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163

**THE MULTIPLICITY OF BLACK IDENTITIES
IN BRAZILIAN POPULAR MUSIC**

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I. Popular Music and Afro-Brazilian identity

References to people's skin colors is absolutely widespread in dance genres of Brazilian popular music, to the extent that it is legitimate to describe this practice as a sort of cultural obsession on the part of song writers. This has been so since the beginning of the century and continues until today, as I will be showing here examples of recordings of 1993. Given the title of this conference (Black Brazil), I wish to present a selected commented historical anthology of song texts which reveal how black people have been alluded to and characterized in commercial recordings of Brazilian popular music for the last sixty years. In order to do this, I shall have to discuss very briefly a theoretical model to understand song texts I am presently developing.

Moreover, this study should be better understood if it be seen as a continuation of a previous essay on the construction of black ethnicity in Brazil (Carvalho 1993a).¹ In that essay I discussed four main models of ethnic emblems available for blacks in Brazil through the identification with certain types of musical traditions. I shall sum them up now, before entering fully into the world of popular music.

The first model I discussed was that of the orthodox Afro-Brazilian cults (**Candomblé**, **Shango**, etc.), holders of the African traditions in Brazil. These cults simply suspend the question of who is a black; the deities worshipped (the **orishas**) are universal and as such put themselves on top of whatever divisions are built on racial, social, political or sexual basis. Besides, all song texts are made in African languages, unknown today to the worshippers, so that biographical or collective experiences of the Brazilian black cannot be formulated linguistically in the texts. Instead of offering a black identity, therefore (which would necessarily be contrastive) the traditional cults merely state ritually that anyone, black or white, can be an African. As I have been able to edit recently (Carvalho 1993b), translation of these song texts in Yoruba language reveal a repertoire that moves

1. I want to thank Rita Segato and Leticia Vianna, for the valuable suggestions in the building of this conceptual model; I also thank Manuel Alexandre Cunha and Nilza Mendes Campos for their help in the reading of some song texts; Ernesto Ignacio de Carvalho for helping me with writing song texts; and Nívio Caixeta for the search for some musical examples in the archives of the radios Nacional and Cultura FM of Brasília. I am especially thankful to Gérard Béhague for the opportunity he gave me of presenting this work to his students and colleagues at the University of Austin. I feel equally obliged to George Marcus, of Rice University; Max Brandt, of the University of Pittsburgh, and Patricia Sandler, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, for their kind invitations to share this essay with their colleagues and with themselves.

entirely in a mythical world, quite apart from the historical experience of the descendants of slaves in Brazil.

Secondly came the model of the *Congadas*, religious brotherhoods that perform a kind of folk drama structured as an African royal embassy aimed at dramatizing the opposition between blacks and whites in Brazil, since the beginning of the Colony. Basically, what they do is to promote a rite of inversion: for one single day in the year the blacks take the main streets of many traditional towns and cities of the country and the whites are only invited to watch their dances, recitations, and speeches from the sidewalk. Quite in opposition to the model of the **candomblé**, the Congos explicitly quote black and white as social positions, and present various ideological solutions for these differences. Expressed in the lyric mode, the relationship between whites and blacks (which is fairly equivalent to that between masters and slaves) is narrated ritually as a parody, since it describes exactly what is not the case in everyday life.

The third model was provided by *Macumba* and *Umbanda* cults, which expand the pantheon of African deities of Candomblé in order to assimilate spirits of slaves, Indians, prostitutes, mestizos and various other kinds of supernatural entities that bear connection with the historical experience of the Brazilian peoples. This is the model of negotiation par excellence: anyone can be a black inside umbanda. Social and racial hierarchies are mobile, interchangeable. Especially relevant for an understanding of umbanda's complex ideology is the entity called **Preto Velho** (the Black Old Man), or **Preta Velha** (the Black Old woman), that portrays ritually the black man and woman who worked in Brazil as slaves or as a son or a daughter of slaves.

Finally, a fourth model, that of popular music. Due to the complexity of the subject, I couldn't do more in that essay than present just a sketch of this world and focussed specifically some examples of black protest songs. In the present text, therefore, I wish to return to that discussion so as to encompass a wider range of examples of popular music, both in terms of genres as in terms of historical perspective.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I chose to ask a very simple question: how is a black person depicted in popular songs? Thus, my research aims to select a collection of popular songs that deal with race relations and offer images and representations of blacks in Brazil.

I start by affirming that the rescue of black identity is one of the dominant themes in Brazilian popular music. References to black man, black women, *mulata*, etc, are found in practically all the musical genres practised in the country, since the beginning of the century. What I offer here is a first sketch of a research in progress, which aims at preparing an extended commented anthology of popular songs that deal with Brazilian blacks, men and women. Signifiers like *nega*, *nego*, *crioulo*, *preto*, *mulata*, *preta*, *pretinha*, *neguinho*, *neguinha*, *morena* (all variants of the term black to denote people of dark skin color) are found in hundreds (or even thousands,) of commercial songs. Curiously enough, signifiers like *branco*, *branca* (white man and white woman, respectively), *loura* (blonde), are almost non-existent. This in itself tells us how complex is the universe of black identity in Brazil.

First, a couple of words about Brazilian popular music. Contrary to what some scholars have argued for the case of rock lyrics in English (namely, Simon Frith (1987), who claims that many rock listeners do not really pay attention to words), words are very important in Brazilian popular music in general. People tend to follow texts quite closely,

especially in romantic genres. Obviously, some genres are more wordy than others and the more elaborate texts come from the genres loosely connected with each other and labelled as MPB (música popular brasileira). This is the universe of the great authors, such as Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Milton Nascimento, Djavan, João Bosco, and so on.

In the case of MPB, the predominant mode of the song texts is lyrical and the words develop a quite sophisticated phenomenology of love relationship, entering very often into the intricacies of the emotions, desires, phantasies and more abstract, even ethical and philosophical considerations about the lives of the two or more individuals involved in a particular relationship. Here, the point to be stressed is that they are individuals; and the dilemmas they face, endlessly explored in hundreds of song texts, are those, typically individualistic, between autonomy and surrender of the self. The melodic, rhythmic and harmonic materials construct this subtle and mobile landscape of feelings, visions and ideas that are expressed in the words. If I think of songs such as 'Oceano' by Djavan, 'Tigresa' by Caetano Veloso, or, above all, 'Super-Homem a Canção', by Gilberto Gil, I can certainly regard the MPB as a classical song tradition.

Now, returning to the subject of this anthology, the question is that these more sophisticated song genres rarely mention racial issues: ideally, they are dealing with individual souls and if the body is ever touched, it is usually the face which is important: smiles, eyes, lips, hairs, head; or else, hands, fingernails, arms, shoulders; the texture of the skin might be relevant, but hardly its color.

Thus, it is the genres more related to dance - and more precisely those associated with an African origin - which are loaded with references to skin color. Musical genres can therefore work like an alibi for some contentious or controversial contents; they prepare the reception in a way, setting a mental framework for the absorption of the text. To exemplify, it is enough to remember how a **lambada** is danced -the man's right thigh is put well into the middle of the woman's thighs, and the couple move their pelves together in a way that openly resembles sexual intercourse - to realize **lambada** texts are not meant to describe men and women as angels or disembodied souls!

Many genres of Brazilian popular music have a clear African or Afro-American influence, that can be detected even by their names: *samba, marcha, pagode, batuque, lambada, fricote, samba-reggae, axé music, carimbó, funk, reggae, rap*, etc. Associated with these genres, however, are stereotypes, images, references, representations, or mere statements about the living conditions of black people in Brazil. I selected out of about five hundred commercial songs, certain fixations of identity that can be extremely revealing, from an ideological point of view, of the positions held by the blacks in Brazil and the new perspectives of changes and ruptures of these traditional roles. I chose only texts where the issue of color is explicitly mentioned; I consciously avoided metaphors and euphemisms, because of the relationship of certain signifiers with the common consciousness. Some of the texts are so insulting and negative towards black women, for example, that their sole exposition, in the context of an argument, might be food for thought, especially on a comparative basis: how could these texts circulate freely in Brazilian radios for so long, if we can't find equivalent of them in the popular music traditions of other countries?

One general statement to be made, before entering into the details and intricacies of these songs, is that there are various black identities being exercised by people in Brazil; furthermore, there are many female and (not so many) male blacks represented in these

songs. I shall mention historical examples precisely to point out continuities in these stereotypes and representations. I have organized certain themes that run across sixty years of commercial songs and present them within a conceptual argument that allows me to address questions of ideology, values and politics in a broader context of transformations - social, cultural, political, - that have occurred in Brazilian society until recently.

Two more things: given the nature of the question behind this work, it should be evident that I was guided by song texts, and not by songs alone: my first criterion was, therefore, a literary one; regardless of its importance or aesthetic efficacy, a song which did not refer explicitly to skin color could not enter in my selection. Nonetheless, I have chosen, among the numerous songs possible, the ones which caused a greater social impact, those whose texts were more blatant or complex and those I found more satisfying musically. I also selected examples from the greatest variety of genres possible, exactly to emphasize how pervasive is that which I call obsession with skin color in song texts. Obviously, I haven't exhausted the possibilities of analysis of those texts; more than extract everything they might be revealing, I wanted to offer them as material for further research on text meaning and especially on the difficult issue of determining what is an expression of racism and discrimination in songs.

II. Conceptualizing Popular Music

Linking this essay with the previous one, my first main contention is that commercial popular music is radically different from the other three models of Afro-Brazilian musical identity, in many ways. Above all, it differs on a fundamental expressive convention: popular music, broadcast by the mass media, works with an imagined community - it aims at anyone who is able to listen to the radio, record, TV or whatever media is available - whereas the other models, fixed and controlled by ritual, convey meaning and experience within the sphere of a concrete, bound, living community. This difference is crucial for any discussion, not only of ethnicity, but also of identity: for the conditions of expression of popular music makes it necessarily more open, more easily taken for emblematic identification than any kind of ritual music.

One must bear in mind the cultural and social revolution caused by the growth of commercial popular music. All those genres created with the record industry helped to de-ritualize many styles of sacred music that until then were kept within the bounds of religious or ethnic communities. In this sense, it can be argued that in all of the three previous models of ethnic emblems it is the community which keeps control of the production and diffusion of its symbols and also of its efficacy in expressing its values and its ideology. In the case of popular music, most of the constitutive elements of ritual are reintroduced, being transformed into aesthetic elements: arrangement and orchestration, for instance, can provide an idea of gathering, reunion, and so on, typical of the traditional models. And that is why it is frequent, in the repertoire of popular musicians, examples of parodies, imitations and sometimes even reproductions of folk genres, secular and sacred: to celebrate, even if subreptitiously, the free movement of the song and the performance over the rigid constraints of ritual conventions. For this reason, popular music requires a framework for its analysis that differs considerably from the conceptual models developed

for the understanding of ritual music.

Popular music deritualizes symbolic expressions, break ethnic and other kinds of barriers and, theoretically, addresses everybody. This raises complex issues of identity, because its message is necessarily open, whereas most identities, in complex society, is formed on the basis of constructing closed territories. It is a double movement, which I have theorized in another article (Carvalho & Segato 1990): some receptors want to capture the music, to retain and stereotype its meaning, whereas the musical material, the song itself, always has a residue of escape, of non reducing itself to the semantic weight the group of receptors want to attribute to it. It is within this movement, this tendency of rigidity versus fluidity that identities are formed and remade, celebrated and rejected.

Another important feature of popular songs is that, unlike cinema, theatre, plays, painting, and even literature, they present themselves more easily as an unfinished object, an incomplete (or polyvalent) product. And one must not forget another rather obvious characteristic of the reception of popular music: fragmentation. Popular songs are many times overheard, partially heard, or heard simultaneously with other public or social messages. In the radio, on TV, in live shows, in dance halls, in clubs, one can catch sometimes only fragments of a song; we can establish for years a full relationship with a strophe, a section of a song, a phrase that caused an impact, sometimes nothing more than a couple of words, even without knowing the basic data about it — who is the singer, the whole text, the authors, the musical genre, and so on. In other words, not all popular songs are made to offer, structurally, a new whole, or an idea of wholeness; some are more like sections, or parts without a conclusion.

What Frank Kermode theorizes, 'the sense of an ending' (1967), crucial to the structure of Western literary fictions, does not necessarily hold true for the case of song texts. For we have to distinguish songs, that are sung, arranged and recorded, from song texts, that can be read like prose or poetry. Sometimes a song text is clearly unfinished, whereas the song, through the musical material, presents itself with an ending. We should therefore consider important a characteristic which Mikhail Bakhtin conceptualized for the realistic novel: unfinalizability. Moreover, there is a specific way through which popular songs are unfinished: by presentification. Songs of all periods are played in radio programs all the time: very old songs, not so old, past hits, rarities, not so new, recent ones, and so many other temporal labels and categories that are created and manipulated all the time. As a consequence of this, old songs are not necessarily old: for the world of popular songs, especially as broadcast by the radio, is basically a world where the past is a perfect part of the present. This is extremely relevant for the stereotypes and images of blacks we shall discuss later on.

Apart from that, popular songs are usually immediate objects: they tend to express desire with a lesser degree of sublimation or rationalization than other artistic expressions. Some of them are made up easily, like in an internal impulse. Furthermore, as Mikhail Bakhtin has argued, psychic life is a process which is partially social, partly internal, the contact between individual psyche and the outside world being semiotic and, most often, linguistic. And it is in this sense that songs reveal collective psychic life, for it tends to reflect individual experience as spontaneously as possible. It takes no more than a couple of minutes for someone to make up a catchy sequence of verses, or an encore that might sell hundreds of thousands, or even millions of copies and might be in people's memories for decades. I believe this explains, at least partially, the fact that the number of composers of

popular music is much higher, proportionately, than the number of playwrights, novelists, film directors, videomakers, and even painters.

III. A Model of Analysis of Song Texts

I can identify at least three levels of fixation of meaning in a popular song, which are sometimes confused or at least not sufficiently distinguished by most analysts. These three levels can be grasped as the I, which takes the place of the individual consciousness which enunciates the text:

Level 1. The singer as the I. To continue with Simon Frith's creative theorization (Frith 1987), I also maintain that the singer in popular music is almost always singing to a second person singular who is listening, showing a particular accent, exposing a genre, playing a specific character and exhibiting a unique personality. The first aesthetic identification of the listener in popular music is, in my view, with the singer.

Level 2. The poetical subject as the I. This is sometimes clear, sometimes not; it is the **locus** of speech, the individual (or group of individuals) who speaks in the text. It should be searched strictly through discourse analysis. The various ambiguities, alternatives, choices, levels of indeterminacy, incompleteness, are assets, possibilities open for the composer to make appear or to disguise the I.

Level 3. The I which is being constructed by the listener, based on the specific rhetoric of the song: its genre (inasmuch as it is known and recognized as such by the listener), its metaphors, images, onomatopoeia, and so on. The I constructed by the rhetoric of the song will depend on the critical abilities of the listener, musical and literary, i.e., his/her capacity to understand the allusions, irony, parody and all the possibilities of indirect discourse of the text, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, of his/her ability to decode the metamorphoses of the poetical subject when fixed or displaced by the singer (or group of singers).

To sum up, level 1 deals strictly with performance: the song is always sung by someone at a particular point in time: what he/she does/did with the text always affect/ed the apprehension of the listener. As Roland Barthes says (1988), no human voice is neutral. Of course, Barthes is talking about a kind of impact of the song on the listener which is not exactly on the order of the linguistic meaning of the text, but that of the fruition of the language itself. Now, in popular music the singer usually forces an identification with the poetical subject; the first option is to follow the singer's idealized, or imagined biography - his/her genre, age, skin colour, sexual preference, and so on. That is quite different from erudite music, as Roland Barthes discusses for the case of the classical **lied**, in which the singer is beyond gender or other distinctions; he/she just incarnates the romantic soul, the subject (man or woman) in love with another human being or with nature. Many romantic genres of popular music follow partially the model of the **lied**, as I will explain later on; however, most of the Afro-Brazilian genres I will be discussing do not follow this romantic mode and count on a number of social and racial attributes of the persons created by the song text.

Level 2 refers strictly to the text, to the words chosen to convey the message.

Level 3 refers to the ideological implications of the song. This is the level where

power lies, where influence on the life of others can be exercised, where struggles for hegemony take place, and where censorship, value judgments, blindness, identifications, rejections, the building of personal models, and so on, occur. The ideological subject is always a subject in the making, built through the combination of levels 1 and 2. Rigorously speaking, there are as many ideological I's as there listeners to a song. Revisiting old songs is a common mechanism in Brazilian popular music to alter, consciously, the conventional subjectivity already constructed by them and thus, proposing new ideological identifications.

Here comes an important difference between song texts and poems. George Steiner, for instance, in *Language and Silence* (1969) and in *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971), laments the loss of the reception of the English poetical tradition of the last six centuries. Drawing examples from Spenser, Milton, Pope, Shelley up to Yeats, he argues as if there is basically one correct or full reading of a poem and the only reason for the decline of this literary corpus today is the ignorance of the receptor, who is not as prepared, 'culturally' (in the classical sense of the term), as he/she used to be. Steiner seems to believe that, in principle, this correct or full reading can be done by anyone who is able to understand the poem. Ideally, there should be no semantic gap between the reciter as the I and the poetical subject, as it happens quite often in popular songs. Of course, due to space, I cannot do more than just an outline of a theory I hope to present fully in another essay.

I shall illustrate the model of analysis announced above, as well as the differences of song text apprehension from Steiner's idea of how a poem is or should be apprehended with an analysis of an extraordinary song of **Preto Velho** (The Old Black Man) from the **jurema** cults of Recife, because it reveals quite well the ideological subtleties of the Afro-Brazilian musical repertoire.

Nego não entra no céu
Nem que seja rezador
Tem o cabelo duro
Vai furar Nosso Senhor

(A black man does enter in heaven
Even if he is a good prayer
he has got a very thick hair
is going to hurt Our Lord).

Here, racial conflicts are stated openly, but the poetical subject is not clearly defined; its position is ambiguous, and it calls for a fixation of meaning that only the music, when sung by a particular singer, can provide. The text, as such, presents itself as an oracle; it is the task of the singer to offer a reading of the text and it is up to the listener to apprehend this reading according to the ideological principles that he favours.

First of all, if it is a white person who sings it (to be clear: not a white person, necessarily, but the poetical subject **qua** white, inducing the ideological subject to identify with the first person), the text can be understood as favouring the non-admittance of blacks in heaven: if he enters there, he will hurt Our Lord, and this is not what the subject wants.

In other words, if a white subject sings the text meaning it (musically, of course, which can be done through satire or downright despise, for instance), the song becomes unequivocally racist.

Now, this sacred song forms part of the repertoire of a supernatural entity (the Old Black Man we referred to earlier) and if the singer acts in his place, it reflects quite well his dubious character, transforming the text into a lament: the **Preto Velho** resigns to the possibility of entering the white man's heaven and this sense of resignation might also give him a certain degree of strength. We have here, therefore, lament, resignation and also accusation, for the **Preto Velho** faces discrimination by expressing it openly.

Thirdly, we can still identify the singer, say, as a priest of the **macumba** or **jurema** as a black who incorporates the singer's I; in this case, the text becomes not only an expression of complaint against racial discrimination but also a justification for open racial conflict: since his hair prevents him from entering heaven, even when he prays properly, the black man can feel free to join **macumba**, to do black magic; in other words, to act as an anti-Christ (which is the same here as being anti-white). Still, a black protest singer might use the text precisely to claim access to the white man's heaven; by doing so, he will be making an anti-racist statement. And I can think of at least a fifth possibility of interpretation: if a rasta person sings this song, he or she might be saying: thanks Jah I am not going to the white man's heaven, because I've got my own. And, contrary to the Lord of Babylon, Jah likes my thick hair!

We can now move to the central part of this essay, namely, a commented anthology of Brazilian popular songs which build different images of people on the basis of their skin colors.

IV. Images of black people in Brazilian Popular Music

1. The black woman - crazy, ugly, stupid.

Historically, Carnival songs opened a semantic field where the whites could express how they saw the blacks, especially the black woman and the *mulata*: the quasi-black, brown color woman, ideologically and aesthetically seen as the nicer result of the miscegenation of blacks and whites. Since the 30's, numerous Carnival songs mention these two female images.

Take the following song, famous in the voice of Linda Baptista:

Nêga maluca - Linda Batista (Ewaldo Ruy - Fernando Lobo)

Tava jogando sinuca
uma nega maluca me apareceu
vinha com o filho no colo
e dizia pro povo

que o filho era meu.
Não sinhô, tome que o filho é seu
não sinhô, guarde que Deus lhe deu
Há tanta gente no mundo
mas meu azar é profundo
veja você meu irmão
a bomba que estourou na minha mão
tudo acontece comigo
eu que nem sou do amor
até parece castigo
ou então influência da cor.

(I was playing snooker
when a zanny black woman bumped at me
she was holding a baby in her arms
and was telling everybody
that the son was mine.
No sir — take him, the son is yours
no sir — keep him, God gave him to you.
There are so many people in the world
but my bad luck is deep
you, my brother, you see
the bomb which blew up in my hand
everything happens to me
I, who am not on the side of love
it even seems to be punishment
or else influence of the color)

The poetical subject here seems absolutely unconcerned with the woman's feeling: from his point of view, the black woman and her child (probably black too) are a nuisance, a burden that was thrown on him by way of his bad luck. The *nega* is crazy, preposterous. His problem is with his fellowmen: he's ashamed of having to admit openly that he had a relationship with a black woman (probably unknown and socially inferior). He laments to his colleagues, explaining that he is not involved in love; moreover, the word "even" in the phrase "it even looks like a punishment" sounds like an admission of bad luck, since, in his mind, using sexually a black woman is supposed to be a common and unsequential social act.

As we shall see, in this and in other cases, it is not by chance that the last word of the song becomes surprisingly difficult to understand: the orchestra hides partially the singer's voice and she appears to be saying **cor** (colour), but it can also be **dor** (pain, suffering). Influence of the colour? Does it mean the poetical subject is himself a black, and *because* he is black, he is more unfortunate than the rest, to the point that a black woman

accuses him of having an illegitimate child with her? If that is so, we would then be facing a very special kind of discrimination, which is self-racism: because I am black, things never run easily for me. There is also the possibility that the subject is a white man, who has entered into this trouble because he was fool enough to have an affair with a black woman. What lies behind this is the idea that if a white person mixes with a black, he/she is likely to finish having trouble or misgivings. Nonetheless, I believe it is more probable that the composer of the song is a black; in other words, he is the poetical subject. In such a case, the singer as the I is here performing a double inversion in relation to the text: instead of a black man, it is a white woman who is narrating this affair.

What identity is here being constructed? A *nega* is an unknown person, someone who can offer herself easily to satisfy the sexual needs of a man, even of a black man! He had forgotten all about her and now she comes, claiming some help for her baby with her supposed father.

The next song, by Emilinha Borba, deals with a crucial symbol of black women in Brazil: the hair.

Nega do cabelo duro - Emilinha Borba (autor: Rubem Soares)

Nega do cabelo duro
qual é o pente que te penteia
teu cabelo ondulado
não desmancha nem na areia
toma banho e bota fogo
qual é o pente que te penteia

(Black woman of the hard hair
where is the comb that can comb you
your ondulated hair
doesn't undo even in the sand
take a bath and apply fire to it
where is the comb that comb you).

The black woman is here accused of not finding a comb (surely, of the Western type) that can loosen her hair. "Put fire" alludes to the common practise of ironing the hair with an iron comb that is taken to the fire up to the point of becoming red and then passing it on the woman's hair, to stretch its curls. The text brings to the open a very private, embarrassing and painful practice of black women. The singer and the chorus, therefore, are actually making fun of the black woman, in an almost sadistic manner. As I have shown in the other essay (Carvalho 1993a), the theme of the "bad hair" (this is the current name in Brazil for the curled hair, so characteristic of blacks) is extremely frequent in popular songs and there I mentioned a song (*Sarará crioulo*) by Gilberto Gil, where he replied to this trait of weakness of the blacks when they face a model of beauty which is fiercely European.

Let us pursue the issue of the black woman's hair a bit further, since it is such a revealing symbol of race relations in Brazil.

O teu cabelo não nega
Lamartine Babo

O teu cabelo não nega, mulata
porque és mulata na côr
mas como a côr não pega, mulata
mulata eu quero o seu amor.

(Your hair type can't be hidden, mulata
because you've got the color of a mulata
but since color doesn't stick, mulata
mulata, I want your love).

This text, sung in almost every Carnival ball all over the country for the last fifty years, is regarded by many as the epitome of Brazilian carnival tune. Moreover, it is usually considered to be one of the ten greatest popular songs ever written in the country. What the poetical subject is expressing here denies frontally the myth of racial democracy so widespread in Brazil: since color is something that doesn't stick (obviously, only a white person could be saying this), so he can ask the mulata for her love. Of course, "love" here is an euphemism for sex. It is the idea of a non contagious relationship which is behind the text. To have an affair with a mulata, to "love" her is not a serious game: it is open to all white men. This explains the text of "Nega maluca": she is crazy because she wanted to charge the white man for the responsibility of making a son in her, which was not part of the social agreement. In the present example, being black is symbolically equivalent of having a contagious disease (precisely because that is denied by the subject). The subject addresses the mulata directly, as if they both agree. Many people sing the word *nega* instead of *pega*, which means: "and since the colour can't be denied", which may possibly suggest an idealization of the **mulata**. This Freudian slip occurs probably to soften the crudeness of the statement. While I was preparing this essay, I had the opportunity of discussing this song text with many Brazilian friends and colleagues and invariably they were shocked by the actual content of the text: they said they sang it believing they were praising the mulata!

2. The black woman as a sexual object

The song of Emilinha Borba is of 1940 and the one of Lamartine Babo, of 1931. However, consider the following *fricote* by Luís Caldas, written less than ten years ago:

Fricote - Luís Caldas & Jorge Aragão

Nega do cabelo duro
que não gosta de pentear
quando passa na praça do Tubo
o negão começa a gritar
pega ela aí, pega ela aí
pra quê? pra passar batom
de que cor? de violeta
na boca e na buchecha
pega ela aí, pega ela aí
pra quê? pra passar batom
de que cor? de cor azul
na boca e na porta do céu.

(Black woman of the hard hair
who doesn't like to comb herself
when she crosses the Tubo square
the big black man starts to shout
grab her there, grab her there
what for? to put lipstick on her
of what color? purple
in the mouth and in the cheek
grab her there, grab her there
what for? to put lipstick on her
of what color? color blue
in the mouth and in the heaven's door)

This song, which was quite a hit, explores further the exploits of this black woman whose hair is "uncombed". Let be stated, first of all, that Luís Caldas is a very well known musician from Bahia and *fricote* is one of these new variants of Bahian Carnival rhythms that appear every year. So, the first level of meaning pushes the song towards a black perspective, not a white one, as it is clearly the case with Emilinha Borba's tune. Now, what is this black subject, Luís Caldas, singing? The *nega* is crossing a square and a group of men (probably blacks) run after her to hold her and paint her with a lipstick. If she wants it or not, if she likes it or not, it is not their problem. There is a double entendre in the text, when the singer rhymes the names of the colors - with **violeta** (purple) he doesn't really mean *buchecha* (cheek), but *buceta*, a vulgar term for vagina - in live shows Luís Caldas sings this word openly. And with *porta do céu* (heaven's door) he really means something like 'cunt.' One does not have to be Freud to realize that the lipstick here can (or must) also mean the big black man's penis.

This song provoked strong reactions on the feminists and members of black movements, who accused Luís Caldas of racism and misogyny. Surely, indications of lasciviousness, sadism, objectification of the body of a black woman, or even rape, are

more than explicit in this text. Following this model of analysis, firstly the song seems to adhere to our treatment given to this *nega*, for the singer is a black and according to the musical conventions used, he is certainly not protesting!

As to the poetical subject of the text, he runs away from a frontal identification with the intervention on the woman by transferring the action to a third person singular: it is the Big black man who runs after the black woman crossing the street. He (Luís Caldas, we guess) is just reporting what is happening. The subject's escape from responsibility of the action described by the text is reinforced musically by the antiphony used in the central strophe of the song, which is iconic of the dialogue, transmitting an image that not one, by various people chase the woman, hold her and paint her face and genitalia. In other words, we've been given the picture of a happy gang rape.

Fricote is a *dance* genre, proper to express the fun of Bahian Carnival. Very funny... for the Big black man, at least!. We don't know if the *nega* who doesn't like to comb herself took pleasure in being painted with that phallic lipstick. She doesn't seem to have been given the choice. However, some white middle class women whom I asked about this song text tended to think the the *nega* would take this gang sexual assault as a compliment: she is so attractive in her pure blackness (for she keeps her hair as it is, curled) that the men run after her. Usually *negas* and *mulatas* do not have a voice of their own, or a point of view to hold, in popular songs; actually, they never have a name for themselves.

Now, the black woman is not only an object that a man (black or white) can use to exercise his sadism and other sexual fantasies; many times she is beaten up, punched, verbally insulted and occasionally, murdered. Take the following song, recorded by Germano Mathias in the fifties and that Gilberto Gil seems to have taken special musical delight in revisiting:

Nega na janela - Gilberto Gil (autor: Germano Mathias)

Não sou de briga, mas estou com a razão
ainda ontem bateram na janela do meu barracão
saltei de banda, peguei da navalha e disse:
pula, muleque abusado
e deixa de alegria pro meu lado.
Minha nega na janela
diz que está tirando linha
êta nega tu é feia
que parece macaquinha (vê só!)
olhei pra ela e disse:
vai já pra cozinha
dei um murro nela
e joguei ela dentro da pia
quem foi que disse que a nega não cabia?
Spoken: A nega na janela/ no barraco/ e vejam só de repente eu peguei... a nega deve ter

ido de tarde no armazém e tal, o sol, a Guanabara muito bonita, luminosa, e ela já entrou de papo com aquele malandro. Pois não teve conversa não, fui lá dentro, puxei a lâmina, aquela, tá entendendo?, alemã, legítima, e disse: Muleque descarado, tu tá atrás da minha nega, miserável. Vou te mostrar agora.

(The black woman in the window/in the hut/and see suddenly I took... the **nega** might have gone to the grocery in the afternoon and then, the sun, Guanabara beach so beautiful, luminous, and she already began to chat with that scoundrel. Well, there was no talk; I went inside the house, took my blade knife, that one, you see, legitimate German steel and said: shameless crook, you're after my nega, you son of a bitch, I'm gonna show you now).

Here, the poetical subject is an incredibly jealous and violent man. It is not even clear if the black woman actually betrayed him. Her only guilt seems to be to like showing off. She can't defend herself and he insults her, comparing her with a female monkey. The spoken words, in the end, hidden by the swing of the instruments of the *samba de breque*, are extremely violent and phallic. This text exemplifies very well the seducing character of popular songs: the listener is taken by the nice rhythm and the smooth melody, by the inflection of the singer's voice (the 'grain' of his voice, as Barthes would say), and he lets his consciousness go with the flow, quite unaware of what is being sung. This is a case when it becomes critical to disentangle the superimposition of the various I's present in the song.

First of all, Gilberto Gil, being male and black, sings the tune as if the **nega** was his woman - that is, his and Mathias'. Secondly, as far as discourse analysis is concerned, the poetical subject leaves no doubt: the **nega** deserves punishment. What of the listener, the constructed I? His tendency is to identify himself with the singer rather than with the text: the common listener might not even agree with the idea of throwing any black woman in the tub, but he can agree with the idea of Gilberto Gil expressing this desire. What a paradox for someone like Gilberto Gil, normally a champion of the black cause! Possibly he is just teasing the listener by singing the song, as if he is saying: listen to this preposterous song by Germano Mathias; isn't it funny?

We have moved thus from an ideological critique of a song text to a critique of a singer; or rather, more properly, to a critique of the relationship between the poetical subject found in the text and the singer as the poetical subject. Gil uses the ironic mode here, in the sense used by Hayden White (1973). This is somewhat risky in the Brazilian context, for the question remains to what extent the listener might follow the irony and also the controversial use of the black woman to sing a humorous song.

Pungar - Fricote - Singer: Gerude

Se a pungada derrubar
Apenas uma forma de amar
Ai, ai, ai, ai,
A, a, a - ai, ai
Cafungar no cangote na nega
Um cheiro forte de pó

Uma paixão vibração
 Da cabeça ao chamató
 Se a pungada derrubar
 Apenas uma forma de amar
 Na pungada derrubou
 apenas uma cena de amor
 na Casa da Mina tambô rufou
 Obá
 a casa da mina tambô rufá
 obá rufou
 eu vou falando mal
 tambor que não tem cachaça
 eu vou falando mal
 (If the *pungada* makes one stumble
 it_ just one way of loving
 Ah ah ah ah
 To breath in the negra'_ neck [to blow in the negra's ear]
 A strong smell of dust
 A passion, a vibration
 From head to toe
 In the *pungada* stumbled
 just one form of love
 in the House of Mina the drum sounded
 in the House of Mina the drum shall sound
 I am denouncing it
 a drum that doesn't have white rum
 I am denouncing it)

Gerude forms part of the group of musicians from São Luís, Maranhão, who develop the Afro styles of popular music there. The text depicts one of the main African traditions of his state, which is the *tambor de crioula*. *Pungada* is the main dance step of **tambor de crioula** and he says it is just one form of love. The central phrases are typical of the images of the black woman as hot and undemanding lover:

To breath in the negra's neck

A strong smell of dust
 A passion, a vibration
 From head to toe

What he is in fact describing here, quite literally, is an orgasm he achieved, probably by having anal intercourse with his **negra**. The 'ah ah ah' of the third phrase is quite clearly an expression of sexual pleasure. In short, the black woman is just like an

animal the man mounts, takes his sexual pleasure from it (her) and leaves; the text tells no communication, no personal impact made by the black woman in the man who enjoys mounting her.

The term he is using here for sniff (**cafunhar**) is also associated with the act of inhaling cocaine. The poetical subject seems to regard the *nega* as a stupefying drug, a toxic element that allows him to realize extraordinary trips. Two associations are here quite openly implicit to get the message of this text: the two senses of sniffing and also the two senses of the word **pó** (dust). It can mean both cocaine powder and also the dust which has covered the *nega's* body because of the dance which is being developed in the open square during the performance of the *tambor de crioula*.

This text illustrates quite well and blatantly the tenet that one cannot separate racial relations from sexual practices in Brazil. It has been reported repeatedly, since Colonial days, how the Portuguese man was fond of the black woman as a sexual object, most of all because of her smell, reportedly stronger than that of the white woman, felt to be odourless, tasteless and insipid. Now, this externally hierarchical relationship between the *nega* and the man who mounts her from behind (ideologically, a white man) would certainly give rise to negotiations between the two parts involved, and the *nega* might feel happy to provide this total orgasm to the man in order to receive various benefits and privileges from him in exchange. Moreover, at least two white middle class Brazilian women whom I asked about this text accepted it as true, on the grounds that 'it describes a sexual power a white woman does not have, but that she would like to have'. Finally, I would say the poetical subject here is most likely to be a white man, but the constructed I could be a man of any skin color, either a white, a mestizo or a black.

3. The poor, old, humble black man

Another strong image which appears in many songs is that of the old, poor, humble black man, who still carries with him the marks of slavery. The musical style often used to express his agonies and hopes is the lament. The following *Lamento Negro*, sung beautifully by the Trio de Ouro, is a masterpiece of its kind.

Lamento negro - batuque - Trio de Ouro (autores: Constantino Silva e Humberto Porto)

Xangô, Xangô
Ogum dilodê
Ogum dilê Xangô
Meu pai, Xangô
Já se foi lá na Aruanda
Já se foi, se vai
Caô ô
Maleme, meu pai, maleme
Xangô

Ô ô ô ô ô
 Ô ô ô ô ô
 Tetê angorô corumbá
 Zi no samba não tá saravá
 Zi mureque brada ponto
 pra descê Oxum Marê
 pra salvar nossa terera
 cum dina maduna marerê
 Caô ô
 Maleme, meu pai maleme
 Xangô.

This batuque sounds like a typical rhythm of the African tradition in the Plata region - like the Uruguayan *candombe*, for instance. The song is built as a combination of various ritual songs, most of them still in use today in *macumbas*, *juremas*, or *candomblés de caboclo*. It transmits a taste of pan-Afro-Brazilian tradition: in the first strophe it is the Yoruba culture which is invoked. The word *maleme* means mercy; it is a Bantu word, used even in the Afro-Venezuelan tradition (see, for instance, the outstanding traditional piece known as "Tonto maleme", made famous by the Quinteto Contrapunto). The use of the pentatonic mode gives this sadness to the lament. The Portuguese words of the text put the question of the flight of the gods back to Africa, leaving the black people in the Americas suffering the pains of slavery and of the post-slavery period: Shango, or Ogun, or perhaps both - 'he has already gone to Aruanda, he's gone, he is leaving'.

The last strophe of the song was built with an incredible elegance, as far as the meaning of the text is concerned. The words swing between Bantu expressions, plain Portuguese and Bantu-like words that sound like corrupt Portuguese. We couldn't find out yet what the expression 'Tetê angorô corumbá' means, but the next phrase, 'zi no samba não tá saravá' sounds like: if samba is not saved, granted, secured. 'Mureque brada ponto' can be read as broken Portuguese; 'if the poor black sings his ponto, his ritual song' to ask Oshunmare to come down, to save our temple. Then 'cum dina maduna marerê': again, an unknown expression which sounds Bantu. We get the intention of the subject, but he is not able to tell us clearly if his prayer was successful: whether Oshunmare saved his faith we don't know, for in the last minute he lost himself in language: couldn't get through the mess of Bantu languages and broken Portuguese (or, to play with the title of an essay by Clifford Geertz, he got 'lost in translation'). This is really sophisticated, both poetically and conceptually: the *orishas* are never clear, they are not talkative as the local spirits and their message can only be deciphered by the initiates. In other words, the song itself seems to belong to the realm of the esoteric.

This song is paradigmatic, therefore, of an aesthetical strategy of using African words, sometimes phrases and names of gods, in song texts to imprint a Negro-African mood to popular songs. We hear them all the time, in Jorge Ben, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Caetano Veloso, Vinicius de Moraes, etc. Even in the *lambada* by Beto Barbosa we will discuss later called 'Preta' (Black woman) a mumble jambo that sounds like Bantu phrases

can be heard, shouted rhythmically by the singer.

The overall feeling of the song is a bit like a Negro spiritual, and quite Christian; - in spite of the African name, when he calls "my Lord, Shango" he seems to be addressing the One God who has hidden himself from men. Actually, as a literary-musical genre, the lament belongs to the Western cultural tradition, not to the African. It made sense in Brazilian popular music when it was the task of the whites to sing the sufferings of the black people; an entire rhetoric apparatus, poetical and musical, was mobilized to dramatize the black situation. As to the ideological I, it is difficult to define it: the poetical subject is a black; on the other hand, the text emphasizes a formally unnecessary overt sympathy for the black people, apparently indicating the singer is enacting a black person, which means he/she is more likely to be existentially a white. In other words, black and white singers are singing qua whites a song lamenting the black people's social and spiritual condition. Nowadays, with funk, reggae, rap, as we shall see later on, it is easier to accuse and fight discrimination from the point of view of the blacks. The lament is rarely used, because the subject shows himself/herself entirely autonomous. Nonetheless, this lament is perfect, using all the relevant materials and clichés and putting them together in a most efficacious way. The vocals are superb: the leading singer was the great Dalva de Oliveira and one of the two male members of the Trio de Ouro at that time was black.

Cem anos atrás - Choro serenata - Nelson Gonçalves (autores: Benedicto Lacerda e René Bittencourt)

Sonhei que vivia cem anos atrás
e vi Pai João ainda rapaz
Viçosa e bonita eu vi Mãe Maria
Se fosse verdade, que bom que seria!
Na grande varanda da vasta fazenda
eu vi Sinhá Moça de bata de renda
Na fria senzala eu vi os escravos
que foram na guerra exemplo de bravos
Meus olhos se abriram, tristonho acordei
Voltando à verdade da vida, chorei
Não vi Pai João, que a guerra levou
Nem vi Mãe Maria, que o céu reclamou
Em vez do gemido tristonho das redes
senti o silêncio das frias paredes
não sei como um sonho tão bom se desfaz
viver eu quisera cem anos atrás.

(A hundred years ago -
I dreamed I lived a hundred years ago
and I saw Father John still a boy
I saw Mother Mary healthy and pretty
If that was true, how good it would be!

In the large veranda of the big farm
I saw Sinhá Moça (the farmer's daughter) with a lace skirt
In the cold **senzala** (the slave's house) I saw the slaves
who were example of bravery during the war
My eyes opened, I woke up sad
Turning back to the truth of life, I wept
I didn't see Father John, that the war took away
Nor did I see Mother Mary, who was taken to heaven
In stead of the plaintive murmur of the hammocks
I felt the silence of the cold walls
I don't know how such a good dream is dissolved
I wish I could live a hundred years ago.)

This song exemplifies once more the great seducing power of singing in the popular music tradition. Nelson Gonçalves, one of the greatest singers in the country, renders it beautifully, the orchestration is precious and the overall feeling of loss and longing explored in the text is very Brazilian. One is taken over by the soothing mood of the music and is ready to identify oneself with the author's dream... But what sort of dream is it? I imagine the poetical subject, who wants to go back to this style of life a hundred years ago can only be a white slavist! The text depicts Brazilian slavist society as a promise of happiness: Mother Mary, the tender black woman, would be there taking care of the young white lady and Father John, the warm and faithful black man, would also be there to help the poetical subject. As to the slaves, he even misses them living in the *senzala*; and they would even fight bravely during the war to defend their master!

What is also special about this song is that it was recorded in 1946 and it has been reedited in the important LP *Abolição e Música*, issued in 1988 in the context of the celebrations of one hundred years of abolition of slavery. I just wonder what were the motivations behind the decision of putting such a song text in circulation again.

4. The black man as the malandro (the romantic hustler)

This is another fixed image of the black man which has been constructed since the thirties and which goes on until today, although not as strong as it used to be. The *neguinho* is the happy black *malandro* (hustler) who lives in the *favelas* (the hilly slums of Rio de Janeiro) and is a *samba* composer. A romanticized and mythical figure, he provides fun and doesn't threaten the whites, for he only operates inside the established hierarchy: he does the job which is expected of a black. Take the following song, for example:

Olha o jeito desse nêgo - samba - Linda Baptista (autores: Custódio Mesquita e Evaldo Ruy)

Lá vem chegando
o neguinho que eu gosto
Que eu gosto, que eu me enrosco
até fazer besteira
Reparem no seu passo
marcando o compasso
Pois quem é que não cai no laço
de qualquer maneira?
De terno branco todo engomadinho
De camisa azul-marinho
e gravata vermelha
traz sob o braço um violão de pinho
e faz um samba num instantinho
se lhe der na telha
E olha o jeito desse nêgo!
É pose só!
E olha a boca desse nêgo!
É ouro só!
E olha a roupa desse nêgo!
É seda só!
E olha a alma desse nêgo!
É ouro em pó!
Lá na gafieira ele faz sucesso
não paga ingresso e bebe de graça
Se bebe não tomba, se não bebe empomba
Faz barulho e zomba, mas é boa praça.

(Look at the style of this nego -

The neguinho I like is coming
I like, I turn around him
until I do a foolish thing
Look at his step, following the beat
For, who is he who does not fall
into the lace anyway?
Dressed with a white suit, so neat
With navy-blue shirt and red tie
He carries a wooden guitar under his arm
and he makes up a samba in a moment

if he feels like it.
And see the way of this nego
It's pure poise!
And see the mouth of this nego
It's pure gold!
And see the clothes of this nego
It's pure silk!
And see the soul of this nego
It's gold dust!
There in the gafieira (samba house) he is a success
He doesn't pay to enter and drinks free
If he drinks he doesn't fall,
If he doesn't drink he blows up
He makes a fuss and laughs,
But he is a nice guy).

The song is sung by a white woman, but she is possibly enacting the role of a black woman.

5. Preta or nega as any woman

The four images we have seen so far belong to what I call the realm of images and stereotypes fixed by a white eye. They have lasted for more than half a century, practically unaltered. We will now move from song texts that allude to concrete black women and men to texts that depict any woman qua **preta**, or **nega**. There are many song texts that use these two words in this broadest sense and I have chosen a *lambada*, this rhythm that has become famous worldwide, just to expand the musical panorama here presented. Here is Beto Barbosa, possibly the better known *lambada* singer of Brazil, singing to his lover, whom he calls *preta* (I insist, he could have used *nega* too).

Preta - Beto Barbosa

Preta fala pra mim
fala o que você sente por mim
será que vô será que você me quer
será que você vai ser
a minha mulher
diga o que será
quando o seu corpo

no meu se encontrar
bateu legal bateu forte a capoeira
pintou virou varreu minha cabeça
ô preta fala pra mim
minha mulher

(Black woman, speak to me
Speak up what you feel for me
is it true that you love me
is it true that you want to be my wife
tell me what will happen
when your body find mine
the *capoeira* felt good, felt strong
turn my head over)

Nega or **preta** is also used as an expression of affection or intimacy between lovers or couples in Brazil. In other words, **nega** is a woman with whom a man can achieve a certain level of intimacy. When a man calls a woman of fair skin **nega**, this means she is able to preserve for him, in that particular situation at least, something of the sexual mystery attached to the real other (obviously, the black woman being the real other). And most of the time the fair skinned woman will take this treatment as a compliment. As a female friend of mine, a blonde with whom I discussed these lyrics, has told me: "when your husband calls you **minha nega** (my black woman) it means he still finds you attractive, in spite of the fact that you are his wife". The underlying idea here is that real sexual pleasure is normally achieved outside marriage, mostly with a black woman, who comes to represent total openness, as opposed to the wife, who represents controlled and conventional desire.

Of course, this is a transposition of a courtly and sexual code that comes from slavery days. For a white man, especially if he had a minimum of economic or social status in the hierarchy of slavist Brazil, relationship with his wife was extremely formal and distant, and he would use black women sexually more often than her. Within this patriarchal, male oriented framework, therefore, to call his wife **nega** might mean a compensation from the oppressed role she would play for him in the house. Moreover, **negro** might also mean, in many senses not at all unrelated to the previous one, the 'impure', forbidden sex; the instinctual, free, unlimited reins of desire, as it has been expressed quite openly in Gerude's song.

Another intriguing use of **nega** is found in the title of a song by Caetano Veloso called "Eu sou neguinha"? (Am I a little black girl?). The text explores the vicissitudes of a poetical subject who wants to escape from fixed identities - political, genderized, sexual. The gist of the song is precisely the oxymoron created by the text being sung by a male singer; if a female singer sings it, the greatest part of its aesthetic effect will disappear. A question can be put to Caetano's fans: why using, once more, the predictable image of the **pretinha**, instead of innovating in terms of color; say, 'am I a little *morena*, or a little blonde'??

6. Forgetting the *nega*: *morenas*, *mulatas*, and blondes

We will now leave those fixed images and enter the sphere of relative, or ever moving identities, still produced primarily by a white eye that looks at people with various skin colors. The image of the **preta** as any woman opens up the group of images I call the group of transformation. The first of these really mobile images is that of the *mulata*.

a) The *mulata* is supposed to embody all the seductive feminine traits of the Brazilian woman and she apparently reigns over Carnival. The following song, very famous, exalts her appeal and coqueterie.

Mulata Assanhada - samba - Ataulfo Alves - Singer: Miltoninho, 1961

Ai, mulata assanhada
Que passa com graça
Fazendo pirraça,
Fingindo inocente
Tirando o sossego da gente.
Ai, mulata, se eu pudesse
E se o meu dinheiro desse
Eu te dava sem pensar
Essa terra, este céu e este mar.
Ela finge que não sabe
Que tem feitiço no olhar.
Ai, meu Deus que bom seria
Se voltasse a escravidão!
Eu pegava a escurinha
Prendia no meu coração.
E depois a pretoria
É quem resolvia a questão.

(Ah, mulata
who gracefully passes by
making tuntrums
Pretending to be innocent
Taking away our tranquility.
Ah, mulata, if only I could
And enough money I had
I would give you,

without thinking
This land, this sky and this sea.
She pretends she doesn't know
That she's got bewitching eyes.
Ah, my God, how nice it would be
if slavery came back.
I would grab the little dark one
and arrested her inside my heart.
And afterwards the justice
would settle the dispute.)

Once again, like in the song *Cem Anos Atrás*, here the poetical subject longs for the return of the slavery era, when he could simply pick up the *mulata* he would like best as his private property.

b) The *morena* is, basically, an eufemism for the Brazilian white woman with dark hair. The next Carnival tune proclaims the *morena* as someone who will take the crown from the *mulata*.

Linda Morena - Lamartine Babo - marcha

Linda morena, morena
morena que me faz penar
a lua cheia, que tanto brilha
não brilha tanto quanto
o seu olhar
Tu és morena, uma ótima pequena
não há branco que não perca seu juízo
toda gente faz questão do seu sorriso
teu coração é uma espécie de pensão
de pensão familiar à beira-mar
Moreninha não alugues tudo não
deixa ao menos o porão
para eu morar
Por tua causa já se faz revolução
vai haver transformação
na cor da lua
antigamente a mulata era rainha
desta vez oh moreninha
a taça é sua

(Pretty morena, morena
morena who makes me suffer
the full moon, that shines so strongly
doesn't shine as much as your eyes.
You are a morena, an excellent girl
there is not a single white man
who doesn't lose his mind.
Everyone is fond of your smile
your heart is like a guest house,
a familiar guest house by the sea.
Little morena, do not rent all the rooms,
spare at least the basement for me.

Because of you, revolutions are already being made
a transformation will take place
on the moon's colour
in old times the mulata was the queen
but this time, oh little morena,
the cup is yours.)

It should be registered, first of all, the open reference to the white man. It is equally worth mentioning the idea of a woman whose heart is like a guest house, which means she is prepared to receive dozens of people (mostly man!) at the same time. The poetical subject seems so fond of her that he contents himself with the basement of the hotel. One wonders whether a certain sexual overtone is not present in this request to keep the 'basement' for him; after all, Lamartine Babo wasn't exactly a prudish songwriter.

c) The **loura** (blonde) is the skin color less mentioned in song texts. And it is understandable, for the white woman played the ontological role of the universal, in relation to which all the other 'colored' women would be situated (the **negra**, the **cabocla**, the **mulata**, etc). The next song text is extremely important because it is one of the rare songs that mention the blonde woman. Actually, this is the only one I could find, among over five hundred tunes, from the twenties up to 1986. This, in itself, would make it extremely relevant. Moreover, it helps us to complete the picture of this process of color transformation.

Linda lourinha - João de Barro - marcha

Lourinha, lourinha
dos olhos claros de cristal
desta vez em vez da moreninha

serás a rainha do meu carnaval
Loura boneca
que vens de outra terra,
que vens da Inglaterra, ou vens de Paris
quero te dar o meu amor mais quente
do que o sol ardente
deste meu país
Linda lourinha tens o olhar tão claro
deste azul tão raro
como um céu de anil
mas tuas faces vão ficar morenas
como as das pequenas
deste meu Brasil.

(Little blonde, little blonde
of light crystalline eyes
this time instead of the little morena
you shall be the queen of my Carnival.
Doll blonde who comes from another land
who comes from England, or from Paris
I want to give you my love,
hotter than the burning sun
of this country of mine.
Beautiful little blonde
you have such light eyes
of this rare blue like a navy blue sky
but your cheeks will become brown (morenas)
like those of the girls of my Brazil.)

The three last songs illustrate a clear movement of transformation which is ideologically hegemonic in Brazilian race relations. Firstly, we have seen how the *mulata*, being the allegedly perfect result of the country's practice of miscegenation and a product of national pride, was the natural queen of Carnival, the festival of racial integration. However, Lamartine Babo comes and publicizes that times have changed and the *morena* will decrown the *mulata* and will reign over Carnival. Just five years later comes this last song proclaiming that now, instead of the little *morena* (the *mulata* is not even mentioned!) it is the blonde's turn to be the queen.

We are now facing a hierarchy of colors that only works in one direction: first, the *mulata* was worshipped; then, the *morena* came and showed she is able to perform the role of the *mulata* too; finally, the blonde proved to be able to act as a *morena* and, transitively,

to take the place of the *mulata*. How can the blonde carry out this deed? Very simple: through sun tan! Her cheeks becoming brown (*morenos*), everything else is easy. It is also curious that the poetical subject behaves as if there are no blondes in the country, for he is inviting English and French women to come to Rio and conquer Carnival from the Brazilian mestizo women.

Two more ideological consequences of this chain of colors: firstly, it can only work in the direction presented, i.e., the *mulata* can never have the transforming power of the blonde; secondly, at this point, when we have entered the realm of negotiation and visibility, the black woman gets practically out of the picture. She has become just a part of nature, and she was never called to be the queen of Carnival.

7. The Carnival Black

O Canto da Cidade - Samba reggae - Daniela Mercury (composers: Tote Gira e Daniela Mercury)

A cor dessa cidade sou eu
o canto dessa cidade é meu
o gueto, a rua, a fé
eu vou andando a pé
pela cidade bonita
o toque do afoxé e a força, de onde vem?
Ninguém explica
ela é bonita
Uô ô verdadeiro amor
Uô ô você vai onde eu vou
Não diga que não quer mais
eu sou o silêncio da noite
o sol da manhã
Mil voltas o mundo tem
mas tem um ponto final
eu sou o primeiro que canta
eu sou o carnaval
A cor dessa cidade sou eu
o canto dessa cidade é meu.

The Song of the City -
(I am the color of this city
the song of this city is mine
the guetto, the street, the faith

I am walking
by the beautiful city
the play of the afoxé
and its strength, where does it come from?
Nobody explains
it is beautiful
Oh oh true love you're going to where I am going
Don't say you don't want it anymore
I am the silence of the night
the morning sun
The world has a thousand whirls
but it has a final stop
I am the first to sing
I am the Carnival
I am the color of this city
the song of this city is mine)

Daniela Mercury is one of the queens of *axé* music, this new trend in Bahian popular music which has penetrated everywhere in Brazil, from North to South. I chose this song because it was a tremendous hit in the country for more than a year and it epitomizes, together with *Olodun*, the thrill of Bahian Carnival. Again, the paradox between the poetical I and the singer's I couldn't be more poignant. She is certainly not a black, although she might act as one; actually, she is defined by the media as the 'the white woman who is most black in Bahia'. Nonetheless, she states to have the same colour than of the city of Salvador, known as the African city in Brazil, or the African Rome in the Americas.

This text is one of the most complex, ideologically, of this entire anthology, especially because it exhibits neatly the nuances and ambiguities of racial identification in Brazil. To start with, the tone of the narrative is romantic: the ego fuses itself with nature, history and culture, operating through a synecdoque, for she represents all the qualities of Bahia; it could be even a double synecdoque, if we take the word color in this context to mean spirit - for she doesn't say 'I have', but 'I am' the color.

As to the first phrase of the text, we are certainly facing an oxymoron, at least taking the words by their literal meaning, for Daniela Mercury is a white woman, whereas the city of Salvador is taken to be the black city of Brazil, or the 'Black Rome in the Americas'. Some listeners would read it as follows: Daniela Mercury has become black by fusing herself with the city of Salvador. That is the compromising reading, quite typical of the white tourists, from the South of Brazil or from abroad, who come to enjoy Carnival in Bahia. This is what I call the 'Carnival Black' (*negro* or *negra*): you buy the *mortalha* (the costume of the *bloco*, like the one of *Olodun*, for instance) and join the party. A simulacrum of ethnicity is here at play.

Now, other listeners might read the song's paradox as bitterly ironic: since Daniela

Mercury is a white woman, she has 'whitened' Salvador by becoming the city's spokeswoman and Carnival master. In any case, the idea of a Carnival Black is certainly a non-black idea and is certainly a recent revival of the old myth of racial democracy, after it has been strongly attacked by the rise of black movements over the last twenty years.

8. Turning the tide to black pride: funk and rap

None of the texts presented thus far can really represent the viewpoint of a Brazilian black person with self-esteem, pride and sense of autonomy. As I commented elsewhere (Carvalho 1993a) it was only in the early eighties that transnational musical styles associated with black culture - such as reggae, funk and rap - have been introduced systematically in Brazil. They have had a strong and steady influence in many urban blacks, especially among the youth and some singers and musicians have associated themselves openly with the various black movements. They differ from the two previous groups (that of the fixed images and that of transformation) because they inaugurate a black eye that is seeing and imposing a pattern of evaluation of the racial situation in the country. It aims again at fixing a new group of images, or counter-images, to be more precise politically.

A good case of this black pride style is the following funk, famous in the voice of Sandra de Sá, and clearly inspired by the song of Gilberto Gil quoted in my previous article (Carvalho, 1993a), that makes pun on the blondish hair of some blacks ('Sarári crioulo').

Olhos Coloridos - funk - Sandra de Sá

Os meus olhos coloridos
me fazem refletir
eu estou sempre na minha
e não posso mais fugir
meu cabelo enrolado
todos querem imitar
eles estão baratinados
também querem enrolar
você ri do meu cabelo
você ri da minha roupa
você ri da minha pele
você ri do meu sorriso
a verdade é que você
tem sangue crioulo
tem cabelo duro
sarári miolo

sarará crioulo
sarará crioulo
sarará crioulo
sararará crioulo

(My colorful eyes
make me think
I'm always doing it my way
and I can't escape anymore
my curled hair
they all want to imitate
they are are perplexed
and also want to curl
you laugh at my hair
you laugh at my costume
you laugh at my skin
you laugh at my smile
the truth is that you have got black blood
you've got thick hair
blondish brains
blondish mulato)

Now, the following rap has been quite a sensation, both in Brasília, where it was recorded last October, and in São Paulo, the two main centres for rap movement in Brazil.

Sub-Raça - Rap - Câmbio Negro

Woman (spoken): É uma gente mal-educada, fica falando grosseria pra gente, é uma gente suja, é uma gente que você olha para as caras das pessoas e tem vontade de fugir, entendeu? Um horror, não são brasileiros não, cara, é uma sub-raça... Chorus: É a puta que o pariu!

Singer: Agora irmãos vou falar a verdade
a crueldade que fazem com a gente
só por nossa cor ser diferente
somos constantemente assediados pelo racismo cruel
bem pior que o fel
é amargo de engolir um sapo só por ser preto
isto é fato, o valor da própria cor

não se aprende em faculdades ou colégios
e ser negro nunca foi um defeito
será sempre um privilégio
de pertencer a uma raça
que com seu próprio sangue construiu o Brasil...
Sub-raça é a puta que o pariu!
Sub-raça é a puta que o pariu!

Sub-raça sim, é como nos chamam aqueles que não respeitam
as caras dos filhos dos pais dos ancestrais deles
não sabem que seu bisavô, como eu era escuro
e obscuro será seu futuro
se não agir direito
talvez será encontrado em um esgoto da Ceilândia
com três tiros no peito.
O papo é esse mesmo e a realidade é foda
não dê o bote mal dado senão gangue te bola
fique esperto, racista e se liga na fita
somos animais mesmo,
se foda quem não acredita.
Sub-raça é a puta que o pariu!
Sub-raça é a puta que o pariu!
É a puta que o pariu! Pode crer.

(Sub-Race

Spoken: It's a people with bad manners, they keep saying course expressions to us; it's a dirty people; you look at their faces and you feel like running away, you see? Horrible. They're not Brazilians, my friend, it's a sub-race...

Chorus: It's you, son of a bitch!

Singer: Now I'm going to tell you the truth, my brothers
the cruelty they do to us
just because we are of a different colour
we are constantly bombarded by the cruel racism
worse than gall it's bitter to swallow
just because one is black, that's a fact
the value of one's colour is not learned in schools or colleges
and being black has never been a fault
it shall always be a priviledge,
that of belonging to a race
which built Brazil with its own blood...

Sub-race it's you, son of a bitch!
Sub-race it's you, son of a bitch!

Yes, sub-race, that's how we're called by those who don't respect the faces of the sons of the fathers of their ancestors
they don't know their greatgrandfather was dark like myself
and his future is going to be obscure
if he doesn't behave well
maybe he will be found in a gutter in Ceilândia
with three shots in his chest.
That's the situation and reality is fucking hard
don't miss the jump or else the gang will grab you
open your eyes, racist, and get in tune with things
we're really animals, fuck those who don't believe it.
Sub-race it's you, son of a bitch!
Sub-race it's you, son of a bitch!
Fuck you!

Câmbio Negro is a band which forms part of the so-called 'rap consciência' (clear consciousness rap), a trend which seeks to oppose itself to hip-hop, taken to be alienating. In the line of funk, although politically more radical, rap music seeks to build a symbolism of reversion: accusation, condemnation and black pride. In this case, the text was meant as an answer to an insult, formulated by a white young woman against blacks, which was recorded in a TV program. The poetical subject mirrors itself at these insulting words and reacts strongly, returning the label of sub-race to her. In this sense, rap politics is exactly the opposite of that projected by the songs of the Old Black Man: the singer decides to fight against racism openly. One of the strong points of this lyrics is certainly the presence of the expression 'puta que o pariu'. This is probably the strongest curse in Brazilian Portuguese and it is the first time it is ever heard in a song text. It has made an enormous impact, musically and emotionally, especially among young people, of all colour descriptions.

In most of the examples of reggae and rap recorded in Brazil, and in the more radical varieties of funk, the singer is always the same as the poetical subject: the lyrical mode disappears and the I-thou relationship becomes a conscious and controlled dialogue. The movement towards black pride has led to a greater fixation of the singer's I; certain inversions, ambiguities and indirect language have given place to a clearer biographical profile: song texts are written on the perspective of blacks and must be sung by blacks; thus, the differences between levels 1 and 2 of the model presented are practically eliminated.

9. Even more radical images of blacks and whites

The next song text presents what I regard as the most radical picture of race relations in Brazil ever formulated. I chose it because of the synthesis proposed by its title and also because it represents quite a distinct aesthetic and ideological voice.

O Preto e o Branco - Bezerra da Silva

É, mas tem preto, compadre
Que pára num branco
Tem branco que pára
Num preto também
Mas para mim tá tudo certo
Para mim tá tudo bem
Eu disse pro preto que o branco dá branco
E o preto me disse que vai muito além
Me disse que o preto apesar de ser preto
Quando é bom preto dá branco também
É por isso que o preto se amarra num branco
E o branco se amarra num preto também
O preto e o branco são limpos e arregados
São sempre tratados iguais a neném
Tem gente que aperta, tem outro que cheira
Tem até quem bate e dá beijo de bem
É por isso que o preto se amarra num branco
E o branco se amarra num preto também
Até em cartório já ficou provado
A força que o preto no branco contém
Depois que mistura seu nome ao dela
É difícil tirar esse nome de alguém
É por isso que o preto se amarra num branco
E o branco se amarra num preto também

(The Black and the White -
Yes, but there exists a black man, pal
who sticks to a white
and there is the white
who sticks to the black too
But for me it is alright

for me it is all very well.
 I told the black that the white 'whitens' [goes haywire]
 And the black told me he goes much further
 He told me the black in spite of being black
 When he is a good black he 'whitens' too
 That's why the black sticks to a white
 And the white sticks to a black too.
 The black and the white are clean and well kept
 They are always treated like a baby
 There are people who roll, there are others who snort
 There are even those who cut and kiss quite well
 That's why the black sticks to a white
 And the white sticks to a black too.
 Even in the notary it has been proved
 The power that the black has on white
 After his name is mixed with hers
 It is difficult to erase this name from someone
 That's why the black sticks to a white
 And the white sticks to a black too.

Contrary to funk, reggae or rap, *pagode* is a local musical genre, part of the complex universe of *samba* music and deeply rooted in the communities of *favelas* (the hilly slums of Rio de Janeiro). The words of the song make reference to a secrete code, certainly unknown to most people who haven't access to how life is like in the *favelas*. *Branco* here means, alternately, white man and cocaine; and *preto* means black man and marijuana. The poetical subject bases his statements on a representational code which is supposed to separate the two colors. White is the world of the whites, who like cocaine and who live in the asphalt (the urbanized part of Rio de Janeiro); and black is the world of the black people, who live in the muddy hills and who traditionally consume marijuana. The poetic subject therefore starts to fuse these two ideologically and affectively separate worlds stating that there are black people who also like cocaine and there are whites who also like marijuana.

In the second strophe he said to a black that cocaine 'makes one white', i.e., provokes an electric discharge in one's brains; and the black replied that a good marijuana 'makes one white' too. Later he will explain all the various ways of consuming and experiencing the drugs, mixing all the time the two worlds who are apparently separated. So, although Bezerra da Silva has accused racial discrimination explicitly in another song, what he offers here is an absolutely cold, sharp, cynical picture of Brazilian society: there are corrupts, crooks, dealers, liars, hipocrits, everywhere, regardless of people's skin colors. All the social institutions found in the *favelas*, those of the whites as well as those of the blacks, are criticized systematically by him: Carnival, the *jogo do bicho* (an illegal form of gambling), drug traffic, smuggling, robbery, Afro-Brazilian religions (*candomblé*,

umbanda), Protestantism, Catholicism, politics (he insists that black politicians can be as corrupt as white ones). Given the degree of moral degradation which characterizes life in Rio de Janeiro today, this kind of *pagode* tells black people not to get illuded by anybody and not to take sides in this tough and violent world: for him everything is fine, cocaine as well as marijuana, whites as well as blacks. Beyond black lament and black pride, Bezerra offers no racial utopia for blacks, but a Macchiavelian ethics, in the sense Benedetto Croce explains it: an ethics which replicates life, instead of affirming or denying it.

Even more anomalous than Bezerra da Silva's 'The Black and the White' is the following song, sang by Elis Regina.

Black is Beautiful - Marcos Valle & Paulo Sérgio Valle - Singer: Elis Regina

Hoje cedo na rua do Ouvidor
quantos brancos horríveis eu vi
eu quero um homem de cor
um deus negro do Congo ou daqui
que se integre ao meu sangue europeu
Black is beautiful
I want a black so beautiful
Black is beautiful
Black beauty so peaceful
Hoje à noite, amante negro
eu vou me enfeitar
o meu corpo no teu
Eu quero esse homem de cor
um deus negro do Congo ou daqui
Black is beautiful
Black is beautiful

(Black is beautiful -
Early this morning, at Ouvidor street
how many horrible whites I've seen
I want a man of color
a black God from the Congo or from here
who can mingle with my European blood
Black is beautiful
I want a black so beautiful
Black is beautiful
Black beauty so peaceful

Tonight, black lover
I'm going to make me up
my body in yours
I want this man of color
Black is beautiful

Although the composers are two men, the text was written clearly in the perspective of a white woman, such as Elis Regina herself. In the context of race and gender relations in Brazil in 1971, when it was first recorded, it is simply extraordinary that the poetical subject, a white woman, rejects the white men she has met in the street and decides to have an affair with a black man. She has proposed an exact inversion of the normal racist and sexist pattern, which would allow a white man to express his desire for a black woman. The song text is certainly influenced by the American Black Power movement; so much so that the motto is sung in English: Black is beautiful. The expression 'man of color' is a common euphemism, prior to black pride, for it hides the outward statement of a person's skin color; in this sense, the text is not completely liberated from the disguises and hipocrisies so typical of Brazilian racism. So, there are many ambiguities with this text; however, it is worth mentioning because it adds complexity (and confirms the obsession with the theme) to an already complicated picture.

Epilogue: Teaching a black girl how to dance

In March 1994, when I was preparing the final version of this essay, my five year old daughter sang to me, proudly, the following song, she had just learned at her school in Brasília. Busy as I was for over two years, looking for recordings that circulate through radios, TVs and shows, I had forgotten how strong oral transmission of racial images still is, especially from adults to children. Whatever doubts I might have as to whether I wasn't exaggerating in choosing all those racist examples from popular music, they disappeared when I realized what sort of children's song they were teaching my own daughter. I close the essay with this song, sparing the reader of further comments.

Dança Pretinha - Children's Song

Plantei uma florzinha
no meu quintal
nasceu uma pretinha
de avental
dança pretinha
eu não sei dançar
pega um chicote
que ela vai dançar

(I planted a little flower
in my backyard
a little black girl was born
carrying an apron
dance, little black girl
I don't know how to dance
pick up a whip
and she is going to dance).

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