

“MADONNA, WARRIOR LIKE CUBA”

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Abstract

Through the practices of the main fan of the US singer Madonna in Cuba, we investigate how cubans deal with the presence of Anglo-American icons of pop culture on the socialist island. A set of tensions about the presence of fan objects in the country is pointed out revealing a particular form of globalization that seems to negotiate the flows of transnational capital with the singularity of the Cuban state regime. From the memory of the fan, an itinerary takes us to the TV program Colorama, a kind of "cuban MTV". It postulates that the cultural consumption of Madonna artifacts on the island can be perceived as a dynamic of resistance, negotiation and solidarity of communities of fans that connect also through the social network Facebook.

Keywords

pop music; globalization; consumption; fan culture; Madonna.

Introduction

At On Mondays, precisely at 11 pm, the 14-year-old Alberto Arcos sits in front of the black-and-white television set in his living room in Holguín, east of Cuba, to watch the show *Colorama*, an electronic magazine for the youngest, focused on releases of national and international music videos, shown by *Tele Rebelde*. The year is 1992, Cuba goes through what historians call the "Special Period"¹, that is, the historical moment of the end of the Soviet Union, the crisis of socialism and the "abandonment" of the country by the "socialist bloc", resulting in an isolation of the island in the international politics games. With the economic embargo of the United States in full force, Cuba goes through one of the moments of greater closure of products of first necessity. Lack of everything in the "tiendas", from milk to toilet paper, from meat to deodorant.

While watching *Colorama*, between a Latin music video and another, Alberto sees a video in which feathers open (as in a kind of cabaret show) and men (some black) stand like statues in haughty poses among women also static and works of art. You hear a start keyboard, the creation of a suspense, and then a blonde woman, face-to-face, singing in English: "strike a pose" - with her hands framing her face, in a kind of one-sided manual snapshot. This is the video clip of the song "Vogue", directed by David Fincher. The blonde singer is the American Madonna and the first verse of the track seems to narrate that difficult moment in Alberto's daily life: "Look around / Everywhere you turn is heartache / Look around / You try everything you can to escape / The pain of life that you know (Life that you know)". In the song, the refuge of the pain of life is healed with a trip to the dance floor. The nightclub turns into a liberation metaphor. In the daily life of Alberto Arcos, in a small Cuban city, the refuge was television. More precisely the television program with video clips.

It is in this context that Alberto's interest in Madonna begins. In his television, in the countryside of Cuba, the teenager watches the music video "Vogue" in which the singer portrays classic divas from American cinema, in a tribute to the "give good face" tradition and the pose in the media culture of Hollywood. "Vogue" is an all-black-and-white clip, with contrasting photograph accentuating the shades of gray and the art direction that attempts to highlight Madonna's face and poses. The glamour of the blonde woman, the gestures, the

¹ During the "Special Period", according to Chomsky (2015), "the Cuban government has introduced strong economic reforms, including opening up to foreign investment, allowing some forms of private companies, facilitating remittances and promoting tourism. (...) Social inequalities have increased and phenomena associated with pre-revolutionary poverty, such as prostitution and begging, have resurfaced. (Chomsky, 2015, p.195)

look. Madonna seems to be an attempt to derive from the impositions and constraints imposed by political and historical contexts on that young Cuban.

As the television set in Alberto's house was black and white, he watched all the video clips in "black and white", as I am reported by the main fan of Madonna on the island² and creator of the largest page of Facebook dedicated to the singer in the Cuban context - "Madonna Cuba" - which has existed since 2015, and has 788 followers in March 2017. "Only when I had access to a color television ten years later did I realize that 'Vogue' was, in fact, a black-and-white video clip. For me, all the clips I saw in Colorama were black and white", recalls Arcos. Alberto's interest was Madonna, of course, but it was on the same Colorama television show that he watched Michael Jackson's "Thriller", Lionel Ritchie's "Hello" as well as music videos from Tina Turner, Janet Jackson, among others. Cubans were most interested in the American artists not only because of the difficulty of seeing them, but also for their strangeness and exoticism. Perhaps because of the slightly subversive curiosity of having artists singing in English – some of which could be censored by the Cuban government³. In addition to watching Colorama, Alberto Arcos also recorded songs on radio cassette tapes that broadcast more "open" and international songs, especially those that came from signals captured from Florida radios (US), through parabolic instruments in Cuban residences⁴. Madonna's tracks were the first on either side of the tapes he heard, often at night, after studying.

These gaps in the regulations surrounding the life and consumption habits of the Cuban population by government measures trigger thinking about how the senses are re-elaborated interculturally. "Not only within an ethnic group, not even within a nation, but in global circuits, overcoming borders, making national and ethnic barriers porous and making each group able to source itself from different

² In an interview held in person at the Cafeteria La Rampa, in the Vedado neighborhood of Havana, on March 13, 2016, on the occasion of the trip to the field of research "Pop Music in Cuba: Political and Mediatic Coping", with resources obtained through of the edict CNPq / MCTI 25/2015 - Humanities, Social and Applied Social Sciences. The first field trip took place in March 2016, using a methodology of ethnographic inspiration that aims to contact with subjects that integrate that context. During a trip to Cuba in 2015, I had contact with pop music fans (Madonna's and Lady Gaga's) in Havana. These mediators were important so that I could be among Anglophile pop music lovers in Cuba and meet Alberto Arcos, who runs the Facebook page "Madonna Cuba".

³ The debate over the Cuban government's "censorship" of American cultural products or English-speaking ones is controversial, since official or documentary measures or records of these restrictions are not officially available. However, in the interviews conducted at the two camp trips in Havana with officials of Cuban radio and television stations, I realized that there was a certain fear and a climate of surveillance and apprehension on the part of producers of television shows that "someone might not like or complain" about English-language products. The Cuban Radio and Television Institute (ICRT) was founded in 1962 and is a public institution belonging to the Cuban State, which is responsible for the control and regulation of radio and television stations on the island.

⁴ Since the 1990s, with Cuban exiles circulating on the island, there has been an informal trade in antennas in Cuba that captured radio signals from Florida (United States). "The dollarization of the Cuban economy between 1993 and 1995 allowed Cubans abroad to send money to their relatives and Cuba became one of the many countries that depended on remittances from emigrants." (Chomsky, 2015, p. 198)

cultural repertoires." (Canclini, 2009, p. 43) Canclini's recommendation, from the methodological point of view, is that analyzes of anthropological inclination are convergent with the communicational analyzes, since we are talking about circulation of goods and messages, changes of meanings, from one passage to another, and how meanings are received, processed and recoded. "It is necessary to analyze the complexity assumed by the forms of interaction and refusal, appreciation, discrimination and hostility towards others, in situations of assiduous confrontation." (Canclini, 2009, p. 44) When thinking about the relationship between a Cuban fan of Madonna, the main figure of pop music produced in the United States, and the geopolitics between the two countries - historically conflictual since the breakup of relations after the Cuban Revolution, in 1959 - a unique framework of debate on cultural asymmetries in global dynamics is drawn. The question of globalization in Cuba is one of the central points for the debate about the fissures between nation-states and subjects - in the context of a country "apart" from the dynamics of the neoliberal economic globalization process, whose three main "institutional innovations", according to Santos (2014), are: 1. restrictions on state regulation of the economy; 2. new international property rights for foreign investors; 3. subordination of national states to multilateral agencies such as the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization. (Santos, 2014, 31) As defined by Feinberg (2012),

the Cuban Revolution was largely defined in terms of what it was not: not dependence on the United States; not a domain governed by global corporations; not a liberal and market-oriented economy. As the guerrilla army made its triumphant entry into Havana and the Revolution established itself, a distinct brand of its anti-imperialist ethos became central to the US-based nationalization process of companies that controlled many key sectors of the Cuban economy, including hotels and casinos, utilities, oil refineries and the rich sugar mills. In the strategic conflict with the United States, the "historical enemy," the Revolution consolidated its power through the excision of the US economic presence (Feinberg, 2012, p. 5)

Although in a macro-political and prescriptive sense the Cuban government has demarcated a political and economic separation from the United States, the micro-politics of daily life and the actions of the subjects have always stressed, to a greater or lesser extent, such premises. Considering the mass migrations and intense circulation of Cubans around the world, it is inevitable to recognize that a fan of Madonna in Cuba is inserted in what Appadurai (1997) calls "diasporic public spheres", that is, media imagination, deterritorialization resulting in transnational symbolic universes, "communities of feeling", prospective

identities, sharing of tastes, pleasures and aspirations that seem to negotiate with macro-political aspects as much as to affect the tactics and affections of the micro-politics. It is postulated, therefore, that the presence of icons of the American culture in Cuban territory does not include an imperialist maxim, of cultural domination or ideological imposition of the logics of capital in the flattening of local cultural manifestations, but rather creates a set of tensions of political-cultural orders that manifest themselves in contradictory experiences, insofar as they deal with the history of a Nation and the limits and impositions of living beings. It is thus seen that globalization is not a linear process, much less consensual, insofar as it is an "intense field of conflicts between social groups, states, hegemonic and subaltern interests". (Souza, 2014, p. 27)

Colorama, "Cuban MTV"

The TV show Colorama is one of the central points for understanding the presence of icons of world pop culture in the context of Cuba. Created in 1979 and on air for 36 years, Colorama is named by Alberto Arcos and fans of Anglophile pop music in Cuba as "an oasis" amidst the programming full of attractions linked to the exaltation of traditional Cuban musicality on TV stations. The show, which is informally called "Cuban MTV", can be seen as a cosmopolitan, pop and contemporary breakthrough in the socialist island's television media. It is also shrouded in a certain aura of mystery as producers/programmers were able to play, for example, Madonna's music videos - one of the greatest icons of the "Yankee culture" also detracted from political speeches and billboards on the island. From the report of an in-depth interview with Madonna fan and journalist Alberto Arcos, we recognize the uniqueness of the TV show Colorama in the Cuban media context, as a starting point for thinking about the subjects' confrontations in restrictive environments of spectatoriality and fruition, to discuss the tensional zone of globalization processes that insert subaltern subjects into global logics. (Santos, 2014)

The "closure" of Cuba's media systems to international products, much of what has come to be called pop culture from the capitalist system, triggers a series of internal and external disputes between groups that proposed different views of how the revolutionary government, which began in the country in the 1960s, should deal with "external influences". Thinking about Colorama in the 1970s and 1980s in Cuba, means recognizing a history of gaps and accommodations of "subversive" products in the everyday life of Cubans, implying that although in the

most closed systems of access to cultural goods, in view of given structures and watertight legal sanctions, it is possible to see actions of subjects that tangentialize and problematize the structures. With a focus on film production, Villaça (2006) investigates how the Cuban Film Institute and Art Institute (ICAIC), the first cultural organization created after the Cuban Revolution, was important as a mediating institution capable of finding places of autonomy and negotiation within "rigid" standards of censorship and control. In the case of the Institute, the author postulates that the institution enjoyed relative autonomy in regard to governmental control mechanisms, through the action of the filmmakers and the mediation of the ones in charge of ICAIC, making possible the production of several films ambiguous and critical to the regime, along of the period between 1959 and 1991.

This autonomy has been shaken at various times by factors such as the restructuring of the State, economic failures and the intensification of authoritarianism in Cuba, especially since the 1970s. Nevertheless, the Institute has been readapted to governmental political demands in a political game of adhesion and resistance to official cultural policy. (Villaça, 2006, p.8)

It is possible to see that the dynamics of control and censorship of contents exhibited in the Cuban context present loopholes that can be visualized as tensile fields of action in which the social and the political are interwoven generating complex plots of resistance. One of the points to understand how the process of closing and subsequent negotiation between institutions of the Cuban government and subjects occupying leading positions in Cuban media institutions was in the creation in 1961 of the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba (UNEAC)⁵. An organization that will postulate the bases and manage the cultural policies of Cuba, especially in the first years after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, between 1961 and 1968. "In this period, cultural policy is defined much more by practice than by the publication of laws and projects" (Villaça, 2006, p.170), resulting in a visibly porous arrangement which favoured individual actions that endorse or circumvent master guidelines.

It is worth highlighting the context in which, according to Villaça, two groups drew different "conflicting cultural policy proposals" on how the Cuban government should deal with the production and circulation of cultural products - including foreign ones - in the country. A first, "dogmatic", presented a proposal close to the guidelines of Soviet Socialism Realism⁶, which, in turn, was aligned

⁵ <http://www.uneac.org.cu/>.

⁶ Socialism Realism was, in practice, a state policy for aesthetics in all fields from literature to design, including Soviet artistic and cultural manifestations (painting, architecture, sculpture, music, cinema, theater, etc.). It is directly associated with Orthodox Communism and Stalinist orientation or inspiration

with a conciliatory policy, in the revolutionary guidelines. These were "communists before the Revolution who were part of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP), which reluctantly supported the revolutionary movement and Fidel Castro, but then decided to support the Revolution and the government". (Villaça, 2016, p. 171) The second group, called the "oppositionist", was composed of communists who were against the guidelines of Socialism Realism and also opposed to the full adoption of the parameters of the Soviet regime in Cuba and also by non-Communist intellectuals sympathetic to the policies of the M-26, the revolutionary movement that established the Communist Party of Cuba (CCP) as the only party in the country since 1965.

It is noticed that in this porous context of formation of bases of the cultural policy in Cuba, there were symptoms of the two proposals - although formally the Cuban government in this period tried to break with the "proselytizing and ideological diversion" of those who defended cultural policies less centered on the formation of a solid cultural base based on the values and guidelines of Cuban and Latin American cultures. The departure of "dogmatic" Communists and the entry of "oppositionists" into the Revolutionary Government took place gradually, slowly and tensely, at first, dragging on for a long period of seven years (between 1961 and 1968), resulting in sometimes unexpected and unexplained measures, such as the closing of literary supplements and independent book publishers, the remodeling of publications that debated cinema aesthetics, for example, the prohibition of foreign (Nouvelle Vague) and national films, the censorship of abstractionist aesthetic proposals, and musical styles such as rock and, more closely, groups that sang in English, like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones⁷.

One year before the first debates on the Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba, more specifically on August 6, 1960, began the nationalization of television and radio in Cuba, which was actually the intervention of the Revolutionary Government in the American companies that monopolized Cuban media systems: Cuban Telephone Company and its subsidiary with foreign capital, Equipos Standard de Cuba SA⁸. In 1962, the process of governmental management of the media was completed with the creation of the Cuban Institute of Broadcasting (ICR), later

regimes. The style of Socialist Realism is associated with the official aesthetic created by Andrei Jdanov, commissioner of Stalin, responsible for cultural production and propaganda. A goal of this totalitarian propaganda, often successful, was to convey to the people the idea of the omnipresence of the great leader, present everywhere, knowing everything, and therefore it is necessary to fear him.

⁷ The censorship of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones on the island only increased the subversive character of those who heard these artists in Cuba. Fans of the Beatles began to create contact networks to import discs and clandestine recordings of shows for sharing in homes that had video cassettes in the 1980s, as reported by Ernesto Juan Castellanos (1997) in the book "The Beatles in Cuba." Several bars in Cuban cities, even under the "distrustful" look of the state, paid homage to the Beatles, such as the Amarillo Submarino (Spanish for Yellow Submarine) in Havana; Yesterday, in Trinidad and the Beatles Bar, in the resort of Varadero.

⁸ For further information: <https://www.cubanet.org/otros/television-cubana-radio-con-imagen/>.

called the Cuban Radio and Television Institute (ICRT), the "tormentor" of many artists who say they are censored by government directives⁹. Although measures appeared as the guiding principles of a cultural policy that would attempt to implement the strength of Cuban and Latin American cultures, it is perceived that isolated actions of subjects in distinct historical contexts stress such norms and open flanks by which part of the people of the island try to see Anglophile pop culture. It is in this way that one tries to understand the tensions with the Cuban censorship in the Colorama show – mentioned by Alberto Arcos as "their window of contact with the international pop culture".

Russian Madonna

Colorama was first aired on Cuban television in 1979 as a kind of "radio with pictures", as several interviewees report. It is a show dedicated to music videos, musical numbers and national and international artists' charts. Until 1984, the show was live, featuring pre-recorded video inserts throughout its half-hour of viewing. "It was in 1985, with the arrival of Sony Betacam format equipment to the island, that the recording and editing of dramatized spaces and musicals on Cuban TV was generalized". (Peidro, 2013, p.1) Umatic format was lost with the change of equipment, according to the author. Others, he says, were purposely "forgotten".

There was an orientation by the PCC's Ideological Department to eliminate the programs in which artists emigrated from the country. Soon in the 1990s, the purchase of new tapes by TV stations was reduced [so that shows with actors, musicians and artists emigrated in the Special Period were not reexhibited]. Many shows carried out in the 1980s have been lost because the media on which they were recorded cannot be reused. (Peidro, 2013, p.1)

While worried about emigrant Cuban artists as a "bad examples" for citizens living on the island, ICRT managers ignored the pop culture icons airing on television. Not only did Madonna, but Spice Girls, Backstreet Boys, Mariah Carey, U2, among countless others, have their videos shown on Colorama. It was in 1998 that the young Alberto Arcos became a fan of Madonna, when he saw a live performance of the track "Frozen", in the same Colorama in which he had watched the "Vogue" video. "Madonna was dark-haired, had a daughter with Carlos León, a

⁹ On a specific episode of censorship of a reguetón music video and the tenseness of this musical genre with the Cuban government and the ICRT, see: SOARES, Thiago and PEREIRA, Simone Luci. Reguetón em Cuba: Censura, Ostentação e Rasuras de Políticas Midiáticas. Disponível em: http://www.compos.org.br/data/arquivos_2017/trabalhos_arquivo_VKL3HT7NAE5QXFGAEJFY_26_5410_14_02_2017_10_51_34.pdf.

Cuban dancer, the father of her daughter Lourdes Maria. There were a series of connections of that mutant artist, with 'several faces' and hair colors, and the island of Cuba. I realized how Madonna reinvented herself and how we, Cubans, also learned to reinvent ourselves", says Alberto Arcos, who began to become a reference in the search for and disseminate information about Madonna in Cuba. Other fans called, on landlines, to Alberto, so he could pass on information about Madonna's career, new videoclips' releases or gossip about her personal life. First in hometown Holguín, then in Havana, when he had already migrated to the capital in search of studies and employment. Alberto worked at Radio Ciudad, located between Calles 23 and N, in the neighborhood of Vedado, Havana, in 2016, and was a kind of central figure to spread Madonna's news in Cuba.

How did Madonna's videos end up on Colorama? It is a "mystery" for Alberto himself - who recognizes the need for the Cuban government to actually censor some works, not international artists, that brought affective and edifying messages (such as the songs of Madonna he liked, "Vogue" and "Frozen"), but the very production of "bad" Cuban songs that denigrate the image of the woman - he refers to the reggaeton¹⁰. The idea of protectionism in Latin music, according to Alberto, was always questioned when discussing the restrictive guidelines of the government in international pop music forums. According to him, the screening of international video clips at Colorama occurred "without warning" and it was always a "frisson" to wait for the show, which generated comments throughout the week among his friends, mostly fans of international artists. It seems that the Cuban television programming obeyed a pattern similar to that described by Villaça in relation to cinema: an exhibition policy that is defined much more by practice than by laws or measures, since even during the decades of 1970 and 1980, when the restrictions of international attractions were intensified in Cuban state broadcasters, Colorama showed musical numbers from different countries.

Producer Marta Pita, one of the programmers responsible for Colorama during the 1980s and 1990s, explains the quota mechanisms that existed within the show: "seven music videos were allowed in each program, four of which were from the socialist countries and three of Latin artists. " (apud Suarez, 2014) This fraction, according to the producer, was part of a policy of internationalization of the Cuban citizen, who needed to "get in touch with other cultures, especially those that brought socialist values." Still, not all Latino artists could be screened. Spanish

¹⁰ There is an internal tension in the consumption of music in Cuba as much refusal of some natures of foreign music, as the American pop music, but also the reggaeton, peripheral Latin music, is rejected by part of the organs of control of the media systems, but also the public, who accuse the music of denigrating the woman, talk about sex and consumption - such as the funk carioca and brega in Brazil. However, part of the Cuban youth is fond of reggaeton.

Julio Iglesias, Brazilian Roberto Carlos, Argentine Alberto Cortez, Venezuelan Jose Luis Rodriguez "El Puma," the Puerto Rican José Feliciano, and of course the Cuban singer Gloria Estefan, who had emigrated to the United States, were banned to air in the Colorama. According to Marta Pita, these artists were considered "alienated" and, therefore, examples of Latinos not to be followed, for dealing with subjects such as love and "worldly" relationships. Specifically about Julio Iglesias, the producer remembers the first time they exhibited a music video of the singer in the year 1991, because, according to her, "a head of state who was in love with a woman wanted to dedicate the song to her and said that would take full responsibility for the music going to the air". The song was "Me Olvidé de Vivir", released by Iglesias on the album "Begin the Beguine" in 1978, and only thirteen years later played on a Cuban official station¹¹.

One of the most interesting things of Colorama's programming lies in the possibility of filling the space of four weekly music videos from countries of the socialist camp (notably the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany, among others). Something that, of course, was mocked by the production of attraction. In the relation that Marta Pita had to issue weekly to the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT), she justified that, for example, the Australians Bee Gees and Air Supply were "Poles"; the American Michael McDonald was from the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) and Madonna (as well as all the blond singers) were from the Soviet Union. "I was very scared, every week was a tension if someone suspected that we were putting artists from the United States," she said. Marta Pita quotes the remarkable presence of English-speaking artists from Australia (Bee Gees, Air Supply, Men at Work, Divinyls). The only time, according to the producer, that she was called to give an explanation to the Cuban Radio and Television Institute (ICRT) was when she exhibited the video "I Touch Myself" of the Australian band Divinyls, which made mention of the fact that a woman "touches herself", bringing clear hints to masturbation. According to Pita, government criticism came under the vague argument that "it was not a video to be shown on state television". She says she apologized and "nothing happened".

The producer justifies not only circumventing the artistic logics of Colorama, but also the dissemination systems. During the 1990s, the Special Period of food restriction in Cuba, Pita assumes that exchanged food for advertisement in the final credits of Colorama. The main highlight was for the Coppelia Ice Cream

¹¹ Part of Julio Iglesias' refusal by the Cuban government was its intense relationship with Miami in the United States, and therefore with Cuban exiles "on the other side", largely critical of the island's post-Cuban revolution in 1959. For further information: http://www.diariodecuba.com/cultura/1444430222_17424.html.

Company, which provided ice cream and cake boxes for the production of the show and, in exchange, had its name quoted in larger letters in the final credits. "This caused a big tension as well. Many asked me why the Coppelia name was credited with in Colorama. Would an employee of an ice cream parlor work on a television show?", says Marta Pita.

Still on the productive dynamics of Colorama, the producer explains that when some official who had contributed to the Cuban Revolution and its developments died, it was necessary to do the military honors of some action. She was given guidelines to suspend the screening of video clips and create videos with choreography and erudite music themes, such as Chopin, Mozart and Bach, in memory or honor to the leader. According to Pita, when Cuban colonel Pedro Benigno Tortoló, one of the people responsible for the government of Cuba on the island of Granada in 1979, who established a leftist government on the Caribbean island, returned to Cuba as a hero, they produced clips with songs of revolutionary artists such as Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés. The producer had special attention when Colorama was broadcast before or after some speech by Fidel Castro. "Certainly the officers would be very attentive to what was going to be aired at that moment. So we always had to show videos with revolutionary songs by artists like Mercedes Sosa", she notes.

Social network of fans

Alberto Arcos's contact with Madonna's music videos through Colorama and his subsequent process of distinction in the context of the singer's fans in Cuba was also linked to his career as a journalist. Alberto joined the University of Havana to study journalism in 1996 and in 2016 he was working on Radio Havana Cuba (www.radiohc.cu), at the time of the interview for this research. Alberto Arcos's relationship with the media is taken in the search for Madonna's material in Cuba as a metaphor for the very disposition of fans of international pop music in the Cuban context. In the year 2015, continuing the project to publicize the work and personal life of Madonna among Cubans (first taking calls and then meeting face-to-face with other fans), Arcos creates the fan page "Madonna Cuba" on the social network Facebook. The first post, with the profile photo of the page (an image of Madonna), dates from April 21, 2015. It is evidenced that Arcos has privileges of access to the internet in Cuba, since the Country has one of the lowest indexes of the world's private internet access (only 3% of the population has broadband Internet access in the home, often pirated).

The descriptive text of the page says only: "Cuba also has fans to praise the Queen of Pop"¹². There is the contact of Alberto (alberto@rhc.cu) and also a possibility to send messages to him. It was through this chat that in January 2016 I had the first contact with Arcos, explaining that I was doing research on Anglophile pop fans in Cuba and requesting an interview, which would happen two months later, on March 16, 2016, in the Cafeteria La Rampa, in the neighborhood of Vedado, near Havana Cuba Radio, where he worked. Our interview lasted almost two hours, during which we introduced ourselves and talked about Alberto's relationship with Madonna, from his adolescence in Holguín and later to Havana to study, until his militancy to spread the work of the singer in Cuba. I took gifts for him: a DVD of the MDNA Tour; a CD "Rebel Heart" and a shirt with the image of the singer. Alberto is calm, speaks very low, and at times I think he suspected my interest in the subject. Sometimes it was difficult to understand what he was talking about, both by the volume of his speech and by the misunderstandings that seemed to be in his speech. To some extent, I think Alberto minimized his position of privilege in relation to the internet, by working on a radio, which would give him full access, at least in his working hours.

When I noticed that Alberto lowered his voice and tried to escape some subjects, I chose not to insist, not to confront him, respecting his limit of access to information that he wanted to be present in his speech. I realized that Alberto was sort of ashamed of the gifts I gave him, and also of the fact that I paid his bill at the cafeteria. The interview with Alberto Arcos helped me contextualize the fan more historically and biographically. However, due to the time limit and the interviewer's unavoidable shyness, I could not trace any new provisions about his relationship with Madonna. I returned to Facebook and went to investigate chronologically how the narrative proposed by Arcos for Madonna in the Cuban context was presented.

I noticed three large groups of posts that seemed to both introduce the singer to new Cuban fans and also connect Alberto himself with other fans - notably from Latin America and from European countries with Latin mother tongues. Among the main types of posts of Arcos on Madonna are: 1. connections between the trajectory and the poetic of Madonna with the geography or geopolitics of Cuba; 2. Networking with other Madonna fans; 3. Reporting on Madonna's fan condition without access to the singer's products in the Cuban context. We draw considerations and bring empirical evidence to follow:

¹² Translation to "Cuba también tiene fans para distinguir a la reina del pop".

1) connections between Madonna's trajectory and poetics with Cuba's geography or geopolitics: in this group of posts, it is evident from references to Madonna's songs that would "fit in" to talk about Cuba (as "La Isla Bonita"¹³ and "Vogue") until references to the trajectory of the singer, in analogy to the history of Cuba. The song "La Isla Bonita", released by Madonna in 1986 on the album "True Blue", is the most recurring connection between the singer's fans and the Cuban context. One notices how Alberto also resorts to a series of clichés about Cuba to make comparisons with Madonna. On July 2, 2015, he posts "Madonna: caliente como Cuba", bringing to the surface the tropical imagery of the Caribbean island. The reference to tropicality follows: "Madonna: Un Sol de Verano como Cuba" (July 19, 2015), "Madonna: Luminaria como Cuba" (August 6, 2015). "Un Rayo de Luz como Cuba" (August 30, 2015), "Un huracán como Cuba" (September 30, 2015).

Concomitantly, Alberto adopts the strategy of referring also to the political singularity of Cuba to compare with Madonna. On July 21, 2015, he posted a photo of the singer with the caption: "Madonna: Única como Cuba". Cuba's unique place in world geopolitics seems to be a good key for the journalist to exalt his page as "unique" in the Cuban context. On July 16, 2015, another political reference that connects Madonna with Cuba through the lens of Arcos: "Madonna: Sin Miedo como Cuba", making a veiled reference to the anti-Cuban policy of embargo and restrictions implanted by the United States. In the month of Madonna's birthday, with a photo that resembles Madonna's own warlike configuration, journalist Alberto Arcos attests: "Madonna: Guerrera como Cuba" (August 4, 2017), bringing up the imaginary fighter, present in the image of the album "American Life", when the singer appears on the cover in an image reminiscent of Che Guevara. There are a number of photo postings of Madonna in military outfits, especially in the performances of the track "American Life", when the artist adopted a beret, buskin look and militaristic aesthetic.

Also associating the healthy and energetic lifestyle of Madonna to the sporting trajectory of the socialist island, we can see posts that appear to be in this universe: "Madonna: Recordista como Cuba" (August 23, 2015) and "Madonna: Indomable como Cuba" (September 2, 2015). Leaving the political reference to enter a personal dynamic still connected with the island of Cuba, is the posting of January 31, 2016, in which, before a photograph of Madonna's daughter, Lourdes Maria, the journalist states: "Lourdes, la hija de Madonna es una auténtica bella cubana" ("Lourdes, the daughter of Madonna is an authentic Cuban beauty") (January 31, 2016), establishing the reference that the first daughter of the singer

¹³ Available in: <https://www.facebook.com/Arcos73/posts/859154647491058>.

is the result of the relationship of Madonna with Cuban dancer Carlos León. This set of posts helps to situate the page before a double addressing, from the narrativization of similarities between the singer and the history and politics of Cuba and the private affective bonds from her daughter.

2) Networking with other Madonna fans: this set of posts is often based on shares that Alberto Arcos makes of pages dedicated to Madonna in other countries, in the Cuban context. The journalist's preference for sharing content from Latin American and Latin American-speaking countries, located in Latin America and in Europe, is perceived by the Spanish language. Comes from Mexico the largest number of posts sharing (a total of eight) of the pages "Madonna Mexico", "Madonna MX" and "The Royalty of Pop." With four posts, in second place, the page "Madonna Official Group - Peru" appears, followed by three posts of "Madonna Venezuela". It is noticed that Alberto Arcos also hierarchizes the pages, making posts highlighting some of them, due to its historical importance. When referring to the page "Divina Madonna - Spain", the author emphasizes that the page is very faithful to the "queen of pop", being, along with Madonna, since the extinct Orkut social network in the early 2000s.

The Latin American Madonna fan network formation perspective narrows as of June 6, 2015, when Argentine fan Alejandra Silvia Ludueña suggests that Alberto publish posts featuring the page "Madonna Cuba" in the forum page "Lucky Star Madonna Fans Club Argentina". Surprised, he posted, one day later, thanking Alejandra, that in 24 hours, the page "Madonna Cuba" had 70 "likes". From this contact comes the collaboration of Argentinean fan Lesmack Mesa Parente (from the fan club Madonna Argentina), who gives an illustration of Madonna to Alberto and is duly credited "Arte Madonna by Lesmack (Argentina)". There are sharing posts of English-language sites (Madonna Australia and Material Girl PR-England), Chinese (Madonna China) and Turkish (Madonna Türkiye Official - Turkey). None from the United States.

3) Narrativization of Madonna's fan condition without access to the singer's products: on June 18, 2015, Alberto Arcos surprised the "followers" of the page "Madonna Cuba" with critical content in her post: "Cuban fans within this island we are anxious and disillusioned because there is no way to even see the clip of 'Bitch I'm Madonna'. No downloads, no low quality, no access. Everything is blocked.

Youtube does not even appear. Amen"¹⁴. It is the first time that the journalist uses a critical tone referring to the blockade to Internet and the slow speed, in the Cuban context, including mentioning the possibility of censorship to YouTube that "neither appears". Five days later he regrets, in a post dated June 23, 2015, in which, with a frightened photograph of Madonna, he writes: "This is #Madonna's face to know that her Cuban fans in the island have not yet watched to her latest video 'Bitch I'm Madonna'. YouTube cancels video access in my country. Blocks. Will Madonna know that?"¹⁵. In this same post, a dialogue begins with fans from other countries where Alberto reports the difficulty of being a fan of Madonna in Cuba. For the Spanish Paolo Salas, he testifies at 09:09 pm on June 23: "Dear friend, you can not imagine the suffering of the Cuban fans to see things of our queen." Russian fan Diego Gregoraschuk gives Alberto a suggestion at 9:22 pm on June 23: "Wow, boy! What if you try to see through Vimeo or some other network? There is the Rutube, Russian network. Or else, I come up here and share it with you. Are there things about Madonna in Cuba? Magazines, records, if something edited?", asks the Russian fan. Alberto responds at 11:28 pm on June 23: "Nothing comes here or, if you would send it, it would get lost on the way. But I admire your attitude", referring to his friend's proposal to upload the video on a Russian social network so that Alberto and other Madonna fans in Cuba could watch the music video "Bitch, I'm Madonna".

Final considerations

How to discuss the political affections of fans of singer Madonna in Cuba, faced with a history of geopolitical disputes between Cuba and the United States, but through an agenda that proposes to understand the impasses of interculturality? Affects that are processes that are not easily grouped into the same socioeconomic or cultural series, since they are contradictory, hazy, insecure. Rather than generalize conclusions, we choose to think as phenomena like this help to reformulate questions: what happens to the local, the national and the transnational? What relationships between work, consumption and territory are involved in the articulation between goods and messages? To think about the

¹⁴ Translation to: "Los Fans cubanos dentro de la Isla estamos ansiosos y desilusionados no existe aun una via para poder VER el clip de BITCH I'm MADONNA, nada descarga, nada baja, nada nos da acceso, todo bloqueado, youtube que NO aparece, AMEN". Available in: <https://www.facebook.com/Arcos73/posts/885386048201251>.

¹⁵ Translation to: "Esta es la cara de #Madonna al enterarse que sus Fans Cubanos dentro de la isla aun NO hemos visto su último video, Bitch I'm Madonna. Youtube cancela las vistas al video dentro de mi pais. Lo bloquea. Sabrá MADONNA esto?". Available in: <https://www.facebook.com/Arcos73/posts/885386048201251>.

consumption of American products and artists in Cuba means to discuss, in a broader sense, the numerous labels with Asian identification, US consumer goods or the Argentine and Mexican flags. Canclini states: "the relations between market approaches, political nationalisms and daily inertia of tastes and affections follow divergent dynamics, as if they had not been aware of networks that bring together economics, politics and culture on a transnational scale". (Canclini, 2009, p. 21)

It is about paying attention to the mixtures and misunderstandings that bind the groups, describing how it appropriates the material and symbolic products of others and how it reinterprets them. Not only the mixtures but also the barriers in which they became entrenched. Not only the attempts to combine the differences but also the lacerations that inhabit us. (Canclini, 2009, p.25)

What is a place in globalization? Who speaks and from where? What do the disagreements between games and actors mean, military triumphs and political failures, global diffusion, and creative processes? Important questions to ask in an always diffused context between local contexts and global arrangements. Temporalities and territorialities that are organized, generating singular forms of understanding of cosmopolitanism.

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