

Tropical sex in a European country: Brazilian women's migration to Italy in the frame of international sex tourism

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ABSTRACT

In Fortaleza, one of the main cities linked to sex tourism in the Northeast of Brazil, young low-income women leave the country either with or invited by 'sex tourists'. While some become engaged in the sex industry in Europe, others leave prostitution when they marry European men. Focusing on the universe of couples made up of women from the Northeast of Brazil and Italian men, this paper addresses the specificities that emerge when these relationships, formed in an ambiguous terrain where sexuality, economic interest and romance intermingle, unfold in the Italian context. I analyze the cultural, political and economic implications of that migration. The study investigates the relationship between gender and economic negotiations within these couples, reflecting on the meanings that "tropical sexuality" takes on through migration to this country of the North.

Key words: migration, sex tourism, sex industry, marriage market

TRANSNATIONAL DESIRES: THE MIGRATION OF BRAZILIAN WOMEN TO ITALY WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF INTERNATIONAL 'SEX TOURISM'

INTRODUCTION

In this text I discuss the migration of Brazilian women to Italy within a context of 'sex tourism' in Brazil. In the latter country, the relationship between sex tourism and migration has raised concerns since the beginning of the 1990s. According to commonly-held opinion, Brazilian women, attracted by promises of marriage or employment offered by international visitors, are forced to prostitute themselves in Europe. Some studies endorse the idea that, within those contexts, middlemen contact Brazilian women offering work in prostitution in Europe (Piscitelli, 2006). However, as I will demonstrate shortly, migrations linked to 'sex tourism' are heterogeneous and do not always lead to Brazilian women's participation in the sex industry.

From 1999 to 2002, I carried out research in Fortaleza, one of the major cities linked to sex tourism in the Northeast, well known in the international tourism circuits for its beautiful white sand beaches and turquoise sea. While carrying out my field work with the aim of understanding connections between international tourism and sexuality, (Piscitelli, 2004), I perceived that girls from the lower classes frequently left the country by invitation of tourists looking for sex. Some left and then returned. However, others remained abroad, mostly in the North of Italy.

In this text I consider how gender, articulated to other categories of differentiation, cuts across these migratory processes. Focusing on a universe made up of Brazilian women who left Fortaleza at the invitation of Italians who visited the city for the purpose of consuming sex, I explore the cultural, political and economic implications of this type of migration. In the migratory process, gender, nationality, class and notions of 'tropical sexuality' acquire new meanings, affecting women who frequently face limitations and feel a certain disillusionment. However - and this is my main argument- these relationships may take on a new value given the possibility they offer for creating a space for agency across borders.

THE FIELD

My research followed an anthropological approach. The fieldwork took place in Italy, between May and July 2004, and in Fortaleza, for brief periods that continued until December 2007, where I met with some of the couples that I had interviewed in Italy. Data was obtained by means of observation and in-depth interviews and gathered from various sources. The most relevant part of the fieldwork consisted of spending time with people in their daily lives at home, in their workplaces, throughout neighbourhood routines, at birthdays, family parties and with friends, at meetings in restaurants and bars, in Milan as well as in neighbouring towns in the Lombardy region.

I carried out in-depth recorded interviews with eight Brazilian women who migrated within the context of sex tourism in Fortaleza and with four Brazilian women married to Italians who migrated within other contexts (and were used as a control group), as well as interviews with five Italian husbands and with two boyfriends/clients. Of the women who migrated from Fortaleza, half were part of my universe of interviewees in the research

carried out in that city, whose trajectories I accompanied over the course of several years. The rest were part of their relationship networks.

My fieldwork also involved visits to non-governmental organizations dedicated to working with prostitution and trafficking, semi-structured interviews with eight key people linked to these institutions and with officers at the Brazilian Consulate in Milan, informal interviews with four Italian women with some type of knowledge of 'mixed' couples and the gathering of secondary sources of information and data at and through the Università Degli Studi in Milan.

TRANSNATIONAL MARKERS IN THE SEX INDUSTRY AND THE MARRIAGE MARKET

In migration studies there is a consensus regarding growing female participation in international migration (Anthias, 2000; Phizacklea, 2003), yet also points out that the feminization of these dislocations is intensified in specific currents. In Italy, during the 1990s, there was a largely female migration flow from certain Asian and Latin American countries, including Brazil (Orsini-Jones, 2000; Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, 2004; Andall, 2003). Women from these countries were largely concentrated within the lowest levels of the employment hierarchy in the services sector: domestic work, caring for children and elderly people and the sex industry.

Milan and a number of nearby cities make up a region where a heterogeneous contingent of Brazilian women, associated in diverse ways with the sex industry, has been established. In Italy, the 1990s is considered noteworthy in terms of the increase in the circulation of foreigners that offer sex services. According to research on the issue, from this time onward, foreign prostitutes, as well as dancers and mail-order wives, start to flood the sex industry (Campani, 1998).

This boom in foreigners, increasing and diversifying 'supply', is seen as warming up the consumer market for prostitution, including clients from diverse age groups (Leonini, 1999; 2004). According to research on prostitution in Italy, most of this activity is carried out by transsexuals and Latin-American women, as well as African and Eastern European women (Ambrosini, 2002). Brazilian women, for the most part, carry out their activities in closed spaces, situated at the middle levels of prostitution (Campani, 1998).

Parallel to this, the practice of marrying foreigners is significant in Italy. In the year 2000, marriages taking place between people born in Italy and born abroad represented 7.1% of all marriages (Daphne Program, 2005). According to data from the 2001 census, the absolute majority of 'mixed couples' (71%) was made up of Italian men and foreign women¹. Since most citizenship concessions are related to these marriages, women are consequently a majority among new citizens (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, 2006).

Research on marriage as a gateway to immigration classifies 'mixed' weddings in different categories, outlining distinctions between them. Both forced marriages and those carried out for purposes of reunification are seen as placing women at risk of exploitation in situations where the marriage leads to forced entry into the sex industry (Daphne Program, 2005). Statistical data does not allow us to draw conclusions about the types of marriage involved, but it does offer information on the most sought-after nationalities for marriage.

¹ According to research on migration in Lombardy, only 8,3% of Latin American men who reside in the region have an Italian *partner*, while 32,4% of Latin American women have an Italian partner. OSSERVATORIO REGIONALE PER L'INTEGRAZIONE E LA MULTIETNICITÀ, 2003.

According to the analysis of the 2001 census Brazil, in that year, was the main Latin American supplier of foreign wives for Italians (Istituto Nazionale de Statistica, 2005).

TRANSITS

Brazilian women who migrate from the most diverse contexts with the objective of getting into the sex industry in Italy look for networks made up of friends and acquaintances and also look for, or are contacted by, middlemen or entrepreneurs. Some get into debt. Work, according to the 'schemes' which they get into, can involve a greater or lesser degree of exploitation. A hairdresser from the South of Brazil whose customers are Brazilian women and transgendered people involved in sexual work in Voghera sees sex industry participation in the following light:

In a night club, the business has to earn money, but in a *casa de encontro* it depends, sometimes they [the sex workers] get it all... or just half of it... They can earn between €1,500 and €3,000 a week ... They arrive as tourists, with the possibility of staying for three months. After that, they stay on illegally... Many come from Rio de Janeiro, but many also arrive from the Northeast and the poorer regions...

Studies of the sex industry argue that the people who work in it are rarely considered in migration studies (Agustín, 2006), although they carry out an important role in the creation of a social transnational space, through both the networks that they create and the circulation of money they promote. This is applicable to both country of origin and country of destination, and are pertinent considerations for the case of migration of these Brazilian women. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that in 'sex tourism' contexts, relationships with international visitors may well extrapolate prostitution (Piscitelli, 2007). Therefore, it becomes necessary to pay attention to the different contacts and networks activated by women who fulfill diverse activities in the tourism sector.

The interviewees that left Fortaleza in the company of 'sex tourists' make up a heterogeneous mosaic. Some, in a seasonal transit between Milan and Fortaleza, use the invitation to travel free from debt to remain in Italy, looking for '*programas*' (explicit agreements regarding the interchange of sexual services for money) with clients that they met in Brazil, returning to the country with money. Others, reiterating the not very 'professional' standard present in relationships with foreigners in Fortaleza, visit 'boyfriends' in Italy looking for some possibility of staying on in the country through them. When this does not materialize, they return, bringing with them suitcases full of clothes, watches, perfumes and ultra-sophisticated cell phones. However, most of the interviewees already have a residence permit in Italy, obtained after marrying an Italian man. None of them is currently involved in the sex industry.

In Fortaleza, some of these girls offered sexual services. A young woman from Fortaleza, aged 22, who had been living in Italy for 15 months, when narrating her meeting with her current husband, commented:

I used to charge up front and say immediately: [it's] U\$150,00. The first night I was with him... We went to a motel... We went to have a party, to drink... At the end of the story, we ended up talking, just him and I... And I made him pay me [laughs]... Next day, same story... [He said] If you want to stay with me, we can stay together... I'll help you, but... I can't keep doing it like a normal tourist does, paying each time.

Others had had stable jobs, with relatively low salaries (the highest was U\$250 a month), in the service sector. Even though they had relationships with foreigners with an eye on obtaining material benefits, they did not go on *programas*. These women, mostly 'morenas' (the term used for brown skin colour), between 22 and 31 years of age and coming from the lower and lower middle classes of various Northeastern States in Brazil, arrived in Italy at different points in time (between 15 months and seven years prior). Amongst them, the migratory pattern presents analogous features. These girls worked in tourist regions of Fortaleza, establishing successive relationships with foreigners, fostered by the dream of traveling. A 29-year old ex-waitress tells the story of the beginning of her relationship with her current husband:

He fell in love with me in ten days... I came to [Italy to] spend a month and go back. I said... "do you want me to go? Well, I'll go, but with a return ticket, with my passport that will stay in my hand so that when I want to return, I can return, with money in my pocket". He sent money, tickets. So many had said that they wanted me to come and it never worked out. Well, this time it did!

In the context where they found their partners, money, sex and love intermingle in an ambiguous terrain. Relationships with foreigners tend to be marked by economic interests. However, cut across by conceptualizations of gender, ethnicity and 'colour', they can also involve romanticism and a certain idealization, combined with the desire to live outside of Brazil.

In the universe of these interviewees, migratory projects are instigated by the apparent success of other girls that, after having migrated, continue to maintain close links with their place of origin. Female networks of friends operate, stimulating the dreams of leaving and offering elements to assess the best possible destinations.

Literature which analyzes the feminization of contemporary migrations sees migrations as part of a family strategy.² In the universe in question, the girls, almost all of whom are daughters of large families (with six or seven siblings) provide resources for their families, to whom they regularly send money, of between € 100 and € 300 monthly, paid into bank accounts, in addition to funds for the purchase and/or repair of houses, medical treatments, school supplies, newborn baby layettes. Considering the low income of such families, these are significant resources. The story of the ex-waitress allows us to see the how far-reaching this flow is:

² ANTHIAS, 2000, p. 24.

My husband promised that he would send money for my daughter every month, and without fail, every 15th of the month he sends R\$ 300. That's enough in Fortaleza. I saved money for two years, he and I..When we took the trip, I had € 2.800 We took € 2.000 to buy a shack for my mother... With R\$ 6.000 we bought a house... It took another R\$ 2.000 to make the kitchen and bathroom... It's for my mother, my daughter and my younger sister who's 12, the same age as my daughter, to live in. But I put it in my daughter's name... They don't pay rent. with that money, plus the scholarship, plus the gas assistance, they live well. My sister...is pregnant, She called me crying that she didn't have anything for the baby. I told my mother-in-law, and she came up with € 50, her sister put in another € 50 I sent it and my sister was really happy because that's more than R\$ 300 in Brazil. With that money, she bought bottles, the whole layette for the baby.

However, it is important to note that these migrations also have the features of individual strategies. The recognition of economic obligations to kin has limits. According to an ex '*garota de programa*' (call girl) who, at the time of the interview, was starting a job as a waitress at a bar in Milan,

I don't do what a lot of other Brazilian women do. I have a cousin who lives in Paris, who sends all the money she has to her mother... I live my life and I send what I can..... It's not that I don't want to give my mom all the best...it's because I have a brother, too. There are six people in the house. To keep sending, supporting six people, I'm just not able...I was just saying this on the phone today... I told her I would do something...since I found a job, I'm going to...pay the electric bill, the phone, the water, through 'automatic debit' through my Banco do Brasil account.

Although kinship practices in the place of origin - in domestic units which can hold two or three generations, consanguineals and affines –affect the dissemination of resources sent by the migrants, the sending of remittances, when there are no children left behind, tends to be limited to the life span of migrant women's mothers.

NOTIONS OF BRAZILIANNES

Latin America and Brazil in particular are acquiring visibility in Italy. This tendency is noticeable in the Latin-American music festivals and in trade, where it is easy to find T-shirts, tops and bikinis with the Brazilian flag. VIVA O BRASIL! was the headline of one of the main articles in the June 2004 edition of Italian *Elle* magazine, where Brazilian music, food, fashion and creativity were eulogized³. In the Lombardy region, Brazilians are popular in services involving corporality: male/female dancers, exotic therapists (doing samba-therapy), personal trainers.

³ "Viva o Brasil", *Elle*, Italy, June 2004.

Within this context there has been a dissemination of a 'Brazilian style', linked to the boldness of the thongs and bikinis⁴ and to the diverse procedures aimed at lifting and curving female bottoms. In the ambiguity that permeates the construction of a national style linked to Brazil, through procedures that are not at all original, women are constructed as symbols of national essence (Andall, 2003). This procedure is frequently synthesized in the perception of Brazilian women as being endowed with a style of 'tropical' sexuality, an exacerbated interest in and joyful disposition for sex, frequently associated with prostitution. A 42-year old Brazilian woman, owner of a restaurant, summarizes this ambiguity, associating differentiated perceptions to the Italians' social class and cultural level:

They like the Brazilian joy, the '*jeitinho*' (Brazilian knack of doing things). But this attraction works in a different manner with Italians of a higher status than with the average Italian. For the average Italian, if she's Brazilian she's a whore...

This view of 'Brazilianness' affects women of different social classes, with differing degrees of education, particularly those who perform manual labor, even when their paths are not linked to prostitution and they have migrated from cities unassociated with sex tourism. However, the association between female versions of 'Brazilianness' and prostitution is particularly intense for women who arrived in Italy accompanying tourists who visited Brazil in search of sex.

MARRYING IN ITALY

My male interviewees visited Brazil various times. Some travelled to Fortaleza over many consecutive years and more than once a year. They are mostly young, aged between 32 and 38, but one of the couples has a 16-year age gap and the group makes reference to other couples where the age difference is of 25 or 30 years. Having gone to higher education technical schools, all have an educational level that is superior to that of the girls, among whom the highest level of education completed is secondary school.

The income level of these men is diversified, ranging from approximately €2,000 to €5,000 a month⁵. They work in small family enterprises, self-owned small businesses and in the service sector focused on information technology. The couples live in two-room apartments in Milanese neighbourhoods still located within the city, albeit near the last stops of the subway, or in neighbouring municipalities. Some are already homeowners, others pay rent while preparing to request a mortgage loan, and one couple lives in the husband's family home in one of these municipalities.

The apartments, with new furniture, including ample verandahs full of flowers, smell of cleanliness and show an intense domestic investment. The kitchens are chock full of state-of-the art household appliances, complete tableware sets and glasses for different uses. While the girls show everything with pride and an air of success, I ultimately remember their extremely simple houses in Fortaleza.

⁴ "Per lê Piú Audaci, lê stilo brasileiro", Corriere della Será, Vivi Milano, 11/06/2004.

⁵ During the period when this research was carried out, the average wages for the Lombardy region were calculated at €2,483 a month (Forum Europa, 2004).

Most of the couples have a relatively high consumer level. In a “nouveau riche” style where money is a value which involves unending conversations about salaries, profits and shopping, they proudly exhibit brand new cars and motorcycles, sophisticated computers, clothes and repeatedly comment on trips to different parts of Italy, countries in Europe and outside of it. Certainly the lifestyle of these couples has little in common with the Italian upper classes. However, when compared to these women’s lifestyles in Fortaleza, the upgrade in their lives in the company of their Italian husbands is unmistakable.

One of the reasons that lead such men to choose Brazilian wives is the search for ‘less independent’ styles of femininity (considered difficult to find among Italian women) that include the inclination toward domesticity and motherhood. Paternity is an important project for these men. At the time of my fieldwork in Italy, one of the interviewees was pregnant and others were trying to get pregnant⁶; by now two are already mothers. These motivations, explained by the men interviewed, are clearly perceived by Italian women and interpreted as expressions of ‘machismo’. In these women’s perceptions, such styles of masculinity make their bearers unattractive to Italian women. According to a female Italian employee, aged 40:

Men who marry that type of women are those who are incapable of winning over an Italian woman. It is a way of not having to face up to Italian women, because they are chauvinistic. They don’t do anything at home, don’t look after the children...

In line with these husbands’ narratives, many of them had limited amorous experience before they started going to Fortaleza. While their styles of masculinity might not make them desirable in the local marriage market, it is also important to consider that other factors may lead to a certain devaluation. Most are internal migrants or sons of internal migrants from regions that are less valued than Lombardy, such as Puglia and Sardinia. And, in some cases, their body types (short, fat, bald) are far from doing them any favors.

After the end of the period of stay that tourists are legally allowed, almost all the girls remained for a period in an illegal situation which they subsequently regularized through marriage. Matrimony is a coveted means for obtaining “papers”. Although papers can be purchased, in the universe I studied, marriage represents more than the possibility of ‘papers’

Analyzing the processes through which migrants attempt to gain access to ‘cultural citizenship’, Ong (1996) highlights the importance of cultural practices and beliefs in negotiations with criteria related to ‘belonging’ to a territory and a national population. The value attributed by the interviewees to marriage maintains links with these ideas. Among them, marriage represents the materialization of a dream of social ascent which goes beyond mobility in terms of social class, involving the illusion of total inclusion in Europe through the legitimating route of becoming part of an Italian family.

This value became evident when an ex-waitress, telling me about her wedding party, gave me a glass bell with a red ribbon and a little card printed with the date of the ceremony and the names of her husband and herself as a gift, showing me the photographs

⁶ It is worth noting that Italian fertility rates are amongst the lowest in Europe. In 2000 it was 1,21, while in France and in the United Kingdom it was 1,71. Del Boca, 2003:1.

of the event. Some 300 pictures of excellent quality, stored away in a red album, show her wearing a long red strapless velvet dress that highlights her brown skin. There are pictures of the couple, the couple with the parents, with members of his family who came from various parts of Italy, with her friends and with the only member of her network of relationships that came from Brazil, with the air ticket paid for by her husband: her former boss, the woman whose house she worked in as a nanny when she left the countryside and moved to Fortaleza. She proudly showed me a ring that looked as if it were made of diamonds, telling me that her mother-in-law gave it to her the day before the wedding: 'I wanted one so much, all Italian women have one. Why can't I have one, like the Italians?'

In the local narratives, Brazilian women appear as privileged partners for marriage with Italians who are consumers of sex services abroad. However, among the agents that work with prostitution and migration, these weddings are perceived as dangerous traps. According to the information offered at the Brazilian Consulate in Milan, from 2000 onward there has been a significant increase in the number of marriages between Brazilian women and Italian men⁷. Since then, the institution has registered a weekly average of 7 to 10 document requests from Brazilian women to make these weddings possible. Marriages, however, are considered a territory where tensions explode (Daphne Report, 2005). Sharing these perceptions, the director of the *Associazione Donne Brasiliane* in Italy considers that (domestic) violence involving Brazilian women married to Italians is one of the most serious problems these migrants face.

ALTERNATING BETWEEN CONTEXTS

In Brazil, these couples began their relationships in a terrain where notions of femininity and masculinity were linked to national origin, race, class and age - part of a process that sexualized native women, rendering them exotic, while foreign men appeared as embodying the most valued styles of masculinity (Piscitelli, 2004). In this context, where nationality acquired central importance, 'race' and gender 'acted' as metaphoric agents of the economic and cultural power inherent in such transnational relations. These two categories played an active part in the conceptualizations through which native men and women were rendered inferior and foreigners were privileged.

At the same time, the extreme sensuality attributed to these women opened paths that destabilize linear criteria of inequality. On the basis of the sexualization of which they were the objects, they negotiated their positions within relationships. And, through them, some managed to cross local, racial and class barriers that they had considered insurmountable without the (material and symbolic) resources offered by the foreign visitors. But how are repertoires of mutual perceptions re-elaborated when relationships move to Italy? In Brazil, on the micro-level of personal relationships, the incorporation of exoticism partially neutralized the structural inequality of these relationships. But how does this unequal and romanticized notion of difference (Kempadoo, 2000) work in a new context?

⁷ Agents working at the Brazilian Consulate in Milan estimate that in 2004 between 40,000 and 50,000 Brazilians were thought to be living in this jurisdiction, that covers the North of Italy (as far south as Florence).

In Fortaleza, girls whose actions were marked by considerable determination were nonetheless seen by foreigners as 'traditional' (according to their interpretation, expressing sweetness and docility). These young women formed relationships with Italians, whom they perceived as embodying more egalitarian styles of masculinity than those attributed to native men. Foreigners, considered as men 'with a future', an expression that refers to a promise of a better life, were highly aestheticized.

Within the Italian context, gender patterns seem to become more rigid. Husbands are seen through lenses that show they are not egalitarian at all. These men, who do not share household chores, reveal aspects of intense control and 'traditional' expectations in relation to their partners. At the same time, they are no longer seen as 'rich', - as they had been considered in Brazil - but as workers who are put under considerable stress in order to keep up their consumer levels. In this light, these women establish comparisons between them and other Italian men, perceived as more handsome and with more 'future'.

In this new context, women start to value 'traditional' styles of femininity, associated with domesticity, in a way they did not in Fortaleza. Among our interviewees, domesticity and body care become the synthesis of a supposedly more authentic version of femininity. In the words of a former sex worker from Fortaleza:

In Europe, women are all men. Your work, your independence, your life... and you lose femininity... Italian women are much more concerned... with comfort, and not if she is looking good. That is what they [European men] look for in Brazilian women. That thing of being at home, of being a [housewife], that the Italian woman doesn't have anymore. Brazilian women like... to look after the house, to go shopping, to get their hair done, to paint their nails.

These relationships are far from being established exclusively by girls who have migrated from contexts of sex tourism. According to a 34-year old former dancer, a cashier at a supermarket in Milan:

They know that we are obsessed with cleanliness... we wax our legs all year long... If you look at Italian women, from here up they are models, but when the summer arrives, they start to take their stockings off, then it starts, out come the nails, out come the hairs... It is a lack of hygiene... they... stink... They [the Italian men] complain, they [the women] don't smell nice (laughs)...

In this context, the Brazilian interviewees reaffirm bodily practices held as singular, comprising a style of sexuality marked by the pleasure of doing sex and the knowledge of sexual practices. They consider that these traits place them on a superior level in relation to the Italians. In the words of a former dancer:

What do they like about us? It's sex... My husband didn't know how to make love, but with an Italian woman he was ok... I taught him... because otherwise I didn't feel well. I said, don't feel offended, but it isn't like that, first you kiss, kiss, kiss, Brazilians like to kiss... And it isn't just kissing...

For the Brazilian women that migrated from the context of sex tourism in Fortaleza, their 'exotic sexuality' constituted one of the main negotiating tools within the scope of their relationships with their partners. However, in the Italian context and within the framework of conjugal relationships, the supposed superiority linked to this style of sexuality is anchored on bases that are more fragile than they are in Brazil.

RE-SIGNIFYING ETHNO-SEXUAL BOUNDARIES

In the web of relationships established in this 'new world', Italian husbands are submitted to particular tensions. At the same time, the possibilities for action on the part of the Brazilian women married to these former 'sex tourists' seem to be relatively more limited than in Brazil. In the interaction between categories that takes place in this context, there is a new demarcation of ethno-sexual boundaries (Nagel, 2003). In Italy and in the framework of conjugality, that style of sexuality, tinged with threatening tones, seems to imprison these couples.

For Italian men, these marriages evoke the taste of a transgression associated with the double movement of introducing extreme 'carnal passion' into conjugality while disrupting homogamic and homoethnic conventions. These aspects become threats to the expression of their styles of masculinity. Several things weaken the valorization they have obtained through their relationships with these Brazilian women. One of them is the possibility of economic exploitation. All of the women interviewed tell of how they squandered money during their initial stay in Italy. Repeating patterns present in the relationships with their Italian partners when they were in Fortaleza, they demanded trips, jewelry and money spent with total lack of control. In the words of one of the interviewees: 'In the beginning I wanted to buy everything I saw, it felt as if my heart would burst if I couldn't get all that I wanted'. The steps taken to avoid this danger involved strategies, controlling the expenses of the Brazilian wives, threatening to remove credit cards and hiding the figures of salaries and/or profits.

An additional aspect that haunts these Italian husbands is unfaithfulness. Another feature attributed to 'Brazilianness' comes together with the joy, openness and sexual availability associated with these women: a certain inclination to deception. The entwining of these aspects feeds jealousy and a concern that in some cases becomes obsession and gives way to real harassment. The consequence is a patrol system in which husbands, families and friends take part, involving the control of activities and mobility of the Brazilian wives as well as the circulation of information on them. Sometimes the Brazilian women themselves participate in this control, in procedures that reveal efforts to mark distinctions among them, traced according to diverse parameters: degrees of faithfulness, past participation in the sex industry and particular types of sentiments in relation to husbands, valuing 'respect' and 'love' and condemning 'interest'.

Control involves even work relations. None of these Brazilian women studied Italian in a language school, a fact that hindered their job opportunities for quite some time. They all ended up performing paid activities outside the home, but exclusively in small businesses or establishments belonging to relatives or friends of their husband (supermarkets, bars). In these occupations, in which they are watched over, salaries are relatively low (between €400 and €500 for part-time jobs and €1,200 for full-time), making it difficult to obtain economic autonomy.

The system of control also involves sociability. None of those interviewed had Italian women friends, because according to them, Italian women show mistrust and contempt towards them. Contact with other Brazilian women is restricted, basically reduced to weekend meetings with other transnational couples. The presence of sisters or cousins at home is banned unless they have quickly gotten involved in 'serious' relationships with Italians. These procedures make it difficult to create ample and close-knit networks of Brazilian women. At the same time, much-desired trips to Brazil tend to be restricted to those undertaken in the company of husbands.

Control extends itself even as far as elements that define the identity of these women, such as their temperament and its expression through corporality. An ex-waitress who, in a twofold attempt to erase the past and get closer to obtaining 'cultural citizenship' put on 10 kilos in the two years that she spent in Italy, cut off her almost waist-length curly hair and started wearing glasses, summarized the perception of inequality inherent in this control. In an outburst of rage, after a family party in which she felt badly treated and after which her husband grabbed her ear and hair forcefully, she yelled:

No, I won't shut my mouth! You want to change me completely. You want to change my way of dressing, my way of speaking, everything, but I won't change my character! That woman shouldn't have treated me as if I was her servant. You told me I had to change my clothes. I accepted that I would have to be dressed like a lady...I learned to cook... I changed my way of speaking, I stopped swearing... Everyone wants me to change but nobody else changes at all!!!

With the change of context, the structural inequalities of the nationalities in question become even more exacerbated. In Italy, within a scenario in which symbolic violence is a common occurrence in the daily lives of these couples, husbands erase the class differences existing in Brazil. The women, despite belonging to lower and lower-middle classes of Fortaleza, were far from being on or below the poverty line. Their husbands perceived this, but within the Italian context, such distinctions disappear: Brazil, as a whole, is considered poverty-stricken.

Racism, something these women wish to erase from their lives, reappears in an even more monolithic fashion than in Brazil. In Fortaleza, these '*morenas*' were sexualized and racialized by the local inhabitants, above all, when they were accompanying foreign tourists. In Italy, they experience racialism in their daily lives in which 'color' permanently expresses the fact that they are from outside the European community. The workplace constitutes one of the main spaces of their vulnerability (Merrill, 2004), a place in which they are exposed to this racism and subjected to hostilities from Italians who do not consider them worthy of 'belonging' to the local or national productive sphere (Ong, 1996). Far from helping them in their adaptation to a new context, the '*morena*' color which attracts tourists in Fortaleza, gives rise to tensions and verbal aggression in Italy.

Within this scenario, for the Brazilian women in conjugal relations, the opening of spaces of agency depends on a delicate and difficult balance between the re-creation of only a few cultural traits, such as joyfulness and, at the same time, the relative disappearance of the trait associated with 'tropical sexuality', as in daily life, according to them, sex becomes a practice relegated to the weekend.

The emotional dimension is important in my interviewees' experiences. Initially, their abilities to seduce tourists, provoking their passions, was a powerful tool. Feelings are important among the few women for whom romance was a motivation to face the risks involved in migration and also for those who desired a better life, but were not in love with their partners when they left Brazil. Among the latter, however, the emotional dimension present in the Italian context is different. It is not a question of sensual 'love', inflamed by passion, nor is it pure 'interest'. What is at stake is an emotion that they translate as 'respect'. Calling upon standards considered as traditional between couples, the positive aspects of this emotion are fed by gratitude for and acknowledgement of the opportunities granted. At the same time, this feeling grants them a certain distance from and a certain degree of control over their enamoured husbands.

SOCIAL MOBILITY IN TRANSNATIONAL SPACES

As with 'sex tourism' in Fortaleza, structural inequalities between the nationalities concerned, permeated by gender, underlie this mode of migration. The strategy of leaving Brazil does not exempt those interviewed from occupying an inferior social position in their new lives abroad. Nevertheless, these migrations make it possible for them to escape inequality on the local level, in Fortaleza, and this is highly valued by the women.

Studies on work relations draw attention to the effects of globalization, which makes jobs more precarious and vulnerable, even in Europe: jobs are unstable, badly paid, undervalued, with slim chances of promotion and with limited or non-existent social rights, characteristics that mainly affect women and migrants (Hirata, 2006). In this context, Latin American women, including Brazilians (Maia, in press), situated in the middle social classes in their place of origin, end up being subjected to depreciated jobs in Northern countries. In the migratory process, these migrants belong to two different social categories according to their position within their country of origin and their country of destination.

Those interviewed who migrated in the context of 'sex tourism' in Fortaleza, located in the lower classes of one of the poorest regions of the Brazil, came from lower social positions than those they come to occupy they in Italy. In addition to being precarious and badly paid, in Brazil their jobs were often highly stigmatized. For them, the jobs available in Italy are objectively 'better', in terms of the relation between salary, energy spent and working conditions. They also belong to two different social categories, according to their positions in their place of origin and destination. As they perceive it, taking into account the standard of living attained in their new life in Italy, they are in a far better position. This is a crucial point in the permanent comparison they establish between Brazil and Italy. In the words of one of those interviewed:

Yes, I changed. When a person changes country, they also change. I lost my color, I faded, I got fat. But I learned to be more polite...I miss the sun, the heat, the beach...my girl-friends. But I think of the life I had, working at night, sleeping during the day, going to bed with anyone, sometimes just in exchange for a few beers, for them buying me dinner...So, it's a good life.

Pessar and Mahler (2001) point to the need to analyze the feminization of migration considering how gender, central to the organization of migration, works simultaneously on multiple scales. Their concept of 'geographies of power marked by gender' contributes to analyzing social agency, taking social positions within the multiple hierarchies of power that operate within and throughout several territories into consideration. These ideas help to situate the migration of the Brazilians interviewed in a transnational perspective, and therefore are important in understanding major aspects of the valorization of their marriages and the envy they provoke in the milieu from which they came.

Literature on contemporary migrations sees female migration mostly as part of a family strategy (Anthias, 2000). In the universe under focus, nearly all of the girls are daughters of large families (with six or seven siblings), and they offer resources to their families. In some cases, these migrations have traces of individual strategies that pose tensions regarding kinship obligations. According to a girl who in the past went out on *programas*:

I don't do as many Brazilian women do. I have a cousin who lives in Paris, and she sends all the money she has to her mother... I live my life and, as far as I am able, I send money... It isn't because I don't want to give all that is good and best to my mother... It's because I also have a brother. There are six people in the house. To keep sending money, supporting six people, it's not feasible...

The majority of the interviewees, however, regularly send money, between €100 and €300, destined for the payment of regular bills, as well as extraordinary remittances for the purchase and/or makeover of houses, medical treatments, surgeries, school material, layettes for babies. Considering these families' low income, these resources are significant.

These money remittances are the expression of care work across the borders (Aranda, 2003) and sometimes even of mothering from a distance (Parreñas, 2001). They contribute to feeding kinship ties and are also fundamental elements in the valorization and power these women acquire in their homeland.

Those interviewed travel to Brazil only once a year or every other year. They alternately receive a visiting member of the family residing in Fortaleza (brother, mother, daughter) for periods of a few months. Yet by means of telephone calls, they follow the daily routine of the family, constantly interfering in daily life in Fortaleza. They make decisions related to the lives of relatives and aggregates, based on the force they have acquired through their marriages to Italian ex-tourists. In the account of an ex-waitress who bought a house for her mother, daughter and sister to live in together:

My mother got herself a much younger man. I made her throw him out of the house. I bought was the one who bought the house!! I told her, one day he is going to wake up, he is going to look at you, already old, and he is going to look at my sister or at my daughter who are both young, and what is going to happen? Who is he going to want?

In the permanent contrast between the spaces featured between by those interviewed, the perception that they have of their marriages is linked above all to the position this gives them in Brazil. This position is built through a variety of actions mediated by economic power and colored by the prestige achieved from living in Europe, as women married to Italians. One of them is the purchase of property, meant for vacation use or with the possible objective of opening small businesses in Brazil. Another of these actions is the help they give to their families, or sometimes deny them, with a certain taste of revenge. In the words of one of the girls:

I haven't seen my father for 3 years. My sister asked me for R\$350 for his old-age pension. But I said no: he used to say I would become a whore!

CONCLUSION

The migrations linked to 'sex tourism' are heterogeneous and do not always result in Brazilian women's participation in the sex industry abroad. The mode under discussion in this text gives an example of one of the paradoxes involving sex tourism, when it offers a way out of the sex industry, by means of migration to the North and marriage.

It is a kind of displacement that re-creates, on a world scale, inequalities permeated by gender. In the new context, those interviewed are subject to a rigidifying of the gender roles that they themselves recreate, under the guise of qualities that provide access to social inclusion. In this milieu, in which the lower position conceded to Brazil is felt even more acutely and where they are subjected to an even more intense racism than that which they experienced in Fortaleza, 'tropical sexuality' acquires an ambiguous and threatening meaning, which gives way to mistrust and to a control that may be exercised over them. The creation of spaces of agency demands the recreation of only some of the characteristics that have been linked to Brazilianness, while others must be neutralized, with an effect on corporality. Nevertheless, these marriages are valued as they allow access to lifestyles with consumer and comfort levels that are out of the women's reach in Brazil, making it possible to occupy a different social and political position than the one they had occupied in their homeland. Their appreciation of the relationships with their Italian husbands is linked, above all, to the perception of the social place that the latter make viable within a transnational space.

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Acknowledgements. This text is based on research made possible by the Guggenheim Foundation and linked to the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa (São Paulo) thematic project “Gender and Corporalities”. I would like to thank Luisa Leonini and Paulo for their crucial intellectual and logistical support at the University of Milan. I’m grateful to Mônica Schpun, Giovanna Campani, Daniela Danna, Helena, Mara; Suor Claudia Biondi, Sônia, Nadia, Célia Cruz, Magrão and the employees at the Brazilian Consulate in Milan for the support, bibliographical material and contacts supplied. I also thank Marco Aurélio Garcia and Kamala Kempadoo, Mariza Corrêa and Ana Fonseca for the suggestions made.

Translated by Nina Adel and Miriam Adelman

Translation from **Revista Estudos Feministas**, Florianópolis, v.15, n.3, p. 717-744, Sept./Dec. 2007.