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Carnaval, Samba Schools and the Negotiation of Gendered Identities  
in São Paulo, Brazil

by

Carla Sacon Brunet

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requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, Chair

Professor Bonnie Wade

Professor Emeritus Percy Hintzen

Spring 2012

Carnaval, Samba Schools and the Negotiation of  
Gendered Identities in São Paulo, Brazil

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by

Carla Sacon Brunet

# Abstract

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by

Carla Sacon Brunet

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

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Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, Chair

The behaviors and interactions that enact specific gender identities are assumed by many Brazilians to be “natural.” Within the context of samba schools, the distribution of specific performance roles has always been informed by the assumption that there are natural feminine and masculine spaces. Thus, samba school members have well defined performance roles that are hierarchically structured.

In this dissertation, I argue that gendered identities are constructed and articulated in the process of cultivating specific performance roles within samba schools. I am particularly interested in highlighting the ways in which specific femininities and masculinities came to be taught, learned and naturalized in the lives of samba school members, as they engage in strategies of social- and self-discipline while preparing for the carnival parade each year.

Central to my argument is the idea that dance/musical competence is intertwined with notions about the physical body and the nurturing of particular character dispositions. By analyzing specific historical moments, discourses and samba schools’ micro-practices and disciplinary methods, I show how performance roles are determined and defined by perceptions regarding gender as well as age, body type, skin color, behavior and bodily deportment. Furthermore, I demonstrate how the act of dancing and/or playing music in distinctive ways has become, at once, critical markers of specific femininities and masculinities, and also the way through which one learns how to be feminine or masculine.

Finally, I explore how some samba school members have been able to construct alternative capacities for themselves by examining the circumstances that have allowed these participants to operate differently *despite* the given assumptions about the division of gendered identities.



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Example 3: Sample of a Samba School Groove

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

I began to formulate the fundamental questions this ethnography addresses after listening to a comment<sup>1</sup> by Leci Brandão, a well-known samba composer and member of Rio's Mangueira Samba School. Leci said,

The most important characteristic of my lyrics is my life. The words of all my songs reflect my daily life – my loves, my emotions, my fans, my problems. I try and picture everything I feel in my lyrics. I always try to be myself and act natural. When I went to agents with my music, I would say: “look, if you don't like my work, that's ok with me. If you like it, fine. If you don't, there is nothing to do. I don't need you. And that's how I have been all my life. For me that is no great problem, except in the case of my samba school where there was prejudice against me being a woman. So much so that I always lost samba competitions. So I just got up and left (1982).<sup>2</sup>

The last three sentences particularly caught my attention. In many samba schools, it is through samba competitions that the *samba enredo*<sup>3</sup> of that year's carnaval<sup>4</sup> parade is chosen. The parade itself is also a competition among different samba schools and members often believe that much of the school's success relies on a “good” *samba enredo*: one that moves people, members and the audience alike. Thus, winning a *samba enredo* competition is considered an important accomplishment among samba school members. And while Leci Brandão was already recognized as a samba composer in Brazil, she never had one of her sambas reverberated through the sambadrome. By her account, that was so because she was a woman.

I had seen this documentary once before, but somehow I neglected to notice her remarks about gender politics within Mangueira Samba School. I began to wonder if this were a localized practice or if there was something more about the structure of samba schools in general.

While I had been raised in Brazil and had watched the carnaval parade on television, I had never been to a samba school's hall, known as *quadra* or *barracão*.

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<sup>1</sup> Documentary entitled “The Spirit of Samba: Black Music of Brazil,” which is one of a fourteen-part series entitled *Beats of the Heart* by filmmaker Jeremy Marre, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Leci's own words are many times covered on the video by the voice of a translator. Therefore, I include here only the transcription of the voice-over

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, Leci's own words are many times covered on the video by the voice of a translator. Therefore, I include here only the transcription of the voice-over translation.

<sup>3</sup> Samba enredo is the theme song of a samba school.

<sup>4</sup> I use the Portuguese spelling of the word carnaval, rather than the American spelling carnival when specifically referring to the Brazilian celebration. I use carnival when referring to celebrations elsewhere.



So, during my next visit to see family in São Paulo, I decided to attend the first night of the *samba enredo* competition at Vai-Vai Samba School, one of the oldest schools in São Paulo city. After paying a very reasonable entrance fee, the equivalent of a dollar at the time, I made my way through Vai-Vai's hall, which was packed. Measuring about 1000 square meters, the simple hall had a stage to the right of the entrance door and a bar to its left. A mezzanine wrapped around three sides, providing a clear view of all who entered. The stairway that led to the mezzanine was roped off and a security man guarded its access. I was informed that to go to the mezzanine level I needed to pay the equivalent of another five dollars, which I gladly did to be able to stand at a place where I could see better. Much to my surprise, as I climbed up the stairs I saw a group of five women sitting at a table; their nametags read "Feminine Department." As these women explained to me, members of the feminine department are in charge of receiving and welcoming new people at the school, cooking for school functions, helping out in the sale of food and beverages when the school holds large functions opened to the public, among other things. Aside from being members of the Feminine Department, all of these women also had a performing role. In other words, aside from their performance roles, some members of the samba schools also took on jobs to help run the institution.

That night I learned that samba schools are highly hierarchical organizations and that within their structure, men and women have well defined performance roles. For the most part, women are dancers, taking on roles such as being a *passista* (solo samba dancer), a *porta-bandeira* (flag-bearer), or a member of the mandatory *baiana* section. Men can dance, as in the example of the flag-bearer counterpart—the *mestre-sala*; however, their main responsibility revolves around music making—singing and playing.

Thinking back, I see that, like many other Brazilians, I too had taken for granted that there were specific feminine and masculine spaces and roles and that these had been made normative. It was only at that moment that I came to realize there was something more significant about how each performance role was designed and maintained by the schools and members themselves. Through subsequent research, inspired by Henry Spiller's work on Sundanese dance and the construction of masculinity in West Java, I came to understand samba schools not simply as a site for music making, but also as a space where gender is learned and performed.

## THE RESEARCH

The carnivalesque tradition has already been described and analyzed extensively.<sup>5</sup> It has been interpreted as a time outside of time, in which social hierarchy is suspended and the established order is dissolved through madness, laughter, and the celebration of the flesh (Bakhtin 1968). It has also been construed through its essential opposition to the world of daily life, as a ritual of reversal in which social life is turned upside down (Leach 1961, Turner 1969, Da Matta 1979). Other theorists have pointed to carnival's

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<sup>5</sup> See Bakhtin 1968, Burke 1978, Baroja 1979, Ladurie 1979.

potential to release pent-up emotions, functioning as a safety valve through which inner tensions can be disbursed and the equilibrium of social, dominant order reestablished (Gluckman 1963, Gross 1980, Eagleton 1981).

Carnival studies in the Americas have generated a significant body of scholarship. Scholars interested in diasporic cultural flows have largely focused on Caribbean-style carnivals in the United States and Europe (Hill and Abramson 1988, Nunley 1988, Manning 1990). Others have used carnival as a window into issues of class, race, national identity and conflicts (Taylor 1982, Spitzer 1986, Da Matta 1979, Guillermprieto 1990, Kinser 1990, Lipsitz 1990, Queiroz 1992). Yet, only a few carnival studies have focused on gender and sexuality (Parker 1991, Green 1999, Dikobe 2003), and with the exception of a few works on Trinidadian calypso, few studies demonstrate a central interest in carnival music (Warner 1985, Dudley 1997, Averill 1997, Dikobe 2003, and Guilbault 2007).

This dissertation explores how specific articulations of gendered identities are cultivated through music and dance practices among members of samba schools in São Paulo, Brazil, as they prepare for the *carnaval* parade each year. Among carnival's most salient figures are the scantily dressed female of mixed race, known as *passista*, the *baiana*, an older, large woman from the state of Bahia dressed in a voluminous white dress, and the percussionist, often seen as the embodiment of the *malandro* figure, who is an astute but somewhat devious man often viewed with ambivalence. What conditions make possible such articulations in cultural constructions of gendered identities? How do samba school practices contribute to the construction of these identities?

I am defining gendered identities as social categories that are constructed by and through assumptions and behaviors that lead to the division of people into female and male (Butler 1990, 1993). These identities are not fixed prior to social interaction, but rather, they are constructed in interaction (Connell 1995).

Most members of the samba schools I interviewed regarded their gender as an innate attribute. However, they still often spoke of how the refinement of particular femininities and or masculinities could be achieved through a variety of practices. For instance, as the custodian of decorum, a samba school flag bearer is trained to be modest and virtuous. Such behaviors are acquired through the repetition of assumed behaviors that are practiced in and outside the samba schools. Essential to this process is a concurrent disciplining of the body and mind that lead such qualities to become embodied habits.

In order to understand how samba school members cultivate ways of consciously embodying specific qualities, as well as to locate the different mechanisms within the tradition that allow them to do so, I have drawn from Michel Foucault's later work on traditions of self-cultivation in the Greco-Roman period and also in early Christianity under the Roman Empire (1997, 1988). Unlike his earlier works, in which Foucault argues that subjects were historically produced through technologies of domination, Foucault's later work comes to recognize that among those technologies of power which support a subjects' formation, were those of the subjects own purposeful intent. It is important to note, however, that the subject for Foucault does not

precede power relations; instead, the subject is produced through the power relations that come to form the conditions of his/her possibility. Foucault's work allows me to understand the process of self-cultivation as an effect of power through which samba school members become willing subjects, and consciously work on their bodies, desires and emotions to cultivate specific gendered identities within the tradition's parameters.

Foucault's work has significantly impacted feminist and gender studies scholarship by offering new ways of investigating power relations and gender inequality within different societies (Mahmood 1998, Bordo 1993, Rago 1991, Butler 1990, Ong 1987). One of the most influential feminist theorists to utilize Foucault's formulations of power and subject formation has been Judith Butler.

In her work, Butler maintains that the same conditions that secure a subject's subordination enable the subject to become a self-conscious identity (1993). Butler refers to this process as the paradox of "subjectivation." As scholar Saba Mahmood explains, for Butler "the set of capacities inhering in a subject, the abilities that define its possible modes of agency, are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power, but are themselves the product of that operation" (1998: 27-28). In order to clarify this point, Mahmood writes,

...consider the example of a virtuoso pianist who submits herself to the, at times painful, regime of disciplinary practice, as well as hierarchical structures of apprenticeship, in order to acquire the ability—the requisite agency—to play the instrument with mastery. The conditions of her agency are also those of her subordination to structures of authority (1998:28).

For Butler, as in much of feminist work, agency, defined as the ability to subvert the norm, is at the core of her work. She locates agency within the gaps and fissures of the citational process, when through reiteration, variations can occur. Furthermore, in Butler's analysis, resistance to power occurs not in the consciousness of individuals, but in the process of resignification through which body subjects are themselves constituted (1993).

While I find Butler's notions of subject formation and agency very persuasive, I have chosen to engage Saba Mahmood's conception of agency to understand and interrogate the desires and motivations of many samba school members. Mahmood eloquently puts forth a notion of agency that attempts to break the binary terms of submission and resistance, instead taking into account how different forms of desire emerge, including those for submission to a variety of aims. She maintains that the concept of agency should be disassociated from the goals of progressive politics that locates agency within resistance against oppression. Instead, she proposes that agency should be interpreted "as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create" (2001: 203). As she explains, what is perceived as passivity and docility from a so-called progressive point of view, could be seen as a form of agency when understood within a context of discourse and structures of subordination. As she writes,

...if the ability to effect change in the world and in oneself is historically and culturally specific (both in terms of what constitutes “change” and the capacity by which it is effected, thus its meaning and sense cannot be fixed a priori, but allowed to emerge through an analysis of the particular networks of concepts that enable specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectively (2001: 212).

I found Mahmood’s insights useful when analyzing women’s performance roles within samba schools. Many women realized that in the process of becoming dancers and performing postures that are either modest or sexually provocative, they had to willingly subject themselves to the discipline of male-dominated practices. Paradoxically, it was their engagement with these practices that at times made it possible for them to challenge the prescribed norms.

After having carried out two years of intensive field work in two samba schools of São Paulo city (2002-04), I argue that the cultivation of specific performance roles have provided members of samba schools with a significant means to construct and articulate gendered identities. This dissertation offers evidence of the ways in which specific articulations of gendered identities come to be learned, taught, and naturalized in the lives of members of samba schools.

Samba Schools are organizations that first emerged at the end of 1920s in the city of Rio de Janeiro. They were an outgrowth of groups known as *blocos* and *cordões*, which were comprised of black and mixed-race citizens, usually from the same neighborhoods, who gathered to celebrate carnival in an informal, non-organized manner.<sup>6</sup> Just as it happened in Rio, São Paulo’s samba schools were also a reinvention of the old *cordões* into regulated institutions that operated under the gaze of the local government. But unlike Rio’s *blocos* and *cordões*, which started to transform into samba schools in the 1930s, São Paulo’s carnival groups only began to organize as Samba Schools in the 1960s. And it was only in 1968, under the government of mayor Faria Lima, that the carnival parade of São Paulo began to be subsidized by the local government. This marks what became known as the *officialization* of São Paulo’s carnival parade.

During my fieldwork years, 2002-04, there were 71 samba schools in the city of São Paulo that were divided into five groups: Special (14), Access (14), First (10), Second (13), and Third groups (20). The carnival parade that this dissertation focuses on, also the Official Carnival Parade of São Paulo City, is enacted only by the samba school of the Special Group. In 2002, it was estimated that the four days preceding Ash Wednesday, moved around 1 billion dollars within Brazil. Of this total, São Paulo’s carnival parade generated around 17 million dollars (Araujo 2002: 31).

While São Paulo’s carnival parade does not compare to Rio’s parade in terms of visibility, the number of tourists it attracts, and the amount of money

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<sup>6</sup> See chapter 2 for an analysis of the socio-political climate that urged the emergence of Samba Schools in the late 1920s.

it dispenses into the parade as well as makes through the parade, it constitutes the third largest carnival celebration in the country, after Rio and Salvador. Nevertheless, little has been written about São Paulo's carnival. In fact, to date, only a few descriptive works, all in Portuguese, of the festivity and its samba schools have emerged (Moraes 1978, Urbano, Mabhan, and Santos 1987, Von Simson 1998, Soares 1999, and Oliveira 2004). Of all the work generated around Rio's carnival parade, aside from several feminist works on the construction of the *mulata* (Giacomini 1992, 1994, 2006, Corrêa 1996, Gilliam and Gilliam 1998, Bennet 1999, and Pravaz 2000, 2002, 2003), no other analysis focusing on gender or gender roles has been done.

The scholarship on Brazilian carnival has primarily focused on the parade of Rio de Janeiro (Da Matta 1979, Taylor 1982, Pereira de Queiroz 1992, Cavalcanti 1995, Cabral 1996, Cunha 2001). Scholars studying carnival festivities in Brazil have often classified them as a spectacle carnival, where there is a clear separation between performers and spectators, or as participatory carnival, where it is assumed everyone is free to participate.<sup>7</sup> Embedded in this classification is an inherent tension framed by the assumption that participatory celebrations are more "authentic" and have remained less influenced by the dominant, and often white, elite (Risério 1981, Raphael 1990, Dunn 1992, Crook 1993). This tension is played out in the discussions of the political and social functions of carnival, which has been greatly influenced by debates generated over different theories (i.e. ritual of reversals, suspension of hierarchy, safety valve concept, instrument of social control).

My analysis is guided by a set of assumptions. I ascribe to the assertion that carnival is a complex social celebration and reject the notion that it has a prescribed function that asserts the same values upon everyone. My theoretical approach is informed by privileging what people say about their experiences, activities and goals, while at the same time investigating how these accounts are informed by and intertwined in broader cultural and historical frameworks. I think it is important to consider the modes of participation (e.g. spectacle carnival, participatory carnival), who participates (e.g. white male or mixed race female), and the conditions of participation (e.g. watching the parade from a box, parading on the avenue, or hanging on at the metal fence outside the samba avenue). I believe carnival festivities should be seen as multifaceted social events that continuously change in response to specific circumstances of Brazilian life.

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<sup>7</sup> For studies that focus on participatory carnival in Salvador, Bahia, and the Re-Africanization of such celebrations see Risério (1981), Dunn (1992) and Crook (1993). Also See Linger (1992) for an insightful analysis of the connection between carnival and violence in São Luis, Maranhão, and how these are directly tied with the process of venting frustration. For an historical examination of how a variety of folkloric traditions came into existence in the carnival of Recife, Pernambuco, and have manage to flourish in urban 20<sup>th</sup> century, see Katarina Real (1990). Also focusing on the carnival of Pernambuco, Oliveira Pinto investigates different types of formal organizations that make up various carnival celebrations in Recife and Olinda (1994, 1996).

Without negating the contribution of works that propose overarching theories of such a complex phenomenon, the aim of my inquiries has been to move less toward a theory of carnival's function than toward an analysis of carnival as it exists in the social imaginary of samba school members and its practices. By social imaginary I am referring to the way in which a group of people envision their social surroundings through a shared understanding that makes possible common practices. In spite of how they interact, there are differences between how carnival is imagined and its actual practices.

My interest lies not in the recovery of neglected issues or areas simply for the sake of putting together a more inclusive carnival history. Rather, I am interested in understanding how specific discourses about carnival are shaped, who and what they highlight or omit, what this can tell us about what is valued, and ultimately, how these processes help construct gendered identities within the practices of samba schools.

## FIELDWORK

The ethnographic material presented in this dissertation stems from archival and fieldwork research pursued in São Paulo, Brazil. The bulk of my research was accomplished over a period of two years, from 2002 to 2004, however, since then I have continued to commute to São Paulo from the U.S. These shorter trips have varied in duration, sometimes lasting two or three months, and other times two or three weeks.

I collected the data related to this research in several different ways. Archival research took place at the National Library in Rio de Janeiro as well as at the Carnaval Memory Center of São Paulo City. At these locations I examined and collected newspapers, journal articles, and other official documents of the various organizations involved in the production of carnival. The historical undertaking was useful to contextualize the practices of samba schools and also to trace persistent discourses that are historically embedded in the cultural ideas of gender interactions. My assumption was that only by understanding how different discourses and power relations were historically constituted in Brazil, could I begin to understand the complex interconnections of gender, sexuality, race, class, and other identity markers. Working at these locations also provided me with access to visual material, such as photographs and cover art that were fundamental for grasping the different constructions of femininities and masculinities at different historical periods.

While I interviewed participants of many of the schools for the purpose of observing rehearsals and following the annual cycle of preparations, I chose to focus particularly on two of the fourteen schools of the Special Group: *Grêmio Recreativo Cultural e Escola de Samba Vai-Vai* and *Grêmio Recreativo Cultural e Social Escola de Samba Águia de Ouro*.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>8</sup> The term *Grêmio Recreativo*, meaning Recreational Association or Society was appended to Rio's schools' names during the Vargas dictatorial regime. This is why the names of all samba schools are preceded by the G.R.E.S. (*Grêmio Recreativo*

my work has been greatly informed by members of all schools. Also, I would argue that the schools could be divided into two different categories: those are considered more “traditional,” by which I mean schools that have been long-established with strong ties to the community, and those which are much newer and, for the most part, their inclusion in the Special Group more recent. Águia de Ouro would fall within this newer category whereas Vai-Vai is considered one of the most “traditional” schools in São Paulo.

Large or small, the samba schools are aggregated under larger federations or associations. These—in collaboration with the official tourism organization of São Paulo, *Anhembi Turismo*—are responsible for organizing the annual carnaval parade.<sup>9</sup> In São Paulo, the schools are under the organization of mainly two associations: The Independent Association of Samba Schools of São Paulo (LIGA), created in 1986, is in charge of organizing the Special and Access groups; the Union of Samba Schools of São Paulo or UESP oversees groups one, two, and three.

Aside from attending the annual parades, once as audience member and another in one of the sections of the school Águia de Ouro, I also attended rehearsals, observed music and dance lessons, *samba enredo* competitions, and other more informal gatherings at the two schools I followed. My goals were to investigate how ideas of gender are made normative through the practice of samba, and to observe how members both evaluated each other’s performance and negotiated between prescribed and individual creativity. By focusing on the evaluation of members’ perceived competence and transgressions, as well as the ways in which evaluation was discussed, my hope was to elucidate the practical conditions that enabled samba school members to delineate gendered identities, the challenges they encountered and negotiations they had to make.

I also conducted many interviews with dancers, musicians, instructors, and others involved in the production of carnaval, such as LIGA and *Anhembi Turismo* representatives. Talking to people about my project was not the greatest challenge; what was difficult was arranging formal interviews, as most people had a very different sense of time. After a few weeks of consistently waiting for two or three hours to conduct a scheduled interview, I came up with the term “samba time.” Once I understood “samba time” I saved myself a lot of waiting time. I found that most samba school members I interviewed seemed more comfortable with casual, spontaneous conversations. Nevertheless, in the end, I conducted many in-depth interviews, which proved crucial for this analysis. With some of them, I became quite close, sharing considerable time in their daily lives and activities to learn how they sought to realize the principles taught/learned in the schools.

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Escola de Samba). In this dissertation I refer to the schools simply as Vai-Vai Samba School and Samba School Águia de Ouro.

<sup>9</sup> Founded in 1970, *Anhembi Turismo* is the official tourism organ of the city of São Paulo. Its main objective is not only to market São Paulo’s tourism potential within and outside Brazil, but also provide the infrastructure for hundreds of events realized by the local government. Among these are the annual carnaval parade, the official Independence Day parade, and the Formula 1 Grand Prix Brazil.

In the many months I have spent away from Brazil, I have found different ways to remain in touch with samba school members. With those who became I friends, I communicate via email and more recently through software applications that allow for video calls, such as Skype. I am also a member of SASP,<sup>10</sup> a virtual site for those interested in Samba. Interestingly, to become a member, one must have a Brazilian national identification number, or CPF. All members are identified by name, age, and school affiliation. This has been a very useful tool that allows me to have access to many members' perceptions of specific questions at once. Since everyone can see all answers to the question posed, members can also comment on other's responses.

My decision to carry on fieldwork in São Paulo appeared controversial to some for two reasons. The first was that São Paulo's spectacle carnival involves what many would describe as a commercialized, hypersexed, tourism-oriented practice, rather than a more participatory carnival, viewed by many as a more "authentic" representation of carnival practices. The implication is that commercialization corrupts practices that prior were somehow "pure." In this case, that commercialization of carnival is changing practices for the financial benefit of the corporations who sponsor it. I favor a line of thinking that rather takes commercialization into account as simply part of cultural practices, creating technologies and mediations that continue to inform and shape its subjects. After that explanation, the question that followed was: then why not Rio's samba schools? After all, Rio's carnival parade is the most visible facet of the Brazilian carnival. Two reasons shaped this specific decision. The first was that I believed that because São Paulo's production of carnival is less visible than of Rio's, that it may prove more flexible, at least in regards to gender division of roles. For instance, of the fourteen samba schools comprising the Special Group in São Paulo in 2002, three were presided over by women presidents, one had a woman song leader, and many were beginning to accept at least a few women in their percussion sections. The second was purely based on practical issues. I knew São Paulo well and felt more comfortable navigating within São Paulo city than in Rio. Reality or not, I felt safer there and earlier on, was able to count on a number of people to help me in a variety of ways. From housing to introductions to samba schools members, from companionship simply for the sake of sharing the experience, but mostly to guarantee that I would be safe in certain places, family and friends made fieldwork in São Paulo fruitful.

## **ETHNOGRAPHY "AT HOME"**

Representation is perhaps one of the most troublesome issues for ethnographers. Recent research has brought to the forefront the limitations and "partial truths" produced by the methodologies ethnographers employ in the field. The ethnographer has been conceptually displaced from the position of detached observer, and attention has increasingly been drawn to

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<sup>10</sup> SASP stands for *Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista* or Society Lovers of São Paulo's Samba.



questions regarding the positionality of the researcher, the practices of ethnographic writing, and the politics of such representation. As Wolcott reminds us, “both culture and personality enter into the equation of how each of us goes about fieldwork, influencing even the way we pose our problems or devise strategies for investigating them” (2008: 50). Indeed, the researcher’s positioning is always a constituent of any research process.

I was born and raised 50 km from São Paulo city, in a town called Jundiaí. In that sense, I was doing fieldwork in my own backyard and in my native language. I believe this made my entry into the schools easier than it would have been for a non-native researcher. On the other hand, I had never attended a samba school rehearsal or gathering of any sort. So, if on one level I felt and was perceived as an insider, at another I was not. Initially, this ambiguity was further intensified by my educational status both as a musician skilled in Western art music and as a graduate student trained at a foreign university. A certain distance arose from the assumed hierarchy of knowledge; the inherent belief that what is created locally is not as good as what is produced abroad. Ultimately, I feel these differences were somewhat eased by the many hours I spent with my collaborators and musicianship skills.

## ORGANIZATION

The material presented in this dissertation is organized into five chapters. Following this introduction, chapter two serves to contextualize carnival as a tradition within the legacies of colonialism, gendered from the outset and historically shaped by a selective process of inclusion and exclusion that influenced its social and cultural meanings today. I examine how specific discourses about carnival have been shaped within historical intersections and through political strategies to demonstrate how these processes contributed to the conditions that enable articulations of distinct gendered identities.

In chapter three I examine how specific beliefs and practices surrounding carnival inform participants’ engagement with the event and ultimately impact the construction of gendered selves. I begin by examining the discourse surrounding two prevalent and related ideas: that the lives of Brazilians are inherently sad, and that carnival interrupts such sadness. Through analysis of song lyrics, poems, newspaper articles and scholarly works, I show how these ideas have shaped samba schools’ members’ expectations. In the second part I focus on how through specific carnival practices, those revolving around singing, participants are condition to engage with music in ways that foster certain types of gendered interactions.

In chapter four my central concern is to highlight the tensions between how subjects are socially constructed through normalized practices and how they also self-cultivate certain dispositions. To accomplish this I embark on an exegesis of samba school’s micro practices and disciplinary methods, which many times involve the rules of the carnival parade competition. I pay particular attention to the division of gender roles and each specific set of musical/dance practices. I also examine how performers themselves seek to

achieve competence in their prescribed roles by drawing upon a repertoire of bodily and ritual practices that are deployed through music making and dancing, and in the process of doing so, cultivate specific femininities and masculinities. I begin by examining how the percussion ensemble is a central site for the construction of a dominant heterosexual masculinity and how through performance, instruments and playing techniques take on attributes of such masculinity. I later examine three of the female performance roles—the *porta-bandeira*, the *passista*, and the *baiana*—and show how performers cultivate specific femininities by embracing archetypal narratives of idealized selves.

In chapter five I address how some carnival participants have imagined or created alternative spaces for themselves within carnival, both inside and outside of samba schools. Drawing upon ethnographic work, I illustrate how many carnival participants negotiate and problematize the status quo and what conditions enable them to do so. I accomplish this by investigating three different cases. First, I examine how professional percussionist Miriam Cápuia, Samba School Águia de Ouro's Percussion's Ensemble, and professional singer Eliana de Lima were able to occupy spaces marked as masculine. Secondly, I analyze which conditions have enabled some homosexual men to take on the important role of *Mestre-sala*. And in the last section, I analyze the emergence of the group Oriashé, an all-female percussion ensemble that parades during carnival but independently from samba schools.

## CHAPTER TWO HISTORICAL LEGACIES

*The Country of Carnaval*

—— Title of Jorge Amado's first novel, 1931

*There is no sin south of the equator*

—— Song by Chico Buarque & Ruy Guerra, 1973

*My happiness crossed the ocean and anchored itself in the samba avenue,  
it was a fascinating landing onto to the greatest show on earth.*

—— *Samba enredo* lyrics, School União da Ilha, 1982

By definition, carnaval is a period of festive popular events held prior to the beginning of the Lenten season, from Sunday to Tuesday immediately preceding Ash Wednesday.<sup>11</sup> It is a time marked by different types of celebrations, including balls, street parties, informal and formal street parades, which are specific to time and place (see figures 2-1 through 2-4). However, since the dictatorship years of Getúlio Vargas,<sup>12</sup> the formal carnaval parade enacted by members of the samba schools has become the most visible facet of carnaval celebrations in Brazil.

As the epigraphs show, a prevalent set of ideas exists in relation to carnaval that circulates widely within the Brazilian popular imaginary. Newspapers, magazines, television programs, and music lyrics construct contemporary carnaval as a Brazilian tradition par excellence. One that has historically been seen as a time when anything is possible and organically developed to become, as the popular slogan indicates, "the largest show on earth."

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<sup>11</sup> Lent is a period of forty days preceding Easter Sunday in the Roman Catholic Church. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is marked by a concern with spiritual preparation for Holy or Passion Week, which recalls the events leading up and including Jesus' crucifixion.

<sup>12</sup> In his book *Father of the Poor*, historian Robert Levine asserts that Getúlio Vargas was the most influential Brazilian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1998: 1). He ruled Brazil through a series of positions: as Interim President following an armed uprising against the government (1930-34), as President appointed by the Constituent Assembly (1934-1937), as Dictator (1937-1945), and as President elected by the public (1951-1954).



*Figure 2-1. Indoor Carnival Ball  
Copacabana Palace, Rio, 2009*



*Figure 2-2. Carnaval organized street party  
Salvador, 2010*



*Figure 2-3. Informal street parade in the Bexiga District of São Paulo  
Bloco dos Esfarrapados, 2010  
Photograph of Anderson Barbosa*



*Figure 2-4. Formal Samba School Parade and Competition  
Sambadrome in São Paulo, 2011*



In general, the term “tradition” is used to describe practices and customs that conform to a precedent, a model that has endured from generation to generation. Tradition in this sense is perceived as an inert, historicized element of social structure, often understood in contrast to ‘innovation’ and quickly associated with ‘authenticity.’ However, I share Raymond Williams’ assertion that tradition should not be interpreted simply “as the surviving past,” but rather as an active force that is “in practice the most evident expression of the dominant and hegemonic pressures and limits” (Williams 1977: 115). In this light, it is possible to see carnival as a regulated site and at the same time, one that regulated its subjects.

To understand how carnival has been shaped by projects and tactics that seek to arrange and re-arrange the conduct of its participants, it is necessary to address the following additive issues: (a) racial, gender, and sexual legacies of Brazil’s colonial history; (b) the disciplining of space; i.e., the urban city, the streets, and samba schools; (c) the construction of the national character as racial mixed and the promotion of cultural products associated with race mixture.

In this chapter, I synthesize information found in secondary sources with other primary source documents to locate carnival as a site where power is negotiated. I explore historical intersections and political strategies that have merged to position carnival as a moment when *who* was included or excluded from participation and *what* conduct was permissible or punishable were put on display to shape national subjects.

## I

### COLONIAL DISCOURSE

Brazil became a colony of Portugal in the first decades of the sixteenth century<sup>13</sup> and it remained as such until 1822. While independence from Portugal was declared then, Brazil continued to be ruled as an Empire by the same Portuguese lineage until 1889, when it was proclaimed a Republic.<sup>14</sup>

Immediately after their settling of Brazil, the Portuguese began importing slave labor from their African colonies.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that around 4 million enslaved Africans arrived in Brazilian ports in the period between 1550 and 1850. The flow of slaves to Brazil was most intense in the nineteenth century with an estimated total of 1.7 million arrivals. It is remarkable that between the period of 1830-1850, when slave imports were formally illegal, some 700 thousand slaves were brought to Brazil (Versiani, Pianto, and Vergolino 2003).

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<sup>13</sup> The first settler arrived in Brazil in 1500 and the first expedition to colonize took place by 1530.

<sup>14</sup> Portuguese Prince Pedro I declared Brazil’s independence and was given the title of emperor of Brazil.

<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that more than a third of all Africans shipped to the New World as slaves were sent to Brazil. More than 60% of those arrived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Levine 1999, Skidmore 1993).

This extraordinary flow of slave trade to Brazil was caused by a succession of export surges, productions that were labor-intensive and very lucrative: sugar in the seventeenth century; gold and diamonds in the eighteenth; and sugar, cotton, and especially coffee from the 1790s onward.

The importation of slaves to Brazil was so massive that by the beginning of the 1800s, at least two-thirds of the population in Brazil was non-white (Bethell 1970). According to preliminary estimates, the 1991 census reported that half of the nearly one hundred and fifty million Brazilians were classified as black or mulatto (Lovell 1994).

Interracial sexual reproduction was another factor that contributed to the large non-white population in Brazil. Portuguese men sent to settle Brazil arrived without families; their stay in Brazil expected to be temporary. The scarcity of white women rendered miscegenation a viable practice for the Portuguese men and, consequently, contributed to the extensive process of racial mixing. As Bradford Burns wrote, “the Portuguese monarchs customarily sent out on their global expeditions a combination of soldiers, adventurers, and petty criminals condemned to exile. The Portuguese female was noticeably rare during the first century of Brazilian history” (1993: 38).

While interracial marriages were prohibited to ensure the integrity of the dominant party, sexual contact between white males and female slaves, often in a form of rape, was a common event. This particular kind of violence was naturalized by the unequal power structure at the basis of master-slave relationship.

Such racial mixing, initially seen as the product of three racial streams—white European, black African, and Amerindian—resulted in a complex system of racial classification; one that was multi-racial, in contrast to the rigidly bi-racial system of North America (Skidmore 1993).<sup>16</sup> According to Skidmore, within this gradation of races, Africans were seen as a lower race than Amerindians (2010: 35). He recounts that a viceroy from Portugal, upon learning that an Amerindian male had married a black woman, removed the Amerindian from his post. This fact, Skidmore argued, shows “both that blacks were barred from posts that Indians were able to hold and that marrying blacks was worse than marrying Indians (ibid.).”<sup>17</sup>

By the time abolition was declared (1888), million of freed slaves entered a complex social structure that was devoid of the application of the “descent rule” constructed in North America.<sup>18</sup> In place of ancestry, racial categories in Brazil were constructed as the sum of several physical features—hair color and texture, skin color, and facial features—combined with the apparent wealth or status, as determined by the person’s attire and social

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<sup>16</sup> This system became even more complex after the immigrations of several other groups of people such as Italians, Germans, Japanese, Lebanese and Syrians, to mention a few.

<sup>17</sup> In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with racial mixing involving African and Portuguese populations because samba is seen as the product of such mixture. For sources on the concept of race as applied to Ameridians in Brazil see Thomas Skidmore (1993 and 2010).

<sup>18</sup> According to the “descent rule,” ancestry, rather than physical appearance, determines racial classification.

company that also influenced the perception of a person's race or color (Skidmore 1993). As the old Brazilian adage argued, "money whitens." Skidmore writes,

...the mulatto...was granted entry—albeit limited—into the higher social establishment. The limits on his mobility depended upon his exact appearance (the more "Negroid," the less mobile) and the degree of cultural "whiteness" (education, manners wealth) he was able to attain (1993:40).

In Brazil, race—often discussed as color<sup>19</sup>—was constructed as a continuum of shades that combined with perceptions of prestige and wealth determined a person's placement within social hierarchy. Similarly, in his analysis of race and Creole ethnicity in the Caribbean, scholar Percy Hintzen noted that, for racially mixed population, the attainment of certain privileges was related to the perceived distance from an African heritage and the closeness to European cultural values and phenotype. As Hintzen writes,

The allocation of Creole privilege was directly related to racial and cultural manifestations of the degree of separation from an African past. It was related, also, to the extent of demonstrated cultural and phenotypical similarities with the European...In combination, gradations of color and the acquisition of cultural capital, particularly education and training, determined location in the social hierarchy of Creole society" (2002: 482).

Of importance is that the discourse of racial mixture produced in Brazil functioned as a strategy to construct and imagine a nation without racism—a color-blind society. Interracial sex was often credited as the reason of, as well as the evidence for the lack of racism. In fact, until the mid 1990s, Brazil's pattern of racial relations was perceived, especially when compared to the United States, as benign (Winant 1992).<sup>20</sup> But what must become clear is that the discourse on racial mixture was predicated on both integration and distancing, since at its core was the project of *branqueamento*, or "whitening." Such theory held that miscegenation over generations would lead to a "whitened" population. The search for "whiteness" was predicated on a general acceptance of the superiority of white skin over black, of European values over African ones, and an association of whiteness with the elite's definition of civilization.

This belief system can be exemplified by the systematic promotion of European immigration, and the denunciation of non-white immigration during the nineteenth century. For instance, in 1890 Asian and black immigration was prohibited by the government unless authorized by an act

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<sup>19</sup> Color terms in Brazil are complicated and elide with words used to refer to racial identities. The words include: black, white, brown or mixed, dark, light, freckled (*sarará*), among many others.

<sup>20</sup> For examples see Frank Tannenbaum (1947), Gilberto Freyre (1959) and Donald Pierson (1967).



of Congress (Meade 1997: 31). At this time, many proposals were put forth by plantation owners to bring Chinese laborers into the country but each time, they were met with loud opposition. "The controversy of Chinese immigration had forced many Brazilian, however, to make clear their racial views. What emerged was a strong commitment to a progressively whiter Brazil" (Skidmore 1993: 27).

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, immigration policies had been put in place to facilitate the immigration of millions of Europeans (Skidmore and Smith 1992). This strategy, masked as the solution for laborer scarcity, was part of the modernizing national project which had as one of its major targets the whitening of the national population (Hasenbalg 1979: 128).

From the beginning, racism fashioned a hierarchy of social stratification based on the assumptions of white superiority. As Percy Hintzen has pointed out,

For the better part of the last five hundred years, whiteness and its related claim to uncontaminated diasporic origin in Europe have conferred a 'natural,' 'ineluctable,' and 'deserved advantage' over those who are not white. Accordingly, the later are considered to be 'naturally' inferior.' There is a contingent, even though almost universal conjoining of white supremacy with privilege, power, knowledge, and wealth (2003: 129).

Intricately connected with these issues are the questions of gender relations and sexuality. The colonial project was fundamentally dependent in the deployment of white patriarch (Hintzen 2003: 131). Not only did it legitimize the practices of white male superiority, but the colonial project also naturalized these practices, rendering "invisible the fundamental immorality of colonialism (ibid.).

During colonial and imperial times (1500-1888), the most important organization through which social relations were structured was the slave-based plantation (Merrick and Graham 1979). Studies like those of Brazilian literary critic Antonio Cândido (1951) and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (1956) elaborated that patriarchal order within the plantation consisted of a core formed by the patriarch, his wife and their legitimate children, while at the periphery stood was a group of individuals who were linked to the patriarch himself: his mixed-race mistresses, illegitimate children, servants, friends, and so on (Parker 1991:31). As Richard Parker observed, "the figure of the patriarch, and the authority which emanated from him, clearly lay at the heart of this system, effectively linking the core to the periphery and uniting them as a single, functional unit" (ibid.).<sup>21</sup>

Under such patriarchal order, males were defined as "strong" "dignified," and "virile" (Freyre 1938). Demonstrated by sexual engagement and the fathering of children, virility was likely the most valued quality a man could possess (Wilson 1969: 71). On the other hand, women were

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<sup>21</sup> As Percy Hintzen pointed out during his readings of this dissertation, the logic of patriarchal order in Brazil was quite distinct from that which existed in Europe, as it related to the development of the enclosures and its urbanizing consequences.

constructed as “weak” and “beautiful” (Freyre 1938). However, I would argue that the definitions of beauty and weakness varied depending on a woman’s color and social position. Whereas white women were characterized by their perceived fragility and restrained gracefulness, beauty in a women of color resided in their sexual appeal and perceived unrestrained eroticism.

Thus, the functions reserved for white women related to the upkeep the master’s household by upholding Catholic morality. Morality, as defined by Michel Foucault as “a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family, educational institutions, churches, and so forth,” (1985: 25) was thus, constantly under surveillance. White women’s sexuality, always a subject of moral and religious anxiety, was only acceptable as a matter of reproduction within the realm of marriage (Pravaz 2002: 35-6). In a way, the respect of a family rested in their hands; their behavior almost entirely responsible for the family’s honor. As such, white women were often isolated to their home, “protected” from the outside world.<sup>22</sup>

In 1863 Jean Charles Marie Expilly, a Frenchman who spent a few years in Brazil, wrote about the invisibility that characterized the lives of elite women. He said,

A desconfiança, a inveja e a opressão resultantes prejudicavam todos os direitos e toda a graça da mulher, que não era, para dizer a verdade, senão a maior escrava do seu lar. Os bordados, os doces, a conversa com as negras, o cafuné, o manejo do chicote, e aos domingos uma visita `a igreja, eram todas as distrações que o despotismo paternal e a política conjugal permitiam `as moças, e `as inquietas esposas (2000: 183).

The resulting mistrust, rivalry, and oppression impair all rights and grace of women, who are more than slaves of their homes. Embroidery, cooking of special candies, conversing with negro women, the stroking of the head that lulls one to sleep, the handling of a whip, and a visit to church on Sundays, are all the distractions that paternal despotism and matrimonial politics allowed young women and uneasy wives (2000: 183).

In another passage, Expilly quoted a popular Portuguese saying that gives insight into male’s logic regarding white women’s position within the home. He wrote,

Uma mulher já é bastante instruída, quando lê corretamente as suas orações e sabe escrever a receita da goiabada. Mais do que isso seria uma perigo para o lar (ibid.).

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<sup>22</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the role of white women under the colonial condition, its relationship to patriarchy and its practices, see Cynthia Enloe’s *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* (2000).

A woman is sufficiently educated when she can read correctly her prayers and is capable of writing a recipe for guava candy. More than that would be harmful to the home (ibid.).

This system of interaction—between the white respectable woman and the white male patriarch—not only functioned to construct a specific type of femininity but it also served to shape a specific masculinity. In Cynthia Enloe's words, "[p]art of the empire-building masculinity was protection of the respectable lady. She stood for the civilizing mission which, in turn, justified the colonization of benighted peoples" (1989: 48).

The role of white women was paramount to the production and preservation of white supremacy on the plantation. As Percy Hintzen pointed out to me, this was the reason that anti-slavery movements in the United States were organized around the sympathies of white women in the North, who, outside of the plantation society, were more predisposed to see slavery as a form of white patriarchy in which they were instantiated.<sup>23</sup>

As I argued, specific representations of weakness and beauty were contingent on color. Black women's beauty in general, but particularly mixed-race women was located in their eroticized body. Perceived as highly erotic and inherently licentious, slaves were expected to satisfy all sexual needs of white masters (Bastide and Fernandes 1959). Furthermore, colonial discourse firmly constructed women of color as "wild" and "inhibited," placing on them the blame of seduction (Pravaz 2002:50). As Pravaz writes, "[t]heir systematic violation and rape by the white master was ideologically legitimized by a symbolic inversion in which white masters were depicted as "victims" of black female eroticism" (ibid.).

It was this type of discourse—one that, at once, resolved the contradiction that derived from cross-racial desires and intimacy, but also continued to exclude women of color from the space of civilized peoplehood—that characterized Freyre's writings and ultimately became the basis for his theory of racial democracy.

According to Freyre, it was in this early colonial context that European men and native Brazilian women, designated then as "Indians," that race mixture began to take place. Like many others, Freyre argued that when colonizers arrived in Brazil they already had an inclination to idealize, in sexual terms, the dark-skinned woman due to the Moorish occupation of Portugal (Goldstein 1999: 568). Such predisposition, Freyre said, fueled racial miscegenation and contributed to the perceived lack of racial prejudice. Such attitude was later extended toward African enslaved women and, according to Freyre, fashioned a less violent form of slavery than in other parts of the Americas.

While Freyre's concept of Brazil as a racial democracy has been criticized by many scholars, his imagery of the sexualized dark-skinned woman, who through her sexuality enslaves men, has persisted in everyday discourse and mass media in the image of the *mulata*. His depictions of interracial desires and intimacy played a crucial role in the systematization of the notions of Brazil as a land of racial and sexual democracy. And the

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<sup>23</sup> Personal communication, 2012.

implications embedded in the unquestioned notions and practices of interracial sex, continue to shape perceptions of race relations in Brazil. In the words of Donna Goldstein, “[f]ew Brazilians can see themselves as racists in a highly conventionalized political economy of interracial desire” (1999: 568).

## II

### REGULATING SPACES AND REGULATED SUBJECTS

After the abolition of slavery (1888) and the establishment of a Republican system of government (1889)<sup>24</sup> Brazil experienced profound transformations. This period was characterized by a massive influx of internal migration and by 1890, former slaves of Bahia comprised the largest group of migrants in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Tinhorão 1998: 264). Aside from internal migration, foreign immigration was also taking place and was especially concentrated in the regions of the Southeast.<sup>25</sup>

By the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century processes of industrialization and urbanization were quickly taking place in these major cities. Part of the strategy to industrialize and urbanize major cities was tied to the idea of “civilizing” them. In other words, authorities were concerned with regulating public spaces. Major cities streets were redesigned as widened to facilitate vigilance and eliminate them as a public space for the popular classes which was poring in from the Northeastern States (Leu 2007: 2).

In Rio, the restructuring of streets was concentrated on heavily populated areas around the city center, not surprisingly a space where Bahian migrants congregated (Carvalho 1987:93). And while there was criticism on the manner and extent to which demolition was carried out, these reforms were also seen as a necessary means to modernization (see *figures 2-5, 2-6, and 2-7*). As Lorraine Leu writes, this was so because,

[t]he intensity of the demolition implied a Republican rejection of the colonial past, with which Afro-Brazilian popular culture was associated, due in part to the recent history of slavery, as

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<sup>24</sup> In 1889, a military coup overthrew the Empire and exiled the Emperor, Dom Pedro II. Under the Empire the political system had always been controlled by the landholding oligarchy. While two political parties existed, the Conservatives and Liberals both represented broad fractions within the oligarchy. The Conservatives were centered in the older plantations, including the northeastern sugar producers and interior ranchers, while the Liberals centered in the coffee growing regions of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Under the Republic, the organization of government was dramatically altered and a dual federalist structure, which guaranteed autonomy for the states, was created. At the national level, the federal government was controlled by the politicians of key units of the federation: São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, and Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>25</sup> According to Levine, most immigrants were of Italian, Portuguese, German, Spanish, Polish, and Japanese origin (1999: 74).



*Figure 2-5. Opening ceremony of the demolition of São Bento Hill for the construction of Avenida Central (now Rio Branco), Rio de Janeiro 1904.*  
Photograph by Marc Ferrez, Jennings Hoffenberg Collection.



*Figure 2-6. Avenida Central in the center of Rio following renovations, c. 1908.*  
Photograph by Augusto Malta, Jennings Hoffenberg Collection.





Figure 2-7. Largo do Rosário in São Paulo city, c. 1902 after renovations. Previously, this was the site of the Church of Our Lady of Rosário of Black Men built in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and demolished for the amplification of the street.  
Photograph by Guilherme Gaensly.

well as the support of the freed black population and its descendents for the monarchy (2007: 3).<sup>26</sup>

In the name of sanitizing the city, street vendors, comprised mostly of Bahian women, as well as many popular customs, such as *candomblé* ceremonies, serenades, *rodas-de-samba* (samba circles) were virtually eliminated through a variety of prohibitions, fines and taxes (*ibid*). Popular culture was perceived by the elite as an impediment to modernization and the emergent capitalist system, and consequently, as “a way of contesting... [elite] power (Velloso, quoted in Leu 2007:3).

This “disciplining” project altered how space was occupied and popular classes were pushed into certain parts of cities. In Rio de Janeiro for instance, the square known as *Praça Onze* (now a site discursively linked with the origins of *samba*) became a point of convergence for many who had migrated to the capital of the country.<sup>27</sup> In fact, this area of Rio became known as “Africa in miniature” (McGowan and Pessanha 1998: 22).

As Leu elaborates,

The reforms were concentrated on precisely the areas where Bahians congregated: the port and the most densely populated

<sup>26</sup> Princess Isabel signed the law that abolished slavery in 1888 and thus, freed blacks were supportive of the monarchy in Brazil.

<sup>27</sup> Rio was the capital of Brazil between 1763 and 1960. The prior capital was Salvador (1534-1763), located in the Northeastern state of Bahia.

parts of the city center. The demolition frenzy constituted a violent attack on the city...Whole communities were reduced to rubble in an attempt to put an end on the street as a public space for the popular classes (Leu 2007:2).

In these areas, manifestations of popular culture were, at best, tolerated, with the practices of racialized subjects often being the target of repression. Practices and traditions associated with blackness were perceived as barbaric, lascivious, and uncivilized. Their music was often described as noisy and disturbing to the “civilized” ear. As reported in a letter to the editor of *O Dia Newspaper*, “from Thursday to Friday, from Saturday to Sunday, all night long, these people’s *batuque* [percussion jam sessions], their screaming and the songs of these detestable revelers disturbs the sleep of their neighbors” (quoted in Raphael 1990).

Persecuted cultural practices, such as *capoeira*,<sup>28</sup> *candomblé*,<sup>29</sup> and *batuques*, were practiced away from the police, often in home backyards. The backyard comes to symbolize a safe space, away from persecuting eyes but at the same time, a disciplining site where “civilized society” was not subjected to such practices.<sup>30</sup> One of the best-known examples of such a place was the house of Tia Ciata, a Bahian matriarch who had migrated to Rio de Janeiro and had established contacts within local authorities. Her backyard is legendary—often linked to the origins of urban samba—and “came to substitute for the battleground of the street, which was replaced with a negotiated, permitted space of transgression due to Ciata’s contact with the local police force” (Leu 2007: 4).<sup>31</sup>

Persecution was also extended to the first type of carnivalesque celebration introduced in Brazil: the *entrudo*.<sup>32</sup> The *entrudo*, brought to Brazil by the Portuguese in the seventeenth century, consisted of a stylized instigation, as anthropologist Daniel Touro Linger explains, “a form of ritualized aggression, reminiscent of Rome’s comfit battles” (1992: 59). In its more gentle form, celebrants threw rubber balls filled with perfumed water at each other, and at times other foul smelling liquids. At times however,

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<sup>28</sup> *Capoeira* is a Brazilian martial arts and dance that is always performed to music (voice and percussion instruments) in a circle formation known as *roda*.

<sup>29</sup> *Candomblé* refers to an Afro-Brazilian religion similar to Voodoo in Haiti and Santería in Cuba.

<sup>30</sup> This notion is still an important one since, for instance, “legitimate” samba schools are housed in buildings known as *quadras* or *barracão* and the carnival parade enacted by samba schools no longer take place in the streets but rather in a special built structure known as *sambódromo* or samba avenue.

<sup>31</sup> This process is not unique to Brazil. See for instance the important contribution of Jocelyne Guilbault in *Governing Sound*, which provides a detailed and critical genealogy of calypso and the particular conditions that allowed for this musical practice to be seen as an emblem of Trinidadian national identity.

<sup>32</sup> According to Queiroz, the origins of Brazilian Carnival are found in the Portuguese *entrudo*, which prior to Christianity celebrated the arrival of spring. However, with the adoption of the Christian faith, *entrudo* became synonymous with the celebrations that took place three days before the lent season, ending on Ash Wednesday.

*entrudo*'s provocation surpassed its playing aspect and took on much rougher characteristics (ibid).

Afraid of provoking rebellions, authorities tolerated the *entrudo* and intervened only when fights or other "offensive conducts" were taking place. But by the mid nineteenth century, the *entrudo* became another target of the modernizing project. The discourse generated by authorities began a campaign to associate the playing of *entrudo* not only with lack of morality and order, but also with public health. In March of 1886, the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias* of Rio published the following note:

A Inspeção Geral de Higiene aconselha os habitantes desta capital que se abstenham do jogo do entrudo, divertimento bárbaro, impróprio de uma nação civilizada ... As supressões bruscas da transpiração, os resfriamentos, consequência imediata do entrudo, são as causas mais poderosas da tísica pulmonar, de todas as moléstias graves, especialmente da febre amarela.

The General Department of Hygiene advises the population of this city to abstain from playing the *entrudo*, barbaric entertainment, improper of a civilized nation... The sudden suppressions of transpiration, the colds, direct consequence of *entrudo*, are the most powerful causes of tuberculosis, of all grave maladies, especially yellow fever.

As Michel Foucault has argued, the demographic upswings that took place in Western Europe during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were interpreted not only as a problem but also "as an object of surveillance, analysis, intervention, modification, etc." (1980: 171). In the same manner, the influx of migration to the city of Rio following the abolition of slavery required new tactics of disciplining. Discourse about public health was often a mechanism of control and surveillance of bodies. Thus, rigid hierarchy of social stratification was enacted and constructed through participation in different types of celebrations. Race, class, and gender determined the way each group could or would participate.<sup>33</sup> In Rio, elite businessmen formed some of the first carnivalesque clubs and began organizing a carnival parade on Fat Tuesday.<sup>34</sup> Considered "proper" men, unlike the popular classes who would take the streets, their parade was organized around a specific theme and club members paraded on Central Avenue on opulent floats (Queiroz 1992)<sup>35</sup>. Carioca elite women were permitted to participate only in a promenade of carriages and later automobiles known as *corso*, always sheltered from those in the streets<sup>36</sup> (see figures 2-8 and 2-9).

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed chronological description of different carnival celebrations in Rio de Janeiro see Queiroz, 1990 and Cunha, 2001. For São Paulo's carnival see Moraes, 1978 and von Simson, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Fat Tuesday is the day before Ash Wednesday.

<sup>35</sup> This is the same avenue shown in figures 2-1 and 2-2.

<sup>36</sup> Carioca refers to natives of Rio de Janeiro.





*Figure 2-8. Magazine Fon-Fon, February 1922.  
Depiction of the Corso*



Figure 2-9. Photograph printed in Newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, 1996.  
Caption Reads: Avenida Central, today Rio Branco, in the center of Rio de Janeiro: the celebration during the first half of the century [20<sup>th</sup> century].

According to Queiroz, by the 1870s the popular classes formed groups, known as *ranchos* and *cordões* to parade during carnival. The *cordões*, paraded playing percussion, guitars, and singing in the streets. Often persecuted by the police, *cordões'* members were perceived as "an unsettling presence in the center of the city" (Leu 2007). According to von Simson, women were prohibited from participating in *cordões*, but some were allowed to parade with *ranchos*. *Ranchos*, with their wind and string instruments, were perceived as less problematic than the loud *cordões* (Cunha 2001: 64). Therefore, one could infer that musical instruments were often associated with specific racialized bodies and carried with them the associations of the corresponding racial and social classes.

To date, aside from von Simson's article, a brief summary of women's participation in carnival celebrations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there is very little mention of women's participation in carnival. Often, newspapers notes, drawings, or other accounts of the nineteenth century mentioned women's participation in regards to proper behavior (i.e. participating in the *curso*) or depicted them in improper transgressions. In such cases, women became the central figures of evocations of eroticism, lustfulness and abuse of the flesh. For instance, in carnival illustrations of the turn of the century, women were almost always shown naked, or partially so,



interacting with men in ways considered licentious (see figures 2-10 through 2-12).

In fact, a common term used to describe a prostitute in Brazil is a “mulher de rua,” or “woman of the streets.” Conversely, as the popular adage goes, “lugar de mulher de respeito, é dentro de casa,” or “the place for a woman of respect is inside the home.” As DaMatta has shown, in Brazilian culture the streets symbolize lack of control, the unpredictability of events, movement, and passions. On the other hand, the house is a controlled space where “everything is in its place” (1991: 64).

Interestingly, given the discourse of eroticization of the dark-skinned woman, all of these magazine covers depict white women. But as Margareth Rago explains, European immigrants were a strong presence among the working prostitutes in São Paulo at the turn of the twentieth century. She elaborates that the project of urbanization and the socio-economic development of major cities at that time blurred the traditional delineations of gendered roles (1991: 37) and, it should be added, the racialization of class. The presence of the working women in factories, offices, schools, and commerce threatened to subvert the crystallized codes of interaction. At this time, “the figure of the prostitute began to emerge like a ghost in the social imaginary” (ibid.)

It is possible that white women’s sexuality was beginning to be perceived beyond the realm of childbearing, albeit then as prostitution, but it is also important to keep in mind that colonial understanding of race and sexuality was predicated on desire and aversion (Pravaz 2002:42). In Pravaz’s own words, “ambivalence is in fact one of the most significant discursive and psych strategies of discriminatory power” (ibid). Another possible interpretation was that role of white women was changing in the new modern, industrial urban environment. Distinctions had to be made between the respectable white women and the prostitute as a basis of preserving the heteropatriarchal family. Following the nation-building process that began in the 1930s, however, the depictions of women and sexuality begin to focus solely on bodies of mixed-race women.

According to von Simson, in São Paulo women first began to participate in carnival parades in the early 1920s. Many of my informants who were carnival participants at that time, speculated that that was so because, as carnivalesque groups like *cordões* began to be legally allowed to parade, women could lend them an air of certain respectability. Another possible interpretation is that the inclusion of women in carnival parades was a means to accommodate women in urban environments in non-traditional spaces, while still preserving traditional forms of femininity. As von Simson points out, by the 1920s *cordões’* social-activities were increasing and women were allowed to operate according to what was deemed appropriate for them. That included rehearsing and parading with children.

While now it is commonplace to see women parading in the streets, many of these notions still linger. For instance, a participant of a São Paulo samba school spoke of her parent’s reluctance to let her watch the carnival parade in the streets in the 1960s. It was only after getting married that she was able to attend the parade with her husband.<sup>37</sup> Recently, my own mother

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Vivi, June 2002.



Figure 2-10. Notice naked women in back left and right.  
 Words on drum read: "This is good, this is good. This  
 Is good! This is indeed very good, very good! Good! Good!  
 Magazine Fon-Fon





Figure 2-11. Drawing of Raul Pederneiros, 1903.  
Magazine O Malho.



Figure 2-12. A Venetian-style mask partially hides the face of a semi-naked woman.  
*O Malho*, 1904.

called me to discuss her bias regarding this issue following her divorce. She had been invited to attend a street carnival parade with friends but was concerned with what people would say about a divorced woman parading in the streets. While she had no qualms about attending an indoor carnival festivity, it took a disguise to make her attend such a parade without fearing reprehension from older members of the family.

### III

#### SAMBA, SAMBA SCHOOLS AND NATION BUILDING

It was in the early 1930s that the debate of national identity culminated in the celebration of the mixed-race character. This was a time marked by an intense pursue, on the part of intellectuals as well as politicians to define *Brasilidade*, or Brazilianness, in order to promote national unity.

The tension that the problem of racial degeneracy due to miscegenation had caused was turned on its head after the publication of Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933),<sup>38</sup> a social history of slave plantation system in Brazil during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In it, Freyre argued, the racially mixed Brazilian culture constituted Brazilian uniqueness among other nations, and as such, it should be embraced.<sup>39</sup>

For Freyre, racial mixing produced a society that he defined as harmoniously constituted. The romanticized Brazil of Freyre's interpretation was constructed as a nation in which racial democracy always existed; a nation in which blacks and whites mixed freely. However, this construction of a Brazilian identity denied questions of understanding the subalternity of black and mixed-race Brazilians, as well as the contradictory mechanisms deployed within this socio-historical process (Pravaz 2002:88).

As Shalini Puri has shown us, discourses of hybridity perform multiple functions. They allow for the elaboration of a new identity, distinct from its "mother cultures," and thus, provide a basis for national legitimacy. They also serve to stabilize or displace discourses of equality, an important strategy for securing bourgeois nationalist hegemony. And lastly, by promoting racial mixes acceptable to the elite, discourses of hybridity have been used to manage racial politics (2004: 45).

It is within this context that specific bodies and cultural products associated with race mixture, such as samba— music and dance practice that emerged as a distinct Afro-Brazilian genre in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century— became markers of a Brazilian national identity.

Colonial stereotypes such as the eroticization of mixed-race women, became enmeshed in discourses about the nation during Vargas' nation

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<sup>38</sup> *Casa Grande e Senzala* was roughly translated as *The Masters and the Slaves*.

<sup>39</sup> This argument was a precursor to that of *créolité* in the French West Indies. See Guilbault (1994, 2007), Burton (1995, 1997), Brathwaite and Glissant (1996), Hintzen (1999, 2002), Puri (2004), Lewis (2006).



building campaign. The *mulata*, the quintessential representation of race mixture, became a favorite figure in the Brazilian construction of self. As Pravaz writes,

...twentieth century iconography, literary and popular representations that shape current discourses of Brazilianness both at the national and international levels stereotypically present a fetishized image of the *mulata's* body as the height of the female attractiveness, as the perfect embodiment of the heat and sensuality of the tropics, and as a representation of Brazil itself (2002: 70).

But the *mulata*, like most figures of hybridity, was and still is constructed through ambiguous and contradictory notions. While the *mulata* was celebrated by her physical beauty and constructed as the epitome of Brazilianess, her subaltern place in Brazilian society remained. Instead, *mulatas'* lack of social status and poverty point to the colonial understandings of such bodies. As Nascimento writes,

she [*mulata*] is frequently held up to the world as symbol of racial democracy because she is considered desirable by the "unprejudiced" Brazilian white male. But her social and economic status eloquently testifies to the reality of her historical origins (quoted in Pravaz 2002: 71).

Part of the nation-building project involved defining which cultural practices could, and could not exemplify the nation. As already mentioned, it is in the context that samba,<sup>40</sup> a genre perceived as the blend of both European and African musical elements, arose as a cultural emblem of Brazil. I argue that it is no mere coincidence that by the early 1930s many *ranchos* and *cordões* in the city of Rio de Janeiro became samba schools. The association with education carried a notion of authority and a certain prestige. And as samba became emblematic of Brazil, samba schools were seen as the vehicle not only to promote the nationalistic agenda but also to regulate the increasing number of people in the urban settings.

Unlike *blocos* or *cordões*, which had no fixed membership, samba schools had to operate under specific regulations imposed by Rio's mayor, who had been appointed by Vargas to govern the city. Samba and samba schools, now seen as legitimate cultural products, functioned as an apparatus through which the administration governed.

Under orders of the mayor, samba schools had to register with the police and provide the name of its officers. In exchange for obedience of the new government's regulations, the schools became legitimate institutions that

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<sup>40</sup> Samba is based on 2/4 meter, with an accent on the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat. It is comprised of a stanza and refrain structure where melody and accompaniment interlock in a syncopated pattern.



received modest subsidies from the local government and also gained the right to parade during carnival. Their parade was shifted from local neighborhoods to a spot downtown; the transfer placing the carnival parade on center stage.

Aside from recognizing the importance of samba-schools as a medium for spreading such nationalistic agenda, Vargas' government also was betting on the potential that samba schools could become a tourist attraction. Therefore, in the early 30s the Department of Tourism, RIOTUR, was created to take official charge of the samba-schools and the carnival parade. Establishing a competition among the different, recently formed samba schools, RIOTUR put forward a set of rules and requirements for the carnival parade and demanded from its participants a certain type of formal organization. Samba lyrics were required to be nationalistic, including the exaltation of the country or of important national figures. Schools were divided into different hierarchical groups but provisions were made to guarantee the ascent or descent of a school from one division or another. As Taylor points out, "certain schools became famous as they monopolize the first division, and the contest amongst them for each year's championship became the central event of the carnival" (1982: 302). The model of today's carnival parade of samba schools was then set.

For decades, the carnival parades in Rio and São Paulo took place in the streets. But as the mid 1980s in Rio and early 1990s in São Paulo, a new space, known as sambadrome, was constructed to accommodate and continue to control the increasing numbers of participants and audience members.

The sambadrome in São Paulo is located within the *Anhembi Parque*, which is administrated by *São Paulo Turismo*, a company that has as its majority shareholder the local city government (*Prefeitura*). The samba avenue, which is 530 meters long by 14 meters wide, has at one end an area known as concentration and at the other, the dispersion area. Along the lane, are the bleachers and diverse boxes that accommodate small and large groups of spectators. In 2011, according to *Anhembi's* representatives, 30 thousand audience members were present to see an average of 25 thousand people parading per carnival night.

The rules that govern the parade and its physical space delineate who performs (see chapter 4), who will watch and how that will take place. Performers arrive at the sambadrome on buses provided by the mayor's office at specific times. They congregate at the concentration area where they wait for the sirens that announces the beginning of each school's performance. Once the parades begin, performers have between 55 to 65 minutes to arrive at the dispersion area where they are immediately placed on buses and taken away from the sambadrome.

Entrance into the sambadrome and the specific location from which one can view the parade is usually based on one's financial resources (see figure 2-13). Most striking to me, however, was to see those could not enter the sambadrome hanging from the fence, looking from the outside in hoping to get a glimpse of the parade (see figure 2-14). These allocations of spaces

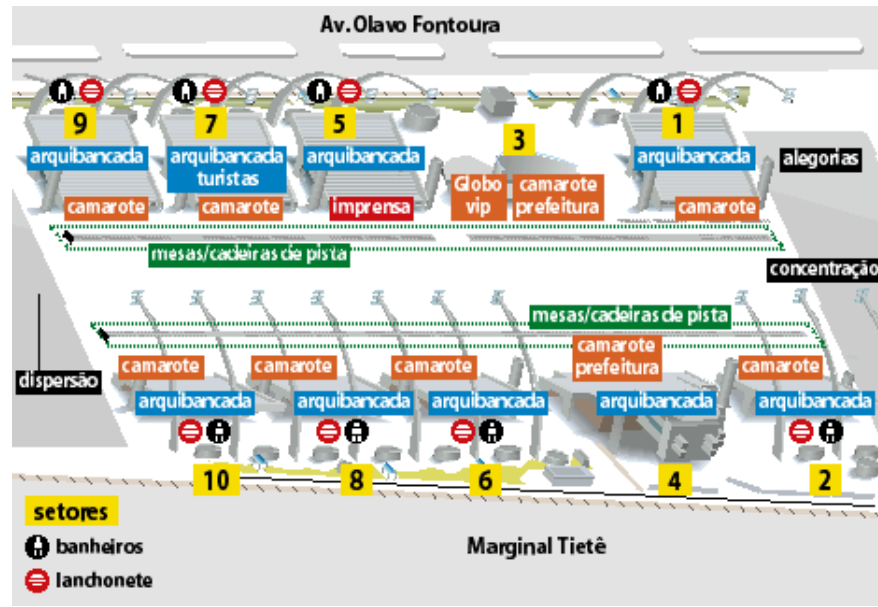


Figure 2-13. Map of São Paulo Sambadrome's Sectors: Bleachers; Boxes (Boxes in Sector 3 are reserved for VIP Globo and Boxes in Sector 3 and 4 also reserved for Mayor's Office). Press is located in front of Sector 5. Tables and chairs are located on the ground floor, next to performance lane. Black Left: Dispersion Area. Black Right: Concentration: Concentration Area.



Figure 2-14. Carnaval 2007. São Paulo Sambadrome. Photograph of Diógenes Muniz.

bring to mind the popular Brazilian saying: “each money on its own branch.”<sup>41</sup>

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By exploring historical intersections and political strategies, this chapter situates carnival as a practice that, from its beginnings, has been a site where power is affirmed and negotiated. By examining colonial legacies, I have shown how carnival has been shaped by tactics that seek to regulate the conduct of its participants. I have argued that changes brought about by modernization and urbanization required new technologies of disciplining to accommodate the modern demands of mobile subjects, under the trope of citizenship, while trying to preserve established hierarchies. This chapter also establishes a link between sexuality and the construction of race. Part of my project was to show how the figure of the *mulata* has been used to resolve the contradictions of colonial entanglements and colonial discourse rooted in notions of white superiority.

In the chapters that follow, I turn to ways in which these legacies have informed and continue to influence articulations of gendered identities.

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<sup>41</sup> In Portuguese: “Cada macaco no seu galho.”

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE CULTURAL WORK OF DISCOURSE AND PRACTICES

In this chapter I examine carnival discourse and practices to understand the cultural and social processes that inform participants' engagement with carnival and how these impact the construction of gendered selves. I probe how samba schools and the organizations that support the coordination of carnival—mainly the local government and non-profit organizations—become facilitators of these processes while still regulating permissible expressions. I am interested in which practices are valorized and brought into focus and how these arrange and re-arrange the conduct of its participants.

I do not see the notions of carnival as a joyfully fleeting moment and of carnival as a site that is highly controlled as contradictory. I have often seen them at play simultaneously. I do not mean to imply that participants are unaware of regulating tactics or even that these tactics are always inherently malignant. What I am suggesting is that many participants draw upon and engage in specific discourse and practices so as to induce an altered state—one of exhilaration—in *conjunction with* other disciplinary tactics.

I begin by addressing two prevailing notions in Brazilian cultural thought: first, the belief that life is hard, sad, and that this sentiment is collectively shared by Brazilians; second, the idea that carnival interrupts such sadness. As Richard Parker commented in his analysis of contemporary Brazilian culture,

the life of any given individual is conceived in essentially linear terms, as a constant uphill battle, a struggle that must constantly be waged in order to produce even the most minimal conditions of one's existence... This linear (and ultimately tragic) trajectory of one's life is interrupted each year by the cyclical rhythm of the seasons, by the time outside of time, during carnival, when the work and suffering of daily life give away to a world of *risos* (laughter). Here, in this world of laughter, the normal conditions of human existence, marked as they are by an almost overwhelming *tristeza* (sadness), are transformed in the *felicidade* (happiness) and *alegria* (joy or elation) of the festival (1991:141).

Thus, participants believe that taking part in carnival experiences can affect emotion, transforming feelings of simply “putting up” with the difficulties of every day life to a form of ecstasy.

Because I share Judith Becker's belief that people are conditioned to listen and respond to sounds in culturally specific ways,<sup>42</sup> I argue that carnival experiences are delineated by a set of specific characteristics that are learned through members' engagement in a variety of practices. And by doing so, participants will approach carnival with established expectations

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<sup>42</sup> See Becker (2004).

and form a “community of interpretation” (Fish 1980, quoted in Becker 2004: 69). As Becker writes,

...modes of *listening* vary according to the kind of music being played, the expectations of the musical situation, and the kind of subjectivity that a particular culture has fostered in relation to musical events... Modes of listening implicate not only structures of knowledge and beliefs but also intimate notions of personhood and identity (2004: 70).

In the case of Brazilian carnival, I suggest that a transformation of one’s emotional state entails an intense engagement with the physical body—dancing and singing. I will show that there exists an entrenched belief that it is through singing that one can alter one’s emotions. I argue that the act of attentive singing, by which I mean a conscious engagement with not only producing sounds but also active listening to sounds being produced, is the strategy that allows for a transformative experience—one that has the potential to displace sadness and evoke a state of happiness.

In her examination of how we accumulate our listening habits and expectations, Becker argues that we accumulate our patterns of listening largely unaware of why we are doing what we are doing. By adapting Pierre Bourdier’s elaboration of the term *habitus*, Becker explains that,

our “*habitus of listening*” is tacit, unexamined, seemingly completely “natural.” We listen in a *particular* way without thinking about it, and without realizing that it even is a particular way of listening. Most of our styles of listening have been learned through unconscious imitation of those who surround us and with whom we continually interact. A “*habitus of listening*” suggests, not a necessity nor a rule, but an inclination, a disposition to listen with a particular kind of focus, to expect to experience particular kinds of emotion, to move with certain stylized gestures, and to interpret the meaning of the sounds and one’s emotional responses to the musical event in somewhat (never totally) predictable ways. The stance of the listener is not a given, not *natural*, but necessarily influenced by place, time, the shared context of culture, and the intricate and irreproducible details of one’s personal biography (2004: 71).

While I am inspired by Becker’s examination of “deep listeners,” I agree with Saba Mahmood’s critique of Bourdier’s interpretation of *habitus* as lacking “attention to the pedagogical processes by which a *habitus* is learned” (2005:139). Instead, she proposes an Aristotelian model of *habitus*, which focuses on specific pedagogical processes by which individuals learn through repeated practice. She is interested, as I am, in conscious actions that are “directed at making certain kinds of behaviors unconscious or nondeliberative” (2005: 139 in footnote). Thus, I argue that in addition to the ubiquitous discourse about the power of singing, participants learn attentive

singing through their recurrent engagement in specific social practices throughout the carnival calendar cycle. This chapter is organized into two main parts. In the first, I analyze the discourses that have produced and reproduced the notion of sadness of the national character and have constructed carnival as an event that has the power to interrupt such emotional state. To do so I examine song lyrics, poems, scholarly writing, and newspaper articles from the late nineteenth century to the present.

In the second part, I show how some carnival practices condition people to listen in specific ways and how that contributes to specific types of gendered interactions. While there are many practices that relate to specific performance roles such as the percussion ensemble rehearsals and the *mestre-sala* and *porta-bandeira* classes, here, I will focus on the practices that bring together all members of the school. While I believe the former valuable in building individual emotional arousal, I am concerned with the practices that unite all members, which invariably revolve around singing. I perceive the latter moments to create emotional excitement that is incomparable to others, partly because people respond to others' excitement by becoming more aroused themselves.

## I

### SPEAKING OF SADNESS

In the poem entitled "Brazilian Music" the modernist Brazilian poet Olavo Bilac described his country's music and culture as representing the "loving flower of three sad races." Published in 1888, the poem reads:

Tens, `as vezes, o fogo soberano  
Do amor: encerras na cadência, acesa  
Em requiebro e encantos de impureza,  
Todo o feitiço do pecado humano.

Mas, sobre essa volúpia, erra a tristeza  
Dos desertos, das matas e do oceano:  
Bárbara poracé, banzo africano,  
E soluços de trova portuguesa.

És samba e jongo, chiba e fado, cujos  
Acordes são desejos e orfandades  
De selvagens, cativos e marujos

E em nostalgias e paixões consistes,  
Lasciva dor, beijo de três saudades,  
Flor amorosa de três raças tristes.

You have sometimes the sovereign fire  
Of love: you enclose in your cadence, inflamed

With hip movements and charms of impurity,  
All witchcraft of human sin.

Yet on such voluptuosity wanders the sadness  
Of deserts, jungles and the ocean:  
Barbarous Indian dance, African homesickness,  
And sobs of Portuguese ballad.

You are samba and jongo, chiba and fado, whose  
Chords are desires and orphanhoods  
Of savages, captives, and seamen.

And in nostalgias and passions you consist,  
Lascivious sorrow, kiss of three longings,  
Loving flower of three sad races.<sup>43</sup>

Two distinct notions are explicit in Bilac's representation of Brazilian culture: first, that it was multiracial and second, that it carried an inherent sadness which was the result of longing for places left behind, whether Portugal, Africa, or the land that became known as Brazil. As David Haberly writes,

[t]he Portuguese, in Bilac's interpretation of Brazil's musical – and cultural – history, sang songs filled with nostalgia for the homeland they had left behind. The Indians [Indigenous population] joined in to mourn the world the white man had taken from them. The Africans, brought to Brazil in chains, wept for the freedom they had lost (1983: 1).

It is important to point out that such notions of Brazilian culture were widely accepted, for Bilac was not simply referring to the first encounters of these groups of people in Brazilian history but rather, he points to a collective sadness that was already entrenched in the national perception. For, as Haberly points out, "the theme of national sadness survived the assimilation of the Portuguese, the virtual disappearance of the Indian, and the abolition of African slavery; by Bilac's day, it was deeply embedded in the consciousness of the independent Republic" (1983: 1).

Sadness, as an essential part of the Brazilian national character, continued to be reinforced in the Brazilian imagination through varying discourses. For instance, in 1928, Paulo Prado, a coffee planter and exporter from a distinguished Paulista family, published *Portrait of Brazil: Essay on Brazilian Sadness*. As he wrote,

Numa terra radiosa vive um povo triste. Legaram-lhe essa melancolia os descobridores que a revelaram ao mundo e a povoaram. O esplêndido dinamismo dessa gente rude obedecia a dois grandes impulsos que dominam tôda a psicologia da

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<sup>43</sup> Translation of Carlos Palombini published in *Ethnomusicology Online* 8: 2002.

descoberta e nunca foram geradores de alegria: a ambição do ouro e a sensualidade livre e infrene que, como culto, a Renascença fizera ressuscitar (1962: 3).

In a radiant land there lives a sad people. The discoverers who opened that land to the world and settled it bequeathed to it that melancholy. The splendid dynamism of these rude people obeyed two major impulses, which permeated the psychology of discovery and could never produce happiness: the greed for gold and the free and unrestrained sensuality that, like a cult, the Renaissance resurrected (1962: 3).

In this passage, Prado explains the sadness in the Brazilian character as the result of sexual excess and the fantasy of easy wealth. For him, Brazil's national history was rooted in the intimacy of miscegenation. Notice that unlike Bilac, who speaks of "three sad races," Prado begins with the sentence: "In a radiant land lives a *sad people*" (italics mine). It is evident that he sees Brazil as a nation that collectively experiences sadness as a group of people rather than separate races.

Another example of the connection between sadness and the Brazilian national character is found in the writings of anthropologist Gilberto Freyre. In *New World in the Tropics: The Culture of Modern Brazil*, Freyre writes,

The sadness expressed in Brazilian folk music and guitar songs is explained by a trauma in the social past of a large part of the population: slavery. The slave, even when well treated, felt vaguely nostalgic, which made his song one of sadness, though his dance was often one of joy. From the Portuguese the Brazilians inherited the well-known nostalgia of the Portuguese language by the word *saudade* (1959: 7).

Whatever the perceived cause—a sense of exile and of loss, greed, or an inherited nostalgia—the trope of sadness of the Brazilian character is still a common one. In February of 2003, one of the members of samba school Águia de Ouro said about life,

A vida é tão dura. Ela é mesmo um eterno sofrimento; uma preocupação atrás da outra. Quando não é uma coisa é outra. E assim a gente vai levando (Cora, Interview 2003).

Life is so hard. It is really an eternal suffering; one preoccupation after another. When is not one thing, it is another. And that's the way we live (Cora, Interview 2003).

Cora's words are significant as they echoed many other participants' perception of life in Brazil. While many different circumstances were blamed as the cause of sadness, the notion that life is difficult is still enduring and prevalent.



## THE POWER OF CARNAVAL

Related to the metaphor of life as a battleground is the pervasive discourse that Carnival interrupts this fight, providing participants a break from everyday sadness. The event is constructed as a moment in which sadness gives way to happiness, a form of ecstasy, but one that is evanescent and certain to end on Ash Wednesday. At the brink of the 1986 carnival's end, the headlines of São Paulo's newspaper *A Gazeta* read: "Wednesday: All is ashes. All is over." Under it, a large photograph, measuring 12.5 by 8.5 inches and taking much of the 22 by 13.5 inches page, depicts a man sitting on the ground amidst of all the debris left over from the parade. His arms are stretched over the metal tubes that improvised the bleachers and his head is positioned downward (see figure 3-1). Above the photograph, the caption reads:

A fantasia, o mundo da magia, o som da folia...acabam na quarta-feira de Cinzas, se transformando num sonho, apenas. A realidade, dos outros 360 dias do ano volta a transformar o cenário, colocando o público já não mais folião, no corre-corre do cotidiano, do mundo dos negócios, dos estudos, do trabalho, enfim, enquanto as escolas começam a se preparar para os desfiles do ano seguinte, onde novamente o sonho se tornará realidade (02/12/1986: 15).

The fantasy, the world of magic, the sound of revelry...end on Ash Wednesday and become only a dream. The reality of the other 360 days of the year return to transform the scenario, placing the people, no longer revelers, back into the fast-paced routine, the world of business, schools, work, all while the samba schools begin to prepare for next year's parade, when, once again, the dream will become reality (02/12/1986: 15).

And beneath the picture, the capture reads: "Now what, José?" referencing the poem of Carlos Drummond the Andrade entitled "José," which reads:

E agora José?  
A festa acabou  
A luz apagou  
O povo sumiu  
A noite esfriou  
E agora José?

Now what, José?  
The party is over  
The lights are off  
The public disappeared  
And the night is cold  
And now what, José?



Figure 3-1. Newspaper "A Gazeta" from February 12, 1986, page 15.

This image could be used to depict exhaustion or tiredness following the festivities but instead, it is used to infer desolation, a certain feeling of longing often associated with the end of carnaval and always marked by Ash Wednesday.

In the Brazilian public discourse, Ash Wednesday is hardly referenced in relation to the beginning of Lent, rather, it is invariably used as a marker for the return to the hard life. Take for instance the lyrics to “Happiness,” a classic of the Bossa Nova repertoire composed in 1956 by Tom Jobim and Vinícius de Moraes, and “Ungrateful Wednesday,” a Luís Bandeira frevo<sup>44</sup> recorded in 1957 by Carmélia Alves:<sup>45</sup>

“Happiness”

Tristeza não tem fim  
Felicidade sim  
A felicidade é como a pluma  
Que o vento vai levando pelo ar  
Voa tão leve, mas tem a vida breve  
Precisa que haja vento sem parar  
A felicidade do pobre parece  
A grande ilusão do carnaval  
A gente trabalha o ano inteiro  
Por um momento de sonho, prá fazer a fantasia  
De rei ou de pirata ou jardineira  
E tudo se acabar na quarta-feira

Sadness has no end  
But happiness does  
Happiness is like a feather  
The wind has carried up into the air  
It floats so lightly, but it can only do it  
As long as there is a breeze to hold it there  
The poor man’s happiness would seem  
The grand illusion of carnaval  
He works each day through the year  
For a moment of dream, to pay for the costume  
Of king, pirate, or gardener,  
But everything ends on Wednesday.

“Ungrateful Wednesday”

É de fazer chorar  
Quando o dia amanhece  
E obriga

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<sup>44</sup> Frevo is the most characteristic genre of Pernambuco’s carnaval. Typically in duple meter, frevo is usually organized into two repeated sections of sixteen measures each, with highly syncopated melodies played by woodwinds and brasses accented by percussion.

<sup>45</sup> In Portuguese: “A Felicidade” and “Quarta-feira Ingrata.”

O frevo acabar  
Oh Quarta Feira ingrata  
Chega tão depressa  
Só pra contrariar  
Quém é de fato  
Um bom pernambucano  
Espera um ano  
E se mete na brincadeira  
Esquece tudo  
Quando cai no frevo  
E no melhor da festa  
Chega a Quarta Feira.

There is reason to cry  
When the day arises  
And demands  
The *frevo* to end  
Oh, ungrateful Wednesday  
That arrives so quickly  
Only to antagonize  
Those who are good *Pernambucanos*<sup>46</sup>  
Wait for a year  
To partake in this fun  
And forget everything  
When the *frevo* they hear  
But when the party is at its best  
Wednesday arrives

These are only two examples of song lyrics that reinforce the common conception of sadness as a constant part of Brazilian's lives, which is only lifted during carnival. As it is evident, in both songs "Wednesday" comes to symbolize the end of happiness and a return to sadness.

This discourse is also widespread in print media in the weeks preceding the carnival celebrations. In expectation for the carnival of 1998, the official press of the State of São Paulo released a 16-page booklet, printed in newspaper style on 11X17 inch paper, only containing articles pertinent to the festivity (see figure 3-2). The articles written by an assortment of state officials, carnival scholars, journalists, art critics, and choreographers emphasize carnival's history, tracing its continuity from the *entrudo* practices to the Venetian masked balls to the present day parade, its prestige, laid out through a discussion of important names and works in samba, and its emotional connection of participants with the festival. The cover page reads in bold, red font: "Carnaval! Happiness as Heritage." And the first article, written by an Editorial Coordinator of the Secretary of Culture of the State of São Paulo, continues to link carnival and happiness. As he writes, "we, Brazilians of today, received a curious inheritance that gives us the right and

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<sup>46</sup> Pernambucano refers to those who are from the State of Pernambuco in the Northeast of Brazil.



Figure 3-2. Cover of booklet #167 published by the Official Press of São Paulo State depicts image by Debret entitled “Carnaval Scene.”

the obligation to be cheerful, happy, and relaxed for at least three days of the year, the famous carnival.”

Such discourse is even present in newspapers published outside of Brazil for the Brazilian community. Prior to the 2007 carnival, the New York based newspaper *The Brazilians* ran with the headlines “Carnaval is the kingdom of happiness since men learned to play” (January 2007: 15-16).



## SINGING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE MUSICAL ENCOUNTER

I would like to nuance the notion of Carnaval as an event that disrupts sadness by arguing that is rather through singing that emotional states are affected. As mentioned in this chapter's introduction, I am suggesting that it is by participating in attentive singing, or the conscious engagement with not only producing sounds but also listening to these sounds, that encourages a transformative experience; it is singing that is often credited with the power of displacing sadness.

The idea is so prevalent that I was not surprised when I came across a book of children's songs that used as its title the popular adage "those who sing, expel their evils"<sup>47</sup> (see figure 3-3). The popular book, in its 29<sup>th</sup> edition in 2008, ten years after it was first printed, includes the lyrics to seventy-three popular children's songs with an accompanying compact disc. On the back cover, the publishers continue to reinforce the discourse of singing as a transformative experience by asserting that, "these enduring songs continue to stir up emotion in several generations, because singing still is one of the most fun activities for children (and adults alike)."



Figure 3-3. Cover of "Those Who Sing Expel Their Evils" designed by Soraia Kajiwará.

Examples of how attentive singing can affect one's emotion are explicit in many song lyrics. Take for instance the song "Sem Aviso" released by well-known singer Maria Rita. The lyrics say,

Anda

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<sup>47</sup> In Portuguese: "Quem canta seus males espanta."

tira essa dor do peito, anda  
despe essa roupa preta e manda  
seu corpo deslembrar  
Canta  
vira a dor pelo avesso, canta  
larga essa vida assim `as tontas  
deixa esse desenganar  
Calma  
dê tempo ao tempo, calma  
Alma  
põe cada coisa em seu lugar  
e o dia virá, algum dia virá sem aviso

Move on  
Remove this pain from your chest, move on  
Strip off this black cloth and demand  
Your body to forget  
Sing  
Turn this pain inside out, sing  
Let go of this life without thinking  
Leave this disillusion  
Calm  
Give it some time, calm  
Soul  
Put each thing in its place  
And the day will arrive, someday will arrive without warning

In this 2005 song, composers Francisco Bosco and Fred Martins not only make explicit the notion of singing as the impetus for personal transformation, for instance in the second verse: “sing, turn this pain inside out, sing,” but they also utilize compositional techniques to reinforce this idea. In setting its rhythm, the composers alternate between long-held notes that encapsulate a single word, and several short notes that span many words (see example 1). The result is that long notes highlight the phrases: “move on, move on, demand to forget,” “sing, sing without thinking this disillusion,” and “calm, calm, soul.”

Having said that, the association of carnival with singing and ecstasy is pervasive. I believe this is so not only because carnival offers participants a time in which singing is privileged but also because the event is already invested in the social imaginary with the notions of happiness and freedom. Thus, carnival becomes attentive singing largest stage, one of the main sites where participants learn, practice and perform attentive singing.

## Example 1

Sem Aviso  
Transcription of Carla Brunet

2  
An - da ti-ra'es - sa dor do pei - to an - da

4  
des-pe's - sa rou - pa pre - ta'e man - da seu cor - po des - lem - brar

7  
can - ta vi-ra dor pe-lo'a-ves - so can - ta

9  
lar-ga'es - sa vi-da's - sim as ton - tas dei - xe's - se de - sen - ga - nar

11  
cal - ma dê o tem-po'ao tem - po cal - ma al -

14  
ma põe ca - da coi-sa'em seu lu - gar que o di - a vi-rá

18  
al - gum di - a vi - rá sem a - vi - so'en - tão an - da



During carnival, participants are not only engaging in affecting their emotion through singing but they often sing about singing. Take as an example the famous *March of Ash Wednesday* composed by Vinícius de Moraes and Carlos Lyra in 1968.

Acabou nosso carnaval  
Ninguém ouve cantar canções  
Ninguém passa mais brincando feliz  
E nos corações  
Saudades e cinzas foi o que restou

E no entanto é preciso cantar  
Mais que nunca é preciso cantar  
É preciso cantar e alegrar a cidade

(First Verse)  
Our carnival has ended  
No one hears songs  
No one plays happily in the street  
And in our hearts  
Only longing and ashes are left

(Refrain)  
But it is still necessary to sing  
More than ever it is necessary to sing  
It is necessary to sing and bring happiness to the city

Once again, in the first verse of the song the composers establish the idea that the end of carnival also brings the end of happiness, the return of sadness. No one is singing or dancing happily, and hearts are filled with *saudade* or longing. Thus, the refrain insists on the idea that singing will return joy into one's life. Note the phrase "it is necessary to sing" is repeated three times in just three lines.

In 1984, on the break between military rules and civilian administration in 1984-85, the famous song-writers, Chico Buarque and Francis Hime, released the following samba:

Vai passar  
Nessa avenida um samba popular  
Cada paralelepípedo da velha cidade  
Essa noite vai se arrepiar  
Ao lembrar  
Que aqui passaram sambas imortais  
Que aqui sangraram pelos nossos pés  
Que aqui sambaram nossos ancestrais  
Num tempo  
Página infeliz da nossa história  
Passagem desbotada na memória  
Das nossas novas gerações

Dormia  
A nossa pátria mãe tão distraída  
Sem perceber que era subtraída  
Em tenebrosas transações  
Seus filhos  
Andavam cegos pelo continente  
Levavam pedras feito penitentes  
Erguendo estranhas catedrais  
E um dia afinal  
Tinham o direito a uma alegria fugaz  
Uma ofegante epidemia  
Que se chamava o carnaval,  
O carnaval, o carnaval  
Vai passar  
Palmas  
Para a ala dos barões famintos  
E o bloco dos Napoleões retintos  
E os pigmeus do bulevar  
Meu Deus, vem olhar  
Vem ver de perto uma cidade a cantar  
A evolução da liberdade  
Até o dia clarear  
Ai que vida boa, olerê  
Ai, que vida boa, olará  
O estandarte do Sanatório Geral  
Vai passar

It's on its way  
A samba's coming down the street  
All the cobblestones of the old city  
Tonight will be shivering  
Remembering  
That immortal sambas passed by here  
That here they bled about our feet  
That our ancestors danced here  
There was a time  
Unhappy page of our history  
A faded passage in the memory  
Of our younger generations  
Our fatherland was asleep  
A distracted mother  
Didn't see she was diminished

By shady transactions  
 Her sons  
 Wandered the continent blindly  
 Carrying stones as if doing penance  
 Erecting strange cathedrals  
 Until finally one day  
 They had the right to a fleeting joy  
 A panting epidemic  
 That was called carnaval  
 Oh, carnaval! Oh, carnaval!  
 It's on its way  
 A hand for the carnaval groups:  
 The famished barons  
 The painted Napoleons  
 And the pygmies of the boulevard  
 My God, come see  
 Get a close look at a city singing  
 The evolution of liberty  
 Until the night is day  
 Oh, what a good life, la la dee do  
 Oh, what a good life, la la dee da  
 The banner of the State Hospital  
 It's on its way<sup>48</sup>

Political commentary aside,<sup>49</sup> in this song Buarque and Himes speak of the joy brought about by carnaval but they also clearly state, in lines six and seven of the fourth verse, that singing will lead to a feeling of liberty and happiness, that is at least, until the night becomes day. The lyrics are clearly ironic, since the moment of happiness is framed as a brief one and the “good life” is associated with the banner from the State Hospital (i.e. mental institution). As Perrone explains, “[carnaval] is called a “fleeting” event, and the celebration of newfound freedom is represented by a performance of the mentally unstable” (1989: 43). Nevertheless, the pair does reference popular beliefs about carnaval as a moment in which one can vent and open his or her heart, but also to actively bring about a temporary change of emotion. They do not speak of a city “dancing the evolution of liberty;” rather, it is the process of actively engaging in singing that comes to frame found happiness (see lines six through eight of verse four).

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<sup>48</sup> Translation Charles Perrone, 1989:42.

<sup>49</sup> For an insightful articulation of Buarque’s and Himes political commentaries, see Perrone, 1989: 42-44.

## II

### ACQUIRING ATTENTIVE SINGING SKILLS

It was during the last rehearsal at Águia prior to their performance in the carnaval parade and competition that I began thinking about what I came to call attentive singing skills. What I witnessed that night left me with the sensation that I had been to an event resembling at times an indoor carnaval ball and at other moments, something closer to an ecstatic trance episode, such as the excitement showed by members.

The rehearsal in question began much like others I had observed previously. The schools *puxadores*,<sup>50</sup> or lead singers, Douglinhas and Serginho do Porto, took the stage backed by two *cavaquinho* players and a guitarist. The drum ensemble, composed of approximately seventy drums was positioned on the floor, to the side of the stage, was led by mestre Juca. In front of mestre Juca, a line of *passistas* danced.

As the music started members were still socializing by talking, drinking, and dancing in small groups. For instance, some of the *destaques* who were openly homosexual stayed together and hung out at the mezzanine rather than mixing with the rest of the school members. According to them, their location provided them a privileged position to watch the percussion ensemble but I also suspect that they felt more comfortable together and away from other members.

The *puxadores* began by singing well-known *enredos*. Among the ones most cited by participants as favorites were the *samba enredos* of 1984, "The theater Throughout the Years," 1993 "Identity Brazil: Rescue of a Cultural Identity," and the *enredo* for 2001, "From Salem to Brasilia: Witchcraft is What is Important." By choosing popular *samba enredos*, they began to solicit the attention from school members.

Another way in which *puxadores* build excitement was by singing what is known as *sambas exaltação*. These are sambas exalting the school, praising its existence and history and reinforcing member's allegiance to their school. Each school has several of these sambas but one of the most popular at Águia was the following:

Bate forte coração  
Que emoção quando ela pisa a passarela  
É dela o sorriso mais belo que encanta a avenida  
Águia de Ouro é soberana  
Razão da minha própria vida  
Amor como é gostoso amar demais  
A minha águia é pompéia e faz  
Um verdadeiro carnaval  
Amor ao anhembi levo alegria

---

<sup>50</sup> The word *puxador(es)* literally means the one who pulls, in this case, the one who pulls the samba forward. It is interesting that the word singer is not used in the case of samba *enredo*.

Ao som da minha bateria  
Que faz esse povo cantar  
Samba menina bonita  
De azul e branco é legal  
Águia de Ouro faz o carnaval  
Samba menina bonita...  
De azul e branco é legal  
Águia de Ouro faz o carnaval

Beat strongly heart  
What emotion when she enters the samba avenue  
It is hers the most beautiful smile that enchants the avenue  
Sovereign Águia de Ouro  
The reason of my own existence  
Love, it is great to love intensely  
My Águia is Pompéia and makes  
A true carnaval  
Love, to anhembi I take happiness  
To the sound of my percussion  
That makes my people sing  
Dance pretty girl  
Of blue and white is nice  
Águia de Ouro puts on a carnaval  
Dance pretty girl  
Of blue and white is nice  
Águia de Ouro puts on a carnaval

As excitement began building, driven by the anticipation of the carnaval parade just two days away and also by the careful selection of sambas, the interaction between school members became very different and dramatically changed the pace of rehearsal. All conversation ceased, singing became louder and very focused. It was evident that the singers knew which sambas stirred the crowd more, and at times, to continue drawing more and more attention, they would return to a samba already sung, such as the samba above that was particularly moving to the participants.

After about ninety minutes, Douglinhas and Serginho began singing the new *samba enredo*. By that point, every member of the school, including those who were always a few feet away in the mezzanine somewhat reserved from the crowd, had joined the main group in the *quadra*. Soon, groups that normally clustered together were absorbed into the multitude of people who began moving in a circular pattern around and around the *quadra*. They were fervently singing the *samba enredo*, which by this point, they knew by memory. And for the next hour, this five-minute song was repeated over and over again with increasing intensity as members continue to move together in a large circular pattern.

I believe that by experiencing a heightened emotional state, participants were able to interact in very different ways. For instance, the

group of homosexual *destaques*<sup>51</sup> who were always positioned in the mezzanine, joined in without inhibition and also without standing out in the crowd. In this case, sexual differences were set aside and instead participants focused on becoming what I am referring to as attentive singers. At that moment, everyone was singing and moving to the same sound, in the same manner and space together. To partake in such swelling of excitement became more important than highlighting individual differences.

These experiences were described as being extremely important to many members of Águia. For instance, Corali, a sixty-year-old married woman who has been a member of Águia since its beginning in the 1970s, never parades on the actual competition. Instead, she professes,

Com esse ensaio final eu encerro meu carnaval. Acabo por aqui. Já me diverti muito, já estou feliz. Na sexta estarei lá para torcer pela minha escola mas nunca saio na avenida. Sabe o que é, o meu marido não gosta (Interview 2003).

With this last rehearsal I end my carnaval. I am finished. I already had fun, I am already happy. On Friday I will be there [samba avenue] to cheer my school but I never parade in the avenue. You know, my husband does not like it (Interview 2003).

Corali stated that she did not join the parade because of her husband's objection. However, she did attend all rehearsals and gatherings accompanied by her daughter and sister. While her husband might not have encouraged her, he was not a member of the school and did not partake in any of the activities, I suspected that Corali herself was uncomfortable joining the parade. At the school she was among her community, while at the parade she would be "in public." On the other hand, Corali supported her 30-year-old unmarried daughter to take part in the parade and was always cheering her and their school at the sidelines on the samba avenue.

Patricia, Corali's daughter, was bothered by the fact that her mother did not parade. She interpreted as "sad" the fact that her mom "rehearsed" all year but did not follow through with the performance. At the moment the parade was about to start on Friday, Patricia commented that she felt sorry her mom was not present at such an important moment after following through with all preparations. As the fireworks that announced the beginning of Águia's parade began, crying in anticipation Patricia shouted,

Tem coisa melhor que ouvir o nome da sua escola ser chamado no alto falante e ouvir os fogos! Eu mal posso esperar. Pena que minha mãe não está aqui. Ela vai nos ensaios mas nunca desfila. É uma pena (Personal Communication 2003).

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<sup>51</sup> *Destaques* refer to people who are placed in highlighted positions within the parade, such as a top of a float.

Is there nothing better than to hear the name of your school being called through the loud speaker and to hear the fireworks! I can hardly wait. It is pity that my mother is not here. She goes to the rehearsals but never performs. It is a pity (Personal Communication 2003).

What Patricia did not consider was that her mom, in an alternate way, did have a carnival experience just as rich as the one she herself described having. By participating in all school gatherings, Corali was able to build intense emotional arousal which allowed her a transcendent experience. As she explained later,

Ah, ali eu canto para limpar minha alma. Não tem coisa melhor para mim do que cantar e dançar até a noite acabar. Quando eu saio dali eu já esqueci todos os meus problemas, saio mais leve, com animo de viver. E daí, lá no sambodromo eu também canto e vibro assistindo a minha escola desfilar (Interview 2003).

Ah, there [at the final rehearsal] I sing to clean my soul. There is no better thing to me than to sing and dance until the night is over. By the time I leave, I have forgotten my problems, I leave feeling light, encouraged to live. And then, at the samba avenue I also sing and am thrilled to see my school parade (Interview 2003).

On the samba avenue or from the sidelines, Corali was just as charged as Patricia was. She sang and danced with her school and described the same feelings of happiness and satisfaction that other parading members did.

## THE CALENDAR CYCLE AND ITS EXPANDING SOUNDSCAPES

I believe that the crescendo of excitement and building of emotional arousal that I witnessed at Águia was influenced by other activities that began almost as soon as the prior carnival had ended.

While schools have slightly different calendars, each school's preparation begins around April, only a month or two following the end of one parade, when the boards of directors and the artistic director, known as *carnavalesco*, choose a theme for the following year's *samba enredo*. During the months of May and June, a synopsis of the theme, as defined by the board and *carnavalesco*, is sent to composers so they can begin crafting a new *samba enredo*. The first rehearsals of the season begin by August or September, and by October, the *samba enredo* is defined.

By this time, each school is moving at full speed. Individual sections, such as the percussion ensemble, are rehearsing, costumes and floats are being fashioned and participants begin to be grouped into sections, known as

*alas*. Most people must purchase their costumes and for many, the expense is a financial hardship that can only be accomplished by paying for it in monthly installments.

The most intense period in these preparations begins at the beginning of the calendar year, two or three months prior to carnival. This period coincides also with the end of the school year, the summer season, and two major holidays—Christmas and New Year’s celebrations—all of which contribute to a swelling of sensation that is finally released with the arrival of carnival.

During what I will refer to as the carnival season, the period between New Years’ and Ash Wednesday, gatherings once mostly private begin to seep through walls, spilling over the streets where the heat and moisture in the air seem more tolerable (see figures 3-4 through 3-6). Elaborate floats now too large to hide, parked on samba school’s lots all over the city, take shape before the public’s eyes while music coming from the neighbor’s house or from the samba schools a few blocks away invades what were previously individual soundscapes.

As Yara, an avid spectator of the carnival parade and a fan of the samba school Vai-Vai, explained,

Eu acho que todo mundo é mais tolerante nesta época do ano. Acho que as pessoas gostam de ouvir todo esse som que vem das escolas de samba, até mesmo da casa da gente. E especialmente aqui, que a gente está perto da Vai-Vai, a gente está sempre vendo o movimento de pessoas indo e vindo da escola, as festas, tudo isso faz parte da nossa vizinhança. Essa mistura da batida do samba e toda a euforia que acompanha a chegada do carnaval nos dá muita energia. Você sabe como é: nada mais acontece entre o Natal e o Carnaval (Interview 2003).

I suppose everyone is more tolerant at this time of the year. I think that most people like to listen to the sounds coming from samba schools, even from our [fan’s] homes. And especially here, since we are near Vai-Vai, we see all the movement of the people coming and going, the parties, it is just part of our neighborhood. This mixture the samba’s groove and the excitement that accompanies carnival’s arrival give us so much energy. You know how it is: nothing happens between Christmas and Carnival (Interview 2003).





Figure 3-4 & 3-5. Symbol marks the location of Samba School Vai-Vai in the Bela Vista neighborhood of São Paulo city.



Figure 3-6. This is a photograph of the location above that I took at the corner of R. São Vicente & R. Card. Leme, looking toward R. Dr. Lourenço Granato. The streets had been blocked in expectation of the large audience attending one of Vai-Vai's rehearsals prior to the carnival parade, 2003.

The famous expression—"nothing happens between Christmas and Carnaval"—and the frequency for which it is invoked, suggests that for many Brazilians carnaval marks only the end of a special period, one that is experienced in a particular way, differentiating it from the rest of the calendar year. It is a time when society's focus is turned to the event and many experience a heightened sensation, a carnaval mood, which is partly contoured by the impending arrival of carnaval and of the perceived happiness and liberation it will bring to its participants.

### THE SAMBA ENREDO

This carnaval was not good. We knew it would not be the minute we heard the *samba enredo*. No one liked it, no one felt this samba.

—Fátima, member of Vai-Vai

In one form or another, the sentiment in the statement above surfaced several times among members of Vai-Vai following the carnaval parade of 2002. This statement conveys assumptions about the nature of *samba enredos* and their direct correlation with a successful carnaval experience. Because no one liked the enredo or "felt it," meaning that participants were not moved by the enredo in question, the carnaval experienced was deemed a failure.

Samba is a generic term for a style that has many variants, characterized by 2/4 meter with a strong accent on the second beat and highly syncopated and interlocking melodic and instrumental lines. *Samba enredo* refers to a samba with a narrative—enredo literally means story in Portuguese—performed during the carnaval parade. Its lyrics generally treat national topics, although such mandate, imposed by the government in the 1930s, was lifted in 1996. A *samba enredo* is usually in a verse-refrain form, sometimes with two refrains. Harmonic accompaniment is supplied by a *cavaquinho*, a type of steel-stringed ukelele, a nylon stringed acoustic guitar, and at times, a seven-string guitar. These instrumentalists, along side singers, parade atop the sound truck, which follows the percussion ensemble in the samba avenue. The massive percussion ensemble, which parades on the ground, is comprised of the *surdo* (bass drum), *repique* or *repinique* (high-pitch two-headed lead or aluminum drum), *caixa* (snare drum), *pandeiro* (frame drum with heavy metallic discs), *tamborim* (small cymbal-less tambourine played with a pre-fabricated plastic rods held together on a handle), *cuíca* (friction drum), *chocalho* and *ganzá* (shakers), *agogô* (cowbell), *reco-reco* (metal scrapper) and *pratos* (plates).

The *samba enredo* is a key factor in creating emotional arousal within participants. The "right" enredo can make a difference between a successful emotional experience or an unsuccessful one. A good samba de enredo is usually described by participants as one that has the power to move them, one that is easy to remember and that is "contagious," in other words, one that compels people to sing. As members have described,

1: Um bom samba enredo uni a escola. Ele ajuda os components a evoluírem e a cantar melhor porque ele os arrebatá. Com um bom samba de enredo não existe necessidade da gente ficar gritando nas laterais para as alas canrare e dançarem. Isso é porque um bom samba de enredo mexe com a gente naturalmente (Dicá, online communication 2008).

1: A good *samba enredo* unifies the school. It helps participants to move forward and sing better because it enraptures them. With a good samba de enredo, there is no need to scream from the sidelines to get members to sing and dance. That is because a good samba de enredo naturally moves us (Dicá, online communication 2008).

2: Um bom samba enredo é aquele que contagia, que vem fazendo o corpo de quem ouve arrepiar (Nuna, online communication 2008).

2: A good *samba enredo* is one that is contagious, that makes the bodies of those who listen to it shiver (Nuna, online communication 2008).

It is important to note that much of the discourse about what makes a good *samba enredo* is produced and reproduced by the LIGA Independente das Escolas de São Paulo (Independent Alliance of the Samba Schools of São Paulo), a non-profit organization responsible for all aspects of the coordination the carnaval parade of the samba schools in the top two groups: 1- The Special Group, 2-The Access Group. In published material, members of the LIGA have described a good *samba enredo* as composed of two components: melody and lyrics, which until 2011 were judged separately. In regards to the latter, organizers have established that a good *samba enredo* is based on clarity, factual precision, and proper grammar (Booklet released by LIGA 2006: 15). A good melody, the booklet reads, “must induce and provoke in participants the necessity to move forward and sing and it is easy to assimilate” (ibid). Thus, ideas set forth by the overseers of the event have given rise to and reinforced particular ways of speaking about *samba enredo* and its functions. As of 2011, these criteria have merged and only one score is given to the *samba enredo*.

The task of choosing a *samba enredo* varied greatly between the two schools I worked with. At Águia, a group of school composers wrote five different sambas and between September and October, the community chose the *samba enredo* of their preference after several gatherings.

At Vai-Vai however, the course of action was quite different. After the theme was announced and a synopsis released, members of the composers’

section,<sup>52</sup> write their sambas divided in groups. The *samba enredo* is chosen by a jury, formed by other members of the school, through a process of elimination that takes several weeks and performances.

The elimination rounds have been described as much like an electoral campaign (Soares 1999: 88). Pamphlets with the *samba enredos'* lyrics were distributed in front and inside of the school so members can begin learning the samba and help composers by singing along. Part of what makes a good *samba enredo* is how well the song is accepted by members and the public and how memorable it is. By the time elimination rounds began, many samba school members were already somewhat familiar with the *samba enredo* of their particular school.

During the elimination rounds, *samba enredos* were performed at the school, accompanied by members of the percussion ensemble. And after each round the jury, comprised of samba school members, would cut a few sambas until the final round, when only three sambas remained. As the number of sambas diminished, the number of performances for each remaining samba increased, so much so that in the final night, each samba was repeated up to eight times. This pattern of repetition is by design, guaranteeing that participants came to know the *samba enredo* intimately. The enthusiasm of members over a particular *samba enredo*, shown by the act of singing along, is an important factor.

The impressive final night of competition took place in the streets and counted with the presence of thousands of members and interested public alike. Banners, organized fan groups, fire works, and the presence of people of note, such as actors and politicians, characterized the night. At the end of a long night, the president of the school announced the winner, who received a new car and cash prize, aside from having the recognition of composing that year's *samba enredo*.

Of the 1998 final elimination round at Vai-Vai, Reinaldo Soares described:

Um público estimado em 8.000 pessoas lotava o espaço reservado para realização do evento, o clima era de muita expectativas: enquanto aguardavam o início do evento, os sambistas dançavam e cantavam ao som dos grupos de pagodeiros que faziam o "aquecimento" para a festa. O mesmo ritual repetiu-se em cada apresentação: cada compositor cantou seu samba repetidamente (1999: 90-91).

An estimated 8,000 people crowded the space reserved for the event, the climate was one of expectation: while awaiting the beginning of the event, *sambistas* danced and sang to the sounds

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<sup>52</sup> To participate in the samba enredo competition, one must be a member of the section or *ala* of composers. Becoming a member entails being accepted by older members of the *ala*.

of pagodeiros<sup>53</sup> who were there to warm up the party. The same ritual was repeated for each of the performances: each composer sang his samba repeatedly (1999 90-91).

Once the *samba enredo* is chosen, percussion masters begin to craft its arrangement, another important component of building excitement in rehearsals and at the samba avenue. Among the techniques used by percussion masters to create arousal during the performance of the *enredo* is the employment of what is known as *paradinhas*, or break patterns. These create a rupture in cyclical rhythmic pattern of a *samba enredo* and consequently, change the percussive cadence momentarily. According to Pitú, a member of the percussion ensemble of Vai-Vai,

Em alguns momentos a gente mantém os surdos segurando o groove para as caixas e repiques trabalharem a cadência do ritmo. De repente, introduzimos as paradinhas que faz com que todos parem de respirar por quarto, oito, e até mais compassos (Interview 2003).

In certain moments [of the samba de enredo], we keep the surdos holding the groove and let the caixas and repiques work on the rhythmic cadence. Then suddenly, we introduce the paradinhas, which make everyone stop breathing for four, eight, or more bars (Interview 2003).

While a few *paradinhas* are worked out ahead of time, the decision of which to introduce and when to do so lies with the percussion master. These breaks create moments of tension since percussionists need to be able to perform them and return to the basic rhythmic patterns seamlessly. Since no one really knows when, in the average forty repetitions of the *samba enredo* they will occur, percussionists, other school participants as well as audience members are taken by surprise when they happen. The sonic impact of these musical techniques can be impressive and at times, they become unforgettable. McGowan and Passanha have described *paradinhas* as “the musical equivalent of stopping a jumbo jet’s take off at the end of the runway and then getting it to take off again” (1998: 43).

## SINGING AND MODES OF INTERACTION

Singing, in general, figures prominently in Brazilian culture. The preference of vocal genres over instrumental ones in Brazil is impressive. So much so that many times lyrics have been added to well-established instrumental melodies. As an example, I point to a scene from a documentary

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<sup>53</sup> Pagodeiro refers to those who play pagode, an urban form of samba that emerged in Bahia in the mid 1990s.

film by Mika Kaurismäki about *choro*<sup>54</sup> released in 2005 entitled *The sound of Rio: Brasileirinho*. In it, well-known 7-string guitarist Yamandú Costa takes the stage on Rio's Municipal Theater to play the famous choro *Carinhoso*, composed by Pixinguinha and first recorded in 1928, with lyrics added by João de Barro in 1937. It was surprising to see a solo instrumentalist taking the stage to play such a piece, since *choro*'s sound texture is derived from a combination of three parts—a highly ornamented melodic, a center line that provides rhythmic and harmonic underpinnings, and an elaborate bass line that usually creates a countermelody. What Yamandú did was to write an arrangement where he provided the accompaniment and bass countermelodies but relied on the audience to sing the melody. The fact that Yamandú prepared such an arrangement is telling: there was no doubt that the audience would know how to sing the melody in question and that freed him to play the harmonic accompaniment and countermelodies.

In the same manner, carnival participants, by which I mean not only performers but also audience members, expect and are expected to engage in singing during performances. While interactive modes of participation are usual in many different types of performances, the type of embodied participation observed in Brazil is striking: participants sing loudly, their entire bodies moving with the sound. Of his fieldwork experience in Salvador, Brazil, scholar Jeff Packman also wrote,

One of the most striking aspects of musical practice in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, in addition to the sheer abundance and variety of sounds that can be heard there, is the active way that people listen to music. At numerous performances, I saw audience members dance in the smallest of spaces with no prompting whatsoever and regardless of whether or not there was a dance floor. And I heard them sing; not quietly to themselves, only at refrains, or when prompted by performers, but rather, at full volume, along with almost every word to almost every song (2010: 242).

Knowing songs and being able to sing them is often cited by participants as an important factor of what constitutes a “successful” carnival experience. Learning the words and music to the *enredo* is usually accomplished through participation in the *samba enredo* competition and subsequent rehearsals, and also by listening to the *Samba enredo* CD, released a few months prior to the parade by the LIGA. The CD, which includes the winning *samba enredo* of each of the schools of the Special Group, is used to teach the *enredos* to those who are less active at the schools' rehearsals and to entice the public to attend the parade. It allows many to become intimately

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<sup>54</sup> The term *choro* first appeared in Rio de Janeiro around the 1870's to designate a style of interpreting European dances such as the polka, waltz and mazurka played by amateur instrumental ensembles: usually the flute, and two guitars. Around 1890, the term was extended to a musical genre that grew out of the style.

familiar with the *enredos* and ensure that the carnival experience will be a successful one. As Yara said,

Eu compro o CD assim que sai porque é muito melhor quando a gente sabe cantar os sambas bem. Se você não sabe cantar, não dá para ficar envolvido pela música e o carnaval não é legal. O bom mesmo é a gente saber os enredos e poder cantar junto até lavar a alma, até esquecer todos os problemas e a tristeza (Interview 2003).

I buy the CD as soon as it is released because it is much better when we know how to sing the sambas well. If you cannot sing, then you cannot lose yourself in the music and then carnival is not very nice. What is really good is when we know the enredos e can sing along until our soul is clean, until we forget all our problems and sadness (Interview 2003).

Once again here, the idea of singing and washing one's souls is reiterated. Knowing the *samba enredo* comes to represent intimacy and an opportunity to rise above sadness.

The rules imposed by the LIGA also reinforce the notion that all members must sing at all times. In fact, judges can deduct points from the school if they notice members who are not singing with energy. As the regulations read, "during the entire parade, the school must maintain the same cadence, sing with vigor, and move forward with strength. A rupture in any of these factors, even if just for a few seconds, will result in a loss of harmony points" (2006: 8).

Not singing often indicates lack of enthusiasm and can interfere with other members' carnival experiences. This became clear to me as I made my way to the samba avenue on the day of Águia's parade with my friend Patricia, a long time member of Águia de Ouro. We were both on our way to the samba avenue on a bus donated to the school by the Mayor's Office. With us, there were about forty other people, many were not avid members of the school but students of a reputable university that had decided, in the last minute, to parade with the school. They were able to purchase their costume only a week prior and as such, had the right to parade. As one of the directors began to insist that we practice the *enredo* while on the ride, it became obvious that the students were uninterested. They were inebriated, interested in "having fun" and obviously not concerned with the performance of the school in the carnival parade. This greatly impacted my friend Patricia who had been preparing for this moment for a year. She became increasingly more annoyed at the fact that they did not know the *enredo* and that if they happened to be positioned near her at the parade, that would impact her ability to have a "good" carnival. She said,

Tenho raiva quando pessoas não se importam em aprender o samba de enredo. O que é que eles querem fazer aqui? Estragar

o carnaval de todo mundo? Eu tenho que ficar longe deles porque eu quero cantar até o dia raiar. Eu pretendo ter um bom carnaval (Personal Communication 2003).

I feel anger when people don't bother to learn the samba de enredo. What do they want here? Spoil everyone else's carnaval? I have to stay far away from them [during the parade] because I want to sing until a new day rises. I intend to have a good carnaval (Personal Communication 2003).

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I have shown in this chapter that specific articulations of discourse and performance practices that surround the construction of carnaval have substantial effects on participants' lives. In an organization with a rigid social hierarchy and specific gendered roles assignment, singing is the one function performed by all, independently of gender, race, age, or any other classification.

While *puxadores* are almost always men, they are not referred to as lead singers, or even singers, but only as those who will pull the samba forward, providing vocal cues and so forth. As part of the competition, *puxadores* are not judged independently from all other members. In fact, singing is only judged as part of the overall harmony or interaction of the school. The rules are clear: all members must sing at all times.

By engaging in what I am calling attentive singing, carnaval participants expect to experience an emotional transformation. I have shown that the success of attentive singing lies greatly on powerful emotional arousal, which is based not only on a strong reaction to musical stimulation but also in the anticipation that they will be inspired or moved by it. As such, carnaval becomes attentive singing's main stage, a platform where participants learn, practice and perform it.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCIPLINING BODIES AND SHAPING IDENTITIES

"I don't understand why you are so preoccupied with what men and women can and cannot do here at the school. Everyone is equal. It doesn't really matter if you are a man or a woman," said Ubaldo to me. And then, as I asked him if he thought I could join the school's percussion section he said, "why would you want to do that? Carrying heavy instruments around is not for girls" (Field Notes, February 2002).

Ubaldo is a long time member of Vai-Vai and one of the school's directors of harmony.<sup>55</sup> His reaction—disbelief that a female would like to play a percussion instrument and therefore invade a predominantly masculine space—was not uncommon among members of Vai-Vai and did not surprise me. As mentioned in chapter one, samba schools have always been organized around rigid social hierarchies in which men and women have defined roles that are gender specific. For the most part, women are dancers, subsection leaders, and are also in charge of organizing social events. Men can dance but their main responsibilities always revolve around music making—singing and playing. While changes have occurred, the spheres women and men can occupy continue to be demarcated by the assumptions culturally embedded in the construction of gendered identities. In other words, to accommodate or allow changes in performance roles, samba school members have redefined spaces (i.e. placing women in certain areas of the percussion ensemble), re-categorized instrumentation and its construction (i.e. using lighter material), among other things. By doing so, dominant notions of femininities and masculinities are constantly being produced and reproduced.

I am defining the concepts of masculinity and femininity as the result of the cultural meaning given to certain traits and ways of conduct, which arise from the process of engaging in gendered lives. Assuming that behavior is inherently relational, masculinity has been constructed in contrast with femininity, and vice-versa. Furthermore, scholars have recognized that there can be different notions of masculinities and femininities in a given place at a specific time, rather than one, single masculinity or femininity.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, masculinity and femininity are not only constructed in relation to one another, but are also constituted in their difference from other versions of masculinity and femininity.

While the grandiosity of parade signals to most outsiders the dedication, time commitment, and performance skills of samba school

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<sup>55</sup> In the samba schools of São Paulo, harmony refers to the unified progression of the parade in terms of time (i.e. reaching specific points at the samba avenue within the allotted time), unity of *alas* (i.e. integrants are evenly distributed within a given *ala* with no apparent gaps between each *ala* and within the *ala*). In essence, directors of harmony parade alongside participants paying attention and addressing problems referent to time and distribution of participants in the samba avenue.

<sup>56</sup> See Jeffrey Weeks (1981, 1985), Connell (1995), Nixon (1996).

members, it does not point to kind of cultivation of bodily practices that many participants engage in as a means to realize particular notions of femininities and masculinities, which have in turn become associated with specific performance roles.

The samba school members I worked with ascribed to a conception of performance competence that involved not only an evaluation of one's dance or musical skills, but also one that was often tied to the physicality of the performer's body (i.e. skin color, body shape, age, and sex) and his or hers comportment. While behavior was not necessarily delineated by the official rules that governed the parade itself, there were strong expectations of conduct for each performance role within the schools. And these expectations were always intertwined with the evaluation of one's musical competence. For instance, a *porta-bandeira* was perceived as a "bad" dancer if she did not smile at all times, while another was asked to surrender her title because she became a single mother. Members found this so shameful that they could no longer watch her dance.

Thus, in this chapter, I analyze how performers, understanding themselves and others to be closer or further from gender ideals, engage in strategies of social and self-discipline, through which they seek to attain competence in their prescribed roles. To do so, I consider samba schools' micro practices and individual's self-disciplinary methods of specific performance roles. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, I address a group of performers—the percussion ensemble—because I view their gatherings as a central site for participants to construct a dominant heterosexual masculinity. I also analyze how through the performance of samba, instrumentation and playing techniques take on characteristics attributed to this dominant masculinity. In the chapter's second section, I examine the conditions that make possible the enactment of idealized versions of femininity. Paying attention to three of the female roles in samba schools—the *passista*, the *baiana*, and the *porta-bandeira*—I analyze how conceptions of gender, as they intersect with race, sexuality, and morality, are produced, affirmed, and contested. I suggest that these stereotypes, signified through bodily deportment, the use of elaborate costumes, hairstyles, dance movements, invite dancers to embrace archetypal narratives of idealized selves. It is not my intent to establish oppositional binaries between these roles but rather, to examine the conditions of possibility that have enabled their emergence and to consider what types of cultural work they do.

## CONSTRUCTING A DOMINANT MASCULINITY

## THE PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE: "THE HEART OF A SAMBA SCHOOL"

The highly elaborate sound composite of São Paulo's samba schools are comprised of a lead and a support singer, a few *cavaquinhos* or small steel 4-string guitars resembling a ukulele that provide harmonic accompaniment, and a large percussion section, which includes a variety of instruments.<sup>57</sup> These are the musicians responsible for the performance of the *samba enredo*, which is selected from a pool of sambas written by a member, or members, of the school's composer's section.

I argue that while all these musicians come together to create the sound component of the carnival parade, they do operate as separate sections: the composer's section, the percussion ensemble, singers and *cavaquinho* players. Not only do they mostly rehearse independently, coming together for specific rehearsals and other gatherings, but they are also spatially separated during the parade. While singers and *cavaquinho* players are positioned atop the sound truck during the parade, the percussion section parades in the samba avenue. As such, the percussion ensemble comprises not only a sounding section but also, form an important visual component of the carnival parade.

Known as *a bateria*—word derived from the Portuguese verb *bater*, meaning to strike—the percussion section is commonly said to be "the heart of a samba school." Considered one of the most important sections of a school, the ensemble parades on the samba avenue with an astounding number of participants, usually ranging between 280 and 350 players.

According to percussionists from Vai-Vai Samba School, only twenty percent of the percussionists who parade regularly attend the school's rehearsals, which take place all year long. Of these twenty percent, an even smaller group of ten or twenty musicians make up what I have come to call the school's inner percussion ensemble.

The inner ensemble is usually comprised of musicians who are not only more experienced but who are also considered devoted to the school. Experience alone cannot determine inclusion into this tight circle, since, in the case of Vai-Vai, members of the inner ensemble are entrusted with the responsibility of creating the school's particular sound. They must also have strong ties with their school – their parents are members of the school, they grew up attending the same school and most likely they learned how to play drums there, not to mention that most of the people in their social circle are also school members.

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<sup>57</sup> Rarely, other instruments might be added to the mix. For instance, in the 2003 parade, school Águia de Ouro added violins to their sound.

Most percussionists are male. Certainly, all those in the inner percussion ensemble as well as those in charge, such as the percussion master, are males. In the last few years, women have begun to play percussion instruments but are, for the most part, restricted to instruments that have been classified as light percussion, such as shakers, cow bells, and scrapers.

Like Ubaldo, most samba participants would absolutely deny that women are excluded from participating in music making purposefully. Instead, to them, that is simply a consequence of the “natural” assignment of roles. As Ubaldo said to me,

Carregar instrumento pesado por aí não é coisa prá mulher. A mulher já nasce delicada; algumas mais, outras menos mas mesmo assim, tocar na bateria é coisa prá macho. Não é fácil fazer isso porque você precisa ser muito forte prá carregar esses instrumentos pesados enquanto seguindo o passo, cantando, e mantendo o entusiasmo. Cada um tem o seu lugar aqui e todo mundo entende isso. A mulher tem que ser charmosa, elegante, dengosa (Interview 2002).

Carrying heavy instruments around is not for women. A woman is born delicate; some are more, some are less but still, playing in a percussion section is a macho’s job. It’s not easy to do because you need to be strong to carry these heavy instruments while keeping the pace, singing, and maintaining the enthusiasm. Each one has its own place here and everyone understands that. A woman is supposed to be charming, elegant, dainty (Interview 2002).

Ubaldo’s comments are representative of the discourse produced by other male and female samba school members. Ubaldo begins by stating that women are born delicate. Delicateness is seen as an innate attribute that women possess in varying degrees and one that is positioned against physical strength. Interestingly, in all the interviews I conducted, the words weak or fragile were never mentioned. I suggest that is so because delicateness is perceived as a valued attribute in women while weakness or fragility are often seen as negative characteristics. Another notion embedded in this quote is that delicateness is the means to elegance, grace and beauty. To be delicate is to be elegant and dainty. In many members’ views, these are characteristics that women should strive for as they are seen as markers of an ideal femininity.

On the other hand, a percussionist, as Ubaldo expressed, should be a physically strong man, recognized as a macho and possessing a reputation of being aggressive and somewhat of a philanderer. Take for instance the comments of Marcelo, one of the percussionists at Vai-Vai’s inner percussion group:

Aqui não tem lugar prá maricas. Se alguém faz alguma coisa errada, não tá tocando direito, aí leva umas pancadas. Toma uns tapas ou uma baquetada na cabeça” (Interview 2003).

Here [at the percussion rehearsal] there isn’t space for sissies. If someone does something wrong, is not playing well, then he will take a beating. It’s a slap or someone’s drum stick on his head (Interview 2003).

While I never observed this kind of behavior during rehearsals and considered that Marcelo might be “performing” for me, I must say that there were many violent incidents involving several percussion ensembles. For instance, when I attended the coronation of the carnival queen and king in December of 2002 at the Anhembi Theater, two rival percussion ensembles that were featured to play that night exchanged gunfire injuring two people. The exchange took place right as the event was supposed to start, causing the military police to descend onto the theater. While the victims were still outside waiting for medical assistance, event organizers, with the help of the police, asked the public to take their seats so the show could continue.<sup>58</sup>

As social anthropologist Reinaldo da Silva Soares points out, members of the percussion ensemble occupy conflicting spaces: they are revered for their musical skills but are also perceived as trouble-makers. As Soares writes,

A bateria ocupa uma posição contraditória dentro da agremiação: é um setor que desfruta de um status positivo junto à agremiação ao mesmo tempo que é vista como um setor problemático, em termos disciplinares” (1999:61).

[t]he percussion section occupies a contradictory position within the samba school: it is a section that possesses a positive status within the school but at the same it is seen as a problematic in regard to discipline (1999: 61).

And then, quoting the percussion master of Vai-Vai, he writes,

... a bateria de uma escola de samba é a ovelha negra, é onde está as pessoas carentes, a maioria dos problemas está na bateria... (Mestre Tadeu, quoted in footnote 1999:61).

... the percussion section of a samba school is the black sheep of the family, it is where the needy people are, most of the problem individuals are in the percussion section...” (Mestre Tadeu, quoted in footnote 1999:61).

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<sup>58</sup> People did return to their seats, as if nothing had happened, and were ready to continue with the show. However, some of the performing guests refused to take the stage in fear that the fight would start again. In the end, the event was postponed.

Soares' offers an explanation of such behavior. He writes, As normas rígidas impostas pelo diretor de *bateria* são consequência da própria composição da *ala*, em sua maior parte, formada por jovens, impulsivos e irreverentes. Sendo assim, a zombaria e o escárnio são constantes no seu convívio e, algumas vezes, as discussões ultrapassam os limites verbais e se transformam em agressões físicas" (ibid.).

The rigid rules imposed by the percussion master are consequence of the section's make up, which for the most part, is composed by impulsive and irreverent young men. Because of it, teasing and mockery are a constant part of their interactions, and at times, discussions can surpass verbal limits and turn into physical aggression (ibid.).

I would argue that such behavior is a valued attribute in the construction of a dominant heterosexual masculinity and not limited to the younger generation.

Returning to Marcelo's comment, what I found interesting was that he equated not playing percussion well with being a *marica*, meaning a somewhat effeminate man. One of the ways Vai-Vai members emphasize this notion is by placing musicians who are not rising to the expected competence level in the back of the school's line up – a space where they place most of the light percussion and which they have termed "the kitchen" (see example 2). Therefore, I would argue that competence in drumming is a critical marker of this dominant masculinity. And furthermore, I would also suggest that it is through drumming that one learns to be masculine.

Samba school's percussion ensembles are usually comprised of *surdo* (bass drums), *repique* or *repinique* (high-pitch two-headed lead or aluminum drums), *caixa* (snare drums), *pandeiro* (frame drums with heavy metallic discs), *tamborim* (small cymbal-less tambourines played with a pre-fabricated plastic rods held together on a handle), *cuíca* (friction drums), *chocalho* and *ganzá* (shakers), *agogô* (cowbells), *reco-reco* (metal scrappers), (see example 3 for a sample of a Samba School Groove).

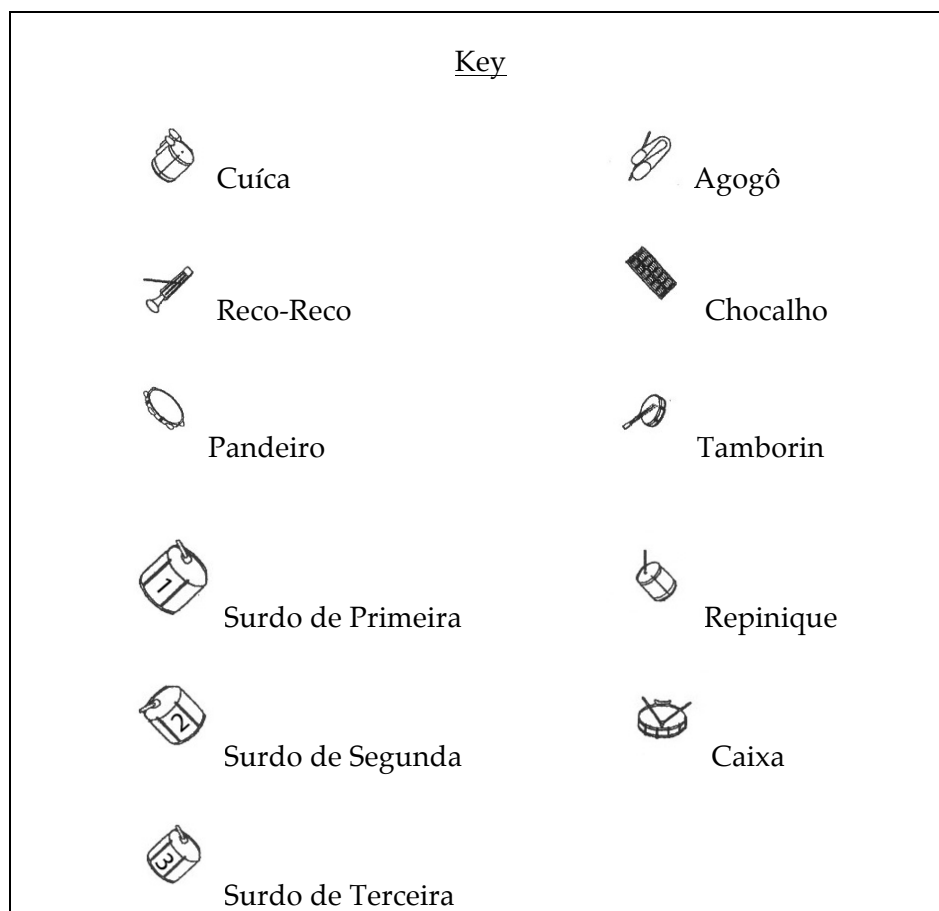
At the Vai-Vai samba school, percussion lessons are offered to children and adolescents who wish to learn how to play the drums with the intention of playing in the school's ensemble. When I was conducting fieldwork in 2002-2003, Marcelo was teaching the class. While in theory the class was not offered exclusively for boys, girls were not encouraged to participate. As Marcelo said,

No momento eu tenho 60 alunos na classe de percussão da Vai-Vai, todos são meninos. Bom, começamos com 2 meninas mas isso não durou muito. Os meninos gozavam delas o tempo todo. E se não estavam fazendo isso, tavam fazendo perguntas as garotas: o que elas estavam fazendo, você sabe, esse tipo de

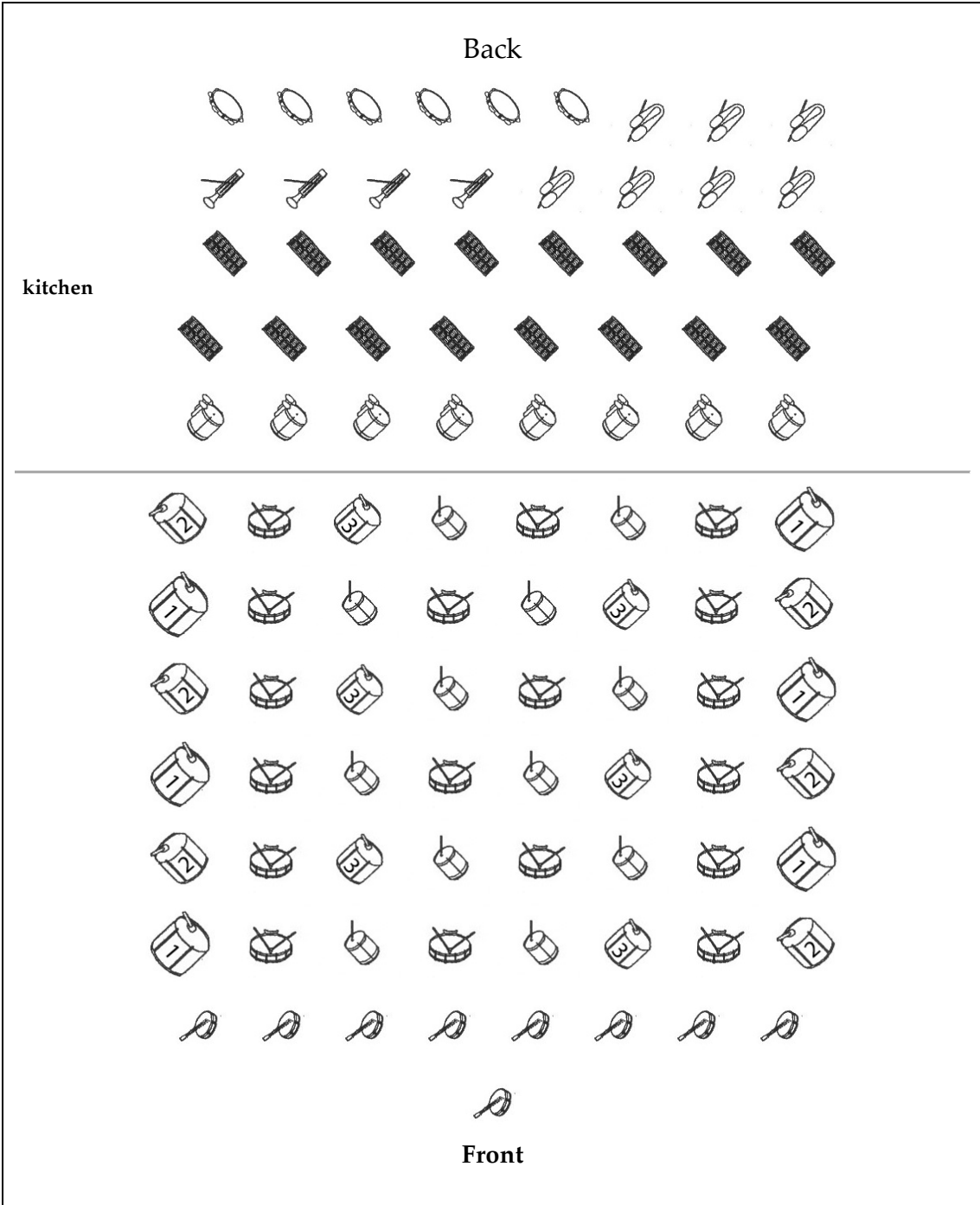
coisas. O que eu posso fazer? Meninos são meninos. Então, depois de umas aulas as meninas não voltaram mais (Interview 2003).

### Example 2: Line up of Vai-Vai Samba School's Percussion Ensemble

My use of drawings to show instrumentation was inspired by sample found in *Aprendendo a Tocar o Batuque Carioca* (Gonçalves & Costa, 2000: 17). The actual line up was supplied by percussionist Miriam Cápua.







### Example 3: Sample of Samba School Groove

Based on *Aprendendo a Tocar o Batuque Carioca* (Gonçalves & Costa)

The musical score is written for ten percussion instruments in 2/4 time. The instruments are listed on the left: Pandeiro, Cuíca, Agogô, Tamborim, Chocalho & Reco-reco, Caixa, Repinique, Surdo 3, Surdo 2, and Surdo 1. The score is divided into four measures. Above the Pandeiro staff, there are four 'V' markings, indicating a vibration or a specific rhythmic pattern. The Pandeiro part consists of eighth-note patterns. The Cuíca part features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes with accents. The Agogô part has a steady eighth-note pattern. The Tamborim part uses a complex pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with accents. The Chocalho & Reco-reco part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Caixa part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Repinique part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Surdo 3 part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Surdo 2 part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents. The Surdo 1 part has a steady eighth-note pattern with accents.

I currently have 60 students in the Vai-Vai percussion class, all boys. Well, we began with two girls but that didn't last long. The boys teased them the whole time. And if they were not doing that, they were asking the girls questions: what are they doing, you know, that sort of thing. What can I do? Boys are boys. So, after a couple of classes the girls didn't come back (Interview 2003).

It is clear that Marcelo did not foster a class environment that welcomed all people. Like the young boys attending his class, Marcelo also believe a percussion ensemble to be a masculine space and brushed the bullying behavior of his students, much like his own, simply as things that boys do. He explained that he too had started playing the drums in that same space when he was a child. As he said,

Eu comecei tocando percussão na Vai-Vai quando garoto, talvez com 6 ou 7 anos. Meu pai era percussionista, tocava caixa, e o meu irmão também começou a tocar percussão na Vai-Vai. Toda noite depois do jantar a gente nem podia esperar para ir prá lá praticar, jogar futebol e ficar lá com os nossos amigos. A gente vivia lá, praticamente uma extensão da nossa casa. Até hoje eu passo mais tempo no barracão do que na minha casa. Hoje em dia eu vou lá para ensaiar toda semana, para dar aula e prá ficar com os meus amigos. Você sabe como é; é sempre uma festa. A gente passa uma hora tomando umas e paquerando as garotas que vem para assistir a gente, e daí começa a ensaiar a bateria (Interview 2003).

I began playing percussion at Vai-Vai when I was a very young boy, maybe 6 or 7. My father was a percussionist, he played *caixa*, and my brother also began playing percussion at Vai-Vai. Every night after dinner we could not wait to go there to practice, play soccer and hang out with our friends. We lived there, it was like an extension of our house. To this day, I spend more time at the school than at my house. I now go there to rehearse every week, to teach lessons and just to hang out with my friends. You know how it is; it is always a party. We spend an hour or so drinking and flirting with the girls who come to watch us, and then we start rehearsing the percussion ensemble (Interview 2003).

As is evident in this passage, much of a boy's socialization process happens at these percussion gatherings. They are not mere classes where boys learn to play samba patterns. Instead, surrounded by other male family members and friends, boys also have an opportunity to learn and negotiate a dominant heterosexual masculinity that emphasizes attributes of roughness,

physical strength, and virility. And eventually, I argue, both the instrumentation and its specific playing movements also become associated with this masculinity.

Among the percussion instruments, it was obvious that some—the *surdos*, *caixas*, *repiniques*, and *pandeiro*—were regarded as belonging more in the “masculine realm” than others, such as the smaller, lighter percussive instruments, such as *agogô*, *chocalho* and *reco-reco*. I hypothesize that this perceived spectrum was constructed to accommodate female participation within samba school’s percussion ensembles.

I believe that one of the instruments most emblematic of a dominant masculine identity is the *surdo*. During the parade, its sonic importance lies with the fact that without the steadiness of the loud bass drum, the beat falls apart and consequently, the whole parade loses its synchronization.<sup>59</sup> According to Frederick Moehn, “with its goatskin head, the *surdo* produces a sound that is quite different from that of a kick drum in an American-style drum kit. It emits a deep, sustained tone with a complex envelope of overtones and a fundamental frequency in the range of sixty to seventy-five Hertz” (Moehn 2005: 59).

Usually, three types of *surdos* are used in a samba school percussion ensemble. The heaviest of the bass drums, known as *Surdo de Primeira* (First *Surdo*) or *Surdo de Marcação* (Marking *Surdo*), is responsible for marking the second, and most accentuated beat of a samba 2/4 meter. The *Surdo de Segunda* or *Resposta* (Second or Answering *Surdo*), which is tuned a 5<sup>th</sup> above the first *surdo*, answers the first *surdo* by playing on the first beat of the measure, although with less emphasis. And finally, the third *surdo*, known as *Surdo de Corte*, plays on the beats and off beats, cutting the rhythm and adding syncopation.

Referred by some percussionists as the “king,” the *surdo* is often perceived by male and female participants as too heavy to be played by women. But I would argue that there is another facet to the construction of the *surdo* as a “masculine” instrument—its playing technique (see figure 4-1). To illustrate this point, I would like to cite a passage from my notes related to taking percussion lessons during fieldwork. In June of 2002 I wrote,

Today I had my second percussion lesson with Miriam Cápuia. Much to my surprise she invited one of her friends, Adamastor, who is also the percussion Master at X-9 *Paulistana*, to join in hoping he could be of help to me. As I began to run through the percussion pattern for bass drum (basically

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<sup>59</sup> According to Sergio Cabral, the pioneering samba percussionist Alcebíades Barcelos (a.k.a. Bide) of the first samba school, Deixa Falar, is credited with having introduced the instrument into samba during the late 1920s as a means of maintaining a steady pace during the street parade.



*Figure 4-1. Percussionist at rehearsal*

playing on the second beat while muffling the first and some variations on this theme), he interrupted the lesson to say that while the sound was fine I didn't look right. As I asked him to clarify what he meant, he picked up the bass drum to demonstrate what he wanted: he brought his right arm (the one which held the mallet) way up around his head on beat one, before striking the drum on beat two. At the moment of attack, his opposite shoulder moved back as his torso also moved up and down from the waist. As I began to try to imitate him, he

covered his face with his hands and said: “if I close my eyes, the sound is the same, but if I look at you, everything looks wrong. I can only listen to you if I have my eyes closed” (Field Notes).

I was reminded of my early conservatory years, in which I was constantly instructed on how to lift my hands from the piano keyboard in the “correct” manner (i.e. delicately, emphasizing round, circular motion of the wrists and hands). In these instances, bodily deportment becomes an indicator of gendered identities and while the moving body might go unnoticed when aligned with the expected gender, it suddenly comes into focus when seen as transgressing permissible expressions. It was clear to me that Adamastor expected me to behave delicately and that it disturbed him to observe my performance of movements he felt too masculine for my body. In other words, I could not transcend the femininity of my body. So much so, that before he left, Adamastor urged me to attend the *porta-bandeira* lessons, clearly steering me toward feminine spaces and hopefully, feminine movements.

Other percussion instruments are also assigned higher status within the instrumentation hierarchy of samba schools percussion ensembles. The *repinique* or *repique*, a high-pitched, two-headed drum, is the first instrument heard in a samba parade, cuing most of the drum section. Because they often support or back up the bass drums, *repiniques* and *surdos* are often positioned together in a school’s line up (for a sample of a school line up, see example 2). *Caixas* and *tamborins* are responsible for a school’s sonic signature. With the continuous search for innovation that drives schools members within the frame of the carnival competition, samba schools’ musicians have found important to differentiate their *baterias* from one another. Most of the time that is accomplished by creating original patterns for the *caixas* and *tamborins*. As director of the percussion ensemble of the school Águia de Ouro expressed,

... a minha levada de caixa é a marca da escola. Sambistas da cidade de São Paulo sabem diferenciar entre a bateria da Águia e a da VaiVai ou qualquer baseado nisso. Nós temos o nosso som (Mestre Juca, Interview 2002).

...my caixa pattern is now the signature of the school. Sambistas in São Paulo city can differentiate between the bateria of Águia from that of the Vai-Vai and all the others because of it. We have our own sound (Mestre Juca, Interview 2002).

Over time, these rhythmic patterns are becoming increasingly more complicated. On the avenue, then, the distinctions among the different performance practices of each school are highlighted in order to attract the attention of the judges and the public (Moehn 2005: 59-60).

During the years I conducted fieldwork at Vai-Vai I did not meet women who played *surdos*, *caixas* or *repiques*. I did notice, however, that a few women did play the *tamborim*. *Tamborim* is a small cymbal-less tambourine (single-head and a metal shell). It is played with a pre-fabricated plastic rods held together on a handle. The instrument is held with the left hand (thumb across the ring while the other fingers curled inside the body of the instrument) and struck with the plastic stick, which plays a combination of stopped strokes, rim shots, muffled strokes, and open strokes. Its quick playing style does not require large movement of arms and, with a small frame, *tamborim* does not put into questions aspects of physical strength. Even so, as with many of other instruments, such as shakers and scrapers, *tamborins* are now being made of lighter materials. Therefore, even when spaces were created for female percussionists, notions of femininity and masculinity continued to be aligned with ideas culturally entrenched in the construction of gendered identities.

## II

### IDEALIZED VERSIONS OF FEMININITY

#### *PORTA-BANDEIRA: THE QUEEN OF A SAMBA-SCHOOL*

As her title indicates, a *porta-bandeira*, or flag bearer, is responsible for carrying and displaying her samba school's flag. Her male counterpart, the *mestre-sala*, dances alongside her, and together they form the most important couple of a samba school. Usually, each samba school has three couples in such roles, the second and third usually being less experienced dancers who aspire to hold the title of first *porta-bandeira* and *mestre-sala*.

The principal *porta-bandeira* and *mestre-sala* are among the first performers to enter the parade. She performs in grandiose attire, tight in the bodice with a very full skirt embroidered with jewels, beads, sequins, and feathers. Until a decade ago, a white wig was the appropriate adornment for her head (see figure 4-2). Today, decorated, large headpieces hold her hair back ensuring that public and judges see her smiling face at all times. Her dance is most often characterized as "graceful," "beautiful," and "elegant." Stylistic speaking, it requires an elongated spine—a continuous, unbending line from head to tail bone. Her torso must be locked in position to allow for the proper movement, all the while carrying her school's flag (see figures 4-3 and 4-4).

Instead of intricate footwork accompanied by loose and gyrating hip movements that characterize samba dancing, the *porta-bandeira's* choreography focuses on lateral and forward steps and spins, which, according to the samba community, allows for the proper displaying of the flag. The pole of the flag, which should always be perpendicular to the





*Figure 4-2. Mestre-sala & Porta-bandeira  
Vilma and Benicio, carnaval 1964*



Figure 4-3. *Porta-bandeira* of Águia de Ouro, Carnaval 2010  
Photograph of Alexandre Schneider



Figure 4-4. *Porta-bandeira* & *Mestre-sala* of Vai-Vai , Carnaval 2011  
Photograph of Roberto Vasquez

ground is held only by the little finger of the *porta-bandeira's* right hand. No other part of her body should touch the flag. And in the event that does happen during the parade, points are deducted from her performance.

Since 1986, the rules that guide the parade have been disseminated and maintained by an organization known as LIGA Independente das Escolas de São Paulo (Independent Alliance of the Samba Schools of São Paulo). The LIGA, a non-profit organization, is responsible for all aspects of the coordination the carnival parade of the samba schools in the top two groups: 1- The Special Group, 2-The Access Group. As such, part of LIGA's responsibility is the production of a manual that outlines for the jury, which is also selected by the LIGA, the rules for judging the parade.

Regarding the *porta-bandeira's* performance role the manual reads,

*A porta-bandeira é a figura mais representativa de uma escola de samba; a ela cabe a honra de conduzir o pavilhão da entidade. Ela deve mostrar garbo, graça, elegância na postura e na dança, deve apresentar-se com desenvoltura, com movimentos distintos, sem visagens (caretas) desnecessárias... O casal executa um bailado próprio no ritmo do samba (não devendo nunca sambar)...A porta bandeira jamais se curva a qualquer pessoa, uma vez que ela ostenta o ponto máximo da escola que é o seu pavilhão. O seu bailado tem características próprias que são movimentos giratórios em torno de seu próprio eixo, no sentido horário e anti-horário (2006: 5-6).*

The *porta-bandeira* is the most representative figure of a samba school; she is entrusted with the honor of carrying the school's flag. She must show distinction, grace, elegance in her posture and dance, always performing in an agile and assertive manner, with distinct movements and without contracting her face in unnecessary ways...The couple executes their unique dance to the rhythms of samba (but should not ever dance samba)... The *porta-bandeira* should never bow to any person since she is the one who presents the most important emblem of the school—the flag. Her dance [bailado] has unique movements, characterized by spins around her axis in clockwise and counter-clockwise directions (2006: 5-6).

While Carnival's images create certain dominant pictures for viewers, primarily focusing on the *passista's* body, the hierarchical structure of samba schools and the competition aspect of Carnival as outlined by the LIGA tell us a different story. By investigating these aspects, it is clear that the *porta-bandeira* occupies center stage.

The status of the *porta-bandeira* stems from several aspects. As mentioned, entrusted to her is the important responsibility of leading the school's flag during the annual parade and any other events that require the flag's presence.<sup>60</sup> The performance practice of carrying the banner during the parade is clearly laid out and most school members are acutely aware of what is expected of such performance. More importantly, the performance of the *porta-bandeira* and *mestre-sala* couple may add up to ten points, out of 100, for the school during the carnival competition. No other single couple has such accountability, for most of other requirements to be judged rely on the performance of groups of people (i.e. the percussion section) or of the school as a whole (i.e. how well the school progressed through the samba avenue).<sup>61</sup>

The couple's position commands space and attention and this is easily seen during the parade. In the aerial shot (figure 4 -5), one can see clearly three sections, characterized by different colors: red, pink and yellow. Ahead of these sections, is the *porta-bandeira* and *mestre-sala* couple. Notice how much space of the samba avenue is allocated to the pair.

The *porta-bandeira's* status within the school is also shaped by the discourse that positions her as such. I found pertinent that the samba school members, like the LIGA's manual, did not use the verb to dance (*dançar*) to refer to a *porta-bandeira's* movements. Instead, members often use the verb *bailar* to describe her dancing movements. But *bailar* and *dançar*, which are usually synonymous, seem to be positioned in a hierarchical scale in terms of the acquisition of dancing skills. Linked to *bailarina* (a ballerina), *bailar* is associated to dances perceived as more difficult to learn, the long and hard labor of acquisitional skill. *Dançar*, especially in opposition to *sambar* (to dance the samba), is still seen as competence achieved through the acquisition of specific skills, but it was never used to describe the type of dances considered to be "more difficult" to learn. On the other hand, *sambar* is perceived as an innate quality, a talent that one is either born with or without. It is common to hear that "sambar está no sangue," or "to samba is in the blood." In other words, a ballerina *baila*, a *porta-bandeira baila*, a *passista samba*, and any other person dancing at the carnival parade *dança*.

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<sup>60</sup> A samba school's flag is the symbolic representation of their entity and as such, it is treated ceremoniously. Upon entering the school's hall, if the flag is displayed, members will walk toward it, hold the lowest corner of the flag between their hands, right hand placed on top of left hand, and with the gesture of kissing their right hand, pay their respect to the flag.

<sup>61</sup> A school's score for the carnival competition is based on the evaluation of 10 items, which are divided into 3 categories. See appendix 1 for a detail outline of these requirements.





Figure 4-5. *Porta-bandeira & Mestre-sala*

Even though the LIGA's literature on what constitutes the *porta-bandeira's* performance speaks primarily to behavior and her dance during the competition, I argue that the *porta-bandeira's* role involves much more than the performance of dance movements. It also entails the development of certain character dispositions. As guardian of her school's flags, a *porta-bandeira* is also seen as guardian of decorum and as such, she must embody modesty and grace. Her reputation within the samba community, how well she embodies her role, has an impact on how her performance is received during competition. Competence here refers not only to how well a *porta-bandeira* dances, but also how well she complies with moral and social rules of interaction.

Take for instance the following passage in which Vivi, a flag-bearer who in 1999 was considered "Best *Porta-bandeira* of the twentieth century,"<sup>62</sup> explains how she became a *porta-bandeira*:

...antes de me tornar uma *porta-bandeira*, eu era *passista*. Eu adorava sambar, ainda sinto saudades aqui e ali. Só o que eu precisava fazer era colocar um biquíni e sair sambando.

<sup>62</sup> Vivi was elected "Best *Porta-bandeira* of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century" by a jury put together by the major newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*.

Aquilo já tava dentro de mim, no sangue mesmo. Mas quando eu fui escolhida para ser porta-bandeira eu tive que me empenhar muito para mostrar que era capaz. O mestre-sala se recusou a me aceitar e largou o posto porque ele não achou que eu fosse a melhor pessoa para assumir o lugar de porta-bandeira. Mas a Magali acreditou em mim e ela me pegou pelo braço e anunciou prá todo mundo que eu era o nova porta-bandeira e que os incomodados podiam se retirar. Ai minha filha, eu comecei a treinar muito. Eu ficava no quintal praticando por horas e horas, segurando a vassoura, assim como se fosse a bandeira. Aí eu comecei a observar a Dona Lúcia, que era uma antiga porta-bandeira lá da escola. Ela era uma senhora muito elegante e me ensinou tudo o que eu sei: como sentar, andar, me comportar em público, como pentear o meu cabelo assim com um rabo de cavalo, como falar e me vestir, e também como bailar. Eu mudei completamente. O mais engraçado é que eu nem me lembro de com eu era antes. Agora, eu sou uma porta-bandeira dentro e fora da escola. Já não sei me comportar de maneira diferente (Interview 2002).

... before I became a *porta-bandeira* I was a *passista*. I loved to samba, still miss it sometimes. All I had to do was to put on a bikini and begin to samba. That [knowing how to samba] was inside of me, truly in my blood. But when I was chosen to be *porta-bandeira* I had to work hard to prove myself. The *mestre-sala* [who is the *porta-bandeira* 's partner] refused to take me as his partner and resigned the position at the school because he didn't think I was the best person to take the role. But Magali [the president of the school] believed that I could do this and she took me by the arm and announced to everyone that I was the new *porta-bandeira* and whoever was not happy with her decision could leave the school. Then, I began to practice very hard. I would practice in my backyard for hours and hours, with the broom as my flag. I began to observe Dona Lucia, who was the old *porta-bandeira* at my school. She was a very elegant lady and she taught me everything I know: how to sit, to walk, to behave in public, to do my hair pulled back, how to talk and dress, and how to dance [bailar]. Everything about me changed. The funny thing is that I don't even remember how I used to be. Now, I am a *porta-bandeira* in and out of the school. I don't know how to behave differently (Interview 2002).

In this quote, Vivi makes explicit the notion that while one is born knowing how to samba, one must learn to be a *porta-bandeira*. It is clear that Vivi needed to prove herself after the school's *mestre-sala* left his post because

she had been a *passista*— not a small statement in his part. The two positions require very different attributes. The *porta-bandeira* reinforces ideals of modesty and grace stemming from Victorian conventions, while the *passista* is often described as sexy, provocative, and exotic. While these two constructs foreground polarized versions of accepted forms of femininity, I argue that *porta-bandeiras* are perceived as embodying the ideal femininity.

When I asked Vivi to clarify how a *porta-bandeira* should behave, she said,

Uma porta-bandeira tem que saber se comportar bem, como uma lady. Ela deve sempre se sentar com as pernas cruzadas, assim na altura do calcanhar, o cabelo tem que estar sempre preso, ela deve sempre usar saias e sempre abaixo do joelhos. Ela nunca dever ser vista bebendo ou fumando. Ah, e também ela não dança samba. Ela tem que se comportar bem (Interview 2002).

A *porta-bandeira* must know how to behave well, like a lady. She should always sit with her legs crossed at ankle length, her hair should be tied back, and she should always wear skirts longer than knee length. She should never be seen drinking or smoking. Ah, and she also should not dance the samba. She needs to behave well (Interview 2002).

Before we parted, Vivi invited me to attend the *porta-bandeira* classes as her guest. As I had learned, to assure that all *porta-bandeiras*, regardless of school affiliation, understood the importance of their role and codes of morality, an association composed of experienced and respected members of the samba community had been created in 1995. Since then, aspiring *porta-bandeiras* have attended formal instruction taught by the *Mestre-sala and Porta-bandeira Association of São Paulo City*. The curriculum of the seven-month long course is taught every other Saturday afternoon in one of the samba schools. Aside from practical lessons on how to dance, it also includes instructions on what constitutes the proper conduct of *porta-bandeiras*. As one of the instructors explained,

...a aula também enfatiza o que constitui e o que não constitui roupas apropriadas, estilos de cabelo, e outros comportamentos tais como beber, fumar, e andar sem rebolar como se você se confundisse e de repente pensasse que fosse uma outra pessoa e não a rainha da sua escola (Nena, Field Notes 09/14/2002).

...instruction also emphasizes what does and what does not constitute proper attire, hair styles, and other behavior such as drinking, smoking, or properly walking without swinging one's hips from side to side as if you became confused and



thought for a moment you were someone else and not the queen of your school” (Nena, Field Notes 09/14/2002).

Therefore, on a Saturday afternoon in mid May, I made my way through Bexiga district in São Paulo city to attend this formal class for aspiring and new *porta-bandeiras* and *mestres-sala*. I was instructed to be at the Vai-Vai samba school promptly at 2:00 pm because, unlike the rest of events surrounding the samba community, this class, I was told, “always starts on time.” Given my experience that far, I had come to associate certain sounds with proximity to the school. On this day, however, the streets were utterly calm and upon entering the hall, I was immediately taken a back by the changed atmosphere. The hall at Vai-Vai, which I had experienced many times before as a place of social gathering, a stage for dancing and playing samba, on that afternoon served like a type of formal classroom.

The setting was framed by chairs neatly lined up positioned on one side of the room and a row of flags on the other, separated only by the long rectangular instructors’ table. The space where the flags were arranged, a semi-circle at the front of the hall, functioned almost like an altar. As each instructor and student, entered the room, they would carefully position him/herself in front of the flags, take one of the flag’s ends between both hands and bring it first to his/her lips and then forehead, in a ceremonious manner.

Aside from the several instructors, there were about thirty students present on this date. Female and male, ranging from children to young adults, all participants dressed in white— women wore skirts or dresses while men wore long pants. A crowd of viewers, which I learned later were mothers and other relatives of the students, gathered on the side lines and there remained with me for the next four hours. Although this was to be a dance class, there was little dance done. Only the last ninety minutes of four hours were dedicated to the teaching and evaluation of participants’ dance technique.

As I was expecting, instruction focused on the history of carnaval and samba schools, with special attention given to the appropriate conduct of *porta-bandeiras* and *mestres-sala*. Addressing potential *porta-bandeiras* in the audience, the instructor said,

Ser uma porta bandeira significa ser a mulher mais importante da sua escola. Ser escolhida para ser a porta-bandeira de uma escola é, com certeza, a maior honra que uma mulher pode atingir dentro de uma escola de samba. Ela é a graça da sua escola. Ela é a rainha da escola e se você quer ser uma porta-bandeira, você precisa se comportar como tal. O problema é que muitas garotas acham que podem fazer o que bem entendem. Se você carrega a bandeira da sua escola, então precisa se comportar bem, de maneira adequada. Isso significa que eu não quero ver ninguém rebolando, sambando, fumando, usando saias curtas e muito menos conversando com garotos aí fora. Ponham uma coisa na cabeça: a porta-

bandeira é a rainha da escola. Não passista ou outra coisa. A porta-bandeira é a rainha! (Field Recording 2002).

To be a *porta-bandeira* means that you are the most important woman of your school. To be named a school's *porta-bandeira* is, without a doubt, the highest honor a woman could achieve within a samba school. She is the grace of her school. She is the queen of her school and if you wish to be a *porta-bandeira* then you must behave like one. The problem is that too many girls think that they can do whatever they want to. If you carry the flag of your school, then you need to behave well, to behave properly. That means that I don't want to see anyone swinging their hips, dancing samba, smoking, wearing short skirts, and especially talking to boys outside [of the hall]. Get one thing through your heads: the *porta-bandeira* is the queen of the school. Not the *passista* or someone else. The *porta-bandeira* is the queen! (Field Recording 2002).

This hierarchical structure of roles seems to be understood and negotiated by all samba school members I interviewed. I do not mean to imply that this is a process in which power is imposed from samba schools and affiliate organizations onto passive dancers. This is rather a complex interaction in relations of power. *Porta-bandeiras* participate in the discourse and practices that come to shape them as "guardians of decorum." As scholar Judith Butler has argued, the very processes and circumstances that guarantee a subject's subordination are also the means by which a subject acquires an identity (1993). "Thus, the set of capacities inhering in a subject, the abilities that define its possible modes of agency, are not the residue of an undominated self that existed prior to the operations of power, but are themselves the product of that operation" (Mahmood 1998: 27-8). I found the insights forwarded by Butler's analysis to be extremely useful when studying the practical ways in which women become *porta-bandeiras* through a gradual acquisition of skills and knowledge which are learned, taught and eventually become naturalized.

When asked to talk about her desire to become a *porta-bandeira* and how she did so, Priscila, an 18-year-old, mixed-race woman, and the third *porta-bandeira* of one of the oldest samba schools in São Paulo said,

Eu sempre quis ser porta-bandeira. Sua dança é tão graciosa e elegante. E eu gosto disso, gosto de como eu me sinto. Não é nada fácil-eu e meu mestre-sala passamos horas ensaiando. Eu não tenho tempo prá mais nada mas vale a pena. Porque afinal, a porta-bandeira é a rainha da sua escola. Quando eu era menina, o meu pai queria que eu fosse passista mas eu não nasci com o dom prá sambar como uma mulata. Ou você tem ou não tem. E o meu corpo nem desenvolveu desse jeito, sabe? Eu sou toda magra. E também, eu não queria ser

esse tipo de mulher. Quer dizer, eu não estou falando elas não são boas mulheres. Elas são diferentes. Eu acho que ser porta-bandeira é mas do meu jeito: eu sou mais do tipo quieta, mais envergonhada (Interview 2002).

I've always wanted to be *porta-bandeira*. Her dance is so graceful and elegant. And I like that, I like the way it makes me feel. It's not easy – my partner and I spend hours practicing. I don't have time for much else but it's worth it. After all, a *porta-bandeira* is the queen of her school. When I was younger, my father wanted me to become a *passista* but I just was not born with the talent to dance samba like a *mulata*. You either have it in you or you don't. And my body didn't develop that way, you know? I am small all around. Plus, I didn't want to be that kind of woman. I don't mean to say that they are not good women. They are just different. I suppose that being a *porta-bandeira* suits my personality better – I am quieter, a bit more shy (Interview 2002).

There are a number of things about this quote that I would like to consider, as they are representative of the discourse that *porta-bandeiras* produce and reproduce.

Priscila's positioning of a *porta-bandeira*'s role in contrast to that of a *passista* is common among *porta-bandeiras*. A *porta-bandeira* is what a *passista* is not. Not only in body shape (she pointed to her perceived small hips) and personality (being more reserved) but also in behavior and character. What she does not quite say, but became clear in conversations with other *porta-bandeiras* is the avoidance on their part of attracting sexual attention. Behavior normally associated with *passistas*—swinging one's hips while walking, dancing samba and wearing revealing clothing—is strictly forbidden for it is seen as markers of a less respectable character.

Priscila's comments raise another issue: the notion that dancing samba is something innate, natural, and almost biological that some people are just born with. By referring to a *mulata* while being careful to distance herself from that classification, she is in essence marking *passistas* as the racialized "other." As anthropologist Mariza Corrêa has suggested, in the Brazilian construction of race, which privileges a continuum of colors rather than the white-black binary, the term *mulata* is not always equated to mixed-race woman. She writes, "mulatice [the act of being a *mulata*] is not a definition subject to negotiation," and then quoting Brazilian anthropologist Da Matta, she continues, "our system of classification, even if functioning in gradations, assumes: 'a places for each one, each one in its place.'" (Corrêa 1996: 47).

So, while Priscila is a mixed-race woman, she is not perceived as a *mulata*. She claims not to be born with the talent to dance samba as *passistas* do. Instead, her accomplishments as a dancer are achieved through hard work and discipline. In conjunction with the non-verbal cues such as the typical *porta-bandeira* rehearsal attire—the white, flowing, below the knee-

skirt, the tight but modest bodice, the hair pulled back— such criteria create a belief that grace and elegance are achieved through discipline. I suggest these signifiers of rationality, discipline, grace, and elegance are encoded in Victorian conventions. They are frequently unmarked or deracialized. On the other hand, *passistas* stand as the racialized feminine other.

### **PASSISTA: SOLO SAMBA DANCERS**

*Passistas* are the solo samba dancers of samba schools. The term refers to male or female dancers, however, the *passista's* section of samba schools is, presently, mostly comprised of females.<sup>63</sup> Admired and marketed for her voluptuous body that is always constructed as young and brown-skinned, her sensuality and talent to dance the demanding samba, this solo samba dancer has been invoked as the quintessential representation of Brazilian carnival, and by extension, of Brazilian culture (see figure 4-6).

*Passistas* are often referred to as *mulatas*. In its broadest conception, the term *mulata* denotes a woman of mixed race, more specifically, it points to a particular type of race mixture: black and white. But in more recent decades, the term has also come to signal an occupation—a woman who engages in dancing samba for money at a variety of events, such private as club shows and at times, the carnival parade. According to Natasha Pravaz, the concept of a professional *mulata* is contrasted with that of a *passista*, who dances samba at her samba school without remuneration (2000: 49). Subtleties aside, the terms are used interchangeably. And both discourse about, and practices surrounding *passistas* are entrenched in cultural construction of the *mulata* figure.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Neither Vai-Vai or Águia samba schools had male *passistas* while I conducted fieldwork.

<sup>64</sup> *Passistas*, albeit always referred to as *mulatas*, have been the central figure of several feminist studies in more recent decades. These scholars have provided insightful analysis by looking at Brazilian literature (Bennet 1999), samba lyrics (Pravaz 2000), international sex tourism (Gilliam, 1998), the *mulata's* multiple historical constructions (Corrêa 1996) and processes of professionalization (Giacomini 1992, 1994, 2006).



Figure 4-6. *Passista* of School Águia de Ouro

While I do use the term *mulata* when referring to the mythical construction, I will refer to the women solo samba dancers as *passistas* since, in my opinion, the term *mulata* perpetuates sexualized stereotypes about Afro-Brazilian women. As Pravaz writes, “in Brazil the *mulata* is commonly portrayed as a woman always ready to deploy her tricks of seduction and bewitchment, embodying the tropical ethos and national culture in her proficiency at samba” (2003:117). Vital to the appeal of this construction is the *mulata*’s characterization as exotic, always signaling sexual possibilities.

The strong erotic association linked to the mythical *mulata* is a construct that has been shaped by Brazil's colonial history.<sup>65</sup> As already detailed in chapter 2, Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre suggested in 1930s that the prominence of the patriarchal family in Brazilian history was an ideological construct that became central to the way Brazilians structure their social interactions. As he explained, the nuclear family was composed by the patriarch, his wife and their legitimate children, while at the periphery were his mixed race mistresses and illegitimate children (*The Masters and Slaves*, 1983). Black women, but specially mulatto women were stereotypically seen as wild, lustful, and extremely desirable, while their white masters were seen as victims of their eroticism. As Pravaz writes, "the 'essence' of their [*mulata*] nature was understood as wild and unbridled, and their relationships with white men conceptualized as a love fable" (2003:127).

Furthermore, the emergence of the national character as a hybrid one, combined with the construction of samba as a defining element of Brazilian identity in the 1930s, congealed around the construction of the female, mixed-race body as a national symbol.<sup>66</sup> On posters, TV vignettes, and magazines, the *mulata* image was superimposed with other Brazilian symbols: tropical beaches, the carnaval parade, the Brazilian flag. Twentieth century iconography, popular and literary representations have often constructed the *mulata's* body as the epitome of Brazil itself, the perfect embodiment of tropical beauty and sensuality.

Yet, this construct is only idealized within the contradictory realms of Brazilian culture. The *mulata* figure continues to occupy the fringes, held up as a sexual ideal but not as a social one. This construction still guides the processes of gender interaction within samba schools and the *passista's* subjectivity is reinforced by practices and discourses. I would argue that an example of such status is the fact that while *passista* images accompany all news about carnaval, the *passista's* section is not a scored category within the carnaval competition. That is not the case with the percussion ensemble and the *porta-bandeira* and *mestre-sala* pair, for they are each responsible for 10% of the school's final score. Instead, *passistas* performances only influence certain aspects that are judged as a whole, such as progression of the school throughout the samba avenue (*evolução*) and the overall presentation of a given school (*conjunto*).

The fact that *passistas* are not a scored category is usually explained by the following argument:

... devido `a característica de desenvolvimento individual do samba do *passista*, ele é visto sempre como empecilho para a escola alcançar máximo pontuação nos quesitos harmonia e

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<sup>65</sup> For a detailed historical analysis of the *mulata* within Brazil's myth of hybridity, see Pravaz's dissertation *Performing Mulatice: Hybridity as Identity in Brazil*, York University, 2002.

<sup>66</sup> See Hermano Vianna's *The Mystery of Samba* for an excellent analysis of how samba became the symbol of the racial and cultural mixture that, since the 1930s and the writings of Gilberto Freyre, came to define a Brazilian national identity.

conjunto, pois a apresentação virtuosística do samba no pé pode acarretar uma quebra na marcha geral do desfile e abrir clarões no meio da pista, fazendo com que a escola perca pontos (Toji 2006: 28).

...because of the individual nature of dance of the *passista*, [she] is always seen as an obstacle in the school's quest for the perfect scores as far as the entire presentation of the school is concerned, since the virtuosic nature of samba can cause a break in the progression of the school and create some open spaces in the samba avenue, causing the school to lose points (Toji 2006: 28).

I would argue, however, that this is not a simple cause and effect relationship. Rather, what categories are considered worthy of scoring, and who is excluded from it, is among the micro-practices that construct specific identities. For instance, as I have pointed out earlier in the chapter, the *porta-bandeira* and *mestre-sala* couple is allocated a tremendous space in the samba avenue which is never interpreted as break in the flow of the parade. The parade is structured to provide the couple the necessary time to perform their dance and to present the school's flag.

For *passistas*, the path to acquire status within the school is delineated by internal contests that set up a hierarchy among the schools' group of samba dancers. A favorite *passista* can be elected as "queen of the percussion ensemble" (*Rainha da Bateria*) and as such, she parades in front of the percussionists. Some schools also elect one or two princesses that may or may not parade next to the queen. And usually parading behind the percussion ensemble are all the other dancers who form the *passista's* section. It was after the move of the parade to the sambadrome in the early 1990s that this group of dancers began to parade together, organized as section. Prior to that, *passistas* paraded in duos or trios dispersed in between other sections (RIOTUR 1991).

Becoming the queen of the percussion ensemble is considered the apex in the trajectory of a female samba solo dancer. But with the expansion and visibility of the carnival parade in the last decades, many schools have adopted the practice of inviting celebrities for the role. This is certainly a point of contention among dancers who may feel betrayed by their school, but at the same time, dancers understand it as a mechanism used to attract attention and perhaps influence the outcome of the carnival competition. Many times, dancers respond by switching schools in search of validation and better exposure.

The ideal samba school *passista* is described by school members as a young, brown-skinned woman who has "samba no pé," an expression that means the ability to dance samba well. As I have mentioned when discussing *porta-bandeiras*, the ability to dance samba is seen as an innate talent that those

of mixed-racial origins are believed to have inherited.<sup>67</sup> Unlike Priscila, the young *porta-bandeira* who attributes competence in dancing to hard work and discipline, Thaize, a *passista* at school Águia de Ouro, defends most members' assumption that,

...samba no pé é uma coisa que ninguém ensina. Acho que já está no sangue da gente. Vem de dentro. Você já nasce com esse dom, essa facilidade para sambar que é coisa da mistura de raça (Interview 2003).

...dancing samba is not taught. I think it is something in our blood. It comes from inside. You are already born with this talent, this ability to dance samba, which is a thing of race mixture (Interview 2003).

This assumption is also seen in specific samba school practices. While schools offer formal percussion lessons for players and aspiring *porta-bandeiras* have to attend a formal course for several months, lessons are not offered for aspiring *passistas*. Instead, lessons for *passistas*, which although not yet formalized are now available in some schools, are understood in terms of perfecting or improving one's innate ability.

In 2010, School Águia de Ouro started running classes for young *passistas* between the ages of 14 and 16. In an interview for *Época Magazine*, Mauria, the teacher said,

Ensino a ter postura, a usar o braço e a chamar o público. O papel delas é cativar as pessoas com carisma...Elas começaram sambando com rasteirinha e hoje já estão com salto 10, 15. Eu tiro os vícios de olhar para baixo, não mexer o braço (February 11, 2010).

I teach [the young *passistas*] how to have good posture, to use arms, and to attract the public. Their job is to captivate the people with charisma... They began dancing with flat shoes and today are wearing 10, 15-centimeter heels. I take their bad habits, such as looking down, not moving arms, away (February 11, 2010).

When I asked *passista* Fernanda who taught her to dance samba, she said,

Ninguém me ensinou a sambar. Aprendi sozinha, acho que está no sangue. Para aprimorar as coreografias que uma *passista* faz eu participei do curso para *passistas* em 2002 na Escola de Samba X-9 Paulistana, ministrado pela coordenadora da Ala de Passista, a Edna, e pela Giseli Alves,

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<sup>67</sup> See Giacomini, 1992.



que foi considerada Passista do Milênio (Email correspondance 2011).

No one taught me how to dance samba. I learned on my own, I think it is in my blood. To perfect the choreographies of a *passista's* dance, in 2002 I participated in a course for *passistas* at the X-9 Samba School, given by the leader of the *passista's* section, Edna, and Giseli Alves, who was named *Passista* of the Millennium (Email correspondence 2011).

Again, the idea of an innate, almost biological ability to dance is seen to be tied in discourse to notions of hybridity. And while the idealized version of a *passista* is constructed by discourse of racial mixture and its propensity toward samba, one does see many shades when looking at the *passista* section of any given samba school (see figures 4-7 and 4-8). *Passistas* will frequently refer to a white or lighter color *passista* who shows competence in dancing samba as a *mulata*, while the lack of such competence is then blamed on her "whiteness."

For instance, referring to the some of the lighter *passistas* in figure 4-7, online readers commented,

*Reader 1: São passistas mesmo?? Fala sério!!*

*Reader 2: Concordo com o Evandro, não as vi, mas acho que falta mais gurias pretinhas para realmente mostrar o samba no pé...*

*Reader 1: Are these really passistas?? Be serious!!*

*Reader 2: I agree with Evandro [Reader 1], I have not seen them, but I think the group is missing some darker women to really show us how to dance samba.*

As scholar Giacomini points out on her study of the *mulata* identity, while color is frequently mentioned as one of the more important attributes of the *mulata* construction, the issue of color as a defining element can be highly manipulated. Giacomini writes, "the same category of color— such as being a light brunette or black — can include or exclude" [one from being a *mulata*] (1992: 220). In other words, when *passistas* speak of color, of a *mulata* color, they are not necessarily pointing to a definite shade but to a spectrum (see figure 4-9), "an aggregate of possible combinations of diverse colors" (Giacomini, 1992: 119) that can be used to explain inclusion or exclusion from the role.



*Figure 4-7. Passista Section, Águia de Ouro*



*Figure 4-8. Passista Section, Vai-Vai*



Figure 4-9. *Passistas* from Vai-Vai, Carnaval 2010  
Photograph of Cesar da Silva

Racial mixture, discussed as color, and its connection with certain abilities is only one in the list of attributes an ideal *passista* should possess. *Passistas* also aspire to have a curvaceous body type, one described in Brazil as “corpo violão,” or a guitar-like body. The guitar like shape is characterized by a specific contrast – the lower part (below one’s waist) has to be larger

than the upper portion of one's body. While having a 90-30-90 body (meaning a 90-centimeter bust line, 30-centimeter waist, and 90-centimeter hip line) is seen as ideal for models, *passistas* aspire for much larger numbers on the bottom. In fact, several of São Paulo newspapers and magazines have recently published the measurements of the newest queen the percussion ensemble of school Águia de Ouro, Valesca Popozuda<sup>68</sup> (see figures 4-10 and 4-11). In one of magazine *Veja São Paulo's* blogs, Alexandre Aragão wrote,

Ainda é cedo para dizer quais escolas estão no páreo para vencer o título deste ano, mas, se depender de tamanho, a campeã está anunciada: Águia de Ouro. A rainha de bateria Valesca Popozuda é a que tem o maior derrière: 110 centímetros. Valéria de Paula, da Unidos do Tucuruvi, vem em segundo com 108 centímetros (March 6 2011).

It is still early to tell which schools are favorites to win this year's title [Carnaval champion], but, if it depended on size, the winner is already clear: Águia de Ouro. Valesca Popozuda, queen of the percussion ensemble, is the one with the largest derrière: 110 centimeters. Valéria de Paula, of school Unidos do Tucuruvi, would take second place with 108 centimeters (March 6 2011).

*Passistas* emphasize their guitar shaped body with specific attire and a predilection for displaying long, wavy hair. As many *passistas* mentioned, their costume should not restrict movement but usually, the choices are made to highlight sensuality. With bikini-like attire, expansive headpieces, and the now standard 16-centimeter heels that elongate their legs, *passistas* aim to focus the audience's gaze on their individual bodies (see figure 4-12). According to Angela Gilliam, a woman's hair is an important type of racial marker. She writes, "a woman with long, wavy, or straight hair—whether genetic or constructed—is more likely to be coded as a *mulata*" (Gilliam and Gilliam 1999: 69). To Gilliam's argument, I would add that, in Brazilian culture, hair type can also function as one of the indicators of a woman's social position. Just as long, wavy or straight hair that hangs loose has come to signify sexiness, hair that is pulled tight, gathered away from a woman's face is used as a marker of seriousness and modesty. When combined with other traits, such as type of clothing, speech and mannerisms, hair type can also trigger assumptions about a woman's sexual conduct, and consequently, their social status. Thus, while *porta-bandeiras* are required to wear their hair pulled back, *passistas* play up their sex-appeal and are often characterized as "hot," "provocative," and "exotic." By combining certain physical attributes to specific attire and to virtuosic dance movements, *passistas* have become the most common visual image of the carnival parade.

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<sup>68</sup> Popozuda literally means "large buttocks."





*Figure 4-10 & 4-11. Valenska Popozuda, Carnaval 2011*



*Figure 4-12. Passista, Samba School Vai-Vai*

## BAIANAS

Ricardina is a 67-year-old woman who has been a member of one or another samba school since she was a teenager. As Ricardina recounts, she began to parade in what she referred to as the ladies' section,<sup>69</sup> always accompanied by her mother and a male cousin escort. As she aged, Ricardina explained, she joined the *baiana's* section at the school Camisa Verde e Branco where she has remained for many years.

The term *baiana* signifies a woman from the State of Bahia. As Ricardina points to, the *baiana's* section hosts many older women of a samba school. While a close look at any *baiana's* section will reveal an array of different shades, ages and sizes, *baianas* are constructed as black, older, and heavier women. This is because the *baiana* represented in Carnaval is a depiction of a specific *baiana* woman: the street vendors of Bahian delicacies who also belonged to the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé religion (see figure 4-13). This *baiana* figure, dressed in typical candomblé attire (see figure 4-14)—a hoop skirt, lace blouse adorned by the a piece of cloth referred to as *pano da costa*,<sup>70</sup> tied across the breasts or positioned over the shoulder, the lace turban and colorful necklaces and bracelets—is one of the most visible markers of 'Africanism' in Brazil (Sansone, 1999:21).



Figure 4-13. Baiana selling food in the streets of Salvador, Bahia

<sup>69</sup> In Portuguese: *Ala de Damas*.

<sup>70</sup> According to Raul Lody, *Pano da Costa*, which literally translates to cloth from the Coast, was worn to distinguish the female ranking within Afro-Brazilian communities. He explains that the term "cloth from the Coast" suggests that its origin was the Ivory Coast in Africa.



*Figure 4-14. Typical Baiana Attire*

Salvador, the capital of Bahia, served as the major point of entry of Africans during the slave trade and since then, “has played a central role in the making of ‘Africa’ in Brazil” (Sansone 1999: 8). Sansone explains that not only was Bahia depicted as the “Black Rome” in travelers’ accounts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but it was also seen by anthropologists and sociologists of the early twentieth century (Herskovits 1941, Pierson 1942; Verger 1957 and 1968; Bastide 1967) as one of the areas in the Americas in which Black culture had maintained African traits to a greater degree. Thus, Sansone asserts that while Rio and its associated racial and cultural hybridity came to represent Brazil after the 1930s, Bahia was constructed as traditionally African and culturally pure.

If a number of aspects of Rio de Janeiro black culture have become essential for the public representation of Brazilianness at home and, even more so, abroad, a set of aspects of traditional Afro-Bahian culture have become an obligatory source of inspiration for black culture elsewhere in Brazil... In Rio, manipulation... is seen as constituting the basis of black cultural creativity—the carnival parade...still reflects that mixture, syncretism. In the representations of Afro-Bahian culture by outsiders as well as a selected number of insiders who operate as representatives and mouthpieces of the black

community, what is held as clever and beautiful is the ability to relate to Africa, and to use this to be loyal to tradition...So, in a way, black culture in Rio looks to Bahia as the main source of African purity, while Afro-Bahian culture looks to Africa as the main source of inspiration and legitimization of its role as the Black Rome of the Americas (1999:20).

I add to that, that one of the reasons Bahian culture came to stand for “tradition” in Brazil is that during the nationalistic movement of the 1930s and 40s, Bahia began to be depicted as the cradle of “authentic” Brazilian traditions. As historian Anadelia Romo writes, “by the time Vargas made his first visit [to Bahia] in 1933, he was able to draw on nativist pride by evoking Bahia as ‘the birthplace of our nationality’ in his speeches and appeals” (2010: 48). As Romo remarks, “if Rio de Janeiro was samba’s birthplace ...Bahia was its muse and a central motif for sambistas” (2010: 48).

Samba is often seen as a continuation of musical practices of “Black Bahia” (Sodré 1998: 16). As such, *baianas* are firmly placed at the center of the common discourse surrounding the emergence of samba. Not only is the practice linked to the *batuques*, or percussion jam sessions associated with slaves and the Afro-Brazilian religion *Candomblé*, but also, its emergence in Rio is linked at an exact location—the neighborhood of Praça Onze or Plaza Eleven, a part of town to which many freed slaves migrated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And the homes of *baianas*, referred to by all as *tias* or aunts, served as sites of gathering for Bahian migrants. As such, the *baiana* figure of the carnival parade embodies the notions of “tradition” and “lineage,” their image not only rooting samba in an Afro-Brazilian heritage but with the matriarchs of the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé as well.

All discourse produced about the Baiana section by the samba community reinforces these notions. For instance, as it is written in the official website of School Camisa Verde e Branco,

...a cultura do samba raiz está sendo esquecida nos tempos modernos, onde todos parecemos ter vistas voltadas `a fatores que analisam de forma fria, a nossa cultural popular: alegorias, coreografias, famosos `a frente da bateria...mas, algumas alas refutam a exercer tais papeis impostos pelos modismos e valores que não justificam a essência do samba... As primeiras manifestações no Brasil que influenciaram o Carnaval, aconteceram com a chegada dos navios negreiros...Nos idos de 1870 [in Rio] ... viviam negros vindos da Bahia. Moravam em casas dirigidas pelas tias baianas... Suas casas eram pontos de reunião dos negros e mulatos que, além de freqüentar os cultos africanos, também divertiam-se em rodas de capoeira... Os negros faziam seu carnaval nos cordões, manifestação espontânea marcada pelo batuque africano... A ala das baianas é presença obrigatória no desfile. Essas senhoras... são



exemplos no mundo do samba e responsáveis por propagar a raiz do mesmo aos filhos, netos, bisnetos... Nelas o samba se baseia, pois são um espetáculo `a parte evoluindo no refrão do samba com suas saias rodadas ... Todas as nossas baianas são graciosas e simpáticas, sentimo-nos um pouco filhos, netos, bisnetos... Sentimo-nos sambistas seguros, pois na sua figura temos a tranqüilidade de que o samba por muitos anos nos contagiara...

(<http://www.camisaverde/com.br/setores/baianas/baianas.htm>. March 20, 2007).

...in these modern times, the roots of samba are being forgotten; our sight seems to be focused on other factors, such as allegory, choreography, the famous people parading in front of the percussion section... but some *alas* refuse to follow current trends and values that do not justify the essence of samba... The first manifestations in Brazil that influenced Carnaval, happened with the arrival of the first slave ships... Around 1870 in Rio... lived blacks who came from Bahia. They lived in the homes of *baianas*, whose houses served as a meeting place for those who, aside from practicing African religious cults, also played *capoeira*... During carnaval, they would participate in groups known as *cordões*, an spontaneous manifestation marked by African drumming... [Today,] the *ala* of *Baianas* is a compulsory element in the parade. These women ... are examples in the samba community and responsible for propagating its roots to children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren... Samba is based on them because they are a separate show evolving through the chorus of samba with their full skirts. Our baianas are graceful and friendly, and we feel a bit like their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren... As *sambistas*, we feel secure and tranquil because in their person we know that the samba will continue to proliferate and motivate us...

(<http://www.camisaverde/com.br/setores/baianas/baianas.htm>. March 20, 2007).

Aside from discourse, there are many practices within the schools and parade rules that place *baianas* in the position of keepers of tradition and the embodiment of lineage. Dressed in typical Candomblé attire, each baiana section must parade with at least 100 members or points are deducted from a school's final score. While their performance is not a scored item, the presence of the baiana section became compulsory in 1972. The section is described by members as "one of the most special sections of a samba school." As such, the *baianas*, aside from percussionists, are the only performers who do not need to purchase their costume. Instead, the expensive costumes are paid for by the school and given to its participants.

Like *porta-bandeiras*, *baianas* do not dance the samba during their presentation. The traditional movements of *candomblé* practitioners mark the *baiana's* choreography: the shuffling the feet, arms lifted at chest length, spinning to the right and to the left (see figures 4-15 and 4-16). As Ricardina expressed,

Eu gosto de sambar no pé mas baiana não é prá sambar. Então quando chega na hora da avenida, eu danço como eu tenho que dançar: arrastando os pés, com os braços gingados, rodo prá direita, rodo prá esquerda. Quanto mais a gente roda, mais bonito fica (Interview 2003).

I like to samba but a baiana is not supposed to do that. So, when it is time to go to the samba avenue, I dance as I must: shuffling the feet, with swinging arms, turning to the right, turning to the left. The more we spin, the prettier it is (Interview 2003).

Just as *surdos* and its playing technique have become associated with masculinity, the darker, heavier, and older female bodies and their spinning dance movements have become markers of tradition and an African heritage.

I would also argue that the presence of *baianas* at the schools re-create a matriarchal social network common of the Afro-Bahian culture. Historically, Afro-Brazilian women had more work opportunities than their male counterparts (Velloso 1990: 5). Due to domestic employment, through a variety of small jobs such as selling food and sweets in the streets, women could guarantee the economic support of their families. As Dona Carmen Teixeira da Conceição, an Afro-Bahian woman who migrated to Rio at the turn of the twentieth century, reminds us:

Não era fácil não, eles não gostavam de dar emprego pro pessoal assim que era preto, da África, que pertencia `a Bahia, eles tinham preconceito. Mas a mulher Bahiana arranjava trabalho ... e sempre se empregavam nas casas de família...muitas mulheres trabalhavam em casa lavando pra fora, criando as crianças delas e dos outros... (quoted in Velloso 1990: 5).

It was not easy, no one liked to employ the people who were Black, from Africa, belonging to Bahia; people were prejudiced. But the Bahian women could find work... they would find domestic work...many women worked from home washing clothe, raising their own children and those of others too... (quoted in Velloso 1990: 5).



*Figure 4-15. Spinning Baianas*



*Figure 4-16. Baiana Section, Vai-Vai*

Furthermore, according to scholar Mônica Velloso, not only were women responsible for financially supporting their family but, for the most part, they were often the only parent raising children. As Velloso says, “the figure of the father, when not unknown, was of little expressivity” (1990: 5). As such, women became dominant and powerful voices in Afro-Brazilian communities.

I would like to suggest that samba schools are understood by many members as extensions of the old *baianas'* homes. As Velloso writes,

... se confirma a idéia da sociabilidade espacial como costume profundamente enraizado na cultura afro-baiana. Entre nós, essa tradição era encabeçada pelas mulheres que, muitas vezes, acabavam transformando suas casas em verdadeiras oficinas de trabalho. As casas eram os cantos, o pedaço onde era possível unir esforços, dividir tarefas, enfim, reunir os fragmentos de uma cultura que se via constantemente ameaçada (1990: 6).

Spatial sociability is affirmed as a custom deeply rooted in Afro-Bahian culture. Among us [Brazilians] this tradition was headed by women, who many times ended up transforming their homes into workshops. The homes were the niches, the space where it was possible to combine efforts, share chores, and ultimately, to unit the fragments of a culture that was constantly threatened (1990: 6).

In most gatherings I attended at Samba Schools, it was common to find older women cooking, selling food during events, receiving guests—in other words, taking care of the school and its members.

Moreover, younger members also look to them for cues of conduct. For instance, a couple of months into my fieldwork at Vai-Vai, Joana, one of the older *baianas*, took me by the hand and alerted any and all male percussionists we encountered at the school that they should cooperate and “not bother me.” She assumed that some might make advances toward a female researcher and as she said, she needed to “place order in the house.” I was not surprised by her actions but was surprised to realize how much weight her person carried. From that day on, I was never told to return next week, or asked to meet someone outside of the school.

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Throughout this section of the chapter, I have argued that feminine archetypes have been historically embedded and intertwined in the cultural ideas and implicit rules of gendered interaction and identification. They have been defined either as graceful, universal, and logical as in the figure of the *porta-bandeira*, or marked by its exoticism and sexual qualities in the figure of the *passista*, while the *baiana* character is imbued with notions of tradition, respectability, and lineage. In fact, discourse about *porta-bandeiras* is often deracialized, devoid of any description as white, black, mixed race, or any other categorization in the racial continuum. I believe *porta-bandeiras* have been made “normative” and “universal.” On the other hand, a white *passista* who is considered a competent samba dancer is frequently referred to as a *mulata*, while the lack of such competence is then blamed on her “whiteness.”

Independently of specific shades and ancestry, *passistas* are always constructed as mixed race, and therefore, undeniably “Brazilian,” whereas *baianas* are constructed as black and ultimately, “African.”

The constructs I have articulated do not exhaust the possible ways women can act and define themselves. What I am arguing here is that these roles foreground accepted forms of femininity. I am also suggesting that in the construction of these archetypes, the object of attention is sexual conduct. A *porta-bandeira* explicitly signifies what a *passista* is not. A *porta-bandeira* is “graceful,” “beautiful,” knows how “to behave,” while *passistas* are “hot,” “provocative,” and “exotic.” Constructed as the other, *passistas* then also emphasize as normative a version of feminine identity that is grounded in European elite, Catholic codes of sexuality and moral conduct, embodied by the role of *porta-bandeiras*. The *baiana*’s role also reinforce this notion by constructing older women as respectable mothers, keepers of the “house” and of tradition.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### UNWRITTEN NARRATIVES OF ALTERNATIVE SUBJECTIVITIES

On a Sunday evening in July of 2002, I attended the first eliminatory round at Vai-Vai's *samba enredo* competition. At each year, the *samba enredo* competition sets in motion the cycle of activities and preparations that culminate with the school's presentation at the carnival parade. It is a time when many expressed renewed hope and excitement at the prospect of winning the next carnival competition. As I learned, each round consisted of the presentation of four sambas, from which one would be chosen to continue in the competition until the judging committee, a couple of months later, selected the winning *samba enredo*. Of all the observations I recorded about those first two months in the field during these eliminatory rounds, there was one in particular that remains engraved in my memory. Of this instance, I wrote,

...The jury was set in the mezzanine level and was comprised of ten people—eight men and two women—all of whom are members of the school. Men were introduced to the audience by their position within the school's organization (i.e. director of harmony, etc.), but the women were introduced by what they represent to the school, through a physical characteristic. For instance, one of them was introduced as "the smile of the school," while the other was announced to be "the beauty of Vai-Vai." I learned later that both of them are also directors within the organization...

While, as presented in previous chapters, heterosexual men engaged in a variety of performance and organizational roles within the samba schools, On the other hand, the participation of homosexual men and of women, either heterosexual or homosexual, is much more restricted. As the passage above shows, even when women participate in leadership roles, the long-standing cultural assumptions continue to position masculinity and femininity in oppositional binaries that have consequences in how we understand and respond to bodies. While men are associated with mind and rational thought, strength, assertiveness, and culture, the women are associated with the body and emotion, weakness, passiveness, nature/nurturing among others. Because they are inextricable from power relations, these dichotomies also position men as superior, and women as inferior. As Keith Nurse writes,

The epistemological roots [of notions of gender relations in Western thought] are to be found in the Newtonian-Cartesian world-view which dichotomizes and hierarchizes cultural values in binary opposites: objectivity versus subjectivity, reason versus emotion, mind versus body, culture versus

nature, competition versus cooperation, public versus private. These differences are usually used to differentiate between male and female traits. In the dominant masculinist phallogentric discourse, the “feminine” is conceptualized as the “ontological Other” (2004: 6-7).

From this schema, the assumptions and correlations between women/dance and men/music quickly emerge. As dance scholar Susan Foster writes,

Music’s visible abundance of “structure,” its close alliance with mathematics, and the viability of its notation system carried a masculine valence that contrasted with dance’s feminine ephemerality and bodiliness... Enjoying the full range of stereotypic attributes associated with the feminine, dance was often viewed as ornamental or sensual, chaotic or emotional, fecund but insubstantial (2002: 19).

I would argue that characteristics often linked with women are also attributed to many homosexual men, whose performances are restricted to a few roles, such as artistic director and *destaques* on floats, which are in turned marked as “things of gay men” and no longer desirable to heterosexual men.

Returning to the comments made by the MC at Vai-Vai, months later I questioned him about his way of introducing the female jury members. His response was simply “and why not introduced them that way? They are beautiful. It was a compliment” (Field notes 2002). But systematic discourse grounded in heteropatriarchal values—one which links a gender to the body, the other to the mind, one to be seen, and the other to be heard—is hardly benign or without power. As Michel Foucault wrote, “power is tolerable only on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault 1990a: 86). Practices such as this, show us how even in the face of change, i.e. women taking leadership roles, discourse can continue to re-inscribe heteropatriarchal values upon women and men.

My main goal, however, is not to point out the subjugation of women and homosexual men, to advocate for changes within samba school practices, or to celebrate those changes. I am rather interested in what circumstances allow some participants to create alternative spaces for themselves despite the given assumptions embedded in the culture of samba schools about the division of gendered identities. I am interested in the processes and conditions that enable some participants to problematize the status quo by complicating the stereotypical archetypes often described in extreme opposition and historically embedded in the implicit rules of gendered interaction and identification.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first, investigates women who have found ways to operate in spaces perceived as masculine within the schools. I investigate three cases: percussionist Miriam Cápuia, who became an assistant to the percussion master of School X9 Paulistana, the

formation of a female percussion ensemble at the school Águia de Ouro, and singer Eliana Lima, the only woman who led a samba school of the Special Group. In the second section, I analyze the present tension surrounding the participation of homosexual men in one of the most “traditional” performance roles for men at samba schools: the *mestre-sala*. Finally, In the last section, I explore the narratives of those who have left the schools seeking alternative spaces and ways of celebrating carnival. I will focus on the group Oriashé, an all female percussion ensemble who parades during carnival but independently from samba schools.

## I

### VOICING COUNTER NARRATIVES

#### MIRIAM CÁPUA AND ÁGUIA’S FEMALE ENSEMBLE

Miriam Cápuia fell in love with the sounds of samba when she visited Rio and had the opportunity to watch a samba school perform. Inspired by this experience, at the age of 18, she began attending a small samba school in São Paulo. As she reported, during the six years she attended the school Perola Negra, Miriam’s ritual comprised of watching the percussion rehearsal and after the better and sober musicians had left, leaving behind busted instruments, Miriam would practice on her own.

When asked to talk about her first experiences at a samba school Miriam said,

Na Pérola Negra ninguém me ensinou a tocar. Eu tive que aprender sozinha mesmo. Mas daí, um dia uma cantora de samba famosa me viu tocando e resolveu me apresentar para o Tadeu, que era, ainda é o mestre lá da Vai-Vai. Isso foi lá por 1981, eu tinha uns 23 ou 24 anos. Eu era muito inocente e não entendia que existia preconceito, que mulheres não tocavam percussão. Então eu fui lá no ensaio e no final o Tadeu chegou prá mim e perguntou: “O que é que você toca?” “Eu toco repenique.” Aí ele me deu um repenique no fim do ensaio e falou: “Então vai tocando aí.” E eu fiquei tocando na quadra sozinha que nem uma idiota sem entender o que estava acontecendo. Aí depois de muito tempo ele voltou e falou: aparece aí no domingo. E assim eu comecei a freqüentar a Vai-Vai e toquei repenique lá por cinco anos (Interview 2002).

At Pérola Negra no one showed me how to play. I had to learn on my own. But then one day, a famous samba singer saw me playing and decided to introduce me to Tadeu, who was, still is the percussion master at Vai-Vai. That was around 1981; I was about 23 or 24 years old. I was very naïve and didn’t understand that there was prejudice, that women didn’t play



percussion. So I went to a rehearsal and at the end of it, Tadeu asked me: “what do you play?” I play *repenique*. So he handed me one and said: “start playing.” And so I stayed there at the samba hall alone, playing like an idiot, without understanding what was happening. After a long time he returned and said: “You can show up on Sunday.” And that’s how I started going to Vai-Vai where I played *repenique* for five years (Interview 2002).

There are several things about this quote that point to disciplinary methods and strategies used by sambistas when negotiating gendered spaces. Unlike Marcelo, who learned how to play from his father and other friends at his school, Miriam’s experience was largely a solitary one. While she was not prohibited from playing, she was ignored by other percussionists and, differently from most samba percussionists who report learning from older school members, Miriam had to learn how to play on her own. But she persisted and perhaps because she did not encounter much support at Pérola Negra that she decided, at the age of 23, to attend percussion lessons at a music college.

Miriam had completed a six-year course in Public Relations and Journalism at the University of São Paulo when she decided to return to school and pursue a Bachelor of Music degree at São Paulo’s Art College, which she completed in 1985. Since then she has been active as a professional percussionist, playing in diverse ensembles, such as symphonic orchestra, theater, rock bands, and samba schools. In addition, she has been teaching percussion at the Souza Lima Conservatory in São Paulo city.

Ultimately, becoming a competent player was paramount for her acceptance and inclusion into the ensemble at Vai-Vai and later at X-9 Paulistana. While Tadeu initially left the room, in an attempt to intimidate and discourage Miriam from playing at Vai-Vai, he did listen to her and realized that she was good. He was also highly aware that carnival is a fierce competition between the samba schools. His ultimate goal was and still is to win the carnival competition. I believe that having a very good musician was more beneficial to him than keeping a woman away from a masculine space.

Miriam’s case offers another example of how musical knowledge and competence, in the context of competition, can trump gender roles. As she explained, in 2000, Adamastor, the percussion Master of X-9, asked her to join his ensemble to teach and coordinate a new djembe section that he wanted to include in his sound. Adamastor was the same percussion Master that told me that to watch me playing was necessary to close his eyes, because “there is something wrong about women playing the drums.” Nevertheless, while he was the percussion Master at X-9, Miriam was second in command, leading the ensemble with him. I attribute that to not only her overall competence but also to the fact that she had specialized knowledge. After graduating from São Paulo’s Art College and having played in a variety of ensembles, Miriam had an expertise that Adamastor could not find among the members of the samba school. After returning from a trip to Africa and becoming interested

in including a djembe section into his ensemble, not an instrument usually played in samba schools, Adamastor turned to Miriam for help. Thus, in these contexts competence and knowledge gave Miriam the power to negotiate a position otherwise considered not permissible.

I would argue that there were other conditions that contributed to Miriam's success as a percussionist in samba schools. The fact that Miriam was an outsider to the tradition was paramount, I believe, in her ability to persist attending rehearsals even when she kept being ignored. By outsider I mean, by she did not become a member of a samba school until she was 18 and her social circle was not composed of samba school members. While she did have some pressure at home—for instance she talks about how her mom used to cry, disappointed that “after all she had been through to put [Miriam] through school, she had decided to play drums,”—the fact that Miriam's parents and their friends were not members of the school, inadvertently made things easier for her since they did not suffer the pressure and consequences of having a daughter who was transgressing her space. Unlike insiders, who repeatedly cited family pressure as a reason for maintaining prescribed roles, Miriam was spared such criticism.

Miriam status as an outsider was reinforced by the fact that during the time she was playing at Vai-Vai she began teaching percussion at conservatories and other music schools. Other members were aware that she was a music teacher and respected her for being able to read music notation, playing percussion instruments they did not, and for being a professional musician. But these factors would only have antagonized male participants if it were not for Miriam's attitude, the way in which she positioned herself as a woman, and her financial situation. Most percussionists perceived her as non-aggressive, helpful, and deferential while in rehearsals. They also commented that the way she presented herself – her non-revealing choice of clothing, lack of make up, and so forth, that she came across as being “neutral” (see figure 5-1). When I asked her if that was a purposeful move on her part, she replied by saying: “not really. I have never been into very feminine things. I just want to be comfortable” (Interview 2002). The fact that Miriam's shared the same economic status as the other players was another reason, I believe, for her acceptance into these percussion ensembles. Unlike most sambistas, Miriam was, still is, a professional musician supporting herself solely from performing and teaching music and was not financially better off than most other members were.

It is my opinion that while Miriam was able to circulate within a predominantly masculine space, she has not done so without paying a certain price for it. Manipulating the grammatical gender used in Portuguese language, Miriam played with the masculine article “o,” (i.e. “the”) to refer to herself. She said, “sometimes I think of myself as ‘o’ woman, instead of ‘a’ woman. I believe she used the masculine article not because she really perceives herself as being masculine but only because she does not feel “entirely” feminine and has associated that with feels with being a “somewhat of a asexual person.” She said,



Figure 5-1. Miriam Cápuia

Eu sou terna mas também sou um pouco como os homens. As minhas amizades com certos homens, sempre platônicas, chegam a serem super íntimas, com descrições de coisas que acontecem com eles. Eu me dou melhor com meus amigos homens do que com minhas amigas mulheres. Eu estou acostumada com isso. Eu sempre fui “o mulher.” Até com meu ex-marido, nós eramos amigos na verdade. Eu sou uma pessoa meio asexual (Interview 2002).

I am nurturing but I am also a bit like men. My friendships with certain men can be very intimate, we talk about their lives in details. I get along better with male friends than with my women friends. I am used to this. I was always “o woman.” Even with my ex-husband, in truth, we were friends. I am somewhat of an asexual person (Interview 2002).

I am suggesting that Miriam’s perceptions of her own gendered self as an asexual, neutral person is one of the consequences of her particular circulation in a masculine space and of her perceived ideas about masculinity and femininity.

I would like to turn now to another example of how alternative spaces are cultivated, not so much by an individual, but within the organizational structure of a samba school, bringing further nuances to the way gendered

identities are constructed in samba schools. Aside from working closely with the Vai-Vai samba school members, I also conducted extensive fieldwork at school Águia de Ouro. Unlike Vai-Vai, which has long-established ties to the samba community and has been consistently ranked among the better schools of the Special Group of São Paulo, Águia is a much newer school. It won a space among the schools of the Special Group—the highest ranking in Samba Schools—only since 1999.

In 2003, Águia was the only samba school to form a female percussion ensemble in Brazil. The ensemble was formed in 1998 when the school's percussion master and president agreed that the inclusion of women would provide Águia the edge needed to remain innovative and attract attention. They had just ascended in the carnival ranking of the samba schools, moving from Second Group to the rankings of Special Group and felt that that had happened because their school was perceived as always presenting new and original material.

As Juca, the percussion master, recounted, their strategy was to begin actively recruiting girls from within the school's subsection and by asking percussion members to bring girlfriends, sisters, or any other woman who wished to play. In the first year of recruiting, they paraded with fifteen girls and by the following year, Juca remarked: "the female percussion ensemble had become a hit" (Interview 2003). By 2003 the school's ensemble was comprised of 280 members, 88 of which were women. What was impressive about Juca's arrangement was that women played all instruments and learned along side male percussionists (see figure 5-2).

Juca attributed their success to the women's versatility. He explained that unlike most men, the women were interested in learning several of the instruments in the ensemble and some had become excellent percussionists. His explanation for this was that rehearsals were less of a social gathering for women than they were for men. In his words, "their incredible willingness and desire to learn do not cease to impress me. They are extremely dedicated and do not come here just to have a good time, like some of the guys" (Interview 2003).

Significantly, to make clear that he was fully aware of the widespread notion upheld by most samba school members that drumming is a masculine activity and that when women engage in such activity they lose their delicateness and beauty, Juca explained:

Eu prometo: elas ainda são bonitas. Não estão perdendo sua feminilidade. Ao invés, é um bonus: dois por um. Elas tocam bem e também são bonitas. Elas elaboram o que querem usar e daí são convidadas para shows, elas dançam também (Interview 2003).

I promise you they are still very pretty. They are not losing their femininity. Instead, it's a bonus: two for one. They play well and are also very pretty. They elaborate what they want to wear



Figure 5-2. *Águia's Percussion Section in Rehearsal*

and when they are invited for shows, they dance too (Interview 2003).

By coupling drumming with dancing and accentuating “femininity” through clothing, Juca was able to reframe women percussionists as still embodying the idealized feminine attributes of delicateness and beauty (see figure 5-3).

Ultimately, I believe that several factors combined, allowing Juca to successfully integrate women into his percussion ensemble. As I have mentioned before, *Águia de Ouro* is a relatively new school, formed in the late 70s, unlike *Vai-Vai* which emerged in 1930. Also, it is a smaller school whose most members, for the most part, live in the neighborhood and whose average age is much younger. By emphasizing creativity and promoting innovation, *Águia* differentiated itself from long-established schools, and in doing so, attracted a younger membership.

Rehearsals at *Vai-Vai* always struck me as a super production, especially as carnival approached and more people, including famous artists, attended the rehearsals. The streets surrounding the school were closed for traffic because it was expected that the school’s hall would not hold the number of people in attendance. The fact that in a busy part of an extremely congested city, local government permitted those streets to be closed and also





Figure 5-3. Female Percussion Ensemble (pants and see-through shirt over camisole) positioned behind the four *passistas*. Male percussionists are wearing the school's traditional percussion uniform (white pants and the school's t-shirt).

arranged for police reinforcement, show the enterprise of Vai-Vai's presence (see figure 5-4).

On the other hand, Águia rehearsals were contained to the school's hall, there were no security guards at the school even during the carnival parade, and famous celebrities were not a common sight. In fact, they now have stipulated that no super models or actresses are invited to parade in front of the percussion section, as it is usually the norm in other schools. Instead, they have decided that only a women member of the school can fulfill such role (see figure 5-5).

Other examples of Águia's micro practices point to its much less rigid organization. For example, instead of going through a competition to choose the *samba enredo* each year, Águia simply asked that their composer's team to write four or five songs, one of which the community chooses as that year's *samba enredo*. They tend to choose political and social themes, such as denouncing violence against children, including abandonment and pedophilia.

I also noticed that within the school, I met many more openly homosexual males, some which would go as far as wearing women's clothing and make up without being harassed by the community. At Vai-Vai, the few homosexual males I talked to, always described being preoccupied with not



*Figure 5-4. Outside of Vai-Vai 's hall, school members and spectators gather for the final rehearsals prior to carnaval parade.*



*Figure 5-5. Águia de Ouro's Hall during rehearsal, 2003.*



appearing too different or behaving in ways that would appear too effeminate.

While Águia's organizers position themselves as innovators and are seen as such by many, their practices have yielded criticism. On one hand, the school is criticized by other more "traditional" schools for their unconventional practices. Some sambistas felt that Águia mocked the long traditions of samba schools by letting women play any percussion instrument. On the other hand, Águia is also criticized by feminists such as Marise Barbosa, a social scientist and member of Black women percussion group. According to Barbosa, Águia, as part of a larger patriarchal organization, still exoticizes women. She points to Juca's compulsion of mentioning women's beauty and the fact that female ensemble is being promoted for special shows, as examples of the ways in which women continue to be seen as objects of male gaze. Barbosa's insights must be understood in the context of a particular notion of human agency firmly grounded in feminist scholarship—one that seeks to locate agency as resistance to structures of subordination by subverting hegemonic cultural practices. I argue that, despite the important contributions this line of thinking has enabled, it has also limited our ability to understand the desires and motivations that have been shaped by non-liberal, patriarchal traditions.<sup>71</sup> In other words, it is important to understand how individuals subject themselves to particular roles even when they realize the unequal access those roles provide.

#### ELIANA DE LIMA

Much importance is given to interpreters<sup>72</sup> of *samba enredos* and some interpreters become well known outside the carnival sphere.<sup>73</sup> However, the evaluation of the interpreter's singing during the parade and competition is never separated from the overall sound, which includes the singing of the parading members and of the audience. Furthermore, in the scoring of the overall sound, judges also take into consideration the interaction between singing and drumming.<sup>74</sup> In other words, interpreters are not judged by their singing ability and vocal quality alone. The expectations are that a good singer will motivate members and audience to sing along, and that their voice

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<sup>71</sup> See Saba Mahmood, 1998.

<sup>72</sup> Samba-enredo interpreters are popularly referred to as "puxadores de samba," meaning the one who "pulls" the samba and motivates members and audience to sing along.

<sup>73</sup> Examples of famous interpreters include, Jamelão, who has been the voice of Rio's Samba School Mangueira, and Neguinho of School Beija-Flor.

<sup>74</sup> In the official guidelines for judging the parade, the evaluation of singing falls under the larger element referred to as "Harmony." The LIGA defines "harmony" as "the perfect interaction between the percussion section's rhythm and the singing from all components of a samba-school." See appendix 1 for rules and regulations.

is powerful enough to lead thousands of people without letting them fall behind.

As with percussionists, the discourse used to describe a good singer involves always the use of terms such as “powerful” and “strong.” As explored in the previous chapter, such qualities are seen as inherently masculine and directly oppositional to qualities perceived as feminine. Therefore, women have had an extremely difficult time assuming such position at samba schools. Presently, only two women have been able to assume the post of *samba enredo* interpreter of a samba-schools ranked in the Special Group—Eliana de Lima and Vânia Cordeiro.

While Eliana has sung in different schools and has participated as the official lead interpreter of different schools for many years, Vânia’s voice was only heard in the parade of the Special Group in 2001 and 2002, prior to my arrival in the field. During this period, she led School Unidos de São Lucas as it ascended in the rankings from Access Group to Special Group in 2001. Its ascension was due to a change stipulated by the LIGA, which established that the Special Group should be comprised of fourteen schools, rather than twelve. Therefore, Unidos de São Lucas, which had finished in second place of the Access Group, benefited from such change in the carnival criteria and was promoted to the rankings of Special Group. But only two years after, the school was demoted, returning to Access Group where it has remained until present.

São Lucas’ passage through the Special Group was short and largely perceived as a circumstance of internal changes. Shortly after the school was demoted, a male was appointed lead interpreter of the school. For this reason, this chapter will focus mainly on Eliana de Lima, who is the only woman who has been able to circulate as a *samba enredo* interpreter for many years.

Unlike Vânia, Eliana is a well-known singer outside the samba-school community. Having released ten albums under independent labels in twenty-five years of career, three Gold and two Platinum, Eliana is popularly referred to as the “queen of pagode.”<sup>75</sup> According to Eliana, her singing career began at a samba school when at 18, when she was taken to school Cabeções da Vila Prudente for the first time. Of that experience, she said,

Entrar na escola de samba pela primeira vez foi uma coisa tão emocionante porque eu já trazia o samba dentro de mim e não tinha como me expressar. Quando eu cheguei na quadra e vi o pessoal na bateria tocando, era tudo novo, tudo maravilhoso. Eu ouvia os discos de Beth, Martinho da Vila, Clara Nunes, Elza Soares mas não era a mesma coisa ver aquilo ao vivo. Eu fiquei encantada com aquilo (Interview 2002).

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<sup>75</sup> Pagode is defined principally as the gathering of musicians to play samba. It is also a form of urban samba that emerged in Salvador in the mid-1990s.

Entering a samba school for the first time was such an emotional experience because I had always had samba in me and never knew how to express myself. When I walked into the samba school's hall and saw all those people in the percussion section playing, everything was so new, so wonderful. I used to listen to records of Beth [Carvalho], Martinho da Vila, Clara Nunes, Elza Soares, but that was not the same as seeing all this in person. I was enchanted by it (Interview 2002).

For Eliana, this initial experience at a samba school was the motivating factor behind her decision to become a *samba enredo* interpreter. So much so, that a week later she had put together a repertoire of ten songs and returned to Cabeções da Vila Prudente hoping to sing for them. As she expressed, samba school members were not sure what to think of a white woman wishing to become a samba school's interpreter in the late 1970s. She said,

Uma semana depois de visitar a escola pela primeira vez eu fiz um repertório de 10 músicas. Eu pensei—eu vou chegar lá e pedir para cantar um samba. Aí cheguei lá e o pessoal ficou assustado, pensando—quem será essa branquinha que está querendo cantar? (Interview, 2002).

A week after I first visited the school, I put together a repertoire of 10 songs. I thought to myself—I am going there and will ask to sing a samba. So I got there and the people seemed a bit scared, probably thinking—who is this white woman wanting to sing? (Interview, 2002).

And according to Eliana, she was allowed to sing for them, even if it was only under the assumption that after having her wishes entertained, she would be satisfied and leave. And then she added, “what they didn't know was that I liked when I had to fight for things. It motivated me.”

Eliana was conscious that her whiteness was measured by samba school members and feared it as an added obstacle that would prevent her success. However, I argue that, aside from its sex, her physical body—its color and shape, actually helped her to succeed as an interpreter. As a white and overweight woman, Eliana did not fit any of the idealized feminine types and its typical roles within samba schools (see figures 5-6). In other words, she could not be easily typecast.

Aside from her physical appearance, there were other factors that contributed to Eliana's success. Like Miriam, she did not grow up as a member of samba schools. In fact, she recalls that she was not permitted by her parents to participate in any form of carnival celebration. As she explained,



Figure 5-6. Two of Eliana's album covers, 1990 (left) and 2005 (right)

Eu tive uma criação reprimida. Meus pais eram Evangélicos e não permitiam de jeito nenhum que eu assistisse o carnaval pela televisão, não permitiam que eu fosse em bailes de carnaval. Nada desse tipo (Interview 2002).

I had a repressive childhood. My parents were Evangelical Christians and would never permit that I watch the carnival parade on television or even go to a carnival ball. Nothing of the sort" (Interview 2002).

I believe that because Eliana did not grow up within a samba school community, she did not possess the same references about which functions women were expected to fulfill. In fact, the famous samba singers who inspired her (i.e. Elza Soares, Clara Nunes and Beth Carvalho) were not associated with samba schools.

When asked to indicate which factors she believed contributed to her success as a *samba enredo* interpreter, Eliana highlighted these aspects: talent, charisma and perseverance. By talent she means not only an innate ability to sing, something one is born with, but in her case, talent is also equated with a strong voice and an ability to sustain it strong for hours. It is the combination of these three qualities that Eliana feels separate her from all other women who have attempted to become *samba enredo* interpreters. She said,

Eu nasci com um talento artístico e o que me ajudou a vencer como puxadora de samba foi o fato de que eu persisti muito. Você entende: uma ala de compositores abriga vinte, trinta homens. E daí também tem a presidência e seus diretores e é difícil você bater de frente com eles. Teve escola que eu defendia

o samba durante as eliminatórias e ganhava, mais a escola não me deixava gravar e nem puxar na avenida. Por exemplo, em 82 o samba da Imperador ganhou na minha voz mas eu não fui para a avenida, e isso aconteceu várias vezes com várias escolas. As desculpas eram que eu era mulher, que não iria agüentar, que as pessoas não estavam acostumadas com uma mulher cantando... O que me fez ficar esses vinte e dois anos foi que eu bati de frente com os compositores, com os presidentes. Aonde tinha um samba, eu estava lá. Não tinha como eles se livrarem de mim. Toda semana eu pegava o ônibus pra ir e voltar de ensaio, as vezes às 5:30 da manhã eu estava pegando ônibus. De uma certa maneira eu corri risco de vida, mas era aquilo que eu queria então eu agarrei com unhas e dentes...E também eu sou uma figura marcante, eu tenho um carisma e isso não é uma coisa que a gente conquista, é uma coisa que já vem com a pessoa...O que tem a ver é talento. É desagradável citar nomes, eu não posso citar o nome de ninguém mas tem mulheres que pensam que puxar samba é um show, e não é. Num show você canta, para, canta, para. Mas samba enredo não. Você começou a cantar, tem que ir até o final. Para falar a verdade, não tem mais mulheres puxando samba enredo porque essas mulheres não tem pique para isso. Isso aí está sangue (Interview 2002).

I was born with an artistic talent and what helped me succeed as a *samba enredo* interpreter was the fact that I persisted a lot. You understand: the group of composers of a samba school has twenty, thirty men. Then there is also the presidency and its board of directors and it is hard to collide head on with them. There were schools in which I would defend [sing] a samba during the preliminary competitions and would win but the school would refuse to let me sing in the avenue. For example, in 82 the samba I was singing won the *samba enredo* competition at school Imperador but the school would not let me record the samba or to defend it in the avenue, and this has happened to me many times with several different schools. The excuses were always that I was a woman, that I would not be able to endure singing, and that the community was not used to having a woman singer...But what made me stay all these twenty-two years was that I did collide head on with composers, with the presidents. Where there was samba, there I was. There was no way for them to get rid of me. Every week I would take the bus to come and go to rehearsals, sometimes at 5:30 am I was taking the bus. In a way, I put my life in danger but that is what I wanted, so I took it with nails and teeth... And also, I am an noteworthy figure, I have a charisma and this is something one cannot acquire, it is something that comes with the person...It is talent. It is troublesome to mention names, I cannot mention any

names but there are women that think that to singing *samba enredo* is like performing a show, and it just isn't. At a show you sing, then stop, sing, stop. But not with *samba enredo*. Once you begin to sing, then you must go until the end [of the parade]. To tell you the truth, there are not more women interpreting *samba enredo* because these women do not have the stamina. This is in your blood (Interview 2002).

There is no doubt that Eliana had to fight the samba community who believed she could not carry them through the samba avenue. From ignoring her, to letting her singing in rehearsal but not in performance in hope that would be enough for her, samba school members employed several tactics to discourage Eliana from singing. And while she attributes her determination simply to a character disposition, I believe that she was able to persevere because her goal was to be an interpreter but ultimately she did not have a deep emotional attachment to a particular school. It did not matter to her where she was singing and which community she was leading through the avenue. All that matter, was that she was in the samba avenue leading a *samba enredo*.

Eliana described participating in several different schools in São Paulo city, including Príncipe Negro, Barroca, Imperador, Mocidade Alegre, and Nenê. It was in 1982 however, after joining school Unidos do Peruche that Eliana achieved what she wanted. After interpreting the winning *samba enredo* in the *samba enredo* competition, Eliana was allowed to record it and to lead the school in the avenue. This was not only a major victory for Eliana and it indicates that the Peruche community saw her as a competent *samba enredo* interpreter.

Her position was legitimized the following year when she again led Peruche along side one of the most famous samba interpreters from Rio—José Bispo Clementino dos Santos, aka Jamelão. To this day, her duet with Jamelão is still part of the discourse that justifies her position among a masculine space. Eliana even pulled out a 10X17 picture of the two of them singing side-by-side during our interview and said, “I am the only woman who has ever sang with Jamelão. This was an immense experience for me” (Interview 2002). And throughout my fieldwork experience, this picture and mention of the famous duet kept appearing in every newspaper entry about her, concert notes, and other advertisement material.

Jamelão, an Afro-Brazilian man from Rio, the place credited with the birth of samba, has been the official interpreter of one of the most famous samba schools in the country—Mangueira—since 1949.<sup>76</sup> A member of Mangueira since childhood, Jamelão is considered by many as the epitome of an “authentic” *sambista* (see figure 5-7).

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<sup>76</sup> Jamelão is 95 years old and has been age of official interpreter of Mangueira since the age of 37. While he had to excuse himself from the 2007 carnival parade for health reasons, Mangueira maintains that he continues to be its official interpreter.



Figure 5-7. Jamelão, 2005  
Photograph by Julio Etchart

Coincidence or not, it was during this time that Eliana's recording career took off and she began to be known outside of the samba school community. I argue that by keeping her musical encounter with Jamelão alive in the memory of the samba community and by using his image of an "authentic" *sambista*, Eliana could position and justify herself also as a genuine interpreter. Beginning at that moment, her gender, race, outside status, and lack of personal alliance with a particular school were less important than Eliana "the great singer."

Eliana stayed at Peruche for seven years until school Leandro de Itaquera "offered [her] a great contract which Peruche could not match" (Interview, 2002). But during 2002 and 2003, Eliana once again led Peruche. Since then, alleging disagreement with the schools, Eliana has not performed in the samba avenue.

As with Miriam, several factors have congealed around Eliana's acceptance into a masculine space. Her physical appearance, perseverance, and entrepreneurial skills, have allowed her to achieve acceptance as a samba interpreter when many others capable singers have not. Take for instance the example of Leci Brandão, who was mentioned in this dissertation's introduction and whose concerns over gender division within the schools inspired this dissertation topic. Leci has been a member of samba school Mangueira her entire life. She is a mixed-race woman, who possesses a slim body figure (see figure 5-8). While Leci has also been successful in launching a singing career outside the samba schools, she has never been allowed to





Figure 5-8. Leci Brandão (CD Cover) 2000

lead a samba school during the carnaval competition. She has served as a jury member for the competition, is a respected member of Mangueira and makes many guest appearances in several samba schools.

I believe that aside from her physical appearance, her insider status and own sense of alliance to a school made it impossible for her to be seen as an interpreter. When I asked Leci why she had not moved to a different school after being rejected as a composer and interpreter time and time again by Mangueira, Leci said,

A escola da gente é como se fosse seu país. `As vezes tem coisas que a gente não gosta mas eu não posso abandonar meu país. Se eu nasci aqui, serei sempre daqui. Não tem escolha. Eu nasci Mangueira e sempre serei Mangueira“ (Interview 2003).

One’s school is like your native country. Sometimes there are things we don’t like but I cannot abandon my country. If I were born here, then I will always be from this place. There isn’t a choice. I was born Mangueira and forever will be Mangueira. (Interview 2003).

To conclude this section, I would like to point out that Leci, unlike Eliana, is a composer. She would not only have liked to have had the opportunity to lead a samba school, but mostly, she wanted one of her sambas to win the *samba enredo* competition at Mangueira. That never happened.

I would argue that Eliana’s success is largely due to the fact that several aspects enabled the disembodiment of her voice. After her initial few years, I believe samba school members were able to reframe her as a facilitator of their own singing experience. As explained in chapter two,

carnaval participants, by which I mean not only performers but also audience members, expect and are expected to engage in singing during performances. Knowing the songs and being able to sing along is often cited by participants as an important factor of what constitutes a successful carnaval experience. They have come to trust her to lead them and such trust trumps her gender. On the other hand, Leci's voice is not easily separated from her body and her alliance to Mangueira is indicative of her priorities.

## II

### CONTESTED GROUND: THE *MESTRE-SALA* ROLE

The *mestre-sala* is one of the most important roles within samba schools. He is the counterpart of the *porta-bandeira* and together, the pair's performance counts for a little over 10% of their school's total score. As mentioned before, no other requirement is scored on the basis of one or two people, but rather, requirements involve the efforts of several, sometimes thousands of individuals (i.e. the percussion ensemble, the overall school presentation, etc.).

According to the official carnaval manual, the *mestre-sala* is the keeper of the *porta-bandeira* and of the school's flag, and in performance, is seen as her romantic pair. Dancing around her, he leads and protects her. Many of the *sambistas* I interviewed, described the ideal *mestre-sala* as a warrior but elegant man, who shows reverence for his counterpart and flag. In performance, *mestres-sala* are encouraged to represent such ideals in the following manner:

Todo o seu trabalho [*mestre-sala*] deve ser voltado para a Porta-Bandeira, portanto, a ele são permitidos todos os movimentos, desde que pareçam naturais e se voltem para a Porta-bandeira e o Pavilhão. O casal executa um bailado próprio no ritmo de samba (não devendo nunca sambar). Não é permitido ao Mestre-sala: 1 – Colocar o joelho ou mão no chão; 2 – Formas bruscas de tocar no Pavilhão; 3 – Gestos vulgares e comunicação verbal; 4 – Permanecer excessivamente de costas para a Porta-bandeira (LIGA 2006: 6).

All of his [*mestre-sala*] work must be focused on the *porta-bandeira*. Therefore, he is allowed all movements as long as they appear natural and are geared toward the *Porta-bandeira* and the flag. The couple should execute their own dance to the rhythms of samba (but should never dance the samba). The following are not permitted: 1 - placing knees or hands on the ground; 2 - touching the flag in a rough manner; 3 - vulgar gestures and verbal communication; 4 - turning one's back on his *porta-bandeira* for more than a few seconds (LIGA 2006: 6).

Given the importance of the role and the idealized notions of *mestres-sala* as warriors, I found interesting that many of the *mestres-sala* I met in the field were openly homosexuals. At first, I assumed this had become an acceptable role for homosexual males, after all they were performing it. But quickly, I learned that this is a matter of much debate among the samba community. I found interesting that so many members would verbalize their preoccupation over this situation with the same phrase: “we now have two tip-towing ballerinas dancing, rather than a pair” (Member at Vai-Vai, Interview 2002). Obviously, a pair implied a heterosexual man and woman. And the fact that so many members of different schools referenced the same word to describe present day *mestres-sala* signaled a new but established discourse. For instance, the president of the Union of São Paulo’s Samba Schools<sup>77</sup> said,

Eu não concordo com essa coisa do homossexual como mestre-sala. Antigamente o mestre sala era um guerreiro e a própria dança dele não era como é hoje. Ele tinha uma forma de proteger o pavilhão, seus trejeitos eram de uma forma provocadora. E hoje, virou que temos duas bailarinas na avenida. Eles estão floreando mais do que o necessário por causa da homossexualidade. Pelo fato da pessoa ser homossexual, os trejeitos comprometem o casal. Nas escolas do grupo 1, 2, e 3 não se aceitam homossexuais como mestre-sala. Carnaval é um teatro aonde você está representando. E o mestre-sala é um guerreiro, não um bailarino. Imagina um homossexual representando Pedro Alvarez Cabral? (Interview 2003).

I do not agree with homosexuals as *mestre-sala*. In the old days, the *mestre-sala* was a warrior and even his dance was not like it is today. He had a way of protecting the flag with gestures that were provocative, challenging. And today, it turns out we have two ballerinas in the samba avenue. They are embellishing their gestures more than necessary because of homosexuality. Because the person is a homosexual, their movements compromise the couple. Schools of Groups 1, 2, and 3, don’t accept homosexuals as *mestre-sala*. Carnaval is a theater and one has to act their part. And the *mestre-sala* is a warrior, not a ballet dancer. Can you imagine a homosexual playing Pedro Alvarez Cabral? <sup>78</sup> (Interview 2003).

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<sup>77</sup> Union of São Paulo’s Samba Schools (UESP) oversees and organizes the samba schools ranked in Groups 1, 2, and 3.

<sup>78</sup> Cabral was a Portuguese explorer regarded as the first European to discoverer of the sea route to Brazil in 1500.

This quote is illustrative of many assumptions and fears that fuel this debate. There are several implied perceived characteristics, such as weakness and therefore inability to protect, the exaggeration of feminine gestures, commonly attributed to homosexual males. But perhaps the most important point this quote brings out, is that performance roles are intertwined and not separate from a person's identity. While she points out that carnival is a theater where one is acting, she cannot separate the role of *mestre-sala* from the man himself. In other words, a *mestre-sala* is not only a role a man plays while performing samba. Rather it is a way of being, of behaving, of moving in a certain way, which has been defined and monitored by the members of samba schools.

The preoccupation with the perceived turn the role was taking, motivated a group of experienced *porta-bandeiras* and *mestres-sala* to form the *Mestre-sala* and *Porta-bandeira* Association of São Paulo City (AMESPBESP) in 1997. As discussed in the previous chapter, the curriculum of the seven-month long course is taught every other Saturday afternoon in one of the samba schools. The association's goal is to mold future *mestres-sala* and *porta-bandeiras*. Instructions emphasize both dance movements and personal conduct.

I hypothesize that the disconnect between the idealized role (i.e. warrior) and the way it is currently being perceived (i.e. ballerina) began to take place much earlier. In March of 1976, the following note was published in São Paulo's newspaper Notícias Populares,

Está na hora de se criar uma espécie de curso de mestre-sala, onde os antigos e bons sejam convidados a transferir aos novos suas experiências e conhecimentos...O problema é mais sério do que parece, pois os novos mestres-sala macaqueiam a arte de conduzir a porta-bandeira. Os jovens mestres-sala têm uma tendência enorme para a luta-livre, tantas são as vezes que se agarram `a porta-bandeira. Nesse andar logo teremos estivadores travestidos de porta-bandeiras, única forma de agüentar a agressão dos mestres-sala (Notícias Populares 03/29/1976).

It is time for some sort of course for *mestre-sala* to be created, where older and better dancers be invited to pass on to new dancers their experiences and knowledge... The problem is more serious that it appears to be, for young *mestres-sala* are not taking the art of leading the *porta-bandeira* seriously and appropriately. Based on how much they clasp onto the *porta-bandeira*, they must have an enormous tendency for wrestling. The only way to handle their aggressiveness will be to have dockworkers cross dressed as *porta-bandeiras* (Notícias Populares 03/29/1976).

In a reversal of the current “dilemma,” this 1976 article points to *mestres-sala* tendency to roughness and makes it clear that such behavior was considered inappropriate. Man-handling his *porta-bandeira*, who has always been idealized as a modest, almost virginal queen, was not acceptable. According to Gabriel Souza Martins, who has been a *mestre-sala* for the past 30 years and who was honored with the title of “*Mestre-sala* of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” a good *mestre-sala* is a warrior but should not be aggressive. Instead he should be charming and elegant in his way of leading his *porta-bandeira*” (Interview 2003).

However, as discussed, the version of masculinity that was rewarded in samba schools was defined as rough and aggressive. I believe that it was precisely because of this polarity that homosexual males were allowed as *mestres-sala* initially. The assumption that homosexuality meant that a man would be less aggressive and more delicate, albeit not effeminate, fulfilled part of the ideal *mestre-sala* role.

When asked to provide an example of an excellent *mestre-sala*, every single member I asked agreed that Gabriel was it. And indeed, Gabriel, a soft-spoken man, is an excellent dancer, who is extremely attentive in his interactions with his *porta-bandeira* (see figure 5-9). But what really makes him the best is that Gabriel has been married to his *porta-bandeira*, Vivi, for 30 years. Together, they raised a family and maintained a modest but stable and respected household. Furthermore, Gabriel is also an integral part of the composer’s *ala*, a space perceived as masculine and heterosexual.

But the dilemma that many members in samba community are facing is that by now, the role is beginning to be associated with homosexuality so, heterosexual young man are less and less interested in becoming *mestres-sala*. On the other hand, homosexual young men who are *mestres-sala* have to endure the criticism and are constantly monitored and monitor themselves as so to not appear effeminate. For instance, a young *mestre-sala* who self identifies as homosexual, expressed concerned about not revealing his sexual inclination while dancing. He explained that he has nightmares about dancing and constantly turning his wrists—a gesture frequently interpreted as an exaggeration of feminine behavior—after he was reprimanded by school officials for “looking too much like a ballerina.” As he said, “I constantly monitor myself to make sure I don’t do anything that would embarrass my school or call unwelcome attention to myself” (Interview 2003).



*Figures 5-9. Vivi and Gabi as 1<sup>st</sup> Mestre-sala and Porta-bandeira of School Camisa Verde e Branco.*

### III

#### GROUP ORIASHÉ: AN EMERGENT ALTERNATIVE

On April 1, 1988, a group of women participants of the Black Movement in São Paulo staged a public performance by washing the street 13 de Maio (May 13<sup>th</sup>). Almost 100 years before, on May 13, 1888, slavery had been formally abolished in Brazil. Washing that street on all fool's day was a clever pun, meant to call attention to the discrimination still suffered by the Black community in Brazil. This act marked the emergence of the Brazilian Society of Black Culture and Art Oriashé.<sup>79</sup>

According to their statement of purpose, Oriashé is a non-profit organization ran by black women. The purpose of the organization is to eliminate forms of discrimination and violence through the education of human resources and implementation of public policies that promote racial and gender equality. To do so, Oriashé organizes and endorses activities to advance women's professional formation, culture, recreation, health, and

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<sup>79</sup> Oriashé Sociedade Brasileira de Cultura e Arte Negra.

citizenship. This chapter will focus especially on the Oriashé Percussion Ensemble,<sup>80</sup> which comprises only one branch of this larger organization.

According to Marise Glória Barbosa, one of the original members of the percussion ensemble, the group was originally mixed and relied on the expertise and teaching of a few male percussionists, who were adapts of *canbomblé*. The group organized and kept its instruments in a beauty salon in the Bexiga neighborhood, where Vai-Vai is also located. But, as Barbosa explains, in a few years, “the group dissolved because of internal fighting” (Interview 2003). In 2000, the group was revived by women and for women only (see figure 5-10). According to Beth, one of two percussion masters, the group is primarily formed of Black women, although other women also participate.

When asked to comment on their decision to exclude man, Barbosa explain that many of the members of the Old Guard had been participants of different Afro-Brazilian traditions that prohibited women from playing drums. As such, they conceived of Oriashé as a space where women of all ages could come together to play. As she said,

Aqui tem mulheres entre 6 e 50 anos de idade. Algumas mulheres trazem suas filhas, como é o caso dessa garotinha de 6 anos que saiu esse ano tocando uma lata de leite ninho com umas baquetinhas improvisadas... Outro dia, duas meninas da vizinhança estavam nos assistindo e logo começaram a dançar na frente do bloco. Logo alguém deu um xerequê na mão de uma e um surdo na mão da outra e elas saíram tocando (Interview, 2003).

Here there are women between 6 and 50 years of age. Some of the women bring their daughters, like it is the case of this 6-year-old little girl who paraded this year playing a formula can with little improvised mallets... Another day, two girls from the neighborhood were watching us, and soon they began to dance in from of the group. Pretty soon, someone gave one of them a shaker and the other a surdo and they started to play (Interview, 2003).

The women’s repertoire consists of styles associated with Black culture: *samba-reggae*, *ijexá*, *samba-de-roda*, and *afoxé*. Instruction is passed on from an inner ensemble of about 40 women, who teach others how to play and dance. The inner ensemble is comprised of the members who belonged to the first Oriashé Percussion Ensemble and are referred to as the *Velha Guarda* or Old Guard.<sup>81</sup> In 2002, during their carnival parade, which took place in the streets

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<sup>80</sup> The Group is called “Bloco Oriashé” during Carnival, but when performing for shows outside of Carnival, the group is referred to as Banda, or Band.

<sup>81</sup> Notice much of the terminology is borrowed from samba schools.





*Figure 5-10. Oriashé Members, 2002.*

of the Bexiga neighborhood, Oriashé paraded with 110 participants. Many of them, joining the group as the carnival season approached.

As Barbosa explains, the group functions just like a samba school or bloco in the sense that it has its own instruments, which are kept in a rehearsal space and used by all members. For the most part, members of samba schools and blocos could not afford their own instruments. While initially the Oriashé group functioned this way, its space now also attracts different economic classes. As Barbosa says,

No grupo original, tinha muita gente pobre então a gente tinha que ter todo e qualquer instrumento. Mas agora, tem mulheres que trazem para o bloco djembes de 400 dólares. Outro povo, outras mulheres começaram a tocar mas mesmo assim, a gente tem os instrumentos para as pessoas tocarem (Interview 2003).

In the original group, there were a lot of very poor people, so we really needed to provide all and every instrument. But now, we have women who bring in djembes worth 400 dollars. Different people, different women who have begun to play but even so, we need to have instruments so people can play (Interview 2003).

It is clear that the principal identification of the group is not based on economic status and race, as it was with samba schools during their emergence, but rather, the main identification of members is based on race, gender and sexuality.

Unlike many samba schools, which complete ignore homosexual women, Oriashé is a space open to women of all sexual preferences. As Barbosa explains,

O oriashé não se representa como um grupo lésbico. Embora as dirigentes sejam todas lésbicas, nem todas as componentes são. A gente não se junta ali porque somos um grupo de lésbicas, a gente se junta porque somos um grupo de mulheres e porque é um espaço para tocar que é só de mulheres (Interview 2003).

Oriashé does not represent itself as a lesbian group. Even though all founders and directors are lesbians, not all members are. We didn't come together because we are a group of lesbians. We come together because we are a group of women and because this is a space just for women to play (Interview 2003).

While an all women group functions to affirm a feminine identity, in this case a black alternative of femininity, I believe it is important to question if their exclusion of men casts doubts in their criticism of groups that exclude women or blacks. It is this argument that prevents some women percussionists, such as Miriam Cápua, to perform with Oriashé. Nevertheless, the group has been an important space for women to become percussionists and a site where carnaval is experienced in a manner that break the conventions of the samba schools.

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This chapter focuses on the processes through which alternative subjectivities can emerge within samba schools as well as outside them. In the first section, I examined how women percussionists and singers have been able to circulate masculine spaces. I hope to have complicated these polarized gender dynamics and explore how permissible gender roles and expectations are trumped by other factors, such as body types, musical knowledge, competition, age, school affiliation, and social status, thus creating space for innovation. In these examples, the convergence of several elements destabilized the status quo, allowing certain individuals agency to operate outside the prescribed norms.

In the second section, I have explored how the role of *mestre-sala* has been occupying an ambiguous space. Caught between the archaic notion that a *mestre-sala* should be a warrior and the more recent need for a dancer of more refined, delicate traits, this role comes to exemplify long held assumption which cast warriors as heterosexual, rough men, and male dancers, who come to embody gestures associated with delicateness, as homosexuals and weak. By exploring the schools' discourse and micro-practices, I have shown how the role has become a site of ambiguity that can and does enable alternative expressions. Even if under the guise of

heteropatriarchal values, more homosexual men are being allowed to perform an important role in the schools.

In the final section of this chapter, I have explored how the formation of an all women percussion ensemble has provided women percussionists an alternative way to participate in carnival celebrations. As Raymond Williams explains, it is important to explore new alternatives because they also provide insight into the dominant culture. They can point to which areas of experiences the dominant social order “is willing to ignore or dispense with: to assign as private or to specialize as aesthetic or to generalize as natural” (Williams, 1977: 125). And ultimately, I believe such analysis helps us understand some of the processes through which alternative subjectivities can emerge.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

On the afternoon of Fat Tuesday, March 8, 2011, representatives of the 14 samba schools of the Special Group gathered at the sambadrome to hear members of the LIGA broadcast each and every score for all categories judged during the carnival parade<sup>82</sup> (figure 6-1). Under rain, members of the schools and fans crowded the bleachers in expectation of hearing the name of their samba school announced the winner of the carnival competition of 2011 (figure 6-2).



*Figure 6-1. Members of the LIGA announcing all five scores for each of the 9 categories evaluated.*  
Photograph of Daigo Oliva.

Many other members congregated at their specific schools, watching the event on large screens (figure 6-3).

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<sup>82</sup> The LIGA often changes the rules for the parade and each year releases a document containing all rules. For 2011, the changes included the following:

- a. Each school needs to make their presentation within 55 to 65 minutes, instead of 70 minutes.
- b. Number of allegoric cars changed from a minimum of 3 to 4. The maximum of 5 remained.
- c. Number of categories to be judged changed from 10 to 9. The difference is that instead of “lyrics” and “melody of samba enredo” receiving separate scores, they are now judged as one category: samba enredo.
- d. 5 judges will be selected per category. Scores should be given between 7 and 10, with increments of 0.25. The lowest and highest scores will be discarded. Thus, each school can receive a maximum of 270 points.



Figure 6-2. Representatives of Samba Schools take their places under umbrellas while other school members watched from the bleachers.



Figure 6-3. Members at Vai-Vai Samba School's *Quadra* during the counting of scores. Photograph of Roney Domingos



Perhaps even more so than on the night of the parade, members' attachment to their samba school during this event is almost palpable. Holding a catholic rosary, a lucky medal or cloth with the name of his/her school, many cannot help praying for a successful outcome: the recognition of hard work throughout the year (see figures 6-4 through 6-6).



*Figure 6-4. The president of School Mocidade Alegre  
Photograph of Marcos Bezerra*



*Figure 6-5. Representative of School Vila Maria  
Photograph of Daigo Oliva*



*Figure 6-6. Member of Samba School Vai-Vai  
Photograph of Rodney Domingos*



Unfortunately, the event is always marked more by disappointment than happiness, for only one school can be proclaimed a winner. In 2011, Vai-Vai won the competition by a margin of 0.25 points, scoring a total of 269.5 out of 270 possible points.<sup>83</sup> While the pictures below can give the reader an idea of the exhilaration shared by members, words and images do not quite capture the emotions felt and displayed at the realization of victory (see figures 6-7 through 6-9).



Figure 6-7. Members at Vai-Vai 's table at sambadrome at the moment victory was announced.  
Photograph of Daigo Oliva.

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<sup>83</sup> Águia came in 6<sup>th</sup> place, with 268.25, a small difference from the winner, which shows how fierce the competition is. On this particular year, the two schools with the lowest scores were demoted to the Access Group. Each year, the LIGA stipulates how many will be demoted and how many will be elevated to the Special Group.



Figure 6-8. Celebration at Vai-Vai Samba School's *quadra*.  
Photograph of Edson Lopes Jr.



Figure 6-9. Outside of samba  
school after victory was announced.  
Photograph of Edson Lopes Jr.

Of the many carnival images that have stayed with me, these are the ones that figure prominently as I think of the event now. I believe the profound attachment members feel toward their schools, enhanced by the competitive element, plays a part in their willingness to engage in practices that sustain and foster unequal gendered relations.

The primary goal of this dissertation was to show how gendered identities are constructed and articulated in the process of cultivating specific performance roles within samba schools. I have sought to demonstrate the ways in which specific femininities and masculinities came to be taught, learned and naturalized in the lives of samba school members as they engage in strategies of social and self discipline in the process of preparing for the carnival parade each year.

While I have been concerned with contemporary practices of samba schools and the carnival parade/competition, I began my investigation by locating and contextualizing carnival practices within the legacies of colonialism experienced in Brazil (chapter 2). I did so because I find these legacies continue to affect contemporary expressions of gendered identities and interaction. By examining racial, gendered, and sexual legacies of Brazil's colonial history, the disciplining of space—the urban city, the streets, and samba schools, as well as the construction of the national character as racially mixed, I demonstrated how carnival has always been a project shaped by tactics that seek to arrange the conduct of participants.

I am not, however, suggesting that carnival participants are unaware of regulating tactics. What I do show is how participants draw upon and engage in different discourses and practices to construct carnival as an event that can affect emotion (chapter 3). By analyzing varying discourses and practices, I highlighted the common beliefs that life is sad and such sadness can be interrupted during carnival. Furthermore, I suggested that it is through acquiring what I have termed attentive singing that participants can evoke a different emotional state. And there, I argued, lies the power of the event. Since I ascribed to the notion that people are conditioned to listen and respond to sounds in culturally specific ways, carnival participants will approach the event with established expectations for the outcome: through participation, more specifically through singing, one can alter his/her emotion.

While all participants—males and females—are expected to sing, other performance roles are gender specific. In chapter 4, by analyzing the four different principal roles of percussionist, flag bearer, solo samba dancer, and *baiana*, I showed how performers seek to attain competence in their prescribed roles by engaging in a repertoire of practices that are deployed through music and dance. And in the process of doing so, they also cultivate specific femininities and masculinities.

I have argued that dance/musical competence is often intertwined with notions about the physical body and the nurturing of particular character dispositions. In other words, sex is not the only factor determining who takes on specific performance roles (e.g. a *baiana* is female). Rather, performance roles are also determined, and therefore defined, by perceptions

about age, body type, skin color, and behavior (e.g. a *baiana* is constructed as a older, black, heavier woman who is nurturing and motherly). I have attempted to show how through or by understanding themselves and others to be closer or further from gender ideals, performers engage in strategies of social and self-discipline. My central concern was to highlight the tensions between the ways subjects are socially constructed through normalized practices and also self cultivate certain dispositions.

But even within these rigid, gendered spaces, some samba school members have been able to construct alternative capacities for themselves. To illustrate this, in chapter 5 I undertook a detailed analysis of female members who have been able to negotiate alternate spaces, all clearly marked as masculine. I also drew on examples of how many homosexual males have been able to secure the important role of *mestre-sala*, previously reserved for “warriors,” a persona normally attributed to heterosexual males. I also felt it was important to show what happened when carnival participants were unwilling to accept the parameters of samba schools. Thus, in the last section of chapter 5, I analyzed the emergence of an all-female percussion ensemble that parades during carnival independently from the schools. I was interested in what circumstances allowed these participants to operate differently *despite* the given assumptions about the division of gendered identities. I wanted to highlight the processes and conditions that enable some participants to problematize the status quo by complicating the stereotypical archetypes often described in extreme opposition in the rules of gendered interaction and identification.

Throughout this work, my intent was not to point out the subjugation of women and homosexual men, to advocate for changes within samba school practices, or to celebrate those changes. As I have made clear, I do not locate agency as subversion of social norms. As Saba Mahmood eloquently writes,

...the normative political subject of poststructuralist feminist theory often remains a liberatory one, whose agency is conceptualized on the binary model of subordination and subversion. In doing so, this scholarship elides dimensions of human action whose ethical and political status does not map onto the logic of repression and resistance (2005: 14).

Rather, what I sought to understand in my research and show in this dissertation were the desires and conditions that lead samba school members to construct specific gendered identities through their engagement in dance and musical practices. My intent was to bring to light the very practical ways in which femininities and masculinities came to be learned, taught, and naturalized for the men and women with whom I worked.

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

*Agogô*: A cowbell. Sound is produced by holding the instrument with the left hand and striking the bells with a metal stick. The left hand can also squeeze the *agogô* to produce yet another sound, creating an interlocking pattern. The interval between the bells is usually a whole step.

*Ala(s)*: Section(s) within a samba school of varying sizes but in which members wear the same costume and perform the same steps.

*AMESPBESP*: *Mestre-Sala and Porta-Bandeira Association of São Paulo City*. An organization that offers instructions to aspiring *Porta-Bandeiras* e *Mestres-sala*.

*Anhembi Parque*: Located in São Paulo city, it is the largest events center in Latin America. *Anhembi Parque* hosts 30% of all the events that take place in Brazil and 55% of all the events in the Southeast Region of the country, such as the carnival parade and competition. *Anhembi Parque* is administered by *São Paulo Turismo*.

*Baiana*: 1. A woman from the State of Bahia. 2. A performance role within the samba schools in which women wear costumes inspired by *candomblé* attire: hoop skirt, lace-trimmed blouses and stiffened petticoats in addition to a variety of accessories: necklaces, ear-rings, metal bracelets.

*Blocos*: carnival groups that appeared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, initially comprised of the poorer classes and all male. Like *cordões*, *blocos* paraded in the streets playing percussion.

*Caixa*: Small snare drum, 13 to 14 inches in diameter, with a 3.5 metal shell. With its four coiled wire snares, *caixas* are played with two snare drumsticks. The right hand plays the accents while the left hand adds alternating buzz rolls.

*Candomblé*: Afro-Brazilian religion similar to Voodoo in Haiti and Santería in Cuba.

*Capoeira*: Brazilian martial arts and dance that is always performed to music (voice and percussion instruments) in a circle formation.

*Carioca*: A person born in Rio de Janeiro.

*Carnavalesco*: Artistic director of a Samba School.

*Cavaquinho*: A type of steel-stringed ukulele.

*Chocalho*: Cylindrical metal shaker filled with pellets. Several tubes may be connected together for louder sound. The technique consists of moving the instrument back and forth parallel to the ground. Accents can be produced by a more rapid stroke.

*Cordões*: Carnaval groups of allegorically costumed characters such as devils, kings, Amerindians. Their integrants were mostly from the popular classes and initially all male. The first São Paulo *cordão* appeared in 1914 in the *Barra Funda* neighborhood.

*Corso*: Promenade of carriages during carnaval popular in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*Cuíca*: A single-head, metal shell friction drum. A thin bamboo stick is embedded on the underside of the drum in the center of the head. When rubbed with a damp cloth, sound is produced. The drum is held with the left hand, which by pressing the head and changing its tension, can alter the pitch.

*Destaques*: Refer to people who are placed in highlighted positions within the parade, such as a top of a float.

*Enredo* – the overarching theme (plot) organizing the presentation of a samba school parade.

*Entrudo*: Street manifestation of Portuguese origin popular in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Brazil. During the *entrudo*, participants would sing comical or farcical songs while playing pots and pans and would douse each other with different types of offensive liquids. The *entrudo* was prohibited in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Frevo*: The most characteristic genre of Pernambuco's carnaval. Typically in duple meter, *frevo* is usually organized into two repeated sections of sixteen measures each, with highly syncopated melodies played by woodwinds and brasses accented by percussion.

*LIGA*: Independent Alliance of the Samba Schools of São Paulo. A non-profit organization responsible for all aspects of the coordination of the carnaval parade of the São Paulo samba schools in the top two groups: 1- The Special Group, 2-The Access Group.

*Malandro*: Term associated with samba in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to depict an astute but somewhat devious man often viewed with ambivalence.

*Marica*: A pejorative term meaning a somewhat effeminate man.

*Mestre-sala*: Main male dancer of a samba school and the pair of the *porta-bandeira*.

*Mulata*: 1) Denotes a woman of mixed race, more specifically, it points to a particular type of race mixture: black and white. 2) Occupation of a woman who engages in dancing samba for money at a variety of events, such private as club shows and at times, the carnaval parade.

*Oriashé*: A non-profit organization ran by black women. Its main purpose is to eliminate forms of discrimination and violence through the education of human resources and implementation of public policies that promote racial and gender equality. To do so, *Oriashé* organizes and endorses activities to advance women's professional formation, culture, recreation, health, and citizenship. Part of this project, was an all-female percussion ensemble that parades during carnaval but independently from samba schools.

*Pandeiro*: Similar to a tambourine, the *pandeiro* is a hand-held wooden frame drum with heavy metallic discs or jingles that are inverted towards each other. Lighter *pandeiros* are now made with metallic frames. It is normally held with the left hand, with the middle finger at times being used to muffle the head on the underside. The right hand plays a combination of palm slaps, finger, thumb, and heel of the hand, as well as finger and thumb rolls.

*Paradinhas*: Percussion breaks in the rhythm of a samba school ensemble.

*Passista*: A solo samba dancer.

*Paulista*: A person from São Paulo state. However, a person born in the city of São Paulo is known as a *Paulistano(a)*.

*Pernambucano*: Refers to those who are from the State of Pernambuco in the Northeast of Brazil.

*Porta-bandeira*: A flag bearer, the main female dancer of a samba school.

*Puxador(es)*: In the context of samba schools, refers to the singers who "pull" the samba motivating members and audience to sing along.

*Quadra*: Is the rehearsal space (hall) of a samba school.

*Rainha da Bateria*: The woman who holds the title of Queen of the Percussion Ensemble. Each samba school has one.

*Ranchos*: Carnaval groups that developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, organized around a particular theme. Unlike the *cordões*, *ranchos* included the participation of women and the use of, not only percussion, but also brass instruments.

*Reco-reco*: Metal scraper that produces sound by drawing a stick across metal springs. Alterations of timbre can be achieved by placing the thumb of the left hand across the springs for particular notes

*Repinique or Repique*: A high-pitch two-headed lead or aluminum drum measuring about 12 inches in length and diameter. It is usually played with one stick and uses various different playing techniques such as: rim shots, left-hand muffles, one stick buzz rolls, single-hand stick tremolos, and open and stopped sounds.

*RIOTUR*: Department of Tourism of Rio de Janeiro created in the 1930s to take official charge of the samba-schools and Rio's carnival parade.

*Roda de samba*: Samba circle. The expression refers to the circle formed by samba dancers, in which participants take turns showing their skills.

*Samba*: Considered the national music and dance of Brazil. There are many different types of samba but, what they share in common is duple meter, with the strong beat suspended while the weak beat is accentuated, a stanza and refrain structure where melody and accompaniment interlock in a syncopated pattern.

*Sambar*: Refers to dancing the samba.

*Sambódromo/Sambadrome*: Samba Avenue, which in São Paulo city was built in the early 1990s.

*Samba enredo*: Theme song of a samba school.

*Samba school*: Are organizations usually described as functioning like a society dedicated to music making and the participation of its members during the annual carnival parade.

*SASP: Sociedade Amantes do Samba Paulista* or Society Lovers of São Paulo's Samba. An online society that provides news and history regarding the São Paulo carnival and its samba schools, as well as a chat board for its members.

*Saudade*: Portuguese concept for longing, yearning for someone or something.

*Surdo*: Two-headed large cylindrical drum, which for samba schools is made of stainless steel body and goatskin heads. Usually comes in three different sizes and is always played with a stick (about 13 inches long and ¾ inch in diameter, the playing end formed by a wooden ball covered in leather).

1. *Surdo de Primeira ou Marcação* – the heaviest of bass drum, it measures 24 inches in diameter. It plays on the second beat of the 2/4 samba, the most emphasized beat in samba practice, while the other

hand muffles the drum on the first beat. It is considered the base for the entire ensemble.

2 . *Surdo de Segunda ou Resposta* – the second largest bass drum measures 22 inches in diameter. As its name indicates, it answers the first drum by playing on the first beat of the measure, although with less emphasis than the first *surdo*, then muffling the second beat. It is usually tuned a 5<sup>th</sup> above the first *surdo*.

3. *Surdo de Terceira ou Corte* – the smallest of all *surdos*, measuring 20 inches in diameter. It plays with the first *surdo* on the 2<sup>nd</sup> beat but also on off beats, “cutting” the rhythm and adding syncopation.

*Tamborim*: A small cymbal-less tambourine (single-head and a metal shell). It is played with a pre-fabricated plastic rods held together on a handle. The instrument is held with the left hand (thumb across the ring while the other fingers curled inside the body of the instrument) and struck with the plastic stick, which plays a combination of stopped strokes, rim shots, muffled strokes, and open strokes.

*UESP*: Union of São Paulo’s Samba Schools oversees and organizes the samba schools ranked in Groups 1, 2, and 3.

## APPENDIX

Divided into three categories, the items scored during the carnaval parade are:

### 1. Visual Category

- Enredo: artistic visual representation of the school's theme for the year's parade.
- Costumes
- Allegoric Cars: anything above wheels, including any people above the moving cars

### 2. Music Category

- Harmony: integration between the percussion ensemble and singing.
- Percussion Ensemble
- Samba-enredo: the theme song.

### 3. Dance Category

- Front Commission: group of people who first enter the parade to greet the public and jury members.
- Evolution: the continuous rhythmic movement of members throughout the samba avenue.
- Porta-bandeira & Mestre-sala: the flag-bearer and her pair.