PIONEER PAGU: ANALYSIS OF THE COMIC STRIPS PUBLISHED IN *O HOMEM DO POVO*

ÍCARO CARVALHO
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

Abstract: This article analyzes the pioneering comic strips created by Patrícia Galvão (Pagu) for the short-lived Brazilian newspaper/magazine *O Homem do Povo*, in the 1930s. Employing innovative use of sequential art and framed narratives, the development of recurring characters, and the establishment of visual traditions in early Brazilian comics, Pagu engages in critical, ironic, and politically charged commentaries on Brazilian society. This study also aims to question Pagu's role in the modernist movement as "muse," proposing to situate her as a central figure in the history of Brazilian art, being able to anticipate avant-garde themes and innovate in comic strips.
Keywords: Pagu, Patrícia Galvão, Brazilian literature, modernism, comics, pioneer

Resumo: Este artigo analisa as tirinhas criadas por Patrícia Galvão (Pagu) para o efêmero jornal *O Homem do Povo*, na década de 1930. Utilizando de forma inovadora a arte sequencial e as narrativas em quadros, o desenvolvimento de personagens recorrentes e o estabelecimento de tradições visuais nos primórdios dos quadrinhos brasileiros, Pagu tece comentários críticos, irônicos e politicamente engajados sobre a sociedade brasileira. Este estudo também busca questionar o papel de Pagu no movimento modernista como "musa", propondo situá-la como uma figura central na história da arte brasileira, capaz de antecipar temas de vanguarda e inovar no desenho de tiras.
Palavras-chave: Pagu, Patrícia Galvão, literatura brasileira, modernismo, quadrinhos, pioneiro

Often accompanied by a strong nationalist sentiment and a decolonial impulse, the pioneer spirit of poet, writer, designer, and semi-polymath Patrícia Galvão emerges in the comic strips of a very short-lived magazine, *O Homem do Povo* (1931). While the origins of comic books date back centuries, Pagu's contributions to the genre drew particular attention, especially in her

use of sequential art and framed narratives in strips. Thus, this study examines the comic strips written and illustrated by Pagu and published in this short-lived newspaper, where she contributed to the early development of comics in Brazil. Pagu's characters anticipated many of the archetypes that define contemporary comic books. The stories followed recurring characters across different events, gradually shaping their personalities, establishing relationships, and developing narrative arcs—all while establishing a tradition in visual traits, such as clothing, which today seems trivial but was a notable innovation at the time. The trio Kabelluda, Fanika, and Mallakabeça navigate key moments in Brazilian history with critique, irony, and political commentary. Thus, this essay presents the figure of Pagu through her latest biographers and her innovative connection to comic strips during her time at *O Homem do Povo*—where Pagu introduced and anticipated some tropes of the genre.

Pagu: biography

Patrícia Galvão was born in São João da Boa Vista, in 1910, and relocated with her middle-class family to São Paulo when she was very young, in 1913 (Campos 422). In 1928, Pagu received her diploma for public teaching. Emerging in the modernist scene of São Paulo in 1928 at the age of 18 (Freire 29), Pagu was introduced to the couple Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral by the poet Raul Bopp—who dedicated a poem to her[1] (Campos 421), contributing to her image as the "musa antropófaga" (Campos 69). Pagu's artistic education and first interventions into the São Paulo scene was guided by Tarsila do Amaral, who introduced her to modernist techniques of line and color. Pagu became a disciple of Tarsila, dedicating the *Álbum de Pagu* (1929) to her (Campos 14) and collaborating alongside her mentor with drawings and texts for the *Revista de Antropofagia* (Second Edition) (Campos 58, 382). Their relationship, however, suffered a breach due to Pagu's involvement with Tarsila's husband, Oswald de Andrade.

[1] "Coco de Pagu" (*Para Todos*, October 27th, 1928. p.24)
Pagu tem uns olhos mole/ Olhos de não sei o que/ Se a gente está perto dele/ A alma começa a doer
Ai Pagú eh/ Dói porque é bom de fazer doer
Pagú, Pagú,/ Não sei o que você tem/ A gente, queira ou não queira/ Fica lhe querendo bem
Eh Pagú eh/ Dói porque é bom de fazer doer
Você tem corpo de cobra/ Onduladinho e indolente/ Dum veneninho gostoso/ Que dói na boca da gente
Ai Pagú eh/ Dói porque é bom de fazer doer
Eu quero você pra mim/ Não sei se você me quer/ Se quiser ir pra bem longe/ Vou pronde você quiser
Eh Pagú eh/ Dói porque é bom de fazer doer
Mas, se quiser estar perto/ Bem pertozinho daqui/ Então, você pode vir/ Ai... ti ti ti... ri ri ri...ih...
Eh Pagú eh/ Dói porque é bom de fazer doer

Throughout her career, Galvão utilized several pseudonyms, including Mara Lobo (fiction), Solange Sohl (poetry/criticism), Ariel (journalistic columns), and Léonie Boucher (during her militancy in Paris) (Freire 23). By the age of twenty, she had already become a central figure in artistic and political circles with indignation and a desire for social change, eventually joining the PCB, Brazilian Communist Party (Freire 85). In March 1931, together with Oswald de Andrade, she co-founded and co-directed the pamphlet newspaper *O Homem do Povo* (Freire 65), which must be understood within the political milieu of early 1930s Brazil. Following the 1930 Revolution and the ascension of Getúlio Vargas, the revolutionary climate was characterized both by hopes for reform and intensifying repression of oppositional ideologies. *O Homem do Povo* appeared twice weekly as a radical, modernist alternative to the conservative press and could be defined as a pamphlet newspaper and political rag—combining satire, caricature, and populist rhetoric close to the anthropophagic movement (Campos 35, 85). Published in tabloid format (48 by 34 cm) and usually comprising six pages with Art Deco fonts (Campos 132), the publication could be considered a descendant of the *Revista de Antropofagia*'s second edition (Campos 85).

The section "A Mulher do Povo" was especially innovative because it was unlike the normative women's pages of the time, which typically emphasized domesticity, focusing instead on irony, satire, and discussions of gender and politics. Pagu's comic strips published in this section can be understood as both aesthetic innovation and political intervention, challenging conventions of the formal press in the 1930s. Besides contributing to the section with her comics and the newspaper more generally with other illustrations, caricatures, and vignettes, Pagu, via pseudonyms, also criticized the "elite feminists" and dominant classes in bold language (Campos 132). Galvão fiercely opposed the "petit-bourgeois feminism" in vogue in Brazil in the 1930s (Freire 67), arguing the demands of Brazilian feminists were incapable of accounting for the country's socioeconomic reality. Due to Pagu's writings and artistic decisions, "A Mulher do Povo" was integral to the aesthetic and political project of *O Homem do Povo*—fitting within the newspaper/magazine topics by targeting the moral, social, and political hypocrisies of the elite (Campos 133). Although funny with concise narratives, Pagu's comic strips did not function only as entertainment, but also as active interventions into the political and cultural logic of the period—where the very existence of a female cartoonist delivering subversive content in a mass medium was (and still is) a disruptive act.

The publication period of *O Homem do Povo* lasted only eighteen days, ceasing to exist after it was prohibited from circulating by police order in 1931 (Freire 65). This prohibition followed severe incidents on April 9 and 13, 1931, in which law students, resentful from the offensive editorials against the traditional Faculdade de Direito, attempted to destroy the newspaper office (Campos 299). Ultimately, the newspaper relied on Oswald de Andrade, who likely financed it, and genuine advertisements for businesses like Café Paraventi—although some ads were clear counterfeits used for humor or criticism (Campos 85).

Pagu's uniqueness and subversiveness extends beyond the comics and art to the realm of politics also due to the fact that, during the first years of the 1930s, Pagu became noticeable for being the first woman in Brazil to be arrested for political motives (Freire 111)—during a rally protesting the Sacco and Vanzetti execution in Santos (Campos 344). Following her arrest, PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), adhering to an anti-intellectualist "proletarianization" policy, forced her to sign a document declaring herself an "individual agitator, sensationalist and inexperienced," a turning point in her life (Freire 111).

In 1933, pressured by PCB and under political-police surveillance, Pagu traveled abroad intending to reach Moscow to observe the results of the revolution (Freire 18). Acting as an international correspondent for Brazilian newspapers (Campos 344), she also visited the United States, Japan, Manchuria, and Europe. Between 1934 and 1935 in Paris, she joined the anti-fascist *Front Populaire* under the pseudonym Léonie Boucher (Armony 23–24), getting arrested in August 1934 for distributing anti-war leaflets. As a result, Pagu was severely injured, hospitalized, and eventually expelled from France for disseminating propaganda of the Communist Party (Armony 32–33, 96). Back in Brazil, more than enduring repeated arrests, torture, and long imprisonment between 1935 and 1940 (Campos 70), Pagu was also expelled from the PCB in 1939 for "atitudes escandalosas de degenerada sexual" (Armony 97). In 1950, campaigning for the Partido Socialista Brasileiro (PSB), her pamphlet "Verdade e Liberdade" repudiated both the totalizing left and the reactionary right (Campos 51).

Pagu's political trajectory has also influenced her literary production, especially if her first novel, *Parque Industrial* (1933), is taken into account. Published under the pseudonym Mara Lobo, this work is considered the first Brazilian proletarian novel (Campos 343). The PCB condemned the book, despite its intention to prove loyalty to the party's ideals, for its raw depictions of reality including prostitution (Freire 113), and it remained largely forgotten for decades (Freire 115). Later, *A Famosa Revista* (1945), which she co-authored with Geraldo Ferraz, served as a

conceptual opposite of *Parque Industrial*, offering a critique of Communist bureaucracy and machismo while also moving toward stylistic experimentation (Campos 41-42).

After imprisonment, Pagu focused on journalism and literary criticism. From 1946 to 1948 she collaborated on the "Suplemento Literário" of the *Diário de São Paulo*, translating avant-garde texts by authors such as James Joyce, Valéry, and Apollinaire (Campos 43). Through her column "Cor Local," Pagu advocated for artistic rigor and freedom (Campos 44), opposed the politicization of art, and critiqued the "Generation of 45" poets (Campos 45) who pushed poetry to be more formal and traditional—contrary to Pagu's modernist ideas. She also promoted theater, translating works by Eugène Ionesco and Octavio Paz, and defended "vanguarda e pesquisa" against established theatre and narrow nationalism (Campos 49). Ultimately, Patrícia Galvão's importance lies not only in her individual works but in her "vida-obra"—a trajectory defined by artistic, political, and ethical freedom, making her, as Augusto de Campos assesses, "revolucionária permanente das nossas letras e artes" (Campos 15). Her work at the intersection of gender, politics, and aesthetics played with and against dominant narratives—anticipating debates of feminist and arts theories.

Comic Books Innovation and Historical Context

Brazilian comics did not begin with Pagu; in the late nineteenth century, Angelo Agostini contributed to the genre with *As Aventuras de Nhô Quim* (1869) and *Zé Caipora* (1883), which introduced serialized narratives and caricatural humor that engaged readers through visual storytelling. In the early twentieth century, satirical magazines as *Careta* and *O Malho* consolidated caricature as a central medium of political commentary, even though they largely excluded women from authorship and tended to reinforce patriarchal stereotypes. By the 1920s and 1930s, São Paulo's press abounded in humorous drawings, but almost none gave female characters depth or political voice, mimicking society in a way. Thus, Pagu's comics in *O Homem do Povo* are pioneering not because they invented the comic strip, but because Pagu shifted the center of it by focusing on rebellious female protagonist and articulating feminist and avant-garde critiques—far away from happy endings and benevolent super-humans.

In a manner reminiscent of Gregório de Matos Guerra, Pagu's illustrations magnify the flaws and contradictions of Brazilian society, serving as a form of social critique aimed at those in positions of political or economic power. Similarly, Pagu employs her cartoons with a sharp yet subtle critical edge, using caricature's exaggeration of physical features as a means of mockery.

Although São Paulo society is not directly depicted in Pagu's comic strips, its distorted and dysfunctional image lingers in the background of Kabelluda and her uncles' adventures, revealing a not so implicit critique of the universe in which these characters exist.

Like her fellow modernist contemporaries Anita Malfatti and Emiliano Di Cavalcanti, Pagu shifts the focus of her work from the written word to the visual. This departure from logocentrism is evident not only in her handwriting but also in her drawings, which serve as a vehicle for her raw and incisive critique. Much of Pagu's ideological expression is conveyed not through text but through visual composition—how her characters are positioned within the frame, how they interact with surrounding objects, how their bodies respond to unfolding events, and even how their clothing contributes to the construction of their identities.

Thus, in order to fully appreciate the novelty of Pagu's comic production, it is productive to situate her work in a comparative framework that includes both Brazilian and international examples of early 20th-century sequential art. In Brazil, the dominant visual idiom for political satire in the 1920s and 30s was largely adhered to masculinized conventions of caricature, privileging the grotesque over the narrative—rarely portraying female characters with psychological or political depth. In contrast, Pagu's comics not only centered a female protagonist but constructed a serialized narrative that engaged directly with issues of gender, morality, and power—weaponizing the comic strip as a feminist instrument of social critique.

Pagu's contribution also prefigures elements of what would later be theorized as feminist graphic narrative. Her use of bodily expression, serialized character development, and indirect irony anticipates techniques that would become central to the work of artists such as Aline Kominsky-Crumb and Marjorie Henderson Buell or, more recently, Julie Doucet and Marjane Satrapi. Like these authors, Pagu subverts the assumed neutrality of the comic strip's visual form, turning it into a space for political embodiment and narrative dissent. Kabelluda's evolving arc—from rebellious child to politically-aware woman—parallels the feminist coming-of-age story that would dominate late 20th-century graphic memoirs. Yet, Pagu accomplished this decades earlier, and in a far more repressive political context.

Furthermore, Pagu's visual storytelling demonstrates an intuitive understanding of what Scott McCloud would much later theorize as "closure" in comic form—the mental process by which readers connect panels and infer meaning between them. Her strips depend on the reader's capacity to deduce critique from fragmented or ambiguous sequences, a technique that demands active engagement. This capacity to operate across the registers of image, text, and

reader inference situates her work not only as political art but also as sophisticated narrative experimentation—making her comics precursors to modern feminist and decolonial graphic literature by disrupting patriarchal traditions and looking for a reinvention in the Brazilian national art.

Thus, although comics have been around for centuries, Pagu can be identified as a pioneer in Brazil because of her role in employing and integrating comic-strip aesthetics within the avant-garde Brazilian art and journalistic scene— representing a disruptive force in the 1930s. Her work, characterized by its hybridization of genres, can be seen as a point of rupture with academic norms and an active challenge to the dominant-hypocritical-bourgeois society. It is important to notice that Pagu became an emblematic figure also due to her defiant posture, extravagant art, and audacious attitude—which could be interpreted as aligning with the spirit of the modernists. It constituted an early attempt to link verbal and non-verbal,—"symbolic-iconic" (Campos 34)—employing a hybrid language that drew from journalism, cinema, cartoon, and comic strips. This experimentation fit into the contemporary search for Brazilian originality because linking text and drawing was considered an act of discernment and sensibility outside the common range (Campos 60). The variety of her activities, allied especially with the hardships of imprisonment, political repression, and misogyny, make her early reputation as rebellious and eccentric key legacy to understand her pioneering comics.

Analysis of the Comic Strips published in *A Mulher do Povo* in O *Homem do Povo*

Figure 1

Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 1, p. 5.

Beyond her distinctive drawing style—which, despite its cartoonish quality, effectively captures a dynamic movement, as illustrated by the depiction of Kabelluda directing the organization of ideas on a wall (see Figure 1)—, Pagu challenges conventional expectations regarding character nomenclature in Brazilian narratives. The deliberate inclusion of foreign letters such as W, Y, and, particularly, K plays with an amplified sense of nationalism, a phenomenon that once even resulted in the temporary exclusion of these letters from the Brazilian national alphabet. Moreover, the unexpected twist in the final two panels—declaring "O jornal fez enorme sucesso/ O jornal fechou."—further subverts narrative conventions. The phrase "traveling to Fernando de Noronha" also carries evolving connotations: during the Vargas Dictatorship it signified the destination for political prisoners, whereas today it is recognized as a sophisticated tourist attraction.[2] At first glance, one might assume that Kabelluda is embarking on a leisurely journey to a paradisiacal island; however, the contextual cues reveal a much less glamorous destination.

Furthermore, the element of unexpected humor—manifested through such surprising narrative turns—serves as a deliberate shock to the interlocutor, a hallmark of the modernist movement's aspirations. By rejecting the prevailing, this cathartic strategy invites the audience to enter a moment of suspension and critical reflection on the work's underlying proposals, an almost Brechtian pause (Benjamin 159) where the viewer can analyze the whole scene thoroughly. The following excerpt provides further insight into the modernist movement's intentions and the complex role of Pagu, who, for many, was seen merely as the inspirational muse of the movement, thereby overlooking her substantial contributions as an author and pioneer.

> O modernismo marcou a história da nossa literatura pelo seu caráter contestador, polêmico, que teve em Pagu uma musa, uma artista empenhada na pesquisa estética e uma crítica feroz da devesa das revoluções subjacentes ao espírito desta. Mulher de beleza provocante, sensualidade incomum no modo como se enfeitava, seu comportamento era um choque para a São Paulo provinciana do início do século. (Caixeta 60)

[2] The archipelago of Fernando de Noronha, now a tourist destination, was a prison for common and political prisoners from the 18th century until mid-20th century.

The prevailing image of Pagu has often been reduced to that of the modernist muse. Contrary to this oversimplification, I opt to highlight how Pagu was not merely a peripheral figure but a central protagonist in a movement so important for Brazilian art. Her contributions extend beyond any kind of passive inspiration—her work, particularly her comic strips, stands as an essential and innovative component of Brazilian art in the aftermath of the 1922 Week of Modern Art landscape, marked by sharp irony and critical engagement. Brazilian Modernist tendencies could be characterized as dreamlike, symbolic, distorted, monstrous, or hybrid, but also as a revolutionary spirit in breaking from traditional European academicism and a semi-utopian search for a unique, authentic Brazilian national identity through art.[3] Together, these two ideas went back to the anthropophagic practice of eating the foreigner in order to absorb their strength.

One of Pagu's most forward-thinking artistic choices is the consistency of her characters' attire throughout the strips—an approach that remains a defining feature of contemporary comics and animated series. This visual continuity plays a crucial role in shaping the reader's familiarity with the characters and their world. By maintaining a stable cast within a cohesive universe, Pagu establishes narrative expectations based on each character's personality, motivations, and relationships. Over the course of several strips, Kabelluda's identity, as well as her dynamic with her uncles, becomes clear, allowing the audience to anticipate her likely actions while also recognizing moments that challenge or subvert her established traits.

The following drawing illustrates Kabelluda's characteristic appearance:

[3] As presented in "Modernismo Brasileiro: Entre a Consagração E a Contestação" (2013), by Ana Paula Cavalcanti Simioni, *Modernidade em preto e branco* (2022), by Rafael Cardoso, and Unicamp's journal *Remate de Males* (v. 33, n.1-2) 2013.

Figure 2

Galvão, Patrícia. "Impróprio para menores." *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 2, p. 1.

Here, Kabelluda is facing the priest to possibly confess about intimate matters that, according to the Pope, can only be discussed before an official representative of the Church (see Figure 2). One of the points that draws attention is that, if read naively and without any knowledge of the context, there are no critical indications in the strip, as it resembles a booklet of recommendations and nothing more than that. Pagu gives her interlocutor the responsibility of inferring the criticism and irony present in the text and the lines. The priest holds on to the phallic-shaped candle while, with the other hand, he directs Kabelluda to the church—at the same time that the sentence "só o padre pode ministrar educação sexual às crianças" proposes a not-so-subtle sexual entanglement between priests and pupils. From this, we can infer Kabelluda's young age.

This strip not only satirizes the contradiction of religious authority over sexuality but also exposes the contradictions embedded in the pedagogical regimes of the Estado Novo period—which lasted from 1937 until 1945 under the dictatorship of Getúlio Vargas and intended to prevent an imaginary communist coup in Brazil. Pagu's work destabilizes the legitimizing

narratives of social order, showing how seemingly benign institutions participate in the reproduction of patriarchal control.

Once again, we note that young Kabelluda also appears in:

Figure 3

Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 2, p. 6.

Kabelluda's arrival into the family of Malakabeça and Fanika is introduced through the folkloric trope of the stork, reinforcing both her ambiguous youth and the magical, whimsical nature of the trio's universe (see Figure 3). This fantastical premise invites the reader to embrace the boundless possibilities within Pagu's comics, establishing a playful suspension of disbelief that enhances the narrative's engagement. Additionally, the strip establishes the characters' signature outfits, which remain consistent throughout subsequent comics: Fanika in her polka-dot dress, Malakabeça in formal attire, and Kabelluda with a shorter skirt and an elegant Parisian hat. This sartorial continuity further anchors the characters' identities within their world, reinforcing their distinct personalities and visual recognition.

The next strip introduces the arrival of Prince Edward in Brazil and the turmoil it sparks:

Figure 4

Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 3, p. 6.

Kabelluda's "Parisian elegance" directly contrasts with the postures in which the character is presented. In the strip above (see Figure 4), in the first frame, we see the protagonist sitting on top of a tree, subverting gender expectations, in which boys tend to be more adventurous and prone to climbing trees than girls, and, in the last frame, there is Kabelluda holding her arms—almost in a way of demonstrating her own strength. Interestingly, this drawing comes years before the famous "We can do it" from 1943. The strong woman to represent American hope before the Second World War seems to be drawn in the same way that Pagu presents Kabelluda: with her arms exposed as if demonstrating that she is in control of situations.

The platform, or this position of attention, also appears in the following strip:

Figure 5

Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 4, p. 6.

Although laughable, it becomes difficult at a certain point to separate Kabelluda from Pagu, since both have a youthful, revolutionary and pioneering air. If Fanika's niece was arrested and shot, Pagu, in turn, experienced *just* the prison. Researcher Natania Nogueira explains that:

> Em algumas de suas tiras, Kabelluda foi brutalizada e presa, antecipando aquele que seria o futuro de Patrícia Galvão. Pagu foi presa 23 vezes, principalmente por sua militância no Partido Comunista. Sua primeira prisão ocorreu em 23 de agosto de 1931, na cidade de Santos (SP), ao participar de um comício. Durante o protesto, Pagu tentou socorrer um estivador negro, fuzilado pela polícia, diante dos filhos. Era a primeira vez que uma mulher havia sido presa no Brasil, por motivos políticos. Ela foi levada para o cárcere na Praça dos Andradas, cadeia que atualmente abriga um centro cultural que leva o seu nome. (Nogueira 8)

It occurs not only in the quick text and unusual turns "Foi Presa/ Fuzilada/ No terceiro dia ressurgiu dos mortos!", but also in the dramatic features that surround Fanika and Kabelluda. The aunt begs at the shooter's feet at the same time that the niece is completely embarrassed by the gunshot. The arms as outstretched as the legs of the new messiah barely resemble a human figure, while his new faithful hold their hands up to Kabelluda's curses: "now you pay me".

These exaggerated body expressions also appear in:

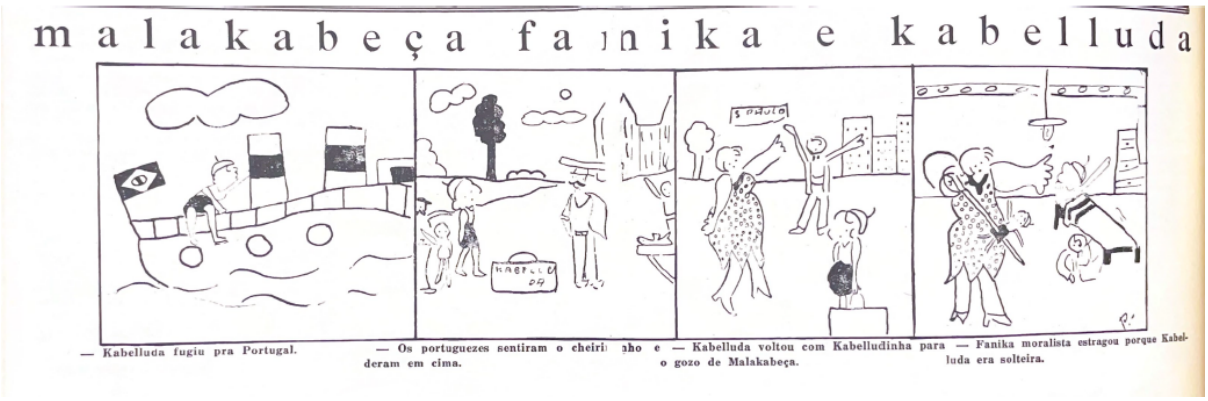
Figure 6

Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 5, p. 6.

Kabelluda's erect and confident posture ends the moment Fanika "on purpose" forbids her from producing this free newspaper (see Figure 6). The way the niece leans over her own body conveys to the interlocutor, in a very dramatic way, all her sadness at not being able to have found her beloved newspaper. Pagu can express through lines the most theatrical emotions we could imagine. One could spend minutes looking at Kabelluda in this second painting, how her crooked spine leans forward, how her arms are below her legs and her head, still elegant, rests on her knees. Kabelluda's sadness is immense, and we feel it through just one drawing – without any mention in words. Kabelluda leans in on herself, almost as I imagine Odysseus' sadness at losing most of his crew during his return home. Greek despair is also present in the protagonist of Pagu.

The protagonist sits on the bow of the ship traveling to Portugal in:

Figure 7



Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 6, p. 6.

In a modernist and decolonial social criticism, style, Kabelluda seems to embody the tropical "scent" of Brazil, drawing the attention of a Portuguese suitor (see Figure 7). However, upon returning to São Paulo—visually marked by towering buildings and a conspicuous sign—Kabelluda, now the daughter of a Portuguese father, faces rejection from Fanika. In the final panel, her reaction escalates to an unprecedented level of brutality, positioning her as a symbol of a particular strain of hypocrisy—one that condemns the social stigma of motherhood outside of wedlock while disregarding Kabelluda's vulnerability as an unwed mother.

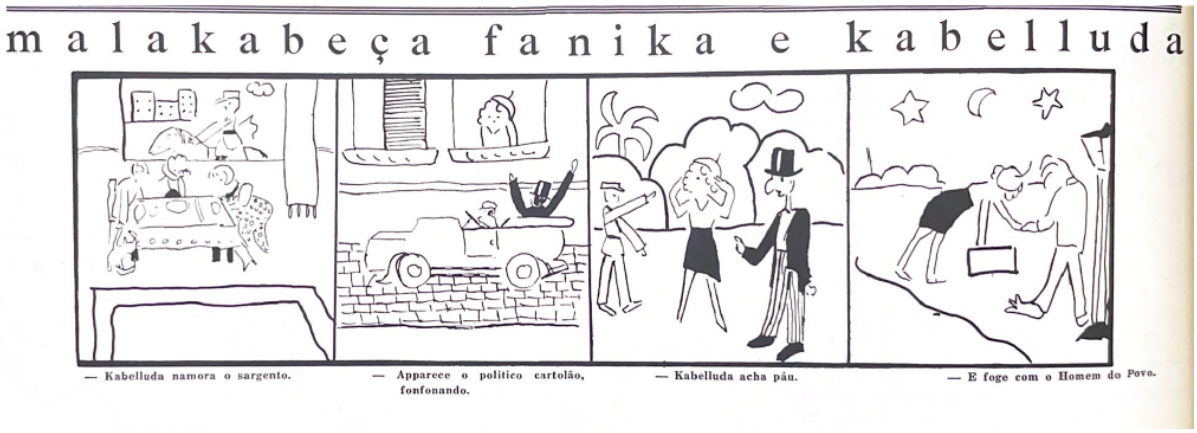
Pagu's work can be situated within some of ideas presented by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui in *Sociología de la imagen: Miradas ch'ixi desde la historia andina* (2015): "El discurso "miserabilista"—que objetiviza a indios y mujeres como víctimas sufridas, sometidas a la explotación y tributarias

de una identidad y protagonismo ajenos– logra sumirlxs en el anonimato colectivo de su condición de colonizadxs, privándoles de una posición de sujetxs de la historia" (151). Cusicanqui also presents the "descolonización de la mirada" (23), a dismantling of colonial visuality that has historically rendered women, particularly those from the Global South, as passive subjects to be exploited—or mere muses to evoke a term often used by critics to describe Pagu. It is possible to notice how her female characters are engaged and able to take part into the central stage of this fictitious Brazilian society, rather than assuming a secondary position—like the one Pagu was placed for a couple of decades after the modernist movement. In positioning Kabelluda not just as a protagonist but as a politically active subject with desires, Pagu offers a reconfigured visuality where women speak, act, suffer, and resist in historically specific ways. This is a radical gesture in both political and artistic terms, especially considering the overwhelmingly masculinist and Eurocentric bent of Brazilian modernism.

While earlier strips relied on dark humor—such as Kabelluda being shot, imprisoned, resurrected, or exiled to Fernando de Noronha—this particular sequence lacks the same comedic relief. Instead, Fanika's act of piercing the child's body with a sharp object evokes unsettling imagery, possibly alluding to the violence associated with abortion or to the conscriptions of societal expectations. In the end, the uncle fades into near insignificance, reduced to a mere shadow within the family dynamic, while Aunt Fanika emerges as the rigid moral authority, imprisoning Kabelluda within the restrictive customs of 1930s São Paulo.

The protagonist's love life follows:

Figure 8



Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 7, p. 6.

At first glance we can see how hectic Kabelluda's love life would be, especially considering the historical context of São Paulo in the 1930s. Far from Fanika's moralism, Kabelluda explores her sexual freedom until she can decide about her partner, also based on political preferences (see Figure 8). Control over one's own body, emancipation, and the clash with traditional ideals, which also marked the Pagu's life, could easily be 21st-century themes. Pagu was at the vanguard of both comic book artistry in 1930s Latin America and the social themes examined in her works, but it also extends to the themes she chose to discuss in her comics and her novels, such as *Parque Industrial* (1933). Through just four comics, we see how Kabelluda, if transposed to contemporary moment, would likely have clashes with thousands of Fanikas throughout her career.

Moreover, the last comic depicts Kabelluda's trip to university, which indicates a certain chronological order in the strips beginning with her arrival through the arms (or wings) of the stork through this arrival at university (see Figure 9). However, the protagonist's stay at the educational institution seems to be shorter than expected, considering her discussion with the educational representative.

Figure 9

Galvão, Patrícia. "malakabeça fanika e kabelluda" *O Homem do Povo*, ed. 8, p. 6.

This marks the end of the analysis, as the newspaper *O Homem do Povo* ended after a brief, but intense and troubled life, where Pagu, in addition to drawing comic strips, also was responsible for other roles in the newspaper, such as publisher and as a columnist. Scholar Francisco Carlos Ribeiro, in his doctoral thesis at PUC-SP, briefly comments on the impact of

the newspaper on São Paulo society and, also, a little bit about Pagu's motivations as chief, editor, creator, designer, columnist, etc., in *O Homem do Povo*:

> Não à toa, com essa linguagem agressiva em relação a igreja, às autoridades, aos costumes, ao imperialismo, ao colonialismo cultural da sociedade em geral, o jornal recebeu forte reação, que culminou com o seu já mencionado fechamento. Porém, a orientação jornalística era revestida de muito humor, apelando, às vezes, para uma comicidade mais rasteira. Posteriormente, em suas memórias Pagu afirmou que "não havia muita convicção... mas muito entusiasmo... sem discrição, mais de revolta acintosa." (Ribeiro 118-119)

Finally, based on these close readings, we can notice how political and critical Pagu's strips were, especially when considering the decade of the 1930s. In another recent study on the critical and feminist aspect of Pagu, scholar Jessica Ferrara discusses similar topics more focused to women's perspective. If female protagonism is still being discussed, especially in large productions, Pagu gives Kabelluda the stage not only to be shot and resurrected, but to speak for herself and for those unable to have their voices heard. Per Ferrara:

> Conclui-se que Pagu tomou para si as tirinhas, formato tipicamente cômico e rápido que procurava criticar a vida cotidiana, e inseriu uma protagonista mulher, militante política e autônoma, fato que muda totalmente a perspectiva da cotidianidade. Se as críticas contidas em tirinhas eram direcionadas ao modo de vida das pessoas em geral, quase nunca se valiam do modo de vida das mulheres, tanto porque eram pouco vistas como pessoas no sentido completo do termo, quanto porque eram impedidas de agir ativamente na sociedade que as cercavam. (Ferrara 17)

Pagu's comic production invites a layered theoretical reading that transcends literary or art historical analysis alone. Her visual narratives intersect meaningfully with key concepts in feminist theory, decolonial critique, and media studies. From a feminist standpoint, her work aligns with what Hélène Cixous termed *écriture féminine*—a mode of writing (and by extension, visual storytelling) that seeks to dislodge patriarchal structures embedded in language and representation. Cixous' considerations speak directly to Pagu's pioneer actions, in a "masculine-economy" (Cixous 879). Pagu played with phallocentric tradition throughout her work, but

specially at "A Mulher do Povo," contraposing this "self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallocentrism" (Cixous 879) with her comic strips.

Although Cixous focused primarily on textual production, her analysis proves relevant to understanding Pagu's visual style and language, which, taken together, similarly undermine normative gendered codes by granting the female body agency, grotesquerie, irony, and even sacrilege. Pagu's literary and artistic work did not fit into this "phallocentric tradition" of literature, having been historically seen as a "muse" of Brazilian modernist movement and segregated to a second tier of the movement, below her male counterparts. However, Kabelluda's exaggerated expressions, her bold physical stances, and her transgressions of social decorum enact a visual *écriture*, where the female body is both sign and site of resistance. Similarly, from a decolonial perspective, Pagu's artistic choices challenge the cultural hegemony of Eurocentric norms. The deliberate use of marginalized forms—comic strips, grotesque exaggeration, informal language—positions her within what Walter Mignolo might call *border thinking*: a practice that emerges from the margins of modernity/coloniality and resists assimilation into dominant epistemologies. Acknowledging that "it requires first of all delinking from hegemonic epistemology—'absolute knowledge'—and the monoculture of the mind in its Western diversity" (Mignolo xvii), Pagu writes from a colonial border. She is centered on the verge of a new artistic expression that precisely intends to curate a true national art. Thus, Pagu begins her trajectory in one side of the border and ends at the other.

Her frequent invocation of foreign letters (K, W, Y) and absurd narrative turns can be read as symbolic refusals of nationalist linguistic purification, an implicit critique of the homogenizing tendencies of both authoritarian politics and cultural nationalism. By making these elements central to her visual and textual style, Pagu inscribes a decolonial aesthetics that undermines hegemonic models of language, gender, and genre, presenting colonial wounds through expressions (Jilani 1584) and breaking free from Western artistic canon—creating art that may antagonize this tradition, but absolutely not defined by it (Smiet 80). In Pagu's work, different forms of artistic expression do coexist.

Lastly, in terms of multi-arts, Pagu's comics anticipate contemporary understandings of the strip as a "vernacular modernism" (Hansen 60), a form that merges high-concept aesthetic strategies with popular and accessible formats, "because the term vernacular combines the dimension of the quotidian, of everyday usage, with connotations of discourse, idiom, and dialect, with circulation, promiscuity, and translatability" (60). By nesting avant-garde critique

within a popular medium, Pagu disrupts the dichotomy between elite and mass culture. Her work thus exemplifies an early form of critical media praxis: using the tools of the culture industry to expose and destabilize the main ideology. As Néstor García Canclini defines in a *Hybrid Cultures,* Pagu can be described as one of the "amphibious artists, capable of articulating cultural movements and codes of different origins. … possible to fuse the cultural heritages of a society, critical reflection about their contemporary meaning, and the communicational requirements of mass diffusion" (272).

Pagu's comic strips are marked by a deliberate economy of sentences and drawings that end up providing a deep understanding of how visual minimalism can amplify political meaning. Her use of sparse backgrounds and exaggerated bodily gestures allows the human figure—particularly the female body—to emerge as the primary locus of affect, resistance, and irony. In visual terms, the uncluttered panels focus the reader's attention on posture, facial expression, and costume, all of which become carriers of narrative and ideological significance. Rather than relying on verbal exposition, Pagu's strips often communicate complex emotions—humiliation, defiance, sorrow—through visual cues alone, thus reorienting the reader's interpretive work toward a more embodied form of understanding: "The basic question, which goes beyond this exhibit, is how this aggregate of symbolic traditions, formal procedures, and mechanisms of distinction that is called high art is reconverted when it interacts with the majority population under the rules of those who tend to be its most effective communicators: the culture industry" (García Canclini 73).

The formal properties of her strips also help to draw attention to their seriality. Characters like Kabelluda are recognizable not only through their names or dialog but through consistent sartorial and corporeal traits: hats, dresses, stances, and facial expressions that serve as both identifiers and thematic reinforcements. This technique of visual consistency mirrors the logics of branding and repetition seen in popular media, but Pagu subverts this by loading these visual motifs with political content. In other words, visual continuity becomes a vehicle for ideological disruption. Kabelluda's persistent elegance in dress, even when subjugated, arrested, or mocked, contrasts with the violence or absurdity of her circumstances, emphasizing the tension between appearance and power.

The exaggerated proportions and postures in Pagu's figures also echo the techniques of caricature, similar to the ones painted by Tarsila do Amaral, but with a distinct emotional range. Unlike traditional political caricatures that aim primarily at ridicule, Pagu's grotesque forms

oscillate between humor and pathos. For example, a bent spine or an elongated arm may provoke laughter in one panel and sympathy in the next. This ambivalence is a key feature of her visual language: her comics engage the reader emotionally without collapsing into sentimentality or didacticism. The capacity to hold irony and compassion together is part of what makes her visual storytelling so innovative. Finally, Pagu's paneling eschews rigid grid structures in favor of dynamic compositions that mimic the emotional flux of her characters. Angled perspectives, disproportionate frames, and inconsistent visual rhythm invite the reader to participate in the interpretive act, rather than passively consume content.

Conclusion

In 2016, on International Women's Day, Pagu was honored with a stamp entitled "Pagu Comics," with the aim of exalting the creations of women comic artists. The publishing imprint, which contributed to the memory of Pagu's pioneering spirit, continues to have active publications until 2025. It is worth noting how Pagu's memory as a comic book artist appears to be revisited beyond the figure of "muse of Brazilian modernism" both by cultural media and academic researchers—such as Heloisa Pontes, Mariza Corrêa, K. David Jackson, Luiz Fernando Valente, and Patrícia Lino.

The comic strips of Patrícia Galvão, published in the ephemeral pages of *O Homem do Povo*, offer not merely an aesthetic curiosity or a footnote in the history of Brazilian modernism, but a critical archive of resistance, imagination, and ideological subversion. By mobilizing the format of the comic strip—often dismissed as frivolous or apolitical—Pagu inserted a disruptive feminist voice into the visual culture of 1930s Brazil. Her serialized narratives, steeped in irony and theatrical exaggeration, succeeded in both critiquing dominant power structures and modeling alternative forms of female subjectivity. Through Kabelluda and her universe, Pagu constructed a visual lexicon that was at once grotesque and graceful, absurd and incisive, lighthearted and deeply political. The implications of this intervention reach far beyond the moment of their publication. In her pioneering fusion of political content and popular form, Pagu not only anticipated later developments in feminist and decolonial visual theory, but also challenged the hierarchies of value that continue to shape literary and artistic canons. Her comics demonstrate how mass media can serve as a terrain of ideological struggle, capable of disrupting conventional narratives around gender, nationhood, and cultural legitimacy. In doing so, she

crafted an alternative genealogy of modernism—one that is irreverent, embodied, and distinctly Brazilian.

As contemporary academic research continues to recover and reassess marginalized voices in literary and visual history, Pagu's work remains a potent reminder that artistic innovation often begins at the margins: in the laugh of a caricature, the tilt of a hat, the absurdity of a punchline. Her comics are not only artifacts of an avant-garde past but templates for a radical, visual storytelling still urgently needed in the present. Through her comics, Pagu discusses the society in which she was inserted: patriarchal, provincial and hypocritical. Like a star in constant expansion, her image goes beyond mere muse for modernist poets. As an author and activist, Patrícia Galvão argues in favor of not only greater political participation by women, but also explores art in a way that encourages bittersweet reflections. Pagu's pioneering spirit goes beyond being a comic artist, author, activist, writer. In a way, Pagu was also a pioneer in the art of being a political prisoner.

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