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Los Angeles

The Political Voice:
*Opiniã*o and the Musical Counterpublic
in Authoritarian Brazil

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Musicology

by

Schuyler Dunlap Whelden

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Political Voice:
*Opiniã*o and the Musical Counterpublic
in Authoritarian Brazil

by

Schuyler Dunlap Whelden
Doctor of Philosophy in Musicology
University of California, Los Angeles, 2019
Professor Tamara Judith-Marie Levitz, Co-Chair
Professor Timothy D. Taylor, Co-Chair

This dissertation investigates how music making shapes political participation during periods of democratic crisis and authoritarianism. It examines the musical theater production *Opiniã*o, which was staged nightly in Rio de Janeiro from December 1964 to April 1965 at the onset of the Brazilian military dictatorship. Rather than examining *Opiniã*o as the reflection of its director's or authors' politics, I take an intersectional approach that focuses on the performers and audience members, who came from different gender, racial, geographic, and class backgrounds. Through an analysis of the show's performances, I demonstrate how people from diverse populations enacted political protest. I put their diverse strategies for intervening in the Rio de Janeiro public sphere into dialogue with one another to demonstrate how authoritarian regimes impact different

sectors of society. My inquiry combines both ethnographic and archival research methods. I draw on hundreds of archival documents and recordings—including newspaper and magazine clippings, theater programs, advertisements, and other ephemera—to reconstruct details of the show and investigate in depth the discourse that the show engendered. I argue that notions of authenticity were instrumentalized by critics and audiences to evaluate not only the performances in the show, but also the participants' politics. In addition to archival materials, I draw on interviews I conducted with participants and audience members of *Opiniãõ*, thereby including the impressions of people whose ideas were not included in the written record. In my analyses of *Opiniãõ*'s songs and performances, I listen for the aspects of the performances that attendees identified as important. By combining musical analysis with an investigation of the political discourse around *Opiniãõ*, I illustrate how politically oriented music making is bound up with issues of power, and how musicians employ a variety of strategies in the face of myriad limiting factors.

The dissertation of Schuyler Dunlap Whelden is approved.

Robert W. Fink

John Randal Johnson

Tamara Judith-Marie Levitz, Committee Co-Chair

Timothy D. Taylor, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2019

Para Julia.

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INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of December, João do Vale, Zé Kéti and I will give a show in the Teatro de Arena.... The presentation will consist of a testimony of our lives.... We will relate our vision of the world, each with her diverse experience, uniting at a common point.... This is my point of view, which I have the right to defend.
– Nara Leão¹

On December 11, 1964, *Opinião* opened in Rio de Janeiro. Variouslly referred to as an *espetáculo* (show), a *peça* (play), a *musical* (musical), a *peça musical* (musical play), or, most commonly, using the English word “show,” *Opinião* had no plot and nearly no dialogue.² Instead, the performers sang politically charged songs and gave spoken testimonials about their life experiences and opinions on social matters. As it was conceived, the show starred three performers: Nara Leão, a then twenty-two-year-old woman who had been raised in a wealthy area of Rio; Zé Kéti, a forty-three-year-old samba composer from one of the city’s poorest areas; and João do Vale, a thirty-one-year-old composer who had migrated to Rio from a rural area of Maranhão, a state in Brazil’s Northeast region. Leão left the show after a month of performances

¹ Nara Leão, quoted in Ilmar Carvalho, “Nara Dará Show Na Arena,” *Correio da Manhã*, November 8, 1964. This and all subsequent translations from the original Portuguese are my own, unless otherwise noted. Because primary sources frequently differ in how they spell proper names, I have standardized name spellings to follow the most common usage (e.g., I use “Zé Kéti” throughout, even when sources spell the name Zé Ketti or Zé Keti).

² The term “show” was so commonly used as a descriptor that many have taken to referring to the work as *Show Opinião* in the decades since its staging, likely due in part to the 1965 LP version being titled *Show Opinião*. Based on the way the word “show” was used in all materials related to the production, though, it appears that the term “show” was meant in the LP title to describe the contents of the disc as a recording of a show. For some examples of the various terms used to describe *Opinião*, see: *ibid.*; Mário Cabral, “‘Opinião’ X Samba Altamente Elaborado,” *Tribuna da Imprensa*, November 5, 1964; Reinaldo Jardim, “Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, December 15, 1964; Yan Michalski, “A Opinião de Todos Nós,” *Jornal do Brasil*, December 15, 1964; Mário Cabral, “‘Opinião’ Revela Excelente Trio,” *Tribuna da Imprensa*, December 16, 1964; “‘Opinião’ Vai Ser Garantida,” *Correio da Manhã*, January 17, 1965.

due to performance-related laryngitis; she handpicked her successor, a then-unknown eighteen-year-old singer named Maria Bethânia who lived in the northeastern state of Bahia.

Opinião's credited playwrights were Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho (also known as Vianinha), and Paulo Pontes. The playwrights were upfront about the fact that the “script” was derived from transcribed recordings of the performers speaking about their own lives, divulging this information in interviews and the show’s program.³ They were also careful to point out that the performers, along with director Augusto Boal and musical director Dorival Caymmi Filho (later known as Dori Caymmi), had edited and reordered the material during rehearsals. In his memoir, Boal recalls that they reduced three-hundred pages of monologues, dialogues, and lyrics to the fifty that they performed.⁴ Boal also sarcastically noted that the show’s “immense orchestra comprised guitar, drums and flute. Nothing else.”⁵ The players, respectively, were Roberto Nascimento, João Jorge Vargas, and Alberto Hekel Tavares.⁶ Neither the band nor the singers had much in the way of amplification; when I asked about this, Caymmi deadpanned, “Sound-wise, it was not fantastic.”⁷

The venue was the Teatro de Arena de São Paulo, a small black box theater housed in a Copacabana shopping mall, just a few blocks from one of the city’s most famous beaches.⁸ The audience sat on wooden benches surrounding the small cross-shaped stage, which bore no

³ Program for *Opinião*, December 1964, NL-2164-01–NL-2164-32, Acervo Nara Leão, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

⁴ Augusto Boal, *Hamlet e Filho do Padeiro: Memórias Imaginadas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2000), 225.

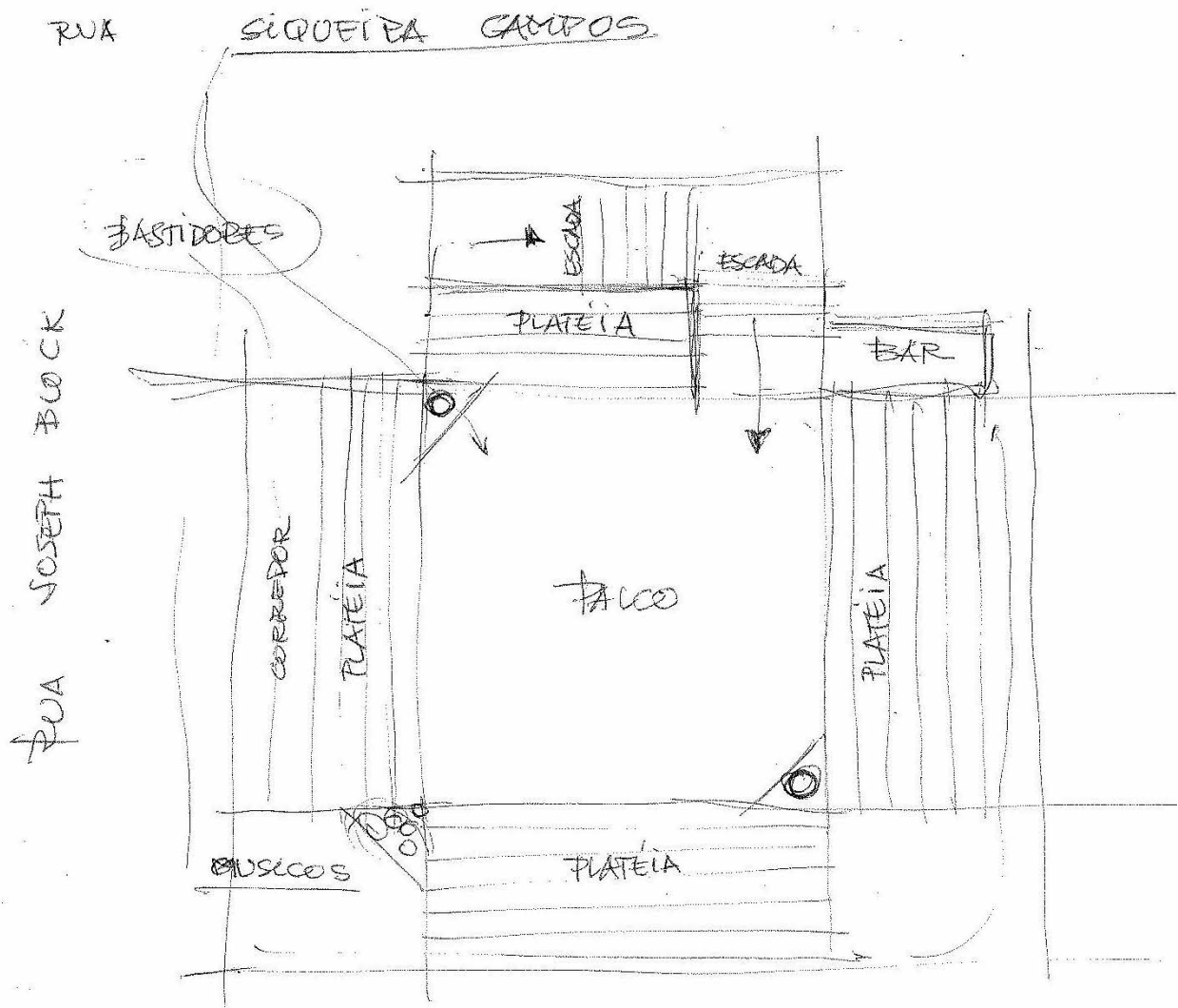
⁵ *Ibid.*, 227. Emphasis original.

⁶ Program for *Opinião*.

⁷ Dori Caymmi, interview with author, Van Nuys, California, September 30, 2015.

⁸ The Teatro de Arena de São Paulo was named, initially for the São Paulo-based theater company that co-produced the show with members of who would be referred to as the Grupo Opinião, following the show’s success. For similar reasons, the group also renamed the theater the Teatro Opinião.

scenery whatsoever (see Fig. 0.1). Performers and audience members sat in intimate proximity, the former only raised off the ground by a few inches. The performers did not wear elaborate costumes, but everyday clothing, further establishing a kind of solidarity with their audience.⁹ Rather than proper stage lightning there were “floodlights, half a dozen, cellophane in lieu of light gels.”¹⁰



⁹ Boal, *Hamlet e Filho do Padeiro*, 227; Katia Rodrigues Paranhos, “Engajamento e Intervenção Sonora no Brasil no Pós-1964: A Ditadura Militar e os Sentidos Plurais do Show Opinião,” *Pitágoras 500 2* (2012): 76.

¹⁰ Boal, *Hamlet e Filho do Padeiro*, 227.

Figure 0.1. Layout of the Teatro de Area de São Paulo (later known as the Teatro Opinião). Located in the Super Shopping Center de Copacabana at 143 Siqueira Campos Street in the Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of Copacabana. Drawing by Ângela Tâmega.

Opinião played six days a week during its run; according to the *Grupo Opinião*, the collective of artists and intellectuals that produced *Opinião* and other plays and events in the mid-1960s, just shy of 24,000 spectators attended the production in Rio de Janeiro. In addition, from April to July of 1965, the show played to another 28,000 spectators in the cities of São Paulo, SP and Porto Alegre, RS.¹¹ In Rio, the show's audience was, by most accounts, students and middle-class *cariocas* (Rio de Janeiro natives), though at least some audience members traveled to see the show.¹² In Rio, an average of 225 paying customers filled the 348 available seats during the 106 performances that happened there.¹³ Newspaper accounts of the time and recollections of audience members whom I interviewed recall a fuller house than that.¹⁴ Leslie

¹¹ Dori Caymmi remembered the show playing every night except Monday, which is confirmed by contemporaneous newspaper accounts. Dori Caymmi, interview with author, Van Nuys, California, September 30, 2015; Miguel Estevo, "A Livre Voz de Betânia," *Jornal do Brasil*, March 19, 1965. I obtained the attendance numbers from the official statistics released by the *Grupo Opinião*, a collective of intellectuals that formed in the wake of *Opinião*'s success and produced a number of theatrical productions during the mid-1960s. Some of these spectators are, as I will show, repeat customers; others claim to have attended the show without paying. See the program for the São Paulo staging of *Liberdade, Liberdade*, Acervo Paulo Autran, Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

¹² Roberto Schwarz, "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964-1969," in *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, ed. John Gledson (New York: Verso, 1992), 147; Vinícius Mariano de Carvalho, "*Opinião* 50 Years After..." *Iberoamericana* 16, no. 62 (2016): 71.

¹³ Program for *Liberdade, Liberdade*.

¹⁴ In all likelihood, the average attendance dipped after Nara Leão developed laryngitis and left the show, but before Maria Bethânia arrived. During this time, Suzana de Moraes, daughter of Vinícius de Moraes, filled in and, according to some reports, attendance suffered. Fernando Pessoa Ferreira, "Quatro Notícias," *Diário Carioca*, February 20, 1965; Salvyano Cavalcanti de Paiva, "A Estrela Nara no Céu Desponta," *Correio da Manhã*, December 31, 1964; Fernando Lopes, "Boatos Destroem Noite de Mentira," *Tribuna de Imprensa*, January 18, 1965; "A Nara Seguem Suzana e Betânia," *Diário Carioca*, January 30, 1965; Dori Caymmi, interview with the author, Van Nuys, California, September 30, 2015; Geraldo Picanco, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 6, 2017.

Hawkins Damasceno argues that, based on the attendance statistics, there had to have been at least some attendees from other social classes and professional groups.¹⁵

*Opiniã*o is universally understood as “political,” a descriptor that requires some elaboration, because, to cite one of show’s attendees whom I interviewed, “The definition of what is political or not is a bit elastic.”¹⁶ Politics, in its formal usage, tends to refer to the actions of political parties within and with respect to government institutions. Discursively, politics can indicate the power struggles that underlie and inform everyday actions and decision-making. Both of these kinds of politics are relevant, but in relation to *Opiniã*o, I tend to use politics to mean the work done individuals as they speak to and about the issues of the larger social group to which they belong. In the case of the performers and participants of *Opiniã*o, the scope of this larger social group expands and contracts, sometimes encompassing all of Brazil and sometimes referencing a single neighborhood or a particular demographic. I include in this definition both discussions inside and outside of government institutions, but remain ambivalent about the work of political parties. I derive this view of politics from the concept of the public sphere—the discursive space in civil society where people engage in reasoned debate about matters of the state—but am informed by scholarship that uses the public sphere to theorize how individuals speak to social issues more broadly. Moreover, because my work deals with music making, this discourse does not always take the form of reasoned debate.

My analysis of the politics of *Opiniã*o counters the prevailing characterization of the production as the “first response” from the cultural realm to the 1964 military coup that marked

¹⁵ Leslie Hawkins Damasceno, *Cultural Space and Theatrical Conventions in the Works of Oduvaldo Vianna Filho* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 140. I would critique this reasoning slightly, by pointing out that audience members with whom I spoke recalled seeing the show multiple times, sometimes many times.

¹⁶ Paulo Neuhaus, interview with author, Skype, April 19, 2016.

the beginning of Brazil's twenty-one-year dictatorship.¹⁷ Although *Opinião* did contribute to the formation of a space for people who opposed the dictatorship, at no point during the show do the performers make explicit mention of the military government. Instead, the show's politics are embedded in the performers' songs and testimonials about poverty, drought, and unequal living conditions. These topics had been at the center of social and political art well before the military coup and continued after it. By widening the lens on the topics the show's participants engaged, and by problematizing the notion that *Opinião* was a "first response" against the dictatorship, I illustrate the multivalent messages and strategies that circulated around the show.

By demonstrating that *Opinião* was characterized by debate and discussion about social issues, I depart from orthodox analyses that understand *Opinião* as a message imparted by its authors.¹⁸ Though I recognize the authors' importance, I argue that the show is better understood as a form of political participation by people of diverse class, geographic, gender, and racialized backgrounds. I identify two intertwined but distinct contradictions that recur in most descriptions and analyses. The first of these stems from a frequent interpretation of the performers as symbolic representatives of oppression who were instrumentalized by the authors. The second is that, even among critics and participants who characterize the show as an opportunity for debate

¹⁷ Countless scholars and others have referred to *Opinião* as a "first response." For a few representative examples, see Dias Gomes, "O Engajamento é Uma Prática de Liberdade," in *Coleção Dias Gomes*, ed. Antonio Mercado, vol. 3 (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Bertrand Brasil, 1991), 607; Boal, *Hamlet e Filho do Padeiro*, 229; Maria Helena Kühner & Helena Rocha, *Para Ter Opinião* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2001), 46; Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Augusto Gonçalves, *Cultura e Participação nos Anos 60* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1982), 22; Carvalho, "Opinião 50 Years After...", 71. Many audience members of the show characterized it in the same way when I interviewed them. Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016; Eduardo Escorel, interview with author, Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 17, 2017; Luiz Guilherme de Morães, interview with author, Leblon, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 6, 2016. Of the audience members and participants whom I interviewed, only plastic artist Carlos Vergara disagreed with this characterization, though even he called the "first manifestation that had a popular reverberation." Carlos Vergara, interview with author, Santa Teresa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 16, 2017.

¹⁸ By "authors," I refer to the three playwrights credited with having written the screenplay, and the show's director, Augusto Boal.

that included both performer and spectator, the authors' message tends to receive the lion's share of the attention.

Because *Opinião*'s performers were all, in various and different ways, in subaltern positions vis-à-vis its authors, focusing on those authors' politics in lieu of those of the performers reinforces some of the hegemonic systems that the show was ostensibly designed against. All of the authors were white and of the Brazilian middle class. In contrast, both João do Vale and Zé Kéti were black and born into situations of rural and urban poverty, respectively. Nara Leão was white and upper-middle class, but, as a woman, she endured structural sexism and harassment in both her political and cultural work. Characterizations of Maria Bethânia in the press reveal the ways that she was subject to both gender and region-based stereotypes. These performers' lived experiences, which were included in the show, spoke to the kinds of oppression experienced by those in different minoritarian positions. Analyzing these experiences as part of the authors' message fails to acknowledge that they were a political act when performed on stage.

Based on my discussions with people who attended the show, as well as descriptions and recollections in primary documents, I argue that the show was understood and used by audience members not just as a political statement, but as an opportunity for dialogue and debate. Audience members returned to the theater frequently, not simply to hear their favorite songs, but to meet with one another and discuss politics and art. The fact that the performers each expressed their own opinions and enacted their own forms of political participation both allowed for and spurred on this culture of debate. As I describe below, and throughout this dissertation, opportunities for political debate in other venues (e.g., student organizations, political party

meetings, and even newspapers) grew increasingly scarce after the military coup, which made *Opinião* especially important.

By focusing on the audience's reception of the show, I argue that the politics of *Opinião*—and of performance in general—cannot be fruitfully understood as a one-way transmission. To the contrary, politics in performance relies on the relationships of accord and contestation between performers and audiences. One axis on which audience members read and assessed the political valences of a given song or performance is through notions of authenticity and sincerity. This took different forms with each of the performers but tended to hinge on whether a given performance met the expectations associated with a given performer's positionality. These expectations were the product of a mixture of cultural knowledge, stereotypes, and the careful construction and manipulation of the performers' presentation in the show. When audiences and critics deemed a performance authentic or sincere, they tended to embrace its stated or implied politics and vice versa.

Because *Opinião*'s performers came from parts of Brazilian society frequently excluded from formal politics, they brought underrepresented perspectives to the debates, which makes the show laudable, even groundbreaking, in its approach. But if these performers are reduced to their symbolic representation on stage, that act becomes one of appropriation. The same can be said about the audience's relationship to the show. Offering audiences a space for participating in politics, even if that space is separate from the dominant political debate—perhaps especially in that case—is a radical inclusionary act. The continued depiction of *Opinião* as a top-down political message by its authors not only does a disservice to its other participants, it may weaken even our knowledge of its effects as a political project.

By examining *Opinião* and its participants in detail, this dissertation provides insights into how musicians participate politically through their music making. Although I am careful to contextualize their activities in the particular cultural landscape and historical moment in which they occurred, this study sheds light on different uses of music making in politics, including, but extending beyond, notions of “protest music.” I also contribute to literature on issues of authenticity in popular music, showing how ideas of authenticity are used not only to judge and evaluate popular music making, but to restrict participation in politics. Moreover, by grounding my analyses in audience testimony, I offer a way of thinking about the reading of musical texts that foregrounds their social uses and meanings.

Origins and Effects of the Military Coup

Although *Opinião* is nearly universally characterized as the first cultural response to the military coup of April 1, 1964, neither the show, as a political event, nor the coup itself can be understood in vacuum; both events resulted from the actions of politicians, military officers, intellectuals, and artists in the preceding years and decades. For this reason, it is necessary to recount some of the most important events discussions that accompanied these years.

Through the twentieth century, Brazil alternated between democratic and authoritarian regimes, experiencing a democratic period between the end of Getúlio Vargas’s semi-fascist Estado Novo (New State) in 1946 and the military coup in 1964.¹⁹ Beginning in 1946, the country was governed by a presidential democracy, with each president limited to a single five-year term. This period was marked by mixture of turmoil and optimism: turmoil characterized

¹⁹ The description of the Estado Novo as semi-fascist is common, but not uncontested. See Samuel Putnam, “Brazilian Culture Under Vargas,” *S&S Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1942): 34-57; Youssef Cohen, “Democracy from Above: The Political Origins of Military Dictatorship in Brazil,” *World Politics* 40 no. 1 (1987): 30-54.

the term of Getúlio Vargas—this time elected president—who committed suicide in the throes of scandal, leaving a succession of stopgap presidencies; optimism, meanwhile, is the prevailing descriptor of the term of Juscelino Kubitschek, a centrist politician from the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, who promised that his five-year term would see “fifty years” of progress.²⁰ He oversaw the building of the new capital of Brasília and an enormous industrial expansion in the country.

Following Kubitschek’s term, Brazil elected Jânio Quadros, who, supported by the leading conservative party, the UDN (Democratic National Union), had run his campaign on a free-enterprise, anti-corruption platform.²¹ The electorate, however, did not choose Quadros’s running mate, opting instead for the nominee from the PTB (Brazilian Labor Party), João Goulart. This left the country with a right-leaning president and leftwing vice-president. Quadros’s early policies did not adhere to the right-wing coalition that had supported his campaign, leading to fierce critique by UDN leader Carlos Lacerda, governor of the state of Guanabara (present day Rio de Janeiro). Quadros shocked allies and opponents alike when, in August of 1961, he responded to these attacks by resigning as president.²²

Military officers tried to block Vice-President Goulart’s ascendancy to the presidency. They considered him dangerous both because of his sympathies for activists to the left of the political spectrum, as well as his ties to Vargas, under whom he had served as labor minister until forced to resign by the military.²³ In the end, they merely succeeded in temporarily limiting

²⁰ Thomas E. Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²² *Ibid.*, 8.

²³ Cohen, “Democracy from Above,” 36.

Goulart's presidential powers, which he restored in January of 1963.²⁴ After some indication that he would adopt a centrist policy position to bridge the polarized ideological positions of the left and right, Goulart began to push for a series of Reformas de Base (Basic, or Structural Reforms), that would redistribute land in rural areas of Brazil, nationalize industries run by foreign corporations, combat vast illiteracy in the country, and provide health care in underserved areas.²⁵ It became clear that Congress would not support his reforms, so, on the advice of leftwing organizers and politicians, Goulart decided to seek a mandate directly from the Brazilian people.²⁶

The high point of Goulart's agitation for reform was also the moment that most historians view as the moment around which military officers coalesced in resolving to launch a coup d'état: a massive public rally held on Friday, March 13, 1964 in Rio de Janeiro.²⁷ Youssef Cohen argues that the act can plausibly be read as an instigation, that if Goulart had taken a more moderate line, there may not have been a coup.²⁸ Other historians, while acknowledging the symbolic appeal of the rally on March 13, believe that the point of no return had been long passed by then. Maria Helena Moreira Alves has shown that the coup was years in the making. Based on the release of formerly classified intelligence documents, she points out that a coalition

²⁴ Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-14; Cohen, "Democracy from Above," 39.

²⁶ Carlos Fico, *Além do Golpe: Versões e Controversias Sobre 1964 e a Ditadura Militar* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2004), 17.

²⁷ Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 15.

²⁸ Cohen, "Democracy from Above," 40.

of Brazilian military officers and civilians, supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, had long worked to destabilize the Goulart government.²⁹

Alves points further to the training of Brazilian military officers—including future military government ministers—in the ESG (Superior War College), an institution developed with the help of the U.S. and French militaries.³⁰ The notion of “national security,” one of the ESG’s tenets, would be the basis for military regime’s National Security Doctrine, which Alves characterizes as the foundation for class-based oppression and domination.³¹ The ESG also pushed a staunch anticommunist ideology, which was likely responsible for the military’s view that leftist intellectuals, union organizers, university students, and faculty were a greater threat than an external invasion.³²

Urban unions and rural labor groups, as well as student activist organizations and leftwing political parties, flourished during the late 1950s and early 1960s.³³ The most prominent of the latter was the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party), which became the predominant voice in leftist politics, despite having been previously outlawed.³⁴ Because poor rural Brazilians were living in a system of semi-feudalism, communist party members sought a bourgeois revolution. In keeping with the Marxian teleological view of social revolution, they believed, presumably, that the proletarian revolution would follow.³⁵ The PCB saw Goulart’s ascension to the

²⁹ Maria Helena Moreira Alves, *State and Opposition in Military Brazil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

³² Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 4.

³³ Alves, *State and Opposition*, 5.

³⁴ Marcelo Ridenti, *O Fantasma da Revolução Brasileira*, 2nd Edition (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2005), 27.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

presidency as a sign that the party was gaining a possible foothold in governmental politics, an idea that seemed briefly plausible when Goulart announced on March 13 that, among his other reforms, he would legalize the communist party.³⁶

The military, acting either out of legitimate fear that Goulart would institute a leftist authoritarian regime, or in an attempt to maintain a concentration of power among socioeconomic elites, enacted its coup on April 1, initiating a twenty-one-year military government. Newspapers at the time referred to the regime change as a “revolution,” although today it is called a coup d’état. It is also often described as “bloodless,” but that does a disservice to the seven protesting civilians killed on April 1, as well as to the many people who were tortured and disappeared during military rule.³⁷ Thomas Skidmore estimates that, immediately following the coup, between ten and fifty thousand were arrested, most released within weeks. Several hundred of those experienced torture lasting more than one or two days.³⁸

Youssef Cohen argues that the extreme polarization of the left and right wing political parties resulted from the manner in which democracy was restored in 1946, which he describes as “democracy handed down from above.”³⁹ Democracy from above is democracy instated by a non-democratic government, rather than developing from a bottom-up social movement. In Brazil, democracy from above successfully allowed the socioeconomic elite to perpetuate its

³⁶ Ibid. Cohen, “Democracy from Above,” 39.

³⁷ Elio Gaspari, *A Ditadura Envergonhada* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002), 112. Despite his reporting on the torture that followed the coup, Skidmore is one of the scholars that has used the term “bloodless” in describing the coup. See Thomas E. Skidmore, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, 2nd Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 152.

³⁸ Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 25.

³⁹ Cohen, “Democracy from Above.”

power by electoral means.⁴⁰ Brazil was state dominated as the result of the populist authoritarianism of the first Vargas era; the democratic era that followed was characterized by weak political parties, non-executive branch politics, and grass-roots political organizations. As a result, civil society was weak in relation to the state.⁴¹ In this context, grassroots political movements (frequently of the left) and state powers (frequently of the right) became increasingly polarized.

The tone of the first few years of the military dictatorship was established shortly after the coup with the issuance of the first of the regime's "Institutional Acts" and the installation of its first president. Institutional Act No. 1, or AI-1, gave the president the power to suspend citizens' political rights and repeal laws.⁴² General Humberto de Alencar Castelo Branco, who assumed the presidency on April 15, was a lifelong military officer who had been educated with the ESG.⁴³ Despite having helped organize the anti-Goulart conspiracy, many considered him, to quote *Opinião* musical director Dori Caymmi, "a little mild, if you compare with the other guys that came after him."⁴⁴ This comment reflects the historical view that, across the course of the dictatorship, "the screws were tightened in installments," to cite an audience member of *Opinião*.⁴⁵ The worsening oppression and violence culminated in the so-called leaden years (*anos de chumbo*) that followed Institutional Act No. 5 in late 1968.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁴¹ Cohen, "Democracy from Above," 50-51.

⁴² Fico, *Além do Golpe*, 208.

⁴³ Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 21.

⁴⁴ Caymmi, interview with author.

⁴⁵ Neuhaus, interview with author.

Opinião occurred during the first period of the dictatorship, when still only a single Institutional Act had been issued. During this phase of the dictatorship, the left was limited to what theater critic Edélcio Mostaço calls “rhetorical” responses to the coup.⁴⁶ It was a time when, as literary critic Roberto Schwarz has famously written, “despite the existence of a right-wing dictatorship, the cultural hegemony of the left [was] virtually complete.”⁴⁷ As Chico Buarque described to me, “The military coup of ’64 reached the unions, the parties, the leftist movements, in general, but not culture.... Culture had a huge importance, had a huge political weight.”⁴⁸ Cacá Diegues contextualized *Opinião* in this era: “Between ’64 and ’68 the dictatorship had not installed itself as a dictatorship. It was still a regime, indirect elections, a certain democratic freedom.... There was still some hope of living in a democracy. So, *Opinião* was a kind of flagship, a banner of this movement in the cultural realm.... *Opinião* became a symbol of this struggle that in ’68 became impossible.”⁴⁹

Cultural Responses to the Coup

Prior to the military coup, the left was made up of a number of political parties, each with differing ideals and approaches. On the one hand, this meant that there was no immediate resistance or organized response to the coup; on the other, it meant that the coup was not able to snuff out the many manifestations of the left within the cultural realm.⁵⁰ Just as the coup was

⁴⁶ Edélcio Mostaço, *Teatro e Política: Arena, Oficina e Opinião: Uma Interpretação da Cultura da Esquerda* (São Paulo: Proposta Editorial, 1982), 75.

⁴⁷ Schwarz, “Culture and Politics in Brazil,” 127.

⁴⁸ Chico Buarque de Hollanda, interview with author, Recreio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 12, 2017.

⁴⁹ Diegues, interview with author.

⁵⁰ Ridenti, *O Fantasma da Revolução Brasileira*, 73.

preceded by years of polarization, consolidations of power on the right, and growth of bottom-up leftist activism, the seeds for the engaged art (*arte engajada*) produced during the military regime were sewn before it began.⁵¹ Marcelo Ridenti contends that, particularly during the Goulart years, artists and intellectuals believed they were involved in an ongoing, growing revolution in Brazilian society.⁵² On the whole, these artists thought that to contribute to the revolutionary mission they needed to champion national cultural traditions and focus on making art with politicized and consciousness-raising messages.⁵³ As I show in chapter 1, many of these artists adopted a near authoritarian tone in their demand for what they termed “revolutionary popular art,” arguing that all non-politicized forms of art were illegitimate.⁵⁴ Some had become artists through their work in the student movement. Such is the case with *Opinião* playwright Vianinha, who adopted theater as a tool for consciousness raising before developing a taste for the form.⁵⁵

Prior to the coup, the most prominent activist group to adopt the practice of making art as a political tool was the CPC (Centro Popular de Cultura, or People’s Center for Culture), also called the CPC da UNE, because of its connection to UNE (União Nacional de Estudantes, or the National Student Union). The CPC was formed in 1961 by Vianinha, filmmaker Leon Hirszman, and sociologist Carlos Estevam Martins.⁵⁶ As I discuss at length in chapter 1, it would be a

⁵¹ Marcelo Ridenti, “Artistas e Intelectuais no Brasil pós-1960,” *Tempo Social* 17, no. 1 (2005): 81-100; David Treece, “Guns and Roses: Bossa Nova and Brazil’s Music of Popular Protest, 1958-68,” *Popular Music* 16, no. 1 (1997): 2.

⁵² Marcelo Ridenti, *Brasilidade Revolucionária: Um Século de Cultura e Política* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2010), 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵⁶ Carlos Estevam Martins, “Anteprojeto do Manifesto do CPC,” *Arte em Revista* 1, no. 1 (1979): 67.

mistake to characterize the CPC as having a single vision, but, broadly speaking, their mission was to use various forms of art—including popular music—to help educate and mobilize the Brazilian *povo* (meaning literally “people,” but used typically to reference the urban and rural working poor).⁵⁷ Santuza Cambraia Naves contrasts the CPC’s proposed engaged art of the early 1960s with that of the Kubitschek years, where “five years in fifty” happened against a Bossa Nova soundtrack of “love, smiles, and flowers,” to quote the title of a famous LP by Bossa Nova innovator João Gilberto.⁵⁸ Indeed, one of the ideas that united CPC artists was a dissatisfaction with so-called “alienated” culture.⁵⁹

The CPC brought art directly to its target audience, performing short educational plays and music at factories and in poor neighborhoods.⁶⁰ Carlos Vergara, a plastic artist who would later attend *Opinião* and participate in a group exhibition named for the play at Rio’s Museum of Modern Art (MAM), remembered, “I was a worker at [national petroleum corporation] Petrobras, so I saw the CPC do plays in Duque de Caxias, in the refinery... that were plays of a political character for the workers. That was important work for political consciousness raising.”⁶¹ The group also released the political single *O Povo Canta* (The People Sing) in early 1964, which featured the song “Canção de Subdesenvolvido” (Song of the Underdeveloped), composed by Carlos Lyra.⁶² One *Opinião* audience member with whom I spoke remembered

⁵⁷ Treece, “Guns and Roses,” 13.

⁵⁸ Santuza Cambraia Naves, *Da Bossa Nova à Tropicália* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editora, 2001), 30-31.

⁵⁹ Mariângela Ribeiro, “Musica em Cena: A Canção Popular como Forma de Resistência Política ou Sucesso de Mercado,” *Temáticas* 19, no. 37/38 (2011): 183.

⁶⁰ Charles A. Perrone, “Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics in Contemporary Brazilian Popular Music,” *Luso-Brazilian Review* 39, no. 1 (2002): 67.

⁶¹ Vergara, interview with author.

⁶² Naves, *Da Bossa Nova à Tropicália*, 33.

having the disc and sang the chorus for me: “After the colonial period / The country has become a good backyard / And after giving the earnings to Portugal / The national *latifúndio* was installed / Undeveloped, Undeveloped.”⁶³

As the military government used Institutional Acts to repeal citizens’ rights to organize through unions and other groups, art became an even more important force of political participation than it had been prior to the dictatorship. One of the earliest acts of the military after the coup was to prohibit the CPC, along with its parent group UNE, and many communist party headquarters. The new regime argued that these organizations’ “subversive cultural projects [were] harming the order and morals of the nation.”⁶⁴ Marcos Napolitano has argued that, as non-capitalist cultural organizations were closed, commercial artists turned to more complex expressions in their political art. “Culture,” he writes, “became overvalued, because, good or bad, it was one of the only operating spaces of the politically defeated left.”⁶⁵ Charles Perrone, meanwhile, examines how the dictatorship affected developments in popular music, noting that “significant aspects of contemporary styles and practices are linked to the advent and evolution of the military regime.”⁶⁶ Even in 1966, artists and critics noted as much, with journalist Flávio Macedo Soares focusing on the “various crises” that characterized cultural production in the post-coup era.⁶⁷

⁶³ A *latifúndio* is a large parcel of land owned by a single person or corporation. In this context, the word refers to the semi-feudal sharecropping that was prevalent in rural Brazil. See chapter 4 for more on this.

⁶⁴ Fernanda Paranhos Mendes, “‘Show Opinião’: Teatro e Música de um Brasil Subjugado,” *Horizonte Científico* 5, no. 2 (2011): 21.

⁶⁵ Marcos, Napolitano, *Seguindo a Canção: Engajamento Político e Indústria Cultural na MPB (1959-1969)* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2001), 67.

⁶⁶ Perrone, “Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics,” 65.

⁶⁷ Flávio Macedo Soares quoted in Airtón Lima Barbosa, “Que Caminho Seguir na Música Popular Brasileira?,” *Revista Civilização Brasileira* 1, no. 7 (1966): 376.

Opinião

Many characterize *Opinião* as an outgrowth or extension of the shuttered CPC. João das Neves, one of the eight members of the Grupo Opinião, which was named after the show, notes that the group's founders were all former members of the CPC's board of directors.⁶⁸ Along with Vianinha, one of the show's producers, Ferreira Gullar, played a prominent role in both the CPC and the staging of *Opinião*.⁶⁹ Filmmaker Antônio Carlos da Fontoura, who helped write the portion of the show that referenced North American protest music, was also a member of CPC.⁷⁰ Another filmmaker, Cacá Diegues, who attended the show regularly during its run in Rio, served as first president of the CPC and referred to *Opinião* as the organization's "bastard son."⁷¹ Katia Rodrigues Paranhos argues that the show's purpose was the same as the CPC: an attempt to teach a "revolutionary" mentality through art and, in that way, attain a transformation in Brazilian society.⁷² Marcos Napolitano even claims that *Opinião* radicalized the CPC mission.⁷³

Despite these myriad connections between the show and the erstwhile cultural organization, some scholars have noted differences between the two. Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Augusto Gonçalves point out that the idea of bringing the "povo" to the stage in a middle-class milieu, rather than seek them in their homes and place of work was a

⁶⁸ João das Neves, *Ciclo de Palestras Sobre o Teatro Brasileiro*, 5 (Rio de Janeiro: INACEN, 1987), 15. According to the program for the show *Liberdade, Liberdade*, which followed *Opinião* in the same Rio theater, the seven members of the Grupo Opinião were: Armando Costa, Denoy de Oliveira, Ferreira Gullar, João das Neves, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, Paulo Pontes, and Pichin Plá. Most sources, however, list eight members: these seven and Teresa Aragão. See, for example, Marcelo Ridento, *Em Busca do Povo Brasileiro: Artistas da Revolução, do CPC à Era da TV* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2014), 106.

⁶⁹ Paranhos, "Engajamento e Intervenção Sonora no Brasil no Pós-1964," 76.

⁷⁰ Antônio Carlos da Fontoura, interview with author, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, May 19, 2017

⁷¹ Diegues, interview with author.

⁷² Paranhos, "Engajamento e Intervenção Sonora no Brasil no Pós-1964," 76.

⁷³ Napolitano, *Seguindo a Canção*, 71.

novelty for the ex-CPC members.⁷⁴ I would add that those seeking to connect *Opinião* and the CPC invariably do so through the show's playwrights because the cast held no direct ties to the organization. CPC member Eduardo Escorel recalls that even Nara Leão, who had many friends in the CPC, was not directly connected to the organization.⁷⁵ These differences do not diminish the legacy of the CPC to the show's orientation and audience, but they are important markers of difference between the two that, I argue, are evidence that examining *Opinião* as only a continuation of this political lineage misses a great deal of its political importance.

Scholarly emphasis on the CPC legacy in *Opinião* is undoubtedly connected to the fact that the show is typically characterized as a single political statement made by its "authors." Vinícius Mariano de Carvalho focuses on how "the playwrights work to awaken the political consciousness of the audience."⁷⁶ Bossa Nova historian Ruy Castro writes that *Opinião* "was characterized by a delicious and moderate reformism, well in accordance with the political tactics of its authors, all of whom were closely aligned with the Communist Party."⁷⁷ Treece, meanwhile, mistakenly inverts the relationship between the show and the Nara Leão album that inspired it, writing that the latter "was an anthology of the songs produced for Oduvaldo Viana [sic] Filho's show *Opinion*, voicing the orthodox left's protest against the dictatorship through the themes of urban poverty and the rural struggle for land reform."⁷⁸ In fact, the album, by all

⁷⁴ Hollanda and Gonçalves, *Cultura e Participação*, 24.

⁷⁵ Escorel, interview with author.

⁷⁶ Carvalho, "Opinião 50 Years After..." 79.

⁷⁷ Ruy Castro, *Bossa Nova: The Story of the Brazilian Music that Seduced the World*, trans. Lysa Salsbury (Chicago: A Capella Books, 2000), 270.

⁷⁸ Treece, "Guns and Roses," 17.

other accounts, is what inspired the show.⁷⁹ Though there is no doubt that the playwrights were important in shaping *Opinião* and bringing it to the stage, these characterizations fail to recognize that the performers had their own political views, that the words they spoke were their own, and that they expressed them in their own ways.

Part of the reason that scholars have focused on *Opinião*'s authors' messages is that the playwrights included a list of intentions for the show in their program notes, which were reprinted in newspaper articles, promotional materials, and in the book containing the show's script and song lyrics.⁸⁰ As I discuss in more detail in chapter 1, these published intentions were twofold: first, to argue that popular music is more expressive when it has an opinion about social and political matters; and second, to invigorate the Brazilian theatrical repertory with new, Brazilian works.⁸¹ The text included on the back cover of the show's LP also reinforced this notion, stating that "the show was conceived and ... written by three of [Grupo Opinião]'s members."⁸² Elaborating on this, the liner notes called the show "the fruit of many years of work of a group of intellectuals and artists that break with the culture of the elite and decided to bring culture to the povo. To make culture with and for the povo, they ensconced themselves in student groups, in unions. They researched, studied, debated, got it wrong, got it right."⁸³

⁷⁹ Santuza Cambraia Naves, *Canção Popular no Brasil: A Canção Crítica* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2010), 58.

⁸⁰ Program for *Opinião*; MM Emery, "Apresenta: Destaques da Semana," *Luta Democrática*, November 24, 1964; Germana de Lamare, "No Ritmo de um Opinião," *Correio da Manhã*, December 6, 1964; Van Jafa, "Lançamento: 'Opinião'," *Correio da Manhã*, December 11, 1964; Van Jafa, "As intenções de 'Opinião'," *Correio da Manhã*, December 16, 1964; Cesário Marques, "Zé, Nara e João Lançam 'Nova-Forma,'" *Diário Carioca*, November 15, 1964; Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Paulo Pontes, *Opinião: Texto Completo do "Show"* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Val, 1965), 7.

⁸¹ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 7.

⁸² Liner notes to Nara Leão, Zé Kéti, and João do Vale, *Show Opinião*, Philips P 632 775 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Typical analyses of *Opinião* acknowledge the importance of the performers to the degree that they served as representatives of their social positions that were instrumentalized by the show's authors. Augusto Boal wrote that each of the performers "represented themselves and their class. Zé came from the *morro* (hillside favela) descending to the asphalt; João the Northeast coming to the South. Nara, Copacabana girl, intelligent, represented herself and other girls that, like her, would not lose their head exercising their bodies."⁸⁴ Another of the show's producers, João das Neves, noted that one of *Opinião*'s four innovations was that "it brought Brazilian music to the Rio stage"⁸⁵ This depiction extends beyond the authors and producers of the show. One representative example comes from Edélcio Mostaço: "A black Northeasterner and a black carioca represented the popular contingent. A singer identified with the student wing, the aware middle class. The three authors and the director, the portion of the *intelligentsia* that would ideologically weld the performance together."⁸⁶ Audience members whom I interviewed described the show in similar terms.⁸⁷ Foregrounding actors who are their real selves and "have an opinion," yet at the same time attributing the show's politics to playwrights, is not only self-contradictory, but rather reinscribes the power dynamics that the show's authors ostensibly sought to critique.

The analysis of *Opinião* that comes closest to recognizing that one of the show's primary functions was creating a space for debate is by Roberto Schwarz; yet it too fails to fully account for the relations of power between audience and performer in the show. Schwarz called the show

⁸⁴ Boal, *Hamlet e Filho do Padeiro*, 226.

⁸⁵ Neves, quoted in Damasceno, *Cultural Space and Theatrical Conventions*, 141.

⁸⁶ Mostaço, *Teatro e Política*, 76. Emphasis original.

⁸⁷ Ângela Tâmega, interview with author, Humaitá, Rio de Janeiro, February 1, 2017; Morães, interview with author; Fontoura, interview with author.

“a collection of well-thought-out arguments and actions, to be imitated, criticized or rejected.”⁸⁸

As I describe in chapter 1, this description captures *Opinião*'s importance for the audience members whom I interviewed. It also meshes with Boal's desire to create a live dialogue with the audience.⁸⁹ Schwarz also recognizes that the show did not present a single perspective but a plurality of arguments and positions. But his analysis fails to acknowledge that those arguments were made by the performers themselves.

Fernanda Paranhos Mendes offers an alternate perspective on *Opinião*, arguing that the cast's diversity created a host of potential identifications for audience members. She correctly notes that the show's participants sought to show that “to be part of a social class marginalized by its own capitalist society was not synonymous with political weakness.”⁹⁰ But Mendes continues to paint the people on stage—the same ones who, despite their experiences of marginalization, had political opinions and a capacity to participate in political through music making—as instruments of *Opinião*'s authors: “When the authors of *Opinião* put, in the center of the staging, songs, slang, and characters from the popular universe, their goal was to give the public a notion of the political power that it already had in its hands.”⁹¹ She compounds this problem by characterizing these performers as possible points of identification between the play and spectators, who could see themselves in one of the three people on stage. Given that those audiences were, by and large, made up of with more social and political power than the performers, this characterization is problematic; it depicts the performers as being

⁸⁸ Schwarz, “Culture and Politics in Brazil,” 147.

⁸⁹ Augusto Boal, “Na Nossa Opinião,” *Arte em Revista* 1, no. 1 (1979): 59.

⁹⁰ Mendes, “‘Show Opinião’: Teatro e Música de um Brasil Subjugado,” 24.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

instrumentalized both by the authors and the audience, with no regard for the power dynamic at play. It also disregards the hypocrisy of celebrating the agency of these minoritarian subjects in order to make them objects of identification.

***Opinião* and Popular Music**

Scholars have frequently pointed to *Opinião* as an important inflection point in the history of Brazilian popular music, arguing that it paved the way for the genre known as MPB, or *Música Popular Brasileira*.⁹² This is true, but not because the show's songs exemplify the genre. In fact, *Opinião*'s songs were primarily samba, an urban genre associated with Rio de Janeiro's Afro-Brazilian population, and *baião*, a genre native to the Brazil's Northeast region. As I discuss in chapters 2, 3, and 4, questions of genre became an important element of the debate that swirled around the production. *Opinião* exemplified Nara Leão's push against trends in Bossa Nova lyrics to sing about so-called "alienated" (i.e., non-politicized) topics like beaches, flowers, and love. It also raised questions about who could perform Brazil's what were perceived to be native musical forms, such as samba and *baião*, which informed the eventual characterization of MPB as a quintessentially Brazilian genre, unlike music derived from American and British rock forms.

The show also informed debates about the word "popular," helping to solidify its use as a referent to commercial music forms with roots among Brazil's poorest classes. The term *música popular* underwent a slow transformation during the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1930s and before, the term was used predominantly to describe music of rural origin, with

⁹² Iná Camargo Costa, *A Hora Do Teatro Épico No Brasli* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Paz e Terra, 1996), 111.

scholars using *música popularesca* for urban music.⁹³ By the 1950s, “música popular” had begun to describe urban commercial music, with the term *música folclórica* preferred for rural music.⁹⁴ Beginning in the mid-1960s, Música Popular Brasileira, typically capitalized or known by the acronym MPB, was adopted not only to describe urban commercial music, but a urban popular music not seen as derived from U.S. and UK rock musics.⁹⁵ Because debates about the value and purpose of popular art making (cited above) and questions of what it meant to be “Brazilian” were circulating as the genre crystalized, MPB came to be understood as necessarily political.⁹⁶

Scholars have also noted the importance of *Opinião* in influencing the emergent MPB’s tendency to speak to political and social issues. Marcos Napolitano situates the show as an early strand in the genre’s formation, focusing on the show’s legacies in the mid-1960s song festivals.⁹⁷ Naves argues that “*Opinião* contributed not only with musicality, but also with the establishment of a kind of posture that would symbolize the future MPB: the intense dialogue and cooperative work of musicians with other kinds of artists and intellectuals.”⁹⁸ Maria Bethânia’s brother Caetano Veloso recalled that *Opinião* and other shows like it became “one of the most influential forms of expression in the subsequent history of MPB.”⁹⁹ Given that *Opinião* was a commercial endeavor in addition to an artistic and political one, Ridenti rightly points out

⁹³ Carlos Sandroni, “Farewell to MPB,” in *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship*, ed. Idelbar Avelar and Christopher Dunn (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 66.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 67.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 68. Perrone, “Nationalism, Dissension, and Politics,” 68.

⁹⁷ Napolitano, *Seguindo a Canção*, 72.

⁹⁸ Naves, *Canção Popular no Brasil*, 44.

⁹⁹ Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*, trans. Isabel de Sena (New York: Da Capo Press, 2003), 43.

that the show's success was part of leftist artists' move toward "show business"—that is, these artists saw the commercial potential of their politically oriented musical theater.¹⁰⁰

Methodology

Because the orthodox interpretations of *Opinião* and its repercussions that I have catalogued above have been repeated and consecrated within secondary literature, my study of the show returns to primary documents and witnesses. In order to reconstruct details of *Opinião*'s performances and better understand the political valences of those performances, I employed both archival and ethnographic methods. Rather than attempt an analysis of *Opinião* based solely on my own close listening of the extant recordings of the show, I grounded my investigation in the recollections of audience members and participants. My archival research involved examining and collecting documents and recordings, including newspaper and magazine clippings, theater programs, advertisements, and other ephemera in Rio de Janeiro archives and online databases. I also conducted ethnographic-style interviews with audience members and participants in *Opinião*, including in my inquiry ideas and opinions that were not a part of the written record. I then drew on these materials to analyze the techniques the performers used to communicate meaning and engage in political discourse. In my analysis, I sought to "listen along" with these audience members by pointing out and examining the aspects of the performances that they found important.

In 2015–17, I visited four Rio de Janeiro archives: the Biblioteca Nacional, the Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS), the Instituto Cultural Cravo Albin (ICCA), and the Museu da Imagem e do Som (MIS). At the Biblioteca Nacional and ICCA, I gathered materials from newspapers and

¹⁰⁰ Ridenti, *Brasilidade Revolucionária*, 141,

magazines published before, during, and after *Opinião*'s run. These included everything from periodicals with large circulations, like the *Jornal do Brasil*, trade publications like the *Bulletin for SBACEM* (the Brazilian Society of Authors, Composers, and Writers), and government publications such as the official magazine of the State of Guanabara (modern day Rio de Janeiro state). At ICCA, I was able to examine the original LP releases of not only the *Opinião* LP, but other LPs released by the performers during this historical moment.

At MIS and IMS, I examined documents held in the personal archives of musicians and journalists such as Nara Leão, Sérgio Cabral, José Ramos Tinhorão, Maria Luiza Kfourir. Many of these contained newspaper and magazine clippings unavailable elsewhere, in addition to ephemera such as theater programs and record session notes. I supplemented this archival research with online databases, particularly the National Library's *Hemeroteca Digital*, which contains digitized images of many newspapers and periodicals. In all, I examined over 1,000 newspaper and magazine articles, over 500 of which directly contributed to this study.

At MIS, I listened to the indispensable interviews conducted as part of the museum's series *Depoimentos Para a Posteridade* (testimonies for posterity), in which artists discuss their lives and careers with journalists and colleagues. These provided access to artists' own perspectives on their music and performances, crucially so in cases when these artists have passed away. Interviews conducted with *Opinião* performers from the television program *MPB Especial*, which aired in the mid-1970s, served a similar purpose.

I used archival materials to collect and verify details of the show, to understand its reception by journalists and critics, and to contextualize it alongside other news and advertisements. Moreover, these materials aided in formulating questions for the ethnographic interviews and in verifying specifics about the show. Memorabilia—particularly theater

programs, but also advertisements and LPs themselves—served as tangible materials to share with interlocutors to spur recollections and descriptions of performances, gestures, and oral expressions. Print materials also helped me establish the topics and tenor of the debates that swirled around the show and its participants.

In Rio, I also conducted interviews with participants and attendees of *Opinião*, gathering not only details about the show, but thoughts about the social and political landscape of the time. I identified potential interlocutors with the help of recommendations from mentors, colleagues, and archivists, particularly at the IMS and ICCA, who were kind enough to make introductions or provide contact information. From there, I relied on word of mouth and introductions from interlocutors themselves, many of whom knew other attendees or participants with whom I might speak. I conducted most interviews in interlocutors' homes or offices, although I met a few in public spaces and spoke to one via video conference.

During interviews, I asked not only about *Opinião*, but about my interlocutors' backgrounds, including their childhoods, professions, family life, neighborhoods, political orientations. This helped me understand better the kinds of people that attended the show. With respect to *Opinião* itself, I began by collecting general impressions of the show, before asking specific questions about details not included in news sources of the time: what people wore to shows, whether they sang along, why the show appealed to them. In some cases, I was able to share images and listen to recordings as a way of spurring conversation.

My analysis of the songs and performances involved listening for aspects of the show that written sources and interlocutors highlighted as important. Sometimes this meant verifying a specific quality or detail (e.g., Dori Caymmi's comments on João do Vale's poor intonation is evident in most of his recorded performances). In most cases, however, this required seeking

musical evidence for non-technical descriptions (e.g., Zé Kéti's comments that Nara Leão "speaks the song"). In both of these cases, I sought not only to describe the performance details, but also to understand how they contributed to the performers' politics. I cast a wide net in the kinds of musical and performance details that I considered, including lyrics, melody, harmony, timbre, phrasing, instrumentation, pronunciation, form, and genre.

Because there is very little film of *Opinião*, and only an abridged audio recording of the show, I drew on a number of commercial and non-commercial sources for my analysis.¹⁰¹ The first of these is the LP release *Show Opinião* (Fig. 0.2), which includes portions of a staging of the show from August of 1965, released in October of that year.¹⁰² For confirmation of the show's dialogue and elements excluded from the LP, I drew on the book *Opinião: Texto Completo do "Show,"* which was self-published by *Opinião*'s production team in April of 1965 (see Fig. 0.3).¹⁰³ A small portion of the show was filmed by Paulo César Saraceni for his film *O Desafio* and Antonio Venancio and Cecília Boal provided some short clips of the production, all of which I used in my analysis. In addition to these *Opinião*-specific materials, I drew on contemporaneous commercial LPs recorded by Nara Leão (*Nara, Opinião de Nara, 5 Na Bossa, O Canto Livre de Nara*), Zé Kéti (*Acender as Velas/Nega Dina, Sucessos de Zé Kéti*), João do Vale (*O Poeta do Povo*), and Maria Bethânia (*Carcará/De Manhã*), which included songs sung in *Opinião* and circulated among *Opinião* audience members.

¹⁰¹ According to one newspaper account, *Opinião* was filmed for television, but due to technical problems, TV producers elected not air it. The article cites one military officer who "informally" claimed that the military had not censored the broadcast. "TV da Bahia Tira do Ar Opinião," *Jornal do Brasil*, April 7, 1965.

¹⁰² Nara Leão, Zé Kéti, and João do Vale, *Show Opinião*, Philips P 632 775 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm; "Brasil Pede Passagem," *Jornal do Brasil*, October 13, 1965; "Opinião Ao Vivo e em Discos," *Jornal do Brasil*, October 19, 1965.

¹⁰³ "Livros," *Jornal do Brasil*, April 21, 1965; Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*.



Figure 0.1. Cover for LP release of Opinião, titled Show Opinião, recorded August 23, 1964.



Figure 0.2. Front and back covers of Opinião: Texto Completo do “Show.”

My analyses are informed by the work of a number of social and political theorists. To help understand how a musical production became the site of political dialogue, I draw on literature related to the public sphere, publics, and counterpublics. This begins with Jürgen Habermas and extends to theorists that have critiqued and advanced his ideas, such as Craig Calhoun and Charles Taylor. Fernando Perlatto’s work on the Brazilian public sphere was indispensable. To theorize the *Opinião* counterpublic, I turn to the work of Nancy Fraser and Michael Warner. I also engage the scholarship of Christopher Balme, who has theorized the ways that publics form in and through the theater, and Kate Lacey, whose work on listening helps me think through the differences and similarities between audiences and publics. I also look to Gabriel Tarde’s foundational work on the formation of opinion in analyzing the limits and boundaries of the *Opinião* counterpublic.

I use both anthropological and historical perspectives on issues of sociogeographic marginality to show how music making is informed by and speaks to these issues. Janice Perlman's ethnography of marginalized communities in Rio during the 1960s and 1970s was particularly useful. Historians Brodwyn Fischer and Bryan McCann's work helped to contextualize and historicize these communities and their residents' political activities, particularly Fischer's concept of a "poverty of rights."

I look to literary theory to examine the use of the testimonial in popular song, drawing on the work of George Yúdice, John Beverly, Gareth Williams, Joan Dassin, Georg Gugelberger, and Michael Kearney, whose work on the literary genre *testimonio* contributed to my theorizing of the use of sung life narrative as a political tool. I also engage Clyde Adrian Woods's concept of blues epistemology to inform my discussion on the northeastern Brazilian genre of baião. To investigate the ways that discourse about authenticity and sincerity influenced debates about the performances in *Opinião*, I draw on a vast body of scholarship. Among the authors that I engage on this topic are Lionel Trilling, Richard A. Peterson, Simon Frith, Jason King and Benjamin Filene.

Not all of the forms of participation in *Opinião*—from performers, authors, and audience members—tend toward to the rational-critical that public sphere scholars theorize. Thus, I also engage with work of social theorists on the importance of emotion in politics. I show how Mabel Berezin's concept of "communities of feeling," which she derived from Raymond Williams's influential "structures of feeling," can help explain transformations in the counterpublic in the latter part of the show's run. To analyze the importance of anger in this transformation, I engage the work of James C. Scott, Mary Holmes, Helena Flam, and Peter Lyman.

I am aware of my own positionality vis-à-vis *Opinião* and its participants. The show was conceived and staged in a culture very different from my own. And though I have spent years in Rio de Janeiro, the city has changed a great deal since 1964. I am fluent in Brazilian Portuguese, but *Opinião*'s performers, in some cases, used different idioms and references than are common today. Moreover, their own sociogeographic backgrounds meant that, even among themselves, they employed a variety accents and syntactic patterns. And even though Brazil's military dictatorship hangs heavily over the country's current political situation—for some as a warning and others as an inspiration—I have no personal experience with that regime. For all of these reasons, I rely a great deal on the documents I collected and the people with whom I spoke to perform my analysis of the show. Whenever possible, I attempt to base my conclusions on elements of the performances heard and identified as important by people involved in the production, whether on stage or in the audience. I also have tried to keep in mind my own privileges, whether stemming from my class, race, gender, nationality, as I examine the priorities, values, and debates that drove these performances and politics. I am grateful to those who have helped remind me of those privileges and helped me see and hear *Opinião*, the military regime, and Rio de Janeiro, and Brazilian culture in new ways.

Chapter Organization

I begin in chapter 1, “Voicing Opinion in a Theatrical Counterpublic,” with *Opinião*'s audience members, who, I argue, constitute a counterpublic. A counterpublic is distinguished from other publics by its oppositional nature and subordinate status vis-à-vis the dominant public. As the military government began to restrict the dominant public sphere, alternative spheres for debate about politics and social issues became necessary. Based on interviews with

Opinião audience members who remember returning to the theater with great frequency, I show that the show served as the organizing event for one of these alternative spheres. I investigate the ways that the show's structure, with its opinion-driven monologues addressed directly to the audience, contributed to and made possible this dialogue. I trace the counterpublic's roots in erstwhile political and cultural organizations, such as the CPC, showing how *Opinião* fit in a long-established culture of debate. I also examine the limitations of the *Opinião* counterpublic, looking at the segments of society left out, and how the authors' stated intentions conflicted with their realization.

In chapter 2, "Nara Leão: A Singer Without a Voice," I focus on Nara Leão, who was the show's most famous performer and the woman whose recordings inspired *Opinião* in the first place. I argue that Leão used speech-related activities to participate politically in both the *Opinião* counterpublic and the dominant public sphere. By examining Leão's own words alongside newspaper columns and other press materials, I show how Leão contributed to the formation and tenor of the *Opinião* counterpublic. I show that her recorded repertory, from which the majority of *Opinião*'s songs were selected, was populated with songs that included political and social commentary. I analyze her spoken text in the show, which she used to engage her public directly. Last, I analyze her performances, which *Opinião* participants and audience members described as "speaking the song." To understand Leão's role in the show and its counterpublic, I explore her socioeconomic, racial, educational, and geographic privileges, counterposing these with the challenges she experienced by virtue of her gender and youth.

Chapter 3, "Zé Kéti: The Voice of the Morro," examines the songs and activities of Rio de Janeiro-born samba composer Zé Kéti. I argue that Zé Kéti used his sambas to draw attentions to issues of issues of *marginalidade* (marginality) in the city through his depictions of quotidian

life. Zé Kéti was known as “the voice of the morro,” following his song of that title. Although Zé Kéti was not from a morro, his songs spoke to the conditions of life for the marginalized residents who lived there. The details that he included in his songs were usually his inventions, but they helped make the stories seem real, and were representative of that segment of society. I discuss the ways in which his songs speak to joy as a form of resilience and offer a nuanced understanding of criminality in poor communities. He contradicted stereotypes of laziness among poor Brazilians and protested government removal of favela residents. I also show how critics of Zé Kéti seized upon the fictional aspects of his songs to criticize him. His story gives evidence of the ways in which the concept of authenticity can serve as a marginalizing discourse.

In my fourth chapter, “João do Vale and the Testimonial Voice,” I examine *Opinião*’s third performer, a migrant composer from the northeastern state of Maranhão named João do Vale. I argue that Vale’s testimonial songs formed the basis for his political participation. Drawing on theorists of the literary genre known as *testimonio* and the musical genre the blues, I show how Vale drew on details of his own life to speak to the injustices experienced by poor Brazilians in the rural Northeast region. I investigate how Vale’s use of song forms native to that region, as well as his regional accent and syntax, contributed to impressions that he was, “simple” and guileless, impressions complicated by investigated by the nature of his songs. In particular, Vale’s focus on the lack of educational opportunities in his home town showcases the ways structural inequalities contributed to the interpretation of him as being simple, as well as his awareness of that.

In chapter 5, “Maria Bethânia, The Voice of Protest,” I discuss the transformation that the *Opinião* counterpublic underwent with the arrival of the young singer Maria Bethânia, who took Nara Leão’s place in the production. I show how Bethânia’s performance style, which audience

described as emotionally powerful, contributed to the formation of a “community of feeling,” adopting the term from sociologist Mabel Berezin. I analyze Bethânia’s performance of the João do Vale song “Carcará,” one of the few moments from the show for which there is surviving film. I listen and look for the aspects of her performance that made it so powerful for audiences. I argue that the notion that Bethânia was an authentic northeasterner contributed to the audience’s ability to read her performance in this way. I also discuss how Bethânia’s affectively powerful performance led to threats of repression and censorship from governmental officials, threats the show had, up to that point, mostly avoided.

Chapter One. Voicing Opinion in A Theatrical Counterpublic

The night of the debut arrived. The audience of allies, an essential part of the show, shouted our song, sang our shout. Opinião was us and the audience!
– Augusto Boal¹

The popularity of *Opinião*—as discussed in the Introduction, over 50,000 people paid to see it—may seem surprising given the odd nature of promotional campaign undertaken by the show’s performers, playwrights, and director. In interviews with all of the city’s major newspapers, participants did not paint a very entertaining picture of what was to come. Prominent theater critic Yan Michalski even went so far as to question the show’s status as theater when he asked Augusto Boal, “In what sense is and in what sense isn’t *Opinião* a play?” Boal responded, “It is not a play in the sense that it does not have, in any degree, a basic structure of conflict; every part of the text boils down to information provided to the audience by the singers.... However, although it is evidently not a dramatic text, *Opinião* seeks, in the manner of the theater, to explain all of the ideas contained in the song lyrics. The singers never just *sing*.”² “Information provided to the audience” and “[explanations] of the ideas contained in the song lyrics” are not phrases that leave one expecting a fun night out at the theater. To hear Boal tell it, *Opinião* sounds more like an academic lecture.

The dry nature of the show’s publicity is further perplexing when we remember that many of the spectators returned to the show more than once. In 2016 I asked one such audience

¹ Augusto Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro: Memórias Imaginadas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2000), 228.

² Yan Michalski, “Boal Opina Sobre Opinião,” *Jornal do Brasil*, December 8, 1964. Emphasis original.

member, filmmaker Cacá Diegues, if he had a clear recollection of the show. He answered, “Of course! I went to see *Opinião* every day.”

“Every day!?” I replied, shocked.

“Every day is an exaggeration, but I went to see *Opinião* a lot. *Opinião* became a kind of symbol of resistance to the dictatorship. It was the first performance of resistance staged after the 1964 coup. So we all attended *Opinião* as if we were attending mass. It was thus ... very daring, very courageous because the military coup was really harsh. They arrested a lot of people. But for some reason that I never really understood the play managed to stay running. So we went all the time.”³

Diegues’s instinct to characterize *Opinião* as a political gathering place first, and only later praise the show’s “extraordinary musical quality,” speaks to the show’s importance and function for its largest group of stakeholders: the audience. Echoing Diegues, many of the other attendees with whom I spoke similarly recalled returning to the theater repeatedly.⁴ They did so not always to hear the performers sing or “explain the ideas contained in the song lyrics,” but to meet one another to discuss those ideas. Frequently, they would retire to one of the nearby bars, sometimes without having seen the entire production, to discuss art and politics.

Drawing on ethnographic interviews conducted with audience members, I argue in this chapter that *Opinião* is best understood as the defining event of a counterpublic. I follow Michael Warner in defining a counterpublic as a social entity that “comes into being through an address to indefinite strangers” and is “constituted through a conflictual relationship with the dominant

³ Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016.

⁴ Diegues, interview; Chico Buarque, interview with author, Recreio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 12, 2017; Eduardo Escorel, interview with author, Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 17, 2017; Ângela Tâmega, interview with author, Humaitá, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 1, 2017.

public.”⁵ This reading of *Opinião* revises oft-repeated depictions of the show as presenting a cohesive political argument as formulated by its authors (i.e., its playwrights and directors). Though critics correctly read the show’s political and social messages as conflicting with those of the dominant public, they fail to recognize the plurality of perspectives and arguments made by the show’s performers, and the audience members that returned night after night. In order to understand the show’s function as a counterpublic, I sketch the state of the public sphere in Rio de Janeiro when *Opinião* was staged, outlining how the dictatorship dominated the public sphere. To do this, I draw on theoretical literature on publics, counterpublics, and the public sphere. Throughout the chapter, I show that there was a constant dialogue between artists and critics by citing a vast range of interviews and articles published during the show’s run.

Opinião engendered a complex social formation, and conceptualizing it as a counterpublic, rather than as a group motivated by a collective vision, both moderates evaluations of its successes and explains its failures in motivating political change. The show’s makers were preoccupied with the social and political status of the *povo*. But, as participants and audience members note, the show, like most publics and counterpublics, was limited in its reach by demographic considerations: the audience, and therefore the counterpublic that formed around it, was mostly made up of the Copacabana bourgeoisie. This has served to raise questions about who the show was for and how effective it was as a vehicle for political and social change. Critics who see the show as a failure of the bourgeoisie to communicate with the *povo*, however, fail to fully understand the show. Indeed, *Opinião* was not an event that reached any social class in its entirety, and for this reason, I have chosen the counterpublic as a frame that describes the show’s participatory limits. These critics also fail to recognize the work the show did in bringing

⁵ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 120; 118.

issues of poverty to the awareness of the Copacabana bourgeoisie. They also frequently overlook the participation of musicians, who were, by all definitions, themselves “povo,” a fact on which I focus in subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In this chapter, however, I focus on the audience, who found that *Opinião*’s most crucial quality was the way it engendered debate and conversation.

The Rio de Janeiro Public Sphere

In his influential work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas theorized that the public sphere was a space outside of parliament or other legislative bodies where private citizens could engage in “rational-critical” debate about issues of policy and state.⁶ According to Habermas, the public sphere emerged in Europe as early as the seventeenth century as a part of civil society, not the state.⁷ Habermas uses the designation “bourgeois public sphere” due to this sphere’s coincidence with the emergence of bourgeois society. Typically, members of the bourgeoisie made up the greater part of the public sphere, as they possessed both the education and the distance from the state apparatus necessary for participation in the public.⁸ With respect to education, participants required not only literacy, but also critical reasoning skills, the latter derived, crucially, in non-political arenas. Habermas highlighted activities such as letter and literary writing, in which writers and readers engage in

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 28.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3. George Yúdice argues that in Latin America, social issues were relegated to the realm of civil society after the neoliberal turn. As the historical context for this dissertation precedes that turn, I bracket his concerns here. For more, see George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁸ Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 7; Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 22-23.

private and public forums, respectively, as contributing factors to the public sphere's formation. He claimed that the public sphere was historically situated, a feature of eighteenth-century England, France, and Germany in the nineteenth century, and thus cannot be abstracted from that place and time.⁹

Subsequent scholars have found that the public sphere is not only a historical phenomenon, but a useful concept for describing and understanding social formations that enable debates about social and political issues outside of state institutions.¹⁰ Nancy Fraser points to the public sphere's utility as a "conceptual resource," that describes a space in which political participation occurs through "the medium of talk."¹¹ Ideally, this participation, though separate from the state, is integral to the principles of a democratic society. Habermas traces the emergence of the public sphere to the bourgeoisie, because unlike the aristocracy, they did not belong to the ruling class, but rather to civil society.¹² This is the mechanism by which rule moves from inheritance to rational, collective opinion. Or as Charles Taylor puts it, the public sphere is not a discursive space for the sake of discourse, but where "rational views are elaborated that *should guide the government*. . . . It is supposed to be listened to by power, but it is not itself an exercise of power."¹³

The degree to which "power" has listened to the rational views espoused within the public sphere in Brazil is a matter of debate. Sociologist Fernando Perlotta has argued that in

⁹ Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 31-35.

¹⁰ Habermas himself has done some of this in later work, especially in his theory of communicative action, as pointed out by Craig Calhoun. See: "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," 29-32.

¹¹ Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 57.

¹² *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹³ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 89. Emphasis mine.

nineteenth and twentieth-century Brazil, the public sphere was marked by the enormous influence of the ideas and perception of people of the dominant classes.¹⁴ Though the economic and politically dominant segments of many societies maintain a stranglehold on the circulation of ideas, in Brazil, this phenomenon appears to have been particularly pointed. The country vacillated between democratic and authoritarian governments throughout the twentieth century, and a large portion of the country's population remained illiterate, and therefore limited in their ability to participate in a public sphere defined by the circulation of written texts.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Brazilian public sphere was made up primarily of a bourgeoisie who engaged in artistic and intellectual pursuits. For example, in the 1920s, modernist Mário de Andrade wrote literary, journalistic, and musicological works and engaged in debates on political and artistic topics. At the same time, Oswald de Andrade (no relation) contributed poetry, plays and two influential manifestos that have informed writing about Brazilian culture well into the twenty-first century. Perlotto characterizes this period as marked by intellectuals and politicians seeking to find new ways to reconcile their relationships with the lowest social classes.¹⁵ Many modernists, including Mário de Andrade, Cassiano Ricardo, and Menotti del Picchia, also engaged political matters from within the state. For example, the latter two both held positions within the authoritarian government of Getúlio Vargas, who held the presidency from 1930-1945. Vargas was responsible for some opening of the public sphere through his direct appeals to the middle class and urban working class, but even the kindest critics of his regime acknowledge its patrimonial authoritarianism; some even

¹⁴ Fernando Perlotto, "Habermas, a Esfera Pública e o Brasil," *Revista Estudos Políticos* 4 (2012): 85-86.

¹⁵ Fernando Perlotto, "Seletividade da Esfera Pública e Esferas Públicas Subalternas: Disputas e Possibilidades na Modernização Brasileira," *Revista de Sociologia e Política* 23, no. 53 (2015): 130.

call it fascism.¹⁶

With the return of democracy in 1945, Brazil saw an even greater expansion of the public sphere, with some notable restrictions. The Brazilian public sphere theoretically welcomed participation by all citizens during times of democratic government. In reality, however, only a small portion of the population was able to participate due to educational, geographic, racial, gender, and class barriers. For instance, only literate citizens had the right to vote and the authoritarian restrictions on the formation of unions and strikes had carried over from the Estado Novo government of Getúlio Vargas.¹⁷ Literacy was already a practical limit to participation in the public sphere, but making it a condition of voting rights also served to lessen illiterate citizens' participatory incentives.

By the 1950s, the bourgeoisie in Rio de Janeiro reflected both the promises and the limitations of a functioning public sphere. Citizens could, in theory, speak or write their opinions about local and national issues without holding political office, thereby influencing legislators or swaying public opinion in advance of elections. These opinions might speak to specific legislation, or more general ideological shifts. Such is the case with João Goulart's aforementioned *Reformas de Base*, which were debated in the Brazilian press by politicians and citizens alike, both on their specific merits and for their ideological groundings. But participation in the debates, happening as they did in the Rio and national presses, extended primarily to those with the access that their class, gender, racial, and educational positions allowed. This meant that women, Afro-Brazilians, and the lower classes, among others, were underrepresented in this sphere.

¹⁶ For an example of a characterization of the Vargas regime as fascistic, see Samuel Putnam, "Vargas Dictatorship in Brazil," *Science & Society* 5, no. 2 (1941): 97-116.

¹⁷ Perlatto, "Seletividade da Esfera Pública e Esferas Públicas Subalternas," 131.

The smallest expansion of the public sphere—as seen in the organization of rural workers in response to proposed structural reforms in the early 1960s—were stopped short by the military coup of April 1, 1964.¹⁸ As I mentioned in the intro, beginning with the first “Institutional Act,” issued on April 9, 1964, the military government began to undermine internal and external challenges to the dictatorship under the auspices of “national security.” Declaring that their coup “represent[ed] not the interests and will of a group, but the interests and will of a nation,” they inverted the mechanism that granted power, such that the executive branch conferred legitimacy upon congress.¹⁹ This institutional act allowed the president to make constitutional amendments, manage all expenditure legislation, declare a state of siege, and suspend the political rights of any citizen for as long as ten years “in the interests of peace and national honor.”²⁰ The transfer of power from the civilian government to the military was thus not only a question of who was in power, but what the nature of that power was. By creating a “legal” basis for the restriction of citizens’ rights under as vague a mandate as the interests of peace and national honor, the military government created the mechanism for restricting the freedom of expression necessary for rational-critical debate about issues of policy and state.

Publics of the Rio de Janeiro Public Sphere

Within the public sphere there is both a dominant public—usually defined by things like newspapers with the widest circulation—as well as publics (and counterpublics) that are not necessarily oriented toward the public sphere writ large. These may or may not speak of and to

¹⁸ Ibid., 138.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Skidmore, *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-1985* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 19-20.

²⁰ Ibid., 20.

the same social and political circumstances. Likewise, they may use the same methods of discourse (e.g., newspapers) or alternative methods of discourse (e.g., the theater). There is some lexical slippage that often attends discussions of “publics” and “public spheres,” in part due to the English translation of Habermas’s original German. The term *Öffentlichkeit*, Christopher Balme points out, “connotes ... persons, not a space, albeit in a collectivized and abstract sense.... It can also connote being ‘in public view’ and is thus implicitly spatial. In Habermas’s definition of the concept ... [the public sphere] should be understood neither as a collectivity nor a space but as an institution embodied by people ... primarily a discursive and not a physical space.”²¹ In his definition of “publics,” Michael Warner, calls them a “social entity,” emphasizing that they are made up of people and defined by “the circulation of texts.”²² I lean on Warner’s clarification in my discussion, examining publics as the self-organizing social formations that participate in discourse and debate together.

Publics are also possible “only by virtue of their imagining.”²³ A public is not a community due to a shared sense of group belonging or by virtue of some demographic designation, though these factors can affect the limits of a public.²⁴ They are constituted through a process of mutual self-selection, what Warner calls “self-organizing.”²⁵ When someone addresses a public, they imagine a group of people willing to listen to and interested in hearing a

²¹ Christopher B. Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 18. Kate Lacey attributes the terms’ persistence in English-language scholarship to an initial “creative” translation of this term and deems the verbal connotation of spatiality “fortuitous” when considering the role of listening as a public activity. See Kate Lacey, *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 5.

²² Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 114; 11-12.

²³ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

particular message. Whoever that address reaches becomes a part of that public by virtue of having been reached. And though theoretically, that address is made to anyone and accessible to anyone, the sphere in which it circulates does, in practice, delimit the public. A newspaper serves as a representative example. If a newspaper is sold on a regular newsstand, anyone can buy it. But that paper's partisan bias will tend to influence who decides to read it. Writers interested in speaking to that audience will seek to publish in its pages.

Turn-of-the-century French sociologist Gabriel Tarde theorized the problems with self-selection, describing something akin to an “echo chamber” in his essay “The Public and the Crowd”:

After a few trial runs, the reader has chosen his paper, the paper has selected its readers, there has been mutual selection, hence mutual adaptation. The one has a paper which pleases him and flatters his prejudices and passions; the other has hold of a reader to his liking, docile and credulous, whom he can easily direct with a few concessions to his positions, analogous to the oratorical precautions of the ancient orators.²⁶

Alternative perspectives can and do commingle with dominant perspectives, but the institutions that allow for the circulation of these perspectives are bound up in their affiliations along a variety of lines—political party, class, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, etc. As I will show shortly, the makers of *Opinião* were aware and critical of this limitation of their show.

Because *Opinião* was a performance, it would be easy to conflate the audience and the counterpublic. Warner warns against this when distinguishes a public from the social totality (the *Opinião* public should not be confused with the entirety of the Brazilian nation.) and a concrete audience.²⁷ Kate Lacey has explored this dynamic in her work on “listening publics.” Like

²⁶ Gabriel Tarde, “The Public and the Crowd,” in *On Communication and Social Influence*, ed. Terry N. Clark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 283.

²⁷ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 65-66. Habermas discusses this kind of public in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, noting that theater and concert music both gained publics when they became

“public,” “audience” is a collective noun that forms in relation to text, though it also can mean a group of listeners.²⁸ But Lacey critiques the “tendency and temptation” to think of publics and audiences as opposites due to the former’s characterization as “active” (one is active in a public through written texts, dialogue, etc.) and the latter’s as “passive” (audiences receive performances, but don’t participate in them).²⁹ Thinking of an audience as something to be tamed, manipulated, or exploited, rather than engaged, she argues, mischaracterizes their collective power and potential.³⁰ Like Lacey, I find this view wanting, as audience engagement can take many forms, from laughter to group singing to heckling to silence, with each affecting a performance in its way. In the case of *Opinião*, which was staged in an intentionally intimate way, the audience was certainly *engaged*. That said, I do believe that to theorize the phenomenon I have observed in my interviews using the term “audience” would fail to encapsulate all of the activities of the participants in *Opinião*. Moreover, in Brazilian Portuguese, the two most common terms for audience are *plateia* and *público*. *Plateia* is typically used for the group of people physically attending a performance, while *público* may be this group or the larger potential audience. For clarity’s sake, then, I distinguish between *Opinião*’s “audience” and the counterpublic that formed around its politics.

When publics form around oppositional voices, or voices that do not have access to the dominant public, they may coalesce into “counterpublics.”³¹ Nancy Fraser has popularized this

divorced from the court patronage system and, in principle, anyone who could buy a ticket could attend. See Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 39.

²⁸ Lacey, *Listening Publics*, 13-14.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

³¹ Rita Felski introduced the term in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 121.

term term, calling them “subaltern counterpublics” to emphasize their position vis-à-vis the dominant public. Fraser theorizes counterpublics as parallel to the dominant public and populated by “subordinated social groups [who] invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs.”³² She contends that such “parallel arenas” have always existed in friction with the dominant public sphere theorized by Habermas, though historical circumstances can serve to call more attention to them or further marginalize them.

Due to the selectivity of Brazil’s public sphere in the first half of the twentieth century and the hegemony of the dominant classes in this arena, members of the lower classes made use of “hidden discourses,” which circulated, for example, among the communities in Rio’s favelas, spaces characterized by informal economies and political structures.³³ Though publicly available, these discourses required specialized knowledge, either to access them or understand them. They may be found, I would argue, in musical spaces. Many samba composers wrote lyrics attending to subaltern concerns that could theoretically reach the dominant classes, though they were “hidden” in song.

In democracy, counterpublics are necessary for discourse about matters left unvoiced by the dominant public, but under a dictatorship, such as the one instituted by the Brazilian military in 1964, where public discourse is threatened or restricted by governmental policy, counterpublics become crucial for the preservation of democratic thinking and for the sharing of ideas that counter the dictatorship’s rule. Perlotto has shown that subaltern counterpublics have existed in Brazil since the nineteenth century, but highlights the period of the dictatorship as

³² Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 67.

³³ See Perlotto, “Seletividade da Esfera Pública e Esferas Públicas Subalternas,” 133.

particularly important for “hidden discourses.”³⁴ As I previously mentioned, scholars have argued that the early years of the military dictatorship were characterized by a general openness and freedom in the cultural realm, a state of affairs evidenced by the mere existence of artworks such as *Opinião*.³⁵ Indeed, culture makers were less censored than they would be following the 1968 issuance of Institutional Act 5 (AI-5), which institutionalized repression by repealing *habeas corpus* and closing congress, making challenges to the military’s power—whether in print, film, theater, or musical performance—jailable offenses.³⁶ While the Brazilian military government focused on limiting the powers of congress, culture makers set about creating spaces in which they could circulate their oppositional discourses through various artistic media. All counterpublics occupy a subordinate position vis-à-vis the dominant public, but because they are differently limited and affected by issues of class, gender, race, geography, and education, not all speak their opposition in the same way.

Michael Warner has also theorized that an understanding of publics as forming only by virtue of “rational-critical” discourse radically underrepresents the degree to which performative or poetic dimensions of discourse can cause them to coalesce. Warner attributes this misunderstanding of public formation to a tendency to disregard aspects of text that are not reducible to rational and sense-making. The importance of rhetoric, poetry, and performance, in this view, are undervalued.³⁷ Musicologists and performance studies scholars will likely recognize parallels here with criticism that examines only lyrics and intentions in explicating a

³⁴ Ibid., 138.

³⁵ Regarding the “cultural hegemony of the left,” see Roberto Schwarz, “Culture and Politics of Brazil, 1964-1969,” in *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, trans. John Gledson (New York: Verso, 1992), 127.

³⁶ Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 132.

³⁷ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 115.

work's meaning.

The performative and poetic dimensions of art became particularly important in Rio de Janeiro in 1964 due to the censorship of rational-critical voices and the migration of discourse into spaces outside of the dominant public sphere. The theater functioned as an arena in which a counterpublic could form due to its (1) having the characteristics of other public-forming texts and (2) not being named as such. That is, the theater is literally a space for the circulation of discourse through written texts, improvised speech, and conversation among spectators. But the theater is also a form of entertainment, so its political and social interventions can sometimes fly under the radar, though there are many historical examples of political theater and theater as diversion coexisting. *Opinião*, by virtue of its name, tips its hand to its political orientation.

Christopher Balme's "theatrical theory of the public sphere" is useful in understanding how the theater functioned vis-à-vis the public sphere in Rio. Balme outlines three complementary elements in the theatrical public sphere: rational-critical dialogic, "'agonism' with its emphasis on emotion and affect," and "the ludic power of the stage."³⁸ As I show in this and the following chapter, many of the participants in *Opinião* engaged in debates that hew more closely to the rational-critical than the performative-poetic, while in later chapters, particularly chapter 5, I examine the affective components of this tripartite theorization. I take Balme's seemingly coy question "can [theater] be a space of debate and discourse?" as the impetus for my investigation into how *Opinião* functioned in that very way.³⁹

³⁸ Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere*, 11-12.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

***Opinião* as Counterpublic**

Opinião became the central element in the formation of a counterpublic because its members held an oppositional stance to the military government, it had a frank political orientation that served to instigate debate for its audience, and there was a growing absence of spaces for oppositional political discourse due the climate of censorship under the newly installed military government. Moreover, many of the participants in the *Opinião* counterpublic were connected to the CPC, an organization known to agitate for socialist-style reforms that had been shuttered by the military government shortly after the coup. The legacy of the CPC, therefore, not only carried with it a reputation for opposition to the right-wing government, but a legacy of debate about social and political topics, particularly as connected to artistic practice.

The founders of the CPC were three politically minded artists: the playwright Vianinha, the filmmaker Leon Hirszman, and the sociologist Carlos Estevam Martins.⁴⁰ The group's intentions were circulated in a Martins-penned manifesto in late 1962, in which Martins made clear the group's debt to Karl Marx. Building on the Marxian notion that superstructural cultural forms could only be understood in relation to their material base, he argued that those forms could be mobilized to effect social change because of their relative flexibility.⁴¹ He famously outlined three possibilities for art that he famously defined: the people's art (i.e., folk styles), popular art (mass, commodified art), and revolutionary popular art (the only kind of popular art capable of mobilizing the masses). As he wrote,

The people's art [*arte do povo*] is predominantly a product of economically delayed communities and flourishes, preferably, in rural environments or in urban areas that still have not achieved the ways of life that accompany industrialization.... Popular art [*arte popular*], for its part, is distinguished not

⁴⁰ Carlos Estevam Martins, "Anteprojeto do Manifesto do CPC," *Arte em Revista* 1, no. 1 (1979): 67.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 68-69.

only by an audience that is constituted by the population of developed urban centers, but also by the appearance of a division of labor that makes the masses the unproductive receiver of works that were created by a professionalized group of specialists.... People's art and popular art, when considered from a rigorous cultural point of view, hardly deserve the denomination of art; on the other hand, when considered from the point of view of the CPC, in no way do they deserve the denomination of popular or of the people.... The artists and intellectuals of the CPC chose for themselves another path, that of revolutionary popular art [*arte popular revolucionária*].... Radical as is it, our revolutionary art is intended to be popular when it is identified with the fundamental aspiration of the people, when it is united to a collective effort that aims to comply to the project of the people's existence, which can only be to let the people be how they present themselves in a society of classes, that is, a people that cannot direct the society of which it is the people.⁴²

Martins distilled the CPC mission as the creation of revolutionary popular art that could reach and reflect “the people” and awaken them to their conditions of oppression, thus mobilizing them for change. It would do this by using already popular artistic forms to educate the masses as to their oppression.⁴³ During the Goulart years, the CPC helped to push the president's agenda further left, hence the military's rapid shuttering of it.

Martins' manifesto brings up a question of definition and translation that is central to the arguments of the CPC and the participants in *Opinião*. In Brazil, the word *popular* can mean both “of the people” and “commercial,” much like it can in English; however, it has a complex history, particularly when used next to “música,” as in *música popular*. As I mention in the Introduction, musicologist Carlos Sandroni has beautifully explicated the changing meanings of the term “música popular,” particularly related to the genre *Música Popular Brasileira* (MPB). He shows how the term shifted from meaning “folk music” in the 1920s to referring to rural and

⁴² Ibid., 72-73.

⁴³ See David Treece, “Guns and Roses: Bossa Nova and Brazil's Music of Popular Protest, 1958-68,” *Popular Music* 16, no. 1 (1997): 1-27. Augusto Boal, not a member of the CPC, but an important voice in the staging of *Opinião* as its director, claims to have rejected the French Théâtre Populaire model that sought to “bring culture to the people.” See Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro*, 178.

urban popular styles by mid-century, then to a form of socially-conscious music performed on acoustic guitar in the 1960s, and finally began to indicate a more stylistically-diverse music with a primarily middle and upper-middle class audience by the 1970s.⁴⁴ The use of “música popular” by participants in *Opinião* reflected their belief in a “certain conception of the ‘Brazilian people.’”⁴⁵ This usage reflects a decades long debate about whether “popular music” was meant to invoke folk (i.e., rural) music styles or urban styles. In its use by the makers of *Opinião*, and particularly Nara Leão, the term meant both of these within a commercial context. The class politics inherent in the use of the term popular, and reflected in the makeup of *Opinião*’s directors, authors, and audience, are implicit even in its English-language usage. Raymond Williams points out that the word was in use during the sixteenth century to refer to political system made up of the totality of the citizenry, but also “low” or “base.”⁴⁶ These resonances continued, he notes, into the nineteenth century, when the word meant from the point of view of the people, rather than seeking power from the people.⁴⁷ For these Brazilian artists to identify “popular art” from a more privileged class position, even ostensibly in service of class uplift, does reflect their lack of membership in the popular classes.

Many of the people involved in *Opinião*, whether in its production or as audience members were former members of the CPC; because the organization had been shuttered by the military government, the show became an important haven for CPC members. One woman that I

⁴⁴ Carlos Sandroni, “Adeus à MPB,” in *Decantando a República: Inventário Histórico e Político da Canção Popular Moderna Brasileira*. vol. 1: *Outras Conversas Sobre os Jeitos da Canção*, eds. Berenice Cavalcanti, Heloísa Starling, and José Eisenberg (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2004), 235.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁴⁶ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Revised Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 236.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

interviewed, Célia Costa, traveled with a group of UNE members from the Northeastern city of Recife to attend *Opinião*, reflecting both the show's widespread reputation and its importance in carrying the torch for the organization. Ângela Tâmega, who saw *Opinião* many times and sang in the follow-up show *Liberdade, Liberdade*, told me that censorship was a consistent worry, with playwrights Millôr Fernandes and Flávio Rangel regularly speculating about whether passages would have to be cut.⁴⁸ *Opinião* nearly suffered dramatic cuts when it traveled to São Paulo in April of 1965.⁴⁹ Artists as diverse as Chico Buarque and Carlos Vergara voiced concerns resonant with Tâmega's recollections of Fernandes and Rangel, specifically with respect to the phenomenon of self-censorship. As Buarque told me, "One of the great evils of censorship was to inject censorship into the mind of the creator."⁵⁰ Keeping this climate in mind—the government's fears about the play's politics and the artists' fears about government censors—it is difficult to conclude that *Opinião* was not a vital text for the formation of a counterpublic during its short run.⁵¹

The face to face dialogue that *Opinião* modeled and engendered was necessary in an era when its public was unable to find itself through mass-mediated forms. Drawing on democratic theorists such as John Stuart Mill, Lacey has theorized that in an age of mass-mediated political discussion, publics are constituted when their views are represented back to them through mediated forms.⁵² *Opinião*, however, was staged at the outset of a dictatorship that had already

⁴⁸ Tâmega, interview.

⁴⁹ Van Jafa, "Opinião (Censurada) em São Paulo," *Correio da Manhã*, May 29, 1965.

⁵⁰ Buarque, interview.

⁵¹ This resonates with Christopher Balme's observation about France and the UK, where, in times censorship, the theater has become an important space for political debate and oppositional voices. See Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere*, 16.

⁵² Lacey, *Listening Publics*, 160.

demonstrated a willingness to censor some of the spaces and voices that would make that representation possible. Because of that, it became a crucial site for maintaining some form of representation of those voices. But more than that, *Opiniã*’s public maintained the less mediated nature of classic auditorium, both within the theater and without.

The Makeup of the *Opiniã* Counterpublic

The predominantly young, middle-class makeup of *Opiniã*’s audience troubled its creators, inspired critiques by journalists, and limited its performers’ ability to speak to the segments of the Brazilian population whose plight they strove to depict. Cacá Diegues told me that the audience was “middle class and young, university folks.”⁵³ Geraldo Picanco and Ângela Tâmega were both architecture students who attended *en masse* with their colleagues. Luiz Guilherme de Moraes and Paulo Neuhaus both studied economics. Neuhaus elaborated:

There was a large proportion of students, but there were older people that were professionals, middle-class people.... Rio was always an opposition city during the military government and because of that it was always punished by the central government because they wouldn’t transfer budgetary allocations. So, the Zona Sul intelligentsia, for lack of a better word, it was heavily anti-military. So, it was, sort of, my cohort.... There were students and young professionals and middle-aged people. Not very old people, I don’t recall. And in those days, when you are in your 20s, you chill with young people.⁵⁴

Some pointed to this homogeneity as dampening the political projects surrounding the show. Journalist Paulo Francis estimated that the show reached exclusively “the Copacabana bourgeoisie.” And though attendees were moved by the sad songs, Francis wrote that “there is nothing in the text that makes the spectator [paying] 2,000 cruzeiros per seat feel threatened in

⁵³ Diegues, interview.

⁵⁴ Paulo Neuhaus, interview with author, Skype, April 19, 2016.

their privilege, or even raises a self-examination.”⁵⁵ Even the playwright Vianinha voiced his displeasure with the show’s limited reach when reflecting on it years later:

The [Teatro de] Arena was the mouthpiece of the popular masses [*massas populares*] in a theater with 150 seats.... Arena did not reach the popular public [*público popular*] and, what is perhaps most important, could not mobilize a great number of activists to its work.... Not that Arena had closed its movement on itself; there was a long and fecund jolt of action that was reached with excursions, with conferences, etc. But the mobilization was never higher because it could not be very high.⁵⁶

The counterpublic that coalesced around *Opinião* — though ostensibly open to entry by anyone— did not reflect a wide swath of Brazilian society. As Vianinha points out, this public was, like most publics and counterpublics, relatively homogenous “along economic, religious, aesthetic, political lines.”⁵⁷ Attendees of *Opinião* had to go to Copacabana, which was convenient only for residents of the Zona Sul, a great many of whom were middle class. Moreover, tickets cost 2000 cruzeiros.⁵⁸ For comparison purposes, Zé Kéti himself reportedly earned 80,000 cruzeiros per month in 1964 working a steady job for the National Social Security Institute (IAPETC).⁵⁹ Attending *Opinião* would have cost one fortieth of his monthly salary. That means that Rio citizens living on such a salary—or on much less, given the precarious financial situation of many favela residents—were unlikely to be afford to attend the show.

⁵⁵ Paulo Francis, *Opinião Pessoal (Cultura e Política)* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1966), 164.

⁵⁶ Vianinha, *Teatro, Televisão, Política*, ed. Fernando Peixoto (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983), 93.

⁵⁷ Tarde, “The Public and the Crowd,” 284.

⁵⁸ According to Thomas Skidmore, 2,000 cruzeiros was the equivalent of slightly more than US\$1 from the end of 1964 until November 1965. See Skidmore, *Politics of Military Rule*, 37-38. This reflects a marked devaluation of January of that year, when US\$1 bought 1,360 cruzeiros, a rate that the *New York Times* described as a “new low.” See “Unofficial Rate Hits New Low On the Brazilian Cruzeiro Here,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1964.

⁵⁹ Cesário Marques, “Zé, Nara e João Lançam ‘Nova-Forma,’” *Diário Carioca*, November 15-16, 1964.

A glance at the program’s advertisements indicate that the promoters were aware of their audience. Alongside the political messages appear ads for international airlines, perfume, and “aristocratic” cookware sets (see Fig. 2.1).⁶⁰ The imbrication of the “self-selecting” public for the show and a particular socioeconomic stratum of Rio is clear. For his part, Paulo Francis claimed that his critique was not meant to denigrate the show—being that “today, any protest is useful”—but that the show lacked a motivation to political action.



Figure 1.1: Advertisements from the Opinião Program.

These advertisements also reinforce the fact that *Opinião* was a commercial endeavor. According to Denoy de Oliveira, himself a member of the Grupo Opinião, the show had no governmental support, and “lived on the box office.”⁶¹ Boal recalls similarly that there was pressure not to shut down production when Nara Leão contracted laryngitis because, even without her, “the box

⁶⁰ Program for *Opinião*, December 1964, NL-2164-01–NL-2164-32, Coleção Nara Leão, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

⁶¹ Denoy de Oliveira, quoted in Marcelo Ridento, *Em Busca do Povo Brasileiro: Artistas da Revolução, do CPC à Era da TV* (São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2014), 106.

office [could not] stop.”⁶² The producers of the show did not hide this fact. Rather, they published attendance figures, in a remarkable gesture of transparency. The economic pressures on the theater company helped keep the show within its middle-class milieu. There was some effort made to bring *Opinião* beyond the theater when the performers presented the show for free at Zicartola, a samba venue in Rio’s *Centro* (central zone) run by samba composer Cartola and his wife Zica.⁶³ Similarly, the only advertisement in the program not for luxury goods was a recommendation of Zicartola from the *Opinião* “team.” The free presentation there, however, seems to have been a one-time event, rather than a recurring effort.

In his memoir, Augusto Boal related his and his Teatro de Arena collaborators’ worries about the audience for their plays:

Our audience was middle-class. Workers and peasants were our characters ... but not our spectators. We were making theater from a perspective that we believed to be popular [*popular*, in the “of the people” sense]—but we were not presenting *to* the people! What was the point of supporting the working class and offering them up on a platter, before dinner, to the middle class and the rich?⁶⁴

Echoing the complexities of defining the term “popular,” Boal also divulged that the group was uneasy with the term “povo,” or people. Rather than venturing a definition, they relied on knowing “what it was not: it was not us.”⁶⁵ Presumably, “us” meant the educated, mostly white, middle-class artists of the Teatro de Arena. With that in mind, the group turned to a kind of tokenization, with some casts having a single worker [*operário*] or a single peasant [*camponês*] as way of “legitimizing the cast.”⁶⁶ Boal did not make these comments with specific reference to

⁶² Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro*, 228.

⁶³ “Zicartola Vai Ter Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, December 23, 1964.

⁶⁴ Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro*, 167.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Opinião, but as a general critique of the work of the Teatro de Arena. He may have even seen *Opinião* as a triumph over this problem, both because fully two-thirds of the cast—Zé Kéti and João do Vale—were “not us” and, more importantly, the sociogeographic origins of the cast were divulged to be part of the organizing principle of the play. Zé Kéti was chosen to represent the urban class, at once operário and *marginal* (marginal resident of city or criminal). Vale was both camponês, owing to his rural background, and operário, owing to his time as a mason in Rio. By this definition of “povo,” Nara Leão was the only non-povo in the cast.

There is an argument to be made that reaching a non-povo audience with stories about the plight of the povo could have an important effect. It is clear that the participants and audience members for *Opinião* understood that the people most negatively affected by the dictatorship’s policies were not they themselves, but the poor and working classes. In fact, two middle-class men that grew up in the Zona Sul during the dictatorship told me that they experienced it not as harsh, repressive, and violent, but as a time of relatively high security and economic prosperity.⁶⁷ Their experiences are reflected neither in the stories of tortured and exiled artists, nor in the stories of the rural and urban poor. Journalist José Poerner highlighted *Opinião*’s potential to educate middle-class audiences about social realities in a piece from the end of the show’s run in Rio. He wrote, “I believe that the tendency of audiences that attend the show is to change their opinion about a series of falsely spread taboos, such as ‘the favela resident does not want to do anything,’ [and] ‘all the Northeastern wants is to move to the city.’”⁶⁸ The fact that *Opinião* brought these stories to this neighborhood, therefore, means it cannot be completely dismissed as not having any transformative potential.

⁶⁷ Both of these people related this perspective when they knew that my recording device was off and indicated that it was a perspective they preferred to share with some anonymity.

⁶⁸ José Poerner, “Opinião Sacode Poeira de Abril,” *Correio da Manhã*, February 2, 1965.

Even keeping these critiques in mind, the show was notable for its role in focusing the conversation of those apt to engage in the debates, citizens who, while not necessarily on the economic margins of Rio de Janeiro social life, certainly did not follow the dominant politics represented by the newly installed military regime. This is another factor that relates to the show's role as the defining event of a counterpublic; as Michael Warner explains, for a public to be a counterpublic, it must be aware of its subordinate status.⁶⁹ They were not subordinate in an economic sense, but they certainly cut against the most prominent political voices of the time: those of the military government. Moreover, unlike the CPC, which strove to speak *to* the Brazilian working class to educate them, *Opinião*'s performers—two-thirds of them, at least—*were* the Brazilian working class, speaking for themselves.

Opinião reflected many of the legacies of the film movement Cinema Novo, and counted many of the movement's proponents in its counterpublic. In addition to Cacá Diegues, many other filmmakers attended the show, including Leon Hirszman, Ruy Guerra, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Paulo César Saraceni, and Eduardo Escorel.⁷⁰ Many of them had other important connections to *Opinião* beyond their mere attendance. Singer Nara Leão sang a number of songs that first appeared in their films, including Nelson Cavaquinho's "Luz Negra," which was written for Hirszman's *A Falecida*, and Moacir Santos's "Naná," composed for Diegues's *Ganga Zumba*. Leão was dating Guerra during this period, and he is said to have greatly influenced her politics, gifting her the book *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir.⁷¹ Leão would also later marry Diegues. Pereira dos Santos helped launch the career of Zé Kéti, employing him as

⁶⁹ Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 119.

⁷⁰ Likely others attended as well, but these are all directors whose presence I have confirmed.

⁷¹ Flávio Eduardo de Macedo Soares, "Menina Rica e Mendigo Poeta," *O Jornal*, 1963.

composer, actor, and even assistant camera operator for his films *Rio 40 Graus* and *Rio, Zona Norte*. Saraceni included a live clip of Maria Bethânia's performance of the song "Carcará" from the show in his film *O Desafio*. Critic and director David E. Neves devoted one of his weekly film review columns to *Opinião*, justifying the choice not only by calling attention to *Opinião*'s quality, but also the close relationship between Cinema Novo and Brazilian popular music. He finished his review by calling the play "a superb show that can be swapped with a trip to the cinema."⁷²

Even more than these personal connections, *Opinião* reflected practices from the Cinema Novo movement. According to Glauber Rocha, "in 1957-58, Miguel Borges, Cacá Diegues, David Neves, Mário Carneiro, Paulo Saraceni, Leon Hirszman, Marcos Farias and Joaquim Pedro and I met in bars in Copacabana and Catete [another Rio neighborhood] to debate the problems of Brazilian cinema."⁷³ This legacy helps to explain filmmaker Eduardo Scorel's recollection that "everyone went more than once."⁷⁴ Scorel's father was a diplomat and until the age of ten, he grew up primarily in the United States and Italy. He studied sociology and politics at the private Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). He was younger than the Cinema Novo founders, too young to have been involved in the CPC, but he recalled being "very close to those that participated."⁷⁵ Beyond emphasizing the legacy of the CPC, though, Scorel called attention to the limited cultural happenings in Rio as a factor in *Opinião*'s success. Describing the show as "something very important for those, in that moment, that lived in the

⁷² David E. Neves, "Operação Opinião," *Diário Carioca*, December 20, 1964.

⁷³ Glauber Rocha, quoted in Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Augusto Gonçalves, *Cultura e Participação nos Anos 60* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1982), 35.

⁷⁴ Scorel, interview.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Zona Sul,” he recalled having trouble getting tickets to the show, and that he watched, standing, behind the seated audience.⁷⁶

The show also became an important text for plastic artists. Carlos Vergara, of the artistic movement known as *Nova Figuração* or *Pop Art Brasileiro*, said that he “often went there to the theater, because that place was where there were art galleries and important bars.”⁷⁷ Vergara had moved to Rio in 1964 from São Paulo after his success in the 1963 Bienal Internacional. In addition to highlighting the social geography of *Opinião*, he points to the show’s political orientation as a crucial factor in his attendance:

Opinião was so strong that ... it was the first manifestation, one of the first manifestations that had a popular repercussion, without being a street rally.... I was an employee at [state-owned oil company] Petrobras, so I saw the CPC do plays ... in the refinery. They were plays of a political character for the workers ... important for their political conscientization. *Show Opinião* was so important that we did the plastic arts exhibition *Opinião*. It [was] derived from this. We even used the same name. Our exhibition came afterward, but we used the same name—it was a way of creating a relation that the plastic arts had with the thinking that existed in *Show Opinião*.⁷⁸

By differentiating *Opinião* from the CPC’s initiatives, which were predicated on activists taking their message to the street and to the refinery, Vergara implicitly emphasizes the importance the show held as a place to go, to be.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Carlos Vergara, interview with author, Santa Teresa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 16, 2017.

⁷⁸ Ibid. The 1965 exhibition he mentions, *Opinião '65*, ran at Rio’s Modern Art Museum and included artists Antônio Dias, Hélio Oiticica, and Roberto Magalhães, among others.

⁷⁹ Of course, as Vergara pointed out, Copacabana itself was a place for artists to meet and have these conversations. Boal recalled that, prior to *Opinião*’s conception, he and Gianfrancesco Guarnieri would meet regularly in Copacabana to drink whiskey and debate future projects: “Boal and Guarnieri together, danger in sight—what could they be plotting!?” Guarnieri had written the influential *Eles Não Usam Black-tie*, a work of social and political commentary staged by the Teatro de Arena in 1958. Boal, *Hamlet e Filho Padeiro*, 224,

This “place to be” quality was certainly important for non-artists who attended the show. Picanco remembered dropping in for parts of the show multiple nights per week. Picanco and Tâmega were from the neighborhood, so attending the show was no great strain geographically. He recalled that he would attend with his university cohort, or he would meet his musician friends there. Though he was captivated by the show’s politics and artistry, he remembered frequently leaving early and retiring to a nearby bar to engage in his own conversations with friends and colleagues.⁸⁰ These conversations, I argue, are the crucial detail in understanding how *Opinião* worked for so many audience members as the formative text for a counterpublic.

The Opinion of *Opinião*

The participants in *Opinião* were clear that the show had a political agenda, detailed in the show itself as well as in the myriad materials—including interviews, the resultant LP and published script, and the play’s program—that surrounded it. Based on these materials, it would appear that the playwrights’ intention was to advance an opinion and sway its public to that opinion. In “Opinion and Conversation,” Gabriel Tarde defines opinion as “a momentary, more or less logical cluster of judgments which, responding to current problems, is reproduced many times over in people of the same country, at the same time, in the same society.”⁸¹ What, then, was the opinion that this show sought to spread? And was this reproduced many times over? That is, was it persuasive?

⁸⁰ Geraldo Picanco, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 6, 2017.

⁸¹ Gabriel Tarde, “Opinion and Conversation,” in *On Communication and Social Influence*, ed. Terry N. Clark (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 300.

As I have mentioned, newspapers reprinted the text of *Opinião*'s program, outlining the authors' mission statement and creative process.⁸² Playwrights Vianinha, Armando Costa, and Paulo Pontes leave some ambiguity in what purports to be a simple statement of their intentions. What was printed in the program, the book, and even the newspaper *Luta Democrática* two weeks before the show opened was the following:

This show has two principal intentions. One is that of the show itself; Nara, Zé Kéti, and João do Vale have the same opinion—popular music is much more expressive when it has an opinion, when it allies itself with the people in the collection of the new feeling and values necessary for social evolution....

The second intention refers to Brazilian theater. It is an attempt to collaborate in the search for ways out of the problem of the restriction of the repertory of the Brazilian theater—intersecting the general crisis the country suffers.⁸³

Both of these statements mask a bit the underlying thrust of the participants' politics. In the first, we learn that the musicians have an opinion, which is that popular music should have an opinion. This seems relatively innocuous, except it is followed by a call for popular music to ally with the people in service of a social evolution. A similar appeal is made to the theater—for a repertory that speaks to the country's general crisis, rather than shows that do not deal with politics or imported works. By phrasing this as a crisis of repertory, the statement stays part of the "hidden discourse" that resulted from the repressions in the dominant public sphere. These lightly coded messages helped define the public for the show.

In his review of the show, Fernando Pessoa Ferreira wrote that the message and intention was clear, reading into these published intentions a lesson about freedom:

⁸² MM Emery, "Apresenta: Destaques da Semana," *Luta Democrática*, November 24, 1964; Germana de Lamare, "No Ritmo de um Opinião," *Correio da Manhã*, December 6, 1964; Van Jafa, "Lançamento: 'Opinião'," *Correio da Manhã*, December 11, 1964; Van Jafa, "As Intenções de 'Opinião'," *Correio da Manhã*, December 16, 1964; Cesário Marques, "Zé, Nara e João Lançam 'Nova-Forma,'" *Diário Carioca*, November 15, 1964.

⁸³ Emery, "Apresenta: Destaques da Semana"; Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Paulo Pontes, *Opinião: Texto Completo do "Show"* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Val, 1965), 7.

The show was imagined with minimal concessions for tourists.... There are almost no colored, pretty, or sophisticated lighting effects. But in spite of this, or really because of it, the show, in no moment, permits the spectator to miss its intention, or lesson. It is a harvest, a rummaging in the fertile warehouse of our popular music, highlighting the quotidian reality of the Brazilian people and composing, with the assistance of a very well done text, a little anthology of freedom. Not freedom in the generic sense, but a Brazilian freedom. Freedom of a Northeastern, Minas Gerais, or Rio de Janeiro taste. Freedom that the student, the housewife, the garbage collector, the farmer, the merchant, indeed anyone of the people understands and desires.⁸⁴

Ferreira's reading does not contradict the intentions printed in the show's program, but neither does it fully overlap with them. Instead, his reading becomes another text for the show's public.

To the degree that *Opinião* contained an overall argument, it is fair to ask whether it was persuasive. Embedding ideas about social evolution and the plight of the povo does seem to have convinced some audience members, at least according to a story related by Sérgio Porto in his newspaper column:

Opinião is a show narrated with such rhythm and such good language, with such a hidden argument, that the audience ... ends up joining in the protest ... and ends by consecrating it with applause that interrupts the actors every second, until the final consecration. Upon leaving the Teatro de Arena, I heard a conversation between three military boys that were descending the stairs in front of me. I left the theater in a rush because of another commitment; the three left because they were the only ones who did not agree with what they saw and heard. The rest of the audience stayed in their seats, demanding an encore. One of the idiots said to the other, "Huh? They demanded a revolution and now they stay there applauding those that protest it." And this, my friends, is very good.⁸⁵

Porto's specificity in celebrating the show's subversiveness gives the anecdote veracity, while also showing that at least a few audience members were unsympathetic to the views the performers espoused.⁸⁶ Oppositional voices also emerged when vandals defaced the theater,

⁸⁴ Fernando Pessoa Ferreira, "A Melhor 'Opinião,'" *Diário Carioca*, December 13, 1964.

⁸⁵ Stanislaw Ponte Preta, "A Opinião de 'Opinião' É Uma Boa Opinião," *Última Hora Revista*, January 8, 1965.

⁸⁶ The presence of other dissenting views can be seen in the footage of *Opinião* in the film *O Desafio*. See Conclusion for more on this.

making vulgar puns on the performers' names, painting hammers and sickles on the walls and modifying the poster to read "directed by Karl Marx."⁸⁷ There is no evidence that the vandals actually saw the show, but the incident does reflect the polemical nature of its assumed politics.

An anecdote related to the *Jornal do Brasil* by performer João do Vale illustrates the show's appeal to the military class it purportedly protested. According to the report, Vale said "that the greatest praise [the show] received was from 'an army colonel, head of the Committee on the Repression of Communism, who said that *Opinião* was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen."⁸⁸

Because *Opinião* featured performers speaking as themselves and of their own experiences and opinions, Boal called the play a *show-verdade* (truth show).⁸⁹ The term is inspired by *cinema-verdade*, a Brazilian derivation of French *cinéma vérité*. Boal cited the Eduardo Coutinho film *Cabra Marcado Para Morrer* as exemplary of the style, because actors played themselves and the plot related their own lived experiences: "in other words, real documentaries with the appearance of fiction."⁹⁰ Notably, Boal saw the show's structure as more than fiction-seeming testimony. With the intimate theater, the performers could look directly at one another and the audience, speak directly to one another. Their "truth show," he wrote, "was dialogue."⁹¹ In this way, the show not only engendered dialogue through its location and

⁸⁷ "'Opinião' Vai Ser Garantida"; "Mão de Piche em 'Opinião'," newspaper clipping, NL- 2906-52, Coleção Nara Leão, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro Brazil.

⁸⁸ "'Opinião' Sai de Cartaz Esta Semana Para Estrear em S. Paulo Sem Zé Kéti," *Jornal do Brasil*, February 23, 1965.

⁸⁹ Boal, *Hamlet e Filho Padeiro*, 222.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Coutinho was forced to stop filming *Cabra* by the military regime. The final version, released in 1984—hence the English-language title *Twenty Years Later*—combines the original footage with reflections filmed in 1981 by the original "cast" and crew.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

introduction of political and social opinions, but modeled dialogue in its staging and structure.

It is telling, then, that Nara Leão cited cinema-verdade when she promoted *Opinião*. She said, “The spectacle will be based on the experience of truth-cinema, so we will have a truth-show. We will relate our vision of the world, each with her diverse experience, uniting at a common point, where we will speak and sing of this experience, in reference to popular communication and integration with Brazilian life.”⁹² It is clear that the show’s politics provided less a thesis statement or political argument than a group of perspectives and opinions, voiced by the performers and discussed and debated by the show’s public. For this reason, I examine, in the following chapters, the form and content of each performers’ political interventions—from João do Vale’s use of storytelling and humor to draw attention to the perils of rural poverty to Zé Kéti’s depictions of marginality in urban Rio de Janeiro in his sambas, and from Nara Leão’s use of her voice in myriad ways (including arguing with audience members from the stage) to Maria Bethânia’s profound emotional impact on audience members.

The fact that the play is structured as a series of individual testimonies is the basis for Maria Helena Kühner and Helena Rocha’s argument that *Opinião*, above all, is about the freedom to express “situations that are emblematic of our social reality.”⁹³ It does this, they argue, through the words of witnesses who can directly attest to the experience of living in Rio’s poorest neighborhoods (Zé Kéti) and migrating from the drought-stricken Northeast (João do Vale).⁹⁴ If the testimony of witnesses is necessary to shed light on important moments, it does not do so through “accounts that are closed, complete, and capable of permitting all of the

⁹² Nara Leão quoted in Carvalho, “Nara Dará Show Na Arena.”

⁹³ Maria Helena Kühner and Helena Rocha, *Para Ter Opinião* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2001), 55.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

sudden a judgement or conclusion.”⁹⁵ This format, then, contributes to the dialogic nature of the *Opinião* counterpublic. The show lends itself seamlessly to the dialogue that would follow in the bars and streets of Copacabana. Moreover, the words spoken and sung by the performers were rarely directed at one another. Instead, as Kühner and Rocha aptly point out, they were addressed directly to the “you” of the audience.⁹⁶ There was neither physical distance between performer and audience nor structural distance. The form implies a response: the performers share, then the audience shares. Kühner and Rocha interpret the intimacy of the show and its incorporation of quotidian topics as a way of speaking to and about the Brazilian people on the level of those people. Augusto Boal’s recollections about his early work with the Teatro de Arena de São Paulo reinforce this: “With frequency, comments from the audience were heard.... Working in theater in the round is strenuous, but gratifying. Interrelation or death!”⁹⁷ I would add that these factors contributed to the audience’s inclination to speak, too—to become more than spectators and participate in the counterpublic.

I would argue that the debate that characterized *Opinião* better reflects any legacy granted by its connections to the CPC. Historian Miliandre Garcia reminds us that there is no document that should be viewed as a unilateral reflection of the group’s beliefs, as the members differed on many points.⁹⁸ Vianinha was one of the members whose ideas about what was meant by “popular culture” often differed from Martins’s characterization above.⁹⁹ Instead, the

⁹⁵ Ibid., 44.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁹⁷ Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro*, 142.

⁹⁸ Melisandre Garcia, “A Questão da Cultura Popular: as Políticas Culturais do Centro Popular de Cultura (CPC) da União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE),” *Revista Brasileira de História* 24, no. 47 (2004): 128-129.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 137.

organization created an opportunity for debate within a given public about these topics, a tradition of debate that continued with *Opinião*. Augusto Boal posited that the military government's decision to shutter the CPC and other similar organizations was primarily a means to stop the dialogue that these organizations permitted.¹⁰⁰ This interpretation of the military's actions implies that the CPC's tradition of debate not only continued with *Opinião*, but that *Opinião* provided the impetus for that debate's very survival.

In his theorization of opinion, Gabriel Tarde does not attribute the spread or formation of a common opinion solely to the circulation of newspapers, but rather to the effect that newspapers have on conversation. Tarde asserts that the level of spontaneous engagement required for conversation is why it is the most important mechanism by which opinions spread and take root.¹⁰¹ He clarifies that this process occurs by way of voluntary conversation, whether contentious or informative, not an exchange of niceties, and that it is the press that makes such conversations possible.¹⁰² The common circulation of information and argument through print materials gives conversations their thrust and shape. *Opinião* functioned in much the same way that newspapers function in Tarde's theory: as "common regulator." The primary difference was that this public was not the dominant public reached by the circulation of newspapers, but a counterpublic characterized by hidden discourse.

Examining *Opinião* as a common regulator for a counterpublic takes into account Vianinha's critiques of its limited reach and permits a deeper understanding of the show as, to use his term, "participant-theater." In "Perspectives on Theater, 1965," Vianinha called attention

¹⁰⁰ Boal, *Hamlet e Filho do Padeiro*, 221.

¹⁰¹ Tarde, "Opinion and Conversation," 308.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 312

to some qualities that distinguished the theater from other forms of entertainment. Unlike television and film, theater demands the presence of its audience; beyond that, the audience *acts*—by feeling “stimulated, contested, surprised, revolted.”¹⁰³ Vianinha compares the “basic condition” of theater (the possibility for audience action) to the basic condition of democracy (the possibility for free expression). Writing under growing authoritarianism, Vianinha did not make every idea explicit. He claimed that it was neither necessary to define democracy (“we miss it in our bones”) nor participant-theater (“the ‘difficult’ plays ... explain everything”).¹⁰⁴ He saw the theater as a redemocratizing force, and *Opinião* as the flagship example of this process. If participation was, for Vianinha, the marker of both theater and democracy, I imagine that he would be happy with *Opinião*’s role in the formation of a counterpublic. The show not only inspired attendance, its ideas inspired debate—and that epitomizes the “participation” in participant-theater. The observations of journalist Reinaldo Jardim, in his review of *Opinião*, sum up this perspective nicely: “It’s unnecessary to speak of authors and directors. Their competence is demonstrated by the final result of the show, by the communicability achieved, by what is left planted in each spectator: the seed of ideas to think about, opinions to defend, and positions to take.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Vianinha, *Teatro, Televisão, Política*, 103.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Jardim, “*Opinião*.”

Chapter Two. Nara Leão: A Singer Without a Voice

*The girl said things
To cause a shudder?
Because the voice of a girl
Unsettles the revolution?*

...

*Does she have in her speech
More than charm, a cannon?
Or do you think that, by her name,
Instead of Nara, she's a lion [leão]?*

...

*Nara is a bird, didn't you know?
And prison does not work
For the voice that, through the air,
Spreads her song.*

*My illustrious marshal,
Leader of the nation,
Don't allow, even in jest,
That they imprison Nara Leão.*

– Carlos Drummond de Andrade,
selections from “Imagens em ão”¹

The Voice of a Girl Unsettles the Revolution?

On Sunday, May 22, 1966, the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* published an article titled “Nara Is of the Opinion: This Army Is Worthless.”² “Nara” was Nara Leão, a then twenty-four-year-old singer who had grown up in the wealthy Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of Copacabana. Leão was famous for her outspokenness on political topics, but this headline highlighted especially scandalous behavior. The military class, the very people Leão’s words attacked, were

¹ Carlos Drummond de Andrade, “Imagens em ão,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 27, 1966. In Portuguese, the syllable “ãõ” can frequently be added to the end of words as an augmentative, much like the English “est.” With this title, Drummond plays with the fact that the surname Leão, meaning lion, ends in this syllable, as he uses the poem as both a supplication to the Brazilian president and an exaltation of Leão herself.

² “Nara É de Opinião: Êsse Exército Não Vale Nada,” *Diário de Notícias*, May 22, 1966.

the most powerful people in the country. Two years prior, on March 31, 1964, the Brazilian army had staged a military coup; by the time of this article, its officers were beginning preparations for a transfer of power from their first installed president, Humberto Alencar de Castelo Branco to the second. The presumptive “candidate” from the military’s ARENA (*Aliança Renovadora Nacional*) party was Castelo Branco’s Minister of War, Artur da Costa e Silva.

The day prior to the article’s publication, a reporter had called Leão at home as part of a survey on the kind of candidate Brazilian public figures thought would make the ideal president.³ Leão candidly responded that she believed the country would be better served by a civilian rather than a military officer, because, in her words, “the military may understand cannons and machine guns, but ‘knows nothing’ about politics.”⁴ As part of the transition back to civilian rule, Leão believed that the politicians targeted in the 1964 coup should be granted amnesty and the military officers involved in the coup barred from participation in politics. Leão called for a president who “would organize an economic plan according to the necessities of the country,” rather than supporting a system wherein a small minority held and maintained all of the country’s wealth.⁵ She suggested using resources for services that benefitted the greatest number of people, and endorsed diverting funds spent on the military to hospitals, schools, technicians, and teachers.

Within two days of their publication, Leão’s opinions were front page news and Costa e Silva called for Leão’s jailing under Article 14 of the National Security Law.⁶ In his widely distributed memorandum, he declared, “Singer Nara Leão’s interview may have repercussions at

³ “Nara: Castelo Deu Liberdade e Falei,” *Diário de Notícias*, May 27, 1966. This is also confirmed by writer Ruben Braga, who received the same phone call and reports asking for time to think before conveniently “forgetting” to phone back. See Rubem Braga, “O Processo de Nara,” *Diário de Notícias*, May 27, 1966.

⁴ “Nara e de Opinião: Êsse Exército Não Vale Nada.”

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ “Armas Contra a Opinião de Nara,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, May 26, 1966.

the heart of the military class and, possibly, be exploited by the anti-revolutionary faction.”⁷ Costa e Silva speculated that Leão either was attempting to promote her own career or “demoralize the revolution.” Regarding the latter allegation, he suggested that she was attempting to undermine congressional support for the military candidate and strengthen the support for the opposition MDB (*Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*) party, who favored a civilian candidate.⁸ The paper *Luta Democrática* further reported that military officers believed Leão’s words were intended to create animosity between the three branches of the armed forces.⁹ It is clear that Costa e Silva believed Leão was acting subversively, and for this transgression he threatened her with up to five years imprisonment.¹⁰ Costa e Silva’s immediate, intense, and widely reported response shows his anxiety about expressions of dissent from musicians generally and Leão in particular.

Five days after the initial story broke, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, one of Brazil’s most acclaimed and well-respected poets, published “Imagens em ão,” an excerpt of which is cited as this chapter’s epigraph. Drummond’s seventeen-stanza poem implores Castelo Branco not to imprison Leão, praises her singing, and wonders what the repercussions of Leão’s free expression of opinion might be: “Does she have in her speech / more than charm, a cannon? ... Because the voice of a girl / Unsettles the revolution?”¹¹ The questions seem rhetorical at first,

⁷ Memorandum from the Minister of War, quoted in “Govêrno Acha que Nara Pode derrubá-lo com Entrevistas,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, May 26, 1966.

⁸ “Armas Contra a Opinião de Nara.”

⁹ “Nara Leão Enquadrada na Lei de Segurança Nacional,” *A Luta Democrática*, May 26, 1966.

¹⁰ “Exército Quer Punir Nara Leão,” *Jornal do Brasil*, May 26, 1966.

¹¹ Drummond de Andrade, “Imagens em ão.”

implying that her words do not pose a threat, but in fact they serve as a warning: “prison does not work / for the voice that, through the air / spreads its song.”¹²

In this chapter, I examine how Leão used her voice as a political tool within the publics I outlined in chapter 1. Here, I focus on Nara Leão’s political interventions both in the dominant public sphere and within the *Opinião* counterpublic. I argue that Leão used four speech-related activities to render her message intelligible. First, I examine Leão’s interventions in the classic medium of the public sphere: the press. Through interviews and self-penned opinion pieces, Leão spoke openly about her political beliefs and defined her music making as a political act. Second, I show that Leão chose songs that, to use her words, “said something,” i.e., had politically and socially relevant lyrics. Third, I situate her work on stage in *Opinião*, where she engaged her public directly, reiterating opinions that appeared in print and debating with her audience. Finally, I analyze her singing itself, which her collaborators and audience understood as speech.

Leão navigated a social and professional landscape characterized by the privileges of her social class, racial identity, geographic positioning, and education, on the one hand, and limits imposed and implied by her gender and youth, on the other. She came from an upper-middle class family, was raised in the most affluent part of the Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of Copacabana, and belonged to the cohort of musicians responsible for Bossa Nova’s emergence in the late 1950s. She had access to influential social circles and educational opportunities. As a woman, she was not barred from being a composer in any formal way, but given the paucity of women composers in popular music, it was not a viable professional path. Leão’s greatest chance at a musical career was as a singer even though Leão, her collaborators, and critics all considered

¹² Ibid.

her vocal abilities modest at best, and poor or nonexistent at worst. Moreover, she was sexually harassed by music producers and endured sexist critiques from journalists and others.¹³ Leão's youth in comparison to her collaborators limited her possibilities and shaped the reception of her music early in her career. Leão leveraged her social capital to intervene in the public sphere and form coalitions with musicians from economically and racially marginalized groups, even against the wishes of some of her collaborators.¹⁴ She also marshalled her limited vocal abilities in such a way that a perceived deficiency became a politically effective tool.

Nara Leão, “Poor Little Rich Girl”

Leão was not a carioca. She was born in Vitória, the capital of the state of Espírito Santo. But she moved to Rio with her father, Jairo, a lawyer, her mother, Altina (Tinoca), a teacher, and her older sister, Danuza, before her first birthday. In Rio, she grew up in the rich neighborhood of Copacabana, at first one block from the Atlantic Ocean on Avenida Nossa Senhora de Copacabana, when it was it was a commercial center with upscale goods marketed to the upper-middle class.¹⁵ Later, the Leãos moved to an apartment at 2853 Avenida Atlântica in the *Edifício Louvre*, a luxury name befitting the luxury apartment.¹⁶ The Leãos' third-story apartment

¹³ Both Chico Buarque, Leão's friend and collaborator, and André Midani, who served as the head of Philips during a large portion of Leão's career, characterized the recording industry as sexist in my conversations with them. As I will discuss later in the chapter, a portion of Leão's *Opinião* dialogue has her relating a specific story of being propositioned during an audition.

¹⁴ Leão was supported by some collaborators, such as Carlos Lyra. But she had to fight others, including Aloísio de Oliveira, who produced her first LP.

¹⁵ Beatriz Jaguaribe, *Rio de Janeiro: Urban Life Through the Eyes of the City* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 136.

¹⁶ Sérgio Cabral, *Nara Leão: Uma Biografia* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 2001), 16. The Leãos' apartment stands about a mile from the Copacabana Palace, a glamorous hotel designed by French architect Joseph Gire in the early 1920s. The French influence on the Brazilian upper class, from fashion to philosophy was dominant in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, only to be usurped by the U.S. Americanization of the 1950s. For more on this influence see Ruy Castro, *Rio de Janeiro: Carnival under Fire*, trans. John Gledson (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); Robert Stam and Elia Shohat, *Race in Translation: Culture Wars around the Postcolonial Atlantic* (New

overlooked the Copacabana beach. According to Roberto Menescal, one of Nara's early boyfriends and musical collaborators, if you slouched down enough in the living room couches, you could see just ocean from the windows and imagine you were not even in the city.¹⁷ The apartment was large, so friends could come and go at their leisure, making noise in the living room at all hours without keeping the rest of the family from sleeping.

By the 1950s, Copacabana was advertised to outsiders as a combination of modern luxury and tropical exoticism, while representing to insiders the center of youth culture.¹⁸ Earlier aristocratic pretensions associated with European—particularly French—fashions and intellectual currents had been replaced by a new (U.S.) Americanization.¹⁹ As Beatriz Jaguaribe puts it, “the ‘Copacabana way of life’ promoted by the real estate market, illustrated magazines, and advertisements was premised on gender differences, racial inequality, class divisions, and the maintenance of the status quo. The golden tanned youth of Copacabana were white middle-class members and not poor, black, or mestizo youth.”²⁰ In *Opinião*, Leão served as the representative of the idealized Zona Sul, the resident of Copacabana. Jaguaribe argues that the depiction of Copacabana during this time—sometimes referred to as the neighborhood's “golden years”—has been invoked in nostalgic depictions because the bourgeois middle-class flourished then.²¹ The Leãos occupied that class position and consequently enjoyed its privileges.

York: New York University Press, 2012); Jeffrey Needell, *A Tropical 'Belle Epoque': Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹⁷ Roberto Menescal, interview with author, São Conrado, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 19, 2017.

¹⁸ Jaguaribe, *Rio de Janeiro*, 152.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 154. In reality, Copacabana did reflect some of the social disparities of the city as a whole. It is home to a number of favelas.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

Leão also benefitted from a musical education through her proximity to the cohort of musicians associated with Bossa Nova, a decidedly upper-middle class genre of Brazilian music, created in the Zona Sul by teenagers and twenty-somethings in the late 1950s. She began to commingle with this cohort at only ten years old, when she met a fifteen-year-old Roberto Menescal and dated him for two years.²² At fifteen, Leão started dating Menescal's frequent composing partner, the twenty-eight-year-old Ronaldo Bôscoli. By sixteen, she devoted herself full time to guitar playing and musicianship.

Suzel Reily has argued that Bossa Nova met two seemingly contradictory criteria for the carioca youth that invented it: it was Brazilian, but it was also modern, not the exoticized brand of Brazil that had been sold as part of samba in the preceding decades.²³ Nara Leão said as much in a letter she wrote to columnist João Carlos de Oliveira:

the truth is that a few people's talents and the surge of industrial and economic development of our country joined together, leading to a positive result: a renewal in all of our artistic sectors (Bossa Nova, Cinema Novo, etc.) The time when it was shameful to be Brazilian passed, and a feeling of Brazilianness was born in each of us, along with the necessity for an art more our own. Maybe this is the story of Bossa Nova.²⁴

Leão's description of Bossa Nova relates to the genre's emergence during the period of dramatic economic and industrial that occurred during the presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek. These changes did not affect all parts of the country equally. They principally benefited the urban

²² Menescal was careful to point out to me that he did not know that Leão was so young when they first met.

²³ Suzel Ana Reily, "Tom Jobim and the Bossa Nova Era," *Popular Music* 15, no. 1 (1996): 1-16. The three "pillars" of Bossa Nova's formation, according to musicologist André Luis Scarabelot, were: the particular manner in which João Gilberto played samba rhythms on his guitar, Antônio Carlos (Tom) Jobim's classical training, and the participation of jazz musicians who played nightly in the bars of Copacabana. See André Luis Scarabelot, "Música Brasileira e Jazz – O Outro Lado da História," *Revista Digital Arte* 3, no. 3 (2005), accessed March 10, 2018, <http://www.revista.art.br/site-numero-03/trabalhos/07.htm>.

²⁴ In the same letter, as I shall discuss, Leão criticized Bossa Nova for not representing all social classes in Brazil. Nara Leão, "A Resposta de Nara Leão," *Fatos e Fotos*, October 31, 1964.

middle- and upper-middle classes that could afford modern amenities—classes represented by the apartment dwellers in Copacabana.²⁵

Bossa Nova’s practitioners and creators were of the first generation to grow up in a Zona Sul primarily characterized by apartment buildings, thus the genre is frequently characterized by both adherents and critics as “apartment music.”²⁶ Both the music and its creators were profoundly bound up with the particularities of the economic boom and cosmopolitanism associated with the Kubitschek years. Better still, the music was quiet enough to be played in an apartment building without disturbing the neighbors living only one plaster wall away. The specific apartment most famously associated with Bossa Nova is the one where Leão grew up. It appears to have been Bôscoli who first advanced the notion that the Bossa Nova movement was born in Leão’s house, in a 1961 profile of the then nineteen-year-old Leão for the magazine *Fatos e Fotos*.²⁷ Though the claim has been taken as fact in many histories of Brazilian popular music, Leão refuted this characterization repeatedly, likely as a way of distancing herself from the genre.²⁸ That said, Menescal told me that if 100% of Bossa Nova’s development didn’t happen at number 2853 Avenida Atlântica, then 90% did.²⁹

²⁵ Reily, “Tom Jobim and the Bossa Nova Era,” 5.

²⁶ This characterization of Bossa Nova was not unique to Brazil. The genre is associated with “easy listening” and bachelor pads in the U.S. and U.K. as well. See Keir Keightly, “Un Voyage via Barquinho...: Global Circulation, Musical Hybridization, and Adult Modernity, 1961-9,” in *Migrating Music*, eds. Jason Toynbee and Byron Dueck, 112-126 (New York: Routledge, 2011). I am thankful to K.E. Goldschmitt for reminding me of the genre’s widespread reputation.

²⁷ Bôscoli, quoted in Cabral, *Nara Leão: Uma Biografia*, 55

²⁸ See, for example, José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular Brasileira: da Modinha à Canção de Protesto* (Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes, 1974), 224.

²⁹ Menescal, interview. For examples of Leão’s refutations, see: Juvenal Portella, “Nara de Uma Bossa Só,” *Fatos e Fotos*, October 17, 1964, 12-13; Leão, “A Resposta de Nara Leão”; “Nara Fala (Bem) de Nara,” *O Cruzeiro*, August 3, 1963.

Leão's membership in the Bossa Nova cohort afforded her even more privilege—what Pierre Bourdieu might call social capital—than she already had.³⁰ Through her powerful friends in Bossa Nova, Leão gained access to myriad platforms: recording studios, radio, stages, local and national press. According to journalist Sérgio Cabral, “Nara occupied a special position in the group, naturally for being the host, but also for playing the guitar very well, for her good memory (she knew infinite songs by heart), and for her timely critiques.”³¹ Her own talents and intellect notwithstanding, this “special position” would afford Leão a great number of opportunities as she began her musical—and eventually, her political—career. As she leveraged this social capital toward her political project, some of her former friends and collaborators responded, either playfully or spitefully. After receiving an invitation to a 1964 performance, one group replied with this telegram: “Congratulations Nara STOP happily impossible to attend commercial promotion using Bossa Nova prestige STOP signed Bossa Nova.”³² The message, delivered publicly through the *Diário Carioca*, evidenced the circulating awareness of the social capital Leão had built up through a youth spent with some of the most admired musicians in Rio.³³

Throughout this first phase of Leão's career, she gained the fame that she would later leverage as she became outspoken in her political beliefs. She debuted as a professional singer in the show *Pobre Menina Rica* (poor little rich girl) at the restaurant Au Bon Gourmet in Copacabana. The songs for the show were written by the poet Vinícius de Moraes and songwriter

³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 253.

³¹ Cabral, Nara Leão: Uma Biografia, 33.

³² Norma Hirszman, “Segundo Sexo: A Mulher de Quem se Fala,” *Diário Carioca*, November 15, 1964.

³³ It also evidenced the polemic that attended Leão's political turn, which I will discuss in following section of this chapter.

Carlos Lyra, both regular attendees of the gatherings at the Leão household. The musical director was Aloysio de Oliveira, one of the most powerful non-performers in the Bossa Nova world and the man who would produce Leão's first album on the Elenco label. We do not have recordings of this phase of Leão's career, but it is clear that she amassed significant visibility in Rio before beginning her political project in earnest.

The title of the show at Au Bon Gourmet, *Poor Little Rich Girl*, reflects two of the limitations she would face in making her political turn: her age and gender. Leão was by far the youngest of the *bossanovistas*, with collaborators ranging from five years to twenty-nine years older than her.³⁴ Because of this age gap, Leão was more observer than participant, which she recalled in a 1977 interview at Rio's Museum of Image and Sound: "I functioned in the group as a kind of computer. I knew all of the lyrics, melodies, and chords by heart, but I only opened my mouth when someone needed me to remember a song. And the gist was usually: 'nasal,' 'off-key,' and other 'compliments' like that. I really think that I only stayed in the group because of my house. No one believed in me, but also no one heard me singing."³⁵

Leão's professional ambitions were marked from the very beginning by the challenges of institutional sexism: being a singer meant being judged on the basis of her looks. One article called her knees the "most talked about in the Republic."³⁶ Sometimes she was described as a "pretty girl," but not all descriptions were kind: sometimes a "neither pretty nor ugly girl," and

³⁴ Cabral, Nara Leão: Uma Biografia, 33.

³⁵ Nara Leão, "Depoimento Para a Posteridade," Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Quoted in Cabral, *Nara Leão*, 35.

³⁶ "Nara Leão Sonante e Dissonante," *Revista T.V.*, August 1964.

one writer notes her “her almost ugliness, an almost pretty ugliness.”³⁷ The organizing principle was not a consensus opinion about Leão’s beauty, but that her beauty mattered. As a woman, she would be subject to a kind of evaluation that her male peers avoided. Even her own father, Jairo Leão, allegedly remarked, upon learning that his daughter had secured the lead in *Pobre Menina Rica*, “Ah, you mean to say you’re going to become a common whore?”³⁸

Because her gender established tacit boundaries to her available roles as a musician, Leão was referred to as “the muse of Bossa Nova,” a title that she vehemently and repeatedly decried in the face of its persistent use by journalists and others.³⁹ It is obviously gendered term that fits a pattern within Brazilian popular music, where women composers were exceedingly rare.⁴⁰ None of the women associated with this period of Bossa Nova composed. In a society that values authorship as the genuine creative act, there is an easy slippage between singer and muse, a fact that sets implicit boundaries on the political agency of a singer. Leão was a self-actualized political actor, but despite her attempts to shed the title of “muse” as early as 1963, she was referred to as such year after year, evidenced by this comment from a 1965 interview: “I would

³⁷ Fernando Lôbo, “Violão, Môça & Sonho,” *Diário de Notícias*, May 5, 1965; “Nara Sendo Ela Mesma,” *O Globo*, February 29, 1964; Van Jafa, “Opinião,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 15, 1964; Interino, “‘Opinião’ É Um ‘Show’ de Brasil,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, December 22, 1964.

³⁸ Castro, *Bossa Nova*, 263.

³⁹ It is difficult to find a newspaper article from the era that doesn’t refer to Leão by this title. See, for example: Mário Cabral, “Nara Leão: Musa de Bossa Nova,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, February 20, 1964; Fernando Lopes, “Bossa Nova em Marcha Lenta Para o Fim,” *Tribuna da Imprensa*, February 29, 1964; Rufus Lawdovzsky, “Lp Elenco de Nara Leão,” *Diário Carioca*, March 15, 1964; “Nasceu Uma Deusa Para a Bossa-Nova: Nara Leão,” *Revista do Rádio 766* (1964), 5; “Nara Canta Bossa-Eterna,” *Intervalo* 61 (August 3, 1964), 23A.

⁴⁰ The number of women characterized as “muses” for Brazilian composers extends from musicians (notably Leão and Gal Costa, “the muse of *Tropicália*) to non-musicians. Among the latter is Heloisa Eneida Menezes Pais Pinto Mendes Pinheiro, the “muse” for Vinícius de Moraes and Tom Jobim’s “*Garota de Ipanema*.” In a 1965 interview, Moraes recalled how he and Jobim were “dumbfounded” by how she moved. She was, quite literally, objectified in the song that has become most associated with Bossa Nova throughout the world. For more background on this song’s origins, see Jairo Severiano and Zuzana Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo: 85 Anos de Músicas Brasileiras, vol. 2: 1958-1985* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1999), 65. Regarding women composers, other than *choro* composer Chiquinha Gonzaga (1887-1935), *samba-canção* composer Delores Duran (1930-1959), and *sambista* Dona Ivone Lara (1922-2018), there were nearly no other well-known women composers prior to the 1970s.

like to say one more time that I am not the muse of Bossa Nova. I simply sing and work hard.”⁴¹

The political stance that she took at the onset of her recording career underscores her need to be taken seriously both as an artist and as a laborer, as well as the inapplicability of a descriptor like “muse.” Leão, whose “decision” to become a singer was the product of the limited positions offered in a gendered field, made her interventions where she could: behind a microphone on stage and in the studio, and in front of one when speaking to the press about social and political issues.

Nara Speaks (Well)

Leão established herself as a political actor initially and most plainly through her pronouncements to and through the press. In interviews and self-penned opinion pieces, Leão spoke frankly and repeatedly about her views on the relationship between music and politics, leaving no doubt that she intended her musical activity to be understood as a political statement. In addition to rejecting her status as “muse,” she also renounced her associations with Bossa Nova. This topic captured the public’s interests and allowed Leão to imagine a new kind of political music. Leão’s critique of Bossa Nova as alienated—as attending only to the interests of the city’s upper and middle classes and the social milieu of the Zona Sul—seem ironic given that she made it from the perspective of someone who enjoyed the privileges of that class. This irony did not escape the attention of some critics, whose charges of inauthenticity and appropriation I discuss below. In this way, her use of her social capital to promote her political cause actually both allowed for and limited the efficacy of her political pronouncements.

Leão’s critique of Bossa Nova began as early as August 3, 1963. Two articles published

⁴¹ “Nara Leão Protesta: Não Sou Deusa Coisa Nenhuma,” *Revista do Rádio* (1965) 8-9.

that day made clear her position. The first of these, a Leão-penned piece titled “Nara Speaks (Well) of Nara,” established her primary critique of the genre: its lack of connection to the *povo* (popular classes). Leão made the class origins of Bossa Nova composers a point of critique, characterizing them as elitist and disconnected from the vast majority of the Brazilian populace. At the same time, she celebrated popular composers, whose lyrics “can serve as a vehicle for information.... They portray an era, a region, their problem and their customs.”⁴² In the short article, Leão stated unequivocally that popular music should speak to as large an audience as possible about social issues.⁴³

In a conversation with theater director Augusto Boal published the same day in the São Paulo edition of the paper *Última Hora*, Leão specified how Bossa Nova’s compositional and performance conventions, the rehearsal practices of its adherents, and the genre’s performance contexts left it divorced from the people. She reinforced the notion that “the people” were defined by their social class.⁴⁴ Leão critiqued Bossa Nova concerns for lacking meaningful lyrics, saying of the genre “there is no greater alienation!”⁴⁵ In the interview, Boal asks her why the genre so frequently centers on themes of sadness and suffering. Leão disputes the premise of the question, saying, “Your mistake.... Bossa Nova is neither sad nor joyous. It’s simply innocuous. If you have the word ‘*dor*’ [‘pain’], don’t be afraid, it’s only a sound that rhymes with ‘*amor*’ [‘love’].... In Bossa Nova the words don’t have meaning. They only have musical

⁴² “Nara Fala (Bem) de Nara.”

⁴³ To understand Leão’s use of the word “popular” requires remembering her roots in the CPC, the leftist organization discussed in the previous chapter. Though Leão’s approach to music making did not align fully with all of the ideals and prescriptions outlined by the CPC founders, her use of the that term is consistent with theirs.

⁴⁴ Augusto Boal and Nara Leão, “Boal e Nara Leão Denunciam o ‘Bestialógico’ da Bossa Nova,” *Última Hora São Paulo*, August 3, 1963.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

value.”⁴⁶ Leão’s critique is predicated on the idea that this lack of meaning is directly tied to the genre’s composers’ lack of engagement with society in general and the working classes in particular. She says, “this sometimes tricks us: we think that the composer is tortured when, in truth, he is only drinking another whiskey, far from the things of the world, dreaming of harmonies.”⁴⁷ The composer drinking whiskey is an evocative detail: the liquor of the *povo* would be cachaça, not whiskey, which, due to its foreign status, marked its consumers as separate from the world of the Brazilian people. Leão strips away the mystique of the lonely, hermetic author drinking whiskey to help forget his pain as he composes his masterpiece, and replaces it with the image of an out-of-touch elitist cliché.

Later in the piece Leão puts the responsibility for creating meaning on all of the participants in the process, noting that Bossa Nova performers were equally alienated, as shown in their unreflective rehearsal practices: “In theater rehearsals the text, the interpretations, and the author’s ideals are debated. There is a dialogue. In music, only the instruments dialogue. And instruments don’t argue.”⁴⁸ As a performer with little recourse to the composition process, Leão holds herself to the same standard she would a composer: she too is responsible for making choices in service of socially meaningful music. Leão also finds fault in Bossa Nova’s standard performance contexts, which leave audience and performer without an opportunity for connection: “We don’t see who hears us, we don’t feel the direct reaction of the spectator. We work for a live audience, in general, only in nightclubs. You sing, give all your effort, while the customer, that is, the spectator, eats a *‘lapin de notre élevage sans nom’* [homebred rabbit

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

without name] and drinks French wine. Imagine what the content of plays would be if the audience ate during them!”⁴⁹

In her response to Boal’s question “Is Bossa Nova popular?” Leão explicitly wrestles with the multiple meanings of the word:

It could be that the people like to hear it, but it requires a lot of musical training to reproduce. Because of this, Bossa Nova is more successful among bourgeois youth with free time to take guitar lessons. Those who buy Bossa Nova records are the same that buy Frank Sinatra and Ray Charles. And they aren’t exactly the people. Beyond this, Bossa Nova can’t be played on a matchbox, which, in a way, diminishes its popularity.⁵⁰

There is, of course, some irony and lack of self-awareness in her characterization here. Saying that those who have the time to engage in musical training—a category that includes Leão herself—are *not exactly the people* is a position that she would later contradict as debates raged over her authenticity in performing this music of the people.

Leão’s comprehensive takedown of Bossa Nova also reflected her perspective on the stated values of the CPC. As I outline in the previous chapter, the CPC sought to create art that educated and uplifted the poor and working classes by using the artistic vernacular of those classes.⁵¹ Leão’s opinions differed. She aligned with Martins’s assertions in his CPC manifesto that “in our country and our time, *outside of political art there is no popular art.*”⁵² That said,

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ When Leão invokes the image of music that can be played on a matchbox, she is speaking literally. A number of practitioners of the sub-genre of samba known as *samba de morro* accompany themselves on a box of matches as they sing, and the instrument has come to symbolize the genre. I delve more deeply into the complex history of *samba de morro* and its contested spaces and meanings in the following chapter, but for our purposes here, it is important to understand it as the form of samba practiced in the morros of Rio. Ibid.

⁵¹ For a concise synthesis of the CPC’s project, see David Treece, “Guns and Roses: Bossa Nova and Brazil’s Music of Popular Protest, 1958-68,” *Popular Music* 16, no. 1 (1997): 1-29.

⁵² Carlos Estevam Martins, “Anteprojeto do Manifesto do CPC,” *Arte em Revista* 1, no. 1 (1979): 73. Emphasis in original.

Leão never spoke of using those forms to spread a top-down message. Instead, she chose to perform songs written by working-class composers, both rural and urban. She drew attention to these composers and their work. She never claimed to be educating them, but rather spreading their message.

Leão continued to reiterate these points in various press organs, culminating in an October 1964 interview published in the magazine *Fatos e Fotos*. This is the moment that most point to as Leão's "break" with the Bossa Nova cohort, despite her repeated earlier pronouncements. The article opened with a lengthy quotation from Leão:

Enough of Bossa Nova. Enough of this thing that has no meaning. Enough singing for two or three intellectuals some little apartment music. I want pure samba, that has much more to say, that is the expression of the people, and that is not something made by a little group for that little group. And this story of saying that Bossa Nova was born in my house is a big lie. If the group met here, it met in more than a thousand places. I have nothing, and I mean nothing, to do with this musical genre that, I feel, is neither mine nor is true.⁵³

It appears that she did not believe her calm "takedown" of Bossa Nova had had the desired effect and turned to this newer hardline: "If I am now disconnecting from Bossa? A while ago I did, but no one wanted to believe it. I hope that now they understand that I have nothing more to do with it. For those who could not or did not want to understand before: Bossa Nova makes me sleepy, it doesn't excite me. It might be that, in the past, I was a fool, accepting that box that they still want to put me in."⁵⁴ These comments do not reflect the measured reasoning Leão exhibited in her interview with Boal. But they do serve to attract attention so that later in the interview she might explain herself and the purpose behind her music making.

⁵³ Portella, "Nara de Uma Bossa Só."

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The public for *Fatos e Fotos* was, broadly speaking, Rio middle class, including Leão's former collaborators and friends from Bossa Nova. The interview, therefore, served as both exploitable tabloid fodder *and* a public debate about the political and social role of popular music. The magazine shared Leão's opinions with Bossa Nova practitioners, running the juiciest responses in their subsequent issue. Pianist Luís Eça painted her as young and fickle, while Ronaldo Bôscoli called her "ungrateful" to those in the Bossa Nova cohort who helped educate and promote her.⁵⁵ Columnist José Carlos (Carlinhos) Oliveira wrote:

Look, Nara, unintentionally I have confessed that you are my secret girlfriend. We all have a secret girlfriend, and you are mine. When I hear you singing, and think about you, so tiny, with that little nose incredibly appropriate to your type, and with that voice full of gentleness and sweetness, and so intelligent, so Ipanema, I say to myself: 'There is no doubt. This girl is my girlfriend.' Or, at least, if the gods were just, every citizen would have a girlfriend called Nara, from Vitória and delicate like you. But the gods are not just, or, at least, not perfect: to us, poor mortals, they only concede one Nara per generation, and we are forced to listen to her. At least, we can look at her on the album cover.⁵⁶

Couched in the language of praise, Oliveira's "confession" shows how easily he, and other writers, veered away from the topic at hand to questions of beauty and gender relations. He imagines Leão as an ideal prize that "if the gods were just, every citizen would have." And he is not the only one. Two days following the publication of this column, Sérgio Porto also claimed Leão as his "secret girlfriend."⁵⁷

In her response, Leão expertly walked the tightrope of dismissing Oliveira's advances while advancing her own political agenda. After thanking Oliveira, she wrote, "I will avail myself, then, to say, to whom with such tenderness chose me as his girlfriend, what I actually

⁵⁵ Luís Eça and Ronaldo Bôscoli, quoted in *ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Stanislaw Ponte Preta, "Bossa Nova Nara Leão e Carlinhos," *Última Hora*, October 26, 1964.

think about things and about music.”⁵⁸ She reiterates that Bossa Nova was an important moment in Brazilian music, but adds, “times have changed, and now it’s clear that the people want to speak more clearly through their music. I’m with them.”⁵⁹ She also refutes any notion that she chose to

sing samba to be different or out of sophistication. I respond to this by bringing up the topic of a show that I am rehearsing with Zé Kéti and João do Vale, for the new Teatro de Arena, that will open in December, in the Copacabana Shopping Center: what links and identifies people is not just their problems, but the way they face them and react to their own as much as to those of others. Because of this, I think it’s perfectly normal that I sing those songs, even though I wasn’t born in the morro or in the Northeast. What is important is that I am moved by them, by what they say, by the world of which they speak, and that, like it or not, it is also our world. If it were not like this, Carlinhos, only the French could put on French plays, on the English could put on English plays. The fact is that I don’t want to limit myself to any musical genre, Bossa Nova or *Bossa Velha* [old form]. I want to sing that which agrees with my way of thinking and feeling. I can change again, who knows? That is a whole world to discover. I hope that now you understand me better and are less angry with me.⁶⁰

Leão outlines the common interests—“it is also our world”—that inspire and sustain the alliance that will shortly be modeled on stage for *Opinião*. Her analogy is not perfect: she conflates nation and class in a way that reflects a lack of perspective on her own class position.

In the fallout of this article, some members of the Bossa Nova cohort chose not to attend the release party for her second LP, *Opinião de Nara*, a fact that they made public with an open letter declining the invitation.⁶¹ The release party was reported in all of the major papers, and as it was billed as a tribute to Leão by the city’s sambistas, it served to sustain the debate beyond

⁵⁸ Leão, “A Resposta de Nara Leão.”

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Juvenal Portella e Mauro Ivan, “O Samba Cá Entre Nós”: Nara Terá Homenagem em Noite Só de Samba,” *Jornal do Brasil*, October 8, 1964.

the pages of *Fatos e Fotos*. The night's performers included Leão, Zé Kéti, and João do Vale, as well as sambistas Paulinho da Viola, Jair do Cavaquinho, Élton Medeiros, Cartola, Nelson Cavaquinho, and the samba school São Clemente de Botafogo.⁶² This was Leão's last big performance before the debut of *Opinião* and it reiterated her mission statement of moving away from the politically alienated Bossa Nova and toward a music of the people. In an interview with Ilmar Carvalho backstage, she elaborated again her intentions:

The record *Opinião* was born of an important discovery for me. Being that popular music is a means of communication created by the people themselves for their manifestations of joy, sadness, and other states of being, it means much more than simple entertainment. It gives to people awareness of their essential problems and serves to help them to find better paths, such is the force of the musical message.... Many people still think ... that in Brazil no one goes hungry, either because there is no awareness of this reality or because it is more comfortable not to think about it. In 'Acender as Velas' we can show an aspect of the social tragedy of the morro. I feel that certain listeners are surprised by the contents of the lyrics, however they express everyday facts. I am not, nor have the pretension of bringing new facts or news. Especially because those that say these things aren't me, but Zé Kéti, João do Vale.... If love is a truth that inspires so many melodies, I believe that other topics merit the same opportunity. Music, with its melodic attribute, can perfectly communicate and give general knowledge of other problems that afflict the people.⁶³

These few moments of engagement with the press are representative of Leão's political stance during the pre-*Opinião* period. She continued to engage in this public debate throughout her run in *Opinião*, navigating sexism, both overt and structural, and using the fame she had attained to promote the idea that music was necessarily political and should communicate the social realities of broad segments of the Brazilian populace, not just the alienated interests of elite upper-middle class bossanovistas. She reiterated her intention to sing music about and by

⁶² Ilmar Carvalho, "Nara Dará Show Na Arena," *Correio da Manhã*, November 8, 1964.

⁶³ Nara Leão quoted in *ibid.*

the working class, thereby drawing attention to the stories and issues important to the people of that class.

These debates had a contentious tone, which kept the conversation active and relevant. It is difficult to separate some news outlets' tendency to gossip from the fact that Leão was a young woman. What is remarkable is her persistence in centering the conversation on her musical intentions in the face the powerful restrictions of structural sexism. Leão's public pronouncements to the press served as a kind of instruction manual for listening to her music. By reiterating her message at every chance, she left no doubt that the purpose of the music she chose to sing was to spread the stories and message of "the people," the realities of those living in poverty and at the margins of Rio de Janeiro and Brazilian society. After reading these thoughts on what music should do, her fans would know to listen for these aspects of her music, to listen for what the songs "said."

Songs that Say Something

As she made clear in her many interviews, Nara Leão intended to sing songs that spoke to the circumstances of the Brazilian people.⁶⁴ She sought lyrics that described and commented on the lives of the Brazilian working classes, both to share those experiences to those unaware of them and present a recognizable image of Brazil to those classes. Unlike the ideal of art making presented in the CPC Manifesto, which posited a marriage between artforms arising from the popular classes with a message from an educated elite, Leão drew a large portion of her repertory from composers of those popular classes and from genres associated with the urban and rural working class, particularly *samba de morro*, a genre named for the ostensible birthplace of

⁶⁴ She outlines explicitly this vision of songs that communicate in *ibid.*

samba in the hillside favelas of Rio de Janeiro that invokes a sense of authenticity derived from its practitioners and styles, and *baião*, a popular genre native to the Brazilian Northeast.⁶⁵ Though her repertory was not exclusively made up of songs in these genres, it was Leão's engagement with them that drew the most attention from critics.

It was one thing for Leão to prescribe an approach to popular music making and another entirely for her to put that approach into practice. Given her own class position, her musical abilities, and the upper- and middle-class makeup of her audience, Leão's choice to sing this repertory was critiqued as inauthentic, or even an act of appropriation, a charge that Leão would struggle to answer. Some of her responses to these accusations, in particular, fail to meet modern standards for admission of privilege, but to her credit, Leão did not shy away from the debate. She answered her critics directly in further interviews, on her record sleeves, and on stage. By highlighting her class position and background as a source of her inauthenticity, Leão's critics also showcased the privileges and limitations that characterized her intervention within the public sphere.

The repertory of Leão's first three LPs exemplifies what Leão meant by songs that say something about Brazilian social realities. I focus on the first two, 1964's *Nara* and *Opinião de Nara*, as they were released prior to *Opinião*'s run and the musicians and directors selected the show's repertory mainly from these discs.⁶⁶ In fact, along with 1965's *O Canto Livre de Nara*, they were the only three LPs released by the show's performers while the show ran.⁶⁷ In all, it

⁶⁵ For more on samba de morro and baião, see chapters 3 and 4, respectively.

⁶⁶ Nara Leão, *Nara*, Elenco ME-10, 1964, 33 1/3 rpm; Nara Leão, *Opinião de Nara*, Philips P 632 732 L, 1964, 33 1/3 rpm.

⁶⁷ Nara Leão, *O Canto Livre de Nara*, Philips P 632 748 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm. Maria Bethânia released a 7" single of "Carcará" during her run in *Opinião*. See Maria Bethânia, *Carcará / De Manhã*, RCA LC-6155, 1965, 45 rpm. Vale and Zé Kéti would each release albums in 1965, the former as a solo artist and the latter as a participant in the group A Voz do Morro and the group album *Show Opinião*, recorded live in the Teatro de Arena would only be made and

contains four songs each from *Opinião de Nara* and *O Canto Livre de Nara*, and three from *Nara*. As the show's song list was not static, it is likely that other songs from these records were also sung at times. Leão's discs were the only ones circulating while audiences were attending *Opinião*, and they are a representative sample of the songs that they would have heard there. In fact, a number of audience members told me that they knew the songs—well enough to sing along—from hearing Leão's recordings.⁶⁸

Leão was by far the biggest star in *Opinião*, selling more records than any other singer in the country.⁶⁹ *Opinião de Nara* sold a record twenty thousand copies in less than a month's time and the 45 rpm singles for “Diz Que Eu Fui Por Aí” and “Opinião” both charted.⁷⁰ Audience members from *Opinião* with whom I spoke highlighted their fandom of Leão as integral to their interest in the show and recalled knowing the show's repertory primarily because of Leão's recordings.⁷¹ The packaging of Leão's first two LPs evidences Leão's struggle—and relative success—in fighting against the perception of her as the “muse of Bossa Nova” and for a kind of music making centered on politics. Her first LP, *Nara*, released on the label Elenco in February

released after the show's run had ended. João do Vale, *Poeta do Povo*, Philips P 623 773 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm; A Voz do Morro, *Roda de Samba*, Musidisc HI-FI – 2114, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm; A Voz do Morro, *Roda de Samba 2*, Musidisc HI-FI-2126, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm; Nara Leão, *Zé Kéti*, and João do Vale, *Show Opinião*, Philips P 632 775 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm. Among these artists, all but Leão capitalized on their success in *Opinião* to launch their recording careers.

⁶⁸ Paulo Neuhaus, interview with author, Skype, April 19, 2016; Luiz Guilherme de Morães, interview with author, Leblon, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 22, 2016.

⁶⁹ Celliah Messias and Néilson Santos, “Nara Vos Convida,” *Newspaper unknown*, December 1964, 24-27. Clipping from Coleção Nara Leão, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, NL - 2905-131, NL - 2905-132, NL - 2905-133a, NL - 2905-133b.

⁷⁰ Lawdovzsky, “Lp elenco de Nara Leão”; Salvyano Cavalcanti de Paiva, “A Estrela Nara no Céu Desponta,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 31, 1964; Eli Halfoun, “Gente é ‘Show’,” *Última Hora Revista*, November 12, 1964; “Discos Mais Vendidos,” *Intervalo* 102 (December 20, 1964), 30; “Discos Mais Vendidos,” *Intervalo* 98 (November 22, 1964), 27.

⁷¹ Neuhaus, interview; Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016; Eduardo Escorel, interview with author, Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 17, 2017; Célia Costa, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 13, 2017.

of 1964, was delayed due to fights about the repertory with producer Aloysio de Oliveira, who wanted Leão to sing Bossa Nova.⁷² And despite her winning the battle to record samba and other non-Bossa Nova songs, the packaging persists in highlighting the singer's youth and associations with Bossa Nova (see Fig. 2.1). Leão wears her straight hair in a bob cut, her bangs nearly reaching her eyes. She is seated profile, slouching slightly, as she turns to her right and looks slightly upward toward the camera. She appears quite young. One photo on the back of the record cover reinforces this youth and timidity, as she is pictured hunching her shoulders together and staring sullenly into the distance. A blurb from Oliveira states, "As incredible as it seems, the young woman Nara Leão has been, since the first stages of Bossa Nova, a kind of muse of the movement. Nara's name has been linked for a long time to every musical event of our young people."⁷³



Figure 2.3. Nara Leão, *Nara*, 1964.

⁷² J. Lyra de Moraes, "Nara Leão (VII)," *Diário da Tarde*, November 13, 1964.

⁷³ Aloysio de Oliveira, from back cover of Leão, *Nara*.

In contrast, the cover for *Opinião de Nara*, released in October of 1964 on the Philips label, shows Leão standing in a posture of joy, right arm reaching high above her head, with her eyes closed and mouth open in a half smile (see Fig. 2.2). Sociologist Gilberto Vasconcellos calls it “a call to participation, arms raised, the epic gesture suggesting action.”⁷⁴ This reading meshes well with the Leão-penned text on the back cover, a call for the music to inspire political action:

This album was born of an important discovery for me: that popular song can be more to people than a distraction or delight. Popular song can help them to better understand the world where they live and identify with one another on a higher level of understanding. Popular music is one of the broadest modes of communication that the people themselves created, so that people could tell one another their experiences, their joys and sorrows. The fact is that, in most cases, these feelings refer to individual cases, to which composers manage to amplify. But there are other problems, other sorrows, and other joys, no less profound and no less links to everyday life. And composers like Zé Kéti, João do Vale, or Sérgio Ricardo, among others, speak of these things. They reveal that; besides love and longing, samba can sing solidarity, the will for a new life, peace, and freedom. And who knows if, singing these songs, maybe we can enliven the soul of the people ideas and feelings that help them find, in a hard life, their best path.⁷⁵

Leão has taken control of the narrative of her album, and is using its packaging to spread her message, to give a key to decoding the songs she sings.

⁷⁴ Gilberto Vasconcellos, *Música Popular: De Olho na Fresta* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Graal, 1977), 88.

⁷⁵ Leão, *Opinião de Nara*.



Figure 2.4. Nara Leão, *Opinião de Nara*, 1964.

If the packaging of the LPs tells the story of transformation, the repertoires of the two discs share some commonalities. On both, Leão interprets a number of sambas de morro compositions, particularly those written by sambistas Cartola, Nélson Cavaquinho, and Zé Kéti. With the release of *Nara*, this fact was novel enough that this list appeared in virtually every review.⁷⁶ These latter three were known to the Brazilian populace for their role as composers for two of Rio’s oldest and most prominent samba schools.⁷⁷ As such, they composed music for use in the citywide celebration of carnival, serving both the diverse Rio population and the communities that housed and supported those schools. Cartola (born Angenor de Oliveira) was

⁷⁶ “Sambista” means samba practitioner and can include the non-composing interpreters and players, but tends to be used with composers. For examples of record reviews and articles that prominently mention Leão’s use of these composers’ songs in her repertoire, see Stanislaw Ponte Preta, “Discoteca Lalau,” *Última Hora*, February 20, 1964; Cabral, “Nara Leão: Musa de Bossa Nova”; “Nara Sendo Ela Mesma”; “Nara Canta Bossa-Eterna”; “Nasceu uma Deusa para a Bossa-Nova”; Hélio Santos, “A Bossa é de Nara,” *Fatos e Fotos*, March 1964, 71; “Zé Keti Chama Todo o Rio para Ver a Inauguração do Restaurante de ‘Cartola,’” *Jornal do Brasil*, February 21, 1964; Haroldo Costa, “A Musa Nara Canta,” *Diário de Notícias*, March 22, 1964.

⁷⁷ For a more in-depth discussion of the role of samba and samba de morro in Rio de Janeiro social and political life, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

one of the founders of the school First Station of Mangueira, of which Cavaquinho (Nelson Antônio da Silva) was also a member. The Morro da Mangueira is a favela in the center of Rio de Janeiro where the school was founded in 1928. Zé Kéti composed for Portela, a samba school founded in 1923 in Oswaldo Cruz, a neighborhood in the city's Zona Norte (north zone). The composers were symbolic and literal representatives of a larger swath of Rio de Janeiro than their Bossa Nova counterparts.⁷⁸ The grouping of these three names in articles and reviews about *Nara* has rendered them forever associated. Jairo Severiano and Zuza Homem de Mello, in their anthology of important popular songs, call them “the three sambistas unveiled to the mass public by the muse of Bossa Nova, Nara Leão, on her debut album.”⁷⁹

On *Nara*, Leão debuts her association with samba de morro by singing three compositions within this genre, while the focus on *Opinião de Nara* is on expanding the definition of “the people,” including compositions from different time periods, geographic origins, and social classes. The three samba de morro compositions on the former disc—Cavaquinho’s “Luz Negra,” Cartola’s “O Sol Nascerá,” and Zé Kéti’s “Diz Que Eu Fui Por Aí”—showcase the characteristics Leão prescribed as early as her August 1963 conversation with Augusto Boal: simple harmonies and melodies, use of popular rhythms, and lyrics about lived realities of working class people. While *Opinião de Nara* does include six sambas—including two more by Zé Kéti, “Opinião” and “Acender as Velas”—the disc also includes “Sina do Caboclo,” a baião by the Maranhense composer João do Vale, and an old *marchinha*, a kind of samba made for parading at carnival that originated in Rio in the 1930s among radio

⁷⁸ Leão became friendly with these composers at Zicartola, the restaurant and samba venue owned by Cartola and his wife Zica. Cartola ran the venue side and Zica the kitchen. As Zé Kéti was the musical director of Zicartola, I examine this space more closely in chapter 3.

⁷⁹ Severiano and Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 75.

composers.⁸⁰ This variety implies that the realities and messages from diverse segments of the population are worth spreading as long as they *say something*.

Though its lyrics are allegorical rather than literal, “Luz Negra” meets Leão’s criteria for simple harmony and serves as a way to promote Cavaquinho’s music to her audience.⁸¹ The lyrics portray a protagonist who seeks but fails to find someone who suffers as he does as he nears his own end: “The black light of a cruel destiny / Lights a colorless theater / Where I play the role / Of love’s clown.”⁸² Unless understood as an allegory for the fate of the poor, the song does not seem to speak directly to social realities. Due to the well-publicized fact that the sentiments are Cavaquinho’s, it is reasonable to expect that audiences would read that allegory in the song.

If the lyrics do not *quite* fit the transparent documentary-style that Leão championed, its simple harmony and melody do meet her criteria for music of the people. The song resolves repeatedly to the minor tonic within the refrain, thereby invoking the lyrical imagery in harmony of resignation to an eventual sad fate. None of the harmonies extend past a seventh chord. The melody descends, meandering down the scale from a high B through an occasional chromatic for more than an octave before stopping on the fifth scale degree. After Leão sings the refrain melody once alone, a chorus repeats it, this time stopping at the tonic. An alternating section inverts this motion, rising to the high B, only to descend again. It is a straightforward song, with a harmony that a musician with modest skills could easily pick out, as well as a simple melody and few enough lyrics to enable audience participation when sung live.

⁸⁰ Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular*, 209; 129.

⁸¹ Cavaquinho composed the song for the film *A Falecida*, directed by Leon Hirszman. Severiano and Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 75.

⁸² See appendix A for complete lyric and translation.

“O Sol Nascerá,” co-written by Cartola and Élton Medeiros, with its similarly simple melody and harmony, can also be read as allegory. The song fits Leão’s criteria for music that’s easy to understand on first listening, in terms of lyric, melody, and harmony. It takes a more hopeful approach to the same the theme of lost love: “The storm is ending / The sun will rise / This longing is ending / There has to be someone else to love.” It speaks of overcoming the difficulties that life has presented. The melody matches the optimism of the lyrics. Though it is primarily descending, it begins with an upward octave leap on the third syllable of the first line and descends in Bb major from there. It is even simpler than “Luz Negra,” entirely diatonic other than a couple of secondary dominants.

The most obvious example of a “song that says something” on *Nara* is the album’s opening track: Zé Kéti and Hortêncio Rocha’s “Diz Que Eu Fui Por Aí,” a samba painting a mini-portrait of a poor musician trying to make ends meet. The protagonist is “out,” not to work a day job, but to hustle his trade anywhere he can. He’s on the corner, in the bar, both in the city and the favela; that is, he’ll work within the formal or informal economy. Given that only favela residents would be expected to engage in the social life of both the favela and the city, we suspect that he himself lives in a favela. And his willingness to stop anywhere to play indicates his need for work. The song’s melody is not as straightforward as “Luz Negra” or “O Sol Nascerá,” due to its lack of repetition, but the harmony follows a classic I-VI7-ii-V7 progression with a few modifications, well within the toolset of professional and amateur musicians alike.

Zé Kéti’s “Opinião,” which opens *Opinião de Nara* and gives the disc its title, is about the forced removal of residents of Rio’s morros, explicit in its defiance and its depiction of life at Rio’s sociogeographic margins. It uses only three chords, resolving to the minor tonic at the end of each line. The melody is sung mainly on the tonic and fifth degree of the scale. Despite not

having water to drink or meat to eat, the protagonist prefers to stay where he does not pay rent, and if he dies, at least he's close to heaven, that is, high above the city, on the hill: "They can arrest me, they can beat me / They can leave me to starve / But I won't change my opinion / From here in the morro, I won't leave."⁸³

"Acender as Velas" is another depiction of life in the morro written by Zé Kéti. This time, the story is of another in the community who has died due to the community's poor infrastructure. With no telephone to call the doctor, and no way for a car to bring him to his patient, he has arrived too late. "Lighting candles" in memory of the dead is so common that it has become a vocation. It is another samba in a minor mode that resolves to the tonic at each line, only venturing outside of this harmony for the verse section.

The first João do Vale composition that Leão recorded was the baião "Sina de Caboclo." The story is personal for Vale, as it describes his own journey from the son of farmers in the Maranhão to a mason's assistant in Rio.⁸⁴ In addition to recounting Vale's own story, the lyrics contain a bold renouncing of a lifestyle of sharecropping: "But plant just to share / I won't do this anymore." The work that the album's sambas do with respect to life in the morros, "Sina de Caboclo" does for life in the *sertão*, the drought-plagued region in the interior of Brazil's northeastern states. The "people" in this song are the rural laborers living in poverty in that region, or those forced to migrate south to escape that poverty.

This sampling exemplifies what Leão meant by songs that say something: lyrics that, literally or by association with their composers, relate the realities of Rio's morros and the Northeastern migrants. Hearing them sung in the first person by Leão, a listener might

⁸³ For a deeper explication of these lyrics, see chapter 3.

⁸⁴ I examine this story in depth in chapter 4.

understand her use of the songs as appropriation or as an attempt to amplify these composer's ideas. Leão believed the latter to be true, saying that the descriptions served to inform, but also create "solidarity, the will for a new life, peace, and freedom." A class-rooted power dynamic belies aspects of this mission. While it is possible that Leão's primarily middle-class audience felt empathy for the people of the morros while listening and singing along with these songs, they may also have used them as class tourism, an opportunity to feel sadness or outrage before returning to the comfort of their own lives.⁸⁵

Leão's choice to sing samba de morro stirred further debates concerning "the validity or not of a girl called Nara Leão having the pretension of singing sambas."⁸⁶ Journalists and critics were forced to address questions like: Is Bossa Nova alienated? What is the social role of the musician? What does "music of the people" mean? Who is allowed to sing this music?⁸⁷ Some critics, like Sérgio Porto (writing under the pen name Stanislaw Ponte Preta) and Thor Carvalho, argued that Leão was doing important work by publicizing sambas of master composers whose work might easily be forgotten.⁸⁸ "If these guys that consider themselves the masters of samba don't bother recording the great sambistas, I can only applaud Nara for doing so."⁸⁹ Porto himself was of the Zona Sul and had famously helped to draw the Mangueirense composer Cartola back into the spotlight in the 1950s after he had fallen into obscurity.⁹⁰ Carvalho was

⁸⁵ I discuss this idea more in the conclusion of this dissertation.

⁸⁶ Ponte Preta, "Discoteca Lalau."

⁸⁷ Sérgio Porto appropriately called Leão "the year's most argued about singer." "Opinião de Nara Mostra Que Nem só os Cocorocas Têm Vez," *Última Hora Revista*, November 12, 1964.

⁸⁸ Ponte Preta, "Discoteca Lalau."

⁸⁹ Stanislaw Ponte Preta, "Discoteca Lalau."

⁹⁰ Maurício Barros de Castro, *Zicartola: Política e Samba na Casa de Cartola e Dona Zica* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2004), 42.

surprised “to encounter Nara Leão singing good, consistent music, without the emptiness of the stupid ‘lyrics’ that characterize Bossa Nova.”⁹¹ If Leão had been a samba singer from Cartola or Zé Kéti’s neighborhood, her choice to record these songs would not have caused a stir. It is the dissonance between, on the one hand, Leão’s social class and position in Bossa Nova circles, and, on the other hand, her choice of material that drew their attention to the implications of her repertory. Leão alternately characterized herself as either a reporter bringing news from “the people” or as part of the people herself. In one interview she said, “The merit of my work is climbing the morros, going to Bahia, in sum going to the source of our best popular music. I seek to be ... a reporter. I transmit the message of the composers and this satisfies me.”⁹² The expression calls to mind an image of the intrepid explorer or anthropologist who risks danger to find some undiscovered truth or territory.

At times, however, Leão seems to move away from her previous definition of “the people,” whose message she was spreading:

I admit that I also was surprised by the idiocy of all the people that don’t believe that someone can be sincere with themselves. I am tired of hearing the question, ‘Nara, did you record sambas by Cartola, Zé Kéti, and Nelson Cavaquinho because you actually like them, or because it is “good” to sing sambas by people from the morro?’ This kind of question makes me furious. Or else comes this other foolishness: ‘You are cute, this little sophisticate singing things of the people.’ That’s garbage! First, I’m no kind of little sophisticate. Second, everyone sings things of the people, and I’m also people. Those waiting to find in me a little dilettante girl that sings to pass the time who is satisfied with rhyming ‘flower’ with ‘love’ and ‘darling of my darling.’ I was very happy to record songs by Cartola and other good composers that are on the margins of the recording company, in the same way that I was to sing songs by my friends Vinícius, Baden, Carlinhos Lyra, and Moacir Santos. I learned through daily contact to like them as artists and people, in the same way as these latter artists

⁹¹ Thor Carvalho, “Retorno ao Bom Senso,” *Última Hora*, February 25, 1964.

⁹² Bahia is a northeastern state that is also used a reference point for authenticity. I discuss this more in chapter 5. “Nara Leão Diz que Bossa Nova Quer Dizer Musica Brasileira Mesmo,” Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, September 1964. Musicians—including Leão—who adopt this repertory are often said to be “climbing the morro,” a turn of phrase that can be both literal and metaphoric. See Lopes, “Bossa Nova em Marcha Lenta Para o Fim.”

had my admiration well before I became their performer. I am happy with the road that I have chosen and I'm going to stay on it.⁹³

Leão creates slippage between two definitions of “the people”: one definition contrasts “the people” with the elite upper-middle class, but the second definition encompasses all Brazilians. This slippage weakens her argument for being a reporter of those realities. On the other hand, these composers were pleased to have Leão sing their songs. Cartola brought Leão’s first album to the Morro da Mangueira to show off the recording of his song.⁹⁴ And when he and Zica reopened their restaurant after their honeymoon, the first show they scheduled was a tribute to Leão.⁹⁵ Zé Kéti visited the office of Sérgio Bittencourt to defend Leão against the former’s criticisms, saying that Leão was the only singer who wanted to record his and Cartola’s songs.⁹⁶

Leão was not immune to the appeals to authenticity laced throughout these critiques. She carefully pointed out that she had “daily contact” with these musicians and counted them as her friends, that her choosing their music to record was a considered act. Her remarks on these composers’ marginality in the recording industry could even be read as self-congratulatory, given how she drew new attention to their music.⁹⁷ That said, her decision to take the stage with Zé Kéti and João do Vale in *Opinião* and promote them as the composers of the music helped their careers and gave credit where credit was due. Leão did not *have* to promote Zé Kéti and Vale’s music—many people would have been thrilled for her to sing “The Girl from Ipanema”—and she abandoned a promising career in Bossa Nova to do so.

⁹³ Costa, “A Musa Nara Canta.”

⁹⁴ “Zica do Cartola: ‘Meu Samba é Bife e Feijão Com Arroz...’,” *O Globo*, February 28, 1964.

⁹⁵ “Zicartola Reabre com ‘Show’,” *Jornal do Brasil*, November 10, 1964; Sérgio Cabral, “Música Popular: Início de Conversa,” *Diário Carioca*, November 13, 1964.

⁹⁶ Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 30, 1964.

⁹⁷ For more on marginality, see chapter 3.

Music critic and historian José Ramos Tinhorão criticized *Opinião*, and Leão by association, as a case of “appropriation of popular culture by the middle class, which had no culture of its own.”⁹⁸ In his piece, Tinhorão chronicles the lengthy history of such appropriations in Brazilian music, beginning in the late nineteenth century and culminating in the claim that, in the early 1960s, the middle class of the Zona Sul took on popular culture—particularly samba—as another consumable good alongside their Ray-Bans and blue jeans. He claims that Leão’s choice to sing these composers’ music and *Opinião* itself are evidence of a passing fad that young people will abandon as they graduate from their universities and move on to their careers. With this change, a new middle class will emerge, also without its own culture, and another generation will look to the working classes for an authentic artistic expression.

The argument over Leão became a referendum on politics and music making and showcased valid critiques of Leão’s choices as well as the gendered politics that inflected those critiques. Sérgio Bittencourt, a columnist for the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* and son of the legendary mandolin player Jacob do Bandolim, was vicious and unrelenting in his criticisms of Leão and anyone that supported her, charging the singer with inauthenticity and lack of musical talent. He used his column “Good morning Rio” to repeatedly attack Leão:

There is out there a little schizophrenic group that has resolved to hoist Miss Nara Leão up to a too high pedestal. . . . Miss Nara Leão, musically, does not and will never represent anything in the logical order of things. She has managed in such little time, to sing Bossa Nova badly and the so-called Bossa Velha even worse. She sings out of tune unwittingly, squeezes out a sharp voice through her own nature, besides pronouncing the words defectively. . . . Her validity is null, even singing the good repertory that she has chosen.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ José Ramos Tinhorão, “Um Equívoco de Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, December 27, 1964.

⁹⁹ Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 19, 1964.

Bittencourt's colleague Sérgio Cabral responded, "save your stones for someone that deserves them and not for Nara Leão, who is a girl of the greatest artistic dignity and only seeks to do right."¹⁰⁰

Bittencourt revealed in subsequent columns that his love of samba was tied up with an exoticist fantasy of the music as the product of an unmolested segment of Brazilian culture to which he, as an intrepid explorer, had special outsider access. He lamented having been born white, green-eyed, and rich, a mistake that he "remedied" by climbing the "morros, contrite, in silence, to hear and understand samba."¹⁰¹ He claimed his own right to the music on the basis of the trials he endured to reach the roots of the music—never mind the access he was granted by having a famous musical father. He asserted that Leão had not suffered in kind:

Born and toughened in samba, I cannot accept, however good she may be, a miss Nara Leão, graduate of the thickest and most impure category of Bossa Nova, that decides to come out singing, dishonestly, sambas of a proven honesty.... A samba by Zé Kéti, for me, is a very serious subject: for miss Nara Leão it is, only, one more samba.... A sambista, seen from my intransigence, is like an honest woman: he is or he is not. There is no such thing as a 'more or less honest' woman, just like there is not, nor could there be, a 'more or less sambista' singer.¹⁰²

His analogy between "an honest woman" and a sambista, taken up just at the moment that he's judging Leão's insincerity, reveals a layer of sexism in his critique, which also ignores the deep similarities between himself and Leão: both were white and wealthy.

In one of her responses to Bittencourt's attacks, Leão levied charges racism: "Deep down, in the depths of this situation, there is a bit of racism. You think that I am joking? It is racism. There are those that believe that whites cannot sing samba.... I will listen to everything

¹⁰⁰ Sérgio Cabral, "Disco: Presente ou Castigo," *Diário Carioca*, December 22, 1964.

¹⁰¹ Sérgio Bittencourt, "Bom Dia, Rio," *Correio da Manhã*, December 23, 1964.

¹⁰² Ibid.

they bring me. And record what pleases me. Trying to do something through Brazilian music. What ought to be done? I do not know. I will stick my neck out. Giving my contribution. Modest, but sincere.¹⁰³ Admirably, Leão accepts that wading into the public sphere with her political music making opens herself up to critique. But the idea that she experienced racism as an upper-middle class white woman falls flat. Bittencourt never explicitly labels her whiteness—though he does lament his own—but he does negatively compare Leão to black singers.¹⁰⁴ It is one of the few moments where Leão’s arguments sound tone deaf. Though Leão did not always account for the power dynamics at play in her recording of samba de morro composers’ songs, she did take these collaborations seriously, as evidenced in *Opinião* itself, in which she would take the stage alongside Zé Kéti and João do Vale, using her fame to promote the show and, subsequently these musicians.

“Not just a popular political event, but ... a ‘Nara Leão’ event”

In her conversation with Augusto Boal from August 1963, Leão lamented that Bossa Nova’s performance venues were inadequate, that “the contact singers and composers have with the public is almost nothing and, the little that exists, is negative.... We don’t see who hears us, we don’t feel the direct reaction of the spectator.”¹⁰⁵ Much like her other negative critiques of Bossa Nova in that interview, this comment, taken at its inverse, reads as a prescription for many of the characteristics of *Opinião*. As outlined in chapter 1, the Teatro de Arena de São Paulo was

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ In one article, Bittencourt challenges Cabral (or anyone) to bring him a guitar and a “Clementina” that he might prove, musically, that Leão’s music was bad. Clementina refers to black samba singer Clementina de Jesus, who began a successful commercial career at 63 years old. Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 29, 1964.

¹⁰⁵ Boal and Leão, “Boal e Nara Leão Denunciam o ‘Bestialógico’ da Bossa Nova.”

a theater in the round that only seated about 150 audience members on simple wooden bleachers. There was a great deal of intimacy in this context, and Leão's pronouncements on stage in *Opinião* were made directly to her public, barely mediated by an inadequate sound system.¹⁰⁶ In addition to testifying to her own experiences and opinions, Leão engaged in direct, unscripted debate with the audience.¹⁰⁷

Leão's presence in *Opinião* was the primary draw for the show's audience, both due to the singer's popularity as an artist and her reputation as a political actor. Diegues, again: "Of course, the majority of the people that went to see the show went to see Nara.... She transformed the [show] into not just a popular political event, but into a 'Nara Leão' event.... And this ... resulted in great success for the show."¹⁰⁸ Escorel affirmed that it was both the play's politics and quality that drew him, and everyone with whom I spoke credited their fandom of Nara as a powerful draw.¹⁰⁹ The intersection between "Leão the star" and "Leão the political force" is evident in the testimony of one woman who traveled from the faraway state of Pernambuco to see the play. She highlighted Nara's politics as a primary reason for her fandom: "There is also the question of a person's character, right? We ended up knowing who was who.... Nara Leão was someone of [quality]."¹¹⁰ As I discussed in chapter 1, the counterpublic generated by *Opinião* formed not only through the common opinion shared by the spectators, but by those spectators returning to the play repeatedly. That counterpublic was, in part, an outgrowth of Leão's spoken interventions in the public sphere.

Toward the beginning of *Opinião*, each actor introduced themselves. Leão's statements

¹⁰⁶ Yan Michalski, "A Opinião de Todos Nós," *Jornal do Brasil*, December 15, 1964.

¹⁰⁷ Cabral, *Nara Leão: Uma Biografia*, 89.

¹⁰⁸ Diegues, interview with author.

¹⁰⁹ Neuhaus, interview with author; Escorel, interview with author.

¹¹⁰ Costa, interview with author.

on stage tended to follow the same trends as her statements to the press. As the representative in the play of the middle-class youth of the Zona Sul, she used her self-introduction to claim her origins in Copacabana, but also to justify her choice not to sing that place's music (i.e., Bossa Nova): "I want to sing all of the songs that help us to be more Brazilian, that make everyone want to be freer, that teach us to accept everything, except that which can be changed."¹¹¹

Leão's comments highlight the minefield that she entered as a woman in the industry. In the second act of *Opinião*, she told the story of being a timid performer who only decided to become a singer "after April of 1964." Though she did not explicitly mention the April 1 coup, the subtext was clear. In fact, since her professional trajectory had begun well before that, changing this detail was actually a way to draw attention to show's resistance to coup, while maintaining a plausible deniability. Continuing, she told of her first time in a recording studio. A record producer had invited her to make a test recording, but when she arrived, she was forced to wait four hours to sing, which she did because she wanted to be "witness" to everything the world had to offer. After singing the song "Insensatez," the producer—portrayed on stage by Zé Kéti—made a pass at her: "You aren't bad, my dear. But you're so pretty, so sexy, if you want to be better, sing more through your nose so it is more sensual. This is what they want, dear. A bedroom voice, you know? I'll help you, I'll show you. Come to my house, make your voice more sensual and we'll practice."¹¹²

The great majority of Leão's lines concerned the purpose of popular music (and to a lesser degree, popular art in general).¹¹³ In the second act, she told of her exit from the alienated

¹¹¹ Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Paulo Pontes, *Opinião: Texto Completo do "Show"* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Val, 1965), 20.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ She also highlighted the importance of Cinema Novo in revealing truths about Brazil, though she credited the genre most for its musical contributions, citing Kéti's, "A Voz do Morro," "Rio, 40 Graus," and "Malvadeza

music of Bossa Nova, alongside musicians like Carlos Lyra and Baden Powell, and how she had decided to make albums featuring Zé Kéti's sambas and Vale's *baiões*.¹¹⁴ In the midst of telling this story, a voice interrupted her from the loudspeaker:

Voice: Nara Leão
Leão: Huh?
Voice: You are going to make a record singing baião, Nara?
Leão: I am.
Voice: Baião, Nara?
Leão: Yes.
Voice: Nara. Baião?
Leão: Yes. Baião.
Voice: Nara!
Leão: Why? The constitution doesn't permit me to sing baião?
Voice: Nara. You are Bossa Nova. You have a Copacabana voice, a Copacabana style.
Leão: I'll work it out.
Voice: Nara.
Leão: What is it?
Voice: The money you earn from the album—you are going to give it to the poor?
Leão: Ah, don't test my patience.
Voice: You think music is the Red Cross, is that it?
Leão: No. Music is for singing. Singing what we think we ought to sing, in our own style, the lyrics that we have. What we feel, we sing.
Voice: You don't feel any of this, Nara, stop being fresh. You have a marble nightstand that cost 180 contos, Nara. You've ever seen a farmer, Nara?
Leão: No, but every day I see people that live at farmers' expense.
Voice: Calm down, Nara, Calm down.
Leão: Ok, leave me alone.
Voice: It's not going to work out, Nara. You are going to lose the Copacabana public, farmers won't hear you because they don't have radios, the people of the morro won't understand. Nara, please, no one else is your friend.¹¹⁵

Leão and the playwrights did not hide the material critique of her project, but the context made Leão the hero. The voice was cowardly in its disembodied anonymity (much like the telegram

Durão," all of which were made for film soundtracks or reached larger audiences because of them. Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 66.

¹¹⁴ *Baiões* is the plural form of baião.

¹¹⁵ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 73-78.

from “Bossa Nova” that was printed in *Fatos e Fotos* in October 1964). Leão was the brave one, facing these criticisms on stage.

The dialogue between Leão and the disembodied voice was one of few moments in the show that the “opinion” shared by Leão or her colleagues was presented in an indirect manner. It was also unique in the show because Leão argued with someone that did not share her view. Typically, the three performers spoke directly to the audience or one another, while in this episode, the voice represented a laughable take, a straw man, an argument so easy to dismiss that they’ve chosen to pre-record it. That opinion was not invited to the debate in a real way, but as a token acknowledgement.

Leão also argued directly with audience members in an unscripted manner. According to Sérgio Cabral, “There were nights that Nara interrupted the show to argue with people that spent the night provoking the artists, especially her, the little girl from the Zona Sul worried about social injustices.”¹¹⁶ In these interactions, Leão embraced the “truth theater” aspect of *Opinião*, demonstrating that the position she took in the show was truly her own and showcasing her ability to argue from that position without the benefit of an intermediary.¹¹⁷ Her ability to speak directly to her critics spontaneously and extemporaneously gave her another tool in advancing her political project. The spoken portions of *Opinião*, then, served not as plot advancement, but as contextualizing material for the songs, similar to the function played by Leão’s interviews vis-à-vis her albums. But her spoken pronouncements were not the only kind of speech she used onstage or in print; her singing itself was considered by many audience members and

¹¹⁶ Cabral, *Nara Leão*, 89.

¹¹⁷ As I outline in the previous chapter, *Opinião*’s directors and writers called the show a “show-verdade.”

collaborators as a kind of speech. In the next section of this chapter, I analyze her vocal performance for its qualities as speech and show how that relates to her political project.

Speaking the Song

In 1967, Zé Kéti taped an interview in which he praised Nara Leão and highlighted her importance to his own career and to protest music in general. One of the interviewers asked him whether he thought Leão was a good singer. His response: “I think that Nara Leão—the question of her voice—I do not think that she is a great singer, let’s say, an Elisete Cardoso or a Dalva de Oliveira. I think that I would compare her to Mário Reis, you know? Musically speaking. She says, you know, says the song, she speaks the song.”¹¹⁸

Zé Kéti’s comment raised some important questions about how Leão’s talents and work as a singer relate to her political project. How did the quality of her voice contribute to or detract from her interventions in the public sphere? How did her singing style relate to her stated intentions of singing music that “says something,” that communicated the realities of the Brazilian people? Even one of her closest collaborators confessed that Leão was not a “great singer,” but he provided an important clue in his assessment of her delivery style. In what follows, I examine Zé Kéti’s claim that Leão “speaks the song” alongside similar claims found in archival materials and made by my interlocutors. It is clear from these testimonies that people understood her singing as speech in some way, an interpretation that I relate directly to her political project in two primary ways. First, Leão wanted the lyrics to speak for themselves. Second, this manner of interpretation had the effect of putting her and the composer on equal

¹¹⁸ Ibid. Cardoso’s first name is alternately spelled “Elisete,” “Elizete,” and “Elizeth.” I opt for the former here, following Sérgio Cabral’s use in his biography of Cardoso. See Sérgio Cabral, *Elisete Cardoso, Uma Vida* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 1993).

footing, a balance that is frequently lost in popular music, where the singer is paramount and the composer anonymous. Though her vocal style can be explained in reference to her training in Bossa Nova, I am inclined to understand it as part of her political project. She coopted her vocal limitations to political ends, thereby inserting musical performance into the rational-critical discourse of the public sphere.

In the midst of the Bittencourt-fueled debate about whether Nara Leão should or should not be singing samba de morro, columnist Carlos Alberto ran a hit piece on Leão, targeting her voice. “Nara, whose last two discs I have just heard this moment, has nothing to do with authentic Brazilian samba. Her little voice is that tiny thread that it always was. Two pennies worth of voice.”¹¹⁹ Alberto then went on to “survey” eleven people as to whether or not Leão was a good singer. Some examples include:

Meira Guimarães: “I also think that she is not a singer. She has no voice. She has nothing. But it is better that you clarify that I do not know anything about singers.”

...

João Roberto Kelly: “For me she continues being the muse, in quotation marks, of Bossa Nova. Bossa Nova, muse, in quotes.”

...

Maestro Carlos Monteiro de Souza: “If I said what I think of the young woman as a singer, it will get ugly. It is a risk. The young woman has a good repertory and was well taken care of in the recordings made by Aloysio de Oliveira.”

Father João, creator of the boys of Guanabara: “I personally find her weak, extremely weak.”¹²⁰

Leaving aside the question of Alberto’s selection process, it is clear that at least some members of the Rio public were not fans of Leão as a singer. The nicest comments included in his column relate to her repertory, the nastiest claim she has no voice at all.

¹¹⁹ Carlos Alberto, “Os Onze que Gostam e Não Gostam de Nara,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, January 9, 1965.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

This last claim was not new in January of 1965; Leão had said as much in a lengthy profile published the previous month. Of her limitations, she said frankly, “I sing without a voice not because it’s charming, but because I really don’t have a voice.”¹²¹ And she had no illusions that her vocal deficiencies were some kind of secret, as she bluntly acknowledged: “Today everyone knows that I don’t have a voice, but they buy my records.”¹²² But every time she ran up against the (self) critique, Leão reiterated, “I am not a singer, really. I have a mission: inform about Brazilian reality.”¹²³

Even when Leão’s audiences are not denying her having a voice at all, the descriptors they choose are often pejorative. I frequently encountered the words *fiô*, meaning “thread,” *fiozinho*, or “tiny thread,” and *fiapo*, meaning either “lint” or the barest whisper of frayed fabric.¹²⁴ These words evoke two qualities: thinness and weakness. They are often balanced by a compliment. For example, Barreto Brasil wrote that her voice “may have been a fiapo, but it was a sexy fiapo.”¹²⁵ Eduardo Escorel told me that her voice was “very in tune, but a fiapo.”¹²⁶

A great deal of the critique of Leão’s voice has to do with its appropriateness in the context of samba, particularly samba de morro. Whereas singing in this style may have been congruent with a boss nova repertory, many felt it did not fit with samba de morro. As Carlinhos Oliveira explained:

¹²¹ Messias and Santos, “Nara Vos Convida.”

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Nara Leão, quoted in *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Interino, “‘Opinião’ É Um ‘Show’ de Brasil”; Mário Cabral, “‘Opinião’ Revela Excelente Trio,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, December 16, 1964; Ângela Tâmega, interview with author, Humaitá, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 1, 2017. Notably, thin voices have frequently been cited as important to Bossa Nova’s international appeal, with U.S. and U.K. male listeners sometimes hearing that weakness as seductive.

¹²⁵ Barreto Brasil, “Nada Cala Fala de Nara,” *Jornal dos Sports*, January 10, 1965.

¹²⁶ Escorel, interview.

The voice of the morro is an open, generous, lazy or imperious voice. A thread of a voice is not the voice of the morro: a thread of a voice is the voice of Bossa Nova, to sing any melody quietly, whispering. You do not deceive anyone Nara, since anything that you sing comes full of flowers, sea, and Copacabana. Anything that you sing conveys to us a totally clear image: you are the spirit of Ipanema, that sad joy that only Ipanema has is in your voice and in your way of being.¹²⁷

Oliveira observes that Leão's voice is the voice of Bossa Nova and should be treated as such.

Leão, for her part, also distinguished between the singing styles of Bossa Nova and samba. In her August 1963 interview with Augusto Boal, she said, "In the old days ... lyrics and music were only vehicles for the singer to show his vocal power. The audience exclaimed in ecstasy, 'my God, what lungs he has!'"¹²⁸

Leão's voice was just as responsible as her reputation as "muse" for keeping her linked to Bossa Nova. Some referred to her as "a feminine version of João Gilberto," who is the single person most responsible for the genre's gently sung, nearly whispered, vocal affectation.¹²⁹ There are, however dramatic differences between how Leão and Gilberto used their voices; Leão was strict in her adherence to the rhythms of the melodies she sang, while Gilberto's "voice danced with breathtaking precision around the quiet beat of the guitar."¹³⁰ Moreover, Gilberto's singing style was not the product of having been encultured into that style, but of a willful self-invention. Unlike Leão, who came up as a musician singing in this way, Gilberto had the

¹²⁷ José Carlos de Oliveira, "Declaração (De Amor?) A Nara," *Fatos e Fotos* (October 24, 1964), 48.

¹²⁸ Boal and Leão, "Boal e Nara Leão Denunciam o 'Bestialógico' da Bossa Nova."

¹²⁹ Lawdovzsky, Lp Elenco de Nara Leão." See also Gerard Béhague, "Bossa & Bossas: Recent Changes in Brazilian Urban Popular Music," *Ethnomusicology* 17, no. 2 (1973): 210-211; Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular*, 213.

¹³⁰ Castro, *Bossa Nova*, xii.

powerful voice of a crooner until he refashioned himself for the “apartment music” he helped to invent.¹³¹

Zé Kéti’s comparison of Leão to Mário Reis is a reminder that singing in a soft, mellow style was not limited to Bossa Nova singers. Though *samba-canção*, a popular form of samba that preceded Bossa Nova and produced singers like Elisete Cardoso, is generally associated with a big, expressive, *bel canto* style, Reis was an exception, and an inspiration for singers like Gilberto, who pioneered Bossa Nova.¹³² Severiano and Homem de Mello find Reis’s innovation so important that they use him to mark a “before” and “after” in the history of Brazilian popular music, saying that he took advantage of recording technologies to create a simplified, colloquial, and more natural performance style.¹³³ Reis’s innovation, however, did not immediately change everything. Many singers in the generation preceding Leão’s continued to adopt some of the conventions of the earlier, more expressive style, conventions I explore below in my comparison of Leão and Elisete Cardoso. The connections that Zé Kéti (and Sérgio Porto) draw between Leão and Reis show her to be part of a musical lineage, just not the lineage typically associated with *samba-canção* or, especially, *samba de morro*.

The most striking descriptor of Leão’s singer, and the factor that ties it to her political project is the idea that she, to use Zé Kéti’s words, “spoke the song.”¹³⁴ His was not the only

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, xx.

¹³² Sérgio Porto made this point in a column reacting to Carlinhos Oliveira’s “Declaration of Love.” See Ponte Preta, “Bossa Nova Nara Leão e Carlinhos.” For more on the debts owed to Mário Reis by singers like João Gilberto, see Reily, “Tom Jobim and the Bossa Nova Era,” 5.

¹³³ Severiano and Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 86.

¹³⁴ Zé Kéti had also made a similar comment to critic César Marques in the publicity leading up to *Opinião*: “Nara is a very good performer. I think the union was perfect, because no one speaks my songs better.” Zé Kéti, quoted in César Marques, “Nenhum dos Três Muda de Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, November 15, 1964. He reiterated this take in a 1966 interview. See “Zé Kéti: A Voz Do Morro No Jôgo Da Verdade,” *Manchete*, January 8, 1966.

claim of this type. In describing Leão's singing style, plastic artist Carlos Vergara, who went repeatedly to see *Opinião* during its run, told me, "What Nara had was an expressivity ... as if she had been speaking."¹³⁵ Critic and novelist Ignácio de Loyola Brandão was compelled to write about Leão in his column, despite not being his paper's music critic:

I am stepping in because Nara impressed me profoundly in this personal contact, the first that I have had, at length, open and unleashed in front of her friends. She belongs to another sphere, almost outside musical circles.... She broadened the general idea of music. So Nara's importance is the clear and clean way that she says the lyrics. Many, many times, melody gives way to spoken verse; and I believe that among all Brazilian singers she is the one who speaks best. She speaks transparently.¹³⁶

The Portuguese word "*dizer*" (to say) is sometimes used in lieu of sing or perform when describing the latter two acts, and in some cases, it would appear to be interchangeable with these, but in each of the three cases I have cited, the word is used specifically in contrast to "*cantar*" (to sing). Zé Kéti distinguishes between her singing and speaking. Vergara uses the form "as if." And Loyola clearly differentiates between melody (that is, singing) and spoken verse.

The challenge in interpreting these statements is that Leão is not actually speaking by any common definition of the word. A quick listen to any of her records will reveal that what she is doing is singing: she follows the song's melodic contours (mostly with decent intonation) in rhythm with her accompaniment, holding out notes at lengths consistent not with spoken utterance but song. Loyola uses a word that serves as a clue to the meaning of these claims: transparent. In her performances, Leão "speaks" the songs transparently, that is, she does not

¹³⁵ Carlos Vergara, interview with author, Santa Teresa, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 16, 2017.

¹³⁶ Ignácio de Loyola, quoted in J. Lyra de Moraes, "Nara Leão (I)," *Diário da Tarde*, October 21, 1964.

insert performative, singerly additions into the song, but stays out of the way of the lyrics, letting them speak for themselves.

To better understand the mechanism by which Leão “speaks” her songs, it is useful to compare Leão’s version “Diz Que Fui Por Aí” with Elisete Cardoso’s version of the same song.¹³⁷ As Zé Kéti specifically contrasted Leão with Cardoso, and each singer recorded his song in the same register, at the same tempo, and within a year of one another, “Diz Que Eu Fui Por Aí” is a good measure by which to understand the two primary mechanisms that Leão uses to “speak” her performances: (1) her use of a standard Rio de Janeiro accent rather than affecting an accent popular among recording artists, and (2) her faithfulness to the song’s melody and rhythm and avoidance of performative interpretation throughout.

Cardoso was born twenty-two years before Leão and had come of age as a samba-canção singer, singing in nightclubs and on live radio programs in the late 1930s and 1940s. Her most famous record, *Canção do Amor Demais*, is considered the first Bossa Nova record due to the participation of João Gilberto and a repertory by Tom Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes.¹³⁸ But that association is misleading, as her musical education did not take place within the context of an “apartment music” like Bossa Nova. A big sound was valued in samba-canção and that is the sound that Cardoso brings to bear in her performance of “Diz Que Fui Por Aí.” She sings with good breath support, uses copious vibrato, and avoids holding out long nasalized vowels. This last technique is particularly audible on the words “mim” and “botequim,” where Cardoso lets the notes disappear in a breathy hush rather than pushing them through. Cardoso also does not sing the song using her normal speaking accent, but affects a pronunciation style more typical of

¹³⁷ Hear Elisete Cardoso, *A Meiga Elisete N.º 5*, Copacabana CLP 11383, 1964, 33 1/3 rpm.

¹³⁸ Castro, *Bossa Nova*, 126.

samba-canção and the radio music she came up singing. In a typical Rio de Janeiro accent, the letter “r” at the end of the word is aspirated, sung almost as the letter “h” in English. Cardoso spoke with this very accent having lived in Rio her entire life, but at the end of the words “por,” “perguntar,” and “afastar,” she rolls the “r,” adhering to the conventions of the sung genre rather than her own speech habits.

Cardoso’s version of the song is filled with interpretive embellishment. She uses ample glissandi, either sliding up into pitches, such as in the word “sim” in the line “diga que sim,” or down out of them, audible in the transition between the two syllables of the word “paro.” Cardoso also throws away the final syllable of some lines, speaking them rather than singing them on pitch, evoking a crooner. She draws out other syllables: the “guém” of “alguém,” the words “é mais um,” and the word “depois.” Subsequently, she runs the rest of the line together. Her use of unpitched syllables and loose interpretation of the song’s rhythms better mimic the unexpected pauses and irregular rhythms of spoken dialogue and would lead one to hear this performance as “speech-like” if it were not for her big, well-supported vocal sound and vibrato. Instead, her performative way of singing serves to draw attention away from the lyric and to herself as a performer.

Leão’s performance differs greatly from Cardoso’s. She does not roll the “r” at the end words, but sings in her normal speaking accent. She also uses no vibrato, and controls her pitches with her throat, rather than through breath support, leaving her with an untrained sound—a sound that critics might describe as “weak” or “thin. When a nasalized vowel falls on a syllable of longer duration, Leão holds it out, even when the sound is uglier for it. Carlos Vergara called Leão an “interior singer” and offered this perspective on Leão’s voice: “people crave and envy

what they can't do. And Nara had a voice that was possible to do."¹³⁹ That is, Leão's performance was attainable, making it both less desirable and more relatable—something closer to speech, perhaps. This choice is related to her upbringing within Bossa Nova. As Carlinhos Oliveira wrote to Nara in his "Declaration of Love":

It was necessary that a boy called João Gilberto appeared for us to discover that it isn't necessary to sing very loud to be a singer. It's enough to pronounce as the lyrics in an exact tone, that is, in our own range. After that, our ears could evaluate with clarity the sweetness of Nara's voice, that little enchanting hoarseness that has no end. Because what is most beautiful in your singing, Nara, is that we feel that you are close, that your voice is almost a caress, as if you were sitting, barefoot, singing and playing guitar just for us.¹⁴⁰

Oliveira differs from Vergara in that he likes this manner of singing, but he, too, emphasizes that she sings "in our own range." Oliveira's claim that Leão "pronounces the lyrics in an exact tone" is instructive as it aligns with her avoidance of the performance-heavy details that Cardoso employs. Other than occasionally slowing down the end relative to the accompaniment, Leão sings in strict sixteenth, eighth, and quarter notes, maintaining a fidelity to the composed material. The idea that Leão "speaks songs," then, may not be a literal description of her mode of singing, but rather an indication that her delivery is easy to understand, faithful to the song's rhythmic notation, and doesn't draw attention to the singer's performance.

The idea that Leão "speaks the song" is not universal. One of Gilberto Vasconcellos's critiques of her singing is precisely that she affects a performative style when she should not. He writes, "The preoccupation with politicizing popular song is not in and of itself condemnable; the problem is that the political untruth stained its aesthetic configuration. Including Nara's own diction, which, in the most poignant moments of 'participation,' is stripped of its normal manner

¹³⁹ Vergara, interview.

¹⁴⁰ Oliveira, "Declaração (De Amor?) A Nara."

in lieu of an effusive, expressionist interpretation, bordering on the theatrical.”¹⁴¹ His critique, though based on a diametrically opposed hearing of her performance style, aligns with my understanding of the political good of a non-affected performance style: Nara’s normal diction is effective in the politicization of popular song, while a theatrical take is not. The example he gives, meanwhile, is not a samba de morro composition, but the song “Funeral de um Lavrador” by João Cabral and Mello Neto and Chico Buarque, which appears on her 1966 album *Manhã de Liberdade*. In that case, I do agree that Leão adopts a different style, but during these first recordings, her performances align with Zé Kéti’s reading.¹⁴²

Leão’s focus on conveying the lyric rather than adopting a showy performance held true in *Opinião*. The show’s director, Augusto Boal, said,

The majority of performers think of the lyric last, they are always much more preoccupied with the mechanical part, the voice, etc. We want to create a show, where it makes sense, changing the lyric, sometimes, the performance, but breaking away from the “frenetic” melancholy so common at carnival where [people] sing in great leaps and with great joy, ‘my pain, our desperation, the death of our love!’ or whatever other tragedy it may be. Of course, we maintain the vibration, but not only the from the rhythm, but the vibration of the feeling, preventing a highly litigious separation between the music and the lyric of a song.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Vasconcellos, *Música Popular*, 89.

¹⁴² In 1965, Elisete Cardoso released the album *Elizete Sobe o Morro* on which she performed another of Zé Kéti’s compositions, “Malvadeza Durão,” as well as Nelson Cavaquinho’s “Luz Negra.” As Leão also recorded these, they serve as further evidence of the difference between the two. Leão’s dry, faithful treatment—at least during this period of her career—is in stark contrast to Cardoso’s vibrato and performative flair. Cardoso opts for an accompaniment typical of samba de morro on these, and amidst the busy percussion, and especially when singing antiphonally with a chorus of voices, she does not take as many rhythmic liberties as she did with “Diz Que Fui Por Ai.” In the verse, however, she strays a great deal. Moreover, she adopts a heavy vibrato on both “Malvadeza Durão” and “Luz Negra.” Leão does not, following the same singing conventions as in her performance of “Diz Que Fui Por Ai.”

¹⁴³ Germana de Lamare, “No Ritmo de um Opinião,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 6, 1964.

Leão used the method of “speaking the song” to model a kind of objectivity in her performance. “I seek to be ... a reporter. I transmit the message of the composers and this satisfies me.”¹⁴⁴ She identified as a journalist and used her technologies of amplification—newspapers, stages, record players—less available to the composers whose songs she sang to spread their message. By singing without “false joy,” Leão strove to “transmit the message of the composers” in what she understood to be an impartial manner.

Leão’s manner of interpretation—staying out of the way of the composer’s message while amplifying it—can be understood as an act of political solidarity. Habermas theorized the public sphere is a space of rational-critical discourse, a characterization that has frequently stumped analysts of affective performative declamations, particularly musical ones. Musical performance, they say, does not intervene rationally. Leão pushes at this limitation with her singing style, not by literally speaking when she sings, but by doing her utmost to let the song speak for itself.

Nara, Heart of a Lion

Leão left *Opinião* in late January with laryngitis. She selected her own replacement, Maria Bethânia, and when *Opinião* traveled to São Paulo with Bethânia as its main attraction, Leão returned to the Teatro de Arena stage. This time she would star, alongside Paulo Autran, Tereza Raquel, and Vianinha, in *Liberdade, Liberdade*, a play constructed as a collage of historical writings about freedom interspersed with songs by Leão. The play helped to maintain the Teatro de Arena as a space for the oppositional counterpublic that had grown there, though *Liberdade, Liberdade*’s cast was all of the same upper-middle class sociogeography and did not

¹⁴⁴ “Nara Leão Diz que Bossa Nova Quer Dizer Música Brasileira Mesmo.”

model the *Opinião* coalition. The military government grew less tolerant of these oppositional discourses and threatened to censor both plays. Leão's reputation as an important political voice was solidified enough that her friends and family feared her arrest.¹⁴⁵

Leão had fully established this reputation by 1966, when a journalist called her under the auspices of taking a survey about her views on the presidency, leading to the episode that opens this chapter. Her friends and allies came to her aid, but, in the end, her statements had little effect on public opinion. She didn't retract them or claim her position was mischaracterized. The threat of retaliation was enough to make Leão characterize her ideas as a matter of personal opinion—not an attempt to sway others. The *Correio da Manhã* noted that she, “clarified to the reporter that [she] has nothing to do with political parties or any kind of organization. Her opinions are completely personal.”¹⁴⁶ Leão's own words to *Jornal do Brasil* were similar: “I'm very honored by the attention that the government is giving me. What I had to say I already said. That is my opinion.”¹⁴⁷ She claimed that the fact that the ideas reflected her personal views meant that they did not constitute any kind of threat to national security, as Costa e Silva argued.¹⁴⁸ In arguing for her right to state her opinions, Leão and others appealed to the ostensible freedom of expression granted by the Brazilian constitution and heretofore maintained by the installed military government. In *CM* she was quoted saying, “President Castelo Branco himself declared that everyone can state their opinions because this is characteristic of a democratic regime, and

¹⁴⁵ Messias and Santos, “Nara Vos Convida.”

¹⁴⁶ “Nara Diz que Não Quis Ofender mas Guerra a Processa,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 26, 1966.

¹⁴⁷ “Exército Quer Punir Nara Leão.”

¹⁴⁸ See also the statement from Leão in “Nara: Sou Contra Militar no Poder,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, May 27, 1966; “Nara: Castelo Deu Liberdade e Falei.”

that was all that I did.”¹⁴⁹

Leão’s interview and the threats it precipitated from the government served to rally support from an enormous swath of artists and intellectuals. Actresses Fernanda Montenegro and Odete Lara publicly backed Leão, with Lara saying that if Leão were imprisoned, she would make the same statement to force the government to arrest her as well.¹⁵⁰ Vianinha took a philosophical approach in his support, saying that “existence itself would not have meaning if we couldn’t state our opinions, since life is a constant taking of positions, reflection of opinions.”¹⁵¹ Support from such acclaimed members of the cultural elite further advanced and solidified public support not only for Leão, but for her expressed point of view.

Writer Ferreira Gullar believed that Leão was giving her personal opinion, and that it didn’t matter if it corresponded to the opinion of the rest of the populace, saying that he would mount an enormous protest if Leão were imprisoned: “We will raise the artistic-intellectual world of Brazil and if possible of the world, against any measure that the government may take to punish the artist.”¹⁵² He saw the government’s response as more evidence that Leão’s critique was cogent: “only a government destitute of any lucidity could think—let alone carry out the act—of indicting Nara for having practiced a crime against the nation.... Consequently, the government obtains for itself the following result: it takes one more step in its sad administration, the most unpopular in the history of Brazil, and simultaneously falls into ridicule.”¹⁵³

On May 27, Leão received a flood of telegrams from artists and intellectuals, while others

¹⁴⁹ “Nara Não Vê Como Pode Pôr Em Perigo Segurança Nacional,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 27, 1966.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Ferreira Gullar, quoted in “Nara Não Vê Como Pode Pôr Em Perigo Segurança Nacional.”

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

gathered at her home.¹⁵⁴ Many of these wrote a collective letter to President Castelo Branco to show their support for her and appeal to him to intercede and prevent her jailing.¹⁵⁵ The list of supporters was published in many of the papers of the time and included many artistic luminaries.¹⁵⁶ The publication of this kind of list is not uncommon in gossip columns; it presents an opportunity for columnists to show off their own attendance at “high society” functions and give readers a glimpse into the social lives of the upper classes of Brazilian society, but in this case, the fact that these artists were expressing support for Leão’s political opinions suggests that there were other effects of this published list. Readers were presented with a list of socialites as well as political actors, publicizing these public figures’ common opinion beyond their social circle.¹⁵⁷

The actions of the national legislature also indicate that Leão’s personal opinions reverberated beyond their cultural niche. MDB Rep. Paulo Ribeiro saw Costa e Silva’s threats to jail Leão as “the fatal blow against what democracy remains in our country.”¹⁵⁸ He entered Drummond’s poem into evidence at the legislative assembly with some joking that Leão should set it to music and make some money off of it.¹⁵⁹ (For her part, Leão also joked that “It’s worth

¹⁵⁴ “Deputado Quer Nara Para MDB por Sua Voz Positiva,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, May 28, 1966; “Nara Leão Repousa Depois de Enfrentar o Exército e Agora Só Deseja Cantar,” *Jornal do Brasil*, May 29, 1966; “Nara Leão Só Vai Ter Advogado se Fôr Processada,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 29, 1966.

¹⁵⁵ “Artistas Pedem a Castelo que Interceda em Favor de Nara,” *Luta Democrática*, May 27, 1966; “Nara Leão Recebe Solidariedade de Artistas em Casa,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 28, 1966.

¹⁵⁶ “Nara Continua em Paz: Só Jornais é Que Vêm,” *Diário de Notícias*, May 28, 1966. See also: “Deputado quer Nara para MDB por sua voz positiva.”

¹⁵⁷ The people that participated in this act of solidarity also appeared on a similar list in one of Leão’s biography’s nearly forty years after the event. See Cabral, *Nara Leão: Uma Biografia*, 112.

¹⁵⁸ “Assembléia Aprova Poeta e Quer Nara Leão Livre,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 28, 1966.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

dealing with whatever noise to get a poem like that.”¹⁶⁰ But joking aside, these personal commentaries reached all of the local and national newspapers, the cultural elite (including the most celebrated Brazilian poet), the whispered conversations of military colonels in the streets of Rio, and the national legislative assembly. Not to mention the military’s presidential candidate, who would go on to be “elected” the following year. Despite these many artists’ protestations, it’s clear that Leão’s personal opinions did have some public resonance.

As of May 29, one week after the publication of the initial interview, the threat passed. The Minister of Justice, Mem de Sá, announced that Leão would not be indicted or tried under the National Security Law.¹⁶¹ Mem de Sá circulated a statement to all of the major newspapers, which many published concurrently. Describing the statement, the *Jornal de Commercio* wrote:

that the government never considered jailing singer Nara Leão under the National Security Law, even though [Mem de Sá] considers the ideas emitted by the singer in a recent interview ‘bold and unjust.’ He added that the government knows how to distinguish perfectly between subversive elements, worthy of repression, when necessary, and the inexperienced youth ‘that play the game of schemer, when they try to turn public opinion against the armed forces.’¹⁶²

Sá used the opportunity to downplay the importance of Leão’s statements, calling her an inexperienced youth and even recalling Costa e Silva’s dismissed explanation that she was engaging in a publicity stunt.¹⁶³ Sá actually affirmed in his statement that he believed Leão was trying to “turn public opinion against the armed forces,” but he would not admit the possibility that she could be effective in so doing. He was clear, as well, to point out that the government had never taken her words as a threat, nor had any intention

¹⁶⁰ “Nara Continua em Paz: Só Jornais é Que Vêm.”

¹⁶¹ “Mem de Sá Avisa Que Nada Tem Contra Nara,” *Diário de Notícias*, May 29, 1966.

¹⁶² “Nara Leão Não Será Processada,” *Jornal do Commercio*, May 30, 1966.

¹⁶³ “Nara Já Pode Respirar: Não Vai ser Enquadrada,” *Tribuna de Imprensa*, May 31, 1966;

of prosecuting her, despite the abundant evidence to the contrary, including one report that the government had done some research on the effects of her statements on public opinion.¹⁶⁴

I close this chapter on this episode because it gives evidence that Leão did not limit her political voice to the small audience in the Teatro Arena de São Paulo in Copacabana. As a political actor, she ventured into the public sphere writ large. Later, she would become a voluntary prisoner of her (luxury) apartment and, eventually, would self-exile to France with her new husband, Cacá Diegues. What is remarkable, though, is how Leão, during these early years of the dictatorship, continually attempted to enter the public sphere, though she was beat back or boxed in each time. As she would write in a piece in November 1966, “I am the most courageous woman that I know.... [T]hey can call me Nara, Heart of a Lion.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ “Nara Leão Não Será Processada”; “Medida Contra Nara dá Divisão de Gabinetes,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 28, 1966.

¹⁶⁵ Nara Leão, “Nara Coração de Leão,” *Jornal do Brasil*, November 2, 1966.

Chapter Three. Zé Kéti: The Voice of the Morro

I consider myself a “musical reporter.” Because I always compose speaking of something important, something that has meaning, a story, a theme.
– Zé Kéti¹

During the mid-1960s, several popular song competitions that celebrated the nation’s songwriters and performers were convened by Brazilian television networks.² In each case, a panel of judges, made up primarily of journalists and musicians, presided over nominations and judged televised performances, awarding their preferred composers and singers. After zero samba composers were among the nominees for the 1966 iteration of the Festival Internacional da Canção Popular, samba composer Zé Kéti (José Flôres de Jesus, 1921-1999) criticized the festival judges. An article from the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* reported that Zé Kéti spoke out against the “discrimination against authentic samba,” noting that none of the compositions selected “were true samba de morro . . . leaving instead ‘songs that do not say anything.’”³

Responding to Zé Kéti’s criticism, bossa nova lyricist Ronaldo Bôscoli lashed out, remarking that Zé Kéti “nowadays only knows about the morro through hearsay.”⁴ Bôscoli’s comment was predicated on a grain of truth. Zé Kéti was a carioca, but grew up in the neighborhoods of Inhaúma, Bangú, Dona Clara, and Bento Ribeiro in the city’s Zona Norte, not on one of its morros. These neighborhoods were not favelas, though like favelas their residents were poor and lacked access to much of the city’s infrastructure—everything from its schools to

¹ Zé Kéti, “Depoimento Para a Posteridade,” February 9, 1967, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

² For a complete history, see Zuza Homem de Mello, *A Era dos Festivais: Uma Parábola* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2003).

³ “Festival: Zé Kéti Acusa Deficiência,” *Correio da Manhã*, September 4, 1966.

⁴ “Ronaldo Bôscoli Acha Que Zé Kéti Não Tem Direito de Falar em Samba Autêntico,” *Jornal do Brasil*, September 6, 1966.

its sewers. Perhaps more important for Bôscoli's "critique," these neighborhoods were not on the city's morros, but in a *subúrbio* at the city's periphery. Also relevant was the fact that, by 1966, Zé Kéti had experienced some modest social mobility by virtue of his success as a composer, allowing him to buy a house.⁵

A bitter war of words followed. Zé Kéti noted that, unlike Bôscoli, he was both a good lyricist and musical composer.⁶ He then offered an impassioned defense of his work as a samba de morro composer:

I am not vain and I have my faults, because I'm human. . . . He thinks that I left the morro, which lacks truth. The musicians from Mangueira know this, and also know—as authentic colleagues of mine from there—that I live in the suburb of Bento Ribeiro. Noel Rosa, who Mr. Ronaldo Bôscoli must have heard of, used to say that samba is born in one's heart, and, for that reason, it is not necessary to live in the morro to compose something authentic.⁷

Zé Kéti's defense both reinforces and denies the notion that the morro is the source of authenticity. He references the Morro da Mangueira to invoke the unmistakable authenticity of the artists living there and associated with its famous samba school, notably Cartola and Néilson Cavaquinho. Also, by referencing the words of Noel Rosa, a white composer who did not grow up in the favelas, Zé Kéti subtly points out the irony that Bôscoli—himself upper middle-class and white—would mention a black, lower class composer's sociogeographic roots in criticizing his authenticity. Indeed, Bôscoli made his bitter commentary in bad faith. Zé Kéti had never claimed to literally be from a morro; instead he used his songs to document life at the sociogeographic margins of Rio de Janeiro.

⁵ Hugo Dupin, "Sempre aos Domingos," *Diário de Notícias*, December 6, 1964.

⁶ "Zé Kéti Quer Conferir com Bôscoli sua Bossa de Fazer Letra e Música para Samba," *Jornal do Brasil*, September 9, 1966.

⁷ Ibid.

Zé Kéti cemented his reputation as a *cronista* (chronicler) of life for Rio's marginalized during his "golden era," a period from 1964–1967 that coincided with participation in *Opinião*, which was named after one of his sambas. He was the oldest participant in the show, his career having begun ten years prior. He worked with a few samba schools in Rio de Janeiro's Zona Norte, having the greatest success with one of the city's oldest samba schools, Portela. In the mid-fifties, he earned some fame working as a composer, actor, and assistant camera operator on director Nelson Pereira dos Santos's films *Rio, 40 Graus* and *Rio, Zona Norte*. Throughout this period, Zé Kéti worked various jobs, including a position at the Brazilian social security service and as artistic director of the restaurant and music venue Zicartola. He met Nara Leão at the venue and enjoyed a career boost when she recorded a number of his songs. During this period, Zé Kéti earned a reputation as a *cronista*, which led to his being compared to samba composers like Noel Rosa:

Zé Kéti has dedicated his career as a musician and popular poet to portraying the small and large human dramas of the streets of Rio. ... He has also recounted in verse the desperation of an assault victim in unpoliced roads of the city and proclaimed, at a moment that many would fall into cowardice, that "he won't change his opinion." Zé Kéti arrives as the musical *cronista* of the city.⁸

In profiles of Zé Kéti and reviews of his songs, journalists and critics remark on his "songs that tell a story," that "say something," and his "abilities as a poet-pamphleteer and inspiring melodist."⁹

While Nara Leão used her social status and access to express her political opinions through speech-related activities, Zé Kéti used his sambas to depict and comment on experiences

⁸ José Carlos Rego, "Zé Kéti, O Poeta Sofredor, Canta os Dramas da Cidade," *Última Hora Revista*, August 11, 1964. Sérgio Cabral made a similar comparison. Sérgio Cabral, "Os 4 Grandes do Zicartola," *Correio da Manhã*, June 21, 1964.

⁹ "Zé Kéti - A Voz que Levou o Morro à Avenida," *Jornal do Brasil*, September 26, 1973; "Figuras do Samba - Zé Kéti," *O Jornal*, September 27, 1964; Rossini Pinto, "Zé Kéti Volta a Fazer Sucesso," *O Jornal*, September 18, 1964.

of *marginalidade* (marginality). The term *marginal* frequently references criminal behavior—hence the word’s translation as “outlaw” in Hélio Oiticica’s famous silkscreened banner *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói* (Be an Outlaw, Be a Hero). But Zé Kéti’s songs speak to two other meanings of the term: “at the margins” and “not belonging to or integrating with the mainstream.”

The songs that he brought to *Opinião* spoke to the difficulties associated with living in Rio’s poorest communities by depicting quotidian details with a remarkable economy of language. Such is the case with “Acender as Velas,” discussed in chapter 2. The anthemic “A Voz do Morro,” which celebrates the resilient joy of the marginalized, makes an appearance in the show. And in songs like “Diz Que Fui Por Aí” and “Nega Dina,” he characterizes working life in a way that contradicted stereotypical notions that marginalized citizens were lazy and supported those characterizations through his advocacy for professional composers. In doing so, he complicates the image and understanding of the *malandro* (rogue, street hustler), a common archetype in samba. Zé Kéti also adopted a nuanced take on criminality in marginalized communities. In his song “Malvadeza Durão,” he denounces violence while speaking admiringly of the ingenuity of other criminal behavior. In pointed cases, notably the titular “Opinião,” Zé Kéti’s songs also served as direct protests against favela removals. Because Zé Kéti’s depictions of marginality reached a large audience outside of the *Opinião* counterpublic both prior to and following the show’s run, I pay close attention to how the circulation of his songs in other media and other milieus shaped and revealed their political valences. I have chosen only songs sung onstage in *Opinião*, but it is impossible to ignore the fact that audience members would have known many of these songs from other contexts.

Throughout the chapter, I pay special attention to the fact that the seemingly real people and events that populate his songs were, in actuality, invented but representative stories about Rio's marginalized populations. Because the stories are not factual, the truth of the songs resides in the way that they exemplify marginal life. They are realistic—if not actually real—portraits. As the episode with Ronaldo Bôscoli indicates, some journalists and musicians seized on this fact to criticize him. Particularly after Zé Kéti experienced some success in *Opinião*, critics such as Bôscoli, columnist Sérgio Bittencourt and politician Carlos Lacerda attempted to undermine and critique the political work of his songs by claiming that Zé Kéti had no authentic right to speak to issues of marginality. Their attacks were predicated on the idea that his depictions of marginalized life were only valid if authenticated by his own biography. In effect, they posited that Zé Kéti could only speak to and about marginalized communities if he remained within them. It is a dynamic that will be familiar to scholars of North American hip-hop, especially in relation to the phrase “keeping it real.” As Tricia Rose has argued, “‘keeping it real’ is a strategy that traps poor black youth in a repetitious celebration of the rotten fruits of community destruction.”¹⁰ Hip-hop artists are frequently judged on the degree to which they maintain lives of poverty or violence, even when these artists seek to escape those conditions. I argue that Zé Kéti's experiences are specific evidence of the ways that notions of authenticity can be used as a marginalizing discourse—a way of pressuring people from marginalized communities to remain marginalized lest their musical and political work be dismissed for being inauthentic.

¹⁰ Tricia Rose, *The Hip-Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip-Hop and Why It Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 146. For an example of this phenomenon outside of the academic sphere see Charisse Jones, “Still Hanging in the ‘Hood; Rappers Who Stay Say Their Strength Is From the Streets,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/24/nyregion/still-hanging-hood-rappers-who-stay-say-their-strength-streets.html>.

“I am a marginal Brazilian”

Rio de Janeiro’s numerous morros stand for a kind of social marginality even as they are not, geographically speaking, marginal—that is, peripheral to the city center. In the late nineteenth century, many city maps ended at the base of the morros, where development was challenging, though most were occupied with at least a few houses.¹¹ Soldiers returning to Rio from a campaign in the Brazilian northeast settled the Morro da Favela (known today as the Morro da Providência) and named the morro after the favela weed that grew there.¹² Along with many other morros, Providência is not peripheral to Rio’s *Centro*, the city’s commercial hub, but situated within it. Likewise, other favelas emerged adjacent to the luxury residences of the Zona Sul. Given this imbrication, it is ironic that a common understanding of what is and is not a favela requires its being contrasted with the city, despite the fact that the favelas are part of the city.¹³

The euphemistic equivalent of this binary opposition is between “morro” and “*asfalto*” (asphalt), a distinction that maintains and reinforces an understanding of the favela as untamed and the city as developed. For example, during Zé Kéti’s golden era, music journalists and columnists commonly referenced musicians bringing samba from the morro to the *asfalto*.¹⁴ This binary carries a more literal truth than that between favela and cidade, for, at least during the period in question, the city’s morros tended not to be paved. These areas also often lacked other

¹¹ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 27.

¹² Ibid., 16; Bryan McCann, *Hard Times in the Marvelous City: From Dictatorship to Democracy in the Favelas of Rio de Janeiro* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 22.

¹³ McCann, *Hard Times in the Marvelous City*, 21. Emphasis original.

¹⁴ See, for examples Fernando Leite Mendes, “Zicartola é Samba a Dois para Mais Um,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 2, 1964; Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 23, 1964; Sérgio Porto, “Confronto: A Nossa Música Popular,” *Diário Carioca*, January 1, 1965; “Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Asfalto,” *Última Hora*, April 2, 1965.

modern conveniences, such as telephone service, clean water, sewage systems, and social institutions like hospitals and schools.¹⁵

Janice Perlman's anthropological study of marginality helped upend notions that favela residents (*favelados*) were politically and economically marginal by choice or inner disposition, showing instead that they were systematically exploited and repressed by more powerful elements of Rio de Janeiro society. Upon arriving in Rio in 1968, Perlman discovered that more affluent segments held stereotyped views of favelados as lazy, uneducated, self-isolating, disease-carrying rural peasants whose lives were characterized by crime, violence, and promiscuity.¹⁶ After a year spent conducting ethnographic research in three marginal locations—a favela in the residential Zona Sul, a favela in the industrial Zona Norte, and a subúrbio—she concluded that these stereotypes were, at best, not based in the realities of these people's lives, and, at worst, used to create and maintain their marginalized state.

Instead of laziness and self-isolation, Perlman found people seeking and finding ingenious solutions to a housing and employment crisis that arose with the rapid growth of urban labor force in the 1950s.¹⁷ Without access to standard housing options found through the formal real estate market, many new arrivals to the city, as well as people born into its poorest classes obtained housing and work through the informal economy that characterized (and continues to characterize) many favelas. She found social and recreational associations that supported

¹⁵ Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 81.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xii, 1-2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

community needs and a lower incidence of unemployment than assumed based on residents' integration within the formal economy.¹⁸

The poor were geographically marginalized—that is, isolated in the city's morros—due to legal mechanisms such as the municipal building code of 1903. This code, as Brodwyn Fischer note, made illegal most existing housing options for poor people in central Rio, leaving the poor's settlement options to favelas and other improvised housing.¹⁹ Fischer has coined the term “poverty of rights” to describe the ways that citizens of these marginal communities were not only economically impoverished, but excluded from access to basic rights in the city.²⁰ Through laws such as this one and the 1904 sanitary code, the poor often were pushed into means of survival characterized by illegality, insecurity, and dependence.²¹ In spite of these laws' restrictions, settlements within Rio's morros grew rapidly throughout the first half of the twentieth century, meaning that an enormous percentage of the city's housing stock was technically illegal.²² Many residents, whether they had migrated from other parts of the country or had been born in the city, were forced to live in illegal dwellings.

The existence of definitions of “marginal” as “criminal,” “at the margins,” and “outside of mainstream society” contributed to a tendency to attribute marginality to all favelados regardless of whether they engaged in criminal activities or not. This was accompanied by an assumption that marginality was a choice, that favelados elected not to participate in

¹⁸ Ibid., 30-31.

¹⁹ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 36.

²⁰ Ibid., 18.

²¹ Ibid., 38.

²² Ibid., 49.

“mainstream” culture and economic activity.²³ In fact, favelados did and do participate in Rio’s formal economy, though that participation is often characterized by exploitation and arduous bureaucratic and infrastructural barriers.²⁴ Furthermore, Perlman’s research revealed that, prior to the military coup, favelados did participate in the electoral process, but felt that they were manipulated and powerless within it.²⁵

The living conditions in these marginalized communities are portrayed throughout Zé Kéti’s oeuvre, most explicitly in his song “Acender as Velas.” The song’s lyrics are:

Lighting candles
Has become a profession
When there is no samba
There is disillusion

It’s one more heart
That stops beating
An angel goes to heaven
God forgive me
But I’m going to say

The doctor arrived too late
Because in the morro
There’s no car to climb
There’s no telephone to call
And there’s no beauty to be seen
And we die without wanting to die²⁶

In the song, the act of lighting candles, done in remembrance of the deceased, has become a profession because of the sheer number of morro residents who die. The lack of modern infrastructure in the form of telephones and paved roads delays the arrival of the doctor. The

²³ These assumptions bring up the most troubling aspects of the counterculture’s appropriation of marginality as a way of life. For many countercultural youth, “dropping out” of society *was* a choice. By using the term “marginal” to describe this activity, they reinforced the mistaken notion that disenfranchised residents also self-marginalized.

²⁴ Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 140.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 188-189.

²⁶ See appendix A for full Portuguese lyrics.

song reminds the listener that the quality of life for marginalized cariocas is vastly different than that of other parts of the city.

One reason that Zé Kéti's portrayals were taken seriously by listeners, critics, historians and fellow musicians is that he was regularly considered to be a representative of the morro. Augusto Boal, the director of *Opinião*, said that the actors in *Opinião* "represented themselves and their class. Zé came from the morro, descending to the asfalto."²⁷ This characterization of Zé Kéti parallels similar characterizations in newspaper articles and announcements, such as this one from the *Jornal do Commercio*: "Nara Leão (the city), João do Vale (the country – Maranhão) and Zé Kéti (the morro)."²⁸ The same structure appeared in the *Correio da Manhã*, where the show's repertory was described as showcasing all of Brazil: "Nara sings her neighborhood, the Zona Sul, Zé Kéti the morro... and João do Vale, the Northeast."²⁹ Cesário Marques described the same dynamic, calling him a "sambista of the morro."³⁰ One critic used this characterization as an opportunity to praise *Opinião*'s authenticity: "The first impression that I had, upon attending *Opinião* ... was of a creative, intelligent, beautiful, timely, and above all true show.... The composer from the morro was [really] a composer from the morro, Zé Kéti."³¹ Audience members of *Opinião* used the same language in describing the show's dynamic to me. For example, Ângela Tâmega recalled "Zé Kéti, from the morro, who is samba personified."³² Whether her characterization is due to the efficacy of the show's advertisements or to

²⁷ Augusto Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro: Memórias Imaginadas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2000), 226.

²⁸ Interino, "Arena e Opinião," *Jornal do Commercio*, November 11, 1964.

²⁹ Germana de Lamare, "No Ritmo de um Opinião," *Correio da Manhã*, December 6, 1964. Italics mine.

³⁰ Cesário Marques, "Confronto: A Nossa Música Popular," *Diário Carioca*, January 10, 1965.

³¹ "'Opinião': A Volta 11 Anos Depois," *Jornal do Brasil*, May 18, 1975.

³² Ângela Tâmega, interview with author, Humaitá, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 1, 2017.

independent associations with Zé Kéti, it is significant that he is consistently positioned this way. Other descriptions of his sociogeographic standing eschew the euphemism, referring to the favela directly. José Poerner called him the show's "carioca favelado."³³ Zé Kéti himself used the same terms in retrospective interview from 1979.³⁴ In some cases, portraits emphasize the content of his songs, how they "show a little bit of the morro."³⁵ Ciléa Gropilla notes that "his songs are returns from the morro."³⁶

Zé Kéti did not grow up in a morro, or a favela at all. He was from the subúrbio, far from the urban center. Unlike the English equivalent "suburb," subúrbio it does not evoke white picket fences and manicured lawns. Much to the contrary, the subúrbio, in terms of quality of life and access to urban conveniences, was similar to the favela.³⁷ For this reason, some historical and anthropological studies of poverty and social marginality in Brazil look at both kinds of neighborhood together.³⁸ Because the word "morro" is used as a euphemism and Zé Kéti is from the subúrbio, he is drawing implicit connections between marginalized people across the city's geography. The morro is not a particular place—one would have to ask which morro to begin with—but represents the marginalization that so many cariocas experience.

³³ José Poerner, "Opinião Sacode Poeira de Abril," *Correio da Manhã*, February 2, 1965.

³⁴ Ciléa Gropillo, "A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos," *Jornal do Brasil*, November 19, 1979.

³⁵ "Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Asfalto."

³⁶ Gropillo, "A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos."

³⁷ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 30.

³⁸ This is the case, for example, in the work of Brodwyn Fischer and Janice Perlman. See Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*; Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*.

Zé Kéti's very name, and the story he told about its origins, reflect the degree to which he used details of his life to self-mythologize. On stage in *Opinião* he recounted the story, subtly lacing it with social commentary:

The nickname business, do you know why I'm called Zé Kéti? It's because when my mother was raising me all by herself, she got a job as a live-in maid. And they wouldn't let her bring me. So she left me in some relatives' house. I stayed at the window watching the other boys play. I flew a kite from the window. Sounds like an Italian film, doesn't it? So, my mother came back and they told her 'Zé was very quiet [*quietinho*]. My how Zé stayed so quietinho. ... Zé Quietinho ... ended up being Zé Kéti. From there I started to write it with a K, because that was a lucky letter—Kubitschek, Khrushchev, Kennedy. But now, my friends, I think the luck ran out.³⁹

In subsequent places, he told the story in almost *exactly* the same terms.⁴⁰ This is certainly, in part, a product of his having memorized the text for the play. But it also reflects the degree to which this story is a sedimented, mythologized version of his lived reality. In a few lines, he condenses months—maybe years—of slow evolution.

Opinião's participants chose to include this story in the show instead of many possible others because it located Zé Kéti among the city's poorest classes.⁴¹ It illustrates that his mother had to support him alone by working as a maid for people of a different (higher) socioeconomic class. Moreover, it shows how their social class defined their geographic positioning within the city and disrupted their family. It also speaks to the resilience of that class, as members of his extended family pitched in to help to raise him. The story also mythologizes Zé Kéti, gives him an origin story, and explains why he had such an unusual name. It is akin to efforts by comic

³⁹ Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Paulo Pontes, *Opinião: Texto Completo do "Show"* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Val, 1965), 30.

⁴⁰ See, for example: Cesário Marques, "Zé Sou Eu," *Diário Carioca*, November 15, 1964; "Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Jôgo da Verdade," *Manchete* 716, January 8, 1966, 30-33; Gropillo, "A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos."

⁴¹ From 300 pages of transcribed stories from the actors' lives, Augusto Boal and the actors selected "the essential 50." See Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho do Padeiro*, 225.

book creators to explain the “S” on Superman’s chest or the radioactive spider that gave Peter Parker his “spidey sense.”

Finally, at the end of the story is the stinger: by remarking that the letter K, which had seemed so lucky just months before, was no longer lucky, Zé Kéti inserts a subtle political commentary cloaked in humor and broad topicality. Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963. Khrushchev was ousted by KGB conspirators in October of 1964, and though Kubitschek had left power in a normal democratic transfer, he now found himself in voluntary exile, accused of communist ties by Brazil’s military leaders. It is an unmistakable critique of Brazil’s authoritarian regime.

“I am samba”

One sad irony about the poor living conditions that residents of Rio’s marginalized communities experienced is that these communities are frequently seen as the authentic source of Brazilianness as expressed through cultural forms such as samba and carnival.⁴² Promoted during the presidential tenure of Getúlio Vargas, samba was adopted as Brazil’s national music, and used to define and promote a cultural program both within the country and without, as part of, for example, the Good Neighbor Program in partnership with the United States.⁴³ Alongside samba, carnival became Rio’s premiere tourist event, a yearly celebration of Brazilian music and

⁴² Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 15. In his depictions of life in Rio’s favelas written in the 1920s, Benjamim Costallat points to samba as “a transcendent, stubborn happiness in the face of unspeakable privation.” Costallat, quoted in Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 72.

⁴³ See Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 9.

culture.⁴⁴ His musical education and composerly output demonstrate the connections, real and exaggerated, between marginalized communities and these cultural forms.

In Zé Kéti's many interviews and comments about his upbringing, he regularly speaks to his (lack of) schooling during his childhood in Rio's Zona Norte. As with the story about his name, he gives an honest but mythologized account. He admits that he "was not one much for studying," but some of his accounts chalk this up to circumstances, that he "had to stop his studies at a young age."⁴⁵ Zé Kéti's lack of schooling is undoubtedly tied to his geographic positioning in the city. The Zona Norte at the time of his upbringing did not have the educational infrastructure of more affluent areas of the city. Perlman points out that, even as late as 1969, the city's poorest communities did not have schools and that residents of marginalized communities were systematically excluded from educational opportunities.⁴⁶ Historian Brodwyn Fischer also notes that while 93% of Rio's primary-school-aged children did attend school by 1964, this number was much lower during Zé Kéti's childhood, particularly in poor neighborhoods.⁴⁷

In stories about his childhood Zé Kéti jokes that his education was limited to his experiences in the *escolas de samba* (samba schools) of the Zona Norte. As he said in a 1973 interview, "I went to live in Bento Ribeiro and the only school nearby was a samba one: Portela."⁴⁸ Samba schools are the official organizations that parade and compete during Brazil's yearly carnival. An outgrowth of informal *blocos* (parade bands), samba schools were thus

⁴⁴ For more on the promotion of carnival and the Brazilian tourism industry, see John Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20.

⁴⁵ Gropillo, "A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos"; Sérgio Porto, "'Opinião': Revolta do Samba ao Lado do Povo," *Última Hora Revista*, December 17, 1964.

⁴⁶ Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 30; 149.

⁴⁷ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 66.

⁴⁸ "Zé Kéti - A Voz que Levou o Morro à Avenida."

named not because they were literal places of education, but so that sambistas could show that their activities were serious.⁴⁹ Alison Raphael argues that the shift in label was a response to police repression of the informal blocos and the exclusion of black cariocas from the city's official carnival celebrations.⁵⁰ The formalization of samba schools arose in response to regulations during the Getúlio Vargas era and as a matter of practicality for schools looking to excel in the various categories used in the judged parades during carnival.⁵¹ Samba schools rely on a division of labor based on expertise. Along with those responsible for costumes, floats, and other aspects of the parade, the three primary musical segments are the *bateria* (drum corps), the *puxador* (the lead singer who encourages the chorus that sings the samba), and the *ala de compositores* (composer's wing), the group of musicians responsible for composing that year's *samba-enredo* (theme samba), which the school will play and sing throughout their parade.

Nearly all of Rio's poor neighborhoods housed (and continue to house) samba schools. The first school, Deixa Falar, formed in 1928 when practitioners from the Morro de São Carlos, a hillside favela in the neighborhood of Estácio, began to codify a syncopated version of the form suitable for dancing in a *roda* (circle, or ring) as well as for parading in the streets.⁵² Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba da Portela, commonly known as Portela, followed in 1929, initially as Vai Como Pode. The group adopted the more "serious" name G.R.E.S. Portela upon receiving official recognition from their city delegate in 1935.⁵³ Founded in Oswaldo Cruz, a

⁴⁹ Marc A. Hertzman, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 166; McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 47-48.

⁵⁰ Alison Raphael, "From Popular Culture to Microenterprise: The History of Brazilian Samba Schools," *Latin American Music Review* 11, no. 1 (1990): 76.

⁵¹ Raphael, "From Popular Culture to Microenterprise," 78-79.

⁵² Bryan McCann, McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 47.

⁵³ Nei Lopes, *Zé Keti: O Samba Sem Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2000), 28; José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular: da Modina à Canção de Protesto* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1974), 173.

neighborhood in Rio's Zona Norte bordering Bento Ribeiro, Portela was not the only samba school available to Zé Kéti. Bento Ribeiro had three schools, but none as famous or successful as Portela.⁵⁴ Zé Kéti was introduced to the school by its former president Armando Santos and by 1945 joined the ala de compositores.⁵⁵ He had success as a composer there, but left briefly for the school União de Vaz Lobo, before returning to Portela in 1954.⁵⁶ It was during this brief hiatus that he composed his first and most enduring success, the song "A Voz do Morro," which I discuss in detail below.

Among the many different practices and forms that samba has engendered, the one most associated with Zé Kéti, samba de morro, is also perhaps the least clearly defined stylistically.⁵⁷ While some forms of samba are defined by their usage (such as samba-enredo, composed for carnival competition) and others by their musical characteristics (such as *samba de partido alto*, which employs a specific kind of syncopation and a form that alternates improvised solo verses with group refrains), samba de morro tends to be distinguished by amorphous ideas of authenticity. According to music historian José Ramos Tinhorão, samba is one of the city's two "most authentically carioca" music genres.⁵⁸ But samba de morro, of all the kinds of samba, is

⁵⁴ Bento Ribeiro's three schools were Paz e Amor, Na Hora É Que Se Vê, and Lira do Amor. For more on these, see Lopes, *Zé Kéti*, 25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁵⁶ Vaz Lobo is a small section of the neighborhood of Madureira, adjacent to Bento Ribeiro and Oswaldo Cruz. Lopes, *Zé Kéti*, 34; Sérgio Cabral, *As Escolas de Samba do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 1996), 352.

⁵⁷ Samba cannot be rightly considered a single genre of music; John Murphy suggests that we think of it "as a broad stream of musical activity comparable to jazz." See Murphy, *Music in Brazil*, 7.

⁵⁸ The other "most authentic genre" is the *marcha*, or *marchinha*, which accompanies the majority of the city's street parades during carnival. Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular*, 115.

undoubtedly the form most frequently cast as the authentic form of samba.⁵⁹ One indicative detail is that the term has gone out of fashion and the same composers and repertoires are often referred to, nowadays, by the equally euphemistic *samba de raiz* (roots samba).

The name “samba de morro” derives from the genre’s perceived connection to Rio’s hillside favelas. As I discuss in chapter 2, many of the city’s oldest samba schools and formative samba composers are from the city’s morros. The Morro de São Carlos produced composer Ismael Silva and Deixa Falar. The school Estação Primeira da Mangueira was founded by composer Cartola in the Morro da Mangueira. The Morro do Salgueiro is home to composer Nescarzinho and the school Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba Acadêmicos do Salgueiro. The term does not actually require that the composer actually come from a morro—many neighborhoods whose residents occupy a similar class position aren’t located on the city’s morros. It describes a kind of samba made by people of little economic means, in the places where samba originated, that frequently speak to those circumstances, if obliquely. And this is not to say that all samba composed and performed by favelados is samba de morro, nor that the only samba composed and played in those spaces is samba de morro. Instead, definitions of the term rely on “you know it when you see it” concepts of authenticity.

Samba de morro implies a particular instrumentation. It tends to utilize a *batucada* (percussion ensemble) of *surdo* (a kind of tuned bass drum), *pandeiro* (a tambourine like instrument with a stretched skin that is struck by the fingertips, thumb and base of the hand in a complex pattern), *tamborim* (a small frame drum played with a stick), and *cuíca* (a friction

⁵⁹ Carlos Sandroni, *Feitiço Decente: Transformações do Samba no Rio de Janeiro (1917–1933)* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor, 2001), 114; Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music & National Identity in Brazil*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 88.

drum).⁶⁰ Wind instruments are uncommon in the genre. It is frequently accompanied by acoustic guitar and *cavaquinho* (a small four-string accompaniment instrument), rarely incorporating other chordal instruments.

Zé Kéti never learned to play a chordal instrument, but was an expert on samba de morro's most iconic makeshift instrument: the matchbox.⁶¹ An instrument typically associated with poor, savant composers, the matchbox was widely available but not formally taught. It could, however, convincingly replicate the rhythms of samba, particularly those made on the pandeiro. Along with many others, Zé Kéti associates the matchbox with samba's roots. In a 1966 interview about his life and work, he calls authentic samba "the pure samba, that rhythm on a matchbox, and of the morro, with acoustic guitar and cavaquinho."⁶² Nara Leão has made the even more extreme assertion that authentic samba de morro can be played accompanied solely by a matchbox, because its melodies are memorable and clearly outline the song's harmonic structure even when unaccompanied.⁶³

Zé Kéti's song "A Voz do Morro" has been variously described as "unforgettable," "consecrated," and "an anthem," among other plaudits.⁶⁴ The song is not included in the abbreviated LP recording of *Opinião*, but, according to the script, the performers sang a portion of the anthem towards the beginning of the show. Zé Kéti also mentions the song in his self-introduction, referencing it both by title and by its most famous lyric "eu sou o samba [I am

⁶⁰ Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular*, 159

⁶¹ Mauro Ivan and Juvenal Portella, "A Voz do Morro," *Jornal do Brasil*, November 11, 1964.

⁶² "Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Jôgo da Verdade."

⁶³ Augusto Boal and Nara Leão, "Boal e Nara Leão Denunciam o 'Bestialógico' da Bossa Nova," *Última Hora São Paulo*, August 3, 1963.

⁶⁴ Haroldo Costa, "A Musa Nara Canta," *Diário de Notícias*, March 22, 1964, 2; Marques, "Confronto: A Nossa Música Popular"; Haroldo Costa, "Zé Kéti do Samba," *Diário de Notícias*, March 29, 1966.

samba].” The song also marks the end of Part I, the performers singing the chorus in its entirety before intermission.⁶⁵ It was his first and most enduring success as a composer and remains a representative example of samba de morro.

The song’s lyrics mythologize Rio’s morros as the authentic birthplace of samba, and subsequently “the joy that fills Brazilian hearts.” Musically, it illustrates the genre’s musical devices, particularly in the melody’s diatonicism, compact range, and syncopation, but as with the song’s lyrics, a closer look undermines an understanding of the song as “simple.” A surprisingly complex harmonic underlies the straightforward melody. Before examining these components of the song in detail, however, it is necessary to understand how samba (and samba de morro in particular) function in Rio de Janeiro, as well as Zé Kéti’s own integration within the genre. Samba, not unlike Zé Kéti himself, has both real and mythologized ties to Rio’s morros.

“A Voz do Morro” was critical to the realistic portrayal of Rio’s marginalized in Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s 1955 film *Rio, 40 Graus*.⁶⁶ Zé Kéti wrote the song during a brief hiatus from Portela, while composing for the samba school União de Vaz Lobo.⁶⁷ Santos used it after its success at carnaval to accompany the opening credits of the film, which was a sociological critique of Brazilian society, dealing directly with marginality in the suburbs of Rio.⁶⁸ Santos recalled that the film was a kind of proof of concept, to show that “if [Brazilian] films succeeded in becoming a cultural force, they would permit an improved degree of communication and lay

⁶⁵ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 48.

⁶⁶ Zé Kéti was grateful for the song’s placement in the film but bemoaned the lack of financial benefit from it. His earnings were based on box office success, of which the film had very little. “Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Jôgo da Verdade.”

⁶⁷ Cabral, *As Escolas de Samba do Rio de Janeiro*, 352; Jairo Severiano and Zuza Homem de Mello, *A Canção no Tempo: 85 Anos de Músicas Brasileiras* (vol. 1: 1901-1957) (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998), 325.

⁶⁸ Randal Johnson, *Cinema Novo x 5* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 164.

the foundations for a genuinely Brazilian cinema as an expression of both a particular culture and a given economy.”⁶⁹ Whereas other films of the era painted a portrait of Brazil—and Rio in particular—as a kind of tropical paradise, *Rio, 40 Graus* did not, leading to its being initially censored by police official Colonel Meneses Cortes.⁷⁰ The song plays over aerial shots of the city, which don’t linger on the kinds of tourist attractions used to advertise Brazil to its “good neighbor” to the north. Instead, the camera travels to the morros and their impoverished residents. Randal Johnson points out that the trope of using a samba to accompany the opening credits was common to the popular *chanchada* genre, but that in *Rio, 40 Graus* the idealized studio version of a favela was replaced by footage actually filmed in the favelas.⁷¹

The lyrics of “A Voz do Morro” (see appendix A) are sung from the first-person perspective of a personified samba: “I am samba/ The voice of the morro, I am the very same, yes sir / I want to show the world that I have value.” Samba itself claims its position as the voice of the morro, aligning itself with the poor and disenfranchised residents who live there. The subtext in the lyric “I want to show the world I have value” is implicit but clear: the disenfranchised are not automatically valued in this society. However, some interpretations of the song read the “I” lyric as Zé Kéti himself. For example, in his excellent dissertation on discourses of blackness in samba, Stephen Bocksay writes, “it is clear that the lyrical voice is the *Carioca* Zé Kéti himself who speaks.”⁷² This interpretation is understandable given the sheer quantity of attributions of Zé Kéti as “the voice of the morro,” but I and others read the lyric

⁶⁹ Santos, quoted in Randal Johnson, *Cinema Novo x5: Masters of Contemporary Brazilian Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 165.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷² Stephen Bocksay, “Voices of Samba: Music and the Brazilian Racial Imaginary, 1955-1988,” Ph.D. diss, Brown University, 2012, 38.

differently. Composer Jards Macalé, who played guitar in *Opinião* towards the end of show's run in Rio, agrees that the lyric is from the perspective "of music itself."⁷³

Samba's status as the voice of the morro is important, because the lyrics establish the morro as a synecdoche that stands first for all of Rio de Janeiro, and then the entire Brazilian nation. The second stanza begins "I am samba / I am native to Rio de Janeiro" and later, in the final stanza, the voice of the morro is equated with "the voice of a country's people [*povo*]." ⁷⁴ In this formation, samba is not only representative of multiple levels of community—local, municipal, and national—but the marginalized community of the morro is attributed the status as the authentic voice of the nation. Drawing on the notion that the morro is a source of authentic Brazilianness is not uncommon in the genre of *samba-exaltação*, a patriotic form of samba encouraged in the 1940s, during the era of Getúlio Vargas's populist dictatorship, the Estado Novo.⁷⁵ One prominent example of a composer drawing on images of the morro to paint an ostensibly authentic portrait of Brazil is Ary Barroso, who said of musicians of the morro,

They are the kings of syncopation, one of the most difficult manifestations of music and yet one which, in the sambista of the morro, is spontaneous. Our people know samba of the salon, embellished with all the harmonic recourses of the orchestra, but are completely unfamiliar with genuine samba, which, in the tranquil hours of the night, our anonymous composer drums and cries.⁷⁶

Barroso's ideas about the "spontaneous" ingenuity of the musicians of Rio's favelas crop up in the racialized depictions in his song "Aquarela do Brasil," which was famously used to promote

⁷³ Jards Macalé, interview with author, Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 9, 2017.

⁷⁴ The song also accompanies the end of *Rio, 40 Graus*, a scene the favela residents dance together at a carnival celebration. The scene reinforces the synecdoche of lyric. I am grateful to Randal Johnson for reminding me of this connection.

⁷⁵ McCann, Hello, Hello Brazil, 43.

⁷⁶ Barroso, quoted in McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 68-69.

Brazil in the 1942 Disney animated short *Saludos Amigos*. The second line of the song describes people of the racialized category *mulato* as sly and deceitful. Later, Barroso draws on images of black and brown Brazilians to describe samba's innovators.

Unlike Barroso, who grew up middle-class in the state of Minas Gerais, Zé Kéti's depictions were rooted in something akin to personal experience. At the very least, he was understood as a bearer of authentic samba. For example, in *Rio, 40 Graus*, he appeared in his ever-present fedora, as a "a malandro from the morro," running a small gambling operation and cracking wise.⁷⁷ Santos's casting of Zé Kéti shows that he was already an accepted representative of a morro resident. Years later, in the debates about whether Nara Leão was appropriating the authenticity of samba de morro in singing Zé Kéti's songs, Sérgio Bittencourt wrote, "A samba by Zé Kéti is, for me, a serious subject; for Miss Nara Leão, it is just another samba."⁷⁸ At the same time that Zé Kéti was collaborating with Leão, he also formed a band with a group of other sambistas with a stated mission "to defend traditional samba, authentic samba."⁷⁹ They called themselves A Voz do Morro, after his song, and spawned a number of imitators and even awards categories for "best authentic samba group."⁸⁰

Although "A Voz do Morro" is a well-known example of samba de morro, the song does not conform to stereotypes about the genre's simplicity due to the complex harmonic structure that underlies its straightforward melody. This construction nearly parallels Zé Kéti's lyrical depictions of marginalized life work: seemingly true details may not be factual but are

⁷⁷ In addition to providing the song for the title sequence and acting in the film, Zé Kéti also worked as an assistant camera operator. From Zé Kéti interview with program "Ensaio: MPB Especial," July 4, 1973. Available as Zé Kéti, *A Música Brasileira por Seus Autores e Intérpretes* (São Paulo: SESC, 2000), 245.

⁷⁸ Bittencourt, "bom dia, RIO."

⁷⁹ "Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Jôgo da Verdade."

⁸⁰ Ibid.

nonetheless representative. In chapter 1, I noted that members CPC were invested in the use of simple vernacular forms to convey messages about sociopolitical uplift to members of the Brazilian lower classes. In chapter 2, I showed that, although Nara Leão had a slightly differing view of this political strategy, she nonetheless accepted the notion that these vernacular forms, including samba de morro, were “simple.” Her comments that samba de morro can be played on a matchbox is illustrative of this opinion. Dissecting “A Voz do Morro,” however, reveals that this view of samba de morro is reductive. The song’s melody is, indeed, simple and contained in a small vocal range, ideal for group singing. The melody also makes use of rhythmic devices common to samba. However, in its harmony and form there are layers of complexity that belie the reductive view of the genre.

In the key of D major, the melody of “A Voz do Morro” (see transcription in appendix B) effectively occupies the range of a single octave, spanning from the fifth scale degree (A) below to the tonic (D) to the fifth scale degree above.⁸¹ It touches the G# below the low A once briefly in the third stanza. This G#, which implies a brief secondary dominant, is the only time the melody strays from D major. The melody moves in stepwise fashion throughout most of the song and repeats frequently. Measures 5 through 8 recur with different lyrics in measures 19 through 22. Measures 9 through 12 replicate the contour and rhythm of 3 and 4 beginning one scale degree lower. These factors make the song easy to learn and sing along with.

The rhythm of the melody of “A Voz do Morro” may appear complicated in notated form due to its extensive syncopation. However, it invokes a rhythm commonly played on the tamborim or *agogô* (a two headed bell struck with a wooden stick) and is, therefore, familiar to

⁸¹ The version of the song that I analyze here is one sung by Zé Kéti himself during an interview for the July 4, 1973 edition of “Ensaio: MPB Especial.”

listeners of samba. As is common with the tamborim, the melodic rhythm in “A Voz do Samba” frequently begins by emphasizing the first and third sixteenth notes within the quarter note pulse and, during the next measure, shift to an emphasis on the second and fourth. This phenomenon is audible in the portions notated as measures 5 and 6, 9 and 10, and 13 and 14 in the transcription. When sung accompanied by a tamborim, this means that the melody may coincide, rhythmically, with that instrument’s pattern.⁸² The apparent complexity of these parts is misleading as well because, when notated, the rhythms conflict with the rhythmic subdivisions inherently implied by the notation due to their so-called syncopation. Carlos Sandroni notes that this desire to describe samba rhythms as syncopated, as a “rupture” of the rhythmic pulse, is a false remnant of a European perspective on the music. In fact, the rhythmic pattern is stable.⁸³ Thus the use of the seemingly syncopated rhythm for the melody should be understood as a convention of samba de morro, a comfortable rhythm for singing for those familiar with in the genre.

The hidden layers of complexity in the song are most obvious in its harmonies.⁸⁴ In a lightly accompanied performance of the song— Zé Kéti plays matchbox and Eduardo Guidin acoustic guitar—during a 1973 interview, Zé Kéti adds some light ad-libs between the song’s phrases that imply a descending chromatic bassline. Upon closer inspection, this descending

⁸² Unlike other Latin American musical traditions with ties to West Africa that use bell pattern or *clave* rhythm to organize musical time, samba rhythms as performed on tamborim or *agogô* do not tend to adhere strictly to one pattern unless played in large groups. In smaller ensembles, players have a lot of freedom to improvise within the basic structure. That said, a tamborim pattern that plays half of a cycle emphasizing the strong beats and half the weak beats is audible in a great majority of samba performances. In Ary Barroso’s aforementioned “Aquareal do Brasil,” a simplified version of the the tamborim pattern is audible in the famous six-note horn pattern that opens the song. For a detailed analysis of this song, see K.E. Goldschmitt, “From Disney to Dystopia: Transforming ‘Brazil’ for a US Audience,” in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music and Sound*, 363-374, eds. Miguel Mera, Ronald Sadoff, and Ben Winters (New York: Routledge, 2017).

⁸³ Sandroni, *Feitiço Decente*, 20-21.

⁸⁴ The song’s form is also deceptive in its simplicity. It conforms to an AA’B structure, but rather than divide neatly into three sixteen measure sections, the sections are fourteen, eighteen, and sixteen measures, respectively.

chromatic line does not even correspond to the diatonic scale of the song, let alone conform to its harmonies. After a D7 chord to begin the song (remember, the song is in D, so this is already a diversion from the key), the first stanza descends chromatically: Abm7b5, Gm6, Gbm7, F°. None of these chords appear in the song key. Only the cadence that follows (Em7, Asus7, DM7) tells the listener what key we are in. The pattern repeats almost identically in the second stanza, and then twice as fast in the third. This chord structure reveals the fallacy of claims that samba de morro need be simple. One such claim appears as part of the Sérgio Bittencourt campaign against Nara Leão cited above: “Nara went to the morro, and with that little holy way of a good girl, collected musical jewels, brought them to the asfalto and misrepresented the basic characteristics of samba de morro, of traditional samba: the simple, beautiful harmony.”⁸⁵ Remember, this is the man who called a Zé Kéti’s samba “a very serious subject.”

Ensembles undermine the claim that samba de morro is simple harmonies even in alternate harmonizations of the melody. For example, I have heard the harmony played as Em, Em7b5, D, B° or Em, A7, DM7, G7 in *rodas de samba* in Rio. Certainly, these chords are “simpler” than the Abm7b5, Gm6, Gbm7, F° that Guidin used to accompany Zé Kéti. But in any of these harmonic interpretations, the melody does not outline the chords. In Guidin’s accompaniment, the melody plays seventh of the Abm7b5, alternates between the sixth and seventh of the Gm6, the seventh of the Gbm7, and seventh of the F°. Even using simplest harmonic structure above, the melody emphasizes the ninth of the Em, the thirteenth of the A7, the ninth of the DM7, and the thirteenth of the G7 chord. That is a lot of upper extensions for a form whose harmony is supposedly so simple.

The ways that Zé Kéti’s “A Voz do Morro” subverts expectations of simplicity are

⁸⁵ Sérgio Bittencourt, “Em Defesa do Samba,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 29, 1964.

important because they show that, as a genre, samba de morro does not adhere to many of the assumptions made about it by artists and critics. Listeners make these assumptions in part because of the genre's association with residents of the city's morros. They are used to paint those residents as homogeneously uneducated and simple, whether positively—the authentic expression of the Brazilian soul—or negatively, as the source of crime and disease. Zé Kéti makes a political choice in “A Voz do Morro” to celebrate the former stereotype in his lyrics and subtly deny the latter in the song's music.

One *Opinião* audience member named “A Voz do Morro” as one of Zé Kéti's many “clearly political” songs.⁸⁶ Ironically, it may have gained this reputation when *Rio, 40 Graus* was censored by Cortes. Zé Kéti himself points out that the formal censorship at least contributed to the film and song's fame.⁸⁷ When I asked Jards Macalé why he performed it as part of a protest performance at the Rio de Janeiro Ministry of Culture, he told me, “I chose songs that say directly, or might be read as having, a political meaning.”⁸⁸ Zé Kéti biographer Nei Lopes calls it a “political affirmation of samba as the most legitimate vehicle of communications of the black communities of Rio.”⁸⁹ Bocksay characterizes the song as critical and points to Zé Kéti's equating of the morro residents and the Brazilian people as evidence of this.⁹⁰ It's a vision of marginality that shows the marginalized to be the basis for Brazilian national identity. Unlike the counterculture's appropriations of marginality as a label and way of life, Zé Kéti's vision seeks to remind the song's audience that these people may be marginalized, but they are not marginal.

⁸⁶ Paulo Neuhaus, interview with author, Skype, April 19, 2016.

⁸⁷ “Zé Kéti Faz Musica Desde os 6 Anos,” *Jornal do Brasil*, February 2, 1967.

⁸⁸ Macalé, interview with author.

⁸⁹ Lopes, *Zé Kéti*, 107.

⁹⁰ Bocksay, “Voices of Samba,” 35-38.

To the contrary, they are foundational to what it means to be Brazilian. Just as Zé Kéti was accepted as an authentic representative of the morro despite not technically being from a morro, “A Voz do Morro” is representative of samba de morro despite not conforming to some of the genre’s stereotypes. An investigation of the song’s layers shows that, below the surface simplicity, it is in fact a sophisticated construction, a template that persists throughout his work.

“I work hard”

One stereotype of marginality that Zé Kéti combats, both in his self-presentation and throughout his songs, is the notion that Brazilians living in marginalized communities are lazy and that they choose not to work. Onstage in *Opinião* and in interviews, he regularly references his own work history, the many jobs he has held, and even what he has earned. He talks about his composerly activities as a profession, referencing his formal relationship with SBACEM, the Sociedade Brasileira de Autores, Compositores e Editores Musicais, which distributes musical royalties much in the way that ASCAP or BMI does in the United States. Though Zé Kéti’s music and stories sometimes engage the stereotype of the malandro, his consistent efforts to portray himself as a hard-working striver undermine any efforts to characterize him as a malandro. When he does engage the malandro archetype, he does so to show that *malandragem* (the street hustle practiced by the malandro) is a response to lack of opportunity in the city’s formal economy, not a moral failing. Zé Kéti’s focus on labor issues among marginalized people is particularly evident in his composition “Nega Dina.” Though the first recording of the song appeared on Nara Leão’s 1965 album *O Canto Livre de Nara*, Zé Kéti had sung the song as a solo in *Opinião*.

Along with *Opinião*'s playwrights and director, Zé Kéti clearly endeavored to present himself as a worker, someone for whom employment was a core value. In his testimonials for the show, he introduced himself as an employee of IAPETC, the Brazilian social security service. It was a job in the public sector, which could carry negative connotations in Brazil as a plum position, but Zé Kéti's words clarify that he only earned "eighty contos per month. That is, Christmas without turkey."⁹¹ This self-presentation convinced some show goers of "his condition as a humble employee of IAPTEC in which he struggles to survive."⁹² One of Zé Kéti's longest monologues in the show related to his time working for the Brazilian military police (PM). He framed his joining the police force around Brazil's entering World War II, noting that "the police officer is the last to go to war."⁹³ Columnist Sérgio Porto cited the story in his column reviewing *Opinião*, noting that Zé Kéti narrowly escaped death as some of his fellow officers were on the *Baependi*, a Brazilian ship torpedoed by the Nazis.⁹⁴ It is unclear to what degree the story is meant as a factual account and to what degree is manipulated to remind the audience of the horrors that military powers can cause. And while Zé Kéti joked that he joined the PM to avoid the war, it is notable that his method of avoidance was to work.

Besides his work in the public sector, Zé Kéti performed myriad jobs on his way to becoming a composer, an activity that he framed as the culmination of a series of jobs, a profession that he would pursue while earning money in other ways if need be. A profile of Zé Kéti published a few months before the staging of *Opinião* notes that

⁹¹ Costa et al., *Opinião*, 19.

⁹² Pinto, "Zé Kéti Volta a Fazer Sucesso."

⁹³ Costa et al., *Opinião*, 59.

⁹⁴ Porto, "'Opinião': Revolta do Samba ao Lado do Povo." For the full story, see Costa et al., *Opinião*, 59.

Since early on ... he did not like to stay still. He had to work. And thus, Zé Kéti got to know the typesetting office, the shoe manufacturer, before the radio path. ... “From my time as a blue-collar worker I have some good memories: companionship, camaraderie, the little samba that happened during lunch, beaten out on lunch pails ... and the work as well, which never scared me.” Zé Kéti’s dream was always of appearing, not as a performer, but as a composer.⁹⁵

The work may not have scared him, but it was not easy to survive as a composer: he told one journalist, “Composers in Brazil cannot live solely through music. Parallely, they have to do something else. I go deep, when an opportunity arises. But the anxiety hurts.”⁹⁶ He promoted his music to performers and record studios for eight years before having a song recorded.⁹⁷ Zé Kéti chronicled some of these difficulties in “Diz Que Fui Por Aí.” In the song, which was an enormous hit for Nara Leão, a musician carries his guitar from bar to bar, both in the favela and the cidade, performing, composing, and trying to eke out a living.

Despite his consistent performance of effort in his stories and interviews, some writers characterized Zé Kéti’s composition activities as a kind of natural gift, in keeping with many stereotypical portrayals of less educated people by more educated people.⁹⁸ These stereotypes are also often racially inflected, as the earlier quote from white samba composer Ary Barroso about samba de morro indicates. Zé Kéti did not escape similar portrayals. For example, journalist Haroldo Costa wrote that Zé Kéti “does not even remember when he composed his first samba, because it was a normal act, without any previous preparation, dictated by his very existence. It would be the same as asking one of you when you drank water for the first time. Composing

⁹⁵ “Figuras do Samba - Zé Kéti.”

⁹⁶ Gropillo, “A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos.”

⁹⁷ Marques, “Zé Sou Eu.”

⁹⁸ See the discussion of the CPC and their relationship with the “popular” classes in chapter 1.

sambas for Zé Kéti is water.”⁹⁹ The analogy is flawed, though, because though both acts speak to survival, one consumes water and Zé Kéti produced compositions. As part of his political project, Zé Kéti was committed to calling attention to his work ethic, thereby combatting these harmful stereotypes. Even Costa noted that, as of March of 1964, he had written the absurd amount of “around 800 unreleased compositions.”¹⁰⁰

Zé Kéti’s *Opinião* testimonials were not the only venue in which he shared details of his meager earnings. He regularly publicized his salary in interviews to show how difficult it was to make a living as a composer. *Opinião* netted him two million cruzeiros during its Rio run, a seemingly enormous sum, but much less than co-star Nara Leão, who, as the main attraction of the show, had negotiated a better fee.¹⁰¹ Newspaper accounts of the show’s move to São Paulo initially indicated that Zé Kéti would not make the trip.¹⁰² The fact that he did end up performing in São Paulo, but ended up earning much more—one million cruzeiros per week compared to half a million per month in Rio—might indicate that he successfully held out for a larger share of the production’s box office earnings.¹⁰³

Once he was established as a professional composer, Zé Kéti campaigned for composers’ right to receive royalty payments for use of their songs. He promoted the Authorial Rights Defense Service (SDDA), a society founded to enforce the collection of royalties from bar and

⁹⁹ Costa, “Zé Kéti do Samba.”

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ “Samba Pra Valer,” *Jornal do Brasil*, April 28, 1964.

¹⁰² “‘Opinião’ Sai de Cartaz Esta Semana Para Estrear em S. Paulo Sem Zé Kéti,” *Jornal do Brasil*, February 23, 1965.

¹⁰³ “Samba Pra Valer.”

club owners that did not pay for the right to have published songs played in their venues.¹⁰⁴ He joined SBACEM, from which, in late 1965 he earned only “seventeen thousand cruzeiros and change” per month, despite having dozens of songs recorded, some of them hits.¹⁰⁵ By the following year—after the above public griping about the seeming discrepancy between his royalties earnings and the popularity of his compositions—his income raised to fifty-thousand cruzeiros per month.¹⁰⁶ When recounting this earnings increase, though, he lamented the difficult path he took: “there was a time that was so disgruntled that I even thought about starting my own publishing firm. I could not, unfortunately, for lack of funds.”¹⁰⁷

Zé Kéti’s willingness to share these trials indicates that he approached writing songs as a profession, a fact that directly contradicts his frequent characterization as a malandro.¹⁰⁸ In a story promoting the soon-to-be-staged *Opinião*, Cesário Marques used the word to describe Zé Kéti’s role.¹⁰⁹ Sérgio Cabral’s review of the show noted that Zé Kéti brought “the spirit of the carioca malandro” to the production.¹¹⁰ Reinaldo Jardim tempered the of the descriptor in his review, writing that “Zé Kéti is the malandro and imaginative image of carioca suffering. But, he also is a conscious interpreter of the social anxiety we all encounter.”¹¹¹ A closer investigation of

¹⁰⁴ “Zé Kéti - A Voz que Levou o Morro à Avenida.”

¹⁰⁵ Luiz Alberto, “A Voz do Morro Sou Eu Mesmo, Sim Senhor Venho Mostrar ao Mundo que Tenho Valor,” *Jornal do Commercio*, September 20, 1965.

¹⁰⁶ “Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Jôgo da Verdade.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Bocksay even ironically lists malandro along with Zé Kéti’s formal professions. See Bocksay, “Voices of Samba,” 33.

¹⁰⁹ Cesário Marques, “Zé, Nara e João Lançam ‘Nova-Forma,’” *Diário Carioca*, November 15-16, 1964.

¹¹⁰ Sérgio Cabral, “Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, December 16, 1964.

¹¹¹ Reinaldo Jardim, “Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, December 15, 1964.

the meaning and uses of the term show that Zé Kéti was not a malandro and, in fact, took pains to distance himself from some of the stereotypes of the figure.

Scholars have defined the malandro as a “transgressive, womanizing hustler” and “a flashy petty criminal, disdainful of work and domesticity.”¹¹² It is a persona or archetype frequently associated with samba, both due to depictions of malandros in sambas and to a popular understanding that musicians themselves were both charismatic and averse to work.¹¹³ A classic example of a sambista-malandro is Moreira da Silva, who self-characterized as streetwise, but polished.¹¹⁴ Sociologist Roberto DaMatta has posited that the malandro is “a being out place,” that the figure is seductive due to its ability to navigate society despite being excluded from its economic and social structures.¹¹⁵ This reading has led some scholars to understand the malandro as a figure of resistance, even if it is not classically associated with activism or charity work.¹¹⁶ But the common understanding of the malandro has damaging consequences for the vast majority of people in Rio’s marginalized communities who do not engage in anything approximating malandragem. Compare, for example, the definition above with the popular stereotype of favela residents that Janice Perlman encountered during her fieldwork in the late-1960s: “male, black, footloose, uninterested in work, and without stable family lives”¹¹⁷ With that in mind, attempts to associate Zé Kéti and malandragem not only neglect his employment

¹¹² Paulina L. Alberto, *Terms of Exclusion: Black Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 87; McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 53.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹¹⁴ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 53.

¹¹⁵ Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, trans. John Drury (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 209.

¹¹⁶ Paulina L. Alberto points to the malandro’s potential for resistance. See Alberto, *Terms of Exclusion*, 87.

¹¹⁷ Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 15; Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 58.

history and self-characterization as hard working, but preserve problematic stereotypes about disenfranchised Afro-Brazilian men.

The degree to which Zé Kéti meets malandro standards as a “womanizer” is difficult to say. One carioca musician who met and chatted with Zé Kéti a few times in the 1990s did describe him this way. Based on the scant information in the historical record about Zé Kéti’s relationship with women, it does not appear to have been a topic of great importance in the public discussion about the man or his music. Reading between the lines, however, one might tend to believe that this musician’s experiences were not atypical. For example, Zé Kéti repeated stories—learned from his mother—that his father “couldn’t see a pretty girl without flirting with her.”¹¹⁸ In other instances, Zé Kéti identified with his father’s behavior, saying in one interview, “My father liked women. So do I.”¹¹⁹ Nei Lopes points out that, although Zé Kéti claimed to have been taught not to covet his neighbor’s wife, he lived the life of a sambista, complete with a wife at home and another woman “in the street.”¹²⁰ Thus, his reputation as a malandro may have been a consequence of this aspect of his reputation—though that reputation was not commented in print during the height of his fame.

While Zé Kéti’s self-presentation as *interested* in work directly contradicts the stereotype, certain aspects of his life story sometimes fit with assumptions about the malandro. Zé Kéti was seen as clever, with his lack of formal schooling retold in interviews and onstage in *Opinião* in order to prove his self-sufficiency. In a profile of Zé Kéti marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of “A Voz do Morro,” his education was characterized as “Malandragem, the school of life, those

¹¹⁸ Zé Kéti, *A Música Brasileira por Seus Autores e Intérpretes*, 244.

¹¹⁹ “Jesus, José Flores de - Zé Kéti,” *Última Hora*, September 2, 1972.

¹²⁰ Lopes, *Zé Kéti*, 91.

things that you cannot learn at home or in school.”¹²¹ Zé Kéti was not above using depictions of malandragem and its associated behaviors selectively in his songs, but both in his wordplay and his musical choices, he deployed the archetype ironically, not to reinforce or celebrate it, but to critique the harmful stereotypes of laziness by favelados and other marginalized people.

In “Nega Dina,” Zé Kéti depicts a character navigating the challenges of work and family life in these marginalized communities. Though historian Nei Lopes interprets it as a “portrait of ... romantic marginality,” there is musical evidence to suggest that his song does not romanticize marginality.¹²² It is true that the song uses humorous language and a joke-like structure; however, while the lyrics of the song seem to tell the story of a protagonist pursued by a woman for failure to uphold his duty as breadwinner, a late twist reveals that the song is a critique of the societal pressures that prevent him from doing so. Moreover, though the song’s lyrics name a number of characters and places, and thus appear to draw on Zé Kéti’s lived experiences, closer inspection of those details reveal that they are mere stand-ins, representative of what happens to marginalized people. In his manipulation of the song’s melodic rhythm, Zé Kéti exposes these details for what they are and reinforces the lyrical irony.

In the song’s title, “Nega Dina,” and in a key detail at the end of the first stanza, Zé Kéti marks this as a story about Afro-Brazilians and points to the racial makeup of the city’s marginalized populations. The word *nega*, which can be read as either pejorative or affectionate, depending on who is speaking, racially marks the title character, Dina, as black. This fact is never explicitly mentioned in the body of song, though Dina does tell the narrator that she has “brought his name to a *macumba*.” The term “macumba” is a generalized term for a number of

¹²¹ Gropillo, “A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos.”

¹²² Lopes, *Zé Keti*, 111.

Afro-Brazilian religions, including *candomblé*. Like “nega,” it can have positive or negative associations depending on the speaker. The implication in the lyric is that the narrator has wronged Dina in some way, and she has sought metaphysical retribution. The detail places both characters within a segment of Rio society that practices Afro-Brazilian worship. Zé Kéti’s uses of the word in interviews imply a deep respect for the power of these religions’ practices. For instance, he regularly described his father’s demise at the hands of a macumba curse and claimed to be safe from similar attacks due to his mother having delivered him to Saint George’s protection.¹²³ Zé Kéti was intimately familiar with the social world in which macumba was practiced, and his use of the term in the song is almost certainly not satirical.

Zé Kéti includes so many details that, at first, it seems that the story must be true; however, these details, upon closer listen, actually undermine its veracity. “Dina climbed the Morro do Pinto / To look for me / Not finding me, she went to the Morro da Favela / With Estela’s daughter / To bother me / But I was on the Morro de São Carlos.” She eventually finds him in the third favela. Going from morro to morro like this in a short time would be so onerous that the story stretches credulity. By having Dina make so many stops, Zé Kéti not only tells us that this story is not precisely true, he also shows that it is relevant to more than just the residents of a single morro. These are the shared circumstances of people in different neighborhoods, a story that could happen in any morro, or— as Zé Kéti and the morro are representative of an entire class of people—to any marginalized person.

This passage also points to Zé Kéti’s use of details to create a sense that this story really happened, even though there is no evidence that it actually did. For example, Dina went to the Morro da Favela (now called the Morro da Providência) with “Estela’s daughter.” Who is

¹²³ Ibid., 83.

Estela? Why is her daughter there? We never hear from Estela or her daughter again; the detail is a red herring. It makes the story seem to be about a very specific incident though it is not. He is chronicling life in the morro, populating his story with its characters.

In the second part of the song, Zé Kéti uses a twist to paint an otherwise stark portrait of life at the margins. The narrator begins, “Just because it’s been a week / Since I’ve left any money for our expenses,” showing that he is, in fact, at fault. His “just” appeals to the listener by implying that a week really is not that long. He continues, “She thinks my life is so great / I work hard playing cards / To be able to live.” Dina becomes the stand-in for those in Rio society that misunderstand the realities of life in marginalized communities, those that assume that marginalized people choose not to work. And he uses a pun, replacing the idiom *eu dou duro no trabalho* (I work hard at my job) with the rhyming *eu dou duro no baralho* (I work hard playing cards). The pun clues the listener in to the joke, which was received with a hearty laugh by the audience at the taping of the LP version of *Opinião*. In the next line, the narrator doubles down on his claim for a difficult life, but now, instead of joking, he is deeply serious. He sings, “My life is not easy, no / I’m thrown in jail all the time without appeal / I walk around afraid without a place / I am a marginal Brazilian.” Having set the scene and inserted some humor, Zé Kéti drops the dark truth at the end. Playing cards is not a way to pass some leisure time; it is a matter of survival.

The song’s melodic rhythm is crucial to understanding the ironies that Zé Kéti laces throughout the song. In contrast with the syncopated melodies of most of Zé Kéti’s sambas, the melody of “Nega Dina” is made up almost entirely of eighth notes on the beat. The quantity of notes in the melody reflects the information overload. The song opens with three similar phrases, all of which begin as a pickup to the downbeat and end anticipating the downbeat, but then he

inserts a passage, lasting from measure eight to the measure fifteen, in which the narrator fills nearly every available eighth note. Not only does this phrase feel like a run-on sentence due to its sheer quantity of notes, it fails to adhere to the boundaries implied by the four-chord repeated harmony that accompanies most of the song. Zé Kéti crams the song with information, both textual and melodic. This phrasing structure recalls a magician diverting attention, or a liar giving too much information. Or even a comedian telling a joke, building on the audience's laughter by adding tags and buttons.

This rapid fire eighth-note phrasing builds to the punch line (or gut punch) "I am a marginal Brazilian" that closes the song.¹²⁴ Zé Kéti waits until the very last line to change the phrasing, slowing down the melody to nearly half speed to deliver the song's most telling lyric. If there were any doubt that this line is the most important one, the skeleton key that unlocks the rest, this rhythmic choice erases it. In *Opinião* the line is set apart even more. The entire accompaniment stops for him to deliver the line "I am a marginal Brazilian" unaccompanied, leading into lengthy applause break. Hearing the middle-class audience respond rapturously to this lyric calls attention to the effectiveness of Zé Kéti's political message. He won his public's attention and praise as he showed the pervasive and difficult realities of carioca marginality: the ways that it kept people from participating in the formal economy, how it disturbed family structures, and that it disproportionately affected Afro-Brazilians. The song may be laced with humor and end with a punch line, but it is not comedy. Nor is it, as Nei Lopes has written, a

¹²⁴ In Brazilian Portuguese, the words *marginal* and *brasileiro* (Brazilian) are both adjectives and nouns. Furthermore, the language permits a flexibility of syntax that make the line *Sou um marginal brasileiro* ambiguous. It may indicate "I am a Brazilian *marginal*" or "I am a marginal Brazilian." Given that "a marginal" can imply "an outlaw" (see above), this presents a translation challenge. After asking a number of Brazilians how they understand the lyric, I have chosen to translate the passage as "I am a marginal Brazilian." This also seems to fit with the portrait of petty criminality that Zé Kéti draws. The narrator plays cards and seems to be pursued by police for loitering, rather than engaging in more serious criminal activity.

“romantic portrait.” It is, instead, a story of desperate striving to navigate the informal economy that characterized Rio’s sociogeographic margins.

“I was hurt”

Violence was a recurrent issue both in Rio’s marginalized communities and in depictions of them. While Zé Kéti used “Nega Dina” to focus on the petty criminality that characterized the informal economy of Rio’s socioeconomic margins, his song “Malvadeza Durão” depicts the violent act of murder. In fact, he took pains to distinguish between the victim of the crime, the eponymous malandro Malvadeza Durão, and its perpetrator, an unidentified “criminal,” showing that stereotypes about violence among marginalized cariocas ring false. Like his other work, he chronicled this tale using seemingly specific details, despite Malvadeza Durão being a fictional character.

One pervasive myth about life in marginalized communities in Rio de Janeiro is that violence is a defining feature of life there. Brodwyn Fischer has shown that exaggerated stereotypes about the pervasiveness of violence in these communities resulted in something of a self-fulfilling prophecy in the latter quarter of the twentieth century.¹²⁵ That is, assumptions about the degree and nature of violent acts in these communities has led to their further marginalization. Fischer points to the testimony of a resident of the favela Praia do Pinto named José de Almeida Neto, who bemoaned the ineffective police raids that treated hundreds of residents as criminals, detaining residents for lack of identification or work. He felt that these activities discredited the police and that treating people as criminals pushed them toward

¹²⁵ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 315.

criminality.¹²⁶ These actions were part and parcel of legal efforts, including the 1940 criminal code, the 1941 misdemeanor law, and the 1942 procedural code, that made personality and circumstance the determining factors in assessing punishment and guilt, establishing that even individuals who had not committed crimes could be deemed dangerous.¹²⁷

Depictions of criminality could be important in exposing these stereotypes, offering examples, if not justifications, of the nuanced way that marginalized people distinguished between different kinds of criminal behavior. Sometimes these depictions took the form of portraits of famous outlaw figures, such as author Clarice Lispector's short story "Mineirinho" or Hélio Oiticica's silk-screened banner *Seja Marginal, Seja Herói*, where Oiticica includes a silhouette of the dead body of the famous outlaw Cara de Cavalo after he was assassinated by Rio police. Both of these portraits were of men executed for their criminal behavior, Mineirinho in 1962 and Cara de Cavalo in 1964.¹²⁸ Zé Kéti's 1957 composition "Malvadeza Durão" falls into this tradition, though unlike Mineirinho and Cara de Cavalo, Malvadeza Durão is an invented character. Zé Kéti's approach to telling the story of Malvadeza Durão's death is, unmistakably, one of compassion.¹²⁹ In the song, he distinguishes between the petty criminality of Malvadeza Durão and the violent criminality of his assassin with nuance.

As Nara Leão points out in her introduction for the song in *Opinião*, Zé Kéti wrote "Malvadeza Durão" for the 1957 film *Rio, Zona Norte*. It is likely that many of the audience members would have seen the film, but Leão's introduction makes clear the connection between

¹²⁶ Ibid., 205.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 187.

¹²⁸ Ventura, *Cidade Partida*, 36.

¹²⁹ Marcos Luiz Bretas, "Valente Mas Muito Considerado: A Memória do Crime," XXVI Simpósio Nacional de História, São Paulo, July 2011.

not only the song and the film, but the Cinema Novo movement and *Opinião. Rio, Zona Norte* was Zé Kéti's second collaboration with director Nelson Pereira dos Santos.¹³⁰ Santos based Espírito da Luz Soares, the film's protagonist, on Zé Kéti, though it seems that he took inspiration more in the difficulties he faced as a samba composer struggling to make a living than in any actual detail of his life.¹³¹ Zé Kéti acts in the film, but Espírito is portrayed by the better-known actor Grande Otelo, while Zé Kéti plays another sambista, Alaor da Costa, who appears as part of a brief but pivotal plotline during which Espírito is manipulated into ceding authorship rights to his samba "Mexi Com Ela" in exchange for tiny fee. Espírito lives in poverty, attempting and failing to find financial success by having his sambas recorded. Like Zé Kéti himself, Espírito has a reputation as a paragon of the authentic samba de morro composer. When he shows some of his sambas to a group of middle-class cariocas, they remark, "Espírito's sambas have nothing to do with folklore. They are authentic creations. They reflect what Espírito has lived and felt."¹³² As historian Marcos Napolitano points out, Espírito's response to the group is to turn away, embarrassed, as they discuss him as a cultural object, rather than as a human being.¹³³ He has arrived to seek help in transcribing his song for piano, so that he might earn a living as a composer, but they are preoccupied with their own discussion and ignore him. The scene recalls some trends in Zé Kéti's own life: he was not musically literate, he was called upon to be representative of samba de morro, and he struggled materially.

¹³⁰ In the film's credits, the song is listed as "Fechou o Paletó," but it is the same song that Zé Kéti and Nara Leão each recorded as "Malvadeza Durão and that they actors performed in *Opinião*.

¹³¹ Nelson Pereira dos Santos, *Três Vezes Rio* (Rio de Janeiro: Artemídia Rocco, 1999), 139.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 205.

¹³³ Marcos Napolitano, "Rio, Zona Norte (1957) de Nelson Pereira dos Santos: a Música Popular Como Representação de um Impasse Cultural," *Per Musi* 29 (2014): 81.

No song models the spontaneous authenticity of Espírito's composerly voice more than "Malvadeza Durão." He first sings the song towards the end of the film for Ângela Maria, the "Queen of the Radio," who plays herself in the film. Ângela Maria's approval could launch Espírito's career, and the fact that she agrees to record it makes his death two days later even more tragic: his consecration by the Queen is too late. In the scene, Espírito sings the song, accompanying himself on a matchbox, while Ângela Maria reads the lyrics, which seem to have been written on a napkin. Spontaneously, a guitar player takes over the accompaniment and, eventually, Ângela Maria sings the song, while Espírito looks on admiringly.

Both "Malvadeza Durão" and *Rio, Zona Norte* are built around the tragic death of a marginalized figure and the lack of urgency shown by society in responding to that death. *Rio, Zona Norte* opens with Espírito falling from a train and suffering a head injury. The bulk of the film is made up of Espírito's memories of his life, but the scenes set in the aftermath of the accident show the life-and-death consequences that socioeconomic marginalization has for a large swath of cariocas. At first, the witnesses of the accident are in a hurry and do not want to stop and help. When they eventually call for help, an ambulance is dispatched but then rerouted to another victim, presumably one more worthy of attention than Espírito. Though the accident occurs at 6:00 a.m., the ambulance only eventually collects him after dark and, despite undergoing surgery, Espírito dies in the hospital. The way that the passersby attempt to ignore the injured Espírito is reminiscent of the final line of "Malvadeza Durão": "Malvadeza Durão has died / And no one saw the criminal." Zé Kéti's lyric does not literally mean that no one saw who killed Malvadeza Durão, but that no one is willing to speak out about it, to take responsibility. As Zé Kéti put it, "Malvadeza Durão tells the story of the morro, that in the morro no one is a rat. When something happens, everyone keeps their mouth shut. People see, but they don't say

anything.”¹³⁴ Like Espírito’s, Malvadeza Durão’s death is less the fault of a single, identifiable criminal figure, and more due to the failure of this society to take care of him.

The names of both Malvadeza Durão and Espírito da Luz Soares are evidence that, though fictional, these are representative figures of marginalized Rio. Randal Johnson notes that Espírito’s name means “Spirit of the Light,” and says it “indicates, in the sense that he represents the ‘people,’ a certain romantic notion of the popular classes and their culture.”¹³⁵ Espírito is shown to be naïve throughout the film: he’s taken advantage of by radio industry executives, local criminals, and even his own son. He is also characterized to those outside of his immediate circle as “no one.” While helping fill out the intake form for the unconscious Espírito, the good Samaritan who accompanied him says, “No identification, no profession, address... everything else, leave blank.... He fell from a train.”¹³⁶ Meanwhile, the name “Malvadeza Durão” translates to something like “Tough Cruelty” or “Tough Baddie.” Like Espírito, Malvadeza Durão comes to stand for anyone in this position, “another malandro,” to cite Zé Kéti’s lyric. That said, his malandro criminality is distinct from that of his murderer, whom he unambiguously calls a *criminoso* (criminal).

Each time Malvadeza Durão’s name is uttered during the song’s refrain, Zé Kéti includes an epithet—or, perhaps more appropriately, an epitaph—that evidences the figure’s status in his community; these also communicate nuances which help delineate the role and function of criminality in Rio’s marginalized communities. The phrase “*valente, mas muito considerado*” translates to “courageous, but held in esteem.” The use of “but” implies that the courage in

¹³⁴ Zé Kéti, *A Música Brasileira por Seus Autores e Intérpretes*, 249.

¹³⁵ Johnson, *Cinema Novo x5*, 168.

¹³⁶ Santos, *Três Vezes Rio*, 184.

question is not an uncomplicatedly laudable trait, but carries a sense of danger with it—“dangerous, but held in esteem” may convey some of this meaning. It indicates that Malvadeza Durão was a malandro, someone who operated outside of the formal, legal strictures of society, and therefore lived in some peril always. But he was also an important community figure, loved in a way by his neighbors. There is an ambiguity in this portrayal of malandragem that is completely absent in the depiction of the murderer, who is a criminal, full stop. Moreover, the singer, in recalling Malvadeza Durão’s death, feels the sting of loss: he says “*eu tive dó*” (I hurt) as he recounts the tale.

The song’s melody (see appendix B) illustrates Kéti’s compassion for the criminal protagonist, as well as the felt sense of resignation that his tragic end is typical of marginalized life. Unlike many of Zé Kéti’s melodies, which tend to anticipate harmonic shifts, the dominant pattern in “Malvadeza Durão” is a suspended non-chordal tone—the ninth—which resolves after the downbeat. This is audible in both phrases of the refrain, first on the B-A resolution over an A7 chord and then in the D-C resolution over the tonic C chord. The effect of the technique is one of melancholic nostalgia, but eventual submission to the reality of the lyric.

Zé Kéti’s own performance of the song further emphasizes the sense of resignation and sorrow.¹³⁷ Rather than adhere to the duple meter syncopation of the melody, he drifts into near triple meter at times, pulling against the forward movement of the percussion accompaniment, which maintains a syncopated duple feel.¹³⁸ This performance choice is particularly audible in

¹³⁷ The transcription is based on Zé Kéti’s solo studio recording of the song because of intonation problems I found in the *Opinião* performance. Zé Kéti’s rhythmic and phrasing choices are similar in both performances. Zé Kéti, *Opinião... E Outros Sucessos*, Itamaraty ITAM 2118, 1973, 33 1/3 rpm.

¹³⁸ Transcribing the song, I was tempted to notate some of the phrases using triplets, but as that notation neither captures Zé Kéti’s performance, nor matches the phrasing of other singers’ performance, I’ve opted for the duple feel.

his phrasing of the lyric in *Opinião*: “Four lit candles / On a table,” an image that he would reuse in the previously analyzed “Acender as Velas.” Zé Kéti is sad and wistful in his recollections of the malandro, delaying even further in performance the emotion his melody implies.

The overall effect of “Malvadeza Durão” reinforces a view of criminal marginality as complex and nuanced. Zé Kéti decries the murder of the song’s title character; his views of violence are of a piece with marginalized residents who want safety in their neighborhoods. But he points out that the malandro is held in esteem. This might put Malvadeza Durão more in the category of the protagonists in “Nega Dina” and “Diz Que Fui Por Aí,” who strive to make their living, whether playing cards or writing sambas. And though Malvadeza Durão is, in the coldest of terms, a murdered criminal, his posthumous depiction illustrates Zé Kéti’s take on criminality in marginalized communities. He admires the well-esteemed, if dangerous, Malvadeza Durão, but draws a clear line at the violence of murder.

“I won’t leave”

The most iconic protest samba in Zé Kéti’s repertory was the song “Opinião,” whose name was adopted not only for the show, but the theater where the show was staged and the artistic group that backed the show.¹³⁹ The song sees Zé Kéti protesting against a wave of favela removals overseen by the governor of the state of Guanabara (the present-day state of Rio de Janeiro), Carlos Lacerda. Unlike his other compositions, which enacted political participation through depictions of life at Rio’s sociogeographic margins, “Opinião” was a direct statement of resistance to Lacerda. It showcases Zé Kéti’s use of his position as representative to speak out against what many saw as unjust removals.

¹³⁹ Severiano and Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 86.

The piecemeal governmental attempts to curtail and reverse settlement and development of Rio's favelas that characterized the first half of the twentieth century coalesced into formal removals during Lacerda's governorship (1960-1965).¹⁴⁰ Lacerda had shown some opposition to the settlements early in his career, and even in the early 1960s, he favored maintaining some favelas, particularly ones with symbolic power, like the Morro da Mangueira, which houses the famous samba school of the same name.¹⁴¹ But by 1962, perhaps owing to his political ambitions and alliances with conservatives, he instituted policies that resulted in the eviction of over 31,000 people from their homes. They were relocated mostly to a number of housing projects in the Zona Norte and Zona Oeste (west zone), far from the city center.

Some scholars have pointed to the removals as evidence of an ideologically grounded governmental effort to maintain inequality in Rio. Janice Perlman characterizes removals as an expression of the ideology of marginality; they geographically isolate residents and thus diminish their ability to effectively participate in city life.¹⁴² Perlman contends that wealthier residents of Rio saw favelados as inherently inferior, and that pushing these residents farther from their homes and workplaces was an effort to distance themselves from the disease and violence favelados supposedly brought with them. At the very least, the removals made literal the geographic marginality of residents who were already socioeconomically marginalized.

Many favelados opposed the removals and agitated for their right to stay. They pointed out that the new housing projects were insufficient in size and number. Moving meant that communities and families were broken up. And many residents were never offered new lodgings

¹⁴⁰ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 79.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁴² Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 196.

after being moved out of their homes, recreating the same housing crisis that had made the favelas necessary in the first place.¹⁴³ Many of those who were able to stay in their homes in the favelas lived in constant fear of removal.¹⁴⁴ With that fear looming over them, many residents protested the removals and in some cases, especially in the democratic era prior to the 1964 coup, the protests were successful in increasing favelados' bargaining power and urban services in their neighborhoods.¹⁴⁵

The resistance efforts against favela removals are part of a long history of skepticism about municipal reorganization and "modernization" efforts on the part of the poorest segments of carioca society. Jeffrey Needell has noted that even as early as the 1904 *Revolta da Vacina* (vaccine revolt), in which poor residents agitated against government-mandated vaccinations for diseases like yellow fever and bubonic plague, marginalized populations frequently felt that policies that were ostensibly implemented to improve city life frequently had the opposite effect. These policies appeared to some as justifications for police presence and surveillance of the already marginalized.¹⁴⁶ These efforts to curtail and eradicate diseases in Rio were frequently authoritarian, with poor residents forced to watch as government officials invaded, searched, and, in some cases, razed homes.¹⁴⁷

Although the name vaccine revolt suggests that the impetus of the revolt was medical reforms, it comprised many factors. Recalling the common stereotyped views of favelas and

¹⁴³ Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 80.

¹⁴⁴ Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality*, 31.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Jeffrey Needell, "The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904: The Revolt against 'Modernization' in Belle-Époque Rio de Janeiro," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (1987), 256.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 257.

favelados as disease-ridden, for example, it is easy to understand how conceptions of poor communities made public health and the housing crisis inextricable from one another. As José Murilo de Carvalho points out, at the moment that the revolt occurred, the city was undergoing immense changes in the name of “modernization,” including the demolition of roughly 640 buildings in order to widen the city’s central avenue.¹⁴⁸ Carvalho recounts the successes of these efforts, lauding the “visits” to over 110,000 homes to treat and prevent disease.¹⁴⁹

Whether the removals are seen as a part of a well-intentioned public health outreach or a land grab grounded in racist and classist stereotypes, those people removed from their homes consistently opposed such efforts. In addition to public protests and appeals to government officials to stop or reverse removals, carioca composers frequently lent their talents to opposition efforts. Some notable entries in this tradition are the 1927 samba “A Favela Vai Abaixo,” by Sinhô (J.B. da Silva) and the 1949 marchinha “Daqui Não Saio” by Paquito and Romeu Gentil. “A Favela Vai Abaixo” was a carnival hit in 1928 that spoke out against French urban planner Alfred Agache’s plan to rid Rio of its favelas.¹⁵⁰ The song posits that even though living conditions in the favela are not ideal, it is still home. It goes on to point out that razing the favelas would lead to rampant homelessness, and even namechecks the neighborhood of Bangú, where Zé Kéti would spend some of his childhood. “Daqui Não Saio,” a 1950 carnival hit for the Vocalistas Tropicais, is both more ostentatious and less explicit in its protest.¹⁵¹ Foreshadowing Zé Kéti’s “Opinião,” the song’s protagonist refuses to be removed, singing a chorus of “I won’t

¹⁴⁸ José Murilo de Carvalho, *Os Bestializados: O Rio de Janeiro e a República que Não Foi* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987), 93.

¹⁴⁹ Carvalho, *Os Bestializados*, 94-95.

¹⁵⁰ For more on this story, see Fischer, *A Poverty of Rights*, 15-18.

¹⁵¹ Severiano and Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 277.

leave here / No one can take me from here.” The remainder of the song speaks to the consequences of removal, asking “Where will I stay?” once leaving. Unlike “A Favela Vai Abaixo,” it never explicitly references a favela or morro by name.

“Opinião” continues in this tradition by openly protesting favela removal. Recorded first by Nara Leão for her second LP, *Opinião de Nara*, it is one of Zé Kéti’s most famous compositions.¹⁵² Both the LP and compact single releases of Leão’s recording were among the best-selling records of late 1964.¹⁵³ The song’s popularity is also reflected in adoption as the title of Leão’s LP and, of course, the show *Opinião* itself. Moreover, after the show’s success, the artistic team backing the production changed their name to *Grupo Opinião*; the theater where it was staged was renamed the Teatro Opinião; and the group even launched a journal of the same name.¹⁵⁴ The permeation of the song’s title perhaps explains its continued success—especially compared to the songs cited above, which are much less commonly performed and recorded.

The lyrics of “Opinião” are told from a first-person singular perspective, counterposing the narrator’s “I” with an undefined “they.” It opens with the chorus: “They can arrest me, they can beat me / They can even leave me to starve / But I won’t change my opinion / I won’t leave the morro, no / I won’t leave the morro, no.” The chorus does not reference an explicit removal, and it is possible from the text alone to imagine that the narrator’s resistance to leaving the morro stems from personal circumstances. However, given the song’s release during Lacerda’s favela

¹⁵² According to the Instituto Memória Musical Brasileira (IMMuB), an institute that catalogues recordings of Brazilian music, the song has appeared on at least fifty-five separate releases, his fourth most recorded composition behind “A Voz do Morro” (114), “Diz Que Fui Por Ai” (104), and “Máscara Negra” (93). See “Zé Kéti,” *Instituto Memória Musical Brasileira*, <http://immub.org/compositor/ze-kefi>, accessed November 5, 2018.

¹⁵³ “Discos Mais Vendidos,” *Intervalo* 102 (December 20, 1964), 30; “Discos Mais Vendidos,” *Intervalo* 108 (January 31, 1965), 26; Celliah Messias and Néelson Santos, “Nara Vos Convida,” *Newspaper unknown*, December 1964, 24-27. Clipping from Nara Leão Archives, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, NL - 2905-131, NL - 2905-132, NL - 2905-133a, NL - 2905-133b.

¹⁵⁴ Severiano and Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 86.

removal campaign and Zé Kéti's explicit setting of the song in "the morro," it is as clear a protest against the removals as there can be. The "they" who would arrest, beat, and starve the narrator, then, is DOPS, the aforementioned Department of Political and Social Order that removed the Favela de Esqueleto.¹⁵⁵

In "Opinião," Zé Kéti draws on the tactics he displayed in songs bemoaning social realities in marginalized communities and those celebrating the people who navigate those realities. Like in "Acender as Velas," Zé Kéti shows that life for favelados is difficult; the example he provides is the precarious situation of living without water or meat. But like the protagonists of "Nega Dina" and "Diz Que Fui Por Aí," the first-person narrator of "Opinião" shows determination. He says, "If there is no water / I'll dig a well." He also displays the ability to make something of nothing: "If there's no meat / I'll buy a bone and put in in the soup."

"Opinião" also celebrates marginalized people in their poverty, much like "A Voz do Morro." In one particularly complex lyric, Zé Kéti draws on double meaning, carioca geography and Biblical text to draw a connection between marginalized people and those who deserve entrance into heaven. The final line of the song is "If I die tomorrow, sir / At least I'll be close to heaven." The Portuguese word for heaven, *céu*, is also the Portuguese word for "sky." At its more literal, the lyric points out that the hills on which the morros were built are physically closer to the sky than the rest of the city. But it also evokes the Bible verse "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In this reading, staying in the morro, risking death to do so, is a moral good, not only because poverty and salvation are linked, but because the narrator would be defending his and his neighbors' land.

¹⁵⁵ "Favelados do Esqueleto Começarão Quarta-feira a Ir para Vila Kennedy"; "DOPS Garante Fim da Favela para Amanhã."

In keeping with its function as a protest song, “Opinião” is both simple and easy to learn, even during a performance. The melody is limited to an octave in range, extending from one tonic to another and employing no non-chordal tones. Zé Kéti records the song in E minor and relies almost entirely on Em, Am, and B7 for its harmony. Most important, though the song does not make use of a call and response structure, Zé Kéti builds repetition into the rhythmic phrasing, making every other phrase a near perfect repetition of the last. The first phrase, “podem me prender” is rhythmically identical to the next, “podem me bater.” This trend continues, with a single exception, for the first ten phrases of the song. In a protest context, this means that the song leader does not need to stop the forward propulsion of the song in order for the crowd to quickly learn it.

When Zé Kéti breaks this pattern, he does so to highlight lyrics that portray the resilience of the people for whom and with whom he is protesting. The one divergent instance within the first ten phrases is the lyric “I’ll buy a bone and put it in the soup.” At first glance, this lyric does not seem to carry the weight of the earlier, “they can leave me to starve” or even the resolute “I won’t leave the morro, no.” However, as I have said, it points to the ingenuity and persistence of the people in question. It is the lyric that proves their strength and ability to survive hardship. Reinforcing the importance of this moment even more is the song’s accompaniment. In nearly every performance of the song, including Zé Kéti’s, Nara Leão’s, and the staged version from *Opinião*, the instruments stop at this lyric, leaving the lead singer alone. The final four phrases of the song return to the repetitive phrasing, but with a bit more variation as the protagonist acknowledges the stakes of the protest: “If I die tomorrow, sir, at least I’ll be close to heaven.”

Listeners were well aware of the song’s intention as a protest against removals. In their indispensable reference volume on Brazilian popular music, Jairo Severiano and Zuza Homem

de Mello call the song “an explicit song of protest.”¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, many profiles of Zé Kéti and reviews of *Opinião* reported that the song explicitly spoke against Lacerda’s housing projects. José Poerner noted the “documentary character” of *Opinião* and how the actors “sympathized with favela residents against ‘solutions’ such as removal to the Vilas Kennedy and Aliança.”¹⁵⁷ Two years after the show closed, Eurico Andrade included mention of the song as an aside when pointing to Lacerda’s housing program in a heartbreaking feature on the urban housing crisis in Brazil.¹⁵⁸

Due to the well-publicized nature of the protest within “Opinião,” the song became a lightning rod for critics of Zé Kéti’s political project. These critics focused specifically on the authenticity of his lyric, claiming that it was disingenuous for him to sing “I won’t leave the morro” given his own housing situation. One critic wrote “I WON’T LEAVE THE MORRO, NO. Get it? I’ll tell you, then. Zé Kéti already changed his opinion, or at least, already left the morro, because he arranged ... financing for his own house.”¹⁵⁹ Buying his own home had been a priority for Zé Kéti for many years. Much in the same way that he used interviews to celebrate and support an ideal of work, he also spoke regularly of his hopes to earn enough as a composer to buy a home.¹⁶⁰ When he finally realized that goal, he recounted his success happily, talking of his “house with a garden in Bento Ribeiro.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Severiano and Mello, *A Canção no Tempo*, 86.

¹⁵⁷ Poerner, “Opinião Sacode Poeira de Abril.”

¹⁵⁸ Eurico Andrade, “O Brasil Não Tem Onde Morar,” *Realidade* 14 (May 1967), 109-119.

¹⁵⁹ Dupin, “Sempre aos Domingos.”

¹⁶⁰ For example, see ; “Zé Kéti: A Voz do Morro no Jôgo da Verdade.”

¹⁶¹ Gropillo, “A Voz do Morro Há 25 Anos.”

As I recounted at the start of this chapter, a similar line of reasoning predicated Ronaldo Bôscoli's comments that Zé Kéti "only knows about the morro through hearsay."¹⁶² This line of reasoning contradicted Zé Kéti's own goals of financial stability, consistent work as a composer, and home ownership. It also meant that any social mobility he enjoyed as a result of his efforts would undermine his political project, leaving him marginalized one way or the other.

The most knotted and ironic of this series of critiques came at the hands of Carlos Lacerda himself. In 1966, the former governor published a lengthy feature in the weekly magazine *Fatos e Fotos* called "The Protest the People Sing." In it, he chronicled and adjudicated the efficacy of various protest songs, writing, "The urban protest is today Zé Kéti, at its heart kind of reactionary, reacting against Vila Aliança and Vila Kennedy, to which he eventually moved and today has a home, after singing: 'They can arrest me, they can beat me, but I won't change my opinion, I won't leave the morro, no.' He left."¹⁶³ Though I found no record of Zé Kéti himself speaking about this, it seems Lacerda is referring to a report that Zé Kéti was approved for a house in Vila Kennedy, which he refused.¹⁶⁴ It would appear that he never lived there. Lacerda clearly lacks both the critical distance and credibility to evaluate the efficacy of a song protesting one of his own projects as governor. His criticism, though, is more evidence of the way that Zé Kéti's own lived experiences—like those of many hip-hop musicians—were used to judge the worth of his music. Of course, well- and ill-defined conceptions of authenticity are commonly used to judge artistic worth. But in Zé Kéti's case, the practice is notable because the composer's perceived lack of authenticity was used to discredit

¹⁶² "Ronaldo Bôscoli Acha Que Zé Kéti Não Tem Direito de Falar em Samba Autêntico."

¹⁶³ Carlos Lacerda, "O Protesto que o Povo Canta," *Fatos e Fotos*, October 29, 1966, 2-12.

¹⁶⁴ "A Queixa de Zé Kéti," *Jornal do Brasil*, February 23, 1965.

his political project. And more than that, these critiques could only be combatted by preserving a status quo of sociogeographic marginality.

Marginalidade after Marginality

Zé Kéti participated politically both inside and outside of the *Opinião* counterpublic by chronicling the lived realities of Rio's sociogeographically marginalized. He spoke to the difficulties experienced by these populations and presented them as hard workers striving for social mobility, even if their means of participating in the city's formal economy was limited. He distinguished between petty criminality and violent crime, and protested the removal of homes by the state and municipal government. His songs were not documentaries, recounting specific lived events. Instead, they served as representative examples of life for marginalized people.

Zé Kéti's portrait of marginality stands in stark contrast with the ideas of marginality adopted by artistic movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Frederico Coelho argues that "marginal culture" was adopted by Brazilian artists dissatisfied with the orthodox left's cultural responses to the Brazilian military dictatorship.¹⁶⁵ These artists' radical practices paralleled their feelings of alienation from the conservatism enforced by the military regime. Christopher Dunn has noted that these artists embraced the Brazilian counterculture, which "could mean several levels of dissent, from pursuing a modestly 'alternative' lifestyle within a middle-class structure to more radical options of 'dropping out,' avoiding formal employment, pursuing an itinerant 'hippie' lifestyle, or living on a commune."¹⁶⁶ Where Zé Kéti was commenting on the poor access marginalized people had to social and economic goods, members of the counterculture—a

¹⁶⁵ Coelho, *Eu, Brasileiro*, 42-43.

¹⁶⁶ Christopher Dunn, "'Experimental o Experimental': Avante-garde, Cultura Marginal, and Counterculture in Brazil, 1968-1972," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 50, no. 1 (2013): 231.

great many of whom were middle-class—were actively rejecting their own access to those goods.

Hélio Oiticica's artwork was instrumental in the counterculture's embrace of marginality. A large banner silk-screened with the image of a corpse and the words "be an outlaw, be a hero" in lowercase lettering, the piece was displayed publicly at iconic moments during the Tropicália movement and was denounced by the Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (DOPS) for inciting subversive attitudes.¹⁶⁷ The corpse pictured was that of Oiticica's friend Cara de Cavallo, a low-level pimp, thief, and bookmaker, who was assassinated by Rio de Janeiro police in relation for killing an off-duty detective.¹⁶⁸ Dunn has argued that, for Oiticica, marginality was an ethical stance against state repression and violence against favelados.¹⁶⁹ However, the mere notion that marginality was a choice undersells the realities of people who are born into the lowest stratum of an unequal society.¹⁷⁰

Seja Marginal, Seja Herói became a kind of manifesto for artists, who also adopted the concept of marginality as a guiding principal.¹⁷¹ Marginality was a way of resisting conformity and integration with the mainstream. This was the perspective of Torquato Neto, who, in his iconic column from the late 1960s, affirmed this reading when he wrote, "all of the proposals will be accepted, except the conformist ones (*seja marginal*). All of the conversations, except the

¹⁶⁷ Christopher Dunn, "Tropicália: Modernity, Allegory, and Counterculture," in *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2005), 76..

¹⁶⁸ Frederico Coelho, *Eu, Brasileiro, Confesso Minha Culpa e Meu Pecado Cultura Marginal no Brasil das Décadas de 1960 e 1970* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 2010), 63; Zuenir Ventura, *Cidade Partida* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994), 39; Celso Favaretto, "Tropicália: The Explosion of the Obvious," in *Tropicália: A Revolution in Brazilian Culture (1967-1972)*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2005), 94.

¹⁶⁹ Dunn, "'Experimental' o Experimental," 236.

¹⁷⁰ While it is possible to read the work as ironic, the hordes of young people whose choice to "drop out" is associated with counterculture artists like Oiticica mitigates that reading to a degree.

¹⁷¹ Coelho, *Eu, Brasileiro*, 179.

repressive ones (*seja herói*).”¹⁷² Because of the banner’s conflation of resistance and violence, the countercultural adoption of marginality seems to have endorsed an undercurrent of violence that Zé Kéti’s songs did not. Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda notes that marginality inherently means aggression and violence, which was appealing for counterculture artists looking to shake and threaten mainstream society.¹⁷³ Coelho agrees, writing,

Oiticica opened the doors to the permissibility of the violence in which we currently live, in that era the relation between marginality and heroism was much more than a mere deification of urban criminality. The banner synthesized the collective dilemma of a generation stuck between conforming to the military dictatorship or being seen as a bandit at the margins. ... It was not only the artists, however, that defined the ‘marginals’ of that era. In many cases, it was the population, the public opinion and even the military government that transformed some artists into potential marginals.¹⁷⁴

Coelho sees violence not as a romantic choice, but a fact of life during the dictatorship. Zé Kéti’s approach to marginality, perhaps due to his belonging to a different generation than most counterculture artists, did not adopt this ambiguous view.

The contrast between Oiticica’s and Zé Kéti’s views of marginality is representative of the difference between fields of cultural production. Oiticica is speaking as an upper middle-class artist to other people of that class, while Zé Kéti is speaking as a “popular” artist to a popular audience. But as both artists developed their ideas of marginality in relation to the marginalized people of Rio, their views mark differences of being born into a sociogeography marked by poverty and violence and viewing it from outside. Oiticica characterized himself as

¹⁷² Torquato Neto, “Torquatália III,” in *Torquatália: Do Lado de Dentro*, Vol. 1, ed. Paulo Roberto Pires (Rio de Janeiro: Artemídia Rocco, 2003), 63.

¹⁷³ Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, *Impressões de Viagem: CPC, Vanguarda e Desbunde, 1960/1970* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1980), 68.

¹⁷⁴ Coelho, *Eu, Brasileiro*, 180.

“marginal to the marginal, not marginal aspiring to the *petite bourgeoisie*.”¹⁷⁵ It was a social position that he adopted for political reasons. Zé Kéti had no such purity. He chronicled Rio’s sociogeographic margins as he strove to break free from them. And while some practitioners of marginal culture have been criticized for cultural appropriation, the similar critiques Zé Kéti received by people like Bôscoli and Lacerda were at best made in bad faith, given his political project and career goals. To say that Zé Kéti could not speak to marginality after achieving some success through his work was not only at odds with his own ambitions, it was also a way of ensuring that he remain “a marginal Brazilian.”

¹⁷⁵ Oiticica, quoted in Christopher Dum, “‘Experimental o Experimental,’” 236.

Chapter Four. João do Vale and the Testimonial Voice

He denied his political disposition. He had an enormous social consciousness and longing for justice. ... He was that which he reproduced.
– Marcio Paschoal¹

Opinião opens with the song “Peba na Pimenta,” composed by João do Vale (b. 1933, Pedreiras, Maranhão, d. 1996, São Luís, Maranhão). Before beginning his performance of the song, Vale explains, “*Peba* is a kind of *tatu* [armadillo]. We hunt and eat it. With pepper, it’s tastier.” The song’s verse tells the story of party thrown for residents of a town called Campinas by a powerful man, seu Malaquias, who is most likely the owner of the *latifúndio* (large swath of agricultural land) on which the locals make their living.² He prepares for them five armadillos in pepper. One of the guests, Maria Benta, says she does not want to eat anything spicy, but Malaquias assures her that “the pepper doesn’t burn.” When Benta takes over the narration in the verse, we learn that the pepper does, indeed burn:

Ay, ay, ay, seu Malaquias.
Ay, ay, you said it wouldn’t burn.
Ay, ay, it burns like crazy.
Ay, ay, it’s causing me agony.
Ay, ay, that’s good, I know it is.
Ay, ay, but it’s causing a discomfort.

From the recording of the song, it is clear that this is a funny story. The audience starts to titter at the mention of Maria Benta and breaks into a full throated laugh when she says, “If I knew, I wouldn’t eat this armadillo.” On the line “it burns like crazy,” the audience explodes. It would appear that they understand the double meanings laced throughout the song. The exclamation

¹ Marcio Paschoal, interviewed in Werinton Kermes, *João do Vale: Muita Gente Desconhece* (Brazil: Granppo Films, 2005).

² In Portuguese, the possessive pronoun “seu,” a shortening of “senhor” (mister, sir), can be used an honorific before a name as a way of conveying respect and acknowledging a power differential.

“ay, ay” means “ouch,” but can also be an expression of sexual pleasure. The word *comer* (to eat) can mean “have sex,” while *arder* (to burn, sting) can mean “cause a sexual sensation.” After a little word substitution, the code is deciphered: Vale is describing a sexual encounter between Malaquias and Maria Benta. While the song is clearly hilarious, it does raise a question: why would *Opinião*, a serious show ostensibly protesting the recent military coup, open with what amounts to a dirty joke? To answer this question requires that we better understand the political nature of João do Vale’s songs and the debate about whether he was or was not a protest singer.

Vale denied the label “protest singer,” instead characterizing his songs as depictions of his own experiences. As he told Tarik de Souza in 1973, “If I knew how, if I could write, I would write an article. But since I don’t know how, I make my verses narrate what I have seen.”³ He maintained this posture throughout the dictatorship and afterward, either because he genuinely did not see his songs as protest music or out of fear of retribution. The latter interpretation may explain his reaction to the topic in a 1991 interview as part of the series *Depoimentos Para a Posteridade* at Rio de Janeiro’s Museum of Image and Sound. After Vale claimed, “I didn’t know anything about this protest business. I just talked about how things were,” his interviewers asked if he had ever been confronted by authorities or had his music censored.”⁴ He shot back, “Leave it alone, you’re talking about things you shouldn’t!”⁵

³ Tarik de Souza and Elifas Andreato, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” in *Rostos e Gostos da Música Popular Brasileira*, Porto Alegre: L&PM Editora, 1979), 133.

⁴ João do Vale, “Depoimento Para a Posteridade,” December 9, 1991, Museu da Imagem e do Som, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

⁵ Ibid.

In fact, “just talking about how things were” is an apt description of how Vale’s songs functioned as protest— or as political, in the sense of speaking to and issues relating to Vale’s larger social group. More specifically, Vale’s testimonial songs were his politics. His lived experiences spoke directly to some of the most important issues of his time—economic inequality, poverty, literacy, migration, agrarian reform. In using his songs to tell his own story, Vale gave voice to the experiences of people otherwise underrepresented in the dominant political discourse. By offering specific anecdotes, these experiences became more than statistical evidence to the depths of northeastern suffering. He made real the people that lived far from the center of Brazilian cultural production. He also called attention to the experience of migrants, who, despite their immense importance to southeastern cities like Rio de Janeiro, were often cast in negative terms, as a “problem” to be dealt with, rather than the neighbors they were.⁶ In this light, “Peba na Pimenta” no longer appears to be just another dirty joke. Small details, such as Vale’s regional accent, audible when he pronounces words like “arder”—he says “ardê,” dropping the “r”—and his mention of local fauna—the peba-tatu—locate his story in the country’s Northeast. Meanwhile, Vale’s double entendre not only depicts Malaquias in a vulnerably intimate act, but it does so in a way that makes everyone laugh at him, thus inverting the power dynamic between the landowner and the residents.⁷

⁶ See Janice Perlman, *The Myth of Marginality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

⁷ In his biography of João do Vale, historian Marcio Paschoal includes an anecdote about this song. One time, after Vale performed the song for a powerful landowner, who, upon hearing it, sought out Vale and asked him not to sing it again: Identifying with the protagonist, he said “What would the people say? ... This business of “ay, ay, ay, seu Malaquias” had to stop.” Vale did not resist and went on to sing “Sina de Caboclo,” a song about the injustices of sharecropping. Hearing this, the landowner suggested, “I think it’s better for you to go back and play the forró about Malaquias...” Marcio Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará: Vida e Obra do João do Vale, Poeta do Povo* (Casadura, RJ: Lumiar Editora, 2000), 29-30.

In this chapter, I argue that Vale’s testimonial songs were the basis for his political participation. I show that, unlike his friend and collaborator Zé Kéti, who wrote stories representative of marginality using invented details, Vale depicted his lived experiences. He lived in the towns he referenced and worked the jobs he described. Due to these factors and Vale’s lack of formal education, critics and fans understood Vale as “simple” and his songs as “authentic” expressions of a guileless performer.⁸ Vale himself was upfront about his lack of education—as I discuss below, this detail motivates his song “Minha História”—but this also may have contributed to his being cast as an instrument of *Opinião*’s authors, rather than as an independent political voice. Here, I trouble this characterization, showing how his songs were his political tools.

I call João do Vale’s form of political song the testimonial baião. The baião is the popular song genre most associated with Vale. Most specifically, it refers to a northeastern dance rhythm that Vale utilized in some of his compositions, but it can also be used to describe a broader range of northeastern popular music. In order to build a theory of musical testimony as politics I draw on scholarship related to the literary genre known as *testimonio* (literally, “testimony,” but usually translated as “testimonial narrative”). I also draw on scholarship related to the North American musical genre known as the blues, in particular as understood through the lens of American geographer Clyde Woods’s concept of “blues epistemology.” Woods theorizes the blues as more than a set of musical practices, but as a way of knowing. I intentionally do not adopt either “testimonio” or “blues” as a label for Vale’s work, instead preferring the term “testimonial baião.” I do this to avoid appropriating terms like “testimonio” and “the blues” that

⁸ Dori Caymmi was the first, but not only, person whom I interviewed that used the term “simple” to describe Vale. Dori Caymmi, interview with author, Van Nuys, California, September 30, 2015.

are culturally and historically contingent. And though I do not use the term “autobiographical,” I draw on popular music scholarship focused on autobiographical lyrics to help explain how issues of sincerity and authenticity contributed to the reception and understanding of Vale’s form of political participation.

After outlining the theoretical framework that supports the testimonial baião, I discuss the social and political issues that Vale’s songs address, as well as the techniques he uses in his songwriting. I begin by showing how Vale used his songs to paint a portrait of his home region, then take up his stories of migration from the Northeast and of the educational injustice experienced by poor people in his home region. I end with a discussion of Vale as protest singer and the mantle he was reluctant to take up, thinking through the ways that his songs functioned as protest despite his denials. I discuss his politics through four Vale compositions that were performed in *Opinião*: “Minha História,” “Sina do Caboclo,” “Pisa na Fulô,” and “Carcará.”

The Testimonial Baião

Autobiography is a genre of personal writing that raises questions about subjectivity and historical memory. In contrast with historians and biographers, who tend to rely on archival materials, autobiographers tend to draw on their own memory in telling their stories, which raises questions of subjectivity. Through their first-person narratives, autobiographers offer their readers points of entry and opportunities for identification centered on ostensibly true occurrences.⁹ Autobiographers engage in the politics of remembering, weighing in on questions about what should be remembered and who should do that remembering.¹⁰ Literary critic Lionel

⁹ Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 13.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

Trilling has pointed out that, as a genre of writing, autobiography developed in tandem with the concept of the individual subject and tends to rely on the idea that a single person's experiences, thoughts, and feelings themselves have value.¹¹

In contrast with the classic autobiography, the genre known as the testimonio, which emerged in Latin America in the 1960s, is a first-person narrative genre in which the individual's experiences are representative of a class of people or segment of society. John Beverly defines testimonio as a first-person account of a "significant life experience" narrated by a real witness to that experience.¹² The form's most widely acknowledged and studied exemplar is K'iche' activist Rigoberta Menchú's 1983 book, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchu y así me nació la conciencia*, which tells of Menchú's experiences as an indigenous woman in Guatemala during the country's lengthy civil war.¹³ The testimonio tends to be associated with the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America, but there are examples of testimonio in Brazil as well. One of these is Carolina Maria de Jesus's 1960 work *Quarto de Despejo*, the edited diaries of a woman living in the favelas of São Paulo. And Joan Dassin has written about how Brazilian testimonial literature published during the country's return to democracy in the early 1980s offers evidence of the "culture of fear" that characterized military rule.¹⁴

¹¹ Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 23-25.

¹² Georg Gugelberger and Michael Kearney, "Voices for the Voiceless: Testimonial Literature in Latin America," *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (1991): 5; John Beverly, "The Margin at the Center: On *Testimonio* (Testimonial Narrative)," *Modern Fiction Studies* 35, no. 1 (1989): 12-13.

¹³ Gareth Williams, "Translation and Mourning: The Cultural Challenge of Latin American Testimonial Autobiography," *Latin American Literary Review* 21, no. 41 (1993): 82.

¹⁴ Joan Dassin, "Testimonial Literature and the Armed Struggle in Brazil," in *Fear at the Edge: State Terror and Resistance in Latin America*, ed. Juan E. Corradi, Patricia Weiss Fagen, and Manuel Antonio Garretón, 161-183 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

Though he works in a musical rather than literary form, Vale describes his songwriting process in a way that parallels these works: “I make [songs] from the things that I see, from my region.”¹⁵ Artists can and do construct fictional works based in their lived experiences, of course. The Brazilian writer Graciliano Ramos drew upon his personal knowledge of the northeastern sertão to write realist novels that depict life in these areas, such as *Vidas Secas*.¹⁶ But Ramos drew on his life experiences to describe fictional characters. Vale sang about his own home town, the actual street where he grew up, his actual parents.

Like João do Vale’s songs, the testimonio centers on a narrator from a class of people typically excluded from hegemonic literary production speaking to issues such as poverty and oppression.¹⁷ To quote Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “testimony is the genre of the subaltern giving witness to oppression, to a less repressed other,” a description that applies equally to testimonio.¹⁸ But that subaltern subject is not simply a victim, but a subject seeking to confront and change the hegemonic system about which they speak.¹⁹ George Yúdice argues that the testimonio emerged as new form of participation in the public sphere for those otherwise excluded from it by virtue of their social class.²⁰ The narrator uses their biography to point out some kind of social problem, such as injustice, poverty, subalternity, or repression.²¹ In

¹⁵ Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 130.

¹⁶ Joseph Abraham Levi, “Graciliano Ramos,” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 307: Brazilian Writers* (New York: Thompson Gale, 2005).

¹⁷ Gugelberger and Kearney, “Voices for the Voiceless,” 4.

¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and Circumfession,” in *Postcolonialism & Autobiography*, ed. Alfred Hornung et al. (Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), 7.

¹⁹ John Beverly, “Testimonio, Subalternity, and Narrative Authority,” in *A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture*, ed. Sara Castro-Klaren (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 579.

²⁰ George Yúdice, “Testimonio and Postmodernism,” *Latin American Perspectives* 18, no. 3 (1991): 25.

²¹ Beverly, “The Margin at the Center,” 14.

testimonio, the narrator stands as the representative of a social class or group. Rather than speaking as an extraordinary individual example, the narrator of a testimonio understands themselves to be “an allegory of the many.”²² Rigoberta Menchú’s claim that “it’s not only my life, it’s also the testimony of my people” is an illustrative example of this quality.²³ As I discuss below, Vale’s songs frequently showcase this quality.

Although the testimonial *baião* differs from the testimonio due to it being a commercial form, it still requires that audiences understand the narrator as an authentic voice. Vale was frequently painted by critics, audiences, and collaborators as a “legitimate voice of the people.”²⁴ His artistry was so frequently framed as natural, as naïve, that he was seen less as an artist-spokesperson than as a genuine voice. Audiences cite the sincerity of Vale’s mannerisms as important to the power and importance of his songs. The fact that *he* made them is crucial. Moreover, due to the blurred uses of the Portuguese word *popular* discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation, forms like the *baião* that had both commercial and folkloric iterations were important sites of intervention for people who traditionally had little recourse in the public sphere.²⁵

Like João do Vale, the narrator in testimonio is, in almost every case, either illiterate or not a professional writer, a fact that necessitates what Beverly terms a “compiler,” the person who records and edits the narrative for publication.²⁶ Vale frequently worked with a kind of

²² Gugelberger and Kearney, “Voices for the Voiceless,” 8.

²³ Menchú, quoted in Beverly, *The Margin at the Center*,” 15-16.

²⁴ João Antônio, “Poesia de João Nasce do Canto,” *Jornal do Brasil*, July 16, 1965.

²⁵ In a similar way, George Yúdice has noted that “the testimonio has contributed to the demise of the traditional role of the intellectual/artist as spokesperson for the ‘voiceless.’” Yúdice, “*Testimonio* and Postmodernism,” 15.

²⁶ Beverly, “*The Margin at the Center*,” 15.

“compiler,” someone who transcribed and helped edit his lyrics. Luiz Vieira recalled his first “partnership” with Vale: “On the wooden stairs of Rádio Tupi, he showed me a group of enormous verses and unedited poems, however with fantastic poetic images. Immediately I saw: this guy has talent and is a natural poet. I started to pull out some of the verses and mine them.”²⁷ This encounter ended with the songwriting credit for Vale’s song “Madalena” being split with Vieira. The same happened with “Estrela Miúda” and, presumably, explains the many songwriting partnerships that populate Vale’s catalogue. Vale recalled that to make it in the music business in the ’50s and ’60s, he had no recourse but to sell songwriting credit. He admitted that Vieira did edit some of his compositions, but, for the most part, he recalled selling credit just because he needed the money. When journalist Tarik de Souza pressed him on which songs he had sold, Vale refused to give details for fear of losing customers. He would only say, “It’s there on the disc,” implying that every partnership reflected this practice.²⁸

Vale’s testimonial *baião* is also distinct from *testimonio* in the ways that Vale maintains the specificities of his grammar, dialect, and regional accent in his performances. The compiler of Menchú’s *testimonio*, Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, endeavored to correct some of Menchú’s grammatical errors, noting that, because Menchú testified not in her native tongue, but in Spanish, including these errors may have undermined her message.²⁹ Vale and his collaborators seem to have chosen to maintain grammatical and pronunciation differences in his song lyrics. When Vale sings them himself, this choice is all but obvious—it is the way he speaks, after all.

²⁷ Vieira, quoted in Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará*, 35. Given that elsewhere Vale admits to not be able to write, it is not clear if Vale sang the verses to Vieira or if someone else had helped transcribe them prior to the encounter with Vieira.

²⁸ Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 126-127. See also Mariana Barreto, A Trajetória de João do Vale e os Lugares de sua Produção Musical no Mercado Fonográfico Brasileiro *ArtCultura* 14, no. 24 (2012): 53.

²⁹ Beverly, “The Margin at the Center,” 20.

But when a singer such as Nara Leão sings “my classmate were studying” in the song “Minha História,” the choice to leave the regional linguistic “mistake”—the use of the singular form of the noun *colega* with plural agreement—stands out. This could certainly be read as an authenticating gesture, a way to ground the narration in the real voice of the narrator. Other gestures do similar work. For example, “Minha História” begins with a direct appeal to the listener: “Dear sir, do you want to know, I will sing in a baião / My story for you, dear sir, pay attention.” This technique recalls the “interlocutive and conversational markers” that are frequently maintained in the *testimonio*.³⁰

Vale’s testimonial baião (plural: *baiões*) serve as counterpoints to the spoken portions of *Opinião*, which are, themselves, mostly testimonial monologues. Maria Helena Kühner and Helena Rocha have argued for the importance of testimony to the show’s political project. They point out that the almost collage-like texture of the show, wherein the performers’ small spoken passages are put together in a seemingly aleatoric way, frames the performers as witnesses to apparently trivial facts of life. In this context, the audience does not assume that they hold special access to the truth, but hears their words as “opinion.”³¹ But, Kühner and Rocha argue, “the *triviality of what’s said is only apparent*; the intention ... to make ‘new values’ emerges and ‘a richer capacity to feel reality’ thus is revealed: in fact these little passages, more than only a modality of enunciation, are a form of accessing a reality, a truth that is not only private, but general.”³² The quotidian details of the testimony parallel the simple clothing and lack of set design, and help put the audience and performers on a level playing field. This context allows for

³⁰ Beverly, “The Margin at the Center,” 18.

³¹ Maria Helena Kühner and Helena Rocha, *Para Ter Opinião* (Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará, 2001), 51.

³² *Ibid.*, 54. Emphasis in original.

greater opportunities for identification, allowing the participants in *Opinião* to effectively persuade their audience to share their opinion.

Because Kühner and Rocha draw primarily on the spoken testimonials in *Opinião*, and focus on the importance of the show's "authors" in writing them, they miss other voices. For instance, João do Vale enacts his political participation not only through his spoken passages but through his lyrics, which testify to his own experiences and stand for the experiences of his class. The "I" voice from which he sings serves a similar function as the "I" in the testimonio, an opportunity for audience members to identify with Vale's position.³³ Vale's first-person narratives were always sung by other performers and audience members, in addition to Vale himself. For example, in *Opinião* and elsewhere, they were performed by Nara Leão. For example, when Leão sang the lyric "I continue to be João nobody" from "Minha História," she assumed Vale's subject position—even his name.³⁴ The same was true for audiences as they sang with the performers during the show.³⁵

The testimonial baião has important resonances with the musical genre of the blues as theorized by Clyde Woods in terms of blues epistemology, a system created by working-class African Americans in the U.S. south to explain and interpret "their daily life, organizational activity, culture, religion, and social movements."³⁶ Woods shows that the blues is not only a musical practice, but a way of knowing and doing history that was created and developed by people systematically excluded from the hegemonic "plantation bloc" that maintained economic

³³ Beverly, "The Margin at the Center," 23.

³⁴ The English equivalent to the Portuguese João is "John." In this case "João nobody" plays on the name's ubiquity and ability to stand for any person.

³⁵ Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016.

³⁶ Clyde Adrian Woods, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Verso, 1998), 16.

and political power in the region and controlled the production of historical knowledge. The blues, Woods argues, was an alternative. It “conveyed the sorrow of the individual and collective tragedy that had befallen African Americans. It also operated to instill pride in a people facing daily denigration, as well as channeling folk wisdom, descriptions of life and labor, travelogues, hoodoo, and critiques of individuals and institutions.”³⁷ Similarly, listening to Vale’s testimonial *baiões* was a way for audiences to know his experiences: his poverty, his exclusion from educational opportunities, his migration and the difficulties that accompanied it.

Woods’s concept of blues epistemology can help us understand the political valences of Vale’s work. Many of the attributes of the blues that Woods identifies are present in Vale’s songs, including stories of individual and collective tragedy, travelogues, and descriptions of life and labor. Like the blues, Vale’s *baiões* circulated outside of the institutions responsible for official knowledge production and frequently critiqued those institutions. Vale’s musical practice is also rooted in his own experiences in a rural space defined by the legacies of a colonial plantation economy predicated on chattel slavery.

Although the blues and the testimonial *baião* are both musical practices, the nature of the knowledge that they create is different. Woods implores us not to forget that meaning in the blues is not only made in lyrics, but in sound and performance. The same is true for the testimonial *baião*. Though Vale’s lyrics are very important, his songs are not limited to the words he sings. By adopting northeastern song genres, Vale not only invokes that space sonically and contextualizes those lyrics in that space, he organizes the thoughts in the forms of those genres. Just as blues has its own lyrical conventions, referents, and rhyme schemes, so does the *baião*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

Vale's songs, then, invite us to listen regionally, keeping in mind the song forms, rhythms, vocabulary, and stories contained therein.

Vale's songwriting practice is rooted in an oral tradition. As Woods points out, because some people understand non-literate as meaning "lack of intelligence," literacy is often invoked as a dividing line between the so-called developed and undeveloped, as way to maintain regressive binary oppositions like "civilized" and "primitive."³⁸ Non-literate people, then, are frequently excluded in dominant knowledge-making practices. But because oral traditions are often embedded in daily life, and therefore contain and transmit knowledge that was unwritten and, thus, unrecognized, they serve important "social, moral, educational and pragmatic" purposes for people excluded from dominant knowledge-making systems.³⁹ Vale was forced to leave elementary school in the third grade; as a result, he could read, but could not write. As he would say later, "The little dots confuse[d] me."⁴⁰ His work was part of an oral tradition in a time (the 1960s) and place (Rio de Janeiro) when that practice may have seemed odd, despite the fact that in the 1960s, perhaps fifty percent of the country could not read or write.⁴¹ Vale, as I discuss below, points to the baião as his outlet not only to communicate his story but to overcome the limitations of the social structure that failed to offer him adequate educational opportunities.

³⁸ Woods, *Development Arrested*, 33.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

⁴⁰ Souza, "Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana," 133.

⁴¹ Roberto Schwarz, "Culture and Politics in Brazil, 1964-1969," in *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, ed. John Gledson (New York: Verso, 1992), 134.

Authenticity and Sincerity

Questions of sincerity and authenticity frequently drive the reception and criticism of autobiographical forms, including the *testimonio* and the blues, a factor that both share with the reception of João do Vale's work. Yúdice describes *testimonial* as an "authentic narrative."⁴² And Beverly argues that sincerity is paramount in *testimonio*, much more so than literary prowess.⁴³ The form's appeal, he argues, is derived from this quality.⁴⁴ This dynamic reflects the reasons that journalists and critics cite when celebrating Vale's music. For example, in a review of his 1965 album *O Poeta do Povo*, critics Juvenal Portella and Mauro Ivan wrote, "Popular music is very much a mirror of the social reality in which it was created.... In that way, the music of this man of suffering couldn't be different, since it would lose all of its authenticity if it were separated from the crudeness that João do Vale brings with him."⁴⁵ In this view, Vale's authenticity is wrapped up in his "crudeness." His appeal stems directly from his lack of polish. Dori Caymmi, musical director for *Opinião*, told me that "João was not a musical guy."⁴⁶ He recalled that Vale could not hear and reproduce the pitch at the beginning of a song, leading to many situations in which Caymmi had to adjust the key to Vale's singing after the fact. This is easily verifiable on record, where Vale frequently sings with poor intonation. What is remarkable, however, is that, for many critics, the "anti-musical" qualities of Vale's work formed the basis of his appeal.

⁴² Yúdice, "*Testimonio* and Postmodernism," 17.

⁴³ Beverly, "The Margin at the Center," 14.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁵ Juvenal Portella and Mauro Ivan, "O Povo de João e o Violão de Dilermando," *Jornal do Brasil*, October 8, 1965.

⁴⁶ Dori Caymmi, interview with author.

Many factors contributed to Vale's construction as what humorist Chico Anysio called an "authentic poet, pure, pure—everything that he did was pure."⁴⁷ Sociologist Richard Peterson has noted that group membership—frequently membership in particular racialized groups—can serve as an authenticator for audiences, a fact that can be problematic when artists are expected, by virtue of their group membership, to make art about and within the restrictions of that group.⁴⁸ Jason King has pointed out that the familiar traditions associated with a particular group may be useful as a referent towards or against which singers may position themselves.⁴⁹ Vale's status as a black, poor, rural northeasterner was such an important factor in his reception that, in his work in *Opinião*, he is frequently characterized not as an agential actor but as an instrumentalized representative.⁵⁰ Fellow Maranhense Ferreira Gullar said, "Authenticity is a stupid word, but it is in authenticity that the strength of this *joão maranhense* resides, coming from Pedreiras to give a national voice to the sertão."⁵¹

To read an artist or a song as authentic, audiences tend also to be concerned with the sincerity with which that work is expressed. Lionel Trilling has historicized the ideas of sincerity and authenticity in relation to the concept of the individual self. He argues that, as sincerity came to be judged in social settings, it lost its meaning as "true to one's self" and came to be

⁴⁷ Chico Anysio, interviewed in Kermes, *Muita Gente Desconhece*.

⁴⁸ Richard A. Peterson, "In Search of Authenticity," *Journal of Management Studies* 42, no. 5 (2005): 1086-1087.

⁴⁹ Jason King, "When Autobiography Becomes Soul: Erykah Badu and the Cultural Politics of Black Feminism," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 10, no. 1-2 (1999): 212.

⁵⁰ See, for example: Ruy Castro, *Bossa Nova: The Story of the Brazilian Music that Seduced the World*, trans. Lysa Salsbury (Chicago: A Cappella Book, 2000), 270; David Treece, "Guns and Roses: Bossa Nova and Brazil's Music of Popular Protest," *Popular Music* 16, no. 1 (1997): 17.

⁵¹ Gullar, quoted in Nilton Costa Silva, *Vida e Arte em João do Vale* (São Luís: FUNC/SIOGE, 1979), 23. Gullar puns on Vale's name when he calls him a "joão maranhense," employing the name "João" as a stand in for anybody and thereby implying that he was a typical representative of his home state.

associated with performances of sincerity.⁵² In turn, authenticity supplanted sincerity as an expression of the individual's inner feelings: "Part of the moral slang of our day [that] points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existences."⁵³ Simon Frith traces a similar shift in the meaning of authenticity during the U.S. folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s. He notes that, initially, folk music was judged as authentic based whether it had popular roots, or could be traced to a popular source. In the mid-1960s, the determining factor in questions of authenticity shifted to whether or not the singer's feelings were real.⁵⁴ Vale exemplifies both of these trends at once. His musical practice has popular roots and audiences hear his performance as real. For example, Vale's lack of intonation and regional grammatical "mistakes" served to indicate sincerity.⁵⁵ According to Gullar, Vale "would make the audience laugh and cry, with the strength and sincerity of his songs and his words."⁵⁶

Although audiences use authenticity to evaluate both the aesthetic and political value of an autobiographical narrative in song, the notion of authenticity is always mediated by producers, directors, and promoters, and compilers.⁵⁷ This process is evident in ostensibly

⁵² Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity*, 5-6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 93.

⁵⁴ Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock'n'Roll* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 31-32.

⁵⁵ Frith argues that in different musical traditions, different techniques, such as vocal uncertainty in country music or an inability to speak in soul music, are understood as markers of sincerity for audiences. See Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 168.

⁵⁶ Gullar, quoted in Nilton Costa Silva, *Vida e Arte em João do Vale* (São Luís: FUNC/SIOGE, 1979), 23.

⁵⁷ Peterson subtitled his scholarship on the U.S. country music industry "fabricating authenticity" to foreground the degree to which an ideal of authenticity is valued in country music production and consumption, while not denying its constructed nature. See Richard A. Peterson, *Creating Country Music: Fabricating Authenticity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 3-4.

ethnographic and folkloristic practices, where biographical details were sometimes used to inflate a reputation or create a false impression of an artists. In one famous example, John and Alan Lomax used the fact that folk singer Leadbelly was a former convict to portray him as wild and dangerous.⁵⁸ The Lomaxes also encouraged Leadbelly to enunciate in a way to make his lyrics more accessible to northern audiences and incorporate spoken stories within his songs.⁵⁹ Examples like these serve as reminders that Vale's authenticity was mediated, whether in *Opinião* or his first LP release for Philips.

Baião

Although João do Vale also made use of northeastern rhythms like the *xote* and the *coco*, as well as non-northeastern rhythms found in samba, the *baião* was the musical form most associated with him. Critics, fans, the producers of *Opinião*, and even Vale himself regularly called him “a composer of *baião*” in lieu of simply “composer.”⁶⁰ *Baião* was also a common catchall term for northeastern popular musical styles of the era, the group of styles that are today referred to as *forró*. Vale's use of the *baião* served both symbolic and utilitarian purposes. Symbolically, it recalled northeastern musical traditions, but its simple harmonies and flexible structure also accommodated his stories without restricting them.

Although the *baião* had been practiced informally in the Northeast for some decades, it only became a formalized musical genre beginning in the 1940s, when Pernambucan

⁵⁸ Benjamin Filene, “‘Our Singing Country’: John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past,” *American Quarterly* 43, no. 4 (1991): 610.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 613.

⁶⁰ “Composer of *baião*” is the precise wording used, for example, in articles such as Cesário Marques, “Confronto: A Nossa Música Popular,” *Diário Carioca*, January 10, 1965; Narciso Kalili, “A Nova Escola do Samba,” *Revista Realidade* 8 (1966), 116-125.

accordionist Luiz Gonzaga became a radio and recording star in Rio de Janeiro.⁶¹ Bryan McCann has shown that Gonzaga's success was possible because his career spoke to trends of massive migration from his home region, touched on the increasing popularity of folk forms, and occurred at an important moment in the history of the Brazilian recording industry.⁶² Gonzaga codified musical trends and practices circulating in his home state of Pernambuco, but did so in Rio de Janeiro, at the geographic center of the nascent recording industry, meaning that his version of baião was the one that circulated. Moreover, the many northeastern migrants in the Southeast nostalgic for the cultural products of their home region provided Gonzaga a large base audience.

Vale carried a reputation as a baião composer, even contributing music to Gonzaga's repertory, factors that contribute to my use of the term to describe his form of political participation. Upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro in December of 1950, Vale worked as a mason's assistant by day and frequented the headquarters of the radio stations Rádio Nacional and Rádio Tupi at night. He promoted his repertory to the artists working there, eventually meeting lyricist Luis Vieira, who is credited as co-writing many of Vale's songs. Vale biographer Marcio Paschoal writes that Vieira "took João's melodies and verses and developed them."⁶³ Vieira also introduced Vale to Zé Gonzaga, brother of Luiz, whose recordings of Vale's songs "Madalena" and "Cesário Pinto" were the first successes of the young composer's career.⁶⁴ Gonzaga failed to credit Vale for either composition, claiming that they were actually compositions by the

⁶¹ José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular: da Modina à Canção de Protesto* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1974), 211.

⁶² Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 123.

⁶³ Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará*, 38.

⁶⁴ Silva, *Vida e Arte em João do Vale*, 19.

Gonzagas' father, Januário.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, Luiz Gonzaga would go on to record a number of Vale's compositions throughout his career. Whether these compositions were literally baiões or other northeastern forms matters less than the use of the term to describe Vale's oeuvre.

“I went dancing in Pedreiras, on Golada Street”

One of João do Vale's primary uses of the testimonial baião was to depict the place where he was born and grew up. His portrayals of his home served the dual purpose of authenticating him as a true northeasterner and calling attention to the difficult living conditions there. Vale's song “Pisa na Fulô” (co-credited to Ernesto Pires and Silveira Junior) served as the singer's primary introduction. The song was among the first sung in *Opinião* and one of the few Vale compositions included in the show that audience members knew—singers Marinês, Zé Gonzaga, and Ivon Curi had all recorded versions of the song in 1957-1958.⁶⁶ The song is relatively light in tone and its lyrics do not point out injustice as overtly as other Vale compositions. In *Opinião*, however, “Pisa na Fulô” served as the backdrop for Vale's introduction to his audience.

Though all three stars shared details of their lives, Vale's monologues outnumbered those of his co-stars in both frequency and length, and focused even more on such details. Because Nara Leão was a burgeoning star and the show's major draw, she used her monologues to explicitly share her political opinions. Zé Kéti, while not yet hailed as a performer, was

⁶⁵ Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará*, 232. This explanation fails to account for the fact that the disc was credited to “Zé Gonzaga” rather than “Januário Gonzaga.”

⁶⁶ “Marinês,” *Dicionário Cravo Albin da Música Popular Brasileira*, accessed March 26, 2019, <http://dicionariompb.com.br/marines/dados-artisticos>; “Zé Gonzaga,” *Dicionário Cravo Albin da Música Popular Brasileira*, accessed March 26, 2019, <http://dicionariompb.com.br/ze-gonzaga/dados-artisticos>; Vale references the version by Ivon Curi when asked, “who had a hit with ‘Pisa na Fulô?’” during his “Testimony for Posterity.” Vale, “Depoimento Para a Posteridade.”

nevertheless well-known as the composer of many popular sambas, and his non-musical contributions to the show traded on humor and charm more than sincere life narrative. But he was not a household name.⁶⁷ As he recalled years later, “People only took notice of me as a compositor after the show *Opinião*.”⁶⁸ Nearly every time he spoke in the show, then, he told stories of his own lived experiences. He situated himself as a northeastern migrant, a composer of authentic northeastern songs, and someone who had lived and continued to live a difficult life—all issues and details that also surfaced in his songs.

Vale’s spoken passages both filled in the audience on his life and commented on the difficulty of his social circumstances.⁶⁹ In his first monologue, as “Pisa na fulô,” plays quietly in the background, he says:

My name is João Batista Vale. Poor people, in [the state of] Maranhão, are either named Batista or Ribamar. I came out a Batista. I was born in the town of Pedreiras, Golada Street. Modesty aside, Golada Street, today, is called João do Vale Street. That is, I, looking like this, am already a street. I live in [the housing project] Fundação da Casa Popular de Deodoro, Street 17, Block 44, House 5. You can get there in two hours, if you aren’t mugged. I have 230 songs recorded, aside from the ones that I’ve sold. They go for 500,000 réis and more. I think the best known songs are the ones just for fun. They appeal more to the singers and the record companies. You just play them and people sing. I have other, less well-known songs, some that have never been recorded. My homeland has a lot of funny things, but it has even more hardship.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Diegues, interview with author; Eduardo Escorel, interview with author, Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 17, 2017; Luiz Guilherme de Moraes, interview with the author, Leblon, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 22, 2016.

⁶⁸ João do Vale, footage from Kermes, *Muita Gente Desconhece*.

⁶⁹ As mentioned previously in this dissertation, the spoken passages in *Opinião* were edited versions of the performers’ own testimonials, which had been taped and studied by the credited playwrights. Though edited by the latter, it is fair to hear these words as originating with the performers.

⁷⁰ Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Paulo Pontes, *Opinião: Texto Completo do “Show”* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Val, 1965), 19.

Vale's hometown of Pedreiras is located in the center of the northeastern state of Maranhão.

According to the 1940 census, conducted when Vale was seven years old, Pedreiras had roughly 43,000 citizens, nearly 30,000 of whom could neither read nor write.⁷¹

Vale's comment about Maranhense naming practices is not simply a regional joke, but a marker of his belonging to that regional identity. Ribamar is a famously marker of Maranhão. For example, Ferreira Gullar—or as he was named at birth in his native Maranhão, José Ribamar Ferreira—was one of the eight members of the Grupo Opinião. José Sarney, President of Brazil in the 1980s and governor of Maranhão in the late 1960s, was born José Ribamar Ferreira de Araújo Costa. By connecting the names Batista and Ribamar, Vale calls attention to his native status.

According to Mariana Mont'Alverne Barreto Lima, the last name Vale—minus the “do,” meaning “of the,” which was added as a bit of artistic flair—points to the dark truth that his grandfather was born into slavery on the cotton plantation owned by Raymundo Ferreira Vale and Alferes Ricardo Ferreira Vale.⁷² Vale also dispels any myths that his relocation to Rio de Janeiro freed him of his problems; he points out that he lives in a dangerous housing project, far from the city's commercial center. Vale's introductory monologue is the show's first hint that his political participation took the form of sharing details of his own life. Because those details, whether in his monologues or his songs, point to the social realities experienced by an entire class of people, they function less as funny stories and more as an illustration of hardship.

⁷¹ *Censo Demográfico, População e Habitação, Censos Econômicos, Agrícola, Industrial, Comercial e dos Serviços* (Rio de Janeiro: Serviço Gráfico do Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 1952), 156-157, <https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/index.php/biblioteca-catalogo?view=detalhes&id=765>.

⁷² Mariana Mont'Alverne Barreto Lima, “João do Vale e a Formação de um Artista popular no Brasil, Nos Anos de 1950,” *Revista de Ciências Sociais* 46, no. 2 (2015): 202.

Thus contextualized, the lyrics of “Pisa na Fulô” take on a deeper meaning. The title “Pisa na Fulô” mean, literally “step on the flower,” “fulô” being a regional pronunciation of the Portuguese *flor*. Sociologist José de Souza Martins notes that indigenous peoples in Brazil, particular those who spoke the Tupi language, found doubled consonants (such as the “fl” of “flor”) difficult to pronounce, leading them to introduce extra vowels into Portuguese words. The pronunciation of “flor” as “fulô” is residual evidence of this.⁷³ For Vale, who used the word “flor” in its Portuguese pronunciation in other compositions, the use of “fulô” here was an intentional evocation of the regionalism.⁷⁴

In the song’s chorus, this lyric is neither a literal description of stepping on a flower nor a metaphoric instruction to be careful (i.e., “step lightly”), but instead, the describes a popular dance. Over the course of the self-referential and logic-defying verses of the song, the narrator goes to a dance where accordionist Zé Cachangá only plays “Pisa na Fulô.” There, Mr. Serafim testifies to never having attended a better party; a grandmother and a twelve-year-old girl are both inspired to dance; and the performer refuses payment for his services, asking the owner of the venue to hire someone else to play the song so that he, too, can do the dance. Each of the characters end their testimony with the words “pisa na fulô,” leading straight into the chorus. The complexity of the song structure is quickly evident: either Vale is singing a song about someone playing a song so well that he wants to teach a third person to play the song, or Vale *is* that third person. It is also possible that song functions as a chain: each performer, inspired to dance, passes the song along.

⁷³ José de Souza Martins, “A Proibição da Língua Brasileira,” *Folha de S. Paulo*, July 20, 2003, accessed on March 21, 2019, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/opiniaofz2007200309.htm>.

⁷⁴ For one example, see Vale’s 1965 song “A Voz do Povo.”

The song's structure is, in reality, just scaffolding for Vale to describe a scene set in his hometown. As he told Tarik de Souza in 1972, "I simulated the dance to tell a story, to tell the story that I wanted to tell. I had to say that there was a dance."⁷⁵ The story is set in Vale's hometown, on the street where he grew up, on Golada Street in Pedreiras. Unlike the frequent linguistic "corrections" instituted by the compiler of the testimonio, Vale's characters speak in the accent of his town, elaborating the effect implied by the song's title. The word *melhor* (better) is pronounced *mió*. *Até* (even) is *inté*. *Velhinho* (little old man) is *véinho*. This pronunciation recalls Vale's regional roots and his lack of formal education. It brings alive and demonstrates the facts of testimony embedded within it. Unlike the story he tells to set it up, the song is happy, a mini portrait of the quotidian joys of life in Pedreiras.

While some scholars characterize Vale primarily as a protest singer and others characterize him primarily as a practitioner of northeastern music genres, "Pisa na Fulô" carefully links the two. As Lima has argued, by presenting "popular northeastern countryside music" within a political musical, the participants in *Opinião* insinuate a politics of the popular, in the sense explicated in chapter 1.⁷⁶ Indeed, to invoke some of the language around popular music used by the People's Center for Culture (CPC) referenced there, Vale's music moves from "art of the people" to "revolutionary popular art" by virtue of its inclusion in *Opinião*. He moves one step further by not only writing within a recognizable northeastern style, but also depicting a scene set within his own biographical specificity.

⁷⁵ Souza, "Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana," 127.

⁷⁶ Barreto, "A Trajetória de João do Vale," 51.

Generically, Vale notes that “Pisa no Fulô” is “a *xote*, but everyone records it in their own way.”⁷⁷ The *xote* is a common dance in Northeast.⁷⁸ It is played at the country dance party known as the *forró*, the kind of party that Vale’s song describes.⁷⁹ Though it is neither unique nor native to the Brazilian Northeast, it nonetheless is both associated with and reminiscent of that region.⁸⁰ The *xote* is characterized, rhythmically, by a three beat pattern on the *zabumba*—a bass drum played on one side with a mallet and on the other with a wooden stick—accenting the first, third, and fourth eighth notes in a 2/4 measure. This bass drum pattern is picked up in the song’s chorus, where all of the strong syllables coincide with the accents on the drum: “PI-sa NA fu-LÔ.”

The song’s harmony implies a picture of Vale’s hometown that is troubled but not unbearably bleak. On the official recording of *Opinião*, the song’s harmonic cycle (iv – V7 – i) is used to accompany Vale’s recited self-introduction. In such a context it reads as subdued and even dark, but this is slightly misleading. Although the published script for the show indicates that the song’s verses were performed, they have been edited out of the recording. Also edited out, therefore, is the IV chord that substitutes for vi in the final line of each verse. This treatment, audible on Vale’s 1965 solo debut, *O Poeta do Povo*, lightens the song tonally each time one of the participants is inspired to join in the dance.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Larry Crook, *Brazilian Music: Northeastern Traditions and the Heartbeat of a Modern Nation* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2005), 67.

⁷⁹ The term “*forró*” is typically traced to the word “*forrobodó*,” meaning confusion or disorder, though a popular explanation is that the term is a regional pronunciation of the English words “for all” used to describe dances held for American servicemen in the Northeast region. See “*Forro*,” *Dicionário Cravo Albin da Música Popular Brasileira*, accessed March 26, 2019, <http://dicionariompb.com.br/forro/dados-artisticos>.

⁸⁰ Jack A. Draper, *Forró and Redemptive Regionalism from the Brazilian Northeast: Popular Music in a Culture of Migration* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 47-48.

The fact that the Vale builds xote characteristics, like the zambomba rhythm, directly into the melody of “Pisa na Fulô” means that the song retains its regional identity in spite of its new (musical and geographic) context in *Opinião*. In a subtle way, it allows the audience to listen regionally, regardless of the ensemble. This factor, along with the song’s seemingly innocuous depiction of everyday life in Pedreiras, recalls Woods’ blues epistemology. And, not unlike the blues, the song is a tonal hybrid, both light and heavy. It is not an example of a subaltern giving witness to oppression, exactly, but it brings people from this specific place to life and humanizes them. Moreover, taken as part of a body of work, the song plays an important role in creating a more complete portrait of his life circumstances. And if there were any confusion about the tone, remember that, in *Opinião*, it literally accompanies Vale saying “my homeland has a lot of funny things, but it has even more hardship.”

“I’ll go to Rio to carry cement”

Another aspect of Vale’s testimonial baião is the story of his migratory journey from Maranhão to Rio. In two separate monologues during the show, Vale tells the story of his relocation to Rio. In the first, he tells of his journey from Pedreiras to São Luís, capital of Maranhão, to Fortaleza, capital of the nearby state of Ceará. Specifically, he recalls a letter he sent to his father:

From Fortaleza I wrote a letter to my father. Forgive me, father, for having run away from home. There was no other way, father. Pedreiras doesn’t let people live a happy life. I didn’t ask for permission because I know you: you are very protective of your children, you wouldn’t let me leave home at fourteen. I am in Fortaleza. I am a truck driver’s assistant. I am earning 200,000 réis per month but I am almost positive that I won’t stay here. I’m going to the south, father. Everyone is going. They say that there, who knows, it’s better. The boys that have finished fifth grade join the Marines, the Air Force. I only finished second, so the Navy won’t take me. But I don’t want to keep selling bananas, selling lollipops in São Luís. . . . I’ve saved 700,000 réis, father. I’m going to try my luck. Who

knows, maybe I'll succeed. I know how to write lyrics. Memories of Duda, Deouro, Rafael, Leprinha, João Piston. Memories of Aunt Agda, Aunt Pituca, Aunt Palmira. I ask for your blessing. Ask mother to pray for me. I don't know when I will see you again, but one day, if God permits, we'll see each other.⁸¹

According to Vale, this is a true story.⁸² When the subject came up in a television interview from 1974, Vale became emotional and asked to change the subject.⁸³ Moreover, the people he names are his real family and friends. João Piston even makes an appearance in the 2005 documentary *João do Vale: Muita Gente Desconhece*.

From Fortaleza, Vale traveled as a truck driver's assistant to Salvador, capital of the state of Bahia, the largest city in Brazil's Northeast region. In *Opinião* he recounts the story of his travels from there:

I come from Maranhão, land of Gonçalves Dias, of Ferreira Gullar. First in a truck from Salvador [da Bahia] to Teófilo Otôni [in Minas Gerais]. There was a mine there. I remembered that my grandfather read my palm and said that I would be rich. I went to the mine to try my luck. I dug and dug, made a whole three or four meters deep. I didn't find any diamonds. I didn't find any sapphires either. What I found were ant hills. At the fifth ant hill, I gave up on being rich and came to Rio as a trucker's assistant. I slept on top of the cargo, on a sack of rice. The driver, to pay me, either gave me lunch or dinner. He stopped in a boarding house and said, "Take your pick, *neguinho*, do you want dinner or lunch today?" So I arrived in Rio with 400 réis in my pocket. Where is Copacabana, man? Are you kidding? No. I'm going there. I went to Copacabana. I got work as a mason's assistant. I slept in the construction site, only left at night. Without family, without friends, without anybody."⁸⁴

⁸¹ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 38-39.

⁸² In the show he says, "I wrote a letter," but it is likely that dictated it to someone, as he also has said that he did not know how to write.

⁸³ João do Vale, interview as part of television program *MPB Especial*, November 12, 1974. Available as Available as João do Vale, *A Música Brasileira por Seus Autores e Intérpretes* (São Paulo: SESC, 2000), 123.

⁸⁴ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 60-61. The term "neguinho" could be read as affectionate or pejorative. Given that this story takes place within the context of Bahia, where the term is more common, the former is possible. However, Vale inserts the word twice in his storytelling during *Opinião* and both times the speaker is condescending to him. Here, he is offered only lunch or dinner; later, he points out that one of his songs is on the radio and his interlocutor replies, "what are you talking about, *neguinho*? Are you delirious?" In either case, the word marks Vale as dark skinned.

Vale's story is a common one, including his migratory trajectory through successively larger cities and his willingness to work many different kinds of jobs.

Though none of Vale's songs in *Opinião* fully recount his journey from Maranhão to Rio, his song "Sina de Caboclo" does make mention of the journey. The song is co-credited to Jocastro Bezerra de Aquino, who was known as the owner of a forró venue, not as a songwriter.⁸⁵ Vale has said that he composed the song during his time working as a truck driver's assistant, on his travels to Rio, so it is likely that Aquino acted as the song's compiler.⁸⁶ The word "caboclo" appears regularly in Vale's compositions and people who saw him in *Opinião* used the word to describe him.⁸⁷ In colonial Brazil, the term was used to describe Brazilians of mixed European and indigenous parentage, or indigenous people living among white colonists.⁸⁸ At least since Euclides da Cunha's 1902 book *Os Sertões*, "caboclo" came to describe anyone from the rural interior of the Northeast, invoking an "adaptable, tenacious, and independent person."⁸⁹ It is clear that Vale is invoking the regional associations of the term, but his usage also evidences the ways it had changed by 1964. At least part of Vale's ancestry was enslaved people from Angola, a notable difference from the term's previous implications.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Vale biographer Marcio Paschoal notes that Vale's difficulty in writing led frequently to "partnerships" with people he met in bars and music venues. See Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará*, 232-233.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 28

⁸⁷ Tâmega, interview with author.

⁸⁸ Crook, *Brazilian Music*, xxiii; McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil* 69

⁸⁹ See Darién J. Davis, *Avoiding the Dark: Race and the Forging of National Culture in Modern Brazil* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 1999), 54; Crook, *Brazilian Music*, 17.

⁹⁰ This usage may also shed light on Ary Barroso's usage of the term in his description of the "caboclo of the morro" as "born with the samba in his heart with the Brazilian rhythm in his conscious." Bryan McCann notes Barroso peculiar usage of the term, writing that "Barroso was apparently transferring the indigenous associations of the term caboclo to the Afro-Brazilian residents of the favela." (McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 68-69.) In fact, it seems that the term was used to describe less a particular racial parentage and more the many people who had migrated from the rural Northeast to live in Rio's favelas. This does not erase the term's racialized nature, as it still tends to describe people of color. For more on the variety of the term's racialized implications, see "caboclo,"

“Sina de Caboclo” is sung from the perspective of a farmer in the northeastern sertão where Vale grew up. The aspects of Vale’s own biography in the song make it clear that he is the protagonist, speaking from the past, describing the present using the future tense:

I am a poor *caboclo*.
I earn my living with a hoe.
What I harvest is shared
With those that haven’t planted anything.
If it continues like this,
I’m going to leave my sertão
With tears in my eyes
And with pain in my heart
I’ll go to Rio to carry cement
For masons in construction.

The *Opinião* audience has just been told Vale’s story. They know that he migrated to their city and now they have an idea as to why: life in the sertão is not just. Farmworkers are limited to sharecropping, which is tantamount to indentured servitude. Vale not only uses evocative lyrics to describe this scene, but stands as a witness to it, in front of a Rio de Janeiro audience, who may not have a mental image of farm life in the sertão, but have more than likely seen migrants working in construction locally.

Vale’s father and grandfather were farmers—the latter born enslaved into the “profession”—and Vale assisted his father in farm work. He describes this in the second verse:

Just give me land and see how
I plant beans, rice, and coffee.
It’ll be good for me and for you, sir.
I send beans, he sends a tractor.
You all will see what I produce!
Modesty aside, I beat my chest.
I am a good farmer!

Michaelis Dicionário Brasileiro da Língua Portuguesa, accessed March 21, 2019,
<https://michaelis.uol.com.br/moderno-portugues/busca/portugues-brasileiro/caboclo/>.

This is where Vale begins, as in *testimonio*, to tell not just his own story, but that of a class of people. Beans, rice, and coffee may have been grown by the same farmer, but, realistically, reflect different regions; and he does not mention sugar or cotton, important crops of his home state.⁹¹ He does, however, point to the impact of modernization on farmers. Yes, the tractor allows the farmer to be more productive, but imagine the cost in beans. Vale remembered the incredulous response to the song: “When I wrote ‘Sina de Caboclo,’ which Nara recorded, there were some that said, ‘Man, is this a type of music where you put “tractors” in a song?’ I said, ‘It is. Tractor, really. A song with a tractor.’”⁹²

This dynamic directly parallels a story that Vale told during one of his recited testimonials. His grandfather had been struck with malaria when the Mearim River overflowed. Although the government supplied free medicine, called *aralém*, to treat the malaria, the local politicians used political recruiters to distribute it. These recruiters traded “the aralém for a sack of rice. I remember that many people did this. Many. This stuck with me, seeing a sack of rice that cost two months’ work weeding and sewing just to be traded for a little envelope with two pills that were supposed to be given for free.”⁹³

The song’s story is sandwiched between a repeated chorus, a single, non-rhyming couplet that, despite Vale’s denials, reads very much like a cry of protest: “But plant just to share, / I won’t do this anymore.” The chorus opens the song and closes each verse. The first line loosely arpeggiates the I chord and the second gestures toward vi, ending on I. The effect is that of a moment of hope followed by resignation, of leaving the sertão with tears in one’s eyes pain in

⁹¹ Silva, *Vida e Arte em João do Vale*, 12.

⁹² Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 127.

⁹³ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 28.

one's heart. The solution to the problem, as suggested by the story, is not to change the unjust dynamic, but to leave. Only in the final reading of the chorus does this seem to change.

Eschewing the melody completely and breaking free from the strictures of the harmony, Vale shouts the last line, "I will won't do this anymore!"

Generically, "Sina de Caboclo" is a baião.⁹⁴ Although baiões are marked, typically, by an accompaniment of accordion, triangle and zabumba, none of these were used in *Opinião*.⁹⁵ The zabumba provides the baião's signature rhythm: a syncopated pattern that emphasizes the first and fourth sixteenth notes in a 2/4 bar. Practitioners and composers of the genre frequently prefer modal scales, especially the mixolydian and dorian, with "Sina de Caboclo" written in the former.⁹⁶

The generic attributes of "Sina de Caboclo" fight against its accompaniment, paralleling the song's political orientation. In *Opinião*, Nara Leão sings the first verse rubato, accompanied by a lightly strummed guitar. As she gently, resignedly sings "I won't do this anymore," Vale enters, singing forcefully and in time. His intonation is poor and his voice is dramatically less pretty than Leão's. The guitar is replaced by a combination of stomping and drum set, which beat out regular quarter notes. The arrangement establishes the affect of the two verses: the first is subdued and pensive, the second much more a call to action. The stomping and drumming evoke work, whether in rural farming or urban construction. Much as "Pisa na Fulô" marks the xote rhythm, Vale's verse melody for "Sina de Caboclo" beats out the baião rhythm through syllabic emphasis, maintaining the accent anticipating the second beat. The baião, the musical paradigm

⁹⁴ Vale, "Depoimento Para a Posteridade."

⁹⁵ Tinhorão, *Pequena História da Música Popular*, 209-210.

⁹⁶ Vicente Samy Ribeiro, "O Modalismo na Música Popular Urbana do Brasil" (PhD diss, Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2014), 108-155.

of northeastern joy, resists the rigidity of the industrial sounding accompaniment. The adaptability of the baião bears some similarity to the blues, which, in spite of its ideal type as a twelve-bar form, was actually quite adaptable in form and harmony.

The use of northeastern musical genres to tell stories of migration is not unique to Vale. Jack A. Draper has shown that Luiz Gonzaga did similar work with the song “Vozes da Seca,” which takes on the meteorological reasons behind many migration stories. Draper does not read the song as biographical, but as a story of power relations and dependency between regions.⁹⁷ Michael B. Silvers points out that “Vozes da Seca” was “an overt protest song” that confronted the Brazilian government’s failure to provide adequate support and protection in the face of devastating droughts.⁹⁸

Diverging from Gonzaga’s overt protest, “Sina de Caboclo” instrumentalizes Vale’s own story of migration to call attention to injustice in his home region and to cast a different light on the legions of migrants living in the Southeast metropolises. The song finds Vale standing for an entire class of good, hardworking people, and couches the knowledge of that class of people in the native musical form of baião, though that form is stretched and challenged by its environment. Given the shouted “I won’t do this anymore” that concludes the performance, it’s easy to understand why listeners hear “Sina de Caboclo” as “a denouncement. Direct report, sober, without anesthesia.”⁹⁹ But it is equally possible to understand Vale’s perspective that he was describing what he saw and experienced. “I won’t do this anymore” can also be a simple description of the decision he made: “I won’t plant to share anymore. I’ll go to Rio and work

⁹⁷ Draper, *Forró and Redemptive Regionalism from the Brazilian Northeast*, 91-93.

⁹⁸ Michael B. Silvers, *Voices of Drought: The Politics of Music and Environment in Northeastern Brazil* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 63-64.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

there.” The audience reads it as a cry of protest because of its context in *Opinião*, its arrangement, Vale’s voice, and accent. The politics happen in between these two readings of the performance.

“They also couldn’t study and can’t even write a baião”

Vale wrote about how baião could serve as a way out of poverty and the key element to his self-education. By adopting composing baião as a professional practice, Vale was able to overcome some of the limitations to his social mobility imposed by the educational institutions in his native Maranhão. Vale recounted this story in his composition “Minha História,” which, in an ironic twist, is not an exemplar of the genre. Although he was clearly proud of his successes as a composer, Vale seemed to recognize his good fortune in successfully making a career in the genre. In “Minha História,” he contrasts his own successes as a composer with that of his less fortunate classmates. In doing so, he comments on the lack of educational opportunity and equality in his native Maranhão.

“Minha História” begins in the past tense, with Vale still a schoolboy in Maranhão. He tells the listener about how he would spend his days selling sweets on the street while his classmates studied. “My mother,” he sings, “poor thing, couldn’t educate me.” In the evening, while he played with his classmates, he would become jealous when one boy, Zezinho, talked about how the teacher got angry with him because he did not want to study. Swapping the past for the present tense, Vale says that, nonetheless, he is happy to see his former friends educated. And when they hear his baiões, they applaud and ask for more. To this point, the song seems to be about Vale coming to terms with his lack of educational opportunity, as if he had been jealous

that he could not go to school with his friends, but later recognized that things worked out for the best.

Vale does not end the song on such a happy note. He sings, “But this is not just about me, it is Mané, Pedro, and Romão / Who were also my classmates and are still in the sertão. / They also could not study, and can’t even write a baião.” As it turns out, Vale was not the only young boy left out. Unlike Vale, his classmates did not have recourse to musical composition. Vale points to the factor that determined who was included and who was left out when he sings, “Today, they are all ‘doctor,’ and I continue João nobody / But those born to money can never be penniless.” The title “doctor” here does not literally refer to someone holding a PhD or medical degree, but anyone educated and respected. Vale’s characterization of the situation seems to almost indicate that he accepts it for what it is: he was born poor and simply did not have access. Taken with the end of the song, however, this line becomes a commentary on the injustices of wealth disparity. Vale seems to be saying, “I would be fine being João nobody, because I found my calling as a songwriter, but I cannot abide so many others suffering the same fate.”

In *Opinião*, Vale sets up the performance of “Minha História” with a similar kind of twist. He recounts how he returned to his hometown of Pedreiras and “was received as if I were the president.”¹⁰⁰ It was hero’s welcome—remember, they named a street after him. He went on, “It was all great, except my homeland, which continued to be the same after all this time.”¹⁰¹ Vale is careful to distinguish his own good fortune and success from the poor living conditions and persistent injustices experienced by so many in his situation. In a subsequent interview, Vale explained,

¹⁰⁰ Costa et al., *Opinião: Texto Completo*, 71.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

When I was little, they changed the tax collector [in Pedreiras] for political reasons, and it seems that I was hand-picked. I had to leave school to give my seat to the tax collector's son. . . . That affected me, you know? First, I got angry, I thought it was the teacher's fault. Then I discovered that it wasn't. I thought it was the headmistress, but it wasn't. Then the mayor, it wasn't. I grew up and went to see if it was the governor.¹⁰²

Vale learned as a young person that those responsible for his limited educational opportunities were not those closest to him. Instead, his experiences of injustice were the mark of systemic inequality.

“Minha História” was performed in *Opinião* but not included in the official recording. None of the exclusions were explained, but space was certainly a consideration—Philips did not release its first double album for some years. It is also fair to assume that the record company wanted to promote its most popular artist, Nara Leão, and she did not sing the song in the show. Another explanation is that both Leão and Vale released studio recordings of the song on Philips in 1965.¹⁰³ Because both singers' versions have similar arrangements, it is likely that the version sung in *Opinião* bore some similarities. Both singers choose a tonic of B. The melody's frequent use of D natural, A natural and G sharp indicate the Dorian mode, common for baião.

The song is structured in six stanzas: an opening quartet followed by five six-line stanzas. In each of the six-line stanzas, the last two lines are repeated. In Vale's version, the repeated lines are sung by a small chorus, while Leão sings everything alone. Given their repetition, these lines carry more weight and attract more attention. In the first stanza, Vale tells of his poor mother who could not educate him, presumably both because she was, herself, uneducated and because she had to work. In the second, he reiterates the words of his classmate that did not want

¹⁰² Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 133.

¹⁰³ Nara Leão, Zé Kéti, and João do Vale, *Show Opinião*, Philips P 632 775 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm; João do Vale, *O Poeta do Povo*, Philips P 623 773 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm.

to study, in great contrast with Vale who was desperate for school. During the third repeated couplet, the tones is more positive, as Vale is recognized as an important composer. And finally, the last repetition is a more somber—even cynical—take on this fact, hammering home the point that there were others that “couldn’t study, and don’t even know how to write baião.”

Francisco Damazo reads the song as speaking to the ways that oppression and “subalternization” persist even in the face of geographic and career changes. He writes, “Being able to study, like some of his friends, or being a composer (artist), like him, gives the subject consciousness and competence not only to escape misery, but also to resist and combat the oppressor, with the greater purpose of preventing him from returning him to the condition of the naive and alienated oppressed.”¹⁰⁴ Only through a fundamental change to the circumstances of oppression can the oppressed overcome their inherited socioeconomic position, but in the meantime, Vale both tells and shows his listener that there is real value in being a composer. Though Vale tempers his own successes as a baião composer with the realistic view that not many people have had such a success, the story he tells in “Minha História” nonetheless speaks to the ways that musical composition allowed him to participate in politics despite his educational disenfranchisement.¹⁰⁵

By articulating his exclusion from formal educational systems in song, Vale participates in a dialogue about him that circulated among critics and audience members. People who knew Vale during the era of *Opinião* fixated on both his lack of education and his artistic talent. They

¹⁰⁴ Francisco Antonio Ferreira Tito Damazo, “Se o Moço Quer Saber Minha História, Seu Doutor, Me Dá Licença, Eu Vou Contar,” Paper delivered at XI Congresso Internacional da ABRALIC, July 13-17, 2008, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

¹⁰⁵ Marcelo Ridenti points out the metatextual element of this story, because “Minha História” was among the songs responsible for the author’s social mobility. See Marcelo Ridenti, *Brasilidade Revolucionária: Um Século de Cultura e Política* (São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2010), 140.

described him as “simple,” “primitive,” “without any education at all,” which indicates that many did not respect his intelligence.¹⁰⁶ But in the same breath, they recalled his “fantastic poetic soul.”¹⁰⁷ In an interview conducted towards the end of Vale’s life, his occasional collaborator Luis Vieira said, “He was a sort of simple person, semi-illiterate, or almost illiterate about everything, intractable at times, irreverent, rude, even nasty at times, but these are the things of genius. Every genius is a bit crazy, a bit kooky, and even a little, a little João do Vale. João do Vale was a genius.”¹⁰⁸ Clyde Woods’s point that “[i]t is assumed that non-literate translates into a lack of intelligence” is relevant here.¹⁰⁹ Vale was upfront about his lack of formal education, but his clever and insightful framing of those circumstances in “Minha História” demonstrate the fallacy of assuming that he was intelligent. Moreover, the effectiveness and quality of his work make the tacit argument for voices like his own to be included in the political dialogue.

One of the great ironies of “Minha História” is that, despite being a song *about* baião, the song is not, rhythmically, a baião. The journalists who interviewed Vale during his Depoimento Para a Posteridade called the song a “toada” (tune), vague language that evidences their struggle to categorize the song. Both Leão and Vale sing the song in a rubato style, accompanied by a swirling acoustic guitar. The lack of stable of rhythm prevents the listener from associating it with a particular musical tradition. The only parts of the song played in time are the repeated lines at the end of each stanza. In Vale’s version, the line is accompanied by a drummer marking

¹⁰⁶ Caymmi, interview with author; Ângela Tâmega, interview with author, Humaitá, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 1, 2017.

¹⁰⁷ Tâmega, interview with author.

¹⁰⁸ Luis Vieira, interviewed in Kermes, *Muita Gente Desconhece*.

¹⁰⁹ Woods, *Development Arrested*, 33.

out a slow samba rhythm. In Leão's, the guitarist provides the rhythm, again gesturing toward samba.

Damazo analyzes the song as poetry, finding that Vale transgresses some of the metric, rhythmic, and syllabic conventions of the northeastern songwriter, a fact that he ascribes to the irregularities of orality and syntax inherent to Vale's diction.¹¹⁰ He points out words which only conform to the rhyme scheme by virtue of Vale's accent, such as *manzugá* (corn pudding) and *estudar* (to study) from the second stanza. Vale does not pronounce the "r" sound at the end of the verb *estudar*. Instead, he conforms to his own accent, preferring an open "a" sound. To quibble with Damazo, the two endings of the two words sound identical in Vale's performance; the question of whether this rhyme is consonant or not, therefore, relies on the way that it is written. As Vale could not write himself, the compiler was responsible for capturing the "correct" spelling of the word or a version that captures Vale's pronunciation. Damazo also points out some of the words that Vale pronounces using two syllables, rather than the "correct" one syllable, such as the honorific *seu*. For example, pronounced "correctly," the first line of the song would have six rather than the typical seven syllables. Instead, Vale divides the word in two, perhaps changing the meaning to *se o* (if the) in the process. This process is evidence of Vale's autodidacticism, of the very story that he narrates. He was excluded from the educational opportunities he was owed, but he found his own way.

Because of the rubato performance style, the interviewers also described "Minha História" as "declamatory."¹¹¹ Vale and Leão do sing the song, but the melody hovers around the tonic, with most lines ending on B natural, often resolving from the D above on the final syllable.

¹¹⁰ Damazo, "Se o Moço Quer Saber Minha História."

¹¹¹ Vale, "Depoimento Para a Posteridade."

The singing style helps to preserve the seriousness of the composition. Especially in Vale's version, with the choral response, the effect is that of a cantor leading a congregation through scripture. The topic is secular, of course, but Vale's church-like intonation makes it clear that there is no humor here. In this tone, the final twist is less punch line than moral. Vale's own story, then, is a reminder of the failures of Brazil's failure to provide educational opportunities for its people.

“Catch, kill, and eat”

Although Vale vehemently resisted the label of “protest music,” participants in the *Opinião* counterpublic nonetheless described his work in those terms. Such was the case with his song “Carcará,” which described a bird of prey native to the northeastern sertão. *Opinião* may have been inspired by Nara Leão's recording of the titular Zé Kéti samba, but “Carcará” was quickly identified as the show's highlight. Vale had written the song in 1963, but no one wanted to record it: “People said what is this about, man, a carcará? Even Luiz Gonzaga didn't record ‘Carcará!’ Nora Ney neither.”¹¹² Newspapers called the song a “cry of revolt” and audience members still remember it as “an iconic song of protest.”¹¹³ The *Jornal do Brasil* made note of the song's popularity in 1965, writing “This ‘Carcará’ that ‘catches, kills, and eats’ has been transforming into a kind of specific and general anthem-symbol of the students of the various capitals through which its creator passes—São Paulo, Porto Alegre, Belo Horizonte, Salvador...”¹¹⁴

¹¹² Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 132.

¹¹³ “João do Vale no Verso e no Canto,” *Jornal dos Sports*, January 3, 1965; Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, February 21, 1965; Neuhaus, interview with author, Skype, April 19, 2016.

¹¹⁴ João Antônio, “Poesia de João Nasce do Canto.”

Vale continued to deny the protest reading of the song throughout his life. The topic even became somewhat contentious in his *Depoimento Para a Posteridade* in late 1991, when one of the interviewers asked, “‘Carcará’ didn’t have a problem? ... In a certain era, ‘Carcará’ was a kind of protest anthem. Everyone understood ‘Carcará’ in another way, right? Not in the literal sense of the verses?”¹¹⁵ Vale responded by saying, “I always made songs like this. I never cared about any of that.” Later, he added, “It’s the eagle. I tell the story of the carcará and the way that it is.”¹¹⁶ The way that Vale describes the animal indicate both a fear and an admiration for the bird:

There are still too many. My region has them. In the sertão and in one part of Bahia there are too many. Even a flock of them. It’s a black and white eagle. Only it’s bigger than an eagle, right? The size of a rooster. In the song there is that part that says: “The newborn lambs can’t walk.” A lamb is a baby sheep. When it’s born, its umbilical cord is there dragging behind it and the carcará grabs the umbilical and kills it. ... They eat anything, they eat baby chicks, they eat snakes, they eat anything. Everything. You need to see it killing a snake. He grabs the tail of the snake and flies with it, goes up high and drops it. It smashes down below—pah! It picks it up again, drops it from up high. Until it’s dead. ... Now, the name is *cara cará*. But the *sertanejo* [sertão resident] calls it carcará. It yells carcarááá... We don’t eat it, are you going to eat a vulture? Not a vulture, right? But even eagles, we don’t eat. And [carcarás] are more dangerous than eagles. ... They are the [most feared] from there.¹¹⁷

Vale paints a picture of a powerful, fear-inducing bird, but it is just this—a portrait of a bird native to his home region.

In contrast to Vale himself, listeners and critics frequently interpret “Carcará” as an allegory for the plight of the rural northeasterner. For example, in a 1966 magazine feature called “The Protest the People Sing,” the journalist and politician Carlos Lacerda cited “Carcará” as an

¹¹⁵ Vale, “Depoimento Para a Posteridade.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 132-133.

example of an effective protest song, contrasting it with a litany of other politically charged songs from Brazil and elsewhere.¹¹⁸ He wrote, “‘Carcará’ is [Vale’s] flagship. Strong, rough, raspy: ‘Carcará catch, kill, and eat / Carcará won’t die of hunger / Carcará, more courage than man / Carcará catch, kill, and eat.’ The bird of prey carcará takes the role of the avenger, of Zé do Telhado of the popular old Portuguese stories, the Antônio Silvino of before, the Robin Hood.”¹¹⁹ Antônio Silvino was a *cangaceiro* (bandit) who was a kind of folk hero of the Brazilian Northeast in the early twentieth century. Larry Crook describes his Robin Hood-like status.¹²⁰ Silvino, like other famous *cangaceiros* such as Lampião, was feared for his potential violence, but celebrated as a folk hero.¹²¹ And although this Brazilian Robin Hood does not appear to have literally robbed from the rich and given to the poor, his activities were in defiance of landowning elites. Lacerda’s romantic reading of the carcará also fits neatly in the tradition of romanticizing the sertão associated with Euclides da Cunha.

Looking at the lyrics of “Carcará,” it is not difficult to find the allegory. Lacerda cites the song’s chorus, which contrasts the bird with human beings, who lack courage. In a survival tale, the “wicked” bird is not passive in its misery. Instead, finding nothing left to eat on its burned-out farm, it steals what it needs, including a penned-in lamb. As the lamb is, presumably, the property of someone else, the Robin Hood comparison makes sense. And the scene is set in the sertão, home to *cangaceiros* like Antônio Silvino. For those opposing the nascent military

¹¹⁸ Lacerda had a reputation as a “destroyer of presidents” due to his role in exposing the corruption that led to the late-President Getúlio Vargas’s suicide, as well as in the ouster of Presidents Jânio Quadros and João Goulart. He flirted with the idea of running for president as a civilian option in 1965, before it was clear that the military would not hold such open elections. Some called him *o corvo* (the crow) because of his apocalyptic tone and alarmist nature. See Kühner and Rocha, *Para Ter Opinião*, 15-16.

¹¹⁹ Carlos Lacerda, “O Protesto que o Povo Canta,” *Fatos e Fotos*, October 29, 1966, 4-12.

¹²⁰ Crook, *Brazilian Music*, 240-241.

¹²¹ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 111-112.

regime, this response could be seen as a call to action for the oppressed lower class. In fact, when the military ousted President João Goulart and put a stop to his Reformas de Base, including plans to restructure of landownership in rural areas of Brazil, which may have helped reduce poverty in the northeastern sertão.¹²² Residents there may have taken inspiration from a figure like the carcará, an anti-hero of the poor, who does not sheepishly follow rules but takes what he needs.

The entire scene is set in the sertão, more specifically, “there in my sertão.” The political is personal: the testimony of a northeasterner who has left his home behind. This aspect of the song was reinforced in the arrangement made for *Opinião*. The playwrights chose to add, after the song’s final verse, a recitation of migration statistics. In performance, over a series of semitone modulations, the singer says, “In 1950, more than two million northeasterners lived outside of their places of birth. Ten percent of the population of Ceará emigrated. Thirteen percent of Piauí. More than fifteen percent of Bahia. Seventeen percent of Alagoas.” The lyric didn’t explicate these statistics, leaving audiences to interpret them. Are these migrants the victims of hunger and poverty? Or are they carcarás taking matters into their own hands by descending on the larger cities *en masse*? One episode from the show’s São Paulo run illustrates the power of this aspect of the song. In May of 1965, the head of the federal police, General Riograndino Krueel, declared that the statistics were subversive and ordered that they be removed from the production.

¹²² Ironically, Carlos Lacerda was among the civilian voices who supported the takedown of Goulart’s government. See Marieta de Moraes Ferreira, “As Reformas de Base,” *Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, Fundação Getúlio Vargas*, accessed September 26, 2017, http://cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/Jango/artigos/NaPresidenciaRepublica/As_reformas_de_base.

It bears mention that “Carcará,” unlike the other songs discussed to this point, was not written in the first person.¹²³ Rather than Vale’s own story, it tells the story of a bird, in the third person. In this way, it diverges slightly from Vale’s preferred method of political participation, eschewing personal testimony for allegory. In the context of his other work, however, “Carcará” is understandable as speaking to and for a class of people, northeasterners from the sertão, whether living far from their homes or not. Here it is the carcará, not the narrator of a testimonio, whom Vale conceives of “as an allegory of the many.”¹²⁴ There is no ambiguity that the song is about “an individual and collective tragedy” and a survival narrative.¹²⁵

“Carcará” became, in subsequent months, a “student hymn,” sung in student-led demonstrations and protests.¹²⁶ The song even led Vale’s being honored by the University of São Paulo’s Academy of Letters of the School of Law as the “Poet of the People.”¹²⁷ According to newspapers of the time, Vale was only the second honoree after legendary nineteenth-century Brazilian poet and playwright Castro Alves. Columnist Eli Halfoun recalled that, during the ceremony honoring Vale, “the audience also could not hide their tears. When he was responding to requests that he sing ‘Carcará,’ João began to weep and only managed to say goodbye and leave.”¹²⁸ The episode may indicate that Vale’s later denials about the song’s political meaning

¹²³ “Peba na Pimenta” is the other exception, but, of these five songs, it does not have as obvious a political interpretation.

¹²⁴ Gugelberger and Kearney, “Voices for the Voiceless,” 8.

¹²⁵ Woods, *Development Arrested*, 17; Woods, “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?,” 1008-1013.

¹²⁶ Silva, *Vida e Arte em João do Vale*, 31.

¹²⁷ Eli Halfoun, “Gente & Show,” *Última Hora*, May 28, 1965.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

were overstated, that when he said “Leave it alone, you’re talking about things you shouldn’t!” he was speaking more in fear of retribution than genuine denial.¹²⁹

Protestations

The audience played an important role in determining the political orientation of not only “Carcará,” but Vale’s music in general. Prior to *Opinião*, Vale was not known as a performer, though he did sing his songs at Zicartola, a small restaurant and musical venue in the center of Rio owned by samba composer Cartola and his wife, Zica.¹³⁰ Zicartola was a short-lived but beloved venue where many highly touted composers performed. Almost all of these were Rio-born samba composers—notably, Cartola himself, Néelson Cavaquinho, and, of course, Zé Kéti—making Vale, a northeasterner who composed baião, a notable exception. Many recall Zicartola as the place where the idea for *Opinião* was initially hatched, so it is no surprise that the audiences for both overlapped a great deal. Both attracted young leftist intellectuals and artists.¹³¹ It was there that Vale established and refined the political orientation of the songs he would perform in *Opinião*.

The audience response to Vale’s performances shows the importance audience members placed on the connection between Vale, the performer, and Vale, the person in the songs’ stories. Literary critics Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have pointed out that in performed autobiographical narrative, the close proximity between narrator and audience can serve as a

¹²⁹ Vale, “Depoimento Para a Posteridade.”

¹³⁰ Antônio, “Poesia de João Nasce do Canto.”

¹³¹ Later in his life, Vale would strive to make his music his music available to other displaced Northeasterners in Rio de Janeiro. Lenita Beltrame recalled that Vale “made a point to bring culture to people who didn’t have access to it,” bringing Northeastern migrants working on the construction of Rio’s subway system to shows that he produced in the late 1970s. Lenita Beltrame, interviewed in Kermes, *Muita Gente Desconhece*.

kind of feedback loop.¹³² There is evidence for this in accounts of Vale's performance in *Opinião*, such as this one from the *Jornal dos Sports*:

The liberation of the rural man depends on the effective contribution of every one of those that lived or witnessed the misery that enslaves them. Each contributes as they can. João resolved to tell by singing the anguish of his siblings of Maranhão. ... In the Teatro de Arena every night, with that joyous face of a happy boy that God gave him where only his eyes show the scars of the most bitter days, João extracts enthusiastic applause of the public that overflows daily from that playhouse."¹³³

According to this account, Vale's stories create the possibility for liberation from misery not by bringing that misery to the attention of an audience that is unaware of it—whether the audience was aware or not is unknown and perhaps unimportant—but by performing in a way that moves them.

The *Opinião* audience was also responsible for Vale gaining a reputation as a composer of protest music, seemingly in direct opposition to Vale's self-presentation and perception. For example, let us revisit Vale's comment cited above: "I make [songs] from the things that I see, from my region. And, it's funny, it wasn't called protest ... People thought that I was singing the problems of the region. After a while, they showed up with this name protest, right?"¹³⁴ One audience member called one of Vale's songs "an iconic song of protest against the dictatorship."¹³⁵ Carlos Lacerda, the former governor of Guanabara (the present-day state of Rio de Janeiro), wrote an article about protest music in which he identified Vale as the only authentic

¹³² Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 77.

¹³³ "João do Vale no Verso e No Canto."

¹³⁴ Souza, "Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana," 130.

¹³⁵ Neuhaus, interview with author.

protest music singer in the country.¹³⁶ Maranhense poet Ferreira Gullar, while not using the term “protest,” has said that João do Vale “had a political consciousness . . . a consciousness—rare among people from the [rural] interior; in the city it is already rare, imagine someone from the interior!—of inequality, of the search for social justice.”¹³⁷ But Vale continued to resist this label: “I sang the truth about the Northeast: the drought, the famine, the people from there, not as a protest. After ’64, they started to think that it was a protest. Censorship cut this and that, prohibited various songs of mine, and I was protesting. On the contrary, I thought that I was even helping, showing the real situation of the Northeast, the damage of the drought, the misery there.”¹³⁸ Chico Anysio, meanwhile, claims that his music “had nothing to do with politics. . . . People took his music and brought to them a political intention that he did not have.”¹³⁹ By framing João do Vale’s political participation as autobiographical baião rather than protest song, we can take seriously both Vale’s claim that he was merely observing and recounting the circumstances in the Brazilian Northeast *and* the audience’s claim that this was protest music: what Vale sang as testimony was heard as protest.

In 1987, Vale suffered a stroke that rendered his speech slurred and slow and drastically limited his ability to remember. During the 1991 Depoimento Para a Posteridade, interviewers had to stop multiple times to let him rest. Moreover, Vale’s most common response to the questions was “I don’t remember,” eventually leading him to elaborate, “I don’t remember things

¹³⁶ Lacerda, “O Protesto que o Povo Canta”; The importance of this article is mentioned in Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará*, 104; Souza, “Não Troquei de Mulher Quando Entrou Grana,” 122.

¹³⁷ Ferreira Gullar, interviewed in Kermes, *Muita Gente Desconhece*.

¹³⁸ Vale, quoted in Paschoal, *Pisa na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará*, 103.

¹³⁹ Chico Anysio, interviewed in Kermes, *Muita Gente Desconhece*.

well ever since the illness.”¹⁴⁰ The simple and heartbreaking explanation laid bare the difficulties that accompanied the end of Vale’s life and highlighted the sad irony accompanying the event: the interview was meant to capture his recollections for posterity, but it was too late. Considering the nature of Vale’s political work, this loss was particularly poignant. His songs were built from his remembered experiences, and they were part of an oral tradition that made his life, his home, his problems knowable to audiences.

Though Vale’s Depoimento Para a Posteridade was inhibited by his illness, his songs persist as his testimony. Because Vale embedded his own life narrative within these songs, they served as his form of political participation in *Opinião* and after. Although he was ever reluctant to claim that he wrote political songs, audiences understood them that way because of the topics he sang about, the way he and his co-stars sang them, their contextualization within the show, and, perhaps most important, the biographical details that surrounded them. They became a crucial driver of the debates and discussions that characterized the *Opinião* counterpublic.

¹⁴⁰ Vale, “Depoimento Para a Posteridade.”

Chapter Five. Maria Bethânia: The Voice of Protest

*I like to sing violent music. I adore it.
I become much looser. It's better for me...
I don't like to sing restrained [music].*
– Maria Bethânia¹

On March 21, 1965, *Opinião* closed in Rio de Janeiro after 106 performances.² The performers had three weeks to recuperate—and renegotiate their earnings—before the production travelled to São Paulo for a two-month engagement at the Teatro Ruth Escobar.³ Midway through its São Paulo run, the show, which had already been approved by national censors, was threatened with a new slate of cuts by General Riograndino Krueel, chief of the Federal Police under President Castello Branco.⁴ Teresa Aragão, one of the eight members of the *Grupo Opinião* that produced the show, expressed shock and dismay at the development, noting that the show “has been running for a month already, receiving from the São Paulo public equal or greater praise than it had received in Rio de Janeiro.”⁵ As I noted in chapter 1, censorship was a real concern for the show’s makers, but this was still a period during the dictatorship notable for relative freedom in the cultural realm, especially in comparison with the so-called leaden years that began in late 1968.⁶ The show had passed through the censors in Rio and again in São Paulo,

¹ Júlio Bressane and Eduardo Escorel, *Bethânia Bem de Perto: A Propósito de Um Show* (Biscoito Fino, 1966). Available at Biscoito Fino, “Bethânia Bem de Perto,” Youtube video, 33:10, January 7, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo4Jsj5hbPM&t=3s>.

² Program for São Paulo staging of *Liberdade, Liberdade*, Acervo Paulo Autran, Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

³ “Bethania Voltará Para a Bahia Sem Esquecer Opinião,” *Diário Carioca*, March 23, 1965; “‘Opinião’ Sai de Cartaz Esta Semana Para Estrear Em S. Paulo Sem Zé Kéti,” *Jornal Do Brasil*, February 23, 1965.

⁴ Van Jafa, “Opinião (Censurada) em São Paulo,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 29, 1965; “Inelegibilidades,” *Correio da Manhã*, May 27, 1965.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture*, ed. John Gledon (New York: Verso, 1992), 127.

so there was no reason for the producers or performers to expect the show to be cut. What had changed to make the Federal Police suddenly consider *Opinião* dangerously subversive and worthy of further cuts? Although multiple factors certainly contributed to Kruel's intervention, one stands out from the rest: the growing importance of the newest member of the cast, an eighteen year-old singer from the northeastern state of Bahia named Maria Bethânia (Maria Bethânia Viana Telles Veloso, b. June 18, 1946, Santo Amaro da Purificação, Bahia, Brazil). Bethânia had joined the cast on the recommendation of Nara Leão, whom she replaced

Bethânia and Leão met in Salvador, Bahia a few months prior to the opening of *Opinião*, while Leão was on tour.⁷ She was so impressed with Bethânia that she left her with a few new songs, including the Zé Kéti compositions “Opinião” and “Acender as Velas.”⁸ When Leão lost her voice in late January 1965, she recommended that Bethânia take her place.⁹ Bethânia was already aware of *Opinião* and quickly said yes: “It was a huge chance that I couldn't miss. [*Opinião*] is a marvel; it's all they talk about back home.”¹⁰ Later she recalled, “I didn't have to think much because I was coming to sing: Nara gave the suggestion, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho called the same night, and the next day, I left.”¹¹ Just over two weeks later, on February 13, 1965, Bethânia made her official debut in the show.¹² She continued alongside Zé Kéti and João

⁷ Barreto Brasil, “Samba de Roda da Bahia,” *Jornal dos Sports*, February 14, 1965.”

⁸ Sérgio Cabral, *Nara Leão: Uma Biografia* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 2001), 7-71; Caetano Veloso, *Tropical Truth: A Story of Music and Revolution in Brazil*, trans. Isabel de Sena (New York: Da Capo Press, 2003), 45-46.

⁹ “Nara Sem Voz Tira ‘Opinião,’” *Diário Carioca*, January 28, 1965; Eli Halfoun, “Pedro Bloch Proíbe Nara de Cantar e Filha de Vinícius Entra Em ‘Opinião,’” *Última Hora Revista*, January 29, 1965; José Carlos de Oliveira, “Enquanto Nara Não Vem,” *Jornal Do Brasil*, January 29, 1965; “A Nara Seguem Suzana e Betânia,” *Diário Carioca*, January 30, 1965; “Filha de Vinícius No Lugar de Nara,” *Correio Da Manhã*, January 31, 1965.

¹⁰ Jonas Vieira, “Nara Sai, Ela Fica,” *Última Hora Revista*, February 11, 1965.

¹¹ Miguel Estevao, “A Livre Voz de Betânia,” *Jornal do Brasil*, March 19, 1965.

¹² Bethânia would need time to travel from Bahia and learn the show, but the producers did not want to lose momentum, so they contracted Suzana de Moraes, daughter of Vinícius de Moraes, to fill in for two weeks.

do Vale in the production for the rest of its run, including shows in São Paulo and Porto Alegre.

By the time that Krueel decided to censor the show three months later, Maria Bethânia had become its centerpiece. The show's average attendance was up.¹³ Her 45 rpm single of João do Vale's song "Carcará" was selling hundreds of copies per day in stores and from the theater lobby.¹⁴ Her participation seems to have given *Opinião* new life. It also changed the show. Because Bethânia was not from an upper middle-class family and did not grow up Rio's wealthy Zona Sul, she did not represent the same sociogeography as Nara Leão. She also did not have the same social capital as Leão, nor did she participate in public debate in the newspapers. More than anything else, Bethânia did not sing like her.

In this chapter, I argue that Maria Bethânia's performances served to engender what sociologist Mabel Berezin calls a "community of feeling."¹⁵ Berezin theorizes communities of feeling to describe social groups that come together for discreet time periods in public spaces "to express emotional energy."¹⁶ The term takes inspiration from Raymond Williams's concept of "structures of feeling" to emphasize the momentary specificity of the formation of these groups. Just as Williams famously posits structures of feeling as "social experiences in solution," one may think of communities of feeling as "social groups in solution."¹⁷ In creating this community of feeling, Bethânia's performance did not cause the *Opinião* counterpublic to cease to exist—indeed, discussion and debate of politics and art continued during Bethânia's tenure—but, as

¹³ Program for *Liberdade, Liberdade*.

¹⁴ "Discos," *Correio do Paraná*, May 8, 1965.

¹⁵ Mabel Berezin, "Secure States: Towards a Political Sociology of Emotion," in *Emotions and Sociology*, ed. Jack Barbalet (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁷ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 133.

audiences recount, her dynamic performances moved them, emotionally.

In order to show how this community of feeling formed, I examine how audiences reacted to Bethânia. I argue that their reading of the affect of her performances was informed by the expectations created by the singer's regional origins and descriptions of her voice and body that circulated in print upon her joining the show. I investigate how critics and the *Opinião* production team highlighted the fact that Bethânia was a *baiana* (Bahian woman) to play into the reputation of Bahia as an authentic source of Brazilian culture—particularly music. I illustrate how audiences reacted in surprise when her appearance and presentation did not match the stereotyped image associated with *baiana*—typically a black woman, often dressed in white clothing associated with the Afro-Brazilian religion candomblé and the street vendors of Bahian cuisine. I also describe how audience expectations were disrupted in the perceived discrepancies between Bethânia's body and her voice, a discrepancy that some reconciled by ascribing to her a voice an inner-born sincerity.

I begin by examining the ways that Bethânia, the *Opinião* production team, and the audience participated in constructing the singer as authentic. I investigate Bethânia's background in Bahia, the cultural meanings associated with that state, and how they were embedded in Bethânia's monologues in the show and the song “De Manhã,” composed by Bethânia's brother Caetano Veloso based on a traditional Bahian samba. Furthermore, I discuss how the decision to have Bethânia sing the song from offstage before appearing in front of the audience played into the moment of shock at seeing her. Bethânia's interpretation of “De Manhã” also showcases the emotive power she brings to her performances.

I then turn to Bethânia's most celebrated moment in *Opinião*, her performance of the João do Vale song “Carcará,” to show how her dynamic performances engendered a community

of feeling. Inspired by audience reactions, I analyze Bethânia's performance of the song from Paulo César Saraceni's film *O Desafio*, which was filmed in the theater where the show was running. I show how Bethânia injected emotion into the interpretation through her singing and movements and argue that Bethânia's performance style inspired the kind of emotional investment that makes political action possible. I examine how she used anger in her performance to create what audience members heard as a shout of protest, and the backlash this shout received from government officials like Riograndino Krueel. In a way, the performance's shocking nature was one small step toward further government repression and closures of the public sphere.

Constructing Bethânia's Authenticity

In articles and reviews of Bethânia's performance in *Opinião*, journalists highlighted the fact that Bethânia was from Bahia, consistently referring to her as "the baiana." This fact, according to director Augusto Boal, was a source of anxiety for the production team. They worried about the show being "disfigured" by Bethânia's presence, because she did not fit any of the categories associated with the original cast—urban elite, urban poor, rural poor.¹⁸ Bethânia grew up in a relatively modest middle-class family, rather than the more luxurious upper middle-class upbringing that Nara Leão enjoyed. Bethânia was, like João do Vale, a northeasterner, but she was not from the rural *sertão*. She was born in the small city of Santo Amaro da Purificação, Bahia, before moving to the state capital of Salvador at the age of 13.¹⁹ As Antônio Carlos da Fontoura, who advised the *Opinião* production team on North American protest music trends,

¹⁸ Augusto Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho Do Padeiro: Memórias Imaginadas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2000), 230.

¹⁹ Zuza Homem de Mello, *Música Popular Brasileira* (São Paulo: Edições Melhoramentos, 1976), 44-45.

told me, “Bethânia was a change. Because the very conceit [of the show] was to have a girl like Nara that represented the dominant class . . . In truth, it lost its initial DNA, in a way. Because even though Bethânia was urban, she was not that golden youth, none of that. She was a Bahian girl.”²⁰ Every audience member with whom I spoke made similar comments: “It was no longer a little rich girl from the Zona Sul, it was a person that came from Bahia, from the Northeast.”²¹ Bethânia “had a different tradition.”²² She “brought the baggage of northeastern music.”²³

This change was not hidden; it was highlighted during *Opinião*, where Bethânia immediately told audiences where she was from, although her monologue was carefully manipulated to leave some details unsaid and embellish others. In *Opinião*, she introduced herself like this:

My name is Maria Bethânia Viana Telles Veloso. I have this Bahian landowner’s name but I’m just Bahian. I’m 18 years old, I can’t graduate because I haven’t finished my math studies. I’m the daughter of a good guy, a postal worker, me and my eight siblings. . . Now I’m a singer, but until I was twelve, I was a left wing on the [soccer] team in Santo Amaro, where I was born.²⁴

There is no mention of Salvador; instead Bethânia’s words quickly distance her from the landowning elite. Moreover, Bethânia’s older brother, Caetano Veloso, who accompanied her to Rio in 1965, says that she was never a soccer player, that this was just a way for the playwrights to insert a sly political joke punning on the word “left.”²⁵ Ironically, these embellishments were a

²⁰ Antônio Carlos da Fontoura, interview with author, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, May 19, 2017.

²¹ Eduardo Escorel, interview with author, Jardim Botânico, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, March 17, 2017.

²² Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016.

²³ Chico Buarque de Hollanda, interview with the author, Recreio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 12, 2017.

²⁴ Armando Costa, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho, and Paulo Pontes, *Opinião: Texto Completo Do “Show”* (Rio de Janeiro: Edições do Val, 1965), 85.

²⁵ Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, 44.

way to situate Bethânia as an authentic northeasterner. Even true details, such as the size of her family and her father's profession, were included to paint a picture of her as from modest origins.

Merely being Bahian played into the notion that Bethânia was more “authentic,” as articles of the time indicate. Bahia holds a reputation as the origin of Brazilian culture. This reputation derives from the city's colonial past—Salvador, Bahia was the Brazilian capital for over two hundred years, and its churches and public buildings are some of the oldest remnants of the colonial period. Many aspects of Bahian regional culture are promoted as exemplars of authentic Brazil. Bahian cuisine—including foods like acarajé, vatapá, moqueca, and other dishes—is celebrated by the Brazilian tourism bureau and even in popular song.²⁶ Native Bahian Dorival Caymmi's samba “Vatapá,” which he recorded in 1957, includes the recipe for making the titular Bahian dish: cashews, chili pepper, peanuts, shrimp, and coconut.²⁷ Assis Valente's “Brasil Pandeiro,” another samba by a Bahian composer, uses Bahian food more explicitly to promote Brazilianness. Its lyrics note that “Uncle Sam ... has been saying the Bahian sauce makes his food better.”

Bahia also has a reputation for producing many of Brazil's most popular musical forms. Samba, the genre promoted as Brazil's national music in the mid-twentieth century, developed alongside carnival, a tradition that arrived in Rio with migrants from Bahia.²⁸ Although samba's musical and social attributes coalesced in Rio, the genre was continually connected with Bahia

²⁶ Larry Crook and Randal Johnson, “Introduction,” in *Black Brazil: Culture, Identity, and Social Mobilization* (Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Center Publications, 1999), 1.

²⁷ Gal Costa, another native Bahian, recorded an even more popular version of the song in 1976.

²⁸ Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music & National Identity in Brazil*, trans. John Charles Chasteen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 25; Marc A. Hertzman, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 80

and Bahians.²⁹ Many point to the Rio de Janeiro home of Tia Ciata, who, like Maria Bethânia, was born in Santo Amaro, Bahia, as the birthplace of samba as we know it today.³⁰ Tia Ciata made and sold Bahian food and clothing in Rio and created a space for musicians to experiment and perform the nascent genre.³¹ The song “Pelo Telephone,” which was the first samba ever recorded, was said to be composed at her home.³²

Marc Hertzman has described the contentious debates in the 1920s and 30s that show that samba was not universally recognized as a Bahian genre.³³ But journalists writing about Bethânia’s arrival in Rio in 1965 drew connections between the genre and the young singer’s roots nonetheless:

They say that samba was born in Bahia. And I’m not the one that is going to doubt this... It was there, through the core population of the *recôncavo* [the region surrounding the Bay of All Saints], that samba was born. On feast days, for some reason, the simple people of those surroundings get together and put on a *samba de roda*.³⁴

Samba de roda is a form of samba native to Bahia and associated with populations of African descent. The practice, which is still common today, usually consists of a small ensemble arranged in a circle, in the middle of which dancers take turns.³⁵ The “circle” aspect of samba de

²⁹ Bryan McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 44.

³⁰ Sérgio Cabral, *As Escolas de Samba Do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 1996), 32.

³¹ Hertzman, *Making Samba*, 62.

³² The credited composer, Donga, admits that the song was, in fact, a *maxixe*, not a samba. Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba*, 79-89.

³³ Hertzman, *Making Samba*, 121-127.

³⁴ Brasil, “Samba de Roda da Bahia,”

³⁵ Larry Crook, *Brazilian Music: Northeastern Traditions and the Heartbeat of a Modern Nation* (ABC CLIO: Santa Barbara, CA, 2005), 63; John Murphy, *Music in Brazil: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 41.

roda may be an inheritance from earlier forms of music making developed by enslaved Africans in Brazil, such as the *lundu*.³⁶ These articles associate Bethânia and her musical education with the birthplace of the country's national music and therefore as a direct connection to the source.³⁷

The press emphasis on Bethânia being a baiana also came with racialized implications. Scholars frequently note the large percentage of Brazilians who are of African descent and the ways that black Brazilians have contributed cultural forms now associated with Brazil writ large.³⁸ Due to its reputation for having the largest population of people of African descent in Brazil, and the prevalence of cultural forms associated with African heritage there, Bahia invokes notions of blackness more than any other part of the country.³⁹ José Ramos Tinhorão has even argued that Bahian women like Tia Ciata were able to provide spaces for early samba musicians because they inherited matriarchal family structures from African roots. Regardless of this argument's persuasiveness, it shows the degree to which people from Bahia were seen as bearers of Afro-Brazilian culture and heritage.⁴⁰

Associations between Bahia and blackness recur frequently in depictions of baianas in popular music. Dorival Caymmi alludes to the black Bahian woman's special ability to make authentic food, saying that "If you want to eat vatapá ... look for a black baiana / That knows

³⁶ José Ramos Tinhorão, *Pequena História Da Música Popular Da Modinha à Canção de Protesto* (Petrópolis, RJ: Editora Vozes, 1974), 41.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Crook and Johnson, "Introduction," 1; Michael Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: The Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, Brazil 1945-1988* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.

³⁹ See Patricia de Santana Pinho, *Mama Africa: Reinventing Blackness in Bahia*, trans. Elena Langdon (

⁴⁰ José Ramos Tinhorão, *História Social da Música Brasileira* (Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1990), 218. Bryan McCann has also pointed to the importance of West African heritage in the image and reputation of the baiana. See McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 60.

how to stir.”⁴¹ Moreover, the Portuguese term for stir (*mexer*) also connotes dancing and sex, and sexualizes the black woman described in the song. Other songs, like Caymmi’s “O Que é Que a Baiana Tem?” and Geraldo Pereira’s “Falsa Baiana” play off and reinforce stereotypes that Bahian women are more innately rhythmic, and therefore more authentically Brazilian.

The instrumentalization of the baiana image in Rio de Janeiro’s official carnival parades further demonstrates its widespread racialized implications. As a way of recognizing the important role that Bahian women like Tia Ciata played in creating spaces for samba to develop in Rio, every school is required to have an *ala de baianas* (wing of baianas) marching with them.⁴² The women who march are not typically from Bahia, but wear costumes that recall the clothing worn by the women who work as street vendors selling Bahian cuisine. Typically, this means flowing white dresses, which themselves have been adopted from attire worn by practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religion of *candomblé*.⁴³

Every *Opinião*-era article about Maria Bethânia refers to her as “the baiana” at least once.⁴⁴ In many cases, the word takes the place of the pronouns she and her.⁴⁵ On one hand, this is a completely reasonable choice, merely a descriptor of where she’s from. It would be characteristic, for example, for an article about Frank Sinatra in a Brazilian publication to refer to him as “the American” at least once. On the other hand, these terms are markers of difference—it

⁴¹ The ingredients, as Bryan McCann has pointed out, matter less than the person mixing them. McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 108.

⁴² Sérgio Cabral, *As Escolas de Samba Do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Lumiar Editora, 1996), 79; Hertzman, *Making Samba*, 196.

⁴³ McCann, *Hello, Hello Brazil*, 60.

⁴⁴ See, for a few representative examples: Yan Michalski, “Jabuticabeira Continua Florida,” *Jornal do Brasil*, February 25, 1965; Brasil, “Samba de Roda da Bahia.”; José Poerner, “A Opinião que Bethânia Mudou,” *Correio da Manhã*, February 19, 1965.

⁴⁵ “Carcará,” *Jornal dos Sports*, March 14, 1965.

would be strange if that Sinatra article *only* used the term “American” to describe him. In the case of “baiana,” the connotations of this term, particularly how it is used to imply and invoke an authentic connection to Brazil’s past, and to its African heritage, are relevant here. They paint Bethânia’s roots—as well as her musical performance and politics—as particularly authentic. With respect to musicians like Bethânia, Fontoura told me, “by being northeasterners, it’s another kind of thing that they bring. Another musical sensibility, in a way.”⁴⁶

Locating Bethânia in Bahia, labeling her in this way, was not only a way of attributing to her a special connection to the source of Brazilian music; it was also a way of showing her difference. One newspaper called her “the fruit of the so-called *grupo baiano* [Bahian group] that met every afternoon in Salvador ... to modernize even more our samba.”⁴⁷ Bethânia took responsibility for inventing the idea. After the success of *Opinião*, Augusto Boal asked Bethânia to do another show in São Paulo. She responded: “So I said, ‘look, Boal, I’ll do it, but under one condition. Only if you bring all of the people that worked with me in Bahia.’ ... So he said, ‘perfect, great, let’s do a show with everybody from Bahia.’ So they all came. It was the *grupo baiano*.”⁴⁸ The term “*grupo baiano*” described all of the Bahian musicians that went to São Paulo, including Bethânia, her brother Caetano, Gilberto Gil, and Gal Costa.⁴⁹ These four would tour in the mid-’70s under the name *Doces Bárbaros*, the name playing off of a cartoon portraying the *grupo baiano* as barbarians invading Brazil’s southeastern cities.⁵⁰ The singer

⁴⁶ Fontoura, interview with author.

⁴⁷ “Discos,” *Correio do Paraná*, May 6, 1965.

⁴⁸ Maria Bethânia, quoted in Tarik de Souza, ed., *O Som do Pasquim: Grandes Entrevistas com os Astros da Música Popular Brasileira*, 2nd ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Codecri, 1976), 54-55.

⁴⁹ All of these musicians, except Bethânia went on to participate in the *Tropicália* movement of the late 1960s.

⁵⁰ Christopher Dunn, *Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 139.

Luiza, who starred in the musical theater production *Reação* during Bethânia's time in *Opinião*, even implied a kind of self-segregation on the part of the Bahians. She told me that "Bethânia, Gal, Caetano and that group became a clan. They didn't mix with the rest of the music. There wasn't any exchange at all."⁵¹

"Cocorocó"

Audiences and critics raved about the quality of Maria Bethânia's voice. The authenticity conferred by Bethânia's Bahianness no doubt influenced this reaction, as some even called her voice "exceptional" even before they had heard it.⁵² Once they did hear her, audience members attributed her vocal power to a raw, regionally derived talent, rather than any kind of training or technical ability. Fontoura called it a "rustic, northeastern even, from the earth."⁵³ Yan Michalski juxtaposed his praise of Bethânia's voice with an assessment of her "rather crude technical control."⁵⁴ One fan recalled liking her singing despite the frequent critique that she sang with bad intonation.⁵⁵

But her vocal power should not be cast as a mere side effect of her regional origins. Journalists Sérgio Cabral, Napoleão Moniz Freire, and Jonas Vieira all gushed about Bethânia's voice and talent in advance of the show's opening. Cabral predicted that "her career will be one

⁵¹ Luiza, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, May 28, 2017.

⁵² "A Opinião de Maria Betânia," *Diário Carioca*, February 3, 1965.

⁵³ Fontoura, interview with author.

⁵⁴ Michalski, "Jabuticabeira Continua Florida."

⁵⁵ Edgard Salles, interview with author, Leblon, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, May 23, 2017.

of the great musical events of 1965.”⁵⁶ One newspaper said she had a “voice to shake one’s foundations.”⁵⁷ In his memoir, director Augusto Boal recalled the rehearsals: “I heard a noise behind me; I looked and saw the audience almost full. Spectators, from the street and the bar on the corner, hearing this strange, unusual beautiful voice came to the theater dumbstruck... This was [Bethânia’s] true debut in Rio de Janeiro: the night of the dress rehearsal!”⁵⁸

If Bethânia’s voice reinforced notions of her authentic connection to Bahia, her appearance, based on audience descriptions and reactions, did not. By virtue of her body and clothing, she did not fit the stereotypical image of the *baiana*, a fact that surprised critics and audience members. Some, like Vieira, described her skeptically. He wrote, “looking at Maria Bethânia, 5’4”, 108 pounds ... no one is capable of identifying her as a singer.”⁵⁹ In fact, most articles noted her height (short) and weight (skinny).⁶⁰ One paper remarked on her “ungainly manner.”⁶¹ Others were more critical in their characterizations. Geraldo Picanco, an audience member who frequented *Opinião*, did not mince words in describing “that horrific image of Bethânia, so skinny, with those baggy pants, that nose—no one would believe that she would be successful. That hair tied back in a bun, those arms...”⁶² Another member of the *Opinião* audience described her similarly: “hair tied back... Ugly, very ugly.”⁶³ These comments, at least,

⁵⁶ Napoleão Moniz Freire, “Alienadas,” *Diário Carioca*, February 11, 1965; Vieira, “Nara Sai, Ela Fica”; Cabral, “Maria Betâmia e Uma Opinião.”

⁵⁷ “Bethania Espera,” *Jornal dos Sports*, July 3, 1965.

⁵⁸ Augusto Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho Do Padeiro: Memórias Imaginadas* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2000), 229.

⁵⁹ Vieira, “Nara Sai, Ela Fica.”

⁶⁰ “Discos,” May 8, 1965; Poerner, “A Opinião que Bethânia Mudou.”

⁶¹ “Maria Bethânia: Samba Nôvo, Samba Eterno,” *Correio da Manhã*, April 17, 1965.

⁶² Geraldo Picanco, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 5, 2017.

⁶³ Luiz Guilherme de Moraes, interview with author, Leblon, Rio de Janeiro, June 22, 2016.

illustrate some of the differences in how, like they had with Nara Leão before her, audiences and critics judged Maria Bethânia's appearance in a way they did not do with her male co-stars.

Even more than showcasing this pervasive sexism, though, these descriptors illustrate the ways that Bethânia contradicted audience expectations about what a baiana was supposed to look like. Barreto Brasil captured this feeling when reporting on the rehearsals that preceded Bethânia's debut. After referring to her Bahianness multiple times as an authenticating gesture, he wrote, "But what a baiana! Looking at that tiny person, so skinny, with that straight hair, it makes you want to purse your lips."⁶⁴

The *Opinião* production team also worked against baiana stereotypes in the clothing they chose for her. Grupo Opinião member Teresa Aragão told the paper *Correio da Manhã* that the producers opted for a tomboy look of jeans and a man's long-sleeved shirt.⁶⁵ Theater critic Yan Michalski praised the producers for exploiting her boyishness.⁶⁶ Columnist Léa Maria noted the men's clothing and lack of makeup in concluding that Bethânia was in the Nara Leão tradition of the "ugly-pretty" physical type.⁶⁷ Her brother felt that the production team "didn't know how to dress her, style her hair, or otherwise present her to the public" because "she was not a typical middle-class white girl. Her frizzy hair and indefinite skin color, her thinness, her high forehead above that strong nose, her contralto voice, and even her indeterminable age created problems."⁶⁸

The contrast between perceptions of Bethânia's voice and body magnified the effect that

⁶⁴ Barreto Brasil, "O Que é Que a Bahiana Tem? Tem uma voz..." *Jornal dos Sports*, February 7, 1965.

⁶⁵ Poerner, "A Opinião que Bethânia Mudou."

⁶⁶ Michalski, Jabuticabeira Continua Florida."

⁶⁷ Léa Maria, "Bethânia na Estudantina," *Jornal do Brasil*, March 17, 1965.

⁶⁸ Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, 44.

her voice engendered. Barreto Brasil, in the same review cited above, wrote,

The damn *baiana* seems to have the devil in her. She sings through all of her pores. Maria Bethânia's voice makes you think. Having a voice is one thing. Singing is the hard part. And how the little thing sings. She really sings.... The words that come out, they come from inside. Deep inside. From the depths. ... If I'm exaggerating I will buy a Fanta tonight at the Leandro bar for anyone that disagrees with me.⁶⁹

Brasil connects his shock to the sincerity of her singing, how the words come from “deep inside.” This fact contributed to the emotional effect of her performance, which, along with the cultural expectations through which she was judged and interpreted, led to the possibilities for the community of feeling that formed around her performance.

In performance, this shock was even more pronounced because *Opinião* audiences actually heard Bethânia's voice before seeing her. She sang her first song, “De Manhã,” from offstage in the darkened theater. Boal describes the moment in his memoirs:

She had asked to sing Caetano's “É de Manhã” [sic] as her first song. I requested that she start to sing in the dressing room. I darkened the theater so that Bethânia would enter in the dark searching for her flower. She emerged into the first light of the day ... and when the rooster started to sing, at the end of the song, so then did the light open like a flower, bathing her in the dawn. It was morning, yes, Bethânia, like your brother's song says: it was the lovely morning of your beautiful career, that will never have a night.⁷⁰

The contrast that audiences noted between Bethânia's voice and her appearance became a shocking moment at the beginning of the show, and the staging of the moment played on their expectations. *Opinião* had no set and only a very simple lighting setup, so this moment was made even more dramatic by virtue the slightly more elaborate lighting used. One journalist used a sports metaphor to describe the impression the moment made: “The victory came—as sports

⁶⁹ Barreto Brasil, “O Que é Que a Bahiana Tem?”

⁷⁰ Boal, *Hamlet e o Filho Do Padeiro*, 230.

announcers say—in the fifth minute of the first half... Maria Bethânia had just received the ball from Zé Kéti and João do Vale and, for the first time, like the point of the spear that she was in Santo Amaro da Purificação, she was alone in front of the goal.”⁷¹

“De Manhã” was a novelty for the Rio audience. Veloso was as yet unknown as a composer in the city. And although the lyrics were based on a traditional Bahian samba, knowledge of the original composition did not extend as far south as Rio.⁷² Because of this, Brasil anticipated “a number of people ... asking [him] to share the lyrics,” which he printed in the *Jornal dos Sports* in the week following Bethânia’s debut.⁷³

It’s morning,
I’m going to search for my flower.
The first light of day arrives,
The rooster cock-a-doodle-dos.
It’s morning,
I’m going to search for my flower.

It’s morning,
It’s dawn.
It’s morning,
I don’t know anything else.
It’s morning,
I’m going to see my love.

It’s morning,
I’m going to see my beloved.
It’s morning,
Dawn flower.
It’s morning,
I’m going to see my flower.

I’m taking the road,
And each star is a flower,
But the beloved flower

⁷¹ Poerner, “A Opinião que Bethânia Mudou.”

⁷² Caetano Veloso, *Sobre as Letras*, ed. Eucanaã Ferraz (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003), 32.

⁷³ Brasil, “Samba de Roda da Bahia.” José Poerner did the same in the *Correio da Manhã*. Poerner, “A Opinião que Bethânia Mudou.”

Is more than the dawn.
And it was for her
That the rooster cock-a-doodle-doed.⁷⁴

The first stanza seems to be a recreation of the traditional samba on which Veloso based the composition. Neither this portion of lyrics nor the melody that Bethânia uses to sing them are included in Veloso's official songbook, which indicates that they were not part of his original work.⁷⁵ In this section of the song, Bethânia pronounces the word "flower" as *fulô*, adopting the same indigenous pronunciation as João do Vale in his song "Pisa na Fulô."⁷⁶ Later in the song she uses the standard *flor*. At the very least, this pronunciation locates the verse in Brazil's Northeast, playing into audience expectations of Bethânia as a baiana. Veloso remembers that the Grupo Opinião saw it as "the best representation of her musical origins."⁷⁷ Though Bethânia sings this portion of the song *a capella*, the melody clearly outlines a I-IV-I progression. In the key of A major, the passage covers only a sixth in range, from A3 to F#4. The highpoint occurs on the lyric "cock-a-doodle-do" (*cocorocó*). Set in this way, the simple, repetitive lyric is easy to sing and easy to remember. It has all of the hallmarks of a folk song, or a nursery rhyme that teaches children the sound that a rooster makes.

After Bethânia's a capella introduction, a band joins as accompaniment and her performance lends the lyric a dramatic arc.⁷⁸ Both key and mode change, the song now in E

⁷⁴ For original Portuguese lyrics, see appendix A. Because of a few discrepancies, I have included a translation of the lyrics as Bethânia sang them on her 1965 recording of the song, rather than the transcription provided by Barreto Brasil. Maria Bethânia, *Carcará / De Manhã*, RCA LC-6155, 1965, 45 rpm.

⁷⁵ Caetano Veloso and Almir Chediak, *Caetano Veloso*, vol. 1 (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Lumiar, 1988), 53.

⁷⁶ For a full explanation of this, see chapter 4.

⁷⁷ Veloso, *Tropical Truth*, 46.

⁷⁸ Although we do not have a recording of Bethânia performing the song in *Opinião*, she did record the song as the B-side to her first single while she was still performing in the show. It is reasonable to assume that the recording reflects how Bethânia may have performed it in the show. There were some differences, though. In *Opinião*, the ensemble included only guitar, flute, and drums. On the recording, there is a full orchestra.

minor. Bethânia also sings higher and with a larger range, from E4 to B5. The lyrics are less straightforward and more poetic, comparing stars to flowers and introducing a love story. These marked differences seem to be evidence of Veloso's composerly voice in the song, though it is never made clear which lyrics he borrowed and which he invented. More than compositional devices, audience members tend to locate the drama of the performance in the way that Bethânia sang the song. One audience member remembered these early shows as remarkable because of Bethânia's youth: "She was only 18, a girl—a girl, really... but with extraordinary power."⁷⁹ This power is audible in the way that her performance transforms the lyric "cocorocó" from a description of a crowing rooster in the first stanza to an invocation of that rooster's crow later in the song. The first time she sings the lyric, it actually sounds more like a rooster. She sings it quick and because the first and fourth syllables of the word fall on downbeats, it imitates the sound of a rooster. But if the rooster's crow is a wake-up call, this faithful rendition fails. Bethânia almost throws the line away in performance, moving on quickly to the last final couplet. The performance is more about seeking the flower than waking anyone up.

The later performance of the rooster's crow is the actual wake up call. She draws out the word, again, starting on the downbeat of the measure, but now milking the onomatopoetic word. The melody is syncopated, with the last syllable falling on the eighth sixteenth note in a 2/4 measure. This in itself draws more attention to the line, but Bethânia stretches it even further, unrooting the rooster's call from the strict rhythmic pattern so that the final syllable is almost coincidental with the beginning of the next bar. The melody is higher in Bethânia's range and she belts it out—a wake-up call, indeed. If the rooster's crow accompanies the end of the

⁷⁹ Luiz Guilherme de Moraes, interview with author.

darkness, it is not hard to hear Bethânia's belted "cocorocó" less as a marker of that moment than the cause of it.

As I show below, *Opinião* audiences began to read Bethânia, like Nara Leão before her, as a protest singer. With that in mind, I would argue that even "De Manhã" can be read as a politicized commentary on the recent military coup—a hopeful reminder that light follows the darkness. The rooster crows for the flower rather than for the dawn (*madrugada*). The Portuguese word "madrugada" may mean "dawn," but it is more commonly used to describe the period between midnight and dawn. If read in this way, the rooster crows not for the darkness, but for the flower, the promise of new life—a reminder that the military government will, one day, pass. Whether "De Manhã" carried this meaning for audiences or not, there is no question that it contributed to the building of Bethânia's reputation as an authentic northeasterner and showcased her ability to perform in an emotionally evocative way. It is also linked to protest as the B side to Bethânia's first single, "Carcará," which one audience member called "an iconic song of protest."⁸⁰

"Carcará"

The story of "Carcará" being transformed from a João do Vale song about the fauna of his native Maranhão into "an iconic song of protest" says a great deal about how *Opinião* changed during Bethânia's tenure in the show. It also speaks to how a performance's affect can both influence audience members' reading of a song's political valences and attract the attention of dominant powers. The audience response to "Carcará," predicated on the anger that they read into Bethânia's performance and felt coming from it, led them to understand the song as a protest

⁸⁰ Paulo Neuhaus, interview with author, Skype, April 19, 2016.

and a call to action against the military government. When *Opinião* took on this new meaning, government officials saw it as a threat and called for its censure.

Media accounts and the reports of audience members invariably highlighted the performativity of her song interpretations. They attribute the strength of her performance to Bethânia's feelings. In his review of the revamped show, theater critic Yan Michalski wrote, "what most impresses me about [Bethânia] is the interior strength of her interpretation, her aggressive and communicative way of singing, her exemplary concentration."⁸¹ Nelson Motta remembered how she sang "the songs of João do Vale and Zé Kéti with vigor and emotion."⁸² Cacá Diegues attributed her power to having a "very effusive side"⁸³ Others used the term "personality" and "presence" to locate the fuel for her performance within her.⁸⁴

Attendees described the emotions *they* felt upon listening to her and watching her perform. One fan told me, "I don't think that Bethânia is a great singer.... She is much more a catalyst for emotions."⁸⁵ When I asked for clarification, he highlighted the importance of being in her presence: "Bethânia is a *being*. So, you being there, you participate in that ritual. And just listening—it's not that it isn't good. There are some songs that are better still. Here or there she sings very well. But, the best is seeing her show."⁸⁶ Sérgio Cabral wrote that "her performance of

⁸¹ Michalski, "Jaboticabeira Continua Florida."

⁸² Nelson Motta, *Noites Tropicais: Solos, Improvisos e Memórias Musicais* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Objetiva, 2000), 89.

⁸³ Diegues, interview with author.

⁸⁴ Escorel, interview with author; Lygia Marina de Moraes, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 14, 2016.

⁸⁵ Salles, interview with author.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

‘Carcará’ ... moved the audience so much that, almost every night, she had to sing it again.”⁸⁷

Bethânia herself participated in this narrative. In March of 1965, after about a month of shows, one journalist asked if the Copacabana public scared her. Her response: “Through song I think I succeed in reaching and moving many people.”⁸⁸

In chapter 4, I discussed the ways that João do Vale’s lyrics for “Carcará” were read as an allegory for the plight of the rural northeasterner and his insistence that he intended no such reading when composing the song. When one audience member, Paulo Neuhaus, called the song “an iconic song of protest,” I brought up Vale’s denials. He replied:

If there was a song describing the miserable conditions in the Northeast with the droughts ... that song, in some sense, may have been co-opted, by Bethânia, by Nara, and these people into a more political thing. I don’t know the details, but obviously in the delivery, when I saw shows with “Carcará,” it was sort of in your face that it was a political song. And, yeah, there was something having to do with the poverty in the Northeast and the drought and vultures there that, you know, were eating the *bichos* or whatever, but I think it was clear to the audience that that was metaphorical, in some sense.⁸⁹

Without denying the importance of the lyrics, he points to the delivery of the song as the crucial factor and highlights both Nara Leão and Maria Bethânia’s roles in this process. Thankfully, there is film of both singers performing “Carcará,” meaning that it is possible to compare the two to discover what constitutes the protest elements of the song in performance.

Nara Leão sang “Carcará” for roughly six weeks before leaving the production. But even before opening her mouth to sing, she contributed to the song’s politics. As I argued in chapter 2, her extensive promotion of the show and discussion of politics in the press had marked her as a political performer. Her repertory gained the same reputation and audiences seeing her perform

⁸⁷ Cabral, *Nara Leão*, 94.

⁸⁸ Estevo, “A Livre Voz de Bethânia.”

⁸⁹ Paulo Neuhaus, interview with author.

in 1964 expected something akin to protest music. Her interpretation of “Carcará” is in keeping with the idea of “speaking the song.” It is dry and faithful. She sings in straight sixteenth notes, closely matching the rhythm of the accompaniment, neither dragging nor rushing. This is particularly audible in the lengthy first verse where she maintains a strict tempo and even rhythmic subdivisions despite singing mostly unaccompanied. When she leaps up an octave to sing “carcaráááááááááááááááá,” she returns in time with the other musicians, rather than milking the high note. She doesn’t project, singing low in her range. During the break in the first verse, Leão is quiet, delicate, and proper—nearly whispering, “Keep your voice down; we’d hate to wake the monstrous carcará!” She sings the entire song while barely moving. It is a thoroughly accurate, but stilted, performance.

After hearing Nara Leão’s rather plain performance of “Carcará,” Bethânia’s stands out. In interviews I conducted with attendees, they universally agreed that Bethânia’s version was better.⁹⁰ Lygia Marina de Moraes saw both performers in the show; she told me that when Bethânia sang the song, people were so bowled over that they “became catatonic.”⁹¹ Filmmaker Eduardo Escorel said, “I think that [the song’s politics] only became obvious when Bethânia appeared. Because, while Nara was singing, I think that everyone thought it was great. But the force that Bethânia brought, the dramatic weight that she brought, that established a contrast.”⁹² One journalist wrote that the Bethânia “proved that the success of ‘Carcará’ was more due to the

⁹⁰ Diegues, interview with author; Escorel, interview with author; Célia Costa, interview with author, Ipanema, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 13, 2017.

⁹¹ Lygia Marina de Moraes, interview with author.

⁹² Escorel, interview with the author.

singer than the song itself.”⁹³ Sérgio Cabral remembers one friend saying, “The song’s lyrics are not at all subversive. But, if I was of the political police, I would arrest Maria Bethânia.”⁹⁴

Unlike Leão, Bethânia left a strong affective mark on the song, performing with an emotional range that audiences recalled even decades later. A critic for the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* noted that “her interpretation of ‘Carcará’ ... profoundly moves the spectator.”⁹⁵ Another paper published this appeal just before the show closed in Rio:

If you haven’t heard Maria Bethânia singing “Carcará,” don’t stay there reading the paper. No. ... Don’t think that we are being cute. The [theater] has been full, every night. And with only one week remaining, it is very possible that you will not be able to find a seat. And the *baiana* is seriously good. ... When we listen to her sing “Carcará,” we feel something.⁹⁶

Bethânia’s great intervention comes from her ability to evoke an emotional response from her audience as a performer, by projecting her voice throughout the theater, taking liberties with the melody’s rhythms, and incorporating sharp and defined movements throughout her interpretation.

Bethânia sings the song a whole step higher than Leão, which allows her to belt the high notes. In contrast to Leão’s whisper, Bethânia isn’t afraid to wake the whole neighborhood to warn of the monster’s arrival. The same audience member told me, “Because the range of the voice of Bethânia is much more expressive.... She made that into a crescendo... to energize people.... Because Nara was much more sort of low key, her voice range was more limited.... I don’t think she was able to produce that dramatic effect.”⁹⁷

⁹³ Ney Machado, “Sucesso de Betânia no Cangaceiro,” *Diário de Notícias*, April 27, 1965.

⁹⁴ Isaac Piltcher, quoted in Cabral, *Nara Leão*, 94.

⁹⁵ Yan Michalski, “Jaboticabeira Continua Florida,” *Jornal do Brasil*, February 25, 1965.

⁹⁶ “Carcará,” *Jornal dos Sports*, March 14, 1965.

⁹⁷ Neuhaus, interview with author.

In contrast with Leão’s rhythmically precise interpretation, Bethânia sings behind the beat and stretches her notes, pushing against, rather than following, the accompaniment. She sings each section differently, marking an affective range between mourning, admiration, and outrage. Her interpretation begins as a lament, but by the end of the verse, she sings with audible disgust. On the drawn out “carcaráááááááááááá,” she doesn’t leap into her head voice like Leão, but stays in a comfortable register, drawing the syllables out in appreciation. At each chorus, she is more forceful, only returning to the initial mournful tone at the end of the song. Then, over a modulation, as she enumerates the masses who have migrated from the northeast, her tone transforms from matter of fact to matter of life and death.

One characteristic that many people highlighted in both Leão and Bethânia’s versions is their intonation—or lack thereof. Though columnist Sérgio Bittencourt railed against Leão’s intonation in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, many of the people whom I interviewed praised her for being *afinadinha* (very in tune).⁹⁸ In seeking an explanation for this discrepancy, I spoke with a singer and vocal teacher who, after listening and watching Leão’s performance, said that, in fact, her intonation is pretty good, though she “throws away” some of the lower notes and has trouble on longer held pitches. He described it as “pretty,” but “too careful,” continuing, “she is using her vocal folds to hold the pitch instead of using her breath. That’s how she harmed her vocal chords. On longer notes she wavers because there is no breath. It’s pretty, but it’s lacking in breath support, which is why it doesn’t sound as exciting. When she tries to push, it gets raspy.”⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 23, 1964; Sérgio Bittencourt, “Em Defesa do Samba,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 29, 1964; Sérgio Bittencourt, “Bom Dia, Rio,” *Correio da Manhã*, December 30, 1964; Costa, interview with author; Escorel, interview with author.

⁹⁹ Caleb Whelden, phone conversation with author, October 5, 2017.

Bethânia, on the other hand, was noted for singing out of tune, but not critiqued along these lines. Instead, people understood her lack of intonation as a consequence of her expressiveness.¹⁰⁰ The same vocal teacher told me, “You can tell she’s never had vocal training, because she’s not supporting in the right places. She’s basically yelling, which is a good thing.”¹⁰¹ Her intonation, while also not perfect, is not worse than Leão’s. Audiences heard Bethânia as out of tune and Leão as in tune due to their own conceptions about expressivity and emotion. Bethânia, to audiences’ ears, injected so much emotion into her singing that she couldn’t possibly stay in tune.

Bethânia also inflects her performance with movement. During the rubato section that introduces the verse, she glares at her audience, hands on her hips. On dramatic syllables, she jerks her head violently to the side, like a bird. Picanco even told me, “She looks like an eagle, she looks just like a carcará.”¹⁰² Later, she leans her head back and closes her eyes, appreciating the magnificent carcará. Her eyes dart from one audience member to another as her tone turns to pleading. Each time she sings the chorus, her back straightens and, standing at attention, she testifies to the power of the self-sustaining carcará. During the statistical recitation that closes the song, she stands stock still, in military posture. She turns to her left as if ordered by an officer. At the song’s end, Bethânia’s dramatic performance style shifts the meaning of the lyrics. She leans forward into the crowd in anger and shouts the final words of the song,¹⁰³ transforming the lyric

¹⁰⁰ Escorel, interview with author.

¹⁰¹ Whelden, phone conversation.

¹⁰² Picanco, interview with author.

¹⁰³ Leão’s version also has this shouted ending, but without the gestural component. Furthermore, her relatively soft voice makes it difficult to hear her shout over the band. The effect is not the same.

from the indicative to the imperative. She no longer recounts the carcará's actions, but calls the audience to action: catch, kill, and eat. To cite João do Vale, "Nara sings, Bethânia fights."¹⁰⁴

Anger and Political Action

Audience members attributed the political valences of "Carcará" to their own emotional experience hearing the song. This contributed to the transformation that the *Opinião* counterpublic underwent, as a social group, during her tenure in the show and to the formation of what Mabel Berezin terms a "community of feeling." social groups in their moments of formation, particularly in their expression of emotional energy.¹⁰⁵ Berezin sets up communities of feeling as a counterpoint to the "secure state," which maintains security through police and military forces. She argues that citizens become emotionally invested in the state, pointing to military service and taxpaying as activities that evidence of this investment.¹⁰⁶ Communities of feeling may also express opposition to the secure state, which relies on emotional investment to gain legitimacy. Berezin also points to the "insecure state" as a state in dissolution or in formation.¹⁰⁷ In 1964, Brazil's nascent military dictatorship could aptly be described as such an insecure state, either a democratic state in dissolution or an authoritarian one in formation.

As Berezin has argued, communities of feeling can be either staged or spontaneous in supporting or opposing the secure state. She points to the unplanned act of singing "God Bless America"—a song originally written for a Broadway musical—by US senators in the wake of the

¹⁰⁴ Antônio, "Poesia de João Nasce do Canto."

¹⁰⁵ Berezin, "Secure States," 39.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

September 11th attack on the World Trade Center as an example of a spontaneous community of feeling investing in the state.¹⁰⁸ One might see also the song's continued performance at baseball games as a staged community of feeling. *Opinião* was quite literally staged, and certainly its authors and director did not intend to engender support for the Brazilian secure state. But, while the show was wildly successful during Nara Leão's tenure, there was a marked shift when Bethânia took her place, driven by the emotional power of Bethânia's performance. Beyond its effect on audiences, that shift seems to have been understood as a threat by members of the secure state, hence General Kruel's sudden decision to censor it.

The anger Bethânia expresses in the final moments of her performance of "Carcará" raises questions about the relationship between that particular emotion and the formation of a community of feeling. In fact, social theorists have identified anger as perhaps the emotion most important in constituting political action, particularly in action originating among dominated or subaltern groups. These scholars claim that, even though anger can power many kinds of political activity and conflict, it is the driving force behind protest.¹⁰⁹ Mary Holmes argues that

anger is the essential political emotion because it is a response to a perceived injustice. Listening to anger may lead to a constructive public dialogue about the fairness of political order; but order may be threatened when anger is repressed because its repression may lead to emotions and actions such as resentment, rage and violence. The threat that anger poses for political order means there are strong cultural and political norms that seek to suppress the expression of anger; the danger of repression is that essential dialogues about injustice may be suppressed as well.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 40.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Holmes, "The Importance of Being Angry: Anger in Political Life," *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2 (2004): 123; Peter Lyman, "The Domestication of Anger: The Use and Abuse of Anger in Politics," *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2 (2004): 133; Helena Flam, "Anger in Repressive Regimes: A Footnote to *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* by James Scott," *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2 (2004): 172.

¹¹⁰ Holmes, "The Importance of Being Angry," 127.

For the participants in *Opinião*, who opposed the dominant order, anger could have been both an honest response to the injustices they identified in the Brazilian social and political order and a spur for dialogue within the counterpublic that the show engenders.

Regimes predicated on discourses of law and order tend to seek to repress angry speech, either due to fears that such speech may lead to violence, or to fears that it will help spur feelings of dissent. Peter Lyman argues that anger has the latter effect, that it allows subordination and domination to become a legitimate topic of political debate.¹¹¹ He notes, however, that regimes tend to argue for the former. They attempt to devalue angry speech as a form of political discourse by characterizing it as irrational, the opposite of order, or as the first step to violence.¹¹²

Anger's utility as a tool to combat injustice is limited by the degrees and methods of repression within a given society. James C. Scott has argued that subordinated groups in systems of domination have to control impulses to become angry for fear of retribution.¹¹³ Because of this, those in dominated segments of society develop techniques for expressing their anger in social spaces not visible to the dominant, or use veiled discourses as way to maintain their dignity.¹¹⁴ It is in these settings that they might develop critiques of domination, which serve as a cathartic release.¹¹⁵ But, Scott argues, in the most repressive regimes, where the dominant limit and prevent even these alternate forms of expressing anger, the repressed, having no recourse for

¹¹¹ Lyman, "The Domestication of Anger," 139.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 133.

¹¹³ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 37.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 137.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xi, 187.

their anger, inevitably erupt in violence.¹¹⁶ Helena Flam disputes Scott's claim; she argues that subordinated people in many situations adopt "ambivalent, satirical and carnivalesque forms" rather than direct angry speech as a way to speak to and protest injustice.¹¹⁷ In a way, *Opinião* employs all three of these forms, offering ambivalence about the show's relationship to the military government in its stated intents, satirizing the regime's fears of communism with comments like "red is not in style anymore," and packaging many of these messages in a signifier of carnival—samba. The performers toed the line expertly, until they crossed it during Bethânia's run.

Both Flam and Scott agree that some expression of anger, either overt or coded, is necessary for subordinated people to combat repression. Scott highlights open declaration of these shared, hidden feelings as moments when subordinated peoples recognize that other citizens feel the same anger.¹¹⁸ The expression of anger, therefore, can serve to precipitate a community of feeling. In the case of *Opinião*, the common recognition of the shared feeling of anger is the moment when the show moves from being a release valve to being a potentially dangerous political formation capable of resisting the government in some legitimate way. This is the moment that Bethânia's performance made possible. Audience members remember being moved emotionally by her performance. The fact that a performance of anger was tied to *Opinião*'s growing popularity is evidenced by how many people remember and highlight it when recollecting the show. It indicates how Bethânia's interpretation led to the song's later reputation. And it also sheds light on why the show attracted negative government attention the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 217.

¹¹⁷ Flam, "Anger in Repressive Regimes," 171.

¹¹⁸ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 223. Emphasis original.

show attracted at this moment. Social movements inspired by anger threaten authoritarian regimes in a way that sly jokes about wearing red do not.

Maria Bethânia Guerilla Warrior

In 1968, the journalist and poet Reynaldo Jardim published a book called *Maria Bethânia Guerreira Guerrilha*. On the cover is a photo of Bethânia in profile. She wears a collared shirt and her hair is pulled back in a bun—in other words, how she was presented in *Opinião*. Inside is a lengthy concrete poem paying tribute to Maria Bethânia, characterizing her as a revolutionary figure. I first saw the book in its 1968 edition as part of the archival collection of journalist José Ramos Tinhorão, held at the Instituto Moreira Salles in Rio de Janeiro. I was struck by some of the verses: “she shouts at the men who rule / she is grabbed and eaten by vultures / she explodes the body into a thousand pieces / she shoots a thousand shots.” And this one:

she is the salt of the morning

warrior

she is the seagull on the beach

guerrilla

she is the grenade in the hand

warrior

she is Bethânia

warrior

guerilla

Tinorhã’s copy had been printed by a cooperative publisher, one of apparently very few copies in existence. I later discovered that the book had been reissued in 2011. In the reissue, the editors, Marcio Debellian and Ramon Nunes Mello, explained that the book had been blacklisted

by the military government for being subversive. Even Maria Bethânia's own copy had been burned.¹¹⁹

The government's actions did not stop at banning and burning books. Nearly four years after Bethânia's fun in *Opinião* ended, twenty military police officers invaded Bethânia's Rio de Janeiro apartment and took the singer, then 22, to a DOPS facility. They interrogated her and then required that she reappear at the DOPS location twice weekly for three months.¹²⁰ In a 1992 interview, Bethânia told Marília Gabriela, host of the television program *Cara a Cara* about the events:

Two o'clock in the morning, they invaded my home... They took me ... to a barracks. I was interrogated until sunrise... They arrested me because of a book, written in homage to me, by Reynaldo Jardim. They wanted to know why I caused this book—why he wrote this book for me. The book is a beautiful poem. A gesture of love.... I'm a woman of the stage. He, an intellectual, a poet. He wanted to write a poem.¹²¹

Jardim's recollections from the reissue of the book confirm that the homage originated with her "singing 'Carcará,' the audience becoming frenzied."¹²² He was not the only person to call the mid-1960s version of Maria Bethânia a guerilla.¹²³ One audience member told me, "Because she was a girl from the country, becoming the start of a show at eighteen, replacing Nara Leão, it

¹¹⁹ Marcio Debellian and Ramon Nunes Mello, "Dupla Homenagem," in *Maria Bethânia Guerreira Guerrilha*, Reynaldo Jardim (Rio de Janeiro: Debê, 2011), 7.

¹²⁰ "Oswaldo Coimbra: A prisão de Bethânia, na Ditadura," *Instituto Paulo Fonteles de Direitos Humanos* (blog), September 27, 2017, <http://institutopaulofonteles.org.br/2017/09/27/oswaldo-coimbra-a-prisao-de-bethania-na-ditadura/>.

¹²¹ Maria Bethânia, quoted in *ibid.* See Filmes e Especiais, "Marília Gabriela Entrevista Maria Bethânia Em 1992 Completo," Youtube video, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeAOLxoVm8A>.

¹²² Reynaldo Jardim, "Um Pedaco da História, in *Maria Bethânia Guerreira Guerrilha*, Reynaldo Jardim (Rio de Janeiro: Debê, 2011), 13.

¹²³ Fontoura, interview author.

would be normal to be afraid. And she wasn't afraid at all. The shout of 'Carcará.' The enormous voice that echoed.... It was the figure of a guerilla."¹²⁴

These readings of Maria Bethânia as a revolutionary showcase the complicated nature of her political participation. Unlike Nara Leão, who clarified her political views in interviews and opinion pieces, or Zé Kéti and João do Vale, who, as composers, provided lyrical clues, Bethânia's form of participation occurred in performance. Audiences understood her work as a call to arms, a call to action. She never clarified the meaning of these performances; however, when given a chance to speak about her politics in an interview with one journalist just before *Opinião* closed in Rio, she said, "I felt in Rio a certain fear in people's faces, and carnival left me very depressed, because the people were sad."¹²⁵ It is telling that she turned to emotion when asked about politics. For so many in her audience, the two were the same.

¹²⁴ Luiz Guilherme de Moraes, interview with author.

¹²⁵ Estevao, "A Livre Voz de Betânia." Some collaborators even claimed that she was *never* involved with political music making. Caymmi, interview with author.

Chapter Six. Conclusions

In 1965, director Paulo César Saraceni filmed a small portion of *Opinião*, which he included in his film *O Desafio* (English title: *The Dare*).¹ The film's protagonist Marcelo (played by *Opinião* playwright Vianinha), a left-wing journalist and novelist, is searching for something to shake him out of the depression that has enveloped him since the military coup. On the recommendation of a journalist colleague (Hugo Carvana), he attends *Opinião*. The audience reacts with passionate applause to Zé Kéti's performance of "Notícia de Jornal" and Maria Bethânia's of "Carcará," while Marcelo sits rapt but unexpressive.² The scene captures the film's tone, which uses Marcelo's melancholy to comment on the challenges that leftist intellectuals and artists faced after the military coup.³ Cacá Diegues called it "a kind of romantic documentary about our quandary," which, given that the film was not a documentary, highlights the realism of the conversations and concerns it depicts.⁴

Seeing *Opinião* is not a revolutionary experience for Marcelo. Despite Bethânia's moving performance, his own doubts linger and fester. In the subsequent scene, he meets his lover Ada (the actress Isabella), a bourgeois woman married to a factory owner (Sérgio Britto) in an upscale apartment in the Zona Oeste neighborhood of Joá. Ada tries to convince Marcelo that

¹ The English title does not capture the themes of the film as well as the Portuguese does. A better translation would be *The Challenge*. That said, the film seems to have been released as *The Dare* in English. "Cinema Novo Revolutionised Brazilian Cinema in the 1960s," Presidency of the Republic of Brazil, accessed April 22, 2019, <http://www.brazil.gov.br/arts-culture/film-and-theatre/cinema-novo-revolutionised-brazilian-cinema-in-the-1960s>.

² There are also two young men with crew cuts and short-sleeved white button downs who do not applaud. They seem to be dissenters, though that it is not made clear.

³ Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda and Marcos Augusto Gonçalves, *Cultura e Participação Nos Anos 60* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1982).

⁴ Cacá Diegues, *Vida de Cinema: Antes, Durante e Depois Do Cinema Novo* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Objetiva, 2014), 222.

they can be happy together, that their love can overcome this dark time. He replies, bitterly, “you will never understand what I feel. Because I think that no one has the right to be happy as long as this hunger, this misery, this injustice reigns.”

As Marcelo rejects Ada’s every effort, she grows impatient and lectures him on his childish behavior: “The hardest thing is for us to admit that things happen. Becoming despondent does not work. It’s pretty to become despondent. We feel *just*. Human. But then we forget everything.” Marcelo reacts in anger and lectures Ada on class domination. She laments that he only sees her a representative of her class and finally gives in, saying, “As a good bourgeois woman, I resolve to think of my people.” The scene resolves nothing—the couple does not appear together for the remainder of the film, perhaps having broken up—but it seems that the audience is meant to take Ada’s side.

Most scholarship on the film casts it as the product of self-critical, left-wing artists grappling with their own failures.⁵ At one point Marcelo blames the military for his problems, saying “This goddamn military coup is what is preventing us from being on the same side.”⁶ But his actions at the film’s end do more to confirm Ada’s assessment. Descending the outdoor staircase connecting the Rio de Janeiro neighborhoods of Santa Teresa and Lapa, Marcelo passes a young girl begging for change. He pauses to look at her, but offers her nothing and leaves, as the chorus “It’s a time of war, it’s time without sun” from Edu Lôbo’s song “É um Tempo de Guerra” plays. He is distraught, but does not act.

⁵ Randal Johnson, “Brazilian Cinema Today,” *Film Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (1978): 43; Randal Johnson and Robert Stam, *Brazilian Cinema*, expanded edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 35.

⁶ This dialogue, which was censored for the film’s 1966 release, was restored in the remastered version along with another mention of the coup. In the remastered version, the dubbed mentions of the coup fail to match the rest of the dialogue, sonically, but one can clearly read the words *golpe militar* (military coup) as the characters say them.

That *Opinião* is one of the failures highlighted in the film is especially interesting given that Vianinha, who plays Marcelo and co-wrote *O Desafio*, was also one of the show's credited playwrights. Ada's words cast Marcelo's feelings as a product of his self-righteousness and imply that those feelings do not lead to positive social change. Might the feelings expressed and engendered in *Opinião* serve the same empty purpose? Indeed, there is evidence that *Opinião*, in many ways, failed as "revolutionary popular art," to paraphrase the CPC's famous manifesto. The show influenced or inspired many subsequent artistic projects, including other musicals like *Liberdade, Liberdade*, starring Nara Leão and Vianinha; *Arena Canta Bahia*, which starred Maria Bethânia; and the modern art exhibition *Opinião 65*. And, as I mentioned in the introduction, it helped establish some of the tenets of the nascent genre MPB, particularly that genre's tendency to use music to critique the military regime. But the show did not cause a dramatic transformation in Brazilian society.

By being such a sensation, *Opinião* may have even made things worse for artists seeking to oppose or critique the Brazilian military government. The production certainly caught the attention of government officials, as the calls to censor the show in São Paulo, discussed in chapter 5, indicate. It also put a target on many of its participants. In addition to Maria Bethânia's aforementioned interrogation, Nara Leão and Augusto Boal both went into voluntary exile for a time beginning in the late 1960s.

Opinião's greatest failures seem to revolve around questions of inclusion. The back cover of the LP release of *Opinião* includes the self-congratulatory description, "it is the fruit of many years of work of a group of intellectuals and artists that broke with the culture of the elite and decided to bring culture to the *povo*."⁷ This seems wrong, though. The audience, by all accounts,

⁷ Liner notes to Nara Leão, Zé Kéti, and João do Vale, *Show Opinião*, Philips P 632 775 L, 1965, 33 1/3 rpm.

was mostly middle- and upper-middle-class people who would not stand to gain much from the kind of radical project the show implied. In keeping with Ada's critique in *O Desafio*, these audience members could benefit from the emotional release the show provided without having ever dedicated themselves to remedying the societal problems it pointed out.⁸

There is another failure, though, in the way that *Opinião*'s authors presented the show and its performers. By framing the show as the words of this "group of intellectuals," they underplayed the revolutionary potential of populating a stage with performers from underrepresented sociogeographic groups. The playwrights and director all came from demographic groups that had traditionally participated in Brazilian politics, either in government, or by other means, like the press. The show's performers did not. There were no women or black men in either the military or preceding governments. For the show to highlight these voices and to promote the participation in political debate of these people—that was revolutionary. The authors of the show missed a great opportunity when they characterized the performers as instruments of their authorial vision.

I have emphasized that these performers matter not because of the implied authenticity of their positionality, but because people from these gender, racial, and class groups were frequently excluded from other avenues of participation in political discourse. That said, a theme of authenticity runs throughout this dissertation. Critics and audience members repeatedly assessed both the performers' artistry and politics on the basis of its authenticity. They judged performers based expectations they had of people from their social station. The middle-class Nara Leão was not supposed to sing samba de morro, because she was not from a morro. Zé Kéti

⁸ Some scholars have made the same point. See, for example, Edélcio Mostaço, *Teatro e Política: Arena, Oficina e Opinião: Uma Interpretação Da Cultura Da Esquerda* (São Paulo: Proposta Editorial, 1982), 75-88.

forfeited his right to compose in that genre because he had experienced some social mobility.

João do Vale met expectations, and his performances were deemed authentic. Maria Bethânia did not meet the expectations that critics had for a baiana. But critics and audiences were moved by performance style, sparing her the criticism that others received. Authenticity, in each of these cases, was a way of keeping these performers in their class, racial, and gender positions. Because people in those positions were frequently excluded from political dialogue, authenticity, became an axis of exclusion for these performers.

Opinião's legacy is audible in the protest music that characterized the early years of the genre of MPB. This legacy is especially audible in the work of artists like Chico Buarque and Geraldo Vandré. Vandré's song "Caminhando (Pra Não Dizer que Não Falei de Flores)" became a protest anthem in 1968 after taking second place in a televised song competition.⁹ Buarque's "Apesar de Você," a scathing critique of the military government veiled as a fight with a lover, was censored after release in 1970.¹⁰ In some ways, these songwriters had more in common with *Opinião*'s playwrights than its performers. Both men were highly educated and came from upper-middle-class families.

Subsequent to *Opinião*, Nara Leão, Zé Kéti, João do Vale, and Maria Bethânia all had decades-long careers, though none maintained precisely the same political orientation in their work. More than her co-stars, Nara Leão continued to use musical performance for political participation. Alongside Vianinha, she participated in the play *Liberdade, Liberdade*. The play was a collage of texts about "freedom," including ones by William Shakespeare, Martin Luther

⁹ Jairo Severiano and Zuza Homem de Mello, *A Canção No Tempo: 85 Anos de Músicas Brasileiras*, vol. 2 (São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998), 125.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 151.

King, Socrates, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, and Brazilian revolutionary Tiradentes.¹¹ Leão sang Carlos Lyra and Vinícius de Moraes's "Marcha da Quarta Feira de Cinzas," which had also appeared in *Opinião*. As recounted in chapter 2, in 1966 Leão risked imprisonment after speaking out against the dictatorship. She was an early star of the song competitions, winning in 1966 with Buarque's "A Banda" and helping to launch the young composer's career by including six of his songs on two of her albums that year.¹² She also participated in the album *Tropicália ou Panis et Circenses*, which marked the high point of the Tropicália movement. She and her husband Cacá Diegues went into voluntary exile in Paris for two years out of fear that Leão would be arrested by the military regime.¹³ When they returned in 1972, Leão starred in Diegues's film *Quando o Carnaval Chegar*, a musical comedy designed that every image was "linked solely and exclusively to the idea of the struggle for power."¹⁴ Though she would never achieve the levels of fame she had in the mid-1960s, Leão's career continued until her premature death from a brain tumor in 1989.

Zé Kéti's golden era ended in 1967, though he would continue to make a living as a composer and occasional recording artist for the rest of his life. That year, he released one of his most famous compositions, a marchinha called "Máscara Negra," which is still one of the most popular songs of the blocos that fill Rio de Janeiro during carnival. Unlike the songs he composed before and during his work in *Opinião*, "Máscara Negra" hews closely to carnival archetypes without speaking directly to marginality. In 1972, during the presidency of Emílio

¹¹ See Flávio Rangel and Millôr Fernandes, *Liberdade, Liberdade* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1965).

¹² Chico Buarque, interview with author, Recreio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 12, 2017.

¹³ Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016.

¹⁴ Cacá Diegues, quoted in Silvia Oroz, *Carlos Diegues: Os Filmes Que Eu Não Filmei* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Rocco, 1984), 85.

Médici, which Cacá Diegues described as a “horror” due to the number of people the regime killed and disappeared during the period, Zé no longer took a critical stance toward the government.¹⁵ As historian Paulo Cesar Araújo writes, Zé Kéti seemed “to have changed his opinion, because he recorded a march in homage to the Sesquicentennial of Independence and put a photo of President Médici on the cover of the disc.”¹⁶ In spite of this apparent shift, in 1975, Zé Kéti participated in director Bibi Ferreira’s restaging of *Opinião*, alongside João do Vale and singer Marília Medalha.¹⁷ After some two decades living in relative obscurity, he died in 1999 at 78 years old.

Just as he had during *Opinião*, João do Vale denied being a protest singer until the end of his life. He only recorded two albums as a performer, *O Poeta do Povo* in 1965 and *João do Vale* in 1981. The two discs contain nearly the same repertory—many of the songs ones that were performed in *Opinião*—with the second mostly duets between Vale and other Brazilian musicians. Although he never achieved mass fame after *Opinião*, Vale commanded great respect among Brazilian musicians, as illustrated by the stature of the guests on his second album: Nara Leão, Tom Jobim, Chico Buarque, Clara Nunes, Jackson do Pandeiro, Zé Ramalho, and others. Vale maintained an orientation towards social justice. He demanded that tickets be made available to migrant northeasterners working on the construction of the Rio de Janeiro’s metro for a weekly show that he hosted in the city.¹⁸ In March of 1987, while having lunch with Zé Kéti, Vale suffered a stroke, which left him with limited mobility and reduced his capacity to

¹⁵ Cacá Diegues, interview with author, Centro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 15, 2016.

¹⁶ Paulo Cesar Araújo, *Eu Não Sou Cachorro, Não: Música Popular Cafona e Ditadura Militar* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 2002), 220

¹⁷ “‘Opinião’: A Volta 11 Anos Depois,” *Jornal Do Brasil*, May 18, 1975.

¹⁸ Lenita Beltrame, interviewed in Werinton Kermes, *João do Vale: Muita Gente Desconhece* (Brazil: Granppo Films, 2005).

speak. He returned to Pedreiras, Maranhão to live out his life. In November of 1996, he suffered a third, fatal stroke.¹⁹

Of all of the performers in the show, Maria Bethânia has had the most successful post-*Opinião* career. During that time, she mostly moved away from using musical performance as a form of political participation. In fact, after *Opinião*, Bethânia began to immediately distance herself from “Carcará,” the song that became famous as a protest anthem because of her performance. She refused to include the song in the setlist for her 1966 show at the venue *Cangaceiro*, her first in Rio after *Opinião*. In a 1966 conversation captured in the short film *Bethânia Bem de Perto: A Propósito de um Show* (dir., Júlio Bressane and Eduardo Escorel), Bethânia lamented, “I had an album with twelve songs, but I could never sing anything except ‘Carcará.’”²⁰ She began to recite poetry as part of her shows in the early 1970s, constructing more and more elaborate spectacles with overarching themes, costume changes, and sets. Her show *Rosa dos Ventos*, initially staged in Rio in 1971, exemplified this shift. The live recording of that show also pioneered a trend of immensely successful live albums, not only by Bethânia, but other artists like Elis Regina and Milton Nascimento.²¹ Even though she mostly avoided overt political work after *Opinião*, Bethânia did star with Leão in *Quando o Carnaval Chegar*. In 1976, she toured with Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, and Gilberto Gil as part of the group Doces Bárbaros. Her 1978 album *Álibi* was the first million seller by a woman in the history of the

¹⁹ Marcio Paschoal, *Pisa Na Fulô Mas Não Maltrata o Carcará: Vida e Obra Do Compositor João Do Vale, o Poeta Do Povo* (Casadura, RJ: Lumiar Editora, 2000), 223.

²⁰ Maria Bethânia in Júlio Bressane and Eduardo Escorel, *Bethânia Bem de Perto: A Propósito de Um Show* (Biscoito Fino, 1966).

²¹ Roberto Menescal, interview with author, São Conrado, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 19, 2017.

Brazilian music industry.²² She only began to occasionally sing “Carcará” in shows again in 2015, five decades after her debut in *Opinião*.²³

That these performers backed off of their political work after *Opinião* can be explained by the increased repression, censorship, and violence perpetrated by the military government, especially after the issuance of Institutional Act No. 5 (AI-5) in late 1968. Threats of imprisonment, like those that Leão suffered in 1966, and interrogations, such as the ones that Bethânia endured in 1968, wore down musicians in this time period, leading to self-censorship and a preference for music that could not be seen as politically engaged.²⁴

More than repression, though, the market played a role in these artists’ turn away from politics. These musicians were not guerillas. They were not militant. They were recording artists and popular composers. The box office success of *Opinião* may have helped in creating a counterpublic, but it also recalls the capitalist origins of that counterpublic. There is no way of knowing whether the show would have been more or less successful as a political event if it had not had the same commercial success, but there is no doubt that its success had some effect on its politics. By virtue of the voices that it amplified, *Opinião* was radical in ways that the play *Liberdade, Liberdade* and the film *O Desafio* were not. For a few months in 1964 and 1965, *Opinião* created a space for other voices to, in the words of one headline, “sing sorrows and protests.”²⁵

²² Ricardo Cravo Albin, *O Livro de Ouro Da MPB: A História Da Nossa Música Popular de Sua Origem Até Hoje* (Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2004), 223.

²³ Nelson de Sá, “‘Estou Com Pena Do Brasil’, Diz Bethânia, Aos 50 Anos de Carreira,” *Folha de S.Paulo*, February 13, 2015, <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrada/2015/02/1589032-estou-com-pena-do-brasil-diz-bethania-aos-50-anos-de-carreira.shtml>.

²⁴ Chico Buarque talked about this in my discussion with him. Chico Buarque de Hollanda, interview with author, Recreio, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, January 12, 2017.

²⁵ “Nara, Zé Kéti, and João Do Vale Cantam Mágoas e Protestos,” *Diário Carioca*, November 15, 1964.

Appendix A. Song Lyrics

“Acender as Velas” (Zé Kéti)

Acender as velas

Já é profissão

Quando não tem samba

Tem desilusão

Lighting candles

Has become a profession

When there is no samba

There is disillusion

É mais um coração

Que deixa de bater

Um anjo vai pro céu

Deus me perdoe

Mas vou dizer

It's one more heart

That stops beating

An angel goes to heaven

God forgive me

But I'm going to say

O doutor chegou tarde demais

Porque no morro

Não tem automóvel pra subir

Não tem telefone pra chamar

E não tem beleza pra se ver

E a gente morre sem querer morrer

The doctor arrived too late

Because in the morro

There's no car to climb

There's no telephone to call

And there's no beauty to be seen

And we die without wanting to die

“A Voz do Morro” (Zé Kéti)

Eu sou o samba

A voz do morro sou eu mesmo sim senhor

Quero mostrar ao mundo que tenho valor

Eu sou o rei dos terreiros

I am samba

The voice of the hill I am, yes sir

I want to show the world that I have value

I am in the king of the *terreiros*

Eu sou o samba

Sou natural daqui do Rio de Janeiro

Sou eu quem levo a alegria

Para milhões de corações brasileiros

I am samba

I am a native of Rio de Janeiro

I am who brings joy

To millions of Brazilian hearts

Mais um samba, queremos samba

Quem está pedindo é a voz do povo de um país

Viva o samba, vamos cantando

Esta melodia de um Brasil feliz

Another samba, we want samba

Who is asking is the voice a country's people

Long live samba, let us sing

This melody of a happy Brazil

“Carcará” (João do Vale & José Cândido)

*Carcará, pega, mata e come
Carcará não vai morrer de fome
Carcará, mais coragem do que homem
Carcará pega, mata e come*

*Carcará, lá no sertão
É um bicho que avoa que nem avião
É um pássaro malvado
Tem o bico volteado que nem gavião*

*Carcará
Quando vê roça queimada
Sai voando, cantando
Carcará
Vai fazer sua caçada
Carcará
Come inté cobra queimada
Mas quando chega o tempo da invernada
No sertão não tem mais roça queimada
Carcará
Mesmo assim não passa fome
Os burrego que nasce na baixada*

[refrão]

*Carcará é malvado, é valentão
É a águia de lá do meu sertão
Os burrego novinho não pode andar
Ele pega no bico inté matar*

Carcará catches, kills, and eats
Carcará won't die of hunger
Carcará, more courage than man
Carcará catches, kills, and eats

Carcará, there in the sertão
It's a beast that flies like an airplane
It's a wicked bird
It has a turned beak like a hawk

Carcará
When it sees the burned farm
It leaves flying and singing
Carcará
Goes on its hunt
Carcará
Eats even burned snakes
But when the wintertime arrives
There aren't any more burned farms in the sertão
Carcará
Even so, it doesn't go hungry
The lambs that are born in the lowlands

[chorus]

Carcará, is wicked, is brave
Is the eagle from there in my sertão
The lambs in their pen cannot walk
He catches in his beak and kills [them]

“De Manhã” (Caetano Veloso)

*É de manhã
Vou buscar minha fulô
A barra do dia vem
O galo cocorocó
É de manhã
Vou buscar minha fulô*

It's morning
I'm going to search for my flower
The first light of day arrives
The rooster cock-a-doodle-dos
It's morning
I'm going to search for my flower

*É de manhã
É de madrugada
É de manhã
Não sei mais de nada
É de manhã
Vou ver meu amor*

It's morning
It's dawn
It's morning
I don't know anything else
It's morning
I'm going to see my love

*É de manhã
Vou ver minha amada
É de manhã
Flor da madrugada
É de manhã
Vou ver minha flor*

It's morning
I'm going to see my beloved
It's morning
Dawn flower
It's morning
I'm going to see my flower

*Vou pela estrada
E cada estrela
É uma flor
Mas a flor amada
É mais que a madrugada
E foi por ela*

I'm taking the road
And each star is a flower
But the beloved flower
Is more than the dawn
And it was for her
That the rooster cock-a-doodle-does

“Diz Que Eu Fui Por Aí” (Zé Kéti and Hortêncio Rocha)

<i>Se alguém perguntar por mim</i>	If anyone asks for me
<i>Diz que fui por aí</i>	Say that I went out
<i>Levando um violão / debaixo do braço</i>	Carrying a guitar under my arm
<i>Em qualquer esquina eu paro</i>	On any corner, I'll stop
<i>Em qualquer botequim eu entro</i>	In any bar, I'll go in
<i>E se houver motivo</i>	If there's any reason
<i>É mais um samba que eu faço</i>	It's one more samba that I'll write
<i>Se quiserem saber se volto</i>	If they want to know if I'll come back
<i>Diga que sim</i>	Say yes
<i>Mas só depois que a saudade se afastar de mim</i>	But only after this longing departs
<i>Mas só depois que a saudade se afastar de mim</i>	But only after this longing departs
<i>Tenho um violão</i>	I have a guitar
<i>Pra me acompanhar</i>	To keep me company
<i>Tenho muitos amigos</i>	I have lots of friends
<i>Eu sou popular</i>	I am popular
<i>Tenho a madrugada</i>	I have the wee hours
<i>Como companheira</i>	As my companion
<i>A saudade me dói</i>	The longing hurts
<i>O meu peito me rói</i>	My heart aches
<i>Eu estou na cidade</i>	I'm in the city
<i>Eu estou na favela</i>	I'm in the favela
<i>Eu estou por aí</i>	I'm around
<i>Sempre pensando nela</i>	Always thinking of her

“Esse Mundo é Meu” (Sérgio Ricardo and Ruy Guerra)

*Esse mundo é meu
Esse mundo é meu*

This world is mine
This world is mine

*Fui escravo no reino
E sou
Um escravo no mundo em que estou
Mas acorrentado ninguém pode
Amar*

I was a slave in the kingdom
And I am
A slave in the world where I am
But in chains no one can
Love

*Saravá Ogum
Mandinga da gente continua
Cadê o despacho pra acabar
Santo guerreiro da floresta
Se você não vem eu mesmo vou
Brigar*

Greetings Ogum
Our mandinga continues
Where is the offering to end
Warrior saint of the forest
If you don't come, I myself
Will fight

*Esse mundo é meu
Esse mundo é meu*

This world is mine
This world is mine

“Luz Negra” (Nelson Cavaquinho and Amâncio Cardoso)

*Sempre só
Eu vivo procurando alguém
Que sofre como eu também
E não consigo achar ninguém*

Always alone (only)
I live in search of someone
That suffers just like me
And I can't find anyone

*Sempre só
E a vida vai seguindo assim
Não tenho quem tem dó de mim
Estou chegando ao fim*

Always alone
And live goes on like this
I don't have anyone who aches for me
I'm reaching the end

*A luz negra de um destino cruel
Ilumina um teatro sem cor
Onde estou desempenhando o papel
De palhaço do amor*

The black light of a cruel fate
Lights a colorless theater
Where I play the role
Of love's clown

“Malvadeza Durão” (Zé Kéti)

*Mais um malandro fechou o paletó
Eu tive dó, eu tive dó
Quatro velas acesas em cima de uma mesa*

Another *malandro* has died
I hurt, I hurt
Four candles lit on top of a table

*E uma subscrição para ser enterrado
Morreu Malvadeza Durão
Valente, mas muito considerado*

And an authorization for him to be buried
Malvadeza Durão has died
Difficult, but held in esteem

*Céu estrelado, lua prateada
Muitos sambas, grandes batucadas
O morro estava em festa quando alguém caiu*

Starry sky, silver moon
Many sambas, great *batucadas*
The hill was partying when someone fell

*Com a mão no coração, sorriu
Morreu Malvadeza Durão
E o criminoso ninguém viu*

With hand on heart, he smiled
Malvadeza Durão died
And the murderer, no one saw

“Minha História” (João do Vale and Raimundo Evangelista)

*Seu moço, quer saber
Eu vou cantar num baião
Minha história pra o senhor
Seu moço, preste atenção*

Dear sir, do you want to know
I will sing in a *baião*
My story for you
Dear sir, pay attention

*Eu vendia pirulito
Arroz doce, mungunzá
Enquanto eu ia vender doce
Meus colega iam estudar
A minha mãe, tão pobrezinha
Não podia me educar (x2)*

I sold lollipops
Sweet rice, corn pudding
While I was selling sweets
My classmate were [sic] studying
My mother, poor thing
Couldn't educate me (x2)

*E quando era de noitinha
A meninada ia brincar
Vixe, como eu tinha inveja
Ee ver o Zezinho contar
“O professor raiou comigo
“Porque eu não quis estudar” (x2)*

And when at night,
The kids would play
Sheesh, I was so jealous
Seeing Zezinho say
“The teacher was mad at me
“Because I didn't want to study” (x2)

*Hoje todo são “doutô”
Eu continuo João ninguém
Mas quem nasce pra pataca
Nunca pode ser vintém
Ver meus amigos “doutô”
Basta pra me sentir bem (x2)*

Today they are all “doctor”
I am still João nobody
But those born to money
Can never be penniless
Seeing my friends all “doctor”
Is enough for me to feel good (x2)

*Mas todos eles quando ouvem
Um baiãozinho que eu fiz
Ficam tudo satisfeito
Batem palmas e pedem bis
E dizem, “João foi meu colega
“Como eu me sinto feliz” (x2)*

But when they all hear
A little *baião* that I wrote
They are pleased
Applaud, and request an encore
And say, “João was my classmate
“How I feel happy” (x2)

*Mas o negócio não é bem eu
É Mané, Pedro e Romão
Que também foram meus colegas
E continuam no sertão
Não puderam estudar
E nem sabem fazer baião (x2)*

But this is not just about me
It's Mané, Pedro, and Romão
Who also were my classmates
And are still in the *sertão*
They also couldn't study
And can't even write *baião* (x2)

“Nega Dina” (Zé Kéti)

*A Dina subiu o Morro do Pinto
Pra me procurar
Não me encontrando, foi ao morro da Favela
Com a filha da Estela
Pra me perturbar
Mas eu estava lá no morro de São Carlos
Quando ela chegou
Fazendo um escândalo, fazendo quizumba
Dizendo que levou
Meu nome pra macumba*

*Só porque faz uma semana
Que não deixo uma grana
Pra nossa despesa
Ela pensa que minha vida é uma beleza
Eu dou duro no baralho
Pra poder viver
A minha vida não é mole, não
Entro em cana toda hora sem apelação
Eu já ando assustado, sem paradeiro
Sou um marginal brasileiro*

Dina climbed the Morro do Pinto
To look for me
Not finding me, she went to the Morro da Favela
With Estela's daughter
To bother me
But I was on the Morro de São Carlos
When she arrived
Causing a scandal, making a scene
Saying that she brought
My name to a *macumba*

Just because it's been a week
Since I've left any money
For our expenses
She thinks my life is so great
I work hard playing cards
To be able to live
My life is not easy, no
I'm thrown in jail all the time without appeal
I walk around afraid without a place
I am a marginal Brazilian

“Opinião” (Zé Kéti)

*Podem me prender, podem me bater
Podem até deixar-me sem comer
Que eu não mudo de opinião
Daqui do morro eu não saio, não
Daqui do morro eu não saio, não*

*Se não tem água, eu furo um poço
Se não tem carne, eu compro um osso e ponho
na sopa
E deixo andar, deixo andar*

*Fale de mim quem quiser falar
Aqui eu não pago aluguel
Se eu morrer amanhã, seu doutor
Estou pertinho do céu*

They can arrest me, they can beat me
They can leave me to starve
But I won't change my opinion
From here in the morro, I won't leave
From here in the morro, I won't leave

If there's no water, I'll dig a well
If there's no meat, I'll buy a bone and put it in
the soup
Live and let live

They can say whatever they want about me
Here I don't pay rent
And if I die tomorrow, sir
At least I'm close to heaven

“O Sol Nascerá” (Cartola)

*A sorrir
Eu pretendo levar a vida
Pois chorando
Eu vi a mocidade
Perdida*

*Finda a tempestade
O sol nascerá
Finda esta saudade
Hei de ter outro alguém para amar*

*A sorrir
Eu pretendo levar a vida
Pois chorando
Eu vi a mocidade
Perdida*

Smiling
I intend to lead my life
Since crying
I saw my childhood
Lost

The storm is ending
The sun will rise
This longing is ending
There has to be someone else to love

Smiling
I intend to lead my life
Since crying
I saw my childhood
Lost

“Peba na Pimenta” (João do Vale, José Batista, and Adelino Rivera)

*Seu Malaquias preparou
Cinco peba na pimenta
Só do povo de Campinas
Seu Malaquias convidou mais de quarenta
Entre todos os convidados
Pra comer peba foi também Maria Benta
Benta foi logo dizendo
“Se ardê, num quero não”
Seu Malaquias então lhe disse,
“Pode comê sem susto
“Pimentão não arde, não”
Benta começou a comê
A pimenta era da braba
Danou-se a ardê
Ela chorava, se maldizia,
“Se eu soubesse, desse peba não comia”*

*“Ai, ai, ai seu Malaquias
“Ai, ai, você disse que não ardia
“Ai, ai, tá ardendo pra daná
“Ai, ai, tá me dando uma agonia
“Ai, ai, que tá bom, eu sei que tá
“Ai, ai, mas tá fazendo uma arrelia”*

Mr. Malaquias prepared
Five armadillos with pepper
Just counting residents of Campinas
Mr. invited more than forty
Among all of the invitees
To eat armadillo was also Maria Benta
Benta quickly said,
“If it burns, I don’t want any”
Mr. Malaquias then told her,
“You can eat without fear
“The pepper won’t burn”
Benta started eating
The pepper was really strong
It wouldn’t stop burning
She cried and cursed,
“If I knew, I wouldn’t eat this armadillo”

“Ay, ay, ay, Mr. Malaquias
“Ay, ay, you said it wouldn’t burn
“Ay, ay, it burns like crazy
“Ay, ay, it’s causing me agony
“Ay, ay, that’s good, I know it is
“Ay, ay, but it’s causing a discomfort”

“Pisa na Fulô” (João do Vale, Ernesto Pires, and Silveira Júnior)

Pisa na fulô, pisa na fulô
Pisa na fulô
Não maltrata o meu amor

Step on the flower, step on the flower
Step on the flower
Don't mistreat my love

Um dia desses
Fui dançar lá em Pedreiras
Na Rua da Golada
Eu gostei da brincadeira
Zé Cachangá era o tocador
Mas só tocava
“Pisa na fulô”
[refrão]

One day
I went dancing in Pedreiras
On Golada Street
I liked the fun
Zé Cachangá was the performer
But he only played
“Step on the flower”
[chorus]

Seu Serafim cochichava a Marvió,
“Sou capaz de jurar
“Que nunca vi forró mió”
Inté vovó
Garrou na mão do vovô
“Vamos embora meu veinho
“Pisa na fulô”
[refrão]

Serafim whispers to Marvió,
“I could swear
“That I never saw a better forró”
Even grandma
Grabbed grandpa's hand
“Let's go, old man
“Step on the flower”
[chorus]

Eu vi menina que tinha doze anos
Agarrar seu par
E também sair dançando
Satisfeita, dizendo,
“Meu amor vai como
“É gostoso pisa na fulô”
[refrão]

I saw a little girl of twelve
Grab her partner
And go dancing too
Satisfied, saying,
“My love, how
“It is wonderful to step on the flower”
[chorus]

De madrugada Zeca Cachangá
Disse ao dono da casa,
“Não precisa me pagar
“Mas por favor
“Arranja outro tocador
“Que eu também quero
“Pisa na fulô”
[refrão]

Late at night Zeca Cachangá
Said to the venue owner,
“You don't have to pay me
“But please
“Hire another performer
“Because I also want to
“Step on the flower”
[chorus]

“Sina de Caboclo” (João do Vale and Jocaastro Bezerra de Aquino)

*Mas plantar pra dividir
Não faço mais isso não*

But plant just to share
I won't do this anymore

*Eu sou um pobre caboclo
Ganho a vida na enxada
O que eu colho é dividido
Com quem não plantou nada
Se assim continuar
Vou deixar o meu sertão
Mesmos os olhos cheios d'água
E com dor no coração
Vou pró Rio carregar massas
Prós pedreiros em construção
Deus até tá ajudando
Tá chovendo no sertão
Mas plantar pra dividir
Não faço mais isso não*

I am a poor *caboclo*
I earn my living with a hoe
What I harvest is shared
With those that haven't planted anything
If it continues like this
I'm going to leave my *sertão*
With tears in my eyes
And with pain in my heart
I'll go to Rio to carry cement
For construction workers
God at least is helping
It's raining in the *sertão*
But plant just to share
I won't do this anymore

*Quer ver eu bater enxada no chão
Com força, coragem, com satisfação?
E só me dar terra pra ver como
Eu planto feijão, arroz e café
Vai ser bom pra mim e bom pra o doutor
Eu mando feijão, ele manda trator
Vocês vão ver o que é produção
Modéstia á parte, eu bato no peito
Eu sou bom lavrador
Mas plantar pra dividir
Não faço mais isso não*

You want to see me beat the ground with my hoe
With strength, courage, satisfaction?
Just give me land and see how
I plant beans, rice, and coffee
It'll be good for me and for you, sir
I send beans, he sends tractors
You all will see what I produce
Modesty aside, I beat my chest
I am a good farmer
But plant just to share
I won't do this anymore

Appendix B. Song Transcriptions

A Voz do Morro

Comp. Zé Kéti
Trans. Schuyler Whelden

D7 A b m7 b 5

Eu sou o sam - ba

Gm6 G b m

A voz do mor - ro sou eu mes - mo sim sen - hor

F° Em

Que-ro mostrar ao mun - do qu'eu ten - ho va - lor

Asus DM7 D7

Eu sou o rei dos ter - reiros Eu sou o

A b m7 b 5 Gm6

sam - ba Sou na - tu - ral da - qui do Rio

G b m F°

de Ja - nei ro Sou eu quem le - vo a - le - gri -

Em Gm6

- a Pa - ra mil - hões

Asus D69 D7

de co - ra - ções bra - si - lei - ros Mais um

A b m7 b 5 Gm6 G b m

sam - ba quer - e - mos sam - ba Quem

F°

es - tá pe - din -

Em Asus Am D7

- do é a voz do po - vo du'm pa - is Vi - va

A b m7 b 5 Gm6 G b m F°

sam - ba vamos can - tan - do Es - ta me - lo -

Em Asus DM7

di - a d'um Bra - sil fe - liz

The image shows a musical score for the song 'Samba Brasil'. It consists of eight staves of music in the key of D major (two sharps). The lyrics are written below the notes, and guitar chords are indicated above the staff lines. The chords include Em, Gm6, Asus, D69, D7, A b m7 b 5, Gm6, G b m, F°, Am, and DM7. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps. The lyrics are: '- a Pa - ra mil - hões de co - ra - ções bra - si - lei - ros Mais um sam - ba quer - e - mos sam - ba Quem es - tá pe - din - do é a voz do po - vo du'm pa - is Vi - va sam - ba vamos can - tan - do Es - ta me - lo - di - a d'um Bra - sil fe - liz'.

Malvadeza Durão

Comp. Zé Kéti
Trans. Schuyler Whelden

C G7 C A7 Dm
 Mais um ma - lan - dro fe - chou o pale - tó Eu ti - ve dó eu ti - ve dó

8 G7 Dm
 Quat - ro ve - las a - ce - sas em ci - made u - ma me - sa U - ma sub - i - scri -

14 G7 C A7
 ção pa - ra ser en - ter - ra - do Mor - re - e - eu Mal - va - de - za Du - rão ão Va -

21 Dm G7 C G7 C
 len - te Mas mui - to con - si - de - ra - do Mor - re - e - eu Mal - va - de - za Du -

27 A7 Dm G7 C Dm
 rão - ão Va - len - te Mas mui - to con - si - de - ra - do Ceu es - tre -

34 A7 C G7 C
 la - do lu - a pra - te - a - da Mui - tos sambas gran - des ba - tu - ca - das O mor -

41 Dm A7 Dm D7
 - ro ta - vem fes - ta quan - 'al - guém ca - iu com a mão no co - ra - zão sor - riu

47 G7 C A7 Dm
 Mor - re - e - eu Mal - va - de - za Du - rão - ão E o cri - mi - no -

54 G7 C
 - so nin - guém vi - u

Nega Dina

Comp. Zé Kéti
Trans. Schuyler Whelden

8 **Em7** **A13**
A Di - na su - biu o mor - ro do Pin - to Pra me pro - cu - rar

7 **DM7** **Fdim**
8 Não m'en - con - tran - do foi ao mor - ro da Fa -

11 **Em7** **A13**
8 ve - la Com a fil - ha da Es - te - la Pra me per - tu -

15 **DM7** **B7#5**
8 bar Mas eu es -

19 **Em7** **A13**
8 ta - va lá no mor - ro de São Car - los Quan - d'el - a che - gou

23 **F#m7** **B7#5**
8 Fa - zen - do es - cân - da - lo fa - zen - do - qui - zum -


27 **Em7** **A13**
8 - ba Diz - en - do que le - vou Meu no - me pra ma - cum -


31 **DM7** **B7#5**
8 - ba Só por - que


35 **Em7** **G#dim**
8 faz u - ma se - man - a qu'eu não dei - xo u - ma

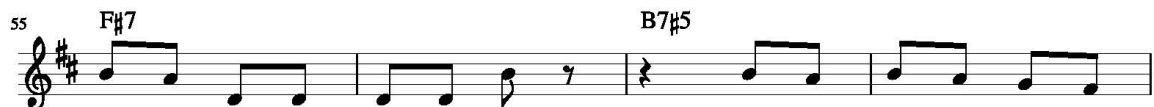
39 **F#m7** **B7#5**

 gra - na pra nos - sa des - pes - a E - la pen - sa que a

43 **Em7** **A13**

 min - ha vi - d'ê 'ma be - le - za Eu dou du - ro no ba -


47 **DM7** **Em7** **F#7** **B7#5**

 ral - ho pra po - der co - mer A min - ha

51 **Em7** **A13**

 vi - da não é mo - le não En - tr'em ca - na to - da

55 **F#7** **B7#5**

 ho - ra sem a - pel - a - ção Eu já an - do as - sus -

59 **Em7** **A13**

 ta - do sem pa - ra dei - ro Sou um mar - gi -

63 **Gm6** **DM7**

 nal bra - si - lei - ro

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