of money. For, by taking money as a substance, we may convert the done into the given, into the dick, incorporating into the body that which not only affirms man's potentialities, but makes up that very body and its potentialities. Carsten (2004) therefore authorizes me to continue to defend a relational male person without, however, having to silence his discourses surrounding an essence of the body, so that money, as an acquired capacity, is transformed into the *power of the dick*, as a given.²⁹ It does not, however, mean taking money as a permutation of potency, one as the equivalent of the other, but as one transforming into the other. They thus may be thought of as separate, but simultaneously related, entities.

Final thoughts

Through the ethnography and the conceptual formulations I have presented in this article – understanding that ethnography may not be conceived of or apprehended except in relation to the theoretical formulations that forge and produce it –, I have brought to a modern context a notion of a non-circumscribed body and person more commonly found in non-Western societies. A proposal contained in Latour's very notion of *actant* – an aggregate formed by person, body and objects – whose conceptual path is based on the intransigent defense that the so-called

²⁹ Carsten (2004), through the meanings attributed to blood by the Malay, seeks to formulate a notion of substance that escapes the idea of substance as the essence of a body and of gender, as in the Indian case, and of substance as referring to female and male parts of a body that is defined by gender instabilities, as is the Melanesian case.

purifications that Western ontology promotes are much more the result of the operation of a Cartesian *cogito* than the effective product of the practical arrangements that derive from social life (Latour, 1994). The possibility of viewing the body and the person in the West as being made both by the world of objects and by their biological dimension is equally contained in Haraway’s (2009) notion of cyborg, from which Strathern draws inspiration to formulate not only the notion of prosthesis, but her whole theory of person (Strathern, 1988). The formulation of body I present further makes evident its interface with the production of bodies in Amazonian societies, in which bodies are not only made, produced, but made “by the world of artifacts”, as Lagrou (2016) argues for the case of the incorporation of beads into Amerindian societies.³⁰ I have thus taken the person, body and objects as a single instance, in which the person or body do not precede one another or the objects, but the biological body and the body that is made are confused with one another. I thus conceive of a body that is entirely *artifactual* (Mizrahi, 2014).

If the ethnological literature shows us a historical conversion of the person’s adornments into money (Graeber, 1996), here we see money be converted into an empowering adornment of the person. Money has thus worked in an analogous register to that of the Kachin: instead of capital being invested, it is converted into an adornment of the person. They are primarily “items of display” (Leach, 1996:197). The magic of money, its magical powers, derive from the visibilization and visualization faculties, from showing and seeing, producing aesthetic discourses erected onto material objects and the visual, and not so much onto the word and speech.

By rethinking body and object, I believe I have added another meaning to the idea of “ostentation”, a term that not only

³⁰ For other relevant studies concerning the relationship between bodies and material objects in Amazonian societies, see, among others, Hugh-Jones (2009), Santos-Granero (2009) and J. Miller (2009).

names a funk sub-genre, but is also attached to a biased and moralizing manner of dealing with the consumption of those supposedly recently-arrived at the world of goods. In an aesthetic universe that is often criminalized and associated with poverty (Facina, 2009), I have sought to consider the power of money and that which it purchases through the destabilization of the idea that the marked exhibition of wealth goods is done unthinkingly or as a mere result of the power of markets over consumers perceived as passive. What funk has shown us instead is that the use and handling of objects is done in a well thought-out manner and in the search for bringing the person's potencies to the fore and to the other's gaze. We have seen this occur both at the moment of gender performance and regarding the external other, communicating to the enveloping society the powers of the funk person. Funk, as I have learned, always enables us to be skeptical of arrangements that, at first glance, and only at first glance, are traditional.

The funk universe is slippery, something that is translated into the very idea that men and women do not have a fixed place in this world. For "money" has helped us to unveil a logic that, while it is erected over the opposition between female and male, calls that same opposition into question, attenuating it in everyday life without, however, causing it to disappear. At the party, the woman who surrounds the man is also his extension: the ornament that is also a highlighted and encompassed part of him, which shows the male to be indispensably constituted by the female. But we may also see the woman move across these many roles, whether explicitly, as the "slut" does, or in a veiled manner, as do other women. The "slut" therefore renders explicit woman's otherwise veiled fluidity.

The attenuation of the opposition between male and female is more easily accessible through the manner in which each of the genders signifies the biological given, the body and material objects. The gender relations we have unveiled are strongly constituted by a sexual dimorphism, which, however, does not set the biological given in symmetrical and opposed positions. And

thus, not only is the human/non-human opposition not supported, but the very notion of “material object” is necessarily reconceptualized.

These differences in the composition of the female and male persons and the way in which the two genders relate to each other, and the place the opposite gender has in the composition of the self, were made accessible by the reflection on the way through which each of the genders signifies biological sex, the body and material objects. For these two things, which seem symmetrical, the “dick” for the male and the “pussy” as its female counterpart, establish different relationships with material objects and enter equally different orders of meaning regarding the self. Both, “pussy” and “dick”, refer to the sexual organs of each sex, but are signified based on different logics. The power of the dick, as we have seen, is reinforced by money, or operates within the same register as money. We would thus count as male objects cars, jewels, guns and, no less importantly, women, in addition to money itself. On the female side, we have clothes, hair, nails and body shape. Man, significantly, is absent.

Men’s absence on the one hand and the presence of women and money on the other tells us precisely of the constitutive relational aspect of the male gender. Without leaving aside the fact that money is the means of exchange *par excellence*, and that women, as the ethnographic literature shows, is the exchange good *par excellence*. But we may return to Strathern (2013) and note that if woman appears as an ornament to man, it is man who produces a reification of himself through his body, annexing to it many ornaments. Ornaments that reveal his internal capacities and the relations of which he is composed. It is man, therefore, who emerges objectified to the spectator’s gaze, while woman brings to light the female powers of which man is made.

The funk person’s capacities emerge in the visual play, with the objects that adorn the body circling the watcher. And in the comings and goings of gazes and perspectives, the person emerges. Money was of interest to us, therefore, and above all, due to its aesthetic aspects, far more than its economic dimension,

and for the way in which its manipulation and visibilization allowed us to access performances staged to extract the other's attention. The signification that the form encloses is not, however, disconnected from the immediate representation to which money refers: an abstract measure of value and essential symbol of financial power. The issue, above all, is what must be rendered visible, how it must be rendered visible, and how the person is unveiled through their objects. The body, like the person, is made of flesh and objects.

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