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The Invented Tradition of Forro:
A 'Routes' Ethnography of Brazilian Musical 'Roots'

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*The Invented Tradition of Forró:
A 'Routes' Ethnography of Brazilian Musical 'Roots'*

A dissertation presented

by

Megwen May Loveless

to

The Anthropology Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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The Invented Tradition of Forró:
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Abstract

Framed as a traditional Brazilian music that represents a rural and bucolic past, *forró* is actually a dynamic style that has been transformed over years of creative refractions and has developed into several different genres in both rural and urban settings. My project seeks to explore the phenomenon of a roots revival as it relates to the migratory cycles of increasingly mobile communities. I argue here that, like many cultural products throughout 20th century Latin America, *forró* music and dance have become an ideological tool, accessed by Brazilians in the context of a post-modern and deterritorialized urbanity with increasing influences from abroad. The narratives common to the *forró* music-scape represent an imagined community through which Brazilians build bridges to access an imagined past in the hinterlands, untouched by modern mass media and the intimidating forces of globalization. Ironically, it is through a masterful network of mass media that contemporary citizens access this turn inward toward an imagined pre-modern community. Seen through the lens of the iconic folds of the accordion, the music of *forró* suggests that an increasingly cosmopolitan and globalized Brazil is creating a discourse which makes it possible to participate in a global economy while maintaining a tightly-knit sense of place.

My multi-sited research demonstrates that at this exciting crossroads to the new millennium, *forró* music in Brazil has become emblematic of how nations are

confronting the post-modern concerns brought by intensified globalization – and that popular music has become a lexicon through which Brazilians position themselves within local, regional, national, and international identities. The reverberations of forró's *zabumba* drum can now be heard from rural Pernambuco to outdoor shows in Rio to underground clubs in New York City. Though forró artists across these far-flung sites are perpetually composing and creating new content, a few treasures of the genre continue to be re-interpreted in a standardized canon of forró which, when replicated, allows a post-modern Brazil free admission to its traditional roots.

Table of Contents

Title page	i
Copyright page	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Glossary	ix
CHAPTER 1. Forró: An Age-Old Music of the New Millenium	1
“Os Brasis:” Discovering a Brazilian Identity through Dualist Categories	5
Celebrating Hybridity: Brazilian Music Scholarship	13
Forró Pé-de-Serra: Forró Music in its Most “Traditional” Setting	22
Forró For All?: The Etymology of Forró	32
Methodology and Preparation	37
Synopsis	52
CHAPTER 2.	
The Role of Music in the Construction of Brazilian Nationalism	55
<i>Os Brasis</i> : Early Settlement of the Portuguese Colony	56
Modernismo: a New Moment for the Nation	60
Oswald de Andrade: the <i>enfant terrible</i> of Modernismo	65
Mário de Andrade: the Modernist Musicologist	73
Gilberto Freyre and the Perception of Race in Brazil	84
Gétúlio Vargas and the Rise of Brazilian Nationalism	93
Musical Nationalism under Vargas	99
A Brief History of Brazilian Music	105
Conclusion: the ‘Unmodern’ Modernists	115
CHAPTER 3. Invented Tradition: The Nordeste as a Constructed Space	118
Invented Tradition and the <i>Nordeste do Brasil</i>	121
Saudade, <i>Meu Remédio é Cantar</i>	126
Geography and Settlement of the Sertão	136
The ‘Origin’ of a Species: Euclides da Cunha and the <i>Sertanejo</i> Archetype	144
Re-centering the Periphery: Regionalism	149
Literatura das Secas: the Novel Sertão	154
The Seca and the Nordeste	156
Imagining the Sertão	164
The ‘Authentic’ Sertão	169
São João: the Model Nordeste	177
Inventing Tradition: The Role of Nordestinos in Their Invented Tradition	188
Conclusion: Laying Roots and Routes Across the Nordeste	191
CHAPTER 4. Luiz Gonzaga: Performing the Nordeste	194
Young Gonzaga: The Early Foundations of Forró	196
A New Sound: Performing with a Pernambucan Accent	203
1945: Rio’s Samba vs. ‘Música Regional’	209

Gonzaga's Baião: Collaborating with Humberto Teixeira	213
Gonzaga's Sertão: the 'Nordeste' as a Discursive Space	222
Gonzaga's Performance: Staging a 'Country Bumpkin' Identity	227
Unearthing a Soundtrack to Migration: Zé Dantas Delivers <i>Saudade</i>	239
Gonzaga's Mid-Life Crisis: the 'Ostracism' Years	246
Resurgence: Forró Comes Full Circle	250
Conclusion: Gonzaga's 'Roots' Discourse Takes 'Route'	258
CHAPTER 5. Recife's Roots Revival	262
Recife: A Bustling Colonial Center	264
Afro-Brazilian Musical Influences in and around Recife	267
The Arab Influence of Music in the Northeast of Brazil	269
Recife: The Stagnating Scene of a Newly Industrialized City	278
Mangue Beat: A New Music Scene in Recife	280
Post-Mangue: The Development of <i>A Nova Cena Musical</i>	289
Forró Estilizado: Popular Culture Goes "Pop"!	298
Recife Today	313
A 'Nova Cena' Agora – Recife's Contemporary Music Scene	316
Conclusion: The Role of Roots in Recife's Musical Revival	326
CHAPTER 6. <i>Retirantes</i> and <i>Universitários</i> in Rio de Janeiro	330
Migration as an Age-Old Trope of the Nordeste	332
Brazil: The Urbanization of a Nation	339
Ai, Ai, Saudade Dói: The Migrant Experience	345
Feira de São Cristóvão	352
Nordestino Discrimination	364
The Growth of the Forró Scene in Rio de Janeiro	369
Forró Universitário	371
"Taste": The Social 'Uses' of Forró	384
Conclusion: Rooting for Meaning in Rio's Forró Universitário	394
CHAPTER 7. New York: Forró in a Transnational Setting	396
The "New" Global Age	397
<i>Brazucas</i> in New York	409
New York's Latest <i>Febre</i> : Forró in the Big Apple	427
100% <i>Mistura</i> : Forró Audiences in New York	437
"Discovering" Forró: Outsider Politics	448
Hybrid Forró: 'Roots' Discourse in New York	455
Conclusion: Forró's Routes In and Out of New York	459
CHAPTER 8.	
<u>International Migratory Routes: Bearing the Fruits of Brazilian Roots Music</u>	463
Interview Question Templates	474
Bibliography	476
Discography	496
Videography	503

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Glossary

Aboiado: a melancholy and monotonous tune, said to be calming, which is sung or hummed by cowboys to their herds of cows as they transport them across vast expanses.

Agogô: A metal instrument with two cone- or bell-shaped ends, connected by a U-shaped metal band. When played in succession, it creates two different musical notes. Its name is said to derive from “agog” in Jeje-Nagô while it is also said to be related to the “ngonge” (a Bantu-language name for a similar instrument) and it is often used in Xangô religious ceremonies (similar to Candomblé ceremonies in Bahia). See Guerra Peixe for more details.

Agreste: a geographic region suspended between the fertile zona da mata region of the Northeast and the harsher sertão.

Alfaia: The bass drums used in maracatu musical processions. Alfaia (from Arabic) is a term also meaning adornment.

Anthropophagy: a nationalist theory popularized by Oswald de Andrade in his 1928 “Manifesto Antropôfago,” speaking to the power of Brazilians to create national/nationalistic art for export by cannibalizing foreign cultural imports and imbuing them with a special Brazilian uniqueness.

Arraial (pronounced *ah-hai-aow*): rustic fair.

Arrasta-pé (pronounced *ah-has-tah-pay*): fast march-link dance and music genre that is generally included in the forró complex.

Axé Music (pronounced *ah-shay*): commercial music genre from Bahia that often emphasizes the sound of blocos afro in a pop format.

Baiano: fast duple-meter dance and music genre that is considered a forebear to the baião and, later, forró.

Baião (pronounced *by-aww*): the northeastern syncopated duple meter dance/music genre made popular by Luiz Gonzaga in 1946; the first genre to form the forró complex.

Balanceio: an early northeastern dance rhythm that influenced the *baião* of Luiz Gonzaga, played by groups made up of zabumba, accordion, pífaros and triangle players. See Tinhorão “Pequena História.”

Banda de pífano: a band that plays in northeastern traditional style and generally includes at least two pífanos (fifes), one zabumba drum and a snare drum. Also referred to as *cabaçal*, *musical cabaçal* or *música de couro*.

Baque: A synonym for *toque*, or beat. Most commonly used to describe what part of the beat is emphasized in the maracatu musical tradition. See *maracatu*.

Bombar: literally, “to bomb.” However, it refers to the moment a venue gets really packed and hot. When an event is “bombando,” it is “hopping.” Note that the word is related to “bombo,” another word for a drum. The implication is that a hot rhythm makes the place pop.

Bombo: see zabumba.

Bossa nova: a musical genre dating from the 1960s known for its innovative fusion of North American jazz and samba

Brazuca: a nickname Brazilians use to refer to any Brazilian living in the United States

Brega: a person of bad taste or, more recently, a genre of romantic music from the Northeast which features dancing similar to forró. The word originated from a street sign in the red light district of Salvador, Bahia. Over time, the first two letters of the name Nóbrega were obscured by oxidation, leaving people to declare only that they were going “into the brega.”

Bumba-meu-boi: an all-night musical theater that features a cast of characters who witness the killing and subsequent resuscitation/resurrection of a bull. A deeply entrenched tradition in the Northeast, the bumba-meu-boi is reenacted regularly, particularly in rural areas. See John Murphy, “Performing a Moral Vision.”

Caatinga (pronounced *kah-ching-gah*): often used as a synonym of the sertão, caatinga refers to the areas of low-lying scrubbrush. The word is a Tupi (indigenous) expression from *caá*, vegetation and *tinga*, white.

Cabeludos: a group of young rockers including Alceu Valença and Moraes Moreira (among others) in the late 1970s and early 1980s who brought about a surge of interest in Luiz Gonzaga’s regionalist tunes. Their name (“cabeludos”) refers to their hippy aesthetic with long locks of hair.

Cabra: a term commonly applied to the child of mulatto/black parents and commonly invoked in the lyrics of forró pé-de-serra to refer to a male (usually of rural origin) of the lower class. See also: Ribeiro 151, Da Cunha 103, Câmara Cascudo 1939:115.

Cabroeira: a group of *cabras*, understood to be a bunch of rabblers.

Caipira: a country bumpkin generally from southern Brazil (as opposed to the sertão). Música caipira has many similarities to the music of the sertão and Northeast (including use of the viola) but is considered a quite separate genre from forró.

Cangaceiro: the renegade bandits who roamed the Northeast during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. While widely feared and reviled, these bandits were also championed as heroes (particularly in oral literature and literatura de cordel) because they sought to avenge the social inequalities that were entrenched in the land tenure system of the sertão.

Cangaço (pronounced *kahn-gah-soo*): the tradition of banditry that existed in the Northeast until the 1930s.

Cantadores: troubadours of the sertão who peddled improvised poetry and song.

Canudos: a religious community established in 1893 in rural Bahia by Antonio Conselheiros which eventually grew to number 30,000 people (the second-largest city in the entire state). Soon after the settlement began, however, local and state officials set to destroy it out of fear of their independence and potential for revolt and in the name of order and progress. Its annihilation by government forces during four attacks is treated in gruesome detail in the classic “Os Sertões” by Euclides da Cunha.

Capoeira: the Afro-Brazilian martial art dance form that is said to have developed on slave plantations or in runaway slave communities.

Carioca: a native of Rio de Janeiro.

Cariri: both a region with the northeastern sertão and the name of the indigenous group that settled there; often used as a synonym of the sertão.

Cavalo-Marinho: a musical theater tradition, particularly popular in the zona da mata of Pernambuco, that resembles bumba-meu-boi. In it, several characters re-enact the popular story while audiences gather to participate in what becomes an all-night musical festival. See Murphy “Performing a Moral Vision” for additional information.

Chamego: a musical genre, also called xamego, included in the forró complex. The word also refers to an amorous affair.

Choro: an instrumental music developed in Rio de Janeiro in the late nineteenth century which is closely related to samba. Also called chorinho.

Ciranda: a circular dance in which audience members participate. Said to derive from the Arabic word “çarand,” it is thought to have been brought to Brazil via Spain and Portugal through Moorish influence. See Lélis 17.

Côco: a music and dance genre included in the forró complex. The same term denotes “coconut” in Portuguese, and more than one ethnomusicologist has suggested that the côco began as a work song of black slaves and/or freemen while breaking up coconuts for food and/or building material. See Freyer 107.

Conjunto Regional: generally a “traditional” northeastern Brazilian band composed of accordion, triangle and zabumba. Also called a trio.

Desafio: challenge singing verses, often improvised and intricately rhyming.

Embolada: a northeastern poetry tradition in which words are recited very quickly. Often compared to North American rap music, it is valued for its improvised and rhythmic complexity and often includes alliteration and onomatopoeic effects. .

Embranquecimento: miscegenation or whitening, a policy widely encouraged throughout the 1800s and early 1900s in Brazil.

Embratur: Brazil’s national tourism board.

Fado: a music that demonstrates the back-and-forth exchange of cultural content across the Atlantic; fado originated in the early twentieth century musical fusions of Brazil, was transported to Portugal, and became consolidated as perhaps the genre today most identified with Portugal.

Fazenda: plantation.

Feijoada: a traditional Brazilian stew of black beans and meat, served alongside rice, manioc flour and collard greens.

Feira de São Cristóvão: often called the “market of the Paraíba,” it is a sprawling marketplace in Rio de Janeiro which emerged in 1945 at the drop-off point for buses and trucks arriving with migrants from the Northeast. It has recently expanded to occupy a giant center which includes 700 stalls, two live music stages and countless other cultural spaces for sharing Northeastern products and traditions.

Festas Juninas: the month-long festivities dedicated to a triad of Catholic Saints: Saint John (June 24), Saint Peter (June 29), and Saint Anthony (13 June). The festival, often associated with the harvest, is celebrated with corn puddings and cakes, fruit liquors, forró music and *quadrilha* dancing.

Flagelado: drought victims of Brazilian Northeast

Fole (pronounced *foh-lee*): synonym for accordion. Also referred to as sanfona.

Forró (pronounced *foh-hoh*): a specific northeastern rhythm of music/dance but also a musical complex which includes xote, baião, arrasta-pé and xaxado rhythms.

Forró estilizado: a genre of forró that arose in the 1990s and includes synthesizers (in place of the accordion) and drum sets and is highly perceived to be a commercial (as opposed to “traditional”) genre.

Forró pé de serra: considered the most “traditional” genre of forró, that most similar to the roots music that Luiz Gonzaga would have grown up listening to. It is played widely across the Northeast as well as in several venues in cities of the South.

Forró universitário: a genre of forró that emerged in the 1990s in the southern cities of Itaúnas, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro (among others). Musically it is quite similar to forró pé-de-serra, differentiating only in its addition of bass guitar, though its dance has a more formalized ballroom style than pé-de-serra dance.

Forrobodó: a old-time dance party with abundant food and drink which is most likely the origin of the term “forró.”

Forrozar: to dance forró.

Forrozeiro/a: a forró dancer; in different parts of Brazil this could be an enthusiast or a nearly professional dancer

Frevo: a fast carnival march from Recife similar to the arrasta-pé and often celebrated with frenetic dancing

Ganzá: a metal rattle or shaker. Also called mineiro, bage or reco-reco. See Murphy, “Performing a Moral Vision,” 88.

Gonguê: see *agogô*.

Iê-iê-iê: the nascent rock movement in Brazil of the late 1960s, also called *jovem guarda*, or young guard, a play on the “old guard” of traditional samba musicians. The name iê-iê-iê comes from the famous refrain by the Beatles: “she loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah.”

Jovem guarda: see iê-iê-iê.

Lambada: an international dance craze initiated by the success of Kaoma’s 1988 hit “Lambada.” Although widely recognized as a Brazilian band, Kaoma was in fact a hodgepodge of international players (largely Senagalese band members, French music producers, and a tune actually of Andean origin) that nonetheless brought the world’s attention to the erotic music and dance traditions of the North of Brazil. Lambada was a quickly passing trend, but its legacy can be seen and heard today in forró estilizado and brega styles.

Lampião (1900-1938): a bandit who terrorized the northern states for nearly two decades with a unique and perverse form of violence and became the most famous *cangaceiro* in Brazilian history.

Latifúndio: a land-tenure system long in place throughout the Northeast of Brazil (and much of Latin America) which concentrates land holdings in the hands of the wealthy, creating deep fissures and inequality between upper and lower classes.

Literatura de cordel: poetry pamphlets whose front covers are decorated with woodprints. Strung along booths in northeastern markets, they sell widely and function as ways for even historically illiterate communities to enjoy circulating local publications.

Lundu: an early syncopated dance music that (along with the *modinha*) was central in the development of Brazilian samba.

Malandro: a hustler or rogue; while considered a negative stereotype of Brazilian society, malandros also achieved near-hero status during the early stage of samba through celebratory music lyrics.

Malandragem: the act of hustling.

Mamulengo: a musical puppet play.

Mangue (pronounced *mahn-gee*) **Beat:** a major cultural movement started in 1990 by Chico Science and Fred 04 in Recife which called for musicians to blend local and international sounds, ultimately creating a new genre of Brazilian music in which rock/punk/rap/ragamuffin can be heard alongside embolada/côco/maracatu influences.

Mandacaru: the most famous type of cactus native to the sertão. Its etymology is hotly contested. See Clovis Monteiro 121, Guerra-Peixe 26.

Maracatu: a genre of music that features alfaia bass drum, caixa snare drums as well as the agogô bell, ganzá shaker and abá percussive gourd. Typically, this dynamic style is featured during processions which present the King, Queen and retinue of the maracatu “nation.” Presently, there are two main types of maracatu, the *baque-virado* or turned-beat, and the *baque-solto* or free beat. “Turned beat” refers to the rapid spinning of the drumsticks before they strike the drumhead and is a more common style in and around the cities of Recife and Olinda, while the *baque-solto*, also known as *maracatu de orchestra*, features brass instruments and has become closely associated with the *zona da mata*, or rural sugar-cane region along the coast of northeastern Brazil.

Maxixe (pronounced *mah-shee-shee*): a mixture of the Brazilian lundu with imported polka and Cuban habanera. As Mário de Andrade’s student Oneyda Alvarenga describes maxixe, “the European polka gave it its movement, the Cuban habanera its rhythm, popular Afro-Brazilian music its characteristic syncopation, and the Brazilian generally gave it its essence of originality: its particular way of being sung and played.” Alvarenga 335-6. In practice, however, it was not necessarily easily

differentiated from the *lundu*, the *tango brasileiro* (not to be confused with the Argentine tango) or other Brazilian versions of the polka.

Marcha/marchinha: a quick-tempo Brazilian march in binary meter.

Matuto: a hillbilly.

Mestiçagem: racial mixing (*mestizaje* in Spanish).

Modinha: considered the first song form of Brazilian national origin. A fusion of the Portuguese *moda* with the Brazilian *lundu*.

Movimento Armorial: an erudite artistic movement led by the well-known writer Ariano Suassuna in the 1970s that attempted to revitalize the folk traditions of the Northeast and to curtail new hybrid fusions that included foreign influence.

MPB: *música popular brasileira*, a popular genre of Brazilian music that arose in the 1960s and has become entrenched as one of the most “authentic” genres of the nation, in part because of its appealing sounds and in part because of a Brazilian hierarchy of authenticity that privileges samba (a major component of MPB) and musics of folkloric origin.

Novena: an all-night religious ritual given in honor of a saint and often accompanied by religious, then secular (*forró*) music.

Paraíba: a person from the northeastern state of Paraíba; also a pejorative term for any northeastern migrant in the South.

Pau-de-arara: a term for the trucks that carried northeastern migrants to the South on a treacherous journey; also a pejorative term for northeastern migrants.

Pífano: a fife, also called *pife* or *pifaro*, which is commonly played in drum-and-fife bands (and occasionally triangle or accordion).

Povo: the people or the masses.

Quadrilha: a dancing tradition similar to English contra dancing, *quadrilha* dancing is a popular tradition during *festas juninas*, when massive competitions are organized across the Northeast. Dancers generally wear elaborate costumes (which stress a country aesthetic) and follow calls from a leader, such as “do-si-do,” “sashay,” etc.

Rabeca: fiddle of Portuguese origin, commonly employed in the musical theater tradition *cavalo-de-marinho* and also employed in newer blends of *forró*. According to John Murphy: “store-bought instruments are violins, while instruments made by local craftsmen are rabecas. Murphy, “Performing a Moral Vision,” 89.

Reco-reco: see *ganzá*.

Repente (pronounced *hay-pehn-chee*): improvised oral poetry duel between two artists. Also called *desafio* and *cantoria*. Artists alternate playing rough accompanying chords on the *viola* and improvising stanzas that must maintain structural integrity to one another. Repente is a long-time tradition across the Northeast and has since spread to the rest of Brazil; Elizabeth Travassos estimates that between 2,000-3,000 repentistas are actively performing across Brazil today. Travassos, “Ethics,” 63.

Retirantes (pronounced *hay-chee-rah-chees*): drought refugees.

Roça (pronounced *hoh-sah*): a small back-yard garden. Also slash-and-burn style agriculture common to the Northeast.

Rojão (pronounced *hoh-jawn*): the plucking of strings as the repentistas prepare their musical poetry duels and the source for Luiz Gonzaga’s *baião* rhythm.

Samba: the most influential song genre of Brazil which boasts African and Portuguese origin (with some additional influences) and both rural and urban forms. Since its genesis in the 1920s and 1930s it has developed myriad forms, including (but not limited to): *samba de roda*, *samba-pagode*, *samba-enredo* (what most Americans associate with carnival parades) and *samba-canção*.

Sanfona: accordion. Sometimes distinguished as an eight-bass accordion which uses diatonic buttons for melody instead of a piano keyboard.

São João: see *festas juninas*.

Saudade: nostalgic longing. See chapter three for a detailed discussion.

Seca: drought. See chapter three for detailed information regarding the recurring droughts of the Brazilian Northeast.

Semana de Arte Moderna: an artistic encounter organized in São Paulo in 1922 that is cited as the most important moment in the Brazilian Modernismo movement. Including branches dedicated to music, theater and art, the *Semana de Arte Moderna* brought together many diverse artists under one philosophy that nonetheless soon fractured into a less coherent group but lives on as a definitive moment of rupture (from European models) for the Brazilian arts. Major contributors were Mário de Andrade and Oswald de Andrade (not related) who, along with other Modernists, pushed Brazilians to embrace a new kind of art that would reflect the new modern moment while also tapping into the Brazil’s rich stores of traditional culture in order to create a uniquely Brazilian art for export.

Sertanejo: an inhabitant of the *sertão*. Sertanejo music is a popular rural genre that shares many characteristics with *forró* (including more/less “traditional” and

“commercial” sub-genres) but nonetheless stems from the cultural traditions of central Brazil and not Northeastern Brazil.

Sertão: massive parched desert region of the Northeast. See chapter three for more details.

Toada: the songs of maracatu nation, or simply a generic term for a stanza-refrain song of a romantic or comical nature.

Tropicália: an artistic movement of the late 1960s that sought to celebrate the Brazilian practice of importing foreign influences and imbuing them with a unique Brazilian flair. Major contributors to the movement included Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, To Zé, Os Mutantes, Hélio Oiticica, Capinam and Rogério Duprat. The movement was technically short-lived but has a continued legacy today as one of the most important musical movements and genres of Brazil of the late twentieth century.

Umbanda: a religion that combines African-based spirit worship with some elements of folk Catholicism as well as religious influence from some indigenous tribes.

Umbigada: a provocative dance move in which two people bump their bellies. It is thought to have been a contribution of African slaves and to be the origin of Brazilian dances such as lundu and samba.

Usinas: highly mechanized production facilities for sugarcane

Vaqueiro: herdsman or cowboy.

Vaquejada: a giant gathering of herds and their cowhands that takes place from June to July in which vaqueiros historically took stock of their herds and made divisions for payment. Nowadays it is mainly to celebrate country life and engage in friendly competitions.

Viola: a Portuguese guitar with five pairs of strings which is generally associated with rural musics and/or repente in the Northeast.

Xamego (pronounced *shah-may-goh*): see chamego.

Xaxado (pronounced *shah-shah-doo*): an exclusively male circular dance made popular by the famous cangaceiro bandit Lampião. The name of the genre is said to be an onomatopoeia, sounding like the shuffle of the dancer’s feet along the dirt.

Xote (pronounced *shoh-chee*): a popular genre within the forró complex. Related to the schottische, the xote has a slow duple meter with a shuffle rhythm and is a favorite dance genre in forró pé-de-serra but particularly forró universitário.

Zabumba: a large cylindrical double-headed drum, 60-80cm in diameter and 30-40cm deep, with heads made of goat or ox skin. Also called bombo. It is played with

two sticks and, though it resembles the European bass drum, it is actually a modern substitute for a double-headed hollow-log drum of the West African type. Also called *esquenta muié*, *estocador* and *cabaçal*. The term may also designate the bass drum and the entire fife and drum ensemble (also generically referred to as *banda de pífanos*).

Zabumbeiro: a zabumba player.

Zona da mata: a geographic region well suited for growing sugar cane along the northeast coast of Brazil.

Chapter One

Forró: An Age-Old Music of the New Millennium

*Minha vida é andar por esse país
Pra ver se um dia descanso feliz
Guardando as recordações, das terras por onde passei
Andando pelos sertões, e dos amigos que lá deixei*

- “Vida do Viajante,” Luiz Gonzaga & Hervê Cordovil, 1953

Sweet accordion riffs, the steady twang of the triangle, and the off-beat pounding of the *zabumba* drum make *forró* music a favorite for all Brazilians. The infectious tunes and syncopated beats have been described as “a mixture of ska with polka in overdrive,” and with its hard-hitting beat and memorable hooks, it is a quintessentially Brazilian music. Its infectious sound and exhilarating rhythms form an intimate backdrop for a series of popular partner dances, in which couples swivel around one another in sensuous embraces. In fact, in the past decade, *forró* has become one of the most popular genres of Brazilian dance music, eagerly consumed by crowds of diverse racial, ethnic, and geographical backgrounds. My research examines how, in the increasingly mobile Brazil of the twenty-first century, a traditionalist revival of *forró* is allowing cosmopolitan Brazilians to access an invented tradition of rustic music-making. I examine this revival across three very different yet intricately connected poles of Brazilian migration: Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and New York City.

While samba is commonly recognized as the most ‘pure’ representative of Brazilian nationalist expression, other musics can also be argued to represent ‘the nation’ to a wide audience of Brazilians. Increasingly appreciated locally and internationally, *forró* has a special resonance for Brazilians interested in or attached to

the rural roots of the nation and is widely popular today both in its original form as well as in various derivative genres. I argue that forró music represents a quite significant (though widely understudied) genre that makes possible a discourse across many very different Brazils, including the rural underdeveloped Northeast, the cosmopolitan industrialized South and also the burgeoning immigrant communities abroad. Though Brazil has often been depicted as having intensely regionalized identities, my work problematizes these divisions and underscores, instead, the peripatetic nature of Brazilians and their cultural forms.

The realm of forró musical and dance performance is a particularly rich area from which to study national and regional affiliations and identity because it is itself a product of Brazilian migration and imagination over the past century. Its origins cannot be isolated from the very movement of its *padrinho* or godfather, Luiz Gonzaga, between the northeastern *sertão* and his nodes of recording and performance production in the South. By following the historical trajectory of the forró genre from its roots in rural Pernambuco, to the bustling cultural capital of Rio de Janeiro, and later to the artistic diversity of the immigrant community of New York, I have developed a multi-sited “routes” ethnography to study forró and the institutional discourse that fuels this uniquely Brazilian genre of music and dance at its various geographic outposts of popularity.

Beyond music performance, forró culture is made up of several *soundscapes*¹ that, like Appadurai’s notion of interacting ethnoscapas,² are located across a continuum of

¹ The term “soundscape” was introduced by R. Murray Schafer in his 1977 book *The Tuning of the World* and was first used in an ethnomusicological context by Steven Feld. Personal contact Kofi Agawu 12 April 2010.

related and interactive cultural forms. These soundscapes include entire cultural edifices such as film, theater, poetry and literature, food and dress – and also span a continuum of social classes (from famished farmers to working and middle class Brazilians) and geographic locations (rural and urban, northeastern and southern). Following Appadurai, my vision of these scapes hinges on the notion of *music* located at the center of a cultural map that is “characterized by flux, improvisation, new forms of fantasy, and the breaking down of old boundaries.” I intend to examine how one music-scape in particular – that of forró in its nascent setting of Pernambuco – serves as a projection of an ideal through which many Brazilians, regardless of their socio-geographic histories, identify their cultural roots. The sertão, a massive parched desert region of the Northeast, has entered the imagination of all Brazilians through the images of popular literature and films, and is regularly latched onto as an index of “authentic” Brazilianness. Indeed, the narratives common to the forró music-scape represent an imagined community through which Brazilians actually build bridges to access an imagined past in the hinterlands, untouched by modern mass media and the intimidating forces of globalization.

While giving an in-depth analysis of forró music as it is played and enjoyed at different nodes of its network, I will also examine three different types of migrations that are reflected in the present make-up of the forróscape: regional migrations (particularly in the Northeast), national migrations (particularly of northeasterners to the industrialized centers of the South) and international migrations (particularly of Brazilian newcomers to the New York area). Each of these migrations reproduces the

² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). See also Kay Kaufman Shelemay, *Soundscapes: Exploring Music in a Changing World* (New York: Norton, 2001).

spread not just of people but of musical culture, and I juxtapose the movement of people and *farró* in order to emphasize the dynamic nature of a traditional musical baseline.

In addition, I would like to look at ways in which performance and promotion of *farró* music in migratory centers may elucidate or problematize a Brazilian politics of migration. The trope of pergrination and, ultimately, return to one's homeland, is one treated again and again in the lyrics of *farró*. Few songs exist in the *farró* "canon" that don't somehow hail or reference *saudades* or nostalgia for one's home, as well as reiterate the suffering of an itinerant community. At a time when changes brought on by the growing and increasingly globalized Brazilian economy began to alter the cityscapes across the nation, there appears to be a subtle shift in some parts of the national psyche. While the focus on modernity has up until now motivated most political, economic and cultural policies in Brazil, a new trend toward tradition is slowly creeping into the national subconsciousness. Even as Brazilians participated freely in transnational politics and exchange, many have begun looking to cultural products such as *farró* that might represent a rural and bucolic past, an imagined place and time untouched by modernity that might somehow better reflect an "authentic" Brazilian experience.

One of my goals in this project is to show how *farró* networks, when examined through an unbiased lens, may help to break the centuries-long scheme of oppositions which Brazilians and Brazilianist scholars have constructed in order to understand the nation. I will argue that, while the dichotomies of poor/rich, rural/urban, North/South, underdeveloped/developed, tradition/modernity still exist for many

Brazilians, it is more useful to examine the intersection of these contrasts instead of underscoring their continuing importance in a world of blurred boundaries and increasingly fluid categories. The fact that its popularity straddles these bipolar classifications and creates a cultural bridge between areas considered representative of Brazil's oppositions makes forró a genre which can help us understand culture as it is consumed and practiced in twenty-first century Brazil.

**“Os Brasis:”
Discovering a Brazilian Identity through Dualist Categories**

Since its independence in 1822, Brazil has struggled to create a national identity to unite its diverse regions and ethnic communities. It is largely in the realm of popular culture – and particularly music – that Brazil has found a means of expressing a national culture that might unite its separate parts. As famous singer/songwriter Caetano Veloso reminds us, popular music is “the Brazilian form of expression par excellence.”³

The nation's diversity (or fragmentation, depending on one's perspective) is evident in Brazil's curious tendency to refer to itself in the plural: *os Brasis*. Dozens of Brazilian intellectuals have used this pluralized form to refer to the multiple identities within their nation,⁴ and though it is still an elite plural, not often invoked

³ Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 87.

⁴ See David Hess and Roberto DaMatta “Introduction,” *The Brazilian Puzzle*, Ed. David J. Hess and Roberto DaMatta (Columbia University Press, New York, 1995), 8; Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (New York: Verso, 1992), 14; Kevin Cassidy, *Forró: Constructing Identity in the Brazilian Northeast through Notions of “Tradition,”* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Universiteit in Amsterdam, September 2006). Many scholars saw this bifurcation as a result of Brazil's imitative tendency (to attempt to mimic European cultural models) while Roberto Schwarz

by the popular classes, it is nonetheless noteworthy as a symbol of Brazil's historic divisions.

Today the overwhelming diversity of Brazil continues to be a challenge.⁵ With a geographic area larger than the entire European Union, Brazil's territory is truly expansive. It covers half of South America, encompasses a half dozen climatic regions, and is home to a staggeringly diverse population with phenotypes ranging from Amerindian, Iberian, North African, Mediterranean, Northern European, Middle Eastern, Japanese, South African and West African, to name only the largest native and immigrant groups. Though it boasts one of the largest economies in the world,⁶ it has extremely large disparities in terms of wealth,⁷ health and education; and though the official language is Portuguese, literally hundreds of languages are spoken across its provinces. Brazil has managed to maintain sovereignty as one territory, but has historically been plagued by what one scholar called "a tendency toward 'centrifugal dismemberment' that resulted in a disperse, disarticulated, and fluid nation."⁸ Thus

perceived it as a result of "the lasting result of the creation of a nation-state on the basis of slave labour." Schwarz 14.

⁵ The new capital of Brasília was constructed on Brazil's central plateau in order to facilitate trade and communication across the expanse of the nation.

⁶ The IMF ranked Brazil the 10th largest economy in the world in 2008, while the World Bank ranked it 8th. International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2009: Nominal GDP list of countries. Data for the year 2008; "The World Bank: World Development Indicators database, 1 July 2009. Gross domestic product (2008)." World Bank. 1-7-200.

⁷ Brazil is infamous for its income inequality. The UNDP's Human Development Report in 2003 found that Brazil had the greatest inequality among middle income countries, and was surpassed on the global level only by Sierra Leone. The data show that the poorest 10% of the population receives just 0.7% of total income, while the richest 10% receives almost half. Amanda Cassel and Raj Patel, "Agricultural Trade Liberalization and Brazil's Rural Poor: Consolidating Inequality," *Global Policy Forum* <http://www.globalpolicy.org/globaliz/econ/2003/08agribrazil.htm>

⁸ Raimundo Faoro, *Os donos do poder* (Porto Alegre: Globo/USP, 1973), 279. In Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 37.

since the early nineteenth century – and increasingly throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries – politicians and intellectuals have been struggling to find a way of defining “Brazilianness” and of conceptualizing a single Brazilian nation coalescing around such divergent peoples, histories, geographies and cultures.

Sadly, instead of working to unite its disparate parts, intellectuals began decrying Brazil’s lack of uniformity from early on by underscoring a contrast between two Brazils: the wealthy, increasingly cosmopolitan Brazil of the coastal cities, and the poor, stagnant Brazil of the hinterlands. These binary categories began by imitating the categories that Western Modernists had popularized, importing not just their organizational character but also their underlying ontological structure. As Arjun Appadurai succinctly states,

One of the most problematic legacies of grand Western social science (Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Ferdinand Toennies, Max Weber, Émile Durkheim) is that it has steadily reinforced the sense of some single moment – call it the modern moment – that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present. Reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologized as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies, this view has been shown repeatedly to distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness.⁹

Indeed, for a wallflower nation constantly looking to Western intellectual developments for guidance, this “modern moment” meant an end to the past and a beginning of a new and improved future. And yet Brazil’s very position on the periphery – and its difficulty matching the theoretical imaginings of Modernity with the more practical aspects of modernization – made Modernity a deeply problematic project. For part of the problem with polarized oppositions is, as Jaques Derrida

⁹ Appadurai 3.

points out, that there are very few neutral binary oppositions.¹⁰ And if Brazil was to re-build itself using its own cultural traditions as pilings to support a modern and global future, it would also have to construct a protective parapet to shield negative valuations of its core character.

It is tempting to compare the dichotomies formulated in post-colonial Brazil to Said's notion of Orientalism, in which the Other is identified by essentialized characteristics diametrically opposed to those of the West. Said's argument lays out the manner in which the Other is labeled

passive rather than active, static rather than mobile, emotional rather than rational, chaotic rather than ordered... and marked by a series of fundamental absences (of movement, reason, order, meaning and so on.¹¹

Still, Said's scholarship at some level reinforces the very divisions that he is calling attention to – much like the work of so many Brazilianists who claim to be writing against the hegemony of the southern/urban/wealthy/white/modern/educated Brazilian.

Though we see some binary oppositions in theoretical explorations before the *Modernismo* movement, it is with the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in 1922¹² that these types of formulations begin to emerge on a large scale. Even while attempting to differentiate Brazil based on its syncretic cultural base, one of the central characteristics of the Modernist ideology was the construction of dichotomies through

¹⁰ Anthony McCann and Lillis Ó Laoire, "Raising One Higher than the Other: The Hierarchy of Tradition in Representations of Gaelic- and English-Language Song in Ireland," *Global Pop, Local Language*, Ed. Harris M. Berger and Michael Thomas Carroll (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 240.

¹¹ Mitchell, Timothy. "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order," *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 289.

¹² See chapter two for a more complete discussion of Modernismo and the *Semana de Arte Moderna*.

which to portray the nation, owed in large part to the privileging of the ‘primitive’ as ‘authentic.’ As Chris Dunn observes, the futurist and primitivist tendencies of Brazilian Modernism formed part of a “dichotomy at the very center of national cultural formation” in the country.¹³ Dunn documents many of the major poles suggested in Modernist writings: for Oswald de Andrade, it was a tension between ‘the forest and the school’; for Freyre, ‘the real Brazil and the fake Brazil’; for Augusto de Campos, ‘raw materials and finished products’; for Roberto Schwarz, the ‘archaic and the ultramodern’; for Gilberto Vasconcellos ‘the tropical and the urban industrial’ ...¹⁴ One can add to this list the more simplistic yet equally present dichotomies: urban/ rural, South/North, wealthy/poor, modern/traditional, masters/slaves, educated/illiterate, home/street and so forth.¹⁵

The “futurists” and “passadistas” that confronted one another on the eve of the Semana de Arte Moderna thought of society as a battleground between two opposing forces. A different angle is proposed by Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda’s in his classic treatise on the Brazilian personality, *Raízes do Brasil*. According to him, the polarities in Brazilian intellectual history, at some level, can be traced back to the dichotomous make-up of *each Brazilian*:

¹³ Christopher John Dunn, *The Relics of Brazil: Modernity and Nationality in the Tropicalista Movement* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University, 1996), 5-6.

¹⁴ Ibid 5-6.

¹⁵ Durval de Muniz Albuquerque also suggests adding the categories God/devil and sea/sertão (two divisions that are commonly treated in the literature and popular culture of the Northeast), while Sulamita Vieira includes the contrast of here/there. Durval Muniz de Albuquerque, *A Invenção do Nordeste e outras artes* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1999), 120 and Sulamita Viera, *O Sertão em Movimento: a dinâmica da produção cultural* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2000), 147.

The ruling class divides its conduct into two opposite styles, one governed by the most lively cordiality in relations with their peers, the other marked by indifference in their dealings with those who are their social inferiors. Thus it is that in the same person one can observe two roles being played, depending on whether what is involved is the prescribed etiquette of the hospitable, gracious and generous host to a visitor or the lordly role in dealing with a subordinate; both are exercised with a spontaneity that can only be explained by *the bipartite makeup of his personality*.¹⁶

In a country so diverse, the polarization of its people and space is insufficient for providing an accurate understanding of the nation, yet many Brazilian theorists – and a large percentage of the masses – continue to perpetuate this model. In fact, if anything, this “bipolar” tension has increased over the years, and intellectual studies of music may seem doomed to re-enact this categorization of “two Brazils” even well into the twenty-first century.

Writing about the Northeast is particularly problematic; it is the region most often used to demonstrate these Brazilian polarities in news reports, cinema, picket lines and internet blogs. It is most often invoked as the sad and pathetic cousin (undeveloped, poor, and backward) of the successful South (industrial, wealthy and modern), as evidence that Brazil does not do enough to balance its extreme discrepancies in income and living standards. As the bestselling author Rachel de Queiroz notes wryly, “the media is cock-eyed when it tries to portray the Northeast, since all they really want to show is misery.”¹⁷

Indeed, this tendency is not limited to Brazilian scholars and politicians who can claim a large audience; these essentialized categories are routinely constructed by

¹⁶ Darcy Ribeiro, *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 150. Emphasis mine.

¹⁷ “A mídia tem o olho torto quando se trata de mostrar o ‘Nordeste,’ pois eles só querem miséria.” Quoted in Albuquerque 20.

citizens and used to describe themselves. Certainly, too, this tendency is not limited to Brazilians, and we shouldn't simply ignore this attitude; as Thomas Turino notes, "Essentialisms can be important to people's self-definitions, [and] should not be entirely discounted as irrelevant fictions."¹⁸ Still, at the same time that we appreciate the ways in which people understand themselves, we also must seek to approach our subject of study with an open mind, willing to entertain different paradigms and categories.

Even while many continue to narrate the Brazilian nation as one marred with a giant social chasm, countless Brazilian authors and artists are working to destroy the image of a Brazilian "dichotomy," and some would argue that Brazil has made great strides in breaking away from polarities. As Fred Moehn points out, it is worth remembering that "the most important trope of Brazilian identity is *not* based in a binary opposition, but rather in an equally essentialist tri-partite alchemical fusion: the mixture of the three races."¹⁹ And, notably, not all Brazilian intellectuals have perceived the need – or even the usefulness – of these binary divisions. Even while Gilberto Freyre himself²⁰ was often guilty of the construction of diametrically opposed opposites (the very title of his most recognized text pits the mansion against the slave shanty, with no intermediate locale mentioned), he also encouraged the

¹⁸ Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 24. Michael Herzfeld too, cautions that "distrust of essentialism in social theory should not blur our awareness of its... pervasive presence in social life." Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Politics in the Nation-State* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 27. In Frederick Moehn, *Mixing MPB: Cannibals and Cosmopolitans in Brazilian Popular Music* (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, Department of Music, 2001), 271.

¹⁹ Moehn 89. Of course, it is worth mentioning that many authors bypass this construction by flattening "indigenous" and "Afro-Brazilian" into one category ("of color") in order to create a tidy opposition...

²⁰ See a more complete analysis of Gilberto Freyre's role as a Brazilian author and intellectual in chapter two.

“indefinite middle” as opposed to extremes, and at one point applauded the practice of sunbathing, precisely because it brought black and white extremes closer on a phenotypical continuum.²¹

It must be noted, also, that the very symbols of nationhood are those cultural phenomena which straddle the divide: *samba*, *feijoada*, *umbanda*.²² Even Roberto da Matta, whose structuralist scholarship argues for a rigid oppositional social structure, made interesting conclusions based on the synthesis of polar opposites. In an interesting passage, he makes the case for Brazilian cuisine as perfectly representative of the nation precisely because of its in-between state:

Between the solid (which characterizes the main dish in European and American meals) and the liquid, we prefer an intermediary form. The *cozido* is both solid and liquid. Between meat and vegetable – which feature in European cuisine as the primary and secondary dishes – we are much more taken with a blend of the two.²³

Indeed, anthropologist Hermano Vianna notes that it is the very regime of *indefiniton* that primarily characterizes the Brazilian people – and that contributes to their “grace.”²⁴ As stated before, Brazilian popular music is perhaps the arena where Brazil’s indefinite character most prospers. It is in the fusions of samba, rock and

²¹ Vianna 109.

²² Umbanda is a religion that combines African-based spirit worship with some elements of folk Catholicism as well as religious influence from some indigenous tribes. For more information, see Diana DeGroat Brown, *Umbanda: Religion and Politics in Urban Brazil* (Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, 1986).

²³ “Entre o sólido (que caracteriza o prato principal das comidas européias e americanas) e o líquido, preferimos uma forma intermediária. O cozido é sólido e líquido. Entre a carne e a verdura – que entram nos pratos europeus como comidas principais e secundárias – somos muito mais dados a uma ligação entre os dois.” Roberto Da Matta, *O que faz, o Brasil, Brasil?* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1989), 63.

²⁴ Vianna 147. In Philip Andrew Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico: Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in the Mangue Movement and “New Music Scene” of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Wesleyan University Department of Music, September 1999), 206.

regional music that rhythms and melodies blur together to cross boundaries consistently and to create constantly changing categories.

Celebrating Hybridity: Brazilian Music Scholarship

Not just in the realm of Brazilian music, but also within scholarship on Brazilian popular music, the recognition and celebration of hybridity has been an increasingly common trend. While the few key ethnomusicologists who dominated early writings on Brazilian music (above all Mário de Andrade)²⁵ tended to operate within closed categories, more recent authors – particularly those writing since the 1990s – have enthusiastically embraced the blurring of genres.

Until the last half of the twentieth century, few scholars specialized in Brazilian popular music. Those that did, such as Mário de Andrade, Oneyda Alvarenga (1947), Leonardo Mota (1967, 1976), Luís de Câmara Cascudo (1939), and César Guerra-Peixe (1955), often focused solely on descriptive analyses of folkloric musics, often examining rural folk traditions (considered “authentic” popular culture) and scorning the study of urban musical fusions.²⁶ José Ramos Tinhorão (1974, 1976, 1986, 1988),

²⁵ See a detailed analysis of Mário de Andrade’s contribution to the study of Brazilian popular music in chapter two.

²⁶ During this early period in research on Brazilian popular music, few interpretative analyses were conducted and instead scholars primarily engaged in what Suzel Ana Reily calls “rescue operations” (filling libraries with music and lyrics from “dying” traditions) and in providing raw materials for insertion into art music. Reily notes that a large component to this attitude toward popular music was the repressive political regime of Getúlio Vargas. See Suzel Ana Reily, “Introduction: Brazilian Musics, Brazilian Identities,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* (Vol. 9, No. 1 [2000]), 1-10. The work of these scholars at this juncture, however, is truly a testament of dedication to the study of Brazilian popular music; in 1928 Mário de Andrade complained that “our musical folklore has not been studied as it deserves to be,” and indeed, within one generation this formerly undernourished scholarship had bloomed into an impressive (and still growing today!) collection. “*Nosso folclore musical não tem sido estudado como merece...*” Mário de Andrade, *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira*

the prominent and prolific historian of Brazilian popular music, changed the nature of Brazilian music studies somewhat when he began publishing detailed analyses of the historical development of urban musics. While widely criticized²⁷ for his negative stance on mass media and foreign influences,²⁸ Tinhorão should also be credited with his markedly even-handed discussions of hybrid musics. Even while refusing to hide his abhorrence for North American musical influences, Tinhorão wrote highly comprehensive analyses of any number of historical fusions between West African, South African, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Northern European and Caribbean influences on Brazilian music.

Tinhorão's writings have been followed (particularly in the 1990s and 2000s) by a sharp rise in scholarship on Brazilian popular music, including both Brazilian and North American authors.²⁹ Suzel Ana Reily has attributed this increase to a critical

(São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editora, 1962). In César Guerra-Peixe, *Maracatus do Recife* (São Paulo: Irmãos Vitale, 1980), 5.

²⁷ For criticism, see Caetano Veloso, "Primeira feira de balanço," *Alegria, Alegria, I*, Ed. Waly Salomão (Rio de Janeiro: Pedra Q Ronca, 1977). In Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 34.

²⁸ Certainly, Tinhorão is not the first or last Brazilian to criticize incorporations of foreign influences into Brazilian music; he is simply one enraged historian who has published widely on this topic. Popular culture is rife with controversy over North American borrowings in Brazilian music; before bossa nova received Tinhorão's invectives, Carmen Miranda was scorned by her Brazilian audience for having returned home from years in Hollywood "Americanized," (see Vianna 1998) and Jackson do Pandeiro rose to the top of the Brazilian music charts by singing that he would "only put bebop samba when Uncle Sam learns how to play the [Brazilian] tambourine." ("*Eu sou ponho o bebop no meu samba quando o Tio Sam pegar no tamborim.*") See Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn, "Introduction," *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Later, the tropicalists would be booed for playing electric guitars over a more traditional samba style and including a reference to "coca-cola" in their lyrics. See Veloso.

²⁹ Perrone and Dunn give a sense of the burgeoning growth of popular music studies on Brazil in the 1980s: "With the founding of the International Association for the Study of Pop Music (IASPM) came the seminal journal *Popular Music*, which did a Latin America feature issue and has consistently tried to maintain a global perspective. *Studies in Latin American Pop Culture*, also founded in the early 1980s, has included numerous articles on urban popular musics. The most important serial, in this respect, has been the *Latin American Music Review*, which publishes studies of art music and folk traditions, as well as of urban popular music, especially Brazilian." Perrone and Dunn 6.

re-assessment of the nationalist orientation in Brazilian musical research that developed in the wake of the 1985 political *abertura*, or opening, when the nation eased into open democracy after two decades of repressive dictatorship.³⁰ Indeed, nationalism was a major trend in early writings on Brazilian popular music (see chapter two) and even now continues to dominate the existent literature, albeit in much more nuanced and dynamic ways. Reily explains the shift while underscoring the continued importance of nationalism to writing on Brazilian popular music:

On the one side, there are researchers engaging in critical assessments of the ways in which music has been implicated in the construction of Brazilian national identity (see Menezes Bastos (1999), Quintero-Rivera (2000), Reily (1994), Vianna (1999[1995]) and others), and, on the other, there are those who are calling for a notion of Brazilian music that is able to encompass the multiplicity of identities that are musically constructed with the national territory.³¹

Thus in addition to seminal works on Brazilian folklore and early twentieth century musical history (as well as theoretical and methodological texts in contemporary ethnomusicology),³² my research has drawn upon the rich collection of scholarship on Brazilian popular music from the past two decades including literature on *Tropicália* (Dunn 1996, 2001; Veloso 2002; Harvey 2001); *MPB* (Perrone 1986, 1988, 1990, 1999, 2001; Dunn 2001; Reily 1994; McGowen 1998; Pessanha 1998; Tinhorão 1991, 1998, 2000; José Miguel Wisnik 2004; Moehn 2001, 2002); *Samba* (Guillermoprieto

³⁰ The military deposed the right-leaning President João Goulart (who had himself just taken over the Presidency from Jânio da Silva Quadros, who was legally elected but immediately resigned because of lack of support in Congress) in 1964 and installed general Humberto Castelo Branco in his place. The dictatorship prioritized modernization through industrialization and severely censored political opposition and the arts.

³¹ Reily 7.

³² Averill 1999; Barz 1997; Béhague 1971, 1999; Chernoff 1979; Cooley 1997; Garofalo 1993; Monson 2000; Pacini-Hernandez 2004; Scruggs 1999; Seeger 1992; Shelemay 2001.

1991; McCann 2004; Browning 1995; Vianna 1999); *Rock* (Moehn 2000; Idelbar 2001) as well as *Funk*, *Axé* and *Samba-Raggae* (Sansone 1997, Béhague 1999; Crook 1999, Yúdice 1994; Averill 1999; Fryer 2000) and, especially, research on regional musics from the Northeast (see below).³³

The new popularity of scholarship on popular music³⁴ has certainly grown out of a wider appreciation within academic departments of the role music plays in the expression, repression, transmission and transformation of culture and out of an increased interest in interdisciplinary research. It is also irrevocably linked to movements within popular music – and in Brazil, the past forty years have been highly dynamic and dramatic times of musical growth, allowing for extensive social and musical analysis.

While samba has long held the ultimate prestigious status as the Brazilian musical genre *par excellence*, there is in effect a hierarchy of esteemed genres that gain stature based on their perceived authenticity. It is important to note that this hierarchy is often determined not by popular consumption of music but instead by a perception of authenticity that is often projected by the artists themselves but more often by intellectuals. Suzel Ana Reily illustrates this point well:

The authors of histories of Brazilian music have frequently projected their own nationalist preoccupation into the past, and their narratives represent the past as a continuous and inevitable process, in which the music produced in Brazil is progressively nationalized. This process of nationalization has been represented through a chronological

³³ Not an exhaustive list. Many other Brazilianists have contributed greatly to studies of music and culture, but I mention here only those most influential for my own work.

³⁴ Perrone and Dunn note that the study popular music has been perennially “Caught between the historical prestige of classical or art music and the established legitimacy of folklore (whether through language/literature, anthropology, or ethnomusicology)” and as such “has struggled for decades to attain due acceptance in the academy.” Perrone and Dunn 6.

succession of styles, which came to acquire canonical status, defining what constitutes “authentic” Brazilian national music.³⁵

Of course, there is a contradiction inherent in music that can claim to possess both “authenticity” and “hybridity,” and yet these are perhaps the two most important notions within Brazilian music. Brazilians have long been incorporating elements from other musical traditions (African, Middle Eastern and European to begin with, and limitless combinations since then) while also emphasizing the importance of maintaining a traditional musical baseline. Samba, as the Brazilian music supreme, is often drawn on as the primary foundation, while foreign musical elements are added in order to provide the innovations necessary to keep Brazilian music dynamic and exciting.

After samba, the genre which has commanded a position of high prestige and authority within the realm of Brazilian popular music over the last four decades is *música popular brasileira* or MPB.³⁶ Its authenticity stems in part from its wide circulation among intellectuals and the numerous academic projects developed in its wake, and in part from the deliberate effort of artists in their discourse to connect the hybrid innovations of MPB with a traditional Brazilian nationalist roots baseline of samba. MPB developed in Brazil in the late 1960s, just as the massive success of bossa nova was beginning to wane. Bossa nova, too, had risen to popularity with its emphasis on fusion and innovation (of North American jazz elements) on top of an

³⁵ Reily 6.

³⁶ Often confused as a generic term referring to popular music from Brazil, MPB is actually a specific genre of Brazilian music which, precisely because of its porous boundaries and incorporation of wide influences, is quite difficult to define. It is pop/rock with samba and bossa nova influences and its principal artists include Chico Buarque, Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Marisa Monte, Clara Nunes, Gal Costa, João Bosco, Jorge BenJor, Maria Rita (among many others).

“authentic” Brazilian samba baseline. MPB would capitalize on its success and push the musical mixture to a new level, this time incorporating some regional rhythms (in addition to the urban samba that comprised the basis of bossa) and, eventually, rock n’ roll instrumentation.

It was largely the radical *tropicália* movement which helped MPB modernize while also expanding their hybridization to include rock n’ roll. When *tropicália* first emerged in 1967, the Brazilian listening audience was still intent on categorizing performers into opposing camps, pitting folksy MPB artists like Elis Regina, Geraldo Vandré and Chico Buarque against *iê-iê-iê*³⁷ rockers like Roberto and Erasmo Carlos and Wanderléa. Tropicalists Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil³⁸ rebelled by placing themselves clearly in the middle and causing an uproar from the audience (who resisted the folk influences paired with electric guitar). Unwilling to relinquish the legacy of the “genuine” Brazilian sounds of their youth, and also eager to assimilate cosmopolitan sounds from around the world, the tropicalists blended the two with seeming abandon and carved a liminal niche for themselves and their followers. On choosing between tradition and modernity, their contemporary and fellow intellectual/artist Glauber Rocha famously proclaimed “Between the electric plant and moonlight on the plains, there’s no doubt. I’ll stick with both!”³⁹

³⁷ *Iê-iê-iê* refers to the nascent rock movement in Brazil, also called *jovem guarda*, or young guard, a play on the “old guard” of traditional samba musicians. The name *iê-iê-iê* comes from the famous refrain by the Beatles: “she loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah.”

³⁸ Other influential *tropicália* artists include the musicians Tom Zé, Os Mutantes and Torquato Neto and visual artist Hélio Oiticica.

³⁹ Dunn 6. See also Gilberto Vasconcelos, *Música Popular Brasileira: De Olho na Fresta* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1977), 8. In Moehn 19-20.

Indeed, this inclusive attitude, first brought into Brazilian popular music by Veloso, Gil and the other tropicalists, thrived throughout the following decades, even after the demise of the *tropicália* movement. In fact, it is largely within the MPB genre that the broadened and hybrid categories the tropicalists introduced have become entrenched in a tradition of Brazilian popular music. As Fred Moehn describes in his dissertation on MPB,

This “I’ll stick with both” attitude is, I argue, the legacy that today’s MPB artists, producers and sound engineers inherited. It is at once a recognition of extreme contrasts and a rejection of the idea that they need to be *oppositional*. At the same time, it does not deny that such contrasts imply certain tensions; rather, it is a utilization of these tensions as a source of creative inspiration, and as a fundamental marker of identity, articulated through popular music.⁴⁰

In the 1990s, the *mangue bit* movement started by Chico Science in Recife (see chapter five) further reinforced pop music’s ability to blur boundaries and to jumpstart new theoretical directions for Brazilian popular culture. By broadcasting the notion of musicians as the bottom feeders of the world and celebrating the contribution of these “crabs with brains,” Chico Science and his fellow mangueboys and manguegirls showed that local beats and global grooves could achieve a musical alchemy. With symbolic parabolic antennas projecting their musical *mélange* to the world, the mangue musicians would reinforce their identity as *both* local and global – and refuse to be categorized as either.

The mangue artists were not the only musicians interested in local and global fusions that could speak to increasing cosmopolitanism in regional centers. As leading ethnomusicologist Gerard Béhague has noted:

Since about the 1980s, popular music expressions have developed in rather unexpected ways in that both local adherence to and adaptations

⁴⁰ Moehn 20.

of international styles and strongly regional musical traditions have seen concurrently an unprecedented cultivation and popularity.⁴¹

Maria Elizabeth Lucas notes that the media have referred to this phenomenon as the “nationalization of the regional.” As she describes it,

From north to south, from the Amazon region to the southern plains of Rio Grande do Sul, one can hear regional musics which deliberately blend local grass-roots styles with reggae, funk, rap, rock, salsa, heavy metal, techno, blues and jazz, while also deploying electronic and digital sound technologies along with acoustic instruments.⁴²

I might argue instead that this is the “internationalization of the regional,” since often the local and global intersect directly, completely bypassing the nation in their search for identity. There’s nothing new about importing foreign influence – indeed, even “traditional” samba is the outgrowth of innovative hybridity (see chapter two) – but in recent years hybrid musics have helped to articulate ethnic and social allegiances that often do not involve the nation as a category.⁴³ Ethnomusicologist Mark Slobin has called these “micromusics” and has noted that in recent years they have spurred a major increase in academic research.

Indeed, when I first began my research into forró, I was limited to short chapters on northeastern music within sources on folklore or basic biographies of Luiz Gonzaga (widely held as the genre’s creator) – but I soon found a wealth of sources on northeastern music ethnographies, including texts on the *zabumba* tradition of

⁴¹ Gerard Béhague, “Rap, Reggae, Rock, or Samba: The Local and the Global in Brazilian Popular Music, 1985-1995,” *Musical Cultures of Latin America: Global Effects, Past and Present: Proceedings of an International Conference*, Ed. Steven Loza (Los Angeles: University of California, May 28-30, 1999 [111-20]), 112.

⁴² Maria Elizabeth Lucas, “Gaucho Musical Regionalism,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, (Vol. 9, No. 1 [2000], 41-60), 44.

⁴³ See also: Galinsky; Cristina Magaldi, “Adopting Imports: New Images and Alliances in Brazilian Popular Music of the 1990s.” *Popular Music 18* (no. 3 [1999] 309-29), 310-11. In Dunn “Brutality Garden” 208-9.

Pernambuco (Larry Crook 1991, 1999, 2002), *cavalo marinho popular theater* (John Murphy 1994, 2002, 2006), *mangue beat* (Philip Galinsky 1999, 2002) and regionalist revivals in other parts of Brazil (Martha Uihôa de Tupinambá 1999). While this literature celebrates local tradition and dedicates much space to describing local musical practices in detail, it also underscores the dynamic nature of the local music scene and, in the case of mangue beat and forró fusions, the international exchanges that contribute to new local sounds.

The first published works on forró began appearing in the late 1980s in the guise of a series of biographies of Luiz Gonzaga: José de Jesus Ferreira (1986), Mundicarmo Maria Rocha Ferretti (1988), Dominique Dreyfus (1997), Gildson Oliveira (2000), Elba Braga Ramalho (2000), Sinval Sá (2002), José Farias dos Santos (2002). These biographies were often based on interviews with Gonzaga himself and often involved intensive information on lyrics and recordings of his life work. Still, few of these authors examined the broader sociological impact of forró. Beginning at the turn of the millennium, several authors published in-depth analyses of forró, examining the pé-de-serra traditional forró scene in the Northeast (Bishop 1999; Mattos Madeira 1999; Vieira 2000), the universitário forró scene in the South (Ceva 2001; Vianna 2001), the estilizado forró scene in the Northeast and South (Leandro Silva 2003), forró as it is practiced and understood across the nation (Fernandes 2006; Draper 2005), and post-mangue forró innovations in and around Recife (Sharp 2001; Dupuy 2002; Cassidy 2006). Like other literatures on Brazilian music, the scholarship on forró is increasingly focused on hybrid forms and regional or international fusions; and like other Brazilian musics, forró is a dynamic genre that

is perpetually updating its sound with new innovations while still maintaining a traditional musical baseline.

Forró Pé-de-serra: Forró Music in its Most “Traditional” Setting

Framed as a traditional music that represents a rural and bucolic past, forró is actually a dynamic style that has been transformed over years of creative refractions and has developed into several different genres in both rural and urban settings. It has been called “the most important genre in Brazil after samba”⁴⁴ by Gilberto Gil (the famed *tropicália* and MPB musician and current Brazilian Minister of Culture), and in the past sixty years its influence has spread across all of Brazil as well as to North America and Europe. Hailing from the northeast region of Brazil, forró is perhaps the most emblematic music from a region famed for its diversity of musical talent and resources.

Indeed, the Northeast has been of utmost importance to the development of popular music in Brazil. Leading musicians of a half-dozen Brazilian genres have tapped the musical heritage of the Northeast and, in fact, many of the most influential artists to dominate the national scene hail from the Northeast.⁴⁵ Pernambuco alone is said to have more than twenty different rhythms,⁴⁶ many of which fall under the general category of forró.

⁴⁴ Lauro Lisboa Garcia, “De Volta ao Aconchego,” *Época* (26 June 2000), 125. See also Cassidy 4-5.

⁴⁵ For example: Dorival Caymmi, João Gilberto, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Maria Bethânia, Simone, Luiz Gonzaga, Jackson do Pandeiro, Alceu Valença, Raul Seixas, Tom Zé, and so on.

⁴⁶ Interview with Antonio Nóbrega. *Moro no Brasil*, Dir. Mika Kaurismäki (2006).

Historically used to refer to a music party, the word *forró* has evolved to mean many things. According to John Murphy:

Forró is a more general term that is used in several ways: as a genre label to refer to uptempo *baião*; as an umbrella term for a family of Northeastern dance rhythms; as a label for a dance style; as a label for a dance or party at which these rhythms are performed; and as the name of a place where such a party takes place.⁴⁷

The faster rhythms of the *forró* complex include *forró*, *xaxado*, and *arrasta-pé*; slightly slower and more romantic rhythms include *baião*, *xote* and *xamego*; even slower sub-genres such as *aboios* and *toadas* are primarily “listening” music, though some couples may also slow-dance to them. These primary sub-genres are direct legacies of Luiz Gonzaga, as during his long career he brought the musics of his youth spent in the hinterlands to all of the other regions of Brazil. In addition, genres such as *choro*, *abaianada*, *agalopado*, *maxixe*, *marcha/marchinha*, *rancheira*, and *polca* are sometimes included in the *forró* canon. *Côco de roda* and *frevo* genres are often played by *forró* bands but are generally considered outside of the *forró* complex.

Forró began in the 1940s as a *baião* rhythm adapted by Luiz Gonzaga from musical patterns of his youth in the Brazilian Northeast.⁴⁸ A syncopated two-step, the *baião* is created through the additive and divisive rhythms of the *zabumba* bass drum⁴⁹ and closely resembles what numerous authors have called the typical “Afro-

⁴⁷ John P. Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 95

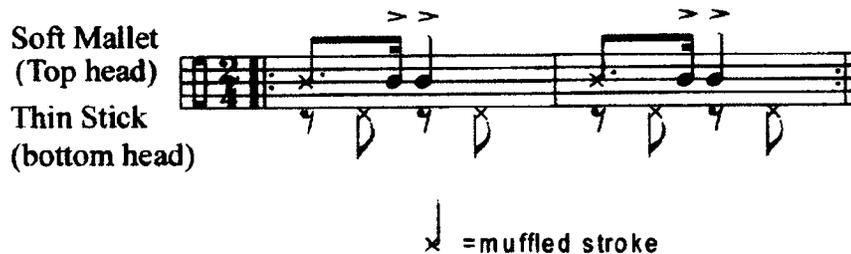
⁴⁸ See chapter four for a more in-depth discussion of this process.

⁴⁹ Larry Norman Crook, *Zabumba Music from Caruaru, Pernambuco: Musical Style, Gender, and the Interpenetration of Rural and Urban Worlds* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin, 1991), 238.

American syncopation.”⁵⁰ About two feet in diameter, the zabumba provides the basis of the rhythmic complexity of the baião, and is described here by Larry Crook, the first North American ethnomusicologist to engage in an in-depth study of the zabumba tradition of the Northeast:

The drum is strapped in front of the drummer’s stomach and played tilted at about a forty-five-degree angle. The primary pattern of the rhythm is played on the top head with a short padded mallet; counter rhythms are played on the bottom head with a very thin stick, while the palm of the hand controls the amount of open ringing and dampening desired.⁵¹

Figure 4: Basic baião played on the zabumba



From Jack Bishop: Sweet.

On top of the zabumba percussive layer is the relentless yet syncopated beat of the triangle, produced by ringing out a steady sixteenth note with the clanger in the

⁵⁰ Ibid 239.

⁵¹ Larry Crook, “Caboclo Traditions: Music of the Northeast Interior,” *Music in Latin American Culture: Regional Traditions*, Ed. John M. Schechter (New York: Shirmer Books, 1999), 213. Jack Bishop also provides an excellent description: “In the basic baião rhythm, the initial strike of the soft mallet (the dotted eighth note with the “x” notehead in the figure) is muffled by holding the mallet head against the head after striking. The following two strokes are accented by letting the head ring. A crisp counter-rhythm is created by striking and holding the bottom head with a thin stick on the up beat. Jack Bishop, “Just as Sweet the Second Time Around: The Re-popularization of *Baião* in Pernambuco, Brazil,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* (Vol. 20 [2001] 203-16), 208. John Chernoff also discusses the technique that differentiates muted and ringing sounds on the drum: “Striking the drumhead freely so that the stick bounces up gives a resonant and stressed beat, but secondary notes are played by pressing the stick onto the drumhead to produce a muted beat several intervals higher than a free stick beat.” John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 43.

right hand while opening and closing the thumb of the left hand to accent the up beats. Jack Bishop notes that “some triangle players actually toss the triangle up very slightly on the open beats to achieve maximum resonance” and that “the two instruments in combination [zabumba and triangle] produce a surprisingly thick percussive layer as support for the ornamentations of the accordion.”⁵²

The accordion provides the melody as well as bass accompaniment and generally dominates the small stage on which the three musicians play. While old-school *trios* may continue to use the eight-bass accordion (considered more rustic and traditional), most contemporary bands use keyboard accordions with up to 120 bass buttons. The accordionists always stand and exert massive amounts of energy pushing, pulling and bouncing the bellows for a very lively performance. The three instruments – zabumba, triangle and accordion – form the basic musical triad from which all forró is produced, though more modern bands may add additional percussion (shakers, scrapers, drum set) or an electronic bass guitar.

The forró rhythm evolved in the early 1960s and was further syncopated. According to Crook, it involved “a strong dampened stroke just before the second beat of a two-four measure, as well as a variety of offbeat counter-rhythms performed with the thin stick on the underside of the drum.”⁵³ With an average tempo of MM=128, it is notably faster than the baião, and often referred to as “hotter” than the baião (a reference to its speed and the virtuosity inherent in its performance). Crook, again, writes:

⁵² Bishop 208.

⁵³ Crook “Caboclo Traditions” 217.

The primary structural difference between the baião and the forró is the reversal of the muffled and open strokes in the surdo and the zabumba together with an added stroke on the last sixteenth of the measure played by the zabumba.⁵⁴

Figure 6: A variant of the baião known as forró



From Jack Bishop, Sweet

Extremely popular today is the xote, a Northeastern version of the schottische, which is considered more romantic due to its slow duple meter⁵⁵ and is unique due to its “underlying shuffle rhythm that is ambiguously between a duple and triple division of the beat.”⁵⁶

Also included in the forró complex is the arrasta-pé, a fast dance similar to the polka, in which closely-embraced couples hop quickly from one foot to another while spinning around the dance floor. Another rhythm less popular today is the xaxado, a fast-paced genre made popular by the *cangaceiro* bandit Lampião who is rumored to have enjoyed (and, some say, invented) this dance, in which dancers swish their feet up and down while gripping a rifle (a stand-in for a lady) in their left arm.

⁵⁴ Crook “Zabumba Music” 244. Bishop notes that “in many cases, the forró rhythm is produced by omitting the quarter note on the top head (in the second beat of the basic baião pattern, see figure), and decorating the off beats on the bottom head. Bishop 209.

⁵⁵ Crook estimates its average tempo to be MM=85.5, while Mattos Madeira suggests 72-84. Crook “Zabumba Music” 251 and Marcos Mattos Madeira, *A Evolução do Baião: A solidificação de um gênero musical nordestino como música da moda dos centros urbanos atuais e principalmente do meio acadêmico* (Fortaleza, Ceará, August 1999), 32.

⁵⁶ Crook “Zabumba Music” 251.

Traditionally, forró music and dance parties took place in “temporary huts with thatched roofs and dirt floors in an atmosphere similar to a North American country hoedown,”⁵⁷ and were largely driven by amateur musicians, representing grass-roots music making in a local context.⁵⁸ These parties were often rural celebrations and drew dozens of people from a radius of several miles, often on foot. Many of the dancers (and often the musicians as well) who frequented these parties were under-educated sharecroppers out to meet girls, to have a few drinks and to have a good time, and even today people revel in stories about the elevated drunkenness and the violence that regularly exploded between patrons at these famed parties.

Indeed, the association of forró with peasant and lower-class populations has been a major feature of the music until very recently,⁵⁹ a quality that is both derided and celebrated amongst fans of the genre. In a recent documentary film *Viva São João*, documenting the return of Luiz Gonzaga’s sister to her childhood home (the metaphoric and literal birthplace of forró) in Exu, Pernambuco, one of Brazil’s most celebrated accordionists addresses the reputation of forró. According to Sivuca, “even saying the word ‘forró’ was considered taboo for a time due to its associations to poverty and disorder.”⁶⁰

More recently, forró is available in any number of clubs, bars and festivals in and outside the major cities of the Northeast, and while often involving drinking and

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ See Ruth H. Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians: Music-making in an English Town* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989) for a discussion of local music-making.

⁵⁹ See chapter six for an in-depth discussion of social class and forró universitário.

⁶⁰ Cassidy 4.

prowling for women, no longer necessarily draws a bad reputation. The biggest season for forró continues to be the São João festival in June,⁶¹ when hundreds of bands play over a period of three weeks, though performances occur regularly throughout the year and new albums are released with relative frequency. During a typical forró show, the non-stop twanging of a giant triangle pushes its pulse to a boiling pitch; a large double-headed *zabumba* drum drives its seductive syncopation; and a 120-bass accordion pumps out its exaggerated chords. Couples grind across the dance floor, their legs intertwined and hips swaying in tandem, appearing as one gyrating subject.

Forró music, like much of Brazilian culture, is fundamentally social. As Mundicarmo Ferretti notes, it is “of the people, for the people.”⁶² Compared to other music and dance venues, forró draws a relatively diverse crowd, with people “from seven to seventy”⁶³ mixing with one another, though with a limited range of social classes present. It is generally a relaxed atmosphere where women and men dance together and couples exhibit very little competition. The dance floor fills up quickly, inevitably leading to collisions and stubbed toes, but the dancers continue whirling in time to the music, nearly oblivious to everything but the syncopated thumping of the *zabumba* that they mimic with their lower bodies.

One of the striking characteristics of forró pé-de-serra is the reliance of performers on a relatively small canon of songs – nearly all composed and made popular by Luiz

⁶¹ See chapter three for an in-depth discussion of the São João festival.

⁶² “*Forró é do povo, para o povo.*” Mundicarmo Maria Rocha Ferretti, *Baião dos Dois: Zedantas e Luiz Gonzaga* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1988), 17.

⁶³ Interview with Arlindo dos Oito Baixos. Cassidy 26.

Gonzaga. Most audience members are familiar with the melodies and lyrics of the songs and enjoy repeated listening and dancing to the same hits. In fact, I would argue that the constant recursivity of this small canon creates a genre specially suited to explorations of transformations in cultural identity, since through regular iterations of forró pé-de-serra, musicians and audiences have constructed a “traditional” genre that reflects their understanding of local historic musical institutions.

Over the decades since its debut, forró has slipped in and out of style, experiencing waves of extreme popularity and periods of lapsed esteem, though its core “traditional” listening audience has remained quite steadfast. That is to say, forró has gone in and out of style regularly in major urban centers, but the support of lower-class rural listeners has never waned.

Since the 1990s, there have been increasingly diverse and interesting fusions of forró, rock, lambada, axé, heavy metal, funk and other regional musics, as generations of musicians continue to tap into the raw potential of Gonzaga’s work. In the southern cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília and Belo Horizonte, the mid-1990s saw a major wave of forró which in fact grew into its own genre of forró: *universitário*. This “university” forró, named for the type of listeners who embraced it and made it into a popular style, shares much in common with forró pé-de-serra.

The rhythms and main percussive backdrop to both genres are similar, as are the major-chord melodies and harmonies – and some musicians refuse to differentiate the two types of forró. However, the newer *universitário* genre adds several (often electronic) musical elements, including keyboards, drum sets and bass guitar. And even more importantly, the latter style, as is clear from its name, is produced for and

by middle-class white educated Brazilians – those in the university circuit of Rio and São Paulo. Thus, these two forms of forró differ slightly in sound but greatly as social indicators.

Another type of forró arose in Ceará (in Brazil's Northeast) a few years later. This style, dubbed *forró estilizado*, or stylized forró, dispenses with the accordion and instead incorporates keyboards for the main instrumental line, along with drum sets and bass guitar for accompaniment. In addition, stylized forró features a stage full of female dancers, usually in matching skimpy outfits, dancing choreographed movements along with the music. Although disdained by most pé-de-serra and universitário fans, this style of forró has proven to be extremely profitable, as it is marketed to a mass audience of young lower-class Northeasterners who regularly fill stadium theaters to take in live performances. While forró estilizado stands out sonorically from the other genres, it also stands out for the offensive reaction it generates in traditionalists.

A final type of forró that I will portray in this dissertation is what I call forró *pós-mangue*, or post-mangue, and is an outgrowth from the *mangue* movement out of Recife. A 1990s movement of musical hybridity, *mangue beat* meshed traditional Recife percussion with global genres such as punk, rock, hip-hop and ragamuffin in order to create a novel genre with equal parts local and global sounds. Hugely successful, this music ushered in a cultural renaissance which is still enriching forró sounds in the Northeast. Forró pós-mangue often features the *rabeca* fiddle as a melodic element in place of or in addition to the accordion, and includes experimental amalgams of rhythms of the forró complex with international sounds and beats. A

“roots” music, it builds upon a traditional baseline, and as such is generally positively viewed by even the most traditionalist forró fans.

Together, these four types of forró form what I call a forró *complex*, a grouping of diverse northeastern musical genres that nonetheless can all claim a similar root and are closely associated by musicians and experts. It is also worth noting that most Brazilians have a concept of forró that often incorporates only the most “traditional” of these sub-genres, forró universitário and forró pé-de-serra. Throughout my research when I have told people I am studying forró music, nearly all seem to assume that I am studying forró only in its most traditional iteration. This, in part, reflects a broad fixation on “roots,” one of the major narratives common to forró enthusiasts and a topic I will stress throughout this text. Indeed, the search for cultural roots is one of the driving forces motivating not just my own project, but the very discourse surrounding the genre of forró.

Forró For All?: The Etymology of Forró

The etymology of forró has been a major polemic, particularly in my own research, in which nearly every informant repeats an urban myth to me about the original meaning of the word “forró.” According to most, it is actually an English phrase, pronounced Brazilian style. Its use supposedly dates back to the mid-nineteenth century (one source dates it to 1858),⁶⁴ though the exact specifics vary. One version reports that its use arose when Great Western Railway, a private English

⁶⁴ Fernando Moura and Antônio Vicente, *Jackson do Pandeiro: o rei do ritmo* (São Paulo, Brazil: Editora 34, 2001), 201.

company, was working on the construction of rail lines in the Brazilian Northeast; according to this story, an engineer of the company reserved a giant storeroom for a dance party for the Brazilian workers and affixed a huge sign with the words “for all” at the entrance. Some sources claim the railway was being run through the state of Alagoas;⁶⁵ some say through the interior of Pernambuco,⁶⁶ and some claim the party happened once, while others maintain it became a veritable tradition along the rails.⁶⁷

Other versions trace the origin to World War II, when U.S. soldiers (some say from the Air Force) manned bases in the Brazilian Northeast;⁶⁸ the dance party aspect remains similar in all of the stories. For most Brazilians, though, the exact details of the story are irrelevant: what matters is the notion that Brazilians were able to synthesize a local cultural tradition out of a foreign intervention (more on this below).

More likely, as most music historians tell us, the term is an abbreviation of the longer “forrobodó.”⁶⁹ Signifying a dance party with eating and drinking aplenty, forrobodó seems to have been considered a synonym of any party that included drinking, dancing and above average fracas.⁷⁰ The first published evidence of the

⁶⁵ Moura and Vicente write that it was an extension of the Guarabira and Mulungu rail line in Alagoas (it was meant to connect Recife to Palmares. He also notes that Great Western Railway had also installed rail lines throughout the North American Wild West. Moura and Vicente 27-8.

⁶⁶ See Mattos Madeira 24.

⁶⁷ *Festejos Juninos: Uma tradição nordestina* (Recife: Editora Nova Presença, 2002), 75.

⁶⁸ Mac Margolis, “Ê, Nordeste festeiro,” *Ícaro Brasil* (Revista de Bordo Varig, 168 [August 1998], 36-44), 44. See also Luís Antônio Giron, “Uma árvore genealógica cheia de frutos e ginga,” *Palavra* (Ano 1, No. 3 [June 1999]).

⁶⁹ Ethnomusicologist Jack Bishop suggests that the term “forró” probably comes from neither the “for all” or “forrobodó” “but from a combination of the two.” Jack Bishop, “Vem Arrasta-pé: Commoditizing Forró Culture in Pernambuco, Brazil,” *Musical Cultures of Latin America: Global Effects, Past and Present: Proceedings of an International Conference*, Ed. Steven Loza (Los Angeles: University of California, [May 28-30, 1999], 187-96), 189.

⁷⁰ Mattos Madeira has composed a nearly untranslatable list of synonyms for *forrobodó*: “arrasta-pé, farra, troça, confusão, desordem, rolo... baile de ralé, baile ordinário, divertimento, festança, bagunça,

word “forrobodó” may well have been in 1881, though other early sources abound;⁷¹ by the early twentieth century, there was ample evidence of the term “forrobodó” being used in diverse parts of the nation.⁷² José Ramos Tinhorão claims that the term was created by the editors of the old-style announcements (called “puffs”) advertising upcoming carnival floats in Rio.⁷³ And, though he doesn’t include a date, Tinhorão also informs us that there was a magazine (published by Luís Pexito and Carlos Bittencourt) circulating under the name of “Forrobodó” which centered on a dance hall in the Cidade Nova.⁷⁴

There seems to be no reason to disbelieve the theory of a “forrobodó” etymology, though in my research I have searched for additional etymologies that could be tied to the word *forró*, specifically because of its uncanny linguistic similarity to the word “forro,” an adjective meaning “freed” and referring to a freed slave. Based on what

brigada, também “frogodó”... Em São Paulo são usuais, além de forrobodó, as palavras: borobobó, barababá, fuá, banzé, bozó, fuzuê e outras.” Mattos Madeira 22.

⁷¹ José Ramos Tinhorão cites the author França Júnior, who (in a short story published in *The Illustrated Globe* of Rio in 1881 or 1882) wrote that *maxixe* was a slang term, synonym of *forrobodó* and *xinfrim*, meaning a dance party in a humble home. José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular (da modinha à canção de protesto)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Vozes, Ltda., 1974), 63. Dantas Silva notes that shortly after this reference, the term was published in *América Ilustrada*, no. 25 (1882) and *Mephistopheles*, no. 15 (1883). A slightly later reference by Visconde de Beaurepaire Rohan noted its Rio de Janeiro origin, in *Dicionário de vocábulos brasileiros*, (Rio) 1889. Another source, published in Lisbon in 1901, notes its Brazilian origin (Alberto Bessa, *A linguagem popular e gíria portuguesa*) Ferretti 9. Dantas Silva notes that the term also appeared in *Cancioneiro do Norte* (Fortaleza: 1903) and Pereira Costa’s *Vocabulário Pernambucano* in 1908.

⁷² Chiquinha Gonzaga wrote a marchinha titled “Forrobodó” in 1912. Expedito Leandro Silva, *Forró no Asfalto: mercado e identidade sociocultural* (São Paulo: Annablume/FAPESP, 2003), 42. Tinhorão tells us that this piece, though known simply as “Forrobodó,” was titled “Forrobodó de Massada.” He includes lyrics: “Forrobodó de Massada / Gostoso como ele só / é tão bom como cocada / É melhor que o pão-de-ló. Forrobodó de Massada / Gostoso como ele só, Chi! / A zona está estragada / Meu deus, que forrobodó / Tem enguiço, tem feitiço / Na garganta faz um nó / Então, seu guarda, o que é isso / Meu Deus, que forrobodó / Mas, então, pelo que eu vejo / não apanho um frango só / Eu vejo que já não beijo / Meu Deus, que forrobodó!” Tinhorão “Pequena História” 90.

⁷³ José Ramos Tinhorão, *Música Popular: os sons que vem da rua* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Tinhorão, 1976) 143.

⁷⁴ Tinhorão “Pequena História” 67.

we know about music and dance traditions that grew out of the Brazilian Northeast, it is likely that these dances began as parties among the lower classes, many of whom would have been slaves or indentured servants (technically “free”) in the nineteenth century.

Both “*forro*” (“free” or “freed”) and “*alforria*” (freedom papers; manumission),⁷⁵ as well as the derivative “*alforriado*,” (“freed”) seem to be used somewhat interchangeably throughout the nineteenth century.⁷⁶ These words, in turn, are clearly of Arabic origin; “*farra*”⁷⁷ is the past tense of “to flee, to run” and “*alfaarru*” the active participle in the nominative of the same verb. Also, Michael Barry notes that both “*alforria*” and “*forro*” come from the Arabic “*al-hurr*,” meaning “free,” or “*al-hurriyya*,”⁷⁸ which means freedom. The shift of “h” to “f” is well documented in Spanish-Portuguese⁷⁹ and probably accounts for the shift in Arabic-Portuguese as well.

The abbreviation “*forró*” to talk about dance parties or a style of music became common only in the mid twentieth century. One source notes that “*forró*” was used as early as 1882, when it appeared in a Recife newspaper,⁸⁰ but the overwhelming majority of sources date the first usage of the word “*forró*” to a song by Luiz Gonzaga

⁷⁵ Kampton Webb also cites “*Foral*” as a legal letter (often from the “King”) which regulated the administration of a place or conceded privileges to individuals or corporations. Kampton Webb, *The Changing Face of Northeast Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 93.

⁷⁶ Tinhorão notes that “*forro*” was used interchangeably with “*alforriados*.” José Ramos Tinhorão, *Os Sons dos Negros no Brasil: cantos, danças, folguedos, origens* (São Paulo: Art Editora, 1988), 100.

⁷⁷ Valeria Lopez-Fadul. Personal contact.

⁷⁸ Personal contact.

⁷⁹ Hijo/filho; horno/forno; herver/ferver; etc.

⁸⁰ Festejos Juninos 20.

and Zédantas, “O Forró de Mané Zito” in 1949. Indeed, many of the older musicians who spoke with me emphasized that forró was never the word they used (in their youth) to refer to the country parties that were held in the area. Instead, they called it a “samba,” a generic term referring to a dance party; as one artist narrates, “the majority of my family was from the countryside and I always went to my grandfather’s house and there was always a dance, a samba, people there called it a samba, not a forró.”⁸¹ Further complicating the term forró is that, in the span of one generation, it has morphed from designating the *place* where forró music was played... to (most often) meaning the *music* forró: “Forró, at that time, wasn’t a kind of music... forró was a place. ‘Yonder at the accordionist’s house, there’s a forró.’ That was it... nowadays, no. Now forró is a music, right? ‘Play a forró, there.’”⁸²

The myth of forró “for all” seems to date to 1983, when a popular forró song by Pernambucano Geraldo Azevedo, “For all para todos,” hit the charts across Brazil. For his part, Azevedo traces the expression back to Gonzaga. Azevedo recalls a television show in the early 1980s in which Luiz Gonzaga and Sivuca (another famous nordestino accordionist) recounted the story of the English railroad company,⁸³ and he immortalized the concept in his catchy “For all” tune.⁸⁴

⁸¹ TA: “a maioria da minha família era da zona rural e eu sempre ia para a casa de meu avô e sempre tinha uma dança, um samba, que o pessoal lá chamava samba, não chamava forró.”

⁸² TA: “o forró, daquele tempo, não era forró uma música não... o forró era o local. “Ali na casa do sanfoneiro, tem um forró.” Era isso... Agora hoje não. Hoje forró é uma música, ne? “Toca um forró aí.”

⁸³ Mattos Madeira 25.

⁸⁴ One of the most prolific forró bands in the New York area is also called “Forró For All,” and is led by Rob Curto, formerly a founder and member of “Forró in the Dark.” See chapter seven for more information.

Still, the fact that there exists such a disagreement over etymology can tell us quite a bit about what matters to performers and audiences alike; as Bryan McCann points out in regards to the similarly contentious etymology of choro music, “Critics, and fans alike are deeply concerned with origins and establishing authenticity, and inclined to see the music as an intrinsically bittersweet evocation of a lost past.”⁸⁵ Indeed, for many Brazilians it is important to locate forró in a time and place far away from the cosmopolitan chaos among which so many Brazilians now live, in order to serve as a deeply dissimilar image that can be recalled with nostalgia. Not only that, but Brazil’s age-old contentious relationship with foreign (largely North American) cultural imports also seems to be at play here. Perhaps unwittingly, by repeating the myth of “forró,” Brazilians are practicing a kind of anthropophagy⁸⁶ – a cannibalist act of importing foreign culture and blending it with their own cultural traditions in order to produce a wholly new cultural object (see chapter two). By citing the North American railway workers (or soldiers) who put on the dances, they are reinforcing the notion that Brazilians can always improve upon any cultural importation. That is, in Brazilian nationalist imaginings, forró may have been financed originally by a few English-speaking foreigners, but its content is entirely Brazilian.

Methodologies and Preparation

⁸⁵ Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 163.

⁸⁶ See chapter two for a more detailed discussion of anthropophagy.

The methodology for my project seeks to mimic the movement of the very people who are singing/writing/playing/listening and dancing to forró. Like the migrations between the sertão and the South and like the migrations of Brazilians to the United States, my own travel has been marked with fits and starts and, though cyclical in theory, it has been quite messy in practice. Nevertheless, in my dissertation I have tried to maintain relatively firm divisions between major research points and places. Focusing on the cities of Recife, Rio de Janeiro, and New York as the interactive musical nodes where forró plays as a soundtrack to the different groups of migrants, my research seeks to understand both the traditional baseline of this music (as it is conceptualized by the majority of Brazilians) as well as the dynamic genres that are perpetually emerging and re-emerging from the forró complex.

I designed this multi-sited “routes”⁸⁷ ethnography and opted to travel between these diverse nodes of musical production in order to place myself along the music-scape complicit in Brazilian “roots” narratives. This methodology has allowed me the flexibility to follow musical trends and acts as they move around the Brazilian music circuit and to interact with very different audiences and forró enthusiasts.

The issue of “the field” has received much attention in the world of anthropology in the past two decades; a discipline which largely defines itself by the traditional year-long local ethnography has had to redesign itself at some level in response to the deterritorialized lives that we and so many of the groups that we wish to understand

⁸⁷ See James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Wayne Marshall, *Routes, Rap, Reggae: Hearing the Histories of Hip-hop and Reggae Together* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ethnomusicology Department of University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2007).

have developed. Appadurai describes this dilemma, stressing the need for anthropologists to adapt to a changing world:

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic “projects,” the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, non-localized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapes – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogeneous... The task of ethnography now becomes the unraveling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world?⁸⁸

Indeed, James Clifford, too, has interrogated the very practice of “dwelling” in the field (that imperative mark of the ethnography) – in part because in his mind it problematically has “contributed to a synecdoche in which location (village) is taken for culture,”⁸⁹ and in part because culture is in fact essentially mobile. Instead Clifford would like to see anthropologists treat “practices of displacement... as constitutive of cultural meanings.”⁹⁰ He goes on to argue that for anthropologists to attempt to “dwell” within or across a mobile way of life is also extremely problematic:

Multilocale ethnography (Marcus and Fischer 1986) is increasingly familiar; multilocale *fieldwork* is an oxymoron. How many sites can be studied intensively before criteria of “depth” are compromised?⁹¹

These scholars have begun to interrogate the very process by which anthropologists have practiced their professions, though few have any solid

⁸⁸ Arjun Appadurai, “Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology,” *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in The Present*, Ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press, 1991), 191, 196.

⁸⁹ Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 28.

⁹⁰ Clifford 3.

⁹¹ *Ibid*: 190.

answers about how to move forward. My own multi-sited project is, in a sense, a contribution to this debate. Indeed, by moving around I have sacrificed the in-depth knowledge that could have been gained from an additional nine months in each site. On the other hand, I have come away from the experience with a wider understanding of the production and consumption of forró culture across a vast nation and between at least two continents. This amplified lens has allowed me to look at forró as it changes across time and space and how it relates to the massive migrations of Brazilians across their country and into the United States.

Somewhat ironically, Gupta and Ferguson note that at the same time the *field* becomes an increasingly complicated place for anthropologists to define, the *fieldworker* has become more esteemed in the discipline of anthropology:

Indeed, it is striking that the generalist and comparativist theorists who dominated anthropology at midcentury (e.g., Radcliffe-Brown, Leslie White and Goerge Murdock) seem in the process of being mnemonically pruned from the anthropological family tree, while the work of those remembered as great fieldworkers (Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Leenhardt, etc.) continues to be much more widely discussed.⁹²

It is important to note, too, that as the world becomes increasingly deterritorialized, the fieldworker becomes much less exotic and unusual; indeed, as Clifford notes, “the ethnographer is no longer a (worldly) traveler visiting (local) natives;”⁹³ instead both are travelers, and both are local (and often global) dwellers.

⁹² Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Discipline and Practice: ‘The Field’ as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 1.

⁹³ Clifford 2.

Many of the musicians and dancers that I worked with in Recife and Rio had already been to New York at least once; others were well acquainted with New York musicians who regularly travel back and forth (see chapter seven). Those that had never traveled abroad were able to teach me much about far-flung communities in Brazil that they are acquainted with through their music tours and family connections.

In an effort to approach my research from as open a perspective as possible, I have tried to enhance my short “dwelling” exercises in each locale with virtual fieldwork, utilizing listserves, blogs, websites, facebook groups, twitter, and online social networking software including chat and Skype in order to keep up with my field sites and continue learning and asking questions. This, I believe, approaches Clifford’s suggestion to “focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as rooted, native ones,”⁹⁴ while also allowing me to “dwell” among the online media that many forró artists and enthusiasts are using. In one sense, this has complicated my write-up, as I haven’t returned home with boxes of material in order to write up what I’ve learned, and instead continue tweaking my writing as tweets flow in about upcoming events and reactions.

Christopher Small, in his book *Musicking*, encourages scholars to engage with music in and as an event. Following his lead, I have found it important to focus my field research largely on forró music in its social context. Since, as he argues, “Music’s primary meaning is not individual at all but social,”⁹⁵ my attempts to

⁹⁴ Ibid 24.

⁹⁵ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NJ: UP New England, 1998), 8. In Morgan Gerard and Jack Sidnell “‘Trying to Break it Down’: MCs’ Talk and Social Setting in Drum & Bass Performance,” *Global Pop, Local Language*, Ed. Harris M. Berger and Michael Thomas Carroll (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003 [269-89]), 270.

understand forró music as it is produced and consumed have centered around performers, performances and audience members.

The first phase of my research for this project involved five months of ethnographic research in Recife (August 2003 and May-August 2004). As the present-day urban epicenter of forró pé-de-serra, Recife is a fascinating environment from which to begin to understand both forró in its most traditionalist style as well as in estilizado and post-mangue performances. A musician myself, I dedicated much of my time during this fieldwork phase to learning the 8-bass-button accordion with Mestre Arlindo Pereira (Arlindo dos Oito Baixos),⁹⁶ a widely-recognized player, tuner and teacher from Recife. These classes became a base point from which to begin building a grammar for understanding music-making in the Brazilian Northeast. Moreover, it provided an opportunity to develop working relationships with musicians and to build rapport within the forró community. Indeed, as Kay Shelemay argues, actively joining in a society's music culture creates the potential for a truly participatory participant-observation. Over the summers of 2003 and 2004, I was able to spend dozens of hours a week as a fixture in the living rooms, kitchens, and practice rooms of the artists of these families, and to accompany them out to shows all over town and in out-of-town performances, learning about musical traditions

⁹⁶ Born in Sirinhaém, on the Rubi *Engenho*, or plantation, in 1942, Arlindo has in his forty-year-long career produced over eleven cds with nearly 100 tracks and rose to fame after accompanying the great Luiz Gonzaga in the 1970s. He has taught both accordion and voice to dozens of local musicians and is intimately acquainted with every ethnomusicologist who has worked in the area over the past twenty years.

through family members young and old, through the kind of organic modes of osmosis that the younger members of the family themselves learn through.⁹⁷

Called a “Pernambucan embassy” as well as the “cradle” of forró,⁹⁸ Arlindo’s home houses both his atelier and a sprawling forró club that hosts live forró for upwards of six hours every Sunday afternoon. Located just over a rise on a long sleepy street that runs out from the very last stop on the Dois Unidos bus line, Arlindo’s club is a local hotspot and frequented by hundreds of people, even on a quiet night. Arlindo himself generally plays one or two sets, and he invites professionals from all over Pernambuco and the Northeast to play. The spot has become so popular that he recently completed a third renovation, adding additional square feet for dancing, tables and another bar for serving guests.

In addition to spending several days a week in Arlindo’s atelier, I regularly attended his Sunday night forrós, and I frequented many nighttime shows of forró, mangue, and other regional hybrid musics on stages all over the city. I scoured the city for any available literature on regional musics and spent many afternoons at the Instituto Joaquim de Nabuco, poring over their archives. I met with and interviewed artists, producers, audience members and representatives of arts funding agencies. I hung out at various record stores around the city, grilling the people working there as well as other shoppers about what new music was coming out, what was important to

⁹⁷ While I learned much from formal interviews, I also benefited greatly from this “deep hanging out,” an essentially informal method of interacting with community members. Many performers approached their interviews with me in the same way they would interviews with local reporters for a short news story, and weren’t prepared to elaborate on questions about the scene and instead only able to repeat their practiced spiel for marketing purposes. This was particularly true for older traditionalists; in general the theoretical stance that younger, more experimental groups had developed was better suited to my line of questioning.

⁹⁸ Said Arlindo’s son, a professional zabumba player: I was born practically in the cradle of forró. “*Eu nasci no berço do forró praticamente.*”

listen to, and what was representative of the Recife music scene as a whole. I joined artists behind stage and introduced myself to anyone who seemed willing to give me an opinion on any aspect of forró music. I surrounded myself with the new and old sounds emerging from the city, and I threw myself into learning to dance.

Not quite a year later, I flew back to Brazil for an additional three months of research (June-August 2005) in Rio de Janeiro. While in Rio, my goal was to enhance my understanding of forró as it is performed and enjoyed in the Northeast by examining it in a quite different space. I settled into an apartment in the South Zone, in the solidly middle-class neighborhood of Ipanema, and from there explored the forró universitário scene that had swept the area. I attended forró parties several evenings a week, attended dance lessons in order to compare the Rio style with the Northeast style I was more familiar with, and engaged as many of the universitário audience members as possible. During this phase of my research, I focused more closely on audience members than on musicians, since the major difference between forró universitário and forró pé-de-serra is not its musical content but its audience. Indeed, as Andy Bennett reminds us, the audience is not a static object but a shifting set of participants and listeners who regularly construct and contest meaning in radically different contexts.⁹⁹ One of the more interesting challenges in my work has been to determine what audiences of different forró musics have in common, and how such diverse groups construct different narratives for understanding performance.

In addition, part of my research plan while in Rio was to augment my understanding of the *interplay* between northeastern migrants and *cariocas*, or Rio

⁹⁹ See Andy Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 55-60.

natives, within the world of forró. With this in mind, I spent a lot of time at the Feira de São Cristóvão, the gigantic Northeastern marketplace that mushroomed out of the old improvised bus depot in the 1940s. The Feira today is a bustling center that has been completely outfitted for upscale tourism and continues to draw both international and national tourists while still catering to the Northeastern population it first grew to serve (see chapter five). I spent many weekends at the Feira, chatting with musicians and other Feira old-timers, wandering the endless aisles of products, and spending hours listening to bands set up at either end of the pavilion. I also conducted interviews with the team that manages the Feira's cultural events and with northeastern forró musicians about their experiences performing in Rio over the last five decades. Some of my most pleasurable research moments were the hours I spent talking with working class northeastern cab drivers and doormen about their forró experiences in the city and how these vary from the experiences cariocas have built for themselves; I felt drawn to their narratives of saudade, or nostalgia, as I, too, missed many aspects (particularly the intimacy and inclusiveness) of the forró scene in Recife.

Like my time in Recife, I spent a lot of time in Rio gathering information on forró that is unavailable in the United States: collecting flyers for forró events around town, clipping articles from local newspapers (including one that the Feira puts out regularly) and visiting archives and museums for access to dissertations and out-of-print books. In a city with 19,000 registered composers and 6,000 performers,¹⁰⁰ the

¹⁰⁰ Fred Moehn provides these statistics (from the Central Office of Rights Revenue, ECAD) and notes that 85% of the [nation's registered] composers live and work in Rio. Cabral, foreword to João Baptista M. Vargens, *Notas Musicais Cariocas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Vozes Ltda, 1986) 8. In Moehn xiv.

variety of music is basically unlimited, and even though I tried to limit myself to attending only forró music performances, I got exposure to a relatively diverse set of scenes within Rio's music culture.

My research in New York began in late 2003, when I first came across the band Forró in the Dark at The International Accordion Festival in San Antonio. When I realized the band was based in New York, I made regular visits to see them perform between the spring of 2004 and 2005. I returned to live in New York in 2007, at which point I again started attending events throughout the area. The growth of the forró scene in New York was somewhat irregular, with ongoing venues coming in and out of the picture, but it was precisely between this time and the present that the scene started to solidify with a growing number of regular forró nights every week in many of New York's barrios. While in New York I made a point to follow not just the growth of the forró scene but of the increasing popularity of northeastern Brazilian music, including innovative fusions by American jazz and bluegrass players. In addition to frequenting shows, I attended percussion workshops, interviewed local musicians, producers, and fans, and took classes in forró dance.

It was during this stage of research that I began to incorporate different media into my research, tapping into new technologies that facilitate communication and networking across short and long distances. I joined a brand new Facebook group called "Forrozeiros (forró dancers) in New York City and Beyond," began following twitter news on forró as well as music events in Recife and Rio, started using Skype to call and record conversations with musicians traveling abroad, started following local and international blogs on northeastern music and traditions and communicating

with forró fans via youtube. Canclini has noted with characteristic skepticism that “it seems we anthropologists have more difficulties entering into modernity than do the social groups we study,”¹⁰¹ and during this last stage of research I was determined to delve into the kinds of technology today being used by so many people connected to the Brazilian music scene. It has proved an indispensable practice, and the contacts I have made through these various outlets have been essential in getting new perspectives and keeping up with old acquaintances. While there is a certain intimacy and trust that cannot be gained as easily online as in person, these media innovations allow for a continued presence in a scene, even from afar.¹⁰²

The setbacks I encountered while researching *in situ* included the typical problems that plague all fieldwork carried out far from home: frustrations stemming from miscommunications about time (I inevitably arrived early to all appointments, and had to re-learn the art of waiting on a regular basis) and misunderstandings stemming from the power imbalance between a first-world researcher and his/her informants (who often disrupt relations by asking for inappropriate sums of money or impossible favors).¹⁰³ By far the most difficult challenge I encountered, however, was being a female researcher in a male-dominated environment. This was mainly an issue in

¹⁰¹ Nestor Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 178.

¹⁰² These technologies may have already started to change how many anthropologists conduct research. As paid sabbatical leave becomes less feasible in a strained economic environment, anthropologists may increasingly spend three months a year in a far-away field site and return to teach two semesters a year while still staying relatively abreast of local happenings and change.

¹⁰³ Cassidy notes, in his Master’s Thesis, that he encountered this issue with one particular informant who was also problematic in my own research. Cassidy 18-9. Indeed, there was often pressure from musicians/producers I worked with who pressured me to get them recording/publishing/touring possibilities through my “connections,” a virtual impossibility, since as an academic I do not have access to the kind of opportunities they were looking for.

Recife, as that was the location where I delved most deeply into the lifestyles of musicians (nearly all male) and a city where “classic” gender roles are still more evident than in either Rio de Janeiro or New York. It was also complicated by the fact that I was young and single and that my interest in all things “forró” and my litany of questions (nearly always directed at male musicians) were often misinterpreted as flirtation.

Though Darcy Ribeiro categorizes the Brazilian *family* as matricentric, in fact Brazilian *society* is decidedly patriarchal and, in many contexts, still dominated by certain expressions of machismo. This is particularly true in the Northeast, where conservative values still dictate gender norms. Linda Anne Rebhun, in her ethnography of love in the Northeast, examines this issue (and, to a lesser degree, her own positionality vis-à-vis gender roles). She describes the historical precedent for exaggerated gender roles in the Brazilian New World: “The Moorish-influenced Portuguese tendency toward seclusion of high-status women intensified in Brazil. Ideally, the white woman was supposed to leave her home only three times: for baptism, marriage, and burial.”¹⁰⁴ She continues with a description of the situation for many women in the Northeast today:

Unmarried girls or women cannot live alone, not only because the state of being unchaperoned would reflect badly on them and their families but also because a woman not clearly protected by a father, brother, or son is considered fair sexual game. Women living alone are subject to sexual harassment, including both verbal and physical assaults.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ A.J.R. Russell-Wood, “Female and Family in the Economy and Society of Colonial Brazil,” *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives*, Ed. Asunción Lavrin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 66). In Linda Anne Rebhun, *The Heart Is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 101. To underscore this point, she notes that the verb “to marry,” *casar* in Portuguese, derives from the word “house,” *casa*.

¹⁰⁵ Rebhun 123.

Indeed, I was not only regularly approached by strange men (as well as colleagues) who assumed that my single status was an invitation, but also reproached by other women who assumed that by interviewing a husband or boyfriend, I was attempting to seduce him! Before my arrival (and even since, with only one exception) the ethnomusicologists who have studied music traditions in and around Recife have been male academics (and many of them have brought wives and even family with them, which further isolated them from these issues).

It is worth pointing out, too, that ethnomusicologists across the world have encountered issues stemming from gender roles; not only are female researchers often marginalized, but female performers, as well. Mavis Bayton notes, in her article on feminist musical practice, that

Women have been largely excluded from popular music-making and relegated to the role of the fan. Women performers have been more prominent in commercial 'pop' than in 'rock,' but their place in all these worlds has been that of vocalist rather than instrumentalist.¹⁰⁶

Larry Crook agrees that this is particularly true in the context of music-making in Pernambuco. As he says, "Men and women do not participate equally in the production of music."¹⁰⁷

Added to these complications is the fact that forró itself is a highly sexual and sexualized music whose lyrics often allude to sex and/or flirtation – and the meta-language used to speak about how forró is played uses explicit sexual metaphors. Crook, in his dissertation on zabumba music in Caruaru, Pernambuco, discusses this

¹⁰⁶ Mavis Bayton. "Feminist Musical Practice: Problems and Contradictions," *Rock and Popular Music* (London, Routledge, 1993 [177-192]). In Bennett 46.

¹⁰⁷ Crook "Zabumba Music" 256.

at length. He notes that forró music “has become synonymous with promiscuous behavior, foul language, excessive drinking, and fights between men over women,”¹⁰⁸ and that forró dances often serve as occasions for sexual encounters (frequently between married men and unmarried young women). Male virility and sexual prowess are reinforced in lyrics but also in the interjections shouted out at intervals by audience and band members. Perhaps the most common of these metaphors is “quente,” or hot, and “esquentar,” to heat up. Indeed, forró is often referred to as “esquentar mulher” since it is considered a music that can heat women up and stir up their sex drive. Indeed, the sexual connotations of the music derive in part from the effect that the rhythmic power of the music has on its listeners. Crook explains this and other “heat” metaphors in detail:

The term *quente* (hot) and its related verb form *esquentar* (to heat up) are the basis of a core metaphor relating the semantic domain of heat to the rhythmic intensity of forró and to sexual potency and arousal. Preparing to play a forró, musicians shout things like *forró, bem quente* or *vamos esquentar* (let’s heat things up). This is a direct appeal to other musicians to get things into the forró groove and animate the party. The verb is also used to describe the physical and sexual effect that the forró style is believed to have on women: *esquentar mulher* (it heats women up). Other terms extend the link of forró to the semantic domain of heat. The phrases: *ele toca como pimenta* (he plays like a hot pepper) and *ele toca fumando* (he smokes when he plays) are common evaluative comments signifying extreme competence of performance in the forró style. Audience participants encourage musicians to play with more rhythmic intensity by shouting: *espalhe a brasa* (spread out the [hot] coals) or *rapa fogo* (catch fire). The phrase *ele é fogo* (he is fire) is used to indicate a musician able to heat up a party through his performance ability.¹⁰⁹

Besides the double-entendres common in forró lyrics, the obvious sensuality exhibited in dance, the rhythmic intensity and the interjections mentioned above, the

¹⁰⁸ Crook “Caboclo Traditions” 202.

¹⁰⁹ Crook “Zabumba Music” 270-71.

association of forró with male virility and sexual prowess is verbally highlighted in several other ways, as well. Crook examines this phenomenon in a fascinating analysis of slang words that are cross-utilized for both the sexual act and the performance of forró:

The term *comer* (to eat) is used in slang to mean to consume sexually. In relation to forró, it indicates intensity of rhythmic performance as in the phrase *a batucada comendo* (the percussion instruments eating [up the music]). The verb *furar* (literally to drill or pierce a hole into) is slang for the sexual act involving loss of a woman's virginity. The same term is applied as a positive evaluation of intense rhythmic performance on a percussion instrument. Thus, the phrase: *furando o zabumba* (piercing the zabumba) implies that the zabumba drum is being driven with force, beaten into submission, and manhandled by the drummer. The terms describing musicians who excel at performing forró have macho associations as well. Words such as *forte* (strong), *perigoso* (dangerous) and *machão* (really macho) convey a sense of maleness and virility while the nouns *cobra* (snake) and *fera* (wild beast) link musicians to the animal impulses of males.¹¹⁰

Obviously, an environment as over-sexed as typical forró performances, combined with the elevated patriarchal tendencies of northeastern Brazil and the lack of a forebear that might have introduced musicians in the community to the presence of a female researcher all intensified my own struggle to be taken seriously in my fieldwork in Recife. The fact that I did not feel safe taking public transportation alone at night also became problematic, as it meant I regularly had to recruit male friends to accompany me to forró events (which tended to take place in lower-middle class neighborhoods on the periphery of the city). I find that these difficulties are worth highlighting as they demonstrate quite a lot in and of themselves about the local culture and the challenges of future research in an area not yet saturated by female performers or researchers.

¹¹⁰ Ibid 271.

Synopsis

This thesis is structured to walk the reader first through a historical and theoretical understanding of Brazilian musical development and then through an ethnographic description of three outposts of forró music as it is performed and consumed today. The chapter following this introductory section provides an introduction to the history of Brazil, focusing on its unique development during and after colonization, as well as the artistic and intellectual movements that underscore the importance of music to Brazilian nationalism. Chapter three examines the notion of invented tradition, exploring the theory as first described by Hobsbawm and how it relates to the northeast region of Brazil. This section features a summary of the major elements that compose what I refer to as a *forróscape*, all of the contributing elements to the tradition that is imagined by artists and audience during a typical forró performance. In chapter four, I introduce Luiz Gonzaga, the architect of modern forró, considered a father figure by the generations of performers who have emulated him and followed the musical path he laid out over his forty-year career; my analysis of his career follows the migratory nodes that he himself followed in creating the forró genre, and explores the lyrics of several of his greatest hits in order to understand how imagination and migration solidify the main elements of the music.

In chapter five, I examine a *primary* migration wave (of rural migrants to Recife) and their participation in musical urban forró networks there. This section is largely an ethnomusicological study of *mangue* and other regional musics that preceded the forró revival, paving the way for the new popularity of the traditionalist genre as well

as for regional hybrid musics. In chapter six, I consider a *second* migration wave (of rural/urban nordestinos to the major industrial centers of the South) and their participation in folkloric forró networks there. This section examines how local performance venues in Rio have tapped into the “imagined community” of the forróscape and have attracted not just northeastern migrants, but also middle-class, university-educated Brazilians who belie convention by embracing the “country bumpkin” phenomenon as their own.

Chapter seven of my project looks at a *third* migration wave (of Brazilians to the U.S. Northeast) and their participation in a small but dynamic forró network in New York City. This ethnographic section also examines the participation of a diverse crowd in a forróscape that does not relate to any prior experience, and how they too have begun to imagine the forróscape.

My project seeks to enhance the already existent literature on forró music by exploring the phenomenon of a roots revival as it relates to the migratory cycles of increasingly mobile communities. I argue here that, like many cultural products throughout 20th century Latin America, forró music and dance have become an ideological tool, accessed by Brazilians in the context of a post-modern and deterritorialized urbanity with increasing influences from abroad. The narratives common to the forró music-scape represent an imagined community through which Brazilians actually build bridges to access an imagined past in the hinterlands, untouched by modern mass media and the intimidating forces of globalization. Ironically, it is through a masterful network of mass media that contemporary citizens access this turn inward, toward their imagined community. Seen through the lens of

the iconic folds of the accordion, the music of forró suggests that an increasingly cosmopolitan and globalized Brazil is creating a discourse which makes it possible to participate in a global economy while maintaining a tightly-knit sense of place.

My research demonstrates that at this exciting crossroads to the new millennium, forró music in Brazil has become emblematic of how nations are confronting the post-modern concerns brought by intensified globalization – and that popular music has become a lexicon through which Brazilians position themselves within local, regional, national, and international identities. Framed as a traditional music that represents a rural and bucolic past, forró is actually a dynamic style that has been transformed over years of creative refractions and has developed into several different genres in both rural and urban settings. The reverberations of the zabumba drum can now be heard from rural Pernambuco to outdoor shows in Rio to underground clubs in New York City. Though forró artists across these far-flung sites are perpetually composing and creating new content, a few treasures by Luiz Gonzaga continue to be re-interpreted in a standardized canon of forró which, when replicated, allows a post-modern Brazil free admission to its traditional roots.

Chapter Two

The Role of Music in the Construction of Brazilian Nationalism

Brazil has often been depicted as having intensely regionalized identities and has sought, through decades of political maneuverings as well as academic research, to unite its diverse regions under a national symbol of unity. Like so many Latin American former colonies, Brazil has often looked toward artistic expression to find its unique metaphor of national harmony. And more often than any other form of popular culture, music has been chosen to represent the “glue” that holds the nation together.

This chapter explores the historical context in which Brazil came into nationhood, its challenges to unity and the unique role that music had in the construction of its national identity. I will first outline the major obstacles (socio-political, geographic and economic) that kept the colony from developing into a cohesive unit, and then outline the Modernism movement of the 1920s – which would impact Brazil’s progress toward a nationalist project far more than any other cultural development of the twentieth century. I detail the participation of two major Modernist intellectuals – Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade – and focus on their theoretical contributions and (in the case of Mário) the privileging of music as a medium from which to stage a nationalist intervention for Brazil. Following this I discuss Gilberto Freyre and his formulations on race, which fundamentally transformed the way that the nation viewed itself. Any discussion on miscegenation leads into the populist government of President Getúlio Vargas, who chose the trope of ‘mixing’ as a

distinctive trait of ‘Brazilianess’ and developed a political machine meant to steer cultural traditions – particularly those of the popular classes – into official symbols of the nation. Finally, I give a summary of the development of Brazilian popular music from early in the colony to give a sense of the different influences that made Brazil’s music unique, that allowed it to go through successive transformations, and that continue to push it in new and exciting directions.

Os Brasis:
Early Settlement of the Portuguese Colony

Like Spanish America, Brazil was settled in an effort to extract riches from the land; its very name derives from the *pau-brasil* (Brazilwood) that was hauled out and shipped across the Atlantic for the red dye it retained in its fibers. Since the colony was oriented toward providing Lisbon with raw goods – and not toward building a self-sufficient settlement – it didn’t establish the infrastructure necessary to create long-term economic, political and cultural connections between ports. One early traveler to Brazil observed that the various Brazilian provinces “rarely communicate with each other and are often mutually ignorant of each other’s existence,” and that “there is no common center in Brazil.”¹¹¹ This lack of cohesiveness was termed “centrifugal dismemberment” by Raimundo Faoro and ultimately resulted, in his words, in a “disperse, disarticulated and fluid nation” after Brazilian independence.¹¹²

¹¹¹ José Murilo de Carvalho, “Elite and State-Building in Imperial Brazil,” Ph.D. Dissertation. (Stanford University, 1975), 267-8. In Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 37.

¹¹² Raimundo Faoro, *Os donos do poder* (Porto Alegre: Globo/USP, 1973), 279. In Vianna 37.

In fact, for ease of trade with Portugal, the various provinces were situated along the coast, each one settling less than a twenty-kilometer swath of land, meaning that from the outset of the colony, few inhabitants ventured into the interior.¹¹³ Criticizing this aspect of early Brazil, Frei Vicente do Salvador describes early colonizers as “people content to crawl up and down the coast like crabs.”¹¹⁴ However graphic this image, it seems not entirely accurate; two leading geographers describe a Brazil entirely oriented toward Europe and with little contact between ports:

The isolation of these nuclei – unconnected to one another and each with its own autonomous port oriented toward Europe and its separate system of river transportation – displayed a spatial structure best described as an “archipelago.”¹¹⁵

After the area’s pau-brasil supplies were depleted, the provinces began planting and exporting sugarcane, which became immensely popular in Europe (where sugar had yet to be extracted from beets). As indigenous labor fled deeper into the interior, the Portuguese began importing slaves to work the sugar plantations¹¹⁶ and, later, to

¹¹³ This remains problematic for Brazil, as a huge percentage of its wealth is located along the coast. The effort to build Brasília as a new capital in 1960 was in large part meant to combat this problem, with only minimal success.

¹¹⁴ English translation: Ribeiro 106. Original: “arranhando as costas como caranguejos.” In Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José Olympio Editôra, 1956), 146-7.

¹¹⁵ Bertha K. Becker and Claudio A. G. Egler, *Brazil: a New Regional Power in the World Economy. A Regional Geography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 28. This image has had a lasting impact on Brazil; even in the mid-twentieth century, anthropologist Roger Bastide would refer to the “diversas ilhas culturais que formavam o arquipélago harmônico” do Brasil.” [“diverse cultural islands that formed the harmonic archipelago of Brazil.”] Durval Muniz de Albuquerque, *A Invenção do Nordeste e outras artes* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1999), 107. And Gilberto Freyre juxtaposed the concept of Brazil as a cultural archipelago with the idea of Brazil as cultural continent in an effort to show the complementarity of these apparently contrasting visions. Gilberto Freyre, “Continente e Ilha,” *Problemas brasileiros de antropologia* 3rd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio 1962), 150-51. In Vianna 58.

¹¹⁶ “Amerindians were found to decline rapidly under the working conditions the Portuguese imposed on them, so the colonists had recourse to Africans, the first of whom may have been landed in Brazil as

mine the gold discovered in Minas Gerais (in the South) in the early eighteenth century. With increased slave traffic throughout the Black Atlantic, Brazilian provinces continued to trade with Portugal (and, increasingly, Africa), furthering the lack of integration at the local level. Territorial wars with the Dutch in the Northeast (1630-1654) and with the Spanish in the Platinate region (in the mid-1700s) only exacerbated the issue.

The isolation of Brazilian ports shifted somewhat with the arrival of the Portuguese royal court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808. Fleeing Napoleon's advance across Portugal, the royal family (along with some 15,000 retainers) relocated to Brazil, where the King João VI would rule his empire from the capital of its most important colony for the next thirteen years. Rio de Janeiro, which had been the region's capital for only forty-odd years when the court arrived, became the de-facto center of the Portuguese empire, boosting commerce and transit throughout Brazil, the empire, and other international ports.¹¹⁷

Still, the foremost aspect that united Brazil was the monarch himself, and after he returned to Portugal in 1821, the colony began a slow and peaceful transition to independence that nonetheless presented a challenge: what would keep the various parts of Brazil united under one flag?¹¹⁸ Ultimately, it was the perpetuity of the

early as 1532." Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 5.

¹¹⁷ After the Portuguese crown relocated to Rio, Brazilian ports were allowed to trade with friendly nations (in particular England, whose navy had assisted in the evacuation from Lisbon), transforming economic relations between Old World and New.

¹¹⁸ Haberly describes the unique independence process of Brazil: "developing gradually during 1821 and 1822... historians are hard pressed to pinpoint the exact date of separation from Portugal. Brazilians celebrate 7 Sept. 1822 – when Pedro, a flamboyant young man, cried "Independence or Death!" while riding near São Paulo – but several other dates would do as well. David T. Haberly,

monarchical principle that preserved the political unity of the territory: the son of João VI (Pedro I) was left as regent, and over the course of a year established Brazil as an independent nation under his own monarchical rule. In less than a decade, Pedro I would depart for Portugal and leave the infant nation in the hands of his own infant son and a governing regency. In order to keep the young Empire from “degenerat[ing] into a Balkan patchwork of tiny nations,”¹¹⁹ Pedro II took over the throne at fourteen years old, mollifying somewhat the unrest in different Brazilian territories. As one historian puts it,

The maintenance of Brazil’s territorial integrity after independence... cannot be attributed to a strong nationalist ideology: Brazilian elites simply recognized that the only way to assure the independent status of the nation was to eschew secession.”¹²⁰

With coffee production expanding in the South and slave traffic from Africa slowly dwindling,¹²¹ European immigration to Brazil increased exponentially throughout the mid- and late-1800s. The changing face of Brazil now included a growing working class (mainly comprised of foreign immigrants) whose daily needs were partially provided by interregional exchange of merchandise.¹²² Due to increasing opposition throughout the Brazilian provinces, a constitutional democracy

Three Sad Races: Racial Identity and National Consciousness in Brazilian Literature (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 15-16.

¹¹⁹ Haberly 16.

¹²⁰ Emilia Viotti da Costa, *The Brazilian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1985), 9. In Vianna 38.

¹²¹ Though the very last nation in the New World to outlaw slavery, Brazil passed a series of laws throughout the nineteenth century meant to ‘ease’ slave abuse: in 1831 they passed a law freeing slaves entering Brazil, in 1850 they established additional measures to repress the slave trade, in 1871 they mandated freedom for all children born to slaves in the “ventre libre” legislation, in 1885 they freed slaves over the age of sixty, and finally in 1888 they abolished slavery with the “Lei Aurea” signed by Princess Isabel.

¹²² Becker and Egler.

– which itself struggled to allocate power between geographic poles of the Brazilian oligarchy¹²³ – finally replaced Pedro II’s monarchy in 1889. Brazil’s constitution, written in 1891, was inspired in part by the United States’, and restructured the nation into a federation of largely autonomous states, further undermining a cohesive national identity.

Modernismo: A New Moment for the Nation

In an era of worldwide industrialization and modernization, Brazil, too, began to experience fundamental transformations; and like most of the young Latin American nations, its entrée into the twentieth century would be marked by a confluence of modernity, nationalist consolidation and Modernism. Indeed, in Brazil the search for national identity would be fundamentally tied to the Modernist Moment. Frederick Moehn underscores this point with a clever twist: “Craig Calhoun has observed that ‘the discourse of nationalism is distinctively modern.’ In Brazil, the discourse of Modernism is distinctly nationalistic.”¹²⁴

The project of national integration, already traceable in some writings of the mid-to late-nineteenth century, would truly blossom amidst the Modernist movement of the 1920s, an artistic renaissance in Brazil which would stimulate the political and social change that ultimately led to the nationalistic Revolution of 1930. Though

¹²³ This period, known as the “café com leite” republic, featured an oligarchy which favored São Paulo and Minas Gerais, the two economic powerhouses of Brazil after the collapse of the sugarcane industry. (The moniker stems from their main exports, coffee and dairy). During this period, the ruling party would alternate between São Paulo and Minas Gerais, each completing a term before passing control to the other party.

¹²⁴ Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Sociology* (Vol. 19, [1993] 211-239), 212. In Moehn 78.

many scholars attribute the search for a Brazilian national identity solely to Modernismo, intellectuals were already demonstrating a concern for expressing the unity of the nation long before the turn of the century.

José de Alencar, the author most closely associated with the indigenist novels of nineteenth century,¹²⁵ embraced French Romanticism, filling his work with idealized themes of nature, love, and patriotism. His famous indigenist novels are imbued with Rousseauian ideology in which Brazilian natives were exalted for their bellicose nature, generosity, bravery, and noble character – and the indigenous protagonists ultimately helped to create a unified Brazilian territory by allying themselves with the Portuguese colonists.¹²⁶ In fact, the figure of the Indian served the nationalistic imaginings of Brazil throughout the nineteenth century; Haberly writes of the “Indian fever” that first appeared during the reign of Pedro I: “Portuguese surnames were replaced with Indian ones, and the emperor himself took the name of Gautimozim, the last Aztec ruler of Mexico, as his Masonic alias.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, writes Haberly, “Pedro II learned to speak Tupi, and worked on a grammar of that Indian language.”¹²⁸ Alas, idealizations of the nearly-decimated tribes of indigenous people did little to cement a Brazilian national identity.

¹²⁵ *O Guarani* (1857), *Iracema* (1865) and *Ubirajara* (1874).

¹²⁶ Roberta Ceva argues that none of these admired traits are, in fact, indigenous, but instead European models projected onto the New World natives. Roberta Lana de Alencastre Ceva, *Na Batida da Zabumba: uma análise antropológica do forró universitário* (Master’s Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro [Antropologia Social do Museu Nacional], 2001), 39.

¹²⁷ Pedro Calmon, *História Social do Brasil*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (São Paulo: C.E.N., 1940), 20. In Haberly 16.

¹²⁸ E. Schaden and J.B.B. Pereira, “Exploração antropológica,” *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, Ed. S. B. de Hollanda, 2nd ed., vol. 2, part. 3 (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1969 [426-44]), 441. In Haberly 16.

Brazilian intellectuals would soon begin to criticize the Romantic and, later, Parnassian stylization of the late-eighteenth and turn-of-the-century, but somewhat ironically the Modernism that they subsequently embraced had a strong primitivist tendency that valorized its indigenous population (as well as its Afro-Brazilians); even as the Modernists were breaking with tradition, their work contained a strong theme of authenticity, which for Brazil was located in its native and Afro-Brazilian communities.

Long accustomed to interpreting itself vis-à-vis its relationship to Europe, twentieth-century Brazil continued to look toward foreign models as it strived to the live up to the positivist dictum of “order and progress” emblazoned on its Republican flag.¹²⁹ Influenced by European Futurism, Brazilian Modernists would break with the constricting and careful Parnassian language that monopolized the Academy of Letters of the era and instead encourage a new aesthetic based on spontaneity and experimentation.¹³⁰ Still, Brazilian Modernism was not an exact replica of the European Modernist movement.¹³¹ As Charles Perrone writes,

¹²⁹ Indeed, the motto emblazoned on the new Republican flag, “Order and Progress” came directly from Comte’s writings. David Marshall, *Perils of Modernization: The Revolt of the Lash in the Brazilian Navy, 1910* (Honors Thesis, Harvard University, 2007), 20-1. See also: Burns, E. Bradford. “Cultures in Conflict: The Implication of Modernization in Nineteenth-Century Latin America,” E. Bradford Burns and Thomas Skidmore, *Elites, Masses and Modernization in Latin America: 1850-1930* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1979), 10-77.

¹³⁰ Recall that the European Modernists had their own valuation of the primitive, particularly in reference to Africa. See: Isabel Cristina Martins Guillen, “Guerra Peixe e os maracatus no Recife: trânsitos entre gêneros musicais (1930-1950). *ArtCultura: Revista de História, Cultura e Artes* (V. 9, N. 14 [January - June 2007], 236-51), 239.

¹³¹ Nor should Brazilian Modernism be confused with its counterpart in Latin America, which appeared a generation earlier (most notably in the work of Rubén Darío) and was very much of product of precisely what the Brazilians were rebelling against.

... what most distinguishes Brazilian Modernism from the various 'isms' of European Modernism, is its nationalistic dimension, the search for New World modes of expression and definitions of national psyche"¹³²

Indeed, the Modernists straddled a binary imperative: to embrace (and prove themselves capable of) modernity, on the one hand, and to re-discover their "roots" in an effort to advance the project of cultural nationalism, on the other.¹³³ Renato Ortiz argues that, for the Modernists, being modern meant being national,¹³⁴ and thus entailed incorporating both local and cosmopolitan realities into their approach. Chris Dunn describes this seeming contradiction:

By interpreting the "primitive" within a framework of vanguardist poetics, the Modernists sought to delineate both the specificity and the universality of Brazilian culture. Artistic production that was simultaneously autochthonous and cosmopolitan could be readily "exportable" as an original intervention in the international sphere.¹³⁵

The movement, though burgeoning for several years prior, coalesced in São Paulo¹³⁶ in 1922 on the occasion of the centennial of Brazil's independence from Portugal and, according to Chris Dunn, "was articulated as an event to herald the

¹³² Charles Perrone, *Seven Faces: Brazilian Poetry Since Modernism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996), 1. In Frederick Moehn, *Mixing MPB: Cannibals and Cosmopolitans in Brazilian Popular Music* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. Music, NYU, 2001), 100.

¹³³ See Bosi, *História concisa da literatura brasileira* (São Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1972), 385-6.

¹³⁴ Ortiz 35.

¹³⁵ Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 14.

¹³⁶ Skidmore points out that its location in São Paulo was no coincidence: though not the capital, it nonetheless had become the country's most dynamic economic center. Skidmore writes: "the profits of a booming coffee economy had helped to finance a growing modernization of commercial agriculture and the beginnings of a modern industrial park. Not surprisingly, therefore, it was primarily young artists from the city of São Paulo who first got to know the esthetic revolution in Europe and attempted to spread it in Brazil." Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 176-8.

nation's cultural independence."¹³⁷ Organized into a series of three "festivals" (of Painting and Sculpture, Literature and Poetry, and Music), the Modern Art Week was a gathering of a quite heterogeneous group of intellectuals and artists¹³⁸ that came together in a critique of *belles lettres* aesthetics, advancing avant-garde ideas from across Europe¹³⁹ and emphasizing the importance of a nationalistic art that would reflect Brazilian reality. Within a few years the movement would become fractured into opposing factions, but nonetheless would ultimately influence all artistic content in the nation, with projects of vastly different scope being heralded as Modernist. As Haberly tells it:

Within a few years, Modernism had become an idea rather than a coherent and cohesive movement, and almost anything written anywhere in Brazil – whatever its style, whatever its aesthetic or political ideology – was routinely classified as "Modernist."¹⁴⁰

Academics have divided Brazilian Modernism into two general phases, though they don't always agree on precise periodization: the first phase (roughly 1917-1924) was one of rebellion, in which authors staunchly criticized "passadismo" (the idealization of old-fashioned styles) and insisted on creating a new language which

¹³⁷ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 14. Several authors that have written on Brazilian music give excellent overviews of the movement; See also Christopher John Dunn, *The Relics of Brazil: Modernity and Nationality in the Tropicalista Movement* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, Brown University, 1996); Ceva; Moehn; John Patrick Murphy, *Performing a Moral Vision: An Ethnography of Cavalo-Marinho, a Brazilian Musical Drama* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1994); Vianna; Haberly; and Elizabeth Travassos, *Modernismo e música brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2000).

¹³⁸ Haberly reminds us that this infamous group was limited to merely 15-20 members, though its impact on Brazilian cultural nationalism reflects a much larger number. Haberly 127.

¹³⁹ Including futurism, cubism, surrealism, and Dada.

¹⁴⁰ Haberly 133.

would express contemporary concerns adequately. The second stage (1924-1929)¹⁴¹ would emphasize the construction of a national identity through an excavation of popular culture (local festive traditions and vernacular, particularly of indigenous and Afro-descendent populations), in effect bridging “high” and popular culture into a cohesive Brazilian political-cultural entity.

Oswald de Andrade: The *enfant terrible* of Modernismo

Though several artists collaborated on the Modernist project, Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade (unrelated) are generally recognized as having played the most formative roles in the creation of a Brazilian national project. Oswald, whom Caetano Veloso describes as “an intuitive and violently iconoclastic force,”¹⁴² is most well known for his two Modernist manifestos, “Manifesto da Poesia Pau-Brasil” (1925) and “Manifesto Antropofágico” (1928). In these writings Oswald formulated – with his signature “corrosive humour, irreverence, parody and sarcasm”¹⁴³ – a theory that would radically challenge Brazil’s relationship to the cultural centers of Europe.

In the Brazilwood Manifesto, Oswald confronted an age-old Brazilian convention of importing cultural products in vogue from European cities, namely Paris. Instead, he stipulated, Brazil needed to create an art worthy of export; no longer should Brazil

¹⁴¹ Dunn cites this second phase, which he refers to as the “heroic phase” as occurring 1922-1930.

¹⁴² Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 153.

¹⁴³ Randal Johnson, “Tupu or not Tupy: Cannibalism and Nationalism in Contemporary Brazilian Literature and Culture,” *Modern Latin American Fiction*, Ed. John King (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 50-1.

be the source for raw materials but instead a source for finished cultural products. The basis of *Pau-Brasil* is built around a series of dichotomies that, for Oswald, represent Brazil's failure to overcome a colonial legacy; only by resolving the binary tension could Brazil come into its own. He contrasts the *forest* and the *school* (one representing the 'natural' elements of his nation that were excluded or marginalized from the economic, political, and cultural centers of power and prestige;¹⁴⁴ the other representing high society and everything unavailable to the former) as well as Brazil's other extreme contradictions: "the mixture of the religious with the profane, of carnival, of magic and of science, the hovel living alongside progress, modernity, the forest and the machine."¹⁴⁵

Oswald's call for Brazil to begin exporting ideas and styles struck a chord with Brazilian intellectuals – though at least as many as supported his work, challenged it. Writes one critic:

When Oswald de Andrade writes that his Pau-Brazil poetry is for export, he implicitly accepts the continuation of Brazil's historical role as an exporter of raw materials and of a certain "exoticism" that has long fascinated Europeans.¹⁴⁶

Another critic, disparaging the exaggerated European influence of many Modernists (and particularly Oswald), called his movement *Pau-Paris*.¹⁴⁷ Chris Dunn defends

¹⁴⁴ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 16.

¹⁴⁵ Fonseca 1982: 58 (limited information available on original source). In Moehn 102-3.

¹⁴⁶ Johnson 1987: 46 Also in: Aracy Amaral, *Tarsila: Sua Obra e Seu Tempo* (São Paulo: Perspective/Universidade de São Paulo, 1975).

¹⁴⁷ Menotti del Picchia, "Feira de Sexta," *Correio Paulistano* (28 January, 1927). In: Johnson 46. Several theorists have also criticized the Modernists for the large influence of European Modernists in their own national version; Blaise Cendrars, in particular, was said to have shown the Brazilian Modernists "the real Brazil" in an excursion to the interior of Minas Gerais – a Brazil that, many critics

these claims, writing that even though the Brazilian metaphor at some level reaffirms the status of Brazil as an exporter of crude goods, “there is a heavy dose of irony in the Brazilwood metaphor since the manifesto is ultimately about subverting the European colonial legacy while fomenting a modern, technologically informed Brazilian culture.”¹⁴⁸

Oswald would follow the Brazilwood Manifesto with his Anthropophagous Manifesto – an essay that would become one of the most quoted national texts of the twentieth century. In it, he advocated creating a truly Brazilian art by “cannibalizing” European cultural models in order to produce a uniquely local aesthetic. The reference to eating flesh came from the native Tupinambá tribes who famously devoured their enemies in order to ingest the power of rival warriors and become stronger adversaries. Martha de Ulhoa Carvalho describes the cannibalization process for early Tupi tribes:

For the native Tupinambá, the physical and spiritual worlds were intermingled and it was possible to “eat” what came from both worlds. In the Tupinambá practice of anthropophagy, people were killed in revenge for the death of an ancestor, but at the same time their death meant the birth of another self in the cannibal, who scarified himself and assumed a new name after the human sacrifice.¹⁴⁹

Thus in Oswald’s formulation, Brazilian artists would consume diverse European products, which would serve to fortify their own creations, while their essential

maintain, was right under their noses, had they chosen to explore a Brazil outside of their own bourgeois reality.

¹⁴⁸ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 15.

¹⁴⁹ Martha Ulhõa Carvalho, “Tupi or Not Tupi: MPB: Popular Music and Identity in Brazil,” *The Brazilian Puzzle*, Ed. David J. Hess and Roberto DaMatta (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, [159-179]). Also in John J. Harvey, “Cannibals, Mutants and Hipsters: The Tropicalist Revival,” *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, Ed. Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (New York: Routledge, 2002 [106-22]), 107.

essence as Brazilian would remain untouched by foreign influence. The theory is best represented in the manifesto's famous sentence: "Tupi or not Tupi: that is the question." Cleverly built upon a Shakespearean aphorism, its subject (the Tupi) is nonetheless undeniably Brazilian – demonstrating that a uniquely Brazilian art can indeed be built with creative influence from abroad. True to Oswald's confrontational nature, the figure of the Tupi Indian – nostalgically referenced in the earlier indigenist novels – is reformulated to break with his past status (as a 'noble savage') in an over-the-top, shocking manner.

Oswald's major feat in the manifesto was discovering a way to give Brazilians agency over their own process of creativity. As Dunn observes, the manifesto informed the world that "Brazilians are not defined by who they are but rather by what they do, which, in Oswald's formulation, is to "digest" myriad cultural influences."¹⁵⁰ The metaphor has certain limitations,¹⁵¹ not the least of which is the fact that very few Europeans were ever devoured by indigenous warriors, their flesh thought to be contaminated by their cowardice.¹⁵² Nonetheless, Oswald had surely read about the cannibalist end of Father Pero Fernandes Sardinha (Brazil's first

¹⁵⁰ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 19.

¹⁵¹ Roberto Schwarz criticized the Anthropophagists for "tak[ing] as their subject the abstract Brazilian, with no class specification," and noted that the analogy with the digestive process "throws absolutely no light on the politics and aesthetics of contemporary cultural life." Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (New York: Verso, 1992), 9.

¹⁵² Anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro explains: "The cultural and collaborative character of these [indigenous] ceremonies made it almost imperative to capture for sacrifice warriors from within the same Tupi groups. Only these – by sharing the same set of values – could fulfill to perfection the role prescribed for them: that of a proud warrior who spoke haughtily with his killer and those who were going to eat him. This dynamic is confirmed by the text of Hans Staden, who was borne to cannibalistic ceremonies three times, and three times the Indians refused to eat him because he wept and befouled himself begging for mercy. They did not eat cowards." Darcy Ribeiro, *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 13.

Bishop) in 1556, and turned his death into a new proverb of Brazilian creativity. Caetano Veloso comments that after Oswald's manifesto, "Father Pero Fernandes Sardinha's deglutition by the Indians becomes the inaugural scene of Brazilian culture, the very basis of nationality."¹⁵³

Later captured and revitalized by Tropicalist artists (with Veloso as its most conspicuous leader), anthropophagy helped the nation to celebrate a distinctively Brazilian lens onto the world. Still, the concept is certainly not limited to the land of the Tupi Indians. Paul Stoller, for instance, writes at length on 'gustatory metaphors' amongst the Songhay of West Africa. During his fieldwork he collected countless metaphors to "eating one another" as references to incorporating the strength and knowledge of others.¹⁵⁴ Nonetheless, anthropophagy stands out in a continent formerly colonized by Iberian royalty whose searches for national identity frequently rest upon notions of hybridity, mestiçagem and creolization. After centuries of

¹⁵³ Veloso 156.

¹⁵⁴ Stoller writes: "...vision is not always the singular sense that orders the experience of non-Western peoples. Among the Songhay peoples of Mali and Niger... smell, taste, and sound contribute profoundly to the construction of their experience, which means that their epistemology is fundamentally embodied. Songhay sorcerers and griots learn about power and history by "eating" it – ingesting odors and tastes, savoring textures and sounds." He continues: "In many North and West African societies learning is understood not in terms of 'reading' and 'writing,' but in the gustatory terms of bodily consumption. This means that body and being are fused in consumptive or gustatory metaphors. Human beings eat and are eaten. People are transformed through their internal digestive processes... The stomach is considered the site of human personality and agency. Social relations are considered in terms of eating. Consider the following Songhay expressions. *Ay ga borodin nega* (I am going to eat that particular person); *Ay ga habu nga* (I am going to eat the market). In the first expression, the other person's knowledge is eaten. Individuals will get to know the other so well that they will ingest the other's being. In Songhay, people consume otherness, but are also consumed by otherness. In the second expression, individuals eat the market if they master it. If they return home without profit, the market will have eaten them... In Songhay, gustatory metaphors are also used to understand history and the power of sorcerers. Griots (bards), who are the custodians of the oral tradition, say: *Ay ga don bori sonni nga* (I eat the words of the ancestors). As in the other statements, this one also implies that the words of ancestors also eat the griots – consume them, and by extension – transform their being. The sorcerers of Songhay, called *sohanci*, literally eat their power and are eaten by it..." Paul Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 3-7.

borrowing cultural models from Europe, Brazil finally came up with a metaphor – invoked repeatedly throughout the twentieth century – to help understand its unique creolization of outside influence.

But I would argue that the usefulness of the metaphor need not be limited to foreign influences, either – that the devouring of culture also happens at the national level, between classes, when cultural goods are appropriated by different classes (see chapter six for an in-depth analysis of this with reference to *forró universitário*). In fact, pushing the metaphor to function at both a national and an international level (after all, subjects both national and international were victims of anthropophagy) also helps to resolve a major critique from leading intellectual Roberto Schwarz.

Schwarz argued that the concept of cultural cannibalism was a provisional balm for a Brazil still divided into drastically different social classes, allowing Brazilians to compliment themselves on their unique cultural contributions while ignoring class inequality and the vast economic and political schisms between rural and urban Brazil.¹⁵⁵ Schwarz’s critique draws attention to another aspect of the manifesto, namely, a return to the concept of Brazilian dichotomies. Chris Dunn describes it thus:

In the cannibalist manifesto, Oswald introduced a new set of binaries related to but not entirely coterminous with the forest and the school. Adopting the oedipal terms of Freud’s Totem and Taboo, Oswald describes the genesis of Brazilian civilization as a struggle to subvert the colonial legacy of Catholicism and patriarchal power in order to restore a utopian “matriarchy of Pindorama.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ See: Schwarz.

¹⁵⁶ *Pindorama* is Tupi for “region of palm trees.” Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 19.

Still, even while the dual framework might seem to imply a Brazil swinging between two drastically different poles, Dunn suggests that Oswald was actually calling for a society in which the best aspects of each pole would meld together, producing a “technicized barbarian” who would lead Brazil into the new century without losing the cultural riches from previous centuries.

This position is supported by the even more admiring Haroldo de Campos, who saw Oswald’s anthropophagy as a theoretical base that established a fundamental break with Cartesian binaries, instead allowing for a “dialogical and dialectical relationship with the universal.”¹⁵⁷ Dunn again, on Haroldo de Campos:

In his view, Oswald undermined Eurocentric binaries (i.e. civilization versus barbarism, modern versus primitive, original versus copy) and their implicit assumptions about linear progress in which the colonized world can at best develop into an inferior imitation of Europe.¹⁵⁸

Certainly, in his manifestos Oswald created the basis for an ongoing articulation of national identity that would serve Brazil well into the twentieth century. Still, whether or not Brazilian artists, intellectuals, politicians and the masses would all be able to appreciate the subtleties of Oswald’s binary construction and dialectic would continue to haunt Brazilians in their century-long search for national identity.

While Oswald’s work gave Brazilians a positive outlook on precisely that which differentiated them from Europe, his writings never truly portrayed the primitive Brazil that he lauded. Still, his Modernist project hinted at a truism which would become clear over time and that Renato Ortiz has examined in detail: Modernism, as

¹⁵⁷ Haroldo de Campos. In Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 20.

¹⁵⁸ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 20.

a Brazilian cultural movement, did not accompany modernization.¹⁵⁹ Even while it professed a shared desire to embrace the technology, industrialization, and other societal transformations inherent in modernization, Brazil's Modernism had an inextricable element of tradition to it, a celebration of and search for national "roots."

Writes Eduardo Jardim de Morães:

Unlike what happens in other Modernisms, in which the notion of revolution or of discrediting the past locates itself at the center of inquiry, in Brazil modernization can be described as "updating," a concept with which a compromise with tradition is not at odds.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, decades after the Modernists first declared their project, Victor Turner would remind us that "Brazil is indeed... a 'post-traditional' society... a society in which strong traditions persist through processes of modernization."¹⁶¹ Or as Brazilian theorist Silviano Santiago would state, in characteristically dry fashion, "There is a symptomatic permanence of the tradition within the modern and Modernism."¹⁶² Certainly, tradition was wound tightly into Brazilian Modernist aesthetics and politics from early on. And of all the Modernists, no scholar would as carefully construct a record of Brazilian tradition as Mário de Andrade.

¹⁵⁹ Ortiz 1988; See also Néstor García-Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 1995.

¹⁶⁰ Eduardo Jardim de Moraes, "Modernismo Revisitado" (*Estudos Históricos*, Vol.1, no. 2), 224. In Ceva, "Na Batida" 41-2. "Diferentemente do que ocorre em outros Modernismos, onde a idéia de revolução ou de descrédito do passado se situa no centro das indagações, no caso brasileiro a modernização vem caracterizada como atualização, onde não está afastado o compromisso com a tradição."

¹⁶¹ Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 49.

¹⁶² Silviano Santiago, *The Space In-Between: Essays on Latin American Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 95.

Mário de Andrade: The Modernist Musicologist

While Oswald had been the ‘radical’ of the movement, Mário de Andrade was not only the “responsible, normative, and organizing figure of Modernism”¹⁶³ but also the biggest champion of a Brazilian nationalist music.¹⁶⁴ In fact, the truly unique role of music in the theorization of the nation is owed in large part to his participation in the movement and his decades-long crusade for national recognition of the rich stores of folk music throughout the Brazilian hinterlands. More than any other intellectual, Mário campaigned for the inclusion of popular music in the national canon, calling it “the most powerful creation and the most beautiful characterization of our race.”¹⁶⁵

A musicologist, folklorist, teacher, poet, literary critic, novelist, and later, culture administrator, Mário was deeply involved in the rise of the Modernists and was one of Brazil’s most provocative intellectual voices of the 1920s and 1930s. Deeply patriotic, he nonetheless felt that “the Brazilian [political] State was born before the Brazilian [cultural] *race*.”¹⁶⁶ In other words, Brazil had found political unity without cultural harmony. He felt it was up to him and other artists and intellectuals to lead the nation toward the expression of its true self. The true essence of Brazil and

¹⁶³ Veloso 153.

¹⁶⁴ In his ethnography of *cavalo-marinho* (a northeastern musical drama), John Murphy cites (after the *Semana de Arte Moderna* and *Manifesto Antropófago*, already detailed above) Mário’s 1928 *Ensaio* (as well as his publication in 1928 of the novel “*Macunaíma*”) as the top event(s) which symbolize the shift in national identity for Brazilians. Murphy 14-5.

¹⁶⁵ Mário de Andrade, *Aspectos da música brasileira* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editôra, 1965), 31. See also: Vianna 14.

¹⁶⁶ “O estado brasileiro... nascera antes do surgimento de um povo brasileiro propriamente dito.” Travassos 55-6. (Race here refers to a concept akin to the *volk*, or common people.)

character of its people, he argued, could be found in local popular culture, and more particularly in local popular music.¹⁶⁷

Mário de Andrade was not the first musician or intellectual to speak of “musical nationalism.” Several earlier artists encouraged the incorporation of local folklore into artistic music, including Alberto Nepomuceno (1864-1920), Ernesto Nazareth (1863-1934), Carlos Gomes (1836-1896) and Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959).¹⁶⁸ What makes Mário de Andrade the stand-out representative of Brazilian music nationalism is the manifesto-like essay he wrote to address the future of Brazilian music, demanding that authors embrace and incorporate the ‘authentic’ sounds of the nation into their music.

Published in 1928, the *Ensaio Sobre a Música Brasileira*¹⁶⁹ includes the first in-depth analysis of the various sound-structural elements that contribute to Brazilian music and set an agenda for a Brazilian nationalist music that followed closely the stated goals of the other Modernist arts.¹⁷⁰ The major guidelines for original Brazilian music production were to determine an “authentic” music which could represent the nation, to eliminate reliance on European models and to incorporate

¹⁶⁷ According to Fred Moehn, Mário thought that local folk musics better represented Brazilian identity (than other art forms) because they best represented the racial mixture of Brazil. I will address the issue of race and its importance to Mário and to Brazilian popular music below. See Moehn 104.

¹⁶⁸ See Travassos 36; and Moehn.

¹⁶⁹ Travassos points out that the format and style of the *Ensaio* was inspired by Manuel de Falla’s “Lesson,” which insisted that the only way to make a ‘universal’ music was to make ‘regional’ music. “*Inspirado na ‘lição’ de Manuel de Falla, segundo quem a única maneira de fazer música universal era fazer música ‘regional.’*” Travassos 34.

¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth Travassos points out that Brazilian music, even during and after the Semana de Arte Moderna, was quite out of synch with trends in European Modernist music, particularly experiments in atonal music. Compared with their contemporaries in Europe, the Brazilian musicians seemed to be embracing a style similar to impressionism, which was itself being attacked in European Modernist circles. Travassos 26.

popular musics into erudite cultural content in order to provide the nation with a 'pure' Brazilian sound. Oddly, according to Mário, this sound could not be represented by Amerindian music nor hybrid musics that allowed European elements to drown out the Afro-Brazilian or indigenous sounds. Instead, he urged musicians to incorporate the rhythms and sounds from rural Brazil, complaining that urban musics of Brazil retained far too much "deleterious influence."¹⁷¹ What was exciting about the *Ensaio* was that it was directed not just toward the artistic community but toward a wider audience, including teachers, bureaucrats, merchants and laymen.

In many ways, Mário's manifesto mimicked the musical nationalism movement that had developed in Europe over the second half of the nineteenth century. This movement, begun as a reaction to the domination of German music across the continent, emphasized the national characteristics of a country's musical tradition. Composers from Sweden, Norway, England and Spain looked to folk aspects of music and dance from within their own national boundaries for art that would better reflect their unique character. Musical nationalism itself had grown out of the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), in which the *volk* or folk contribution to national culture was celebrated. Herder had theorized that the isolation of folk cultures had allowed them to develop unique traits that reflected the distinctive spirit of the nation, untouched by the corrupting influences of the outside world. As such, he posited, any art form that was to reflect the nation would also have to rise from that original and foundational peasant culture. Herder's ideas were adopted across the Old World and soon transferred to the New World, where the

¹⁷¹ Mário de Andrade, *Popular Music and Song in Brazil*, (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1949), 5-6.

impending independence movements would look to his theory to help foment national unity.

In his conception of Brazilian music, Mário chose to emphasize the *national* qualities of music instead of the *regional* richness that Brazil boasted. Indeed, had he focused on the regional diversity of the nation (the very quality which gave Brazilian musical culture its complex and rich nature) he would have detracted from the quality of a unified art culture. In this way, Mário placed himself at the beginning of a century-long struggle between proponents of nationalist and regionalist concerns, opting to emphasize the unity of the nation in its musical creations.

Problematically, though, Mário's outlook assumed a division (and implied hierarchy) of artistic talent and creativity; successful composers of the urban elite class would include segments (melody, rhythm, etc.) from anonymous folk works of the rural hinterlands, in effect mining the countryside for originality but compensating the metropolis for patriotism. Yet even while he emphasized opposing poles of rural and urban Brazil, Andrade endeavored in his work to diminish the fraught tension between black, white and indigenous communities. Andrade emphasized the concept of an emerging homogenous national race – one that, despite regional variations in appearance and character, identifies a single Brazilian “race.” Mário wrote in the *Ensaio* that the country could boast no “Brazilians” during the first hundred years after independence but only Indians, blacks, and Europeans, each still “very pure” (assumedly from a lack of mixing in the colony's early years).¹⁷² It was, at some

¹⁷² This assertion is entirely inaccurate; records show that early Jesuits (appalled at the “shameless” sex between Portuguese men and indigenous women) requested that the Royal Crown send Portuguese (white) women for the colonists to marry and mate with. They called for women of all classes, even harlots, because “there are all classes of men here... and in this way sin will be avoided and the

level, the job of the Modernists to articulate a Brazilian identity that encompassed all citizens – and Mário sought to classify all Brazilians under one racial category.

Mário, however, had an interesting take on racial mixing: he conceived of the Brazilian races coming together in a racial *juxtaposition* rather than fusion. David Haberly explains:

Mario rejected the commonplace idea that the three races were intermingled and fused, in Brazil or in his own being; he saw himself, rather, as multiple: simultaneously black, red, and white.¹⁷³

Indeed, Mário himself (unlike nearly all of his colleagues) was of triple ancestry. As Haberly describes him, “Mário’s skin color was the legacy of Indian ancestors; the contours of his nose and lips, so evident in photographs, portraits and caricatures, were clearly African.¹⁷⁴ In his understanding, racial fusion entailed the domination of one race over another, and the absorption and/or annihilation of certain racial traits. Instead, he envisioned a mixing in which different components could coexist alongside one another, “balanced in an uneasy truce.”¹⁷⁵ Mário’s perspectives on race (particularly as represented in the *Ensaio*) formed a foundation for the Modernist concern for a national-popular culture that would come together around the concept of *mestiçagem*. This concept would be developed much further by future intellectuals and politicians, but certainly the themes of his early work would lay the groundwork

population in the service of God will be increased.” “Letter,” 1550; In Manuel da Nóbrega, *Cartas do Brasil e mais esontos do Padre Manuel da Nóbrega (Opera omnia)* (Coimbra: Acta Universitatis Conimbrigensis, 1955), 79-80. In Ribeiro 55-6. Anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro writes: “They especially wanted so-called orphans-of-the-king, who would marry good and rich men here. They did not get many. In 1551 three sisters arrived; in 1553 nine more came; in 1559 another seven. These few Portuguese women did not play much of a role in the making of the Brazilian family.” Ribeiro 55-6.

¹⁷³ Haberly 137-38.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 137.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 138.

for a theory of race entirely unique to Brazil. In all, Mário's *Ensaio* would prove to be a watershed moment in Brazilian music and is, as Fred Moehn writes, "as current today as... in those formative years of theorizing modern Brazilian national identity."¹⁷⁶

Mário's contribution to Brazilian music was hardly limited to his publication of the *Ensaio*.¹⁷⁷ A musician and writer/poet himself, Mário was an enthusiastic ethnographer and dedicated years of his life to trolling the countryside for folk recordings. He was so successful in collecting a wide variety of examples across a large geographic field that these early recordings remain key sources for folk music research today.¹⁷⁸ Carried out over two decades (in the Amazon: 1927; Northeast: 1928-29¹⁷⁹; rural São Paulo: 1931-37; and Northeast and North: 1938¹⁸⁰), they are comprised of photographs, written descriptions and notations, film and audio recordings. And not only did he use these expeditions for music content, but also for

¹⁷⁶ Moehn 108.

¹⁷⁷ For a survey of Mário's writings on music and how his work fits into the wider context of nationalism in Brazil, see Suzel Reily, "Macunaíma's Music," *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, Ed. Martin Stokes (Providence, Rhode Island: Berg, 1994).

¹⁷⁸ Stroud notes that Mário was not the first to gather musical folklore in Brazil; Silvio Romero had put together a compilation, *Cantos Populares de Brasil* (1883) and Villa Lobos had set out to do the same in the early twentieth century. Still, Mário brought an entirely new energy and enthusiasm to the field of collecting and truly transformed the study of folklore, particularly in his novel use of recording equipment.

¹⁷⁹ His two unpublished volumes from his Northeast expedition were called "Na pancada do ganzá," a title that would later appear as a Recife carnival bloco (parading group) and an album of hybrid regional musics (see chapter five).

¹⁸⁰ The 1938 expedition was carried out while Mário was Director of the Department of Culture of São Paulo (he was an independent researcher in the former investigations) but due to "political fallout from the establishment of the *Estado Novo*... Mário was unable to accompany the expedition." Sean Stroud, *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music: Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2008), 139. For an extraordinary compilation of photos, audio recordings and texts, see: http://www.sescsp.org.br/sesc/hotsites/missao/apresenta_frameset.html

linguistic content, incorporating when possible the idiomatic expressions found in conversations and oral poetry along his route.¹⁸¹

Even while on these ethnographic missions, Mário registered unease with the heterogeneous origins of certain music and dance, complaining of foreign, erudite, urban or bourgeois “importations” and “interference.” He embraced rural samba from the interior of São Paulo (as opposed to carioca samba, from the city of Rio de Janeiro), *côco* of Paraíba over the more urban and sophisticated *maxixe* of the capital, and *bumba-meu-boi* (a northeastern musical theater tradition) over the *choro* bands of the South (which he deemed too influenced by North American jazz). Still, these categories were constantly being blurred and even Mário acknowledged that it was impossible to find rural music entirely unaffected by the cosmopolitan influences along the coastal cities. Durval Albuquerque reminds us that even the rural modal music “played by blind troubadours of the Northeast” had deep influences from European Gregorian chants (see chapter five for a more detailed discussion of influences on northeastern music).¹⁸²

And Mário acknowledged, too, that the very division of Brazil into urban and rural (one that he underscored throughout his career) was problematic. Many outlying cities maintained a lifestyle that could only be called “rustic” while rural zones were rapidly importing urban products and routines. As Mário confessed, “all Brazilian cities are in direct and immediate contact with the rural zone.”¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ See Ronald Daus, *O Ciclo Épico dos Cangaceiros na Poesia Popular do Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação da Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1982), 91.

¹⁸² Albuquerque 153.

Still, a further distinction that Mário emphasized – beyond urban and rural – was that of popular culture and ‘pop’ culture. Deeply resentful of what he called the “popularesca,”¹⁸⁴ Mário encouraged instead popular music that was still “pure” and uncontaminated: of collective creation, without any individualistic sentiments or showy influences, and not intended for commercial or industrial use. Wisnik argues that Mário’s condemnation of market-driven cultural content put popular culture firmly in the grasp of the State, demanding a politics of patrimony:

The research of folkloric culture would entail it being brought into the museum (obeying that rule of the order of things that states, according to Edoardo Sanguinetti’s formulation of the 1960s, the destiny of art in the age of capitalism is either the *market* or the *museum*).¹⁸⁵

Indeed, Mário eventually left his post at the music conservatory of São Paulo to become Director of the Department of Culture of São Paulo,¹⁸⁶ where he would plan performances and exhibitions as well as turn his vast ethnographic collections into a museum of sorts. In his role as archivist, Mário would deeply shape Brazil’s relationship to folk music, as in curating the collection he used his own ideas about “purity” and “authenticity” to build a record of Brazilian folklore. Certainly, as

¹⁸³ Mário de Andrade, *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editora, 1962), 166; Also in Gerard Béhague, *The Beginnings of Musical Nationalism in Brazil* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1971), 9.

¹⁸⁴ In 1934, Mário also famously referred to “pop music” as *submusic*, a neologism that was reiterated to great effect by Elis Regina at the height of the *iê-iê-iê* craze in the 1960s. See Stroud 24.

¹⁸⁵ “O jogava implícita ou explicitamente para um projeto de Estado: o matrimônio com a cultura popular exigiria uma política de Patrimônio, a pesquisa da cultura folclórica faria com que ela fosse trazida para o Museu (obedecendo àquele ditame da ordem das coisas que dizia, segundo formulação de Edoardo Sanguinetti na altura dos anos 60, que o destino da arte no capitalismo é o mercado ou o museu.)” José Miguel Wisnik, *Sem Receita: Ensaios e Canções* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2004), 111-112.

¹⁸⁶ Because of his tense relationship with the Vargas regime, Mário’s tenure at the Department of Culture would be fraught with erratic adjustments.

Canclini reminds us in *Hybrid Cultures*, the museum is not simply a storage depot for artifacts but instead a space where national ‘knowledge’ is constructed.

The museum is the ceremonial headquarters of the patrimony, the place where it is kept and celebrated, where the semiotic regime with which hegemonic groups organized it is reproduced. To enter a museum is not simply to go into a building and look at works; rather, it is a ritualized system of social action.¹⁸⁷

The very same year he published the *Ensaio*, Mário also published *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter*,¹⁸⁸ what is still today a seminal novel in the Brazilian canon and a precursor to magic realism.¹⁸⁹ In it, the anti-hero Macunaíma sets off on an epic journey across Brazil’s diverse geographic expanse in search of a magic amulet (an allegory for the nation’s search for its own identity). Loosely based on Amazonian folklore,¹⁹⁰ the story unfolds as the trickster protagonist gets into one scuffle after another, eventually to die and become a star in the Ursa Major constellation. Though drastically different in style from Mário’s works of non-fiction, *Macunaíma* represents the same core set of values and hopes for the nation. The musician/cultural critic Miguel Wisnik links together his celebrated 1928 publications, writing that the *Ensaio*, much like *Macunaíma*, was an attempt to discover the ‘character’ of a Brazil “without a character”:

¹⁸⁷ García-Canclini 115.

¹⁸⁸ “the hero with no character.”

¹⁸⁹ E. Rodrigues Monegal, “Anacronismos: Mário de Andrade y Guimarães Rosa en el contexto de la novela hispanoamericana, *Revista iberoamericana* 43, (1977 [109-115]), 109-12. In Haberly 146.

¹⁹⁰ The character was inspired by Mário’s reading of a collection of native folktales assembled by the German anthropologist Theodor Koch-Grünberg: “Vom Roraima zum Orinoco” (1924). Dunn writes that although Mário “remained aloof from the cannibalists,” his novel was lauded by the group as “an exemplary cannibalist work in prose fiction.” Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 21. Indeed, Mário wrote his formative novel inspired by a German social scientist who was, in turn, inspired by tales told by an Amazonian tribe: a piece of culture for export produced by the importation of a foreign treatment of a Brazilian “raw” product.

...uniting two worlds separated by a deep chasm: that of a European-derived erudite culture transplanted onto Brazilian soil, and that of the popular cultures spread out across the territory, which showed the unconscious creativity of the masses over centuries of colonization.”¹⁹¹

Ironically, perhaps, *Macunaíma* returned to a regionalist theme – the very genre that Modernists had originally debunked as outdated.¹⁹² But the regionalism of the Modernists incorporated local cultural traits into a national entirety, creating what Chris Dunn has called “homogenous plurality” – the recognition and celebration of the multiplicity of cultural influences in Brazilian civilization with a concurrent subjugation of cultural difference to a powerful, unitary idea of nationality.¹⁹³ Even if using European models to advance their nationalist aims, they had succeeded in their goal “to Brazilianize that Brazilian, in the fullest sense; [and] to make an antipatriotic nation patriotic” in the words of Manuel Bandeira.¹⁹⁴ Brazil was not the only nation exploring its internal cultural make-up in the 1920s and 1930s – Fernando Ortiz, for example, wrote at length about the contributions of Afro-Cuban musicians in Cuba – but the movement galvanized artists and intellectuals to work toward expressing the essence of Brazil, an ambition that allowed the country to solidify its nationalist pride by locating the people’s identity firmly in its cultural traditions.

One of the most celebrated moments in the Modernist movement was the journey embarked upon by Tarsila de Amaral and Mário and Oswald de Andrade along with

¹⁹¹ “Pode-se dizer que seu intuito era encontrar o “caráter” de um Brasil ‘sem caráter’ unindo dois mundos separados por um fosso abismal: o da cultura erudita transplantada de base européia e o das culturas populares espalhadas pelo território brasileiro, que testemunhavam a criação inconsciente do povo através dos séculos de colonização.” Wisnik 109.

¹⁹² See Skidmore, *Black into White*, 178-9.

¹⁹³ Dunn, *The Relics*, 158.

¹⁹⁴ Manuel Bandeira, *Poesia e Prosa*, vol. 2 (Rio de Janeiro: Aguilar, 1958), 1093. In Haberly 128.

Blaise Cendrars to several colonial towns in the interior of the state of Minas Gerais.¹⁹⁵ This trek led the Brazilian Modernists to laud the contribution of the Swiss/French poet in helping them discover their native lands. Tarsila de Amaral declared that “thanks to Cendrars” she and her colleagues were able to truly discover “real” Brazil; Oswald dedicated his book of poetry “Pau-Brasil” to Cendrars, as well, “on the occasion of the discovery of Brazil.”¹⁹⁶ Several authors, and in particular Hermano Vianna, have written on the irony that it took a European intellectual to help the leading Brazilian Modernists to see their own nation unveiled; David Haberly argues that “the modernists’ patriotic goal was undercut by their nearly total ignorance of the real Brazil,”¹⁹⁷ implying that members of the Brazilian intellectual movement would welcome the input of outsiders to help them unearth folkloric material for their use in artistic projects. In fact, the trope of “re-discovery” of native roots is one common amongst Brazilian intellectuals (as we will see in future chapters) and continues to play a large role in the imagined cultural community of Brazil.

As early as 1928 (when the *Ensaio* and *Macunaíma* were published), Modernism had fractured into a field of competing projects and movements.¹⁹⁸ But before they disbanded, the Modernists set in motion a national-culture paradigm that culminated,

¹⁹⁵ In a much later publication, anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro emphasized Minas Gerais as “the knot that tied Brazil into a single entity,” further evidence that this rural “heartland” of Brazil is oft considered its most “real.” (Though just as many scholars make the same claim about the Northeast of Brazil...) Ribeiro 153.

¹⁹⁶ Vianna 96. See also: Ceva, *Na Batida*, 24.

¹⁹⁷ Haberly 128-29.

¹⁹⁸ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 17.

at some level, with the ascension of Getúlio Vargas to power in the Revolution in 1930, and their work would inspire a subsequent generation of social scientists (including Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda and Caio Prado Junior) to uncover the centrifugal and centripetal forces pulling on Brazil's nationhood. These authors would return to the regionalist themes the Modernists had resurrected and, in the spirit of Mário¹⁹⁹ and Oswald de Andrade, embrace the union of popular and erudite art while searching for explanations for Brazil's unique socio-cultural composition.²⁰⁰

Gilberto Freyre and the Perception of Race in Brazil

Another key figure in the 1920s and 1930s was Gilberto Freyre, an intellectual from Pernambuco who would reformulate Brazilian perspectives on racial miscegenation. Freyre was born in Recife to a land-owning family and, as a young man, left for the United States to complete his undergraduate education in Texas. Later, he would study under Franz Boas at Columbia University²⁰¹ and incorporate

¹⁹⁹ For more on Mário de Andrade, see José Maria Naves, *O violão azul: modernismo e música popular* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1998); Suzel Ana Reily, "Macunaíma's Music: National Identity and Ethnomusicological Research in Brazil," *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, Ed. M. Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 1994); Vivian Schelling, *A Presença do Povo na Cultura Brasileira: ensaio sobre o pensamento de Mário de Andrade e Paulo Freire* (Campinas: Editora da Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 1991); Elizabeth Travassos, *Os mandarins milagrosos: arte e etnografia em Mário de Andrade e Béla Bartók* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte/Jorge Zahar, 1997); Reily 2000.

²⁰⁰ Hermano Vianna writes at length of these intellectuals and their frequent meetings with key popular musicians, examining the inter-class interactions that helped to foment a nationalist Brazilian culture.

²⁰¹ In an odd coincidence, the nodes of my multi-sited research follow Freyre to his many important cultural stops (though in tangled order): Pernambuco, New York City, then Rio de Janeiro. Freyre actually visited the capital of Rio only in 1926 – after finishing his studies in Texas and New York.

Boas's studies into his own novel and extremely influential work on race relations in Brazil.

Merely decades after the "discovery" of Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral in 1500, the African slave trade was booming in Brazil. The first slaves were imported as early as 1532 and by the 1560s "Portuguese settlers were using African slave labor there on a vast scale,"²⁰² as the indigenous populations fled their advances into the interior. As Peter Fryer writes, "It was said that when the Portuguese adventurer arrived in Brazil the first thing he did was neither kiss the earth nor give thanks to the Virgin for a safe passage, but buy a slave."²⁰³ Particularly desired for their work on the massive sugarcane plantations, slaves were brought in ever-growing quantities as the economy expanded and plantations began spreading out from around the capital city of Salvador and into neighboring states. The sugarcane business would continue to grow, with the Brazilian Northeast as its largest producer, until the late 1600s, when the Dutch, driven from their settlements around Recife, began a competitive business in their Antilles colony. Still, once sugarcane production declined, slaves continued to be used for mining (gold was discovered in Minas Gerais in 1698), agriculture (coffee production would peak in the early 1800s in the state of São Paulo) and extraction (the rubber boom would transform Amazonia in the late 1800s).

²⁰² These slaves were transported mainly from West Africa in the second half of the 16th century; from Angola during the 17th century; from the Mina coast (which the English called the "Gold Coast") from about 1700-1770; from the Bight of Benin (i.e. Nigeria and Benin, formerly Dahomey) from 1770 until the 1850s. Fryer 5.

²⁰³ Fryer 5.

The ports of Salvador, Recife and Rio became Brazil's prominent slave centers²⁰⁴ – and would reflect the variety of imports (music, dance, cuisine, dress, language, etc.) that were circulating around what Paul Gilroy has since termed the Black Atlantic.²⁰⁵

Brazil was the last nation in the New World to outlaw slavery, signing the “golden law” of abolition in 1888. Certainly, Brazil had received increasing pressures during the 1800s to abolish slavery and had made small inroads toward freeing the massive Afro-Brazilian population.²⁰⁶ David Marshall writes that “abolishing slavery was truly a century-long project for Brazil; in 1819, 30% of the population was enslaved; in 1872, this figure was reduced to 15.2%; and by 1888, it was only 4%.²⁰⁷ In all, the number of Africans brought to Brazil has been estimated at 3,600,000 (though some estimates are higher),²⁰⁸ not counting the 10-30% who perished en route.²⁰⁹ Still, much of the data for the Brazilian slave trade was destroyed in a massive pyre by

²⁰⁴ Fryer observes that these three cities reflected a Black Atlantic “aesthetic,” showing artistic influences from all three corners of the Atlantic triangle.

²⁰⁵ In his landmark book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, Paul Gilroy depicts the Black Atlantic as a geo-cultural area notable for its dialogic and multi-directional flows of culture, people, and information. Notably, he does not speak to the participation of Latin America or Brazil in this triangle, instead focusing on Anglo areas of the Black Atlantic; several authors have already pointed out this omission. It's important to note, though, that many of the ships traveling between Southern Africa and Europe in fact sailed via Brazil, to take advantage of Atlantic currents. According to Fryer, “On average, in fair weather, the voyage from Luanda to Recife took only about 35 days; to Salvador, 40 days, to Rio, two months or less.” Fryer 138.

²⁰⁶ It should be said, though, that these “inroads” succeeded more in taking away the burden of aging and dependent ex-slaves – and allowing plantation owners to defray maintenance costs of unproductive workers – than in liberating the slave populations. In addition to the “grandfather” clause and the “ventre libre” freed womb law of 1871, additional legislation freed slaves upon entering Brazil (1831) and established measures to repress the slave trade (1850), though in practice slavery continued unscathed, in some parts even after abolition.

²⁰⁷ Marshall 18. 4% of Brazil's population in 1888 was approximately (600,000). For statistics, see Skidmore 41.

²⁰⁸ Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Milwaukee Press, 1969), 49.

²⁰⁹ J. Lowell Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 21.

Minister of the Treasury Rui Barbosa, who wrote in his 1890 decree that “the Republic is compelled to destroy these vestiges for the honour of the Fatherland.”²¹⁰

Even after much of the *documentation* of slavery was obliterated, the nation struggled to wipe out the visible influence of African slaves on the Brazilian population; the marked racial mixing of the populace was considered by most to be an illness plaguing the nation. Even pioneers of Afro-Brazilian studies bemoaned the extensive racial mixing that had “sullied” the Brazilian people: Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, the most famous of these black intellectuals, said that “the black race of Brazil... will always constitute one of the factors of our inferiority as a people.”²¹¹

This formulation – of Brazil as backward, a supposition in large part blamed on its racial make-up – was common across the nation, as Brazilian intellectuals looked longingly to other “civilized” countries for answers to their racial ‘ailment.’ Freyre, though, was the first intellectual to make lemonade out of the putrid fruit of Brazilian racial history. According to him, the “evil consequences of miscegenation” stemmed not from race-mixing itself, but from the unhealthy relationship of master and slave under which it occurred.²¹²

In his celebrated tome *The Masters and the Slaves*, Freyre details race relations in colonial Brazil, focusing his attention on social interactions in and around the sugarcane plantation. A large portion of the book is dedicated to the legacy of sexual attraction left on Portuguese men by seven hundred years of Moorish influence on the

²¹⁰ Fryer 196. For a full version of the text see: Francelino S. Piauí, *O Negro na Cultura Brasileira* (Campinas, São Paulo: Publicações da Academia Campinense de Letras, no. 27, 1974), 89.

²¹¹ Vianna 49.

²¹² Skidmore 191-2.

Iberian peninsula; Freyre argued that the plantation owners, influenced by age-old legends of dark enchantresses, were helplessly aroused by their female slaves, and therefore sired a large class of mulatto children. Once born, these mulattoes were nursed alongside the white children of the master by black nursemaids and nannies, further entrenching a life-long affection for dark women. Freyre emphasized the role of intimate fluids – semen, breast milk, and the saliva with which nannies would mash morsels of food for the newborn – in creating a Brazilian society immune to the racial hatred that afflicted so many other former slave colonies.

Instead, Freyre celebrated the contributions of African slaves to the Brazilian race, insisting that interracial mixing made Brazil a stronger nation and a truly exceptional tropical society. Unlike so many of his contemporaries, Freyre took what was unique to Brazil and gave it a positive value. Freyre wasn't the first to theorize race in Brazil or to note the importance of the mestiço²¹³ to the nation's identity; some fifty years prior, intellectual Sílvio Romero wrote that "there can be but one source of nationality... the genius, the true spirit of the people that emerges from the complex of our ethnic origins."²¹⁴ Romero was perhaps the first Brazilian thinker to posit that

²¹³ The term "creolization" originates from the Spanish *criollo* and Portuguese *crioulo*, both deriving from the Latin verb *creare* (to breed or to create). Historically the term has been used in different ways by different societies. Thus, "in Peru the word was used to refer to people of Spanish descent who were born in the New World. In Brazil, the term was applied to Negro slaves born locally. In Louisiana, the term was applied to the white francophone populations, while in New Orleans it applied to mulattoes." Eve Stoddard and Grant H. Cornwell, "Cosmopolitan or Mongrel? Créolité, Hybridity and 'Douglarisation' in Trinidad," *European Journal of Culture Studies* 2.3 (1999), 377. In Cristina Rocha, *Zen in Brazil: the quest for cosmopolitan modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 17.

²¹⁴ Sílvio Romero "Sílvio Romero," *Caminhos do pensamento crítico* (Rio de Janeiro: Pallas/MED, 1972), 470. In Vianna 48. Romero challenged the indigenist movement put in motion by José de Alencar, claiming not only that the indigenous could not be a representative symbol for the nation, but that "the Indian is not Brazilian." Romero 469. In Vianna 48.

“each Brazilian is a mestiço, if not in blood, in his ideas,”²¹⁵ and he was followed in racial philosophy by other intellectuals, including Joaquim Nabuco, Graça Aranha and Afrânio Peixoto.

But what is perhaps noteworthy about Freyre’s intellectual trajectory is that he did not find his inspiration for his classic treatise (and subsequent writings) in the work of any other Brazilian author; instead, he claimed to have been greatly influenced by the work of Franz Boas while under his tutelage at Columbia University. As he stressed again and again, his epiphany about Brazilian race relations came after he had traveled afar and seen his native Brazil through the eyes of a foreigner. Interestingly, we have here (much like Oswald and the other Modernists) another instance of a Brazilian intellectual who absorbed foreign influence and turned it into a dominant discourse about his national identity. While in one sense it is another occasion of anthropophagy and should be celebrated, one wonders if he could have exalted his mestiço tropicalist nation in the same way – and to the same effect – without looking abroad for theoretical models.

There were other issues with Freyre’s analyses of race relations in Brazil. He claimed that class, not race, was the factor that accounted for the vast differences in social treatment between blacks and whites, but his analysis addressed only the issue of race, leaving class entirely absent in his study. Eventually, his theory would evolve into a famous ‘catch-phrase’ and scholars and citizens alike would boast of Brazil’s “Racial Democracy,” a misnomer that led to decades of delusional thinking about race relations across the nation (see below). Freyre also struggled throughout

²¹⁵ Dante Moreira Leite, *O caráter nacional brasileiro* (São Paulo: Pioneira, 1976), 186. In Vianna 47.

his writings to match his rhetoric with his sometimes contradictory deep-seated desires; even while attacking imported food and beverages with disdain, Freyre admitted to having a penchant for English and French cuisine, particularly mutton! Even while he revolutionized the way that race was talked about in his native country, he still displayed a nostalgia for the “real” Brazil of colonial times, contradicting his modern writings with wistful reminiscences of sugar plantations run by oppressed – but content – slaves.

Freyre’s discourse on the positive qualities of miscegenation actually dove-tailed quite well with the practice of *embraquecimento*, or whitening, that had been going on for some time throughout the nation; while speaking to the benefit of incorporating African cultural traits into the Brazilian genepool, he (perhaps unwittingly) also opened up the possibility of overshadowing those very traits (with white, European features) through successive generations of miscegenation. In fact, *mestiçagem* had been “posed as a ‘solution’ to the racial problem for some time.”²¹⁶ Racial mixing had long been cited as a major obstacle to Brazil’s progress, and contemporary racist ideology imported from Europe encouraged Brazilians to mix their mulatto population with incoming immigrants from Northern Europe in an attempt to “ameliorate” the African characteristics of the population. Vianna writes that even Sílvia Romero (cited here as Freyre’s predecessor in progressive racial philosophy) “looked forward to the total whitening of Brazil and criticized German immigrants in the southern part of the country because they resisted mixing with the rest of the population.”²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Vianna 50.

Indeed, large-scale immigration from Europe had begun as early as 1886,²¹⁸ in part to stimulate economic development and in part to “whiten” (and thereby improve) the country’s populace. Of course, incoming citizens were expected “to enhance” the country’s coloring:

Africans were never considered among possible candidates for immigration. The Chinese were classified as “decadent” and “risky” (the risk being an “inappropriate” mixture). Japanese immigration became the topic of intense discussion, reaching venues as exalted as the national constituent assembly of 1934, the debate turning on whether or not the Japanese would mix racially.²¹⁹

In her doctoral thesis, however, Lília Schwarcz argues that “men of science” in Brazil recognized the “unique and singular case of extreme miscegenation” throughout Brazil and were careful not to mechanically apply European racist theories to the Brazilian phenomenon. Instead, she claims, these intellectuals made “original adaptations” in order to confront race as it would have to be dealt with in Brazil. She writes:

By picking and choosing what worked and discarding what seemed too problematic, they fashioned an “original copy” of the racist doctrines then in vogue internationally. In the process, Brazilian intellectuals even relativized the term “race” itself: “Rather than a closed, physical, natural concept, [race] was understood as an object of knowledge, the meaning of which would be constantly renegotiated and tested in that specific historical context with so much invested in biological modes of analysis.”²²⁰

In fact, when ethnic groups other than Europeans were chosen for immigration, such as Japanese, Syrians and Lebanese, often they were *construed* as white; Brazilian

²¹⁷ Ibid, 50.

²¹⁸ According to Thomas Skidmore, more than 2,700,000 foreigners had entered the country by 1914. Skidmore, *Black into White*, 144.

²¹⁹ Giralda Seyferth, “Os paradoxos da miscigenação,” *Estudos afro-asiáticos* 20 (January 1991), 167, 173. In Vianna 51-51.

²²⁰ Schwarcz, Lília, *‘Homens de ciência’ e a raça dos homens* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, 1992), 17, 42. In Vianna 44.

conceptions of race often allowed for certain populations to benefit from notions of racial fluidity.

Another interesting argument on racial mixing comes from Peter Fryer, who writes that, contrary to our understanding of *embranquecimento*, “people of European descent and many Amerindians in Brazil underwent “a decisive *Africanization* of their cooking, dress, language, music, religion and folklore.”²²¹ Fryer believes lower-paid Portuguese artisans and clerks were the first to experience this acculturation, but by the 1750s it had spread to the middle and upper-class Portuguese colonists.²²² Although his argument refers to cultural artifacts – music, dance, cuisine, etc. – as opposed to pigmentation, it is nevertheless a good reminder that miscegenation is not, and will never be, a one-way prospect. In fact, many more authors agree that Brazil experienced such extensive racial mixing from the conception of the colony that tracing specific European, indigenous and African influences on Brazilian culture would be a futile exercise.

Freyre, who expressed genuine excitement at the cultural *mélange* between indigenous, African and Portuguese plantation inhabitants, suggested looking to music as an exercise toward recognizing the contributions of each people to its identity. Like many other writers,²²³ he believed that music occupied a special place in Brazil’s search for identity. According to Hermano Vianna,

²²¹ Fryer 9.

²²² *Ibid*, 9.

²²³ In 1920 the most renowned Parnassian Brazilian poet Olavo Bilac famously wrote that the music of his nation was the “loving flower of three sad races” (“*flor amorosa de três raças tristes*”) (Olavo Bilac, *Poesias* (Rio de Janeiro: Alves, 28th Ed., 1964), 263). In Haberly 1. Literature historian David Haberly writes that “... his dictum was hardly the product of a radical consciousness, and it was widely

Gilberto Freyre called music “the most Brazilian or arts” and the privileged manifestation of “the pre-national and national spirit of the Luso-American people, whether aristocratic, bourgeois, plebeian, or rustic.”²²⁴

For Freyre, the “real” Brazil was personified by the black musicians of Rio de Janeiro’s favelas.²²⁵ Perhaps not coincidentally, the mulatto culture of urban Rio soon came to represent the “real” Brazil for the entire nation under the political guidance of populist President Getúlio Vargas.

Getúlio Vargas and the Rise of Brazilian Nationalism

The Revolution of 1930, which brought Getúlio Vargas to power, would also fundamentally change the social, racial, economic and political situation of the nation. The Vargas regime set an unprecedented importance on the unification of the nation and would radically transform Brazil through a controlled homogenization of national culture and a discursive emphasis on miscegenation. Supported by those in favor of overthrowing the powerful and wealthy coffee oligarchy that had controlled Brazilian politics for four decades,²²⁶ Getúlio Vargas had substantial support from the urban middle class but quickly began building his base with lower class citizens. During

accepted by his contemporaries as both deeply poetic and profoundly true. Most Brazilians, then and now, would unhesitatingly extend it to describe the nation's literature as well as its music.” Haberly 1.

²²⁴ Gilberto Freyre, *Ordem e progresso*, 3ra Ed. (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1974), 104. In Vianna 14.

²²⁵ Vianna 9. Vianna uses a description of Freyre “discovering” samba on a night out in Rio as the introduction to his well received *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil*.

²²⁶ When the Brazilian Republic was declared in 1889, the leaders set up a constitutional democracy with no open elections; see footnote 13 in this chapter.

this period, writes Chris Dunn, an ideological construction of *o povo* as both “a social category and political constituency”²²⁷ was consolidated. Translated as “the people,” *o povo* represents the popular, the uneducated masses, whose cultural capital would be catapulted to the fore as representative of the Brazilian nation. Akin to Johann Gottfried von Herder’s notion of *volk*,²²⁸ the concept of ‘o povo’ within the Vargas regime would underscore the legitimacy of one Brazilian nation united under popular culture, in this case: united under carnival, capoeira and samba.

By combining populist politics with the official recognition of mestiço cultural symbols of the nation, Vargas had a huge impact on the perception of race and class at a time of extreme economic growth.²²⁹ Writes Chris Dunn:

The articulation of a mestiço nationality coincided with the construction of the povo (masses) as a social and political category. Under the Estado Novo, this process entailed the cooptation of urban labor through state-controlled unions and the symbolic appropriation of popular expressive cultures as emblems of nationality. The confluence of mestiçagem and nationalist populism in the 1930s generated a new dominant paradigm for Brazilian culture.²³⁰

Indeed, under Vargas the concept of miscegenation that Freyre had just begun to rescue with his upbeat texts would become a political movement. With Vargas in charge and his *Estado Novo* government under way, Brazilian society would embrace a new official discourse on national identity, one in which “ethnic difference was

²²⁷ Dunn, *The Relics*, 8.

²²⁸ See also Moehn 106.

²²⁹ 1930 represented not just Vargas’s first term but also the beginning of the industrial revolution in Brazil. Along with industrialization came major infrastructure as well as Vargas’s famous “Marcha para o Oeste,” or “Western March,” (similar in concept to our own “Go West, Young Man” campaign in the United States).

²³⁰ Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 27.

effaced and subsumed under a universalist conception of national culture.”²³¹ Manuel

Diégues Jr. describes the transition that made *mestiçagem* a semi-official doctrine:

Article 121, paragraph 6, of the 1934 constitution stipulated that ‘the entrance of immigrants into the national territory will be subject to the restrictions necessary to guarantee ethnic integration,’ and it created a quota system whereby immigrants of each nationality were annually not to exceed 2% of the total immigration from that country during the previous fifty years... ‘ethnic integration,’ an official euphemism for race mixing, had become the policy of the authoritarian New State, declared by President Getúlio Vargas in 1937.²³²

In this pluralist and homogenizing society, the urban samba of Rio de Janeiro – as well as *feijoada* (the black bean stew of low-income households), *carnival* (the bacchanalian celebration of the black *favela* dwellers), and *capoeira* (the elegant martial art developed in the runaway slave *quilombos* centuries earlier)²³³ – would become the preeminent symbols of nationhood. Traditional music, dance, dress, cuisine and language from other regions would come to represent only regional interests, while the same cultural aspects of Rio would be held as the national standard.²³⁴

²³¹ Dunn, *The Relics*, 237.

²³² Manuel Diégues Jr., *Imigração, urbanização, industrialização* (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1980), 335-36. In Vianna 51.

²³³ See also: Vianna 41; Moehn 113; Peter Fry, “Feijoada and Soul Food,” *Para inglês ver* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982). On capoeira see: Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995); Louis.

²³⁴ In a novel use of Stuart Hall’s conception of “dominant particular,” Frederick Moehn claims that Rio de Janeiro’s culture became a sort of “dominant particular” in the formation of modern Brazilian national identity. He writes: “Hall’s formulation referred to the way in which particular cultures of imperialist and capitalist centers dominate ‘global’ culture, such as, for example, so-called international pop music repertoire in the English-language...My use of the phrase here, in contrast, is intended merely to suggest the way in which nationalist forces may set up a particular local that subsequently takes on iconic meaning in global circulations of musics.” Moehn 114.

Although Brazil has often gotten caught up in the use of binaries to define its national character, the prevailing conception of race has been one arena in which a true continuum is invoked by most Brazilians. Unlike race in the United States, where the “one-drop” rule has kept racial divisions quite firm over the past several hundred years, race in Brazil is a quite fluid notion and is influenced not just by phenotype but also by class (as well as other markers such as regional affiliation, dress, accent, etc.). Because of the countless intermediate categories between white and black²³⁵ and the emphasis Brazilians put on *class* as opposed to *race*, Brazil boasts what author David Haberly calls an “escape hatch of perceived whiteness.” This escape hatch is well illustrated by feat of the great mulatto novelist Machado de Assis, who apparently persuaded many of his white contemporaries, impressed with his talent and culture, that he was literally white.²³⁶ Haberly describes the phenomenon thus:

Because... the cultural and genetic components of the racial continuum define intelligence, literary ability, and education as inherently white traits, nonwhites who produce texts of merit have some real possibility of moving themselves along the continuum toward the escape hatch of perceived whiteness.²³⁷

Anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro puts it otherwise: “the Brazilian definition of *black* cannot be applied to an artist or a successful professional.” He continues with a remarkable anecdote:

²³⁵ Besides mulatto, there are dozens of names that identify different racial combinations in Brazil; the most common are: *pardo* (“brown”), *cafuso* (“black indian”), *caboclo* (“dark indian”), *mameluco* (“white indian”), and *curiboca* (also “white indian”).

²³⁶ Haberly 5-6.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

This situation is exemplified by the dialogue of a black artist, the painter Santa Rosa, with a young man, also black, who was struggling to rise in a diplomatic career and complaining about the immense barriers that hindered the rise of people of color. The painter said, very sympathetically, “I understand your case perfectly, my dear boy, I was black once too.”²³⁸

Recently, the concept of a continuum of color in Brazil has been changing and, in some cases, approaching the United States model. In attempting to explain this, both Frederick Moehn and Philip Galinsky point to the fact that the “inclusiveness” superficially implied by the racial continuum (as well as the potential of racial mobility) actually thwarts participation in activism that might emulate black movements in other regions of the world. Galinsky writes that the new tendency toward bi-polar racial categorization “makes mobilizing a black movement more workable”²³⁹ and may improve social justice in Brazil. For decades, many nations have looked to Brazil as an example of racial harmony; but since the writings of Freyre and the political directives of Vargas, a much more complicated picture has been emerging. New affirmative action initiatives in Brazil have received extreme criticism while the impoverished populace continues to be disproportionately black.

During research for his dissertation on contemporary rock music from Rio, Frederick Moehn discovered an interesting trend when it comes to racial identity. When speaking to informants about miscegenation, Moehn became overwhelmed

²³⁸ Ribeiro 157. Emphasis orig.

²³⁹ Philip Andrew Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico: Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in the Mangue Movement and “New Music Scene” of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. Music, Wesleyan University, September 1999), 207, 14. See also: Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); George Yúdice, “The Funkification of Rio,” *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, Ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (London: Routledge, 1994), 193-220; and Skidmore, *Black into White*, for an overview of racial history and politics in Brazil.

with identical versions of the “official story,” hearing from countless interviewees the same sound bits about *mestiçagem*. He writes:

... as discourses of miscegenation and the metaphor of the cauldron (like the “melting pot” in the United States) begin to look like obsessions amongst my informants, it becomes a challenge to separate (a) the country’s real history of cultural incorporation and mixing (which is not unique), from (b) the mythology surrounding race, blood, and the *trope* of mixing. Regardless of the degree to which mixing, miscegenation and incorporation into the body are what we might call discursive “residues” of earlier phases of nation-building and the construction of national sentiment, the fact remains that they are deep-seated interpretive ideologies, and as such, are perpetuated in the music these artists make.²⁴⁰

Indeed, the notion that all Brazilians hail from some mixture of Iberian, indigenous and/or African stock is widespread among the general population, and perhaps only outpaced by the pervasive belief in some version of “racial democracy.” (Though many Brazilians are skeptical of racism, nearly all are quick to point out the superiority of Brazil’s coping mechanisms to racial inequality, *compared to the United States*). Certainly, though, the nation’s discourse on race still speaks to the lasting impact of Vargas’s rule. Indeed, it was through its exploration of race that Brazil truly found itself. As Bryan McCann so succinctly states, “... reconsideration of the importance of African cultural influence was the single most important element in Brazil’s selective inquiry into national character.”²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Moehn 168.

²⁴¹ Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello, Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 2-3. McCann reminds us that popular authors before Modernism never bothered with African elements, only indigenous – and that Brazilian national identity coalesced only with the problematization the miscegenation of all three ethnic sources.

Musical Nationalism under Vargas

The nation under Vargas did not coalesce simply around *mestiçagem*. The Estado Novo presented an unprecedented scope for its national project of unification and made a concerted effort to integrate Brazil's diverse regions through massive consumption of nationalist art.²⁴² Vargas's mission to centralize federal authority stemmed in large part from the very vehicle he used to obtain power; the Liberal Alliance that had brought him to power was comprised of members from far-flung regions of Brazil with very different agendas. Because Brazil's economic system was set up with regional nodes of commerce, a highly diverse and somewhat centrifugal economy also motivated Vargas's push for centralization, and increased immigration from Italy, Germany and Japan (particularly throughout the southern states) made it even more pressing to establish a cohesive Brazilian identity.

As Bryan McCann writes:

The ceremonial incineration of the state flags, shortly after the declaration of the Estado Novo, symbolized Vargas's antipathy toward regionalist sentiment. He railed against "caudilhismo regional" – the parapolitical, semifeudal control of land and labor by regional strongmen, and scorned "the regionalisms that in every area sought to place themselves before the interests of the nation in general."²⁴³

²⁴² As industrialization began transforming landscapes across Brazil, Gilberto Freyre attempted to popularize a movement of regionalism, encouraging Brazilians to embrace the traditional cultures of each region and to reject the homogenizing trend of modernization. Much like Mário de Andrade before him, he exhorted readers to disregard modern creations and to return instead to the richness that Brazil's past had to offer; specifically, Freyre urged his supporters to rebuff the carbonated beverages that hailed from abroad and instead to enjoy natural coconut water, fresh from the Brazilian palm tree. Many have argued that this went in the face of Vargas's centralization policy, though Lúcia Lippi de Oliveira argues that "the authoritarian government [principally of the period 1937-45] so forcefully assured centralization that regionalist manifestations no longer threatened the whole." Lúcia Lippi de Oliveira, *A questão nacional na primeira república* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990). In Vianna 41.

²⁴³ McCann 100.

Though cinema, literature and sport (specifically soccer and capoeira) also became key indicators of national identity, no form of national art would become as central to the debate on national identity as music. Vargas's first years coincided with the growth of radio technology, which provided a platform for Brazilian music to be enjoyed *en masse*; as the technology developed, ratings climbed and musicians and their producers quickly began generating as much content as could be consumed.

Bryan McCann describes the expansion of early radio waves in Brazil:

Radio came to RJ before Christ. It arrived in 1922, when it played a prominent role in an exposition celebrating the centennial of Brazilian independence. Technicians from Westinghouse mounted a radio tower on Corcovado – the sheer peak that became the perch for Rio's famous statue of Christ nine years later – and installed receivers at the exposition plaza downtown.²⁴⁴

Thanks to the new broadcasting system, radio stations were cropping up all over Rio and São Paulo and other regional capitals,²⁴⁵ many of them giving generous playtime to the newly popularized samba emerging on the outskirts of town. Indeed, of all the cultural forms encouraged by the Vargas regime, samba reigned supreme.

For its proponents, samba best represented the Brazilian nation because it was a Brazilian synthesis of foreign and local sound that largely resolved the centuries-old tension between white and black races. Like white rice and black beans (the national

²⁴⁴ McCann 22. The exposition referred to is the celebration of the centennial of Brazil's independence. McCann further explains that, later faced with the option of adopting an American model of commercial broadcasting or a British/German model of government regulated broadcasting, Vargas had little choice but to choose the former. This was due to the burgeoning nature of Argentine radio and the threat that their neighbor to the south would take control of Brazil's airwaves if Brazil didn't quickly fill them themselves. Left with little time to develop radio infrastructure, Vargas chose to open it up for entrepreneurs to develop popular commercial programming. McCann 23.

²⁴⁵ Sulamita Viera dates Rio's first radio station (Sociedade Rádio) to 1923, along with the first radio station of São Paulo and Recife; 1924 would bring radio stations to Fortaleza, São Luis and Salvador, and 1925 to Curitiba and Pelotas. Sulamita Viera, *O Sertão em Movimento: a dinâmica da produção cultural* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2000), 50.

“dish”), samba was the perfect mixture of captivating African rhythms and catchy European melodic lines, an ideal music/dance genre that arose in the ghettos but eventually found its way into the elite parlors – and onto every radio broadcast for the next ten years.²⁴⁶ In his well-acclaimed *The Mystery of Samba*, Hermano Vianna unpacks the growing popularity of samba during the 1930s, suggesting that its positioning as *the* national music of Brazil was as much a social construction of leading intellectuals and politicians as an indication of grass-roots popularity. According to Vianna, intellectuals like Gilberto Freyre, Villa Lobos and Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda, in their interactions with Afro-Brazilian musicians like Donga and Pixinguinha, would create a cultural crossroads – of racial and political theory with popular music – that would ultimately lead to the reification of samba. What would become the myth of Racial Democracy had an accompanying fairy-tale soundtrack: samba.

Samba’s hegemony in the world of popular music was a way for Brazilian mestiços to take pride in their contribution to national culture as well as a way for the Brazilian population as a whole to recognize their unique contribution to world culture (while ‘lightening’ the blow of underdevelopment, a status so often blamed on Brazil’s black and mestiço population). However, while in large part this ‘authenticization’ of Afro-Brazilian culture was a strategy for consolidating nationalist sentiments and popular support for the Vargas regime, it also had a

²⁴⁶ Note that early on in samba’s glory days, there was some class tension as a result of a discursive opposition between “the hill” and “the city,” two poles of samba’s popularity (often essentialized into “origin” and “consuming” classes of samba. See Rafael José de Menezes Bastos, “The ‘Origins of Samba’ as the Invention of Brazil (Why Do Songs Have Music?),” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 8 (1999), 72.

'darker' side. The adoption of samba as a creation myth of Brazilian identity served to help thwart any cries of racial oppression in a country not yet recovered from centuries of slavery. As Peter Fry writes, "The conversion of ethnic symbols into national symbols masks a situation of racial domination and makes it especially difficult to uncover."²⁴⁷ In another article, he continues:

When the very symbols of ethnic boundaries are converted into the symbols which characterize the nation, one has converted something which was originally dangerous into something "clear," "safe," and "tamed."²⁴⁸

Indeed, Néstor Canclini warns that the very practice of using subaltern culture for the creation of national myths is a common, problematic and ultimately coercive move by nation-states.

National myths are not a *reflection* of the conditions in which the masses live, but rather the product of operations of selection and "transposition" of deeds and characteristics chosen according to the projects or political legitimation.²⁴⁹

Obviously, Vargas's push for the nationalist supremacy of samba was not an isolated case; populist governments across Latin America were engaged in similar modernizing projects and often exploited musics from marginalized communities in their pursuit for a widely-recognized cultural patrimony. What, then, was unique to the staging of popular culture²⁵⁰ under Vargas?

²⁴⁷ Fry 52-53. In Vianna 13.

²⁴⁸ Peter Fry, "Feijoada e soul food: notas sobre a manipulação de símbolos étnicos e nacionais," *Ensaio de Opinião* 2, 2 (1977 [44-47]), 47). In George Ruben Oliven, "The Production and Consumption of Culture in Brazil," *Latin American Perspectives* (Issue 40, Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 1984 [103-15]), 114.

²⁴⁹ Roger Bartra, *La jaula de la melancolia: identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano* (México: Grijalbo, 1987), 225-42. In García-Canclini 132.

²⁵⁰ From García-Canclini, chapter five.

Canclini reminds us that nationalist traditions must be staged: “the patrimony exists as a political force insofar as it is dramatized – in commemorations, monuments and museums.”²⁵¹ In order for national identity to be reigned in by state controllers, several new departments were created to manage Brazil’s new nationalist image in the burgeoning field of popular culture. The first, the Department of Propaganda and Cultural Diffusion (DPDC), which was later replaced by the Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP), focused on molding the popular spirit through *Hora do Brasil* national broadcasts and through various censors of popular culture. The *Hora do Brasil* was originally broadcast on all frequencies across the nation at the height of prime time listening; due to its overly didactic and boring format, however, it soon developed into an extremely unpopular show. Several stations refused to comply with the federal mandate to air the show – some played an hour of static instead – while others derided it as the *hora da fala sozinho*” or the “hour of talking-to-oneself.”²⁵² In addition to this programming, the DIP also compiled a team of censors to edit popular culture content, with their efforts focused on defeating depictions of the *malandro* in popular formats. A *malandro* is a rogue who accomplishes his deeds of *malandragem* through trickery and by bucking the system; the heroization of this character became common in samba lyrics of the 1930s. The Vargas regime was intent on derailing this development – a step accomplished by 1940 in what Bryan McCann portrays as a relatively smooth

²⁵¹ García-Canclini 109.

²⁵² See McCann for a more detailed analysis of the *Hora do Brasil* as well as other DIP and MES initiatives under Vargas.

process.²⁵³ With the crackdown on *malandro* idolizations in popular samba hits, the Vargas regime assured that samba could continue as the nation's iconic music genre, representing Brazil to those inside as well as out.

In addition to the DIP's work, the Ministry of Education and Health (MES) created a radio station meant to transmit primarily classical music and didactic presentations of erudite material. Meant to educate citizens of Rio de Janeiro, Rádio MES was able to secure only a small listening audience. In fact, while they have received great attention in recent scholarship as state-led apparatuses to shape popular culture under Vargas's populist government, both DIP and MES were led by bureaucrats out of touch with their constituents and ultimately failed to connect with the Brazilian people.

Rádio Nacional had a quite different trajectory. The popular Rádio Nacional was acquired by the Brazilian government in 1940 and has often been condemned as a puppet of the Vargas regime, but Bryan McCann points out that Rádio Nacional (in contrast to the *Hora do Brasil* and the Rádio MES programming) in fact was run by "broadcasting professionals with an intuitive grasp of their audience and a deep commitment to Brazilian popular music." In fact, he argues, Rádio Nacional received relatively little direct government intrusion until the military coup of 1964.²⁵⁴ Indeed,

²⁵³ McCann traces the relatively unproblematic campaign to eliminate "malandragem" from samba lyrics and performance to several factors: 1) the wide support of Vargas amongst samba musicians, 2) musicians censored themselves so as not to be caught by censors, 3) many subtle references to malandragem were masked and therefore not caught by censors, and 4) the "trend" of malandragem-drenched lyrics simply died out and gave way to new forms of innovation. McCann 65-6.

²⁵⁴ According to McCann, Rádio Nacional was seized by the Vargas government from a consortium of international capitalists that also had extensive holdings in Brazilian railways. Wary of allowing key transport and communications assets to be under foreign possession, Vargas took over all of the holdings (including Rádio Nacional) in March of 1940. McCann argues that Vargas would never have allowed Rádio Nacional to attain the level of influence it reached in the early 1940s – between 1940

unlike the aforementioned departments, Rádio Nacional was run by and large as an independent company and not limited by the bureaucratic hurdles and financial shortfalls of the DIP and the MES. As a result, Rádio Nacional actually “came far closer than either the DIP or the MES to molding national popular culture, and it did so primarily through its presentation of commercial popular music.”²⁵⁵

Under the vigilant protection of the Estado Novo, Rádio Nacional became a household fixture, and its exuberant transmissions of samba helped to define the nation. Depicted as an age-old genre that flowed directly out of the favela slums of Rio de Janeiro, samba cashed in on notions of purity and authenticity, and came to symbolize a country whose mixed ethnicity made members of the nation sing and dance in racial harmony and synch. Yet scholars over the past two decades have noted that much of this version of events has its origin in social imaginings. Where and how, then, did samba really evolve?

A Brief History of Brazilian Music

While entire volumes have explored the contribution of Africans and/or Europeans and/or Arabs and/or indigenous tribes to Brazil’s rich musical history, scholarship on Brazilian music tends to emphasize the extensive mixing of genres and styles throughout the nation’s history. Indeed, the Brazilian *musicscape*²⁵⁶ is a wealth of

and 1946, it increased its gross revenue by 700% – if it had *not* been connected to the government. Still, Vargas demonstrated an understanding that the station was furthering his regime’s nationalist priorities with its popular music programming, and McCann writes that Vargas allowed it to flourish “in the sheltering embrace of the regime.” McCann 39.

²⁵⁵ McCann 21.

distinct cultural traditions, few of which can be studied in isolation from *all* formative influences. Instead of identifying precise genealogical histories of styles, researchers have had to content themselves with drawing rough approximations of relationships between local and global musics and dance that were circulating around the Atlantic from the early years of colonization.

A second issue which arises early in any study of Brazilian popular music is the fluidity of nomenclature; even while genres can be hard to define and to differentiate from one another in a changing environment, the relative ease with which Brazilian artists and audiences substitute names of music genres, dance styles, and locales can be exasperating. Early in the development of Brazilian popular music, foreign genres were imported and incorporated with local elements, creating sub-genres which were not always differentiated from the original imports. (This was true, as Fryer tells us, with the waltz, polka, mazurka, schottisch, habanera and tango.)²⁵⁷ In part, the fluid nature of these genres in Brazil was due to the fact that performance groups did not specialize in a single rhythm or genre and instead freely interpreted a variety of styles in vogue both locally and across the Atlantic. The result was widely varying interpretations of what was reputedly the same genre; or exceedingly similar interpretations of what were considered different genres. Fryer illustrates this with a lively anecdotal exchange between samba pioneers Donga and Ismael Silva about the nomenclature of “Pelo Telefone,” widely recognized as the first published samba:

²⁵⁶ I use the term *musicscape*, inspired by Arjun Appadurai’s discussion of ‘scapes,’ to approximate the notion of transnational distributions of musical elements in continuity. For more on ethnoscares, technoscares, financescares, mediascares and ideoscares, see Appadurai 1996.

²⁵⁷ David P. Appleby, *The Music of Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 42.

When Ismael Silva (b. 1905) said of “Pelo Telefone,” “That’s a *maxixe*,” Donga asked: “Then what’s a samba?” “Se você Jurar,” replied Silva, pointing to a 1931 hit of his own, written in collaboration with Francisco Alves (1898-1952) and Nilton Bastos (1899-1931). To which ‘Donga’ retorted: “That’s a *marcha*.”²⁵⁸

Indeed, not only were the blurry definitions geared toward a highly arbitrary sense of classification; certain genres gained repute as lacking or possessing – an equally imprecise quality: *taste*. With this in mind, some composers classified their pieces with an eye to marketing; José Ramos Tinhorão²⁵⁹ notes that Chiquinha Gonzaga called some of her maxixes “tangos,” in order to “guarantee circulation of her scores in upper-class homes.”²⁶⁰

Further complicating nomenclature within Brazilian popular music, many musical terms were used to describe entire cultural settings; the word *fado*, for example, could mean not just a specific dance or its accompanying music but also the party at which

²⁵⁸ Fryer 157. Ethnomusicologist John Murphy notes that while “Pelo Telefone” is billed as a “samba carnavalesco,” it “is in fact closer to the maxixe, which combined elements of the tango and the polka.” John P. Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9. “Pelo telefone,” a 1917 samba attributed to Ernesto Joaquim Maria do Santos and Mário de Almeida was a pivotal recording that “put samba on the map.” However, Peter Fryer makes the case that it was not, in fact, the first published samba, as is so often stated. Instead, Fryer writes, “a dozen or so others had used the term previously, including a piece called “Brasilianas” (c. 1910), played on the piano by João Gualdo Ribeiro, and “urubu malandro” (c. 1914), ‘arranged from popular motifs’ for clarinet, cavaquinho and guitar. ‘Pelo Telefone’ was simply the first piece of music to gain national success under the name “samba.” Fryer 156.

²⁵⁹ Tinhorão is a fascinating figure in the study of Brazilian popular music. Long before the topic became popular amongst historians and social scientists, Tinhorão was conducting painstaking research on the history of Brazilian music. I can think of no other author on Brazilian popular music who has been as prolific. He approached the study of Brazilian popular music with a deeply polemic outlook and attacked bossa nova with vicious critique in the 1960s, a position that many intellectuals have never forgiven him for. These days, he is often regarded with cynicism. Still, it is important to remember the huge contribution he has made to music studies in Brazil. For more on this conflict, see Stroud, Veloso; Mauro Dias, “Globalização não exclui identidade nacional,” *Estadão.com.br*, 28 abril 2001. www.estado.estadao.com.br/editorias/2001/04/28/cad333.html. Accessed 10 May 2001.

²⁶⁰ José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular (da modinha à canção de protesto)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Vozes, Ltda., 1974), 66. The maxixe was considered a popularized Brazilian form of the polka and was often referred to as tango or even polka in order to avoid its characterization as a lower-class and Africanized music.

it was performed... as well as the “composition of verses, in the midst of the dance performance, inserted into a stand-alone aria.”²⁶¹ ‘Samba’ suffered from this problem, as well, as a samba could mean anything from a primitive circle-dance accompanied by drumming in which couples executed an *umbigada* (a provocative dance move in which two people bump their bellies) to an urban instrumental improvisation, to the barnyard setting where lively parties are held. An additional complication arises when a single dance, music genre, or instrument develops several names, sometimes differentiated across geographical areas or across social classes and often as a result of varied etymologies between the numerous languages that intermingled on Brazilian shores. Indeed, it can be frustrating for a researcher to sort through these fuzzy definitions, nomenclatures and etymologies, but ultimately the most important lesson is to ask what these various terms mean to musicians and audiences themselves. As music and dance are interpreted uniquely by all performers and spectators, it perhaps seems fitting that a plethora of terms exist to define musical experience in Brazil.

Fryer notes that the unique nature of popular music in Brazil is due in part to economic developments early in the colony. According to Fryer, the economic boom brought on by the discovery of diamonds (in the interior of Bahia in the first half of the seventeenth century) and of gold (in Minas Gerais in 1693-95) increased the circulation of money around the nation (particularly toward the formerly sparsely uninhabited interior) and created a widespread urban middle class with enough disposable income to enjoy musical entertainment. Fryer writes that “Brazilian

²⁶¹ José Ramos Tinhorão, *Os Sons dos Negros no Brasil: cantos, danças, folguedos, origens* (São Paulo: Art Editora, 1988), 66.

popular music arose in the eighteenth century, first of all in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, primarily to satisfy the cultural demands of that urban middle class.²⁶²

Another interesting characteristic of early popular music in Brazil is that wealthy landowners often sponsored orchestras made up exclusively of musically literate slaves. Often traded for additional cost, some slaves could be bought trained on certain instruments, and many plantations boasted orchestras of several dozen musicians as well as choirs to accompany chapel events. Early European travelers to Brazil commented on this “pleasing” aspect of plantation life; to own an orchestra provided not just entertainment for the family and staff and of a landowner, but great prestige as well.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, popular music in Brazil could no longer be identified as either Portuguese or African but instead had a distinctly Brazilian flair that mixed influences from around the globe into a unique sound.²⁶³ The two musics most central to the development of a national sound were the *modinha* (a love song with a European melody and syncopated rhythm) and the *lundu* (an early syncopated dance music).

The *modinha* itself shows the multiplicity of complex cultural flows around the Atlantic; in the late 1700s the “moda” traveled alongside Portuguese composers to Italy (where many studied music composition and arrangement) and returned to Portugal having assimilated “influences common to the Italian operettas by Bellini and Donizette.”²⁶⁴ From there it journeyed to Paris and back, and eventually arrived

²⁶² Fryer 138.

²⁶³ See Fryer 2.

on Brazilian shores with the royal family in 1808.²⁶⁵ In fact, Vianna tells us, the modinha made several successive return voyages to Europe in the nineteenth century:

Sigismund Nekomm, one of Haydn's favorite students, lived five years in Rio and later published arrangements of modinhas in Paris, sowing the continued cultural permeability not only of international frontiers but also of those between classical and popular music.²⁶⁶

The lundu²⁶⁷ (also known as lundum, landum, londum, londu e landu, and, by some authors, as calundo)²⁶⁸ was also a music of ambiguous origin. Vianna uses the unclear precedence of the lundu to elucidate his opinion that it is almost impossible to disentangle musical strands so as to determine which are more "original" or "authentic":

Did the *lundum* emerge in Angola? Did it go to Portugal? Did it come to Brasil? Or was it all the other way around? The probability is that the order of the facts does not alter the musical outcome. It is more than likely that the *lundum* was developed in the three places, that were in close contact, at the same time.²⁶⁹

Indeed, Fryer writes that the lundu was "the Luso-Brazilian form of a dance tradition carried round and round the Atlantic triangle"²⁷⁰ and that it appealed to black people and white people across the New World as well as in Portugal. Derived from African

²⁶⁴ Vianna 18-19.

²⁶⁵ Vianna writes that the first Brazilian to popularize the modinha was Domingos Caldas Barbosa, a priest of mixed black and white ancestry from Rio de Janeiro who has been cited as Brazil's "first historically recognized composer." Vianna 18-19.

²⁶⁶ Vianna 18-19.

²⁶⁷ Fryer notes that the lundu may have gotten its name from the port of Luanda. Fryer 3.

²⁶⁸ Tinhorão contests this last assertion (contradicting Gregório de Matos Guerra). Tinhorão, *Os sons negros*, 31, 36.

²⁶⁹ Vianna and Villares, liner notes to *Música do Brasil* cd. Stroud 167-8.

²⁷⁰ Fryer 11.

batuque (a term referring to a rhythmic dance of African origin), the lundu nonetheless had a choreography reminiscent of the Spanish fandango.²⁷¹

The modinha and the lundu were extremely similar in style, and Fryer notes that there was a certain convergence of the two forms by the end of the eighteenth century.²⁷² Indeed, he continues, both boasted three singular features which distinguished them from the music that contemporary Europeans were accustomed to listening to. The novel Brazilian forms had systematized syncopation (in which African cross-rhythms were adapted to European norms) and frequent use of a flattened leading note as well as switches between major and minor (both of which were adaptations of African scalar values to the European concert scale).²⁷³ As direct descendents of the modinha and the lundu, virtually all Brazilian popular music (*choro, maxixe, marcha, samba, bossa nova*, etc.) shares the first two of these features, along with several other indubitably African influences:

[an] emphasis on percussion and dance rhythms; [a] percussive approach to all instruments, including the human voice;... the off-beat phrasing of melodic accents; ... a preference for “rich “or “rough” rather than “pure” tone (i.e. for a tone rich in upper harmonics, with a noise-to sound ratio higher than the European norm);... a texture of contrasting timbres, often polyrhythmically arranged; and in the frequent use of call-and-response patterns, often overlapping.²⁷⁴

Perhaps most importantly, along with the blending that occurred at a musical level with the modinha and lundu, there also transpired a social mixing wherein the modinha became “democratized,” or more popular amongst the lower classes, and the

²⁷¹ Fryer 11; Vianna 27; Tinhorão, *Pequena historia*, 51.

²⁷² Fryer 145.

²⁷³ *Ibid*, 147.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 147.

lundu became accepted by wealthier Brazilians.²⁷⁵ This is a key development in Brazilian popular music, as it shows the beginning of a trend that would continue throughout the following centuries: over time, the wealthy classes of Brazil have come to adopt music and culture from the lower classes, reclaiming the conventions of the poor as cultural icons of the nation.²⁷⁶

The next reverberation of Brazilian sound and dance was the *maxixe*, a mixture of the Brazilian lundu with imported polka and Cuban habanera²⁷⁷ (though in practice it was not necessarily easily differentiated from the lundu, the *tango brasileiro*²⁷⁸ or other Brazilian versions of the polka). Vianna impishly suggests that the *maxixe* was “essentially a Brazilian way of playing and dancing the standard international dance repertory of the 1880s-1920s,”²⁷⁹ though he also calls attention to the commotion it caused in Paris, yet another reference to the regular circulation of music and dance traditions and the recognized cultural impact of a former colony on the Old World.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 145.

²⁷⁶ See chapter six for a discussion of this phenomenon with *forró*.

²⁷⁷ As Mário’s Andrade’s student Oneyda Alvarenga describes it, “the European polka gave it its movement, the Cuban habanera its rhythm, popular Afro-Brazilian music its characteristic syncopation, and the Brazilian generally gave it its essence of originality: its particular way of being sung and played.” (“A Polca européia lhe forneceu o movimento, a Habanera cubana lhe deu a rítmica, a musica popular afro-brasileira concorreu com a nossa sincopação característica, e o brasileiro em geral lhe deu a essência da sua originalidade: ‘o jeitinho de cantar e de tocar’ (Mário de Andrade) que o singulariza...”) Alvarenga 335-6.

²⁷⁸ Mário de Andrade opined that the designation “tango” was probably replaced by “maxixe” in the 1870s, though some artists continued to call maxixes, tangos. Alvarenga 336. McCann notes that, indeed, several composers labeled their maxixes with “the more socially acceptable designation of tango” while their popular audiences continued to call them maxixes. McCann 45. (Note, also, that the *tango brasileiro* has little in common with the well-known Argentina tango.)

²⁷⁹ Vianna 88-9.

²⁸⁰ Ibid, 27.

After the popularity of the modinha, the lundu and the maxixe, the success of its next iteration – the samba – seemed predestined. Indeed, Gerard Béhague argues that the popularity of the prior forms gave samba (and all other urban popular forms) “immediate recognition as characteristic national expressions.”²⁸¹ As discussed in the prior section, samba’s position as “the” national music was a social construction with deep political and racial underpinnings, and many Brazilians at first resisted the push to recognize its preeminence.

Mário de Andrade, for one, was dismayed at the attention samba was getting as ‘the nationalist music’ from contemporary intellectuals and politicians, since he believed that the true Brazil was hidden in its rural musical treasures, steeped for centuries in the rich earth of rustic Brazil and its diverse influences. For Mário, samba was an urban genre that did not represent the “real” Brazil and was driven by radio interests. Still, samba was by far the most popular music emanating from the most powerful city in the nation (recall that Rio de Janeiro was both the capital city, the intellectual mecca, and the center of the country’s growing telecommunications network).²⁸² Indeed, as Bryan McCann eloquently recapitulates, “the music minted in Rio became the standard currency of national cultural exchange.”²⁸³ Rio de Janeiro’s musical machine had already produced the most popular genres in Brazilian history (lundu, modinha, maxixe, choro and samba) and would continue to dominate popular

²⁸¹ Béhague 10.

²⁸² “Even more so than broadcasting, the recording industry was heavily concentrated in Rio de Janeiro.” McCann 25. By the late 1920s, the industry was dominated by three multinational corporations (Odeon, RCA Victor and Columbia), which operated out of the capital city.

²⁸³ Even with the heavy concentration of recording and broadcasting industries in Rio de Janeiro, though, regional musics could and did break through; see chapter four for a detailed analysis of the success of Luiz Gonzaga.

Brazilian musical production over the next generations (with bossa nova and, to some extent, MPB and pagode). Even with the outcry of some isolated intellectuals, samba reigned supreme in nationalistic terms for decades (some would claim it still remains king), only briefly eclipsed in its glory by baião, bossa nova, tropicália, MPB and, more recently, mangue bit.²⁸⁴

In a recent text published on samba, Carlos Sandroni argues that part of samba's huge success as a national musical symbol stemmed from the duality of its form; according to Sandroni, the division of samba into a ballroom dance (accompanied by string instruments, woodwinds and percussion) or a ring dance (accompanied predominantly by percussion) created popular and folkloric levels of the same genre. These echelons of samba corresponded to market-based urban/popular and non-market-based rural/folkloric; Sandroni concludes that this duality allowed samba to prosper as a popular commercial music while still maintaining "its folkloric credentials... dear to the heart of nationalist theorists."²⁸⁵ Once again, we see a theoretical understanding of Brazilian culture based on the notion of bifurcation, perhaps the most common trope in Brazilian intellectual history. Forró, too, has often been cast in a similar dichotomy, and the following chapters will return to this theme, attempting to delineate some of the most common arguments for and against the creation of cultural dichotomies and suggesting how the developing discourse of forró fits into – and stands to resist – this bipolarized conception of culture.

²⁸⁴ See Carlos Sandroni, *Feitiço Decente: transformações do samba no Rio de Janeiro, 1917-1933* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, Editora UFRJ, 2001); Vianna, Dunn; Moehn; Galinsky. Note, also, that while mangue had an enthusiastic following in Recife, it was more popular with the international world music circuit (and with intellectuals, in general) than with national audiences in Rio and elsewhere.

²⁸⁵ See Sandroni. Quoted in McCann 46.

Conclusion: the 'Unmodern' Modernists of Brazil

The twentieth century has been a time of extreme economic, political and societal growth and transformation in Brazil; urban expansion, industrial development and new communication technologies have fundamentally changed the nation since it embarked on a mission to uncover its own identity. Still, even today Brazilians are troubled by the need for a prevailing identity that the nation as a whole can embrace.

Haberly notes that Brazilians

have always tended, even in this century, to look at their nation and its culture in terms of the model of human psychological and physical development, defining Brazil itself as an adolescent – weaned from Portuguese colonialism, but still dependent upon external influences and not yet ready to stand alone as an adult member of the family of nations.²⁸⁶

Historically, Brazil looked to European and North American societies for cultural models, often importing foreign products as well as perspectives. Oswald suggested that they did so with an inventive anthropophagic twist; another scholar attributed Brazil's imperfect mimicry to its "creative lack of competence in copying."²⁸⁷ But other scholars have taken Brazil's relationship to "First World" nations a step further.

As Renato Ortiz argues:

The notion of modernity is "out of place" in that Modernism occurs in Brazil without Modernization. It is not by chance that the literary critics have affirmed that the Modernism of the 1920s 'anticipates' changes that will only become consolidated in later years.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Haberly 7.

²⁸⁷ Paulo Emílio Salles Gomes, "Cinema: trajetória no subdesenvolvimento," *Argumento*, No. 1 (Oct. 1973). In Schwarz 16.

²⁸⁸ "A noção de modernidade está "fora do lugar" na medida em que o Modernismo ocorre no Brasil sem modernização. Não é por acaso que os críticos literários têm afirmado que o Modernismo da década de 20 "antecipa" mudanças que irão se concretizar somente nos anos posteriores." Renato

Other authors, including Néstor García Canclini and Roberto Schwarz, have written extensively on the same topic. Canclini stretches the issue to include all of Latin America: “the most-reiterated hypothesis in the literature on Latin American modernity may be summarized as follows: we have had an exuberant modernism with a deficient modernization.”²⁸⁹

Roberto Schwarz guides the argument back toward Brazil, noting that as the *last* nation in the Americas to abolish slavery (and then, to have done so in large part in reaction to foreign pressure), Brazil has always had a fundamental paradox between the liberalism *espoused* by Brazilian elites and the traditionalist system still in place across most of the nation. This, Schwarz argues, has resulted in the present “incongruity” of Brazilian society, a state he describes as “ill-assortedness – unmanageable contrasts, disproportions, nonsense, anachronisms, outrageous compromises and the like.”²⁹⁰ He argues that Brazil’s incorporation of the liberal political machine of capitalist Europe and North America coincided with a notably *uncapitalist* latifundium system of Brazil.²⁹¹ From this latifundium system rose three classes (owner, slave and dependent), the last dominated by the system of favor, “the relationship by which the class of free men reproduced itself” and which “formed and flavoured the whole of national life.”²⁹² Schwarz reiterates the complaint we’ve seen

Ortiz, *A Moderna Tradição Brasileira: Cultura Brasileira e Indústria Cultural* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1988), 32.

²⁸⁹ García-Canclini 41.

²⁹⁰ Schwarz 25. Translation by John Gledson.

²⁹¹ This traditionalist “latifundium” system was nonetheless swept into the capitalist system as a principal supplier of cheap raw materials.

several times: “In the process of reproducing its social order, Brazil unceasingly affirms and reaffirms European ideas, always improperly.”²⁹³ The question, then, becomes ‘how can Brazil affirm its own ideas?’ a notion about which Schwarz remains quite skeptical.

And yet, while intellectuals continue to debate the nation’s identity and cultural independence from “First World,” Brazilians themselves seem to be finding their way just fine. For all of their uncertainty, Brazilians have nonetheless developed what Bryan McCann calls a “coherent popular culture” – one that offers Brazilians “counterbalanced messages of tradition and modernity, community and individuality, nationalist fervor and cosmopolitan flair.”²⁹⁴ Indeed, it is in the realm of popular culture – and, particularly, in the dominion of music – that Brazilians continue to negotiate these categories, often settling on distinctions that blur boundaries and complicate formerly clear delineations. Indeed, Brazil’s diversity – once characterized as a series of negative rifts splicing the country’s sought-after nationhood – can now be celebrated and invoked in the name of national identity. After all, there is something radical and ultimately liberating in a nation whose character musician Arnaldo Antunes termed “*desidentidade*.”²⁹⁵

²⁹² Schwarz 22.

²⁹³ Ibid, 29.

²⁹⁴ McCann 11.

²⁹⁵ Roughly “un-identity.” Arnaldo Antunes in Moehn 96.

Chapter 3

Invented Tradition: The Northeast as a Constructed Space

*Saudade assim faz roer
É amarga qui nem jiló
Mas ninguém pode dizer
Que me viu triste a chorar
Saudade, o meu remédio é cantar*

- “Que nem Jiló,” Humberto Teixeira & Luiz Gonzaga, 1950

The Northeast, or ‘Nordeste,’ is home to several geographic climatic areas, but none is so deeply entrenched in the Brazilian psyche as the *sertão*, the large expanse of scrublands that spans the interior of the states Pernambuco, Ceará, Bahia, Alagoas and Sergipe. As first described in painful detail in *Os Sertões* (Rebellion in the Backlands) by Euclides da Cunha, this landscape is regularly decimated by region-wide drought that comes in unpredictable (though frequent) cycles.²⁹⁶ As a result of their wide swath of destruction, cyclical migrations are a feature of this area, as poor farmers are forced off the dried-out land and into semi-urban areas to look for work.²⁹⁷

Though it has become a key node in Brazilian migrations (in large part from the movement of these *retirantes*, or refugees of various droughts), the *sertão* is framed

²⁹⁶ “The key distinguishing characteristic of the Northeast’s climate is not the low rainfall per se, but rather the high degree of rainfall variability. The fact that the droughts are unpredictable, that there may be ten or twelve rainy years and suddenly a profound and long-lasting drought, makes life and livelihood precarious.” Kampton Webb, *The Changing Face of Northeast Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 44.

²⁹⁷ “The fact that there is a *coincidental* relationship between the drought area of Northeast Brazil and the area of greatest poverty does not mean that there is a *causal* relationship between them. The actual causes of poverty have more to do with antiquated land tax structures, inheritance patterns, types of land tenure, and the ideas of the socio-economic-political elite groups than they do with climatic drought and soil infertility.” Webb 178.

as an isolated region that was cut off from the rest of Brazil for centuries, allowing the cultural traditions that were brought to Brazil early in its colonization to continue being practiced, impervious to change. Indeed, it is considered home to a medieval social structure that supports rigid hierarchization, family feuds, sanctioned banditry and unhindered violence – and a rich cultural stew of Moorish and Gregorian musical influence.

The notion of a Nordeste region has its beginnings in the regionalist literature of the early- to mid-twentieth century as well as in the political responses to the perennial droughts. Intellectual production shaped a “northeastern” character and brought to life various images, stereotypes and tropes – all of which are closely tied to the droughts – to represent the Nordeste. Key performers, particularly Luiz Gonzaga, further inculcated the idea of the Nordeste throughout the nation and the world by emphasizing traditional imagery – often invented – in his music and stage persona.

This chapter introduces the concept of invented traditions and attempts to trace a modern history for these traditions. By exploring intellectual and local repetitions of culture, I hope to show how the entire area of the Northeast is in fact a recent discursive construction – and one that is accessed every time forró music is played or listened to, across the entire nation and even on foreign land. An ethnography of forró in any city of the world would be incomplete without a detailed analysis of this imagined context – what I will call a *forróscape* – for it is a visceral and wholly enveloping aspect to every dancing, listening or music-making event in the forró genre.

The chapter begins with a short introduction to Hobsbawm's theory of invented tradition and then analyzes the notion of *saudade*, or nostalgia, with which imagery of the sertão is heavily imbued. Part of the discourse surrounding the Nordeste is that it is located in another place and time, and the discussion of *saudade* serves to pinpoint how this belief coincides with reality and how modernization complicates this notion for many nordestinos and other Brazilians. The following sections are an effort to situate the discourse of invented tradition in the recent literary production of northeastern authors: we will examine the major work of Euclides da Cunha (who represents a 'godfather' of sorts of northeast regionalism) as well as that of Gilberto Freyre (who in addition to his treatises on race also wrote extensively on northeast regionalism) and the regional novelists of the 1930s (who developed, perhaps more than even their two critical forebears, a literary environment that would come to represent not just the sertão but the entire Northeast). Following this introduction, we will explore the political process of the invented tradition and we will examine the role of the imagination in the perpetuation of the idea of the Northeast. Finally, as a preliminary case study, we will examine the *Festas juninas* (St. John festival) in the Northeast as an arena in which the invention of tradition is re-enacted annually and on a massive scale; the traditions set forth during this festival are largely responsible for the regional, national and international perceptions of tradition in the Northeast of Brazil. They also happen to be the best time of year to enjoy forró music, as it is broadcast from most major plazas throughout the region for thirty days straight as a musical background to the festivities. We will conclude with a discussion of the implication of nordestinos who help to solidify the images of the forróscape. In all,

the aim of this chapter is to give further background of the invented tradition that listeners and performers are inevitably accessing every time they hear forró music.

Invented Traditions and the *Nordeste do Brasil*

In their 1983 groundbreaking volume, historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger addressed the staging, or invention, of tradition in societies across the world, arguing that many traditions thought to be age-old were in fact of quite recent conception. According to the authors, an ‘invented tradition’

... is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.²⁹⁸

As an example of modern constructions of longstanding traditions, Hobsbawm gives the example of “the deliberate choice of a Gothic style for the nineteenth-century rebuilding of the British parliament,”²⁹⁹ emphasizing with this illustration the *intentionality, prestige and nationalist sentiment that are often a component of invented traditions*. Just as we’ve come to understand concepts such as “nation” as abstract social constructions, Hobsbawm contends, we too must remain skeptical of some cases of “tradition,” many of which may be in fact ‘invented’ and whose continuity with the past may be contrived. According to Hobsbawm, the invention of these traditions is set in motion by a series of repetitions (of rituals, situations, etc.)³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), 1-2.

²⁹⁹ Hobsbawm 1-2.

and is often meant to establish a sense of social alliance amongst a particular community.

A notable observation by Hobsbawm is that

... we should expect [the invention of traditions] to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable, or when such traditions and their institutional carriers and promulgators no longer prove sufficiently adaptable and flexible, or are otherwise eliminated: in short, when there are sufficiently large and rapid changes on the demand or the supply side. Such changes have been particularly significant in the past 200 years, and it is therefore reasonable to expect these instant formalizations of new traditions to cluster during this period.³⁰¹

Indeed, the past 200 years – and particularly, the onset of modernity – has brought about a huge shift in regional and national traditions, providing limitless opportunities for the study of invented traditions worldwide. The investigation into invented traditions within and about the Brazilian sertão are of particular interest, since Brazil is perched somewhat precariously between the so-called center and periphery, between first and third worlds, between developed and developing nations, and for many decades has sought to balance tradition and modernity in an attempt to establish both its unique cultural identity and its socio-economic prominence on the global level. Many of the so-called age-old traditions of Brazil are thus constructions meant to further political or economic agendas, or simply to offset the modernization projects blasting out of the capital cities.

³⁰⁰ Repetition is a key component to any invented tradition. Commenting on the role of repetition in both the “retention” and innovation of culture, ethnomusicologist Kofi Agawu writes: “since each repeated event occupies a unique place in ontological time, repetition subtends both stasis or consistency and dynamism. Kofi Agawu, *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 23-24.

³⁰¹ Hobsbawm 4-5.

The Northeast of Brazil is renowned for its cultural richness: since early in the twentieth century, folklorists flocked to the region to study the plethora of musical, artistic, theatrical and even literary (if you count oral literature) creations, or to take down accounts of captivating historical figures. These folklorists, along with the audiences that read and listened to their accounts and the performers who perpetuated their memories on stages across the nation, are the architects of the Northeast, the inventors of a series of traditions that would come to seem ancient, but are in fact (as Hobsbawm predicted) of quite recent origin.

A key source for many of the ideas presented here is Durval Muniz de Albuquerque's highly acclaimed *A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes*. Published in 1996, the book argues that not only individual traditions but the entire region of the Nordeste was a recent invention, crafted into existence by a combination of intellectuals, artists and politicians. Albuquerque dates the invention of the Nordeste to 1945, the same year that Benedict Anderson cites as the origin of the nation, and writes that "this Northeast is nothing more than a regularity of certain themes, images, and speeches which repeat themselves in different discourses."³⁰²

The first use of the designation "Northeast" in Brazil dates back to the creation of the IFOCS (the Federal Inspections Agency of Works Against the Drought) in 1919. Fueled by political hysteria over the severe drought of 1877 (see below), this agency designated any land subject to periods of drought (i.e. the sertão) and thus under its surveillance *the Nordeste*, thus setting in motion a discursive phenomenon that would redraw geographic and cultural boundaries for decades to come.

³⁰² Durval Muniz de Albuquerque, *A Invenção do Nordeste e outras artes* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1999), 307.

Still, for decades there was a marked tendency in Brazil to simplify geography to “North” and “South” zones, a trend which made *Nordeste* a difficult term to adopt. Albuquerque notes that in the years after the IFOCS was founded, the terms “North” and “Northeast” are used interchangeably, “as synonyms, showing it to be a moment of transition, in which the very idea of the Northeast had not yet been institutionalized, crystallized.”³⁰³ Indeed, it was during the 1920s that politicians began differentiating the sertão area of the nation from the Amazon³⁰⁴ — as Pimentel notes, during this decade the sertão went through various processes of “new meanings, in domesticatory impulses”³⁰⁵ - but the moniker became deeply entrenched in Brazilian conceptions of geopolitics only in the mid 1940s.³⁰⁶ The term became consolidated in popular parlance with the creation of the Banco do Nordeste do Brasil and SUDENE (a development program geared toward the Northeast) in 1952 and 1959.³⁰⁷ Not coincidentally, the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s is the same time frame

³⁰³ Ibid 68-9.

³⁰⁴ This process of differentiation was in large part as a result of increased migration to the rubber-tapping zone (and a marked evaporation of both water and farming across the sertão).

³⁰⁵ “... de novas significações, em ‘impulsos domesticadores...’” Sidney V. Pimentel, *O chão é o limite: a festa do peão de boiadeiro e a domesticação do sertão* (Goiânia, UFG, 1997). In Letícia Vianna, “O Rei do Meu Baião: Mediação e invenção musical,” *Mediação, Cultura e Política* (Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano Editora, 2001), 72. Vieira notes that prior to the 1920s, the *sertão* designated “something distant, uncivilized, with Indians, sertanejos and wild animals running loose across an inhospitable vastness and an indomitable nature.” “... algo distante, não civilizado, com índios, sertanejos e feras soltas numa vastidão inóspita e indomada natureza.” Maria Sulamita Vieira, *Luiz Gonzaga, o sertão em movimento* (Rio de Janeiro: CNFCP/Funarte, 1999) (Monografia inédita concorrente no Concurso Silvio Romero.) In Vianna 72.

³⁰⁶ Indeed, in the early 1940s, the term was still being used in fits and starts. As Sulamita Viera argues, “the term ‘nordestino’ appears and disappears, in the press, in the beginning of that [1940] decade.” “O termo ‘nordestino’ aparece e desaparece, na imprensa, naquele início de década.” Sulamita Viera, *O Sertão em Movimento: a dinâmica da produção cultural* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2000), 123.

³⁰⁷ “Bank of Brazil’s Northeast” and the *Superintendência de Desenvolvimento do Nordeste*, “Superintendency of Development of the Northeast.” Viera 32. For more on SUDENE, see below.

in which the accordion player Luiz Gonzaga rose to national fame with his notably Nordestino folk tunes. Forró music, then, is deeply connected to the creation of the Northeast and the regional reputation that has grown out of it.

While Albuquerque's argument is fascinating, let it not entirely call attention away from other invented traditions of Brazil; while the consequences of the invented region of the Nordeste have had repercussions felt across the nation, it is hardly the only region in Brazil to have gone through such a transformation. Maria Elizabeth Lucas traces a similar invented tradition: the *gaucho-peon* mythical space in Rio Grande do Sul, where starting in the 1970s and continuing through present-day, social clubs cultivated activities characteristic of gaucho life: rodeo, horse-riding, music, dance and storytelling. She writes that

This re-creation of rural life, allied with the sense that a vanishing culture was being rescued, had a profound impact upon local intellectuals, who transformed the gaucho and the ranching complex into symbols of regional identity, the marks of regional distinction within the nation-state.³⁰⁸

Indeed, the description Lucas shares of the gaucho-peon lifestyle approximates the major stylistic components of the Nordeste tradition: a "disappearing" rural culture that emphasizes music, dance, oral traditions and a ranch lifestyle. One of the aims of this project, then, is to discover what global and local pressures are driving a resurgence of traditionalist movements across the nation. Why, at the beginning of the new millenium, are Brazilians embracing these invented rural traditions of the past? What does the traditional forróscape represent that is lacking in the cosmopolitan lives of so many Brazilians? At a time when foreign media present a world for the taking at the fingertips of millions of Brazilians, why are so many

³⁰⁸ Maria Elizabeth Lucas, "Gaucho Musical Regionalism," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2000), 47.

entranced by the invented tradition of a rural landscape plagued with drought and poverty? What, most importantly, are people imagining as they listen to forró music?

Saudade: *Meu Remédio é Cantar*³⁰⁹

Saudade, as any Brazilian will tell you, is a word that can't easily be translated into any other language. It conjures up the melancholy spirit of the lusophone world as it looks out to sea and remembers people and places of the past, the joy felt in the midst of the agony of nostalgic longing. In Brazil, it is used to mark relatively mild forms of wistfulness (e.g. I've missed you while you were traveling this past month) as well as the violent ache of longing something lost forever. As celebrated anthropologist Roberto da Matta writes, "Saudade is a word of the Portuguese language incorporated into the Brazilian culture, a word that we proudly affirm exists only in our language."³¹⁰

Nevertheless, Svetlana Boym, in her eloquent book on memory, *The Future of Nostalgia*, notes that:

Many national languages... discovered their own particular expression for patriotic longing. Curiously, intellectuals and poets from different national traditions began to claim that they had a special word for homesickness that was radically untranslatable... [yet] while each term preserves the specific rhythms of the language, one is struck by the fact that all these untranslatable words are in fact synonyms; and all share the desire for untranslatability, the

³⁰⁹ "My remedy is to sing." Reference to song, "Que nem Jiló," in epigraph.

³¹⁰ "Saudade é uma palavra da língua portuguesa incorporada à cultura brasileira, palavra que afirmamos com orgulho só existir em nossa língua." Roberta Da Matta, "Em tempos de dilaceração e desesperança, Roberto Da matta tenta fixar a saudade no horizonte da sociologia brasileira 'como categoria básica da nossa existência' e elemento de uma nova ética," Especial para *Folha de São Paulo* (28 de junho 1992). In Gláucia de Oliveira Assis, "Estar Aqui... , Estar Lá... Uma... cartografia da emigração valadareense para os Estados Unidos," *Cenas do Brasil Migrante*, Ed. Rossana Rocha Reis, Teresa Sales (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 1999), 138-39.

longing for uniqueness. While the details and flavors differ, the grammar of romantic nostalgias all over the world is quite similar.”³¹¹

She goes on to identify several synonyms for nostalgia: German *heimweh*, French *maladie du pays*, Spanish *mal de corazón*, Czech *litost*, Russian *toska*, Polish *tesknota*, Romanian *dor* and, of course, Portuguese *saudade*. Each language seems to boast an excess of sentiment that no other language can match: the Czech word *litost* means “at once sympathy, grief, remorse and indefinable longing... a ‘feeling as infinite as an open accordion’ where the ‘first syllable when long and stressed sounds like the wail of an abandoned dog’”³¹² while the Polish word *tesknota* gives a sense of “confining and overwhelming yearning with a touch of moody artistry... a phantom pregnancy, ‘a welling up of absence’ of all that had been lost.”³¹³ Her definition of *saudade*, for what it’s worth, is “a tender sorrow, breezy and erotic, not as melodramatic as its Slavic counterpart, yet no less profound and haunting.”³¹⁴ What Boym demonstrates with this analysis is not the frivolity of so many languages insisting they have a monopoly on the feeling of loss and memory, but the profundity of the sentiment itself. The feeling runs so deep and profound that there is not quite a way to translate it into words, much less into foreign words.

³¹¹ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 12-13.

³¹² Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (New York: King Penguin, 1980), 121. In Boym 12-13.

³¹³ Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 115. In Boym 12-13

³¹⁴ Boym 12-13.

Boym traces the history of nostalgia, noting that “contrary to our intuition, nostalgia came from medicine, not from poetry or politics.”³¹⁵ In fact, it dates to 1688, when a Swiss doctor by the name of Johannes Hofer introduced the notion (and the newly coined word, from two Greek roots, a legacy Boym calls “nostalgically Greek”) in his medical dissertation. Concerned with a malaise that soldiers, sailors and rural migrants all shared, he termed the disease nostalgia “to define the sad mood originating from the desire for return to one’s native land.”³¹⁶ Nostalgia seemed to have grown out of the far-away trajectories of modern travelers. Indeed, nostalgia has always been deeply linked to the movements brought on by modernity.

As Boym asserts, nostalgia “is coeval with modernity itself.”³¹⁷ She continues: “Somehow progress didn’t cure nostalgia but exacerbated it.”³¹⁸ Just as Hobsbawm predicted, invented traditions – repackaged as nostalgia – have emerged concurrently with the major social transformations that accompany modernity, creating what Hobsbawm calls a “curious, but understandable, paradox.”³¹⁹ Even while modern nations strive to exhibit the most progressive politics and economics, they also stake a claim to the most traditional culture. Boym sums up the same idea with a different (and haunting) image: “nostalgia and progress are like Jekyll and Hyde: alter egos.”³²⁰

³¹⁵ Ibid 3.

³¹⁶ Johannes Hofer, *Dissertation Medica de nostalgia* (Basel 1688). In Boym 3.

³¹⁷ Boym xvi.

³¹⁸ Ibid xiv.

³¹⁹ Hobsbawm 14.

Anthropologist Allen Batteau addresses this issue as it is played out on the ground in his ethnographic account of the paradox of modern invented tradition. Batteau studies the invention of Appalachia as a cultural category, and writes in one manuscript about the deification of the very thing being destroyed by modernization. In Batteau's study, concomitant with a generalized North American expansion into the area and destruction of the natural environment, there emerged a trend to worship nature and its Native American inhabitants.³²¹ Even as they were forcing the object into submission and/or extinction, the agents of destruction developed nostalgia for the forests and its natives.

A similar trend is occurring in northeastern Brazil: there, "nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals."³²² As global lives become more and more intertwined, Brazilians brace themselves by reclaiming their most traditional, their most "archaic" rituals. Hobsbawm wrote that "Where the old ways are alive, traditions need be neither revived nor invented,"³²³ but this may be, in fact, misleading. Perhaps a more apropos aphorism would be "Where the old ways are *juxtaposed* with modern merchandise and novel customs, traditions need be revived and invented."

The increased pace and impact of globalization has prompted many such declarations from academics; the deep-seated fear from so many intellectuals that globalization would wipe out small and relatively obscure cultures has given way to

³²⁰ Boym xvi.

³²¹ Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1993), 71-2.

³²² Boym xiv.

³²³ Hobsbawm 8.

arguments that, on the contrary, increased global influences can actually reinforce the importance of local culture. The results are not so different in the realm of invented tradition. Gupta and Ferguson note that as globalization helps to blur places and localities:

ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more salient. It is here that it becomes most visible how imagined communities (Anderson 1983) come to be attached to imagined places, as displaced peoples cluster around remembered or imagined homelands, places, or communities in a world that seems increasingly to deny such firm territorialized anchors in their actuality.³²⁴

Amidst all of the modern technologies and products that people covet arises also a yearning for a community that relies on its collective memory to enjoy the present, and a desire for historical continuity in an increasingly fragmented world.³²⁵ Indeed, Boym notes that in the age of globalism, there is a new emphasis on cultural intimacy, which she defines as “a social poetics that characterizes existence in a small nation and transposes upon the national community what was historically the realm of private individual and familial relationships.”³²⁶

Modernity and tradition are, always, two opposites sides of the same coin whose relationship cannot be severed.³²⁷ As Bruno Latour notes:

³²⁴ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond “Culture”: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” *The Anthropology of Globalization*, Ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Boston: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 69.

³²⁵ Boym xvi.

³²⁶ Ibid 255.

³²⁷ As José Jorge de Carvalho writes, “It is not possible to understand tradition without understanding innovation.” José Jorge de Carvalho, *O lugar da cultura tradicional na sociedade moderna*, (Brasília: University of Brasília Foundation, Anthropological Series 77, 1989), 8-10. In Nestor Canclini, “The Staging of the Popular” *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 155.

The modern time of progress and the anti-modern-time of 'tradition' are twins who failed to recognize one another: the idea of an identical repetition of the past and that of a radical rupture with any past are two symmetrical results of a single conception of time.³²⁸

As time moves forward seemingly faster and faster, the desire to save time, to conserve the flying days by stopping the hands of the clock, becomes increasingly urgent. As Boym writes, "contemporary nostalgia is not so much about the past as about the vanishing present."³²⁹ The desire, too, to siphon off the past into a protective space unencroached upon by modernity is tempting; many informants condemn the incorporation of modern elements into traditional forró for this very reason (see chapter five).

Benedict Anderson wonders how nations have come to "command such profound emotional legitimacy,"³³⁰ yet the sentiments are perhaps even more intensified when personified not just into a single national entity, but a regional character. Brazilians have constructed a concept of the Northeast that can be understood as what Said called "Romantic Orientalism," a nostalgic yearning for a pure and pristine past. Brazilians and Nordestinos alike seem to protect this notion intensely. What is perhaps most fascinating to me, though, is the construction of nostalgia in people who *have never in fact experienced the past as projected throughout society*. Indeed, Arjun Appadurai addresses the inculcation of nostalgia via modern merchandizing, condemning the marketing strategies that trick consumers "into missing what they

³²⁸ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 76. In Boym 19.

³²⁹ Boym 351.

³³⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 4.

haven't lost."³³¹ This "ersatz" or "armchair" nostalgia,³³² as he calls it, is (according to Appadurai) particularly problematic in the United States – but I would argue that it is also particularly pertinent to the invented tradition of northeastern Brazil.

These forms of mass advertising teach consumers to miss things they have never lost (Halbwachs 1980). That is, they create experiences of duration, passage, and loss that rewrite the lived histories of individuals, families, ethnic groups, and classes. In thus creating experiences of losses that never took place, these advertisements create what might be called "imagined nostalgia," nostalgia for things that never were. This imagined nostalgia thus inverts the temporal local of fantasy (which tutors the subject to imagine what could or might happen) and creates much deeper wants than simply envy, imitation, or greed could by themselves invite.³³³

Brazilians from all over the nation have embraced the idea of *nordestinidade*³³⁴ and will enthusiastically gush to tourists about the charms of traveling the Northeast and of taking part in its traditions. They talk of a Northeast sheltered from much foreign immigration and left to simmer in its rich cultural juices, perfectly poised as a reservoir of Brazilian tradition. Entire foundations and not-for-profit agencies (not to mention the for-profit sector) distill these traditions into simple entertainment that thrills audiences across the nation, particularly in the large cities of the Northeast and South. There is a nostalgia industry of sorts in Brazil that churns out images of the

³³¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 78.

³³² Appadurai also refers to it as a "social *imaginaire* built largely around reruns." Appadurai 30.

³³³ Ibid 77.

³³⁴ This might roughly translate to: northeasternness.

Northeast, meant to stimulate collective memories in audiences who have never actually set foot in Bahia, Pernambuco or Paraíba (see below for a case study).³³⁵

Appadurai and others rail on the commercial aspect of any nostalgia that isn't accompanied by lived experience of collective historical memory. Boym notes that "...ersatz nostalgia promoted by the entertainment industry makes everything time-sensitive and exploits that temporal deficit by giving a cure that is also a poison."³³⁶ Appadurai is perhaps less caustic but still cynical when he writes, "now the viewer need only bring the faculty of nostalgia to an image that will supply the memory of a loss he or she has never suffered."³³⁷ Yet there is still a social function of this manufactured nostalgia, one which many consumers will pay dearly for. Is it so terrible to harbor nostalgia for a time when we didn't need nostalgia? For a place that we can only conceive of as being exactly the same as it always was? For the security that comes in knowing exactly how to behave and how to plan future iterations of culture?

One particularly problematic issue with the invented tradition of the Northeast is one that often plagues anthropologists working in rural and obscure parts of the world: the relegation of Others to temporal spaces that they [the anthropologists] do not themselves occupy.³³⁸ Indeed, for some time the sertão has been perceived to be not only set apart from the rest of Brazil *spacially*, but also *temporally*. The great

³³⁵ It's important to note that many nordestinos from the litoral cities have never ventured into the interior of their states; they are as much foreigners to the sertão (see below) as the southern tourists who come to visit.

³³⁶ Boym 38.

³³⁷ Appadurai 78.

³³⁸ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). In Appadurai 30-1.

sociologist Caio Prado Júnior wrote in 1942 that the “Brazilian who visits the backlands may be a witness to his nation’s past.”³³⁹ In the Nordeste (so the story goes), time seems to stand still. Yet never does it do so in the present; the path into the sertão is always narrated as a travel through space *and* time.

Yosef Yerolshami, in his essay on memory and religion, charges that “the rabbis seem to play with Time as though with an accordion, expanding and collapsing it at will.”³⁴⁰ I’ve chosen his quote in part because of the image it conjures up in my own mind, of accordionists throughout the sertão somehow driving the ebb and flow of time and mediating between past and present through their music. Yet the image is also useful when considering how powerful men and institutions drive our comprehension of time. As Appadurai writes:

Insofar as consumption is increasingly driven by rummaging through imagined histories, repetition is not simply based on the functioning of simulacra *in* time, but also on the force of the simulacra *of* time. That is, consumption not only creates time, through its periodicities, but the workings of ersatz nostalgia create the simulacra of periods that constitute the flow of time, conceived as lost, absent or distant. Thus, the forward-looking habituation to predictable styles, forms, and genres, which drives commodity consumption onward as a multiplicative and open-ended activity, is powered by an implosive, retrospective construction of time, in which repetition is in itself an artifact of ersatz nostalgia and imagined precursory moments.³⁴¹

³³⁹ Caio Prado Junior, *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins, 1942), 7-8. In Samuel Putnam, “Brazil’s Greatest Book: A Translator’s Introduction,” *Rebellion in the Backlands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), vi.

³⁴⁰ Yosef Yerolshami, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 17.

³⁴¹ Appadurai 78-9.

Indeed, while the great novelist João Guimarães Rosa wrote that “the idea came to me that everything is merely the past projected into the future,”³⁴² the *Nordeste* is, in fact, the past projected onto the sertão through a series of products, including cuisine, folkloric art pieces and especially forró music.

Like so many memories, our sense of the past is flavored more sweetly. This is no different for the Nordeste as it is imagined: relationships are simpler, based on love, hospitality and mutual aid, and the people are strong and heroic, vanquishing the challenges of the land and the hostilities and/or violence that comes from afar. Our sense of the imagined past is markedly more pleasant than an imagined present.

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of nostalgia is its deep connections with human sensations: in our memory, tastes, smells and sounds become highly evocative, each associated with highly charged emotions. Music is particularly important in the arena of nostalgia, and that certainly has not gone unnoticed in the Brazilian Northeast. As Svetlana Boym writes,

Jean Jacques-Rousseau talks about the effects of cowbells, the rustic sounds that excite in the Swiss the joys of life and youth and a bitter sorrow for having lost them. The music in this case “does not act precisely as music, but as a memorative sign.” The music of home, whether a rustic cantilena or a pop song, is the permanent accompaniment of nostalgia – its ineffable charm that makes the nostalgic teary-eyed and tongue-tied and often clouds critical reflection on the subject.³⁴³

Indeed, the music of forró, more so than any other cultural artifact of the Nordeste, creates a visceral saudade in its performers and audience – even those that have never truly experienced the Brazilian Northeast. Forró music is inexplicably imbued with

³⁴² “*Me vinha a idéia de tudo só ser o passado no futuro.*” João Guimarães Rosa, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1956), 283. Translation: James L. Taylor and Harriet de Onís, *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 239.

³⁴³ Boym 4.

the colors, the wildlife, the cuisine, and the smells of the sertão, and it transports audiences to dream of the myriad invented traditions of the Nordeste. The lyrics often escape casual listeners, but the melodies are ingrained in the collective memory of all Brazilians – upon hearing the first chords of “Asa Branca,” the most celebrated song in the forró canon, any Brazilian can picture an imagined landscape of the sertão with its vast parched expanses. The connection between memory and song is intuitive. As Luiz Gonzaga sings mournfully, “Saudade, my remedy is to sing.”

Geography and Settlement of the Sertão

In order to understand the sertão both as it is experienced and as it is imagined, we must first explore some of the basic topography, history and literature of the region. The geography of the Northeast is roughly divided into three areas: the dry sertão backlands known for cyclic droughts, the coastal region³⁴⁴ (a narrow band of territory along the Atlantic which measures a mere twenty kilometers in width) and the agreste, which is a transitional area between the two which shares qualities of both. The population of the coastal region is by far the greatest³⁴⁵ (even while its total area is dwarfed by the other regions), and the agreste has a somewhat smaller population and larger land mass. The sertão is the least densely populated and the most expansive land area, accounting for more than 50% of the total land area of the

³⁴⁴ This area is also referred to as *marinha*, or marinelands (due to its proximity to the Atlantic) as well as Zona da Mata, “forest zone,” (though the tropical forests that once flourished there have long been decimated).

³⁴⁵ This small strip of land accounted for 60% of the population during colonization. Bertha K. Becker and Claudio A. G. Egler, *Brazil: A New Regional Power in the World Economy, A Regional Geography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). That number has increased dramatically in the last hundred years due to intense urbanization and a huge influx of rural immigrants to the towns surrounding the capital of Recife.

Northeast.³⁴⁶ As a general rule, as one moves west, soils get progressively shallower, rainfall scarcer, and – as Rebhun writes – independence from centralized control increased. (She notes that the “lawlessness” of the sertão is what has allowed it to become a refuge for outlaws and rebels since colonial times.)³⁴⁷

Notably, the soils of the sertão were far too dry for sugarcane or even cotton, so large-scale plantation slave labor never arose in the backlands. Instead, the area became a stronghold for cattle ranching, and local farmers also planted small crops for profit (cotton, carnauba palms, sisal, castorbeans and cashews),³⁴⁸ in addition to subsistence farming. In fact, most cattle ranchers and cowhands of the sertão were independent operators; cowhands rarely checked in with their bosses more than twice a year, and were paid in cattle for their labor.³⁴⁹

The agreste developed as a transitional zone between the sugarcane lands bordering the ocean and the drier sertão – though geographer Kompton Webb points out that the agreste as a zone did not exist until human interference in the early nineteenth century. In short, before the colonists had congested the small coastal strip of land with settlements, “there were in fact only two zones, which illustrates beautifully the evolutionary character of landscapes in response to changing cultural

³⁴⁶ R.I. Levine, *Pernambuco in the Brazilian Federation 1889-1937* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1978), 7-9. In L.A. Rebhun, *The Heart Is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). Levine notes, also, that more than 70% of the state of Pernambuco is sertão.

³⁴⁷ Rebhun 39.

³⁴⁸ Levine 7-9. In Rebhun.

³⁴⁹ Traditionally, once a year the cattle were rounded up and counted, and the ranch owner paid the cowhand one cow for every four counted.

contexts.”³⁵⁰ Webb notes that the construction of the agreste area was a response to the rise of cities and the greater specialization of functions within Northeast Brazil. When more agricultural and industrial options opened up for inhabitants (beyond the simplistic structure of sugarcane or cattle farming), the agreste came into being.

Indeed, agriculture across the agreste region was transformed by machines; first by the industrial revolution that replaced the old-school sugarcane plantations with modern-day *usinas* (highly mechanized production facilities), and further by the post-war government policies which gave preferential credit terms to large-scale agricultural operations producing crops for export.³⁵¹ This modernization led to increased productivity, though while great transformations have changed the way the land *was worked*, very little has changed the way that land *changed hands*. As John Murphy writes:

The renovation of agriculture through the adoption of modern techniques (mechanization, fertilizers, pesticides), but without fundamental change in patterns of landholding, has been called “conservative modernization,” a process similar to Eisenberg’s concept of “modernization without change.”³⁵²

Nowadays, owners of modern-day *usinas* are often the very same plantation owners that have maintained their properties for generations and whose influence (as regional oligarchies) is felt from afar. Not only that, but often the wealthy landowners who run these plantations own ranch properties further west; these

³⁵⁰ Webb 75.

³⁵¹ David Goodman, “Rural Economy and Society,” *Social Change in Brazil, 1945-1985: The Incomplete Transition*, Eds. Bacha and Klein (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 69. In John Patrick Murphy, *Performing a Moral Vision: An Ethnography of Cavalo-Marinho, a Brazilian Musical Drama* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Music Dept., Columbia University, 1994), 21-22.

³⁵² Murphy 21-22.

territorial monopolies help to account for the most unequal distribution of land – and wealth – in all of Brazil.

Aside from this vast disparity in land ownings and wealth, the aspect that most distinguishes the sertão and agreste areas from the rest of Brazil is the periodic droughts that affect the region: irregular rainfall, combined with uneven access to water, triggers region-wide droughts that can last up to three or four years. Relatively minor droughts plague the nation on average every eight to fifteen years, while severe droughts can decimate entire populations as often as four times a century.³⁵³

The area, then, is both an isolated frontier in which independent cowhands and ranchers develop autonomous lives in relatively remote regions, and a land of frequent migrations, as people are forced off their land due to drought and/or poverty. Adding to the migratory nature of the region is the fact that slash-and-burn land rotation has been the main agricultural practice for centuries, leading settlers to move frequently from place to place. Still, for those who leave their secluded niches, it is not an area easy to traverse.

Because of impermeable forests of low-lying impenetrable scrub called *caatinga* and severe mountain chasms, the main route in and out of the sertão for several centuries was along the São Francisco River. Nearly three thousand kilometers in length, the São Francisco has been the main artery connecting the southern areas of Brazil (from Minas Gerais) to the Northeast region, and is the only river which never runs dry that crosses the sertão.³⁵⁴ As a conduit uniting these different regions as well

³⁵³ Carlos Garcia, *O que é Nordeste Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986), 64. In Rebhun 42. The droughts have become more regular and more severe since the mid-twentieth century, most believe as a result of global climate change. See below.

as providing for trade between the small towns along its route, the São Francisco has taken on a mythic character all its own; called “Old Man Chico” by locals, the river is said to be haunted by benign and malevolent spirits and is a vast source for folk medicine, art and tales.

Even while the river offered relatively regular access to otherwise secluded towns and outlying areas, the region remained notoriously isolated over several centuries.³⁵⁵

While the cities along the coastal strip developed in tandem with Europe, accompanying its social and economic transformations, the sertão remained mired in a medieval cultural pattern. Skirmishes over land divisions encouraged local leaders to employ bold and often violent defenses, producing over time a small ruling class bent on amassing territory and protecting it with aggressive bands of private mercenaries. Gildson Oliveira writes that in this way the *latifúndio*, the *coronel* and the *jagunço* arose in the sertão: “a replica of Portuguese medieval conditions: feudalism, the lord and the knight.”³⁵⁶ The author argues that the people of the sertão followed roles already long established throughout the Old World, including serfs and kings, religious fanatics and musical troubadours.³⁵⁷ Indeed, Riviere points out that,

³⁵⁴ In recent years, in large part as a result of dams and irrigation projects, the river has been running unnaturally low. See *Espelho d'Água: Uma Viagem no Rio São Francisco*. Dir. Marcus Vinicius Cesar, 2004.

³⁵⁵ Please note that settlers, traders and bards traversed the region for many centuries; I wish to stress here a *relative* lack of contact, as compared with coastal towns. By no means do I wish to imply that the region was literally isolated.

³⁵⁶ “*Surgiram assim o latifúndio, o coronel e o jagunço, réplica das condições do Portugal medieval: o feudo, o senhor feudal e o cavaleiro.*” Gildson Oliveira, *Luiz Gonzaga: O matuto que conquistou o mundo* (Brasília: Letraviva, 2000), 118-19.

³⁵⁷ According to Gildson Oliveira, the only unique persona in the Northeastern Brazilian setting was the *cangaceiro*, or bandit. Often equated to “Robin Hood,” these *cangaceiros* were in fact unpredictable and violent, as apt to sack an entire town, raping, robbing and massacring its residents, as to protect innocent sharecroppers or their corrupt bosses.

due to their singular formation, frontier phenomena in parts of Brazil “ha[ve] hardened into institutionalized forms of social organization and values”³⁵⁸ which he calls “fossilized frontiers.”

While we must remain skeptical about the exaggerated emphasis on “fossilization” within the literature on the sertão – after all, all culture is always, at some level, dynamic, sometimes changing slowly over long periods of time – we must recognize, also, the preponderance of this trope in histories and narratives of the area. Indeed, even today, people tend to equate the sertão with a notion of tradition and a location in the past. But just as “Africa is not to the Americas as the past is to the present,”³⁵⁹ nor is the sertão. Even while much of its development has proceeded differently from that in the towns along coastal Brazil, we must maintain a sense of “coevalness” between the sertão and the rest of Brazil; traversing the agreste does not take us back in time.

Long before colonists set out to the scrublands of the sertão, the Cariri Indians had fled to this region (referred to by the Tupi Indians as *Borborema*, a sterile, unpopulated place) after their combined defeat by the Portuguese, the black runaway slave populations and the Tupi Indians. Euclides da Cunha describes their arrival:

Falling back in the face of superior numbers, the indomitable Cariris found their only protection on this rough neck of land, rent by tempests, indurated by the rigid structure of the rocks, parched by the suns, and breaking out in briar patches and caatingas.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁸ Peter Riviere, *The Forgotten Frontier: Ranchers of Northern Brazil* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), 2.

³⁵⁹ Lorand J. Matory, “Surpassing ‘Survival’: On the Urbanity of ‘Traditional Religion’ in the Afro-Atlantic World,” *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 30, No. 3-4, 37.

³⁶⁰ Euclides da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 83.

Shortly after the flight of the Cariri to the backlands, the area began to be populated by non-native settlers. Darcy Ribeiro points out that, unlike the prohibitive investments necessary to create a successful *usina*, cattle farming in the sertão could support a small family with relatively low initial overhead. Not only that, but the sugar plantations offered few specialized jobs between the class of the masters and the slave masses; tradesmen as well as freed slaves could better carve economic niches for themselves in the sertão. Many free workers fled the discipline of the sugar plantations and headed west to work with cattle; in a number of years, a simple helper could become a cowhand and begin breeding his own herd. The dream of autonomy propelled many settlers west, alleviating the need for slaves in the sertão while drawing many ex-slaves to the region.

A mixture of mainly indigenous and black (with some European) people thus arose in the sertão, with a seemingly extensive list of terms to designate minute differences in ethnic make-up: *curiboca*, *cafuso*, *caboclo* and *cabra*³⁶¹ all refer (with different levels of concentration and pejorativeness) to a mixture of black and indigenous ethnicities. Add to this the distinctive features – notably green eyes – of Northern European influence (from decades of Dutch colonization) and one begins to understand that the sertão “acquir[ed] thereby a highly original physiognomy, like

³⁶¹ As David Haberly writes, “the vocabulary of racial prejudice in Brazilian Portuguese defines black men as *goatish*, as “bodes” or “cabras.” David T. Haberly, *Three Sad Races: Racial Identity and National Consciousness in Brazilian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). While “cabra” was used to describe a man of indigenous and black ethnicity, it was also a gloss for any field hand or unskilled worker. Later, this highly pejorative characterization took on added meaning as a term of auto-identification. The *cangaceiros* who traveled with Lampião (see below) called themselves *cabras*, and Luiz Gonzaga would later popularize the term in various *farró* songs.

that of residents of another country.”³⁶² Linda Anne Rebhun tells the same story in a more optimistic and graceful style:

The history of a place or people consists in a series of stories told and retold, as much in the varied memories of contemporary peoples as in the social and physical residues of past events. People-watching on any Saturday morning in Caruaru will tell a story of the encounters of civilizations: the shapes of faces, nostrils, cheekbones, eyes; the curl of hair and shades of skin tell a story about migration, confrontation, and the intimacy of conquest.³⁶³

Unsurprisingly, during colonization these sertanejos were seen by other Brazilians as dangerous cross-breeds, further encouraging the isolation of the people and the landscape; according to Euclides da Cunha, the royal charter of February 7, 1701, was a measure designed to increase this isolation. “It prohibited, with severe penalties for infraction, any communication whatsoever between this part of the backlands and the south, the São Paulo mines. Not even commercial relations were tolerated, the simplest exchange of products being forbidden.”³⁶⁴

As stated above, the region was not entirely cut off nor was trade completely interrupted. In fact, important figures circulated and allowed for the exchange and transfer of products and ideas around the region; and alongside merchants traveled the renowned *cantadores*, troubadours of the sertão who peddled improvised poetry and song. In the same way that we’ve come to recognize the interregional movement of people around the Black Atlantic, *so too have people sustained a dialogue across the*

³⁶² Da Cunha 82. Though I personally can’t vouch for any particular physical characteristics that differentiate northeasterners from other Brazilians, Anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro writes that the prominent “flat head sunk between the shoulders” of many northeasterners (what today is referred to as “cabeça chata”) is a legacy of the phenotype of the Cariri Indians of the backlands. Darcy Ribeiro, *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 241-42.

³⁶³ Rebhun 48.

³⁶⁴ Da Cunha 82.

sertão of Brazil – and I would argue, pace Gilroy, that music has played a correspondingly significant role in the development of this region. In a highly illiterate region, these bards became the oral poets of the *sertão*, playing a role similar to the printing press in other, more developed areas of the world. It was through the songs and poems of the *cantadores* that news traveled and that an imagined community of the Nordeste first developed.³⁶⁵

These Brazilian troubadours carried news from town to town, singing in verses accompanied by their own guitar strumming and acting as mediators across an immense geography and wide social rifts. Not only did their trade allow for communication and for community to develop across a vast area of sparsely populated land, but it also laid the groundwork for the development of *forró* music; the rough chords that these *town criers* played to accompany their stories were the very inspiration for the first popular *baião* tune by Luiz Gonzaga (see chapter four).

The ‘Origin’ of a Species: Euclides da Cunha and the *Sertanejo* Archetype

More than any other author, Euclides da Cunha created a literary *sertão*, consolidating the very images of the *sertão* that would be reiterated by other authors, artists and politicians over the next hundred years. In fact, if we were to speak of the *sertão* itself as an invented tradition, da Cunha would be its creator. In emphasizing

³⁶⁵ See Benedict Anderson on imagined communities. According to Luís da Câmara Cascudo, the pamphlets are a form of oral literature; they depend on the written word for their mode of composition, but their mode of dissemination takes place through oral performances. Luís da Câmara Cascudo, *Literatura oral no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1952), 19. In Elizabeth Travassos, “Ethics in the Sung Duels of North-eastern Brazil: Collective Memory & Contemporary Practice,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 9: No. 1 (2000), 64.

the role that Euclides played in establishing the narratives that would come to represent the region known as the sertão, Nicholas Arons writes:

Everything that comes after, everything – Graciliano Ramos’s color imagery, Rachel de Queiroz’s depiction of the sertanejos, poets’ metaphors, and even the evening news’ coverage of the drought – finds its origins in da Cunha’s writing. The people’s religiosity, the manner in which drought blends into the sertão and becomes part of the land, and the inextricable link between the sertão and its people – all were first portrayed by da Cunha.³⁶⁶

Da Cunha’s major work, “Os Sertões,”³⁶⁷ is translated as “Rebellion in the Backlands” and is the epic story of the Brazilian army’s various campaigns (between 1893-97) to raze a community of peasant followers of the religious fanatic Antonio Conselheiro. Da Cunha accompanied the 1897 mission and, in large part, “Os Sertões” is a compilation of the journalistic pieces he sent to the *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper as a war correspondent. The conflict began after the prophet Antonio Conselheiro, who had wandered the backlands for months with a growing crew of believers, decided to settle his people on an old abandoned cattle ranch along the Vasa Barris River. There they erected a small town, called Belo Monte (or Canudos, literally “straws,” referring to a long fibrous plant that grew in abundance along the riverbank). As the fame of the prophet spread, peasants flocked to the settlement, which soon grew to be the second most populous city in the state of Bahia;³⁶⁸ some estimates put the town’s population at 30,000. Officials, wary of the

³⁶⁶ Nicholas Arons, *Waiting For Rain: The Politics and Poetry of Drought in Northeast Brazil* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 35.

³⁶⁷ First published in 1902 as “Os Sertoos”, it had previously borne the derivative French title “A Nossa Vendé,” the title of two articles Euclides had published about the revolt before going to Canudos. Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 105.

³⁶⁸ Robert M. Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 2. In Arons 31.

power Conselheiro wielded over such a large group of people and of his supposed anti-republic rhetoric, rallied for an invasion to disperse the religious community. The first three assaults organized against Canudos were easily foiled, in large part because the terrain was so hostile that the invading army was unable to withstand its own marches; the fourth offensive launched a months-long siege and eventually massacred all but the last four men standing inside the religious community.

In his treatment, da Cunha portrays the sertão as a tumultuous land where not only extreme inter-class conflict but environmental violence – in the form of heat and drought – was a constant threat. As such, his narration depicts not just one war but two: the latter “a metaphysical space of war and peace where humanity and nature were in constant combat.”³⁶⁹ Called “the Bible of Brazilian nationality,”³⁷⁰ *Os Sertões* is credited with having precipitated Brazil’s intellectual coming-of-age³⁷¹ and having inaugurated the country’s century-long search for identity. “Os Sertões” established not just the characterization of an entire region, but also a depiction of what would become regarded as the most *genuine* Brazilian.

Some authors have noted that the book itself takes on the unique character of the sertão; “his prose is not tropical, but rugged, rugged as the *sertão* itself; it is nervous, dramatically intense, sculpturesque as the backland hills, and is to the point of

³⁶⁹ Arons 33.

³⁷⁰ Putnam iii.

³⁷¹ Ibid, iii.

appearing overwrought and painful.”³⁷² Indeed, within da Cunha’s account, the landscape is so central as to become a protagonist in the struggle for survival. Still, he creates a hero of sorts out of the sertanejo, simply by equating the man to the earth he works. The *vaqueiro* (cowboy) or *jagunço*³⁷³ of the sertão “had his roots fixed in the soil,³⁷⁴ and was the “living rock of the Brazilian people.”³⁷⁵

The *vaqueiro*... grew up under conditions [with a] seldom varying alternation of good times and bad, of abundance and want; and over his head hung the year-round threat of the sun, bringing with it in the course of the seasons repeated periods of devastation and misfortune. It was amid such a succession of catastrophes that his youth was spent. He grew to manhood almost without ever having been a child; what should have been the merry hours of childhood were embittered by the specter of the backland droughts, and soon enough he had to face the tormented existence that awaited him. He was one damned to life.³⁷⁶

Because he was destined to struggle against the very land that provided his sustenance, the sertanejo became “strong, resigned, and practical.”³⁷⁷ So strong, in fact, that “he was a brawny fortress,”³⁷⁸ a cowboy [that] rides to the dense thicket of the scrub, as dense as the thicket of his heart.”³⁷⁹ His destiny is to accept a life of

³⁷² Grieco, *Evolução da prosa brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Ariel, Editorial Ltda., 1933), 286. In Samuel Putnam, “Introduction by Translator,” *Rebellion in the Backlands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), ix.

³⁷³ A *Jagunço* might be translated as a “ranch-hand mercenary.” Paid to protect his owner’s lands and reputation, the *jagunço* was famed as a bully who, paradoxically, “kept the peace” across the sertão – a land infamous for its lawlessness.

³⁷⁴ Da Cunha 73.

³⁷⁵ “*Rocha viva do povo brasileiro.*” Ronald Daus, *O Ciclo Épico dos Cangaceiros na Poesia Popular do Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação da Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1982), 93.

³⁷⁶ Da Cunha 92.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid* 92.

³⁷⁸ This translation does not do justice to the original phrase: “*o sertanejo é, antes de tudo, um forte.*” “Forte” here is both a noun and adjective (‘fortress’ and ‘strong’), making for a clever ambiguity between two descriptors.

struggle, one that imperiously demanded of him the utilization of every last drop of his energies.”³⁸⁰

Da Cunha relents in his stern descriptions only when it comes time for music.³⁸¹

When the dance music begins, da Cunha writes, the sertanejo

... takes on a bold and frolicsome air... letting himself go in the dance [with] the sharp clack of sandals on the ground mingled with the jingling of spurs and the tinkling of tambourine bells, to the vibrant rhythms, the “rip-snortings” of the guitars.³⁸²

Not only that, but da Cunha described ranch hands that would “remain at home and indulge in traditional forms of merrymaking,” dancing to noisy sambas, challenging one another in *desafio* poetry duels, and plucking *baiano*³⁸³ melodies on the banjos under their arms.³⁸⁴

While da Cunha was applauded for his sympathetic treatment of the sertanejo under attack by an elite aristocracy that had no understanding of the lives of impoverished men and women from the backlands, his depiction also served to reinforce many pre-existing stereotypes and to underscore the dichotomies that were already being employed to contrast the rural, poor, dry sertão with its counterpart in

³⁷⁹ This quote derives from the radio show “No Mundo do Baião,” hosted by Luiz Gonzaga, Zédantas and Humberto Teixeira. Though not directly from da Cunha’s epic book, it nonetheless, like so many depictions of northeastern culture, stems from *Os Sertões*. See Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 120.

³⁸⁰ Da Cunha 92.

³⁸¹ He also notably respects the oral culture of bards and improvisational poets; da Cunha is one of the very first historians of Brazil to feature prominently these verses alongside his own prose. José Calasans, *Canudos na Literatura de Cordel* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1984), 2.

³⁸² Da Cunha 93.

³⁸³ *Baiano* is a forebearer to the baião and is described in more detail in chapter four.

³⁸⁴ Da Cunha 102.

the tropical capital city. His portrayal of Antonio Conselheiro is a textbook description of bipolar disorder – and we are led to believe that the blind faith of thousands of followers is itself the consequence of a deep-seated emotional instability. In da Cunha’s account, the thousands of sertanejos are portrayed as both victim... and victor,³⁸⁵ though they are always prone to the supremacy of the land itself. Published quite early, in terms of racial enlightenment, the book implies that miscegenation can lead only to violence, and that the only “cure” for miscegenation is violence and complete annihilation of non-white peoples – a destruction of the very sertanejos so representative of the Brazilian people!

Still, da Cunha brought the sertão to life in a way no author before him had and established the authenticity of the sertanejo as iconically Brazilian, in a way no other author was ever able to. A decade before da Cunha published “Os Sertões,” the intellectual Coelho Neto declared that “the Brazilian character is hiding in the backlands,”³⁸⁶ but only da Cunha was able to bring the *sertanejo*³⁸⁷ out for all of Brazil to see.

Re-centering the Periphery: Regionalism

Perhaps the greatest consequence of da Cunha’s work was to bring prominence to the northern region of Brazil. For the first time, the sertão became entrenched in intellectual conceptions of the nation. Within two decades, depictions of rural life in the sertão – and caricatures of its countryfolk – became commonplace in Brazilian

³⁸⁵ Arons 15.

³⁸⁶ Skidmore 97.

³⁸⁷ A resident of the sertão.

literature.³⁸⁸ As the differences between rural and urban locales became more conspicuous with the onset of industrialization, the bucolic sertão came to represent a pre-modern antidote to increased foreign importations and ideas. While many cosmopolitans came to enjoy depictions of the traditional interior as quaint and picturesque, some of these same cosmopolitans also began to treat rural peasants from these outlying areas with a certain stigma, and it was this very combination of sympathy and stigmatization which led to a growing movement of regionalism in the Northeast of Brazil.

Maria Elizabeth Lucas emphasizes the role of stigmatization in prompting regionalist movements, drawing in part from Bourdieu:

Seen from a macro-social perspective, regionalist movements have been defined as the responses of socially, economically and politically stigmatized areas against the hegemonic forces of the nation-state. For Bourdieu, for instance, representations of regional identity are constructed especially through signs of difference which are experienced as social stigma; the more salient the stigma, the greater the chance that it will be used as a marker of difference, and consequently as a binding social force.³⁸⁹

And Durval de Muniz Albuquerque reminds us that the concept of the “region” is, in fact, deeply implicated in power relations; it derives, in fact, from imbalances in power across a geopolitical space.

The concept of “region,” before it came to be associated with geography, referred to a fiscal, administrative, or military delineation (it derives from the Latin verb *regere*, to command). Far from meaning a natural division of space or even an economic or industrial partition, the region is directly connected to relations of power and its spatialization; it refers to a strategic

³⁸⁸ Perhaps the best example of this is the title character of *Jeca Tatú*, published by Monteiro Lobato in 1919. A lazy country bumpkin, Jeca famously refused to put any effort into his lifestyle, constantly reiterating “*não paga a pena*,” or “it’s not worth it.”

³⁸⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, “L’identité et la représentation: éléments pour une réflexion critique sur l’idée de région,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, Vol 35 (1980). In Lucas 50.

vision of space, to its examination, to its division and to its analysis, which produces knowledge.³⁹⁰

Led by Gilberto Freyre, a group of intellectuals from around Brazil³⁹¹ convened in Recife in 1926 for the first Regionalist Congress in the Americas. For the occasion, Freyre wrote the “Regionalist Manifesto,” a call to reevaluate the contribution of regional traditions to Brazilian culture and to safeguard against the loss of these traditions through processes of “*Frenchicization, Anglicization and Yankeeization.*”³⁹² While Freyre was not the first northeastern intellectual to propose a regional literature,³⁹³ he was the first to make regionalism a truly popular issue, and to push forward an agenda of regionalism without alienating the nationalists.

While the manifesto is specifically directed to the Northeast region of Brazil, Freyre also encouraged other regionalist movements, noting that the nation could only cement its identity after its regionalist parts had been expressed. As such, Freyre insisted that his movement did not favor the isolation of regions or their separation

³⁹⁰ “A noção de região, antes de remeter à geografia, remete a uma noção fiscal, administrativa, militar (vem de regere, comandar). Longe de nos aproximar de uma divisão natural do espaço ou mesmo de um recorte do espaço econômico ou de produção, a região se liga diretamente às relações de poder e sua espacialização; ela remete a uma visão estratégica do espaço, ao seu esquadrinhamento, ao seu recorte e à sua análise, que produz saber.” Albuquerque 25.

³⁹¹ Freyre goes to great lengths to underscore the support and participation in this Congress and the movement itself of intellectuals from all across Brazil as well as the United States and Europe.

³⁹² “*Primeiro, sacrificaram-se as Províncias ao imperialismo da Corte: uma Corte afrancesada ou anglicizada. Com a República - esta ianquizada - as Províncias foram substituídas por Estados grandes e ricos, nem policiar as turbulências balcânicas de alguns dos pequenos em população e que deviam ser ainda Territórios e não, prematuramente, Estados.*” Gilberto Freyre, *Manifesto Regionalista* (Recife: Instituto Joaquim Nabuco de Pesquisas Sociais, 1967).

³⁹³ Nearly half a century earlier, author Franklin Távora had made a plea for a *literatura do norte*, arguing that “literature, like politics, have a certain geographic character,” and asserting the supremacy of the North in elements necessary to develop a Brazilian literature. Távora would have disagreed with Freyre, though, since he insisted that North and South Brazil could never be treated as a common/united entity, as their personalities could not be combined into one. In José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular (da modinha à canção de protesto)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Vozes, Ltda., 1974), 193.

from the nation, but stressed instead that a nation in which each region and its endemic traditions flourish would be a stronger entity. In his essay, Freyre referenced the experience of the Balkan states, urging Brazilians to embrace national diversity by supporting regionalist movements. In fact, he maintained, a regional consciousness would *precede* a national consciousness, representing a steppingstone in nationalist intellectual development. Much space in the essay is devoted to culinary traditions; also represented are artistic traditions (*renda, mamulengo, bumba-meu-boi*, etc.),³⁹⁴ local vegetation and medicinal cures, architecture and animals. At times it borders on offensive (in his celebration of the *mucambo* shacks of impoverished nordestinos and of the sweet confections that black women sell in the street, or in his call for young girls' schools to teach local cuisine), but overall it is a passionate call for Brazil's various regions to slow down the importation and incorporation of foreign culture (e.g. Santa Claus and wide European-style boulevards), in favor of saving local traditions.

Even while the Regionalist movement called for all regions of Brazil to band together with a goal of self-expression, the epicenter of the Regionalist movement was in fact the Northeast – a somewhat surprising fact, since at this point the “Northeast” as a region had not been consolidated, and was referred to, instead, as the “North.” In large part, the prominence of this region in the movement was a direct result of Freyre's loyalties to his home state, though it is important to remember what a key intellectual center Recife had been throughout the colony and even in the first

³⁹⁴ *Renda* is lace-like embroidery, *mamulengos* are folkloric rag dolls and *bumba-me-boi* is a theatrical tradition similar to *cavalo marinho* in which a musical play revolves around the story of the resuscitation/resurrection of a dead bull.

years of the Republic. In his examination of the Regionalist movement, George

Oliven writes:

Obviously it is not by mere chance that the movement [Modernismo] started in São Paulo, the city which was already beginning its career as an industrial metropolis, and it is also not merely by chance that the traditionalist movement of 1926 began in Recife, the most developed capital of the Northeast.³⁹⁵

In fact, although the Modernist and Regionalist movements are often pitted against one another as contradictory developments, the two intellectual groups had perhaps more in common than even they admitted. Indeed, the Modernists believed, as the Regionalists, that true national coherence could be achieved only after the unification of individual regions – it was the Regionalists that did not support the Modernists' vision of 'creatively' importing foreign culture. Many modernists (in particular Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila de Amaral),³⁹⁶ for all of their emphasis on cosmopolitan sophistication, looked to the Northeast as a repository of local customs that had not yet been destroyed by foreign influence. Durval Muniz de Albuquerque points out that Oswald nearly reproduces the speech of the northeastern traditionalists when writing that the Northeast was the only area of the country in which “the capitalist machine seems to not yet have perforated the lace, the delicate embroidery, the *pano da costa*,³⁹⁷ that which we had and considered sacred in authenticity and beauty.”³⁹⁸

³⁹⁵ Ruben George Oliven, “State and Culture in Brazil,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, Vol. 5 (1986), 181.

³⁹⁶ Albuquerque points out the emphasis on the Northeast in Tarsila de Amaral's work, noting the ubiquity of the cactus – a plant not found in other areas of Brazil – in various paintings. Albuquerque 56.

³⁹⁷ An African fabric worn over the shoulders by Bahian women.

Freyre, for his part, still condemned the Modernists for their centripetal stance, for ignoring the traditions of the periphery while emphasizing the intellectual contributions of the center and, even worse, for celebrating the destruction of traditional cultural elements by foreign imports. For Freyre, the Modernists had given up on local traditions, folklore and museums. And while Freyre continued to fight for the traditions of the North from a sociological angle, there soon arose a group of novelists across the Northeast who, inspired by Freyre and his Regionalist peers, would further consolidate the region through a canonical literature movement.

Literatura das Secas: the Novel *Sertão*

The literature emerging from Northeast Brazil in the 1930s would become well known and treasured throughout the nation and the world. Called *literatura das secas*, or “drought literature,”³⁹⁹ as well as “Romance de 30,”⁴⁰⁰ or “Romance Regional,” these novels detailed both the social and geographical oppressions that kept poverty, violence and beautiful folk art traditions so deeply entrenched in the Brazilian Nordeste. The writers of this era – José Américo da Almeida (*A Bagaceira*, 1928), Rachel de Queiroz (*O Quinze*, 1930), José Lins do Rego (*Menino de Engenho*, 1932) and Graciliano Ramos (*Vidas Secas*, 1938) were essentially realist authors who,

³⁹⁸ “a máquina capitalista ainda não picotou a renda, o crivo, o pano de costa, o que tínhamos de sagrado em autenticidade e beleza.” Albuquerque 105. In a clever take on this quote, Albuquerque writes that “Oswald seems to have consumed Freyre and suffered indigestion.” “Oswald parece ter deglutido Freyre e sofrido uma indigestão.” Albuquerque 105.

³⁹⁹ “Literatura das secas” was first coined by Tristão de Ataíde to designate what he calls this peculiar species of sertanismo regional. See D. Barreira, *Historia da Literatura Cearense* (Fortaleza: Ed. Do Instituto do Ceara, 1986).

⁴⁰⁰ In Portuguese, “Romance” translates to “novel” (not, as the false cognate might have readers believe, “romance”).

through their highly acclaimed work, managed to establish the “dirty, poor, and dry sertão – not the tropical, hot, and sunny coast – as the defining characteristic of the Northeast.”⁴⁰¹

These authors had been preceded by other regionalists novelists, the likes of José de Alencar (*O Sertanejo*, 1875), Franklin Távora (*O Cabeleira*, 1876), Jose de Patrocínio (*Os retirantes*, 1879), Oliveira Paiva (*Guidinha do poço*, 1892), Rodolfo Teófilo (*A fome*, 1890 and *O paroara*, 1899), Domingo Olimpio (*Luzia-Homem*, 1903) and Antônio Sales (*Aves de Arribação*, 1914). These earlier writers shared many of the same social critiques and harsh descriptions of the misery of the drought, but lacked what the novelists of the 1930s shared – namely, success on the heels of Freyre’s Regionalist Manifesto, a unique blend of socialism and realism, and a series of extremely popular novels over a short span of time.

Albuquerque notes that the great success of the 1930s novelists was also due in large part to the recent growth of the print market and the commercialization of books in Brazil. Like much of the intellectual and industrial growth of the nation, this sector was dominated by Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, prompting the self-induced exile of many northeastern writers to southern Brazil, where they sought publishing deals. The thematic content of the books – largely centered around national problems, particularly those affecting the rustic (perceived as exotic) regions of the nation – was enormously popular with the burgeoning urban middle class reading population. And

⁴⁰¹ Arons 33.

since each regional literature was taken to express the “spirit” of that area, the nordestino novel was “rustic, uncultured and strong, just like that area.”⁴⁰²

Later writers that would continue to reinforce the Northeast as a land of drought and misery included Guimarães Rosa (*Sagarana*, 1946 and *Grande Sertão: Veredas*, 1956), João Cabral de Melo Neto (*Morte e Vida Severina*, 1955) and Jorge Amado (*Seara Vermelha*, 1946). All of these authors, like their forebears, capitalized on the quintessential dramatic element of the sertão: the *seca*, or drought. The “Romance de 30” novelists had carved a special niche for northeastern literature, and it always began – and ended – in the *seca do sertão*.

The Seca and the Nordeste

Referred to as a “holocaust of the land”⁴⁰³ by author José de Alencar,⁴⁰⁴ the infamous droughts of the Northeast have assaulted the area for as long as anyone can remember; dry spells of various degrees haunt nordestinos roughly every three years, and the region experiences a severe drought nearly every twelve years.⁴⁰⁵ Major droughts struck the region in 1559-61, 1583, 1603, 1605-07, 1614, 1645, 1652, 1692, 1721-6, 1777-8, 1824-6, 1876-8, 1884-6, 1888-89, 1891, 1896-8, 1899-1900, 1903-

⁴⁰² “O romance nordestino era “rústico, inculto e forte como aquele área.” Albuquerque 108. The author contrasts this essence with that of São Paulo, “a literature of adventure and conquest, like the ‘bandeirante’ spirit.” “A literatura paulista era uma literatura de aventura e de conquista, assim como o ‘espírito bandeirante.’” Albuquerque 108.

⁴⁰³ In fact, in just four years, the drought of 1979-83 killed twelve times more people than did the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. (Comissão Pastoral da Terra, Ed., *O genocídio do Nordeste 1979-1983* (São Paulo: Edições Mandacaru, 1984), 3. In Arons 1. Hundreds of thousands of Brazilians, including tens of thousands of children, died of starvation and hunger-related illnesses during this recent drought. Arons 1.

⁴⁰⁴ José de Alencar, *O Sertanejo* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1996), 16.

⁴⁰⁵ Arons 3.

04, 1908, 1911-13, 1915, 1919, 1932, 1942, 1951-53, 1957-8. 1970, 1972-3, 1978-83, 1989, 1992-3, 1997-8 and 1999,⁴⁰⁶ though some were more severe than others and some ravaged much larger areas than others. Obviously, the droughts have become more frequent in the twentieth century, most likely as a result of global climate change; the droughts are thought to be brought on by a change in circulatory patterns following El Niño's activity in the Pacific⁴⁰⁷ and/or a change in natural water retention as a result of degradation of the Atlantic forests.⁴⁰⁸

The image cultivated of the seca is quite misleading. Unlike the impression of a blistering dry desert that the *literatura da seca* leads us to believe, the sertão cannot technically be described as a desert. It is not generally dry, but instead has a highly fluctuating level of rainfall from year to year; the droughts this leads to are unpredictable (in a sense) and very difficult to prepare for.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁶ Aglae Lima de Oliveira, *Lampião: Cangaço e Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições O Cruzeiro, 1970), 309; Arons 65-6; Sudha Swarnakar, "Drought, Misery and Migration: The Fictional World of José Américo de Almeida's *A Bagaceira* and Jorge Amado's *Seara Vermelha* and *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*," Talk given at the *Latin American Studies Association Conference* (Dallas, Texas, March 27-29, 2003), 3.

⁴⁰⁷ One group believes that the "El Niño storms lead to droughts by preventing cold fronts carrying rain from reaching the Northeastern region. According to this theory, the El Niño Southern Oscillation makes for warmer and drier conditions in Brazil." A.S. Bachmeier and H.E. Fuelberg, "A Meteorological Overview of the TRACE A Period," *Journal of Geophysical Research* 101 (1996), 23881. In Arons 70.

⁴⁰⁸ Another school theorizes that the degradation of the Atlantic forests caused the earth to lose its ability to retain and store water; "the forests of the Atlantic coast transpire vast amounts of water," writes historian Warren Dean, "which easterlies carry farther into the interior. The removal of coastal forests therefore implies a drier inland climate." Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 221. In Arons 70.

⁴⁰⁹ Certain *simpatias*, or magic tricks, to predict and to avoid drought have been developed and embraced by the deeply superstitious peasants of the area. One of these *simpatias* prognosticates future rain by the weather on the day of Saint Lucia (13 December). If there is no rain this day, the story goes, then there will be no rain for the entire month of January. The *simpatia* continues for all months of the year, judging based on Feb. 14, March 15, April 16, etc. Manuel Correia de Andrade, *A terra e o homem no Nordeste* (São Paulo: Editôra Brasiliense, 1963), 37-8. In José Farias dos Santos, *Luiz Gonzaga: A Música como Expressão do Nordeste* (São Paulo: Instituição Brasileira de Difusão

Kompton Webb explains that, during the five-month rainy season (December – April),⁴¹⁰ there are three types of rains that fall around the sertão. Depending on geographical location, some locales will receive precipitation of all three varieties, while some will receive only one or two varieties, and the unlucky, none.

Traditionally, Saint Joseph's Day (March 19) has been held as the determining measure; if by this date the region has received no rain, a drought is declared. (If there has been rain, it is the last day to begin planting the first corn crop, which is expected to mature by the Saint John festival in late June.)⁴¹¹

Beyond El Niño and deforestation of the Atlantic woodlands, several problems stemming from poor land management are responsible for the recurring droughts. To begin with, sugarcane farming harmed much arable land in the agreste region; since this crop cannot be irrigated as often as it is with other crops, the soil may become useless for other agricultural uses after the sugarcane is harvested.⁴¹² Since sugar was once the most profitable crop in the region, many landowners prohibited the planting of sustainable foods (such as beans and corn), in order to reap the greatest profit

Cultural Ltda., 2002), 118-119. Another *simpatia*, written about as early as 1902 in *Os Sertões* by Euclides da Cunha, suggests setting six salt rocks (representing the coming six months) out in the damp night air. According to lore, the salt piece that is most dissolved represents the rainiest month of the coming year. Arons provides seemingly endless additional examples: "if at the end of the year the cows eat bones, there will be a drought. If armadillos are skinny between November and February there will be a slightly good winter. A fat armadillo during these months implies a terrible winter. You cannot kill a snake as the drought is approaching, because when the snakes come out into the open, rain is on the way. Pigs also know what is coming, and people can discover the weather by studying pigs' eating habits. When lizards spontaneously fall onto the floor from the walls, rains are approaching..." Arons 161-2.

⁴¹⁰ Brazilians generally refer to the rainy season as "winter," or *inverno*.

⁴¹¹ Even if it rains after March 19, the likelihood of a successful crop is very low, hence most farmers refuse to plant after this date.

⁴¹² Arons 69.

possible off the land.⁴¹³ Eventually, much of this land stopped producing, forcing farmers further and further into the *agreste* (and eventually the *sertão*) in order to find arable lands. Further devastations to the environment included cattle farming and large-scale cotton cultivation;⁴¹⁴ overgrazing and erosion have had a significant effect on water resources throughout the region.

Still, it is impossible to speak of the *seca* without condemning the social injustices that have maximized the already painful results of nature's devastation. In fact, as Nicholas Arons passionately argues in his book *Waiting For Rain: The Politics and Poetry of Drought in Northeastern Brazil*:

Droughts are not responsible for rural poverty; rather, they expose preexisting inequalities. Droughts would be quite harmless, perhaps the subject of policy debate – as they are in Israel, Texas, and California – were it not for the political factors that exacerbate their effects.⁴¹⁵

Indeed, Kompton Webb warns readers that the Nordeste's extensive list of social ailments cannot be blamed purely on climatic problems:

The fact that there is a *coincidental* relationship between the drought area of Northeast Brazil and the area of greatest poverty does not mean that there is a *causal* relationship between them. The actual causes of poverty have more to do with antiquated land tax structures, inheritance patterns, types of land tenure, and the ideas of the socio-economic-political elite groups than they do with climatic drought and soil infertility.⁴¹⁶

Nicholas Arons sums it up more succinctly and elegantly: "There is a saying in the region, 'o problema não é a seca, é a cerca.'⁴¹⁷ Indeed, the perennial droughts in the

⁴¹³ Ibid, 69.

⁴¹⁴ Interview with Paulo Locha de Souza, June 20, 1997, Natal, Rio Grande do Norte. In Arons 68.

⁴¹⁵ Arons 67-8.

⁴¹⁶ Webb 178.

Northeast are not by themselves disasters; “only when they are coupled with man-made phenomena – such as fences and barricades – do the droughts cause widespread devastation and death.”⁴¹⁸

To begin with, the probability of peasants being forced off their land because of drought is closely related to age-old inheritance practices throughout the region. In general, sugarcane plantations were not split up (since they needed large swaths of land in order to be economically viable). The cattle ranching lands, however, were carved into skinny plots (so that each would have access to a riverbed), divided amongst the widow and eligible sons.⁴¹⁹ As these plots became smaller, the ability of families to weather a particularly dry spell lessened. The problem was worse in the *agreste*, where fragmentation was the severest and where smaller and smaller plots of lands forced families into nearby towns where industrial or commercial work might be available. This helps to explain why the greatest migrations in the Northeast are often from the *agreste* regions.

Generally, wealthy landowners have property in the larger cities where they retreat to in a drought. In the meantime, smaller landowners in the region forfeit on their mortgage and tax payments, allowing the large landowners to swoop in and purchase additional land at a bargain. Indeed, writes Webb, there is a hierarchy of drought refugees: “the droughts tend to drive out the landless salaried workers first, those who

⁴¹⁷ The play on words here are the near-homonyms *seca* (drought) and *cerca* (fence). “The problem isn’t the drought, it’s the fence.” Arons 3.

⁴¹⁸ Arons 5.

⁴¹⁹ According to Webb, when the head of the family dies, the law provides that 50% of the land goes to the widow, if there has been a civil marriage, and the remaining 50% is divided up by the children. Webb 130-31.

have the least security and control over their lives. Next follow the small renters, followed by the small landowners.”⁴²⁰

Government-led initiatives to improve infrastructure (dams, wells, irrigation channels, etc.) often benefit the very people that need the least: politicians, construction managers and entrepreneurs. In this system, which liberals have termed “the drought industry” or “drought politics”⁴²¹ the public emergency funds tend to stay in towns or even on private property of wealthy landowners instead of serving rural sharecroppers.⁴²² Indeed, Nicholas Arons condemns elite landowners and politicians for their role in the drought industry, complaining that “the overriding problem in Northeast Brazil is that water is used as a weapon of power and prestige in a war against the poor.”⁴²³

As droughts worsen and more and more peasants flock to the cities in search of food and work, the capitals become overwhelmed with the swarms of hungry and destitute citizens. In 1878 the horde of drought victims that invaded the city of Fortaleza was four times the population of the city, and to control the massive influx, the government instituted concentration camps outside of the city. So “successful” were these camps that the same design was used across the Northeast until 1942. Still, many more people than were housed in these makeshift camps were shipped to far-flung regions of the country: most were shipped to the industrial centers in the

⁴²⁰ Webb 35.

⁴²¹ “a indústria da seca” or “a política da seca.” For additional information see Arons and Ribeiro 245.

⁴²² The list of failed initiatives is too long to detail here; they include reservoirs, dams and wells. Though some of these attempted to store more water locally, others tried to create more water in the region (often, by increased evaporation and, hence, rainfall). See Webb.

⁴²³ Arons 5.

South, while a large number were sent to Amazonia (where rubber tappers were in constant demand); later, many were directed toward the burgeoning capital city of Brasília (where construction work was in good supply).⁴²⁴

In 1906, the government established its first division to study and thwart drought;⁴²⁵ inspired by Teddy Roosevelt's Reclamation Service, the agency constructed 1400 kilometers of roads and highways for evacuation and shipment of relief supplies, 196 reservoirs and 500 kilometers of railways. Still, Arons notes that "the vast majority of its wells and reservoirs were dug on private property,"⁴²⁶ once again assisting wealthy landowners while driving sharecroppers and small-time farmers off the land. In 1909, the agency was renamed the DNOCS – and has since, according to a San Francisco Chronicle article cited in *Waiting for Rain*, "drilled 18,000 wells on private property out of 25,000 and built 500 private dams out of 800."⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ One author notes that "Between 1932 and 1945... the government was so aware of its inability to do anything about drought that it abandoned most plans and simply shipped as many sertanejos south and west as possible. Marco Antônio Villa, *Vida e morte no sertão* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 2000), 161. In Arons 95. Still, this should not be seen as a technique limited to a single decade in Brazilian history.

⁴²⁵ It was called the Superintendência dos Estudos e Obras Contra os Efeitos da Seca (Superintendency of Studies and Works Against the Effects of Droughts). Earlier attempts had been piecemeal and largely unsuccessful; perhaps the most comical (or tragic?) attempt was the importation of fourteen camels in 1859. Meant to help sustain local trading during time of drought, the camels couldn't walk in the Brazilian environment given "the irregularity of the terrain, with different rocks and aggressive cacti" – and all died within a month. Arons 92.

⁴²⁶ Arons 94. See also: Villa, 95.

⁴²⁷ "Rising Tide of Anger in Brazil's 'Desert,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 22, 1993. In Arons 106.

A major study published in 1958⁴²⁸ reported that the reservoirs built to alleviate drought were being used for cattle rather than humans and (based on evidence suggesting that previous techniques had been a boon to large landowners while not helping small landowners) suggested a move toward irrigation, rather than dams and wells. This, in turn, led to the 1959 establishment of “Brazil’s most ambitious and well-funded northeastern government institution of the century,” SUDENE.⁴²⁹

According to Arons, this agency

... was formed to study and propose development directives; to supervise, control, and coordinate all of the government agencies working on development projects, including DNOCS; to write legislation and contracts related to development; and to implement programs across the drought polygon. Headquartered in Recife, SUDENE was granted sweeping powers by the federal government.⁴³⁰

Unfortunately, its power – and subsequent usurpation of that power – became so extensive that the entire program had to be cancelled in 1999 due to a massive corruption scandal. Not only that, but ecologists have since discovered that many irrigation projects – the cornerstone of SUDENE endeavors – can actually decrease productivity of the land through a combination of waterlogging, depletion/pollution of water and increased salinity that can literally desiccate the soil crust and all plant life supported by it.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ It was called the Furtado Report and authored by Brazil’s economic laureate, Celso Furtado. In Arons 97. See also: Celso Furtado, *A Fantasia Desfeita* (São Paulo: Imprensa no Brasil, 1989).

⁴²⁹ Superintendência de Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (Superintendency of the Development of the Northeast).

⁴³⁰ Arons 98.

⁴³¹ When too much salt accumulates, it can rise to the surface and, after existing water evaporates, kills plant life. According to one author, “eventually, the salts in the roots zones meet the salts on the surface, forming a crust, and the [area] become[s] permanently dead.” Marq De Villers, *Water* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 141. In Arons 100.

In all, after so many promises and proposals, the sertão is still thirsty. When it does rain, less than ten percent of rain that falls is collected for use; the rest runs off into eroded territories, inaccessible and polluted due to a lack of infrastructure necessary for capturing and storing water.⁴³² According to José Farías dos Santos, all social ills of the region have been blamed on the seca since 1877,⁴³³ leaving nature the only assailant culpable for crimes against humanity. Via this perspective, the droughts are to blame for rampant violence by *cangaço* bands of outlaws, messianic movements, landless protests, illiteracy and malnourishment that have rampaged the region for centuries. But it is obviously a farce; after all, in the sertão, it's not the *seca*, but the *cerca*.

Imagining the Sertão

Describing a very different landscape than the desiccated sertão, Toni Morrison uses the symbol of a flooded river to show how memory can be stored in bodies:

You know, they straightened out the Mississippi River in places, to make room for houses and livable acreage. Occasionally the river floods these places. "Floods" is the word they use, but in fact it is not flooding; it is remembering. Remembering where it used to be. All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back where it was. Writers are like that: remembering where we were, what valley we ran through, what the banks were like, the light that was there and the route back to our original place. It is emotional memory – where the nerves and the skin remember how it appeared. And a rush of imagination is our "flooding."⁴³⁴

⁴³² "Rising Tide." In Arons 70.

⁴³³ Santos 93.

⁴³⁴ Toni Morrison, "The Site of the Truth," *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Inventing a Memoir*, Ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 119. In Paul Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 59-60.

While eloquent and deeply evocative, however, Morrison’s metaphor may not be easily applied to the Nordeste. Rarely does the São Francisco rise above its banks, and, as I will argue, the rush of imagination that strikes nordestinos often produces images that “reflect reality at a slant.”⁴³⁵ These images tell us volumes about the northeasterners’ lives, but are not necessarily based on objective experience – as Nicholas Arons tells us, “the reality that [the nordestinos] *described to me was based more on fictional accounts than on their own memories and experiences.*”⁴³⁶ It is the impact of the imagination on the lived experience of nordestinos that I wish to explore in this section; I seek to examine the forróscope as a reflection of these imaginings in the real world, a mirror onto the work of the nordeste imagination, and I wish to uncover not just the sertão as it is imagined but the process of building an imagined sertão, as well.

Appadurai, though perhaps better known for his exploration of “scapes” as new paradigms from which to conduct ethnography, has also written extensively on the potential of the imagination as an anthropological topic of study. He argues that the intensification of global flows of media and migration has had a deep influence on the “work of the imagination as a constitutive feature of modern subjectivity,”⁴³⁷ and proposes a new style of ethnography that will examine the impact of deterritorialization in a globalized context by analyzing the representations of local imagination. According to Appadurai, the ‘imagined’ is no longer limited to the realm

⁴³⁵ Rebhun 37.

⁴³⁶ Arons 13 (my emphasis).

⁴³⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3.

of art, myth, and ritual, but has become embedded in the everyday practice of people(s), whose local realities have been greatly impacted by the images and ideas presented through mass media (film, radio, travel literature, etc.). As such, he argues, imagination “is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order.”⁴³⁸ He continues:

The image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something critical and new in global cultural processes: *the imagination as social practice*. No longer mere fantasy (opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere), no longer simple escape (from a world defined principally by more concrete purposes and structures), no longer elite pastime (thus not relevant to the lives of ordinary people), and no longer mere contemplation (irrelevant for new forms of desire and subjectivity), the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility.⁴³⁹

Appadurai extends Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities, referring to imagined worlds, and stresses the increased agency inherent in the larger imagined space. (In his nuanced view, imaginative members of a world community thus become citizens of the world, not just the local community.) The concept of imagined communities was first theorized by Benedict Anderson in his 1983 classic text. According to Anderson, capitalism and the print language (both products of the Industrial Revolution) led to a decrease in privileged access to texts and an increase in mass vernacular literacy. This in turn led to vast “imagined communities,” in which members needed to share no physical interaction in order to intuit their standing in a community, shared with hundreds of thousands of others. While Anderson stressed

⁴³⁸ Appadurai 31. In Rocha, Cristina, *Zen in Brazil: the Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 128-29.

⁴³⁹ Appadurai 31.

the role of pamphlets, newspapers, books and maps, subsequent analyses have found that the creation of imagined communities need not be limited to the collective experiences of “print capitalism” but also to “electronic capitalism,” including television and cinema.⁴⁴⁰ It is through these forms of media that citizens come to imagine themselves as members of a given society. Writes Appadurai:

The modern nation-state in this view grows less out of natural facts – such as language, blood, soil, and race – and more out of a quintessential cultural product, a product of the collective imagination.”⁴⁴¹

In the case of the Nordeste, high rates of illiteracy meant that print capitalism could not reach a large section of the population; in its absence, the oral poetry of troubadours played a great role in establishing a “community of sentiment”; the musical bards traveled around the Brazilian countryside to relate stories both old and new. Also key was the production of pamphlets, called *literatura de cordel*, which told news and legends in rhyming verse. These were sold in huge numbers at the local markets, where even those who could not read would buy them to take home; there was often someone there who could decipher the leaflet.

Even more influential was radio, a technology that opened up the most rural areas of Brazil to the influence of the broadcasting cities – a process which, in the case of forró, actually resulted in transmitting the imagined forróscape back to its rustic place of origin! Recife had erected its first station in 1923, along with Rio and São Paulo, and the rest of the decade would see climbing numbers of stations in the coastal cities along the perimeter of the Atlantic. This number would slowly climb through the

⁴⁴⁰ M. Warner, “The Mass Public and the Mass Subject,” *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Ed. C. Calhoun (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992); B. Lee, “Going Public,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 5 (2) (1993), 165-78. In Appadurai 161.

⁴⁴¹ Appadurai 161.

1930s and would grow exponentially during the 1940s, spreading through the backcountry.⁴⁴² By the 1950s the transistor radio had brought increased mobility for radio listening,⁴⁴³ and by 1960 the Northeast finally gained access to television,⁴⁴⁴ a change that would lead to what Becker and Egler call “modernized poverty,” a poverty “illuminated by the small windows of television screens dispersed throughout thousands of houses, shacks, and shanties.”⁴⁴⁵

While Anderson’s argument is primarily concerned with the socio-political aspects that led to the rise of nation-states and nationalism, his work can easily be applied to other paradigms, be they postnational or simply regional. Appadurai, for example, argues that the work of the imagination is helping to speed the emergence of a postnational political world, in which diasporic “scapes” share increased importance next to nation-state communities. I would argue, however, that in many cases – and particularly in the realm of forró – the imagination is creating thoroughly entrenched “imagined regions” within the larger national territory. By simply participating in the forróscape, audiences anywhere can enjoy membership as nordestinos. Indeed, the increased possibilities represented in various media have allowed us to stretch our imaginations accordingly. As Appadurai argues, “more persons in more parts of the

⁴⁴² Renato Ortiz notes that between 1944 and 1950, the number of Brazilian radio stations grew from 106 to 300. Renato Ortiz, *A Moderna Tradição Brasileira: Cultura Brasileira e Indústria Cultural* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1988), 40.

⁴⁴³ “Radio in the 1930s and 1940s had promised to take listeners anywhere on an imaginary voyage; in the mid-1950s the new promise was that listeners could take their radios anywhere.” McCann 233.

⁴⁴⁴ Sulamita 30. Other parts of Brazil had been receiving television broadcasts since 1950.

⁴⁴⁵ Becker and Egler 117.

world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before.”⁴⁴⁶ I would like to emphasize, too, the fact that people today can easily enter and retreat from lives that they imagine, and easily live amongst several imagined communities at once.

The “Authentic” Nordeste

In their introductory essay to a volume on “the anthropological field” in an increasingly un-bound world, Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson note the discursive emphasis on the separation of societies. They write:

Representations of space in the social sciences are remarkably dependent on images of break, rupture, and disjunction. The distinctiveness of societies, nations, and cultures is predicated on a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy “naturally” discontinuous spaces.⁴⁴⁷

Even while the boundaries of the sertão, agreste and coastal regions are blurry and themselves problematic, the discourse surrounding the Northeast seems to swallow up these distinctions, employing the term *Nordeste* as a category that really includes only the imagined community of the sertão. The lines around the Northeast region, in discourse, seem to be drawn deep. Gone are the long beaches with fine sand alongside sparkling water, gone are the rolling hills of sugarcane, fluttering in long undulations like underwater rushes, gone are the chaotic cities with millions of inhabitants, whose pace approaches that of New York. When speaking of the Nordeste – and, in particular, when invoking the forróscape – few people allow for nuance and diversity; most remember the sertão of Rachel de Queiroz’s novels, with ranches few and far between, and a hot sun baking the exposed bricks of earth. The

⁴⁴⁶ Appadurai 53.

⁴⁴⁷ Gupta and Ferguson 65.

Northeast that we imagine is still many years ago, and it never seems to move forward in time. As Albuquerque writes,

The Northeast is not believable without local oligarchs, without bandits, without mercenaries and saints. The Northeast is a discursive set of images, a crystalized creation, formed of tropes that become obligatory, that demand certain boundaries upon seeing or speaking of it.⁴⁴⁸

In a nation that still ponders its identity vis-à-vis Europe and the United States, the Nordeste is regularly cited as the antithesis to foreign intervention or importation, to modernity, to change. And what it lacks in income and infrastructure, the Nordeste makes up for in *authenticity*. Authenticity seems to be the meter by which things are measured in the Northeast, and while some skeptics have claimed that “the term ‘authentic’ now has more applications than Microsoft Windows,”⁴⁴⁹ Brazilians have a deep intuition about what is and what is not authentic in the Nordeste.

In order to examine the process behind the authenticization of cultural traditions in the Nordeste, we must first recognize it as an “invented tradition” of its own. In the words of Richard Peterson, who studies authenticity in U.S. country music: “Authenticity is not a trait inherent in an object or an event that one declares ‘authentic’; it is a matter of social construction, a convention that partially deforms the past.”⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, he writes, in order to build and maintain its legitimacy, there must be a *fabrication* of authenticity.

⁴⁴⁸ “O Nordeste não é verossímil sem coronéis, sem cangaceiros, sem jagunços ou santos. O Nordeste é uma criação imagético-discursiva cristalizada, formada por tropos que se tornam obrigatórios, que impõem ao ver e ao falar dele certos limites.” Albuquerque 192.

⁴⁴⁹ Coyle and Dolan, “Modeling Authenticity, Authenticating Commercial Models,” *Reading Rock and Roll: Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics*, Eds. Kevin Dettmar and William Richey (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 21. In Magdalena Red, *Mexican Ska: Youth Identity and Expression*, (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, Department of Latin American Studies, 2003), 28.

Historically, we can trace the beginning of this preoccupation to the writings of Johann Gottfried Herder in eighteenth century Germany.⁴⁵¹ Herder, writing against the Francophilia of Prussian nobles, encouraged Germans instead to embrace the concept of *Kultur*, which emphasized that the emergence of a unique national character would be fomented through local community identities. Herder lauded the cultural contributions of the *Volk*, or people, and found in their customs the repositories of the national *Volksgeist*, or national identity. However, his theory did not address the dynamic nature of culture, assuming that the people would continue to practice a static version of folklore. Social theorist Néstor García-Canclini explains it thus:

The *folk* is seen... as a property of isolated and self-sufficient indigenous or peasant groups whose simple techniques and little social differentiation preserve them from modern threats. Cultural goods – objects, legends, musical forms – are of greater interest than the actors who generate and consume them. This fascination with the products – the neglect of the social processes and agents that engender them, and of the uses that modify them – leads to the objects being valued more for their repetition than for their change.⁴⁵²

Because the underlying assumption of the folk relies on an unchanging tradition, authenticity, when referring to folklore, is assumed to be that which is the most fixed in time and “true” to past experiences. For this very reason, argues Tamara Livingston, there is an underlying conservatism at the heart of all music revivals.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ Richard Peterson, “Fabrication de l’authenticité: La country music,” *Actes de la Recherche*, 93 (January 1992), 3-19. In Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 15-16.

⁴⁵¹ For a more recent history of this phenomenon in Brazil, See Vianna, *Invention of Samba*. See also chapter two.

⁴⁵² Canclini 149-50.

These revivals are based on historical precedent, and as such, often feel compelled to stay as close to the cultural baseline as possible. Forró, in its most traditional incarnation, is no different.⁴⁵⁴

In the mid 1940s and 1950s – not long after the date that Albuquerque marks as the onset of the invention of the Nordeste – a major folklore movement swept the nation.⁴⁵⁵ Notably, according to Roberta Ceva, the folklore movement in Brazil differed from its counterpart in eighteenth century Europe; instead of limiting themselves to “orality, collective culture, ‘stabilized’ culture, etc.,” the Brazilian folklorists approached their studies with a much broader mission, eschewing analyses of “traditional” culture unchanged by millions of years in order to examine culture as a “living thing” subject to continuous adaptations.⁴⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Albuquerque argues that even with this more enlightened approach, the Brazilian folklorists aimed to uncover the “essence” of regional culture and of regional personality, claiming that emotional traits survived over time to create unique enclaves of culture and that these could be interpreted from folkloric traditions.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Tamara E. Livingston, “Music Revivals: towards a general theory.” *Ethnomusicology* (Vol. 43:1 [1999], 66-85.) In Sean Stroud, *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music: Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira* (Burlington: Ashgate, forthcoming), 133.

⁴⁵⁴ Future chapters will explore different “levels” of tradition within forró music, showing that some genres have evolved to include intense experimentation, while others emphasize conformity to the traditional style set by Luiz Gonzaga.

⁴⁵⁵ Roberta Lana de Alencastre Ceva, *Na Batida da Zabumba: uma análise antropológica do forró universitário* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Antropologia Social do Museu Nacional, 2001), 44.

⁴⁵⁶ “...essencialmente um ‘fato vivo’ e portanto sujeito a contínuas adaptações.” Luiz Rodolfo Vilhena, *Projeto e Missão: o movimento folclórico brasileiro (1947-1964)*, (Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1997), 191. Ceva 46.

⁴⁵⁷ Albuquerque 77-8.

Néstor García Canclini attacks an even larger issue with folkloric studies in general:

Folklore, which arose in Europe and America as a reaction against aristocratic blindness toward the popular and as a response to the first industrialization of culture, is almost always a melancholic attempt at subtracting the popular from the massive reorganization of society, fixing it in artisanal forms of production and communication, and guarding it as an imaginary reserve of nationalist political discourses.⁴⁵⁸

A huge polemic arose between the folklorists and social scientists (who claimed that the former did not engage subject matter *scientifically*) in Brazil; the well-known sociologist Florestan Fernandes argued that “the folklore discipline studies its object in a way diametrically opposed to [how] the social sciences [conduct research].”⁴⁵⁹ The proponents of the movement did not manage to overcome obstacles blocking the official institution of folklore studies into the universities, and the movement itself stagnated in the 1960s.

A wide interest in folklore, however, continued to appeal to tourists and some local entertainers. In fact, the late 1960s was a time of great revival in the world of forró (see chapter four); a celebration of musical roots kicked off by the Tropicalist artistic movement brought forró and the entire invented tradition of the Nordeste to the fore and a nation of enthusiastic fans began showing their interest through consumption. It was during this time that tourism on a large scale began in the Northeast.

⁴⁵⁸ García-Canclini 151.

⁴⁵⁹ Vilhena 160. In Ceva 47.

Any study of authenticity in the Nordeste should surely start and end with the legendary forró performer Luiz Gonzaga⁴⁶⁰ and might hone in on the vocabulary used to describe the “King of Baião” in order to understand how categories of authenticity are constructed in the Northeast. According to one fan,

... the great King of Baião was a *pure* and *genuine* man, with *no foreign influences*... he represented a *legitimate barrier to the barbarian invasion*. He had a *resistance* to him that *never lost faith*; [he was] *authentic nordestinidade*. As *real* as moonshine straight from the jug... the *true popular culture of the Northeast* has in Luiz Gonzaga one of its *strongest pillars*, in the face of the *crystalline purity of his interpretations* – a *bona fide mirror* that reflected our people, principally those poor wretches of the sertão.⁴⁶¹

What is perhaps most striking about Luiz Gonzaga is not how so many people continue to adore his persona and his music but the extraordinary repetitiveness in their descriptions of him. Inevitably the same adjectives and expressions arise: authentic, legitimate, real, pure, genuine. What made Gonzaga conform so closely to the notion of Nordeste? What qualities did he have that made him the quintessential example of an *authentic nordestino*? In part, it was his own agency as an architect who helped to create the public image of the sertão (see chapter four) and in part, he had the very qualities emphasized in the writings of da Cunha, José Lins do Rego, Rachel de Queiroz, and the other regionalist writers.

Gonzaga was the epitome of *Volk*: he grew up poor, illiterate and uneducated in a rural ranch several hours from the nearest railroad in the western sertão; he learned to

⁴⁶⁰ I will provide a complete life story and analysis of Gonzaga’s performance style in chapter four.

⁴⁶¹ “... o grande Rei do Baião era um homem puro, genuíno, sem influências estrangeiras, daí a sua importância na cultura popular do Nordeste. Representava legítima barreira à invasão dos bárbaros. Era a resistência que nunca esmorece; a nordestinidade autêntica. Legítima que nem cachaça de cabaça... A verdadeira cultura popular do Nordeste encontra em Luiz Gonzaga um de seus mais fortes pilares, em face da pureza cristalina de suas interpretações – verdadeiro espelho a refletir nosso povo, principalmente o povinho ordeiro do sertão sofredor.” Oliveira 199. My emphasis.

tame wild bulls and to treat his superiors with deference; and he shrugged off a difficult day in the fields by punching an upbeat tune out of his accordion. He was a hard worker and a clever study for new things as well as an indefinite mix of white, black and Indian. His proximity to the land, above all else, made him the quintessential nordestino. Even today northeastern performers are compared to him and found to be equal or less authentic than the great Gonzagão.

Larry Crook, in an essay detailing the Zabumba⁴⁶² band tradition of Caruaru, reminds us that “notions of authenticity and cultural purity [are] not always authentic themselves.”⁴⁶³ In his article, he argues that the zabumba drum became an important national symbol of rural northeastern folk traditions, after which performances were held to standards of “cultural ‘purity’” which didn’t always jive with historical data.⁴⁶⁴ He notes in this essay that “the music of the rural areas, towns, and small cities of the interior regions of the Northeast is a national treasure of the country,”⁴⁶⁵ but also makes clear the fact that performers are well aware of an institutionalization of authenticity within the genre (a fact that helps them to continue contributing to the national ‘collection’). He writes:

The first commercial recordings made by Zabumba groups also coincided with the growth of Caruaru’s tourist industry. The performances frozen on these early recordings have subsequently become the “authentic” versions of these pieces and live performances are now frequently rated according to the extent to which they iconically reproduce the recorded versions. Groups that have not memorized the recorded arrangement are considered both less

⁴⁶² I follow Crook’s use of Zabumba (upper-case) to indicate an ensemble made up of many zabumba (lower-case) drums.

⁴⁶³ Larry Crook, “Caboclo Traditions: Music of the Northeast Interior,” *Music in Latin American Culture: Regional Traditions*, Ed. John M. Schechter (New York: Shirmer Books, 1999), 207.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid 207.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid 194.

authentic and technically inferior than those that have. In this regard, one impact of the media has been the standardization of at least a portion of the Zabumba repertory.⁴⁶⁶

Indeed, the repetition of songs and styles within performances is common in Pernambucan folklore; in his dissertation on *cavalo-marinho* folk music theater outside of Recife, John Patrick Murphy points out that “even had I planned to give less attention to history, my consultants’ frequent comments that compared present performances with past ones would have made it an obvious area of inquiry.”⁴⁶⁷ In fact, Murphy mentions later that “the *quadras* [quatrains] and isolated couplets do not always make sense in their immediate context. They seem to have been repeated over the years without a great concern for their literal content.”⁴⁶⁸ It seems that authenticity can be so important in traditional folk musics that it can even overpower the importance of meaning.

Crook is able to date the emerging cultural industry in Caruaru, Pernambuco, to approximately the same time as the revival in forró music and increased popularity of Luiz Gonzaga in the late 1960s. It is particularly interesting to note the astuteness of the performers, who quickly catch on to a new trend and embrace it in order to assure themselves of musical and financial opportunities:

During the 1960s and 1970s Zabumba musicians discovered a place for themselves in the emerging cultural industry of Caruaru. Zabumba musicians soon recognized a new category and style of performance specifically associated with the outdoor stage shows, concerts, dinner receptions, and street parties that were organized and sponsored by the cultural office of the

⁴⁶⁶ Larry Norman Crook, *Zabumba Music from Caruaru, Pernambuco: Musical Style, Gender, and the Interpenetration of Rural and Urban Worlds* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The University of Texas at Austin, 1991), 287.

⁴⁶⁷ Murphy 3.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid* 117.

city government in conjunction with the local business community. This new genre was called “folklore” and was characterized by an emphasis on technical virtuosity and what in pop music is called “stage presence.” It is interesting to note that, according to the oral testimony of many musicians, “folklore” is a modern tradition that dates precisely from the time of the expansion of the tourist industry and media in Caruaru.⁴⁶⁹

Indeed, that popular culture could be used for political gain was no secret to the artists or the politicians – and it was precisely during these decades that the Nordeste – already consolidated in public understanding as a unique region with a rich cultural history – began exploring and exploiting some of those traditions in earnest.

In fact, 1975 represented a watershed moment for a Brazilian politics of culture. That year, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) released a key policy document titled *Política Nacional de Cultura* (PNC). The PNC “set out an influential new role for the government in the promotion of national culture and also established a series of initiatives to promote the arts in general.”⁴⁷⁰ Cultural theorist Renato Ortiz later observed that the PNC “reflected a nostalgic view of culture, firmly rooted in the importance of celebrating the past rather than dealing with the complexities of the present.”⁴⁷¹

São João: the Model Nordeste

The city of Recife has a long precedent for political peddling of nostalgia: in 1960 it led the nation with its early founding of the Movimento de Cultura Popular,⁴⁷² a

⁴⁶⁹ Crook, *Zabumba Music*, 286.

⁴⁷⁰ Stroud 114.

⁴⁷¹ Renato Ortiz, *Cultura Brasileira e Identidade Nacional* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986), 97-8. In Stroud 114.

⁴⁷² Its name was inspired by the French political movement *Peuple et Culture*. Lúcia Gaspar, “Movimento de Cultura Popular,” *Pesquisa Escolar On-Line* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco). <http://www.fundaj.gov.br> Accessed 10 September 2009.

group made up of local university students, artists and intellectuals concerned with dismal levels of literacy and education. Supported by Recife's mayor Miguel Arraes, the organization set out to educate a large number of children and adults through the lens of local popular culture. Over its four years of operation as a not-for-profit (after which it was burned to the ground by the military coup of 1964), it focused on:

(1) *Interpreting, developing and systematizing popular culture*; (2) *Creating and distributing new methods and techniques of popular education*; and (3) *Preparing skilled personnel to 'transmit' culture to the people.*⁴⁷³

The MCP program was an indubitable success; indeed, in its first two years it enrolled nearly 20,000 students in adult-education and early literacy classes around the city. Notably, it also made major inroads in shaping and popularizing the local cultural traditions, acting as a curator of culture.⁴⁷⁴ More recent programs often go unnamed, having themselves become deeply rooted traditions of the city. Each year Recife's city hall sponsors year-round events meant to further entrench local cultural traditions; the most celebrated and elaborate of these events are *carnaval* and *São João*.

As far as festivals go, carnaval and São João could not be more different.

Carnaval has been treated extensively in anthropological literature,⁴⁷⁵ and it is known

⁴⁷³ Article 15 of its by-laws. Gaspar. My emphasis.

⁴⁷⁴ As readily acknowledged in the field of anthropology and ethnomusicology, we must recognize that the person responsible for recording or curating a collection is "central to the concept of 'authenticity.'" Stroud 133. Sean Stroud gives several examples of early recordings which forever flavored our understanding of early popular culture due to tampering by ethnomusicologists: "Cecil Sharp censored 'bawdy' lyrics that were not to his liking... Likewise, Alan Lomax coached the performers he recorded to modify their repertoires and styles to approximate them to his personal conception of authenticity." Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 130; Neil V. Rosenberg, "Introduction," *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 14. In Stroud 133.

as a classic time of inversion, when community members “parody and confuse gender, social class, and race”⁴⁷⁶ and cavort freely across social boundaries. It is generally described as a time when social rules become meaningless and confusion and hilarity reign.⁴⁷⁷ São João, on the other hand, is billed as just the opposite: a time to get closer to traditional roots, to engage in infantilized and innocent behavior, and to appreciate rural life. Of all the invented traditions of the sertão, none is more archetypal than the *festas juninas*, as the month-long festival commemorating Saint John the Baptist, Saint Joseph and Saint Anthony every June, is called. So popular are the *festas juninas* that many municipalities declare several days of public holidays, and the Brazilian Congress calls a recess on their sessions because “representatives from the Northeastern states cannot afford (politically or personally) to miss them.”⁴⁷⁸

While samba school carnival parades feature impoverished favela residents dressed as kings and queens, São João festivities often consist of middle-class

⁴⁷⁵ See Roberto Da Matta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); Miguel Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World* (Cambridge, Mass. M.I.T. Press, 1968); Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁴⁷⁶ John Harvey, “Cannibals, Mutants and Hipsters: The Tropicalist Revival,” *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, Ed. Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (New York: Routledge, 2002), 109.

⁴⁷⁷ Though the possibilities of carnival based on these interpretations is fascinating, I am much more aligned with the portrayal of carnival in Nancy Scheper-Hughes’s book *Death Without Weeping*. I find, as she does, that much of carnival culture continues to boast a highly segregated and segmented social space (one remarkably lacking in middle-class Brazilians, who tend to flee the big cities, rife with celebrating riff-raff, for beach towns several hours away, where they can party amongst their own).

⁴⁷⁸ Rita Amaral, “Festa à Brasileira: sentidos do festejar no país que ‘não é sério’” (1998). Available: <http://www.aguaforte.com/antropologia/festaabrasileira/festa.html>
In Kevin Cassidy, “Forró: Constructing Identity in the Brazilian Northeast through Notions of ‘Tradition’” (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Dept. Anthropology, Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, 2006), 13. Available: http://kevincassidy.blogspot.com/2007/07/forr-constructing-identity-in-brazilian.html#_ftnref1

Brazilians dressing up as pre-pubescent country bumpkins: the women draw exaggerated freckles on rouged cheeks and draw their hair into two long braids while wearing plaid frocks lined with white lace, and the men draw messy beards and sport missing or buck teeth while wearing simple sandals, torn and patched pants and a plaid shirt, all covered by a giant straw hat. Indeed, as Jack Bishop writes, during São João “amidst this type of identity appropriation, we find a twist on Roberto DaMatta’s concept of social class inversion that allows the sophisticated urbanite to become the rural *matuto*.⁴⁷⁹

Certainly, while nordestinos generally embrace the festival as a fun-loving and innocent time of frivolity, there is a haunting undercurrent of class condescension: for several days during the year the middle-class and wealthy pay large sums to join private parties where they can impress each other with the quaintness of their bumpkin get-up. And not only do celebrants mock the dressing style of the matutos, they also feature a stereotypical crew of rustic simpletons in their seasonal theatrical presentations: the young fiancée is inevitably pregnant, the groom nervous, the father of the bride furious and insistent that the young lovers marry, and the local *delegado* (policeman) confident that his big stick will take care of any problems.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ Matuto can be translated as “hick,” “rube,” or “bumpkin” and is a surprisingly common adjective in the Recife area for simpletons who grew up in the countryside. For more on the inversion of matuto and upper-class roles, see Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); Jack Bishop, “Vem Arrasta-pé: Commoditizing Forró Culture in Pernambuco, Brazil,” *Musical Cultures of Latin America: Global Effects, Past and Present: Proceedings of an International Conference* (Los Angeles: University of California, May 28-30, 1999), 195.

⁴⁸⁰ One obvious similarity that we can draw with carnival is the emphasis on cross-dressing; often young boys play the nervous bride while their families record the play on video and laugh with one another at the silly acting.

Animating all of the festivities are forró bands that pound out a foot-stomping rhythm that keeps people drinking and dancing. Generally they are the “traditional” three-piece bands, which include a bawdy accordion, a syncopated *zabumba* drum and a high-pitched clanging triangle.⁴⁸¹ During most of the festival one can watch forró and arrasta-pé dancing (a close partner dance approximating the undulating lambada and a faster-paced polka partner dance that involves hopping from side to side, respectively) although another key component of the party is the *quadrilha* competitions. Based on the contra dances of France, the quadrilhas closely resemble what we call the Virginia Reel in the United States: they feature two lines of dancers (male and female, usually) facing one another and carrying out coordinated steps in unison: the curtsy and bow, the doh-si-doh, the full turn, etc. The quadrilha culminates in a long chain of dancers that must run underneath the “peak” formed by the arched arms of the other dancers.

All around the locales (each called an *arraial*, or rustic fair) where revelers enjoy the party, long strings with colored triangle-shaped flags hang from ceilings and between towers, and paper-machê balloons in bright primary and secondary colors embellish any open spaces, creating a festive ambience. Food and drink are in abundance, particularly corn dishes (*pamonha* or corn tamale, *canjica* or corn pudding, *minguzá* or sweet hominy gruel, grilled corn and popcorn as well as manioc cake and stewed peanuts) and drinks including the favorite *quentão* (made from cachaça rum, ginger and sugar) as well as liquors made from local fruits (*jenipapo*, *cacau*, *raisin*, *pineapple*, *coconut* etc.).

⁴⁸¹ See chapter five for a history and complete description of this band formation.

The celebration generally begins on the thirteenth of June, the day commemorating the death (in 1231) of Saint Anthony, peaks on the twenty-fourth of June, Saint John's day, and ends on the twenty-ninth of June with a last celebration for Saint Peter.⁴⁸² Indeed, while the month-long festival is called "São João," the Saint of honor in fact relies on his two accomplices, Anthony and Peter, to keep the party going. Each has a special mission to complete: Anthony is the patron saint of marriages (which, legend says, always happen in June)⁴⁸³ and Peter is the patron saint of the rain,⁴⁸⁴ which should fall freely in the Northeast by mid-June. In fact, June in northeastern Brazil has long been a time to celebrate the harvest,⁴⁸⁵ and in syncretic spirit, the festas juninas have long commemorated both the pagan harvest festival and the patron saint celebrations together. In honor of Saint John, giant bonfires burn throughout the month of June, but particularly on the night of the twenty-fourth – and the more courageous jump over the flames to ensure a good upcoming year.

According to one legend, the fire is said to represent the fire that John's mother, Isabel, lit for her cousin, the Virgin Mary, to let her know that John was born.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸² As different municipalities compete to see who can "out-celebrate" whom, many towns have pushed their festivals past thirty, and even past forty, days of festivities.

⁴⁸³ Saint Anthony was born in Lisbon in August 1195 and died 13 June, 1231 in Padua, Italy. He was particularly concerned with the poor as well as the Saint whom people call on to find lost things. Carmem Lélis, *São João: Manifestação de Fé, Celebração da Alegria* (Recife: Prefeitura do Recife, Ciclo Junino 2004), 8-9.

⁴⁸⁴ Saint Peter was considered the first Pope as well as protector of homes and guardian of the keys to heaven. Lélis 11

⁴⁸⁵ The planting of corn (a staple of northeastern cuisine) is traditionally done on Saint Joseph's day, 19 March. If planted correctly (and as long as weather permits), the corn crop should be ready for harvesting by São João.

⁴⁸⁶ Saint John was the son of Zacarias and Isabel (Maria's cousin) and it was he who baptized Jesus in the River Jordan. Lélis 9. He is called John the Baptist in large part as a result of that baptism. He was born six months before Jesus, and (according to one version), Isabel, who lived on top of a hill, promised to light a bonfire to let Maria know when he was born. *Festejos Juninos: Uma tradição*

São João is meant to celebrate the bucolic lifestyle of the countryside (albeit one stuck far in the past) and, as such, is often commemorated in the tiny towns that speckle the agreste and sertão areas of the Northeast. Middle-class Brazilians can purchase resort packages which provide transportation to and accommodation in rural hamlets within a few hours of the big cities. (Perhaps part of the charm, the lodging often consists simply of a set of sleeping bags laid out on the floor, a single bathroom catering to as many as twenty young travelers.) Alternatively, residents of the big cities can enjoy government-sponsored events right outside their homes. Yearly, some 900,000 residents enjoy the extensive celebrations across the city of Recife at no cost. An additional 600,000 fairgoers travel to Campina Grande, Paraíba, while 600,000 visit Caruaru, Pernambuco, for similar hoe-down style revelry. (The towns have year-round occupancies of 3,800,000, 400,000 and 300,000 residents, respectively.) The three towns – Recife, Campina Grande,⁴⁸⁷ and Caruaru, compete for the titles “The Biggest São João in the World” and “the Best São João in the World.”⁴⁸⁸ Jack Bishop dates the industrialization of São João in the city of Caruaru to 1947,⁴⁸⁹ noting that within a short time of the institutionalization of São João,

nordestina (Recife: Editora Nova Presença, 2002), 47. Another version tells that the bonfire was lit by Maria to send word to Joseph to come pick her up after helping her cousin Isabel for the three months prior to John’s birth. Lélis 14-15. Many other legends about the importance of the São João bonfire exist: some say that the bonfires are to awaken São João, so he can share the festival with the people, while others say that the bonfires replaced the tradition of sending flaming balloons up into the sky. *Festejos Juninos* 131.

⁴⁸⁷ Campina Grande even has a “forró-dromo” (based on Rio de Janeiro’s famed sambódromo), an immense pyramid of concrete located at the center of the São João park. Gustavo Pereira Côrtes, *Dança, Brasil!* (Belo Horizonte: Editora Leitura Ltda., 2000), 74 .

⁴⁸⁸ In 2009, Recife instead called its party “the Most Authentic São João in the World.”

⁴⁸⁹ Jack Bishop notes that the staging of São João in this city began when “pífano player from Caruaru... known as Mestre Vitalino, took his zabumba band and his ceramic figurines depicting family life in the Northeast to Rio de Janeiro for an exhibition,” definitively locating the Northeast, and

private celebrations yielded to large organized public festivals, paid for out of government coffers.⁴⁹⁰ Recife, on the other hand, has been sponsoring city-wide festivals since the 1980s, and Campina Grande dates its championship of “the Best São João” to 1983.

Certainly, the merriment of São João has suffered some of the same damage that Rio de Janeiro’s carnival experienced as a result of the industrialization of the festival – and has also reaped similar advantages, including soaring tourism and income. While there is an abundant literature documenting the transformations inherent in the restructuring of Rio’s carnival (particularly since the construction in 1984 of the sambódromo),⁴⁹¹ very little has been written on the industrialization of São João throughout the Northeast. In part, the nordestino celebration is seen as a positive counterpart to carnival (which is often associated with ostentatious shows of sexuality and libertine madness), in which celebrants relive the naïve purity of invented tradition; this often silences critics of commercialization, as the very things that are being industrialized in the São João complex are considered to be infused with traditional and family values.

more specifically Caruaru, on the map. According to Bishop, “soon afterward local officials began to capitalize on their notoriety by staging cultural events for the growing number of tourists beginning to seek out the city. Bishop 191.

⁴⁹⁰ Bishop 191.

⁴⁹¹ On the commercialization of carnival, see: Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, “Escolas de samba no Rio de Janeiro, ou a domesticação da massa urbana,” *Ciência e Cultura* (Vol. 36, 1984), 893-909; Robin E. Sheriff, “The Theft of Carnival: National Spectacle and Racial Politics in Rio de Janeiro,” *Cultural Anthropology* (14:1, 1999), 3-28.

Nevertheless, the commercialization of folklore does have its critics. In a symposium in 1970,⁴⁹² Renato Almeida invoked the moniker of *fakelore* to stand for all alterations, inventions, fabrications, or sophistications of the reality of folk life.⁴⁹³ And while many fans prefer to believe that São João has always been a rural tradition celebrated in a suspiciously urban way, others are more pragmatic. As Jack Bishop writes:

In interviews conducted in rural Pernambuco, I was hard pressed to find any testimonies that alluded to organized communal festivities of São João prior to WWII. This sentiment was exemplified by the comments of one *forrozeiro*: “Formerly, São João took place in the house for family and neighbors. It wasn’t an organized street event as it is today.”

Still, his suggestion that the celebration may not, in fact, have age-old status, was greeted with a certain wariness:

As I continued my inquiry I inadvertently aroused suspicion among locals when I suggested that the festival might be a popular invention. Apparently, the festival has shed the original skin of a tourist event and has donned the cloak of tradition.⁴⁹⁴

Surely, São João has been celebrated in Brazil since early colonization; we know, at the very least, that the bonfires of São João date back several centuries, according to Darcy Ribeiro, who quotes a Jesuit priest commenting on them as far back as the 1580s.⁴⁹⁵ But the exuberant and exorbitant festivals that communities expect these days – with thirty days straight of fifteen-hours-a-day programming – are certainly of

⁴⁹² Note this date coincides with the commercialization and increased tourism that Larry Crook pointed out in the Caruaru area of Pernambuco.

⁴⁹³ Renato Almeida, “Folclore e turismo cultural,” *Revista Brasileira de Folclore*, (Vol. 10:28 [1970]), 199-203. In Bishop 188.

⁴⁹⁴ “*Antigamente, São João era uma coisa da casa pra família e vizinhos. Não era da rua organizado como hoje.*” Bishop 191.

⁴⁹⁵ Ribeiro 128. Frei Vicente, of Salvador, also wrote of the São João bonfires in his *História do Brasil 1500-1627*. See also: *Festejos Juninos* 93.

recent origin. Still, as when speaking of Luiz Gonzaga, the adjectives “authentic,” “genuine,” “legitimate” and “traditional” are still regularly invoked to describe the São João programming.

Jack Bishop is particularly interested in what he refers to as a “compound” invented tradition: “an invention that is built upon a previously invented tradition and has become a tradition in and of itself.” The compound invented tradition that he examines in his article “Vem Arrasta-pé: Commoditizing Forró Culture in Pernambuco, Brazil” is the “Forró train” tourist attraction that makes a day trip from Recife to Cabo de Santo Agostinho most days during the São João season. The five-hour journey takes place in a train adorned with typical São João decorations, and local bands provide dancing music for the patrons who can also enjoy seasonal snacks and imbibe seasonal liquors and beer while in locomotion. The forró train first appeared in 1991 as a tourist initiative sponsored by the state tourism agency Empetur and private tourism entrepreneur Anderson Pacheco.⁴⁹⁶ Writes Bishop, “by 1996, a mere five years after its inception, *trem do forró* was being referred to by the media as one of São João’s greatest traditions.”⁴⁹⁷

Billed as “the Most Authentic São João,” the program of events in Recife becomes a more extravagant party each year. In June of 2009, the São João Coordinator Luiz Cledon Valença planned twenty-four days of festivities, many of them continuing until 4:00 am and commencing again at 9:00 am. He decided to include two guests of

⁴⁹⁶ Owner of Serrambi tourist agency and former commissioner of an earlier (and more limited) rendition of the forró train between Recife and Caruaru.

⁴⁹⁷ Bishop 191.

honor⁴⁹⁸ (as opposed to one, as in many years in the past) and arranged for a total of six performance spaces throughout the city, for a total of eighteen stages.⁴⁹⁹ For the first time, City Hall adopted the carnival tradition of having announcers at each stage, for a total of eighteen⁵⁰⁰ announcers that would introduce 300 artists in 550 performances. These statistics don't account for the quadrilha competitions, which involve hundreds of participants⁵⁰¹ across various sectors of the city. In addition, the municipal administration set up sixteen community centers within the six main performance spaces as well as 700 neighborhood centers (for outlying areas). Not all of the price tag was covered by the municipality alone; in addition to the Ministry of Culture, five private companies agreed to endorse the festivities at various levels.⁵⁰² The cities of Caruaru and Campina Grande continue to ramp up production of their own São João program. It seems that, more and more, cities across the Nordeste – Recife included – are in a race to establish themselves as the trendiest “brand” of São

⁴⁹⁸ The guests of honor in 2009 were João Silva (author of several classic forró songs recorded and made famous by the great Luiz Gonzaga: “Danado de Bom,” “Nem Se Despediu de Mim,” “Não Deixe a Tanga Voar,” “Sanfoninha Choradeira,” “Pagode Russo” and “Meu Araripe”) and Jackson do Pandeiro, a hugely popular performer of côcos and other regional music and dance who livened up Brazil’s stages, radios, and televisions until his death in 1982. Compare this (as well as 2007-08) to past years: 2008: Zé Bicudo (José da Silva), Dominginhos, Trio Nordestino; 2007: Luiz Queiroga and Camarão; 2006: o Coruja (Arnaldo Francisco das Neves); 2005: Chiquinha Gonzaga; 2004: Sivuca; 2003: Martins do Pandeiro.

⁴⁹⁹ Sítio Trindade, a Praça do Arsenal da Marinha, o Pátio de São Pedro, a Rua Tomazina, o Nascedouro de Peixinhos e a Colônia Z1 de Pescadores do Pina.

⁵⁰⁰ “PCR capacita locutores para o São João 2009,” (5 June, 2009). Accessed 10 September 2009. http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/2009/06/05/pcr_capacita_locutores_para_o_sao_joao_2009_167048.php

⁵⁰¹ “PCR capacita locutores para o São João 2009.”

⁵⁰² Private sponsors include: Cachaça 51, Sabão Ala, Bombom Sonho de Valsa, Guarnier Fructis and Banco do Nordeste. “Programação do São João 2009 é apresentada” (21 May 2009) Accessed 10 Sept. 2009. http://www.recife.pe.gov.br/2009/05/21/programacao_do_sao_joao_2009_e_apresentada_166775.php

João. The invented tradition – of the Northeast, and its quintessential symbol, São João – is experiencing careening commercial success.

Inventing Tradition: The Role of Nordestinos in Their Invented Tradition

Referring to the political use of the Nordeste and its cultural traditions,

Albuquerque writes:

It didn't matter if *cangaceiro* bandits and fanatics no longer existed in the Northeast, or if what is called *coronelismo* had long ago been transformed; what matters is the taking back of these myths that remain alive in the popular memory, in the region and outside of it, and the positioning of it within another discursive strategy, to serve another political goal, to call attention to the necessity of social transformation, and for that it was necessary to show that nothing had changed in the Northeast.⁵⁰³

Albuquerque makes an interesting point here; he argues that the traditionalist stance of the invented Nordeste serves to further transformative political goals. What he is arguing here is that the more steeped the Northeast seems in the past, the more liable it is to receive government handouts. Still, there is much more to Albuquerque's text than this. While he deplores what Benedict Anderson called a "systematic historiographical campaign,"⁵⁰⁴ Albuquerque also interrogates the agency of nordestinos themselves in the construction of the Nordeste. He writes, "the region...

⁵⁰³ "Não importava se não existiam mais no Nordeste cangaceiros e fanáticos, se o que se chamou de coronelismo há muito se transformara; o que importa é a retomada destes mitos que permanecem vivos na memória popular, na região e fora dela, e recolocá-los em outra estratégia discursiva, para servir a outro fim político, chamar atenção para a necessidade de transformação social, e para isso era necessário mostrar que nada mudara no Nordeste." Albuquerque 276.

⁵⁰⁴ "...deployed by the state mainly through the state's school system, to 'remind' every young Frenchman and Frenchwoman of a series of antique slaughters which are now inscribed as "family history." Anderson 201.

was not created simply by outsiders, but by its own discourses and reproduced by its own people.”⁵⁰⁵ Indeed, one recalls the words of Geertz, placed slightly out of context: it is a story they tell themselves about themselves.⁵⁰⁶

Albuquerque includes a passionate outcry in his introduction, pondering the positionality of miserable moochers that nordestinos have both bought into and recreated for themselves:

How, through our own discursive practices, have we reproduced a mechanism of power that reserves a space for us as whining beggars, do we produce and reproduce a knowledge in which we feel pleasure in saying and showing that we are poor souls? What masochism is it that makes us feel proud of our discrimination, that makes us happily accept our place as subjugated, as defeated?⁵⁰⁷

The warning against building a life out of donations is not a novel suggestion – even Luiz Gonzaga, who himself played into a half dozen of the most egregious nordestino stereotypes – asked the nation’s leaders not to turn the nordestinos into beggars: “But Sir, alms for a healthy man / Either he dies of embarrassment or it becomes a vice.”⁵⁰⁸

The strength of Albuquerque’s argument derives from his conviction that the

⁵⁰⁵ “A região... não foi gestada apenas fora dela, mas por seus próprios discursos e reproduzida por seu próprio povo.” Albuquerque 307.

⁵⁰⁶ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 448.

⁵⁰⁷ “Como, por meio de nossas práticas discursivas, reproduzimos um dispositivo de poder que nos reserva o lugar de pedintes lamurientos, produzimos e reproduzimos um saber em que sentimos prazer de dizer e mostrar que somos pobres coitados? Que masoquismo é esse que faz nos orgulharmos dessa discriminação, que faz aceitarmos felizes o lugar de derrotados, de vencidos?” Albuquerque 20-1.

⁵⁰⁸ Mas doutô uma esmola a um homem qui é são / Ou lhe mata de vergonha ou vicia o cidadão. “Vozes da Seca.” Zédantas & Luiz Gonzaga, 1953.

reproduction of these oppressive discourses is not limited to the dominant classes⁵⁰⁹ – and that there is little satisfaction to be had in “throwing out the key.”

In fact, it’s important to consider not just the role of nordestinos in the construction of the Northeast and of the forróscape, but the role of performers in perpetuating this invented tradition. In her book *Performing Africa*, Paula Ebron points to the role of “West African cultural aficionados, world music enthusiasts, policy makers, performers, social scientists, journalists, media spectators, and tourists”⁵¹⁰ in helping to form and contest notions of Africa. Indeed, she is concerned with “the ways performance becomes a frame of *enactment*,” creating ideas and images of Africa not just within the physical boundaries of Africa but also in the *performance of Africa* for wide-ranging audiences. As she developed her fieldwork she became increasingly concerned with the interviews with several jali, who seemed not only uninterested in the questions she had prepared and the knowledge of their traditions that she brought to their encounters, but preoccupied in providing material that was “repetitive and sometimes included what appeared to be an utterly rote recitation.”⁵¹¹ These reiterations, she discovered, were in fact “practiced and packaged presentations”⁵¹² that the jali had prepared as “a commodified form for international consumption.”⁵¹³ Indeed, Ebron laments: “...the repetitions of facts I

⁵⁰⁹ Albuquerque 311-12.

⁵¹⁰ Paula A Ebron, *Performing Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.

⁵¹¹ Ebron 135.

⁵¹² *Ibid*, 136.

⁵¹³ *Ibid*, 136.

heard suggested that jali were often telling me what they thought foreigners expected to hear.”⁵¹⁴

In the case of the Nordeste, “artists and narrators are producing nostalgia as much for themselves as others,⁵¹⁵ as Linda-Anne Rebhun writes in her ethnography of love in the Northeast of Brazil. Indeed, nearly every traditional forró band that clambers onto stage invokes the spirit of Luiz Gonzaga, and with it, a slew of stereotypes that help to perpetuate the invented Nordeste. These performances underscore the adjectives “authentic,” “real,” “genuine,” “traditional,” etc. by hewing close to the image of the uneducated and lazy matuto bumpkin, who is undeniably linked to the soil but with both feet planted firmly in the past. Press interviews and stage introductions inevitably harken back to the pristine bucolic life of the sertão, and performers make a concerted effort to present themselves as closely linked to the land and the age-old tradition of forró. Nearly all express intense saudade for Luiz Gonzaga and the world that he represents, and speak of forró as a genre imbued with history and everything good that modern society has lost.

**Conclusion:
Laying Roots and Routes⁵¹⁶ Across the Nordeste**

As common as the adjectives “authentic,” “legitimate,” “real,” “genuine,” and “traditional” are in descriptions of the forróscape, one trope that stands out in nearly

⁵¹⁴ Ibid, 136.

⁵¹⁵ Rebhun 37.

⁵¹⁶ I employ here the homonyms suggested by James Clifford. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 215.

every interview, pamphlet, website and performance is the invocation of “raíz,” or roots. Raíz has come to mean “the” tradition, and it implies a reiterative rendition of popular culture that traces back to an uninterrupted trajectory, to ancient history. In describing a traditional ensemble, one must only call it “fornó de raíz” for everyone to understand its citationality to this sacred trajectory. Luiz Gonzaga is a stop along that path – he is, after all, considered the “father” of fornó – but it is noteworthy that he himself is said to have been a “pure” repository of age-old traditions of the sertão. The fornóscape – including the canon and the performance style – that he assembled is thus imbued with the deepest raízes of tradition of the Northeast.

Is it ironic that the term used by so many to refer to the most ancient and sacrosanct of traditions in the Northeast is related to the organic system that allows drought-resistant plants to survive the harsh environment of the sertão? Is it surprising that *roots* would take on such cultural importance in an area where so many nordestinos have been *uprooted* from their land due to environmental and social degradation?

Historically, northeastern music stemmed from the troubadour performers who created music by referencing both the traditional roots of the sertão and the various routes⁵¹⁷ across the backlands that they regularly traversed. Even today, musicians must have a firm grasp on both roots and routes in order to ensure professional success across the fornóscape. In a manner similar to Brazil’s positionality vis-à-vis modernity and tradition, artists must straddle both roots and routes in order to

⁵¹⁷ Acclaimed novelist João Guimarães Rosa underscores the importance of the image of these routes, *veredas*, in the title of his classic novel *Grande Sertão: Veredas*.

properly express the invented tradition that is so popular for forró audiences around the region, the nation and the world.

As nordestinos traverse their drought-prone sertão across well-worn routes, then, it is the ideal of *roots* of the land that they cherish and that holds them fast to the construction of the Northeast as an invented tradition. As the twenty-first century sweeps the world off its feet with increased industrialization and modernization and decreased sensations of space and time, the forróscape beckons nordestinos, Brazilians and world citizens to take a load off by imagining an altogether different world. As Svetlana Boym writes: “the urban renewal taking place in the present is no longer futuristic but nostalgic; the city imagines its future by improvising on its past.”⁵¹⁸ Put another way: the Nordeste imagines its prospective routes by improvising on – or simply reiterating – its roots.

⁵¹⁸ Boym 75.

Chapter Four

Luiz Gonzaga: Performing the Nordeste

*Trouxe um triângulo, no matolão
Trouxe um gonguê, no matolão
Trouxe um zabumba dentro do matolão
Xóte, maracatu e baião
Tudo isso eu trouxe no meu matolão*⁵¹⁹

- “Pau de Arara”, Luiz Gonzaga & Guio de Moraes, 1952

If we were to distill forró music down to its most basic elements, we would be left with two fundamental characters: Luiz Gonzaga and his accordion. In Brazil, both would become iconic markers of the forró genre – and an inseparable duo that even today evoke the imagery of a northeastern *fórrscape* in the imaginations of nearly all Brazilians. This chapter focuses on the life story of Luiz Gonzaga and the development of his musical persona, ultimately examining his role in the development of a musical ‘invented tradition.’ Luiz Gonzaga, more than any one other person, has carved out a space for traditional rhythms and melodies – as well as for his iconic instrument – in the history of Brazilian popular music, and his music continues to be reinterpreted in countless creative refractions across the nation as well as abroad. As one contemporary has observed, Gonzaga single-handedly ‘blazed a trail’ for the accordion’s musical success in Brazil.⁵²⁰ I would like to trace that path,

⁵¹⁹ I brought a triangle, in my rucksack / I brought a cowbell, in my rucksack / I brought a *zabumba* drum, in my rucksack / xote, maracatu and baião / all of this I brought in my rucksack (see below for definitions)

⁵²⁰ Alcimar Monteiro (a popular show-man contemporary of Gonzaga’s) said “*a importância de Luiz Gonzaga na música brasileira é ímpar, porque o grande pernambucano começou a trilhar a estrada do sucesso numa época em que a canção brasileira recebia forte influência de modelos importados, como o das grandes orquestras, boleros e tangos...*” (“the importance of Luiz Gonzaga in Brazilian music is

analyzing along the way how he shaped Brazilian popular music and how his legacy still ricochets off the walls of dance halls across the nation. This gregarious accordionist arrived on the music scene at a pivotal moment in history, and in this section I will examine the national musical and political context which enabled Gonzaga's story to speak to an entire generation of Brazilians.

The instrument through which Gonzaga spoke to the nation was an accordion – first a small diatonic button accordion and later the large piano accordion that became his steady performing companion, as ubiquitous in press photos of the popular musician as Gonzaga's wide smiles. Brought to Brazilian shores in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the accordion became a popular instrument on which to interpret foreign tangos, boleros, schotisches, waltzes and mazurkas in the elite salons of the bigger cities at the turn of the century. Still, though popular even through the 1930s (when samba began to dominate the national scene), the *acordeom* would have faded into oblivion in Brazil had it not been for the music of Luiz Gonzaga, today remembered as the “godfather” of an entirely new Brazilian music and dance genre, forró. Gonzaga truly ‘rooted’ his love for the accordion in his native Brazil by creating and shaping musical ‘routes’ across this increasingly cosmopolitan and diverse country.

unequaled, because the great Pernambucano began to *blaze a trail* of success at a point in history when Brazilian song was being greatly influenced by foreign models, like the large orchestras, boleros and tangos...” In Gildson Oliveira, *Luiz Gonzaga: O matuto que conquistou o mundo* (Brasília: Letraviva, 2000), 37.

Young Gonzaga: The Early Foundations of Forró⁵²¹

Born December 13,⁵²² 1912 outside of the small Pernambucan town of Exu, where his family scraped out a living as sharecroppers, young Luiz was one of eight children born to Ana Bastista de Jesus and Januário José dos Santos. His name, which he shares with no one in the family, was chosen by the priest who baptized him: Luiz (in honor of Saint Luzia, who shares his date of birth) Gonzaga (the full name of Saint Luiz) Nascimento (in honor of the month both he and Jesus Christ were born). His father, Januário, was a hard-working man who would spend three days a week working the fields and his remaining time playing and fixing button accordions in the workshop off the main house; his mother, known to all as Santana, was a very devout woman who would sing religious *novenas* to commemorate various saints throughout the year. Growing up this musical household, young Gonzaga was exposed early to the *diversion-devotion* complex described by Elba Ramalho: a gendered musical world built around ‘secular’ catholicism (as it is practiced in the region), in which men are primarily involved in celebratory musical activities, while women are duty-driven toward the religious and ceremonial aspects of music-making.⁵²³

⁵²¹ Luiz Gonzaga is not the only artist to become emblematic of an entire genre; Murphy calls our attention to the work of sculptor Vitalino; dancer Nascimento do Passo; cavalo-marinho musician Salustiano. “It is as if there is room in the public’s attention for only one well-known practitioner of each traditional artistic genre, while in commercialized popular genres there can be dozens of such figures.” John Patrick Murphy, *Performing a Moral Vision: An Ethnography of Cavalo-Marinho, a Brazilian Musical Drama* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1994), 52.

⁵²² In homage to Gonzaga, the national “forró holiday” (Dia Nacional de Forró) is celebrated every year on the thirteenth of December, Gonzaga’s date of birth.

⁵²³ Elba Braga Ramalho, *Luiz Gonzaga: a síntese poética e musical do sertão* (São Paulo: Terceira Margem, 2000), 11, 19.

Santana's grandfather had emigrated from Europe, and her family was at first reluctant to marry her to Januário, a poor migrant who fled to the Araripe, Pernambuco area after a severe drought elsewhere in the state. Nonetheless, Santana and Januário were able to start a life together, she selling surplus crops in the weekly market and he playing nighttime parties throughout the region. Having settled in a relatively fertile area,⁵²⁴ they were able to make ends meet for their growing family, bartering for extra foodstuffs with other local sharecroppers. Santana tended the home and the garden; Januário did what work he could in the field when he wasn't sleeping off a late night performance. Occasionally another accordion player would come from afar and stay in their home while Januário set to fixing his instrument, but more often the broken contraptions piled up in a back room while Januário waited for parts or simply time to attend to them. As the children grew up, they contributed to the household economy in whatever way they could.

Most young boys born under similar circumstances would have begun working in the fields at twelve years old and would go on to have a family and settle down in the region, but the gregarious Luiz was of a different persuasion. When he was not yet eight months old, a troupe of gypsies who were passing through took an interest in the baby and pronounced: "He will be worldly... he will wander so much and so far that he will walk on calloused feet."⁵²⁵ The prophecy would come true less than eighteen years later, but in the meantime Luiz worked on broadening his horizons locally.

⁵²⁴ The foothills of the Araripe range drain water into the Cariri and Exu valleys, making Exu a near "oasis" in a region often swept by drought. Still, even though Gonzaga's family worked relatively dependable land, they led a simple rural lifestyle with no indoor plumbing or electricity.

⁵²⁵ "*Ele será do mundo, vai andar tanto, por cima e por baixo... que criará ferida nos pés.*" Gildson Oliveira 25.

Though none of the sharecroppers went to school, he learned the rudiments of reading and writing – even how to eat with a fork and knife⁵²⁶ – from the daughters of *Coronel* Aires de Alencar, the plantation landholder and local ‘bigwig’;⁵²⁷ young Gonzaga agreed to work as a private vassal for Mr. Aires as well, accompanying him on business trips around the area of Araripe, and Luiz joined a local group of Boy Scouts to learn his first lessons in discipline and survival.

More than anything, though, Luiz spent his spare time pawing through the old instruments in his father’s atelier and trying his hand at the 8-bass button accordion. Santana would protest, insisting he make an honest man of himself and not get caught up in the bohemian music world like his father – to no avail. Before long, Luiz could hold his own on the *sanfona*, and Januário started to bring him along to accompany him on his paid gigs at local *sambas*.⁵²⁸ That tiny taste of fame whet his appetite, and, before long he had saved up enough money from his job as *Coronel* Aires’s assistant to purchase a fancy new set of pants and shoes to wear to his weekend performances. Not only that, but Mr. Aires agreed to give Luiz an advance on his salary to purchase a brand new accordion he had seen in a shop window on one of their trips far from

⁵²⁶ Dominique Dreyfus, *Vida do Viajante: A saga de Luiz Gonzaga* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1997), 44.

⁵²⁷ In Northeast Brazil, the title of Colonel is not necessarily linked to a military position but instead is a moniker for respect. In the same way, a “Doctor” (*doutor*) may not have a college education; his name indicates instead a respected social position. I use the Brazilian spelling to call attention to this difference.

⁵²⁸ In fact, there is a great elasticity in Brazilian popular music for definitions and terms; at the time “samba” designated a musical party, a dance, not the specific style that had yet to root itself as the hegemonic popular music of the nation. In one interview, Gonzaga claimed there were parties every weekend, though often he had to walk a dozen miles or borrow a horse to get there. (“*Mas o que ninguém perdia mesmo, eram os forrós, todo fim de semana...*” “But what no one missed out on, were the dances, every weekend...”) Dreyfus 37.

home.⁵²⁹ It was only a question of time – in order to pay off his debt to the Coronel – before Luiz would become a professional musician.

In 1926, when Gonzaga started performing on the local circuit, musical accompaniment was a rustic affair, often with just one button accordion or a pair of fifes and fiddles to keep the dancers moving. The button accordion, often called *sanfona* or *fole*,⁵³⁰ has a contested history in Brazil. Some believe it was brought to the South of Brazil in 1875⁵³¹ by Italian emigrants to replace the viola as it “was considered easier to learn and more suitable for the performance of the salon dance music that was reaching the rural folk.”⁵³² Larry Crook, on the other hand, argues that in the 1860s the instrument was already being transported from the Italian settlements in the South to the Northeast by returning veterans from the Brazil-

⁵²⁹ Gonzaga bought his first sanfona in Ouricuri with help from his boss Coronel Aires. The brand new sanfona was worth 120,000 réis and he earned 700 réis a day. Gonzaga worked to save up 60,000 and the Coronel forwarded him the rest to be paid back so he could pick up the instrument on one of their journeys. Eventually this was the same accordion he would sell to buy a train ticket to Fortaleza. Dreyfus 44-5.

⁵³⁰ Though I have no confirmation of this, I suspect that the word “fole” evolved from the Portuguese word *folia*, for revelry or merriment. (See also French *folie*.)

⁵³¹ There are extreme discrepancies regarding the invention of the accordion itself. According to different sources, the accordion was invented in Germany by Friedrich Buschmann in 1822 (Sulamita Viera, *O Sertão em Movimento: a dinâmica da produção cultural* [São Paulo: Annablume, 2000], 107; Dicionário de Música Zahar); in Vienna by Cyurillis Damina in 1829 (Enciclopédia Delta Universal Acordeão); in Vienna by Damian Hackel in 1828 (Enciclopédia Luso Brasileira de Cultura); and in Vienna by Francês C. Buffet in 1827 (Enciclopédia Luso Brasileira de Cultura). Another source notes that a rudimentary accordion, the *cheng*, was constructed in China in B.C. 2700. Carmem Lélis, *São João: Manifestação de Fé, Celebração da Alegria* (Recife: Prefeitura do Recife, Ciclo Junino 2004), 20. See also Marcos Mattos Madeira, *A Evolução do Baião: A solidificação de um gênero musical nordestino como música da moda dos centros urbanos atuais e principalmente do meio acadêmico* (Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil: 1999), 44-5. Indeed, the original patent for the accordion design was not protected internationally and thus was quickly copied in many areas of Europe. See Simonett *The Accordion on New Shores*, Ed. Helena Simonett (Champaign, Illinois: Illinois University Press, forthcoming)

⁵³² Maria Elizabeth Lucas, “Gaucho Musical Regionalism,” *British Journal of Musicology* 9/1 (2000): 53-6. In John Patrick Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 127. In Rio Grande do Sul (in the South of Brazil), the same instrument is referred to as *gaita*.

Paraguay war.⁵³³ In exactly what year the accordion made it to the hinterlands of Pernambuco is unclear, but certainly it had become a mainstay of local entertainment by the turn of the century. Often referred to in the hinterlands as *harmônica* or *concertina*,⁵³⁴ the button accordion was also called “pé-de-bode,” or “goat’s foot,” a reference that Murphy believes dates back to the days when even more rudimentary instruments (with only two basses) were played in the region; “the analogy seems to be with the division of the goat’s hoof into two parts.”⁵³⁵ Even with its diverse nomenclature, however, one should not confuse the button accordion with the keyboard *acordeom*⁵³⁶ which was then gaining fame in foreign clubs and cabarets in Rio de Janeiro; the latter was considered an elite instrument while the former was a marker of plebian background. In her biography of Gonzaga, Dominique Dreyfus writes:

Gonzaga used to love saying... that ‘accordion’ and ‘sanfona’ were the same instrument, but when an artist played salon music, he was an accordionist, and when he played popular music, he turned into a ‘sanfoneiro.’⁵³⁷

⁵³³ Larry Crook, “Caboclo Traditions: Music of the Northeast Interior,” *Music in Latin American Culture: Regional Traditions*, Ed. John M. Schechter (New York: Shirmer Books, 1999), 213. Carmem Lélis agrees with this assertion, dating the arrival of the accordion in Brazil to 1864, during the Paraguay war. Lélis 20.

⁵³⁴ Dreyfus 35.

⁵³⁵ John Patrick Murphy, *Music in Brazil*, 104. Peter Fryer notes an early mention of a “pé de cabra” by Nuno Marques Pereira (1652-1728) in a list of African musical instruments, concluding that it meant “crowbar” and “perhaps indicating a kind of striker.” Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 161.

⁵³⁶ Unlike most accordions featured today, the button accordion has ‘buttons’ along either side (for both melody and bass chord accompaniment) and functions much like a harmonica, with each ‘button’ having two possible tones, depending on whether air is entering or exiting the interior reeds.

⁵³⁷ “Gonzaga se divertia dizendo, com toda razão, que *acordeom e sanfona eram o mesmo instrumento, mas, quando o artista tocava música de salão, era acordeonista, e, quando era mais popular, tornava-se sanfoneiro.* Dreyfus 79. In the 1930s, instead of sanfoneiro, they used “sanfonista.” Dreyfus 87.

Indeed, another biographer noted that “a rich man’s son doesn’t call himself a *sanfona* player, but an *accordion* player.”⁵³⁸ Later in life Gonzaga would refer to both piano and button accordions as ‘sanfonas’ – and consolidate the term, in Brazilian parlance, for *either* instrument.

For several years, Gonzaga made a living playing gigs on the weekends. The popular social dances of Europe (polka, quadrille, waltz, mazurka and schottische) and Latin America (tango, habanera) had arrived along with the accordion in the Northeast and he kept his audiences dancing to foreign favorites as well as regional rhythms and hybrid sounds. When not playing for tips, he could be found helping out around the house or flirting with girls he met in town or at his performances. His new profession gave him access to and prestige among the ladies, and Luiz loved them all. At one point, deep in the throes of love with a young girl named Nazarena, Gonzaga was devastated to discover that her father, a white middle-class man, would not accept him, a dark-skinned son of a share-cropper, as a son-in-law. Gonzaga set out to defy him at knifepoint but instead ended up drunk, humiliated and whipped into submission by his mother. As Gonzaga tells the story, that episode was the last straw; he was ready for a bigger world than his native Araripe.

With the premise of playing a gig at a far-away ranch, Gonzaga slinked off, his ego still smarting, with his sanfona under one arm. He would sell it at the nearest big town to pay his train ticket to the capital city of Fortaleza, Ceará, where he headed straight for the military camps. Though he wasn’t yet of legal age for military

⁵³⁸ Gildson Oliveira 50.

service, he was nonetheless accepted, and a decade-long adventure during which he would see a good bit of the country began.

As an army recruit, Gonzaga was able to feed the dream of social ascension that had been growing since his early days at the Alencar household. Ever since he was introduced to the finery available at the Colonel's home, he fixated on wealth and on personal eminence. As Gonzaga acknowledged later:

They also taught me how to eat at the table, with knife and fork, so I wouldn't look uncivilized. Because at that time, there weren't hotels, so when we travelled, we stayed with friends, or acquaintances of the Colonel, high class people! But when I returned home, oh! I didn't want to sink down to eating with a spoon, like the rest of the family! I got spoiled!⁵³⁹

A career in the military offered a route toward a different kind of life; as a young man with no education and few marketable skills, the only other means toward raising his social status would have been entering the seminary or a life of banditry. And Gonzaga loved life in the military – he loved following orders and getting familiar with all the corners of Brazil where his regiment was sent on various duties. He missed his life as a musician but thoroughly enjoyed the adventure of new assignments and the feeling of independence from the life he was born into. Three years in, he earned a spot as first-seat cornet player for the army, a feat which earned him the nickname “Beak of Steel”⁵⁴⁰ but was not satisfied with the cornet or even with a brief stint of guitar lessons. He tried out for a position as an accordion player in the army orchestra but was turned away at his audition; the maestro asked him to

⁵³⁹ “Elas me ensinaram também a comer na mesa, com garfo e faca, para não fazer feio. Porque naquela época, não havia hotel, então nas nossas andanças, nós ficávamos hospedados na casa dos amigos, ou dos familiares do coronel, gente fina! Só que quando eu voltava para casa, ah! Eu não queria mais comer de colher, como o resto da família! Fiquei enxerido!” Dreyfus 44.

⁵⁴⁰ “Bico de aço.”

play a “Mi bemol,”⁵⁴¹ and, having no elite musical training or understanding of music theory, Gonzaga was dismissed unceremoniously.

Gonzaga was determined to succeed musically, however. In 1936 he bought a 48-bass accordion and began training on it on his days off military duty – even managing small performances here and there – and in 1938 he picked out a white 80-bass Hohner from a traveling salesman’s catalog and began paying it down in small installments. A year later, when he arrived in São Paulo to pay the last installment and pick up his new instrument, Gonzaga discovered he had been tricked out of his money. Disconsolate, he shared the story with the hotel owner, who ‘sold’ him his own son’s accordion – also a white 80-bass Hohner – for the price of the last installment. That same year Gonzaga would leave the military (Brazil had a maximum cap of ten years, and Gonzaga was already at nine) and travel to Rio, where he would await a boat to take him home to Pernambuco. Except he never got on that boat.

A New Sound: Performing with a Pernambucan Accent

After his discharge in 1939, Gonzaga stayed in the military barracks in Rio while awaiting his transportation home. Alone and frightened of the massive metropolis (his years of service had all been in much smaller towns), he was averse to exploring the streets of Rio, until a soldier pointed him in the direction of the *Mangue*.⁵⁴² The

⁵⁴¹ A ‘Mi bemol’ is an “e flat.”

⁵⁴² Located in what is today “Cidade Nova,” the Mangue was a section of town first built up when the Royal Portuguese family fled Napoleon and settled in Rio de Janeiro – the capital of their vast colonial

Mangue was the red-light district of the capital, where the bulk of nightclubs and brothels were located, and musicians positioned themselves up and down the streets as well as inside the bars and restaurants to earn money for their trade. His ticket home forgotten, Gonzaga began his foray into the musical world of Rio.

For months Gonzaga trolled the red-light district with his Hohner 80-bass accordion, playing the waltzes, choros, blues, mazurkas, foxtrots and tangos that patrons would request – to rather tepid applause. He played on street corners and occasionally was invited to play in a bar (which would bring him slightly more gratuities) but just barely scraped by. His success began to change after he met his first music partner, guitarist Xavier Pinheiro, with whom he performed as a duo. Gonzaga slowly increased his network of musician friends and his opportunities to play, eventually leaving Xavier to play solo. He upgraded to a 120-bass Scandalli that he bought off a drunken sailor in the Mangue⁵⁴³ and booked appearances across the city. Even so, he ‘massacred’ the tangos so in vogue that were always being requested,⁵⁴⁴ enough that he lost one of his gigs and decided to take music lessons from Antenógenes Silva, the most sought-after accordionist in town, famous for his waltzes. He slowly improved his technique and started performing on the ‘*calouros*’ radio shows, looking for a break.

Created in the mid-thirties, the ‘*calouros*’ shows followed the formula of the newly successful “programas de auditório,” in which shows were broadcast live with a

holdings. Once a swamp, the Mangue was dredged and filled in, in order to provide housing. The area, however, was settled largely by gypsies and Jews and quickly became a hot spot for music, gambling and prostitution.

⁵⁴³ Dreyfus 79.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, 79.

studio audience. The calouros shows were set up by the major radio stations to discover talent; amateur artists were encouraged to showcase their best work in the live studio for a “score,” the highest of which might earn them a record deal. Gonzaga frequented the two most popular shows: Calouros em Desfile [Freshmen on Parade] with Ary Barroso and Papel Carbono [Carbon Paper] with Renato Murce.⁵⁴⁵ He tried performing tangos, waltzes, choros and sambas and did well – but never brilliantly. As Gonzaga later said in an interview:

When I play, speak, arrange, it’s all with my accent. My accent doesn’t allow me to sing waltzes, boleros, samba. My sanfona is just like me.⁵⁴⁶

Gonzaga came to understand his own artistic ‘accent’ – a veritable epiphany – through the intervention of a few law students from Ceará, close to his native home of Pernambuco. Six students who heard him performing at their favorite bar caught wind of him speaking and recognized his accent as similar to their own; they pestered him to play a song reminiscent of their homeland. Gonzaga at first declined, but agreed to return in thirty days after practicing some new material. The subsequent performance of “Pé de Serra,” followed by “Vira e Mexe,” was a huge hit:

It was crazy. I breathed deep, gave thanks and launched into “Vira e Mexe”... tiiiiiii-tiriririririririrum, tchan tanran tanran tanran tanran... Ah! It got even crazier. The bar seemed like it was going to catch on fire. It had filled up completely, people at the door, out on the street, trying to get a look at what was happening in the bar. So I grabbed a dish (for tips). By the time it got to

⁵⁴⁵ Arlégo notes that at this point in his career he also appeared on Silvino Neto’s radio comedy show. Radio itself was changing, also, how the public ‘consumed’ its radio stars. Tinhorão points out that the switch to electric amplification valves (in the early 1930s) allowed for clearer reception and created a greater intimacy between broadcasters and the public; he underscores this change, noting that radio announcers began substituting “friends” for “ladies and gentlemen.” (“*senhores ouvintes*” vs. *‘amigos ouvintes.*”) José Ramos Tinhorão, *História Social da Música Brasileira* (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1990), 235.

⁵⁴⁶ “*Quando eu toco, falo, faço arranjo, é tudo com meu sotaque. O meu sotaque não me permite cantar valsa, bolero, samba. A minha sanfona é parecida comigo.*” Dreyfus 80-81.

the third table it was full. So I yelled: Gimme a bowl! Then a few moments later the bowl was full. So I asked for a pot! And I thought to myself: *now we're talking.*⁵⁴⁷

Shortly after his great success in the Mangue, Gonzaga returned to Ary Barroso's 'calouros' show prepared to play "Vira e Mexe" [Turn and Boogey]. Barroso, who recognized Gonzaga as the persistent but not exceptional accordionist of tangos and waltzes, made a sarcastic play on the title: "Well then turn yourself around and do a boogey!"⁵⁴⁸ After Gonzaga finished, the stunned audience went wild, and the announcer congratulated Gonzaga on the highest possible score. Luiz had discovered his accent – and it wasn't 'samba' or 'tango.' It was Pernambuco. Within a year of his 'calouros' show debut, Gonzaga had made his first solo recording with Victor Music.⁵⁴⁹ More than any other, the year 1941 represents the beginning of Gonzaga's rise to fame – as well as the start of an "invented tradition," with Luiz narrating the folklore of his homeland in his familiar and raucous Pernambuco accent.

The first press of Gonzaga's solo work was a two-piece series on 78s: *Véspera de São João* (a mazurka) and "Numa Serenata" (a waltz) on the first release, and the newly popular "Vira e Mexe (xamego/choro) with "Saudades de São João del Rei" (a waltz) on the second record. The release of the exotic "Vira e Mexe" on vinyl was one in a long line of marketing maneuvers that would mark his career and that would

⁵⁴⁷ "Foi uma loucura. Respirei fundo, agradei e joguei o "Vira e Mexe"... Tiiiii-tiriririririririririrum, tchan tanran tanran tanran tanran... Ah! Foi mais loucura ainda. Parecia que o bar ia pegar fogo. O bar tinha lotado, gente na porta, na rua, tentando ver o que estava acontecendo no bar. Aí peguei o pires. Na terceira mesa já estava cheio. Aí eu gritei: 'Me dá um prato!' Daqui há pouco o prato estava cheio. Aí pedi uma bandeja. E pensei: agora a coisa vai." Dreyfus 82-3.

⁵⁴⁸ "Então arrevire e mexe aí!"

⁵⁴⁹ Victor was one of two major multinational companies monopolizing the music business in Brazil – it later changed names to RCA Victor, then RCA and currently BMG. (The other multinational was Odeon, later called EMI.) Dreyfus 88.

consolidate his sound as that of the “northeast” of Brazil. “Vira e Mexe,” the hit that found such success on the ‘calouros’ show, was in fact a *choro*, rhythmically not entirely different from what was already playing on the radio. What set it apart from other choros was Gonzaga’s performance with an air of rustic folklore. To draw attention to its uniqueness, however, Gonzaga pronounced it not a “choro” but a “xamego,” in effect creating a new genre of music – one that was evocative of the sensuality of a backwoods romance. Later, Gonzaga explained that the genre’s title was inspired by his brother’s reaction to his accordion playing: “Oxente, isso é xamego!”⁵⁵⁰ The allusion to the genre as an emotion in and of itself caught on, and his albums disappeared as quickly as they were pressed.

With success finally at his doorstep, Gonzaga’s remained predictably self-confident, so much so that he began to express an interest in singing. He tried singing a few boleros and sambas in his live performances but found his voice didn’t fit the genres, and so once again he returned to his former success in order to carve out a space for a future singing career. He paired with Miguel Lima, who wrote lyrics to accompany his “Vira e Mexe,” renamed this time “Xamego,” and found relative success within his small performance circuit.

His voice, however, had nothing in common with the popular crooners of the day, and he would have to confront great opposition when trying to take his singing career to the radio. José Farias, in his biography of Gonzaga, writes:

In the musical context of the time, Luiz Gonzaga’s voice didn’t ‘match’ the vocal aesthetic set forth by Vicente Celestino, Nelson Gonçalves, Orlando

⁵⁵⁰ I might translate this as: “Whoop – that is sweet lovin’!”

Silva and Francisco Alves... the primary vocalists of the golden age of Brazilian radio.”⁵⁵¹

Indeed, Gonzaga’s contract with Victor/RCA explicitly stated that he perform instrumentals only – and the director of Tamoio Radio was so outraged with Gonzaga’s stubborn insistence to sing (which was outside of the stipulations of his contract) that he left multiple copies of a memo stapled to the walls around the studio, stating that “Luiz Gonzaga is explicitly prohibited from singing, as he has been contracted as an accordionist.”⁵⁵² Even as Gonzaga and his new composing partner, Miguel Lima, were able to sell their new songs to Rio’s best recording artists, Gonzaga stubbornly maintained his objective. He even dared to give stylistic advice to a Manezinho Araújo, a seasoned vocalist from the North who had reached considerable fame from his recordings of *emboladas* (a newly popularized rhythm from the north). Araújo, furious at Gonzaga’s impertinence, retorted that Luiz’s voice sounded “like shredded bamboo” and refused to collaborate with him again.⁵⁵³ Still, Luiz continued to work steadfastly toward his goal: to become a famous accordion player... *and* professional singer.

That opportunity came in 1945, with the release of “Dança, Dança Mariquinha,” a mild success, followed by “Cortando o Pano,” which out-sold all expectations,

⁵⁵¹ “No contexto musical da época, a voz de Luiz Gonzaga não combinava com a estética vocal de Vicente Celestino, Nelson Gonçalves, Orlando Silva e Francisco Alves, considerados os principais cantores dessa fase áurea do rádio brasileiro.” José Farias dos Santos, *Luiz Gonzaga: A Música como Expressão do Nordeste* (São Paulo: Instituição Brasileira de Difusão Cultural Ltda., 2002), 40.

⁵⁵² Luiz Gonzaga está “*terminantemente proibido de cantar, por ter sido contratado como sanfoneiro.*” Dreyfus 98.

⁵⁵³ Gildson Oliveira 45.

confirming Gonzaga as a singer and “demolishing the last barrier of resistance to his voice on the radio.”⁵⁵⁴ Shortly after its success, Gonzaga was contracted by Rádio Nacional – evidence that he was an upcoming new star with infinite potential.

1945: Rio’s Samba vs. ‘Música Regional’

In 1945 Rádio Nacional was the place to be.⁵⁵⁵ Of the hundreds of radio stations then operating in the country,⁵⁵⁶ Rádio Nacional was by far the most popular and housed all of the best performers and producers. It had been acquired by the State five years prior but continued to run as a commercial station, and it not only featured but determined the top talent and top shows in the nation. By 1945, the Brazilian polling organization IBOPE estimated that 85% of the households in Rio and São Paulo owned radios. By 1950, that figure had gone up to 95%.⁵⁵⁷ Not only that, but residents far away from the capital – in provincial cities all across the Brazilian territory – were tuning in, largely to Rádio Nacional.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁴ Dreyfus 102.

⁵⁵⁵ Mário Lago, a modern-day actor contracted by the Globo network compares Rádio Nacional of the 1940s and 1950s to Globo today: “it was listened to like an addiction.” (“*era ouvida por vício.*”) Gildson Oliveira 95.

⁵⁵⁶ Between 1941 and 1950 Brazil’s radio stations burgeoned from 100 to 300. Bryan McCann, *Hello Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 24. Orig. Mário de Andrade, *Cartas de Mário de Andrade a Luís da Câmara Cascudo* (Belo Horizonte: Villa Rica, 1991), 149.

⁵⁵⁷ McCann 23.

⁵⁵⁸ Writes Bryan McCann, “The anecdotal evidence of residents of far-flung provincial cities tuning in to Rádio Nacional in the 1940s and 1950s in order to establish some kind of connection to life in the capital could fill a book in itself. Luís da Câmara Cascudo, for example, the foremost scholar of Brazilian folklore in the period, was an assiduous listener. Living in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, some 1200 miles north of Rio, Câmara Cascudo regularly tuned in Almirante’s programs on Rádio Nacional, and the pair exchanged correspondence in which Câmara Cascudo gratefully acknowledged

At this point samba, still considered the national music, was getting plenty of radio air play – but its heyday was coming to an end. As one of Gonzaga’s biographers writes:

Having reached its golden age, samba’s popularity was plummeting, as the genre began to transform itself into *samba-canção*, the last stage of a transformation that would ultimately result in bossa nova. Alongside this *crooner-mania*, with... the *sambolero*, and every other kind of musical whining, there grew an interest for music with a folkloric taste.⁵⁵⁹

Indeed, after more than a decade of samba dominance, the mid-40s saw a surge in regional acts. All of the top radio stations (Rádio Nacional, Tupi, Rádio Clube, Mayrink Veiga and Tamoio) featured shows with regional content. These shows tended to emphasize the exotic nature of music from outside the capital; even the names of the shows (including “Incredible,” “Fantastic,” and “Extraordinary”) underscored this stereotype. Particularly popular at this time were the *sertanejo* duo, or ‘country twosome,’ of Alvarenga and Ranchinho as well as Raul Torres from the interior of São Paulo; Dorival Caymmi from Bahia; and Pedro Raimundo from Rio Grande do Sul.

Music from the Northeast was featured in its own shows – *Alma do Sertão*, *Noite na Roça* and *A Hora Sertaneja*⁵⁶⁰ – and of course, Luiz Gonzaga was hardly the only

Almirante’s contributions to his own studies. McCann 36-7. Ferreti, however, notes that the radio shows designed for the sertanejo public were broadcast outside of the prime time slots (“*fora dos horários nobres*”). Mundicarmo Maria Rocha Ferretti, *Baião dos Dois: Zedantas e Luiz Gonzaga* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1988), 16.

⁵⁵⁹ “*Finda a sua fase áurea, o samba estava decaindo, se transformando em samba-canção, última etapa de uma mutação que ia desembocar na bossa nova. Ao lado da crooner-mania, com... o samba-canção, o sambolero, e toda sorte de dor-de-cotovelo musicada, surgia um interesse pela música de sabor folclórico.*” Dreyfus 112. Indeed, the introduction of foreign elements (including bolero, beguine, guaracha, and cha-cha-cha) began to transform the samba, which developed fusions (samba + bolero = sambolero) (samba + balada = sambalada) that were argued by many to deteriorate the musical form. See José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena história da música popular: da modinha ao tropicalismo* (São Paulo: Art Editora, 1986), 212; Ramalho 27.

artist hailing from the hinterlands up north. As far back as the 1910s and 1920s artists from the Northeast had found national audiences that appreciated their regional sound.⁵⁶¹ Early in the twentieth century the circus clown Eduardo das Neves tapped into the potential for exoticization of northeastern music and dance, playing to huge crowds in Rio.⁵⁶² A decade later, Catulo de Paixão Cearense and João Pernambucano wrote the perennial hits “Caboca de Caxangá” and “Luar de Sertão” (respectively) which would catapult them to national fame.

João Teixeira Guimarães (1883-1947), who would take his home state as his stage moniker, was born outside of Recife and arrived in Rio as a young adult, where he joined several renowned choro groups (including Grupo Caxangá and, later, the Oito Batutas⁵⁶³) as a guitarist. A post as a city official allowed him the freedom to tend to his musical career,⁵⁶⁴ and he soon built up a reputation as a composer of northeastern côcos and toadas as well as instrumental pieces for the guitar. In 1912 he met Catulo de Paixão Cearense, a singer and popular poet originally from the northern state of Ceará; Catulo was taken with João’s deep repertory of rural northeastern tunes, particularly those from the sugar-cane region of Pernambuco. The two would

⁵⁶⁰ “Soul of the Sertão,” “Evening on the Ranch,” “The Sertanejo Hour.”

⁵⁶¹ “Musique du Nordeste,” a two-volume cd released by Buda Musique in 1999, includes many early artists of the northeast, including Luiz Gonzaga, Manezinho Araújo, João Pernambucano, and Jararaca & Ratinho.

⁵⁶² See Tinhorão, *Pequena História*, 191.

⁵⁶³ The Oito Batutas (literally, the eight conductors’ batons) was an early choro band that included, in addition to João Pernambucano, the future samba giants Donga and Pixinguinha.

⁵⁶⁴ Tinhorão emphasizes the importance for Rio de Janeiro musicians of landing a coveted position as a public official. One of few available occupations that had inherent job security and paid well, public employment allowed musicians the flexibility necessary for rehearsals and performances while guaranteeing a certain quality of life and allowing for greater access to middle- and upper-class music audiences. See Tinhorão, *Pequena História*, 200.

collaborate and, together, pave the way for future artists from the North, the likes of Manezinho Araújo (from just outside Recife), Laura Maia from Ceará, Augusto Calheiros from Alagoas, and the Turunas Pernambucanas (from which the Jararaca and Ratinho⁵⁶⁵ duo sertaneja would form) as well as the Turunas de Mauricéia.⁵⁶⁶

Though quite popular, these groups began trafficking regional folklore after samba had already been consolidated as the national music. As Fred Moehn explains:

Folk musics were more often relegated to ‘regionalist’ status. This helps to explain why... música sertaneja and *música baiana*, [music from the state of Bahia] although mass-mediated, are today still not typically associated with national identity, while MPB [*música popular brasileira*, a folk-rock genre], with its roots in Rio de Janeiro’s musical traditions, is. In effect, it sets up a hierarchical structure of regional cultures: *carioca* [Rio de Janeiro] culture becomes a synecdoche for ‘national culture;’ other regional cultures, by necessity, are subordinated.⁵⁶⁷

In fact, in large part the regional groups had not been able to break through because they lacked a marketing concept for an increasingly consumerist music industry. With the exception of the embolada, which had been popularized in the South by Manezinho Araújo, none of the traditional musics of the North – like the fife bands (*banda de pífanos*) or freestyle poetry jams (*desafio*) – had found an audience in the South. Neither had any of the traditional instruments of the North – the button accordion, the fiddle, the fife, the zabumba drum – taken root in the South.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁵ The Jararaca and Ratinho duo was formed by two nordestinos: José Luiz Rodrigues Calazans, Severino Rangel de Carvalho. José Teles, “Gonzagão: O sanfoneiro danado de bom,” *Continente Documento* [No. 22] (Recife: Companhia Editora de Pernambuco, 2004), 17.

⁵⁶⁶ Ferretti 59. See also Tinhorão, *Pequena História*, 195-6.

⁵⁶⁷ Frederick Moehn, *Mixing MPB: Cannibals and Cosmopolitans in Brazilian Popular Music* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. Music, NYU, 2001), 113-14.

⁵⁶⁸ Dreyfus claims that part of the reason behind the reluctance of artists to use instruments ‘native’ to the sertão (like the button accordion) was due to the fact that the rudimentary nature of the instruments made accompanying vocalizations difficult. Dreyfus 106.

In fact, even regional acts at the time used the same instruments popularized by samba groups from Rio.⁵⁶⁹ The timing was perfect for a new musical sound to take over Rio and its radio networks, and the capital was poised for the next big thing, waiting for an artist with a vision to redirect Brazilian music.

The music that Gonzaga performed was not in itself all that different from other material then available in the capital (recall the “choro” repackaged as “xamego”), but his manner of presenting it was. Dreyfus has called Gonzaga the “first industrial product of the northeast culture”⁵⁷⁰ and, indeed, he nearly singlehandedly invented a tradition of northeastern culture through the iconic performance of his “hymns” about Pernambuco’s back country. Gonzaga’s natural talent, however, was not composing: while he was one of the epoch’s top performers (and marketing geniuses), he ‘co-wrote’ nearly all of his material, sometimes contributing musical riffs or motifs while other times simply suggesting a theme. His great success – and the foundation for a brand new “northeastern” culture zone – lay in the special alchemy between Gonzaga and his co-authors.

Gonzaga’s Baião: Collaborating with Humberto Teixeira

Gonzaga first met Humberto Teixeira through another musician (Lauro Maia, Teixeira’s nephew) who had declined an official partnership with Gonzaga, thinking himself far too bohemian for the regimented and intense enterprise that Gonzaga had proposed with his typical enthusiasm. Teixeira, a Ceará-born intellectual who had

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 150.

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, 158.

earned his law degree in Rio just two years prior, had already authored several popular songs, all of them standard sambas, modinhas or waltzes. With Gonzaga, he would break out of the mold and create an entirely new canon of Brazilian music. Their first song, “No Meu Pé de Serra,” was a sweet *xote* (a Brazilian-style schotissch)⁵⁷¹ in F major that reminisced about the verdant Araripe foothills Gonzaga had left behind in Exu. Today it is a well-known classic, but in 1946 it was eclipsed by Gonzaga/Teixeira’s next musical venture: baião.

Perhaps the biggest hit of the decade in Brazilian music, Teixeira and Gonzaga’s “Baião” had a simple premise: to introduce the music and dance of the Northeast to the rest of Brazil. It did so by tutoring its listeners:

I’m going to show you / how to dance the baião
and whoever wants to learn / please pay attention.”⁵⁷²

The song served as a manifesto for a new musical movement – one that brought the traditional musical styles of the backlands to the capital city where they would be revamped and appreciated anew as urban popular culture with a rustic twist. In fact, the 1946 release of “Baião” by Quatro Ases e Um Coringa (with Gonzaga accompanying on accordion) would spark a new dance craze so popular that Gonzaga had to wait three years in order to record it himself. According to one study, the newly minted baião genre came to dominate an astonishing 80% of musical performances across Brazil over the ten years after its first release.⁵⁷³ The genre is,

⁵⁷¹ The *xote* (pronounced show-chee) derives from the German/Hungarian *schotissch*, which found great popularity in Britain and France in the late 1840s. From there, it was said to have been brought to Brazilian shores in 1851 by dance teacher José Maria Toussaint.

⁵⁷² Eu vou mostrar pra vocês / como se dança o baião / e quem quiser aprender / é favor prestar atenção

⁵⁷³ Farías dos Santos 50. Sulamita reports that between 1950-55, 1,057 baião recordings (of 1,822 total) were produced out of Rio de Janeiro, peaking between 1952-53. Sulamita 44.

today, one of the most important musical trends in twentieth-century Brazilian music, sandwiched between samba and bossa nova (historically) and poised to impact greatly a number of popular styles later in the century.

Baião was framed as a traditional rhythm from the hinterlands that Gonzaga had “rescued” and “redressed” for urban consumption, but it was as much ‘invented’ as it was ‘tradition.’⁵⁷⁴ Back where he grew up, a baião, also called *rojão*, was the plucking of strings as the troubadours prepared their musical poetry duels. As Gonzaga remembered:

There wasn’t really a set music that characterized it [baião], with lyrics or anything. It was something you would say like “gimme a baião...” And someone would sing, “I’ve got my guitar I tuned the strings... nham nham... nham nhamm...” It was just to set the mood, a prelude to the singing. It’s what the singer does when he starts to strum the guitar, waiting for inspiration.”⁵⁷⁵

Many ethnomusicologists have debated the history of the baião before Gonzaga brought it to national attention,⁵⁷⁶ showing the genre to have matured over more than

⁵⁷⁴ The earliest recorded mention of the musical form “baião” was a 1920s song by Jararaca (José Luiz Rodrigues Calazans), featuring Luperce Miranda: Bahiana I immerse myself / in the rhythm of the baião / shake it little Bahiana / break my heart; *Bahiana eu vou mergulhando / no compasso do baião / requebra mais bahianinha / machuca meu coração...* Ferretti 8.

⁵⁷⁵ “Mas não tinha uma música que caracterizasse ele, com letra própria nem nada. Era uma coisa que se falava: “Dá um baião ai...” E alguém cantava: “Já apanhei minha viola já afinei o meu bordão... nham nham... nham nhamm...” tinha só o tempero, que era um prelúdio da cantoria. E aquilo que o cantador faz quando começa a pontear a viola, esperando a inspiração.” Roberta Lana de Alencastre Ceva, *Na Batida da Zabumba: uma análise antropológica do forró universitário* (Master’s Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro [Antopologia Social do Museu Nacional], 2001), 17. Interestingly, though Alvarenga cites Pernambuco as the “principal zone” of baião, she doesn’t include Pernambuco in a list of specific regions which feature diverse instrumental accompaniments to the baião (tambourine in Sergipe, *botijão* in Paraíba, rabeca in Maranhão). Oneyda Alvarenga, *Música Popular Brasileira* (São Paulo: Livraria Duas Cidades, 1982), 179-80.

⁵⁷⁶ On the etymology of baião/abaianada/baiano styles see: Larry Norman Crook, *Zabumba Music from Caruaru, Pernambuco: Musical Style, Gender, and the Interpenetration of Rural and Urban Worlds* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin, 1991), 235-36; José Ramos Tinhorão, *Os Sons dos Negros no Brasil: cantos, danças, folguedos, origens* (São Paulo: Art Editora, 1988); Alvarenga 177; Mário de Andrade, *Danças dramáticas do Brasil* (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia, 1982), Fryer; Adelino Brandão, *Euclides e o Folclore* (São Paulo: Jundá, 1985), 67; Gérard

a hundred years. Most concur that the baião arose from the *baiano* (whose name may stem from “bailar,” the verb “to dance” or from the state of Bahia), which in turn grew out of the lundu.⁵⁷⁷ Certainly, though, all agree that Gonzaga achieved a giant feat, managing with this one musical hit to standardize a genre – by underpinning the traditional syncopations with an accelerated steady 2/4 pulse⁵⁷⁸ – and to introduce it via mass media to the nation as a whole. The baião was only the first of many rhythms Gonzaga would popularize and the basis for the faster-paced *forró* rhythm which would later become the umbrella tune for a variety of regional genres. Still, the early success of the baião was so colossal that it earned Gonzaga his lifelong nickname “*Rei do Baião*,” King of Baião.⁵⁷⁹ Indeed, “Baião” could have been the hit of his career, had he and Humberto Teixeira not created an even bigger success, less than one year later.

Béhague, *The Beginnings of Musical Nationalism in Brazil* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1971), 14.

⁵⁷⁷ Tinhorão, *Sons Negros*, 62; Alvarenga 178; Fryer 180. While there is general agreement that the lundu developed into the baiano and ultimately in the baião, “several authors may have mistakenly labeled the baião and baiano as synonymous.” Crook, *Zabumba Music*, 235-36. See for instance, Alvarenga 177; Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, “Danças Sertanejas,” *Cultura Política* 4[46] (1994) 300-303; Luiz da Camara Cascudo, *Dicionário do folclore brasileiro* (Belo Horizonte: Editora Itatiaia Limitada, 1984), 96; Marco Antônio Marcondes, *Enciclopédia da música brasileira: erudita, folclórica e popular*, vol. 1 (São Paulo: Art Editora, 1977), 63.

⁵⁷⁸ Suzel Ana Reily, “Forró for all: Saldanha Rolim,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 4 (1995), 181-82.

⁵⁷⁹ Dreyfus writes that Gonzaga’s crown was his leather hat (see below) and his scepter, his accordion. Dreyfus 145. Along with the King of Baião – also called the Emperor of Baião (*O Cruzeiro*, 25 August 1956. In Sulamita 116) – arose the designations “Queen” (Carmélia Alves), “Prince” (Luiz Vieira), “Princess” (Claudete Soares) and “Baron” (Jair Alves). Dreyfus 172. The media attention and ‘baptism’ out of his control of so many artists irritated Gonzaga, who said, “*que é isso, agora tem dinastia do baião?*” [What is this, now there’s a dynasty of baião?] Dreyfus 172.

“Asa Branca,” composed and recorded in 1947,⁵⁸⁰ is doubtless one of Brazil’s most influential songs of all time. It is a veritable hymn of northeastern identity and the most commonly interpreted folk song in the nation.⁵⁸¹ It tells the story of a poor farmer who has lost everything in a bitter drought and who holds on until the very last moment, when he is forced to retreat from the desiccated land. The real protagonist of the song, though, is the white-winged dove (*Patagioenas picazura*),⁵⁸² the most stalwart and resistant of animals. According to local lore, the white-winged dove is the very last creature to flee the parched expanses in time of drought, so its departure means that desperation has truly set in and that the narrator must tear himself away; the bird functions as a symbol for the suffering inherent in leaving a land that has betrayed its inhabitants.⁵⁸³ The asa branca is mentioned only once in the song – at a

⁵⁸⁰ Extreme controversy has arisen over the authorship of “Asa Branca.” The melody was said to be one that Gonzaga heard growing up, a piece of oral culture known to people all over the region; Humberto Teixeira was said to have added the bulk of the lyrics, building upon what little Gonzaga remembered from his youth. However, previous transcriptions of the song are said to exist; Baptista Siqueira registered antecedent versions in 1956 and 1978, though the original dates of collection are unclear. Ramalho 67. Obviously, this polemic highlights issues of copyright that necessarily become extremely complicated when folk songs (considered part of oral culture) are elaborated upon – and then become best-selling hits.

⁵⁸¹ “Asa Branca” is on record for having had the most recordings by diverse artists of any other Brazilian song. Artists to have included the popular hymn in their repertoire include Caetano Veloso, Geraldo Vandré, Quinteto Violado, Altamiro Carrilho, Raul Seixas, Tom Zé, Gilberto Gil, Guerra-Peixe (not an exhaustive list). Farias dos Santos 107. In fact, one rendition – by Peggy Lee of the United States – was sold under the title “Wandering Swallow” and was eventually pulled from the market after Gonzaga and Teixeira got ahold of a copy of the plagiarized version. José de Jesus Ferreira, *Luiz Gonzaga O Rei do Baião: Sua vida, seus amigos, suas canções* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1986), 45; Dreyfus 133.

To hear a recent rendition by David Byrne and New York City-based “Fórró in the Dark,” see: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8OWpeF8jy0>

⁵⁸² Also commonly called Columba picazuro, the bird gets its name from the Guaraní word for “sour pigeon,” a reference to the taste of its flesh after it has eaten certain fruits. Its habitat stretches from northeast Brazil to south-central Argentina and it tends to settle in semi-desert or cleared areas, including cities. Presently, it is one of the commonest birds in eastern Brazil and its call – a sad, human-sounding cooing similar to that of the Mourning Dove – can be commonly heard.

pivotal moment in the text – yet so evocatively captures the suffering inherent in the narration that it has forever since been associated with drought and has itself become an anthem of nordestinidade. One can easily visualize in the flight of the white-winged dove a plaintive call for peace, the slow wave of a white kerchief under surrender, pleading for the sun to renounce its siege on the scorched land.

Asa Branca

Quando olhei a terra ardendo
 Qual fogueira de São João
 Eu perguntei a Deus do céu, ai
 Por que tamanha judiação

Que braseiro, que fornalha
 Nem um pé de plantação
 Por falta d'água perdi meu gado
 Morreu de sede meu alazão

Até mesmo a asa branca
 Bateu asas do sertão
 Entonces eu disse adeus Rosinha
 Guarda contigo meu coração

Hoje longe muitas léguas
 Numa triste solidão
 Espero a chuva cair de novo
 Para eu voltar pro meu sertão

Quando o verde dos teus olhos
 Se espalhar na plantação
 Eu te asseguro não chores não, viu
 Que eu voltarei, viu
 Meu coração

The White Winged Dove

When I heard the land was burning
 Like the bonfires of São João
 I asked God, up there in his heaven.
 What is happening to us now

What a hellfire, what a furnace
 Not a tree was left alive
 And all my cattle
 They lay there dying
 Even my last steer, did not survive

And the white-wing dove has flown now
 Far away from this backland
 So I say now, Adeus, Rosinha,
 Though in my heart I'll be back again

Now I live in this big city
 Such a long long way away
 I'll await the rainfall
 Back to my home I'll return some day

And the land one day will blossom
 Like the green that's in your eyes
 And I assure you, my dear Rosinha,
 That I'll be back there right by your side

The drought itself is never directly mentioned but instead alluded to through metaphors of flames and fire, which set a deeply symbolic tone for the music. The

⁵⁸³ Linda-Anne Rebbun notes that the betrayal is of a political (not natural) nature, though this is not explicit in the lyrics. See below for a discussion of Gonzaga's political ("protest") pieces.

references to the bonfires of São João, however, suggest not only a blisteringly dry desert but also the hope and joy inherent in the June festival, when nordestinos jump over flaming bonfires to prove courage and good fortune for the coming year – and when so many rural couples exchange vows before the glowing embers.⁵⁸⁴

In the central stanza, right after the first and only mention of the *asa branca*, the narrator bids farewell to Rosinha, his loved one, begging her to keep him in her heart. After all of his losses – his crops, his cattle – the loss of his true love hurts the most. It is at this point in the song that the narration switches from past tense to present; the loss of his farm seeming almost trivial compared to the loneliness he suffers far from his country lifestyle and his beloved Rosinha. We realize that the present pains him more than the past. From here he switches to the future; he dreams of the promise of rainfall (“I’ll await the rainfall”) that will paint the landscape green (like a reflection of Rosinha’s eyes) and will allow him to return once again.

In an excellent analysis of the song, Elba Ramalho points out that the song pivots along the meaningful third (middle) stanza, the very moment when the song breaks with the past and transitions into present (then future), as well as the verse most instantly recognizable because of its references to the *asa branca* and to Rosinha. This emphasis draws in the listener in a centripetal manner – and disrupts the expected evolution of the song. She notes that “instead of a discursive structure – meaning, introduction, development, conclusion – there is another structural order:

⁵⁸⁴ The bonfire is said to represent a giant flame that Saint Isabel (Saint John’s mother) lit so that the Virgin Mary, still infirm after the birth of Jesus, would see that John, too, had been born. It thus represents not just re-birth but hope for the future and for the coming healing that Jesus would bring to the Christian world.

‘situational instead of abstract.’⁵⁸⁵ Not only does this construction break with common song-writing practices, but I would argue that it also further reinforces the cyclical nature of the sertão, evoking the repetitive nature of droughts in the Northeast. In fact, the song consists of five simple verses, notably lacking a unique chorus and/or bridge that one might otherwise expect in the genre of popular music. Instead, the iconic accordion lick that precedes each verse and that plays unaccompanied could arguably represent a recurring chorus. Together, these two simple⁵⁸⁶ but profound melodies dovetail with one another to create a penetratingly memorable music line.

Ramalho also calls attention to the recurring rhyme, noting that the rhyming nouns are all steeped with deep meaning for nordestinos: *São João* (the June festival most closely associated with the Northeast and alluding to the locally beloved Saint John); *judiação* (alluding not just to suffering – its direct translation – but to Judas’s unwarranted betrayal of Jesus, a treachery nordestinos may relate to their own drought-inflicted anguish); *plantação* (the cultivated land so dear to a rural community); *alazão* (the steer that provides sustenance and continuity of life on the plantation); *sertão* (the arid homeland); *coração* (the aching nordestino heart); *solidão* (the vast loneliness of a man far from his native soil).⁵⁸⁷ Of note also is that

⁵⁸⁵ *Em vez de uma estrutura discursiva – ou seja, introdução, desenvolvimento, conclusão – apresenta-se uma outra ordem estrutural: “situacional em vez de abstrata”* Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy / The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Mathuen & Co., 1982), 49. In Ramalho 70.

⁵⁸⁶ Composed on one scale and in one key, the song is straightforward and can easily be classified in classical musical terminology, unlike many melodies from northeastern Brazil. The song appears to be in G major, but its 5-note-base may throw off the listener; more likely the song is in C major, evidenced by the first note – a natural F – of the accordion lick.

⁵⁸⁷ See Ramalho 70-74.

the “ão” diphthong is one of the most characteristic sounds of the Portuguese language, making it particularly evocative for all Brazilians.⁵⁸⁸

Thirty years after first recording “Asa Branca,” Luiz Gonzaga recalled presenting the new song to his label only to have it rebuffed: “You, after all your success [with the baião], want to record blind man’s music, church music?”⁵⁸⁹ Indeed, the future nordestino anthem was first conceptualized as a *toada* ballad (and only later recorded as a baião) and was considered not “hot” enough to gain a strong following. But in fact the ‘religious’ quality of the tune fit perfectly with the theme and spoke to Gonzaga’s audience in a way no other piece ever did. In an essay on the importance of memory in Jewish historiography, Yosef Yeroshalmi writes that

The single most important religious and literary response to historical catastrophe in the Middle Ages was not a chronicle of the event but the composition of *selihot*, penitential prayers, and their insertion into the liturgy of the synagogue. Through such prayers the poet gave vent to the deepest emotions of the community, expressed its contrition in face of the divine wrath or its questions concerning divine justice, prayed for an end to suffering or vengeance against the oppressor, and, in effect, “commemorated” the event.⁵⁹⁰

In fact, “Asa Branca” has served as a prayer for nordestinos, repeated generation after generation, imploring not just an end to inhumane suffering but a recognition of the anguish of the past and a celebration of future potential. One commentator observed that the truly remarkable trait of the tune was to have managed to convey such a melancholy story in a major key. Perhaps more outstanding is that “Asa

⁵⁸⁸ Notice also the simplicity of the lyrics; the Portuguese version hangs together in a straightforward way that the English translation cannot match.

⁵⁸⁹ “*Mas, vocês, depois de tanto sucesso [com o baião], vão gravar música de cego, música de igreja?*” Interview for TV Cultura (São Paulo, 1977). In Viera 215.

⁵⁹⁰ Yosef Yeroshalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), 45.

Branca,” more than any other song in his repertoire, would help Gonzaga consolidate an image of Brazil’s “Northeast” – hitherto inexistent - in the imaginations of his listeners.

Gonzaga’s Sertão: the ‘Nordeste’ as a Discursive Space

Before 1950, the geographical concept of a Brazilian “Northeast” did not yet exist; it was referred to either as the “North” or as the “interior.” Luiz Gonzaga’s career was perhaps the culminating factor in creating this new ecological and cultural region in Brazil. In 1946, with the extreme popularity of “baião” and the increased media attention afforded Gonzaga, the nation began to recognize the new trope and to associate it with the imagery contained in his music. Until he began singing to the nation, these images were available mainly in the form of regionalist novels, available to a limited number of Brazilians;⁵⁹¹ through his music, Gonzaga democratized the notion of the Nordeste. The “Northeast” category is, more than anything, a discursive construction⁵⁹² which, through regular repetition of its key imagery, has become embedded in the Brazilian imagination as representing a traditional past. The *Nordeste*, in this interpretation, becomes the binary opposite of modernity (represented by the capital city), and the baião serves as a bridge – both building a starting point from a rural “tradition” and simultaneously “translating” it to listeners in the urban destination.

Hobsbawm and others have shown that the ‘invention of tradition’ occurs precisely when modernity forces society to change; it is the modern transformation of

⁵⁹¹ See below for a discussion of the regionalist movement and its primary novelists.

⁵⁹² See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

the social order that triggers a flurry of nostalgia for a past that may never actually have existed in its imagined form.

As Raymond Williams has written, “preoccupation with tradition and interpretation of tradition as an age-old ritual is a distinctly modern phenomenon, born out of anxiety about the vanishing past.”⁵⁹³ And not only is (impending) modernity a push to discover and retain one’s roots, but modernity also provides the tools necessary to do so; in the case of forró, the mass media available (in the form of radio and later, television) facilitated the production of the Brazilian Nordeste, through the music of Gonzaga and countless radio shows that emerged in his shadow.

Lest we get too swept up in wistful reminiscences of the traditional life of the hinterlands, Rebhun reminds us that

... those parts of the landscape imagined to be backward do not in fact live in the past, nor are the cities building the future. Rather, the entire countryside displays what Garcia Canclini calls “multitemporal heterogeneity” in which “traditions have not yet disappeared and modernity has not completely arrived.”⁵⁹⁴

In the case of Luiz Gonzaga, one can be sure that he knew well the impossibility of framing the Nordeste as entirely backward and the capital city as wholly modern because he himself had lived several lifestyles – and would continue to, throughout his long career – within each of those geographical poles. But the ambiguity of these extremes that Gonzaga would find in his lived experience would not make it into his

⁵⁹³ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 318. In Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 19.

⁵⁹⁴ Néstor García-Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). In L.A. Rebhun, *The Heart Is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 2-3.

lyrics and performances, where he would reconstruct, time and again, an age-old rural tradition that belied modern life in the bustling center of Rio.

In his canon of nordestino songs, Gonzaga would further reinforce that imagery. Along with the radiating sun, images that are commonly invoked to represent the sertão include the sinister black *urubu* vulture which picks dry the bones of dying animals, the proud *mandacaru* cactus which holds in an astounding amount of moisture and can survive even the severest of droughts, and various birds (*asa-branca*, *assum preto*, *acauã*, *sabiá*) whose habitat is disrupted by the arid spells but whose natural migration cycle accommodates the climate, allowing them to return later to verdant fields. In fact, Gonzaga himself seems to epitomize allegorically both the *mandacaru* and the migratory birds – remaining a strong and steadfast telluric force who, in his poetic representations refuses to “leave” his land on the one hand, and an itinerant troubadour who travels far to sing the praises of his land yet regularly returns to make it his home on the other.⁵⁹⁵

One of Gonzaga’s biographers notes that in his vast discography,

Next to other animals, birds seem to have a place of honor. As such, the hummingbird, the *bem-te-vi* [great kiskadee], the cow, the burro, the frog, the canary, the *acauã* [laughing falcon], the nightingale, and the *sabiá* [thrush] are celebrated.⁵⁹⁶

⁵⁹⁵ Gonzaga is not the only northeastern artist for whom avians are used as symbols; Patativa de Assaré, the author of “A Triste Partida” (see below), got his moniker from the *Sporophila leucoptera* (colloquial: Patativa) species. In an interview, Patativa de Assaré asserts: “[I am] called Patativa for the spontaneity and beauty of [my] poetry that resembles very much the poetry of our beloved patativa of little wings that we have here in the Northeast, principally in Ceará, where it sings often, see!” In Nicholas Arons, *Waiting For Rain: The Politics and Poetry of Drought in Northeast Brazil* (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 138.

⁵⁹⁶ “Ao lado de outro animais, os pássaros parecem ocupar lugar privilegiado. Assim, são homenageados o beija-flor, o bem-te-vi, o boi, o burrinho, o sapo, o canarinho, a acauã, o rouxinol e o sabiá.” Sulamita 45.

Gonzaga himself enjoyed playing the part of a bird: “I have so many stories to tell, I don’t even have the think, I know them all by heart... I’ve always been a parrot!”⁵⁹⁷ But whether he was taken by the chirpy chatter of the parakeet, the piercing call of the acauã marking its territory, the melancholy cry of the *assum preto*, or the sweet sound of the sabiá, Gonzaga most admired their avian wings. Indeed, Gonzaga himself was happiest as a traveler, traversing Brazil from the smallest provincial towns to the sprawling capitals, sharing his distinctive sound along the way and painting a rustic Brazil never far from a pastoral landscape dotted with twittering flocks. It was from the matrix of an imagined sertão community that Gonzaga extracted the ‘traditions’ upon which he based his repertoire, which would come to represent reality for countless Brazilians.

Gonzaga’s music told such a compelling story about the sertão that Brazilians – and nordestinos especially – began to believe in the images as replicas of an ancient and unbroken past. In his 1991 ethnography of percussionists in rural Pernambuco, Larry Crook found that

Whether or not the older style has remained virtually unchanged for hundreds of years is not the main issue here. More importantly, musicians and audiences believe that it has and believe that the old style is the tradition of their forefathers. This imbues the style with a certain amount of authority which is unchallenged and legitimizes it...⁵⁹⁸

Indeed, not only did Gonzaga personify the nordeste in his lyrics, but he came to epitomize the sertão for a nation of Brazilians. Said one leading folklorist:

⁵⁹⁷ “*Eu tenho tanta coisa pra contar, nem preciso pensar, já sei de cor... eu sempre fui um papagaio!*” Dreyfus 25.

⁵⁹⁸ Larry Norman Crook, *Zabumba Music*, 212.

He [Gonzaga] himself is the source, headwater, and fountain of his creations. The sertão is him. The Pernambucan landscape... forgotten times in sentimental villages, return to live, to sing, and to suffer when he puts his fingers on the accordion.⁵⁹⁹

In a country with as diverse a social and racial history as Brazil, part of personifying a geographic region also entails embodying a racial type, and indeed, the construction of a “nordestino” ethnic category was part of the magic of Gonzaga’s invented tradition. While he had marketed himself as a sexy mulatto during his first days in Rio, he came to retract that description, calling himself instead “nordestino.”

Bryan McCann explains:

Gonzaga encouraged an understanding of *nordestino* as a race unto itself... when recounting the days following his rediscovery of nordestino culture he described himself as “pure nordestino” – in other words, he had stopped identifying himself racially as a mulatto, and had stopped trying to pass for a Carioca, culturally.⁶⁰⁰

By identifying himself entirely by his geographical origin and subsuming his racial self to an entirely unknown category, Gonzaga sidestepped the accepted formulae for racial pigeon-holing in Brazil. He extracted himself from the “mulatto” designation and its connotations of rampant sexuality, *malandro* (rogue) behavior and poverty, instead associating himself with a stalwart working class fraught with hardship and plagued by banditry, messianic movements and poverty. In reality, the racial make-up of the Northeast is anything but straightforward. While the coastal land used for sugar cane was highly populated by former black slaves, much of the sertão was settled by poor white cattle farmers who were said to have partnered (largely) with Indian women. The Dutch stronghold on the area – and extensive miscegenation,

⁵⁹⁹ McCann 99. Translation by McCann.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, 177.

Brazilian-style – had further changed the racial make-up of the land. Gonzaga was just as apt to call himself a “sertanejo” (someone from the sertão), but over time sertanejo would become nearly synonymous with “rural” while “nordestino” represented a person from the Northeast. Of course, the Northeast, too, had radically different racial profiles, but with the exception of Bahia (known to be primarily black), everyone else in the nordeste came to be represented by Luiz. As McCann puts it, “Luiz Gonzaga was not just *nordestino*, he was the ur-nordestino.”⁶⁰¹ As such, he would come to be a poster child not just for the personality of the region, but also for its color.

Between 1946 and 1952, also known as the “baião epoch,” Gonzaga built upon these notions of “Nordeste” and “nordestino” – and further entrenched their legitimacy – by adopting a performance style all his own.

Gonzaga’s Performance: Staging a ‘Country Bumpkin’ Identity

Though Gonzaga crafted a truly unique and iconic artistic presence, he was not the only artist to interpret his compositions – and in fact, his music benefited immensely from the wide-reaching popularity of his music as performed by other radio crooners of the time.⁶⁰² But in large part his rise to fame can be traced to the decisions he made in performance style from early on in his career.

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, 98.

⁶⁰² Dreyfus comments that Carmélia Alves (the “Queen” of Baião) performed Gonzaga’s hits in extravagant nightclubs with a full orchestra while Gonzaga preferred simpler settings where he could play up his rustic flair. Dreyfus 172. The same author stresses that Gonzaga’s music was listened to by all classes in Brazil: even the high-class casinos played Nat King Cole and Cole Porter followed by the baião. Dreyfus 171. Also Ceva, *Na Batida*, 19.

Having left his hometown nearly a decade earlier, Gonzaga had already started assimilating “southern” cultural standards when he first arrived in Rio. As he asserts in an interview with Dreyfus:

Nobody knew I was a nordestino. I was a wily guy, I had thrown myself in with the mulatoes, I dressed the same as they did, I even sang samba in the downtown clubs. I wanted to absorb the Rio accent. The northeastern accent... I had long since lost.⁶⁰³

Still, we know from his experience in the Mangue that his accent *was* apparent, albeit faint, enough so that the law students from Ceará could hear his northern homeland in his voice. After the success of “Vira e Mexe,” Gonzaga must have found that an exaggerated backwoods accent to accompany his “campy” style of playing was received enthusiastically, and so he encouraged his native sound to surface.⁶⁰⁴ Bryan McCann notes that in his 1947 recording of “Asa Branca,” he “exaggerated, rather than concealed, his nordestino accent, stressing regional pronunciation (the twangy *farta*, instead of the proper *falta*).⁶⁰⁵ Indeed, the embellishment of his northeast accent is a trademark of his performances, so much so that most sources of his lyrics include the grammatically incorrect approximations of his accent. Of note are his propensity to drop “r” word-endings⁶⁰⁶ and to substitute “r” for mid-word “l”

⁶⁰³ “Ninguém sabia que eu era nordestino. Eu já era um malandro, me atirava no meio dos crioulos, vestido igual a eles, até cantava samba nas gafieiras. Eu tinha interesse em me adaptar ao sotaque carioca. Sotaque nordestino, havia muito tempo que eu já tinha perdido...” Dreyfus 8.

⁶⁰⁴ Dreyfus notes, however, that he never re-claimed the nordestino pronunciation of “d” or “t,” pronouncing them as instead – carioca style – as affricates. Dreyfus 117. Still, she also insists that Gonzaga retained a nordestino “open” pronunciation of the vowel “é.” Dreyfus 81. In Ramalho 76.

⁶⁰⁵ McCann 114.

⁶⁰⁶ *Pois o teu corpo suado / Cum esse chêro de fulô* instead of “Pois o teu corpo suado / Com esse cheiro de flor” (Vem Morena); *Juazeiro, Juazeiro, me arresponda, por favô... Juazeiro, velho amigo, onde anda meu amô? ... Como doi a minha dô! ... Não me deixe assim ruê... tô cansado de sofrê...*

sounds⁶⁰⁷ while swallowing some “ão” diphthongs⁶⁰⁸ and also creating diphthongs in place of “lh” consonants.⁶⁰⁹

Even beyond pronunciation, Gonzaga’s used his love of language to distinguish himself from his contemporaries. Like so many nordestinos, he delighted in telling tall tales and revelled in clever linguistic tricks and puns. His playful lyrics painted an epic picture of rural life: “cintura fina, cintura de pilão” celebrated the beauty of a young girl’s waist, comparing it to the hourglass shape of a manioc mortar; the “fórró tava gostoso / era fórró de cabo a rabo” to the fórró that was enjoyed from head to toe, literally, from the corporal’s salute to his tail.

Often, his puns featured double meanings not entirely clear in standard Portuguese but riotously funny in northern slang. And some words repeated throughout his canon – including *danado*, *safado*, *cabra* – are generally considered pejorative, yet take on a droll meaning when Gonzaga employs them with his iconic grin.⁶¹⁰ His lyrics walk a line between standard Portuguese and regional dialect and his very comfort in switching between official and non-standard dialects shows his linguistic

instead of “Juazeiro, Juazeiro, me responda, por favor... Juazeiro, velho amigo, onde anda meu amor? ... Como doi a minha dor! Não me deixe assim roer... estou cansado de sofrer.” (Juazeiro)

⁶⁰⁷ *Assum Preto* *veve sorto / mas num pode avuá...* instead of “Assum Preto vive solto / mas não pode avoar...” (Assum Preto)

⁶⁰⁸ *Inté mesmo a asa branca* instead of “Então mesmo a asa branca” (Asa Branca); See also footnote 607 “Assum Preto.”

⁶⁰⁹ *Óia pro céu, meu amor* instead of “Olha para o céu” (Óia pro Céu); *muié macho, sim senhor* instead of “Mulher macho, sim senhor” (Parafba).

⁶¹⁰ Lowell Lewis notes that black dialects in the New World show a special emphasis on positive valuations for words with negative connotations in general use. He uses “danado” (damned, cursed; but also clever) to illustrate this conclusion. Lowell J. Lewis, *Ring of Liberation: Deceptive Discourse in Brazilian Capoeira* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 164; See also Holt 140-51 in Kochman, *Rappin and Styng Out* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972). Other pejorative favorites of Gonzaga’s include “cabra” (literally “goat” but generally mestizo, a child of mulatto/black parents; but also a tough guy) and “safado” (shameless or perverted; but also bold).

and performance expertise. Though he socialized with the most elite artists and politicians of Rio, his lyrics purposefully reflected the grammar of an unschooled person, with dropped plurals,⁶¹¹ case or tense substitutions⁶¹² and superfluous comparatives.⁶¹³ Ulrich Ammon writes that the skillful use of dialect lyrics by artists “serves to reinforce in-group solidarity, as well as demonstrating an additional layer of linguistic and artistic expertise and creativity in language.”⁶¹⁴ And indeed, Gonzaga’s linguistic antics certainly brought him closer to his mass public, while his refined speech in interviews pacified upper-crust listeners. Though he made constant references to himself as a “semi-literate,” his artistic wit showed that he was able to skillfully yet mischievously play various roles, including ‘the rube,’ the polished heartthrob, and the shrewd businessman.

Along with these exaggerated pronunciations and playful language, Gonzaga used the raw nasality of his voice,⁶¹⁵ long spoken passages, mid-song exclamations and

⁶¹¹ *Mas o pobre vê nas estrada... o orvaio beijando as flor instead of “mas o pobre vê nas estradas... o orvalho beijando as flores” (Estrada de Canindé).*

⁶¹² *Pense n’eu... de vez em quando* “Think of I... every now and then” (*Pense N’eu*). In this case, he uses the nominative pronoun instead of the objective pronoun. *Tem pena d’eu* “Have pity on I” (*Sabiá*). *Tu pode ser famoso* “You is famous” (*Respeita Januário*).

⁶¹³ *E pra que coisa mais mió?* “And for what more better?” (*Sala de Reboco*).

⁶¹⁴ Ulrich Ammon, “National-variety purism in the national centers of the German Language,” *Language Choices: Conditions, Constraints, and Consequences*, Ed. Martin Pütz (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1997), 161-778; Kathryn A. Woolard, “Codeswitching and Comedy in Catalonia,” *Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, Ed. Monica Heller (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988), 53-76). In Edward Larkey, “Just for Fun? Language Choice in German Popular Music,” *Global Pop, Local Language*, Ed. Harris M. Berger and Michael Thomas Carroll (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 134.

⁶¹⁵ Câmara Cascudo, the renowned folklorist, compares nordestino *cantoria* (singing) (of which Gonzaga is a clear descendent) to Vetalika singing from India, noting the nasal (and overall poor) quality of the singing as well as the importance of rhythm: “Nothing sonorous. Nothing delicate. Nothing nuanced. The absence of low tones. The singer... sings above the tone in which his instrument is tuned. He tends toward high notes. It’s a rough voice, stiff, with no maleability, with no

onomatopoeia to create an on-stage persona. Certainly he had discovered a niche market, since other singers at the time exemplified suave and sophisticated vocals, while “his shouts of exhortation exuded unrehearsed, backwoods charisma.”⁶¹⁶ Indeed, Gonzaga’s vocals often “bent a half-note below the melodic line,”⁶¹⁷ and were criticized openly. Still, while his voice may not have been truly beloved in his first decade of performance, it was certainly unique. He claims to have been the first artist to sing falsetto in nordestino style music – this, he said, was an influence of the time he spent ‘yodeling’ as a back-up accompanist for Bob Nelson the “American” cowboy star.⁶¹⁸ He often interspersed song and narrative – often pausing in the middle of a well-known hit to tell an anecdote relating to the piece – and he just as often brought diverse sounds to life through lively imitations. Many onomatopoeia culled from his canon are still widely recognized: the “tengo-lengo-tengo-lengo-tengo-lengo-tengo” of the untended cattle that miss their cow-hands’s call;⁶¹⁹ the “fum-fum” of a old accordion with a rip in its bellows;⁶²⁰ the heart of a lovesick

flourishes, with no softness. They sing with free rein, nearly yelling, their veins popping with the effort, their faces contorted, their eyes focused so as not to lose the beat, not the musical timing which for them is inimportant, but the cadence of the verse, the rhythm, which is everything.” “*Nenhuma sonoridade. Nenhuma delicadeza. Nenhuma nuança. Ausência de tons graves. O cantor, como o rapsodo, canta acima do tom em que seu instrumento está afinado. Abusa dos agudos. É uma voz dura, hirta, sem maleabilidade, sem floreios, sem suavidade. Cantam soltamente, quase gritando, as veias entumecidas pelo esforço, a face congesta, os olhos fixos para não perder o compasso, não o compasso musical que para eles é quase sem valor, mas a cadência do verso, o ritmo, que é tudo.*” Luis da Câmara Cascudo, *Vaqueiros e Cantadores* (Porto Alegre, Brazil: Edição da Livraria do Globo, 1939), 91.

⁶¹⁶ McCann 114-15.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, 114-15.

⁶¹⁸ Tárík de Souza and Elifas Andreato, *Rostos e Gostos da Música Popular Brasileira* (Porto Alegre, Brazil: L & PM Editores Ltda, 1979), 26.

⁶¹⁹ A Morte do Vaqueiro.

⁶²⁰ Forró Número Um.

morena that beats “tum-tum.”⁶²¹ He endeared himself to crowds with his unpretentious and self-confident reproductions – and while imitating sounds of instruments, animals, as well as employing his other linguistic tricks he also began producing an entire geographical region.

Several scholars have noted that, in addition to the linguistic markers he used to classify himself as a backwoods *matuto*, or country bumpkin, Gonzaga also used his accordion as another symbol of his rustic flair. To find a publicity photo of him without his sanfona is nearly impossible, as it became so entrenched in his persona that he seldom went anywhere without it.⁶²² On stage, too, Gonzaga maneuvered his signature instrument in a truly unique way. McCann notes that his accordion work “was deliberately choppy and shaded with flat notes,” and Durval Albuquerque writes that he had an innovative manner of playing that approximated the sanfona to an “instrument of percussion, being juggled, opened and closed quickly, unlike the traditional manner of playing waltzes, when it was opened and closed slowly.”⁶²³ In his performances and his lyrics, Gonzaga’s sanfona was imbued with human emotions and personality; in one famous piece he sings of the accordion “playing...

⁶²¹ Forró Número Um.

⁶²² Sulamita notes that “among the countless photos that I found of Luiz Gonzaga during my research, just *one* of them, in the *Revista do Rádio*, n. 28, 1950 [shows]... Gonzaga without his accordion and without his cangaceiro hat.” “*Entre as inúmeras fotos que encontrei de Luiz Gonzaga no período em estudo, apenas em uma delas, na Revista do Rádio, n. 28, 1950 – ... aparece... Gonzaga sem a sanfona, sem o chapéu.*” Sulamita 118. My emphasis.

⁶²³ Durval Muniz de Albuquerque, *A Invenção do Nordeste e outras artes* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1999), 163.

moaning... crying... sniffing... complaining⁶²⁴ while in another the accordion goes on playing long after the accordionist falls asleep.⁶²⁵ And in another favorite, Gonzaga proclaims that his sanfona was always his 'lady.'⁶²⁶ In fact, I would argue that, taking his entire body of work into consideration, his accordion is granted more agency and more emotional development than any of the women portrayed in his canon. Certainly, Gonzaga threw his accordion around on stage with unequalled zeal, and at times looked like he and his sanfona were engaged in a rowdy couple dance, spinning around the stage, enraptured in the music and the moment.

Even though much of his material came from co-authors (many of whom allowed Gonzaga a writing credit for little or no input), Gonzaga's on-stage personality is what carried the music and buoyed the fans. Simply stated, Gonzaga's performances turned good songs into phenomenal hits. As Dreyfus writes,

... the music came to him with lyrics and melodies. But it arrived naked, silent! It was Gonzaga, then, who would clothe it, decorate it, give it shine, sensuality, personality.⁶²⁷

Gonzaga never denied the immense input he received from his different partners; particularly as his tour schedule became more and more demanding, he had less time to spend on new material. When meeting with a collaborator, he often showed up with an idea for a melody, or a 5-word phrase he thought was catchy; other times he

⁶²⁴ The verb in Portuguese is *fungar*, literally "to sniff," and it is commonly used in northeast Brazil where one may be greeted by a lover with a long hug followed by a deep inhalation, the lover's nose pressed hard against the skin of the neck. In No Meu Pé de Serra.

⁶²⁵ *O sanfoneiro cochilou / a sanfona não parou / e o forró continuou*. "The accordionist nodded off / the accordion kept going / and the forró continued. Forró Número Um.

⁶²⁶ *Essa sanfona / sempre foi minha dona*. "That sanfona / was always my lady." Sanfona do Povo.

⁶²⁷ "*Entendamos por sanfonizador que a música chegava às mãos dele com letra e melodia. Mas chegava nua, tímida, calada! Era Gonzaga, então, quem iria vistí-la, enfeitá-la, dar-lhe brilho, sensualidade, personalidade.*" Dreyfus 167.

would suggest a different rhythm or add a harmony. As Dreyfus writes, Gonzaga was responsible for “the skeleton of the song – his partner added its body.”⁶²⁸ But once he began to play the song on stage it would morph under his heavy accordion and raucous laugh – he injected the improvisation and the clever asides to make the piece truly his. As Elba Ramalho reminds us,

the majority of his songs are identified with *him* far more than with the original composers that created them. He surpasses the dimension of their authors and personifies them to the point that they become *his*.⁶²⁹

One way in which Gonzaga managed to construct a persona that would be indissoluble with his biggest hits was by creating an attire all his own in which to perform. By 1948, his baiões were playing all day, every day on every radio station in the nation, and he had begun to fine-tune his stage show. The sophisticated suit that he wore for his auditorium (live) recordings was certainly stylish, but it didn’t reflect his performance persona. At the time, other regional acts were circulating, and Gonzaga took a piece of inspiration from their outfits: Pedro Raimundo dressed in the gaúcho style of the southern pampas; Jararaca and Ratinho wore straw hats from the interior;⁶³⁰ the carioca sambistas had their own uniform of striped button-down shirts; Bob Nelson dressed like a North American cowboy... even Carmen Miranda had her famously over-the-top stylization of *baiana* garb. Wanting to create his own

⁶²⁸ Ibid, 166-7.

⁶²⁹ “A maioria de suas canções se identificam muito mais com o cantor Luiz Gonzaga do que com os próprios compositores que as criaram. Ele ultrapassa a dimensão dos autores e as personifica como se suas fossem.” Ramalho 65.

⁶³⁰ McCann writes that Jararaca and Ratinho, two of the first performers to fashion themselves as hillbillies, originally wore leather hats with an upraised brim characteristic of nordestino cowboys. Only later did they adopt a less region-marked outfit with felt hats instead of leather. They still played up the hillbilly persona with bawdy performances full of jokes and “hick” impersonations. McCann 104.

signature look, Gonzaga wrote home to his mother and asked her to send a leather hat in the style of *Lampião*.

A bandit who had terrorized the northern states for nearly two decades with a unique and perverse form of violence, Lampião (1900-1938) was the most famous *cangaceiro* in Brazilian history. His troop numbered up to four hundred ruffians and they controlled the interior of seven states in the north.⁶³¹ He and his band of outlaws wore large leather hats turned up on two sides, with the turned-up brim facing forward and backward. Generally, the brim featured ornate leather and metalwork and came to be an iconic symbol of the *cangaço*, or banditry, of the Northeast. While the unruly *cangaceiros* were feared and reviled across the countryside, they were also venerated by many, for it was well-known that they were driven to violence by the oppressive and unjust social system that governed the “lawless” region and could, at some level, be trusted more than the local political leaders and police. Not only that, but they were celebrated as intensely musical, and stories of them hosting giant dance parties were regularly featured in the press.

Gonzaga, who as a child had reveled in stories of Lampião’s bravery, added the hat as a way of re-dressing a typical image of the Northeast.⁶³² It was a brilliant marketing moment: the juxtaposition of the “Rei do Baião” with the “Rei do Sertão.” To the unusual hat⁶³³ he added the leather gear of the cowboys who traversed the

⁶³¹ Sergipe, Alagoas, Pernambuco, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará e Bahia. Ronald Daus, *O Ciclo Épico dos Cangaceiros na Poesia Popular do Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação da Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1982), 36.

⁶³² Vianna reports that Gonzaga was not the first performer to use *cangaceiro* costumes for performance; in 1913 the Grupo de Caxangá dressed as bandit followers of the famous outlaw Antonio Silvino (a predecessor of Lampião). Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 28.

spine-ridden countryside, all elaborately worked by hand. That the new uniforms commanded attention, no one doubted. But it was a risky move; in 1947 an authoritarian military governed Brazil, and they had pushed an aggressive agenda to eliminate the cangaço problem of the North. The Artistic Director at Rádio Nacional was furious and prohibited the costume: “Oh, no, cangaceiro here at the National, no way! You can put your hat away.”⁶³⁴ Thanks to Gonzaga’s stubborn streak, though, the hat remained a fixture in every single interview and performance outside of Rádio Nacional – until it became such an iconic element to his persona that Rádio Nacional conceded to allow him wear it, after all. This episode shows not just typical persistence on the part of Gonzaga, but also his creativity: he literally turned a stylized “costume” into a uniform,⁶³⁵ creating a style that to this day is reflected on nearly every forró stage in the nation.⁶³⁶

Shortly after developing his signature fashion, Gonzaga further fortified his performance iconicity by standardizing his stage presentation into a three-piece band made up of the accordion, the zabumba drum and oversized triangle – the very instrumentalization used today in forró performances. Before putting together his *conjunto*, he had played on his own, or with the in-house Radio orchestras. But he wanted a sound that would really capture the sertão: “That’s when I remembered the

⁶³³ Gonzaga dressed his hat with shiny stones of all colors – a much “showier” imitation of cangaceiro headgear. Sulamita 99. Several authors have tried to interpret the giant star of David at the center of his hat with no concrete answers as to its reason of origin. See Sulamita 238; Souza.

⁶³⁴ “*Han, han! Aqui não. Cangaceiro na Nacional, não! Pode guardar o seu chapéu,*” Dreyfus 136. See also Gildson Oliveira 55.

⁶³⁵ For more on the dialectic of costume vs. uniform see Roberto Da Matta, *O que Faz, o Brasil, Brasil?* (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1989), 74.

⁶³⁶ Not only did he create an iconic image for himself, but he also influenced public opinion of the cangaceiros, many of whom were seen in a more liberal light after he “embraced” their cause by adopting their attire. Farias 101-102.

bandas de pife that used to play at church, at the novenas in Araripe... they had a zabumba and sometimes a triangle...”⁶³⁷ Gonzaga first added the zabumba bass drum to the mix and then, while touring an outdoor market in Recife, ran into a young boy peddling biscuits. The young vendor played a triangle to get the attention of customers. As Gonzaga recalls:

I thought it would be perfect with the zabumba and I just fell in love, I went crazy... I even tried to buy the triangle off the boy. Then, he cursed me, called me a fool, swore he wouldn't sell his instrument... but I'll pay good money... no way, I'm not selling. Well, then, will you at least come by the hotel so I can get the measurements? But he wouldn't come, he was afraid I'd take the triangle from him. Still, I had one made for myself as soon as I could.⁶³⁸

From that moment on, Gonzaga perched himself between the instruments of his new ensemble – zabumba to his right, triangle on his left⁶³⁹ – poised to make history with his new nordestino sound.

A great debate arose over whether or not Gonzaga was the first person to put together the trio conjunto (as he had proclaimed on more than one occasion); in fact, as he himself admitted later, the triangle-zabumba-safona (sometimes substituted with the fiddle) combination dated back to pre-colonial Portugal, where *chula* music boasted the three instruments. Not only that, but the trio concept had been employed

⁶³⁷ “Foi quando me lembrei das bandas de pife que tocavam nas igrejas, na novena lá do Araripe é que tinham zabumba e às vezes também um triângulo.” In Dreyfus 150-52; Ramalho 62.

⁶³⁸ “Achei que dava certo com o zabumba e fiquei logo apaxionado, fiquei doido... quis até comprar o triângulo do menino. Daí, veio até palavrão; cê é besta, vender meu instrumento, nada... mas eu pago bem... não vendo meu instrumento, não. Então dava pelo menos pra você vir no hotel pra mim tirar as medidas do instrumento? Mas, ele não veio, tava com medo que eu tomasse o instrumento dele. Mandeí fazer de qualquer jeito.” In Mattos Madeira 42. No information on original source.

⁶³⁹ Mattos Madeira 42.

in the Nordeste since early in the 20th century.⁶⁴⁰ Still, Gonzaga should be credited with bringing this instrumentation into the national limelight and consolidating the playing style for generations of nordestino bands. Further, his claim to having invented a new triangle-playing style hasn't been contested, and certainly a considerable element to the driving rhythm of forró is the syncopated peal of the thick metal beater clanging up and down between two triangle sides. The extreme popularity of this triangle playing style even sixty years later is a tribute to Gonzaga's ingenuity.

As a performer, Gonzaga was many things to many people – over his career he grew from being called Luiz to Lula, to Seu (Sir) Luiz to Lua and finally Gonzagão – but more than any other feat, he lives on in Brazilian memory as the father of forró. This claim to fame was consolidated by the release, in 1949, of “Forró de Mané Vito,” the first song to feature a mention to the dance genre of its title. In the future “forró would come to be an umbrella designation including several dance genres, including baião, xote, *arrasta-pé* (a fast-paced dance in which couples jump from foot to foot), and *xaxado* (a male-only dance made popular by the bandits in Lampião's gang). But forró is also a rhythm all its own which had been evolving within the nordestino rhythmic complex for some time; its familial relation to the baião is quite clear from a simple listening. Compared to baião, forró has a faster tempo, additional

⁶⁴⁰ Indeed, Mário de Andrade had noted the use of accordion with triangle in Pernambuco as early as 1928 (in his *Ensaio Sobre a Música Brasileira*). Furthermore, leading music historian Tinhorão calls attention to a photo published in 1929 showing a young boy playing a triangle alongside a band of pífaro (fife), snare, zabumba and fiddle players. See also José Ramos Tinhorão *Pequena História*, 220-21; José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular (da modinha à canção de protesto)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Vozes, Ltda., 1974), 210; Mattos Madeira 43; Achille Picchi, “O Baião do Lua, *Jornal o Povo* (29/11/97, Fortaleza, Ceará).

syncopation, and a slightly different drum stroke⁶⁴¹ and is, as any nordestino will tell you, “hotter” than the baião – but all rhythms remain popular with crowds, even today. In terms of these new rhythms, one biographer has pointed to the early 1950s as representing a break in Gonzaga’s oeuvre: “with Humberto Teixeira, he built the baião, and with Zédantas he fashioned forró.”⁶⁴² But I would argue that there was never an abrupt shift in Gonzaga’s songwriting; instead, the next era of his career would include both composers (Teixeira and Zédantas), with whom he co-wrote dozens of mega-hits, including xotes, baiãos, arrasta-pés and forrós.

Unearthing a Soundtrack to Migration: Zé Dantas Delivers *Saudade*

By 1950, Gonzaga was the most successful recording artist in the nation,⁶⁴³ he had married Helena das Neves Cavalcanti (a difficult relationship that would be fraught with tension for the rest of his adult life) and brought his entire family from Pernambuco to settle in and around Rio, many of whom often accompanied Gonzaga for performances and recordings (five of his siblings would also become accordionists in the capital city, specializing in northeastern styles). His partnership with Humberto Teixeira had its ups and downs, as did his relationships with most of

⁶⁴¹ “The primary structural difference between the baião and the forró is the reversal of the muffled and open strokes in the surdo and zabumba together with an added stroke on the last sixteenth of the measure played by the zabumba.” Crook, *Zabumba Music*, 244. Average tempo of forró MM=128.

⁶⁴² Gildson Oliveira 39.

⁶⁴³ Between 1949 and 1950, Gonzaga’s Recording Company (RCA) actually had to stop pressing albums for its other artists, in an effort to keep up with the demand for Gonzaga’s songs. Just two hits, “A Dança de Moda” and “Que nem Jiló” would sell 150,00 copies – a record, even for Gonzaga. Farías dos Santos 54. In Ferreira 52.

his friends and family⁶⁴⁴, but they continued working together. Teixeira had won best composer of the year in 1951 and 1952, perhaps leaving Gonzaga sour – but Gonzaga would continue to out-sell all other national recording artists (for a total of a nearly ten-year run), and was keyed up about working with a brand new collaborator, Zé Dantas.

The two new partners first met on a beach in the Pina neighborhood of Recife, Pernambuco, and Gonzaga describes thinking upon their meeting: “Perfect! Now my garden’s been watered!”⁶⁴⁵ Indeed, the new team would bring new life into Gonzaga’s work; his new partner was a sign from above of good things to come. Zé Dantas would enhance Gonzaga’s work even beyond the richness of the Gonzaga/Teixeira collaborations by adding elements of synesthesia and a true intimacy of the sertão to his lyrics and melodies. Having spent his childhood on a ranch in the Pernambuco backlands, he was infinitely comfortable and in tune with the natural environment; his music sketched the northeastern scrublands in language that was palpable and visceral while highly poetic. One can sense the love he had for the sertão. Gonzaga used to joke that he could ‘smell the stink of goat’ on Zé Dantas – a good-natured reference to his deeply rooted telluric talent.

Zé Dantas had made a life for himself in Rio as a distinguished obstetrician and continued to work as a doctor, even while writing with Gonzaga. Referring to his partner’s late arrival on the scene, Gonzaga would say that Zé Dantas had “hopped

⁶⁴⁴ Elba Ramalho reports that out of a total of 833 songs, (127 RPM records, 114 re-releases, 99 12” LPs), Gonzaga had a total of 275 partners (including both lyricists and composers). The collaborators with whom he produced the most tracks were João Silva (187 songs), ZéDantas (152), Humberto Teixeira (133) and Onildo Almeida (120). Ramalho 47.

⁶⁴⁵ “*E então pensei comigo: “Pronto, choveu na minha roça.”* (Gonzaga, in an interview with journalist Assis Ângelo). Teles 15.

aboard the tram mid-way... but boy could he drive!”⁶⁴⁶ The hits kept pouring in. For a few years Gonzaga worked closely with both Humberto Teixeira and Zé Dantas – even co-producing a live radio show with them – but, like most of his collaborators, Teixeira and Zé Dantas would eventually part ways with Gonzaga, largely over contractual issues.⁶⁴⁷ Still, of all of his co-authors, none are as celebrated in the canon of Brazilian music as Humberto Teixeira and Zé Dantas. Sulamita notes that Gonzaga’s collaboration with the two professionals gave a social prestige to his artistry that he couldn’t have attained otherwise; this prestige came not just from their respective professions, but from their immense song-writing talent and combined understanding of the nordeste tradition they were fortifying through their music.⁶⁴⁸ Nonetheless, Gonzaga’s dream of creating a long-lasting friendship among the trio never came to fruition and the group eventually drifted.⁶⁴⁹

While all three were performing on the “No Mundo do Baião,” they struck on a synergy of their personas that was highly popular: Teixeira would play the part of the pedantic professor, espousing truths about the sertão while Zé Dantas would

⁶⁴⁶ “Zé Dantas ‘pegara o bonde andando,’ como gostava de brincar Luiz Gonzaga quando comparava os dois parceiros, ‘mas como o dirigiu bem!’” Dreyfus 149-50.

⁶⁴⁷ Over his career, Gonzaga had several misunderstandings with his partners about authorial rights. Several protested that he shouldn’t have received song credits on certain tracks (to which he didn’t contribute substantially), while others denied Gonzaga the right to perform music he didn’t share the rights on (only to have him do so without permission). Several people have argued, as well, that Teixeira received song-writing credits for music written solely by Zé Dantas. With all of his partners, though, Gonzaga tended to be stubborn and difficult and to square off regularly over contractual conflicts.

⁶⁴⁸ Viera 120.

⁶⁴⁹ Although Iolanda Dantas (wife of Zé Dantas) insisted that the partners never fought – and had even collaborated on one song – the tension in their relationship eventually led Teixeira to a solo career of songwriting (a break that he always glossed over by insisting that the split occurred because of contractual conflicts between their respective recording companies). Dreyfus 165.

impersonate animals, people, institutions of the backlands, and Gonzaga would tie it all together with another one of his larger-than-life grins and accompanying expansive chords on the accordion. The show further consolidated a set of sertão stereotypes already implied in so many Gonzaga songs; the artists would act out exaggerated scenes including stand-out characters like the rich and pompous *coronel*, the country doctor, the corrupt politician, the illiterate cowhand, the superstitious religious fanatic and the local midwife, all coming together at a bumpkin wedding or in a brawl that broke out over forró and booze. It was entertaining, didactic at times, and extremely well liked, and it helped to further entrench an invented notion of nordestinidade for a nation-wide listening audience.

Even more so than Gonzaga's prior hits, the music of Zé Dantas has come to stand out as an anthem to nordestino culture and people; Dreyfus calls his work with Gonzaga a veritable "anthology of the Northeast"⁶⁵⁰ Of note is that their music rarely uses the first person but instead a third-person narrative describing comings and goings across small towns in the interior of the sertão. Zé Dantas quite famously co-wrote "A Volta da Asa Branca" (The Return of the White-Winged Dove), a reprise of the original in which the heartbreak of having to leave the sertão is alleviated with bountiful rain. The protagonist, along with the *asa branca*, returns home to verdant fields and promptly announces his pending nuptials with Rosinha. Published three years later (in 1950) and set in the same key as the original, "A Volta" speaks of hope and of new beginnings for the drought victims:

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, 149-50.

A Volta da Asa Branca

Já faz três noites
Que pro norte relampeia
A asa branca
Ouvindo o ronco do trovão
Já bateu asas
E voltou pro meu sertão
Ai, ai eu vou me embora
Vou cuidar da prantação

A seca fez eu desertar da minha terra
Mas felizmente Deus agora se alembrou
De mandar chuva
Pr'esse sertão sofredor
Sertão das muié séria
Dos homes trabaiador
Rios correndo
As cachoeira tão zoando
Terra moiada
Mato verde, que riqueza
E a asa branca
Tarde canta, que beleza
Ai, ai, o povo alegre
Mais alegre a natureza

Sentindo a chuva
Eu me arrescordero de Rosinha
A linda flor
Do meu sertão pernambucano
E se a safra
Não atrapaiá meus pranos
Que que há, o seu vigário
Vou casar no fim do ano.

The Return of the White-Winged Dove

It's been three nights
That lightning flickers to the north
The white-winged dove,
Hearing the roar of thunder,
Has flown again
And returned to my sertão
Ai, I'm leaving this place
I'm going to tend my crops

The drought made me abandon my land
But happily God has remembered
To send rain
to this suffering sertão
Land of stoic women
And hard-working men
Rivers running
Waterfalls gushing
Moist land
Green growth, how lush
And the white-winged dove
Finally sings so beautifully
Ai, cheerful folk
Even happier, nature

Feeling the rain
I 'member Rosinha, that lovely flower
Of my sertão permanbucano
And if the harvest
Doesn't upset my plans
Oh, yes, Father,
I'll be married at the end of the year.

Quite similar in form to “Asa Branca,” the ‘sequel’ has a composition that also rests on verses (this time three) with no chorus or bridge. Unlike the former, though, “A Volta” does not have the same narrative tension surrounding the white-winged dove, as it is mentioned in two different verses at different moments of build. Notably different, too, are the recurring rhymes at the end of the phrases; the first verse recalls the “ão” sounds of “Asa Branca,” but the second verse features the suffix “eza,” implying that the farmer’s dreams and wishes have become reality (in the form of nouns) while also symbolizing (as an onomatopoeia) the water rushing across the landscape.⁶⁵¹ The original performances of both songs also repeat the key final phrases of each verse, further entrenching those iconic lyrics in the memories of their listeners.

These two nordeste anthems were published between the two worst droughts in recent history: the secas of 1942 and 1958. But perhaps ironically, “A Volta” came out just one year before a severe drought tore through the northeastern state of Paraíba, driving out millions in a catastrophic contradiction to the new hit song.

Indeed, while geographic, economic, political and social conditions have always made the Northeast an area of cyclical migrations, the twentieth century saw unprecedented migration out of the area, due mainly to an acute series of droughts, asymmetrical and irregular land development, an age-old landed oligarchy, and the burgeoning industrial centers (mainly in São Paulo, Rio and Brasília) that beckoned unskilled laborers with few other options. These downtrodden men and women, exiled from their homeland, would travel south on the backs of rickety trucks; called

⁶⁵¹ Many Portuguese nouns can be formed by adding the suffix “eza” to a feminine adjective, as in: bela/beleza, rica/riqueza, natural/natureza.

pau-de-araras, or parrot perches, the truck cargoes packed so tightly that the refugees looked like tiny birds stuck in a cage. As hundreds of thousands of these retirantes flooded the cities of the South looking for work, the tunes of Luiz Gonzaga spoke to them and consoled them during their homesick anguish. Gonzaga came to symbolize everything that they had left home and everything they longed for in return.

Portuguese has a special word for nostalgic longing: *saudade*. Often *saudade* is said to be untranslatable, impossible to express or emote in another language, but, in a pinch, can be conveyed as *nostalgic longing*. In fact, nostalgia (from *nostos*: return home, and *algia*: longing), is a perfect descriptive for the plight of the retirantes: a longing for a home that no longer exists or *has never existed*.⁶⁵² Nostalgia is an important step in the invention of tradition, as it must be evoked along with repetitive imagery in order to establish a yearning, in the present, for an imagined past; and yet its impossibility confounds. As Svetlana Boym writes, “Nostalgia tantalizes us with its fundamental ambivalence; it is about the repetition of the unrepeatable, materialization of the immaterial.”⁶⁵³

The evocative tunes of Zé Dantas and Luiz Gonzaga brought forth the sensations, tastes, smells and sounds that hundreds of thousands of nordestinos felt for their native land. As one nordestino ethnographer wrote, “Gonzaga’s Northeast is created to nourish the migrants’ memory.”⁶⁵⁴ Another article by journalist Ubirajara Mendes speaks to this:

⁶⁵² Ibid, xiii.

⁶⁵³ Ibid, xvii-sviii.

⁶⁵⁴ “*O Nordeste de Gonzaga é criado para realimentar a memória do migrante.*” Albuquerque 159.

The power of his voice and his compelling sanfona leave the station's listeners with a strange saudade without knowing exactly *of what...* perhaps it is saudade of the sertão that we've never known, but for that very reason we find more distant and beautiful. There will always be saudade of the sertão and if you have a radio and Luiz Gonzaga sings, if his accordion plays those familiar chords, you will feel saudades of the sertão.⁶⁵⁵

There is a certain pleasure in prolonging one's pain; and Gonzaga's tunes beg the listener to recall his native soil, to bask in the searing sertão sun, to visualize the sad departure of the last white-winged dove.

Gonzaga's Mid-Life Crisis: The 'Ostracism' Years

Gonzaga's music remained wildly popular throughout the early 1950s, particularly with his nordestino audience, but the political climate began to change in 1956 with the transition to Kubitschek's presidency and the move to modernize Brazil with "fifty years of progress in five." In an era that stressed modernity and progress and measured success in terms of foreign imports, Gonzaga's music no longer appealed to the broad middle-class and elite audience he had once charmed. As José Farias writes,

The musical moment as lived by the urban crowd wasn't a good fit for Luiz Gonzaga and his baião... the leather [cangaceiro] hat was switched out for leather jackets, his sandals for moccasins, and his accordion... replaced by the guitar and the electric guitar.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ Ubirajara Mendes, "Louvação a Luiz Gonzaga," *Jornal do Commercio* (Recife, 3 June 1949). In Fernando Moura and Antônio Vicente, *Jackson do Pandeiro: o rei do ritmo* (São Paulo, Brazil: Editora 34, 2001), 138-39. My emphasis.

⁶⁵⁶ "O momento musical vivenciado pelo meio urbano não era propício para Luiz Gonzaga e seu baião. Existiam outras referências: o chapéu de couro fora trocado pela jaqueta de couro; a alpercata, substituída pelos sapatos mocassim; e a sanfona, relegada pelo violão e pela guitarra elétrica." Farias dos Santos 63.

Though his shows were cancelled and media presence squashed in all of the big cities, Gonzaga continued to enjoy extraordinary success in the small towns of the interior. So he set off on a series of national tours that would keep him away from home for months at a time, playing on a traveling stage set up in the municipality's plaza to a modest but enthusiastic rural public – the only public that continued to adore him.⁶⁵⁷

A populist at heart, Gonzaga had always made music *of* the people and *for* the people. Though he socialized liberally with Rio's elite, even at his peak he preferred to leave the fancy club performances to other, more sophisticated artists. Throughout his career, he had struggled with music executives to continue producing 78s, then LP's, even after more advanced technology had become available in order to keep costs down for his fans with humble origins like his own.⁶⁵⁸ Following with this attitude, he set out to make his national tour and his individual shows free; he found companies and/or politicians to underwrite his shows and he signed on to hundreds of advertising contracts, which would subsidize additional tour costs. Writes Dreyfus:

With the same tone, the same vigor with which he sang his music, Gonzaga promoted liquor, coffee, tobacco, wine, appliance warehouses, shoe stores, pharmacies, medicines, cleaning products...⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ Dreyfus writes that even though Gonzaga received no mentions at this time in print or audio/visual media, he was still able to generate audiences of 5,000 to 10,000 in the plazas of the small rural towns. Dreyfus 208.

⁶⁵⁸ Gonzaga continued to record on 78s until the end of their production in 1962. Ramalho 47; Dreyfus 194. In fact, his production company generally used the pressing of a new medium as an occasion to re-release old hits in the newer formats.

⁶⁵⁹ “*Com o mesmo tom, a mesma empolgação com que cantava sua músicas, Gonzaga promovia cachaça, café, fumo, vinho, lojas de eletrodomésticos, de sapatos, drogarias, remédios, sabonetes...*” Dreyfus 210.

Often, Gonzaga would record or perform ‘jingles’ for his various sponsors to the tune of his most popular hits, changing a word or two to fit in an advertisement where necessary.⁶⁶⁰ In one advertisement, he modified the lyrics to an already famous song: “Pronde tu vai, Luiz? / Eu vou pra casa dela / Fazê o que Luiz? / Tomar café Petinho.”⁶⁶¹ Other campaigns included original music, like a song penned for the state petroleum company. “Brasil, meu Brasil / Tu vais prosperá tu vais / Vais crescer inda mais / Com a Petrobrás.”⁶⁶² He even backed opposing political candidates, each with his own version of publicity. One of his more popular hits, “Paraíba,” was originally composed for Minister Pereira Lyra (a State Department head under Dutra’s Presidency); it was such a hit that he re-recorded it with slightly different lyrics as a commercial success. Gonzaga, who always proclaimed himself a devout Catholic, also made countless songs for local parishes and priests as well as for the Vatican and different Popes throughout his career.

It was during this time, too – as money began getting tighter and the lavish lifestyle that included dozens of relatives living entirely off Gonzaga’s earnings more difficult – that Gonzaga’s wife Helena began establishing nordestino conjuntos of Gonzaga followers that would spread out across the country playing the established hits and gaining ever more popularity (and, hopefully, royalties) for the King of

⁶⁶⁰ This practice still goes on today, particularly with the zabumba groups of Caruaru, Pernambuco. See Crook, *Na Batida*, for details on negotiations between politicians and musical ensembles.

⁶⁶¹ Dreyfus 210. “Where ya going, Luiz? / I’m goin’ to her house / What for? / To drink café Petinho.” Adapted from *Pronde Tu Vai Luiz*. Original lyrics: *Pronde tu vai, Luiz? / Eu vou pra casa dela / Fazê o que Luiz? / Eu vô carregá ela*. “Where ya going, Luiz? / I’m goin’ to her house / What for? / I’m a gonna take her away.”

⁶⁶² “Brazil, my Brazil / You’re going to prosper yes indeed / You will continue growing / with Petrobrás.

Baião. Several of these groups were composed of family members and close friends but few lasted the test of time. In addition, Gonzaga had his first book published and oversaw additional releases of old classics in the hopes of improving his stifled cash flow.

In fact, the success that Gonzaga was able to consolidate during this time underscores a perennial issue for Brazilian artists: record sales generate few to no royalties in Brazil and instead they must rely on performance revenue for their earnings. As Caetano Veloso gripes,

... hardly anyone can live on royalties in Brazil. Unlike artists in rich countries, here we cut records only in order to create shows, and it is these shows, with long runs in the great capitals and tours throughout the rest of the country, that insure the livelihood of their stars.⁶⁶³

Indeed, while in most places “mediatized forms enjoy more cultural presence and prestige – and profitability – than live forms,”⁶⁶⁴ Brazil is an obvious exception, in which music as a phased industrial process is less significant. Already in the 1950s,

Fans no longer demonstrated their appreciation principally by purchasing records. Instead, they proved their loyalty by traveling great distances and suffering hardships in order to attend the auditorium programs and other live performances.⁶⁶⁵

The fact that Gonzaga had taken to the road not only fit several of his personal and professional priorities – by allowing him to remain close to the masses, to continue to travel relentlessly and to continue to make a living while ensuring relatively cheap

⁶⁶³ Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 266.

⁶⁶⁴ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 162. In *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time*, Ed. Ian Inglis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), xiii.

⁶⁶⁵ McCann 196.

entertainment to his fans – but also became a successful business plan that would later be duplicated by thousands of forró bands.

For over a decade, Gonzaga peddled his wares in a constant musical peregrination across Brazil. He continued to collaborate with veteran lyricists, he sponsored upcoming musicians, he created countless more forró classics – and, amazingly, three decades after he was first discovered as a young nordestino, Gonzaga, the “Rei do Baião” had a professional resurgence with his urban audiences.

Resurgence: Forró comes full circle

After the frenzied years of tackling modernity under Kubitschek, Brazil underwent a violent and oppressive regime change in 1964, resulting in the military dictatorship that ruled the nation until 1985. Though certain phases of the regime were more repressive than others, students and intellectuals began to speak out against the regime soon after the coup. Gonzaga, though he had publicly protested the plight of the nordestino retirantes from early on in his career, was famously ignorant about politics – he appalled even his biggest supporters when he retorted that the claims of torture under the Castelo Branco military regime were bogus. Nonetheless, a generation of left-wing sympathizers had grown up with Gonzaga’s music as a backdrop to their youth, and these young musicians would welcome Gonzaga back to his throne at the head of Brazilian popular music.

Brazil’s music scene had changed immensely by the 1960s. After the advent of television the live radio auditório programs faded away and televised music festivals

became the new gauge of popularity for upcoming stars.⁶⁶⁶ The market became youth-oriented and grew exponentially, by an estimated 1375%.⁶⁶⁷ Soon Brazil would boast the fifth largest music market in the world.⁶⁶⁸ At the same time, Brazilian popular music was divided into two warring factions:⁶⁶⁹ the *Jovem Guarda* rockers who emulated North American and European rock acts and the *MPB* (*música popular brasileira*) artists who saw themselves as descendents of bossa nova and earlier “authentic” Brazilian rhythms. The MPB musicians (like their audience) were generally university-educated and gained fame for performing acoustic songs lauding traditional Brazil and criticizing the new political regime. Because of their penchant for protest music, these artists looked to Gonzaga’s canon of songs, several of which mourned the oppression of nordestinos and protested the lack of government action on their behalf.

In fact, it is misleading to say that Gonzaga’s songs of protest made up a large part of his repertoire; he had always been extremely apolitical and rarely challenged individual politicians or groups. Instead he represented the hardships faced by his

⁶⁶⁶ Dunn reports: “Radio grew rapidly in the 1950s (nearly a 225% increase over 10 years) and then slowed considerably in the 1960s (roughly a 37% increase). TV stations, on the other hand, increased by nearly 250% during the 1960s – from 15 to 52 stations.” Christopher John Dunn, *The Relics of Brazil: Modernity and Nationality in the Tropicalista Movement* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, Brown University, 1996), 30; Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 45.

⁶⁶⁷ Renato Ortiz, *A moderna tradição brasileira: Cultura Brasileira e Indústria Cultural* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1988). In Ramalho 50.

⁶⁶⁸ Ferretti 77.

⁶⁶⁹ Veloso emphasizes the antagonism between the MPB and Jovem Guarda factions by noting that artists who appeared on one group’s platform were blacklisted by the other group. See Veloso 123.

fellow nordestinos, often focusing on natural calamities like the recurring droughts.⁶⁷⁰

Dreyfus reminds us that of the hundreds of songs Gonzaga popularized over the years, a mere ten or so can be called “songs of protest.”⁶⁷¹ However, these few songs were dear to his fan base – and became veritable hymns of protest once the young MPB artists publicly embraced them. Besides “Asa Branca,” which became the most popular song of the generation (see below), the song most associated with protest is “Vozes da Seca” [Voices of the Drought], coauthored by Gonzaga and Zé Dantas. In this classic Gonzaga sings mournfully:

Kind Sir the nordestinos are very grateful / for the assistance of the
southerners during the great drought / but Sir a hand-out to a healthy man
Will either kill him or turn him to vice / and that’s why we ask you for your
protection...⁶⁷²

Gonzaga supported agrarian reform and irrigation projects across the sertão,⁶⁷³ though many of these were utter failures from a development point of view.⁶⁷⁴

McCann points out that he also collaborated with liberation theologian clergy on the *missa do vaqueiro* (the cowboy mass). According to McCann,

The *missa do vaqueiro*, celebrated annually throughout the 1970s, played a

⁶⁷⁰ McCann points out that Gilberto Gil identified Gonzaga as “the first spokesperson for the marginalized culture of the Northeast.” McCann 125.

⁶⁷¹ Dreyfus 190.

⁶⁷² *Seu doutô os nordestino têm muita gratidão / pelo auxílio dos sulista nessa seca do sertão
Mas doutô uma esmola a um homem qui é são / ou lhe mata de vergonha ou vicia o cidadão / É por
isso que pidimo proteção a vosmicê*

⁶⁷³ In a 1981 recording with son Gonzaguinha, Gonzaga interspersed commentary on President Kubitschek’s establishment of SUDENE (the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast, created 1959) with the lyrics of “Vozes da Seca.”

⁶⁷⁴ SUDENE was caught up in corruption scandals leading to its demise in 1999. In addition, while providing jobs for thousands of workers, several of the development projects were poorly planned and have since had catastrophic ecological effects on the immediate environment.

significant role in mobilizing impoverished nordestino to participate in the drive for land reform spearheaded by the liberation theologians and allied agrarian organizers.⁶⁷⁵

Still, for all of his work on behalf of exploited classes, Gonzaga was never politically savvy, and one biographer writes that his new followers “were somewhat disoriented” when Gonzaga announced that “that business of torture is a communist ruse” and that Castelo Branco, then in power, was a “quite civilized president.”⁶⁷⁶ Nevertheless, Gonzaga managed to patch things up – not only with the rising MPB stars but also with his own son, Gonzaguinha, who was a leading protest singer and with whom Gonzaga had previously suffered a very public falling out. After this reunion, the two toured together,⁶⁷⁷ restoring his standing with the protest singers (who also seemed to agree to listen to his lyrics and ignore his sometimes awkward public gaffes).

In 1965 Geraldo Vandré was a young upcoming singer-songwriter from Paraíba who had not yet consolidated his fame as a protest singer. He performed a version of “Asa Branca” on his second album – just a few years before he had to exile himself for fear of repercussions from the increasingly severe regime⁶⁷⁸ – and gave a new

⁶⁷⁵ McCann 124-25.

⁶⁷⁶ “...essa coisa de tortura é jogada dos comunistas...” e Castelo Branco era “um presidente muito civilizado.” Dreyfus 262.

⁶⁷⁷ On one of these tours, a placard announcing their upcoming show advertised “Gonzagão e Gonzaguinha, the best sertanejo duo in Brazil.” “... a maior dupla sertaneja do Brasil.” The joke was that though both singers might be considered “sertanejos” (from the sertão), their music was not sertaneja at all. In fact, sertanejo singers (often from the interior of the southern states) often played in duos and boasted exaggerated stage names such as “Pedrão and Pedrinho” or “Zecão and Zequinho.” The names Gonzagão and Gonzaguinha, given in jest, stuck. Ferreira 79.

⁶⁷⁸ A huge number of the MPB singers of this generation were exiled (including both forced or voluntary exile): Chico Buarque (in Italy), Geraldo Vandré (in France, then Chile), Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil (in London) as well as Nara Leão, Edu Lobo, Francis Hime, Vinícius de Moraes,

social legitimacy to the message of the music of Luiz Gonzaga. Then in 1971, Caetano Veloso produced from exile an album which also featured a version of “Asa Branca” dripping with melancholy and saudade. Notably, Veloso included “Asa Branca” as the *only* Portuguese-language song on the record, embedding the song with multiple layers of meaning: though prior interpretations of “Asa Branca” cited only the pain of being expelled from one’s homeland *in the Northeast*, Veloso re-packaged the music to address political exile, as well, helping the song to become an anthem not just of the plight of the retirantes, but of all Brazilians far from home.

Along with the enhanced significations of Gonzaga’s music, the young generation of protest singers also heralded in a new appreciation of folkloric roots. The *tropicália* movement of the late 1960s, driven most famously by the work of Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, had re-formulated the “cannibalist” project of Oswald de Andrade from the 1920s, encouraging a new Brazilian art that would “gorge” itself on folk traditions as well as modern sounds and recording techniques in order to create, through the anthropophagy of foreign and local elements, a truly Brazilian aesthetic.

Not only did the tropicalists inspire interest in Brazilian folklore; they also referred directly to Luiz Gonzaga as one of their earliest and most prominent influences.⁶⁷⁹ In one interview Gilberto Gil compared Gonzaga to the great Pelé, saying that Gonzaga

[was] among the five most important influences on Brazilian popular music... All of us architects of *tropicália*... had, in our infancy and adolescence, huge influence from nordestino songs, especially the music of Luiz Gonzaga. If

Baden Powell and Toquinho. See Tárík de Souza, *Brasil musical* (Rio de Janeiro: Art Bureau, 1988), 268. In Ramalho 30.

⁶⁷⁹ Albuquerque points out, on the other hand, the huge influence that the tropicalists had on Luiz Gonzaga; according to his analysis, Gonzaga was never able to recognize (much less embrace) the modern side of northeastern life until the tropicalista project in the 1960s. Instead, he argues, the protest songs of the 1950s all rested on the notion that the region needed to be saved from a crisis of nature (by developmentalist politics or salvationist christianity). Albuquerque 163.

you take the first album of *tropicália*, you'll find there a variety of compositions, all of them derived from the *baião* style...⁶⁸⁰

Later Gil would call Luiz Gonzaga “the first musical phenomenon that had a great impact on me,” and cite Gonzaga as “the first really significant thing to happen in the realm of mass culture in Brazil.”⁶⁸¹ Caetano, for his part, would also name Gonzaga as one of his strongest influences, even mentioning in his memoir that the first song he ever composed was a *baião*, in C minor.⁶⁸² While short-lived, the *tropicália* movement influenced hundreds of upcoming artists across the nation, many of whom would also come to admire and emulate Luiz Gonzaga’s work. In the coming years, Alceu Valença, Moraes Moreira, Geraldo Azevedo, Zé Ramalho, Raimundo Fagner and Belchior (the so-called *cabeludos*, or “hippy-haired ones”), as well as Elba Ramalho and Raul Seixas, would carry the torch of *nordestino* musical identity alongside Gonzaga.⁶⁸³

⁶⁸⁰ “Luiz Gonzaga é assim como Pelé. Entre as cinco maiores referências que se pode ter sobre música popular brasileira em todos os tempos, Gonzaga é uma delas.... Todos nós, criadores do tropicalismo... todos tivemos, no início da infância e da adolescência, muita influência da canção nordestina, especialmente da música de Luiz Gonzaga.” “Você pega o primeiro disco da *Tropicália* e ali encontra uma variedade de composições, todas elas *baiões*, derivados ou gêneros próximos do *baião*.” Gildson Oliveira 81-2.

⁶⁸¹ “O primeiro fenômeno musical que deixou lastro muito grande em mim foi Luiz Gonzaga.” Augusto de Campos, *O Balanço da Bossa e Outras Bossas* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1978). “E acrescentava que Gonzaga fora, sem dúvida, ‘a primeira grande coisa significativa do ponto de vista da cultura de massa no Brasil.’” Dreyfus 244.

⁶⁸² Veloso 13.

⁶⁸³ It is important to underscore the fact that the *cabeludos* didn’t simply replicate the music of Gonzaga; instead, they used it as a base on which to develop new rock fusions. They were the first generation to “mix *baião* with rock n’ roll, to add electric guitar to the eight-bass accordion, repente improvised verse with concrete poetry, folklore and future.” “Começou a misturar *baião* e rock, oito baixos e baixo elétrico, repente e poesia concreta, folclore e futuro.” Dreyfus 273. In Ceva, *Na Batida*, 52. See below for more recent hybrid forms of *nordestino* rhythms and melodies.

With this new surge of interest in nordestino identity and culture, Gonzaga would continue touring throughout the 1970s and 80s – this time, including the bigger cities in his journeys – and would even record with the younger talent, embracing different genres, namely rock.⁶⁸⁴ In turn, the young performers would record his classic hits. Gonzaga became, on many levels, a paternal figure of Brazilian popular music, sharing his expertise and his good-natured laughter and friendship with subsequent generations of artists.

In a sense, Gonzaga was following an age-old northeastern tradition of paternalism – though more generally it was the politicians, lawyers and police (or charismatic messianic figures and *cangaceiros*) who took on these paternal roles. In rural Brazil, where political power is often fortified through family networks, the consolidation of family relationships has always been extremely important. And Gonzaga, ever attentive to traditions of kin, was more than just a wealthy and popular benefactor. For many, he was the perfect link between impoverished sharecroppers and affluent landowners – he repeatedly acknowledged his own social ascension from poverty and sought to provide opportunities for youth interested in pursuing music.

His role as musical benefactor was further reinforced by a deep-seated custom of the Northeast: the festival of Saint John had long served as a “time to establish and consolidate personal relations between families,”⁶⁸⁵ making it a prime time to hold marriages and baptisms and to appoint godparents. The fact that *forró* – and, of

⁶⁸⁴ In a 1971 release, Gonzaga recorded famous songs by Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Antonio Carlos, Jacáfi, Edu Lobo and Capinan. Several of the featured artists, along with Geraldo Vandré, also appeared with him at the Teresa Raquel theatre in Rio de Janeiro for the debut performance on the live tour. Gildson Oliveira 49.

⁶⁸⁵ Ramalho 19.

course, its most popular artist Luiz Gonzaga – reigns supreme during the festival simply strengthened an already strong link between Gonzaga and his countless “godchildren” of forró.

Gonzaga was renowned for his enthusiasm of fostering young and upcoming talent with no reservations; he was unafraid of sharing talent and/or money and made a point to play the paternal role that had helped him come up in the world.

Whoever has talent doesn't need to fear losing anything. I put a whole world of artists singing in my style and what came of it? I reinforced my own creations and I continue to profit even today.⁶⁸⁶

Indeed, Gonzaga's outreach to upcoming performers served only to consolidate his fame and prestige. These artists, on their own climb to celebrity, always credited Gonzaga for his generous support, earning additional fans for an already huge audience. The most famous artist today that was sponsored by Gonzaga from a young age is Dominginhos, though thousands of kids – and even older artists – received advice, lodging, even brand new accordions from the King of Baião. Even Arlindo dos Oito Baixos (see below) was brought under Gonzaga's wing in his early years as a performing artist, and achieved great success after his idol suggested playing an 8-bass accordion (to separate himself from the crowd of 120-bass accordionists already touring the circuit). As a longtime leader of the genre, Gonzaga was able to give practical guidance to newcomers based on his insider knowledge. And according to Dreyfus, “he never withheld advice, help or a simple tip.”⁶⁸⁷

⁶⁸⁶ “*Quem tem talento não tem medo de perder. Eu botei um mundo de artistas cantando na minha linha e que é que deu? Reforcei as minhas criações e saí lucrando até hoje.*” Dreyfus 303.

⁶⁸⁷ “*Nunca poupava um conselho, uma ajuda, uma dica...*” Dreyfus 191-2. One of the only nordestino musicians with whom Gonzaga did not have a paternalistic (or even particularly friendly) relationship was Jackson do Pandeiro, the famous tambourine player. Jackson had reached stardom throughout Brazil by 1955, fueled by his best-selling “Sebastiana,” and he would top the charts for

As Gonzaga aged and grew ill, these disciples continued to perform his hits all across the world, sharing the stage with their idol whenever possible. Even while afflicted with a slowly growing prostate cancer, Gonzaga continued touring and recording; he brought in additional accordionists when the weight of the instrument became too much for him and would still sing his timeless pieces, to the thrill of his always enthusiastic audiences. Though he succumbed to the cancer in August of 1989, he continues to live on through his classic recordings and, perhaps even more importantly, the new generations of forró musicians which he inspired and assisted throughout his decades-long career.

Gonzaga's very success as a recording artist – he wrote or co-wrote over 300 songs and recorded over 1500 versions of 600 songs⁶⁸⁸ – demonstrates his ability to remain deeply in touch with his fan base and with the very land that he represents in his music. As McCann writes:

When Gonzaga received the 1987 Shell Award for Lifetime Achievement, the most prestigious prize in Brazilian music, critic Nelson Xavier justified the award with reference not to Gonzaga's inventions but to his origins: "Luiz Gonzaga is telluric."⁶⁸⁹

Even after his death, Gonzaga remains alive for many; Sulamita Viera notes that in a commemorative ceremony in his hometown of Exu, the speaker reaffirmed his presence, noting not his moment of passing but the eternity of vitality that he brought to the stage and to his fans. Indeed, as musician João Bosco explains,

another decade before separating from his sidekick and spouse Almira Castilhos de Albuquerque in 1967. Though both were acquainted, Gonzaga and Jackson never forged a friendship and instead avoided one another, perhaps because of a simmering jealousy on the part of one or both.

⁶⁸⁸ McCann 124; Ramalho 49.

⁶⁸⁹ Mis-Arquivo, NMDB, 31 Oct. In McCann 117.

For my generation, Luiz was a person who was already in our hearts when we were born. I don't know from when or where, but everything that he sang, I already knew. His music was everywhere. Luiz was the air that we breathed; he was the people.⁶⁹⁰

Conclusion: Gonzaga's 'Roots' Discourse Takes 'Route'

The discourse created within the forró genre – as it is typically narrated – recreates the dichotomies that Brazilian society has been reinforcing since the onset of modernity. As the standard story goes, the accordion represents the antithesis of progress; one pole of what Martin-Barbero calls a 'schizophrenic' process, in which Brazilians combine a fevered push for 'progress' with a renewed populist 'return to roots.' In this interpretation, an increasingly globalized Brazil compels the populace to begin looking to cultural products such as forró that might represent a rural and bucolic past, an imagined place and time untouched by modernity that might somehow better reflect an "authentic" Brazilian experience.

Luiz Gonzaga himself is complicit in this construction; he played up these oppositions through his performance style, lyrical content and interviews, emphasizing the dualisms of *Northeast vs. South, rural vs. urban, uneducated vs. highly literate, poor vs. elite, underdeveloped vs. industrialized*, etc. Gonzaga narrated the forró musical tradition as one exoticized extreme of the Brazilian culture spectrum. By positioning himself thus, Luiz Gonzaga helped to develop and consolidate a region that, until the 1920s, never existed as such. He (along with other well-known artists, politicians and intellectuals who also built up the discourse) is a

⁶⁹⁰ João Bosco: "para minha geração, Luiz era um pessoa que já estava no nosso coração quando a gente nascia. Eu não sei de quando nem de onde, mas tudo o que ele cantava, eu já sabia. A música dele estava em todas as partes. Luiz era o ar que se respira, ele era o povo." Dreyfus 288.

primary agent of the construction of the Northeast. This region, dressed as it is in novel nomenclature, is discursively and politically restricted in its development.

However, I would like to demonstrate that an alternative analysis of Gonzaga's music and career, as a cyclical and peripatetic invented tradition, may instead bring us one step closer toward bringing the age-old dialectic (of modernity vs. tradition) to resolution and toward finally understanding Brazilian music through a different paradigm.

From its conception, forró has been tied to migration. It was not only created from, but continues to be consumed, because of an ever-growing cycle of Brazilian migration. The troubadours of Brazil brought European, African, Latin, indigenous and Middle Eastern melodies and rhythms to the furthest corners of Brazil, where they evolved over time; Luiz Gonzaga brought the tunes he remembered from his youth to the capital city of Rio; he then created a career based on iterative musical tours criss-crossing the nation.⁶⁹¹ Instead of interpreting Gonzaga's life as one between two opposing poles, we should conceptualize his career as an intricate network: a root system, or a migratory pattern. Indeed, Gonzaga 'blazed a trail' for the success of the accordion in Brazil, but he also created thousands of diverging 'routes' for new creative refractions of the sanfona.

The trope of peregrination and, ultimately, return to one's homeland, is one treated again and again in the lyrics of forró. Few songs exist in the forró "canon" that don't

⁶⁹¹ For many years, Gonzaga split his time between Rio (where he had set up his family and performed regularly at Rádio Nacional, then Mayrink Veiga Radio) and São Paulo (where he had regular programs on Rádio Record and Rádio Cultura), in addition to thousands of live shows across all of Brazil. Further evidence of his proclivity to travel is the title of the *samba enredo* performed in 1982 by the Rio de Janeiro samba school Unidos de Lucas: Lua Viajante. (Gonzaga was chosen as the theme for their parade, and it is notable that of all the aspects of his career and personality that they could have focused on, they chose his penchant for exploring his native Brazil.)

somehow hail or reference “saudades” or nostalgia for one’s home, as well as reiterate the suffering of an itinerant community. The emphasis of Gonzaga’s music on nature (recall the mandacaru cactus, the white-winged dove, the countless descriptions of the sertão and drought...) invokes the very cyclical quality of seasonal changes, and of life, itself. Even his style of collaboration was one in which he would record with various partners in succession, returning perennially to those with whom he had partnered to create new hits. Marcos Madeira de Mattos paints Gonzaga as a “modern” troubadour whose path reversed the traditional course:

... Luiz Gonzaga carried out the inverse function of the troubadours. They brought the news and happenings of the big city to their people, and Luiz Gonzaga, using the baião rhythm of those troubadours as the base for his music, brought, along with his music, the customs of his people and the nostalgia [he felt] for his land and his people to other regions, showing, in a simple way, the richness of his people.⁶⁹²

Gonzaga’s music doesn’t simply ‘bridge’ the tension between Brazilian poles, but it functions as its dialectical resolution. Albuquerque writes:

Though his song lyrics showed a traditional, anti-modern, anti-urban Nordeste, his rhythm and harmony were a modern urban invention. At the same time that he spoke of a space that rejected bourgeois mercantile relations, [his music] was highly commercial... the baião was the perfect expression of a conciliation between modern forms and traditional content.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹² “Luiz Gonzaga agora exercia função inversa a dos cantadores de viola. Esses noticiavam aos seus os acontecimentos e novidades da cidade grande, e Luiz Gonzaga, utilizando como base para o ritmo de sua música a batida que os cantadores usavam em suas cantorias, levava em sua música os costumes do seu povo e a saudade de sua terra e da sua gente a outras regiões, mostrando de maneira simples a riqueza de seu povo.” Mattos Madeira 14.

⁶⁹³ “A música de Luiz Gonzaga é atravessada pela ambiguidade entre um conteúdo tradicional e uma forma moderna. Enquanto as letras de suas canções mostravam um Nordeste tradicional, antimoderno, antiurbano, seu ritmo, sua harmonia eram uma invenção urbana moderna. Ao mesmo tempo que falava de um espaço que rejeitava as relações mercantis burguesas, era eminentemente comercial, voltada para um público urbano... era o baião a própria expressão da conciliação entre formas modernas e conteúdos tradicionais.” Albuquerque 162-3.

Indeed, Gonzaga himself was a retiree, of sorts, whose continued commercial success in fact allowed him to return to his native land, both lyrically and literally, over a lifelong musical journey.

Chapter Five

Recife's Roots Revival

*Lá no meu pé de serra
Deixei ficar meu coração,
Ai que saudades tenho
Eu vou voltar pro meu sertão...*

- "No Meu Pé de Serra," Luiz Gonzaga & Humberto Teixeira, 1946

This chapter explores musical creation and innovation in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, which, as Daniel Sharp argues, "occupies a privileged position as the region's cultural center."⁶⁹⁴ I originally chose to research forró in Recife because I was familiar with its lively pé-de-serra scene in the Luiz Gonzaga (traditional) style, but I soon discovered there is a much more diverse and theoretically interesting musical scene in the city than I had previously imagined. In this chapter I want to examine some of the principal forró-based musical innovations that are going on in the city and what they mean for the preservation and/or transformation of the genre. In order to do that, I must give a context for the other musical influences and histories that led Recife to be the kind of music center that it now is – and that help shape the evolution of a genre.

I will first introduce the colonial history that separates Recife from any other settlement in Brazil or the New World and show how Recife has long led the nation as a center for intellectual exploration and innovation. I will then explore the Afro-Brazilian musical influences in the early colony and throughout subsequent centuries.

⁶⁹⁴ Daniel Benson Sharp, *A Satellite Dish in the Shantytown Swamps: Musical Hybridity in the 'New Scene' of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, Latin American Studies, 2001), 17.

Next I introduce scholarship on the Middle-Eastern influences that have shaped northeastern musical styles and that are clearly audible in many of the forró innovations of the past two decades. The next section describes the mid-20th century stagnation of Recife and how its languishing economic position fueled a major cultural movement. Called mangue beat, this movement is what Philip Galinsky calls “the latest innovation within a long practice of self-aware, experimental musical miscegenation in the country.”⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, mangue, like Modernismo and tropicália before it, approaches traditional culture through an international prism, creating a uniquely Brazilian (and in this case, a uniquely Pernambucan) amalgam of several cultures. The next section explores what I call a “post-mangue” movement among forró-oriented artists, in which they apply much of the theoretical practice introduced by the mangue artists into a primarily forró-based yet alternative genre. Following this, I delve into a description and discussion of forró estilizado, a pop genre of forró that has achieved extreme popularity among the lower classes and is often at the center of contemporary critiques by traditionalists. From here, I explore the city and music scene of Recife today, examining the importance of roots for local musicians and audiences, as well as their enthusiasm for hybridized musical styles. I will conclude by suggesting how these histories and recent trends have changed the genre of forró and how they may continue to transform it in the future.

Recife represents a city that straddles both tradition and modernity. The enhanced interest of Recife artists in tapping into traditional song genres from the area, their willingness to experiment with “alternative” global genres as opposed to simple

⁶⁹⁵ Philip Andrew Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico: Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in the Mangue Movement and “New Music Scene” of Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Dept. Music, Wesleyan University, 1999), 40-1.

foreign pop platforms, and the lack of massification of manguê/post-manguê music in the Brazilian media have created a fluid boundary between “modern” and “traditional” categories. As Philip Galinsky writes:

I argue that in Recife, for specific reasons, a more fluid interaction between “traditional” and “modern” influences and musicians was able to develop; whereby in a sense the “tradition” has become more “modern” and the “modern” more “traditional.”⁶⁹⁶

Indeed, how this bustling urban center with deep roots in rural traditional culture contends with the pressures of post-modernity may teach us much about celebrating culture in our own context while also embracing the new technologies and innovations of the twenty-first century. Recife may be able to show the world how to balance living between two dichotomies in an increasingly complex world. It is perhaps more simple than it sounds: as Kevin Cassidy sums up the role of music in Recife, “Modernity is experienced in this rendering not as a renunciation of tradition, but through a valorization of it.”⁶⁹⁷

Recife: A Bustling Colonial Center

⁶⁹⁶ Ibid 7-8

⁶⁹⁷ Kevin Cassidy, *Forró: Constructing Identity in the Brazilian Northeast through Notions of “Tradition”* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Anthropology Dept., Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, 2006), 37-8.

Founded in 1537⁶⁹⁸ and named for the reefs (*arrecifes*)⁶⁹⁹ that surround the city, Recife and its neighbor Olinda have been one of Brazil's primary centers of commerce since the early years of the colony. Still called "the Brazilian Venice," Recife is located at the confluence of six rivers and the sea, and its urban sprawl began in its early years as a regional trading center, when settlers began building over the rich delta mangroves. The history of Recife differs from much of the rest of Brazil (and even much of the Northeast) because of the unique influence of Dutch colonizers in the mid-seventeenth century. Major players in the early sugar trade, the Dutch began confronting the Portuguese over Brazilian territory in the early seventeenth century and managed to drive the Portuguese out of Olinda by 1630. In the twenty-four years that they annexed the cities and surrounding area, the Dutch built up Recife into their regional capital and "transformed Recife into the first bourgeois commercial city in the colony."⁷⁰⁰ Indeed, under the Dutch, the "Mauritian"⁷⁰¹ city of Recife became one of the most cosmopolitan cities of the world, with a diverse population⁷⁰² and infrastructure unparalleled in the New World.

⁶⁹⁸ It was in this year that the Portuguese King divided the Brazilian colony into *Hereditary Captaincies*, each to be run by local aristocrats (called *donatários*). The *donatários* would govern the area and oversee economic production in the King's absence. Though this system had seen success in the Portuguese colonies in Africa, it was a disaster in Brazil and nearly all of the *Captaincies* failed (with the notable exception of Recife, under Duarte Coelho Pereira).

⁶⁹⁹ One source stresses the Arabic origin of this word. *Festejos Juninos: Uma tradição nordestina* (Recife: Editora Nova Presença, 2002), 33.

⁷⁰⁰ Galinsky 42.

⁷⁰¹ Even today, Recife residents often reference the moniker of Mauritsstad (also Mauricia), which stemmed from the name of Dutch leader Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen.

⁷⁰² Several historians note the large Jewish population that resided in Recife under Dutch rule. In fact, the first Jewish community and the first synagogue in the Americas were founded in Recife (though many of these Jews fled to New Amsterdam when the Portuguese took over in 1654).

Recife, the epicenter of the New Holland colony, was renowned for its splendor, its political organization⁷⁰³ and its progressive intellectual life. Even after the Portuguese regained the area in 1654, Recife remained one of the most influential intellectual centers of the colony – a title it would relinquish only in the twentieth century, when it was eclipsed by Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in the South. Even during the late reign of Pedro II (a time when intellectual life had been restricted), Recife was still one of the leading intellectual havens in all of Brazil, boasting the first major city newspaper as well as one of two law faculties in the colony.⁷⁰⁴ This trend would continue, with the intellectual verve of the city continuing to grow well into the nineteenth century. One noted group of scholars, later labeled the “Recife School,” congregated in the city in the late 1860s. These young intellectuals included Tobias Barreto, Sílvio Romero, Franklin Távora and Araripe Júnior, who would pave the way for Gilberto Freyre’s scholarly pursuits throughout the twentieth century.⁷⁰⁵

Not all of Recife boasted the liberal political views of these leading scholars, however. There was a brief backlash in Recife against Freyre and his liberal theories celebrating Afro-Brazilian cultural practices, led by governor Agamenon Magalhães in the 1930s and 1940s. Having created the “Department of General Vigilance and

⁷⁰³ In 1640 the first Parliament in South America was convened in Recife. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria José Olympio Editôra, 1956), 71.

⁷⁰⁴ Skidmore writes that only three other cities had newspapers by the 1890s: Rio, São Paulo and Porto Alegre; and the other city with a law faculty was São Paulo. Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 90. For more on early intellectual life in Recife, see Joseph Page, *The Brazilians* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1995), 190 and Galinsky 43.

⁷⁰⁵ For details on Freyre’s contributions to racial theory in Brazil as well as the Regionalist movement, see chapters two and three.

Customs”⁷⁰⁶ he set about attempting to eradicate the many Afro-influenced cultural treasures of the region, confiscating instruments and refusing to allow documentation of live music and religious forms.⁷⁰⁷ Even with these persecutions, however, the local influence of African popular culture created a rich environment of countless rhythms and musical traditions.⁷⁰⁸

Afro-Brazilian Musical Influences in and around Recife

Starting in the mid-1500s and continuing even into the mid-1900s (well past the official abolition date of 1888), Recife and neighboring towns received hundreds of thousands of African slaves destined for work on the sugarcane fields or along urban streets as vendors of assorted goods. A coveted (though often inaccurate) detail for the slave traders and buyers was the classification of the Africans by ethnicity, usually determined simply by their port of origin. Thus slaves were grouped into various “nations” from all along the West Coast of Africa.

⁷⁰⁶ The “Delegacia de Vigilância Geral e Costumes,” department was created following decree No. 262, 19 January, 1939. Isabel Cristina Martins Guillen, “Guerra Peixe e os maracatus no Recife: trânsitos entre gêneros musicais (1930-1950), *ArtCultura: Revista de História, Cultura e Artes* (Vol. 9, No. 14 [Jan.-June 2007], 236-51), 242.

⁷⁰⁷ Guillen notes that the Mission of Folkloric Research under Mário de Andrade was not given permission to film live music from a xangô ceremony, forcing the group to “recreate” the music at a later date. Guillen 242. For footage of the ethnographic mission, including photos of Afro-Brazilian instruments that were confiscated by authorities and “donated” to the Museum of the Department of Culture in São Paulo (run by Mário de Andrade), see: http://www.sescsp.org.br/sesc/hotsites/missao/apresenta_frameset.html

⁷⁰⁸ Pace Matory, I resist calling these influences “survivals” and instead point to the dialogue that developed across the Atlantic, in both directions, over many centuries. See Lorand J. Matory, “Surpassing ‘Survival’: On the Urbanity of ‘Traditional Religion’ in the Afro-Atlantic World,” *The Black Scholar* (Vol. 30, No. 3-4 [36-43]), 37.

The well-known Pernambucan genre of *maracatu* is the music of these nations. An elegant and elaborate dance procession driven by *alfaia* bass drums and snares, and punctuated by a *gonguê* bell and beaded gourd or shaker, maracatu is also a music of resistance and of subversion. Within each of the “nations” of Africans, the Portuguese created a hierarchical system of colonial control in which a select few Africans – the appointed King and Queen and their retinue – would enforce local law among their group members. The procession to honor the highly ranked slaves, called the Institution of the King of Congo, was an interesting syncretism of African call-and-response music and improvised dance and European dress codes and pomp. And like other Afro-Brazilian innovations, the slaves grew to identify maracatu not as a political tool of the authorities but as a baseline for their own culture and history.

Because the nations themselves were integrated with Afro-Brazilian religious expression (another legacy of the slaveholders), thematic content of the maracatu music often celebrated the *orixás*, or deities – and much of the singing was done in Portuguese mixed with African expressions or references. Over time, this urban musical tradition (called *o maracatu de baque virado* or the “turned beat” maracatu by its artists) developed a rural counterpart (called *maracatu de baque solto* or the “loose beat” maracatu) which added brass instruments and decreased syncopation for a decidedly more “marching band” effect.

Musically there is not a huge commonality between maracatu and forró; the former is very clearly of African origin, having developed in and around the sugar plantations of the coastal region of Pernambuco, and has a relatively well documented

history⁷⁰⁹ while the latter is a music with somewhat ambiguous ethnic origins. The role of maracatu music, however, is a key element in contemporary innovations within the forró genre, as its influence can be felt through the exciting hybrid musics that arose in and around Recife in the 1990s. We will return to the contemporary sounds of forró and other northeastern musics, but first let us delve into another major contributor to the present-day sound of the Northeast: the Middle-Eastern sound.

The Arab Influence of Music in the Northeast of Brazil

Certainly, one of the most notable characteristics of the precursors to forró is its resemblance, in many ways, to Middle Eastern music. While the rhythmic base of forró is of African origin,⁷¹⁰ its melodic foundation and social development seem much more reminiscent of the troubadour culture of medieval and early colonial Europe; and its formation in the sertão and agreste areas of the Northeast (areas thought to be much more isolated than the coastal region) have also endowed it with unique characteristics that do not seem to be common to any other musical genre of Brazil.

Even in a wider sense, this Arab connection is worth investigating, for many of the “African” elements of Brazilian popular culture in fact can be traced to the Moorish

⁷⁰⁹ For more on maracatu, see Guerra-Peixe, *Maracatus do Recife* (São Paulo: Irmãos Vitale, 1980) and Galinsky.

⁷¹⁰ For a discussion of the Zabumba and its rhythmic detail see Larry Norman Crook, *Zabumba Music from Caruaru, Pernambuco: Musical Style, Gender, and the Interpenetration of Rural and Urban Worlds* (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin, 1991).

influence in the Iberian Peninsula⁷¹¹ and actually predate the Atlantic slave trade.⁷¹²

Though John Storm Roberts claims that the music of Portugal was not as deeply influenced by the Arab domination as southern Spain (even while he attests to the Moorish influence across southern Portugal),⁷¹³ other authors have emphatically disagreed, citing the huge cultural influence of the Arabs on a broad variety of Portuguese technologies and cultural traditions.

The Moors first invaded Portugal in the early eighth century; they occupied much of the Portuguese territory until the mid thirteenth century⁷¹⁴ and over the five hundred years they remained on Portuguese territory, they introduced highly developed and coveted technology as well as immense linguistic and musical influences. According to Fryer, these improvements included the water wheel, the rotation of crops, the orange tree, the silkworm and cotton,⁷¹⁵ not to mention musical instruments and performance techniques (see below).

Simply stated, the Portuguese had so long lived under the domination of their Arab conquerors, that they became “heirs to the Arab technical culture”⁷¹⁶ and incorporated

⁷¹¹ See also Nicolas J. Debbané, “Au Brésil: L’influence arabe dans la formation historique, la littérature et la civilisation du peuple brésilien,” *Bulletin de la Société khédiviale de géographie* (Cairo, VII série, no. 10 [1911], 673-4), 704. In Peter Fryer, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 193.

⁷¹² Note also that some Middle Eastern cultural influences (particularly oral poetry traditions and bent notes) may easily have been transferred to the New World through the spread of Islam across West Africa. Many of the slaves destined for Brazil were exposed to many of the same Middle Eastern influences in their native environments, far before setting foot on Portuguese trading ships.

⁷¹³ John Storm Roberts, *Black Music of Two Worlds* (Allen Lane, 1973: 81-2). In Fryer 2. The Moors were an invading group of Muslims from Northern Africa who occupied parts of Spain and Portugal for seven centuries prior to the discovery of the New World.

⁷¹⁴ Lisbon was reconquered in 1147, the Algarve in 1249-50. Fryer 2.

⁷¹⁵ Fryer 2.

into their own conquests the technologies for sugar production, navigation and slavery that they originally learned under the Moors. In fact, it was the lessons the Portuguese learned under the Moors that allowed for a successful conquest of Brazil; as Freyre writes:

The physical attributes of America demanded an agrarian and slave-driven colonization by the Portuguese. Without the wisdom gained from the Moorish experience, the Portuguese colonizer would most likely have failed at this formidable task. He would have fallen short, unable to respond to conditions so unlike his own European experience.⁷¹⁷

Indeed, the production of sugar cane – the economic engine of the early Brazilian colony – was “first developed by the Moors on the Iberian Peninsula and later transplanted to the island of Madeira and finally to Brazil.”⁷¹⁸ Not only was their experience and technology invaluable, the Moors also contributed a social work ethic to Portuguese and Brazilian agriculture: Gilberto Freyre stressed the fact that continued migration from the Arab empire (even after the Muslims had been driven out officially by the Christian armies) included many Moors (both freed and enslaved) and that it was their work ethic, (contrasting so greatly with that of the

⁷¹⁶ Darcy Ribeiro, *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 197.

⁷¹⁷ “As condições físicas da parte da América que tocou aos portugueses, exigiram deles um tipo de colonização agrária e escravocrata. Sem a experiência moura, o colonizador teria provavelmente fracassado nesta tarefa formidável. Teria fracassado, impotente para corresponder a condições tão fora de sua experiência propriamente europeia.” Gilberto Freyre, *Sobrados e mucambos* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1996), 208. In Luis Soler, *Origens árabes no folclore do sertão brasileiro* (Florianópolis: Editora da UFSC, 1995), 39.

⁷¹⁸ Soler 41.

“indolent and bellicose Portuguese nobility,” as Luís Soler writes) that made possible the colonization of tropical America.⁷¹⁹

The technological contributions of the Moors were not limited to economic production. Along with their agricultural tools and techniques, they brought a rich collection of musical traditions with them to Portugal (and from there, to the New World), as well. Fryer notes that the Arab tradition of accompanying songs with a hand-beaten double-membrane square frame drum with metal jingles (the Arab-derived *adufe*, which Arabs call *al-duff*)⁷²⁰ helped to attune relations between the Portuguese colonizers of Brazil and the slaves, whose music, as a result of a similar African genealogy, was compatible (see below).

Still, while the music of Brazil’s coast retained an obvious influence from West and Southern Africa due to the slave populations working on sugar cane plantations, it was the music of the sertão that displayed Middle Eastern affinities. What explains the difference? Kampton Webb writes that the “extension of cattle ranchers into the sertão started when they fled the Dutch invasion”⁷²¹ and most sources agree that the ranchers of the sertão were an isolated breed who, although they migrated often from one piece of land to another, generally stayed in rural areas, avoiding the major cities on the coast. This relative seclusion (albeit broken by itinerant sharecroppers, various merchants, troubadours and traveling circus performers) allowed for a preponderance

⁷¹⁹ “...através dos escravos mouros e dos moçárabes que, mais ativos e preparados que os indolentes e belicosos nobres lusos, a exerceram sobre os seus senhores, facilitando assim as condições para a colonização agrária, escravocrata e polígama da América tropical.” Soler 39.

⁷²⁰ Fryer 2.

⁷²¹ Kampton Webb, *The Changing Face of Northeast Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 70.

of characteristics from the earliest days of Portuguese colonization – many of which in fact were cultural contributions from the Moors. Of all the Arab influences in the Brazilian sertão, music is today the most apparent legacy of the Moorish occupation of Portugal.

According to Luis Soler, Arab music boasts the following characteristics, all of which are quite apparent in the rural portion of northeastern Brazil: a predominance of profane (as opposed to religious) music;⁷²² a preference for minute intervals (some as small as quarter tones); a tendency toward individualized singing, with collective contributions only in short responses to the soloist; and a more pronounced appreciation for verse (as opposed to the musical element of any given composition).⁷²³ The Moorish influence can also be traced through a variety of instruments common to the nordestino genre of forró.

Scholars have noted for some time the tendency of music of the sertão toward smaller intervals of sound; Mário de Andrade noted in his 1928 *Ensaio* that the nordestinos seem to employ a quarter tone. While he denied that these notes had the theoretical value of an isolated sound, he nonetheless incites Brazilian musicians to study these manifestations “with fondness.”⁷²⁴ In fact, he writes,

But the nordestino has expressive ways of chanting that don’t just regulate the semitone through the voice’s dragging behavior, but the voice itself sometimes rests upon emissions where the vibrations do not reach the tones of

⁷²² It must be noted that there is a large quantity of religious music from the folk Catholic traditions of the Northeast; in particular, these focus around the singing of novenas in saint processions and celebrations. See Crook.

⁷²³ Soler 101-02.

⁷²⁴ “*Com carinho.*” Mário de Andrade, *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira* (São Paulo: Livraria Martins Editora, 1962), 57.

the scale. They are expressive ways of chanting, unique, original and extraordinarily delightful.⁷²⁵

Martha de Ulhôa Carvalho has also observed that viola (Portuguese guitar) music from the northeastern region is frequently modal,⁷²⁶ most likely a related phenomenon.

In addition to these quarter tone and modal influences, however, music of the sertão also boasts instruments of clear Arab origin. According to Soler, before the Moorish invasion, Europe had no stringed instruments that were vibrated with a long arc. The Arabs introduced the rabab (rebab) which they in turn had adopted from the Persians.⁷²⁷ Câmara Cascudo, the well-known Brazilian folklorist from Rio Grande do Norte, wrote extensively on the origin and playing style of the rabeca across northeastern Brazil. He writes that the rabeca was derived from the *rabil* or *arrabil* al rababa (in Arabic *ar-rabed* or *ârabéd*)⁷²⁸ and that its most primitive form had just two strings; by the Middle Ages it had been increased to three strings. The rabeca as it was played in Câmara Cascudo's days had four strings, tuned in fifths, and was

⁷²⁵ “Mas o nordestino possui maneiras expressivas de entoar que não só graduam seccionadamente o semitom por meio do portamento arrastado da voz, como esta às vezes se apoia positivamente em emissões cujas vibrações não atingem os graus da escala. São maneiras expressivas de entoar, originais, características e dum encanto extraordinário.” Mário de Andrade, *Ensaio sobre a música brasileira* (São Paulo: Vila Rica, 1972), 20.

⁷²⁶ Martha de Ulhôa Carvalho, “Musical Style, Migration, and Urbanization: Some Considerations on Brazilian Música Sertaneja [Country Music],” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* (Vol. 12, 1993, [75-93]), 76.

⁷²⁷ “Quite similar to the primitive alaude, the ancient rabab model had a pyriform box (shaped like a pear) and was covered with leather on the front section. Later, the leather was substituted by a piece of thin wood. It consisted of two strings, tuned in fifths, and it was played leaned against the ground by means of an endpin support. “Muito parecido ao primitivo alaude, o arcaico modelo do rabab apresentava a caixa piriforme e vinha coberto por um couro, na parte anterior. Mais tarde, o couro foi também substituído por uma peça de madeira fina. Constava de duas cordas, afinadas em quintas e tocava-se encostado no chão mediante um espigão.” Soler 108.

⁷²⁸ Câmara Cascudo, *Vaqueiros e Cantadores* (Porto Alegre: Edição da Livraria do Globo, 1939), 134.

played with a horsehair bow dipped in pitch. The folklorist insists that “no rabeca player is capable of executing a single piece with his instrument in the usual position of a violin”;⁷²⁹ instead, it is always played held against the heart or the left shoulder with its scroll (*voluta*: the upper part of the head of a stringed instrument, carved in a spiral) facing downward. With a timbre slightly lower than the violin, the rabeca has a melancholy sound with shrill high notes and an undeniably Middle Eastern sound.⁷³⁰ While largely supplanted by the accordion in modern-day forró performances, the rabeca nonetheless played an important role historically in local musics, particularly *cavalo-marinho*,⁷³¹ and has recently had a renaissance in post-mangue fusion musics of the Northeast (see below).

Played in Zabumba conjuntos as well as alone and occasionally along with a forró band, the pífano is another common instrument of northeastern Brazil – and one that Soler traces to Arab influence as well. According to him, the pífano is played at a transverse angle to the lips (an age-old characteristic of the Arab flute) as opposed to the European style which has an embouchure and is played longitudinally, stretched downward from the lips.⁷³²

⁷²⁹ Ibid 136.

⁷³⁰ Ibid 137. For more on the rabeca, see: John Murphy, “The Rabeca and Its Music, Old and New, in Pernambuco, Brazil,” *Latin American Music Review* (Vol. 18, No. 2 [Autumn-Winter 1997]), 147-72.

⁷³¹ See John Patrick Murphy, *Performing a Moral Vision: An Ethnography of Cavalo-Marinho, a Brazilian Musical Drama* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, Department of Music, 1994).

⁷³² Soler 111-12.

Even the name “troubadour” is said by some to derive from Arabic: Luis Soler affirms that it does not stem from the French “trouver”⁷³³ (“to find”) nor from the Latin “turbare” (“to disturb” or “to turn up”) as historically assumed but suggests instead an etymology from the Arabic word *tarrab*, “to sing” or *tarrâb* (“a minstrel, one who affects listeners with a musical performance”).⁷³⁴ Yet another source points out that the Arabic root “wjd” is the base of the concepts “finding,” “music,” “love,” and “ardor” – a detail that places all of the symbolic components of the troubadour under one linguistic root, a fact that some insist relates the words to the Sufic musical tradition.⁷³⁵

Whether or not the term “troubadour” is of Arabic or Latin derivation, the trope of traveling musicians is itself an age-old Arab tradition, and a history of traveling bards and musicians has helped to form the image that many nordestinos as well as outsiders have of the Nordeste. In a land with high rates of illiteracy, often the troubadours (or *cantadores*, as they are referred to in Brazil) played the role of the printing press in other parts of the world,⁷³⁶ bringing verses, often improvised and

⁷³³ The contemporary French word “trouver” is thought by some to be derived from “trobar,” itself from the Latin “tropare,” the verb related to the noun form “tropus,” which gave us the English “trope,” a medieval compositional technique of adding voices to an already composed chant. Instead of employing the nominative form, the French brought into use the Occitan oblique case, “touveor” or “trouveur.” H.J. Chaytor, *The Troubadours* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912).

⁷³⁴ H.G. Farmer, “Music,” *The Legacy of Islam*, Ed. Sir Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1931), 373; J.B. Trend, “Spain and Portugal,” *The Legacy of Islam* 17; Lois Ibsen al Faruqi, *An Annotated Glossary of Arabic Musical Terms* (Westport, Connecticut and London, Greenwood Press, 1981), 357. In Fryer 1. Soler refers to a similar Arabic root, “trb,” as meaning an “alaude (*al oud*) player,” perhaps a gloss for a minstrel or bard who played and sang (what is today called *mot-reb/mot-reba*, “the performer, singer or player”). Soler 57.

⁷³⁵ See Idries Shah, *The Sufis* (London: Octagon Press, 1977).

⁷³⁶ See Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991).

intricately rhyming,⁷³⁷ to far-flung areas of the sertão. Performed as *desafio*, or dueling poetry, this tradition too has deep roots in the Moorish influence across the Iberian peninsula.

Peter Fryer begins his book, *Rhythms of Resistance: African Musical Heritage in Brazil*, with a discussion of the *desafio*,⁷³⁸ noting that it shows not only a convergence in the Americas of Portuguese and African traditions, but a much more basic amalgamation: of traditions from the two continents that occurred over the five hundred years of the Moorish occupation, prior to the discovery of the Americas. This, he claims, has led to a sort of ‘double-African’ legacy in Brazil, in which “three traditions from two continents, *having already merged in Portugal*,⁷³⁹ have merged still more intimately and seamlessly in Brazil.”⁷⁴⁰

Fryer continues: “that Europe owes troubadour verse and its metrical schemes to the Arabs of the Iberian peninsula is ‘no longer seriously in doubt.’”⁷⁴¹ In fact, he claims,

⁷³⁷ Daus notes that often, in the midst of a duel, one singer may change metric and verse formation, challenging his partner to transform future verses in keeping with the game. See Ronald Daus, *O Ciclo Épico dos Cangaceiros na Poesia Popular do Nordeste* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação da Casa de Rui Barbosa, 1982).

⁷³⁸ Early Brazilian intellectuals were not as convinced of this. Luis da Câmara Cascudo believed the *desafio* derived from Greek pastoralists from the time of Homer (while also arguing that it had Arab origins), while Mário de Andrade opined that it was of purely African origin. Others believed it was of indigenous origin. Nonetheless, the presence of *desafios* on Brazilian soil is said to trace back to the sixteenth century; Gabriel Soares e Fernão Cardim noted female and male improvisational singers as early as the sixteenth century. Adelino Brandão, *Euclides e o Folclore* (São Paulo: Jundaí, 1985) 28.

⁷³⁹ “In Portugal such a song is often called a “dueling song” (*canto a atirar*, literally a “shooting song”), and one variety of it is heard in the Lisbon fado when two singers take it in turns to sing verses (*fado d’atirar* or *desgarrada*.)” Fryer 1.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

⁷⁴¹ Daniel Norman, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Longman; Beirut Librairie du Liban, 1979), 103. In Fryer 1.

The troubadours' poetic debates probably derived from the Arab literary debates called *munâzârat*, in which two or more beings, living or inanimate, compete for the honour of which of them has the best qualities.⁷⁴²

For centuries, the cantadores exchanged news and music in their sojourns around the sertão and became fixtures in folk culture depictions of Brazil. They, like other sertanejos, would remain mobile, traversing the region with their musical wares. But in the mid 1900s their traveling pattern would change fundamentally; they, like so many other members of their sertão communities, would migrate en masse to the coastal city of Recife.

Recife: The Stagnating Scene of a Newly Industrialized City

Beginning in the 1950s and especially under the Presidency of Juscelino Kubistchek (1956-61), industrialization and modernization were heralded as the route to national enlightenment. During the “fifty years of progress in five” that he proposed, Kubistchek expanded inter-state infrastructure and encouraged the expansion of industry throughout the nation. More industry meant more jobs, and for millions of impoverished nordestinos, that often meant moving to toil in the construction of the new capital Brasília or moving to the local capital to find work closer to home.

⁷⁴² See Ewald Wagner, *Die arabische Rangstreitdichtung und ihre Einordnung in die allgemeine Literaturgeschichte* (Wiesbaden, Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz; Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Jahrg. 1962, Nr. 8) in Fryer 2. Note also the similarity of this tradition to the “dozens” in African American communities. See Robin D.G. Kelly, *Yo Mama's Disfunktional! Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

Recife's population boomed. But sadly, Recife did not weather these years well. Increased migration to the capital, along with the complete lack of new infrastructure, led to the "accelerated aggravation of misery and urban chaos."⁷⁴³ With the largest percentage of unemployment in the country and half of its inhabitants living in slums and flooded swamp areas,⁷⁴⁴ Recife "came to develop a distinctive kind of wretchedness not found anywhere else in Brazil."⁷⁴⁵ Called by some the "Calcutta of the Western Hemisphere," it earned the infamous distinction of being ranked the "fourth worst city in the world to live in" on a list distributed by an institute of population studies in Washington, D.C. Its economy resembled the brackish, stagnant water all around it that was slowly being converted to dumping grounds and stilted shantytowns.

The city wasn't completely lacking in hope: like early in Brazil's history, Recife again rose as a radical leader, this time with socialist grass-roots programs geared toward education of the masses, agrarian reform and greater social inclusion. The Peasant League was founded in 1956; the Popular Culture Movement (MCP)⁷⁴⁶ was established in 1961; the first socialist governor of Pernambuco was elected in 1962. The MCP pushed an agenda of raising political consciousness via culture and created the Centers of Popular Culture (CPC), a political group geared toward juxtaposing

⁷⁴³ Larry Crook, "Turned Around Beat: *Maracatu de Baque Virado* and Chico Science," *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, Ed. Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (New York: Routledge, 2002 [233-44]), 242.

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid 242.

⁷⁴⁵ Page 191. In Galinsky 44-5.

⁷⁴⁶ The playwright, intellectual and folklorist Ariano Suassuna (and later critic of mangue, see below) was one of the founding members of the MCP. Sean Stroud, *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music: Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira* (Burlington: Ashgate, forthcoming), 148.

politics and folklore. Its first office was established in Recife, and it fanned out to countless other Brazilian cities from there. Still, the city seemed to seep deeper into the surrounding mudflats. Migrants continued to pour in, inflation soon took hold of what little earnings people had, and the city could not keep up with the tide.

As can be expected, the music traditions of Recife were dying along with its reputation. While urban centers of the south like São Paulo, Brasília and Rio were flooded with an exciting new homegrown rock movement (as well as other musical revitalization movements), Recife did not have much of a music scene at all. It was a colonial relic plagued with inequality and poverty. According to one artist, during the 1980s,

Recife was a place that had no [music] circuit. There wasn't any place to record a good tape, there wasn't any place to buy good instruments, no place to play, there was nowhere to rehearse, there were no sound engineers, no music producers, no impresarios, nothing!⁷⁴⁷

Indeed, the rich maracatu tradition had declined, as well; the clamorous processions that in the past had regularly snaked around often steep and narrow cobbled streets appeared only amidst the yearly carnival celebrations – and even so, they had already started to become crystalized into a tidy category of “folklórico.” Though the resonant sound of thick sticks chomping down on cowskin bass drums remained a familiar one for all Pernambucanos, the groups had lost their young audience base and faced an uncertain future with dwindling crowds.

⁷⁴⁷ Interview with Fred 04. Galinsky 72-3.

Mangue Beat:⁷⁴⁸
A New Music Scene in Recife

It was into this environment that a group of young performers, led by Chico Science,⁷⁴⁹ committed to revamping and energizing Recife's traditions for a new generation. In 1990, journalist and musician Fred 04 got together with his colleague Chico Science, another Recife musician interested in jump-starting the local "scene," and wrote the mangue manifesto in response to the ecological, cultural and industrial degradation of their hometown. The manifesto called for local musicians to tap into the extreme diversity spawned along the coastal swamp; to appropriate the biological process of organic exchange into the cultural realm; and to use the mangue swamp as a space for excavating traditional sounds and for receiving satellite transmissions from across the world. Ultimately, their aim was to convince Recifenses to celebrate hybridity:

Emergency! A rapid shock or Recife dies of heart attack! It is not necessary to be a doctor to know that the simplest way to stop a heart is to obstruct its veins. The quickest way to kill and empty the soul of a city is to kill its rivers and fill its estuaries. How to avoid drowning in the chronic depression that paralyses the citizens? How to return some courage and recharge the batteries of the city? It's simple! It's just to inject some energy in the mud and stimulate what's left of fertility in the veins of Recife.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁸ Originally called "mangue bit" by movement members (referring to the technological unit of information, bit, that could be extracted from the mangue swamp), it was soon transformed by the media into "mangue beat" (both 'bit' and 'beat' vowels are pronounced similarly in Brazilian Portuguese), which has seemed to stick; today most people refer to it as mangue beat.

⁷⁴⁹ Chico Science's given name is Francisco de Assis França; Chico is a common diminutive for Francisco, and his "Science" nickname is meant to allude to the "alchemy of sounds" he fabricated in his musical experiments.

⁷⁵⁰ The mangue manifesto. Available online:
<http://blogdesembestado.blogspot.com/2007/11/manifesto-mangue.html>

Together, Chico Science and Fred 04 would form the bands “Chico Science & Nação Zumbi” (CSNZ) and Mundo Livre S/A, respectively, both of which came to dominate the Recife mangue scene at home and abroad. Whereas Chico Science emphasized the combination of local rhythms with global sounds of hard rock and hip-hop, Fred 04 preferred a punk blend. They took much of their inspiration from MTV broadcasts (which had become available in Recife only in 1991) and from the Radio Rock station out of São Paulo;⁷⁵¹ it was through these media that band members were able to tap into the sounds that were being listened to in other parts of the country and the world. Indeed, one of the catch phrases of the movement is “fique antenado,” literally, “stay antennaed,” or connected. At the same time, the renaissance of African cultural forms in Bahia, with innovative musical sounds such as the blocos afro, samba-raggae, and axé music, provided a model for embracing local traditional sounds and creating inventive local hybrids.

Mangue music was an explosion of punk-rock-funk-rap-electronic sound, infused with the *maracatu*, *côco*, *ciranda* and *embolada* rhythmic traditions of the Northeast.⁷⁵² The signature sound of CSNZ featured the low thunder of *maracatu alfaia* bass drums mixed with crackling lightning from electric guitars. Daniel Sharp details:

... Chico essentially considered the *maracatu* beat that he heard during Carnival growing up as a great rhythmic *groove* (the word adopted from English, meaning repeated polyrhythmic ostinato) that he could

⁷⁵¹ Galinsky points out that these sources were key elements in their music education, as Recife “remains outside the country’s circuit of international shows.” Galinsky 77.

⁷⁵² Chico Science was not the first pop artist to feature an *alfaia* bass drum (traditionally used in *maracatu*) in a live show; Jose Teles attested to seeing one used in a Lenine show in 1982. Interview: Teles 1998. In Galinsky 100. Still, the mangue movement was more than a performance; it was an alternative lifestyle and as such, was groundbreaking.

chop up and reconfigure as if he were assembling a looped breakbeat like a hip-hop DJ. The difference being that he chopped up and recombined these rhythms not with a digital sampler but his living, breathing rhythm section, a *sampler orgánico*.⁷⁵³

Indeed, Chico had great appreciation for the local rhythmic grooves of the maracatu, but he also thought they needed to be *envenenados*, or poisoned, an expression he used as a synonym of “corrupted,” and that, according to Sharp, “points to their anti-purist stance towards musical authenticity.”⁷⁵⁴ When Chico donned Rayban shades and a local fisherman’s hat for his first mangue shows, young audiences in Recife surprised even themselves when they discovered generations of choreography stored in their cultural memory, suddenly able to trip through the frenetic movements of the nations’ maracatu. Even their cultural debt as heirs to Luiz Gonzaga’s forró realm emerged in their mix, and in 1999 a group of sixteen different bands produced an award-winning album named “Baião de Viramundo” in homage to Gonzagão and other key forró musicians.

Though the manifesto might imply that he expected the mangue movement to develop in a particular direction, in fact Chico appreciated hybridity and embraced the sounds and sights of dichotomies slammed together into one mish-mashed unit; he enjoyed musical chaos and embraced and encouraged open innovation in his own band and others. In his dissertation on mangue (the first English-language academic

⁷⁵³ Sharp 25.

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid 25-6. Sharp explains: “These *alfaia* parts are significantly sparser than a Carnival *maracatú baque virado*, the stuttering left-right snare part is placed lower in the mix, and another snare is added, playing a part resembling a common hip-hop breakbeat. The syncopation of the three *alfaias*, playing in unison, combines with the breakbeat snare to suggest the push and pull of the bass drum and snare which produces the tension inherent in a hip-hop breakbeat, while retaining the parade drum ensemble sound of the *maracatú*. Hybridity is indexed on the level of rhythmic structure itself.” Sharp 26.

project to detail the movement), Philip Galinsky includes a fitting quote from a Recife musician involved from early on in the mangue beat:

A musician from down in São Paulo came to play here in a festival in which we also played and said, “You guys have a very interesting fusion project,” and we didn’t even know it was fusion. For us it was CONFUSION, right? [laughs]⁷⁵⁵

In part, the mangue bands produced this chaotic hybrid sound through a project of ‘garbage’ bricolage, improvising sub-standard equipment from objects easily accessible in the periphery; as an example, they fashioned a microphone stand out of an old broom handle. In an interview with Galinsky, Fred 04 explains: “The idea was to make the most avant-garde sound possible with the most low-tech equipment possible. And so this was part of the concept of the band, as how an avant-garde of the Third World would be.”⁷⁵⁶

One of the things that has set this music scene apart from the rest from the very beginning has been its vibrant “live” aspect. Starting with AbrilProRock in 1993, concert organizers like Paulo André have truly taken advantage of the satellite icon of the mangue movement and have brought Recife’s sound into venues all over the world. After an extraordinary ramp-up at shows like AbrilProRock, RecBeat, Summerstage, Celebrate Brooklyn and Womex, Chico Science became world music fans’ favorite *mangueboy*, with the press raving about his band’s novel sound and calling CSNZ’s concert in Central Park a “breakthrough success.”⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁵ Interview with Zé da Flauta 1998. In Galinsky 101.

⁷⁵⁶ Galinsky 71. Dupuy notes that Chico’s reliance on alfaia bass drums may also have been due to an inability to purchase sophisticated samplers. Nicki Dupuy, *Contraditório? Musical Style and Identity in the Contemporary Popular Music of Pernambuco, Brazil* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, The University of Salford, School of Media, Music and Performance, October 2002), 46.

⁷⁵⁷ Sharp 50.

In 1997, at the very height of his career, Chico died in a tragic car accident outside of Recife. The city reeled in shock, and the display of grief at his death was such that the Pernambuco state government was forced to decree a three-day official mourning.⁷⁵⁸ As Daniel Sharp narrates,

All the grim truths regarding the popularity of a pop star after an untimely demise came true. Their recordings sold out instantly at local stores, and Chico, an engaging performer, became a legend, worshipped in the minds of many young fans, not unlike the phenomenon surrounding Nirvana singer Kurt Cobain when he died in 1993.⁷⁵⁹

Even as his untimely death flamed his popularity, Chico Science was still what Sharp calls a “pobrestar,”⁷⁶⁰ a “poor” pop star by national standards. Despite critical acclaim and popular tours abroad, the band members of CSNZ still occupied an intermediate tier of their record label⁷⁶¹ and maintained a firmly middle-class existence. Nonetheless, his artistry has had an immeasurable impact on Recife’s musical and socio-economic realm. As this chapter will continue to unveil, Recife is flush with the musical repercussions of mangue, ranging from a plethora of new clubs and studios to record stores and music festivals,⁷⁶² all filled with enthusiasts hoping to hear more innovative fusions of local and global sounds.

⁷⁵⁸ Hermano Vianna, *A Nação Zumbi* (2000). Available: http://www.geocities.com/SunsetStrip/Mezzanine/3620/frame_news.html In Dupuy 15.

⁷⁵⁹ Sharp 11.

⁷⁶⁰ This term was originally used by the Pernambucan press “to define the predicament of northeastern performers who, despite critical acclaim throughout Brazil, Europe and the United States, continue to live a poor- to lower-middle class existence.” Sharp 11.

⁷⁶¹ By 1997, CSNZ had sold 50-100,000 copies of their two recordings worldwide, a significant amount but much less than top stars on their major record label Sony-Brazil. Sharp 11.

Though manguê's sound was entirely new, Brazil has historically been home to myriad artistic genres based on transatlantic fusions: samba, bossa nova, capoeira, and the genre most often likened to manguê: tropicália. What set manguê apart? In his study of manguê beat, Philip Galinsky compares many of the manguê movement's characteristics to the tropicália movement (led by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil) of the 1960s.⁷⁶³ Like tropicália, he writes,

Manguê sought a 'universal' sound that results from a diverse combination of elements – a sound that fuses the most modern genres and influences from abroad with regional and national musical traditions.⁷⁶⁴

Tropicália, exquisitely described in Chris Dunn's *Brutality Garden*, was a short-lived musical movement dreamed up by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil and other influential artists of the time (including Rogério Duprat, Torquato Neto and Hélio Oiticica) that sought to revisit the trope of anthropophagy introduced by the 1930s modernists. With their ears and eyes tuned to the avant-garde art being produced abroad, the tropicalists devoured outside artistic influences and processed them in bodies steeped in decades of Brazilian experience in order to create novel hybrid sounds that might better represent the true nature of Brazilian artistry. Tropicalists played with puns in the Tupi indigenous language, they incorporated Afro-Brazilian

⁷⁶² Already by fall 1999, Fred 04 gave an interview hailing the appearance of recording studios, rehearsal spaces, music shops and an alternative press in the city. (Fall 1999 edition of the U.S. rock magazine *Raygun*); Dupuy 20.

⁷⁶³ Chris Dunn also notes affinities of the CSNZ manguê manifesto (as noted in liner notes of first recording) to Tropicália. See Christopher John Dunn, *The Relics of Brazil: Modernity and Nationality in the Tropicalista Movement* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, Brown University, 1996) and Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁷⁶⁴ Galinsky 95.

motifs on stage and in their music, and they shocked audiences with their irreverent mish-mash of European high art and American kitsch culture.

Ultimately, the tropicalists created a national art form out of global and national influences. Though the project lapsed when both Caetano and Gil were forced into exile by a repressive military government that had become deeply suspicious of their project, it is today one of the most widely studied and popular genres of Brazilian music, precisely because its intellectual project strikes a chord with audiences interested in the nationalist tendencies of twentieth-century Brazilian music (and also, of course, because its aesthetic project still surprises and satisfies broad audiences internationally).

In a sense, *mangue* is a continuation of the *tropicália* project, though one that manages to blur the lines between foreign and national with an emphasis on *local* (as opposed to national) culture. Writes Galinsky:

Tropicalia emerged at a time in which there was a sharp division between “domestic” and “foreign” musics; in response, it opened the way for a much freer interaction between these camps and, in the process, made the subsequent boundaries of what could be considered national music more flexible. *Mangue* came almost thirty years later with both “new” domestic (specifically regional) and foreign influences, in effect updating and reinvigorating, in the same anthropophagous manner as *tropicália*, an MPB which some critics saw as stagnated.⁷⁶⁵

Indeed, Galinsky calls Chico’s work “emblematic of a fluid dialectic between the traditional and the modern, the local and the global, and the regional and the foreign,⁷⁶⁶ and it is noteworthy that in addition to upsetting the age-old dialectic that

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid, 95-6.

divided “os Brasis,”⁷⁶⁷ mangue also demonstrated that the periphery could generate music worth listening to. Sean Stroud notes that mangue beat – along with other regional movements like urban funk (Rio), rap, pagode and axé – represents “challenges to the hegemony of MPB [música popular brasileira]⁷⁶⁸ and also suggested that the regions no longer necessarily look to the center for approval.”⁷⁶⁹

Chico paved the way for youth from underprivileged classes to join the music scene and to be innovative with local and global sounds. And though he always purported to be apolitical, his project brought a sinking city to the surface and provided a non-violent⁷⁷⁰ arena for area youth to appreciate (and a growing industry for them to aspire to join). The mangue scene that Chico jump-started served as an inspiration to at-risk adolescents and oriented them to an entirely different horizon: an international world of beats and grooves. As one informant told Kevin Cassidy: “In Olinda if you don’t watch out you will get involved with drugs, with trafficking and thank God I had a chance to leave this world with music and with culture.” With their unique blends of sound, mangue bands brought postmodernity to the periphery: they empowered subaltern groups to embrace new technologies, they inspired global consciousness through their international music collages, they reconceptualized how

⁷⁶⁶ Philip Galinsky, “The ‘Atomic Maracatu’: Tradition and Modernity in the *Mangue* Music of Chico Science & Nação Zumbi,” (Paper presented at the 1998 meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology: Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana [October 22 1998]), 2.

⁷⁶⁷ See Introduction for a detailed analysis of “os Brasis.”

⁷⁶⁸ See Introduction for a description of the role of MPB in Brazilian music history.

⁷⁶⁹ Stroud 172.

⁷⁷⁰ Somewhat ironically, the (post-Chico) 2001 release of *Rádio S.A.M.B.A* by Nação Zumbi includes a text by anthropologist Hermano Viana which references the cangaceiro bandits of the northeast region, inciting mangueboys and manguegirls to become the heirs of the cangaceiros by ‘pirating’ the new technological resources available to them and taking full advantage of them. See Dupuy 47.

citizens and artists can understand and interact with tradition, they re-fashioned conceptions of regional, national and international identity (and in so doing, diminished the role of the state), and they emphasized a new value to the local.

In the wake of the mangue movement, the city of Recife was once again located at the epicenter of a fervor for regionalist cultural resuscitation and what Galinsky has called “one of the most dynamic and important music scenes in Brazil.”⁷⁷¹ Over time the Recife scene has prospered and grown even more, with many more *mangueboys* and *manguegirls* emerging from out of the woodwork, mixing new and old into that thick mangue stew of sound. Now, contemporary bands continue to experiment with ever more diverse genres of music like electronica, techno, and sampling of other northeastern traditions like *embolada*, rhythmic poetry jams.

Post-Mangue: The Development of A Nova Cena Musical

In the wake of the mangue movement, a new music scene developed across the city of Recife; Galinsky refers to this as the *nova cena musical* or “new music scene of Recife” and underscores the diverse nature of this new scene, which “encompasses everything from local folk music to straight rock or rap.”⁷⁷²

⁷⁷¹ Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 465.

⁷⁷² Philip Galinsky, “*Maracatu Atômico: Tradition, Modernity, and Postmodernity in the Mangue Movement of Recife, Brazil* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 27.

Still, well before the mangue manifesto made local waves, area musicians had been collaborating on novel hybrids of traditional northeastern styles with foreign rock and pop sounds (recall the “cabeludos” rockers who contributed toward Luiz Gonzaga’s renaissance in the 1980s). In a sense, they set the stage for mangue to explode out of the Recife scene – a cultural revolution that itself paved the way for more cutting-edge fusions with forró, embolada, côco, cavalo-marinho, and caboclinho rhythms. Thus it is important to recognize the contributions of nordestino talent like Nando Cordel, Alcymar Monteiro, Jorge de Altinho, Alceu Valença, Fagner, Elba Ramalho, Zé Ramalho, Geraldo Azevedo, Genival Lacerda, Raimundo Fagner, Belchior, Raul Seixas, Morais Moreira, Tom Zé and Lenine – all of whom were experimenting with northeastern hybrids long before it became “hip.” Many of these artists make up what ethnomusicologist Larry Crook calls the “2nd generation” of forró.”⁷⁷³ They often added electric instruments, drum kits, horn sections – and most importantly, they turned forró into a year-round commodity, not limited to the month-long festas juninas that had previously accounted for nearly all forró sales. What is more, nearly all of these artists are still very active musicians who tour nationwide and internationally and often headline the biggest stages at regional São João festivals.

Even while they continue to draw huge crowds, the 2nd generation of forró has had to learn to share the stage with other forró offshoots, many of which take innovation to an entirely new level after the mangue crowd inspired them to push the envelope further and further. This new generation of forró artists, instead of associating themselves directly with the mangue movement, prefer to call themselves members of

⁷⁷³ Crook 288.

the nova cena, eschewing concise categories for their style of forró. (Daniel Sharp credits this to “the game that pop musicians play to distinguish themselves from each other and avoid being pigeonholed as one genre or another.”)⁷⁷⁴ Individual artists and groups may choose to call their sound post-mangue,⁷⁷⁵ nova guarda brasileira (the new guard, a play on the “old guard” of samba masters), forróck, neoforró, forró *com attitude* or forróneirão;⁷⁷⁶ I continue to categorize them within the more general *nova cena* or *post-mangue* umbrella because the unique fusions that each band creates makes for an ever-diversifying genre that is difficult to pin down under one classification.⁷⁷⁷

Included in this rather broad group are bands such as Mestre Ambrósio, Cascabulho, Silverio Pessoa, (originally the singer from Cascabulho), DJ Dolores, and Cordel de Fogo Encantado (see below for a current and more comprehensive list).⁷⁷⁸

Though they do not consider themselves a cohesive movement or group, the post-mangue bands nonetheless have much in common. Nearly all of these “roots” groups include a few danceable forró songs in each of their sets, while also incorporating maracatu, côco and embolada sounds (sometimes even overlapping these rhythms in

⁷⁷⁴ Sharp 13.

⁷⁷⁵ I have heard this term used in a general sense, though DJ Dolores uses it to specify that he is not using live percussion.

⁷⁷⁶ Marcos Mattos Madeira, *A Evolução do Baião: A solidificação de um gênero musical nordestino como música da moda dos centros urbanos atuais e principalmente do meio acadêmico* (August 1999, Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil), 9.

⁷⁷⁷ In fact, even calling them post-mangue can be problematic, as many of them (see previous page) were contributing fusions to the Recife scene before the arrival of the mangue manifesto.

⁷⁷⁸ Not included in this list but worth mentioning is the Raimundos, a band from Brasília that mixes “trash” and “hardcore” rock styles with accordion-driven forró.

the same songs).⁷⁷⁹ Most emphasize live shows over cd production and sales, all create stunning amalgams of foreign and local musics, many have achieved great popularity and enthusiastic reviews from abroad, most have incorporated new technologies into their sound, and most continue to trawl the countryside for interesting rural Pernambucan traditions to incorporate into their new work. Of course, they all also acknowledge the influence of manguê beat. As Silverio Pessoa, a leading member of the post-manguê movement, says in an interview with Kevin Cassidy:

Through the manguê movement there was a re-discovery of another Brazil, inside of Pernambuco itself. The lower class outskirts [periferia] began to also have its own aesthetic. This opened up a curiosity inside of Brazil itself to discover its own past.⁷⁸⁰

Certainly, the post-manguê enthusiasts have uncovered diverse traditions and, in the process, have created a new tradition for future generations to build upon.

Often both post-manguê artists and outsiders refer to these new musical interpretations as *forró* dressed in 'roupagem diferente,' or 'different attire,' not a literal reference to the distinctive and ever-present stage outfits of Luiz Gonzaga, but indeed a reference that reminds us that nordestinos recognize the *forró* tradition as one that is in constant transformation, one that can easily modify its outward appearance, while maintaining its inner coherence.

Of all the post-manguê bands, Mestre Ambrósio has received the most attention from foreign academics, in large part due to the scholarly beginnings of the band (it

⁷⁷⁹ Daniel Sharp notes two instances of this: *maracatú alfaia* drums behind a *côco de embolada* melody, as in Cascabulho's *poeira no terreiro*, or a *viola caipira* accompaniment from rural *cantoria* supported by a hand drum part reminiscent of Afro-Brazilian religious music in Mestre Ambrósio's *Sêmen*. Sharp 61.

⁷⁸⁰ Cassidy 35.

was founded amongst friends studying in the music conservatory at the University of Pernambuco in Recife) and also to the intellectual enthusiasm brought to their project, particularly by band member Siba. Siba (who since the 1992 origin of Mestre Ambrósio has produced two solo cds) researched the rabeca (folk fiddle)⁷⁸¹ for an undergraduate monograph, a project which opened his eyes to the traditional music and folk dramas of the *zona da mata* interior of Pernambuco. He began spending time with local musicians, learning to play old-time tunes on the rabeca and picking up immeasurable stories, songs, rhythms, and customs, and met several kindred spirits who were interested in immersing themselves in a fusion project. The name of the band comes from a main character of the *cavalo-marinho* theater tradition. An all-night play quite similar to the more well-known *bumba-meu-boi*, *cavalo-marinho* combines music with the reenactment of an enduring story of a slave-hand who accidentally kills his owner's bull and must bring it back to life to save his life. In an interesting coincidence, during Mestre Ambrósio's early years, Siba developed a close friendship with ethnomusicologist John Murphy, who spent twelve months in Recife studying *cavalo-marinho* and subsequently published several articles about the novel approach of the band. As Murphy mentions in one article, the band opens its live performances with Hélder Vasconcelos dancing the role of "Mestre Ambrósio," a character that opens the theatrical performance by selling the costumes of the rest of the characters and imitating each one as he does so.⁷⁸² Certainly, this maneuver

⁷⁸¹ See above for the Middle Eastern origin of the rabeca.

⁷⁸² John Murphy, "Self-Discovery in Brazilian Popular Music: Mestré Ambrósio," *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, Ed. Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (New York: Routledge, 2002 [245-57]), 247.

underscores the common commentary that the band is performing a forró with ‘nova roupagem’!

One interesting aspect of Mestre Ambrósio’s performance is that from early on, the band developed two sets and stage set-ups.⁷⁸³ One was a traditional set-up that featured all acoustic instruments (zabumba, rabeca, tambourine, triangle, ganzá or shaker and sometimes an agogô bell and/or wooden scraper) and was tailored for crowds interested in an old-school sertão sound à la Luiz Gonzaga. The other was an electronic set-up, which included more contemporary instruments (keyboards, electric bass and electric guitar, rabeca, drum set and percussion) and generally played from crowds more interested in rock and pop music. Even in their more traditional performances, though, the band embraced technological intervention. As Daniel Sharp eloquently reports:

Mestre Ambrósio, with the help of producer Lenine, sought to make the most of the capabilities of the recording studio, while retaining a sense of the live, rural performance context. The use of a digital multi-track recording system, such as Protools, and the occasional artificial effect such as recording a drum fill backwards, reveals their awareness that even the most traditional music becomes ones and zeros when recorded on a compact disc.⁷⁸⁴

In the case of Mestre Ambrósio, the band took serious pains to demonstrate that their musical process differs structurally from the mangue bands. As John Murphy explains:

They make a distinction between groups which, like them, build on a basis in regional traditional styles and add global musical references, which they refer to as “from the inside out” (“de dentro para fora”) and

⁷⁸³ Their contemporaries, Cascabulho, had a similar dual performance scheme, though their acoustic line-up included a *cavaquinho*, or ukelele, and alfaia bass drums, and lacked the rabeca.

⁷⁸⁴ Sharp 36.

groups which add regional flavor to a predominantly global style, such as heavy metal or rap, “from the outside in” (de fora para dentro.”).⁷⁸⁵

In this sense, Mestre Ambrósio members differentiate themselves from both *mangue* and *tropicália*, both of which belong to the latter category, since they added Brazilian elements to an essentially pop/rock/punk/hip-hop format.⁷⁸⁶ In addition, Mestre Ambrósio has widely publicized a peculiar process by which they have redefined their musical identity. Presented as *limpeza*, or “ear-cleaning,” foreign references are tuned out so that band members can “discover the true value of their local heritage.”⁷⁸⁷ This is not to say that their music lacks foreign stylistic elements entirely; instead, it is a way for the band to explain that “local roots have assumed a primary importance in both their sound and cultural identity” and puts foreign influence into perspective.⁷⁸⁸ In this way, Mestre Ambrósio has crafted a process of deliberate *autodescobrimento*, or “self-discovery,” that reflects the cultural aesthetic the group would like to extend to their music.

Not only have they invested a large amount of philosophical thinking into their project, but the band members of Mestre Ambrósio also manage to approach local culture with a playfulness that makes their music not just fascinating but also fun to listen to. In one of their major successes, “Pé de calçada,” they muse about what an

⁷⁸⁵ Murphy, “Self Discovery,” 252. See also Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), Jack Bishop, “Just as Sweet the Second Time Around: The Re-popularization of *Baião* in Pernambuco, Brazil,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, (Vol. 20 [2001], 203-16).

⁷⁸⁶ See Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 137.

⁷⁸⁷ John Murphy and Seergio “Siba” Veloso, “Self-Discovery in Brazilian Popular Music: Mestre Ambrósio,” (Draft) *Chiclete com Banana*, Ed. Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (forthcoming, 1998), 9-10. In Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 135.

⁷⁸⁸ Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 136.

urban modern forró would be – and the result is hardly different from the traditional genre. The title’s witty pun plays on the linguistic construction of pé-de-serra, or “foothills” forró. Instead of the modern forró being played at the base of a mountain (pé-de-serra), Mestre Ambrósio plays forró at the base of the ‘sidewalk’ (pé de calçada). So popular was this song – and so fitting for their musical project – that it became nearly emblematic with the wide experimentations of forró within the *nova cena*. Present in this ‘new’ version of forró are concrete sidewalks instead of rolling foothills at the base of a mountain peak, and a paved one-way road that has replaced the beaten down footpaths of yesteryear. But the instruments remain the same – and more importantly, their power to move the people and the earth remain strong. In modernity, as Mestre Ambrósio sees it, one can still enjoy all of the sounds of the past – they simply bounce off cement walls instead of dusty barnyard planks.

Pe de calçada

Mas eu fui num forró no pé duma serra
 Nunca nessa terra vi uma coisa igual
 Mas eu fui num forró no pé duma serra
 Cume quente, baiano sensacional

Rabeca véia do pinho de arvoredo
 Espalhava baiano no salão
 O pandeiro tremia e maquinava
 Eu via a poeira subir do chão

Hoje eu faço forró em pé-de-calçada
 No meio da zuada, pela contramão
 Eu fui lá na mata e voltei pra cidade
 De caboclo eu sei minha situação

Rabeca veia não me abandona
 Zabumba treme-terra, come o chão
 Na hora em que o tempo desaparece
 Transforma em pé-de-serra o calçadão

At the Base of the Sidewalk

So I went to a pé-de-serra forró
 I’ve never seen anything like it on this earth
 So I went to a pé-de-serra forró
 How sizzling is it, sensational baiano

Ol’ rabeca carved from a pine grove
 It flung baiano all across the room
 The tambourine shook and schemed
 And I saw the dust rise from the floor

Today I make forró at the base of the sidewalk
 In the midst of the craziness,
 wrong way on a one-way,
 I went out to the woods and I went back to the city
 As a half-breed I know my situation

Ol’ rabeca doesn’t leave me
 Zabumba shakes the ground, devours the floor
 At the time when time disappears
 It transforms the sidewalk in pé-de-serra

Like Chico before them, the band doesn't claim to be politically motivated, and yet the message of their work sends a deeply political message. As Daniel Sharp writes,

The potential of succeeding in music is seen as a graceful, respectable way to make a living without turning one's back on one's marginalized background. This discourse of climbing out of poverty, present in much of the work of the *nova cena*, is about survival with dignity in difficult circumstances, not organized political resistance.⁷⁸⁹

Of course, not everyone fell in love with the mangue beat sound or with the Mestre Ambrósio project. Daniel Sharp notes that “most working class urban Recifenses harbor a strongly negative reaction towards Mestre Ambrósio,”⁷⁹⁰ explaining that the ‘primitive’ sound of the band touches a nerve with poorer residents of the city. From this, Sharp surmises that “like other folk revivals, such as the 1960s example in the United States, their audience is overwhelmingly middle-class.”⁷⁹¹ When I spoke with traditionalist musicians of pé-de-serra, many were encouraging of post-mangue musical transformations, though reluctant to include their innovations in the genre of forró. Said one accordionist,

So these groups... I thought they were cool, I think it's a very good band, I'm not going to call it forró, because it's not forró... So, they're

⁷⁸⁹ Sharp 66.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid 49.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid 49.

good bands that have their own style, but if you ask me if it's forró I have to say: no.⁷⁹²

Nonetheless, I found in my investigations that in general pé-de-serra artists and traditionalists appreciated the aesthetic project of post-mangue bands (even if they weren't enthusiastic about the sound) as an exploration of roots in a modern context.

Philip Galinsky explains in excellent detail:

Indeed, the special trait of mangue in this regard is its fusion of “traditional” and “commercial” “international” elements in an experimental way that not only is accepted by both pop and regional folk music camps, but also that has revitalized both of these camps. ... I am pointing out that pagode and Bahian popular music have divided into more “commercial” and more “traditional” camps (however these have been construed) that have created polemics in these scenes. In Recife, particularly because its scene has been shaped around the idea of diversity with a widely divergent plethora of musics, and because the full commercial potential of the scene has yet to be exploited, these divisions have not been as manifest there... with the arrival of multinational labels in Recife in 1998 for the Abril Pro Rock festival, this test is surely not far off. I would speculate that this musical diversity on Recife's scene – so long as it is upheld – may act as a counteragent to a homogenization and overt commercialism of its music (one of the principal complaints of traditionalists).⁷⁹³

To be sure, mangue and post-mangue pushed local traditionalist genres to the edge, but it seems that conservative musicians and fans have been able to understand and value these innovations. On the contrary, the burgeoning *forró estilizado* movement, to which we now turn, seems poised to receive the wrath of most nordestino traditionalists.

⁷⁹² TA: “Então esses grupos... achava muito legal, acho um grupo muito bom, não vou dizer que é forró, porque não é forró... Assim, são grupos bons que tem o estilo deles, agora se me perguntar se é forró eu vou dizer: não.”

⁷⁹³ Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 159.

Forró Estilizado: Popular Culture Goes “Pop”!

Most often referred to as *forró estilizado* (“stylized” forró),⁷⁹⁴ this extremely popular style of forró is also called *oxente music* (a term most likely given as an analogy to axé music of Bahia and a reference to a common Pernambucan expression of surprise, “oxente!”),⁷⁹⁵ *forró eletrônico*, *foxé* (again, a term referencing the style’s affinities with axé music), *forró lambada*,⁷⁹⁶ *forró pop*⁷⁹⁷ and even *pornoforró*.⁷⁹⁸ It is traced back to the early 1990s and is influenced by axé music (a popular Bahian genre that grew out of the samba-raggae movement of the 1980s, combining samba-raggae rhythms with an extreme pop format), música sertaneja romântica (country music from western and south-western Brazil, itself a derivation of the more rustic sertanejo duo performances) and *brega* music (a fluid genre that generally refers to exaggeratedly romantic music, often paired with exceptionally erotic dance) and

⁷⁹⁴ In his Master’s Thesis on the post-mangue scene in Recife, Daniel Sharp refers to forró estilizado as ‘countryopolitan,’ a play on the cosmopolitan make-up of the area and the seemingly counterintuitive popularity of a “country” sound. Sharp 19. In fact, forró estilizado is far from a country sound – if anything, it would be equated to anonymous pop from basically any equatorial region in the world.

⁷⁹⁵ “Oxente!” could be roughly translated as: “Oh geez!” or “Gosh!”

⁷⁹⁶ Dominginhos, the famous accordionist who was mentored by Luiz Gonzaga, calls it *forró lambada*. “Because lambada is over but the Cearense (from Ceará) kept on playing lambada, through the baião rhythm... the baião of the 1960s, which is a “square” baião that seems more like a samba.” “*Porque a lambada acabou e o cearense continuou tocando lambada, através do baião, isto é, do baião dos anos 60, que é aquele ‘baião quadrado’ parecendo um samba.* Interview with Dominginhos. In Expedito Leandro Silva, *Forró no Asfalto: mercado e identidade sociocultural* (São Paulo: Annablume/FAPESP, 2003), 123.

⁷⁹⁷ Lauro Lisboa Garcia, “De Volta ao Aconchego,” *Época* (26 June 2000), 125.

⁷⁹⁸ Jackson do Pandeiro called “Severina Xique Xique” “pornoforró.” In Fernando Moura and Antônio Vicente, *Jackson do Pandeiro: o rei do ritmo* (São Paulo, Brazil: Editora 34, 2001), 285.

lambada (the “Brazilian” dance craze that swept the world in summer of 1988 and returned to Brazil to captivate audiences across the nation).⁷⁹⁹

Forró estilizado groups are large, often with as many as sixteen members, including musicians (usually male) and dancers (usually female). They tend to boast a very “engineered” sound and a “produced” stage presence, often employing flashing lights and matching costumes and make-up for the dancers. Another peculiar trait that nearly all bands share is the repetition of the band’s name throughout a show; this announcement is often done in the same rhythmic style and melody as the song playing⁸⁰⁰ and usually features in studio-produced recordings, as well. According to Expedito Leandro Silva, this tendency helps each group to distinguish itself and to register its particular personality in a highly standardized realm.⁸⁰¹

Throughout Brazil, there are more than 600 estilizado bands, varying in size and popularity. The most successful bands include Mastruz com Leite, Magníficos, Keijo com Mel, Calcinha Preta, Brucelose, Zanzibar, Capital do Sol, Xamego de Meninas, Stylos, Limão com Mel, Frank Aguiar, Cleilton dos Teclados, Francis Lopes, Zezinho Barros, Fariston Silveira & Suas Arrochadinhas, Sirano e Sirino, and Genildo e Ginaldo; these bands play for entire stadiums and enjoy unparalleled commercial

⁷⁹⁹ The international group “Kaomé” released “Chorando Se Foi” in 1988, and it quickly flew to the top of international pop charts. The group was not in fact Brazilian; the singer hailed from Brazil (Porto Alegre) while most other members were from various cities in West Africa. They reached fame after a French entrepreneur invested in a European tour and music video, which catapulted them to international fame. Their main hit was in fact a plagiarized version of “Llorando se fue” by Andean group Kjarkas (who later won a copyright case).

⁸⁰⁰ José Maria Tenório Rocha, “De Pimenta, Cebola e Mel Com... Terra! Que barulho é esse, o dos forrozeiros?” *Folclore Revista* (Guarujá: São Paulo, No. 21 [1996] 25-7).

⁸⁰¹ Silva 112.

success in the world of forró. Countless journalists have mocked the eccentric group names, which often feature some form of northeastern food:

Cuscus com leite (couscous with milk), *Sururu no côco* (oysters in coconut milk), *Mastruz com leite* (wormseed tea), *Mel com terra* (honey with earth), *Chá de hortelã* (mint tea), *Queijo com mel* (cheese with honey), *Cebola ralada* (grated onion),⁸⁰² *Forró pimenta-do-reino* (black pepper forró), *Só canela* (just cinnamon), forró *catuaba* (Catuaba forró), *Café coado* (filtered coffee).⁸⁰³

Of course, the fact that so many estilizado bands have chosen titles relating to food reinforces the sexualization inherent in the Brazilian verb *comer* (to eat) that we discussed in chapter one. Certainly, forró estilizado is far more overtly sexualized than forró pé-de-serra, as we will see below.

Forró estilizado, unlike its pé-de-serra counterpart, is deeply connected to cutting edge media, allowing it to reach a huge fan base. In large part, this media advantage accounts for both its wide appeal among the popular classes and for the scathing criticism it has received from journalists, middle-class traditionalists and many forró pé-de-serra musicians. The media blitz began in the early 1990s, when Emanuel Gurgel, agent and founder of the forró estilizado group “Mastruz com Leite,” established SomZoom. The former owner of a small t-shirt factory in Ceará, Gurgel started working with forró bands more than fifteen years ago and soon amassed several groups as well as the rights to all of their music and merchandising, making him the most commercially successful entrepreneur in the largest cultural industry of the Northeast.

⁸⁰² This name has a double-entendre, as “cebola” (onion) is pronounced similarly to “cê bola” (you ‘grind’).

⁸⁰³ Tenorio Rocha 26.

SomZoom⁸⁰⁴ was founded as a broadcasting and distribution mechanism for forró music and is the first radio station to transmit programming over a digital satellite in the Northeast; at its peak, it reached a network of 98 stations across the nation, in fifteen different states (even São Paulo).⁸⁰⁵ In 2001 it had an estimated listening audience of 35 million, making it the most popular radio station in all of Brazil. In addition to the digital satellite that transmits forró twenty-four hours a day,⁸⁰⁶ seven days a week, SomZoom is also made up of several other departments, including SomZoom Studio (for recording and production of cds); Editora Passaré (for editing all of the music recorded at its studio); over eight forró bands (including the original, Mastruz com Leite); Mastruz com Leite Fábrica de amplificadores (a factory for producing professional quality speakers, for use at forró shows); Zoom Promoções (for promoting events and artists); and various forró clubs in Fortaleza, the capital of Ceará.⁸⁰⁷ The success of Mastruz com Leite is unprecedented; just one live album sold 1.2 million copies when first released⁸⁰⁸ and some of its shows are said to bring in between 25-50,000 fans. As of June 2009, they have just released their 45th cd.⁸⁰⁹

The successful formula of Mastruz com Leite and its owner Emanuel Gurgel may soon be repeated; João Florentino, the owner of the now defunct “AkyDiscos” music

⁸⁰⁴ <http://www.somzoom.com.br/>

⁸⁰⁵ Oliveira Lima, Maria Érica de. *Somzoom Sat: do local ao global* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Social Communication Dept., Universidade Metodista de São Paulo, São Bernardo do Campo, Nov. 2005).

⁸⁰⁶ The station sends out a coded transmission via channel BS1 (Brasil Sat 1). Oliveira Lima.

⁸⁰⁷ Forró clubs include “Parque do Vaqueiro”, “Casa do forró” and “Vila forró”. Oliveira Lima.

⁸⁰⁸ Ceva, *Na Batida*, 14. Another source notes that it sold four million cds in its first nine years. Silva 112.

⁸⁰⁹ See official website: <http://www.forromastruzcomleite.com>

retail chain, has entered the satellite radio business with a similar model (he also owns a music label and the rights to music by several forró and brega recording artists) and is expected to show comparative profits. What has fueled the media onslaught of the forró estilizado model? One author suggests that SomZoom and others took their inspiration from the giant variety-music “megashows” (generally of big name sertanejo stars) that Rede Globo⁸¹⁰ began broadcasting on television in the early 1990s.⁸¹¹ This set the stage for the success of huge attractions on the scale of *Mastruz com Leite* and other estilizado bands. Much of their popularity may also be attributed to superior marketing; in addition to the exposure garnered from radio play and in-studio interviews, estilizado bands perform on all the day-time talk shows and invest heavily in placards and handouts advertising upcoming shows.

Still, popular as they are, the estilizado bands have sparked a highly contentious debate among some musicians and music-lovers, particularly in the Northeast. The pé-de-serra traditionalists claim that the estilizado bands manage their music like a business and are lacking in passion for the music they create. Some traditionalists refer to it as a “diluted” form of forró, claiming that the synthesized melodies are a far cry from the traditional accordion base of forró pé-de-serra; many even take offense at the notion of calling the genre “forró,” as they consider it lacking in rhythmic and instrumental components of traditional forró. According to a zabumba player from

⁸¹⁰ Rede Globo is a media conglomerate boasting the fourth largest television network in the world (after ABC, NBC and CBS).

⁸¹¹ Silva 113.

Recife, “the zabumba, the triangle, and the accordion gotta be there, otherwise, it’s just not forró... it’s just lambada.”⁸¹²

Another major critique leveled at forró estilizado performers is that their crass lyrics have a deprecating effect on the legacy of Luiz Gonzaga. A percussionist from Recife notes that some bands find traditional forró themes “antiquated,” and as such, “they don’t want to sing the pure Northeast, speak about the people, they want to talk about love, that someone’s wife took someone else to bed, I dunno, that she cheated on him, they want to reach the masses.”⁸¹³ A female accordionist compares the “spicy” lyrics that Luiz Gonzaga included in some of his songs with the more depraved themes of current estilizado groups:

Luiz Gonzaga had many [song-writing] partners, but partners that composed with class, they spoke of things of the land, of man, of the Northeast, but they spoke with class, they were faithful even to the language of the people, the slang of the *matuto* nordestino... Luiz Gonzaga has music that’s sort of spicy... but they did it in such an innocent way that it was pretty, unlike today, today it’s all wide open, it’s pretty rude, pretty depraved, you know? ... they want to get really dirty.⁸¹⁴

Another common criticism of the estilizado bands is that their performances are often dubbed. Others complain that all the estilizado bands look and sound the same.

⁸¹² Interview with RP: “*Mas a zabumba, o triângulo e a sanfona tem que tá, não é, se não tiver aí não é forró...é lambada só.*”

⁸¹³ Interview with RP: “*não querem decantar o nordeste, falar do povo, eles querem falar de amor, que a mulher levou o outro pra cama, não sei o que, que botou uma gaia, quer atingir o povão.*”

⁸¹⁴ Interview with TA: “*Luis Gonzaga teve vários parceiros, mas parceiros que faziam a coisa com qualidade, com qualidade, falavam das coisas da terra, do homem, do nordeste, mas falavam com qualidade, eles foram fiéis até a maneira da gente falar, linguajar do matuto, aquela coisa quer dizer com fidelidade... Luiz Gonzaga tem música assim meio apimentada... mas eles faziam de uma forma assim tão inocentemente que ficava bonita, diferente de hoje, hoje a coisa é meio escancarado, é meio feia, meio depravada, sabe? Querem esculhambar mesmo.*”

Said one pé-de-serra musician in reference to the estilizado bands: “Jeez, they are folks making noise, you know, stuff that nobody can even understand.”⁸¹⁵

Above all, nearly all opponents of the estilizado style detest and denounce the commercialization of the music, claiming that forró estilizado is simply about making money, not a quality product.⁸¹⁶ Says one local traditional artist: “it’s just a money-making machine, so they don’t have that concern, they don’t take care to stand out with the quality of their product, unlike pé-de-serra.”⁸¹⁷ She continues:

The quality of the bands, the quality of the music, of those things, is really of a low level. It is lacking in its lyrics, in its melodies, there’s no question about that. But what happens, you can’t even criticize it because it is a commercial product, a commercial product, and because someone believes he invested in the artist, he only deals with the financial end of it... So what happened, there was a businessman who met these artists, saw their talent, invested in them and created this style... and today they only care about money, it’s obvious. They don’t work from a cultural standpoint, they don’t even want to think about culture, about roots, they don’t want to deal with any of that. They want to throw a band up on stage to make money, to make a profit, you know? That stuff, those women on TV, they don’t have anything to do with [forró pé-de-serra], that’s just a big spectacle to make money.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁵ Interview with ZG: “*Pois olha... tem gente fazendo barulho, né, umas coisas que ninguém entende nada. Hehe!*”

⁸¹⁶ A typical stylized show can draw between R\$20,000 and R\$50,000 (and sometimes more), while a good pé-de-serra show gets, at maximum, R\$5,000, though more likely (for a lesser-known band) several hundred. Even after the dancers, the musicians, the crew, the producer, the equipment rental payments, the stylized is clearly a more lucrative performance. Cassidy 33.

⁸¹⁷ Interview with TA: “*é uma máquina de ganhar dinheiro, então eles não têm aquela preocupação, aquele cuidado de primar-se pela qualidade das coisa que fazem, diferente do pé de serra.*”

⁸¹⁸ Interview with TA: “*o nível das bandas, o nível das músicas, dessas coisas assim, realmente é um nível muito baixo. Pobre de letra, pobre de melodia, isso aí não tinha dúvida. Mas o que que acontece, não se pode nem criticar porque é um trabalho comercial, um trabalho comercial, porque a pessoa que acreditou que investiu no artista estava vendo só o lado financeiro... Então foi o que houve, teve um empresário que conheceu estes artistas, que viu este talento, investiu nestes artistas e criaram este estilo, e investiu e...e hoje realmente eles visam o dinheiro, é lógico. Eles não trabalham em cima de uma cultura, eles não querem saber de cultura, de raízes, não quer saber disso não. Eles querem botar uma banda no palco para gerar dinheiro, para gerar renda, entendeu?... aquela coisa, aquelas mulheres da TV, não tem nada a ver com aquilo, aquilo ali é um espetáculo para se ganhar dinheiro.*”

We must ask, then, why does the reception of forró estilizado in the Northeast contrast so greatly with the reception of mangue beat in Recife? Both borrowed from traditional forms and performed local musics in a basically international format, yet they have received a drastically different reception from traditionalists and enthusiasts of the pé-de-serra style.

As Hermano Vianna reminds us, “pop” culture and popular culture are divided by a deep rift in Brazil that doesn’t exist to the same extent in North America; in Brazil, “pop” culture is a “corrupting, alienating influence: the worst enemy of ‘authentic’ popular culture,”⁸¹⁹ while popular culture has been championed since before the writings of Mário de Andrade as a folkloric product of extreme value. Forró as a genre actually presents both of these extremes (in estilizado as opposed to pé-de-serra) and it is from this basic fissure that forró has experienced such a polemic divide.

To understand better the widespread opposition to forró estilizado, we must revisit the main theories of popular culture introduced by the Frankfurt school, a group of neo-Marxist theorists who condemned kitsch and pop culture, considering it a reductive imitation of high art. Founded in the 1920s by leading theorists to study the negative social effects in modern society brought on by increasing reliance on mass cultural commodities, the group included several leading twentieth century culture scholars such as Theodor Adorno, Jürgen Habermas and Walter Benjamin, all of whom wrote extensively on the growing culture industry of Western Europe and the United States.

⁸¹⁹ Vianna xviii.

It was Adorno who alerted us to the fact that the consumer is not in fact the subject of the culture industry but its object.⁸²⁰ Indeed, he outlines the issue of “compulsive consumption” by explaining that under the influence of the culture industry and its leaders, the consumer will be drawn to certain products – often products s/he did not even like at first – through persistent marketing and will come to attribute (consciously or not) values to it, contributing to the likelihood that the consumer will purchase said product, and by doing so, encourage others around him/her to follow suit. As Dwight MacDonald (an acolyte of Adorno’s) writes:

Mass Culture [sic] is imposed from above. It is fabricated by technicians hired by businessmen; its audiences are passive consumers, their participation limited to the choice between buying and not buying.⁸²¹

In response to my questions about consumer choice in listening to forró estilizado, a music education teacher and alternative forró band leader criticized the monopoly of forró estilizado entrepreneurs Emanuel Gurgel and João Florentino, arguing that their control of mass media created an unfair advantage from which they duped unsuspecting listeners:

This hegemony is in [their] control now, right? So they dictate at some level what is going to be a [commercial] success, you know?... So, check it out, the musical production is directly linked to the same guys who control the mass media. So he influenced the masses, other things get pulled into the avalanche and then you ask ‘why do the people buy?’ ... because it’s the following, because the radio, it educates, it sensitizes in the following way, it captivates the sensitivities of people. You listen, listen, listen and then in no time

⁸²⁰ Theodor A. Adorno, “A indústria cultural,” *Comunicação e indústria cultural*, Ed. Gabriel Cohn (São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1977), 288. In Silva 33.

⁸²¹ Dwight MacDonald, “A Theory of Mass Culture,” *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, Eds. B. Rosenberg and D. White (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1953), 60. In Andy Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 35-6.

you yourself are reproducing it because it gets stuck in your head, it becomes part of you.⁸²²

He continues:

So what happens? I'm not saying that they single-handedly dictate what is going to be a success, but they have a strong lead, so for example, if they were to create today, if they were to have the creativity to come up with a new rhythm, they have the power to test whether it will be popular or not... the decision rests less, in my opinion, with the masses because... they [the entrepreneurs] are the ones who choose, you know? So what happens, the hegemony of this forró came about because of its novelty, its distinctiveness, but I think that it was above all because of the business investment that it was given. In my opinion I think that's what explains it [its popularity].⁸²³

For many members of the forró pé-de-serra scene, commercial success in the music industry in and of itself is something to be celebrated and applauded. Many local artists struggle to be heard in a genre that doesn't have huge commercial outlets (even while it is heavily underwritten by local, regional and national government) or huge financial potential, and as such, appreciate it when they see other local artists climb to the top. Yet for many people whom I spoke with, forró estilizado simply doesn't provide the artistic creative content that they have come to expect from local

⁸²² Interview with CO: *“está na mão dele agora esta hegemonia, certo? Então eles ditam de certa forma o que vai ser sucesso, tá entendendo? Então, veja bem, com a produção musical está diretamente ligada aos caras que tinham os meios de comunicação de massa na mão. Então ele massificou aquilo, outras áreas entraram no avalanche e aí você diz porque o povo compra?... porque é o seguinte, porque a rádio, ela educa, ela sensibiliza no sentido seguinte, ela cativa a sensibilidade das pessoas. Você escuta, escuta, escuta e daqui a pouco está reproduzindo aquilo porque fica na sua memória, fica fazendo parte de você.”*

⁸²³ Interview with CO: *“E aí o que que acontece, não tô dizendo assim que eles ditam sozinhos o que vai ser sucesso, mas eles têm na mão uma parada muito forte, por exemplo, se eles criarem hoje, se eles tiverem criatividade pra jogarem um novo ritmo, eles têm poder para testar se isto vai dar certo ou não, mas vamos testar pra ganhar milhões com isso, eles podem testar para dar certo ou não... A decisão passa menos, na minha opinião, passa menos pelo povo... porque... eles é que escolhem, tá entendendo? Então o que acontece, a hegemonia deste forró se deu claro também pela novidade, né, pela diferenciação, mas eu acho que foi acima de tudo pelo investimento empresarial que houve em cima dele. Na minha opinião eu acho que tem a ver com isso.”*

music. Interesting in this context, then, is to explore Adorno's notion of "pre-digested" culture:

Popular music is 'pre-digested' in a way strongly resembling the fad of "digests" of printed material ... the 'patterned and pre-digested" nature of the music offers relief 'from both boredom and effort simultaneously" with the result that periods of leisure can be tailored to provide maximum relaxation and refreshment for the workforce.⁸²⁴

This concept is particularly useful and interesting when juxtaposed with the popular trope of anthropophagy in Brazilian popular culture studies. As discussed earlier, Brazilians throughout the twentieth century took a special pride in the agency they commanded over deglutition of foreign cultural imports. By ingesting foreign artistic products, they were in fact creating their own amalgam through their body's processing, and thus expressing their national spirit through its innovative hybrid form. If they are consuming instead local products (in the form of *estilizado* tunes) and, as Adorno suggests, said tunes arrive "pre-digested," it in fact subtracts their agency as consumers, rendering them useless in a cultural and nationalistic sense.

Nevertheless, it remains to be stated that the fact that a local music is generating ten times the profit that big-name United States artists like Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston⁸²⁵ are making in Brazil is a stunning feature of the *estilizado* market. In a country like Brazil, so long a major importer of foreign cultural products, this kind of commercial success at the local level is nothing short of exciting. Still, the large domestic consumer base that is so voraciously purchasing *estilizado* records can be equated to the huge numbers of people buying *pagode*, *axé music* and *música sertaneja*. Indeed, these consumers are typically members of

⁸²⁴ Adorno 1941: 306. In Bennett 36-7.

⁸²⁵ Interview with Luiz Tatit. In Silva 50.

Brazil's lower class, and though their buying power is remarkable, they tend to purchase precisely the music that middle-class tastes rebuke.⁸²⁶

The philosophical trope most often cited by performers and enthusiasts of forró pé-de-serra, however, rests on the image of roots, as opposed to the theoretical notion of anthropophagy. For them, the key element leading to their appreciation of local music is whether or not it hews close to the “roots” of nordestino culture. This could mean any number of things – it is a wide category – but although difficult to define, my consultants are quick to recognize when music does and does not conform to their sense of “roots.” In the case of forró estilizado, this traditionalist message that forms the core of the pé-de-serra canon is absent. Luiz Gonzaga's sister complains that estilizado songs

Don't have a roots tradition, primordial roots... They don't have a beginning or an end. They don't have roots, they don't have anything... a person who knows, who has a past, doesn't involve him/herself with that business. That stuff doesn't have any value to me... it has no value at all.”⁸²⁷

For this performer, herself deeply rooted to the historical trajectory of forró and its origin in the very home where she grew up, the element most offensive of the estilizado genre is its lack of roots, its lack of connection to a local sense of place.

Nonetheless, interviews with several musicians uncovered a fascinating paradox: even while many of them discarded forró estilizado out of hand as a genre not worth

⁸²⁶ Frederick Moehn notes that this consumer structure “contrasts with the nature of the music industries of the United States, Europe, and Japan, where the largest consumer base is a relatively well-educated middle class,” though I believe this may in fact be changing (with different populations in the United States purchasing music and the entire financial structure of music purchasing changing, as well). Moehn, “Good Blood,” 266.

⁸²⁷ Interview with CG: “*Não tem uma tradição de raiz, raiz antiga. ... Não têm começo nem fim. Não tem raiz, não tem nada... pessoa que tem conhecimento, tem história, não se mete com negócio daquele. Aquilo ali não tem valor para mim... não tem valor nenhum...*”

talking about, as a music “that has nothing to do with forró pé-de-serra,”⁸²⁸ many also admit that it has brought about a local resurgence of interest in more traditional forró music. The percussionist quoted above said during our interview that “they call it forró, but in reality it’s not forró, they know it’s not,”⁸²⁹ but shortly thereafter recanted his statement somewhat by admitting that “actually I have nothing against them [the band *Mastruz com Leite*, the primary representative of forró estilizado], I think that on the contrary really they are actually elevating the name of forró.”⁸³⁰

Another highly successful accordionist from Caruaru, Pernambuco said that “you can’t even say that it’s forró,”⁸³¹ yet in the same interview he credits the recent popularity of the accordion to the forró pop groups: “There was a while when the accordionist was an endangered species. There was just me and a few others... even though today the accordion is merely a decorative object in the bands... *Mastruz com Leite* and those bands brought the accordion back.”⁸³² Along the same lines, a female accordionist reports on the impact of forró estilizado on the more traditional scene:

... up until a good time ago, the accordion was marginalized, even for men, guys were embarrassed to go outside with an accordion, to walk around with it. Even the accordionists themselves were self-conscious. It was a very marginalized instrument, [but] that all ended after forró estilizado. Then it really hit big, it hit big in all of Brazil,

⁸²⁸ Interview with RA: “*estilizado... não tem nada a ver com forró pé de serra.*”

⁸²⁹ Interview with RP: “*eles chamam isso de forró, mas na verdade não é forró, eles sabem que não é.*”

⁸³⁰ Interview with RP: “*Na verdade eu não tenho nada contra eles [Mastruz com Leite], eu acho que ao contrário de repente eles estão até enaltecendo o nome do forró.*”

⁸³¹ Interview with Camarão: “*nem se pode dizer que é forró...*” In José Teles, *Jornal do Commercio* (Recife: 14 June, 2004).

⁸³² Interview with Camarão: “*teve uma época que o sanfoneiro era especie em extinção. Havia eu e mais uns poucos. Embora, hoje, a sanfona nas bandas seja objeto decorativo... o Mastruz com leite e essas bandas trouxeram o sanfoneiro de volta.*” Teles.

all because of forró estilizado, so the prejudice [against the accordion] ended... and today every teenager wants to learn to play the accordion, he isn't embarrassed to be seen... on the contrary, he makes a point of telling people he plays, he wants to show off, to show off to the girls, he wants to show off..."⁸³³

In fact, the reluctance of so many forró traditionalists to accept forró estilizado reflects the *long revolution* that Raymond Williams wrote about. In a slightly more optimistic critique of massified culture than Adorno's, Williams argued that (even though he considered mass culture an ultimately negative pressure) an ongoing struggle (or long revolution) would arise in which individuals would assert their autonomy to choose or reject massified culture by either selecting more traditional forms of culture to consume or by creating new structures of meaning for the massified objects. In the case of forró, huge audiences have in fact chosen the massified estilizado style, while more traditional artists and their fans take comfort in the fact that the two genres can, in fact, coexist side by side, and may in fact enrich one another.

Pé-de-serra enthusiasts also tend to remind one another that forró estilizado is simply another fashion in a long line of popular music trends. Says the son of my accordion teacher, himself a drummer: "They're phases... like we had the phase of lambada, like we had that phase of pagode, right... that pagode fever, that lambada

⁸³³ Interview with TA: "até um bom tempo atrás, a sanfona era marginalizada até para homem, os homens tinham vergonha de sair com a sanfona na rua, de andar com a sanfona. Os próprios sanfoneiros tinham vergonha. Era um instrumento muito marginalizado, veio a acabar mais essa coisa em relação à sanfona depois do forró estilizado. Aí detonou, forró detonou no Brasil, todo com o forró estilizado, então acabou mais este preconceito. E hoje todo rapazinho quer aprender a tocar sanfona, não tem vergonha de andar... pelo contrário... faz questão de dizer que toca, quer aparecer, quer aparecer para as meninas, quer aparecer..."

fever, that forró estilizado thing... they're chic phases that come in and out of style."⁸³⁴

Indeed, as Elizabeth Traube suggests, "the primary analytical challenge is to preserve rather than dissolve the tension between production and reception that constitutes popular culture as a distinctive theoretical object."⁸³⁵ In order not to reduce all popular culture to a manipulative mass culture, we need to recognize the active negotiation that goes on among audiences – and in order not to collapse naively the full spectrum of cultural production into tidy categories of traditional culture, we need to acknowledge the impact of commercial pressures. Traube reminds us to "see both production and reception as mixed, uncertain, contradictory processes, unstable blendings of domination and resistance."⁸³⁶ My accordion teacher, who loves to speak in colorful analogies and who has an uncanny ability to bring together contradictory ideas into one diplomatic brew, compared the two styles in just such a way: "it's as if one person wanted to wear work-out clothes and the other a jacket. It [forró estilizado] just modernized."⁸³⁷ Never mind that I don't recall ever seeing anyone in Recife wearing either work-out clothes nor a jacket – his statement represents a tactful tactic that some pé-de-serra enthusiasts are adopting. Many are realizing that forró estilizado does not represent a threat to traditional culture –

⁸³⁴ Interview with RP: "*são fases...como a gente teve a fase da lambada, como a gente teve aquela fase do pagode, né... aquela febre de pagode, aquela febre de lambada, aquela coisa de forró estilizado... são fases de modismo que passam, que são passageiras.*"

⁸³⁵ Elizabeth G. Traube, "'The Popular' in American Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, (25 [1996]: 127-51), 142.

⁸³⁶ Ibid 142.

⁸³⁷ Interview with AP: "*é como se fosse uma pessoa de roupa esportiva e outra outra pessoa de paletó. Só modernizou.*"

perhaps the very opposite – and that the best way to appreciate roots music is by allowing it to grow alongside other cultural products.

One thing seems for sure – no matter the hype and/or skepticism surrounding forró estilizado, there seems no doubt amongst the forró pé-de-serra community in Recife that traditional music will continue its current success. As one Recife-based accordionist insists:

...forró pé-de-serra, that one for sure, that one will never fall... it could be that tomorrow or later they create another genre using forró pé-de-serra... an accordionist, a zabumbeiro will never be out of style, because that is part of our Pernambucan culture... that is part of our culture, so it will never die... accordion... zabumba... and triangle... comes from long ago and... will always exist.⁸³⁸

Recife Today

The capital of Pernambuco is a very different city today than it was at the onset of the mangue movement. The last mayor, an avid member of the *Partido Trabalhador*, or Workers' Party, embarked on a "radical program of works aimed to effect social change in housing, health, sanitation and education," a program continued under his successor (also a PT member). As brochures and websites proclaim, "Integral to this is a program of works on local culture."⁸³⁹ State and federal governmentally contributed funds, as well as money from the Inter-American Development Bank,⁸⁴⁰ have recognized the city's initiative to modernize while preserving local cultural

⁸³⁸ Interview with TA: "...então, quer dizer, nunca vai passar um sanfoneiro, um zabumbeiro, nunca vai passar, porque isso faz parte da cultura de Pernambuco... porque isso faz parte da nossa cultura, então ele não vai morrer nunca... sanfona, ... zabumba e ...triângulo... vem lá de trás e ... vai sempre existir."

⁸³⁹ "Recife Melhor para Viver. See Dupuy 6.

⁸⁴⁰ Ilona Blanchard, "Leisure Space in Historic Recife, Brazil: An Exploration of Revitalization as Identity Construction" *Planning Forum* (Vol. 6., 2000), 6.

landmarks and practices. Gigantic shopping centers dot the metropolitan area, swallowing up countless city blocks, while skyscrapers have taken over the beachfront in Boa Viagem, what was once a “sleepy seaside neighborhood on the outskirts of the city.”⁸⁴¹ Even in the sweltering tropical heat, the pace of the city pumps to a cosmopolitan pulse. Certainly a large number of the 3.5 million inhabitants of its metropolitan area – those who live on the precarious stilted shacks above the swamplands with no running water or sanitation, or those who dig a meager living out of the municipal dumps – don’t reap the benefits of modernity, but there is no doubt that Recife is a city of the future.

In order to realize that future while not sacrificing its rich cultural history, Recife has also commenced a municipal revitalization project in two historical areas of its downtown sector. In her study of this project, Ilona Blanchard notes that

In Recife, preservation has never meant restoration. Neither is it exactly “preservation.” While old facades are ‘restored’ they are not restored to original surfaces or colors but rather adapted to current tastes and building practices. The modern latex paints and other materials used can be destructive to older facades. Even when streets are restored, city excavations and repairs create holes in the light and dark bands of cobblestone streets and Portuguese stone chip (*pedra portuguesa*) sidewalks.⁸⁴²

Blanchard notes, also, that in developing this project, Recife looked not to regional or Brazilian cities as models but rather (with the exceptions of Pelourinho and Ouro Preto historical revitalization models) looked to cities like Bologna, Baltimore and Boston for their urban renovation models.⁸⁴³ Indeed, Recife is an international city

⁸⁴¹ Page 193. In Galinsky, *Maracatú Atômico* (dissertation), 44.

⁸⁴² Blanchard 5.

that looks abroad for cultural examples just as often as it looks to national people and locales.⁸⁴⁴

The popular Recife singer Lenine picked a beautiful and apt metaphor to describe his city:

Recife is a city of islands and bridges, you know, basically, it's some islands surrounded by bridges on all sides. A paradox, because "island" is isolation and bridge is connection. This is very important if you're talking about Pernambucan culture, specifically Recife."⁸⁴⁵

Indeed, Recife stands alone in its cultural uniqueness, and yet it functions, at some level, as a bridge between Brazil and the rest of the world.

A 'Nova Cena' Agora: Recife's Contemporary Music Scene

In a short essay written for a compilation of essays on the Pernambuco music scene, ethnomusicologist John Murphy reflects on the transformations that the city of Recife went through from the time he first studied there (in 1991) to the post-mangue era when he returned for additional research. He writes that "before the mangue

⁸⁴³ Blanchard notes that this model is characterized by a public/private partnership, in which "only a minimal number of structures have been expropriated by the public sector, [a model which] reduces perceptions of state paternalism, increases leverage on public funds, expands the taxable high-rent property base, and preserves the historic urban fabric." Blanchard 14.

⁸⁴⁴ Galinsky notes, however, that a "Brazilian" identity is still highly relevant for musicians on the Recife scene. "In other words, this is not an either-or situation, but instead a relative shift in favor of more local (and global) symbols, combined with some nationalist discourse and ideology. Galinsky *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 29-30.

⁸⁴⁵ Moehn 191.

movement, I had the feeling that traditional artists viewed themselves as a dying breed,”⁸⁴⁶ but that the city of Recife “had been transformed... into the most happening musical scene in Brazil.”⁸⁴⁷ Indeed, he exclaims, “a *nowhere* on the *periphery* had become a *center*.”⁸⁴⁸ Certainly, the city is bursting with musical flavor, and during my 2004 stay in Recife, I experienced another one of Murphy’s descriptions: “there was too much good music happening for any one individual to take in.”⁸⁴⁹

Little did I know upon first arriving how fertile the city’s music scene was. Even having narrowed down my choice of music to one genre – forró – and its various offshoots, I found I could not possibly attend all of the performances I was interested in. Recife is a sprawling metropolis, and I was limited to public transportation, so I couldn’t attend more than one performance a night. Sundays were forró nights at my accordion teacher’s backyard club (Forró de Arlindo)⁸⁵⁰ as well as forró de rabeça performances at Mestre Salustiano’s,⁸⁵¹ Wednesdays were live forró evenings at O Cangaceiro,⁸⁵² Friday and Saturday evenings always had top forró headliners playing at Sala de Reboco,⁸⁵³ Thursdays were free live shows at the downtown Pátio de São

⁸⁴⁶ John Murphy, “Mangue Beat and Popular Culture,” *A Maré Encheu*, Ed. Renato Lins (forthcoming - essay available at: <http://web3.unt.edu/murphy/brazil/?q=node/125>), 5.

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid 2.

⁸⁴⁸ Ibid 2.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid 3.

⁸⁵⁰ Avenida Hidelbrando de Vasconcelos, 2900 Dois Unidos, Recife.

⁸⁵¹ Rua Curupira, 340, Cidade Tabajara, Olinda, 81-3371.8197. www.casadarabeca.com.br

⁸⁵² Rua Melqui Ribeiro Roma 31, Pina, Recife. 81-3465-3579.

Pedro,⁸⁵⁴ and other clubs such as Esquina 3-4-1,⁸⁵⁵ Azulzinho⁸⁵⁶ and Arre Égua⁸⁵⁷ featured forró talent throughout the week. The city of Olinda, a few miles north, offered additional clubs and outdoor shows for a variety of local musics. In fact, my greatest challenge was not finding live music but finding safe transportation and/or a chaperone to accompany me on my late night excursions around the metropolitan area.

Perhaps one of the most unique characteristics of the music scene in Recife is the social element to its music. Unlike the recording-centric orientation that I grew up with, the Recife scene is one driven by lively stage performances and personal flair (not necessarily by cd sales). Though Recife has many excellent music stores, artists tend to print small quantities of their cds, and they often run out quickly. I became a fixture at several local stores, often leaving disappointed when my lists of requests had no corresponding inventory. Sometimes even band members didn't have a copy of their latest cd, having already sold or given away his/her copies. Nevertheless, a few weeks taking in Recife Antigo nightlife usually resulted in hearing live whatever track I was after.

While the Recife scene still does not boast the presence of major record labels, there are several small independent labels that have appeared, along with recording

⁸⁵³ Rua Gregório Júnior 264, Cordeiro, Recife, 81-3228-7052. www.saladereboco.com.br

⁸⁵⁴ Pátio de São Pedro, once the loading and unloading port for slaves (Blanchard 23), is now a major stage where shows sponsored (as least in part) by the Recife Prefeitura, or City Hall, take place. Located in Recife Antigo, it consists of a stage on one side of a large cobblestone plaza. It draws a fair crowd, and people congregate near the stage and throughout the plaza to dance or along the periphery to sit at an outdoor café and have a beer while listening to the live show.

⁸⁵⁵ Avenida Inácio Monteiro, 341 Cordeiro, Recife.

⁸⁵⁶ Rua General Polidoro 708, Cidade Universitária; Recife, 81-3272-7540.

⁸⁵⁷ Located in Cidade Universitária; since closed.

studios and professional producers. And even while the music scene in and around Recife is not geared toward cd sales and consumption (but rather live music), Recife artists have been quick to embrace new technologies – in large part capitalizing on the democratization of technology – and are among the leaders of internet-based music initiatives in Latin America. Dupuy points out that Recifenses have had to take the lead, since major infrastructure of the commercial music industry is absent and there has been a lack of interest by the press and record companies in local products. He includes a technological time-line for the city beginning with mangue initiatives in the late 1990s:

Numerous websites and the first internet radio station in Latin America, Manguetronic, [was] produced in Recife [in] 1997.⁸⁵⁸ Recent festivals evidence the interest in electronic pop in Recife. RecBeat in 2002 had an electronic tent for the first time, attracting 10,000 people... E-Brasil-Malakoff (September 2001) aimed at bringing the music to a wider audience and to wider participation, with free workshops, and performances by local and international artists.

Indeed, as Hélder Aragão emphasized in his interview with Dupuy: “We want to make the machines as a means of production of music more accessible.”⁸⁵⁹ It is refreshing to watch artists unpack the wooden or metallic traditional instruments of the sertão and to contrast this seemingly rustic simplicity with the miles of cables, speakers, microphones, and stands of their professional stage set-ups. The artists see no contradiction in these contrasts and while unloading take equally good care of their rabeca as they do their drum sampler.

⁸⁵⁸ Chico Correa: (<http://www.manguebit.org.br/chicocorrea/>)
Re:Combo: (<http://www.manguebit.org.br/recombo/>)
Manguetronic: (<http://www.uol.com.br/manguetronic/>)

⁸⁵⁹ Interview with H. Aragão. In Dupuy 44-5.

Another interesting quality of the scene is that the musicians themselves – particularly the younger generation of artists – are extremely self-aware and eager to engage in debate about issues of globalization, tradition versus modernity, post-modernity, the role of music in socio-economic transformation, and more. I often felt they were the ethnomusicologists and I simply the groupie! Philip Galinsky writes of a similar experience:

Moreover, as I take on certain aspects of native culture, the consultants in my project adopt the role of researchers, analyzing for *me* what their culture and social situation are about. Although some of this self-reflection may have been occasioned by my presence, everyone on the Recife scene was already in one way or another a researcher of his or her own music and sociocultural milieu. This was, in fact, one of the most remarkable discoveries of my fieldwork – that as they shape their sociocultural scene and identity (or identities), the members of the scene also research the various aspects of their journey, from their folkloric heritage to information from the world. All of the consultants with whom I spoke were particularly self-aware and analytical about their situation.⁸⁶⁰

John Murphy also notes their intense intellectual engagement with their music:

The leaders of the main bands are some of the most informed and articulate cultural observers I have ever met. They have developed sensitive filters in order to consume a highly diverse range of global music and information without losing their identity and their sense of rootedness and commitment to Recife and surrounding areas and the culture that grows there.⁸⁶¹

This self-awareness seems to extend to Recife music audiences as well. Most audiences seem interested in a diverse range of musics, from manguê to forró to hip-hop or rap, and often crowds of radically different music-goers end up milling around Recife Antigo between their respective shows. Amongst these swarms I experienced

⁸⁶⁰ Galinsky *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 8-9.

⁸⁶¹ Murphy, *A Maré Encheu*, 4.

only curiosity from the diverse fan groups – never hostility. Galinsky quotes an informant in order to explain the relatively open-minded audiences:

The broad diversity and mixing of styles on the scene may also have been affected by the particular situation of audiences in Recife. According to DJ José Antônio de Souza Leão Filho, Recife simply does not have much of a public for each separate style creating the need to mix styles to attract more people to events. As such, José Antônio asserts that Recife was the first city to mix techno and punk, for example, while in the much larger cosmopolitan city of São Paulo there is a large audience for black music (e.g. hip hop), but that this could not be mixed with techno.⁸⁶²

Certainly, most Recife artists and audiences seem to be incredibly inclusive and comfortable with blurred boundaries. Even race and class divisions seem to be relatively uninteresting for members of the scene; race and class profiles of the various mangue-influenced groups in Recife (unlike most popular music genres of Brazil) are extremely diverse and few people seem intent on stirring up the issue of race. Galinsky points out that he found the ambiguity of racial and socioeconomic backgrounds fascinating but ultimately less central to his project than he had imagined – and I included race in most of my interview questions, only to be looked at quizzically again and again and myself start overstating the importance of social and racial categories in an absurd attempt to obtain commentary from my consultants!

To be sure, as Galinsky eloquently states:

Many people of various musical affiliations in Recife... seemed to accept and appreciate each other's work, a condition which has helped to create a situation where the relation between categories such as 'traditional' and 'modern' could be one of affinity, symbiosis, and overlap rather than one of opposition.⁸⁶³

⁸⁶² Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 158.

⁸⁶³ Ibid 8.

The ultimate irony is that the rest of Brazil, particularly the media (and market and distribution networks)⁸⁶⁴ seems to think that Recife is a source just for traditional music (as Murphy says, “preferably with a rural accent”).⁸⁶⁵ Though at the forefront of musical innovation and internet technologies, Recife music is still thought of by many to be stuck in the past.

No less difficult than convincing outsiders of Recife’s musical greatness is categorizing bands within the Recife scene. With genres that continually cross genres and artists and audiences so attuned to their own philosophies and stylizations, any division of these bands into “traditional” or “alternative” is highly polemic, as lines are difficult to draw – and everyone seems to draw them in slightly different places. Indeed, different audience members and artists may assign different (nuanced) categories to the very same groups. With this in mind, a short list of current performers is as follows. Alongside Mestre Ambrósio, other major hybrid forró bands include Comadre Florzinha, Cascabulho, Chão e Chinelo, Aza Bumba, Josildo Sá, Valdir Santos, Paulinho Leite, Chá de Zabumba, Herbert Lucena, Lampiões e Maria Bonita, Cordel de Fogo Encantado, Silvério Pessoa, Siba, Tiné, Maciel Salú, DJ Dolores, Naná Vasconcelos, and Antonio Nóbrega, while artists such as Arlindo dos Oito Baixos, Banda de Pífanos de Caruaru, Camarão, Mestre Salustiano, Sivuca, Oswaldinho, Chiquinha Gonzaga, Santanna o Cantador, Dominginhos, Maciel Melo, Marinés, Quinteto Violado, Karolinas com K, and Quenga de Coco continue playing what is considered traditional pé-de-serra. Even within these broad divisions there is

⁸⁶⁴ John P. Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 143.

⁸⁶⁵ *Ibid* 143.

much overlap and lack of continuity; Karolinas com K, for example, is a group formed in the past few years of solely female artists. In the male-dominated field of forró, to include even one female instrumentalist in a band is highly unusual, so the fact that Karolinas com K hold together a four-member band of traditional pé-de-serra music makes them not entirely traditional.

While the music scene has exploded and opened up many new opportunities for forró musicians, musical success can still be uncertain. One artist I spoke to estimates that 50% of local musicians are able to make a living at their trade, while the other half must work in other arenas in order to make ends meet.⁸⁶⁶ Many artists complain that music is not supported enough by government, promoters and consumers, insisting that the state and city ought to subsidize more traditional music performances.

These complaints surprised me, as I have never lived in an area that boasts so much free outdoor entertainment aimed at the community; even a typical week in Recife includes free movie showings, traditional music workshops, community theatrical productions, museum workshops and various talks on local folklore. The cultural agenda for special seasons, such as São João, Christmas, and carnival multiply these activities a hundredfold. How is it that a city so famously plagued with poverty could ever afford to institute these kinds of cultural offerings?

One local producer with whom I spoke shared that the major organizers of these events are the Fundação de Cultura do Recife (a subsidiary of the Secretary of Culture within the Recife *Prefeitura* or City Hall), FUNDARPE (the cultural arm of the Pernambuco state government), the local forró clubs and various other private festival

⁸⁶⁶ Interview with RP.

organizers. Within this scheme, though, one must also take into consideration the private companies that underwrite festivals in return for advertising prospects. John Murphy recently researched this new commercial industry:

Privatized utilities and new telecommunications companies are among the leading sponsors of festivals that help sustain Recife's alternative scene. Banners advertising Celpe, BCP, and Tim, for example, are common at festivals. This support comes by means of the Sistema de Incentivo à Cultura, that controversial system by which artists and producers earn the right to secure funds [captar recursos] in the form of tax payments that can be designated to support specific events. Even though this system has produced a class of professional producers who use the system for private benefit, it has made many more projects happen than would be possible otherwise.⁸⁶⁷

Much of the money flowing into local programming can also be traced to Embratur, the national tourism board. Jack Bishop, in his article "Just as Sweet the Second Time Around," explores how the increased efforts of Embratur to encourage local tourism have buoyed traditional forró events around Recife (see chapter three).

An interesting complication of publicly funded cultural events is who creates the roster of musicians. This has been a major issue for the innovative bands of the area, since historically many publicly-funded festivals have been organized by influential social actors interested in safeguarding traditional culture. On the one hand, many of these folk enthusiasts appreciate the fusions being created (as they help to preserve tradition while attracting Recife youth to roots styles) while others vehemently oppose the new hybrid forms (as they sully the "pure" sounds of the "original" traditions).

⁸⁶⁷ Murphy, *A Maré Encheu*, 4.

One particularly influential and polemic group was the Movimento Armorial, led by Ariano Suassuna, perhaps the most successful dramaturge of the Northeast alive today and onetime Secretary of Culture of Pernambuco.⁸⁶⁸ While the group has been active since 1975, it is since the experimentations of mangue beat artists in the mid-1990s that it has been at the center of a major cultural dispute. Suassuna is an outspoken opponent of mangue beat and of other subsequent fusions, as his priority has been the defense of northeastern traditional song, and he has used his cultural and political influence to position state sponsorship programs along his priorities. Daniel Sharp, an ethnomusicologist skeptical of the group, writes:

They wrote compositions for chamber ensembles using the oldest Iberian influences. Musically, *armorial* results in almost baroque arrangements of Luso-Brazilian folk melodies, including the "correction" of tonal elements in folk music which do not fit into Western tempered scales. Music from the *movimento armorial* largely disregards the polyrhythmic percussion that marks one of the contributions of the African side of Brazil's tri-ethnic cultural heritage. Suassuna's recent role as the state minister of culture underscores the direct link between the *movimento armorial* and the state's regionalist cultural policy.⁸⁶⁹

In response to Pernambuco and Recife's regionalist cultural policies, Fred O'Connell of the mangue movement writes,

There is in Recife a hegemony of a certain regionalist, folkloric, traditionalist aesthetic, which is totally suffocating. The public organs, the channels that would be able to promote a certain cultural rebirth, since the economy was totally destroyed, were and are all immersed in the official regionalism, which has an academic and erudite arm, the Movimento Armorial, and a more folkloric branch, which I am accustomed to call macumba [a Brazilian

⁸⁶⁸ He was Secretary of Culture of Pernambuco from 1995-98 and continues to hold influential positions in the Academy of Letters and the Pernambuco and Paraíba governments.

⁸⁶⁹ Sharp 26-7.

syncretic religion] for the tourist. The dominant cultural politics in Recife always were this, to folklorize, to stagnate or else surround itself with the erudite, as the Movimento Armorial does. It judges itself the proprietor of the regional folk culture. Nobody else could want to drink from this fountain.⁸⁷⁰

Only in retrospect does it occur to me that these regionalist policies barred any experimental artist from festival performances; when one considers the hundreds of diverse band line-ups for São João, for example,⁸⁷¹ it is hard to imagine that any are being excluded. And yet many of my favorite bands – Maciel Salú, Tiné, Herbert Lucena – played rarely, and the fusion groups that did get frequent bookings – Chá de Zabumba, Paulinho Leite – seemed to play more mainstream (read: traditional) hits rather than their more cutting-edge material.

Without question, the São João and other publicly-funded festival organizers shun forró estilizado; of the fifty plus free performances I attended, not a single one was estilizado. The producer who spoke with me admitted that the Prefeitura purposely excludes estilizado performances. When asked why, he responded that those kinds of performances

Stray from the Prefeitura's politics. Because there's a policy to market forró, popular culture, pé-de-serra forró. And "Limão com Mel" forró [an estilizado band]... doesn't have anything to do with traditional pé-de-serra forró.⁸⁷²

Conclusion: The Role of Roots in Recife's Musical Revival

⁸⁷⁰ Bia Abramo, "Da Lama à Fama," *República* (Julho 1997 [74-77]: 75). In Galinsky, *Maracatu Atômico* (dissertation), 46.

⁸⁷¹ See chapter four for a more in-depth treatment of Recife's São João festival.

⁸⁷² Interview with RA: "*Que foge da política cultural da prefeitura. Porque há uma política de divulgar o forró, a cultura popular, o forró pé-de-serra. E o forró "Limão com Mel..." não tem nada a ver com o forró tradicional, pé-de-serra.*"

What we have seen from our exploration of the music scene in Recife, then, is that beginning with the onset of manguê, local artists are pushing experimentation with regional forms further in their attempt to create new sounds and to bridge local traditions with global beats and trends. Their music has no doubt sparked a major renaissance in the city of Recife, as the experimentations have re-introduced many youth to regional instruments, rhythms and traditions formerly unknown to them. As evidence of this, one local artist complained of the pressure to learn to play the rabeca (when all he really wanted was to play classical violin). The digging up of cultural resources has created new openings and pressures for Recife artists.

While the pressure to define their music is largely absent (due to an audience that seems infinitely comfortable with blurred boundaries), a certain portion of the population requires that innovative forró bands reference traditional forró in some way. Indeed, though each individual artist and/or audience member draws his line in the sand differently, there is a general sense that incorporating “roots” music is essential to the authenticity of a forró band’s project. As Kevin Cassidy writes, this authenticity “seemed to hinge on the sounds employed, the intentions and motivations of the artist, and a sense of maintaining a connection to one’s “roots.”⁸⁷³

For one artist, these ‘roots’ are present in “in the instrumentation, sounds, and rhythms, as well as with a strong tie with the Northeast ways of speech, foods, geography, and attitudes toward life.”⁸⁷⁴ He continued: “Tradition is important, it’s our anchor. But it’s not right to super-valorize the folkloric and tradition, saying that

⁸⁷³ Cassidy 31.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid 32.

only that is the truth, nor devalue the tradition and the folklore for what's the new, quick thing that will bring... [media success].”⁸⁷⁵

Straddling the line between traditional and modern is perhaps not an easy one, but it seems to be an inevitable one for many artists on the Recife scene. Ultimately each artist must discover for him or herself how s/he wishes to be located on the spectrum. One popular post-mangue artist plays with this concept by fleshing out the concept of contradictions in his music. On the title track of the album Contraditório, DJ Dolores samples a fitting quote by Gilberto Freyre: “Contradictory? I confess I am the most contradictory of men. I am sensitive to the value of traditions but the ecstasies of experimentation seduce me like the sirens did the sailors of old.”⁸⁷⁶

Of course, we must also keep in mind that for many youth, mangue and its offshoots have been around ever since they remember. And as they grow and continue to enjoy transformations of forró and other local musics, the hybrid musics they are listening to today may well be the new benchmark for “traditional.” As Jack Bishop writes,

Through the conscious and habitual cultural behavior of reproducing cultural artifacts (songs), and messages (lyrics), this “new” music eventually emerges as the local tradition... through time these new music traditions take on an “emergent authenticity,” which, in turn, reinforces the music as traditional.⁸⁷⁷

Most pé-de-serra musicians I spoke to are not threatened by the post-mangue experimentations but see them instead as a boon for their own business. According to one consultant:

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid 32.

⁸⁷⁷ Bishop 214.

Things are changing, for example people are appreciating local stuff more, I think people are changing their perspective. Ten years ago if you showed up to play forró there wasn't anyone to accompany you, [but] precisely because of those outside influences that are arriving... [people] start to appreciate [local culture] more.⁸⁷⁸

In fact, even as post-mangue forró bands try ever new possibilities, Luiz Gonzaga, the ultimate hero of Pernambuco music tradition, continues to reign throughout the city of Recife. As one percussionist exclaimed, “still today he [Luiz Gonzaga] is the artist most heard on the northeastern radios.”⁸⁷⁹ Another performer spoke of the different experimentations going on in the forróscope of Recife, concluding that “still Luiz Gonzaga is way ahead of all that... fantastic, even until now no one in forró has done anything more innovative, do you see how [his success] is untouchable?”⁸⁸⁰ It is fascinating to hear, see and feel that Luiz Gonzaga, the godfather of forró, still seems to be leading the way.

More so than any other city in the Brazilian northeast, Recife is firmly planted in tradition *and* modernity, a true global metropolis. Stroll downtown on a Tuesday evening and you'll literally have to squeeze between hundreds and thousands of youth dressed in their interpretation of urban flair (from chained leather belts to pink daisies, from neck piercings to jungle face paint, from polyester to flannel) and out celebrating. Take your pick from over ten genres of hybrid music. No dress code required – feel free to partake in any and all shows, no matter what your exterior

⁸⁷⁸ Interview with RP: “*as coisas estão mudando, por exemplo as pessoas estão dando mais valor à coisa do lugar acho que as pessoas estão mudando a visão há dez anos atrás, você chegava ali para tocar forró, e não tinha ninguém para tocar... [mas] justamente por causa dessas influências de fora que chegaram aqui começam a dar mais valor.*”

⁸⁷⁹ Interview with RP: “*Até hoje ainda é o músico que mais toca nas rádios no nordeste.*”

⁸⁸⁰ Interview with CO: “*mas Luiz Gonzaga está muito a frente disso tudo... fantástico, ninguém no forró até agora fez nada mais inovador, você tá entendendo como a coisa tá intocada?*”

symbolism seems to say. The diverse percussive layers that pulse out of Recife's new sound have steeped over centuries in the social history of the surrounding area. The *mangue* era brought forth a fertile movement that created full-fledged hybridity and laid down a whole other layer to Recife's already thick swamp of palatable rhythms. And each subsequent generation of creative sludge makes for a better mix.

Chapter 6

Retirantes and Universitários in Rio de Janeiro

*No Rio 'ta tudo mudado
Nas noites de São João
Em vez de polca e rancheira
O povo só pede
Só dança o baião*

- "A Dança da Moda," Luiz Gonzaga & Zédantas, 1950

More than any other region of Brazil, the Nordeste is the source of the largest number of internal migrations. More than 50% of the migrations of the nation have their origin in the *flagelados* of the Nordeste,⁸⁸¹ many of whom are caught in the cyclical nature of migration, first leaving home, then returning home, later setting out again. While recurring migrations are a feature of Brazil throughout much of its development, massive industrialization in southern metropolises in the second half of the twentieth century brought waves of migrants formerly unheard of to the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro⁸⁸² and Brasília. In order to understand some of the underlying issues which brought about mass migrations around and out of the Northeast in the twentieth century, this chapter will briefly explore the socio-economic history of the region and the leading causes and results of migratory rupture.

⁸⁸¹ Gilberto Osório de Andrade, *Migrações internas e o Recife* (Recife: Ministério da Educação e Cultura, Instituto Joaquim Nabuco de Pesquisas Sociais, 1979). The same author notes, also, that the 1970 census found that 33% of nordestinos lived outside of their nascent settings. Osório de Andrade 24.

⁸⁸² Rio and São Paulo have generally led the nation in migrant population numbers as well as industrial development, with the two cities accounting for 75% of Brazil's workers and 65% of the country's industrial output in 1980. Bertha K. Becker and Claudio A. G. Egler, *Brazil: a New Regional Power in the World Economy. A Regional Geography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 126.

Of the six million people that make up Rio's sprawling metropolis, 60% are nordestinos,⁸⁸³ and this chapter will begin by tracing some of their migratory experiences while also focusing on an important theme to nearly all voyagers, the *return home*. In many cases, nordestino travelers made regular journeys between their sertão homeland and the urban South. In others, the immigrants recreated the cultural conditions of their northern home in their adopted cities, often through sensory tools and, most commonly, through music. We will revisit the theme of saudade as it is experienced by nordestinos in Rio and how music has become the most widespread balm for their saudade.

We will examine two major cultural edifices that provide musical "remote access" to the sertão in mid- to late-century Rio de Janeiro: the Feira de São Cristóvão, a major nordestino marketplace, and the growing abundance of forró clubs around the metropolitan area. We will subsequently use these two cultural 'sites' as a springboard to examine the resurgence of forró music and dance in the mid-1990s among a very different demographic: urban, educated, middle-class youth.

Though musically quite similar to forró pé-de-serra, forró universitário has developed into a burgeoning scene with dozens of bands and performance venues in Rio, São Paulo, Belo Horizonte and Brasília, and has created its own signature style of dance choreography. The next section of this chapter will detail the musical movement and will examine the discourse within forró universitário that emphasizes "roots" and tradition, even while the universitário scene in practice often marginalizes

⁸⁸³ This figure was released in 1995 by IBGE, the Brazilian census bureau. Cláudia Mamede, "Dança na Feira," *Jornal da Feira* (Vol. 3, Sept. 2004), 7.

nordestinos. Using the work of Pierre Bourdieu, we will explore the concept of the habitus and how it can be related to the discrimination still experienced by nordestino retirantes in Rio, and attempt to understand the process by which the middle classes have embraced a cultural art form of the lower classes. In the final section, we will attempt to negotiate the marginalization experienced by many nordestino migrants in the forró scene with the increasingly sympathetic discourse generated by middle-class forró enthusiasts.

Forró universitário as it is performed and enjoyed in Rio de Janeiro provides a lens through which to understand how identities of both newcomer migrants and oldtimer residents must be negotiated in the wake of major migratory shifts. As citizens of the world become more and more mobile, and urban demographics become increasingly impacted by cyclical migrations, it is crucial to examine the cultural conflicts, interactions and connections along these nodes of travel.

Migration as an Age-Old Trope of the Nordeste

Even before the upheavals of the turn of the twentieth century, migration had already entrenched itself as a customary trope for nordestinos; it has been part of the social landscape for over two centuries. By the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the northeast sugar barons had ceded economic power to the coffee planters in southern São Paulo and its surrounding area, and what had once been the administrative as well as economic center of the colony became a nearly forgotten backwater. The success of coffee in international markets had so appreciated the Brazilian currency

that northern sugar (and cotton) prices became uncompetitive.⁸⁸⁴ At the same time, Brazil's slow march toward abolition meant that large numbers of slaves were being released just as the local sugar and cotton markets were crashing. Instead of encouraging emigration of these freed laborers to southeastern growth poles (what Mike Davis notes was what "neoclassical theory would have predicted as an automatic reflex"),⁸⁸⁵ local and national governments began to subsidize heavily mass immigration from Germany, Italy and Portugal. Linked to contemporary theories of *embranquecimento* (or whitening) racist policies, these turn-of-the-century immigration policies in Brazil promised to create a less stunted Brazilian race by "diluting" its population with Northern European and Mediterranean stock.⁸⁸⁶ As a result of diminished labor opportunities in the South, the freed slaves looked west instead of south, and "the vast northeast interior became a frontier safety valve for the social contradictions of the coastal slave economy."⁸⁸⁷ It was thus that thousands began to venture deeper into the Northeast, from which they would again flee in subsequent cycles of migration.

⁸⁸⁴ The Nordeste's biggest problem, in this view, was its monetary integration with the rest of Brazil. "The coffee-dominated exchange rate," writes Leff, "squeezed factor returns and priced ever-larger quantities of the northeast's sugar and cotton out of the world market." Nathaniel Leff, *Underdevelopment and Development in Brazil*, Vol. 1 (London: Allen & Unwin 1982), 27, 35-6. In Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (New York: Verso, 2001), 382.

⁸⁸⁵ Davis 382.

⁸⁸⁶ Japanese immigration was one of the only exceptions that Brazil made to its immigration policies, with the possible addition of Lebanese and Syrian immigration. In large part, Asian and Middle Eastern immigration policies stemmed from decreased European immigration and Brazil's need to increase its migrant work force.

⁸⁸⁷ Davis 385.

To quote the infamous phrase credited to Antonio Conselheiro, “the sertão will become sea and the sea sertão.”⁸⁸⁸ This prophecy, reported by Euclides da Cunha in his classic treatise of the nordeste, *Os Sertões*, was a reference to apocalypse that the leader of Canudos foresaw, and is still quoted extensively in literature and music of the Northeast as an allusion to other-world calamities that threaten to befall the region. In fact, it seems an appropriate manner of recognizing not just the catastrophic effects of massive out-migration, but also the cyclical nature of the migrations that have regularly advanced and retreated across the sertão throughout history.

Mike Davis notes that between 1822 and 1850, the Empire encouraged migration to the sertão by recognizing homestead claims on land formerly belonging to the sertão’s fast-disappearing indigenous peoples.⁸⁸⁹ Nonetheless, these early settlers were unprepared for life on the vast sertão, where the harshness of the land never allowed for too many settlers to stay in one place. Darcy Ribeiro writes with indignation that throughout the Nordeste,

Cattle and goat herding grew, with farms multiplying randomly and incapable of absorbing so many people into herding activities, which had no need for many workers. So it was that ranches became breeding grounds for cattle, goats and people: the cattle to sell, the goats to eat, the people to migrate.⁸⁹⁰

The sertanejos that found work as *vaqueiros*, or cowhands, lived a nomadic life following their owner’s flock of animals across immense stretches of land. Yet the roving lifestyle of the *vaqueiros* was not, in actuality, all that different from the life of

⁸⁸⁸ “*O sertão virá mar e o mar virá sertão.*”

⁸⁸⁹ Davis 385.

⁸⁹⁰ Darcy Ribeiro, *The Brazilian People: The Formation and Meaning of Brazil* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 243.

many settlers. Darcy Ribeiro notes that many pioneers were forced to press further into the sertão frontier, as poor farmers were forced off land *they themselves had cleared* by the arrival of a wealthy landowner with ‘official’ claim to the territory. He writes that “the bitter experience of successive expulsions has hindered them even in that wilderness from attempting to grow anything with more than an annual cycle, further aggravating their state of poverty.”⁸⁹¹

Yanking even a meager food supply out of the stubborn soil of the sertão has been a constant challenge for settlers in the Northeast. Many brought “labor-intensive, midlatitude farming techniques ill-suited to the dry tropical climate and infertile soils of the sertão,”⁸⁹² and were faced with the thorny challenge of finding suitable land for their crops. Since the fertile bottomlands along the rivers (which corresponded to their farming techniques and abilities) were monopolized by the sprawling cattle fazendas, the newcomers were forced onto higher ground. While the soils were adequate for the first year or two, harvests diminished after that,⁸⁹³ leaving the nordestinos to cope by adapting a “semi-nomadic swidden style of agriculture: two years of cultivation followed by eight years of fallow and cattle-grazing.”⁸⁹⁴ This slash-and-burn style agriculture (in Brazil called *roça*) quickly contributed to the

⁸⁹¹ Ribeiro 247.

⁸⁹² Kampton Webb, *The Changing Face of Northeast Brazil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 85-8.

⁸⁹³ Davis notes that the quickly diminishing soils were a legacy of the geological structure of the land: “in the caatinga especially, impermeable, crystalline rock formations are common, which slope towards the rivers, facilitating rapid run-off, soil erosion, silting up of rivers and evaporation.” Anthony Hall, *Drought and Irrigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 17. In Davis 386.

⁸⁹⁴ Allen Johnson, *Sharecroppers of the Sertão: Economics and Dependence on a Brazilian Plantation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971), 17, 47-8. In Davis 385-6.

deterioration of the landscape, and, along with the pressures of overgrazing, a growing population and a general lack of conservation practices led to continual migration from place to place. With each successive move, sertanejos were forced further onto the rockier soils of the *caatinga* and left more and more vulnerable to seasonal drought.

In 1850, legal squatting was declared illegal, after which point most new immigrants to the sertão simply became *parceiros*, or sharecroppers, on fazenda land. Even though the image that most nordestinos have of the sertão is a hardened landscape where valiant free-roaming vaqueiros resist the tall cactus thickets, in fact “the great majority of the population by midcentury were threadbare subsistence farmers, *parceiros* or migratory *agregados* (day-laborers),”⁸⁹⁵ with less than five percent (and probably less than one percent) of the rural population owning the land they lived on.⁸⁹⁶ Unsurprisingly, as Kampton Webb writes, “the land tenure system as a work regime is not conducive to rooting or fixing the farmer on the land.”⁸⁹⁷

Darcy Ribeiro argues that until recently, the only choices for a farmer or sharecropper forced off his land in a difficult year of drought were to emigrate or to fall into banditry. Both potential routes out of misery involved itinerant migrations, since the bandit *cangaceiros* of the Northeast were archetypal travelers, as well. These famous nordestino antiheroes lived on the run, pausing for periods in safe houses and constantly jumping across state lines in order to avoid state troopers.

⁸⁹⁵ Davis 386.

⁸⁹⁶ Robert M. Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 43. In Davis 386.

⁸⁹⁷ Webb 79.

Although the movement of the cangaceiros was similarly cyclical to the movement of other area travelers, theirs was a life that very few were able to opt out of; most rebels who joined the gang accompanied their bandit brothers until their untimely deaths.⁸⁹⁸ Nowadays the cangaço is a mere memory, though the cycle of migrations continues: young boys set off not to war or to banditry, but to migrate south.

In *Waiting For Rain*, Nicholas Arons points out that throughout the sertao there is a myth of *o Sul* (the South) much like in Central America there is the myth of *el Norte* (the North).⁸⁹⁹ This myth draws youth and others who dream of riches at the other end. Over the past decades, it has become something of a tradition for young men to set out on a journey before the responsibilities of family and the necessity of a steady job become a concern. John Murphy calls this practice *andando pelo mundo*, or traveling the world, and notes that many men take advantage of this rootless period to change jobs frequently and spend time in Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo.⁹⁰⁰

But just as often as the adventurers leave few belongings and family members behind, they often leave wives and children behind, waiting for remittances and/or the money for family to follow. The fact that often it is only the male of the family who migrates south exacerbates the idea of a “temporary” migration, though temporary

⁸⁹⁸ One of the most famous cangaceiros ever to terrorize the northeast, Antonio Silvino, is widely known to have lived a calm farming life after serving twenty-three years in jail for his crimes.

⁸⁹⁹ Nicholas Arons, *Waiting For Rain: The Politics and Poetry of Drought in Northeast Brazil* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 174. The myth of *El Norte* draws Central Americans and Mexicans to risk the dangerous crossing into the United States in order to get to a version of El Dorado, “El ‘Dollar’ado.”

⁹⁰⁰ Lygia Sigaud, *Os clandestinos e os direitos: estudo sobre trabalhadores da cana-de-açúcar de Pernambuco* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1979), 55. In John Patrick Murphy, *Performing a Moral Vision: An Ethnography of Cavalo-Marinho, a Brazilian Musical Drama* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, Dept. Music, 1994), 58.

can seem like an eternity to those left home. Arons writes of the neologism *drought widows* – coined because

Thousands of men moved south, hoping to find work and remit funds to the northeastern interior. Although many did find work, few kept promises to mail money home; those who did send money worked tirelessly. The cost of travel and the humiliation of returning home no richer than before prevented many men from ever returning home.⁹⁰¹

While nearly all the existent literature speaks of these nordestino migrations “south,” we must keep in mind that this image is not entirely correct; in fact, for many nordestinos, the first migration they make is *east*, toward the coast, the *zona da mata*, and the capital cities of each state. Gilberto Osório de Andrade examines this phenomenon in his book *Migrações Internas e o Recife*.⁹⁰² According to Osório de Andrade, there is an overwhelming preponderance of urban-urban traffic (as opposed to rural-urban traffic), which he explains by citing “leap frog” theory, in which migrants “hop” successively between cities. He notes that most traffic to Recife is from the *zona da mata* and *not*, as one might suspect, from the *sertão*. Instead, he explains, migrants move from rural areas to small towns (often in or outside of the *zona da mata*); these towns engorge with the new arrivals and themselves grow into small cities.⁹⁰³ It is from these small cities that migrants move to the capital cities, and often from there that they move south.

⁹⁰¹ Arons 95.

⁹⁰² *Internal Migrations and Recife*.

⁹⁰³ Ethnomusicologist Larry Crook wrote his dissertation about Zabumba music in Caruaru, a small town in the Brazilian Northeast that itself became a city due to large levels of migration. In his work, he emphasizes the fluid lines between rural and urban in this part of Brazil, arguing that residents in these town/city environments participate in both rural and urban practices and are, in fact, neither “urban” nor “rural.” Larry Norman Crook, *Zabumba Music from Caruaru, Pernambuco: Musical*

Brazil: The Urbanization of a Nation

The urbanization of Brazil is a process that began, in large part, with the post-abolition flight of ex-slaves as well as to reactions to the economic turmoil generated by the Declaration of the Republic.⁹⁰⁴ These late nineteenth-century processes fundamentally transformed the demographics of the nation. The case of Rio de Janeiro can illustrate this well: between 1872-1890 the population of Rio de Janeiro doubled in size – and had grown an additional 50% by 1910.⁹⁰⁵ Expedito Leandro Silva calls this influx to Rio a “true laboratory of rural culture,” as rural workers from Pernambuco, Sergipe and Alagoas banded together in close-knit neighborhood slums throughout the capital city.⁹⁰⁶ Indeed, it was at the end of the nineteenth century that favela ghettos began to take form in Rio de Janeiro.

Between 1920 and 1950, the capital city also doubled its population, in large part due to the continued influx of migrants from the North, and São Paulo grew even faster (with additional immigrants arriving from abroad).⁹⁰⁷ While research has shown that in fact only a small minority of the migrants from the North came from

Style, Gender, and the Interpenetration of Rural and Urban Worlds (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: The University of Texas at Austin, 1991), 23.

⁹⁰⁴ José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular (da modinha à canção de protesto)* (Petrópolis, Editora Vozes Ltda., 1974), 188. For a more detailed analysis of the causes of urbanization in Brazil, see Stella M. Bortoni-Ricardo, *The Urbanization of Rural Dialect Speakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁹⁰⁵ Gloria Kok, *Rio de Janeiro na Época da Avenida Central* (São Paulo: Bei Comunicação, 2005). Available: www.aprendario.com.br/index.asp

⁹⁰⁶ Expedito Leandro Silva, *Forró no Asfalto: mercado e identidade sociocultural* (São Paulo: Annablume/FAPEESP, 2003), 41.

⁹⁰⁷ Bryan McCann, *Hello Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 97.

the sertão,⁹⁰⁸ its vast deserts of scrubbrush and cacti became iconic of the plight of the *retirantes*, or refugees.

Migrations from the Northeast continued to swell in the 1940s, when São Paulo became recognized as the leading industrial city of the Americas, as well as the fastest-growing metropolis in the world.⁹⁰⁹ The next two decades introduced unprecedented growth, as the industrial expansion in the South of the 1950s and 1960s opened up potential jobs for hundreds of thousands of nordestinos. The massive construction project of the new capital (Brasília) and expanded commercial agriculture drew migrants with their financial potential, and increased highway infrastructure across the nation facilitated their journeys south.

Of course, even with improved roads, the journeys were frightfully treacherous. What today is a non-stop 48-hour bus ride was, six decades ago, a grueling fifteen-day expedition, the last five of which “become so insalubrious that passengers begin to have fevers and to die.”⁹¹⁰ Atop this precarious transportation, as Arons writes, “the people gripped onto the wood panels... in order not to fly off, as birds would.”⁹¹¹ This image of myriad nameless nordestinos perched inside a bucking truck, earned the migrants the nickname *pau-de-araras*, literally “bird perches.”

⁹⁰⁸ In fact, the largest percent originated in the sugarcane area of Pernambuco, with the “agreste” temperate zone accounting for just 35% and the sertão with only 4%. Osório de Andrade 39.

⁹⁰⁹ “Nosso século, documentos sonorous,” *Abril cultural* (1980), 91, 93. In Mundicarmo Maria Rocha Ferretti, *Baião dos Dois: Zedantas e Luiz Gonzaga* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1988), 64.

⁹¹⁰ Paulo de Carvalho-Neto, *Pau-de-Arara: A Sedução do Sul ou A Saga do Nordestino Migrante*. (São Paulo: Editor Cejup, 1996), 60, 91.

⁹¹¹ Arons 95.

The language used to refer to migrants can, in and of itself, reveal much about the process of migration. In her fascinating study of nordestino discrimination in Rio's Feira de São Cristóvão, Lúcia Morales notes that cariocas (residents of Rio de Janeiro) use the *pau-de-arara* category to produce an offensive discourse or to ridicule nordestinos, since "for the cariocas, only inferior people would accept to be transported in such a precarious way."⁹¹² On the contrary, though, nordestinos interpreted the name as one of respect and dignity, since "only he with real strength can withstand such physical exertion."⁹¹³

Pau-de-arara is not the only controversial term used to refer to the nordestino migrants.⁹¹⁴ Depending on which city you are in, all 'suspect' nordestinos (anyone of a complexion, accent, manner or dress who seems to hail from the Northeast) are called *paraíbas*, *bahianos* or *cearenses*. While these monikers are not themselves pejorative, they collapse an entire region of people into the three common sending communities for migrants (Paraíba to Rio, Bahia to São Paulo, and Ceará to Brasília) and do not allow for the diversity that nordestinos recognize among themselves. In addition, other designations may not carry prejudice but instead the suffering involved in uprooting oneself; the terms *migrante* (migrant), *retirante* (roughly

⁹¹² "Para os cariocas, só pessoas inferiores aceitam ser transportadas de maneira tão precária." Morales, Lúcia Arrais. *A Feira de São Cristóvão: um estudo de identidade regional* (Tese de mestrado, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Antropologia Social, 1993), 83.

⁹¹³ "So quem tem fibra agüenta tamanho esforço físico." Morales 83.

⁹¹⁴ For an interesting discussion of the words that nordestinos and cariocas, old and young, use to refer to the migrants from the Northeast, see Morales and Maria Lúcia Martins Pandolfo, *Feira de São Cristóvão – a Reconstrução do Nordeste num Mundo de Paraíbas e Nortistas* (Unpublished Master's Thesis. Instituto de Estudos Avançados em Educação, Depto. de Filosofia da Educação, 1987).

refugee) and *flagelado* (roughly “downtrodden”)⁹¹⁵ are common descriptions. Used interchangeably by many authors as well as *nordestinos*, these terms highlight not *who* but *how* one leaves the homeland.⁹¹⁶ Indeed, *migrants* retain agency over their prospects:

It is to snatch at destiny with one’s own hands, to rescue dreams and hopes of a better, or at least different, life... to migrate can be understood as a strategy not just to minimize one’s quotidian poverty, but also to look for a social space from which one can get around the exclusion imposed by elite Brazilians and their modernizing projects.”⁹¹⁷

A refugee, on the other hand, implies someone who has given up hope, who is no longer the owner of his own destiny, and a person damned is an even more depressing concept, a victim of the natural conditions of the sertão with no one and nothing to turn to.

In the case of Brazilian migrants, relocation has historically been seen as the only route out of poverty. Ribeiro argues that, because of the vast difference in prosperity and poverty of different regions of Brazil, a move from one region to another can net a substantial rise in salary for the worker, inciting migration to wealthier regions.⁹¹⁸ Still, even though individuals may have experienced a slight upward social mobility by moving to the cities, there was overall a deterioration of quality of life, in large

⁹¹⁵ This is Nicholas Arons’s translation; I might also use “damned.” Arons 42.

⁹¹⁶ Sudha Swarnakar, “Drought, Misery and Migration: The Fictional World of José Américo de Almeida’s *A Bagaceira* and Jorge Amado’s *Seara Vermelha* and *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*,” Talk given at the *Latin American Studies Association Conference* (Dallas, Texas, March 27-29, 2003), 5.

⁹¹⁷ “É pegar o destino com as próprias mãos, resgatar sonhos e esperanças de vida melhor ou mesmo diferente... Migrar pode ser entendido como estratégia não só para minimizar as penúrias do cotidiano, mas também para buscar um lugar social onde se possa driblar a exclusão pretendida pelas elites brasileiras através de seus projetos modernizantes.” Isabel Cristina Martins Guillen, *Errantes da selva: Histórias da migração nordestina para a Amazônia* (Campinas, IFCH/UNICAMP, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1999). In Swarnakar 5.

⁹¹⁸ Ribeiro 149-50. Some authors have pointed to a “brain drain” in the rural Nordeste, as many enterprising youth depart the region for larger cities with increased opportunity.

part because the urban infrastructure could not handle the basic needs of the ever growing number of city inhabitants.⁹¹⁹ Not only that, but by inserting themselves into the commercial economy on a hitherto unknown scale, the former farmers and sharecroppers felt the brunt of economic crises more harshly when they hit – and as they quickly acclimated to the urban capitalist environment, soon became caught up in the enterprise of increased consumption, in effect shrinking their wages.

Indeed, it is worth reiterating that the common narrative of drought refugees tells an incomplete story, as the “pull” forces from industrialized centers in the South have arguably had as much an impact on internal migrations as climatic crises. From the start of the industrial revolution in Brazil (marked, according to Kampton Webb, by Vargas’ “Marcha para o Oeste” in 1930),⁹²⁰ extensive rumors of increased job opportunities, improved health care and a higher standard of living in the South (many of which were disproved in reality, due to overcrowding and lack of infrastructure) were arguably as much a factor in mass migrations as the searing drought.

It is also imperative to keep in mind that not all migrants from the sertão head south; we’ve already seen that many move east in their home states, going from rural zones to towns to larger cities, and we need also to consider the role that so-called “pull” factors have in determining migrations (as opposed to simply the “push” factor of droughts in the Northeast). The vast majority of nordestino migrants have in fact

⁹¹⁹ Osório de Andrade, in particular, employs the metaphor of a cancer to speak about the over-urbanization of city centers like São Paulo, Brasília and Rio de Janeiro; he makes a case that the influx of people and lack of infrastructure to absorb them will kill the city, just as cancer would an organism.

⁹²⁰ Webb 68.

ended up in the southern capitals of Brazil, but that is mainly because of industrial and economic development that has pulled migrants toward increased opportunity in that region of Brazil. Though long an attractive destination because of its importance as the nation's capital, Rio was not always a first choice for migrants.

The rubber boom in Amazonia (1880-1910) drew many newly emancipated and/or impoverished nordestinos to the North, where they took rubber-tapping jobs around the Amazon basin.⁹²¹ This process was repeated in the late years of World War II, when new U.S. demand for rubber stimulated the Brazilian market,⁹²² and again in the 1960s during and after the construction of the Transamazonia highway, linking northeast Brazil with the capital of Amazonas. Residents were encouraged, via government propaganda, to embrace opportunity by heading west toward the heart of "Grande Brasil." (This, in turn, mimicked a similar government policy under Vargas in the 1930s, the "Marcha para o oeste," in which Brazilians were encouraged to migrate en force in an effort to develop the interior.)

Still, the country saw its most massive exodus of northeastern migrants to the South. Many of these "retirantes," as they are often called, settled in the poor suburbs of São Paulo, Brasília and Rio de Janeiro, flooding the existing areas with hungry, malnourished and often sick bodies, and overwhelming the municipal infrastructure. An estimated one in five Brazilians migrated to cities in the span of one decade alone

⁹²¹ See Becker and Egler 70.

⁹²² Though rubber was originally found only in Brazil, its seeds were soon smuggled to East Asia, where massive rubber plantations were established. Because the plantations had increased access to trees, the Brazilian market suffered once Asian rubber products made it to market in the 1910s. WWII offered a respite for Brazil's rubber markets, though, since the Asian holdings were kept under Axis powers and unavailable to Allied forces.

(1960-1970), radically affecting cityscapes across the nation.⁹²³ Like much of Latin America, Brazil has experienced an immense process of urbanization in the second half of the last century – a process which has drastically altered its national territory and culture. As one geographer points out, “In the span of a single generation in Brazil we have evolved from an essentially agricultural nation to a preponderously urban one.”⁹²⁴ By 2000, 81% of Brazilians lived in urban areas,⁹²⁵ up from 25% in 1920 and 50% in 1970. Still, migrants continue to flood into the cities, continuing their journeys toward better prospects.

Ai, Ai, Saudade Dói⁹²⁶: The Migrant Experience

In her book on nostalgia, Boym compares memory to the very act of repositioning oneself in space: “Memory resides in moving, traversing, cutting through place,

⁹²³ Janice Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 5. In Linda Anne Rebhun, *The Heart Is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 39-40.

⁹²⁴ Osório de Andrade 14. Indeed, between 1945 and 1980, Brazil’s population more than doubled – and the concentration of urban inhabitants increased from 35% to over 60%. World Bank report cited by Gary P. Kutchner and L. Scandizzo, *The Agricultural Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). In Crook 21-2.

⁹²⁵ Most recent data available. IBGE. Additional figures of urban population of Brazil: (1950: 30%) (1980: 68%) (1990: 76%). Martha de Ulhôa Carvalho, “Musical Style, Migration, and Urbanization: Some Considerations on Brazilian Música Sertaneja [Country Music],” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* (Vol. 12, 1993, [75-93]), 80-82. For more information see the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE): <http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/>; Gregory Riordan Guy, *Linguistic Variation in Brazilian Portuguese: Aspects of the Phonology, Syntax and Language History* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Dept. Linguistics, 1981), 50; and “Unidades Territoriais do Nível Município,” *Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics* (2008). <http://www.sidra.ibge.gov.br/bda/territorio/tabunit.asp?n=6&t=2&z=t&o=4>. Accessed 23 January, 2010.

⁹²⁶ From Luiz Gonzaga’s famous song: *Ai, Ai, Saudade*, literally “ay, ay, nostalgia hurts.”

taking detours.”⁹²⁷ Indeed, this describes not only the act of remembering, but the very act of *leaving*. For a retiree who has left his homeland, every move forward may bring a flood of memories, even as other memories fall along the wayside. The work of memory in fact overlaps with the journey of the flagelado. In this sense, a migrant’s memory flows alongside his body, unlocalizable yet seemingly solid in the presence of certain sensory triggers.

It is these sensory stimulants that migrants peddle between their nodes of travel: spices, cassettes, oral poetry, liquors, the dissonance of an accordion warming up several chords at once. As we will see, sertanejos rely heavily on musical continuity and history in order to connect their past and present lives. Standing out from dozens of other cultural products, traditional forró becomes a balm that soothes their “ache of temporal distance and displacement (one way that Boym characterizes nostalgia).”⁹²⁸

As discussed in chapter three, an elevated saudade for the homeland is one of the distinctive characteristics of migrations from the Nordeste; sojourners tend to narrate their experience as one drenched in this unique form of nostalgia. Gláucia Oliveira Assis, a sociologist from Governador Valadares in Minas Gerais, explores these narratives in her study on letters written by migrants to their family and friends back home:

The emigrants’ letters are heavy with saudade! The word ‘saudades’ appears in all of the narratives, equally used by men and women. In their letters, this word permeates all of the discourse from the beginning, from the introductions, through the end, when they ask for news from Brazil. This sentiment glides along all of the lines, linking people and places throughout the letters.⁹²⁹

⁹²⁷ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 80.

⁹²⁸ Boym 44.

As the great Brazilian novelist João Guimarães Rosa wrote, “saudade is being after having.”⁹³⁰ In the case of hundreds of thousands of retirantes, “being after having” is living and knowing the sertão without being able to hold its scorched soil in their blistered hands. For these migrants, the music streaming out of a three-piece band can seem literally tangible, a weight to fill up their otherwise empty hands.

Still, the products and emotions that fill the giant hole that saudade has eaten away in a homesick migrant are not always straightforward. As Appadurai reminds us, “the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups.”⁹³¹ Indeed, for many nordestinos, the homeland is a place that exists only as they can imagine it. Durval Albuquerque writes that the Nordeste is:

A region divided between moments of sadness and happiness. Even for he who leaves, the migrant, the Nordeste appears as a fixed space of nostalgia. The Northeast seems to be always in the past, in one’s memories; evoked as a space to which one must return; a space that will remain the same. The places, the lovers, the family, the pets and farm animals, the rustic garden all remain as if suspended in time, as if waiting for the day the migrant returns and finds everything as he left it. Nordeste, sertão, space without history, adverse to change.⁹³²

⁹²⁹ “As cartas dos emigrantes estão carregadas de saudade! A palavra “saudades” aparece em todas as narrativas, tanto de homens como de mulheres. Nas cartas essa palavra permeia toda a narrativa desde o início, das saudações até a conclusão, quando pedem notícias do Brasil. Esse sentimento navega por todas as linhas, ligando lugares e pessoas ao longo das cartas.” Gláucia de Oliveira Assis, “Estar Aqui..., Estar Lá... Uma... cartografia da emigração valadarense para os Estados Unidos,” *Cenas do Brasil Migrante*, Ed. Rossana Rocha Reis, Teresa Sales (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 1999) 138.

⁹³⁰ In Silviano Santiago, *The Space In-Between: Essays on Latin American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 155.

⁹³¹ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 49.

⁹³² “... uma região dividida entre momentos de tristeza e de alegria. Mesmo para quem dela sai, o migrante, o nordeste aparece como este espaço fixo da saudade. O Nordeste parece estar sempre no passado, na memória; evocado como o espaço para o qual se quer volta; um espaço que permaneceria o mesmo. Os lugares, os amores, a família, os animais de estimação, o roçado ficam como que suspensos no tempo a esperarem que um dia este migrante volte e reencontre tudo como deixou. Nordeste, sertão, espaço sem história, infenso às mudanças.” Durval Muniz de Albuquerque, *A*

As problematic a construction as this is,⁹³³ it nonetheless appears as a major trope in music, poetry, films, and personal narratives of migration from the Northeast.

In her study of nostalgia, Svetlana Boym notes that many first-generation migrants were afraid to embrace nostalgia, comparing it to the predicament of Lot's wife ("a fear that looking back might paralyze you forever, turning you into a pillar of salt").⁹³⁴ Indeed, she notes, "first-wave immigrants are often notoriously unsentimental, leaving the search for roots to their children and grandchildren unburdened by visa problems."⁹³⁵ Oddly, this seems to be not the case for the major part of nordestino migrants. Instead, many seem driven by their memories, and instead of turning on their past, they obsessively feed the nostalgic vision they have created of the homeland.

One of the most widespread and celebrated ways in which nordestino migrants get over their intense saudade – or, for that matter, further entrench their nostalgic longing for home – is through music. In fact, this is a universal tendency: as Whitely asserts, "Music... can bond displaced peoples, effectively bridging the geographic distance between them and providing a shared sense of collective identity articulated by a symbolic sense of community."⁹³⁶ Indeed, George Lipsitz calls music a "highly

Invenção do Nordeste e outras artes (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 1999), 83-4.

⁹³³ For more on the problematics of associating certain geographic areas with "the past," see Lorand J. Matory, "Surpassing 'Survival': On the Urbanity of 'Traditional Religion' in the Afro-Atlantic World," *The Black Scholar* (Vol. 30, No. 3-4 [36-43]).

⁹³⁴ Boym xv.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁹³⁶ Sheila Whitely, et al., "Introduction," *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 4.

visible (and audible) commodity”⁹³⁷ and Paul Gilroy notes that it is capable of synthesizing the experience of a locally grounded people through references to “shared memories and/or collectively held views, opinions, and images relating to traditional culture, heritage and, ultimately, a shared point of origin.”⁹³⁸

Indeed, music seems to occupy a special niche within migratory nodes for the nordestinos. According to one informant,

The first thing that a ‘paraíba’ purchases here is a radio. After his first paycheck, he goes out and buys a radio, puts it right up to his ear, and there you have it! Because that’s the way he gets over his homesickness, to listen to his kind of music, you know?⁹³⁹

Another music seller concurred, asserting that nordestinos are in fact *more* musical than other migrants: “No one, in Brazil, is more musical than the nordestinos.”⁹⁴⁰ He continues:

Folks arrive... thinking about two things: if it’s winter, it’s time to buy winter clothes, otherwise, they’ll be shivering. If it’s summer, it’s time to buy a portable radio or one of those music players.⁹⁴¹

A different informant insisted that a better way of keeping in touch with what’s going on back home than watching television or making phone calls is to spend the

⁹³⁷ George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1994) 126-7.

⁹³⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993). In Whitley 4.

⁹³⁹ “A primeira coisa que o paraíba compra aqui no Rio é um rádio. O primeiro pagamento vai lá compra um radinho, bota no pé do ouvido e aí pronto, acabou-se! porque ali deve ser o modo dele matar a saudade de casa, ouvir as musiquinhas dele, entende?” Pombal (Pb) Interview. In Morales 40.

⁹⁴⁰ “O pessoal chega... pensando em duas coisas: se for inverno, é comprar roupa de frio, senão bate o queixo. Se for verão, é comprar um rádio portátil ou uma dessas vitrolinhas. Ninguém, no Brasil, é mais musical que o nordestino.” “Brás Agora é Nordestino,” *O Cruzeiro* (19 de setembro, 1973). In José Ramos Tinhorão, *Música Popular: Os sons que vêm da rua* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Tinhorão, 1976), 190.

⁹⁴¹ Tinhorão, *Os sons*, 190.

afternoon at a nordestino music store in Rio/in the Feira, where travelers share stories and where music is often identified not by title or artist but by humming out its tune.⁹⁴² In the nordestino diaspora, migrants seem to cluster around music-making spaces; it is in the presence of traditional northeastern music like forró that migrants are able to revel in their past, to hear, feel, taste and touch their faraway homeland.

In considering the importance of music for nordestino migrantes, recall the outstanding success of Luiz Gonzaga – a migrant himself who was largely buttressed in his popularity by hundreds of thousands of fellow migrants. Indeed, part of Gonzaga’s appeal as a performer was the fact that he was a nordestino “country bumpkin” who had found commercial success by valuing traditional music culture in the cosmopolitan south—a success which spoke to the thousands of nordestinos exiled in the southern cities.

Certainly, Luiz Gonzaga’s success owed much to the contagious upbeat energy and the danceable nature of his music. It came at a time when the country was ready for a new roots music. Yet ultimately his success is related to the hundreds of thousands of retirantes who heard in his songs a connection to their past, to their homeland. Says Durval Muniz de Albuquerque:

His biggest success is amongst the nordestino migrants, since [his music] connects to the saudade they feel for their homeland, with their fear of the big city, and, at the same time, their pride in confronting it.⁹⁴³

⁹⁴² “*Existe esse vai-e-vem do nordestino visitando a família, e este é um sistema de comunicação muito mais eficiente do que Embratel, Rede Globo, Bandeirantes, etc.*” Silva 120-1. The author points out that many clients don’t read or write well enough to identify songs in written form and so instead sing what they remember.

⁹⁴³ Albuquerque 157.

Like Luiz Gonzaga, many nordestinos travel in a cyclical pattern between their homeland in the North and their jobs and futures in the South. Spoke one informant to Expedito Leandro Silva, “the nordestino has an ‘addiction’ to travel. He likes to travel, so he goes to his homeland, principally during the São João festivities and New Year’s.”⁹⁴⁴ Indeed, nordestinos do not necessarily settle for life in the South – and they often describe their experience in a manner that contrasts with how they seem to live, alternatively choosing to describe themselves as temporary, permanent or, sometimes, both. This paradox creates a category of people that some authors have called “transmigrants.”⁹⁴⁵ These migrants, situated in a limbo “neither here nor there,” build extensive social/political/economic/imaginative networks between their nodes of existence to link their many narratives of migration. Perhaps in contrast to typical North American immigrants, instead of dreaming of the future, nordestinos dream of the past, a time and place that for them remains in the beloved lands of the Northeast.

For those migrants who do not engage in regular or cyclical travel, there remains the option to access the homeland through the imagination. As Sarah Daynes writes:

Return – like the relationship maintained with the homeland – does not need to be concrete, nor even really contemplated; and it does not need to be the same for everyone. If the notion of diaspora is indeed defined by the inescapable link between the people and their homeland, the homeland itself is characterized by its symbolic distance, and the

⁹⁴⁴ “O nordestino tem uma ‘doença’ que é viajar. Ele gosta de viajar, então vai para a terra dele, principalmente na época de São João e fim de ano.” Interview, Mano Novo. In Silva 120.

⁹⁴⁵ It’s important to note, too, that nordestino migrants regularly interact with other migrants – from different parts of Brazil as well as from around the world – and so they are constantly blending “traditional” cultural elements from around the world.

impossibility of reaching it in the present; the link therefore becomes thought, dreamed, imagined, fantasized and symbolized. Although this land still exists geographically, it is present only in memory and does not really have a concrete, material existence.⁹⁴⁶

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, nordestinos who look to rearticulate the past within the present⁹⁴⁷ have done more than simply imagined their homeland; they have built a temple filled with thousands of tantalizing sensory images of the Nordeste: the Feira de São Cristóvão.

Feira de São Cristóvão

Considered by many the longest-running, largest and most celebrated traditional marketplace in all of Latin America, the Feira de São Cristóvão is an emblem not just of nordestino cultural traditions but of the intense creativity, flexibility, generosity, business savvy, tenacity and strength of community demonstrated by generations of nordestino migrants to the city of Rio de Janeiro. It has persevered through decades of political opposition and has served as a weekly reminder of the contributions of nordestinos in Rio while providing entertainment, business opportunities, commerce, and community support to millions. Often it was the first glimpse that arriving nordestinos had of the big city and the fantasy that kept them focused throughout the hard work week. Not only that, but it quickly grew to be a hotbed of artistic

⁹⁴⁶ Sarah Daynes, "The Musical Construction of the Diaspora: the Case of Reggae and Rastafari" *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Ed. Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 30-1.

⁹⁴⁷ For Feldman-Bianco, *saudade* is not simply nostalgia for the past, but in fact a way to live out the past in the present, a way of rearticulating the past within the present. Gláucia de Oliveira Assis, "Estar Aqui..., Estar Lá... Uma... cartografia da emigração valadarense para os Estados Unidos," *Cenas do Brasil Migrante*, Ed. Rossana Rocha Reis, Teresa Sales (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 1999), 142.

development from which traditional sounds from the Northeast could launch – into the city, the nation and the world beyond.

James Clifford notes that all migrant communities discover a way to bridge their present, past and futures and to solidify a community spirit through various hybrid takes on tradition:

Some version of this utopic/dystopic tension is present in all diaspora cultures. They begin with uprooting and loss. They are familiar with exile, with the ‘outsider’s’ exposed terror – of police, lynch mob, and pogrom. At the same time, diaspora cultures work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, ‘customizing’ and ‘versioning’ them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations.⁹⁴⁸

The Feira does indeed function to heal an uprooting of the nordestino community and has grown into an iconic space important not just to the city’s northeastern migrants but to an extended group of cariocas and world citizens. It is remarkable in its size, its duration and its continued popularity among a variety of classes, and today it serves not just as a springboard toward nordestino imaginations of the rustic sertão, but also as an introduction to the imagery of the Nordeste for Brazilian and foreign tourists. It has become a mandatory stop for hundreds of thousands of national and international visitors and has become a symbol for the incorporation of nordestino cultural traditions into the already vibrant and diverse community of Rio.

The Feira, said to have started in September of 1945, has been described and lauded in dozens of impromptu poetry battles and in *literatura de cordel*, the poetry pamphlets that famously circled the sertão and allowed the populace to keep up on

⁹⁴⁸ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 263.

current events even before newspapers were being circulated en masse.⁹⁴⁹ Mestre Azulão, the most famous cordel author in Rio and a bastion of tradition at the weekly market, introduces the great Feira:

After ten or twelve days
Of a torturous journey
The São Cristóvão grounds
Was the arrival depot
Where each nordestino
Sought out his destiny
In search of a new life

They set off for the construction sites
Where others toiled...⁹⁵⁰

São Cristóvão was, in the 1940s, a massive empty field west of the city center where the trucks arriving from long treks from the North pulled in to let the *pau-de-arara* passengers and their cargo off. At the time, Rio did not have a terminal for buses and other vehicles, and the space at São Cristóvão served as a substitute. Located at the end of what would be a major paved highway between Bahia and Rio (whose construction was finished in 1949), the vast area sheltered dozens, sometimes hundreds of retirantes who arrived in the city with nowhere to go and no money to pay for food or housing until they were picked up by family members and/or friends. These familial networks would help new arrivals find work and a place to stay and would sometimes even pay the fare for their transportation south.⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁹ Musicians would memorize the cordels and perform the poems in various towns, spreading news and stories. Named for the string from which sellers displayed the small pamphlets, “cordel” pamphlets were thus closely related to the troubadour tradition in the Northeast and are today still produced and collected with enthusiasm.

⁹⁵⁰ Azulão (José João dos Santos), *A feira dos Nordestinos do Campo de São Cristóvão* (Folheto de Cordel, 1929), 2. In Pandolfo 39.

The area soon became a center for *caminhoneiros*, people who trafficked information and products up and down the route between migrants and their families. One in particular, João Batista dos Santos, known as João Gordo (or Big John),⁹⁵² is said to have exerted a paternal influence over the area. João Gordo and his associates would set up northeastern products laid out on tarps every Sunday morning in the wee hours and, by early morning, had a bustling business selling any number of typical nordestino products such as leather sandals called *alpercatas*, raw brown sugar, leather cangaceiro hats, manioc flour, cheese, beef jerky, knives and tobacco. They also provided newcomers with tips for work, shelter and entertainment, sometimes themselves taking in desperate families. Later they set up food donations for the particularly needy newcomers, all of whom returned the favor once they were settled by making all of their purchases with João Gordo and his partners. In time, the tarps were replaced by tables and covered tents, and the products multiplied, alongside a growing number of musical performances, mobile restaurants, poetry battles, and open-air bars. Sundays became an event that nordestinos across the city would be sure not to miss – it was at the Feira that they would spend their week’s pay on food, clothing, work supplies, letters home, and entertainment.

In 1958, the *feirantes*, or vendors, had a major conflict with the municipality when the city began construction on a giant stadium to house the International Industry and Commerce Expo inside the São Cristóvão area. The project nearly wiped out the

⁹⁵¹ Many retirantes could not pay the fare and hoped that family members and/or friends would pay for them once they arrived in Rio. The drivers simply held onto their suitcases as collateral until they were paid back. Often people had to wait several days for family members to come find them and in the meantime, they slept on the campo de São Cristóvão.

⁹⁵² Generally not mentioned is the participation of three others who worked closely with João Gordo toward the same goal: Aluizio do Nascimento, Dorgival Severino, Antônio Lourenço da Silva. *Jornal da Feira* (Jan. 2005), 4.

weekly Feira, but João Gordo approached the Federal Government to request protection,⁹⁵³ and the various stalls of the Feira simply began setting up around the perimeter of the giant stadium in the early hours every Sunday. Shortly after this success, another figure stepped forward to initiate the founding of a union of Feira vendors in order to better protect their livelihood and cultural legacy. Under the command of Manoel Alexandre Alves, the Charity Union for Nordestinos of the State of Guanabara was founded in October of 1961 and, shortly after, the Association for the Protection of the Nordestinos of Guanabara in 1963.⁹⁵⁴ The Feira itself was legalized in 1982 by City Hall.⁹⁵⁵ So great was the success of the union, wrote one reporter, that twelve other nordestina Feiras were created around the state of Rio, all affiliates of the larger Feira in São Cristóvão.⁹⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the union was besieged by infighting and switched hands many times during successive management bodies, until another union, this time called COOPCAMPO,⁹⁵⁷ was formed in 2001.

Still, during the 1960s and 1970s the Feira was at its busiest and most hectic, with up to 2,400 registered stalls (and several hundred more unregistered).⁹⁵⁸ It had become such a popular hang-out that by 1965 vendors started arriving earlier on

⁹⁵³ “João Gordo inicia o conto dos nordestino de São Cristóvão,” *Jornal da Feira* (Jan. 2005), 5.

⁹⁵⁴ *União Benficiente dos Nordestinos no Estado da Guanabara and Associação de Proteção aos Nordestinos da Guanabara*, respectively.

⁹⁵⁵ Pandolfo 45-6.

⁹⁵⁶ “59 anos de lutas e grandes conquistas...” *Jornal da Feira* (Setembro 2004), 4-5.

⁹⁵⁷ The *Cooperativa dos Comerciantes da Feira de Tradições* was also challenged by a series of internal conflicts and, after changing hands several times, is now under the direction of Agamenon de Almeida.

⁹⁵⁸ Morales 16.

Saturday evening to claim a good spot for their stall and to begin setting up,⁹⁵⁹ and the party surrounding the stadium at São Cristóvão began to start up on Saturday nights, with live music, food and dancing. Vendors jerry-rigged up simple electric lanterns to illuminate the labyrinth of stalls, and Feira enthusiasts danced where they could, avoiding mud patches and power cables that lay on the ground. At this point there were no public restrooms and, as one fan giggled to me, “we had to pee on the pavement hidden behind a tree.”⁹⁶⁰ Drunken brawls were common; Feira visitors would begin drinking early on Saturday or Sunday and the claustrophobic space combined with summer heat waves, torrential rains, and the cacophony of thousands of vendors hawking their wares in close proximity tested the patience of many.⁹⁶¹

Even with the rumored violence, the Feira continued to bring together thousands of nordestinos and interested tourists to taste regional foods and listen to rip-roaring forró all afternoon. During the 2000 election campaign, mayoral candidate Cesar Maia made a campaign promise that he would legitimize the Feira de São Cristóvão inside the old Expo stadium upon election. Maia in fact won, and spent the next three years working out the logistics of re-building the Feira, this time with adequate sanitation and lighting, planned, permanent stalls and official performance stages inside the protected band of the old stadium construction. The official inauguration

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid, 15.

⁹⁶⁰ Interview ME.

⁹⁶¹ One informant told Martha Carvalho Nogueira that before COOPCAMPO took over in 2001, “there was death every single weekend, three, four deaths, and after the COOPCAMPO took charge, instead of being a Feira of death, it became a Feira of life.” “*Antes era morte todo final de semana, três, quatro, mortes, e aí a partir da entrada da COOPCAMPO, ela em vez de ser a feira da morte, passou a ser a feira da vida.*” Martha Carvalho Nogueira, *Estado, Mercado e Cultura Popular no Centro Luiz Gonzaga de Tradições Nordestinas* (Unpublished Master’s Dissertation, UFRJ, 2004), 32.

of the new and improved Feira in September of 2003 drew a crowd of 400,000 spectators, all of whom listened to the celebratory forró of Elba Ramalho, Geraldo Azevedo, Marcos Lucena and others.

In all, the City of Rio is said to have invested R\$16 million (about 6 million in US Dollars).⁹⁶² The Feira now boasts nearly 700 permanent stalls, many of which have access to running water, electricity, gas, and telephone.⁹⁶³ They are set up along horizontal and vertical “streets” inside the old stadium, each named after northeastern states or famous nordestino performers, politicians or intellectuals. At the center of the structure, the stalls open up to create an open-air poetry pavilion, dedicated to poetry battles and sales of cordel literature. Along either side of the stadium are two long stages (called João do Vale and Jackson do Pandeiro, in honor of the two celebrated musicians from the Northeast), each equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and dressing rooms. The Feira has its own FM radio station and publishes a newspaper, *Jornal da Feira* and several sources estimate that the Feira provides jobs for 9,000 workers.⁹⁶⁴

In her dissertation on the Feira, Lúcia Morales notes that Saturday evening and Sunday early morning crowds tend to include more tourists and, in general, customers

⁹⁶² R\$7.15 million were spent on remodeling the stadium itself, while an additional R\$8.6 million was spent on installing running water, electricity, bathrooms, etc. in hundreds of spaces throughout the old building. Nogueira 93. Other sources have claimed that Rio invested closer to 20 million. Edição 2. Slightly different amounts were given to me in an interview with the cultural director of the Feira, who cites R\$12 million for the stadium construction and R\$5 million for the stall construction. Interview with CF. Currency calculated using <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/> for Sept. 2003. Accessed 25 Jan 2010.

⁹⁶³ These stalls are owned by the municipality and vendors pay rent, in addition to the gas/electric/telephone charges.

⁹⁶⁴ A rough estimate puts 20 employees at each of the large stalls. IBGE statistics. Mamede, *Jornal da Feira*. Also Nogueira 2004: 10. Interview with CF.

of a higher social class,⁹⁶⁵ while Sunday crowds are more similar to those which frequented the Feira during its first five decades. She stressed, however, that the large majority of people she spoke with at the Feira are nordestinos: “the presence of middle-class people and tourists is far from being proportional to the poor nordestinos.”⁹⁶⁶ The nordestinos, while nearly all of a lower-class status, work in a variety of jobs as construction workers, maids, cashiers, bus drivers, doormen and others.⁹⁶⁷

Another doctoral dissertation written by Maria Lúcia Martins Pandolfo, notes that the geographical structure of the Feira also reflects social class and geographic origin of its shoppers; stalls dedicated to regional crafts, often grouped together, are generally frequented by wealthier patrons (often tourists), while cheap plastic shoes, for example, draw the attention of less wealthy customers.⁹⁶⁸ She mentions, too, that in the areas where non-nordestino patrons tend to congregate (often to taste a traditional beef jerky dish and to drink a beer or regional brew), elements common to the Rio South Zone (a wealthy, high prestige area of the city) are evident: “the presence of photographers and people selling roses from table to table bring, to São Cristóvão, the consumption habits common to the bar scene of the South Zone.”⁹⁶⁹

⁹⁶⁵ Morales 31.

⁹⁶⁶ “*A presença de pessoas da classe média e turistas está longe de ser proporcional a do nordestino pobre.*” Morales 3.

⁹⁶⁷ Morales 35.

⁹⁶⁸ Pandolfo 75-6.

⁹⁶⁹ “*A presença de fotógrafos e vendedores de rosas que vão de mesa em mesa trazem, para São Cristóvão, os hábitos de consumo comuns aos bares da zona sul.*” Pandolfo 70.

Estimates of the number of visitors vary wildly, from 60,000 to 125,000 visitors per weekend.⁹⁷⁰ In part, this is due to the cyclical nature not just of nordestino migration but of the Feira in general. Says one vendor informant in an interview with Pandolfo:

The Feira generally declines a bit after Christmas and New Year's. By the middle of the year it starts to heat up again, since folks spend a lot of money during Christmas, New Year's and Carnival. So everybody is strapped. Later on it stabilizes. Vendors can't purchase much merchandise, either, because they don't have anyone to sell it to. After May or June, folks are more stable and then people start buying again. Then the vendors start purchasing more, too.⁹⁷¹

Not everyone prefers the spanking new, cleaned-up space. While Agamenon de Almeida, the President of COOPCAMPO and leader throughout the major changes argues that "it [the Feira] became more comfortable without losing its spontaneity," and "the move to the stadium has given full citizenship to the nordestinos who visit and work here,"⁹⁷² others have protested. Complained one former member of COOPCAMPO: "It's becoming like a strip mall... it seems like whoever is running it doesn't understand anything about northeastern culture."⁹⁷³

⁹⁷⁰ More than 500,000 visitors/month. "59 anos de luta." That's down to 250,000 visitors/mo, according to the Feira de São Cristóvão's most recent website: <http://www.feiradesaocristovao.org.br/> 100-120,000 visitors per weekend. Also interview with CF. Another source estimates crowds at approximately 150,000 ppl per weekend (pamphlet).

⁹⁷¹ "A feira geralmente depois do Natal e Ano Novo ela cai um pouco. Quando chega o meio do ano ela começa a engrenar de novo, isso porque o povo gasta muito dinheiro no Natal, no Ano Novo e no Carnaval. Aí todo mundo fica a zero. Depois vai se estabilizar. O feirante também não pode comprar muita mercadoria porque não tem a quem vender. A partir do meio do ano, o pessoal já está estabilizado e começa a comprar suas coisas. Aí o feirante também compra mais." Interview Vava. In Pandolfo 106.

⁹⁷² "Ficou mais confortável sem perder a espontaneidade. A mudança para o pavilhão conferiu mais cidadania aos nordestinos que frequentam e que trabalham aqui." Interview Agamenon de Almeida. In Marco Antonio Barbosa, "Crise de Identidade: Videokês e pizzerias dividem espaço com forró e carne de sol na Feira de São Cristóvão," *Programa (guia seminal da diversão carioca) do Jornal do Brasil*, (19 a 25 de Agosto, 2005), 22.

From its chaotic beginnings as an impromptu marketplace in the 1940s through its more managed ambience today, music has been *the* defining element of the Feira. Its post-construction official name is “The Luiz Gonzaga Center for Nordestino Traditions in São Cristóvão,” and the entrance to the enormous stadium is dominated by a bronze statue of the King of Baião stretching out his accordion while flashing his charismatic smile. In fact, even while João Gordo receives praise for his early work solidifying the Feira tradition, it is the musicians who have crafted it into a cohesive cultural space. They, more than any other, have provided it with the substance that keeps crowds returning for decades and across generations. Artists have played such a central role in the development of the Feira that they were cleared from having to pay taxes after the legalization and re-organization of the entity in 1982, evidence of “the place of honor that they deserve for having been... the modest intellectuals who have founded and given continuity to the Feira.”⁹⁷⁴

It is precisely the element of music that most traditionalists complain about when asked about the improvements of the recent construction. Writes one journalist:

Be it good or bad, the undeniable fact is that the “Center for Nordestino Traditions” has tradition and it has nordestinos, but, strictly speaking, it has very little “nordestina tradition”... the changes of the Feira de São Cristóvão were not merely geographic. Starting with the music. Whoever goes there looking for traditional pé-de-serra forró... will have quite a hard time finding it. What dominates on the two principal stages of the Center... is the so-called synthesizer forró, characterized by female dancers in skimpy outfits and provocative choreographies. And the repertory... Well, the band that opened the afternoon marathon of forró started by playing a Portuguese-language

⁹⁷³ “*Aquilo lá está virando um shopping center... parece até que quem manda não entende nada de cultura nordestina.*” Interview: Marcus Lucena (Cultural Director of Coopcampo for seven years and a Feira regular since 1977). Barbosa 22.

⁹⁷⁴ “*O lugar de honra que lhes cabe por serem ... os modestos intelectuais fundadores e continuadores da Feira.*” In Pandolfo 117.

version of Torn, the pop hit by Natalie Imbruglia. And from there it only went downhill.⁹⁷⁵

Indeed, the performances on the two main stages are dominated by estilizado groups; in all the hours I spent roaming the Feira, not once did I witness a pé-de-serra band as a main attraction on either of the stages. Instead the few traditional conjuntos that attempt to play at the Feira choose small restaurants along the lateral streets where they can play for small gatherings of ten to fifteen people, their sound often being drowned out by competing record stalls blasting top-40, forró estilizado or *música brega* across the busy aisle. The President of COOPCAMPO defends this adjustment, arguing that

Pé-de-serra is preferred in the stalls along the lateral streets. It is the large stalls which contract the estilizado forró bands and COOPCAMPO has no participation whatsoever in those choices. At the end of the day, whoever is paying, chooses.⁹⁷⁶

The major restaurants whose seating areas buttress the stage areas book the music acts that will most appeal to their customers, and they have consistently chosen estilizado groups. Meanwhile, the oldtimers who once played different corners of the Feira (such as Zé do Gato and his brother Zé da Onça, as well as Zé Calixto) meet up on Sunday mornings and spend the early afternoon sipping beer and reliving their glory days on the stage. They have reached a point in their career where it doesn't

⁹⁷⁵ “Seja por bem, seja por mal, o fato inegável é que o Centro de Tradições Nordestinas tem tradição e tem nordestinos, mas tem pouca ‘tradição nordestina’ propriamente dita... as mudanças da Feira de São Cristóvão não foram meramente geográficas. A começar pelo som. Quem vai lá querendo ouvir o tradicional forró pé-de-serra... terá um pouco de trabalho. O que manda nos dois palcos principais do Centro... é o dito forró de teclados, com direito a dançarinas em trajes sumários e coreografias provocantes. E o repertório... Bem, a banda que abriu a maraona de forró da tarde começou tocando uma versão em português de Torn, sucesso pop da cantora Nataleie Imbruglia. E daí para baixo.” Barbosa 22.

⁹⁷⁶ “O pé-de-serra é preferido nas barracas das ruas laterais. Quem contrata as bandas de forró moderno são as barracas maiores e a Coopcampo não tem participação alguma nessa escolha. Afinal, quem está pagando é que escolhe.” Interview: Agamenon de Almeida. Barbosa 23.

make sense to battle against loudspeakers blaring pop music over their performance; they make too little money at the small performances along the lateral streets to do it for anything other than pure enjoyment, and the ambience is no longer inviting.

Still, as we will see in this chapter, the Feira served as a springboard for a forró renaissance in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and even if the Feira is currently experiencing a lull in the popularity of its traditional music, dozens of clubs around the city have picked up the slack with forró shows playing every night of the week throughout the city. The role of the Feira in introducing pé-de-serra into the cultural life of the city cannot be over-emphasized, since it is this influence that helped forró to catch on in other areas of the city. And even without the traditional pé-de-serra sound, the Feira still offers a home away from home to multitudes of nordestinos who have made a home (temporary or permanent) for themselves in Rio. Said one of the accordionists: “the Sunday I don’t come here I can’t sleep and during the day, it’s just not right, something is missing.”⁹⁷⁷ Another fair-goer equates the Feira with his home up north: “I like to come here because it’s the same as in Paraíba. Being here is the same as there...”⁹⁷⁸ The Feira is a living breathing entity that incites saudade in some as easily as it dispels homesickness in others, and for that reason it is a necessary element for nordestinos in Rio:

In the Feira we get in touch with our roots. We eat corn cakes, buchada, sarapatel, sugar cane rum – the stuff from up there, the pure stuff – we go to listen to the accordionist, the poet. During that time, our spirit isn’t here, in Rio, we almost seem to be in our old rural

⁹⁷⁷ “*No domingo que eu não venho aqui eu não durmo e de dia também não tem jeito, tá faltando alguma coisa.*” Interview Ze da Onça. In Pandolfo 101.

⁹⁷⁸ “*Gosto de vir aqui porque é mesmo que na Paraíba. Estando aqui é mesmo que lá...*” Interview Raimundo. In Pandolfo 98.

setting, I mean, we feel that intimacy and for that reason, we can't stop coming here.⁹⁷⁹

The Feira has served millions of retirantes with both a space to help them adjust to life in the new city (in the form of work opportunities and a vast social network) while also allowing them to relish an afternoon among familiar people and things that smack of their homeland. Humberto Teixeira, one of Luiz Gonzaga's closest song-writing partners, once said that "the sertanejo, pushed off his land, pretends to adapt himself to other places,"⁹⁸⁰ and yet the Feira is an excellent example of how important it is for the nordestino to stop pretending to fit in and to start pretending he is home after all.

Nordestino Discrimination

The hardships that nordestinos have encountered do not end with the difficult journey south, with debilitating saudade for their homeland or with the adjustment period trying to discover work and/or shelter. For many nordestinos, that is just the beginning of a difficult road, one that is pockmarked with insults, lack of trust and blatant discrimination in the workplace and on the street. Hailing from the most impoverished and underdeveloped region of Brazil, nordestinos have endured discrimination for the past hundred years, long marked as the most miserable and uneducated of Brazilians. They are often called *matutos*, slang for country hicks

⁹⁷⁹ "Na feira nos encontramos com as nossas raízes. A gente come a pamonha, a buchada, o sarapatel, a cachaça – a de lá, a pura – vamos ver o sanfoneiro, o repentista. Naquela hora, o nosso espírito não está aqui, no Rio, a gente parece que estamos lá no nosso interior velho, quer dizer, a gente sente aquele calor de perto e por isso a gente não aguenta deixar de vir aqui." Interview Vava. In Pandolfo 98.

⁹⁸⁰ "O sertanejo, empurrado da sua terra, finge adaptar-se a outras." M. A. A. Nirez, *Eu sou Humberto Teixeira: depoimento ao Arquivo do Nirez* (Fortaleza: Ecuatorial, 1995). In Sulamita 17.

and/or hillbillies, and many have themselves bought into the extreme prejudice, giving it credence and, often, voice.

María Lúcia Morales's Master's thesis examines the discrimination that nordestinos face, both from outsiders and from themselves. Her interviews, all drawn from within the pre-construction Feira, elucidate these prejudices in painful relief. What she finds in her research is that the specific social background of a single person matters very little; instead a person's worth is read through social codes that he has embodied over a lifetime. Writes Morales, "It's not an issue of being poor, uneducated or rural, what is at play are permanent dispositions, immediately recognizable, through their body language and composure."⁹⁸¹

The homeland can be read in the body, embodied as it is in a person's physique. The Nordeste and all of its social ills, then, can be easily extrapolated onto a nordestino individual. Said one informant to Morales:

The paraíba can be recognized by his body, his smell, his way of walking and talking. He totally reveals himself, you know? He denounces himself with his every move. Let's say that the son of a wealthy man buys a pair of woven pants. The paraíba scrounges together his money and buys exactly the same pair, but when he leaves the store, he is a paraíba. The pants haven't changed at all. The quality [of the pants] is exactly the same, but inside that pair of pants is the paraíba, who is marked, his mannerisms... it's the anxious and embarrassed way that he enters a sophisticated store with beautiful displays. He walks in a dubious, hesitating, fearful, paraíba way.⁹⁸²

⁹⁸¹ "Não é uma questão de ser pobre, ignorante ou camponês. O que está em jogo são disposições duráveis, imediatamente visíveis, através da forma e ação corporais." Morales 99.

⁹⁸² "O paraíba é conhecido pelo corpo, pelo cheiro, pela maneira de andar e pela fala. Ele se denuncia total, entende? ...O paraíba se denuncia com tudo. Vamos dizer que o filho de um homem da alta sociedade compra uma calça de tecido. O paraíba reúne dinheiro e compra exatamente uma do mesmo tecido, mas quando sair dali é um paraíba. A mesma calça não mudou nada. A qualidade não mudou nada porque dentro da calça está o paraíba, que saiu com a marca, o jeito dele... é a maneira inquietada e vergonhosa de entrar numa loja granfina cuja vitrine seja uma exuberância. Ele vai entrar de maneira dúbia, de maneira vacilante, de maneira temerosa, de maneira paraíba." Interview, Feirante masculino de Ipu, Ceará. Morales 97-8.

Morales uses Bourdieu's theory of the habitus to develop her argument; for Bourdieu, the habitus is the sum total of "acquired dispositions, durable ways of being or doing incarnated in bodies."⁹⁸³ For Bourdieu, a socialized body does not oppose society but is itself a manifestation of society. A person's gestures, mannerisms, accent, gait, etc. combine to form the habitus, a mode of being that all members of society can accept. For Bourdieu the habitus allows a person to fit comfortably within a range of society's expectations, but he argues that a collision of social environments (each with unique social codes) logically leads to rupture:

Between people of the same group, equipped with the same habitus, and thus spontaneously orchestrated, everything goes without saying, even conflicts; they can be understood without people having to spell things out, and so on. But when different systems of dispositions are involved, there appears the possibility of an accident, a collision or a conflict...⁹⁸⁴

Indeed, the very mannerisms that the informant includes in his citation are the result of one habitus (embodying nordestino social norms) meeting or colliding with another foreign habitus (embodying carioca social norms). The very fact that *he knows* that he does not know the social codes makes him nervous, further undermining his ability to act in a way consistent with those codes. In a sense, he beats the stereotype to the punch by himself acting out precisely what the informant expects.

The rupture in the case of nordestinos in Rio de Janeiro (or any city outside of their Northeast homeland) results in stereotypes and prejudice, reactions that often

⁹⁸³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Questions de Sociologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1980), 29.

⁹⁸⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays Toward a Reflexive Sociology* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1990), 80.

happen immediately and entirely subconsciously. Much like the black Brazilians who return from the beach wrapped in a towel and are told to use the service (not social) elevator, nordestinos suffer from both egregious and “invisible” discrimination, often limited in their personal and professional growth because of negative reactions to the clues of social origin expressed through their bodies. Another informant to Morales (notably a nordestino himself, like the first informant cited) compares the fate of a nordestino with that of a typical carioca:

The carioca is clever, intelligent. He likes pen and paper. You look at a paraíba, he is strong... When a carioca is born, the doctor grabs him by the legs and slaps his butt so he'll open his eyes and be cunning. The paraíba they grab him and throw him against a wall, if he sticks to it he'll be a bricklayer, if he falls he'll be servant.⁹⁸⁵

Morales sums up the fate of the nordestino newcomer with a common saying:

“Whoever doesn't live to serve, doesn't [de]serve to live.”⁹⁸⁶

More than any other notable gesture or manner of expressing themselves, what Brazilians seem to recognize more than body language to identify a nordestino seems to be a purely physical attribute. Indeed, Morales notes that “Their phenotype stands out like a sharp contrasting element, particularly effective in calling attention to itself. Thus it is an imposition over their identity and it functions as a symbolic stigma.”⁹⁸⁷

An observance that runs throughout Morales's work as well as my own is the so-called *cabeça chata*, or flat head of the nordestino. One of Morales's informants

⁹⁸⁵ “*O carioca é esperto, inteligente. Gosta de caneta e papel. Você olha pro paraíba, ele é forte... Quando o carioca nasce o médico pega pelos pés e bate na bunda para ele abrir os olhos e ser esperto. O paraíba eles pegam e jogam na parede, se pregar é pedreiro, se cair é servente.*” Interview with male Feirante from Feira de Santana, Bahia. In Morales 114.

⁹⁸⁶ “*Quem não vive para servir, não serve para viver.*” In Morales 114.

⁹⁸⁷ “*Sua fenotipia se destaca como um agudo elemento contrastivo e particularmente eficaz em despertar a atenção. Portanto, é uma imposição sobre sua identidade e funciona como um símbolo de estigma.*” Morales 102.

referred to it as an “ugly face, a huge head with no neck,”⁹⁸⁸ while another noted that “a Paraíba has his identity stamped on his head. You see the size of his head, you don’t need to ask him where he’s from.”⁹⁸⁹ To my response that I’m a gringa, born and raised in the Midwest, one Cearense replied that I must be lying, since I too have a “big head, just like the Cearense women”! Of course, in my case advanced schooling saves me from the kind of prejudice that a typical Cearense woman might encounter in Rio or in New York from other Brazilians. Morales mentions that her own positionality as a nordestina was problematic, too, as informants *saw* her as having an upper-class (intellectual) habitus, while they *heard* her as an ignorant matuta: “interesting, you (ma’am) are so cultured, but you never lost your accent!”⁹⁹⁰

In order to build a life for themselves in Rio while pining for their homeland and unable to assimilate into their new home because of the physical “scar” of their immigrant experience (in the form of a recognizable habitus), nordestinos found themselves driven more and more toward expressing themselves musically in sympathetic environments. Among hundreds of other nordestinos, they could unwind, remember good times, and in the process create a tradition of new good times in a foreign land.

⁹⁸⁸ “Cara feia, cabeção e sem pescoço.” Interview with male feirante from Pombal, Paraíba. In Morales 102.

⁹⁸⁹ “Paraíba já tem a identidade na cabeça. Você vê o tamanho da cabeça, não precisa mais pedir a identidade a ele.” Interview with female feirante from Santa Rita, Paraíba. Morales 101.

⁹⁹⁰ “Interessante a senhora tão culta, mas não perdeu o sotaque!” Interview with male feirante from Ipu, Ceará. In Morales 103.

The Growth of the Forró Scene in Rio de Janeiro

The Feira, though certainly the most massive meeting space with the largest number of nordestino products available, was not the only outlet for nordestinos who wanted to associate with others from the Northeast. Other popular meeting places for nordestinos in the city of Rio included the Praça Serzedelo Correia and, a bit later, the Largo do Machado, and by the late 1950s a nighttime scene was growing, as well.

The first *gafieira dos nordestinos*, or nordestino dance club,⁹⁹¹ was Forró do Xavier,⁹⁹² located in the Pasmado favela near what is today the mid-town neighborhood Botafogo. In its place today stands a major shopping mall and one of the most esteemed concert halls in the city, Canecão, but it was once a lower-class ghetto hillside filled with nordestinos and Afro-Brazilians. The club was forced to move when governor Carlos Lacerda mandated the destruction of the Pasmado favela in the late 1960s, and, after a brief stint in Botafogo, it re-established itself in Copacabana, where it was a hopping scene with forrós every day of the week, except for Tuesdays and Fridays.⁹⁹³ Shortly after moving the club to Copacabana, Xavier renamed the club “Recreative Association Singers of the Northeast,”⁹⁹⁴ afraid that including “forró” in the name might “denigrate the image of the place with its

⁹⁹¹ Tinhorão notes that this was how the early forró clubs of the 1950s were referred to in Rio, a play on samba dancing clubs that were referred to as “gafieiras.” Tinhorão, *Música Popular*, 187-88.

⁹⁹² For a history of the Casa de Forró (an early São Paulo forró club founded in 1966 by Pedro Sertanejo) whose role closely compares to Xavier, see Jurema Mascarenhas Paes, “O território do Forró,” Texto integrante dos *Anais do XIX Encontro Regional de História: Poder, Violência e Exclusão* (ANPUH/SP – USP, São Paulo, 08 a 12 de setembro de 2008); Adriana Fernandes, “Vamos dançar forró?” *Anais do VII Congresso Latinoamericano da Associação Internacional para o Estudo da Música Popular* (La Habana, Cuba, entre los días 19 y 24 de junio de 2006) Available: <http://www.hist.puc.cl/iaspm/lahabana/actasautor1.html>

⁹⁹³ Elba Braga Ramalho, *Luiz Gonzaga: a síntese poética e musical do sertão* (São Paulo: Terceira Margem, 2000), 28.

⁹⁹⁴ Associação Recreativa Cantores do Nordeste.

connotation of “rabble-rousing party.”⁹⁹⁵ Tinhorão points out that the renaming of his dance club indicates a process of social ascension that was going on amongst the nordestino masses; he argues that as the club settled into its new location, having “descended from the hillside and installed itself on the asphalt,”⁹⁹⁶ it began disassociating itself with the nordestino culture that was highly discriminated against in the capital city.

Tinhorão notes that a major trend that fueled the opening of new forró clubs in the city was actually the massive sales of newly affordable televisions that were marketed to middle and lower-class Brazilians in the late 1960s; according to Tinhorão, this process left dozens of former movie houses empty, into which forró entrepreneurs could invest little capital for giant dance halls that would hold up to 2,000 dancers. By 1974, he writes, there were more than fifty of these clubs.⁹⁹⁷

Even Luiz Gonzaga had entered into the business of forró clubs, with a dance hall he founded in 1972 with his wife and sisters on Governor’s Island in Rio. Called “Asa Branca,” it opened on Wednesday evenings when the great Gonzaga would play, often surrounded by young nephews or mentees who were learning the style and would accompany his accordion with zabumba and triangle. Unlike many of the other forró clubs, Gonzaga’s actually had some popularity with the middle classes; he often invited countless other radio and television stars, and his own stardom coupled with theirs gave the club a lofty air that other humble bars could not match. Sadly,

⁹⁹⁵ Marcos Mattos Madeira, *A Evolução do Baião: A solidificação de um gênero musical nordestino como música da moda dos centros urbanos atuais e principalmente do meio acadêmico* (Fortaleza, Ceará. August 1999), 48-9.

⁹⁹⁶ Tinhorão, *Música Popular*, 187-88.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 189.

Gonzaga's club closed after just two years, due to tensions between Helena Gonzaga and Luiz's performing sisters. It would be many more years before forró would again be enjoyed by the middle classes of Rio.

Forró Universitário

The forró scene was thriving in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo throughout the 1960s and 1970s, buttressed by the ever-growing nordestino population that continued to seek out music and dance locales that would remind them of their homeland. Some clubs attracted as many as 4,000 dancers and remained popular for years on end.⁹⁹⁸ Still, these clubs were generally confined to the periphery of the growing urban centers and to mainly nordestino audiences; few native cariocas were interested in dancing or listening to forró. In the late 1990s, however, an entirely different forró phenomenon arose in Rio. This time, the middle-class youth that had formerly scorned forró as coarse or unrefined hick music began to frequent forró clubs, eventually creating so much demand that dozens of new houses opened to cater to the new clientele. Because it had evolved within circles of university-educated middle-class youth, the new fad became known as forró universitário, and it swept the major cities of the south, particularly São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, and to a lesser extent, Brasília.

The universitário scene has several competing creation myths, all of which have taken on grandiose proportions, while not necessarily being incompatible with one another. One story has the scene originating in São Paulo out of the interest of a

⁹⁹⁸ See Paes.

group of students from the Universidade de São Paulo⁹⁹⁹ who “discovered” forró as it was being enjoyed by thousands of nordestinos and began attending clubs around the periphery of the city in an effort to take pleasure themselves in an authentic and traditional experience. This version depicts the students as pioneering adventurers who were oblivious to differences of class, simply drawn to the musical and dance culture of the nordestino migrants.

Another story begins with an NGO founded in 1996 by Lu Brandão, a rock musician herself and mother of two well-known rockers.¹⁰⁰⁰ This organization, called Equilibrium Project,¹⁰⁰¹ carved out a space for forró music and encouraged the participation of university students in a new “roots” movement. In an interview with Expedito Leandro Silva, the founder shared her inspiration and vision for the project:

I came to this space to do a release party for a rock band. But then I checked out the club’s ambience and I thought: it’s got everything to do with a forró club. Not only that, but the owner of the club, Professor Vagner, shared the same ideas, and he had already housed forró parties, though in a smaller area within the space. So then I had this desire to expand that, so I started to do what they [the students] call universitário forró... the rise of universitário forró happened between 1996 and 1997, with me as the first person to really encourage this kind of forró and to expand it through different forms of media like radio, TV, newspapers and magazines.¹⁰⁰²

⁹⁹⁹ Silva 108.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Branco Melo was a member of the hugely successful Titãs (Titans) and Paulinho, known as Primo Preto, of Banda Black Music. Silva 106.

¹⁰⁰¹ Its full name was: *Espaço Cultural Projeto Equilíbrio*, or Cultural Space Equilibrium Project. Silva 104.

¹⁰⁰² “*Eu vim para esse espaço [Projeto Equilíbrio] fazer um show de lançamento de uma banda de rock. Daí olhei o ambiente da casa e pensei: Tem tudo a ver com uma casa de forró.*” *Além do mais, o dono da casa, o professor Vagner, tinha as mesmas idéias, pois ele já mantinha a prática de forró em uma quadra da casa, mas o local era muito pequeno. Aí me deu vontade de expandir aquilo, então comecei a fazer o que eles [os estudantes] chamam de forró universitário... o surgimento do forró universitário aconteceu entre 1996 ou 1997, sendo eu a primeira a incentivar esse segmento de forró e*

Attracting students from around the city,¹⁰⁰³ Project Equilíbrio drew crowds of up to 1,000 dancers to its Friday-night shows,¹⁰⁰⁴ and began, via its radio station (USP-FM), laying the groundwork for a new cultural movement. The radio would promote not just new songs and artists but also new clubs, placing itself at the center of an information hub that continued to grow online.

At about the same time, the forró universitário fever spread to Rio de Janeiro.¹⁰⁰⁵ Starting in 1997, The Ballroom dance club in Humaitá featured Project Roots, an endeavor to resuscitate nordestino regional music like forró pé-de-serra, côco and ciranda rhythms. Located in the South Zone of the city, the Ballroom was easily accessible for middle-class cariocas, who began streaming into the live shows featured every Thursday evening.

The last creation myth is perhaps the most interesting, as it builds upon various tropes: of nature, leisure, and exoticism among others. This story centers on the city of Itaúnas, a beach town in Espírito Santo located just south of the border with Bahia. During the late 1990s, the town became a popular vacation spot for middle-class families from São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Belo Horizonte, many of whom rent beach houses during Rio's various extended holidays. Known for its beaches and relaxed atmosphere, it soon became famous, as well, for its burgeoning forró scene.

a expandi-lo através da mídia, desde o rádio, TV, jornais e revistas, etc." Interview with L. Brandão. In Silva 106.

¹⁰⁰³ The bulk of these students hailed from the Universidade de São Paulo (USP), although students from the Pontifícia Universidade Católica (PUC) and Mackenzie were also involved in the scene.

¹⁰⁰⁴ <http://www.brazzil.com/pages/rpdoct97.htm> Accessed 26 Jan 2010.

¹⁰⁰⁵ There is general consensus that the universitário movement first impacted São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, then Rio de Janeiro.

Young people on vacation danced libidinous forró on the beaches and fell in love with its rhythm and its sensuous dance. Upon returning to their hometowns, they started to plan and to promote events in which forró would become the main attraction.

In her Master's thesis on forró universitário, Roberta Ceva begins her analysis by quoting several early published narratives about the forró experience in Itaúnas. She then invokes the work of Peter Burke as she somewhat skeptically deconstructs the Itaúnas creation myth:

One can notice the valorization of the enhanced “freedom” of folks that grew up in Itaúnas, their proximity to nature (evoked through the image of the sun setting); in sum, elements quite similar to those used by European intellectuals at the end of the eighteenth century to identify values supposedly “preserved” by the popular classes and recently “rediscovered” by the enthusiastic bourgeois: simplicity, naiveté, intimacy with nature, freedom, authenticity, imaginative capacity, etc.¹⁰⁰⁶

Ceva ponders, also, the relationship that many universitário enthusiasts claim with Itaúnas, noting that since Itaúnas has been cited as the place of origin for the new style, *all* of the forró dance instructors in Rio de Janeiro (with no exceptions!) claim to have learned how to dance in Itaúnas. She writes:

Saying that you learned in Itaúnas seems to bring more legitimacy to the teachers. Nonetheless, what I was able to certify is that in fact a large number of these professionals learn to dance right here in Rio, simply observing the steps as they are executed by others at forró events.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁶ *A partir de sua fala, percebe-se a valorização da maior “liberdade” dos meninos nativos de Itaúnas, sua proximidade com a natureza (evocada pela imagem do pôr-do-sol); enfim, elementos que se assemelham àqueles utilizados pelos intelectuais europeus em fins do século XVIII para designar os valores supostamente preservados pelas classes populares, por eles recém-descobertas: simplicidade, ingenuidade, naturalidade, liberdade, autenticidade, capacidade imaginative, etc.* Peter Burke, *Cultura Popular na Idade Moderna* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998). In Roberta Lana de Alencastre Ceva, *Na Batida da Zabumba: uma análise antropológica do forró universitário* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2001), 59.

Noteworthy of all of these narratives is the emphasis on their *rediscovery* of roots; the new middle class enthusiasts were anxious to emphasize their own contribution to the revival of forró in these southern cities. The sense that one gets speaking to people about or reading accounts of the forró renaissance is that forró was a forgotten culture, one that had practically disappeared – and it took middle-class interest to save it from the ravages of time. In this sense, forró universitário is somewhat similar to the Buena Vista Social Club phenomenon in Cuba: a local music that was being performed (though perhaps not dominating the local scene) is discovered by an outsider and, when coupled with a narrative of discovery, is “rescued,” to the tune of millions of dollars and international stardom. Of course, Ry Cooder didn’t ride into São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro in his sidecart scooter,¹⁰⁰⁸ and Zé Calixto¹⁰⁰⁹ didn’t make it to Carnegie Hall, but the analogy is nonetheless of interest.¹⁰¹⁰

Universitário producers and marketers play up the authenticity of forró and stress the importance of remaining close to the genre’s roots, as do artists and audience members across the scene. The word “roots” is emphasized in flyers and websites

¹⁰⁰⁷ “Uma vez que Itaúnas é apontada como local de invenção do novo estilo de forró, todos os professores (sem exceção) dizem ter sido lá onde aprenderam a dançar... Dizer que aprendeu em Itaúnas parece conferir maior legitimidade àquele que ensina. No entanto, o que pude constatar é que grande parte dos profissionais aprende a dançar apenas observando os passos executados nos eventos de forró, aqui mesmo no Rio de Janeiro.” Ceva 81.

¹⁰⁰⁸ ...though if we were to use this metaphor, David Byrne could easily stand in for Ry Cooder... (See chapter 7).

¹⁰⁰⁹ A leading button accordion player, originally from Paraíba, who has been playing the local Rio forró and choro scenes for decades.

¹⁰¹⁰ Overall, the transformation within the forró universitário genre is most similar to the Vallenato revival spurred by Carlos Vives and his urban sound in Colombia. See Juan Vicente Contreras, “Carlos Vives and Colombian Vallenato Music” *Musical Cultures of Latin America: Global Effects, Past and Present: Proceedings of an International Conference*, Ed. Steven Loza (Los Angeles: University of California, May 28-30, 1999 [337-45]).

that promote events, as well as in interviews, and designers take special care to include hillbilly imagery in event advertisements. Often pictured are the mandacaru cactus of the sertão, leather hats in the Lampião style, cracked earth under a bright sun, caricatures of bonfires and the triangle-shaped flags that typically decorate the dance floor in a nordestino *arraial*.¹⁰¹¹

Interestingly, the emphasis on authenticity in forró universitário has not limited innovations within the music and dance performance; bands have added instruments such as bass guitar, guitar, violin, drum sets and other percussion instruments, and have often incorporated other rhythmic influences such as bossa nova, jazz and salsa.¹⁰¹² The singer and percussionist of one of Rio's most successful universitário bands calls himself a *zabumbaterista*, an amalgam of zabumbeiro (a zabumba player) and baterista (a drum set player).¹⁰¹³

Adriana Fernandes, in one of many articles she has authored on forró, notes as well that forró universitário resonated with middle class audiences in the South due to its similarity to reggae music. According to Fernandes, both Luiz Gonzaga and Gilberto Gil, according to Fernandes, have commented on this connection, which spans across musical similarities to lyrical and stylistic elements as well.¹⁰¹⁴ Their resemblance made for an easy and interesting fusion, and in fact, *forraggae* is today featured as a new musical style at several universitário clubs.

¹⁰¹¹ An old-school dance setting with country styling (often open-air or in a barn, with hay bales, etc.).

¹⁰¹² Ceva 52.

¹⁰¹³ Ceva 59.

¹⁰¹⁴ Fernandes calls attention to the "surf wear" that forró universitário aficionados use, as well as berets "à la Bob Marley." Fernandes, "Vamos Dançar?"

Perhaps mimicking universitário as a new (and temporary?) trend, many of the performance spaces are themselves ephemeral, appearing one day only to fold months later. Others – notably, ones that have traditionally attracted a more nordestino clientele – have been in existence for decades. The easiest way to differentiate between the two is to evaluate its geographical location; those centrally located usually cater to a more middle-class crowd, while those further out in the suburbs generally accommodate lower-class migrants.¹⁰¹⁵

Some of the most popular universitário clubs in Rio in recent years have included The Ballroom,¹⁰¹⁶ Estudantina,¹⁰¹⁷ Clube dos Democráticos,¹⁰¹⁸ Severina,¹⁰¹⁹ Malagueta,¹⁰²⁰ Toca do Forró,¹⁰²¹ Bar Quebra Mar,¹⁰²² Clube Hebraica,¹⁰²³ Casarão Bambina,¹⁰²⁴ Botafogo Maurisco Bar,¹⁰²⁵ Esporte Clube Carioca¹⁰²⁶ and Asa Branca.¹⁰²⁷ Popular spots in São Paulo have included KVA,¹⁰²⁸ Sala de Reboco,¹⁰²⁹

¹⁰¹⁵ Notable, also, is that lower-class migrants are increasingly listening to forró estilizado.

¹⁰¹⁶ Rua Humaitá, 110 Humaitá, RJ. what used to be Oba Oba.

¹⁰¹⁷ Praça Tiradentes, 79 / 81, Centro, RJ.

¹⁰¹⁸ Rua Riachuelo 91/93, Lapa, RJ.

¹⁰¹⁹ Rua Ipiranga, 54, Laranjeiras, RJ.

¹⁰²⁰ Rua Carneiro de Campos 31, São Cristovão, RJ.

¹⁰²¹ Avenida Rio Branco 277, Cinelândia, RJ.

¹⁰²² Avenida do Pepê 40, Barra da Tijuca, RJ.

¹⁰²³ Rua das Laranjeiras 346, Laranjeiras, RJ.

¹⁰²⁴ Rua Bambina 141, Botafogo, RJ.

¹⁰²⁵ Praia de Botafogo s/ nº, Botafogo, RJ.

¹⁰²⁶ Rua Jardim Botânico, 650, Jardim Botânico, RJ.

¹⁰²⁷ Avenida Mem de Sá 17, Lapa, RJ.

Remelexo,¹⁰³⁰ Equilíbrio,¹⁰³¹ Danado de Bom,¹⁰³² Canto da Ema¹⁰³³ Lambar,¹⁰³⁴ Blem Blem¹⁰³⁵ and Sala Gonzagão.¹⁰³⁶ Of these clubs, few are still up and running, though new venues pop up in their place. Clubs that are further into São Paulo's periphery (and tend to have a more "nordestino" clientele) have included: Sandália de Prata,¹⁰³⁷ Asa Branca,¹⁰³⁸ Centro de Tradições Nordestinas (CTN),¹⁰³⁹ Patativa,¹⁰⁴⁰ Forró de Pedro Sertanejo¹⁰⁴¹ Forró da Catumbi,¹⁰⁴² and Expresso Brasil.¹⁰⁴³

For some traditionalist musicians, it is nonsense to refer to universitário as a different style of forró. Says one drummer, "that's not forró universitário... it's forró

¹⁰²⁸ Rua Cardeal Arcoverde 2958, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰²⁹ (next door from KVA)

¹⁰³⁰ Rua Paes Leme, 208, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰³¹ Rua Eugenio de Medeiros 263, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰³² Avenida Cardeal Arcoverde, nº2.934, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰³³ Avenida Brigadeiro Faria Lima 364, Pinheiros. SP.

¹⁰³⁴ Rua Joaquim Floriano 899, Itaim, SP.

¹⁰³⁵ Rua Inacio Pereira da Rocha, 520, Vila Madalena, SP.

¹⁰³⁶ Rua Cardeal Arcoverde 3030, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰³⁷ Rua dos Pinheiros, 1376, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰³⁸ Rua Eugênio de Medeiros, 263, Pinheiros, SP.

¹⁰³⁹ Rua Jacofer 615, Limão, SP.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Rua Benedito Fernandes 169, Santo Amaro, SP.

¹⁰⁴¹ Rua Catumbi, Belenzinho, SP. This club was founded 1966 by the father of Oswaldinho do Acordeón. Fernandes notes that it was this forró that started the successful forró club model and that "exported" forró club culture to the urban centers of the Northeast. Fernandes, "Vamos Dançar?"

¹⁰⁴² Rua da Catumbi, 183 Catumbi, SP.

¹⁰⁴³ Avenida Aricanduva, 11500, Jardim Aricanduva, SP.

pé-de-serra,”¹⁰⁴⁴ claiming that it is no different from what Luiz Gonzaga played in front of urban audiences. According to this artist, *all* forró music has undergone an urbanization to its lyrics as more and more forró musicians have moved to the cities. As he explains it, “the language has changed”¹⁰⁴⁵ – but the musical content has not. Said another accordionist: “It’s basically [the same]... it’s the same pulse, the same groove, the same pace...”¹⁰⁴⁶ Indeed, for many musicians and audience members, if not journalists or academics, forró universitário has, for all intents and purposes, become a synonym for forró pé-de-serra.

Within the universitário performance, a much greater emphasis is given to the xote style, and, to a lesser extent, baião, both of which are slower paced than the forró beat and thus more suitable for close and romantic couple dancing. Lyrics, as commented above, are much more often thematically linked to urban themes (especially love) but continue to be self-referential (“Listen to my heart that beats to the rhythm of the passion-filled *zabumba*”)¹⁰⁴⁷ and playful. Some of the major universitário bands include Falamansa, Forróçacana, Rastapé, Trio Sabiá, Trio Virgulino, Banda Mafuá and Forrozão, although many northeastern pé-de-serra bands often play on the universitário circuit. Many of the artists on the scene do not limit themselves to the forró genre, performing other genres such as MPB, rock and choro, which arguably adds hybrid sounds and performance styles to the universitário setting.

¹⁰⁴⁴ “*Aquilo não é forró universitário... É forró-pé-de-serra.*” Interview with RP.

¹⁰⁴⁵ “*A linguagem mudou.*”

¹⁰⁴⁶ “*É quase.... é o mesmo pic é o mesmo clima, mesmo andamento...*” Interview with ZC.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Falamansa, “Xote dos Milagres”: Escuta o meu coração / Que bate no compasso da zabumba de paixão

While in musical terms forró universitário shares much with pé-de-serra, in terms of dance performance the two styles are obviously quite different. The universitário dancers have developed their own choreography that reflects influences from lambada, samba de gafieira, salsa, tango, and American ballroom dance. Contrasted with the nordestino style of dancing, universitário style has more turns, spins, twirls and holds – in short, more delicate and intricate tricks. Adriana Fernandes attributes the lack of arm movements in the nordeste style to its origin as a worker’s dance, arguing that someone who has been toiling under great physical strain is not apt to seek highly acrobatic leisure activities; as a result, she argues, “the steps are more repetitive than creative and the dance limits itself to movement from the waist down.”¹⁰⁴⁸ Universitário, on the other hand, can be highly acrobatic, with females being tossed in the air between steps and dipped dramatically.¹⁰⁴⁹

More so than its flashy moves, though, what has most drawn attention about the universitário dance is its exaggerated sexuality. Forró pé-de-serra is already a very sensual dance, with couples entwining their legs and fusing their bodies into one dancing entity. Forró universitário, many critics say, take this to another level, turning an intimate dance into an *arrochado* or “skintight” dance. Says one avid

¹⁰⁴⁸ “*Os passos são mais repetitivos do que criativos e a dança limita-se a movimentos da cintura para baixo.*” Adriana Fernandes, “Forró: Música e Dança ‘De Raiz’?” *Anais do V Congresso Latinoamericano da Associação Internacional para o Estudo da Música Popular* (Rio de Janeiro, 21 a 25 de junho de 2004) Available: <http://www.hist.puc.cl/iaspm/rio/actasautor1.htm> See also Fernandes, “Vamos Dançar?”

¹⁰⁴⁹ Note, though, that while executing the steps, couples rarely lift their feet far from the ground; there is intense movement around the hips but the feet tend to shuffle close to the ground.

enthusiast, “dancing forró... and making love is practically the same thing.”¹⁰⁵⁰

Anthropologist Linda Anne Rebhun concurs, writing that “you don’t have to actually make love in order to make love.”¹⁰⁵¹ She describes a typical dance in the nordestino style:

Generally the man puts one hand on her waist and takes the other hand extended. But there are variations. If she likes him, she can put her arms around his neck. And he has both arms around her waist. So it’s very delicious (*gostoso*) because she, leaning, has to stay with her breasts pushing on the man’s chest. And the mothers, ‘Have shame!’ There’s another that doesn’t use the hands at all. Both keep their hands behind their backs, and the man dances forward looking into her eyes, and her looking into his eyes, him advancing, her retreating. It’s the sexiest thing.¹⁰⁵²

Indeed, forró is often just a prelude; Fernandes notes that it isn’t rare after a night out dancing forró for “the couples to take off for a motel for unplanned sex.”¹⁰⁵³

Promoters take advantage of its reputation in order to increase attendance at shows, adding erotic images alongside the “country” icons on advertisements (to appeal equally to ideals of “roots” and “sex.”) Many images on forró flyers across the city show couples joined at the hips and use clever graphic design schemes (perhaps the pattern on her dress) to eroticize the picture mischievously.

The traditional gendered format remains true in forró universitário; it is generally a male-dominated dance, with males inviting and males leading. Males generally make up the lion’s share of band, as well; I never saw a female instrumentalist in Rio.

¹⁰⁵⁰ “*Dançar um forró... e namorar é praticamente a mesma coisa.*” Interview in Zezé Polessa, “Eu conheço um lugar...” *Caderno Viagem do Joranal de Brasil* (No date). In Ceva 3.

¹⁰⁵¹ Rebhun 136.

¹⁰⁵² *Ibid*, 136.

¹⁰⁵³ “*Os pares dirigem-se a motéis para relações sexuais fortuitas (o famoso ‘ficar’).*” Fernandes, “Forró: Música e Dança” 5.

Occasionally, usually early in the evening, girls may dance with one another, and this doesn't draw any attention¹⁰⁵⁴ – though it seems to end as soon as eligible male dancers appear on the scene.

Across Rio, there are countless dance studios that teach forró dance;¹⁰⁵⁵ in these classes students learn not just the basic steps common to northeastern dancing but also the various turns and tricks that dancers like to show off on the dance floor. There is a noted preference for the ballroom style of forró and several girls told me they get turned off if a guy doesn't dazzle them enough with his moves. This, however, seems not to impact their estimation of forró as highly linked to roots; the universitário dance style is considered the same, with embellishments. That is, in the estimation of the universitário dancers, they are dancing a traditional style with modern adornments. It is worth noting that many nordestinos have witnessed the elevated prestige afforded this more "pretty" forró and that they themselves have started adopting many of the estilizado dance moves. It is also crucial to point out that middle-class youth can generally afford the R\$20 dance sessions (and even private tutoring) to tighten up their moves, while nordestinos don't necessarily have the leisure time or the funds to "re-learn" how to dance a style that is an inherent part of their cultural heritage.

There are other conflicts of commercialization between forró universitário and the nordestinos who originally imported pé-de-serra to the cities. In his Master's thesis,

¹⁰⁵⁴ Roberta Ceva tells a story about the one time she saw two men dancing together: "it was a joke between two forró dance instructors that generated a lot of curiosity and even fright among the present audience members." *"Tratava-se de uma brincadeira entre dois professores de forró que despertou muita curiosidade e até espanto entre o público presente."* Ceva 68-9.

¹⁰⁵⁵ According to Ceva, these dance classes started in Rio in 1999. Ceva 78. In the course of my research I attended only one dance studio: Jaime Arroxa's Dance Center at Rua São Clemente, 55 in Botafogo, RJ.

Kevin Cassidy quotes Silverio Pessoa¹⁰⁵⁶ on the commercialization of the universitário genre. According to Pessoa,

The corporations and recording companies saw that forró could be dressed in different clothes. So, they create bands and groups and they created classifications for this like “university” forró. This is not a true genre. It dressed up in new clothes, elaborated to sell cds.¹⁰⁵⁷

Pessoa’s critique is in fact tied in to issues of music profitability. In order to sell albums, bands must create a popular following through various local and national radio stations – and in order to be successful in various media outlets, Brazilian artists must “pay to play.” As Cassidy argues,

Because many of the more “authentic” or “roots” artists are not affiliated with powerful companies that can afford these pay-to-play fees they are less able to reach mass audiences, especially the classe popular, that relies more heavily on the television and radio to provide entertainment and information.¹⁰⁵⁸

This critique is borne out in my own interviews. While one accordionist states that, in his mind, discrimination has been practically “zeroed,” i.e. diminished to nothing, another accordionist disagrees, arguing that “northeastern music continues suffering from discrimination in the Southeast,”¹⁰⁵⁹ citing the low payments given to artists of northeastern styles as his major point of contention. The major difference in payment, according to the first artist, is that nordestinos generally don’t have the funds to invest in

¹⁰⁵⁶ The founding member of Recife’s hybrid forró group Cascabulho and currently an independent artist quite successful in the alternative forró scene.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Cassidy 29.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Ibid, 28-9.

¹⁰⁵⁹ “*Eu continuo achando que a música nordestina continua ainda sofrendo uma certa discriminação no Sudeste.*” Interview with ZC.

marketing upfront, an advantage that many universitário bands from the South have.

Still, it is shortsighted to attempt to explain the success of universitário forró simply as a novelty imposed by media conglomerates for profit; while it has attained great commercial success, this victory has been in large part an out-growth of a cultural movement led and fueled by popular consumption within the middle classes.

“Taste’: The Social ‘Uses’ of Forró

The question arises, then: why? Why the sudden popularity of a rural lower-class music amongst educated middle classes? Why now? How is it that a music culture that had been systematically devalued until very recently has suddenly been embraced by the very classes that claimed to detest it? How is it that the elements that first marginalized northeastern regional musics (its country quality, its simple three-piece instrumentation, its reputation as a poor man’s music) became the beginnings of a major trend among urban middle-class youth?

The answer begins with the very manner in which art functions as a class marker. As the anthropologist Roger Bastide has observed, “each group tends to separate itself from the others, through characteristics that are unique to it, habits, slang, clothing – art is also one of those manifestations.”¹⁰⁶⁰ Waldenyr Caldas, a Brazilian

¹⁰⁶⁰ Roger Bastide, *Arte e sociedade* (Companhia Editora Nacional e Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1971), 100. “Cada grupo tende a se separar dos outros, por caracteres que lhes são próprios, costumes, gírias, vestimentas – a arte é também uma dessas manifestações.” In Waldenyr Caldas, *Acorde na Aurora: música sertaneja e indústria cultural* (São Paulo: Ed. Nacional, 1979), 46; Silva 30.

scholar who writes on sertanejo music (historically marginalized as much as forró, until the recent universitário trend), agrees. Caldas writes: “art is a cultural manifestation that, in a capitalist society, has the uncomfortable function of differentiating social classes through its consumption.”¹⁰⁶¹

In his celebrated book *Distinction*, Pierre Bourdieu explores the social uses of art and culture, arguing that consumption choices and lifestyle habits are linked to perceived class positions. Indeed, he writes, taste “classifies” and, at the same time, “classifies the classifier.”¹⁰⁶² Bourdieu explains that, in capitalist societies, the social value of commodities fluxuates greatly; products that one day may have elite status may the next be worth very little, and vice versa. In order to maintain their distinction from (and hierarchy over) the popular classes, upper class consumers must regularly invest in new products (even as lower classes attempt to mimic this consumption in order to themselves climb the social ladder).

In a fascinating twist, however, upper class arbiters of taste can also resurrect products further down the social scale, appropriating them for their own use and establishing them as objects of ‘taste.’ This, Martha Tupinambá de Olhõa notes, is a process ameliorated by “age, that is, the inclusion in the community long memory.”¹⁰⁶³ She expands:

Thus, sambas of the 1920s, which were labeled “popularesque,” later become “classic” when they are valued by musicians with proper

¹⁰⁶¹ Para Caldas, “arte é uma manifestação cultural que, na sociedade capitalista, tem a incômoda função de diferenciar as classes sociais através do seu consumo.” Caldas 46. In Silva 30.

¹⁰⁶² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Harvard University Press, 1984), 6.

¹⁰⁶³ Martha Tupinambá de Ulhõa, “Chiclete com Banana: Us and the Other in Brazilian Popular Music,” *Musical Cultures of Latin America: Global Effects, Past and Present*, Ed. Steven Loza (Los Angeles: The University of California, Selected Reports in Ethnomusicology, 11, 1999 [205-18]), 211.

habitus in the name of a search for authenticity, for instance, when bossa nova's muse Nara Leão invites traditional samba composer Zé Keti to perform and record with her.¹⁰⁶⁴

George Oliven has pointed out that the practice of appropriating popular cultural manifestations and subsequently transforming them into symbols of national identity is common to all cultures (he gives the examples of jazz in the United States and the tango in Argentina) but stresses that “it appears more intensely in Brazil.”¹⁰⁶⁵ Ulhôa notes, as well, that in Brazil this process often hinges on uncovering elements from the rustic, “rural-based folk art world or an authentic and uncorrupted close-to-the-roots world.”¹⁰⁶⁶

Forró universitário is, of course, one recent example of many in which the middle class has, on a massive scale, embraced and/or “discovered,” “authentic” national culture emanating from a rustic setting, but cooptation of popular culture by bourgeois interests in Brazil, just as Oliven argues, is hardly new. Chapter two already outlined several bourgeois celebrations of “nativist” culture, not least of which were the Modernismo movement, anthropophagy and that behemoth in Brazilian nationalist music, samba.¹⁰⁶⁷ More recently, Rio Grande do Sul is also experiencing a revival in folk cultural traditions that, not long ago, middle-class

¹⁰⁶⁴ Ibid, 211.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Oliven 1984 113. On taste and specific genres of Brazilian music, see Sean Stroud, *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music: Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira* (Burlington: Ashgate, forthcoming); Paulo Cesar de Araújo, *Eu não sou cachorro, não: música popular cafona e ditadura militar* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2002); Jairo Severiano and Zuza Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo: 85 anos de músicas brasileiras* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Ulhôa de Tupinambá 209. See also Sérgio Micele, *A Noite da Madrinha* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1972).

¹⁰⁶⁷ Tinhorão, *Música Popular*, has an excellent section on this process with samba, as does Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

people disparaged (such as drinking mate, hosting barbeques and playing traditional music).¹⁰⁶⁸ Both Ceva and Elizabeth Travassos point out that capoeira has seen a comparable rise in prestige, with college-bound youth from across Brazil actively participating, and in his history of capoeira, Lowell Lewis emphasizes that *capoeira regional* grew, in large part, out of Mestre Bimba's deliberate effort to attract more middle-class youth to capoeira in order to change its pejorative reputation.

It is worth, too, reiterating that the universitários were not the first group of middle-class Brazilians to “discover” northeast musical traditions or to attempt to “rescue” them. Already in the 1960s, members of the CPC¹⁰⁶⁹ including Gilberto Gil, Capinam and Tom Zé had tapped into the musical forms and lyrical themes of the sertão, utilizing nordestino raw material in the new musical protest culture of the 1960s. Indeed, as Chris Dunn writes:

Progressive artists and intellectuals of the early 1960s, especially those affiliated with the CPC and the peasant leagues, invoked the rural Northeast as a symbol of Brazil's endemic social problems and regional disparities and also as a site of authentic folk cultures that could be useful for an anti-imperialist national-popular cultural project.¹⁰⁷⁰

In his discussion of this project, Dunn includes the lyrics of Geraldo Vandré's “Disparada,” a first-person narrative sung by a plaintive cowhand who is protesting the various injustices of the sertão and the destruction of his way of life via encroaching modernity. The song, intensely similar both lyrically and musically to classics by Gonzaga, romanticizes the role of the vaqueiro and in fact uses him as a

¹⁰⁶⁸ See John P. Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁶⁹ See chapter five.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 46.

symbol of how modernization has destroyed the sertão.¹⁰⁷¹ He begins the song by asserting “I come from way out there in the sertão” and, after seven verses narrating his increasing marginaliation, he concludes dramatically by singing that “now I’m a gentleman... in a kingdom with no king.”¹⁰⁷² The song implies that the sertanejo cowboy has been *displaced* when in fact he has been *replaced* into a new context, extracted from his native soil and inserted into a newly prestigious forróscape miles away.

As Jean Franco writes in her essay on popular culture theories across Latin America, “the very conservatism of rural communities which made them living links with the past also meant that they became an important source for high culture in its search for the expression of Latin American originality...”¹⁰⁷³ Indeed, as modern urban artists explore their own identity and how they fit into their cultural moment, they revisit cultural history and tap into styles and products formerly maligned as in “bad taste.”

Menezes argues that the process of cultural cooptation/domination necessarily involves three stages. I outline them here, though I must point out that, while I find them to be an interesting theoretical formulation, the phases in Menezes’s scheme do not necessarily function seamlessly and/or chronologically; in many cases, any number of geographical/political/socio-economical contexts can add tension to the

¹⁰⁷¹ The irony, of course, is that it is the outdated feudal system that most decimated the social structure of the sertão; modernity simply showed the age-old injustices in greater relief.

¹⁰⁷² *Eu venho lá do sertão... Agora sou cavaleiro / Num reino que não tem rei*

¹⁰⁷³ Jean Franco, “What’s in a Name? Popular Culture Theories and their Limitations,” *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture* Vol. 1[1982], 5-15), 8. (She then argues that rural culture stopped being “tapped” as “authentic” in the wake of industrialization across Latin America which, in fact, I would argue is not entirely true).

process. As we will see, the forróscape across Brazil is currently straddling all three of her proposed stages. Still, they are worth considering, as they help us approach the specifics of how forró universitário found such success on urban stages populated and cheered by members middle-class.

According to Menezes, the first stage of cultural cooptation is that of *rejection*, in which the art form in question is derided by the ruling classes (and often repressed under state regimes). This corresponds to what Bourdieu argues about the negative manifestation of taste, the refusal to accept tastes other than one's own. As Bourdieu explains it:

In matters of taste, more than anywhere else, all determination is negation, and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes, disgust provoked by horror or visceral intolerance ('sick-making') of the tastes of others.... Because each taste feels itself to be natural – and so it almost is, being a habitus – which amounts to rejecting others as unnatural and therefore vicious.¹⁰⁷⁴

In the world of forró, this stage is epitomized by the various discriminatory practices against nordestinos (many of which, let it be noted, continue, even as forró universitário has become popular among the middle classes).

The second phase is what Menezes calls *domestication*:

The scientific apparatus of the dominant classes is used to separate the components of popular culture considered dangerous from those that are considered merely decorative or exotic. This is the phase of symbolic domination, characterized by registration, conceptualization, categorization, interpretation, theorization, and formulation of models.¹⁰⁷⁵

¹⁰⁷⁴ Bourdieu 56.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Eduardo Diatay B. de Menezes, "Elite versus folklore, ou de como a cultura hegemónica tende a devorar a cultura subalterna," *Cadernos* 17 (September 1982), 9-14. In Ruben George Oliven, "The Production and Consumption of Culture in Brazil," *Latin American Perspectives* (Issue 40, Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 1984 [103-15]), 104.

Indeed, this second phase is similar to the process that Diana Brown analyses in her study on Umbanda. Brown suggests that in order for folklore to be absorbed into the middle class, some of its “exotic” qualities must be mitigated and then the remaining morphed into a “national” symbol.¹⁰⁷⁶ I tend to think of it as a process of distillation: the most intimidating elements are set aside while the more appealing aspects are institutionalized through iconic symbols and narratives. In this phase, the violence inherent in the *seca*, in the land tenure system, in banditry and historical aggression toward marginalized populations, is extracted from the *farróscape*, leaving the entertainment value of dance and music alongside culinary and decorative contextual elements.

The third and final stage is referred to by Menezes as *recuperation*, a process in which the culture industry and ideological apparatus work together to transform the remaining components into a coherent culture that can be expressed and enjoyed by the dominant classes.

The case of *farró universitário* is interesting because it seems to conform simultaneously, in some way or another, to all three phases identified by Menezes, at least in practice if not in theory. The most conspicuous example of this is the ongoing discrimination that continues to plague *nordestinos* and their culture even while *farró universitário* (which claims to be a “pure” manifestation of *sertanejo* “roots”) sweeps across stages to great popularity among the middle class of Rio.

One of the clubs that most grabbed my attention is called “Farró dos Democráticos,” capitalizing with its name on the reputation of *farró universitário* as a roots phenomenon that allows for socializing across class boundaries. In fact, though

¹⁰⁷⁶ Ibid, 106.

early newspaper articles highlighted this aspect of the universitário scene, to find a forró party in which members of disparate classes intermingle is quite difficult. While the “employee with employer, patrician with unemployed, hippie with maid”¹⁰⁷⁷ potential publicized by early press is an interesting and perhaps encouraging concept, in reality, as one forró bass player admits, this attitude goes only as far as ‘discourse.’¹⁰⁷⁸

Cassidy notes that even though “many informants gave the impression that forró was equally popular across all classes... there were still definite boundaries maintained that marked out spaces for particular classes and groups.”¹⁰⁷⁹ Indeed, clubs have reputations as middle-class or popular-class establishments, and few patrons cross those lines. One musician chose a different way to describe the scene. Instead of noting the divisions between styles, he expressed a similar idea using overly positive language: “forró pé-de-serra has its public and [universitário] has its public, as well. Neither steals audience members from the other.”¹⁰⁸⁰

Ceva notes that there was even a division within the Feira, though I would argue that with the proliferation of universitário clubs in the city and the lack of pé-de-serra played at the post-construction Feira, middle-class youth are avoiding the Feira and instead heading out to nightclubs around Rio for their forró fix. They are not frequenting any and all clubs downtown, though; in reference to the downtown club

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ceva 121.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Interview with Eduardo Krieger. “*Isso na verdade não passa de ‘discurso.’*” In Ceva 121.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Cassidy 24.

¹⁰⁸⁰ ZO: “*O forró pé-de-serra tem seu público certo e o forró de banda também. Ninguém rouba espectador de ninguém.*” Barbosa 23.

Asa Branca (generally frequented by popular classes), Ceva writes that she overheard many middle-class girls say, “oh, no I won’t go there because what if I ran into my doorman?”¹⁰⁸¹

In response to this kind of attitude from so-called *forrozeiros* or “fórró fanatics,” one fórró universitário bass player retorted: “the middle class is crazy, discriminatory; at the same time that they insist they want roots fórró they don’t want to run into people who are themselves roots, who work earning a minimum wage.”¹⁰⁸² Another member of the scene calls it a fórró “apartheid,”¹⁰⁸³ and Ceva notes that fórró venues seem not to be equally accessible by different social groups. Indeed, she writes, “if the ‘South Zone’ has invaded the Feira de São Cristóvão, the opposite seems not to have happened.”¹⁰⁸⁴

Still, the popularity that fórró universitário is experiencing among the middle classes – and particularly the positive discourse of “embracing roots” that is recreated by its enthusiasts – is a sign that age-old patterns of discrimination and separation may be on their way out. In much the way that samba normalized relations across racial boundaries in Brazil,¹⁰⁸⁵ fórró music is already providing a bridge between the lower and middle classes as well as demonstrating that the so-called poles of Brazil

¹⁰⁸¹ “Ah, eu não vou não porque imagina se eu encontro o meu porteiro?” In Ceva 121-2.

¹⁰⁸² “A classe média é babaca, é preconceituosa; ao mesmo tempo que eles querem fórró raíz ele não querem encontrar as pessoas que são de fato raíz, que trabalham ganhando salário mínimo.” Interview with Eduardo Krieger. In Ceva 27.

¹⁰⁸³ Ceva 27.

¹⁰⁸⁴ “Se a ‘Zona Sul’ invadiu a Feira de São Cristóvão, o contrário parece não ter acontecido.” Ceva 26.

¹⁰⁸⁵ See Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

may be closer than we have previously thought. While in *practice* we don't see great evidence of this approximation, in *discourse* people on both sides of the cultural equation are asserting a "racial democracy"¹⁰⁸⁶ of forró, a fact which shows that at some level people are attempting to assimilate across the beat of the zabumba drum.

One New York forró singer spoke with me about the change in the Rio scene from the time she was a young rocker hanging out and dancing at the Feira until the explosion of forró universitário:

Where I grew up it was just American music, it was just rock, even Brazilian music was like... [she makes a face]... forró, then, was like "God help me!," it was [considered] horrible like that. And now the young people are returning to Brazilian culture.¹⁰⁸⁷

Indeed, music has become one way of bringing people in touch with their cultural identity and one way to bring people together. As one of Cassidy's informants optimistically points out:

With passing time the divisions are more extreme between social classes in Brazil. There has been a flattening of the middle class. Today the middle class is a much smaller slice you could say. And there is more distance between the rich and the poor. Music has turned into one of the few ways that a person from the poor class can leave from that place.¹⁰⁸⁸

¹⁰⁸⁶ Coined by Gilberto Freyre shortly after his watershed publication of "Casa Grande e Senzala," this term was viewed with pride by Brazilians (and admiration by North Americans) for decades, until protests in the 1980s and 1990s called attention to the fact that it was a gross exaggeration of the state of racism in Brazil. Still, while Brazilians call for further improvements in race relations, they nonetheless admit that calling themselves a racial democracy is an excellent goal and that its ubiquitous presence in the Brazilian psyche and discourse is perhaps a small step toward creating a true racial democracy. Perhaps optimistically, I like to think that Brazil's "forró democracy" includes the same challenges and hope for future class relations.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Interview: ME.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Cassidy 29-30.

Conclusion:
Rooting for Meaning in Rio's Forró Universitário

What, then, to make of forró universitário? Is it simply a passing trend that will quickly fade from bourgeois memory, like the lambada of the early 1990s? Is it in fact rooted, as so many participants like to claim, in middle class urban culture, with potential for the future? Is its future now dependent on the whims of the culture industry, or can a passionate group of fans keep it going?

The media, widely known to mold popular conceptions of culture, seem not to have yet incorporated forró universitário into its measure of hierarchies of taste. As Silverio Pessoa notes in his diatribe about modern Brazilian media, even as forró experiences a major renaissance among the middle classes, it continues to be treated in the media as a lower-class cultural phenomenon: “if you are watching a popular soap opera, when the lower class area appears, pagode or forró is playing. But when the middle class appears they play MPB, pop, or classical music.”¹⁰⁸⁹

One must ask, if universitário hasn't caught on in popular media outlets, how does the scene fit into a national forróscape? Unlike forró estilizado, the universitário wave has received enthusiastic support from forró traditionalists across the nation. Most pé-de-serra artists seem to embrace universitário music, many even including it under the rubric “pé-de-serra,” and few seem threatened by it – on the contrary, many credit the increased popularity of pé-de-serra and post-mangue forró experimentations to the popularity garnered by universitário bands. Says perhaps the most influential

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid, 29.

accordionist today: “I’m almost embarrassed, to say this, but the São Paulo and Rio universitários are showing an example to the nordestinos.”¹⁰⁹⁰

Certainly, forró universitário has created a new audience for traditional sounds and elevated the cultural consciousness of many middle-class youth, a number of whom now include their engagement with Brazilian “roots” music as part of their everyday discourse. Perhaps, though, the biggest contribution that forró universitário has made through its reverberations in the South is to stimulate forró pé-de-serra not in the city of Rio (the nordestinos there seem to have moved beyond traditional forró and instead listen primarily to forró estilizado) but back in Recife. In an era when people pay attention to cultural developments at the local, national and international level, it makes sense that forró would circle back upon itself.

¹⁰⁹⁰ “Tenho até vergonha de dizer isso, mas os universitários paulistas e cariocas estão dando exemplo aos nordestinos.” Interview: Dominginhos. In Lauro Lisboa Garcia, “De Volta ao Aconchego,” *Época* (26 June 2000) 126.

Chapter Seven

New York: Forró in a Transnational Setting

*O candeeiro se apagou
O sanfoneiro cochilou
A sanfona não parou
E o forró continuou...*

- "*Forró no Escuro*," Luiz Gonzaga, 1958

This chapter explores the growing community of Brazilians in the United States, specifically in the city of New York, and their participation in forró music flows. The first section examines critical literature on globalization and transnational migrations in order to situate the ethnographic section within a broader understanding of twenty-first century global phenomena. This part of the chapter highlights the flows of people and their cultural objects and processes in a world which is increasingly interconnected, and problematizes the notion that globalization is creating a more homogenous world that is dominated by North American exports. On the contrary, the interviews collected for this chapter demonstrate that as people become more comfortable crossing borders, they also become more comfortable mining local cultures for raw material and creating novel mixtures that juxtapose the local and global.

The next section treats the manner in which recent globalizing forces have re-structured immigrations, examining in particular a growing trend of trans-national (and cyclical) immigrations. Here we will focus on the many factors which make Brazilian immigration to the United States unique as well as archetypal of twenty-first century migrations. I will describe in some detail the demographics of Brazilian

immigrants to the United States and specifically to New York, showing how they stand out in terms of class, race, and migration ideology from other immigrant groups, and how this has helped to shape the way that forró is consumed and created in the metropolitan area. I will also show the importance of music in bringing diaspora communities together.

The final ethnographic section depicts the production and consumption of forró music in New York and explores the major issues I have found while studying this music scene, including audience demographics and experiences, traditional and hybrid forms of forró in the city and their underlying agendas, the discourse of insider/outsider politics and the cyclical nature of forró music and musicians across borders.

New York represents a frontier of Brazilian Northeastern-style music production, and seen in tandem with the forró circuits that have developed in Recife and in Rio, shows how forró music is deeply tied to the experience of migration and the need for Brazilians to maintain deep connections to a bucolic past that contrasts with the increasingly cosmopolitan lifestyle that so many Brazilians are currently experiencing. To be sure, a detailed examination of the forró music scene in New York can help us understand how, when it comes to Brazilian migrations, the past is deeply woven into the future.

The “New” Global Age

The past two decades have ushered in a new globalized age of increased communication technologies, travel capabilities and cultural exchange across borders,

leading to what many have called a post-national era. While indeed many of these processes are in fact age-old, the speed at which they now occur represents new challenges to understanding ever-transforming cultural contexts across the globe – a challenge which countless scholars of anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, history and other disciplines have rushed to tackle, leaving students of culture with a rich body of literature detailing current trends.

A general definition that these researchers have come up to describe these recent changes is “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa.”¹⁰⁹¹ Broad enough to encompass any number of political, economic or cultural subtleties, this definition nonetheless does little to mark any kind of difference between the manner in which these exchanges happened at the turn of the twentieth century and at the turn of the twenty-first century (a debate which continues to engage scholars across many disciplines). For our purposes, we will simply emphasize the role of recent technologies such as cell phones, broadband internet, satellite television, and computer software that features video-conferencing, instant messaging, online networking and photo-sharing. In addition to differences in opinion regarding definitions, there continues to be a plethora of names given to this new social “force,” as independent thinkers create terms that represent slightly nuanced views of the phenomenon. For instance, some scholars refer to this paradigm as “postmodernity,” while others have used the categories of

¹⁰⁹¹ Anthony Giddens, *Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 64. In John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 47.

‘globalization,’ ‘advanced modernity,’ ‘late modernity,’ ‘modernity at large,’¹⁰⁹² ‘complex connectivity,’¹⁰⁹³ ‘the global ecumene,’¹⁰⁹⁴ and ‘*mundialização*, or worldization.’¹⁰⁹⁵ Still others argue that we are in fact still in a period of ‘modernity,’ insisting that the “Enlightenment and civilizing project are still current in these global times.”¹⁰⁹⁶

J. Abu-Lughod has cynically referred to these terms (all of which represent only small gradations of difference) as “globalbabble,”¹⁰⁹⁷ and indeed, called our attention away from a purely descriptive social science and instead toward a science of

¹⁰⁹² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁹³ John Tomlinson defines complex connectivity as the “rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences that characterize modern social life.” Tomlinson 2.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Hannerz explains: “In... 1945... Kroeber discussed the “ecumene” (oikoumene) of the ancient Greeks. That ecumene, the entire inhabited world as the Greeks then understood it, stretched from Gibraltar toward India and a China rather uncertainly perceived. In our time, the corresponding unit is both larger, in the sense of encompassing more, and smaller, in the more metaphorical senses of connectedness and reachability. Yet as Kroeber had it, the ecumene ‘remains a convenient designation for an interwoven set of happenings and products which are significant equally for the culture historical and the theoretical anthropologist,’ and thus the global ecumene is the term I – and some others with me – choose to allude to the interconnectedness of the world, by way of interactions, exchanges and related developments, affecting not least the organization of culture.” Alfred Kroeber, “The ancient *Oikoumene* as an historic culture aggregate,” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (1945, Vol. 75: 9-20), 9. In Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Miguel Wisnik explains: “*Mas, para me contrapor ao seu discurso e pensar sobre mudanças que vêm ocorrendo nos últimos anos, quero propor inicialmente que se considere a diferença entre os processos de globalização e de mundialização. Se por um lado a globalização nos remete à generalização das relações econômicas transnacionais, dependentes do modelo norte-americano e de seus padrões, por outro a mundialização nos leva à constatação de que os sujeitos culturais deixaram há muito tempo de ser necessariamente nativos de uma região, de uma etnia, de uma cultura nacional ou de uma classe social ontologicamente determinada... nenhuma vida cultural paira “pura” acima ou abaixo disso.*” José Miguel Wisnik, *Sem Receita: Ensaios e Canções* (São Paulo: Publifolha, 2004), 321. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Cristina Rocha, *Zen in Brazil: the Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 15.

¹⁰⁹⁷ J. Abu-Lughod, “Going beyond global babble,” *Culture, Globalization and the World-System*, Ed. A. D. King (London: Macmillan, 1991). In Hannerz 18.

understanding the repercussions and meanings inherent in these societal transformations. Indeed, as we enter a new decade in the new millennium, it is imperative that we move beyond defining this moment in history and instead analyze it.

With this goal in mind, we can point to one branch of globalization research that is particularly useful: the study of *place*.¹⁰⁹⁸ Cultural theorist George Lipsitz offers a comparison that explains this new importance of place in social research:

A century ago, the combined effects of state building, urbanization, and industrialization transformed popular perceptions about change over time, making *history* the constitutive problem of the age of industrialization. Today, the ever expanding reach and scope of electronic, computer chip, fiber optic, and satellite communication imposes a rationalized uniformity on production and consumption all over the world, making *place* the constitutive problem of the post-industrial era.¹⁰⁹⁹

Fascinating for its insights into the current study, the examination of place investigates the impact that global flows are having on local places – and, particularly interesting for this project, *vice versa*. Early writing on globalization sounded a warning that local culture would be all but wiped out by the monopoly of popular

¹⁰⁹⁸ According to Tomlinson, “Several theorists have used the term “deterritorialization” in relation to globalizing processes: Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Global Culture: Nationalism, globalization and modernity*, Ed. M. Featherstone (London: Sage, 1990); Nélon García-Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); A. Mlinar, *Globalization and Territorial Identities* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1992); J. Lull, *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); M. Featherstone, *Undoing Culture* (London: Sage, 1995); A. Mattelart, *Mapping World Communication* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1994); D. Morley and K. Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global media, electronic landscapes and cultural boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995) S. Latouche, *The Westernization of the World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996) while others have preferred related terms such as “delocalization (J.B. Thompson, *The Media and Modernity* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995] or “dis-placement” (Giddens 1990) to grasp aspects of the process.” Tomlinson 106.

¹⁰⁹⁹ George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1994), 5.

culture by media giants like Coca-Cola and McDonalds. Quite to the contrary, though, we are seeing an unexpected interaction of local and global forces as the two become inextricably intertwined. In Edward LiPuma's words,

... theorists of the modern have told us that, insofar as the globalization of culture expunges the conditions for the production of local images and identities, cultural localism will wither away (Gellner 1987). The problem with this take on globalization is not that capitalism has renounced its predatory march, or that missions and mass media do not proselytize Western culture, or that migration, electronic commerce, and the like are not dissembling aspects of the state. The problem is that the forces of localism, and the entrenchment of heterogeneity, are themselves constitutive of the globalizing process. Buttressed by its intimacy with the local, the anthropological thesis is that the encompassment and localization of cultural, economic, and political production are two moments of the same process.¹¹⁰⁰

Indeed, as Featherstone has argued, a "paradoxical consequence of the process of globalization, the awareness of the finitude of the boundedness of the planet and humanity, is not to produce homogeneity but to familiarize us with greater diversity, the extensive range of local cultures."¹¹⁰¹ No longer is globalization simply a process of wealthy United States companies imposing Western products and culture upon places around the world; nowadays products from seemingly out-of-the way locations are arriving on the shores of the United States and impacting North American consumers.

¹¹⁰⁰ Robert Foster, "Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (Vol. 20, 1991 [235-60]), 235-36; Ulf Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); John Comaroff, "Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Difference in the Age of Revolution," *The Politics of Difference*, Ed. E. Wilmsen and P. McAlister (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [162-84]), 194. In Edward Lipuma, *Encompassing Others: The Magic of Modernity in Melanesia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

¹¹⁰¹ M. Featherstone, "Global and Local Cultures," *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change* Eds. J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson, and L. Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993), 169. In Andy Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 52.

This seems to apply even to people who do not leave the space where they were born; even members of a community who have never traveled abroad have a fundamental understanding of their world in contrast to the rest of the world. As John Tomlinson writes:

Connectivity means changing the nature of localities and not just occasionally lifting some people out of them... the paradigmatic experience of global modernity for most people – and this is not of course unrelated to the correlation between income and mobility – is that of staying in one place but experiencing the ‘dis-placement’ that global modernity *brings to them*.¹¹⁰²

Indeed, in an age of whirlwind travel in which we can watch streaming video from across the world, the very notion of place has to be approached differently. Arjun Appadurai has encouraged scholars to blur formerly strict boundaries through a scheme of “scapes” that better represent today’s fluid and rapidly evolving world,¹¹⁰³ underscoring the importance that hybrid forms are taking on today. And as Néstor Garcia Canclini asserts, the “hybrid experience is increasingly the global experience.”¹¹⁰⁴

In one of his contributions to cultural debates on globalization, Ulf Hannerz points out that cultures themselves have become caught up in the blurring of categories, asserting that “it is no longer feasible to think of cultures as distinct entities... but as

¹¹⁰² Tomlinson 9.

¹¹⁰³ See Introduction. Frederick Moehn suggests that, particularly in the realm of music production, we focus on “anthroscapes” instead of Appadurai’s ethnoscapas, since “the practice of mixing or recording abroad (usually in New York, L.A. or London), or of touring abroad” may better be explored by a paradigm “in which individuals’ global movements are not specifically linked to ethnicity.” Frederick Moehn, *Mixing MPB: Cannibals and Cosmopolitans in Brazilian Popular Music* (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, Department of Music, 2001), 50-1.

¹¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Tomlinson 142.

mobile, fluid, hybrid and inclusive.”¹¹⁰⁵ In fact, Hannerz discourages the metaphor of mosaic to describe cultures, since present-day cultures can’t actually be characterized as separate pieces “with hard, well-defined edges”¹¹⁰⁶ but are instead diverse amalgams constantly reforming around one another.

It is this reworking of culture at a local level that James Lull refers to as “cultural reterritorialization.” In his framework, global commodities and resources are transformed at the local level “in such a way that their meanings become inextricable from the everyday settings in which they are experienced.”¹¹⁰⁷ Indeed, in this model global goods take on meaning based on their local uses and contexts, in effect *enhancing* differences between local/regional and national/international levels and disproving the pundits that insist that globalization will wipe out local cultures across the globe.

While giving added attention to the local, Appadurai reminds us we must also redefine the notion of “locale.” No longer limited to a single geographic space, a locale may look different to any one of its “residents.” Svetlana Boym explores this new phenomenon and how it transforms the sentiment of “nostalgia” for migrants of the twenty-first century:

It is no longer a specific place where one belongs but rather a social context that one could export into diaspora. Yet nostalgia depends on materiality of place, sensual perceptions, smells and sounds. I do not know of any nostalgia for a home-page; rather, the object of nostalgia

¹¹⁰⁵ Bruce Robbins, *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (London: Verso 1993), 193. In Rocha 75.

¹¹⁰⁶ Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*, 218. Paraphrased in Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, “Introduction: A World in Motion,” *The Anthropology of Globalization*, Ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Boston: Blackwell Publishers, 2002 [1-34]), 11.

¹¹⁰⁷ Lull 160.

is precisely the nonvirtual low-tech world. In this case, locale is not merely a context but also a remembered sensation and the material debris of past life.¹¹⁰⁸

In fact, largely because of added increased flexibility and the very blurred boundaries that characterize modern migrations, many recent migrants are in fact transnationals, not having to confine themselves to one single locale but instead straddling the frontiers of immigration, with one foot at home and another abroad. It is intensified migration, according to many, that compounds a recent trend away from the nation-state as a constitutive category of our time. Orlando Patterson tracks the development of a 'postnational' environment based in Miami by stressing increased migration as the final blow to national boundaries:

The third current undermining the nation state is that of migration... Having spent the last century and a half violating, militarily, economically, politically, and culturally, the national boundaries of the region, the center now finds itself incapable of defending the violation of its own national borders. The costs of doing so are administratively, politically, and, most important, economically too high. Trade, and the international division of labor, follows the flag. But they also set in motion winds that tear it down.¹¹⁰⁹

What Patterson does not allude to in this passage, however, is the peripatetic motion that characterizes many modern migrations. Contrasting with the 'postnational' environment that he describes is the increasingly common term 'transnational.' Defined by anthropologist Aihwa Ong as a modern take on "how

¹¹⁰⁸ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001) 258.

¹¹⁰⁹ Patterson, Orlando. "The Emerging West Atlantic System: Migration, Culture and Underdevelopment in the United States and the Circum-Caribbean Region," *Population in an Interacting World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1987 [227-60]), 260. In James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 38. See also: Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York: New York Academy of Sciences, 1992).

nation-states articulate with capitalism in late modernity,”¹¹¹⁰ transnationalism is believed by many to depict accurately the real-world qualities of the movement of people and ideas in our contemporary world. Writes Ong,

Trans denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism.¹¹¹¹

Also referred to as “flexible citizenship,”¹¹¹² transnationalism heralds an additional category: the *transmigrant*, an individual who regularly engages in cross-border activities.¹¹¹³ More and more, migrants are uprooting themselves while continuing to travel, communicate, develop intense commercial relations, and exchange cultural information with their home communities. Unlike the model in which citizens of the world would find permanent refuge and a bright future for their children and grandchildren under the welcoming arms of Miss Liberty in the New York Harbor, not all recent waves of migrants have been arriving on our shores with plans to stay for good. Indeed, Jeremy Eades has conceptualized contemporary migration as ‘an

¹¹¹⁰ Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 3.

¹¹¹¹ Ibid 4.

¹¹¹² Aihwa Ong writes that “flexible citizenship” refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions. Ong 6.

¹¹¹³ Sarah England, “Negotiating Race and Place in the Garifuna Diaspora: Identity Formation and Transnational Grassroots Politics in New York City and Honduras,” *Identities* 6:1 (1999), 5-53; Nina Glick-Schiller, “From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 68:1 (1995), 48-63; Luis Guarnizo, “The Emergence of a Transnational Social Formation and the Mirage of Return among Dominican Transmigrants,” *Identities* 4 (1997), 281-322. In Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 6.

international network,' noting that contemporary migrations better correspond to a 'spider's web' than to the conventional bipolar model of migration.¹¹¹⁴ Others refer to it as "yo-yo" immigration and argue that "yo-yo migrants" (also called "shuttle migrants" and "cultural commuters" come closer to "commuting" than to "immigrating."¹¹¹⁵ As we will see in the next section, many new migrants claim that they are here only temporarily in order to save money for their return home; even while for many the 'return home' stretches out for years and remains elusive, these migrants bring to their receiving communities a different psychological mindset in which maintaining physical, financial and social links to home remains a high priority.

Roger Rouse was one of the first scholars to study transnational migrants, describing in detail a community of Mexican migrant workers from a small town in Michoacan (Aguililla) who have settled in Redwood City in California to earn a living as farm laborers and service industry workers. Rouse argues that the physical and mediated flows (mainly via telephone, as his account was written in 1988) between their expatriate location and their place of origin have created a single functioning community dispersed across space:

Through the constant migration back and forth and the growing use of telephones, the residents of Aguililla tend to be reproducing their links with people that are two thousand miles away as actively as they

¹¹¹⁴ Jeremy Eades, "Anthropologists and Migrants: Changing Models and Realities," *Migrants, Workers and the Social Order*, ASA Monographs 26 (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987 [1-16]), 8. In *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 28.

¹¹¹⁵ Quote by political scientist Wayne Cornelius, as quoted in Geraldine Grant, *New Immigrants and Ethnicity: A Preliminary Research Report on Immigrants in Queens* (New York: Queens College Ethnic Studies Project, 1981). In Maxine Margolis, *An Invisible Minority: Brazilians in New York City* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 120-21.

maintain their relations with their immediate neighbours. Still more, and more generally, through the continuous circulation of people, money, commodities, and information, the diverse settlements have intermingled with such force that they are probably better understood as forming only one community dispersed in a variety of places.¹¹¹⁶

Indeed, Rouse argues that these migrants exhibit “bifocal” cultural consciousness, since their multiple roles across different geo-cultural territories enable them to view the world through different types of lenses simultaneously.¹¹¹⁷ Ong, too, has pointed to not just transnational *practices* but also *imaginings*¹¹¹⁸ as migrants pass freely along these territorially unbound circuits; their increased geographical space has led to an increased cultural space in which they can freely paste together their own unique identities.

Peggy Levitt, a sociologist based in Boston who specializes in transnational migrant communities, points out that this trend has led to a new dispersion of *social remittances*, the term she uses to refer to “the ideas, behavior and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities.”¹¹¹⁹ For Levitt, social remittances are “the tools with which ordinary individuals create global culture at the local level.”¹¹²⁰ Unlike the model of globalization in which U.S. corporations descend upon other nations to sell North American products and ideas to consumers duped by the dazzling merchandise and its equally radiant marketing, the notion of social remittances allows the consumer to be the agent of change, choosing which cultural

¹¹¹⁶ Quoted in García-Canclini 232. Also in Tomlinson 140.

¹¹¹⁷ Levitt 202.

¹¹¹⁸ Ong 3.

¹¹¹⁹ Levitt 11.

¹¹²⁰ *Ibid*, 11.

products and objects to recommend to friends and family in the sending country.

Based on the numbers of people involved in these migratory circuits and the extensive reach they have through sending and receiving countries, Levitt argues that transnationalism “may become not the exception but the rule.”¹¹²¹

Still, Levitt concedes, the transnational phenomenon is not entirely different from migrant patterns we’ve seen in the past:

Living transnationally is not new... Between 1910 and 1920, for every 100 immigrants who entered the United States, a little more than one-third returned. Between 1880 and 1930, an estimated one-quarter to one-third of all immigrants to America repatriated... the majority of Slavic and Italian migrants, for example, meant for their journeys to be temporary. An estimated 30 to 40% went back to live, and between 15 to 30% made frequent visits back to their countries of origin.¹¹²²

Eric Wolf agrees, arguing that “the circulation of labor has been part of the entire expansion of capitalism,” and noting that “many European immigrants of the 19th and early 20th century remained in communication with their home countries and participated in those countries’ nationalist movements.”¹¹²³

What we are seeing today is simply an exaggerated version of an already established model. The numbers of migrants – and their heightened presence, due to various media outlets – are simply higher today. Not only that, but there is an

¹¹²¹ Ibid, 4.

¹¹²² Ewa Morawska, “The New-Old Transmigrants, Their Transnational Lives, and Ethnicization: A Comparison of 19th/20th/21st Century Situations,” *Immigrants, Civic Culture, and Modes of Political Incorporation*, Ed. Gary Gerstle and John Mollenkopf (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2001); Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York’s Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); M. Wyman, *Round Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe 1880-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993). In Levitt 21.

¹¹²³ Katherine Vassady, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identities and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu’s Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). In *Nations Unbound*, 24.

increased awareness of a global network that includes not just sending and receiving countries but dozens of points in between. Indeed, according to Bruce Robbins, the nature of our world today allows for “multiple cosmopolitanisms” which arise whenever and wherever there is intercultural contact and negotiation and no longer necessarily “belong” to Western intellectuals and travelers.¹¹²⁴

Brazucas in New York

New York is perhaps the quintessential destination where multiple cosmopolitanisms take root; it is most famous for its role receiving and integrating immigrants from all over the world – and for incorporating their diverse culinary, performance and musical traditions into the city’s rich cultural *melange*. Ever the international trendsetters, New Yorkers are constantly looking to the horizon for the next hot thing, be it an item, a restaurant, a bar, or a new genre of music. It is no surprise, then, that over the past two decades Brazilian objects and venues have seen a growing wave of popularity in New York. From *havaiana* flip-flops featured in the New York Times Styles section, to the trendy *caipirinha* cocktails recommended in Time Out, to the Salinas bikinis sold in chic downtown boutiques, Brazil has become a well-known exporter of of-the-moment fashions, even being called “the nation *du jour* among New York style-setters” by New York Magazine.¹¹²⁵ What *is* surprising, however, is that the burgeoning Brazilian community in and around New York gets

¹¹²⁴ Bruce Robbins, *Secular Vocations: Intellectuals, Professionalism, Culture* (London: Verso 1993), 193. In Rocha 75.

¹¹²⁵ Margolis 100.

very little coverage; even while Brazilian products are written up as *en vogue* in newspapers and blogs, Brazilians themselves seem to be an almost invisible minority in the city.

Maxine Margolis, the first scholar to publish on the Brazilian population in New York, has been following the Brazilian community in New York since 1994, when she published her first research in *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilians Living in New York City*. In this first book and subsequent publications, she notes that the Brazilian immigrants to the United States differ greatly from the migrants who have stayed within the national borders:

To people knowledgeable about Brazil, the word “migration” immediately brings to mind impoverished peasants fleeing from the country’s arid northeast after one of the region’s periodic droughts... But today the word has taken on a new meaning.¹¹²⁶

Indeed, in the case of Brazilian migration to the United States, until quite recently the major influx have been from the middle classes, a characteristic that differentiates the local Brazilian community from migrant communities in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro as well as from other migrant communities (particularly Latino populations) here in the United States.¹¹²⁷ *Brazucas*, a nickname Brazilians use to refer to any Brazilian living in the United States, began migrating to the United States in the early 1980s, a time when Brazil’s financial crisis was spiraling out of control and leaving

¹¹²⁶ Maxine Margolis, *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilians Living in New York City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

¹¹²⁷ There is a wide literature on the difference between Brazilian and Latino immigrants in the United States. See Ana Cristina Braga Martes, “Neither Hispanic, nor Black: We’re Brazilian,” *The Other Latinos: Central and South Americans in the United States*, Eds. José Luís Falconi and José Antonio Mazzotti (Cambridge, Massachusetts: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, 2007 [231-56]).

many of them without the relative economic security that their middle-class incomes had previously guaranteed them. According to Margolis,

The traditional “push-pull” explanations of international migration have proved inadequate in accounting for a worldwide phenomenon of such magnitude. Push-pull theorists assert that the catalyst for international migration is the imbalance in labor supply and labor demand in migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries. But they tend to ignore macrostructural factors that enmesh these global movements, such as rising expectations in sending countries brought on by increased levels of education and media exposure to consumer patterns in advanced industrial states. Such macrostructural factors help explain why, as in the case of Brazil, international migrants are not generally from the most impoverished countries or from the poorest sections of sending nations, as push-pull theories would predict.¹¹²⁸

In 1984, when Brazilian immigration to the United States first began to intensify,¹¹²⁹ the nation was just transitioning to democracy after twenty years of a repressive military regime which had engaged in extreme political censorship while prioritizing industrialization and import substitution. Under military rule, exports did rise, but not enough to offset a growing national debt, low investment levels and low employment ratios. Within this economic context, the country became extremely susceptible to stagflation and soon saw inflation spinning out of control.

Between 1980 and 1988, Brazil had an average annual inflation rate of 189 percent,¹¹³⁰ a crisis that would only worsen in the next years. Linda Anne Rebhun, an

¹¹²⁸ Margolis, *Little Brazil*, xv.

¹¹²⁹ Margolis notes that the rate of Brazilian migration to New York City “took off” in 1984 or 1985, continuing at an augmented pace until 1987. Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 4.

¹¹³⁰ Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 76. At the height of the influx of Brazilian immigrants inflation was even higher; it had climbed to 239 percent in 1983 (James Woodall, *A Simple Brazilian Song: Journeys Through the Rio Sound* [London: Little, Brown and Company, 1997], 247) and decreased only slightly, to 225 percent, in 1984 (Teresa Sales, Teresa, *Brazilians Away From Home* [New York: Center for Migration Studies, 2003], 26).

ethnographer conducting research in the Northeast of Brazil, describes the ridiculous task of constantly acclimating to dramatically rising prices:

To understand prices, a buyer had to have a basic sense of what any given commodity was worth that day. Prices changed with such dizzying speed that this was trying indeed. Some examples: the 369 *cruzaos novos* with which I bought a refrigerator in March of 1989 could buy only a slaughtered chicken one year later; what I paid for my stove in March 1989 bought two rolls of toilet paper in March 1990, one roll in May of that year, and nothing more than a pack of chewing gum by June. In March of 1990 my water bill was 230 *cruzeiros*; by June it had risen to 1,670 *cruzeiros*, without any change in water usage... a student colleague of mine... complained of the difficulty of gaining what she called her “money legs,” reminding me of my early difficulties. Like landlubbers at sea, newcomers had to learn how to negotiate the shifting waters.¹¹³¹

The Brazilian government scrambled to address the problem: the Cruzado Plan of 1986 had a successful launch but disastrous results just seven months in; The Cruzado Plan 2 announced later that year suffered much the same fate. 1988 and 1989 produced the highest inflation rates yet – 685% and 1320%, respectively – and inflation had risen to five digits by the end of 1989.¹¹³² In early 1990, President Collor instituted a new economic plan which would eventually ease the crisis but would take over a year to impact inflation.¹¹³³ In the meantime, shoppers complained that prices were being marked up while they waiting in supermarket checkout lines, and that the cost of their meals in restaurants go up as they eat.¹¹³⁴ Eventually,

¹¹³¹ Linda Anne Rebhun, *The Heart Is Unknown Country: Love in the Changing Economy of Northeast Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 54-5.

¹¹³² Sales 26-7.

¹¹³³ “Even after the [Collor] plan was in place, inflation was still galloping along at 926 percent for the twelve months ending March 1991, and by mid-1992 it was once again over 20 percent a month.” Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 76.

economic rehabilitation plans begun under Collor and continued under the guidance of Fernando Henrique Cardoso¹¹³⁵ would slowly improve Brazil's financial crisis. Still, in the span of just over one decade (1980-1993), Brazil had four currencies, five wage and price freezes, nine economic stabilization programs, and an inflation index of 146 billion percent.¹¹³⁶

Teresa Sales suggests that the massive numbers of Brazilian middle-class families fleeing a country in financial crisis is only part of the story; she argues that their disenchantment with the political transition and unfilled promises of emerging leaders also prompted their move to the United States:

... the so-called lost decade was in fact much more than a period of economic recession. It was a time of social and political mobilization, a time of great expectations. The long military dictatorship ended, democracy returned, social movements and political parties proliferated, and people took to the streets to demand – and win – the right to elect the president freely again. Inflation, unemployment and recession went hand-in-hand with exciting prospects, promises of 'salvation' such as the Cruzado Plan, rousing election campaigns and grassroots mobilization. Thus politicians must have been a factor for or against the decision to emigrate, give the hopes and especially the frustrations experienced by so many Brazilian in the years following the return to democracy.¹¹³⁷

However, leading experts in immigration argue that even if incomes increased and/or savings recovered in most sending countries, immigration would continue

¹¹³⁴ James Brooke, "A New Assault on Brazil's Woes," *New York Times* (March 15, 1990) C1, C16. In Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 6.

¹¹³⁵ President Collor was impeached in 1992 under charges of corruption and his stand-in, Itamar Franco, brought Cardoso on board as Minister of Finance. Cardoso would later be elected president himself in 1995.

¹¹³⁶ James Brooke, "In Brazil Wild Ways to Counter Wild Inflation," *New York Times* (25 July 1993), 11. In Margolis, *An Invisible Minority*, 10.

¹¹³⁷ Teresa Sales, "O Trabalhador Brasileiro no Contexto das Novas Migrações Internacionais," (*OIT – Organização Internacional do Trabalho & ABET – Associação Brasileira de Estudos do Trabalho*) *O Trabalho no Brasil no limiar do século XXI* (São Paulo: LTr, 1995), 129. In Sales, *Brazilians Away*, 23.

because, as Michael Piore argues, migration is driven mainly by factors in destination countries rather than sending nations. Teresa Sales agrees, writing that:

Mass migration from underdeveloped to developed countries began in response to active recruiting by employers in the latter, such as the guestworker programs of the 1950s and 1960s in Europe, and the WWII and post-war period *bracero* program in the United States.¹¹³⁸

Like so many other immigrant groups, the masses of Brazilians arriving in the United States in the mid-1980s saw their move as one that could allow them a middle-class lifestyle. Unlike the image that many of us have of first-generation immigrants, however, the majority of Brazilians arriving during this time had themselves been middle-class citizens until the volatile currency crisis had diminished their financial security and consumption potential in their home country. They were traveling to the United States in order to hold on to the middle-class lifestyles they were accustomed to (and that were rapidly eroding in Brazil).

Sociologist Michael J. Piore points out that this is actually quite common in migration circuits, noting that it is often middle-class immigrants who pave the way for the less prosperous citizens.¹¹³⁹ These relatively affluent migrants have the education and resources to research visas and passports, transportation costs and arrival arrangements in a new country with few Portuguese speakers. As Margolis writes,

It is only after information networks that facilitate international migration have been established – travel and remittance agencies, visa brokers, and the like – that would-be immigrants from the lower strata

¹¹³⁸ Sales, *Brazilians Away*, 20.

¹¹³⁹ Michael Piore, *Birds of Passage: Migrant Labor and Industrial Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

are able to follow the migratory path abroad blazed by their nation's more affluent citizens.¹¹⁴⁰

Indeed, it was middle-class Brazilians who still had the discretionary income necessary to make the move to the United States, as well as the wherewithal to develop networks and knowledge that would facilitate the process. This self-selecting group, then, generally emerged from a largely well-educated, urban and white demographic, skewing the social and racial make-up of the immigrant community compared to Brazilian society back home. Margolis notes that

83% of the Brazilians in my sample were white, 8% were light-skinned persons of mixed ancestry, and 8% were black. Thus, blacks and other "people of color," to use the Brazilian term, account for perhaps 16% of New York's Brazilian community, a fraction of the 45% reported in the 1980 census for Brazil as a whole.¹¹⁴¹

It is worth stressing, too, that the Brazilian community in the United States, already alienated by other Latin American immigrant groups because of differences in language and culture, feel further marginalized due to a discrepancy between how they see themselves and how others see them. Simply stated, most Brazilian immigrants to the United States do not see themselves as persons of color, while they are taken to be non-white Hispanics or Latinos by members of the host society.¹¹⁴² Like most immigrant groups, Brazilians settle near one another and build relatively close-knit communities, but their identity politics often further alienate them from other local immigrant communities.

¹¹⁴⁰ Margolis, *Invisible Minority*, 34-5.

¹¹⁴¹ Margolis, *Little Brazil* 83.

¹¹⁴² See Martes 231.

The overwhelming majority of Brazilian immigrants to the United States hail from the state of Minas Gerais, an area of south-central Brazil known for its rich ores and bucolic farmlands. Indeed, as Teresa Sales quips, “if Darcy Ribeiro were still alive and could visit the Brazilians of Greater Boston, he would be even more emphatically sure that ‘all this made Minas [Gerais] the knot that tied Brazil into a single entity.’”¹¹⁴³ Within this population, referred to as *mineiros*, a large percentage of migrants have historically come from the city of Governador Valadares.¹¹⁴⁴ Valadarenses were on the front lines of Brazilian immigration over its first ten years of growth¹¹⁴⁵ and settled principally in cities like Boston, Newark and Danbury, Connecticut, as well as South Florida.¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴³ Darcy Ribeiro, *O Povo Brasileiro – A Formação e o Sentido do Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1997), 153. In Sales 134. Ribeiro’s most well-known book, *The Brazilian People* (introduced earlier in this text), is a cultural history of the ethnic make-up of Brazil.

¹¹⁴⁴ Margolis explains that the large-scale emigration from Governador Valadares (referred to by one author as “the city that Uncle Sam built”) that started in 1980 can be traced to its position as the world’s largest exporter of mica (used in insulation applications) during WWII. After the war the industry (located in and around the city of Governador Valadres) declined, but relationships developed while the North American presence was strong led to continued contact, and eventually many North Americans brought locals back to the United States to work as household servants. See Margolis, *Invisible Minority*, 2-3.

¹¹⁴⁵ On the increasing exodus from Governador Valadares during the 1980s, check out the musical “O Último a Sair Apaga a Luz,” (“Last One Out, Turn Out the Lights”) in Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 95. Because of this exaggerated immigration from one small Brazilian city, it has become increasingly difficult for Valadarenses to obtain visas for travel to the United States, greatly lowering the number of immigrants from Governador Valadares since the mid-1990s. See Wilson Fusco, “Redes sociais na migrações entre Governador Valadares e os Estados Unidos,” *Migrações Internacionais, Contribuições para Políticas* (Brasília: Comissão Nacional de População e Desenvolvimento, 2001), 427-45.

¹¹⁴⁶ The majority of Valadarenses migrants were drawn to the United States because their home context was so saturated with migrant networks and, as such, represented a much wider social range than Brazilian immigrants from other areas. Valadarenses migrants included many working-class Brazilians, a major distinction from other Brazilian migrant communities to the United States.

Brazilian immigrants in New York City¹¹⁴⁷ hail largely from southern and south-central Brazil, both relatively prosperous areas of the nation. They primarily come from Minas Gerais and Rio de Janeiro¹¹⁴⁸ and to a lesser extent from São Paulo, Goiás, Paraná, Espírito Santo and a few others.¹¹⁴⁹ It is key to point out that very few nordestinos have settled in New York, making the surge of interest in northeastern music styles particularly interesting.¹¹⁵⁰

There are wide oscillations between the statistics presented in different sources on Brazilian immigration. The 2000 census showed 22,000 Brazilian residents in New York City and 22,000 in New Jersey (with a total of 212,000 in the United States), while Itamaraty, Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Relations, estimates 300,000 Brazilians living in New York City (with a total of 799,000 in the United States) for the same period.¹¹⁵¹ Even higher numbers were reported in 2002 by migration specialist Peggy Levitt, estimating the number of Brazilian emigrants in the United States at 1.5

¹¹⁴⁷ Margolis discusses a Brazilian *telenovela* or soap opera that premiered in July 1994. Called "Pátria Minha," or "My Homeland," it showed a family of lower-class immigrants who had managed to build a life in New York and were struggling with the decision of whether to move back to Brazil or not. Margolis notes that this family – whose members work in jobs as bus drivers, taxi drivers and auto mechanics and live in a modest home in a Rio favela – is a far cry from the social backgrounds of most New York-bound Brazilian immigrants. See Margolis, *Invisible Minority*, 1998.

¹¹⁴⁸ Margolis notes that nearly 80% of her sample came from these two states. Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 97.

¹¹⁴⁹ Migrants from particular regions and cities often tend to accumulate in the same destination city; Margolis notes that "people from the state of Goiás and Bahia go to San Francisco, there is also an enclave of people from Goiás living in Austin, TX. Natives of the city of Belém head for Miami. Citizens of Lajes, in the state of Santa Catarina, are found in Concord and Franconia, New Hampshire. Mineiros from Poços de Caldas make their way to White Plains and Mt. Vernon in Westchester. Residents of the tiny town of Tiros, in central Minas Gerais, live in Long Branch, New Jersey." Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 101.

¹¹⁵⁰ Obviously, while their numbers are quite small, they are over-represented in the world of forró in New York, as they often gravitate toward the music styles most typical to their Brazilian lifestyle.

¹¹⁵¹ Maxine Margolis, "Na virada do milênio: A emigração brasileira para os Estados Unidos," *Fronteiras Cruzadas: Etnicidade, Gênero e Redes Sociais*, Org. Ana Cristina Braga Martes & Soraya Fleischer (São Paulo: Editora Paz e Terra, 2003).

million.¹¹⁵² As with any population of illegal immigrants, it is extremely difficult to monitor the numbers of Brazilian immigrants here in the United States, and for our purposes it suffices to assess the community of Brazilians in New York as a large and growing corpus many thousands strong.

Contrary to the stereotypes popularized by sensationalist news reports, fewer than half of the illegal immigrants in the United States enter by crossing the Mexican border. Instead, argue Michael Fix and Jeffrey Passel,

Nearly all of the rest – about six of every ten undocumented immigrants – jet into one of the nation’s major international airports. They enter legally as tourists, students or temporary employees and only become illegal when they stay on in the United States after their visas have expired.¹¹⁵³

In his survey of Brazilian immigrants in the Boston area, José Bicalho supports this assertion, noting that 54% of his sample had entered the United States on a valid tourist visa while 43% had entered via the Mexican border.¹¹⁵⁴ Mitchell observes that nearly 700,000 tourist visas were allotted to Brazilian residents in 2000,¹¹⁵⁵ though how many of those visitors are thought to have overstayed is not indicated.

¹¹⁵² Peggy Levitt, “Variations in Transnational Belonging: Lessons from Brazil and the Dominican Republic,” *Dual Nationality, Social Rights and Federal Citizenship in the U.S. and Europe: The Reinvention of Citizenship* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002 [264-89]), 278.

¹¹⁵³ Michael Fix and Jeffrey S. Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight* (Washington DC: The Urban Institute, 1994). In Margolis, *Invisible Minority*, 20 .

¹¹⁵⁴ An additional 2.5% had entered with a falsified tourist visa. José Victor Bicalho, *Yes, Eu Sou Brazuca* (Governador Valadares, Minas Gerais: Gráfica Ibiturruna [FUNSEC], 1989), 84.

¹¹⁵⁵ Serviço de Imigração e Naturalização dos EUA, 2002, Tabela 36. In Christopher Mitchell, “Perspectiva comparada sobre transnacionalismo entre imigrantes brasileiros nos Estados Unidos,” *Fronteiras Cruzadas: Etnicidade, Gênero e Redes Sociais*, Org. Ana Cristina Braga Martes & Soraya Fleischer (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2003) 40.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of Brazilian immigration to the United States is the *temporary* manner in which migrants characterize their stays.¹¹⁵⁶ An overwhelming majority of Brazilians plan to spend only a limited time in the United States, saving up money and waiting out the financial crisis, while dreaming of an impending return home. One researcher noted that Brazilians tend to avoid the label *immigrant*, preferring instead circumlocutions like “my daughter is visiting the United States,” or “my brother is in Boston.”¹¹⁵⁷ In his survey of Brazilian migrants in Boston, Bicalho found that nearly 93% planned to return home,¹¹⁵⁸ and Margolis backs this up by including a quote from one longtime Brazilian resident of New York: “Only one in a thousand plans to stay in the U.S. permanently.”¹¹⁵⁹ Even when they don’t or can’t follow through, most Brazilians cling to the idea that they will one day return home. Indeed, anthropologist George Gmelch notes that some immigrant groups cling to an “ideology of return” no matter how long they have been in the host country.¹¹⁶⁰

¹¹⁵⁶ James Clifford, who refers to ethnographers as “travelers who like to stay and dig in (for a time)... to be homebodies abroad,” might chuckle at the comparison that Brazilians in the United States act a bit like ethnographers, digging in for a time but always returning home. See James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 22.

¹¹⁵⁷ Cristina Martes, “Respeito e Cidadania: O ministério das relações exteriores e os imigrantes brasileiros em Boston,” Paper presented at the *First Symposium on Brazilian Emigration* (Lisbon, October 1997). In Maxine Margolis, “We Are NOT Immigrants: A Contested Category among Brazilian in New York City and Rio de Janeiro,” *Diasporic Identity: Selected Papers on Refugees and Immigrants* (Arlington: American Anthropological Association, 1998 [30-50]), 36.

¹¹⁵⁸ Bicalho 102. In response to his question “How long do you expect to live in the United States?” Bicalho reports the following data: two years (31%); one year (20%); three years (12%); more than three years (5%); forever (2%). Bicalho 80.

¹¹⁵⁹ Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 258.

¹¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 258-59.

Unlike other immigrant groups who think of themselves as settlers, Brazilians conceive of themselves as sojourners, here for only a short while. As sojourners, they are perpetually absent even while present; by living for the day of their return, they invest very little in the migrant community of their host country. Some use a play on words (between *ser* and *estar*, verbs that mean “to be” but express a permanent and temporary condition, respectively) to express this: “*eu não sou, eu estou.*”¹¹⁶¹ It is for this reason that so few Brazilians set up local businesses, clubs or organizations. To do so would be a sign of permanence and an admission of the “ideology of return” as a myth. Says Margolis, “they are reluctant to make the long-term commitment that starting a business often entails.”¹¹⁶² She elaborates:

There are no Brazilian-owned businesses, comparable to Korean groceries or Indian newsstands, that cater to a non-Brazilian clientele. In other words, Brazilians lack what sociologists call an ethnic enclave, a concentration of immigrant businesses that serve the ethnic market as well as the population at large. To be sure, there are a handful of Brazilian-owned enterprises that meet the needs of the community itself, but very few Brazilians in New York City have started small businesses of their own; it is true that Brazilians are employees, not employers.¹¹⁶³

Indeed, with few exceptions, the goal seems to be to earn enough money (referred to by some as “*verdinhas*,” or “little green things”) in the United States to return home to Brazil financially comfortable. Ironically, Brazilians who could have made a comfortable living in their home country often work two or three jobs in the United States in order to make the move worth their while (financially); because of their

¹¹⁶¹ “‘*Eu não sou, eu estou*,’ one averred, which roughly translates to ‘I’m not here permanently, I’m just here.’” Margolis, “We are NOT,” 41.

¹¹⁶² Margolis, *Little Brazil*, 141.

¹¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 111.

legal status, they are often forced to take jobs far below their standard of prestige in Brazil. In fact, the jobs and living arrangements that these migrants qualify for are themselves transitory; their jobs are often low in prestige and security as well as offering few benefits and opportunities for advancement, while their homes are often low-rent apartments overstuffed with more people than beds or bedrooms.

Because of the “ideology of return,” these migrants never fully acclimate to their host country nor do they cease trying to belong in their native land; they live in a state of limbo, torn, as Margolis writes, “between their material and their emotional needs.”¹¹⁶⁴ As Teresa Sales writes, many of these migrants are struggling to financially support themselves within two national systems simultaneously:

... the same person may be paying installments on a mortgage in the U.S. while also owning property in Brazil and not wanting to sell it for the sake of that distant future. The same person may take pains to pay taxes and fees as they go through the legalization process to stay longer in America while having a relative pay social security contributions in Brazil to guarantee a retirement pension that may come in handy some day.¹¹⁶⁵

Surprising, too, is the number of Brazilian migrants who do return home, only to re-embark on another migratory journey. This process, called “retro-migration” by anthropologist M. Estelle Smith, involves migrants who, even after returning to their native countries, set their sights on returning to the host country, sometimes for financial reasons and sometimes because they no longer feel at home in their home country. Tânia Cypriano’s film *Grandma Has a Video Camera* follows the filmmaker’s family between the homes and lives they have built for themselves in the United States as well as Brazil, traveling back and forth (each time “for good”).

¹¹⁶⁴ Margolis, *Invisible Minority*, 114.

¹¹⁶⁵ Sales, *Brazilians Away*, 130.

Caught in a cycle of identity crises, the family members move back and forth several times, only to find that neither destination seems to fit their evolving needs and natures. When they are in the United States, they miss their friends and family in Brazil, yet when they return to Brazil, they miss the family and friends they now left in the United States. In the end, they must reconcile their mixed emotions by embracing the “space between” and resolving to be itinerant migrants, constantly betwixt and between cultures and spaces.

In order to mitigate the irregularities and difficulties inherent in any transnational migration, newcomers bring symbols of their native culture to their host communities. Suitcases open to reveal food, dress, printed material and music that will make their new home just slightly more welcoming and serve as a cultural bridge for migrants who miss their homelands. Of all the cultural objects and practices that immigrants carry with them on their travels, none is perhaps more significant and evocative than music – music serves to connect migrants to their home country at the same time as it helps migrants to negotiate the often complicated decisions and politics that characterize modern migrations. In fact, George Lipsitz writes,

...the very existence of music demonstrating the interconnectedness between the culture of immigrants and the culture of their host country helps us to understand how the actual lived experiences of immigrants are much more dynamic and complex than most existing models of *immigration and assimilation* admit.¹¹⁶⁶

James Clifford notes that diaspora cultures “work to maintain community, selectively preserving and recovering traditions, ‘customizing; and ‘versioning’ them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations.”¹¹⁶⁷ More than any other cultural

¹¹⁶⁶ Lipsitz 119.

product, music serves these diaspora communities by both preserving traditional values and memories and incorporating modern influences (often from the host country or other immigrant groups). Along with the symbol of the ship, Paul Gilroy uses the trope of music to show the magnitude of musical connections that have emerged from the Black Atlantic and that have linked the various outposts of the Black Atlantic diaspora. Indeed, Gilroy admits that music may even *exceed* transportation as a channel of cross-cultural contact and communication:

The dynamism of diasporic interchanges in music confirms Peter Linebaugh's wry observation that long-playing records have surpassed sea-going vessels as the most important conduit of Pan-African communication.¹¹⁶⁸

Music not only brings members of a diaspora community together, but it also becomes a crucial link between immigrants and citizens of their host countries; often it is the one cultural product that can cross the divide and bring together diverse communities that are often deeply suspicious of one another.

The most conspicuous complaint of Brazilians living in the United States is the lack of "warmth" between North Americans. This stems from the fact that Brazilians are accustomed to a more intimate interactions between friends, family members and even strangers. The anthropologist Roberto DaMatta explains that Brazilians define quality of life by personal relations,¹¹⁶⁹ stressing the fact that individuality and

¹¹⁶⁷ Clifford 263.

¹¹⁶⁸ Paul Gilroy, "Cultural Studies and Ethnic Absolutism," *Cultural Studies*, Eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 191. In Lipsitz 43.

¹¹⁶⁹ DaMatta uses a common Brazilian saying to demonstrate this point: A bull far from his corral is just another cow" (Longe do seu curral, o touro vira vaca!"). He continues by arguing that anonymity and individualization (two key characteristics of an immigrant's life in America) are equated with

independence, characteristics so prized within North American society, are relatively irrelevant for Brazilians. Living in a society so dominated by values of self-sufficiency and competitiveness, Brazilians long for prolonged physical and emotional contact with others – precisely what live music (particularly forró) can provide. Not only that, but live music performances also bring together members of both the Brazilian and North American communities and provides a relatively rare opportunity for the two groups to mingle and begin to comprehend one another better.

Gustavo Lins Ribeiro describes the effect of live Brazilian music:

The performances, which also attract North Americans, are usually organized by Brazilians and represent singular moments from which to galvanize the imagination of the migrants under the same symbolic-cultural grouping, music, which truly brings them together at those times as a community which, in each other's presence, can see, touch, get to know one another... in fact, Brazilian musicians on international tours are one of the largest sources of maintenance and reproduction of Brazilian identity.¹¹⁷⁰

Predictably, unraveling Brazilian identity is as much a concern here in the United States for Brazilian immigrants as in Brazil (if not more so). And like the compatriots back home, Brazilians in the U.S. often turn to music to solve issues and questions about personal and national identity.

Several researchers have noted that the racial, geographical and socio-economical divisions within Brazil are diminished among Brazilian migrants here in the United

punishment. Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 167.

¹¹⁷⁰ “Os espetáculos, que também atraem norte-americanos, são, no mais das vezes, organizados por brasileiros e representam momentos únicos para galvanizar a imaginação dos migrantes sob o mesmo guarda-chuva simbólico-cultural, a música, que os une verdadeiramente, naquelas horas, como uma comunidade que, em co-presença, pode se ver, se tocar, se conhecer... De fato, os músicos brasileiros em turnê pelo exterior são uma das maiores fontes de manutenção e reprodução da identidade brasileira.” Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, “O que faz o Brasil, Brazil: Jogos identitários em São Francisco,” *Cenas do Brasil Migrante*, Ed. Rossana Rocha Reis, Teresa Sales (São Paulo: Boitempo Editorial, 1999 [45-85]), 50.

States, where community members emphasize instead their shared national identity.¹¹⁷¹ This is a common reaction among other first-generation migrant groups, as well.¹¹⁷² Still, most Brazilians volunteer their state of origin (Minas Gerais, Goiás, etc.) as a descriptive category,¹¹⁷³ and research by Margolis and Sales shows that additional tensions are present in the Brazilian immigrant community – particularly because of the undocumented status that prevails among both middle- and lower-class immigrants.

Margolis notes an overwhelming contradiction in her sample; she finds that many immigrants speak with contempt of other Brazilians, calling them lower-class, and criticize a lack of community or solidarity among fellow immigrants even while they “seem to get lots of help from one another.”¹¹⁷⁴

The anti-mineiro prejudice I encountered in New York’s Brazilian community... is a revamping and updating of the traditional discourse of urban Brazilians, especially those from major metropolitan areas like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Urban “sophisticates” in Brazil have a long tradition of maligning people from smaller cities and towns, calling them unlettered *caboclos* and *caipiras*. Urban, middle class Brazilians are usually unfamiliar with the interior of their own country... [and] are more likely to have visited Miami, Orlando or

¹¹⁷¹ See Martes 233; Lins Ribeiro 72.

¹¹⁷² Alejandro Portes, *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995); Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, “From Estrangement to Affinity: Dilemma of Identity among Hispanic Children,” *Borderless Borders: U.S. Latinos, Latin Americans, and the Paradox of Interdependence* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998). In Martes, “The Other Latinos.”

¹¹⁷³ Bortoni-Ricardo notes that migrants prefer to refer to their state of origin over other over-arching categories, such as urban vs. rural. Stella M. Bortoni-Ricardo, *The Urbanization of Rural Dialect Speakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 112.

¹¹⁷⁴ Margolis, “Na virada,” 62. Margolis suggests that this lack of solidarity is visible in the refusal of Brazilian merchants in the United States to accept checks from other Brazilians, and in the common practice of selling (not giving) housecleaning jobs to friends and family when one immigrant returns to Brazil.

New York than to have traveled to tourist destinations in their own country.¹¹⁷⁵

Teresa Sales notes the same division in her research of Brazilian immigrants, and explains it by observing that middle-class immigrants who have over-stayed their visas must employ a strategy to separate themselves from the lower-class immigrants (who may be otherwise indistinguishable from the former):

Be they hicks or PhDs, bank employees or teachers, sales clerks or storeowners, they are all in the same boat in the sense that they must all start by doing the menial jobs that are reserved for immigrants and do not require the qualifications or skills they brought with them from Brazil.¹¹⁷⁶

Indeed, Sales demonstrates that in order to fight leveling of the social playing field, many middle-class Brazilian immigrants have created and perpetuated a myth of the “other,” a technique that “served perfectly their need for alterity, for an imaginary “other” located lower down on the social scale than themselves.”¹¹⁷⁷

What is interesting, however, is that on the dance floor, these divisions and conflicts – those constructed between Brazilians as well as those created between Brazilians and North Americans – seem to disappear. Particularly in the realm of forró music and dance, where couples embrace one another and literally melt into each other’s curves, there is no room for distance or for intolerance. There is room

¹¹⁷⁵ Margolis, “We Are NOT,” 38.

¹¹⁷⁶ Sales, *Brazilians Away*, 198.

¹¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 103. For literature on this trend in other migrant communities, see Sarah Mahler, *American Dreaming: Immigrant Life on the Margins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) (on Salvadorans in Long Island); Patricia Pessar, *Visa For a Dream: Dominicans in the United States* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995) (on Latinos in Washington, D.C.); and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, Arturo I. Sanchez and Eduardo M. Roach, “Mistrust, fragmented solidarity and transnational migration: Colombians in New York City and Los Angeles,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22:2 (1999), 367-95.

only for pools of sweat to accumulate between bodies, creating the same kind of intimacy as the fluids that Freyre stressed in his treatise *Casa Grande e Senzala* – fluids that act as mediating flows between cultural ruptures of difference and wariness.

New York's Latest *Febre*: Forró in the Big Apple

Called the style that “is fast becoming the city’s coolest new flavor”¹¹⁷⁸ by leading entertainment magazine *Time Out New York*, forró is indeed sweeping the city of New York and perhaps even finding a place among the top categories that most Americans associate with Brazil.¹¹⁷⁹ As one artist describes it, “nowadays in New York there is a fever of forró”¹¹⁸⁰ and forró enthusiasts can find their favorite genre played live seven days a week across three barrios of the city. In addition to the write-up in *Time Out New York*, New York journals such as *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Village Voice*, *The New York Daily News* and the *New York Sun* – not to mention NPR, *Afropop Worldwide* and other nationally syndicated newspapers – have featured articles on various local forró bands. As a relative newcomer to the New York scene, the forró genre has made great inroads in New York since the first band started playing here in 1998-99.

¹¹⁷⁸ *Time Out NY* (11 November, 2004). www.robcurto.com Accessed 1 Dec. 09.

¹¹⁷⁹ As Manuela Zoninsein notes, the top American associations with Brazil seem to be “sun, sea, soccer, samba, sex.” Manuela Zoninsein, “Are Blocos Taking Back Carnaval?” In “Dance! Global Transformations of Latin American Culture,” *Revista: Harvard Review of Latin America* (Harvard University: David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Fall 2007).

¹¹⁸⁰ “*Agora em Nova Iorque tá uma febre de forró.*” Interview: MH.

Accordionist Rob Curto recalls a band he joined with two musicians from Brasília and a singer from Ceará back in 1998-99.¹¹⁸¹ At the time, the foursome was inspired by the recent popularity that forró was enjoying across different cities of Brazil (particularly São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Belo Horizonte, but also Brasília) and wanted to bring that flavor to New York, a city whose Brazilian population was growing by the day. The band set up at the *Made in Brazil* bar and grill in Astoria, Queens¹¹⁸² and was received well but shortly thereafter disbanded so that the musicians could explore solo careers elsewhere.

Around this time (July 1999), Lincoln Center hosted a show in honor of the tenth anniversary of Luiz Gonzaga's death which featured performances by Gonzaga's grandson and nephew (Joquinha and Daniel Gonzaga) as well as the esteemed Oswaldinho on accordion. In conjunction with the performance, several exhibits were featured, including video and objects of the sertão. The presentation at Lincoln Center was part of a much larger trend among middle-class educated North Americans: the newly recognized genre of "world music."

First established in the late 1980s as a category to boost sales for international music among a population with broad interest in global culture and elevated purchasing power,¹¹⁸³ world music soon became a significant genre in its own right,

¹¹⁸¹ Paulo André, Oswaldo Filho Amarinho Ana Fortuna Tellis, respectively.

¹¹⁸² No longer in operation, this was a hot spot for the Brazilian music scene in New York for some time. Located at 35-48 31st St. in Astoria, it was at the center of one of the largest communities of Brazilians in the city.

¹¹⁸³ See Timothy D. Taylor, *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (New York: Routledge, 1997), chapter one.

out selling both classical and jazz music categories by 1991.¹¹⁸⁴ Brazilian music, with its strong rhythmic grounding as a music of the African diaspora, its generally sophisticated national music market (which guaranteed regular exports of a quality that North American audiences expected) and an infectious diversity of sounds, became a popular category within the newly created world music genre. Dubbed the *Brazilian wave*, this trend grew throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Charles Perrone and Chris Dunn describe this resurgence in their introduction to *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*:

There was a newsworthy resurgence of Brazilian popular music in North America in the 1980s. A phenomenon dubbed Brazilian Wave occurred in all areas of the industry (recording, broadcasting, performance, publishing, media coverage). Unlike the 1960s epoch of bossa nova, when a manner of interpretation became generic and was pursued by all participants, the 1980s brought variety. While bossa nova had operated with stylistic homogeneity, Brazilian Wave was defined by heterogeneity, the only overall common ground being national origin. This umbrella term covers instrumental music as well as singer-songwriters like Veloso, Ivan Lins, and Djavan, whose diverse repertoires show electric-acoustic alternance, modern samba, hybrid post-bossa sounds, regional rhythms, and rock. By the turn of the decade of the 1990s, now fully within the context of the “world-beat” or world-music trends, North American listeners began to be exposed to compilations and series of traditional musics, MPB, and neo-Afro-Bahian repertoires...¹¹⁸⁵

One of the major series of compilations that brought a heightened North American awareness to Brazilian music was the “Beleza Tropical” collection curated by David Byrne. A musician well known for his experimental creations as leader of the band Talking Heads, Byrne also became a leading enthusiast of Latin American alternative

¹¹⁸⁴ Taylor 1.

¹¹⁸⁵ Charles A. Perrone and Christopher Dunn, “Chiclete com Banana: Internationalization in Brazilian Popular Music,” *Brazilian Popular Music & Globalization*, Ed. Charles A. Perrone & Christopher Dunn (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 21-2.

musics, founding in 1988 the record label Luaka Bop.¹¹⁸⁶ Interestingly, Byrne also turned heads with his 1999 essay “I Hate World Music,” published in *The New York Times*. Byrne’s major complaints with the new genre included its exoticization of foreign music and its “catch-all” quality. He writes that world music:

Groups everything and anything that isn't ‘us’ into ‘them.’ This grouping is a convenient way of not seeing a band or artist as a creative individual, albeit from a culture somewhat different from that seen on American television. It's a label for anything at all that is not sung in English or anything that doesn't fit into the Anglo-Western pop universe this year.¹¹⁸⁷

Another major critique of world music has been that it is an inaccurate gauge of what people throughout the world are actually listening to; often the major names in the world music circuit do not have huge followings in their home countries, where genres that are both more commercial and less technically sophisticated often dominate. Forró, however, may prove to be one exception to this rule. Even though individual pé-de-serra and universitário performances do not generate the exaggerated income of those in the estilizado style, forró is still widely recognized across Brazil; even Brazilians who are not forró enthusiasts recognize the importance and popularity of the genre as well as its familiar sound.

The fact that forró is considered a music of folkloric origin also helps it fit in perfectly with the corpus of world music, itself a lightning rod for countless

¹¹⁸⁶ The Brazilian music cds published by Luaka Bop have been some of the most successful Brazilian music compilations of all time. Luaka Bop has released a compilation of MPB (“Brazil Classics: Beleza Tropical,” 2000), a compilation of classic samba tunes (“Brazil Classics, Vol. 2,” 2000), a compilation of rowdy forró hits (“Brazil Classics, Vol. 3,” 2005) and a compilation of recent fusions from the Northeast (“What’s Happening in Pernambuco,” 2008), along with several cds by tropicalists Tom Zé and Os Mutantes and the up and coming Moreno +2.

¹¹⁸⁷ David Byrne, “I Hate World Music,” *The New York Times* (3 October, 1999). Available: <http://www.jasonjhall.com/widrworld/wwpages/byrne.html> Accessed 4 May 2010.

“traditional” musics from around the world. Indeed, what is most surprising is that forró was not crowned a top world music contender even earlier. As Suzel Ana Reily argues in her review of just one recent forró release,

Forró for all is a prime example of what one might call “world music”: it integrates exotic regional timbres into the familiar aesthetic mold of a studio-produced product-oriented commodity. Sophisticated arrangements surround the brilliant, yet distinct, rhythms of the Northeast, and Rolim’s tempered nasality provides a continuous reminder of the ethnic origins of the music. This “listener-friendly” format makes it appealing to the Western ear (and, might I add, to Brazil’s intellectualised upper classes as well).¹¹⁸⁸

Even with its perfect positioning as a world music favorite, forró in fact attracted a younger, more hip crowd when it debuted in New York. With the exception of the performance at Lincoln Center, the venues that began to book forró shows in the early 1990s were largely underground party spots in the Village, and as such, drew twenty- and thirty-somethings from around the city that were interested in local art, jazz and design fusions. These youths were excited to ride the cusp of a new music happening in the city, and were drawn to the funky rhythms of forró and also the alterity that the scene offered. In a sense, forró lost its country bumpkin status when it arrived in New York. Largely because it has seen its success grow in underground performance venues like Nublu and Barbés and because of its treatment in the media as a hip and sophisticated new sound, it has become, as one artist affirms, “a cult phenomenon”¹¹⁸⁹ in New York.

One band in particular arose and capitalized on the mystique of forró to build a following that still remains unchallenged in terms of sheer numbers and presence

¹¹⁸⁸ Suzel Ana Reily, “Forró For All: Saldanha Rolim,” *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 4 (Special Issue, Presented to Peter Cooke, 1995 [181-82]), 181.

¹¹⁸⁹ “*Então o forró virou essa coisa cult.*” Interview: PR.

within the scene: Forró in the Dark. Named after a popular song by Luiz Gonzaga,¹¹⁹⁰ Forró in the Dark was formed in October 2002 by bandleader Mauro Refosco, a Brazilian musician who arrived in New York in 1992 to study classical percussion at the Manhattan School of Music and has played with David Byrne's band since 1994. According to Mauro, playing in a pop band was an unexpected development,¹¹⁹¹ and he narrates the founding of Forró in the Dark as equally surprising:

On my birthday that year, I invited an accordion player and some other friends, including Smokey (Hormel, a guitarist who's played with Beck, Johnny Cash and Neil Diamond) to a party... Smokey had been learning forró songs; every time we met, he'd want to play me something new he'd discovered. Nublu (the downtown New York hot spot) had just opened. I thought we could play some forró to celebrate my birthday. The audience went crazy, and the club offered us a weekly gig.

The weekly gig at Nublu continues today, and every Wednesday at midnight the cramped space draws crowds that pack themselves in until the tiny club is bursting at its seams. Their forró includes self-authored songs as well as old forró pé-de-serra favorites, but all are played as hybrid 'grooves' with ample improvisation and an ambient, rather than traditional, sound. As David Byrne affirms: "they are liberating the genre in the same way that Gram Parsons, Lucinda Williams, and others liberated country music. They aim to hijack the spirit and make it relevant and new."¹¹⁹²

¹¹⁹⁰ "Forró no Escuro," literally "Forró in the Dark." (See chapter epigraph.)

¹¹⁹¹ Says Mauro, "I never wanted to be in a rock 'n' roll band, but playing pop music (with Byrne) changed my life. I decided to stay." J. Poet, "Forró's Northern Revival," *San Francisco Chronicle* (Sunday, July 1, 2007).

¹¹⁹² Gilbert, Andrew, "Take Me to the River: Festival Welcomes Forró in the Dark's Contemporary Brazilian Rhythms," *Boston Globe* (June 15, 2007).

In 2004, while the band was still discovering its distinctive style, group members diverged over what direction to take their music; some wanted to push a more experimental agenda while others wanted to increase their repertory in a more traditional (*pé-de-serra*) vein. In the end, Rob Curto (the lead accordionist) and Pedro Ramos (the *cavaquinho*, or ukelele player and singer) left Forró in the Dark,¹¹⁹³ eventually forming Forró For All¹¹⁹⁴ and building up their own avid following.

Called “fórró’s foremost ambassador in the States”¹¹⁹⁵ and “one of the cats responsible for [fórró’s] sudden jump in local popularity,”¹¹⁹⁶ Rob Curto began his career as a jazz pianist and picked up the accordion after watching Buckwheat Zydeco in performance in New York City. He is a latecomer to the fórró genre, having discovered it only in his late twenties, but he is unsurpassed in his talent on the accordion and an authority on the traditional fórró *pé-de-serra* canon. He spent two years performing fórró¹¹⁹⁷ and choro music in Brasília at the height of the fórró craze there, and studied with Arlindo dos Oito Baixos¹¹⁹⁸ in Recife. The band he formed after breaking with Forró in the Dark has been called “America’s finest

¹¹⁹³ After their split, Forró in the Dark incorporated the *pífano*, or fife, as well as guitar into their performances as the main melodic line. This makes their sound quite unique from other traditional fórró bands, though the *pífano* (as a main component of Zabumba music in Pernambuco) is still considered an instrument natural to the fórró genre.

¹¹⁹⁴ Before forming Forró For All, they also played as Forró Soxote.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Good Times* (Santa Cruz newspaper) (22 August, 2007) www.ochobajos.com Accessed 1 Dec. 2009

¹¹⁹⁶ See footnote 88.

¹¹⁹⁷ During his stint performing in Brasília (2001-2003), he played with the band Trio Perfumado.

¹¹⁹⁸ Arlindo is the master that I also studied with in Recife, and is generally considered the leading teacher in the area of both piano and button accordions.

purveyors of the forró sound,”¹¹⁹⁹ and indeed, Forró For All is highly esteemed throughout New York as the sound closest to what most Brazilians recognize as forró. Though he has in recent years developed original content, Curto has built a name for himself as a performer who symbolizes traditional forró pé-de-serra. The fact that he is an American who first encountered the genre in his late twenties is perhaps ironic, but not at all counter to the hybrid nature of roots forró (see below). In fact, the highly esteemed world music diva Lila Downs has expressed that Curto “is a musician playing in our time the voices of time past,”¹²⁰⁰ a reference to his knowledge and expertise in traditional music of the Northeast as well as an indication of the saudade that his playing elicits in so many of his audience members.

Alongside Forró in the Dark and Forró For All, there are several other successful forró artists in the area, both vocalists and instrumentalists. Marianni is a singer (originally from Rio de Janeiro) whose repertory includes forró as well as bossa nova and MPB; she occasionally features only forró in her performances but sometimes highlights softer (more jazz-influenced) genres for different audiences. Tiny and energetic, her forró has a pep to it that is reminiscent of Elba Ramalho, a diminutive blonde forró singer known throughout the Brazilian Nordeste as “the flower of Paraíba.” Liliana Araújo is another Brazilian singer who specializes in northeastern styles. She has recently formed her own band, “Forró da Madame,” but has also been performing alongside Rob Curto for several years, electrifying audiences with her deep husky voice whose essence closely emulates Luiz Gonzaga’s. In addition to

¹¹⁹⁹ “New York Funksters Rob Curto’s Forro For All...” *San Francisco Bay Guardian* (1/10/07) Available: www.robcurto.com Accessed 1 Dec. 2009.

¹²⁰⁰ www.ochobajos.com Accessed 1 Dec. 2009.

presentations in the forró genre, she is also the voice of Nation Beat and Maracatu New York, two bands established by Scott Kettner (see below). The former merges the sounds of northeastern maracatu¹²⁰¹ and North American – particularly country – influences while the latter brings together a diverse group of percussionists from around the New York area and features more traditional maracatu.

Eliano Brás is a classically trained violinist from Ceará who plays both classical violin and nordestino-style rabeca. A member of the New York forró scene since 2004 and founding member of Rabeca do Forró, he brings the unique sound of a Brazilian country fiddle to his forró performances, enhancing the melodic line of Curto's accordion. The two most impressive percussionists of the scene are Davi Vieira and Zé Mauricio, from Bahia and Rio, respectively. They play zabumba, triangle and any number of additional rhythmic instruments to enhance the rich cadenced beat of forró. Olivier Glissant is an accordion player from Martinique who often plays alongside Eliano in Rabeca do Forró and who also heads a weekly gig at L'Orange Bleue. Another major contributor to the New York forró scene for nearly a decade was Pedro Ramos, the cavaquinho player who left Forró in the Dark to form a new band with Curto. Until moving back to Brazil in 2008, Ramos was the lead vocalist of Forró For All, a role that has since been taken over by Curto himself.

As is perhaps obvious from this generalized genealogy of the forró scene in New York, it is a small and intimate group of artists who often collaborate with one another and substitute for one another during tours and other travel. Because they are so few, they are actually already familiar with one another's playing style and repertory; as one musician said, "if someone calls me to play, he already knows my

¹²⁰¹ See chapter five for a description of maracatu music.

repertory... so you know, when you call someone you have a sense of what to expect, what you're going to play and whatnot."¹²⁰² The forró musicians in New York are in a sense a family, and they speak with respect and appreciation about the other forró projects developing around the city.

Though forró has been widely enjoyed in New York since its inauguration in 2002, it has also had a rather ephemeral history, as clubs that feature the music are themselves transient, opening and closing in a fleeting manner. When I first started following the scene, there were shows three days a week at Nublu, Guernica¹²⁰³ and then SOB's (later Black Betty,¹²⁰⁴ also now closed, became a popular meeting ground for forrozeiros). Nowadays the regular shows are Wednesday evenings at Nublu in the Village,¹²⁰⁵ Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons at Miss Favela in Williamsburg,¹²⁰⁶ Friday nights at Barril Grill in Astoria¹²⁰⁷, Saturday evenings at Giovannas in Spanish Harlem,¹²⁰⁸ and Sunday afternoons at L'Orange Bleue in the Village.¹²⁰⁹ In addition, there are regular shows at Barbés in Park Slope,¹²¹⁰ Lava Gina in Mid-town and Joe's Pub in the Village. Additional performance spaces that

¹²⁰² "...Uma pessoa me chama pra tocar, a pessoa já sabe o repertório que eu tenho, eu tenho esse repertório, então vai tocar aquele repertório que eu canto, aí tem o repertório de outro fulano, então você já sabe mais ou menos quando você chama alguém você já sabe mais ou menos o que espera, o que vai tocar e tudo mais." Interview: PR.

¹²⁰³ Guernica – closed 2005 – 25 Avenue B, New York.

¹²⁰⁴ Black Betty – closed 2009 – 366 Metropolitan Ave., Brooklyn, New York.

¹²⁰⁵ Nublu – 62 Avenue C, New York. www.nublu.net

¹²⁰⁶ Miss Favela – 57 South 5th Street, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York. www.missfavela.com

¹²⁰⁷ Barril Grill – 30-18 Broadway, Astoria, New York.

¹²⁰⁸ Giovanna's – 1567 Lexington Avenue, New York.

¹²⁰⁹ L'Orange Bleu – 430 Broome Street, New York.

¹²¹⁰ Barbés – 376 9th Street, Park Slope, Brooklyn, New York.

regularly feature Brazilian music and often forró as part of the mix, include Mondays at Café Wah,¹²¹¹ Sunday brunch at Dois Caminos,¹²¹² Saturday evenings at Zinc Bar,¹²¹³ and Rodeo Bar.¹²¹⁴

100% *Mistura*: Forró Audiences in New York

Of course, the kinds of audiences drawn to forró performance vary between venues, but there are some general trends that are worth examining. The majority of artists I interviewed estimated that the forró scene draws about 50% Brazilians and 50% Americans,¹²¹⁵ though one musician noted that the audiences are “very New York: not just Brazilian, not just American, but everything,”¹²¹⁶ estimating 33% Brazilian, 33% American and 33% (other) in attendance at different shows. (He followed this assertion with a sarcastic grin and commented that “in New York it’s actually hard to find real Americans.”)¹²¹⁷ The diverse make-up of the forró audience in New York has changed in recent years: one avid forrozeira insisted that when she first entered the scene three years ago, it was dominated (99%) by Brazilian audiences. Certainly, even today, Brazilian audiences predominate in venues in

¹²¹¹ Café Wah - 115 Macdougall Street, New York. www.cafewha.com

¹²¹² Dois Caminos – 373 Park Avenue South (between 26th and 27th Streets), New York.

¹²¹³ Zinc Bar – 82 West 3rd, New York.

¹²¹⁴ Rodeo Bar – 375 3rd Avenue, New York. www.rodeobar.com

¹²¹⁵ Though problematic for obvious reasons, I am using the term “Americans” here to refer to citizens of the United States; it is the term most commonly used among Brazilians and I have adopted its use for this section to remain as close as possible to their original meaning.

¹²¹⁶ “É nova iorquino mesmo: não é só brasileiro, não é só americano, é tudo.” Interview: PR.

¹²¹⁷ “Porque Nova Iorque é difícil encontrar americano na verdade...” Interview: PR.

Queens¹²¹⁸ and in Spanish Harlem. In large part, this can be explained by the large population of Brazilians in these areas; Astoria, Queens has the most concentrated Brazilian population in the New York area, and Spanish Harlem also has a growing Brazilian community.

Also of note is that the major shows by Brazilian bands featured on Globo satellite television advertisements draw an audience markedly predominated by Brazilians, perhaps by 80%. In general, different audiences are targeted for different *kinds* of performances of Brazilian music in New York: bands that play the world music circuit typically draw a middle-aged, relatively well-off audience of some Brazilians and mostly Americans; bands that play roots forró generally attract young Brazilians and Americans in their twenties and thirties; and Brazilian top-40 bands usually pull an audience of young Brazilian immigrants who are not yet fully integrated into North American society (hence the advertising on an all-Portuguese-language satellite television station).

One forró fan whom I interviewed stressed his surprise at the number and diversity of Brazilians present at shows of Brazilian music in the United States. He laughed as he admitted that before immigrating to the U.S., he had assumed that international tours by Brazilian artists would be played to an audience made up of any nationality but Brazilian:

Man, when we're in Brazil and we hear about someone doing an international tour, we have a conception that is totally different from that which we have today when we live here... nobody knows that the international tour that he's about to do, he's going to be playing for Brazilians.¹²¹⁹

¹²¹⁸ One person quoted 90% Brazilian and 10% American as an estimate for forró shows held in Astoria.

One forró musician pointed out that there is a core tier of forró enthusiasts who are regulars at his and other forró shows around the city; he estimates this at about 125, the top 25 of whom are quite fervent in their consumption of forró (going to several shows a week). It is this core group of forrozeiros who maintain the Facebook group “Forrozeiros in New York and beyond,”¹²²⁰ constantly updating the site with information on upcoming shows, photos and videos of different dancers and starting online discussions on various themes related to forró. Many of the core members were introduced to the scene through forró classes (offered in New York, Newark and Long Branch, New Jersey) while others were forró enthusiasts in Brazil or elsewhere¹²²¹ before arriving in New York.

As is clear from these descriptions, the adjective most appropriate to describe the forró scene in New York City is diverse, a quality appropriate for an already diverse genre in one of the world’s favorite centers of contrast and variety. Said one musician,

Man, people from every kind of class come to the forró here, people of every walk of life, you know how New York is, right, there are busboys and millionaires riding the same train together, you know?¹²²²

¹²¹⁹ “*Cara, quando a gente tá lá no Brasil e gente escuta pessoal falando que vai fazer um tour internacional, a gente tem uma noção é totalmente diferente do que temos hoje quando a gente convive aqui. Mas ninguém sabe que o tour internacional que ele vai fazer, ele vai ‘tar tocando pro brasileiro.*” Interview: R.

¹²²⁰ As of February 18, 2010 there were 136 members of this group.

¹²²¹ The forró scene in Paris rivals the scene in New York in terms of the number of musicians regularly performing. See Sarah J. Wachter, “Forró Raises Pulse of Parisians,” *New York Times, Travel Section* (Sunday, 14 February 2010). Available at: <http://travel.nytimes.com/2010/02/14/travel/14headsup.html>

¹²²² “*Rapaz vai gente de toda classe no forró aqui, gente de todo jeito, você sabe como é Nova Iorque aqui, né, tem busboy até milionários andando dentro do trem, entendeu?*” Interview: EB.

Indeed, another forró singer insisted that “I see so, so much mixture here in New York.”¹²²³ This is true not only for the various nationalities that are represented around a forró stage but also within the Brazilian immigrants. Even while many ethnographers have pointed to a division within the Brazilian population (the myth of the “other” described above), this separation does not seem to exist among forró audiences in the city.¹²²⁴ Instead, Brazilians interact freely with one another, mineiro with carioca, paulista with bahiano, and enjoy the music for what it is: a bridge between their immigrant home and their native soil.

Historically, as Chasteen writes in his Introduction to Hermano Vianna’s *The Mystery of Samba*, “since the 1930s, Brazilians have, overall, enthusiastically adopted the notion that racial and culture *mixture* define their unique national identity.”¹²²⁵ He continues by declaring Brazilian music an allegory for that mixture; according to Chasteen, “samba is the great metaphor for the mixture.”¹²²⁶ Indeed, samba has long been recognized as a symbol of miscegenation (due in large part to its own mixed genealogy). At the same time, I would also like to underscore Fred Moehn’s assertion that “while the emphasis on *racial* mixing remains central, equally

¹²²³ “*Eu vejo muita mistura, muita mistura, aqui em Nova Iorque.*” Interview: ME.

¹²²⁴ One very interesting comment that I received with a New York musician native to the Brazilian Northeast is worth examining, even if briefly. When I asked him about discrimination among Brazilians in the United States, he replied that in a kingdom where everyone is blind, a man with one eye is the richest person. (“*Vamos supor uma pessoa que tá no reino... que ninguém consegue enxergar, todo mundo é cego, mas tem um cara que tem um olho, então quem é mais rico? O cara que tem um olho.*”) This expression is common in the Northeast, though it has a few versions. I mention it here because it is significant to me that he associates the Brazilian immigrant community with a physical attribute usually construed as a handicap, implying that Brazilians in the United States are already at an extreme disadvantage. Interview: EB.

¹²²⁵ John Chasteen, *Introduction: The Mystery of Samba* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999) xiii.

¹²²⁶ *Ibid.*

important is a notion of transnational miscegenation of musical styles.”¹²²⁷ I would like to suggest that forró music incorporates and encourages not just racial and transnational miscegenation, but also symbolizes mixture and exchange across other age-old dualistic categories in Brazil, such as urban-rural, wealthy-poor, South-North, etc.

At a typical forró event in New York, Brazilians from any number of backgrounds join the raucous fun, drinking, laughing, dancing, eating and enjoying themselves. People switch couples often and are inclusive and outgoing with new groups or individuals. When tables become scarce, people share tables with complete strangers (often in other languages) and when newcomers set out for home, veteran fans give them directions to the nearest subway. I have never been greeted with anything other than a smile at any of the forró events I have frequented in and around the city; I have always been made to feel welcome.

In fact, the only difference among Brazilians in the audience that any of my interviewees could pinpoint was a preference between “traditional” forró pé-de-serra and what I refer to as “roots” forró (which incorporates various fusions of pé-de-serra with other rhythms and musical traditions). As one performer pointed out, nordestinos (“the folks from there, that were born with it,”)¹²²⁸ prefer pé-de-serra, while Americans as well as other Brazilians appreciate everything, from pé-de-serra to more alternative sounds.

¹²²⁷ Fred Moehn, “‘Good Blood in the Veins of This Brazilian Rio’ or a Cannibalist Transnationalism,” *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, Ed. Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn (New York: Routledge, 2002), 259.

¹²²⁸ “*Mais o pessoal de lá, que nasceu com isso.*” Interview MH.

As it turns out, the musicians on stage adore the diversity of fans who come to their shows. They particularly like to see Americans who are completely new to the genre get hooked on forró rhythms and tunes. Caetano Veloso wrote in his autobiography that

MPB proves to be the most efficient weapon for the affirmation of the Portuguese language in the world, when one considers how many unsuspected lovers it has won through the magic of the word sung in the Brazilian way.¹²²⁹

But forró may be a close second, as thousands of Americans who have been introduced to the sounds of forró are requesting Portuguese and dance lessons and are traveling to different forró hotspots around Brazil to hear forró as it is played in native locales. One musician stressed how many weddings he has played for forró fans who met one another at one of his gigs;¹²³⁰ another noted with a chuckle that he should be charging Embratur (the Brazilian national tourist agency) for every American tourist that embarks after listening to one of his shows.¹²³¹

Certainly Americans approach the music with a different mentality than Brazilians; for them, the point of listening is not to be transported back to Brazil or to soothe their saudades for the homeland (see below); instead, it is about appreciating an electrifying and infectious rhythm and enjoying the freedom inherent in the music and dance of forró. Says one musician,

¹²²⁹ Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 7.

¹²³⁰ This comment was funny and somewhat startling for me; my own wedding was entirely orchestrated entirely around a forró band! (You mean to say that other people are equally obsessed with forró? Hard to believe...)

¹²³¹ “A gente cria uma especie de comércio para o Brasil, a galera todinha que vai para nosso show compra passagem para ir ao Brasil... eu vou começar a cobrar da Embratur, dizer assim que cada turista que chegar lá e falar meu nome, 20% da passagem.” Interview: EB.

‘Ya know you just see the Americans doing this shit, you know, the seaweed dance [he flails his arms and throws his body around in an exaggerated imitation]. All the hippies doing the seaweed dance you’re like this is fucking great. I can play any rhythm I want, I can express myself artistically any way I want within this musical format, and they’re gonna love it, they’re gonna keep dancing, they’re not gonna walk off the dance floor because we stopped playing a forró and started playing a maracatu, they don’t even know what that is, what those words mean, they just hear the rhythm and they’re like great this is awesome.

In this quote, the musician alludes to a problem he has struggled with in championing a hybrid sound that incorporates North American elements into a blend of Northeastern melodies and rhythms. Some audiences (particularly Brazilian) come to forró shows with the sole intention of dancing. These audience members can get frustrated with the musical mixtures that some of the fusion “roots” bands perform (see below), requesting instead full sets of traditional pé-de-serra music.

It is critical to note, too, that not all American audiences are ready for the roots forró fusions that are going on the city, either. In 2002, Lincoln Center featured a concert called *Brazil: Beyond Bossa*.¹²³² Being, along with the Luiz Gonzaga tribute show mentioned earlier, the only performance of northeastern traditional and roots music to grace the elegant venue, it was to be an interesting gauge of the world music audience’s readiness to embrace the new hip sounds emanating out of Recife. They brought Mestre Salustiano and DJ Dolores (both mentioned in chapter five) along with Dona Selma do Coco, Mundo Livre S/A (one of the founding mangue groups)

¹²³² One review is still available online: <http://www.exploredance.com/brazil72003.php> (*The New York Times Review* of the Beyond Bossa festival, though not of the Salustiano/DJ Dolores performance, is available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/19/arts/lincoln-center-festival-review-lively-immersion-course-brazilian-sound-soul.html?pagewanted=1>)

and two bands led by Carlinhos Brown of Bahia.¹²³³ With the exception of the dissonant rock of Mundo Livre, the acts received an enthusiastic response and even managed to get many audience members to leave their seats and dance in the aisle. Still, as at any of these events, a few audience members could be heard complaining that the music featured “was not Brazilian music.” Of course, we have already demonstrated that these musics are very much Brazilian. But what exactly is the complaint that some audience members demonstrate? One New York musician of northeastern music (who has also heard similar comments, at this event and others), explained the reluctance of some audience members to accept this music as Brazilian:

What they want to hear is... “The Girl from Ipanema.” People want to hear that. Now we’re talking about a huge generational gap. Now, when you’re talking about Lincoln Center producing, who’s paying forty bucks to go see them, not you and me, all the gray hairs you know that work on Wall Street or whatever, have like high-rise apartments on the Upper East Side. They’re going to Lincoln Center to watch live music, not us. We’re going to Nublu, Barbés, ya know, we’re part of the movement, they’re not part of that movement anymore, they were part of it when Bossa Nova came to the U.S. So it’s gonna take a while for the generational gap to close, it’s gonna take a minute, for the music of Pernambuco, to really put its roots in the U.S., but it’s already happening because this year there’s a bunch of stuff coming from Pernambuco.¹²³⁴

Even though the musician quoted here shows a healthy skepticism for the close-mindedness of some audience members, he ends on a positive note, expressing his hope that future exposure will win over a dubious audience.¹²³⁵ One way the leaders

¹²³³ The concert series would be a New York debut for DJ Dolores and Dona Selma, while it would be a U.S. debut for Mestre Salustiano.

¹²³⁴ Interview: SK.

of the forró community in New York are confronting these attitudes and attempting to increase the potential for more diverse audiences is by including historical and cultural explanations throughout their performances. Says one band leader:

In my workshops I always start off by talking about the history of the music, and I emphasize how important it is to understand the root of this music, before you even begin to hear it or learn it, it's important to know this.¹²³⁶

For the audience members who *have* become smitten with the forró sound, the northeastern music scene in New York fills a niche. In a city with perhaps more musical potential than any other in the United States, one might expect there to be a plethora of live music dance venues. In fact, there are – but forró shows differ markedly from the salsa, zouk and merengue dance spots that dot the city. In contrast to these other dance genres, forró offers a laid-back community that is down to earth and that enjoys dancing for the sheer thrill. At forró performances in the city, there is no competitive edge, judgment of dancing skills or hierarchy of dancers in the audience. While generally considered a hip dance style, forró is held at venues that encourage conversation and interaction (both with audience members and the band). In a word, forró as performed and enjoyed in New York is *comfortable*.¹²³⁷ Says one artist of the genre:

¹²³⁵ There are skeptics of northeastern music in both the United States and in Brazil; I myself have heard Brazilians complain about regional music that “isn’t Brazilian.” Clearly this is an issue that will improve as more and more regional cultural products become globalized (see below).

¹²³⁶ Interview: SK.

¹²³⁷ This was a word used by several interviewees to describe the forró scene in New York.

There are a lot of places in Manhattan where nobody talks to anybody... it's just a sort of controlled environment. And this music [fórró] seems to bring something along with it that kind of makes people relax.¹²³⁸

Fórró is a social music with no history of competitive performance, and that fact, along with the fact that it is relatively new to New York, has not allowed for a competitive fan group to arise. Instead, people come to fórró performances to meet other people, to dance a bit, to eat and drink and laugh. One entertainer noted in his interview that Brazilian audiences in New York attend shows for the same reasons and with the same expectations as those back home in Brazil:

The majority, it's really interesting, because the majority of Brazilians who go there, they go to the fórró to dance, to flirt with women, that's why they go. And it's interesting that it's the same way as down there [in Brazil] in the rural areas, you know?¹²³⁹

The same performer notes that in addition to smiling and dancing, Brazilians often cry when they come to see his shows. The sound of fórró – particularly that of the pé-de-serra that he plays, transports his listeners back to the Brazil of their memories.

When they [enter and] close the door of the club they don't even remember that they're in the United States, I say that because I'm like that, too... how does it transport them? I think by the energy that is floating around in the club, everyone feels like they're at a Brazilian party, having a drink, eating some Brazilian cuisine, listening to Brazilian music... and then they open the door, they want to smoke and have to go outside, and they realize they're here [in the United States]!¹²⁴⁰

¹²³⁸ Interview: RC.

¹²³⁹ “A maioria, é interessantíssimo, porque a maioria dos brasileiros que vão lá, eles vão pelo fórró para dançar, pra catar mulher, é por isso que eles vão. E é interessante que é a mesma maneira que é lá no interior, entendeu...” Interview: EB.

Indeed, the forró scene in New York serves a similar function that it serves in both Recife and Rio: it is a way to immerse all of one's sense in the stupor of saudade, and a way to relive one's memories and mythologies. One audience member agreed, noting that forró music speaks to immigrants who are far from home in their native tongue. "Principally [for] the people who have been away from Brazil for two, three, four years... a way for the people to relieve their nostalgia for their native land is through forró."¹²⁴¹ Indeed, as Whitely points out:

... part of music's role in facilitating such a collective sense of identity and feeling of community among dispersed diasporic populations is achieved by spiritually transporting them to a common place – an imagined 'spiritual' homeland.¹²⁴²

Because of the effect of forró as invented tradition (discussed in chapter three), the spiritual homeland of Brazilians does not necessarily correspond to their lived geographic experience, but a generalized understanding they may have of how life was lived in rural areas in a pre-modern time.

As we will see below, not all the bands in the New York area play straight ("traditional") pé-de-serra. Several bands, such as Forró in the Dark, Nation Beat and Matuto have incorporated diverse fusions into their northeastern sound. Two bands, however, stand out for Brazilian immigrants looking to cure – or to aggravate – their

¹²⁴⁰ "Quando fecha a porta do lugar nem lembra que está nos Estados Unidos mais, eu digo porque eu sou assim também... como os transporta? Eu acho que pela energia que tá rolando no lugar aí, todo mundo, parece que é festa brasileira, dança, tomando uma birita aqui, comendo uma comida brasileira, ouvindo música brasileira...aí abre a porta, aí quer fumar, sai, e vê que tá aqui." Interview: EB.

¹²⁴¹ "Principalmente as pessoas que tem dois, três, quatro anos afastado de tudo lá do Brasil então é uma das formas da pessoa matar a saudade da terra natal é com forró..." Interview: R.

¹²⁴² Sheila Whitely et al., "Introduction," *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 4.

saudades: Rob Curto's Forró For All and Rabeca do Forró. While they also author their own songs, these two bands also include many of the great Luiz Gonzaga hits in their regular repertoire and, as such, attract a crowd that is particularly invested in hearing forró at its most traditional. Says another local musician:

Yup, absolutely and the Brazilians who are living here when they go to hear forró music or any Brazilian music, they're going because they're homesick, they're going to hear the classics, they're goin' to hear that music that makes them feel at home... Rob's given them their homeland.¹²⁴³

“Discovering” Forró: Outsider Politics

It is perhaps not a great coincidence that both of the bands that have maintained the most traditional baseline of forró performance also invoke an “outsider” discourse when describing their personal evolution within the forró genre. The accordionist Rob Curto is himself an outsider, having grown up in New York to an Italian-American family with no connections to Brazil. And Eliano Brás, the fiddler in Rabeca do Forró, also calls upon a narrative of “discovery from outside.” Both stories complicate – and enrich – the artists’ participation in the forró world of New York while also problematizing the function of forró for populations with different national, regional or international perspectives.

Since the Modernists set off for Minas Gerais alongside Blaise Cendrars in 1928 (see chapter two) to discover the “heart” of Brazil, the discourse of discovery has been an integral part of portraying Brazilian national culture. Years after Tarsila de Amaral and Oswald de Andrade spoke of their “re-discovery” of native roots,

¹²⁴³ Interview: SK.

Gilberto Freyre, too, invoked the now familiar trope. After having written a well-known passage in which he repeats a phrase pulled from a travelogue of Brazil (“the fearful mongrel aspect of most of the population”) in reference to Brazilian mulatto sailors, Freyre then published a conversion story in which, under the influence of Franz Boas at Columbia University, he has a sudden epiphany on the subject of race. As Hermano Vianna notes: “only outside his country did the young Brazilian intellectual learn to place a positive value on the race mixing that he later came to regard as the source of our true national culture.”¹²⁴⁴

The “I understood Brazilian identity only from afar” trope is common throughout Brazilian intellectual musings of the twentieth century; to some extent, it is present in the songs and writings of exiled musicians in the 1960s, and it appears as well in the contemporary forró scene of New York. Many of the major musicians of forró in New York arrived in the United States with no former experience playing forró. Mauro Refosco, Rob Curto, Scott Kettner and Eliano Brás – all leaders within the movement – had no established forró repertoire before the scene exploded in early 2000. Mauro arrived in the United States a classical artist who had never before played the zabumba drum, Rob Curto grew up here playing jazz piano, Scott Kettner was a jazz percussionist with no experience in world rhythms, and Eliano Brás had largely rejected the traditional northeastern music he grew up with in order to play within the more prestigious (and better compensating) classical arena. Still, their very experience in New York seems to have inspired in them all the desire to learn, to embrace and to perform roots music that reflects a traditional baseline from the

¹²⁴⁴ Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 55.

Northeast of Brazil. Of the four musicians mentioned, Eliano Brás is by far the most interested in deeply exploring roots for a rustic and traditional sound. He shares:

When I arrived here I got more taken with the idea of roots. So now for me, the more rustic, the better. I kind of switched sides, you know... I started to write more forró when I got here, but generally the forrós I write are all quite traditional, me talking about things that I experienced when I was in the interior, my grandparents, [because] I was a city kid, but I spent all of my vacations there weeding, tending the land and the animals, so all of those experiences I had in the Northeast, the way that they speak... the food, I use all of that in my music.¹²⁴⁵

Eliano explains that he was a successful performing artist back in Brazil, earning a good living in several orchestras playing classical violin, but felt that something was missing in his life. He was stressed and ultimately not happy and knew, he said, that he needed to reflect on what he wanted in life. The best way to do that, he emphasized, was to leave his home and embrace a new geographic and cultural reality in order to open up new possibilities. As it turns out, leaving Brazil meant for him a return to the Brazil of his memories: the traditional Brazil of the interior that he experienced as a kid on his grandparents' farm. As he asserts, "I began to find myself, [to understand] my culture... [here] more than when I was there."¹²⁴⁶ Eliano continues:

The truth is, before arriving in New York I didn't know how to use that [experience]... I love having come here [to the United States]

¹²⁴⁵ "Quando eu cheguei aqui eu fiquei mais nesse negocio da raíz. Então quanto mais rústico para mim agora, é melhor, entendeu? Então eu virei a casaca completamente, entendeu? ... Comecei a escrever mais forró quando eu cheguei aqui né, mas geralmente os forrós que eu escrevo é bem tradicional assim, eu falando de coisas que eu vivi quando eu 'tava no interior, meus avós, que era um menino da cidade, mas que todas férias eu sempre que ia lá e capinava, cuidava da terra, de animal, não sei que, então todas essas experiências que eu tive no nordeste, a maneira que eles falam... as comidas, eu coloco tudo isso nas minhas músicas." Interview: EB.

¹²⁴⁶ "Comecei a me descobrir, minha cultura...[aqui] mais do que quando eu estava lá." Interview: EB.

because I discovered this idea of roots, I know more about my culture now than I did five years ago, you know?¹²⁴⁷

Eliano also mourns the fact that so many of the musicians in the Northeast are turning their backs on tradition by embracing North American pop and rap styles. While he is hopeful about the potential of fusions of northeastern music with other global traditions (see below), he nonetheless feels that the musical culture of the Northeast is being abandoned for commercial international musics. His role, at some level, is to embrace the roots of northeastern sounds in order to help perpetuate both their traditional performance and new hybrid combinations.

Another myth of discovery in the forró scene of New York surfaces not with Brazilians who have traveled to faraway shores, but to Americans whose travels have led them to identify with Brazilian music. Indeed, one of the most interesting aspects of the forró scene in New York is not just the diversity of the audience and the music itself, but the diversity of the performers. To the surprise of many Brazilians who come to listen to forró, nearly half of the musicians of the genre in New York are not Brazilian! This brings up several questions and re-opens our discussion of the “discourse of discovery” from the previous section.

The musical development of Rob Curto fascinates me, in large part because of the number of years I have spent perfecting my accent and body language in order to “pass” as Brazilian. To watch Rob on stage is to feel in your flesh the contradiction of being entirely Brazilian while not being Brazilian at all. So closely has he studied the accordion in the style of Recife’s pé-de-serra forró that he can intuit the minute

¹²⁴⁷ “*Na verdade antes de eu chegar em Nova Iorque eu não sabia nem como usar isso... Então eu adorei ter vindo para cá porque eu descobri esse negocio de raízes, sei mais a minha cultura agora do que eu sabia há cinco anos atrás, entendeu?*” Interview: EB.

subtleties of cadence from one song to the next. Indeed, he has approached his apprenticeships on the accordion through the prism of pé-de-serra music and as such, has incorporated its music-scape into his musical core. As he says of playing in a traditional Recife style, “I can’t escape it, it’s almost not a choice, that’s really what I do. That’s the music that I know. I know that music probably better than anything else. Really.”

When Rob was a twenty-something searching for his musical passion and center, he stumbled from one singer/songwriter band to the next, until by a number of coincidences, he discovered recordings of Brazilian music. As he narrates the experience, “it’s almost like I was waiting for one of these cultures to adopt me. I actually formulated that to myself in that way.” Years later, he turns heads when jamming on stage in New York, on tour across the U.S. or in performances in and around Recife. Rob rolled his eyes when describing how some people react to his music and said in an exaggerated fashion, eyes wide, “oh isn’t it amazing... a gringo playing forró.” He elaborates on the kind of reactions his accordion playing generates, particularly from Brazilians:

And that’s fine but two things – it’s amazing that that’s still the case because the world is so globalized now that you’d think that people would be a little bit more hip to the fact that people you know everywhere in the world know about forró music; it shouldn’t be that big of a surprise that some people that aren’t from Brazil have learned how to play the music and then are able to translate that in some way.¹²⁴⁸

North American and European audiences are just as impressed with his sincerity, even if they are unfamiliar with the genre and unable to judge how “authentic” a sound he creates when brandishing his bawdy accordion on stage. A former

¹²⁴⁸ Interview: RC.

bandmate of Rob's noted that newcomers to the genre, in particular, paid notice to the fact that Rob was not a native American and yet played in an "authentic"

Northeastern manner. As he recalled,

It was an exotic music played by an American, you know? So... the audience saw that and said wow... that dude is playing a Brazilian music and he's playing it damn well... if it were [just] Brazilians playing Brazilian music there wouldn't be anything novel about it... now if you have a gringo playing Brazilian music then you have a special appeal and the public can identify a bit more...¹²⁴⁹

Not only can the public identify more, but they become empowered to participate as well, dancing instead of simply listening, themselves learning to play instead of simply appreciating the music.

A question that has come up again and again as I speak with both Rob and Scott (the American percussionist and leader of Nation Beat and Maracatu New York) is how being an outsider has changed their appreciation of tradition and roots in northeastern music, in contrast with musicians who are themselves from the Northeast. Is it somehow easier to comprehend the importance of roots from the outside looking in? What else can possibly explain the highly unlikely ratio of North American to Brazilian performers of forró in New York? It is a difficult question to answer, since each of them considers himself deeply connected to the music and, since having long ago recognized the contradiction of their nationalities and musical identities, has moved on to the more important business of creating more music. The fact that the New York forró scene is as intimate as it is also somewhat limits the

¹²⁴⁹ "Era uma música exótica tocada por um americano, entendeu? Então eu acho que as pessoas, o público via naquilo, falava... uau... esse cara tá tocando uma música brasileira e tá tocando bem pra caramba essa música brasileira... Se fosse brasileiros tocando música brasileira não teria nada de novo... Agora você ter um gringo tocando música brasileira já tem um apelo positivo para o público se identificar um pouco mais..." Interview PR.

kinds of critiques that musicians are willing to give of one another's work or musical ideology. Nonetheless, Scott is able to answer this question gracefully by stressing the very factor that is so important not just to him but to all serious musicians who aim to produce forró (be it pé-de-serra, universitário or post-mangue alternative) based on a generally understood and recognized tradition of musical roots:

Music is affected by the climate, the agriculture, the food the people eat, the language they speak, the way they speak the language, you know, all the different dialects, the altitude that they're living in. All these things affect the music, deeply, so I think that's what Salu [a Mestre of northeastern music] recognized in me and the band [Nation Beat], was that we're not just there to take the music, we're not just there to learn the notes that he's playing, or that the other forrozeiros are playing. We're there to eat the food, to speak their language, to learn their dialect, to sweat in the heat with them, take your shirt off and play until you can't play anymore, you know, speak the language.¹²⁵⁰

In effect, Scott is suggesting here that musicians approach their art much like anthropologists approach their science: by "hanging out deeply" and immersing ourselves in as much about local culture as we can during our time in the field. It may be distracting or entertaining that we as anthropologists come from often drastically different environments on the other side of the world to learn what may appear to local community members to be meaningless minutiae, but we are there, digging at and trying to expose the root in order to understand better the cultural traditions that grow out of it. The forró musicians in New York are no different; they simply express their cultural fluency in melody and rhythm, while anthropologists use words on a page.

¹²⁵⁰ Interview: SK.

Hybrid Forró: 'Roots' Discourse in New York

Even while some musicians (notably North Americans) have embraced the traditional sounds of forró pé-de-serra and have thrilled New York audiences with “authentic” forró over the past few years, others have been engaging in wild new endeavors of hybridization, following in the footsteps of the mangueboys and manguegirls who helped to put forró music back on the map.

Globalization, transnational travel and inter-continental communication will always produce hybrids, as differences are negotiated and juxtaposed with one another. Sarah Dayne makes the interesting point that signs of hybridity among an immigrant community are in fact signs of adjustment:

As soon as a community arrives in a foreign country, it organizes networks in order to get food products, cassettes and compact discs. And when this music starts to intermix with the music of the host country, having an influence on it as well as becoming influenced by it, it usually is a good sign of the settlement of the community in the host country. In other words, it means that a collective memory is being built, integrating elements from both ‘places’ and ‘times’ in a multiplicity of back and forth symbolic movements between here and there, and giving way to an original and new construct.¹²⁵¹

Of course, New York is itself a capital of hybridity, with immigrant groups settling on top of one another and trading cultural products and processes with relative ease.

Said one of the musicians who spoke with me:

I think hybridity in New York City is impossible to avoid. First off, impossible, absolutely impossible. An African musician from, like, Guinea could come to New York; a griot could come to New York City and within ten years he is already mixing shit with his, okay, so

¹²⁵¹ Sarah Daynes, “The Musical Construction of the Diaspora: the Case of Reggae and Rastafari” *Music, Space and Place: Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Ed. Sheila Whiteley, Andy Bennett and Stan Hawkins (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 25.

it's impossible to avoid hybridity in New York City, for what that's worth.¹²⁵²

Even the Brazilian musicians who have settled in New York come from an extremely broad background of classical, jazz, pop and folk influences and, along with their involvement in the forró scene, simultaneously perform in a number of other styles including rock, jazz, samba, choro, folk rock, MPB and bossa nova. All of those sounds have the potential of making it into the forró mix that, as in Recife, is constantly evolving from its traditional baseline of pé-de-serra. One local musician described how, as in Recife, the hybrid forró music that is emerging out of New York is infusing a traditional baseline with contemporary sounds that characterize the city and the times:

What we're doing here, me and other people that I know here is more taking like the forró pé-de-serra and then enjoying it and trying to understand it and playing it but then also naturally expressing the fact that we're here in New York and that things can mix together but in a creative way. I know every one of those people pays attention to and cares about what they're doing.¹²⁵³

Certainly the most fascinating mixtures that are happening locally are similar but not identical to those emerging out of Recife: instead of incorporating international sounds of rock, punk, hip-hop and electronica music, New York forró hybrids are incorporating northeast rhythms and melodies into a traditional baseline of North American country and bluegrass music. Scott Kettner from Nation Beat describes the process of hybridization between him and his Pernambucan mentor Jorge Martins:

We started to notice a really striking similarity between maracatu and New Orleans rhythms, between zydeco, Cajun and forró music. Côco

¹²⁵² Interview: SK.

¹²⁵³ Interview: RC.

and... Otha Turner, from Mississippi. The African American drum and fife groups from Mississippi, you know, this shit is deep. And it goes back to where I grew up. I started realizing that the land is very similar, there's a lot of swamps, there is lots of farming, there is a lot of agriculture. It's country music... to me it's like people who work hard, work the land, they work the sugarcane fields in Pernambuco and in the South they work you know in the cotton fields and the corn fields. And these are the people who make that music. It's a rural music in a sense.

Indeed, both Pernambuco and the North American South have often been compared, not only from a geographic or agricultural standpoint but also from a sociological perspective that incorporates race, class and social stereotyping. Both have also been designated poles of a North-South dichotomy (though inverted). The music from each is certainly rural in origin, but it is worth pointing out also that these country genres exploded in popularity only with their arrival in urban zones. Scott continues his comparison of the two musical cultures and their potential for fusion:

Jorge and I realized these [connections]... between the cultures and the music. The rabeca, which was the original instrument of forró before the accordion came to Brazil, the fiddle in Cajun music, the accordion in forró, the accordion in zydeco, the triangle in forró and the triangle in Cajun music, the processions of maracatu, the procession of the second line parades, *frevo*, they're carrying the umbrella, and you go down to New Orleans, they're carrying the umbrella. We could go on for days, you know? Banda de pífano. Côco. You go to Mississippi, go to Otha Turner's farm, you see all the African American drum and fife groups playing just drums and flutes.

The result of mixing these two musical traditions has been, for Scott and his band Nation Beat, a joyous exercise of traveling and learning and a constant exchange of ideas and sounds with Pernambuco-based bands. For his audiences, it has been an

exuberant opening of possibilities and a fitting platform for the beauty and hardship of both Appalachian and sertaneja music to blend.

Another New York band that is developing a similar project is Matuto, led by guitarist Clay Ross. With a signature sound that is more country and more alternative than Nation Beat, Matuto too incorporates the fiddle, guitar and acoustic bass of the North American South while also featuring the accordion and various percussion instruments from northeast Brazil. In performance, Matuto is somehow reminiscent of zydeco music and of American square dance music, and the quirky charm of its lead vocalist brings a smile to the faces of everyone in the audience. Of their special hybrid, says Clay: “the music of the Brazilian Northeast resonates with me. It’s as if it were something familiar and new at the very same time.”¹²⁵⁴

In another quote, Clay touches on the age-old trope in Brazilian national culture of anthropophagy. In an article published about Matuto’s novel hybrid sound and its reception in Recife, Clay announced that “I want to be free to learn about different influences, to digest them and turn them into part of my expression.”¹²⁵⁵ This narrative is wildly similar to the cannibalist pronouncements of the Modernists and the Tropicalists – perhaps without even realizing it, Clay is tapping into a very Brazilian technique of incorporating difference into one’s art. It seems to work; American audiences love him, and Brazilian crowds received him and his band with open arms.

¹²⁵⁴ “A música do Nordeste brasileira ressoa em mim. É como se fosse algo familiar e novo ao mesmo tempo.” Interview: CR. In Victor de Almeida, “Música brasileira, tipo importação,” *O Jornal Dois* (2 April 2009), B-1.

¹²⁵⁵ “Eu quero estar livre para conhecer influências diferentes, digeri-las e fazer delas parte da minha expressão.” Interview: CR. In Almeida.

Said one article of his performance: “Clay Ross demonstrated that not every American with the will to be Brazilian is boring.”¹²⁵⁶

Without doubt, the forró fusions going on in New York are anything but boring! And ultimately, they are not all that different from the alternative scene that is currently sweeping Recife. The New York-based artists are regularly flying back and forth and re-infusing their sounds with what they hear happening in Recife, and they are also importing interesting new ideas of mixture onto the stages of Brazil. When I asked one musician to compare the fusions that are being crafted in New York versus those in progress in Recife, he said:

We are doing the same thing, we are just crossing the opposite way. He [an upcoming forró “roots” player from Recife] bought a plane ticket from Recife to the United States. We bought a plane ticket from the U.S. to Brazil (because he is using electric guitars). He is using more, kind of like a more rock n’ roll vibe, kind of a funk vibe. All that stuff was created here. He’s borrowing from us; we are borrowing from him.¹²⁵⁷

Conclusion:

Forró’s Routes In and Out of New York

Predictably, one of the major topics among Brazilian immigrants is their return home, a process that nearly all Brazilians believe is inevitable and even imminent. The few Brazilians who do have access to documentation travel regularly back and forth, bringing news and products with them when they disembark. Other Brazilians

¹²⁵⁶ Hugo Montarro, “Cobertura: Rec-Beat 2009 – segundo dia,” [Reciferock.com](http://www.reciferock.com) Available <http://www.reciferock.com.br/2009/02/23/cobertura-rec-beat-2009-segundo-dia/> Accessed 4 May 2010.

¹²⁵⁷ Interview: SK.

are limited to dreaming about their return home, as their legal status does not allow them the luxury of entering and leaving the country.¹²⁵⁸

Brazilian musicians in New York find themselves constantly crossing borders, as they return regularly to Brazil to perform and to get a sense of what is happening there artistically, and many regularly travel to Europe (which has a much more lively performance scene for alternative musics). Like their compatriots, these Brazilian artists also struggle with visa logistics, though many of them hold artist visas or greencards.¹²⁵⁹ Their music, however, crosses borders freely and serves as a bridge between geographic locales.

Indeed, music has in many ways begun to emulate the critical role of “print capitalism” as it is conceptualized by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities*. In this transnational era with widely available access to different genres through various platforms, music too can mediate the production of local, regional and inter-regional cultural identity. As one local musician pronounces:

Globalization has changed the way people all over the world will play music or do any form of art, any medium of art at this point. I think it is going to be influenced by whatever people are taking in on the internet so I think you are going to see a lot more gringos playing

¹²⁵⁸ As mentioned earlier, Brazilians generally overstay tourist visas, as opposed to crossing via Mexico (though this is slowly changing as the United States has been releasing fewer and fewer tourist visas). Indeed, according to one person I interviewed, the number of Brazilians who illegally overstay visas exceeds those of any other nation. (Personal communication from an interviewee who worked for the U. S. State Department. Keep in mind that Brazil is considered the sixth or seventh most populous nation in the world, signifying a larger population which can potentially migrate than any other nation in Latin America, Africa, or Europe.) For the many that have overstayed their visas, they are considered illegal in the United States, leading to problems getting documentation for driving, attending university classes, and returning home.

¹²⁵⁹ One musician complains that this type of (artist) visa must be renewed every six months, meaning that visa holders must leave the country every six months in order to remain legal. He explained further: “if you’re gonna be here longer than six months you can apply for an extension, which means you’re okay but then you gotta keep applying for extensions, but then if you leave the country then you have to go through the whole interview process to come back.”

Brazilian music. You are going to see a lot more Brazilians playing Cuban music. You are just going to see it because we are not confined anymore to what the record store has on their shelves.

My question of whether or not forró music in New York has an optimistic future was answered with a resounding yes. Musicians, dancers, producers and even casual observers noted that the simultaneous cultivation of a traditional pé-de-serra style and an experimental roots style allow for both the maintenance of authenticity and the innovation necessary to keep the scene constantly flush with energy and excitement. The regular travel of musicians as well as audiences between the various nodes of forró production and consumption ensure, also, a diversity of experience even while it guarantees a constant restoration of the roots of the genre.

Without realizing her irony, one artist who spoke with me insisted that forró pé-de-serra had “muito pé” heading forward, that is, a good ‘foot’ing for future success.¹²⁶⁰ Another Recife-based artist resolved any questions I had about the future of forró in Recife, in Rio and beyond with his pragmatic attitude:

Forró, it has established itself across all of Brazil. They took forró from here [from Pernambuco] abroad, and abroad there are places that have forró, real forró, authentic forró from the North [of Brazil], there are places in the United States that have it. They’ve called me here in Brazil to tell me that there is forró there, that it has settled itself in Germany, in America. That means that... forró established itself and carved a space out for itself... A while ago, no one abroad even knew what forró was... But today, no matter where you go, people know and recognize the Brazilian forró.¹²⁶¹

¹²⁶⁰ “Então eu acho que é uma coisa que tem muito pé, sabe?” Interview: ME.

¹²⁶¹ “O forró, ele se instalou pelo Brasil todo. Levaram forró daqui para o exterior, e no exterior tem lugar que tem forró, o forró mesmo, forró autêntico daqui do norte daqui, do Brasil, tem lugar nos Estados Unidos que tem. Já ligaram pra aqui pro Brasil falando que lá tem forró, o forró se instalou lá. Na Alemanha, na América. Então quer dizer que o... O forró instalou e acho que ganhou, né, um espaço... Porque em tempos atrás, anos atrás, no exterior, ninguém sabia não o que era forró... Mas hoje, aonde você chegar, o forró, mesmo fora do Brasil, o povo já conhece.” Interview: AP.

He finished his monologue with a sly grin: “and the worst thing is that they seem to like it!”¹²⁶²

¹²⁶² “*E o pior é que gostam.*” Interview: AP.

Chapter Eight

International Migratory Routes: Bearing the Fruits of Brazilian Roots Music

*Ai ai, que bom,
Que bom que bom que é,
Uma estrada e uma cabocla
Uma gente andando a pé...*

- “Légua Tirana,” Luiz Gonzaga Humberto Teixeira, 1949

Quoting Pernambucan folk composer Jacinto Silva, alternative forrozeiro Silverio Pessoa¹²⁶³ from Recife maintains that “forró is [like] dust... it rises... and it spreads out.”¹²⁶⁴ Indeed, through the chapters of this thesis we have demonstrated again and again that forró as a cultural art form is as malleable and mobile as the very people who take pleasure in its various styles. This project has sought to show that a detailed examination of forró music can help us better understand how culture and people move about the world as it becomes increasingly deterritorialized.

We have seen forró evolve from the undefined folk tradition that Luiz Gonzaga recalled from his youth spent in the sertão, to its reinvention as a major Brazilian genre of the post-samba era, to its restoration under the protective zeal of the tropicalists, to its reinterpretation by the mangue movement, to its redesign by commercial estilizado bands, to its reinterpretation by universitário youth in Rio, to its reiteration and reinvention in New York. At the same time as we have witnessed these countless creative refractions of forró, we have also followed the migrations of

¹²⁶³ Also the band leader of Cascabulho (see chapter five).

¹²⁶⁴ “Forró é poeira... sobe... e depois disipa.” Interview with Silvério Pessoa, quoting Jacinto Silva. In *Moro no Brasil*, Dir. Mika Kaurismäki, 2002.

Brazilians – both literal and imagined – along common routes: urbanization, relocation and emigration.

The increased attention to tradition that we have seen in our trajectory of forró can be contrasted with the growing adaptation of modern technologies and lifestyles, yet we believe that the two are not diametrically opposed but instead deeply connected to one another. This seeming contradiction is one pointed to by other scholars of popular music and globalization. Indeed, as Robert Dunn argues, the

Inherent insecurity of the (post)modern environment can and does lead to an examination of the past in search of meanings and values as well as precipitating a resurgence of the popularity of “tradition.”¹²⁶⁵

Dunn refers to this tendency as a “revivalist culture” and notes that its main objective is “...to retrieve a sense of authenticity, often through a reassertion of tradition and the historical past.”¹²⁶⁶ Certainly, even while some theorists continue to underscore the contrast of traditional culture within our modern lifestyle, it is becoming more and more clear that the two are inextricably intertwined. Writes Keith Negus in his book *Producing Pop*:

At a local level, processes of globalisation in popular music are increasingly being experienced as a tension between progress and restoration; between the eclectic, syncretic forms of acculturated expression brought about by the meeting of various musical techniques, technologies and traditions; and a concomitant retreat into nostalgia, with attempts to preserve the imagined purity of the past by constructing idealised ‘heritage’ cultures...¹²⁶⁷

¹²⁶⁵ Robert G. Dunn, *Identity Crises: a social critique of postmodernity* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998) 154. In Kevin Cassidy, *Forró: Constructing Identity in the Brazilian Northeast through Notions of “Tradition”* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Dept. Anthropology, Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, 2006), 6-7. Available: http://kevincassidy.blogspot.com/2007/07/forr-constructing-identity-in-brazilian.html#_ftnref1

¹²⁶⁶ Dunn 14. In Cassidy 7.

Forró is no different; we have seen first-hand the development of elaborate hybridizations alongside discourse that highlights the importance of tradition. We must make an effort to conceptualize forró music as an art form formed from the amalgam of the forces of tradition and modernity and as a cultural entity that through its performance actually bridges these two oppositions. Forró shows that even as people attempt to categorize cultural manifestations according to bipolar categories like tradition versus modernity, we continue to see in popular culture that either/or categories are becoming less and less appropriate for describing how meanings are actively created by social actors.

The various nodes of our forró study bring into focus the fact that as our physical links to local identity become more tenuous, our emotional bonds often become more robust. As Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson point out:

Issues of collective identity do seem to take on a special character today, when more and more of us live in what Edward Said has called “a generalized condition of homelessness,”¹²⁶⁸ a world where identities are increasingly coming to be, if not wholly deterritorialized, at least differently territorialized.¹²⁶⁹

It is important, too, when invoking the concepts of deterritorialization and homelessness, to remind ourselves that place does not have to conform to dualist categories; just as “immigration in the jet age is often more circular

¹²⁶⁷ Keith Negus, *Producing Pop: Culture and Conflict in the Popular Music Industry* (London: East Arnold, 1992), 7. In Sean Stroud, *The Defence of Tradition in Brazilian Popular Music: Politics, Culture and the Creation of Música Popular Brasileira* (Burlington: Ashgate, forthcoming), 106.

¹²⁶⁸ Edward W. Said, “Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims,” *Social Text* (1: 7-58, 1979), 18. In Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Discipline and Practice: ‘The Field’ as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology,” *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, Eds. Akhil Gupta & James Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997 [1-46]), 68.

¹²⁶⁹ Gupta and Ferguson 68.

than linear,”¹²⁷⁰ so is our relationship to place. Because our physical, psychological and emotional bodies are wrapped up in our experience of locality, we are not limited to occupying a single position at one time and instead can exist across a variety of geo-scapes.

In order to understand better the upsurge in hybrid musics that don't seem to efface the traditional styles that have inspired them, we must focus on our definition of tradition. A dynamic process which invites constant reinterpretations, tradition is not a collection of cultural artifacts but instead the encounter between cultural forms and social actors. In fact, tradition is being continuously constituted in the present. It is the agency of groups acting in the present that mold the past into its most current version. As Kevin Cassidy writes in his thesis on forró:

That which is construed as “traditional” is considered and constructed as such because of both conscious and unconscious decisions by social actors trying to understand and negotiate the actual world in which they operate. Tradition has a connection to the past, but it is not merely reflecting the past; it is a present reaction to present situations that searches for responses to these immediacies in re-workings of that which functioned or was used in the past for either similar or vastly different reasons... Tradition in this viewing is not a passive acceptance of the past, but a re-working of the past in the present in order to fit the needs and exigencies of the here and now.¹²⁷¹

As John Chernoff writes in his classic treatise *African Rhythm and African Sensibility*:

Thus while artistic activity reaffirms and revitalizes tradition, people expect their traditional arts to be continuously vital forms. A “traditional” piece of music can therefore still be open to innovation, and Africans who love to celebrate and recollect the great events and personages of their past remain curiously indifferent to what is an

¹²⁷⁰ Maxine Margolis, *An Invisible Minority: Brazilians in New York City* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 120.

¹²⁷¹ Cassidy 8-9.

important concern of Western culture, the issue of artistic origins, because for them, each new situation is the fundamental setting of artistic creativity.¹²⁷²

Critical theorist Nelson García-Canclini notes that Latin American's contemporary cultural milieu is characterized by "multitemporal heterogeneity," a status which has resulted from "a history in which modernization rarely operated through the substitution of the traditional and the ancient."¹²⁷³ In other words, the juxtaposition of modern and traditional cultures, like that which we see across the various genres of *forró*, is a characterization of the entire continent. Indeed, Canclini uses the term "cultural reconversion" to refer to the process by which "local cultural practices are reelaborated and amplified using the tools of modernity."¹²⁷⁴

Niko Papastergiadis has observed that a hybrid identity "is constructed through negotiation of difference,"¹²⁷⁵ and that as such, "identity is not a synthesis of the combined elements but an 'energy field of different forces.'"¹²⁷⁶ In a similar vein, Homi Bhabha has argued that a hybrid is not simply the amalgamation of the two previous identities but instead a "third space," a place for "the negotiation of incommensurable differences... where difference is neither One nor the Other but

¹²⁷² John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 61.

¹²⁷³ Néstor García-Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 47.

¹²⁷⁴ García-Canclini. In Charles A. Perrone and Christopher Dunn, "Chiclete com Banana: Internationalization in Brazilian Popular Music," *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, Ed. Christopher Dunn and Charles Perrone (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), 30.

¹²⁷⁵ Nikos Papastergiadis, "Tracing Hybridity in Theory," *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, Ed. Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood (London: Zed Books, 1997), 258. In Cristina Rocha, *Zen in Brazil: The Quest for Cosmopolitan Modernity* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 18.

¹²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

something else besides, in-between."¹²⁷⁷ It is this "third space" that has found a place in Brazil's literary, film and musical canon.¹²⁷⁸

In his most celebrated short story, "The Third Bank of the River," the great Brazilian novelist João Guimarães Rosa describes the story of a man who relinquishes the life he knew in order to spend the rest of his days living in a hollowed-out canoe, permanently suspended between the two banks of the river. As the narrator tells it, "our father never came back. He hadn't gone anywhere. He stuck to that stretch of the river, staying halfway across, across in the canoe, never to spring out of it, ever again."¹²⁷⁹ The story has been interpreted by hundreds of academics, particularly for its allegorical symbolism. Writes Charles Perrone,

From an epistemological perspective, "The Third Bank of the River" proposes a breakdown in the patterned perception of binary logic. The "third bank" remains an open symbol of creative freedom, the extra-quotidian dimension, and transcendence. Rosa's eternal river crossing (travessia), as in the traversing of the great sertão, is an all-encompassing image of human experience as flux and dialectical becoming.¹²⁸⁰

It is fitting within the context of this literary work to introduce the definition of culture by Yuri Lotman, the Russian semiotician. Lotman, in order to stress the dynamic state of culture, described culture as "more like a

¹²⁷⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 218-19 Italics in original. In Rocha 18.

¹²⁷⁸ I describe only the short story here, though readers are encouraged to discover the film by Nelson Pereira dos Santos, *A Terceira Margem do Rio*, as well as the song by Caetano Veloso (available on the cd "Circuladô").

¹²⁷⁹ Translation: Barbara Shelby. João Guimarães Rosa, *The Third Bank of the River and Other Stories* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 190. Orig: "*Nosso pai não voltou. Ele não tinha ido a nenhuma parte. Só executava a invenção de se permanecer naqueles espaços do rio, de meio a meio, sempre dentro da canoa, para dela não saltar, nunca mais.*"

¹²⁸⁰ Charles Perrone, "João Guimarães Rosa: An Endless Passage," *Modern Latin American Fiction*, Ed. John King (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987), 130.

river with a number of currents moving in different rates and intensities.”¹²⁸¹

If we were to complete the symbolism, culture in this sense would be the Third Bank, the hybridized waters swelling around and under our precarious and constantly itinerant vessel.

In Guimarães Rosa’s masterpiece, *Grande Sertão*, the bumbling protagonist states that “people... are not all of a piece and finished but keep on changing. *They are in tune or out of tune.*”¹²⁸² In fact, if we are to incorporate the lesson learned in this short story, people fall into a continuum of categories and, much like the semi-tones existent within the Western musical scale, cannot be easily classified as one or another. Even as we listen to the rabeça whose tuning sounds quite muddled to a Western ear, we must recognize that in the sertão – like everywhere in the world – “tuning” is an arbitrary notion meant to order a multitude of sounds, not a concrete division that stands up to the challenges of the real world. People, like music and any number of other cultural forms, are awash in that giant river that swooshes and swirls cultural traditions around and around.¹²⁸³

¹²⁸¹ Paspertergiadis 258. In Rocha 18.

¹²⁸² “*Afinam ou desafinam.*” João Guimarães Rosa, *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (Rio de Janeiro: J. Olympio, 1956), 24. My emphasis. Translation: James L. Taylor and Harriet de Onís. João Guimarães Rosa, *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 17.

¹²⁸³ Another image from *Grande Sertão* that is relevant to our discussion is that of *travessia*, meaning “passage” or “traversing.” As Charles Perrone eloquently writes: “Using the analogy of travel, Rosa’s narrator asserts that the essence of things is not in departure or arrival, but rather in the movement from one point to another. The central word and image of [*Grande Sertão*] is *travessia*, meaning “traversing”, “crossing”, “passage.” ... the last word of the novel is *travessia*, yet this is not the final sign: the text concludes with an infinity symbol. The verbal and graphic conclusion [*Grande Sertão*] is the clearest sign that Riobaldo’s quest continues. The end-less novel’s final passage in an initiation of renewal.” Perrone 128.

Forró has evolved in a nation that has perhaps more potential for intuiting hybridity than any other; as Marshall Eakin writes, Brazil “has perhaps been more successful at creating a stable and subtle balance between national and regional culture and identity than any other large nation.”¹²⁸⁴ Not only that but, as Chris Dunn convincingly argues, “Modernist and PostModernist practices and strategies in Brazil frequently operate simultaneously in a continuum rather than as a tidy succession of stages or conditions.”¹²⁸⁵

Part of my project has been to show that forró does and can play a role in helping Brazilians and others to conceptualize and to embrace this hybridization of culture. Sulamita Viera, in her study on Luiz Gonzaga, writes that his baião mediates between the city and the country, translating lived experience into a language that is neither of the sertão nor of the city.¹²⁸⁶ But not only do forró audiences occupy a middle ground between city and country, they also blur the boundaries of wealthy/poor, South/North, national/international, developed/underdeveloped, modern/traditional.

The hybridity apparent across the forró scene is supported and even encouraged by most traditionalists, a development that helps forró to stand out among contemporary musics. The key to satisfying the demands of

¹²⁸⁴ In Tracy Novinger, *Communicating with Brazilians: When “Yes” Means “No”* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), 38. See also: Marshall Eakin, *Brazil: The Once and Future Country* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).

¹²⁸⁵ Christopher Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 212-13.

¹²⁸⁶ Sulamita Viera, *O Sertão em Movimento: a dinâmica da produção cultural* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2000), 29. Elsewhere, Viera literally uses the expression “to translate”: “o baião traduz uma linguagem que nem é só do sertão nem só da cidade.” Viera 19.

traditionalists while encouraging the experimentation of new artists lies, it seems clear, in the deferential attitude that new fusions show toward the roots of the forró tradition.

As the lead singer of one of the major bands of forró universitário said, “with a plant, the root is the reason for everything. If you cut the root, you die. So we have to hold onto our traditions, so that they can be forever.”¹²⁸⁷

Indeed, the symbol of the root – the rhizome – is a theoretical construction recently embraced by Appadurai (pace Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari) to help explain the world as we live in it today. Through this perspective, cultural flows emanate not from one particular center but instead from all areas of the globe, moving around in a chaotic and unpredictable pattern. This paradigm is especially pertinent to the forró phenomenon, since it accounts for both the connectivity across space and the constant combinations of cultural content while not limiting the direction of flows into a hierarchical system.¹²⁸⁸

Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo interrogate the role of anthropology as human society becomes more and more detached (at least, physically) from place. As they write, “the inclination in anthropology, then, has been to assume an isomorphism between place and culture. Culture has been seen as something rooted in “soil.”¹²⁸⁹ In fact, if one were to interrogate this deep sense of place that culture holds for so

¹²⁸⁷ SF: “na planta, a raiz é a razão de tudo. Se você corta a raiz, você morre. Então a gente tem que manter as nossas tradições, para que elas sejam eternas.” In Roberta Lana de Alencastre Ceva, *Na Batida da Zabumba: uma análise antropológica do forró universitário* (Unpublished Master’s Thesis, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Dept. Antropologia Social do Museu Nacional, 2001), 51.

¹²⁸⁸ I refer here to periphery/center debates.

¹²⁸⁹ Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, “Introduction: A World in Motion.” *The Anthropology of Globalization*, Ed. Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo (Boston: Blackwell Publishers, 2002 [1-34]), 11.

many, one might first look for the etymology of the word itself. The word “culture” derives from the Latin verb “colare,” meaning “to cultivate.”¹²⁹⁰ While at first the notion was tied to agriculture, it eventually expanded to incorporate the rather imprecise notion of culture that we have today. But taken in the context of a concept of culture hinging on significance of roots, the etymology becomes quite interesting. In order to cultivate local culture, one must start tending the plant at its very roots. That Luiz Gonzaga and his family were sharecroppers who lived precariously close to the unpredictable land is perhaps fitting; Gonzaga’s proximity to the land may also account for the utmost care with which he nurtured the musical roots of Pernambuco.

As James Clifford first conceived of the usefulness of exploring both “roots” and “routes” within modern anthropology, he brought in the figure of the “native” and the “traveler,” advising anthropologists to focus on the complex and dynamic relationship between both. By juxtaposing these sites of “dwelling” and “travel,” he suggested, we can better understand the modern condition as experienced today. This project has sought to do just that – to follow the roots and routes of forró as it has been shaped over the last sixty years. More remains to be studied as forró undergoes successive transformations, and as researchers fan out to study not just the roots/routes of the forró tradition but other areas as well. As one young performer said, paraphrasing the Pernambucan musician Lenine, “roots are very good, they are

¹²⁹⁰ Expedito Leandro Silva, *Forró no Asfalto: mercado e identidade sociocultural* (São Paulo: Annablume/FAPESP, 2003), 21-2. Also Alfredo Bosi, *Colony, Cult and Culture*, Talk at Princeton University (8 October 2008).

fundamental, but the roots are always underneath; we need to concern ourselves even more with the *fruits*.”¹²⁹¹

¹²⁹¹ “*Raíz e muito bom, e fundamental mas raíz tá sempre por baixo; a gente tem que se preocupar mais com os frutos.*” In Ceva 56. Emphasis mine.

Interview Question Template

1. Describe your personal story, how you began _____ (playing, dancing, singing) forró music. How old were you? Who were your major influences? Who helped you along with your career and/or hobby? What major obstacles did you confront? What was your inspiration to continue? How might your life be different without the kind of participation in forró culture that you currently engage in?
2. Describe the kind of music you _____ (play, dance to, listen to, sing, compose). How is it different from mainstream music that you hear on the radio? What kind of effect does it have on you and your listeners? Who are your listeners?
3. Would you refer to your music as “traditional”? What does this word mean to you? There are several different categories of forró music. How would you categorize your favorite style within the genre? What category does your style fit into? How does your style fit into/differ from that category?
4. There are several different base rhythms and dance movements within the traditional style of forró. How do you differentiate them? Do they have different cultural meanings? Is one rhythm more appropriate for certain places/time/people? What is the historical importance of these different rhythms (where do they come from, who has played them in the past)? Can most listeners/dancers differentiate one rhythm from another?
5. What do you think is different melodically from typical forró tunes and other mainstream musics? What makes these songs “catchy”? can you describe the chord progressions?
6. Certain songs seem to serve as a core “canon” of forró music. Can you name the top 10-20 songs that should be included in this canon? Who are they by? What do they represent? Why are they so widely played and listened to? What makes them more representative than other songs? What characteristics do you think they all have (Nostalgia? Rural bucolic settings? Young, innocent themes like love? Environmental challenges like drought?)
7. What kind of a role has radio and TV had – historically as well as recently – in the creation or perpetuation of this music? How does this compare to other national musics?
8. Would you describe forró as a “protest” music?
9. Do you think Brazil can use this music as a way of getting at larger societal issues? Do you think this is already happening? Who seems to be tapping into it (politicians, musicians, professors)?
10. How can we better understand issues of race and class by listening carefully to this music? What can the rhythms, melodies, repetitions and lyrics tell us about the historical and contemporary relations between different races/ethnicities/genders/classes/cultures in Brazil?

11. How can forró be tied to regional and national identities in Brazil? Can it serve as a bridge to help communication and understanding across diverse parts of Brazil? Does it? How is forró as a genre different across different regions? Are there core characteristics that are the same across the board?

NYC

Interview Question Template

1. How did you get involved in the NYC scene? When? What attracted you?
2. Can you give a sense of what the forró scene in NYC is like? Where are the major shows, what kind of forró is played, what are the audiences like...
3. How has the forró scene changed over the past 10 years? Who were major players/influences in this transformation? How do you view your role?
4. Who are your typical listeners, here in NYC? What percentage are Brazilian/American? What percentage are nordestino/southern? What do you think they most enjoy about forró? What keeps them coming back? Do you think they would appreciate different categories of forró? Do you think forró shows provide something that funk or samba shows can't or don't for these listeners?
5. Do you think that nordestinos, middle-class southern Brazilians and Americans hear different things in your music? What is different for them? What do you think most listeners know about the history of forró? What do you think different audience members are imagining when they listen to forró? Is your music a kind of "soundtrack" for a particular kind of story?
6. How does forró tap into nostalgia for different listeners?
7. Some immigration specialists have noted that Brazilian immigrants to the US tend to have a "us vs them" mentality and act superior toward rural/uneducated/menial laborer Brazilian immigrants in order to not themselves be on the bottom of the totem pole. Do you agree with this? If so, why do you think Brazilian immigrants come to forró parties, when forró is (historically) associated precisely with "lower-class nordestinos"?
8. Where do you see the NYC forró scene in a year, two years, five years from now?

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