

**Machine Gun Voices:  
Bandits, Favelas and Utopia in Brazilian Funk**

By

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### Abstract

Funk in Brazil, a form of the popular culture from the *favelas*, or hillside slums, and other low-income neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro, is as multi-dimensional and ambiguous as the social reality from which it comes and is often misunderstood by outside observers and vilified in the media. Incorporating counter-cultural aspects of the international Black movement and world hip-hop and fusing them together with the culture of the *favelas*, funk has evolved into a rich musical form characterized by irony, complex masking and subversive messages and practices. To examine these practices in funk, I combine literary and cultural theory with social science hypotheses on the nature of the “social bandit” and the power of Rio’s drug gangs, as well as an ethnographic perspective mostly focusing on the community of the favela of Rocinha. After providing background on the climate of violence in Rio de Janeiro and discussing the social and economic organization of the community of Rocinha in general terms, I explore the nature of the *baile funk*, or funk dance, in favelas as a platform for the staging of the power of the drug traffickers. I also attempt to map out the ideological contours of the rule of criminal factions in the partially alternative social formation of the favelas, paying special attention to lyrics of a style of underground funk music know as *proibidão*, one of the principal practices through which the legitimacy of these drug traffickers is produced and lived. Finally, I examine the utopian character of funk as a form of entertainment as an example of the tendencies of ‘black Atlantic’ cultures of the African Diaspora. I also explore its similarities with Brazilian *Modernismo*, compare it to contemporary Carnival and situate it in the context of other styles of popular music in Brazil.

## Introduction

Brazilian funk has become immensely popular with young people from the *favelas*, or hillside slums, of Rio de Janeiro and the city's other poor neighborhoods and has produced many talented artists, vibrant music, dances and shows. Incorporating counter-cultural aspects of the international Black movement and world hip-hop and fusing them together with the social formation, or culture, of these favelas, funk has evolved into a rich musical culture characterized by irony, complex masking and subversive messages and practices. As a form of the popular culture of favelas, funk in Brazil is as multi-dimensional and ambiguous as the social reality from which it comes and is often misunderstood by outside observers and vilified in the media. Since its beginnings in the 1980's, its violent reputation and overt sexuality have made funk one of the most polemic musical practices in the world. In 2002, Rio's funk was described in the *New York Times* as, "Perhaps the most controversial dance scene in the world..." (Strauss 29) Later that year the *Washington Post* also reported that:

The 'funk balls' of Rio are pantheons of pleasure and violence that have gained international renown as the world's fiercest urban dance scene.

Brazilian funk- inspired by the sounds and styles of American gansta rap and hip-hop but far more extreme than either- and the balls where it is played are the most controversial craze yet in Latin America's largest nation. (Faiola C7)

On the surface, the obnoxiously loud funk, with its heavy Miami base style sound, cheap keyboards and low end drum machines, is deceptively childlike and simple. Vocal delivery is often rough and unpolished. Singers typically perform in duos, sometimes yelling, more than singing, in hoarse throaty voices, chanting out refrains reminiscent of

the mass cheers at soccer games in the Maracanã stadium on the north side of Rio. The music is replete with samples of everything from machine gun fire and other explosions, to cows mooing, and digitally altered voices. The lyrics of funk appeal to violence and raw sexuality one moment, then brotherly love, peace and faith in God the next. Beneath the surface of the apparent disregard for originality and taste, however, funk is a weapon in a postmodern war, it is at once heroic and delinquent, a cry of protest and resistance, an apology of crime, a vulgar and sexualized commodity and a call to love, fight and live.

In the year 2002, events surrounding the murder of *O Globo* reporter Tim Lopes, discovered by drug traffickers as he filmed their activities inside a funk dance in a favela in Rio de Janeiro, reinvigorated the debate about the growing crisis of violence and social exclusion in Brazil. In the light of this debate, this study attempts to map out the ideological contours of the partially alternative social formation of the favelas, combining social science and criminological theories on the nature of the “social bandit” and the power of Rio’s drug gangs with a cultural approach emphasizing the practice of *proibidão* funk music as one of the principal ways through which their legitimacy is produced and lived. The bandits that govern Rio’s favelas, and the culture of favelas in general, are neither revolutionary nor purely consumerist, nor are they “parallel” to the Brazilian State. In important ways, they are an extension of the status quo order in Brazil, both economically and ideologically, even as they reject its authority on a formal level. In the end, the revolt that has given rise to the culture of drug trafficking, and the *proibidão* funk that glorifies it, is an outgrowth of the gross economic disparity in Brazil and the partially alternative ideological space of the favela in which the bandits are constructed as quasi-messianic reformers of a paternalistic order. Still, *proibidão* funk, a sort of

“prohibited,” underground style of illegal gangster funk performed live at funk dances and found on pirated recordings available only in favelas, and the culture of the drug traffickers it portrays and glorifies are not the only important aspects of funk. Beyond the question of violence and crime, funk is a powerfully utopian musical practice born of the remarkably fluid hybridity of the favelas and the politics of transformation characteristic of African Diaspora peoples. These dimensions of funk give it a common ground with other utopian cultural forms in Brazil such as *modernismo*, Carnival and Brazilian hip-hop, connections I shall explore in the final chapter of this study.

This study consists in four chapters, a conclusion, an appendix and a bibliography. In chapter one, “Writing about Funk in the Favela of Rocinha,” I attempt to explain the motives that have lead me to study funk music in Rio and a bit of my personal history in the Rocinha. I also offer a short summary of trends in contemporary Brazilian music and discuss funk in terms of these trends. Additionally, I comment on several important studies of funk and discuss the methodological procedures I employed in researching my study. Chapter two, “Funk, Favelas and Organized Crime,” provides an exploration of the nature of the control of favelas by drug trafficking gangs and a reading of the *baile funk* as a staging of their power. The chapter is presented in the context of the aftermath of the murder of journalist Tim Lopes, which took place in June of 2002, and the debate regarding the existence of a “culture of drug traffickers.” In particular, the ideas of Alba Zaluar, a well-known specialist on crime in Rio, are discussed. Chapter three, “The ‘Social Bandit’ in Funk,” is a more detailed exploration of the ideological formation of the power of the drug traffickers as it is represented in *proibidão* funk. Also included is a discussion of the representation of organized crime in funk as comparable to the notion of

the social bandit developed by E. J. Hobsbawm in *Primitive Rebels: Studies in archaic forms of social movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*. There are also some close readings of some *proibidão* texts and an analysis of the ideological strategies of the drug gangs evident in them according to categories suggested by Terry Eagleton. In the fourth chapter I move from the question of violence and organized crime in funk and favelas to an exploration of its dimensions as a utopian cultural practice. In order to do so, I borrow the straightforward analytic framework employed by Richard Dyer in his influential article “Utopia and Entertainment.” Then, I use this analysis as the basis for a comparison between the practice of funk and contemporary Carnival in Rio de Janeiro. Additionally, I explore the relationship of funk to the Brazilian *modernismo* movement that officially began in the 1920s, focusing on the tendency in both toward an aesthetics of *antropofagia*, or cultural cannibalism. Finally, I examine funk as an example of the utopian practices of the cultures of the African Diaspora, analyzing it in terms of what Paul Gilroy has referred to as the “politics of transformation” in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*. The conclusion is intended as more of an afterword that brings my discussion of funk to a close, although it does reiterate the principal arguments and introduce some further conclusions. Finally, the appendix is comprised of lyrics of *proibidão*-style funk songs, and some non-*proibidão* songs by Tati Quebra-Barraco and other artists, typical of the other tendencies to be discussed.

Each of the four chapters and the conclusion are introduced by a short vignette intended to further contextualize my arguments in somewhat more vivid and personal terms. These are fictionalized accounts drawn from field research of dances, conversations and experiences living in Rocinha. While I have included only brief

transcriptions of the actual interviews that took place, it is my hope that the voices of the many others who contributed will be audible in more subtle ways throughout. As for lyrics of songs, a certain fascination with the aesthetic and emotional impact of the original has led me to include them in Portuguese within the body of my chapters. Although Spanish speakers will be able to make some sense of them, even an average native speaker of Brazilian Portuguese is likely to be unfamiliar with some of the gangland references and favela slang. Therefore I am including English translations of my own, in the endnotes. As academic Portuguese is more directly readable to speakers of Spanish, I have left many quotes of Brazilian scholars and other writers in Portuguese without any translation in the endnotes. In any event, in order to protect the composers and singers of the songs cited in this study, as little reference as possible will be made as to the authorship and performance of *proibidão*-style funk songs. Though each individual composer and singer is obviously different from the others and important in his or her own way, I will be looking at excerpts from songs as media texts, i.e., instances of the hegemonic discourse of the social order of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. It must also be remembered that these texts are the artistic productions of individual people living within the culture of favelas and as such they reflect the individual creativity of their authors in much more profound ways than I will be able to address here. For similar reasons, I have sometimes changed names of other people and places mentioned in my work in general.

## Chapter One: Writing about Funk in the Favela of Rocinha

O meu Brasil é um país tropical

A terra do funk, a terra do carnaval

O meu Rio de Janeiro é um cartão postal

Mas eu vou falar de um problema nacional

-“Rap das Armas”, by MCs Leonardo and Júnior<sup>1</sup>

### Guns and Voices in the Via Ápia

Even at its calmest, the Via Ápia is the busiest, most commercial strip in the bustling neighborhood of Rocinha, the largest favela, or hillside slum, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. By day, the Via Ápia is run amuck with innumerable motorcycle taxis, trucks, cars, and bicycles, as well as thousands of pedestrians of all ages, shapes and sizes, going to or coming home from work or school. There are several bars and restaurants lining the street, as well as furniture stores, bingo halls, hair salons, and stands selling hot dogs or corn-on-the-cob. Buildings as many as five or six stories tall overlook the street, which gently slopes up the base of the mountain known as Dois Irmãos, or Two Brothers.

On Saturday nights, the local *comando*, or drug-trafficking gang, that controls Rocinha often sponsors an outdoor *baile funk* dance right in the middle of the Via Ápia. Stacks of fifteen-foot high speakers, hundreds of feet long, line one side of the narrow street. Several thousand young people crowd the Via Ápia, circling to and fro through the masses in long trains, moving up and down the strip as the speakers blast music loud enough to rattle the glass out of some nearby windows. Just in front of the speaker

columns, groups of kids as young as ten and eleven perform choreographed dance moves. Although most actual *funkeiros*, or fans of funk music, are young, the enormous *baile* is a sort of community street festival that attracts people of all ages. Older folks crowd the openings of the bars facing the street and in adjacent alleys. The *baile* in the Via Ápia is typically hot and humid, despite being outside, and the air hangs thick on the crowd, filled with smoke, gasoline exhaust and the smell of bodies.

Joy and expectation also hang in the air, as people with smiling faces pass by shouting the words to the music, chanting and swaying sensually to the songs. The *funkeiros* sing of everything from love to crime, from social problems to the beauty of favelas and other poor neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro. At the *baile*, most girls wear miniature lycra shorts, strapless tops called *tomara-que-caia*, or “hope it falls”; others dress in skirts both tight and low on the hips, or the semi-elastic Gang brand jeans. Boys wear Bermuda shorts, tennis shoes, baseball hats and surf wear, either bare-chested or with Gracie jiu-jitsu shirts or soccer jerseys, hair short, often bleached, or even shaved. The heavily armed “soldiers” of the *comando* can be seen wading through the crowd or standing in the openings of alleys, dressed the same but brandishing AK-47s, AR-15s, shotguns, UZIs. The gangsters talk in groups as they eye the crowd, keeping watch and swaying to the beat of funk. On nights of the *bailes* in Rocinha, the heavy base of the music can be heard all night long booming up the slopes of the favela.

With its population estimated at over 120,000, Rocinha is considered one of the largest of the more than 741 *favelas* in Rio.<sup>2</sup> Due to its size and location in one of the richest parts of Rio, Rocinha receives considerably more attention from the city government than most other *favelas* and has grown commercially at an astounding rate

over the last decade. Still, given the limitation of its physical space relative to its huge population, Rocinha is one of the most crowded, noisy places on Earth and remains sadly lacking in adequate sewage, water, electricity and educational resources. Police do little policing in the neighborhood and instead the local drug-traffickers of the *Comando Vermelho*, the largest group of organized crime in Rio, provide law and order. Rocinha has always been one of the most important communities for the *movimento funk*, or funk movement, as it is called. Many of funk's most famous MCs come from Rocinha, like MC Galo, Neném, Gorila and brothers Leonardo and Júnior. *Funk melody*, a romantic bubble gum version of funk, is also important in Rocinha, which is the home of the composer Renato Moreno and the singer Charlys, who performs songs in Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and Hebrew. In addition, there are four major *bailes* held weekly in Rocinha, each one attracting thousands of *funkeiros*. The most famous is at the Emoções club, another at the old samba *quadra*, or practice hall, on top of the favela at Rua Um, one in the Valão area near the base of the hill and finally the *baile* in the Via Ápia described above.

#### *Writing about Funk in the Favela of Rocinha*

Several very strong motives lead me to study the culture of Brazilian funk. The fact that I have lived in Rocinha for some five years off and on since 1990 and maintain a permanent residence there to this day has been fundamental in my interest in funk in a variety of important ways. From the first time I lived in the community, as an undergraduate student doing an independent research project on organized crime, the residents of the favela made me feel welcome.<sup>3</sup> As the years passed and my history and

identity in the neighborhood evolved, I formed deep personal ties to my friends and neighbors that had a profound impact on me. Through extended stays in Rocinha in 1992 and 1995, research experiences (including a summer experience made possible by a grant from the Tinker Foundation in 1996, a graduate exchange at PUC-Rio in 2000, and field work in 2001, 2002 and 2003), and my deep involvement in co-founding and directing the Fundação Dois Irmãos with old friends in the favela in 1998, I have gone from starry-eyed visitor to community activist and adopted Rocinha as something of a permanent home. In stating this, I am not making any claims to have authority as a native of the community. I am not a native of Rocinha, but I am and have been a resident, even as I am and have been a US born cultural critic who is both middle-class and white. The favela is a fluid space of cultural hybridity, a hybridity characteristic of what Paul Gilroy calls the ‘black Atlantic’ cultures of the African Diaspora and one not unlike that evident in cultural studies themselves. Hopefully, in lieu of radical objectivity, the somewhat duplicitous perspective I have developed and my own “hybridity” will strengthen my analysis of the culture of favelas and of the practice of funk music in Rio de Janeiro.

In the years I have lived in Rocinha, a sort of epicenter for the funk movement, my opinion about funk has evolved. I remember being bemused at best in 1990 when I first heard the blatantly pornographic references of live funk songs ringing up the neighborhood to the roof of my first house in Rocinha, in the Rua Um area. When in 1995 I first bought a cassette of Pipo’s *Volta do Homem Mau* album, with MCs Willian and Duda’s famous “Rap do Borel (Rap da Liberdade)” on it, I found it cheap sounding and simplistic, as well as disappointingly “un-Brazilian.” Nonetheless, throughout the years I have spent in and around funk living in Rocinha, I noticed how significant funk

was for so many people, how important the funk dances were, both in the streets and in the Emoções club, and I became steadily “funkified,” to borrow a phrase from George Yúdice in his well-known study of funk in Rio.<sup>4</sup> Although I am most definitely “old” compared to the young people typically involved in funk culture, who normally fall within the ten to twenty-something age group, at this point I have been enjoying funk for years, going to the dances, and buying and listening to records at home. I also respect many MCs and DJs of funk, as well as dancers and composers and have come to associate funk with a very real sense of community in Rocinha.

In any case, of all the musical practices that form the cultural landscape of favelas in Rio, including other less polemic styles such as samba, pagode, forró, sertanejo and evangelical music, funk is presently one of two styles to embrace self-consciously the social reality of Rio’s poor as its origin and essence. The other is Brazilian hip-hop, a fascinating and energetic musical culture in its own right that deserves much more attention than it will receive in this study. In any event, at the heart of funk is the revolutionary affirmation of the strength and worth of folks in favelas and other poor people in Rio. Against those who would criticize funk as a banal, artless apology for crime, I have found the practice of funk as a culture, whether in writing and performing songs, working as a DJ, going to dances, wearing the clothes, buying the albums, or by any other means, to be a “significant” counter-cultural practice. The praxis of funk, in all the characteristic contradictions and incoherencies of postmodern youth culture movements, constitutes an oppositional and transformational social reality that has at its core the class and racial dissatisfaction of the residents of innumerable favelas and other poor neighborhoods in Rio. In Brazilian society, where the Globo network and its ilk

bombard the spaces of mass culture with a constant flow of classist, racist and sexist texts and images, it is indeed rare to find a counter-hegemonic or alternative cultural movement that has the impact of funk. Chuck D of Public Enemy once said that hip-hop is the CNN of black folks. In the same way, it could be said that Rio's funk, along with its cousin Brazilian hip-hop, are the Globo Network of folk from favelas, black, brown and otherwise. These styles present some of the most direct challenges to the authority of the consensus view of the dominant social order in Brazil today.

Furthermore, the persistent vilification of funk by the media throughout the years has aided in reproducing the same ideological basis for discrimination against Rio's poor. As is evident in the above quotes from the *Times* and the *Post*, it is rare to see any mention of funk in the media, Brazilian or otherwise, that is not double edged at best. References are nearly always made to things such as "corridor of death"-style gang fights, organized crime recruitment of soldiers in the dances and violent gang slogans used as refrains of songs. This process of vilification is a symptom of the very deep and very strong prejudice against favelas and their residents that has been prevalent throughout Brazil. An anecdote will illustrate the point. Before moving to Rocinha in 1990, I had been living in a mansion in Rio's chic beachfront São Conrado neighborhood. When I told dona Ilsa, the kindly, wealthy, white elderly woman with whom I had been living where I was moving, she asked me why, on Earth, I would want to live in a favela. I couldn't move to Rocinha, she said, and surely I would be kidnapped, killed or worse! When I replied that I wanted to learn about the culture of the people in Rocinha, she laughed and informed me that, "Those people don't have culture!" I'm glad to say that this reaction has become less typical since 1990 when I tell other middle-class friends in Rio that I live in Rocinha.

In any event, that the *favelado*, a pejorative term used in references to folks in favelas, has been constructed in Brazilian society as something of a second class citizen is at once obvious, well documented and predictable, as is the disdainful and neglectful treatment of the poor more generally.<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, the vilification of funk is related in a significant way to the longstanding vilification of *favelas* and their residents in general.

Due to similarities between Brazilian funk and Brazilian hip-hop as black urban counter-cultural musical styles, the two styles are often studied together and talked about as if they were the same thing. It is important to clarify that such is not the case.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the first people to say so will be adherents of the “hip-hop nation” in Brazil, which is much more self-consciously political than funk. Many adherents of Brazilian hip-hop, and indeed others of the world hip-hop culture originating in the US, reject funk as hip-hop’s ugly and illegitimate offspring. Brazilian hip-hop is perceived by them to be the musical arm of Brazil’s “movimento Negro,” or black movement, and an empowering critique of the system from the periphery. Funk, on the other hand, is denounced as a sort of musical bread and circus, a new opiate of the masses glorifying hedonistic sex and violence.<sup>7</sup> In truth, Brazilian hip-hop does reflect a much more self-consciously political impulse even in its more “essentialist” understanding of racial identity and its tendency to construct Afro-Brazilian subjects explicitly as members of the world Black family. In funk, racial identity is constructed in a more complex and less bipolar fashion which is much less explicitly foregrounded in its practice. That the two movements are not one is further apparent in the process of vilification both have undergone. Brazilian hip-hop, which has most of its success in São Paulo, has certainly received its share of bad press and found itself at the center of controversy. Still, any vilification of hip-hop in Brazil

pales in comparison to that which has occurred in the case of funk from Rio, a fact that raises the question of whether or not funk might, in some ways, represent an even greater challenge to the social reality of the dominant order, despite its less self-consciously political nature.

Nonetheless, while it is necessary to avoid lumping the two cultures into one, as do most scholars of Brazilian music, neither can they be completely separated. First and foremost, millions of everyday people participate in both cultural currents, both of which obviously speak to and about the experiences of poor folks in Brazil in the discursive struggle for symbolic terrain. Additionally, the questions of race and class are crucial to both forms and they are two of the principal cultural expressions of resistance of poor folks in Brazil. Both Brazilian funk and hip-hop are the legitimate offspring of the world hip-hop movement, two hybrid forms appropriated and practiced by poor folks in Brazil as two edges of a sword in the struggle of counter cultural politics. In fact, the hybrid nature of American and world hip-hop in general, and its openness to appropriate elements of other styles and cultures, is one of its most important characteristics, as Paul Gilroy repeatedly observes in his seminal work on the African Diaspora, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Such hybridity does not invalidate cultural practices, but is indeed one of their great strengths. John Fiske has noted some ways in which hybridity in popular culture is a fundamental characteristic making it crucial in the field of ideological negotiation:

The theory of popular culture that underlies this essay derives from the tradition of cultural studies. This school of thought agrees with all the criticisms of industrial capitalism sketched above (i.e., *the commodification*

*and massification of high art leading to a “middle-brow” conformist culture, destroying both high and popular culture and therefore any authentic human sense from which to criticize capitalist society)* but disagrees with the claimed totality of their effectiveness. It accepts the accuracy of the diagnosis of the forces with which popular culture has to cope but rejects the assumption that people have no resources of their own from which to derive coping strategies, their own resistance and their own culture. Popular culture in industrial societies does exist, even though it may never be pure and authentic, for it is always made from cultural resources that are opposed to it, it is always contradictory and inscribed with traces of that to which it is opposed. It is always, then, a culture of struggle, a culture of making do rather than one of making. Popular culture is typically bound up with the products and technology of mass culture, but its creativity consists in ways of using these products and technologies, not in producing them.<sup>8</sup>

This “making do,” the hybrid nature of popular culture to borrow and expropriate elements from the ideologically ambiguous terrain of mass culture, is an element that lends power and creativity to subaltern communities. Therefore, instead of labeling either Brazilian funk or hip-hop as “inauthentic,” cheap imitations of American culture, or praising one form over the other as the legitimate heir to world hip-hop, the hybridity of both forms should be viewed as an essential dimension of their oppositional natures.

There is one final consideration that has led me to study the culture of funk in Brazil. It is often the case that scholars, particularly young and idealistic ones like me, seem to find revolution and resistance under every rock as they engage in the critique of culture

and the analysis of politics. The title of the present work, *Machine Gun Voices*, may suggest that I am such a writer. For me, there is a very real war taking place in Brazil, albeit somewhat “post-modern” and undeclared, occurring mostly in the favelas and other poor neighborhoods of Brazil. In his important study of the increasing divide between social classes in Rio de Janeiro, *Cidade partida*, Zuenir Ventura defines the nature of this “post-modern war” which has intensified in the city:

A exclusão se transformou no problema social maior. Enquanto dos morros só se ouviam os sons do samba parecia não haver problema. Mas agora se ouvem os tiros. Não se trata de uma guerra civil, como às vezes se pensa, mas de uma guerra pós-moderna, econômica, que depende das artes bélicas mas também das leis do Mercado; é um tipo de comércio. Por isso não há solução mágica à vista. Sabe-se que é preciso destruir as "vanguardas"- os que praticam barbaridades, os traficantes de drogas- numa operação de força implacável. Exterminá-los, porém, talvez seja mais fácil do que desmontar o circuito econômico que os sustenta e cujas pontas- a produção e o consumo- não estão nas favelas (i).

In the most immediate sense, Ventura is referring to the economic circuit of the production and consumption of cocaine and other drugs, a circuit which passes through the favelas of Rio de Janeiro as drugs come in from other countries and are distributed to users who are not mostly from the favelas themselves. By linking the notion of unbalanced economic circuit to social exclusion, however, Ventura seems to suggest that the rise of the power of the drug traffickers in Rio’s favelas itself is a symptom of the failings of the larger system of consumer capitalism in Brazil in general, a system that has

served to crystallize and worsen the distance between the country's rich and poor. Ventura's words are from the preface of *Cidade partida*, a book he wrote in 1994 after the massacre of 21 innocent residents of the favela of Vigário Geral by four police officers. The relevance of his observations only grows as the conflict between organized crime and the government has worsened since the writing of his book. After Tim Lopes' death in 2002, and the subsequent police crackdown on drug gangs, a chain of events has unfolded in Rio that has marred the city with new forms of violence. The campaign of guerrilla tactics undertaken by organized crime has brought the debate about violence and social exclusion to a new level of intensity in which the demonization of both the populations of favelas and funk music has worsened. I do not wish for my study, especially the two chapters on the ideology of the culture of drug trafficking, to be taken as an apology for organized crime, nor as a romantic view of Rio's criminals as heroic revolutionaries. I do see this work, as I see Ventura's book, as a part of the debate as to just what kind of war is going on in Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, by exploring aspects of the world of funk, I am attempting to examine some of the complex ways in which the culture of favelas involves the counter cultural strategies by people on the front lines of the struggle for symbolic terrain in the Brazilian hegemonic process.

The title of this study, "Machine Gun Voices," came to me upon listening to what has become a funk standard, "Rap das Armas," quoted at the beginning of this chapter, a song that is a protest about the problem of violence in society and a disclaimer of the culpability of favelas. Its lyrics form a rapid-fire poem listing the weapons that can be found in favelas. Written by Leonardo and Júnior, well-known brothers from the Valão area of Rocinha, the hit underwent a major process of vilification by the media in the

mid-nineties connecting them to the drug underworld.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the Rio police constantly harassed the brothers as they came in and out of the favela, despite the fact that their song was never intended to promote the drug gangs and that their own older brother is a police officer in the *Polícia Militar*. The refrain, sung by MCs Cidinho and Doca of the Cidade de Deus, is a series of syllables sung to imitate machine gun fire, “Pá parrá pá parrá pá parrá claque bum ...” The refrain became a cliché in funk and the practice of singing off lists of weapons was quickly adopted as a typical feature of *proibidão* funk music, as was that of sampling machine gun bursts and other gunshots and explosions in funk music.

Listening to the song one day, it struck me that the practice of vocally and digitally imitating machine gun fire in funk lies at the core of hegemonic discursive struggle in Rio. As a media image, gunfire becomes an emblem of the “violence” and “barbarity” of the poor and the misery of their lives in favelas. By turning the gunfire into a voice of protest and solidarity, funk artists perform a densely suggestive semiotic inversion that subverts this dehumanizing association and opens possibilities for new meanings. Gunfire can be a lament of the conditions of life in favelas and their abandonment by mainstream society, it can be a roar glorifying the power of the favela and its drug lords, or it can be an ominous war cry warning those of the status quo that there is a storm rising. Furthermore, as a sign in dispute it becomes recognizable differently according to the listener’s particular social reality. The artistic representation of gunfire, self-consciously and ironically affirmed as emblematic of life in the favelas, may provoke sadness in some listeners and fans or make them indignant at the prevailing lack of social justice in Rio; it may make others feel proud to be from powerful and respected neighborhoods, and it

may make still others even feel threatened and scared. Whatever the reaction of the individual listener may be, funk music has made the cadence of machine gun fire and the cult of arms almost as typical in its music as the thumping beats of hip-hop and techno have become to its rhythm. These musical gunshots have become as much a part of the landscape of funk as real gunshots are to the reality of the favelas and other poor neighborhoods of the city. Whether guns are seen as a problem or as a solution is a matter of debate and interpretation, but by pushing gunshots and other aspects of the violence in the lives of people in favelas to the forefront of artistic production, funk music serves to interrogate and denaturalize assumptions about the climate of violence in Rio de Janeiro.

### ***Socio-Political Trends in Contemporary Brazilian Music***

In order to further contextualize the practice of funk in Rio de Janeiro, I will offer a brief discussion of some of the principal socio-political tendencies of Brazilian music since the dictatorship. An enormous variety of musical styles have developed in Brazil over the past century, styles which have been influenced by international music at the same time that they have had a tremendous impact on it. There is the Afro-Brazilian samba music of carnival, and the big band versions of samba in the thirties and forties which came about as samba was chosen to be the “authentic” national music of Brazil. Then there were the smooth sounds and poetic lyrics of bossa nova in the early sixties by such greats as João Gilberto, Tom Jobim and lyricist Vinícius de Moraes. During the period of the military dictatorship in Brazil in the sixties and seventies, the great music festivals produced a new generation of talented progressive performers who questioned the legitimacy of the regime. Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil introduced the eclectic and

iconoclastic tropicália movement, and other MPB (Música Popular Brasileira, a complex, eclectic style that mixes elements of jazz and other world currents with Brazilian styles like samba and bossa nova) artists such as Chico Buarque and Milton Nascimento mixed social commentary with elements of Brazilian popular music and world musical currents.<sup>10</sup>

These developments in music came about in the context of the changes in the larger Brazilian socio-political landscape that were occurring during this period of the military dictatorship, changes which reflected the growing mobilization of local groups and minorities around particular causes and concerns. Several new forms of organization emerged in Brazil, such as the CEBs (*Comunidades Eclesiásticas de Base*, small, intimate bible study groups organized to apply the Gospel to social and political action) of the Catholic Church and the neighbors' associations of favelas, both of which focused on local forms of advancement and fighting the marginalization of the poor. Also, women's groups were created and the Movimento Negro arose for the first time since the Frente Negra Brasileira of the twenties and thirties. During this period, protest in music was extremely important, but tended to limit itself to criticism of the military regime. MPB itself became a primary platform for voicing opposition of the government and artists, such as Chico Buarque, Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso and Geraldo Vandré, were harassed, censured, forced into exile, sometimes being incarcerated and tortured for protesting against the regime.

As the military regime adopted a less totalitarian stance in the late seventies and early eighties, the mobilization of minority and marginalized groups gained momentum, continuing to bring the question of citizenship to the forefront of socio-political debate.

By the time civilian rule was restored in 1986, the problematic of citizenship was exacerbated by a state of crisis which overtook Brazil: inflation soared, corruption was prevalent, and a surge of violent crime pervaded urban centers. Throughout this conflictual period, discourses of resistance that had identified themselves in opposition to the military regime gave way to broader strategies which problematized racial inequality and the effective lack of citizenship of various groups of marginalized people. Reflecting these changes in this period many forms of music gained popularity for which the question of citizenship was a central theme.<sup>11</sup>

Localized Brazilian hybrids of world currents like rock and punk continued to grow in Brasília, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and acts like Legião Urbana and Cazuza gained wide audience. Legião is the all-time most popular Brazilian rock band and something of a cross between U2 and the Cure that combines themes of everydaylife with a quiet sense of spirituality and combative political commitment. Cazuza was a hugely successful pop rock singer who combined tremendous energy and pop sensibility with intelligent and socially conscious lyrics. Sadly, both Renato Russo, the lead singer of Legião Urbana, and Cazuza died of aids in the 1990's. In Brasília, as well as several other urban centers, Brazilian rock music boomed and such groups as Legião Urbana and Os Paralamas do Sucesso lamented social inequalities and their disillusionment with society in general.<sup>12</sup> The Funk Movement of Rio de Janeiro, originating in the Black Pride soul music of Black-Rio, Black-Sampa and Black-Mineiro, moved away from the racially specificity of its early aesthetics, broadening the scope of its social criticism to the question the of the marginalization of the popular classes. The older artists of the MPB generation such as Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso also took up the problem of racial and class-based

inequalities to a greater degree than before, focusing on, among other things, police violence, street children and the overcrowding of prisons.

During the eighties and nineties, citizenship related themes were often treated by interpreters of more traditional styles of Brazilian music as well, by artists such as the *pagodeiro* Bezerra da Silva of Rio de Janeiro, who performs a style of samba.

Unquestionably, one of the most important new tendencies in Brazilian musical culture has been the rise of new black consciousness styles of Afro-Bahian music, and Brazilian music generally, a development that has had far reaching consequences throughout contemporary Brazil. It will be helpful to outline some of the major developments in this process in order to raise questions about racial identity in funk later in this study. During the seventies and eighties, Brazilian musical culture underwent a process of re-africanization as *afoxés* and *blocos-afro* like Ilê Ayê and Olodum were formed and popularized in Bahia. In the late nineteenth century some black Carnival associations were in existence, such as the Pândegos da 'Africa *afoxé*, or percussion and dance group which paraded through the streets during Carnival. These *afoxés* borrowed their rhythm and thematics from candomblé music, presenting in their Carnival parades representations of *orixá* deities. By the turn of the century, such organizations were prohibited and it was not until 1949 that a new *afoxé* was founded, the Filhos de Gandhi. The organization did not attain widespread popularity, however, until the nineteen seventies, and until that time Carnival celebrations in Salvador were characterized by other non-Afro-Bahian forms, such as the "trio elétrico".

In 1975 Gilberto Gil, a huge star of the tropicália movement and of MPB in general, became a member of Filhos de Gandhi.<sup>13</sup> After returning from self-imposed exile in

England in 1972, Gil's musical expression took a major turn towards the question of his own African roots and identity as an Afro-Bahian. Since the seventies Gil has been involved in many Afro-Bahian cultural and musical projects. In the 1976 Carnival he paraded with Filhos de Gandhi, revitalized in large measure by his own participation. In 1977 Gil participated in the International African Arts Festival in Lagos, Nigeria, as did several other Brazilian musicians, and thus was able to bring a broader Pan-African vision to the forum of Bahian music. Throughout the seventies and eighties dozens of *afoxés*, such as Olori and Oju-Obá, were organized across the city, bringing together thousands of participants from the city's poor black neighborhoods.

A wave of another kind of Carnival association also arose in the seventies. This was the "bloco afro", enormous groups which did not have the same connections to *candomblé* as the *afoxés* and that based their rhythm on a loose mixture of samba and reggae. Also, the theme of consciousness raising and challenges to the dominant order in general were much more openly expressed by the blocos afros. In 1974, the first bloco afro was founded, Ilê Aiyê. In addition to parading in Carnival as a bloco, and releasing albums as a smaller musical group, Ilê Aiyê undertook an educational mission which was to become characteristic of many of the blocos afros that followed. Charles Perrone describes this mission:

The group researches and represents the culture of a different African nation each year. The directors of Ilê Aiyê consider their educational work as part of a general movement of black advancement, while resisting affiliation with more militant political groups. (Perrone, 1992, 46)

Of the many blocos afro that came afterwards, such as Ara Ketu, Malê-Debalê and Timbalada, the best known and most influential has been Olodum, founded in 1979. Of all the Afro-Bahian groups, Olodum has reached the largest audience, both in Brazil and internationally. A smaller group version of the Carnival bloco has toured the U.S. and Europe, as well as backing Paul Simon on his album *Rhythm of the Saints*. The music of Olodum, together with the Afro centric educational mission it carries out through lectures and discussions in poor communities throughout Salvador and Brazil, are means to achieve the goal of citizenship. The mixture of international Pan-African musical and cultural influences with traditional Brazilian ones, its appeal as a universal call against oppression and its beauty and communal nature as an expression of popular art have provided Olodum with a powerful means to raise the consciousness of millions of people with its message of Black Pride. Throughout the nineties and into the new millenium, these tendencies to highlight racial and class identities and a general frustration with the fruits of the restored democracy have been accompanied by a process of globalization and commercialization of popular culture in Brazil.<sup>14</sup>

Several important regional and commercial musical styles, have also come to dominate the scene, such as axé, pagode, forró, and sertanejo. At the same time, the number of alternative Brazilian musical practices and localized hybrids of world music continued to increase, in large part as oppositional practices denouncing the racism, poverty and violence that characterize the country's social reality. Sepultura, which began as a typical American and European style death metal group, steadily evolved into a more socially conscious and anti-racist Brazilian style, blending heavy metal with Afro-Brazilian and indigenous musical elements and sometimes singing in Portuguese. In the

northeastern city of Recife, Chico Science and his group Nação Zumbi, along with Fred Zero Quatro of Mundo Livre, S.A. and Mestre Ambrósio, popularized the eclectic and diverse sounds of the *movimento mangue*, or *mangue bit*, as it is sometimes called. An important reggae scene emerged in São Luís do Maranhão and Salvador. In Rio, groups like Planet Hemp, O Rappa and Cidade Negra created socially-conscious eclectic music borrowing from everything from reggae to hip-hop, hard-core and rock. The favelas and slums of Rio witnessed the rise of Brazilian funk and artists such as MC Galo and Catra. And in São Paulo, purist militant hip-hop groups like Racionais MCs, Xis and 509-E exploded in popularity as they brought about a *RAP*, “revolução através da palavra”, or “revolution through words.”<sup>15</sup>

Although all of these socially-conscious post-dictatorship musical styles have been important in the ever expanding landscape of Brazilian cultural activity, funk and hip-hop occupy a position of especially urgent relevance. Not only are these styles concerned with the plight of the poor, the victims of violence and racism, they are predominantly by and for people from the low-income social realities of favelas and other poor and working class neighborhoods. In light of recent arguments that tend to over-emphasize the “north/south” question and minimize the importance of class and racial nuances in the analysis of globalization in Brazilian music, it is important to bear in mind that musical practices in Brazil are not monolithic. In the practice of musical cultures, national identity is often a secondary concern and the identification with international musical styles based on racial and class affiliations is often primary. Despite the wealth of MPB, for instance, it is quite rare to hear Gilberto Gil, Chico Buarque or Milton Nascimento in the favelas of Rio. In fact, it is also rare to hear much music from more contemporary, alternative artists

such as Chico Science, Planet Hemp or Sepultura. Even relatively mainstream groups with a social consciousness like Cidade Negra, from the Belford Roxo municipality of the Baixada Fluminense, and O Rappa, remain the domain of a minority of culturally progressive residents of the low-income neighborhoods and the majority of poor youths are not likely to buy their albums. This is not to say that poor people are not involved in the production and consumption of all musical styles in Brazil. For instance, despite the mass commercialization and co-optation of samba, the so-called national music of the country, the music of carnival still carries to a degree some association with the popular classes. Furthermore, poor people in Brazil are a diverse group and have diverse interests in every style of music in their country, from rock to reggae and classical choral music to what is perhaps the most common musical practice in the popular classes, religious music. Certainly, forró and pagode tend to be produced and consumed by poor people. Still, funk and hip-hop are the only two musical styles that self-consciously embrace the reality of the daily lives of poor people in Brazil as their very essence.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Brazilian funk and hip-hop have evolved as largely separate musical practices, despite somewhat common musical and social roots. Hip-hop in Brazil tends to be a somewhat somber and militant movement of social protest and personal responsibility and is prevalent mostly throughout the periphery of São Paulo. The much smaller hip-hop scene that does exist in Rio tends to be less “Brazilian” hip-hop and somewhat more “world” hip-hop, following the more intellectual/cultural lead of Marcelo D2, of Planet Hemp. The only Carioca hip-hop artist of note who has recorded Paulista style hip-hop is MV Bill, from the infamous favela/projects called the Cidade de Deus. MV Bill, the *Mensageiro da Verdade*, or Messenger of Truth, has

effectively combined the militancy of Paulista hip-hop with the social context of the drug traffickers of Rio. By contrast with the Paulista-style hip-hop, funk, a Carioca practice, tends to be playful, sensual and aggressive. Singers of funk have been known to rap, as do those of hip-hop, and funk music is an electronic blend of base beats, sound effects and samples. Still, where the Paulista hip-hop prefers the minimalist beats of old school West Coast gansta rap, funk tends to borrow beats from very early Afrika Bambaata tracks, Miami base and even techno. Rapping is actually rare in the raw, throaty yelling typical of funk vocal delivery, and songs are almost always sung, whether in imitation of current pop hits, samba and forró melodies or even the call and response chants heard at Brazilian soccer games.

The difference between the Brazilian hip-hop and funk is great enough that most fans of hip-hop, along with most Brazilians in general, see funk as violent, pornographic, commercial and lacking in “consciousness.” In fact, in light of the visceral reaction funk often produces in many intelligent people across class lines who have no problem with hip-hop, one sometimes wonders if funk simply is the worthless junk they find it to be or if it is in some ways actually more threatening to the dominant social order than Brazilian hip-hop. Though to answer this question would require a more thorough comparison than the present argument allows, for now, let us say that the difference in the social geography between São Paulo and Rio may explain why two separate derivatives of American hip-hop have taken hold in these two cities. It is tempting to suggest that the differences between Brazilian hip-hop and funk can be explained by the stereotypical image of São Paulo as a city of work and Rio as a city of play. The main factor, from my point of view, is the social organization of low-income areas in the two cities and the fact

that funk in Rio, unlike hip-hop in São Paulo, comes from areas which are at least partially governed by drug trafficking. In any event, I will return to a slightly more in-depth comparison between funk and hip-hop in Brazil in chapter four of this study.

### *Studies of Brazilian Funk*

While many of my comments regarding scholarship on funk will be presented in the context of my specific arguments throughout this study, it is worth briefly commenting at this time on some of the main tendencies that have characterized them. Despite the significance of funk in Brazil, only a relatively small body of academic work addresses it, even though most studies of topics like violence and citizenship in Rio nowadays do include articles on funk. Generally, researchers who have studied funk have typically done so from a social science perspective, conducting some field visits to *bailes*, surveying fans and interviewing key artists and industry personalities. While such approaches have provided some keen insights into the significance of funk, it's not really possible to understand the practice of funk- with its lyrical irony, use of slang and underworld references- without a comprehensive, up-close understanding of the realities of daily life in the *favelas*. Recent studies of American hip-hop, for example, tackle it as a cultural practice with discernible ideological and aesthetic tendencies.<sup>16</sup> Studies of other aspects of popular music in Brazil, including the musical cultures of *favelas*, have also been conducted in very intimate ways that give more voice to the everyday people. One example that directly inspired my early research is Alma Guillermoprieto's *Samba*, a straightforward almost conversational piece written as an ethnographic study of the

*favela* of Mangueira and its culture of *carnaval*.<sup>17</sup> Barbara Browning, too, conducted her research on Afro-Brazilian popular culture of such forms as *samba*, *capoeira* and the religion *candomblé*, from a highly participatory approach. Unfortunately, scholarship about Brazilian funk is not typically carried out through such “bottom-up” strategies but rather tends to treat it somewhat paternalistically as if it were a simplistic and massified pseudo-musical form.

The tradition of scholarship specifically on funk in Brazil begins with Hermano Vianna’s book *O mundo funk carioca*, which provides a useful history of funk until 1988, the year in which the book was published. Vianna, who was a Master’s student in anthropology at the Museu Nacional in Rio at the time of his research, was a pioneer in the study of contemporary popular culture in Brazil who was able to recognize the significance of funk for Rio’s poor from quite early on. He attended dozens of dances, known as *bailes funk*, and distributed survey forms to the fans present. Also, he spent a great deal of time with DJ Marlboro, a pivotal figure in the history of funk. Unfortunately, Vianna did not attempt to integrate himself with other less conspicuous people in the funk community, familiarize himself with the conditions of their lives outside of funk dances or even interview them in the favelas and other poor neighborhoods from which they came. Furthermore, from my point of view, the way in which Vianna sought to respect the subjects of his study ultimately served to further distance him from them. He states in his work that as a white middle-class observer of funk it would have been ridiculous for him to try to become a *funkeiro* or even dance at a *baile*. Additionally, the fact that all the songs played at the *bailes* at the time of Vianna’s research were early hip-hop and techno in English, and therefore mostly unintelligible to

the Brazilian *funkeiros*, led Vianna to conclude that there were no unifying articulable social concerns present in the movement which might serve as an ideological subtext. In his conclusion, Vianna makes various statements to this effect: “Ethnic identity? The ideas of black consciousness-raising that circulated in the funk world of Rio in the days of the group Black Rio no longer remain.” (105) He goes on to explain that the dances are popular: “...precisely because they are ephemeral, because in them nothing is produced, everything is pure expenditure.” In the next paragraph Vianna asserts that: “In the *bailes*, no social norms are contested. There is no inversion of roles or values, as is said in the case of Carnival.”<sup>18</sup>

In his article “The Funkification of Rio,” which he dedicated to Vianna, George Yúdice makes a similar case for the idea that funk is apolitical. Throughout his piece, however, he seems to contradict this position by asserting that funk somehow represents the rejection by the poor of the status quo vision of racial democracy and social harmony in Brazil. I found this to be a more provocative line of argument, as was his suggestion that prior forms of Brazilian popular culture and musical expression, such as *samba*, *capoeira* and *umbanda*, have been co-opted by the dominant system and provide no means for the expression of discontent. I would not go so far as to say, as does Yúdice, that these other forms are completely rejected by the *funkeiros* along with the ideology that has co-opted them. According to Yúdice, such a collective rejection of the status quo ideology by the *funkeiros* came to a head in the riotous *arrastão* attacks of 1992, in which swarms of poor youths fought along the beaches of Rio’s Zona Sul and robbed bystanders:

The *arrastão*, however, made it patently clear that the allegiance to funk implied opting out of other musics, particularly those identified with Brazilian nationalism, or, more locally, cultural citizenship in Rio de Janeiro (10).

From my point of view, there are two basic problems with this assessment. First, Yúdice offers insufficient evidence for his assumption that the *arrastões* were somehow related to funk. Second, while it is true that the *arrastão* did not take the form of a protest and the young people who participated in it did not articulate a specific call for any specific demands for governmental change, I would not go so far as to say that it was not political, but rather that it was an example of what James Scott refers to as “everyday forms of resistance.”<sup>19</sup> In any event, by focusing on media events and the previous scholarship of Vianna, Yúdice makes two inaccurate claims about funk in 1994, stating that the lyrics of funk songs were still almost all in English and that funk was in total opposition with other forms of nationalist popular culture in Brazil. In fact, by 1994 a whole new movement had taken place within funk in which Portuguese lyrics had come to dominate the scene. Additionally, fans of funk by and large never rejected other “co-opted” forms like *samba* and *capoeira* but actually continued to actively engage in the spectrum of popular cultural practices existing in the favelas of Rio. Even some interesting collaborative projects have been carried out between many of the most famous MCs and sambistas. Despite these limitations, the strength of Yúdice’s article is his fundamental observation that funk is, in fact, something of a counter cultural practice.

The most comprehensive treatment of funk to date has been Micael Herschmann’s work in the area, whether as editor of the 1997 anthology, *Abalando os anos 90: funk e hip-hop: globalização, violência e estilo cultural*, or his 2000 book, *O funk e o hip-hop*

*invadem a cena*. Despite the presence of hip-hop in both titles, these works actually treat hip-hop very little, dedicating much more space to the analysis of funk. *Abalando os anos 90* contains a wide range of articles, including a rewriting of Vianna's earlier work and a Portuguese translation of Yúdice's article. It also contains an article by Hershmann, which would serve as the basis for his second book. The two articles related to hip-hop, one by Olívia Gomes da Cunha and the other by Tricia Rose, are more concerned with an American perspective. Livio Sansone's article on Bahian funk is an interesting comparison of a separate style of music also called *funk*, from the Northeastern city of Salvador, with funk from Rio. Hershmann's full-length book, *O funk e o hip-hop invadem a cena* is primarily a communications study of the process of the vilification of funk in Brazilian media sources. In the book, Hershman includes some interesting interviews with industry personalities such as funk mogul Rômulo Costa, of Furacão 2000, and DJ Marlboro. He also visited a variety of *bailes* in different neighborhoods across Rio and describes his observations of these dances. Perhaps the weak point of Hershmann's book is that he does not often directly engage texts of funk that do not come from newspaper articles, such as lyrics of songs or testimonies of *funkeiros*. Despite the apparent distance between Hershman and the practice of funk at the street level, however, he does see it in a sympathetic light:

Pode-se afirmar que o Brasil, nos anos 90, assistiu ao aparecimento de um novo tipo de poesia rimada, mais falada do que cantada, que vem influenciando e é influenciada por outros ritmos musicais. Uma música que mescla o ao vivo e o gravado, o "novo" a bases, letras e músicas já consagradas, constituindo-se claramente em uma espécie de "artefato

intertextual”. Seus cantores são um misto de contadores de histórias e cronistas do “cotidiano maldito”: o conteúdo das músicas traz ora um discurso de “denúncia,” ora um tom romântico ou brincalhão. Além disso, as próprias letras são uma espécie de cartão de visita dos MCs e de sua “comunidade”. Em geral, além de se apresentarem no final das músicas, esses cantores/compositores prestam também homenagem a seus locais de origem, transformando-os em tema central (ou secundário) do rap. Este tipo de procedimento parece indicar um claro desejo de reconhecimento, de reinscrição de seus amigos, de seu “mundo” na cidade.<sup>20</sup>

Herschman’s observation is a concise and intelligent summary of the basic thematics of funk aesthetics, and he is correct in identifying the tendency of funk MCs to pay homage to their neighborhoods, what he calls a type of “cartão de visita,” or business card, as a significant feature in the discursive struggle underlying funk, themes I, too, shall explore in the chapters that follow.

The most satisfying treatment of the political dimensions of the practice of funk to date, in my opinion, appears in Zuenir Ventura’s excellent book *Cidade partida*, written in 1994 and mentioned above, even though funk remains in the background. As a means of underscoring his thesis that there is an ever-widening gap between rich and poor in Rio de Janeiro, Ventura contrasts middle-class images of funk with a very different image revealed by *funkeiros*. Contrary to its reputation, certain segments of the funk world of 1993 seen in *Cidade partida* were possessed of a highly developed level of political self-consciousness. The composers of funk Ventura spoke with in his frequent trips to the favela of Vigário Geral, in the wake of the massacre that occurred there in August, 1993

in which some 30 police randomly shot to death 21 victims, were explicitly aligned to and active in grass-roots youth and social organizations and recognized their music as a means to educate and uplift the working class youth and to curb violence. One female funk singer says openly, “We don’t like the political parties, but we know that we are political even when we are not.” (60) Another singer, from the group "As Damas do Rap", tells him that her music is:

...a protest against everything that's wrong in the country and sometimes even what's wrong in the world: corruption, political abuse, war and violence. (60)

In *Cidade partida*, Ventura goes to great pains to show funk composers as an important part of the alternative intellectual community of the working class, one in close contact with educators and social activists from the *favelas*. Instead of simply visiting some dances and talking to a few *funkeiros*, Ventura studied the socio-political context of the massacres of street kids at Candelária and residents of Vigário Geral and was thus able to identify the significance of funk as a cultural practice within the conditions of the social formation of Rio’s poor communities.

### *Notes on Methodology*

In my study, I attempt to identify some of the ideological features of the culture of funk as a counter cultural practice interacting with the multifarious status quo orders in Brazil. While I do not wish to seem overly optimistic about the ability of funk to immediately improve the political situation of poor people in Rio de Janeiro, I do see it as a largely counter-hegemonic struggle against the conditions of social injustice and inequality in the city and an active attempt to interrogate existing notions of class, race

and gender in Brazil. Similarly, in attempting to explore the complexities of the culture of drug trafficking in Rio's favelas, I do not wish to seem romantic as to either their actual intentions or their power to improve the lives of the residents of poor communities. Nor do I wish to overemphasize their importance in either favelas or funk. The question of organized crime is without a doubt one of the most relevant issues facing Brazilian society today and I hope that my analysis of *proibidão* style funk as the principal medium expression of their power will contribute to the debate that surrounds it. Even so, the world of funk and the favelas in which it has grown are infinitely larger and greater than drug traffickers or the crisis of violence in Rio. I hope, therefore, that my work can offer some glimpses beyond this issue, one so omnipresent in both media representations about the poor in Brazil and the reality of the streets, into some more positive aspects of the culture and creativity of residents of favelas.

The tradition of cultural studies offers an ample array of conceptual frameworks through which to conduct a meaningful study of funk in Brazil. The general tendency of cultural studies, like many other branches of contemporary scholarship, has been to operate from a broad understanding of "politics" that moves beyond overtly political organizations, such as parties, governments and unions, to include the practice of everyday life and the symbolic/semantic context in which it occurs. In many ways the legacy of Gramsci's understanding of the cultural process and his notion of "hegemony," such a broad notion has made it possible to analyze the relationships between dominant and subordinate groups in society in new ways. The ideas of Raymond Williams have been important for me in my attempt to grasp the nuances of this ideological interaction, helping me to explore the ideological dominance of elites over subordinate groups while

paying attention to the influence of oppositional cultural practices on the hegemonic process as well. Williams understands this process as one in which discourses of the dominant order and oppositional ones are synthesized as its tenets are reformulated to lessen or absorb oppositional challenges. Although this implies the ability of the dominant national discourse to co-opt popular cultural forms of protest, it also ascribes subaltern voices with the power to pull the hegemonic process in their direction and force changes in the dominant order.

Additionally, semiotics-based analyses can help us move away from interpretations based on the intentions of authors towards an understanding of the role of the audience in the communication process. Dick Hebdige, in his study of youth subcultures has pointed to the applicability of semiotics to the study of oppositional popular culture, writing that:

Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go ‘against nature’, interrupting the process of ‘normalization’. As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the ‘silent majority’, which challenge the principal of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus. Our task becomes, like Barthes, to discern the hidden messages inscribed in code on the glossy surface of style to trace them out as ‘maps of meaning’ which obscurely re-present the very contradictions they are designed to conceal.<sup>21</sup>

An example of this sort of “hidden message” is the semiotic inversion of the term “machine gun” occurring throughout funk, discussed above, in which a pejorative meaning as a sign of barbaric, animal criminality is replaced and transformed into one of solidarity, consciousness and power.

Another attractive aspect of cultural studies for the present work is the wide range of disciplines and strategies it encompasses, particularly those which contribute to strengthen the sort of “bottom up” approach I see as fundamental to an understanding of funk in Brazil. Ethnographic research, including extensive fieldwork and interviews, can provide the contextualization of this practice in the social formation of the favela and familiarity with its cultural landscape. Ultimately, funk really only exists as a cultural practice, not as a series of isolated “texts” and songs, and one can hope to understand it only by paying attention to the perspectives of its diverse actors, including everyone from fans to composers, producers, dancers and DJs, men, women and kids, rich and poor, black and white. In many ways, people’s understanding of their own culture *is* the significance of their practices, not some “objective” significance ascribed to them by an observer. This does not mean that close-readings of song lyrics or *bailes funk* will be absent from my analysis; in fact I have attempted to do a good bit of both in the following chapters; but that these readings will be carried out in a manner that contextualizes them to the greatest extent possible within the culture of the favela and the perspectives of everyday people.

Despite the fact that prior to beginning the research for this study I had already spent some years living and working in Rocinha, the prospect of carrying out actual ethnographic fieldwork posed some special challenges. Throughout the time I had spent in Rocinha, I had come to know a great number of people and had been listening to funk quite extensively, buying CDs and going to the various dances around the neighborhood. As a result, although I had a pretty good idea about how things worked in Rocinha at an intuitive level, and with funk and gangsters, I needed to take a step back and gain a more

critical perspective. Even though I had done two short stints of rather informal research in Rocinha, in 1990 and 1996, prior to becoming involved with Two Brothers, I had always managed to keep as low a profile as possible and had shied away from recording formal interviews. In order to do the research for the present study in 2001-2002, I decided to make something of a fresh start and to conduct research as anybody else would who was coming to the community for the first time. Besides reading a great deal of new material, this also meant that I would conduct more formal research practices, such as recording interviews, taking field notes on *bailes* and the dealings of drug traffickers, and carefully transcribing the lyrics of songs. At first, it was a little embarrassing for me to ask people, especially those I knew, to let me interview them and to switch roles from neighbor to researcher. I think this embarrassment stemmed from the way this new role highlighted basic class differences between me and other residents of Rocinha. I didn't want to jeopardize my status as an "adopted son" of the community and be viewed as an outsider, nor did I wish to be seen as an informant or a threat of any kind to the drug gangs. Despite my reticence, the response of people in Rocinha to my research was extremely positive and in a short time I became excited by the possibility to interact with them in this new way.

From January to April of 2002, I conducted the interviews for this study, choosing as subjects a somewhat representative selection of people connected in some ways to funk. Although I did interview some MCs, composers, a DJ, a professional dancer and the owner of the Emoções Club, people who I see as more closely related to the production and performance side of funk, I made an attempt to focus equally on everyday people involved in the consumption of funk- people who attend funk dances, buy funk albums

and listen to funk songs. Oftentimes, members of this second group did not define themselves as *funkeiros* per se, but living in Rocinha in of itself gave them ample experience with funk. For example, one of my favorite interviews was of three ten-and eleven-year-old boys who had never bought a funk album or intentionally gone to a dance. I say intentionally because they had all walked through various *bailes funk* in the streets of Rocinha, coming home from church events or birthday parties and the like, and had been constantly exposed to the funk music that boomed from the windows of neighbors' houses in the tight confines of the alleyways in which they lived. Even though these boys may not be exactly *funkeiros*, they do have a valid experience of funk, as well as knowing the words to almost all of the songs, and even write some of their own funk lyrics. Others, like a teenage girl from the state of Ceará in the Northeast, went to funk dances almost every week, not out of any particular fondness for funk, but because they were the popular places to go on certain nights. The majority of people I interviewed were from fourteen to twenty four, both male and female, and people who actively identified themselves as fans of funk. I also interviewed two middle-class women from outside of Rocinha, one nineteen and one twenty one, who had both gone to hundreds of dances and dated gangsters. My intimate relationship to people in Rocinha also enabled me to talk extensively with some gangsters from the Comando Vermelho and other independent criminals who acted outside of the favela, though I never did this as formal interviews or recorded the conversations.

Since I had already been actively involved in the Rocinha nightlife for some years, it was easy enough in September of 2001 to begin taking field notes after musical events. Prior to this, in 1996, I had started going to *bailes funk*, pagodes and forró venues with

my friend Charlys, who later became a somewhat famous singer in Brazil known as “Charlys da Rocinha,” and his younger brother Alan. Both were, and continue to be, very well known and liked people on the social scene in Rocinha and they introduced me to a great many good people. At that time, a young MC named Moreno, who sold bootleg recordings at the foot of the favela, also helped me considerably with his knowledge of the history of funk music. Once I began to work with Two Brothers in 1998, I became even more active in the Rocinha social scene, particularly with the group of students and volunteers that grew up around the organization. For eight or nine months in the year 2000, my office was in the back room of the PizzaLit restaurant, one of the busiest, most popular spots in Rocinha and a place that is open until five or six in the morning every day. This put me in regular contact with many of the more socially active members of the community that frequented the pizzeria and made it easy to find people to go out with. In 2001 and 2002, I attended every *baile* I could, *bailes* for “adults” and the *matinês*, as the kids’ dances are called, put on by different *equipes*, or sound teams, such as Curtissom Rio, Pipo’s, Furacão 2000 and A Criatura. I went to dances throughout Rocinha, in the street in the Valão, Curva do S or Via Ápia, and at the Emoções Club, the practice halls of the Acadêmicos da Rocinha samba school and the soccer court across from my house in Cachopa. I also attended the famous *baile* at Castelo das Pedras, an enormous dance club in Jacarepaguá known for its loud, elaborate and somewhat middle-class *baile*. It was not my practice to take notes at the dances; I usually waited until later that morning or the next day; instead I danced and socialized with friends. I sometimes did seek out people I wanted to interview and make contacts. Additionally, the composer and DJ Renato Moreno, a friend of mine for many years who wrote some of the earliest funk hits,

spent a great deal of time talking with me in his CD store about the funk industry. He was also kind enough to have me as a live studio guest on his *forró* radio show.

In addition to attending *bailes funk*, I also made an attempt to go to other musical and cultural events in Rocinha as a means of further contextualizing the place of funk within the community. I went to the street *pagode* on Rua Um, on Sunday nights at the top of the hill, and *forró* dances at the Varandão and Cabaré do Barata, as well as innumerable late night cookouts and birthday parties across the neighborhood. I went to some special events, like the Talento da Rocinha party at Emoções, the O Rappa concert fundraiser for the Casa da Cultura da Rocinha, and a similar event on Christmas day 2001 in the Cidade de Deus, featuring hip-hop legend MV Bill, Afro-Reggae do Vigário Geral, Gabriel o Pensador, Fernanda Abreu and Caetano Veloso. I went to the Via Sacra on Good Friday three years in a row and other community theater performances, practices of the samba school and its parade at Carnival at the Sambódromo. Additionally, I attended a new type of event has become popular in Rocinha over the last few years, one that reflects the interconnectedness of musical cultures in the favela. At these parties, a higher price is charged at the door and a person can drink, and sometimes eat, all they want for the rest of the night. Several different musical styles are played at these events, typically rock, pop, funk, hip-hop and pagode. The first was called *100% Bagunça*, something that could perhaps be translated as 100% Mess, or 100% Crazy, followed by other parties *VIP Nites* and *Na Gandaia*. Once in December of 2001, I attended such an event put on in a relatively small and immensely crowded soccer court halfway up the hill in the favela. The street above the court had been blocked off and right in the middle of it was a long table of beautifully catered food for the gangsters. As the night went on and the party

became even more crowded, the heavily armed drug traffickers began drifting in, smiling and shaking hands as they picked at the food. My friends and I were asked to move away from the area, where we had been leaning on a car talking.

In March of 2003, I mentioned to three friends in Rocinha that I regularly went to dances with, Alan, Orlando and Victor, that I would pay them to help me transcribe the lyrics of the underground *proibidão*-style songs only available on pirated tapes and CDs. Though all three were very excited to help with the project and refused payment, Orlando, in particular got interested and began helping me. I gave up paying him after mentioning it several times during the days we worked together. We spent countless hours together carefully going over the often hard to understand words of the bootleg recordings, writing them down in notebooks or typing them into my laptop. Orlando also helped me select songs and took many of the CDs to his home in the Cachopa area of Rocinha, where he typed them in by himself on his own computer. Working with him was invaluable, as I realized there were still references and slang expressions in *proibidão* that I did not know or understand, even after living in the favela and having made it a point to ask about several of them to the people I had interviewed.

My study is intended to be an interdisciplinary, cultural studies-type approach to the practice of funk music in Rocinha, combining social science methods such as ethnographic field work and interviews with studies of music, literary criticism, and theories of popular culture. It is my hope that my closeness to the subject, along with the active formal research I have done both in the field and in the library, has not obscured my views on funk but has instead allowed me to understand funk in a more intimate way. Many of the conclusions and observations that follow in the remainder of this study are

certainly debatable, but it is my hope that they may at least suggest some unique perspectives in the work of placing drug traffickers, favelas and funk in Rio de Janeiro in a cultural context.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The following translation is my own, as are all translations in this thesis unless otherwise noted:

My Brazil is a tropical country,  
 The land of funk, the land of Carnival,  
 My Rio de Janeiro is a postcard,  
 But I'm going to talk about a national problem

<sup>2</sup> In a recent article in by Selma Schmidt in *O Globo* (“Estudo aponta mais 49 favelas na cidade- Novo levantamento aerofotogramétrico da prefeitura mostra que o Rio já tem 752 comunidades carentes”. *O Globo*, Second ed., Sunday April 20, 2003.), it was reported that the official number of favelas recognized by City Hall in Rio de Janeiro went up in 2003 from 603 to 752. The same article also cites the 2000 census conducted by the IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) in estimating the population of Rocinha at 56,000. It is worth mentioning that there is a great deal of disagreement about these statistics. The Associação de Moradores do Bairro de Barcelos, currently the most active neighbor’s association in the favela, estimates the population at around 160,000. The governmental Região Administrativa, a branch of City Hall, places it at 120,000. When I went to Rocinha in 1990, the president of the neighbors association, seu Pereira, a friend who greatly helped me with my initial research on organized crime in the favela who has since passed away, told me that there were 300,000 people in the neighborhood. With such a tradition of inflated numbers, Rocinha’s fabled size has become a part of its ambivalent mystique and consequently some people may be disappointed to hear that there are perhaps less residents than previously thought. No

matter, the difficulty in assessing the size of the population in of itself is evidence of Rocinha's nature as a partially informal geopolitical space. Whatever the population actually is, the relatively small physical space it occupies make it an extremely crowded community.

<sup>3</sup> This initial research was conducted as an independent study under the direction of Herbert Braun of the University of Virginia. In addition to being my first chance to live in Rocinha, this research placed me in contact with the neighbor's association, the União Pró-Melhoramentos, and its then president, Pereira. Aside from allowing me to observe and even participate in his daily negotiations at the Association, Pereira also put me in contact with members of the drug gang and took me to the principal *boca-de-fumo* to meet with bandits.

<sup>4</sup> Here I am playing with the title of Yúdice's article "The Funkification of Rio."

<sup>5</sup> One relevant book on the horrendous living conditions of favelas in Brazil, in particular those in the northeastern region, is Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*.

<sup>6</sup> The anthology *Abalando os anos 90: funk, hip-hop: globalização, violência e estilo cultural*, organized by Micael Herschmann, and *O Funk e o Hip-Hop invadem a cena*, written entirely by Herschmann, are examples of the tendency to conflate funk and hip-hop styles in Brazil. Despite their individual merits in bringing together a wide range of critical perspectives about funk, neither actually treat the subject of Brazilian hip-hop to any significant degree. *Abalando os anos 90* does include two articles about American hip-hop artists, a style even further removed from funk than Brazilian hip-hop. Perhaps this is something of a marketing strategy, as there are, of course, connections between

Brazilian funk and world hip-hop and the second term is much more universally recognizable. Nonetheless, funk and hip-hop in Brazil do constitute two separate aesthetic styles and cultural practices.

<sup>7</sup> On April 22, 2001 at the Second Annual Hip-Hop Generation conference here in Madison, Wisconsin, Vee Bravo, editor-in chief of the hip-hop magazine *Stress*, made some interesting comments to this effect. At the panel discussion on Latin American hip-hop, Vee Bravo showed clips from the film he is putting together on hip-hop in several Latin American countries. He praised hip-hop in Brazil for being the best in the world at present, saying that it is being created within a Brazilian reality comparable to the state of things in the South Bronx of the late 70's that gave rise to American hip-hop.

Unfortunately, he went on to argue quite vehemently that funk in Brazil is "bad."

Apparently, the fact that he only spent two weeks in Brazil and does not speak Portuguese was not an obstacle to knowing enough about funk to condemn it at a public conference, because the "pioneers" of Brazilian hip-hop, such as Mano Brown of São Paulo's Racionais MCs and MV Bill in Rio had told his translators that funk was "bad". Perhaps no larger rift between the hip-hop and funk has developed, in the fashion of the West Coast/East Coast rivalry of American hip-hop, because the two are so different. In fact, I have never heard any distaste for hip-hop expressed by funkeiros. On the contrary, Brazilian hip-hop itself is widely cannibalized by funk, which samples its music freely and even borrows from its lyrics and dress styles. Even large numbers of funkeiros who don't possess a single album of Brazilian hip-hop often wear Racionais MCs shirts.

<sup>8</sup> This quote is taken from Fiske's article "Popular Culture," 325. He continues to say on page 331 that popular culture is always closely tied to mass culture, even though they

are different. They exist in a constant dialectic in which mass culture appropriates, or incorporates, popular cultural artifacts for advertisement and other marketing purposes and people “constantly scan” mass culture to expropriate, or expropriate, some elements of it as resources for their own cultural purposes.

<sup>9</sup> In her article, “Rap exalta lema do Comando Vermelho” (*O Globo* 22 Sept. 1995), Letícia Helena says, “Uma apologia ao Comando Vermelho é o sucesso do momento. Usando como refrão o lema da organização criminosa- “paz, justiça e liberdade”- os MCs Júnior e Leonardo estouraram nos bailes... com o “Rap das Armas”... o Comando Vermelho vem arregimentando menores nos bailes funk se valendo dos “raps de galera”- versões de música conhecidas nas quais as letras, modificadas, exaltam crimes e bandidos.”

<sup>10</sup> A good overview of currents of protest in MPB can be found in chapter four of Charles Perrone, *Seven Faces: Brazilian Poetry since Modernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996)

<sup>11</sup> For a more thorough overview of the tendencies of Brazilian music of the last four decades, see Charles Perrone and Christopher Dunn’s *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*.

<sup>12</sup> For concise thorough information on the various musical styles of the abertura, consult Chris McGowan and Ricardo Pessanha, *The Brazilian Sound: Samba, Bossa Nova and the Popular Music of Brazil* (New York: Billboard Books, 1991)

<sup>13</sup> For a summary of Gilberto Gil's career, see David Hatfield Sparks, "Gilberto Gil: Praise Singer of the Gods," *Afro-Hispanic Review* 11.1-3 (1992) : 70-75.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed history of the rise of Afro-Bahian music, there are several good sources, such as Barbara Browning, *Samba: Resistance in Motion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995)

<sup>15</sup> In the United States, it may be even more difficult for critics to appreciate the differences between what I am calling Brazilian funk and Brazilian hip-hop, especially as the result of the confusion as to just what even constitutes Brazilian hip-hop in the first place. For example, *The Vibe History of Hip Hop*, a comprehensive insider's guide published in 1999, regrettably misses the mark on Brazil. In one of its articles, "Planet Rock: Hip-Hop Supa National," Mark Schwartz claims that the growth of hip-hop in Brazil has been stunted by the fact that samba is king. Unfortunately, such an assertion shows quite emphatically just how little Schwartz knows about Brazilian music at all, as it is in no way dominated by samba. Schwartz mentions a handful of artists he considers representative of Brazilian hip-hop, artists who in fact have little or nothing to do with hip-hop in Brazil. First on his list is the brilliant Chico Science, killed in a car crash in 1997, and his group Nação Zumbi. Perhaps such an inclusion is symptomatic of "globalization" in its own way, in the sense that many forms of musical practice these days are exceedingly eclectic and hard to classify. In reality, Chico Science was about as "hip-hop" as João Gilberto, Tom Jobim or Michael Jackson. Even after his death, Chico Science continues to be one of the most fascinating figures in world music and one of the greatest Brazilian songwriters ever; he just was not hip-hop, but rather *mangue bit* (also known as "mangue beat") from Recife, and in his case a sort of maracatu/rock fusion. If it sounds like he's "rapping" sometimes in his music, it's because Chico was heir to the *embolada* tradition of his native Northeastern region of Brazil, with its characteristically

percussive vocal delivery that is, like that of rap, more spoken than sung. Next in his list of “Brazilian hip-hop,” Schwartz mentions Gabriel o Pensador, who at least could be described as a sort of Will Smith of hip-hop in Brazil, i.e. a slightly watered-down or pop version of hip-hop. Still, though Gabriel reveals much influence of American hip-hop in his pop music, and may even be a hip-hop artist of sorts, his is not what I would classify as “Brazilian hip-hop.” Edi Rock, one of the rappers of Racionais MCs, the first and best-known Brazilian hip-hop group, said in a recent interview, “A realidade do Gabriel é outra, mas ele rima muito bem. Eu não sou juiz para julgar ninguém, mas boy é boy e favela é favela. Cada um no seu lugar, cada um com a sua cara, ninguém ofende ninguém e tudo tá certo.”(3) The fact that Gabriel is a rich, white person who grew up in São Conrado and studied at PUC-Rio ultimately puts him in a different category from artists from the periphery and penitentiaries of São Paulo (even though Gabriel always spent a good deal of time in Rocinha, which is partially located within São Conrado). This doesn’t mean that his music is bad; in fact, he’s a gifted songwriter and performer; he’s just not Brazilian hip-hop, in the terms of the larger Brazilian “hip-hop Nation”, as the movement is called. Last but not least, Schwartz mentions another brilliant musician, Marcelo D2, of Planet Hemp. Planet Hemp, from Rio, is a bit like Pavilhão 9, of São Paulo, a mixture of heavy metal, hard core and hip-hop, a bit like Los Angeles’ Rage Against the Machine or even the Beastie Boys. While his group is a fascinating example of globalism and of the kind of funky, high powered and politically charged music that has come about in Brazil (such as Cidade Negra, O Rappa and Charlie Brown, JR), Planet Hemp, isn’t hip-hop. Marcelo D2’s solo album, released in 2000 with the Bronx’s

Shabazz the Disciple, is hip-hop, though, like Gabriel o Pensador, it seems somehow to have evolved from sources other than the Brazilian national hip-hop movement.

<sup>16</sup> I have in mind here the book *Spectacular Vernaculars: Hip-Hop and the Politics of Postmodernism*, by Russell Potter. Another good study of American hip-hop is Tricia Rose's *Black Noise: Popular Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> In 1989, Alma Guillermoprieto spent a year living in the *favela* of Mangueira, accompanying the yearlong preparations for Carnival of the Mangueira samba school. Her wonderful book is a window into the everyday life of people in *favelas*, from the evangelical movement to Afro-Brazilian religions, violence and just basically the personalities of people in the *favela*. It was after reading her book as a student in Rio that I made the decision to move to Rocinha for the first time.

<sup>18</sup> In this quote, on page 106, Vianna is comparing funk to the analysis of the culture of Carnival in Roberto da Matta's article "Carnaval como Rito de Passagem," *Ensaaios de antropologia estrutural* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1977).

<sup>19</sup> Here I am referring to Scott's *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* and the broader notion of "political" that he embraces against the tendency to:

...focus(es) on just the kinds of movements with which social scientists in the West were most familiar— those with names, banners, tables of organization, and formal leadership.(xv)

Scott argues, quite convincingly, that such a perspective ignores the majority of real political activity, which is more subtle:

Most forms of peasant resistance stop well short of outright defiance. Here I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so on.(xvi)

<sup>20</sup> Translation of Herschmann from page 163:

It can be affirmed that Brazil, in the nineties, witnessed the appearance of a new type of rhymed poetry, more spoken than sung, that has since influenced and been influenced by other musical rhythms. A form of music that mixes the live with the pre-recorded, the “new” with classic base beats, lyrics and songs, clearly constituting a sort of “intertextual artifact.” Its singers are a mixture of story tellers and chroniclers of the “hard reality of the streets”: the content of the music sometimes is an outcry and others is romantic or even playful. Besides this, the lyrics are a sort of business card for the MCs and their “communities.” In general, besides introducing themselves at the end of their songs, these singer/songwriters give homage to their home neighborhoods, transforming them into a central theme (or secondary one) of their raps. This type of procedure seems to indicate a clear desire for recognition, for the re-inscription of their friends, of their “world” in the city.

<sup>21</sup> From Hebdige, “From Culture to Hegemony,” in *Gender, Class and Race in Media*, page 662.

## Chapter 2: Funk, Favelas and Organized Crime

Bota o fuzil pa cantar!

-“Sou da Rocinha,” by MC Galo

### *Street Vigil*

On the corner stands a group of four or five *olheiros*, or “watchers,” rubbing their eyes after an all night shift observing the little dirt street that runs between the houses and alleys of the Cachopa area of the favela of Rocinha, in Rio de Janeiro. The boys laugh, stretching shirtless in the calm, early hours of the morning as they chat with two girls on their way home from the funk dance at the bottom of the hill. The smell of bread just delivered hot out of the oven mixes with that of the cheap marijuana the small group of watchers is passing around. The *olheiros* are unarmed except for walkie-talkies and roman candles, two ways to signal to their “brothers” that another group of drug traffickers or the police is invading. Experience has taught them that if either were to make it this far up the hill, getting past the many other *olheiros* at lower positions along the favela, the police or gangsters might just open fire on them.

The funk dance was good, the girls report; singers Galo, Dolores and Fornalha really got the crowd going. Several of the senior drug traffickers put in an appearance, armed with more than phones and fire crackers. Throughout the night, groups of gangsters called *bondes*, representing the several areas of Rocinha, had come through the dance. Brandishing AK-47s, M-16s, AR-15s, UZIs and the like, they had waded through the crowds of the packed Via Ápia street past the long row of amps and speakers. The *olheiros* know that many of the more powerful gangsters can’t ever leave the protection of the *morrão*, or “big hill,” as they call Rocinha, because they are wanted men, and that

for these gangsters the funk dances are one of the only options of night life their situation allows. Maybe that is why the higher ups in the *comando*, as the gang is called, pay for the enormous *bailes funk*, which are attended by thousands of young people every week.

One *olheiro*, a skinny, black kid of 17 with brown eyes, heavy eyelashes and big forward pointing ears, says he can't wait for the day when he'll be one of those big shots with a gun in his hands. Another, a fourteen year-old with shiny, straight black hair to his shoulders, would rather just go to the beach and meet some girls. They turn up the boom box in between them and sing along with the words of a favorite song about Rocinha from a *proibidão* funk CD they've been playing all night:

A Via Ápia, a Paula Brito, Cachopa,  
 Fundação, Terreirão,  
 Os bondes prontão, sempre de AK na mão,  
 boladão, observando a sua vacilação,  
 fé em Deus para o Comando Vermelho<sup>1</sup>

### *Funk Music and the Legitimacy of Organized Crime*

Throughout the eighties and nineties, long before Tim Lopes was murdered, funk had been controversial and often criticized as violent, pornographic and thematically trivial, a sort of musical bread and circus for the masses of residents of Rio's favelas and low-income suburbs. Despite an occasional flash of national visibility and partial acceptance by the media in Brazil, funk has continued to be principally a musical practice of poor youths in Rio and has neither undergone a full-scale process of commercialization nor one of appropriation by the status quo. Certainly the type of funk known as *proibidão*, a

sort of “prohibited,” underground style of illegal gangster funk performed live at funk dances and found on pirated recordings available only in favelas, has never been embraced by the media and is little understood by outside observers. In any event, funk is unquestionably one of the most significant cultural expressions of the reality and identity of poor people in Rio and the largely marginalized existence they live across the city. Funk is enormously popular across town in places like the sprawling favela of Rocinha, home of funk’s greatest singer, MC Galo, as well as Dolores, Marquinhos, Leonardo and Junior, Fornalha, Gorila and Preto, and Neném. Its heavy bass sound can be heard in the Tijuca favelas of the Zona Norte, such as Borel and Formiga, where the raspy voiced Duda and Catra are from; it booms away by the seaside mountain favela of Vidigal, home of Mascote; and in the Cidade de Deus in Jacarepaguá in the Zona Oeste, where MCs Cidinho and Doca live. In a city with hundreds of favelas, funk is the loudest and most prevalent musical style in places like Vigário Geral, Acari and the neighborhoods of some of the most famous samba schools, such as Mangueira and Salgueiro, as well as the favelas of Niterói and São Gonçalo.

The culture of funk music is one of the principal ways through which the legitimacy of the drug traffickers is produced and lived in the partially alternative social order of Rio’s favelas. By “partially alternative,” I mean to suggest that rule of the traffickers is ambiguous, in some ways representing a challenge to the legitimacy of the status quo order and in others resting upon some of the same ideological foundations. In this sense, funk is a fundamental discursive site in the Brazilian hegemonic process and is uniquely situated to reflect the convergences and incongruencies in the dynamics of power between the status quo order and the rule of the traffickers. For this reason, funk is much

more than a “youth style” or a form of “popular music;” it is a fundamental cultural dimension of a society in which drug traffickers control and defend areas under siege in a war of social exclusion and class disparity. It is my hope to neither condemn nor romanticize the drug traffickers and their governance, nor the music of funk that legitimizes them, but rather to map out the ideological formation of a Brazilian subculture of favelas that has developed in a crisis of violence, poverty and social exclusion.<sup>2</sup> As stated in chapter one, I will focus on the practices of funk and drug trafficking in the favela of Rocinha, situated in Gávea and São Conrado, in the Zona Sul of Rio, considered to be one of the largest and most heavily armed favelas in the city and the one with the highest rate of sales of drugs.<sup>3</sup> In order to provide a context for this analysis, I will discuss the crisis of urban violence in Brazil and some of the basic tendencies of the culture of drug trafficking in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. I will also explain the ways in which the *baile funk* in the favela has become a sort of ritual staging of the power of the drug traffickers and the ways in which funk is supported by them more generally.

*Tim Lopes and Proibidão Funk*

Somos Vermelho até o osso, é paz, justiça e liberdade,  
 Eu tô trepado até o pescoço, e o bonde está demais,  
 Por isso a gente é fé em Deus e o comando cresce mais  
 Aqui quem sabe é nós se caia chuva ou faça sol  
 Defendo a favela nem se for a vida inteira <sup>4</sup>

In June of 2002, events occurred in Rio de Janeiro that brought funk music and the so-called “parallel State” of the drug traffickers in their favelas to the forefront of the

Brazilian political scene. On June 2, 2002, Tim Lopes, an award winning reporter for *Globo* TV network, went to secretly film scenes of minors having sex for pay and the sale of drugs in a funk dance in the favela of Vila Cruzeiro, in the Penha neighborhood of Rio. Of the 741 favelas throughout the city, Vila Cruzeiro is one of fifteen the police classified in 2002 as inaccessible, like Rocinha, Turano, Adaraí and the Complexo do Alemão, and only elite police troops like the Batalhão de Operações Especiais (BOPE) of the Polícia Militar and the Coordenadoria de Recursos Especiais (CORE) of the Polícia Civil go there. (Araújo) Tragically, members of the favela's drug gang, run by crime boss Elias Maluco, discovered Tim Lopes at the dance, tortured and killed him. Tim Lopes' murder touched a nerve in Brazil, a country in the grip of a longstanding crisis of violence, and sparked a city-wide debate among journalists, intellectuals and politicians about what some called the *guerra contra o tráfico*, or the "war on drug trafficking."<sup>5</sup> In the weeks following Lopes' murder, a media blitz ensued, protest marches were organized, police surrounded and invaded Vila Cruzeiro and several other favelas, many other community funk dances were suspended and thousands of pirated funk CDs confiscated.<sup>6</sup> Former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso declared an attitude of "zero tolerance" towards the drug traffickers and Rio mayor César Maia appealed to the federal government that a "state of defense" be declared in the city. (Dantas) These occurrences showed the deep level of frustration felt by many people in the face of the rampant violence that has characterized Rio over the past two decades. They also re-energized the debate about the relationship of funk music to violence, and about the relationship of the drug traffickers to the state.

Throughout the eighties and nineties to the present, questions about funk, favelas and the nature of organized crime have been treated from a variety of insightful perspectives both in Brazil and internationally. Typically, studies on violence in funk have tended to focus more on a practice known as the “corridor of death,” semi-ritualized fights that occur in some funk dances and have resulted in the injury and even death of many participants. This practice, first studied by Hermanno Vianna in his pioneer work on funk in 1988, has diminished significantly as funk has evolved over the years. Another connection of funk to violence was suggested by George Yúdice in his study “The Funkification of Rio” in which he attempts to link the culture of funk and the *arrastão* attacks of October of 1993 in which gangs of poor youths ran along the beaches and streets of the Copacabana and Arpoador harassing and mugging passersby. Funk music itself began to take up the theme of violence as lyrics in Portuguese became more common in the early to mid-nineties and a movement occurred within the funk community to stop fighting at the dances. When, also in 1994, Zuenir Ventura wrote his seminal book on the problem of violence and social exclusion in Rio, *Cidade partida*, after the infamous massacre in Vigário Geral, he portrayed funk artists as something of an alternative intellectual community from favelas and other poor neighborhoods in Rio engaged in a form of social protest. However accurate that might have been, the content of funk lyrics continued to evolve and by the time Tim Lopes went to the favela of Vila Cruzeiro there was a new spin on violence prevalent in funk that was very different from both the gang fights of the “corridor of death” and the social protest of earlier funk lyrics. By 2002, a form of funk music was firmly entrenched known as *proibidão*, a movement

of underground songs about the power and activities of organized crime which are sung live at funk dances in favelas or available on bootleg recordings of these shows.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to studies of violence in funk, a rich tradition of research exists amongst of political scientists, anthropologists and sociologists both within Brazil and abroad about the other aspects of the nature of favelas and drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro. One of the most well respected is Alba Zaluar, who will be discussed in more detail below. She is an anthropologist from the Univerisdade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro who has been researching and publishing on crime and favelas since the early eighties. Other Brazilian specialists in the area include Gilberto Velho, Marcos Alvito, and Luiz Eduardo Soares, who have all produced important anthologies on various aspects of crime, poverty and citizenship in Rio. Elaine Junqueira, a law professor at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio, and her husband José Augusto Rodrigues, a political scientist at UERJ, have also written and lectured extensively on the issue, as has one of the founders of the Viva Rio NGO, Rúbem César Fernandes. In addition, some well known journalists have written on crime and social exclusion in Rio, with varying degrees of success. Zuenir Ventura's 1994 book *Cidade partida*, which presented the world of crime and favelas in clear, accessible Portuguese and eloquently made the case that social exclusion, considered by Ventura to be the root of violence in the city, was worsening. Júlio Ludemir's forthcoming work on Rocinha and his historical novel *Meu coração no comando* are also examples of works that are very well grounded in research in the favelas and prisons of Rio. Other attempts by journalists have not produced such high quality work. For example, Percival de Souza's *Narcoditadura: o caso Tim Lopes, crime*

*organizado e jornalismo investigativo no Brasil* on the lists of best-sellers in 2003, sold well despite little academic rigor or factual merit.

In addition, many scholars from outside of Brazil have been drawn to the topic of crime and the social organization of favelas. Elizabeth Leeds' 1996 article "Cocaine and Parallel Politics on the Brazilian Urban Periphery: Constraints on Local Level Democratization" has become a standard reference for the analysis of crime in Rio. More recent scholarship has been done by sociologist Corrine Davis-Rodrigues, who defended an interesting dissertation in 2002 on the mechanisms of conflict resolution in the favela of Rocinha. In addition to providing a series of case studies on which residents went to the drug traffickers versus other mediating groups, such as the Neighbor's Association (AM), the Balcão de Direitos of the Viva Rio NGO or the governmental Região Administrativa located in Rocinha, her works also provides a very good history of that community. Also, Enrique Desmond Arias' 2001 study "Crime, Violence, and Democracy: The State and Political Order in Brazilian Shantytowns" offers a sophisticated understanding of political life on the periphery of Rio de Janeiro and argues in favor of Local Associative Networks(LANS) in the democratization of favelas. In the following passage from the introductory chapter of his dissertation, Arias describes the complexities of the socio-political terrain of the favela with an admirable economy of words. It will serve as a useful introduction to the intricacies of social life and crime in the favelas and is therefore worth quoting the passage in its entirety:

Rio's favelas today experience a complex political and legal pluralism in which different organizations enforce order over different aspects of life. No longer are AMs (Neighbors' Associations) the primary leaders of communities. Rather, drug

traffickers, AMs, religious groups and other social organizations all participate in the leadership of favelas. Relationships between these organizations, needless to say, are in a near constant state of flux as communities grow and state policies change. There is a general agreement among residents that certain types of violence, such as rape and theft, are not acceptable within the favela. If drug traffickers are well organized and have good relations with the community, they will be able to swiftly punish behavior that violates these rules. If traffickers are weak, violations of these norms will be more common. Most favelas in Rio are still formally administered by an AM, which is registered with the state and the FAFERJ (Federação de Associações de Favelas do Estado do Rio de Janeiro). The leaders of AMs are supposed to be subject to regular election. In practice, however, elections are often meaningless since there is usually only one candidate who, with the support of the drug traffickers, is willing to take office. Though AMs are responsible for relations with the state, administer property transfers, and resolve disputes between residents, much of the real power in the favelas lies in the hands of traffickers. With a limited monopoly on the means of violence, they work to enforce order and often resolve disputes between residents. NGO's and religious organizations also play a prominent role in favela life in building consensus among residents and in working to improve the community. Finally, different state agencies have different roles within the favelas. The state does not act as the unified, coherent bureaucracy in favelas, but is rather fragmented. While its agents in the favelas have the physical and financial means to make and enforce decisions which can change favela life in fundamental ways, they act

independently and their activities often contradict each other. This serves to undermine government policies. In addition, many of these state agents are corrupt and actively use their influence to undermine government directives and work to protect drug traffickers and other criminals. (Arias, 23-24)

What I like about this description of the politics of favelas is that it strikes a careful balance between acknowledging the power of drug traffickers within their communities and recognizing the importance of other actors in the leadership of the favelas. This is important because it emphasizes the limits of the authority of the drug traffickers and thus moves beyond the sort of “narcodictatorship” type model often suggested by other analysts. While Arias is realistic about the dependence of the neighbors’ associations upon the support of the traffickers in many cases, he makes it clear that organized crime operates within a framework of the expectations of community residents and that the success of these gangsters is very directly dependent upon the satisfaction of the local population according to certain norms. This is important for my argument because I see the practice of *proibidão* funk as a symbolic site in which these expectations are both articulated and mediated.

Unfortunately, the media treatment of the conflict between organized crime and the state in Rio is typically more Manichean than that of the many social science analysts and cultural critics who have studied violence and poverty in Rio. This problem is compounded by the fact that, despite the repercussions of social science work in some actual governmental policy, the media is more pervasive and generally has a broader, more immediate impact in the formation of public opinion. A series of articles published in *O Globo* soon after Tim Lopes’ murder will serve as an example of this tendency to

flatten out and sensationalize issues such as organized crime and funk music. In general, funk music is represented in the articles as an apology for crime exalting violence and the claim was made that funk dances in favelas were places of “drugs, gun shots and orgies.”<sup>8</sup> Drug traffickers are portrayed in similarly simplistic, negative terms as cold-blooded killers who torture their victims and tyrannically dominate the ignorant and powerless populations of the favelas. One article, appearing in *O Globo Online*, quotes a heavily loaded and debatable affirmation of researcher Zilah Vieira Meirelles as to the nature of drug trafficking in Rio, “O tráfico do Rio é muito violento. Eles são treinados para matar e não defender os mais fracos e oprimidos; torturam sadicamente os que vão contra as normas estabelecidas e não hesitam em matar, seja quem for.” (Werneck) The article presents some highly questionable statistics regarding the involvement of youths in organized crime, citing a study that claims that one in four people between the ages of ten and nineteen living in favelas participate in the trafficking of drugs. Further down in the body of the story, however, the reporter clarifies that only 7% of these youths actually collect a regular salary from organized crime. As for the other 93%, the author does not explain their involvement and merely writes that they carry out small tasks for the traffickers. By not qualifying either the specific type of “tasks” these kids perform or with what frequency they do them, the article has the effect of making the involvement of adolescents in the trafficking of drugs seem far more widespread than it is. The title could have read, “1.8% of Young People of the Favelas Have Salaries with Organized Crime,” a headline which would have better conveyed the results of the study cited without sensationalizing the issue.

In the special ten-page Sunday insert of *O Globo* from June 16, 2002, entitled “O Rio está perdendo a guerra contra o tráfico?”, there is a revealing two-page spread that typifies this sort of sensationalized, black and white representation of the problem. In enormous letters the title appears across the pages, “O confronto entre o poder do estado e o do crime.” There is a map of the city’s major favelas, showing the numbers of trafficker-soldiers and weapons in each, and a history of what it calls the “parallel powers” of Rio. There is a table with job descriptions and salaries in crime, a map of the movement of drugs throughout South America, and a timeline of some principal crime personalities of the last 50 years. In the middle are two groups of silhouettes of weapons; those used by police and those used by the traffickers. The most striking aspect of the spread to me is the organization it makes of what it calls the “Poder público,” along the left column, and the “Poder do crime organizado,” down the right-hand column. The description of the “public power”, or that of “O Estado do Rio,” is accompanied by photos of Benedita da Silva, governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro at that time, and leaders of various police and public security entities. The regime of the State is defined as a “democracy” and said to be the system of, “twenty seven units of the Federative Republic of Brazil, which is presidential.” On the other side of the spread the “Republic of the Drug Traffickers” is described and presented with pictures of several powerful crime bosses, including Elias Maluco, Fernandinho Beira-Mar and Uê. This “regime” is denoted as a “narcodictatorship” and the “system” is said to be, “tribal, characterized by the imposition of leadership by force and by the lack of institutional organization.”

Of course, it is fair to say, in many contexts, that Brazil is a “democracy” and that the ruling order of the favelas is a “narcodictatorship,” yet presenting the complex social

terrain of Rio de Janeiro in terms of this facile dichotomy does no justice to the complexities of the issues. Most Brazilians are all too aware of the ways in which Brazil is not a perfect democracy, with its chronic problems of corrupt public officials, police abuse and neglect of the poor. Even many very conservative Brazilians would acknowledge the economic disparities and exclusion of the poor as fundamental causes of the social crisis that grips the country. Yet in the special Sunday insert of *O Globo*, the “State of Rio” is presented in a very unproblematic way and in legitimizing terms, whereas the “Power of Organized Crime” is portrayed as purely repressive and despotic. For example, the article defines “tribal society,” the term it uses to describe the social formation of the favelas, as one which is ruled “by the imposition of leadership by force.” Such a definition of “tribal society” is inadequate and harmful, ultimately distorting the picture in a way that dehumanizes the favelas and their rulers. In fact, tribal relations depend on kinship bonds and there are many quite intricate cultural norms in tribal society that do not depend directly on the use of force. Therefore, if favelas do turn out to be “tribal societies” in some ways, this does not mean that the use of force is the only, or even the principal, means of social cohesion.

In the editorial pages that accompanied this insert, *O Globo* did allow for space for the views of some important observers of socio-political life in Rio de Janeiro, such as journalist Zuenir Ventura and composer/musician Marcelo Yuka, who attempted to bring the debate beyond a “war on the traffickers” and pointed to the underlying causes of the crisis of violence. Paulo Lins, author of the novel *Cidade de Deus* and former resident of that infamous favela, wrote in an editorial in *O Globo*:

Suponhamos que conseguíssemos acabar com o tráfico de armas, de drogas e com os bailes funk; diminuíssemos a idade penal; aumentássemos o rigor das penas; e dobrássemos o efetivo das polícias. Será que seríamos felizes num país onde a desigualdade monetária é uma das maiores do mundo? Será que todos os excluídos iriam seguir caninamente a ordem social? Acabariam os conflitos?

(Lins)

To his merit, Lins recognizes that the existence of a criminal society in the favelas and the very sale of drugs that sustains it are only symptoms of more complex issues related to social exclusion more generally. The problem of the wide-scale criminal activity that is the life-blood of Rio's favelas is directly related to the gross economic disparity and general social exclusion that plague the city. Unlike the view presented in a *O Globo* two-page spread, the multi-layered social terrain of contemporary Brazil cannot be divided conveniently into a legitimate, "democratic republic" and an illegitimate "narcodictatorship." Neither can it be said, as the spread in *O Globo* seems to suggest, that the elected government officials and their police forces altruistically represent the interests of the people while the crime bosses of the favelas and their soldiers dominate their communities in egotistical and hedonistic greed.

The reason that I have focused on the death of Tim Lopes as a means of introducing my analysis of *proibidão*-style funk in this chapter is because his kidnapping occurred at a *baile funk*. Thus, Lopes' murder stands at a critical intersection between funk as a musical practice of the culture of the favela and the prominence of drug traffickers in favela communities. As an outsider who went to analyze and critique the governance of organized crime in Vila Cruzeiro, his actions in going there can be seen as a

manifestation of the conflict between the authority of the state, and the status quo ideology that legitimizes it, and the authority and ideology of the drug traffickers. Since the *baile funk* has become a critical site for the staging of the power of Rio's drug gangs and its symbolic representation, it was not a coincidence that Tim Lopes was murdered for being discovered undercover in a *baile funk*. Following a keen reporter's instinct, Tim Lopes went to the favela of Vila Cruzeiro to do an extremely relevant exposé on the activities of drug traffickers in *baile funk* and on the increasingly bold role they have assumed in controlling favela communities. The presence of heavily armed gangsters and the abundance of song lyrics praising their power, as well as the many illegal activities that go on there openly challenge the state's legitimacy, and its monopoly on the use of violence in the space of the favela, and affirms in its place the authority of organized crime in the favela in at least some governmental capacities. Unfortunately, as a representative of the media in Rio, Lopes' presence at the dance made him a spy in the eyes of the local gangsters and a threat to their operations. The decision to torture and kill him, in addition to being an immoral and reprehensible act, inadvertently served as a sort of declaration of war by the Comando Vermelho on the legal authorities in Rio and set off a chain of events that has intensified the conflict between them ever since.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, it was a decision that placed the *baile funk* and the *proibidão*-style funk lyrics at the heart of the issues of violence and citizenship in Rio de Janeiro.

### *Rich and Poor in the Crisis of Violence in Brazil*

Funk as a musical practice has arisen in the context of the long standing crisis of violence in Rio de Janeiro, specifically within the social formation of the favela, and it is

therefore fundamental to consider some of the general characteristics of both at this time. This growing crisis of urban violence, which Zuenir Ventura has characterized as a sort of post-modern, economic war of social exclusion, is one of the most urgent problems facing Brazil. (Ventura 1994) In the last decade in Rio, there has been no shortage of media moments in this war, from the *arrastões* of 1992 (in which crowds of low-income youths swarmed the beaches and streets in the area of Arpoador between Copacabana and Ipanema, looting and stealing as they went), *Candelária* (in which police killed seven street children sleeping on the steps of the Candelária church in downtown Rio) and *Vigário Geral* (in which a group of 30 police officers shot and killed 21 random residents of that favela in broad day light) in 1993, *Operação Rio* (in which the army was sent to occupy several of Rio's favelas) in 1994, the hijacking of the 174 bus right next to the Globo network in Jardim Botânico in June of 2000, the murder of Tim Lopes in June 2002, and the subsequent terrorist campaign by the Comando Vermelho in which buses were burnt, buildings shot up and bombs exploded at various points throughout the city. As frightening as these high-profile events have been for the general public of Rio, most of the thousands of violent deaths occurring each year throughout the city, and throughout Brazil more generally, have taken place in relative obscurity in its country's streets, prisons and favelas. An article on the front page of the *Washington Post* reported that this climate of violence is furthering the physical isolation of the rich from the poor. This is occurring, the article claims, as a symptom of the growing economic disparity between social classes in Brazil:

Amid rising crime and overpopulation, the rich are retrenching into hyper-insulated lives. In this sprawling nation of 170 million, sociologists call it the

price of social inequity. Brazil has one of the most marked disparities of wealth in the world, with the richest 10 percent of the population controlling more than 50 percent of the wealth, while the poorest 10 percent control less than 1 percent. (Faiola, 2002)

According to the article, the quality of life for middle and upper-class Brazilians has worsened as the threat of becoming a victim of crime has steadily increased. Many people have become afraid to go out after dark, to take a walk in the street, or to ride a public bus. Some with more money have purchased bulletproof cars, hired body guards and begun to commute by helicopter. Car-jackings continue to be frequent, there is a high number of kidnappings, and assaults of banks, homes, pedestrians and even buses are commonplace. The article states that homicide rates in the greater São Paulo area have risen in the last decade to about 60 murders per 100,000 residents, exponentially higher than those of Washington, DC and New York City, which, it claims, are 7.4 and 7.8 per 100,000 respectively. According to another source on numbers in greater Rio, the rate in the city has ranged throughout the nineties from 50 to 75 per 100,000, and in the Baixada Fluminense from about 67 to 85.<sup>10</sup> In São Paulo something like 11,000 people are murdered every year and in Rio, a considerably smaller city, around 6,000.

Of course, most of the violent deaths in Brazil are not those of the rich, but of poor people who can't afford to live in gated communities, people who have been forced to develop different strategies for security and survival. In Rio de Janeiro, many of these poor, mostly non-white people live in favelas, partially informal communities in which municipal, state and federal governments have a limited presence. In the face of the nightmarish levels of violence in Brazil and the need for protection and social services,

residents of most favelas in Rio have come to depend upon highly organized and heavily armed groups of local drug traffickers for the well being of the community. This alternative and illegal form of power has emerged around and depends mostly upon the revenue from the trafficking of cocaine and marijuana from points of sale located within favelas known as *bocas-de-fumo*. The drug gangs sometimes also make revenue through activities such as kidnappings, bank robberies and the illegal sale of arms. Most are backed and supplied by one of the narco-alliances in the city: the *Comando Vermelho* (CV), which dominates most of Rio's favelas; the *Terceiro Comando* (TC), also ruling a large number of areas; and the *Amigos dos Amigos* (ADA), the narco-alliance most openly tied to the police, whose control is limited to a relatively small number of the city's favelas.

#### *Favela Gangsters as the New Colonels?*

The question of the nature and role of drug traffickers, and the perceptions of drug traffickers by the residents of favelas, is a complex one and has attracted the attention of many academic observers. Alba Zaluar, considered by many to be one of the foremost experts on urban violence in Brazil, has done extensive work on drug traffickers and she has made important contributions to the understanding of urban violence in Rio de Janeiro. Zaluar, who has a nuanced understanding of the workings of organized crime based on years of research and an abundance of information gathered in her field work, her own and that of her students at UERJ, has argued since the early eighties that, despite the impressions of residents of favelas, the rule of the drug traffickers in Rio is built upon little more than the power of their firearms. For her, no class or race identities are

relevant and in fact no sort of “culture” of drug trafficking can be said to exist in the favelas. On the one hand, Zaluar’s argument works against the notion that the rule of the drug traffickers constitutes a “parallel power,” for the drug traffickers she depicts in her work are not interested in being an alternative government to the state. On the other hand, by denying the existence of any culture of traffickers through which gangsters and residents interact and insisting that their control depends entirely on the force of their weapons, her arguments ultimately suggest the sort of “narcodictatorship” model often affirmed by the Brazilian media. It is worth reproducing a long quote from Zaluar’s article “Nem líderes nem heróis: a verdade da história oral,” appearing in her book *Condomínio do Diabo*, in which she states some of the basic assertions about drug trafficking in Rio that recur throughout her work:

Se não há liderança, muito menos pode-se falar de “governo” dos bandidos nos bairros pobres ou favela. A única função do governo que exercem, *em alguns locais, em algumas épocas*, é a de oferecer relativa segurança aos moradores de sua área, livrando-os dos ataques de bandidos de outras e punindo os que, entre eles, cometem excessos. Mas isso não tem impedido estupros de mulheres por parte de bandidos, nem pequenos roubos e furtos nessas áreas. E seu estilo de vida não os faz aptos a exercerem as funções de assistência social que alguns jornais lhes atribuem. Seu padrões de consumo não lhes permitem acumular dinheiro suficiente para exercê-las em bairros e favelas extremamente populosos, nem possuem o projeto político ou o sistema simbólico que lhes permita concebê-las. Não são bandidos sociais, vingadores de seus povos, são empresários do crime e seus empregados. (144)

Zaluar's words come in response to the argument that the drug traffickers protect and provide for the residents of their communities, a belief very common among the people living in favelas. As the result of her research, Zaluar knows that residents are not as safe or well protected as they think and that the faith many have in their drug gangs is not always deserved. She does acknowledge that, in certain times and places, some gangs have offered some degree of protection from gangsters from other areas and from residents within the community who would harm their neighbors. Even in these cases, however, she points out that rape and petty theft has been known to occur. In any event, Zaluar points out that the levels of consumption typical of the lifestyle of the gangsters prevents them from acquiring enough cash to effectively help the residents of favelas in any significant way. Her emphasis on the materialist tendencies of the drug traffickers is a part of her critique of the larger Brazilian social order more generally. Ultimately, she views the drug traffickers as victims of the failings of society and the prevailing consumerist/hedonist ideology she considers as being a part of the status quo in Brazil for some time.

As another part of her criticism of the larger Brazilian society, Zaluar suggests that a new form of paternalism has emerged that has superseded older forms based upon personal relationships and loyalty.(256) She has applied the implications of this view throughout her career to work against the notion that the drug traffickers of Rio's favelas are some sort of Robin Hoodian "social bandits," that they are modern day versions of the Northeastern *cangaceiro* bandits like Lampião and Antônio Silvino, or that they are related to the *coronelismo* of Brazil's past. She has also worked to dispel the notion that the *quadrilhas* (gangs) are comparable to the Italian and American mafias, or US and

Mexican street gangs, all which she sees as depending on the traditional paternalistic base. For Zaluar, this new form of clientelism is based on self-interest and consumerism and is symptomatic of capitalist society in contemporary Brazil, which she describes as:

...tardio, pós-ético, pós-moderno, pós-sociedade do trabalho, em que os efeitos do consumismo e do hedonismo já minaram os valores sociais agregadores e as autoridades tradicionais, transformou muito rapidamente a sociedade brasileira sem criar uma engenharia institucional para limitar as tendências destruidoras do tecido social, porque baseado na busca do lucro e do interesse pessoal.(262)

Along with the demise of interpersonal paternalism, Zaluar argues, the notion of authority has become inverted and is no longer that of the traditional legitimacy, "...baseado em um consenso social de quem deve ser obedecido em quais espaços e por virtude de quais valores." (113) For the *chefes*, or chiefs, of the new individualistic and ego-centric paternalism the existence of violent means of coercion is the only basis for authority. For Zaluar, the bosses of Rio's favelas are one more instance of this sort of 'chief' and therefore no consensus is necessary for their hegemony beyond the force of their firearms. For these bosses and their soldiers, crime offers an easy means for poor men to participate in the consumerist society already dominant in Brazil: "A saída criminosa é a entrada possível para a sociedade de consumo já instalada no país."(Zaluar, 113)

Although Alba Zaluar may have viewed this argument as a way of shifting the blame for the social ills of the war of drug trafficking from the gangsters to the larger society which has produced them, the somewhat circular reasoning she uses to argue her case ends up oversimplifying the problem in dangerous ways. Beginning from Hannah Arendt's famous demarcations of power, violence, force and authority, Zaluar basically

says that authority is not based on violence, and since the power of the traffickers is based on violence, they have no authority. This is slippery reasoning, for in a backwards way, Zaluar is saying that since traffickers have no authority, they have no authority. She has not proven the second premise of the argument, the one that says that the power of the drug traffickers' power is based on violence. In fact, Arendt herself states in *On Violence* that, "Violence can destroy power; it can never create it." (56) Thus, really a more relevant application of Arendt's thought to the situation of the favelas is to ask other questions that are central to the present essay: If violence does not create the power of the trafficker, where does it come from? How is the authority of the traffickers, understood as "... the unquestioning recognition of those who are to obey," and which requires, "neither coercion nor persuasion," (Arendt, 45) mediated in the community?

Although on the surface Zaluar is right in asserting that most gangsters in Rio do not have any specific political or ideological orientation through which they seek to better their communities, her arguments suggest a false dichotomy between "avengers of the people" and the "businessmen of crime." Somewhere in between being Robinhood and a cold, calculating criminal there is some symbolic system through which the identity of Rio's gangsters is constructed, a system that forms part of the culture of favelas and can be seen in *proibidão* funk music. In any event, it seems to me that she makes her argument an overly rigid notion of consciousness. I would argue that drug traffickers do in fact have a specific ideological orientation, one that makes up and manifests itself as a sort of "culture of drug trafficking," the same one that is presented in the practice of *proibidão* funk. This culture, though not explicitly political, is the sort of emergent consciousness that Raymond Williams writes about, one that involves notions of class

and racial struggle that are essential to the legitimacy of the traffickers in their communities. Furthermore, Zaluar's claim that the hedonist lifestyles of drug traffickers prohibits them from having any money for social assistance does not seem to account for the fact that the traffickers do give significant social assistance beyond protection, specifically in such areas as sports and leisure, money and medicine for the poor. I would not argue that the forms of help offered by the trafficker to his community are the best for political mobilization and the advancement of civil and human rights in Brazil. Still, that such support of the community is ultimately paternalist and further strengthens the legitimacy of the traffickers does not change the fact that a culture of mutually understood expectations about social assistance does exist between the residents of favelas.

Perhaps the biggest danger with Zaluar's characterization of the ethos of the drug traffickers, from my point of view, is that it oversimplifies the matter and presupposes a kind of unity of personality that simply does not exist. Just as individual residents of the community have a variety of opinions regarding the nature of gangsters in the favela, so too do the actual drug traffickers themselves have complex, sometimes contradictory views about themselves and their activities. After all, gangsters are human beings and are likely to be just as incoherent in their beliefs and attitudes as the rest of us. They can want love, be jealous, believe in God, and hate society all at the same time. They can believe both that they are racially inferior to someone and more human than that same person. Maybe a drug trafficker will watch Brazil in the World Cup one morning instead of selling drugs, thereby missing the opportunity to make some money for nothing more than a love of soccer and the Brazilian national team. He might make the sign of the cross

and lower his head as he walks past a church or near a boisterous street evangelist. One drug trafficker may listen constantly to funk music, think hip-hop has a good message, dance with country folk from the interior of Ceará state at a *forró* party and cry when he hears an old song by Legião Urbana. Some drug traffickers are drug addicts and alcoholics, others may become Pentecostal Christians. Some get sober in Alcoholics Anonymous or find religion and manage to leave the life of crime. They have brothers who are pastors, police officers and delivery boys; they have sisters who work in the mall or who are singers in a *pagode* band. The point is that these drug traffickers are people, people living in a post-modern globalized world with TVs, radios, movies, music, churches, schools, military service, samba schools and funk dances. They are not characters in a typical Hollywood movie, flattened out and internally coherent, always acting in greed and self-interest. To ascribe their motives to a vague notion of “post-modern, post-work-ethic, consumerist, hedonist society” is to deny the intricacies of their personalities and the multiple aspects of the confluence of often conflicting ideological currents that run through them.

Just as the drives of an individual drug trafficker cannot be reduced to a single consumerist impulse, the rule of the traffickers collectively is a human endeavor and likely to be even less coherent and unified. There is no single motive that the enterprise is built on, nor one facile explanation that accounts for the choices of tens of thousands of individuals involved in it in different places and the contexts of their own lives. Everyone has a story, so a group of drug traffickers is in a sense a group of life stories, all unique and different in some ways from the others. For example, Marcinho VP, an avowed socialist and one of the most famous bosses of the nineties and chief of the Dona Marta

favela in Botafogo, had a plan to rid his gang of drug trafficking altogether. He wanted to retain power to be able to protect, educate and empower the residents of his community. Maybe he is a romantic, and he would certainly not be the only drug trafficker to romanticize his life in one way or another, just as most people do in all walks of life. Another might be a drug trafficker because of the money, fashionable clothes and attractive girlfriends. Another might be in it because he is angry with life, hates his parents and wants to act out aggressively. Perhaps another has become involved because he is an alcoholic and addict, or maybe because he thinks he's on a mission from God. Still another wishes to, "Live fast, die young and leave a good looking corpse." Another was in the military, enjoyed the sense of purpose and discipline of military life, and now seeks to find an identity and someone to follow in the soldier lifestyle of organized crime. In addition to unrealistic motives and romantic notions about their lives, mixed together with practical and financial reasons for being involved, some drug traffickers are likely to be actually clinically insane. I am not saying that no consumer culture exists that influences the young people who join organized crime in Rio. What I am saying is that the complex motives I described above are not merely exceptions to the rule that traffickers are hedonists, but rather that the consumer culture is but one factor in the intricate knot of drives and motives that are inherent in a fully human personality.

### *Notes on the favela of Rocinha*

It is worth taking some time to take a brief look at the kind of overlapping and intermixing cultural and social trends that interact within the space of the favela of Rocinha in the beginnings of the new millennium. Some might argue that Rocinha is not

indicative of the culture of favelas in Rio, because of its size and the fact that it is somewhat more urbanized and wealthier than most others. On the other hand, due to its location in one of the richest neighborhoods of the Zona Sul, which makes it a classic example of the drastic disparities between the classes, Rocinha can be seen as a paradigm of the rule of the traffickers. Certainly, it is the single favela with the largest number of armed gangsters and the one that sells the greatest amounts of drugs. It is also considered to be the port of entry for the arms trade between the Comando Vermelho and the FARC in Colombia. At the same time, the large numbers of organizations besides the drug gang in Rocinha provides it with leadership from various sectors, including religious groups, the neighbors' associations, several NGOs, and a thriving business community that even has its own commercial association. There is also a great amount of government activity and that of relatively big businesses like Telemar, Light and TV ROC that link Rocinha economically and politically to the city outside. Also, the entertainment industry in Rocinha is important in its own right, as well as sports and fitness related organizations. This broad-based leadership and the multiple layers of the political make-up of Rocinha make it hard for its drug traffickers to establish a absolute "narcodictatorship." Instead, they must operate within a complex social terrain in which their political abilities gain them as much or even more advantage than the force of their arms. If the traffickers are successful at navigating this terrain, they can profit; if not, they will be in danger of being overthrown and replaced.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1930's, a slow trickle of people began occupying the lands of a *fazenda* beneath the mountain know as Dois Irmãos, in São Conrado, then at the remote and rustic edge of Rio de Janeiro. Some fruits and vegetables were grown and sold in the area, which came

to be known as the “Little Field,” or Rocinha. A very curvy and narrow road was built over the hill between São Conrado and Gávea for car races of cars popularly known as “baratinhas.” Over time, more and more people began to settle in the lands of the old *fazenda*, or plantation. Many of these were black people either from Rio itself or from the state of Bahia. Their religion tended to be Roman Catholic, *candomblé* or *umbanda*. During the sixties and seventies, when the tunnels were built under Dois Irmãos and a great deal of construction occurred in the Zona Sul, a massive wave of new residents from the *sertão* region of the Northeast came to live in the favela. This immigration has continued ever since and to this day Rocinha has a thriving Northeastern culture; on virtually every corner people with the Northeastern accents can be heard along with those having *carioca* accents. The Northeastern culture can be seen Sundays at the enormous open-air market in the Largo do Boiadeiro, where *repentistas* play every week. Forró music is as popular as funk in the favela and forró parties pop up in dozens of little bars all over. Also, one can easily buy Northeastern products and foods such as *fumo-de-rolô*, *rapadura* and *buchada de bode* in Rocinha. Most of the Northeasterners who come to Rocinha are afraid of the favela at first for its bad reputation and overcrowded living conditions. They often maintain contact with their families back in their home states, but the distance is great and the cost is high to travel back and forth.

Not surprisingly, many newer immigrants to Rocinha from the Northeast are Roman Catholic. Still, the question of religion in Rocinha, and in favelas in Brazil in general, is a very complicated one and extremely important. While Brazil is culturally a Catholic country, considered the largest in the world, it is difficult to overestimate the impact and size of the Pentecostal movement in Brazil over the last decades. The Assembléia de

Deus (Assmably of God) and the Igreja Universal (Universal Church) are the two largest, but there is a plethora of smaller churches such as Deus é Amor (God is Love), the Igreja Metodista Wesleyana (Wesleyan Methodist Church) and Maranata (Maranatha). These exist side by side with traditional Protestant churches such as the Methodists and Baptists, also very active in poor communities, and the Catholic Church, which has become more popularized in recent decades with movements like Liberation Theology and the Charismatic Renovation. Rocinha itself still has a very active Catholic community, and its *Via Sacra* street performance of the Passion of Christ attracts tens of thousands of spectators as it runs up the Estrada da Gávea on Good Friday. Additionally, there are still many active umbanda and candomblé *terreiros*, and a large number of little shops selling articles of faith for followers of them.

Commercially, Rocinha is considered a huge and lucrative market and much money is made there outside of drug trafficking. There is a McDonalds, a Bob's Burgers, a Brasimac appliance store, a Deplá Kodak store, two banks, and the TV Roc and TV Siri cable companies. There are also many successful local businesses, though it remains to be seen how successful they will be as the development of the favela by outsiders continues. There is a commercial organization, three neighbors associations, dozens of NGOS, the samba school Acadêmicos da Rocinha, and many sports leagues. Rocinha is a Zona Sul beachfront neighborhood, a place of surfers, weightlifters, groups of jiu-jitsu fighters, women in bikinis and men in *sungas* (Speedo-type lycra swimsuits), and there is a constant flow of people walking to the beach to tan, to swim, to roller blade, jog, play *futevôlei* (a cross between soccer and volleyball) and soccer. With its residents constantly tuned in to TV networks like Globo via satellite dishes and the two Rocinha cable

companies, and with its close proximity to the golf courses and elite shopping mall of São Conrado, few favelas in Rio are in closer contact with the Brazilian consumerist dream.

*Cops and Robbers Backwards*

Se tu invadir e ficar de bam bam bam,  
 Vai tomar de fuzil ou de pistola e de sadam  
 Por que o bonde não é papo furado,  
 então eu digo, é fortemente preparado,  
 Se tu é um alemão, ou então um polícia,  
 Melhor não invadir a favela da Rocinha,  
 O bonde forte da Rocinha anda armado até os dentes<sup>12</sup>

Despite its increasing urbanization and economic importance, Rocinha's existence as a slum amidst some of the most elite carioca neighborhoods makes it a classic example of the social terrain of Rio de Janeiro. A long history of neglect on the part of the larger society and the rise of the drug traffickers as the governing power in the favela have left a legacy of complex and backward social organization in Rocinha. One result of this is that the drug traffickers have come to be regarded by many residents as the legitimate protectors of the community and the police as aggressors. In a recent conversation in Rocinha, three young boys told me something quite typical of this view. As we talked about such things as growing up in the favela, what's good and bad about the neighborhood, music and violence, the boys consistently expressed a much higher level of trust in the drug traffickers than in the police.

*Question:* Vocês vêem esse pessoal diariamente (os traficantes), entrando e saindo, vocês têm medo deles? Qual é a sua reação?

*Filipe:* Não! A gente, a gente já está acostumado... Eles não prejudicam os moradores, entendeu? Eles tratam bem...

*Question:* Então, e policial, se você vê policial aqui, você tem medo?

*Filipe:* Aí, sim. Policial, sim, a gente tem medo. Por que o policial não tem diferença, ele não sabe quem é os bandidos daqui, ele, a primeira pessoa que ele vê, “Ah! Ele deve ser bandido.” Atira, mata, ou então prende.<sup>13</sup>

In the conversation, the boys expressed a constant fear of the police and their activity in the favela.

Not surprisingly, when I asked the boys if living in Rocinha is good or bad, violence and police “invasions” were two things that immediately came to their minds.

*Question:* É bom morar aqui na Rocinha?

*Maikom:* A única coisa ruim aqui na Rocinha que eu acho, porque é muita casa uma perto da outra e fica tudo abafado, e quando a polícia invade a gente não, sei lá... mas agora eu já sei quando a polícia está entrando é quando eles solta três vezes os fogos.

*Question:* Aí o que você faz?

*Maikom:* Eu vou para casa, e às vezes a dona Raimunda me chama para eu ir para casa que a gente já está perto da dela, aí todo mundo entra para casa.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the fact that all three found Rocinha to be a great place to play, their underlying fear and insecurity were sadly evident in their comments:

*Erick*: Sabe por que eu acho regular porque é assim, porque tem a parte boa que a gente não é machucada, a parte também que a gente pode se machucar quando os policial vêm pra cá, e a parte que a gente não tem liberdade porque ninguém sabe a hora que os policial vão invadir, aí a gente não sabe a hora que vai ter tiroteio, a gente pode estar brincando na rua, a gente não sabe que tem policial já tá invadindo, aí de repente passa um bandido lá no beco onde a gente mora, passa correndo e a gente pensa que é o cara brincando, vem o policial, vê o cara bem na nossa frente, atira, não vê nem a gente, aí atira, vem bala perdida na gente.<sup>15</sup>

The word “invasion” itself is indicative of the relationships between the police, the drug traffickers and the community of the favela. For example, no one ever refers to the police as invading the Avenida Presidente Vargas in the center of the city. In the favela, the police are often seen as invading because they are not considered by very many people to be the legitimate protectors of the community, although individual police officers themselves do in fact come from favelas or other poor neighborhoods where they may be personally liked. Just as the official government of the state is seen as being remote and somewhat foreign to the favela, the police do not know its individual residents. As a group, they tend to be regarded by the residents of favelas as unsympathetic and dangerous outsiders who are more likely to hurt someone than to help. Their corruption and frequent complicity with the drug trafficking does nothing to endear them to the residents of the favelas, but instead further undermines their authority and emphasizes the hypocrisy of the larger system.

Despite the trust the boys have that the drug traffickers will not harm them, the actual nature of the gangs in favelas, called *quadrilhas*, or *comandos*, and that of their relationship to their communities is a hotly disputed topic. This is true not only among intellectuals and politicians, but among residents of favelas as well. In the case of Rocinha, although each individual resident of the favela of Rocinha has his or her own opinion about the influence of the drug gangs in their community, by and large most accept them as a necessary evil. Some believe that the traffickers competently defend and protect the community; others idolize and love them. There are other people living in Rocinha who deeply hate the drug traffickers and resent their presence in the neighborhood. In my years of living in Rocinha and interacting with my neighbors there, as well as in the interviews I conducted for this study, I saw evidence to suggest that most residents of Rocinha at least trust drug traffickers to a much greater degree than they trust police. If they do not like a particular trafficker or find him cruel and abusive to the population, people tend to condemn that individual and compare him to other more favorable gangsters.

Denis, the big boss of Rocinha during the mid to late eighties, is today generally revered by the population of Rocinha. The period in which he was in charge is remembered as the “good old days” when Denis prohibited his gangsters from openly carrying arms in the favela and using drugs in public, as well as insisting that they always used polite forms of speech when dealing with other residents of the community. This reverence for Denis as Rocinha’s best ever crime boss was only fortified after he was shot to death inside Bangu 1 just a short time before he was to be released in February of 2001. Other bosses since Denis have also achieved a considerable degree of popularity

and support within the community; still others have been greatly feared and hated. The infamous Dudu, who was boss during the mid-nineties, was associated with the *Jovem Comando Vermelho* (Young Comando Vermelho), a movement which relied more directly upon terror than the traditional CV. Among other things, Dudu was known to feed his murdered victims to the two lions and a crocodile he kept in subterranean passages somewhere beneath his *boca-de-fumo*. Also, it is widely reported that he used to force young girls to have their first sexual experiences with him, and that he once burned a young boy to death for stealing in the favela. Even so, Dudu did cater to the image of the drug trafficker as the protector of the community and he did have his admirers. Apparently he didn't have enough admirers, for eventually his lack of popularity caught up to him and his whereabouts were betrayed to police by residents of Rocinha. One Sunday afternoon, Dudu was surprised by police and arrested in 1995 in his mother-in-law's house, ironically the very house that I myself have been living in since the year 2000.

In any event, the basic expectations of the rule of traffickers by the residents of the favela of Rocinha are considerably more comprehensive than the those described by Zaluar. True, the first order of business is protection and if a resident is murdered, raped or robbed, for example, the culprit must be found, permanently or temporarily exiled from the favela, or executed. Residents are never asked to pay with money for this protection or these services and do expect that the same rules apply to even the highest ranking drug traffickers. In addition to this protection, traffickers from the *boca-de-fumo* are also supposed to help residents by giving food, medicine and money to the poor, paving roads and supporting samba schools. Additionally, they regularly pay for

enormous funk dances and are sometimes responsible for such things as fixing up sports courts and administering the schedules of what soccer teams are to play and when. There have been instances in the history of Rocinha in which drug traffickers have forced the *bicheiros*, the men who control an important illegal lottery in Rio, to provide social services for the community also. In return for this protection and these social services from the *boca*, the residents are expected to hold their tongues with the police, acknowledge the rightful leadership of the traffickers, and cooperate with their various activities, from the sale of drugs to the administering of favela justice. They may be expected, in extreme circumstances, to allow the sudden invasion of a home for the purpose of hiding people, weapons or drugs. If a resident does inform either the police or rival gangs about the specific dealings of the *boca-de-fumo*, the traffickers will do their best to kill him or her, often in gruesome ways intended to make an example of the person. Nor can the police be called upon to resolve any problems or otherwise do any policing on their own within the community. "Policing," per se, is the duty and privilege of the *boca*, and any resident wishing to denounce the crime of another must approach the drug traffickers who will, if they deem necessary, undertake an investigation of the matter.

As a means of demonstrating the complex ways in which the roles of the state and the drug gangs gets mixed up and turned around in the multi-layered political reality of the favela, I will recount a revealing anecdote. Until the Rocinha branch of the BANERJ bank was robbed in November of 2000, it was considered by many to be the most secure bank in the city. After a brief exchange of gunfire between the bank robbers and the security guard working inside, the assailants were forced to flee. Within minutes, the

street where the bank is located was swarming with heavily armed gangsters from the *boca-de-fumo*, which was responsible for protecting the bank. The gangsters had called the local officers of the Polícia Militar to help them find the assailants and were slowly walking up and down the street along with the police, trying to get to the bottom of the matter and find the culprits. Had the guilty parties been found within the favela, they would likely have been executed to affirm the authority of the *boca* over even the most commercially developed areas of Rocinha, generally situated near the bottom of the favela, which are still governed by its drug traffickers even as they are becoming increasingly regulated by the state. Fortunately for the bank robbers, they were not found in Rocinha, though they were captured in a random *blitz*, or police blockade, less than two miles away in São Conrado. The all too typical conclusion of the episode is that the bank robbers were actually off-duty members of the Polícia Militar serving on the other side of town.<sup>16</sup>

In the light of this story about the bank robbery, it would seem very difficult to explain the behavior of either the drug traffickers or the police by the sort of “only violent means” thesis espoused by Zaluar. How is one to answer the question, “Why are the drug dealers protecting a bank?” The answer will certainly be at least as complicated as the answers to the questions, “Why are police officers robbing a bank?” and, “Why are other police officers working together with the gangsters to solve the crime?” I am inclined to say that the drug traffickers are protecting the bank because of the social consensus that one cannot steal in the favela. Even a bank or other formal business must be protected, formal and normalized institutions increasingly common in favelas as they undergo a process of “asphaltification.” If they are not protected by the *boca*, the authority of the

traffickers is weakened and it becomes apparent that they cannot be trusted to efficiently uphold their end of the social bargain upon which their legitimacy rests. In any event, I hope this example suffices to suggest that the social order of the favela is infinitely more complex than a tyranny of bloodthirsty drug traffickers over the residents of the favelas and that their social order is much more intimately intertwined with the status quo system than suggested by such characterizations as “democracy versus narcodictatorship.” While I will not argue that the traffickers are some progressive minded revolutionaries, though some may be, I will suggest that there does exist, in fact, a culture of drug trafficking in the social formation of the favela built upon much more complex factors than the mere threat of the use of violence. The social formation of the favela is less “parallel” to the State than it is subordinate to the status quo order in Brazil, as the cooperation of the gangsters with police in this case suggests.

*The Baile Funk as a Staging of Power*

Lá onde nasci tem que saber viver, estou me referindo à minha CDD

Malandro desde pequeno sempre em busca da paz

Nós somamos, dividimos, mas de menos jamais

A nossa união é coisa natural, e a simplicidade é mesmo divinal

Mas se tu tá de mancada, você ver virar raiz, mexe e morre pela boca!<sup>17</sup>

Before going on to examine the representation of the culture of drug trafficking in the lyrics of *proibidão* songs in the next chapter, it is worthwhile to describe the ways in which the gangsters typically support funk. In Rocinha, the drug traffickers pay for almost all of the major weekly *bailes funk*. Every Friday there is a *baile* in the street

known as the Valão and Saturdays one on Rua Um at the *quadra*, a sort of gym-like practice area for the samba school, Acadêmicos da Rocinha. For events like New Year's Eve and carnival, and on other special occasions, there are dances in the busy commercial street known as the Via Ápia. There are also children's *bailes* called *matinês* on Rua Dois and in the soccer court in Cachopa. The traffickers pay individual *equipes*, or sound teams, who provide the equipment, DJs and MCs for the dance. Most favelas have certain preferred *equipes* that tend to put on the shows, but guest sound teams and even battles of the *equipes* are commonplace. Each of the major narco-alliances in Rio have their favorite spokesperson MCs who can perform at any allied favela but will never perform in a community ruled by drug traffickers of one of the other alliances. In addition to whatever other songs are played at these dances, called *bailes de comunidade*, the MCs that perform inevitably sing *proibidão* songs about the drug traffickers, even at the *matinês*. If an important member of the *comando* is killed, a *luto*, or mourning, is sometimes imposed by the traffickers on the favela in which local business owners are required to close shop and the *bailes* are suspended in honor of the deceased gangster. Besides just paying for the dances, the sound teams and the MCs, the drug traffickers also support the *bailes* by personally attending them. They bring their machine guns and a general atmosphere of power, prestige and danger that is an essential part of a *baile de comunidade*. Additionally, the drug traffickers guarantee the protection of the people at the *baile*, where neither fighting nor harassment of members of the opposite sex is allowed.

For an MC, accepting the patronage of the drug traffickers is a decision of major consequence in his or her career. On the one hand, it is the somewhat guaranteed path to

success given that *proibidão* is perhaps the single most popular type of funk music and that therefore a good singer will get lots of work at community *bailes*. On the other hand, becoming associated with the drug traffickers is likely to keep a performer from ever tapping into the more mainstream funk market. At times during its history, funk has attained the level of a national fad and several MCs and DJs have participated on Globo TV shows such as Xuxa Hits or Domingão do Faustão. These artists, such as DJ Marlboro, duos Leonardo and Júnior and Claudinho and Buchecha, and the Bonde do Tigrão, certainly make more money much faster than their *proibidão* counterparts. Some, such as MC Júnior, do not particularly like *proibidão* anyway and lament the connections between funk and the drug traffickers.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, these funk artists not connected with organized crime can and do go to favelas all over the city controlled by the CV, TC and ADA alike. Those MCs who do choose to be spokespersons for the narco-alliances will never have the chance to sing their rhymes to a national audience nor meet the president, and they wouldn't even think of trying to sing in a favela controlled by rival gangs.

Of course, by making such a public spectacle of their appearance at the dances, the drug traffickers are able to use them to build legitimacy. The *baile* is a platform for the presentation of the discourse of the hegemony of the traffickers, a discourse which unifies the community in racial, class and geographical terms as it naturalizes and universalizes the rule of the drug traffickers. Not only are these dances free, a present from the *boca-de-fumo*, but they are stages for the power of the gangsters. Drugs are used in abundance, the very product which sustains the whole structure of organized crime in the favela, guns are brandished, as is the high lifestyle of the gangsters, with their numerous friends,

girlfriends, and gold chains. For example, on the last night of Carnival 2002 dozens of armed traffickers were present at a *baile* in Rocinha. Some were dressed in matching black jumpsuits and carrying shiny silver-plated weapons; one in particular wore an Osama bin Laden mask as he smoked a joint, his AK-47 swinging on his shoulder with a Flamengo soccer club sticker visible on its stock.<sup>19</sup> At a deeper level, their presence at the community dances, attended by anywhere from 1,500 to 20,000 people, is a public affirmation that they are in control and that all is well in the community. In the world of the favela, the drug traffickers and their friends are the rich and famous and their fast lives are necessarily quite public. Even if they cannot leave Rocinha, the drug traffickers are in their element at the funk dance; they are the warriors of the tribe, the special forces, brave, responsible, sometimes well loved, sometimes hated, and always dangerous.

Confinement to Rocinha on the part of its top gangsters still leaves many options for night life and is certainly not as bad as it might be in almost any of the smaller favelas around the city. Although funk is the main attraction in terms of sheer numbers of people attending, there is an abundance of large scale, mostly outdoor musical events of a variety of styles in Rocinha, from funk to pagode, samba and forró. The presence of a large number of cookouts, pizza places and bar front parties with live music create a continuously festive atmosphere in the favela, especially Thursday through Sunday. There is the main *quadra* of the samba school by the tunnel in São Conrado, where practice sessions are held for carnival as well as the bi-weekly 100% Bagunça and VIP Nites mixed-music, all-you-can-drink events. There have also been large scale charity events featuring performers such as Gabriel o Pensador, O Rappa and Padre Marcelo. It is

not uncommon to see Brazilian celebrities, such as soccer players, singers and actors from the Globo network, passing through in cars or mixing with the crowd.

In Rocinha, generally the only funk dances not directly supported by the *comando* are the ones at the *Clube do Emoções*, an enormous nightclub on the fringes of the favela, in São Conrado. *Emoções*, which showcases pagode music on Fridays, forró on Saturdays and funk on Sundays, is highly successful and attracts patrons from Rocinha, other poor neighborhoods around Rio, and the middle-class alike. The two levels of the club have a capacity of about 2,500 people, elaborate security and air circulation systems and numerous security guards. Because *Emoções* is a private club that can charge admission, the drug traffickers do not pay for the dance nor do they attend in their armed *bondes*. As a result, fights do occur at the club, but they tend to be well contained by the club's bouncers. Because the fights often continue outside the club after the trouble makers are thrown out, the owner of *Emoções* asks the police to stay about the entrance of the club throughout the night. *Emoções* also has *matinês* at which no alcohol is sold, before the bigger adult *bailes*.<sup>21</sup>

Although clubs like *Emoções* tend to feature a more diverse variety of acts than the community *bailes*, with such things as competitions of groups of all male dancer/singers and female acts, there are still always one or two big-name MCs representing the Comando Vermelho who are the high point of the dance. No matter what dance trends and other changes come and go in the funk movement, the MCs are the idols and heroes of funk and many have been around since the first funk songs in Portuguese were performed in the early nineties. Their prominent place even in the dances outside of the direct control of the *comando* and the popularity of their *raps proibidos* is testimony to

the importance of the world of the drug traffickers in funk. This is true as much for the adult *bailes* and the *matinês*, a fact that was more than apparent to me one night at a children's dance in which I saw a little toddler on his fathers' shoulders making a gun with his hand and shooting it to the beat of a *proibidão* about the power of the Rocinha gang.<sup>20</sup>

### *Conclusion*

As I have argued above, it was not a coincidence that Tim Lopes was murdered trying to secretly film inside a *baile funk*. What is not clear, perhaps, is how to account for the political fallout of Lopes's murder and the debate it has brought on. In a city where thousands of people are violently killed each year, just what is it about the tragic murder of this specific human being that has touched such a nerve in Brazil? Why are people calling on the government to send the army back into the favelas, why are favelas being surrounded and shut off by the police, why are funk CDs that were ignored before being confiscated and dances that went on suddenly being closed? Perhaps this is because, in a sense, the "favelification" of Rio throughout recent decades has brought about an informal welfare system in which drug traffickers have helped to provide minimal low-income housing, protection, medical assistance, public works and leisure and recreational activities. My friend Sérgio Soares Almeida, a prominent member of the business community and owner of a successful pizzeria in Rocinha, suggested this development has been the result of the complicity of the status quo and an informal policy he calls "favela as solution." At some level, the extremely high levels of violence inherent in this

approach were known to all and considered lamentable, but it is only when the “favela as solution” system spills over into the non-favela space of the *asphalt* that the middle- and upper-class residents of the city are directly confronted with the failings of the system. Of course, the slow evolution of Rio throughout the decades into a city in which the rich must live behind gates and body guards has made things difficult for everyone, but even certain limits on their freedom might be acceptable to the elites to some degree if they can at least remain in power. But when a crime boss like Elias Maluco crosses the line and audaciously applies the rules of the favela to a TV Globo reporter, it is as if the monster which was allowed to thrive threatens to rattle out of its chain and turn itself loose on its master.

Some readers may be asking themselves why excerpts from popular *proibidão* songs have been placed at the beginnings of the subheadings throughout this chapter, even though I have thus far not provided any close readings of them. I have done this in an effort to further contextualize the world of funk music in relation to the climate of violence and social exclusion in which it was born. I have also done this to make it apparent that the themes referred to throughout this study in fact do appear consistently in funk, something easier to see in this type of longer passages. Besides, there would not be much point trying to make too much sense of these lyrics without giving a good amount of background on the world of drug traffickers and favelas. The practice of funk music is every bit as complicated as the socio-cultural terrain of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, of which it is such a vital and important part. It is my hope that, having contextualized funk within the scope of the general crisis of violence and social exclusion in Brazil, a much closer and more meaningful analysis of the ideological strategies evident in funk will be

possible in the next chapter. In any event, I hope I have made it clear that there is a strong connection between funk and the power of the drug traffickers in the favelas of Rio, and that a strong connection exists between the reality of the favela and the larger *carioca* society. Favelas are communities of people living as a part of a Brazilian system that exploits them as it forces them to the periphery. If many poor people in Rio rely on drug traffickers for protection and social services, it may be less from a “consumerist” impulse or a “medieval disposition” as from the need to survive amidst a growing crisis of poverty and violence. If there can be any hope to diminish the crisis of social exclusion in Rio specifically, and in Brazil more generally, the culture of the drug trafficker must be understood in the context of its relationship to the larger Brazilian society. Ultimately, the drug traffickers’ rule of the favelas is a part of the larger society of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil more generally and in order to change it the larger society will have to change as well.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Translation:

The Via Ápia, Paula Brito, Cachopa,  
 Fundação, Terreirão,  
 The gangs ready, always with their AKs in hand,  
 Pissed off, watching your bullshit,  
 Faith in God for the big Red Command

<sup>2</sup> As one of the chief cultural productions of the favelas, funk music is one of the principal spaces in which the ideological negotiation occurs between the drug traffickers, other residents and the larger Brazilian society. My understanding of ideology and the hegemonic process can be described as dialectical in the sense that it represents the sort of continuous renegotiation of power described by Eagleton as “a discursive field in which self-promoting social powers conflict and collide over questions central to the reproduction of social power as a whole.”(29)

<sup>3</sup> According to the information published on the special insert of Sunday, June 16, 2002, published in *O Globo*, the most heavily armed favelas are Complexo da Maré, Complexo do Alemão and Rocinha. Rocinha is generally considered different from the other two because it is one favela, whereas the other two are groups of favelas. In the case of Maré, both the CV and the TC (Terceiro Comando) control some areas of the favela. Still, Rocinha is comprised of several areas, some of which, under different circumstances, could be considered separate favelas. Currently, there is only one *comando* in Rocinha; the favela’s location in the richest part of Rio makes it an excellent

place to sell large quantities of drugs and as result, the comando is extremely well armed and very much in evidence in the daily life of the favela.

<sup>4</sup> Translation:

We're Red to the bone, it's peace, justice and liberty,  
 I'm armed to the teeth, the gang is awesome,  
 That's why we're faith in God and the gang keeps growing,  
 Here it's us who decide if it rains or shines  
 I'll defend the favela my whole life long

<sup>5</sup> On June 16, 2002, the Sunday edition of *O Globo* was released with a special ten-page insert entitled “O Rio está perdendo a guerra contra o tráfico?” Here I have translated “tráfico” as “drug trafficking,” though the Portuguese also implies “the drug traffickers” and their organizations.

<sup>6</sup> This was reported in an article entitled “Apreendidos CDs piratas e de apologia ao tráfico,” appearing on *O Globo Online* on June 24, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> For further information on the evolution of funk and its relationship to violence, see the anthology *Abalando os anos 90- funk e hip-hop. Globalização, violência e estilo cultural*, organized by Micael Herschmann, especially the articles “O funk carioca,” by José M. Valenzuela Arce, and “Rebeldia urbana: tramas de exclusão e violência juvenil,” Glória Diógenes.

<sup>8</sup> “Juizado não consegue fazer a fiscalização.” *O Globo*, June 16, 2002, Especial, 4. The article cites a resident of the Vila Cruzeiro favela, saying, “ Todo mundo aqui sabe que há drogas, tiros e orgias nos bailes. Às vezes, eles arrastam alguém. Pode juntar seis batendo num cara só.”

<sup>9</sup> For a brief history of the rise of the Comando Vermelho in the Instituto Penal Cândido Mendes, on Ilha Grande, see André Cypriano, *Caldeirão do Diabo*, São Paulo: Cosac e Naify Edições, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> These statistics are based on studies published in the book *Violência e Criminalidade no Estado do Rio de Janeiro*, organized by Anthony Garotinho with Luiz Eduardo Soares, Barbara Soares, João Trajano Sento-Sé, Leonarda Musmeci and Silvia Ramos.

<sup>11</sup> One case study supporting this claim is that of the favela called “Santa Ana” in Arias’ study of crime, violence and democracy in Rio de Janeiro (111-151).

<sup>12</sup> Translation:

If you invade and go bang bang bang,  
 You’ll get all full of lead  
 Because the gang doesn’t fool around  
 So I say, it’s very well prepared,  
 If you are an enemy, or a cop,  
 Better not invade the favela of Rocinha  
 The strong gang of Rocinha is armed to the teeth

<sup>13</sup> This passage is quoted from an interview at the Escola Moranguinhos, in Rocinha, with Erick, Filipe, and Maikom, on March 28, 2002. Translation:

*Question:* You all see these folks everyday around here (the drug traffickers), coming in and going out... Are you afraid of them? What’s your reaction?  
*Filipe:* No! We, we’re used to them... They don’t hurt the residents, see? They treat people well...

*Question:* So, and police officers, if you see one around here, does it scare you?

*Filipe:* Oh, yes. Police officers, yes, we get scared. Because a police officer doesn't know the difference, he doesn't know who gangsters around here are, so the first person he sees, "Hey! He must be a gangster." He shoots, kills or at least arrests you.

<sup>14</sup> Translation (continued):

*Erick:* You know why I think it's just ok, it's because it's like this, because there's the good part that we don't get hurt, the part also that we can get hurt when the police come here, and the part that we aren't free because nobody knows when the police are going to invade, so we don't know when there's going to be a gunfight, we can be playing in the street, we don't know the police are invading, so then all of the sudden a gangster goes by there in the alley where we live, goes by running and we think the guy's playing, the policeman comes, sees the guy in front of us, shoots, doesn't even see us, so he shoots, and he shoots us by accident instead.

<sup>15</sup> Translation (continued):

*Question:* Do you guys like living here?

*Maikom:* The only thing uncool here in Rocinha for me is because there's lots of houses all close together all stuffy, and when the police invade we don't, I don't know... But now I know when they're coming in because they (the gangsters) shoot off three roman candles.

*Question:* So what do you do then?

*Maikom*: I go home, and sometimes dona Raimunda calls me over to her house and we all stay close to her, so everyone goes into her house.

<sup>16</sup> An eyewitness account was given to me on November 20, 2000 by the owner of a local Rocinha restaurant, PizzaLit, Sérgio Soares Almeida, a resident of the Rocinha who was inside the bank at the time of the robbery.

<sup>17</sup> Translation:

There where I was born, you have to know how to live,  
 I'm talking about my CDD (Cidade de Deus)  
 We add, we divide, but we never come up less,  
 Our unity is a natural thing, and its simplicity is really divine,  
 But if you cause problems, you'll turn into roots,  
 Mess around and get killed by the gang!

<sup>18</sup> In an interview with MC Júnior at his house in Rocinha, on March 26, 2002, he said he personally would not want to sing *proibidão* for the reasons mentioned above. Júnior and his brother, MC Leonardo, were two of the all time most famous and best-selling funk artists, performing around the country and on Xuxa Hits and Domingão do Faustão. Ironically, they themselves were accused of being spokespersons for the Comando Vermelho for their song “Rap das Armas.” The song includes the words, “paz, justiça e liberdade,” which, according to the press, was the slogan of the CV. In reality, their song was intended as a social protest song decrying the problem of violence in general in Brazil and was never meant to support organized crime. When I asked him if he and Leonardo knew that “peace, justice and liberty” was the slogan of the CV, Júnior laughed heartily and said that the reporter who wrote the article apparently knew more than them

(Helena). Though their song has often been sampled and imitated by singers of *proibidão*, Júnior and Leonardo's vision of funk is much bigger than the traffickers; it is a vision of funk as a beautiful Brazilian musical style for the entire country.

<sup>19</sup> This was observed at a *baile* in Rocinha during carnival on February 12, 2002.

<sup>20</sup> Much of the information regarding the Clube do Emoções comes from an interview held on March 22, 2002 with its owner and manager Wagner Dias Beta.

<sup>21</sup> This was observed at the *matiné* at the Clube do Emoções on January 13, 2002.

### Chapter 3: The ‘Social Bandit’ in Funk

E os amigos de plantão botaram pra cantar

E fizeram realidade o rap do parrá pá pá

-A cappella introduction to “Tá ca cuca louca,” by MCs Cidinho and Doca

#### *Pizza and Helicopters*<sup>1</sup>

A dozen and a half or so tables line the area under the awning in front of 100% Gostoso Beer Pizza. They go all the way up the sidewalk and in front of the pharmacy next door. It’s about midnight on a Thursday and some hundred people chat, drink and eat as they mill about the tables in the muggy summer heat of Rio. The restaurant is well lit, the TV mounted in front of the restrooms inaudible over the roar of dozens of motorcycle taxis, cars and buses constantly passing by. Even at this hour, the narrow *Estrada da Gávea* road is choked by a low-grade traffic jam. At the far end of the tables, a thin young man with an electric guitar shakes his head as he sings an old favorite by Legião Urbana. Several people sing along as waiters in white shirts and black pants bustle through the crowd.

The main drag in the favela of Rocinha almost never sleeps. Even this late, people walk by on their way to and from work, others come back from night school or just heading out for the evening. A group of girls from a local gym, dressed in tiny athletic shorts and sports bras, stop and hug a group a *capoeiristas* relaxing over pizzas and beer. One of them sees a friend from Rocinha’s computer lab, Estação Futuro, and runs to his table to hug him around the neck. There is also a birthday party going on for Vicente, one of the waiters, who is off-duty tonight and sitting amidst a huge group of friends and

family at a long row of tables. The fumes from the traffic mix with cigarette smoke in the hot *carioca* night.

“Did you see that damn helicopter this morning?” Renato leans over to Charlys, who has just arrived with his girlfriend. “Porra, mané! That thing was right on top of me! It stuck around here for hours!”

Charlys hadn’t been in Rocinha since yesterday; he’d done two shows with his band in Campo Grande; one last night and one today.

“Pô, cara! They were flying up and down the ‘big hill’ all morning, cara.” Renato explains that the police came into the favela early with some *X-9* informants in tow, all dressed in black from head to foot. Black masks also hid the informants’ faces as the police led them along on the ends of ropes. The police were after “21,” a well known soldier of the local gang, but they went into the wrong building, Renato’s friend’s cousin’s house, and shot that house up by mistake. Next door, 21 heard the gunfire and came out, shot one police officer in the arm and took off running like a bolt of lightning. Since that time, the PMs had closed down the favela and had been searching everyone all day long. “I was brushing my teeth and I heard the damn helicopter right on top of me... I opened my window to see what it was and it was right in my face! Those two cops were hangin’ on it, hangin’ by belts, you know, standing on the landing rudders or whatever. They had those big assault rifles, with sights and all, and they pointed it right in my face, mané!” Renato drank some beer. “Tema, you were here this morning, right? Wasn’t that messed up?”

Just then, someone opened the trunk of a car parked next to them and a heavy thumping bass beat filled the street. The music of the funk song drowned out the din of the crowd and the MC's voice chanted a familiar refrain:

Tá ca cuca louca, tá lêlê da cuca,  
 A Rocinha é Comando na veia  
 se quiser tomar tem que vir de bazuka...<sup>2</sup>

Nêgu Tema took his knit Rasta man hat off and let his dreads hang down. He rubbed his head and said, "The Third World is a great big videogame."

### *Funk as the Globo of Favela Folks*

I have chosen to open this chapter with this little dialogue about a pizza place on the night after a police invasion of the favela of Rocinha for a variety of reasons. For one thing, I hope it reflects a bit the acute feeling of insecurity and powerlessness such draconian measures often instill in the general population of the favela community, a population that is more often than not innocent of whatever crimes are practiced by the drug traffickers that share the neighborhood with them. It can be very scary to find oneself in the sights of a gun, or to be just next to a ferocious machine gun battle, and it is humiliating to be frisked by police or ordered to step out of a house or vehicle. In another police operation occurring in March of 2003, some time after the one depicted in the dialogue above, the front door to my house was kicked in by a military policeman and my house searched. When the same police officer went to kick my neighbor's door down, that of a fairly high ranking drug dealer in the local gang, he changed his mind. After one kick, the drug dealer's young wife opened the door, baby in arms, asking him what all the

fuss was about. The baby took hold of the policeman's finger and wouldn't let go. He just kept holding onto the man's finger and smiling. Something about this softened the policeman's demeanor and he said to the infant, "You're a strong one! Someday you're going to be a cop!" The drug dealer, hiding in the shower just a few feet away, overheard the policeman's prediction and was deeply offended. "The nerve of that guy!" He later told me. Anyway, the policeman went away without breaking down any more doors. After some three days of searching, the police eventually found the men they were looking for and left.

Beyond the feeling of insecurity that such activities instill in the populations of favelas, they also inadvertently serve to de-legitimize the state and its agents in the eyes of Rio's poor residents. Inevitably, the police comes to be seen as an invading force of outsiders who place the safety of the everyday residents of the community at risk. Such actions make it clear, at least in terms of police tactics, that the state is more than willing to treat the residents of the favelas as second class citizens, or even a some kind of enemies. Of course, individual police, whether from the *Polícia Militar*, *Civil* or *Federal*, have their own individual opinions regarding people in favelas and many are upstanding and well-intentioned. Still, there's no getting way from the fact that the police in Rio de Janeiro are often corrupt and that they frequently employ brutal tactics of repression. By way of an anecdote, I was once horribly surprised at the candor of an army colonel who told me during a cookout that a bomb should be dropped on the favela of Borel. He was completely serious, and though he lamented the necessity to do so, he felt that due to a question of karma, there was no other way to straighten out the mess that Borel had become.

Returning to the question of why I have chosen to open this chapter with the pizzeria dialogue, I hoped that in portraying a *proibidão* funk song and its lyrics in the context of the discussion of the invasion I could suggest some of the principal features of its appeal for so many young people living in favelas. In *proibidão*, the police are portrayed as an invading enemy, one who is corrupt, prejudiced and incompetent, while the local drug traffickers are represented as powerful, crafty warriors who both confound the police and replace them as the legitimate defenders of their communities. It could be argued that the drug traffickers are as much responsible for the invasions by police, and the resulting climate of violence that characterizes life in favelas, as the police themselves. This may be true, but when the guns pointed at a person are in the hands of the police, and when it is them who kick doors down and stop people in the streets, it is hard for a person not to see them as the enemy. The fact that many of the gangsters of the drug gangs in any given favela are residents of that community, and the police are not, only serves to deepen this sentiment. In this context, it is not surprising that many residents of Rocinha would sympathize with 21 in his Hollywood escape from the bumbling police, as it should not be surprising that the funk music which praises the deeds and lives of drug traffickers in general could become so popular in favelas.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the social landscape of the favela of Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro and discussed some of the principal issues in the debate about the role and nature of organized crime in the city's low-income communities. I also discussed the ways in which organized crime has patronized the musical practice of funk in their communities, principally through offering large *bailes funk* in the favelas and by supporting various composers and singers of *proibidão* funk. In this chapter, I will

discuss in greater detail the specific ideological strategies evident in *proibidão*-style funk that serve to construct the drug traffickers of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro as ‘social bandits,’ or primitive rebel avengers of their local populations attempting to establish a traditional, clientelist system of social order. To what extent these drug traffickers actually are social bandits in practice is another matter and perhaps best left to some form or another of social science quantitative analysis. It seems to me in the model of the social bandit as primitive rebel, proposed by Hobsbawm, the tendency of the local population to see its outlaws as rebels is more important in terms of what it says about their consciousness than whether or not the outlaws really are rebels or not. Regardless, Hobsbawm recognizes the tendency for these outlaws to eventually accept and pander to this view, for the obvious benefits such popularity affords them. Thus, by focusing on Rio’s drug trafficker as social bandits in funk, and not necessarily in practice, I intend to analyze the complex set of ideological negotiations occurring between these drug traffickers and the residents of their favelas in the discourse of the power of the organized crime.

Whatever the agreement between the traffickers and their communities, it is informal and unwritten and the ways in which it will actually play out in practice are unclear and in a constant state of negotiation. Additionally, there are innumerable possible expectations and interpretations of the governance of the traffickers as there are innumerable needs of residents of favelas. In any event, these may or may not fall under the jurisdiction of the traffickers, who share space with other institutions such as NGOs, churches, neighbors’ associations and even limited government organizations.<sup>3</sup> Some relatively clear rules and norms for the social organization under the traffickers must be

articulated and upheld, to some extent, in deed in order that the various actors have a notion of the workings of power within the community. The traditional media in Brazil plays only a small role in the dissemination of the laws of the favelas, and it is usually the case, of course, that newspapers and televisions spread false information about the social formation of favelas. The hegemony of the drug traffickers is dependent on oral communication, more than anything else; residents talking to one another, recounting oral history both remote and recent, telling a neighbor what happened on their street and what they saw last night. A great many of the traffickers' actions are intended to be public, in fact, and even great celebrations involving thousands of rounds of ammunition have their place in the construction of the hegemony of the *boca-de-fumo*.<sup>4</sup> As the traditional media is to the status quo in Brazil, and the Globo television network in particular, so is *proibidão* funk to the order of the drug traffickers in Rio. It reflects the social formation of the favela even as it helps to shape it, naming names, mentioning places, reporting what is going on and the rules of how one must behave to survive in the world of the favelas.

If the members of a society do not learn the rules of power within their communities, they will inevitably break them. Those in power would then be forced to occupy themselves in the constant punishment of the guilty parties. For this reason, it is always beneficial for the 'powers that be' to improve the efficiency of their governance by educating those they govern as to their expectations. An action itself is often insufficient as a means of instructing the public and there is a need for some interpretive framework to explain it. In order to do this, the traffickers can call press conferences, as they sometimes did in the late eighties, in which they explain their understanding of their own

role in the favela. Such a practice is dangerous for obvious reasons, in addition to the fact that, by calling on the press, the traffickers run the risk of having their messages distorted. Perhaps for these reasons, it has become rare to call the press and instead they have developed other discursive and ritual means of disseminating the rules of the favela. Presently, one of the most important means at the disposition of the traffickers for the representation of their power in the favelas are the *bailes funk* and the lyrics of the *proibidão* style. *Proibidão* funk in the favelas has become the principal platform for the presentation of the power of the traffickers and the underlying values and rules of behavior in their governance of the favela.

For instance, if the drug traffickers kill a rapist but no one knows why he died, the educational dimension of their action is nullified. In order to educate the residents about the rules of the favela, the traffickers might kill the rapist in the night and leave his body in the street with a knife holding up a note on his back saying that he will never rape again, something that did in fact happen on my street in Rocinha in October of 1990. They may instead drag him screaming from his home, marching him across the neighborhood to die in the clandestine cemetery at the top of the hill. They may even strip him nude and parade him around in women's underwear. If such an action is to effectively discourage future rapes, it must not be seen as a random act but rather as being taken within some common understanding of the rules about rape in the community. In this way, the population learns the rule and is convinced that the traffickers can be trusted to efficiently enforce it. On the other hand, if word gets around that other rapes do occur and go unpunished, the authority of the traffickers will be diminished. In order to avoid spending all of their time policing the neighborhood and

punishing culprits, therefore, it is in the interest of the traffickers to invest in activities that support and legitimize their hegemony through public ritual and discourse; activities such as the *bailes funk* in favelas and *proibidão* music.

*A G3 and a Song about a G3*

Vou falar agora vê se não bate viela  
 Os dez mandamentos que tem dentro da favela  
 O primeiro mandamento é não cagüetar  
 Cagüete na favela não pode morar  
 O segundo mandamento já já eu vou dizer  
 Com a mulher dos amigos não se deve mexer  
 O terceiro mandamento eu vou dizer também  
 E levar no blindão e não dar volta em ninguém  
 O quarto mandamento não é difícil de falar  
 Favela é boa escola mas não se deve roubar  
 O quinto mandamento, boladão estou  
 Vou rasgar de G3 o safadão do encharcador<sup>5</sup>

One of the most succinct examples of the representation of the power of the drug traffickers in funk is the song “The Ten Commandments of the Favela,” quoted in the verses above. This particular was sung live at a *baile funk* in Rocinha, probably in the Via Ápia or the Valão sometime in 2001 by a duo from another favela controlled by the *Comando Vermelho* and appears on the pirate CD entitled *Dos Bandy 2*. The song suggests very clearly the idea that there is a consensus about what should be expected

from the governance of the traffickers, some mutually recognized code of conduct or culture of the world of the favela. While the use of violence hangs over these commandments as the means of enforcing them, the commandments themselves constitute rules that go beyond the business of trafficking drugs. Just as God was represented in the Old Testament as capable of violence but having moral authority beyond this capability, so too are the drug traffickers represented in this song. The use of a religious metaphor for presenting the rules of the favela is typical of the tendency pointed out by Hobsbawm, whose ideas will be discussed below, to equate the outlaw with a traditional order. The performative dimension of the song, which occurs as the drug traffickers and other residents come together in the live setting of a *baile funk* in a street in Rocinha, is a ritual of power and is critical to the discursive function of the song. The performance of the “Ten Commandments of the Favela” is not a lecture to a group of feeble, repressed residents but a celebration of the strength, courage, smarts and anger of the people of the favela and of their rulers.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the first commandment in the song refers to what is often called the “law of silence,” the law that a person cannot inform the police or rival gangs about the activities of the local gang. Such a person, referred to as *X-9*, *Mr. M*, or a *cagüeta*, is constantly represented in funk as the public enemy number one of the favela and his or her actions the ultimate cowardice and self-centeredness.<sup>6</sup> The negative consequences such informants have on the business of trafficking drugs is obvious; less obvious perhaps is the way in which informing is seen as damaging to the well-being of the community. Perhaps the following quote from another *proibidão* song will shed light on this. The song begins with a short dialogue between a drug trafficker and a police

officer who wants more money. The drug trafficker angrily suggests that the police officer sell him an informant:

-Aí, cidadão, é o arrego.

-Qual é, Chefia, de novo? Porra. Tá maluco.

-Pois o salário tá bravo, né?

-Ah, quer dindin, então vende X-9 para mim.

Next, the singer denounces the falsity of the *X-9*, who is said to have pretended to be a friend:

Se faz de amigo, só faz de conta,  
 Sujeito safado tem que apanhar,  
 Por causa dele o meu mano morreu  
 O plantão, todo o trabalho, ele enfraqueceu  
 E causou muitas mortes deixando infeliz  
 Famílias dos manos que eram raiz  
 Os moradores já querem pegar  
 Até grampearam o seu celular  
 O patrão já tá preso e mandou avisar  
 Sua sentença já vamos executar  
 É com bala de AK<sup>7</sup>

In the song, the singer blames the informant for the arrest of the boss, the death of members of the *quadrilha* and the sorrow of their families. Without the boss, the gang is weakened and cannot guarantee the protection of the favela. Worse still, it is always possible that the boss's lieutenants will fight one another for leadership or that gangs from other areas will seize the occasion and attempt an invasion. Whatever the case, the

peace of the favela has been compromised and the residents are in danger. The blatant implication of this song, like that of the “Ten Commandments of the Favela,” is that the person who has violated the laws of the favela should be punished. Still, violence and people talking, or singing, about violence are two different things; in the end, the fact that this “commandment” is being represented lyrically in a popular musical style and sung in a favela at a dance paid for by the drug traffickers brings it beyond “violent means” into a discursive framework. This discursive framework is considerably more complex than the gossip of neighbors discussing a specific murder, for the reason that the violent acts mentioned are not concrete, specific acts that have occurred but rather abstract general possibilities of what can happen if the ire of the gang is provoked.

The second commandment in the song, that one should not “mess with” the women of friends, is not one that is generally mentioned in funk and in fact is not considered to be a rule of the favela in general. In reality, this rule applies more to members of the gang than to the general public, perhaps because any ill-will between members of the gang can seriously weaken and jeopardize it. Still, the rule does reflect a more traditional view of sex relations than one might expect who sees every aspect of the power of the traffickers as hinging upon the force of their arms. For example, the rule could have been that the more powerful members of the community could be with whatever women they want, or at least that the drug traffickers could be with any women not involved with other drug traffickers. Instead, the rule is one that even those in power must obey. In any event, the rule does reflect a consensus about interpersonal relations in the favela; it does not prohibit other forms of involvement with women sometimes prohibited by other cultures, such as involvement with married women or women under eighteen. The basis of the

consensus is less abstract and more directly born of the close tribal kinship of the members of the community; if one doesn't know the husband or boyfriend of the women, it is ok to be involved with her. In a similar way, the third commandment, that one must respect the other residents and not do them wrong in general, is also indicative of this sort of personal level of actions over more abstract principles. The commandment is understood to apply only to the residents of the favela in dealing with other residents of the same favela and not as a more abstract moral code. The fourth commandment also suggests this loyalty to the favela as a sort of tribe or family when it forbids theft within the community. The fourth commandment calls the favela a "good school," an inference that one can learn about theft from the residents but not carry out robberies against them. In the fifth commandment, the singer states the authority of the drug traffickers to kill those who violate the previous four, a sort of "Thou shall die."

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the remaining five commandments of the favela are not mentioned in this version of the song: the singers do not finish the list but instead go on to do a medley of other *proibidão* style songs. Math, no doubt, is not their main concern, and perhaps the singers feel that they have already touched on the most important commandments with just five. In any event, it is a song sung at a live show where the aesthetics of funk and the entertainment of the crowd are also important. The point is that the "commandments" are indicating a set of commonly understood rules for life in the community and that these are not limited to the sale of drugs. So not only is there a discourse about the rules of the favela, there is a consensus about the values of who can use violent means where and when. The fact that these rules are being sung in a song at a *baile funk* patronized by the *comando* suggests that an intricate consensus is

being negotiated within the social formation of the favela. This occurs through the actions of both drug traffickers and other residents as well as the variety of discursive forms through which the significance of those actions is defined and represented. This staging of power of the drug traffickers, both in the *baile funk* and the music of *proibidão*, indicates that at some level the acquiescence of the population and their dependency upon the drug traffickers does constitute some sort of “culture” of drug trafficking in which the hegemony of the traffickers is experienced as legitimate. The residents do have expectations that the traffickers will uphold the laws of the favela among the residents of the favela. By walking into the *boca-de-fumo*, fully expecting the traffickers to resolve his or her problem in a satisfactory way, a resident displays an understanding of the power of the traffickers that goes far beyond the notion of the “law of silence.” In the same way, by writing a song that depicts rules for the drug traffickers to follow, the composer has an opportunity to mold the notion of what it means to be a social bandit in the context of the favela and therefore participates in the negotiation of the order of power in the community.

#### *Crimes of legitimate self-defense*

The cliché “bota o fuzil pra cantar!”, which appeared at the beginning of the last chapter, is a typical opening line in funk meaning “make the gun sing.” These words are shouted by a *proibidão*-style funk MC as if to the DJ, who then unleashes the heavy beats of the song so the MC can begin to sing. In the other song quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the opposite occurs and instead of musicians making music that is gunfire, gangsters make gunfire that is music. The equating of gunfire and music in these two

directions is emblematic of the deep relation of funk to the gangs and of their discourse of the drug trafficker's rule of the favela. In these two apparently simple verses, funk music and gangster violence are mixed together in one complex knot that both glorifies criminal behavior and laments the system that creates it. "And the friends on duty (the armed gangsters guarding the favela against invasion by police or rival gangs) made their guns sing, and they made that old 'bang bang rap' become reality." The verses portray a gunfight between the soldiers of the favela and an unspecified invading force. In the song, the gangsters make their guns "sing;" on one level, they are engaged in a life and death gunfight and on another they perform a song about a life of deadly gunfights.

The song turns shooting into singing, but it is not just any singing that is implied in the song. The old 'bang bang rap' referred to is the "Rap das Armas," a tremendous funk hit recorded by two brothers from Rocinha, Júnior and Leonardo, in 1995. The refrain from that song, sung on their album by guest vocalists Cidinho and Doca, of the Cidade de Deus favela, is a vocal imitation of the sound of machine gun fire, "pa parrá pa parrá pa parráa claque bum." Though the song "Rap das Armas" was intended by its authors as a protest of violence in Rio, it was accused in *O Globo* of glorifying the *Comando Vermelho* and the song found itself at the center of a wide spread debate as to whether or not funk was an apology for crime.<sup>8</sup> The new song, performed some six or seven years after the controversy over "Rap das Armas," could certainly be considered an "apology for crime" in a way that the original never was; the gangsters portrayed are presumably trying to kill somebody with guns. Still, the semiotic inversions implicit in the song turn things on their head in a playful way; a machine gun becomes a voice imitating a machine gun and violence becomes a staging of violence. The gangsters, like the MCs of

*proibidão* funk themselves, engage in singing/fighting as a counterattack, as a means of asserting themselves against another power from without. Though their violent acts are glorified, as is their power and identity as the champions of the favelas, the tragic singing of their machine guns also becomes the mark of a hard life of violence and poverty.

With such blatant praise of the violence of the drug traffickers so common in *proibidão* funk, it is easy to understand why funk is so often accused of making an “apology of crime.” Let me say from the beginning that in my opinion, yes, *proibidão* does make an “apology of crime,” though what this actually means is more complicated than one might expect. The “crime” it defends is, of course, the culture of the drug traffickers who partially govern the favelas of Rio de Janeiro and who provide their communities with policing, basic welfare services and recreational activities. These drug traffickers *are* defended and glorified in *proibidão* funk and are, in fact, represented as being the legitimate defenders of the poor against the violence and corruption of the larger Brazilian system. The “crime” being “apologized,” in this sense, is not random violence but rather a sort of systematic “revolt as survival tactic” by some of the people most effected by the crisis of violence that plagues Rio and indeed Brazil more generally. To defend this crime, however, as do the MCs and indeed the entire culture of *proibidão*, is more than to make a protest; it is a way of negotiating the use of power in the favelas through the discursive field of the hegemony of the drug traffickers. True, the crimes praised in *proibidão* often go beyond the activities of the drug gangs as defenders of everyday people and even the sale of drugs, sometimes glorifying such things as robberies, assaults, and kidnappings as well. Still, in the end, what appears to be an “apology of crime” is also an implicit condemnation of the social norms in Brazil that

have created high levels of class and race disparity and produced a social welfare system dependent on organized crime for its very existence.

In March of 2002, I conducted an interview with a very talented hip-hop artist named Nêgu Tema who was living in my area of Rocinha and who taught me a great deal about favelas and contemporary music in Brazil. At the time, Tema and I were working to put together a hip-hop workshop for kids in the favela through the Two Brothers Foundation. Unlike most hip-hop artists and indeed fans who tend to dislike Brazilian funk, Tema was somewhat positive about funk and even sympathetic with what he identified as a certain spirit of revolt in *proibidão*. He definitely liked it much more than the more sexualized, pop variety of funk and he even wanted to get some of the big name *proibidão* MCs, whose song writing and delivery he admired, involved as teachers in our rap workshop. I asked Tema to compare the older type of protest songs, songs calling on an end to violence that had been common in funk in the mid-nineties, like “Rap das Armas” and “Rap da Silva,” to the *proibidão*-style funk songs of the millennium. Surprisingly, Tema told me he didn’t see *proibidão* as so different:

O funk quer fazer uma crítica social quando faz o “Rap da Silva” e quer fazer uma crítica social também depois quando fala do poder dos nossos irmãos do Comando Vermelho, e aí? É uma crítica também. É, que fala, “Porra, nunca me deu, nunca me deu oportunidade este sistema, então, ó, sou da Rocinha e não dou mole pra Terceiro Comando querendo esculachar,” ... “Ó cachorro, vem me vender um X-9, pega o dinheiro e rala.”<sup>9</sup>

Not surprisingly, Tema linked the rebellious spirit of *proibidão* and the cult of the gangsters to the failings of the system for many poor youths. Furthermore, whereas some

would say that the system bears the burden of half the blame for the actions of poor criminals and the individual criminal is responsible for the other half, Tema is more radical. According to Tema, crime is widespread and found everywhere in Brazil, but there are different types of crime, like the crime of the rich against the poor and the crime of the first world against the third world. The difference, he said was that, unlike these types of crime, the crime of the poor is in legitimate self-defense, “...o nosso crime é de auto-defesa, de legítima defesa.”<sup>10</sup> So by representing and glorifying this crime musically and artistically, singers and composers of *proibidão* are engaging in a strategy of protest against the unfair treatment of the poor. Tema does not see much difference between the performance of *proibidão* funk and involvement in more explicitly criminal activities. Unlike the rappers of West Coast gangsta rap in the U.S., who he sees as mostly posturing, Tema views the Brazilian MCs of *proibidão* as actual criminals revolting in both word and deed. They are not posturing, but are rather singing about their real lives and those of the gangsters they represent.

Interestingly enough, it is not the glorification of violence that Tema criticizes in MCs of *proibidão* funk music or the gangsters they sing about, but rather their lack of a more explicitly revolutionary consciousness. He thinks the militant spirit of *proibidão* and indeed the culture of drug trafficking more generally needs to be tempered with some a broader, more radical rejection of the violence of the system.

...Eu me considero gangsta... eu me considero criminoso, igual ao Galo, igual ao Catra, só que um criminoso diferente... um criminoso diferente, mas com mais ódio do que eles. Eu nunca me esqueci do preconceito que eu sofri, não... eu não esqueci, mano...<sup>11</sup>

Tema says that, more than just the sense of revolt he identifies as the driving force behind *proibidão*, his higher level of consciousness has stirred in him a greater hate for the status quo than that of his funk counterparts. In Brazilian hip-hop circles, people say that “rap” is *revolução através da palavra*, or “revolution through words.” *Proibidão*, as Tema sees it, like the rule of the drug traffickers themselves, is still subversive but much less articulate and self-conscious and ultimately not revolutionary. Although Tema himself never said so, one could say that the rap in funk, instead of being a “revolution through words” is a *revolta através da palavra*, or “revolt through words.” In the end, Tema’s assertion that the crimes of the poor are “legitimate self-defense” turns the concept of an “apology of crime” on its head. Poor criminals such as the drug traffickers that govern Rio’s favelas become “legitimate defenders,” as do the MCs who advocate them. Tema’s hip-hop revolution may be more self-reflective than that of funk culture, but ultimately both revolutionaries and outlaws act on the impulse to reject the power and authority of the state.<sup>12</sup>

### *Drug Traffickers and Primitive Rebels*

While Tema’s comments, reproduced above, are both intelligent and suggestive, I do not offer them as conclusive evidence as to the nature of drug traffickers but rather to shed light on the way in which residents of favelas can see organized crime in this way. Certainly, Tema’s interpretation of Rio’s drug traffickers as some sort of ‘primitive rebels’ who revolt against the system in legitimate defense goes is at odds with Alba Zaluar’s analysis, discussed at length in chapter two. And unlike the portrayal of the drug trafficker as the legitimate defenders of the populations of favelas so evident in funk

songs like “The Ten Commandments of the Favela,” for Zaluar the gangsters are radically self-serving business people who impose their rule through nothing more than the force of their arms. In addition to her constant claims that the scope of their activities does not include welfare and recreational functions but rather is limited to the efficacy of the sale of drugs in the favela, she also writes that the drug traffickers, “. . .acabam empregando meios sempre violentos para manter seu poder.”<sup>13</sup> She frequently argues against the tendency of residents of favelas and newspaper reporters to view the drug traffickers as “social bandits” or primitive rebels:

. . .não cabe romantizar ainda mais do que os moradores da área um bandido-protetor ou bandido-herói e concluir que estamos diante de heróis românticos de um movimento social. Apesar de todas as conotações com a injustiça que os termos *revolta* e *revoltado* trazem à tona, a atividade principal está num rendoso comércio –o tráfico de tóxicos – e o seu estilo de vida está longe de ser contestatório. . . Nem tampouco têm “um programa de defesa ou restauração da ordem tradicional das coisas tal como deveriam ser” como supostamente os bandidos ou os camponeses fora-da-lei. (Zaluar, 31)

Zaluar’s comment that the residents of the favelas themselves are romantic about the nature of the drug traffickers is interesting. Perhaps she sees the “romanticism” of the population of the favelas as some sort of false consciousness. Certainly it is possible for people to have unrealistic notions about their rulers; in fact, to a large degree, such a problem is fundamental to the very concept of ideology itself. Still, one must be careful in suggesting that the social scientist knows the reality of the situation better than the actual residents. By the same token, I think the word “romantic” is insufficient to

describe the attitudes of the much suffered people of the favelas of Rio, people who have every reason to be very practical and realistic. In any event, by suggesting the existence of romantic notions amongst the residents of favelas characterizing the traffickers as protectors and heroes, Zaluar undermines her general assertion that the rule of the traffickers relies solely on the power of their weapons and violent means. If there is not some sort of culture of favelas, and some accompanying discursive process through which such notions are presented and negotiated in the hegemonic terrain of the favela, how do these romantic notions grow and take hold?

In any case, the residents do have notions of the relationship between those who are drug traffickers and those who are not, and they do have an idea about how the rules about violence work. As much as these notions are derived from concrete actions, they are also derived through communication between residents about those actions. To some extent, such notions arise as people observe the actions of the drug traffickers and talk about them with one another. Residents of favelas comment on violent occurrences in their communities in which informants or thieves are killed, for example, occurrences that can take place in their next door neighbor's house, on their street or around the corner. They will say things like, "Wow, that was surprising!" and, "Boy, he sure had that coming," or, "My God! What's the world coming to?!" The drug traffickers are, of course, aware that people discuss their actions in the neighborhood and often choose to perform these actions publicly to let people know what they are doing and why. Such behavior is an extremely powerful and important aspect of the hegemonic process through which power and the authority of the drug traffickers is negotiated. This process is more than an education of the rules of favela life from the repressive machine of the

drug traffickers; it also involves the expectations of the non-trafficker residents of the communities in terms of how power and leadership should and should not work. On the one hand, it allows the traffickers to institutionalize and extend the reach of their power and authority; on the other, since the non-trafficker residents of the community have a voice in the dialogue, they also actively participate in the development and acceptance of the consensus on power in the favela.

Distinctions like the ones made by Nêgu Tema above between revolutionary activities and more primitive revolts are fundamental to E.J. Hobsbawm's classic study of social bandits, the mafia and millenarian movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Hobsbawm's analysis focuses on the ways in which pre-modern peasant communities in 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy tended to regard their outlaws as "social bandits." These bandits were seen as protectors resisting the corrupt order of the legal authorities, redistributing the wealth, righting wrongs and dealing out justice within the parameters of a traditional value system. For Hobsbawm, the pre-modern, pre-capitalist consciousness of these peasants limited them from envisioning the total overthrow or destruction of the social order in which they lived. For this reason he considered the millenarian movements to be more "modern", despite the fact that they were often contemporaneous with the cases of social bandits studied by him, precisely because the radical apocalyptic vision driving them call for the total destruction of the world as it was. In my opinion, one of the most important aspects of Hobsbawm's model is the way in which it emphasizes the consciousness and opinion of the peasants over the intention of the criminals to be seen as social bandits. For Hobsbawm, altruism is not a necessary ingredient in the make-up of the social bandit, who rather more likely to be motivated by self-serving political sensibilities:

It does not greatly matter whether a man began his career for quasi-political reasons like Giuliano (an Italian mafioso studied by Hobsbawm), who had a grudge against the police and the government, or whether he simply robs because it is a natural thing for an outlaw to do. He will almost certainly try to conform to the Robin Hood stereotype in some respects; that is, he will try to be ‘a man who took from the rich to give to the poor and never killed but in self-defense or just revenge.’ He is virtually obliged to, for there is more to take from the rich than from the poor, and if he takes from the poor or becomes an ‘illegitimate’ killer, he forfeits his most powerful asset, public aid and sympathy. If he is free-handed with his gains, it may only be because a man in his position in a society of pre-capitalist values shows his power and status by largesse. And if he himself does not regard his actions as social protest, the public will, so that even a professional criminal may come to pander to its view. (Hobsbawm, 20)

For Hobsbawm, the lack of altruistic motives does not keep a bandit from being a “social” one; what makes him a social bandit is that he is outside the law and dependent on the support of other poor people who are sympathetic to him. The social bandit’s decision to play up his image as being a protector of and for everyday people is characterized by Hobsbawm as more of an afterthought than evidence of a revolutionary consciousness or an agenda of social contestation.

Another aspect of Hobsbawm’s analysis that is interesting is that the social bandit does not need to impose himself on his supporters. Certainly the bandit may impose himself to an extent on his supporters, but if he is too repressive the people will turn on

him and he will therefore lose the advantage of their protection. If he is smart, on the other hand, the natural affinity many other poor people will have for the social bandit will grow. This is why, for Hobsbawm, the phenomenon of the social bandit emerges more from the attitude of his supporters as from the bandit himself. In the following quote, Hobsbawm expresses an idea very similar to those of Nêgu Tema discussed above:

...For in some sense banditry is a rather primitive form of social protest, perhaps the most primitive we know. At any rate in many societies it is regarded as such by the poor, who consequently protect the bandit, regard him as their champion idealize him and turn him into a myth.(13)

So, on the one hand the public elevates the bandit to the status of a heroic avenger and protector of the weak, and on the other hand the bandit panders this view; both parties stand to gain in this construction, for if the public can get the bandit to name himself as their protector and avenger, they can see at least some of his power used for their needs. In a like manner, by placing himself within this framework created by the public, the bandit gains protection against the legal authorities, greater access to supplies, a more developed system of eyes and ears and even some people willing to join his group of bandits. This mutual benefit has important consequences for the dynamics of the hegemonic process and how both the top and the bottom affect the construction of power in the favela, a process that cannot be adequately explored in the confines of the present study.

Hobsbawm's observation that the social bandit phenomenon is related to a pre-modernist consciousness which is not revolutionary may help to explain Nêgu Tema's dissatisfaction with the drug traffickers and with the MCs of *proibidão* and his feeling

that they are not radical enough. In some ways, the drug traffickers and MCs of *proibidão* are tragic figures for Tema, as is the social bandit for Hobsbawm; their revolt is a crime of legitimate self-defense by people pushed to the edge by a socially stratified, corrupt and violent society. They may be brave, just and clever within the landscape of the reformist battles they fight, as they may spend some of their wealth on charity for the poor and as acts of personal largesse. But the tragic nature of these bandits is not the result of their ruthlessness and potentially violent nature but rather because their overall aims tend to be conservative and fundamentally non-revolutionary. In the end, although the bandits are raised up as champions of the poor, they represent more of a survival tactic, an immediate response to the failings of the larger Brazilian social order, than a forward thinking revolutionary plan. Rio's drug traffickers fight a system in which they themselves are trapped in a parasitic relationship, a system they can never really hope to destroy or replace.

*Bandits of Christ*

Bandidos de Cristo, tem muita fé em Deus,  
 Bandidos de Cristo, tem muita fé em Deus,  
 para esta vida tem que ter muita disposição,  
 pergunte pro Patrão

O Rebelde ficou bolado, fez uma reunião  
 Quero todo mundo armado lá no alto do morrão  
 Fogueteiro de AR-15, o gerente de G3,

o vapor vem de pistola, eu vou falar só um vez  
 os soldados do meu bonde vem de 762  
 os olheiros de traçante, o aviso é dois em dois  
 o contexto quando é sangue, os amigos reconhecem,  
 Rebelde vem no comando de AK-47<sup>14</sup>

The lines above, from the song “Bandits of Christ,” is a classic example of the complexity of the discourse about drug traffickers in funk music. The first and last verses of the stanza, the ones that mention the boss’s name, Rebelde, are in the third person. The use of the first person in lines two, four and five places the remaining verses in the voice of Rebelde himself, a former boss of the Rocinha *quadrilha* whose very name, “Rebel,” suggests the Hobsbawmian social bandit. The motive of Rebelde’s anger, the reason he has called his men to arms at the top of the hill, is never explained in the song. The implication, especially when it appears along with “Bandits of Christ,” is that Rebelde is an authority; symbolically, he is at the top of the social structure of the favela, as he is physically “at the top of the big hill.” He righteously prepares his men to come down like a storm, or like a plague, on the unidentified guilty party and take whatever steps necessary to correct any wrongs done. The detailed mention of the names of the guns used by the various types of gangsters in the *quadrilha* suggests his willingness and power to undertake this vengeance, but his power and authority do not stop at the barrel of his gun. Line seven is ambiguous; on the one hand, it can be taken as coming from Rebelde who, by saying, “O contexto quando é sangue os amigos reconhecem,” is thus portrayed as appreciating the worth of the support of the residents. On the other hand, it can be understood as being in the voice of the singer/composer and as merely pointing

out what is portrayed to be an objective truth about the unity between the drug-traffickers and the community. The word *sangue* in this verse is a use of a heavily loaded slang expression of the culture of funk, *sangue bom*, literally “good blood.” *Sangue* has a certain racial or tribal connotation very important to the construction of a subaltern favela identity and to the idea that the gang is one with the people it rules and protects. The implication of being “*sangue*” in this case is that the gang is fair and righteous, not selfish or abusive. Whether the words are understood as coming from Rebelde himself or the narrator, a certain consciousness is implied of some mutual advantage between the gang as “*sangue*” and the residents as “*amigos*.” In this sense, the mobilization that Rebelde has called of his warriors and the unspecified violent actions they are about to take are clearly portrayed as part of Rebelde’s role as protector and champion of the people of his tribe.

The religious dimension of this song is remarkable, a dimension that begins with the initial image of the gangster as a ‘bandit of Christ’ but that goes much further. The first stanza, reproduced below in the foot notes, is about the “brothers” who are in prisons, a sort of Babylonian exile. There is something deeply messianic about the singer’s faith in God that the Boss will return one day. In the second stanza, also reproduced below, even the trafficking of drugs, conventionally seen as abominable, is viewed as a supreme gesture that unifies the city of Rio and the people of Brazil independently of their race and even of social class. By thanking the drug traffickers in this context, the “bandits of Christ,” the singer elevates them to the status of spiritual servants of a higher good and a social order not racially polarized or class stratified. The final stanza, reproduced at the start of this section, is steeped in nostalgia and that ever so Brazilian quality of *saudades*

as it recalls a time when the Boss was not in prison. Back then, he was powerful and just and was a friend of the other people of the favela. When understood in the light of the whole song, this stanza becomes a longing for the “peace, justice and liberty” of the *Comando Vermelho*’s slogan, a utopian hope for people living in the harsh reality of the favela and one that can only be made reality by the good *Patrãozinho*, the good and beloved Boss, together with the power of the *Comando Vermelho*.

Hobsbawm’s observations about the phenomenon of social bandits as primitive rebels are easily applicable to the song “Bandits of Christ.” At the same time, the religious dimensions of “Bandits of Christ” take the song beyond the rigid demarcations Hobsbawm makes between types of “primitive rebels,” in particular those between the social bandit and the millenarian. For Hobsbawm, the social bandit, like the mafioso, is a form of primitive protest that is reformist in nature. Millenarian movements, which are apocalyptic and religious, on the other hand, have a far more sweeping, revolutionary scope that makes them much more modern, despite their superficial medieval appearance. For the social bandit, wrongs are righted and the order of justice is reestablished; for the millenarians, the whole world is remade from top to bottom. In any event, the necessary condition for either is a population with a “pre-modern” consciousness in which other forms of protest and social organization do not exist as practical options.

It seems to me that the construction of the drug trafficker as a social bandit in the song “Bandidos de Cristo” actually mixes the two impulses in a striking way in which the social bandit becomes something of a messianic figure. Hobsbawm thinks that the millenarian movements are mistaken by the modernized middle and upper-classes to be barbaric, that the revolutionary spirit in them is mistaken for the reformist impulse of

primitive protests like the social bandit and mafia phenomena. Certainly, in the case of the war of Canudos, which Hobsbawm mentions on the first page of the preface to *The Social Bandit*, the Brazil of the coastal region did seem to view the followers of Antônio Conselheiro as backwards religious fanatics stuck in a medieval past centuries gone. In fact, the presence of the *jagunços*, or bandit gunmen of the *sertão* region where the war took place, did lead to a conflation of bandits and millenarians in the eyes of the Brazilian republican government, as is evident in Euclides da Cunha's master work *Os Sertões* (1902), also mentioned by Hobsbawm. My question is the following: if the population begins to turn the social bandit into a millenarian figure, would this mean for Hobsbawm that they are more or less pre-modern than a population that does not? We could turn the question around: is the notion of social bandit as millenarian figure more revolutionary than the traditional type of social bandit, described by Hobsbawm, or are the people so non-revolutionary that even a simple reformist revolt gains a messianic significance? My suspicion is that the latter is true and that, in the harsh reality of the favela and the crisis of social exclusion that surrounds it, the possibility of revolutionary social transformation is so remote that any possible semblance of order becomes eschatological.

It could be that in this sense the song "Bandidos de Cristo" suggests more than a symbolic "revolt," one operating within conservative tendencies to restore a traditional order or right specific wrongs, and carries the discourse of the power of the traffickers toward a more radically revolutionary dimension that seeks to turn the world on its head. My suspicion is that such is not, in fact, the case, and that the mixture of imagery typical of the social bandit with elements of millenarian longings is the result of the radical cultural hybridity that exists in Rocinha. The social terrain of Rocinha in the new

millennium is more complex than that of rural, pre-capitalist Italy, a reality that entails overlapping levels of consciousness characteristic of post-industrial and pre-modern society. As I discussed in chapter two, for decades Rocinha has experienced a massive influx of people from a variety of places in the *Sertão* backlands of the Brazilian Northeast. These people have steadily have mixed into a population that includes people from all over Brazil and from all sorts of socio-political backgrounds. The result is a hybrid culture in which bandits, for example, may in some ways be both the ruthless and hedonistic post-modern businessmen of Alba Zaluar's portrayal of them and the traditional clientelist big bosses of the *Sertão* region. And once again, whatever they may actually be in practice, what is really at issue in the context of the present discussion is the way in which they are interpreted by the people and constructed as some kind of heroic figures who offers hope and courage to the population.

*Who Writes the Ten Commandments of the Favela?*

Já é... se liga na resposta.

Porque tem vários caras que pensa que ser bandido, mano,  
 é desfazer do irmão, é usar o outro de trampolim, tá ligado,  
 e na verdade o verdadeiro bandido respeita pra ser respeitado,  
 considera pra ser considerado.

Então, vou mandar mais ou menos assim, ó...<sup>15</sup>

In a sense, what I have been arguing thus far is that the construction of the drug traffickers as the social bandit-type primitive rebel that occurs in the culture of Rio's

favelas and in *proibidão* funk is the doing of the population. In so doing, the population takes an active role in the creation of a consensus about the rules that exist in the “culture” of drug trafficking in the favelas. In the remainder of this chapter, I wish to discuss the participation of the traffickers themselves in negotiating this consensus, the ways in which they “pander to this view,” as Hobsbawm says, particularly as this negotiation is presented in lyrics of the music of *proibidão*. As a way of exploring the ideological formation of the drug traffickers in the favelas as evident in the practice of the culture of funk music, I will examine it in terms of the following hegemonic strategies borrowed from the work of Terry Eagleton in his well-known study of ideology: unifying, action-oriented, rationalizing, legitimating, universalizing and naturalizing.<sup>16</sup> In reality, the very use of the word “strategy” is indicative of some problems of which the present study can only hope to scratch the surface, such as, ultimately, who is responsible for the creation of the consensus about power in the favela and the culture of the drug trafficker as a ‘social bandit’. Do drug traffickers promote representations of themselves as social bandits in the music of funk as a part of some public relations plan? Do they recognize the *baile funk* as the staging of their power, or for them is it simply a chance to show off and/or enjoy themselves? Is *proibidão* the voice of the trafficker or of the community; is it the traffickers explaining the rules to the community, or the community explaining the rules to the traffickers? Is it really meaningful to speak of the two as separate in this way, or is it more accurate to characterize the discourse of power in the favela as a process of negotiation between drug traffickers and the other residents of the community in which both rulers and ruled have an active role?

In the case of power in the favelas, such questions are important because, no matter how close the MCs who sing *proibidão* might be to the *quadrilha*, and no matter how much patronage they may receive from the gangsters, an MC is not a drug trafficker. Of course, one or another MC may be, or have been in the past, an actual gun-toting drug trafficker, but in general they are friends and sympathizers of the drug traffickers who write and sing their music with only the indirect support of the gangs. If the discourse of *proibidão* only worked in one direction, that is, if its messages were always directed at the residents by the drug traffickers, it would lead one to believe that the drug traffickers did in fact basically rule their communities through intimidation. But there are at least an equal number of messages in funk songs directed at the drug traffickers, such as the song quoted at the beginning of this section, a fact that suggests some participation on the part of the community in the negotiation of power in favelas. This participation of the people being ruled in the hegemonic process means that the question of power in the favelas is more complex than a top-down rule by arms; instead, power is built upon the consensus of a block of people from various strata in the hierarchy of their social order.<sup>17</sup>

The quote at the top of this section is a spoken introduction to a live song performed at a *baile funk*. It is an excellent example of an MC telling the public, understood as both gangsters and other residents, of what a “true bandit” is. Other examples of this sort of ‘code of conduct’ for gangsters are the many songs that give advice, usually as if from the perspective of another bandit, telling them not to be selfish and to respect the community. There are also innumerable songs that humorously ridicule gangsters who are braggers, brown-nosers, cowards and bullies. On the one hand, only the proximity of the MC to the actual gang and his credibility as a representative of the world of crime in

Rio can give him the authority to speak in such a way; attempts to define the “true bandit” by people outside the world of crime, such as pastors, school teachers and bus drivers, would inevitably carry less weight. Still, the MC and other composers who write *proibidão* songs are far enough removed from the gangs for me to consider them as more “residents” than “drug traffickers.” An MC is not legally considered a criminal and, although singing about crime can potentially cause some problems in his or her life (yes, there are some female MCs, as shall be discussed in chapter four), an MC can leave the favela and generally travel about freely in Rio without fear of arrest. It is interesting to note that, although some MCs have had legal troubles or suffered from police harassment for the content of their material, in general they are considered as a part of the gangs only by a gang from a different narco-alliance. In other words, although an MC can travel the asphalt of the city at will, if he sings songs about the CV he will not be able to go into favelas ruled by the TC or ADA, for whom he is regarded as an enemy as much as any other bandit from a rival gang.

Even if the funk MC of *proibidão* is somewhat a liminal figure, existing as he does as a quasi-bandit, the lyrics of his music are often written by residents of the communities with no involvement in crime. In Rocinha, there is a very successful composer who writes mostly *pagode*, *forró* and *funk melody* songs, a composer who tends to write very pop-sounding romantic tunes that have nothing to do with organized crime. This composer is also a DJ on a popular radio show and the owner of a small business who has never used either alcohol or any other mind-altering drug his whole life, nor has he committed any crimes or had any professional connection with the gangs. He has recently written a *proibidão*-style song that two of the most famous MCs are trying to buy from

him.<sup>18</sup> In the mouth of either of these MCs, both consecrated *proibidão* artists, the song has the potential to gain a legitimacy that the composer himself could never give it. Coming from either of these MCs, the song is likely to be taken by residents and gangsters alike as the “real deal,” an authentic message of a warrior who represents the world of the favela and the drug traffickers. In this way, the art of a non-gangster resident of the community is absorbed into the hegemonic discourse of the favela.

Funk music and the hegemony of the traffickers cannot be broken down into such neat divisions as production and consumption; the moment a composer of a funk text sits down to write the lyrics to a song, he or she does so both as a producer and as a consumer of past and present products.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the song itself does not exist outside of the circuit of production and consumption, but occurs as an interpretation of the culture of funk within the culture of the favelas of Rio and the rule of the traffickers. To a certain extent, how well the composer is able to interpret this culture and represent it in his or her new production will determine its relevance and, to a degree, the success of his or her work of art within the funk movement. In this sense, although funk songs as texts can be said to reflect the reality of the culture of the rule of the traffickers, at the same time they can innovate and shape that same culture in small ways. Traffickers do not, as far as I know, come to a composer and demand or even ask that he or she write a song about a specific topic. Still, if the composers are not friends of the gangsters or even gangsters themselves, they are at least residents of the communities and have a first hand experience of the reality and culture of the rule of the traffickers.

Because of this, I would place the composers and therefore the production of music about traffickers as something only partially dependent on the traffickers. In many

important ways, they can be said to represent both the ruled population and the rulers, for all composers of *proibidão* are part of the ruled population even as they are patronized by the traffickers, and their characterization of life in the favela represents both sides of the social consensus. One implication of this is that the residents can be said to have a role in shaping the expectations of the community in regards to this consensus, so when an MC sings about the ways in which a “real” gangster behaves, he is not only telling the community what they should expect with regard to the traffickers but also giving the traffickers standards by which to measure themselves. I am not overly optimistic about the power of the composer to shape the social reality of the favelas, for if the things his or her song suggests have no resonance with the public, taken as residents and traffickers alike, no one will pay attention to the song. So when I use the term “ideological strategy,” I am referring to this process of negotiation and its representation as it occurs between people living in the social formation of the favela and not some self-conscious plan.

### *Trafficking Culture*

Meu movimento é político-social, meu tráfico é cultural

Meu movimento é político-social, meu tráfico é cultural...

Vou te dizer, tem preto e tem branco, seu moço,

Tem sim, empenhado no seu bem-estar

A favela é socialista me deu overdose de consciência

Religiosidade, fé em Deus trazemos no coração

Paz, justiça e liberdade, guerra pelo bem sem destruição <sup>20</sup>

The quote above is a good example of how various ideological strategies typically work together in the lyrics of *proibidão*-style funk songs. On one level, the MC of the song presents himself as a metaphorical gangster who traffics revolutionary thought instead of drugs. His consciousness, represented as an outgrowth of the culture of the favela at the self-reflective level, is a blend of religion, revolution and a social organization built around drug trafficking. With an impressive economy of words, and phrases like “faith in God” and “peace, liberty and justice,” which are slogans associated with the Comando Vermelho, the singer presents the core images associated with the governance of the drug traffickers: religious sentiment, the commitment to the well being of the gang and the community and the idea of the legitimate use of violence on the part of the drug traffickers. In addition, the song involves a double-entendre of the words “black” and “white,” which besides their racial connotation mean “marijuana” and “cocaine.” In so doing, the song elevates the favela as an instance of racial democracy, smoothing over very real and important racial differences that do exist in favelas, and rationalizes the economic base of the drug traffickers. Ultimately, the whole song is a sort of double-entendre that presents the “war for good” as both that of the artist as a revolutionary intellectual, representing the revolutionary nature of the favela, and that of the gangsters as actual warriors in a just revolt. In any event, by talking about an “overdose” of consciousness, the MC ironically flips one of the most negative images of the culture of drug use around and turns it into the central metaphor of quasi-spiritual liberation in the song. The urban culture of the favelas of today are far more complex than the sort of pre-modern mostly rural cultures Hobsbawm discussed and thus it is not surprising that the role of its outlaws also be more complicated. As is the case in the song

“Bandits of Christ,” this song is evidence of the mixing of Hobsbawm’s ideologically conservative “social bandit” and the more radical millenarian.

Although not all songs are such dense and complex discursive formulations as “Vamos Traficar Cultura,” most do present combinations and mixtures of various ideological strategies. In the remainder of this section, I will make some general comments about how funk’s discourse on the rule of the traffickers represents it as *action-oriented* and how it is *rationalized, legitimated, universalized* and *naturalized* in funk, categories borrowed from Eagleton’s work on ideology. (Eagleton, 47-61) Next I will look at strategies which present the power of the traffickers as that of the representatives of a *unified* community, another category suggested by Eagleton, the strategy perhaps most indicative of the deeper underlying ideology of their rule. Although such a discussion will be repetitive and hopefully somewhat superfluous at this point, the complexities of the social formation of the favela and its relationship with the dominant order, an order it depends upon even as it reacts against and resists it, merit the emphasis. In any event, the scope of such a discussion is big enough as to prevent anything more than an introductory attempt and I will have to be content to suggest some of the major features of that ideology,

*Action-oriented-* In the case of the favela it is fairly obvious that the principal activity of the drug traffickers is the actual trafficking of drugs. Residents know that these drug traffickers benefit from the sale of drugs and that, as residents, they had better not interfere with this activity. At the same time, the sale of drugs is seen by the population as somewhat of a necessary evil and that without it the traffickers would not be able to protect and help the community. As a result, many of the rules, motivations and

prescriptions implicit in the rule of the traffickers are related to activities that are beyond the scope of selling drugs per se. These rules reflect the consensus on power that exists in the community, for example, that the traffickers must be the police, judicial branch, welfare services and recreational coordinators of the favela. This does not mean that churches, NGOs, businesses and even the government cannot provide these services as well, other than policing, that is, but that the traffickers are expected to perform actions in the interest of the community. In a similar way, the residents are expected to act within the same set of goals and rules, something which takes on a form somewhat similar to the “Ten Commandments of the Favela,” that ‘thou shall not inform the police’, ‘thou shall not steal’, ‘thou shall not rape’, ‘thou shall not murder’, etc. Other rules may be less dramatic but nevertheless still quite real: don’t play your music too loud too late on a weeknight, don’t be a deadbeat tenant, don’t stare at women in lewd ways, don’t punch another resident or throw a hotdog in a local vendor’s face. These rules are often made explicit in funk lyrics, as are the punitive activities of the drug traffickers in regards to infractors. In funk music, emphasizing the array of guns and other weapons in the possession of the traffickers is a form of evidence that they have the means to enforce their rules.

*Rationalizing-* It may seem that in the sad, tough reality of the favelas of Rio it would not be necessary to rationalize a social order built upon the sale of drugs. Certainly, the population would be inclined to accept any semblance of order over total chaos. Still, favelas are in many ways very conservative places and many residents oppose drug use and oppose the rule of drug traffickers of their communities; in fact, many people do not approve of legal drugs like alcohol and cigarettes. I would say that as a result of this

situation, a part of the rationalization of the power of the drug traffickers involves a separate rationalization of the use of drugs themselves. This rationalization is based on ideas that are not limited to the drug traffickers or Brazil but are rather widespread in contemporary international society. Part of this is the notion that using drugs is democratic and individualistic; the individual consumer should have the right to choose his or her own pleasure, just as with anything else in life. The individual in his or her efforts to live a good life becomes a consumer looking for a series of pleasurable moments and experiences that temporarily provide him or her with some degree or another of euphoria.<sup>21</sup>

Another rationalization of drug use that is important to the culture of drug trafficking is that drugs are not really so bad. According to this view, drugs can actually even be quite good, and the fact that they are illegal itself is hypocritical. After all, alcohol, a drug that can be just as dangerous as marijuana and cocaine, is legal. Furthermore, if an individual has a problem with drugs, it is his or her problem and it cannot really be blamed on the drug itself. Some would argue that using drugs is somehow a subversive act of rebellion against the values of the dominant order, it is part of a culture of brotherly love and anti-materialism, a culture quite contrary to the self-centered consumerism of the powers that be. Drug use is related to the artistic and creative side of people, it is a spiritual activity that can free the mind and help a person to think outside the box in ways which might make one a less passive subject for the traditional authorities.

In funk music, there are constant references to the use of drugs: “fui no Borel buscar uma trouxa,” “Confesso pra vocês que gosto de fumar um bagulho,” “Muita gente não sabia que no morro do Borel faço rap na maresia,” “Demorou formar o bonde do

maconheiro,” “Demorou formar o bonde do rastafari,” etc. While many of these cast drug use, especially that of marijuana, in a positive light, there are also a great number that make fun of drug addicts, such as the “Bonde do che-cheiro,” which says, “A brizola faz a gente perder peso e não querer comer, mas depois vem aquela esticação, e quando ficar sem dinheiro vai ter que vender seu bermudão.” Such humor at the expense of the addict is not meant as a global condemnation of drug use in general, but rather actually deflects criticism about the evils of drug use by placing the blame on the individual abuser.

A rationalization that is more specifically related to the actual rule of the traffickers is the notion that, since the government doesn't have a strong presence in the favelas, some local power must step in and provide the necessary services for the community. The selling of drugs is a necessary evil that benefits the residents of the favela. Anyway, the drugs are less often sold to residents than to mostly to wealthy people from outside of the community. These are generally the same people who benefit from the fact of economic disparity in the first place and don't do much to alleviate the problem. I think that a very important aspect of the acceptance of the power of the drug traffickers by the communities they rule is a certain fatalism, or at least a deep sense of frustration, in regards to the notion of power in general. Poor people in Brazil often do not have high expectations from government and are indeed very much used to corruption and violent abuse from the “authorities.” There is a common notion among poor people in Brazil that the great majority of wealth and power in the country has been acquired through dirty dealings of one kind or another. From this point of view, the notion that the local power of the favela is built upon the sales of illegal and potentially dangerous substances is not

so different. In other words, the illegitimacy of power in Brazil historically helps to legitimize the power of the drug traffickers in the specific case of their rule of the favelas.

*Legitimizing-* By discussing above the ways in which an MC gives advice to gangsters and makes fun of them, I have already touched upon some important features of the legitimating ideological strategy in funk. The goal of this strategy is to get the public, understood as bandits and non-bandits alike, to begin to measure and judge itself according to the internal value system of the consensus on power and the rule of the drug traffickers. For example, if a person refrains from informing on the police not out of fear of the violent reaction of the *boca* but because he or she thinks it is morally wrong, the order has effectively legitimated itself with that person. Of course, all these ideological strategies are interdependent on the others, to some degree; it would be hard to get people to internalize the value system of the rule of the drug traffickers without also getting them to accept the notion as to the actions that orient the community, or without them seeing the order of the gangsters as being natural and rooted in universal values. The discourse on power in funk does not condemn a person for being a thief in Barra da Tijuca and Ipanema, for example, rich neighborhoods not under the rule of the drug gangs, whereas robbing within the favela is clearly prohibited. One funk song from Rocinha is even dedicated to the thieves of the community and celebrates their thievery across the wealthy neighborhoods of the Zona Sul. No mention is made in the song of the prohibition against stealing within the community, something that is widely understood anyway and is indeed mentioned in many other songs, such as “The Ten Commandments of the Favela.” Even besides the “rules” of the neighborhood, other cultural tendencies are constantly reinforced and presented in funk that can potentially become a part of the identity of

people in the favela, be they gangster, *funkeiro* or otherwise. In any event, in order to effectively legitimize the discourse of the power of the traffickers, the rules it presents must apply to everyone, whether he or she is a trafficker or another resident.

*Universalizing-* In *proibidão* a religious sentiment is consistently expressed that connects the governance of the drug traffickers to notions of love, faith, peace, justice and liberty, higher principles which are seen as guiding all of human life both in and outside of the social order of the favela. Even though the specific phrase “paz, justiça e liberdade” is a slogan of the *Comando Vermelho*, the words still carry meaning as references to a notion of some universal human good. Humility is also frequently evoked as a necessary quality in the drug trafficker himself, a quality seen as giving him both the power and wisdom to survive and to help the community. Humility can also mean the idea that one must not forget who one is and where one comes from and that one must place loyalty to the community over personal interests. This emphasis on humility can be seen as a way of affirming the value of the people of favelas, gangsters and otherwise, and implicitly contrasting it with the stereotype common among Rio’s poor that middle and upper-class people are arrogant. In this sense, the frequent declarations about the humility of the drug traffickers can be seen as a means of constructing them as Hobsbawm’s social bandits who have been forced into being outlaws by the hypocrisy of the system. In any event, the rules of the favela are presented as being related to a higher authority based on the divine order of things that is applicable to all people at all times.

*Naturalizing-* In *funk*, the community of the favela and its drug trafficker leadership are consistently represented as being a family. The traffickers are not an invading force of people unconnected to the kinship ties and other social networks of the community, but

are instead “cria,” or locals brought up in the favela; they represent the community and know it as intimately as everybody else living there. A typical funk song refers to the “manos,” or brothers, in the gangs and will often mention “cria”, such as in the line, “É o bonde só de cria que só tem destruidor.” The notion of brotherhood is also important, but more than a real kinship based on actual blood relations, the tribal family of the favela is formed on the basis of racial, class and geographical identities. This favela identity, standing in contrast to that of the Brazil of the “asphalt,” is something that involves other ideological strategies besides naturalizing, in particular the strategy of unifying. This may be one of the reasons that funk songs have always included rhymed lists of the names of favelas or areas of favelas that are considered “good.” For example, in the song “Rap da Rocinha,” by MC Galo, he sings, “Galera da Cruzada, Santa Marta e o Pavão, Tabajara, Mineira e a Providência é sangue bom, Cidade Alta, Juramento, Catete e Vidigal,” and so forth. Perhaps emphasizing the paternalistic structure of the traffickers’ governance is another aspect of the naturalizing strategy in funk, a paternalism which easily translates to the traditional tribal notion of power based on interpersonal relations mentioned as a part of the universalizing strategy. Also, the constant mention and showing of weapons can be seen as a naturalizing gesture in a society in which the weak are so used to being dominated by the strong that a show of strength makes the rulers seem natural.

*Unifying-* One of the most important features of the ideology of the rule of the drug traffickers present in funk is the way in which it builds some common identity of people in the favela. In reality, the demographics of favelas are extremely diverse and includes people with great differences in such aspects as race, class, gender, age, religious views and profession. In funk, one of the strongest characteristics of the unity of the people

living under the rule of the drug traffickers is, not surprisingly, their common geographic identity. No matter what region one is from, or what color or sex a person may be, the fact that he or she lives in a favela makes that person a part of the family of the favela. As I mentioned in my comments on the naturalizing strategy above, this is one reason it is so typical to find lengthy lists of the names of favelas included in funk songs, lists that almost never include any wealthy neighborhoods. The physical space of the favela is elevated over the space of the asphalt in funk in a sort of semiotic inversion of the geopolitical map of the city of Rio de Janeiro. In the case of Rocinha, which is enormous and includes several smaller areas within its space, the lists of the areas and their inclusion in the song strengthen the notion that Rocinha is one giant family, just as do the frequent boasts that it is that “biggest favela” in Latin America that occur both within funk and without. The demarcation of territory and the notion of belonging to the family of the favela ultimately depend on the fact that the favela is a mostly informal system within a largely hostile formal system. The racism and class-based discrimination felt by the people of favelas as lived experience helps to unify them. If residents did not feel excluded from and discriminated against by the larger society in important ways, if the government “authorities” were not viewed as incompetent or unconcerned with their lives, if innocent people were not killed by the police, the traffickers would have a much smaller chance of gaining legitimacy, no matter how fearsome they themselves might appear to be.

The importance placed upon geographic space in the discourse of funk calls to mind the “divided city” model put forth by Zuenir Ventura in his book *Cidade Partida*, a poignant study of the question of citizenship and changes in the concept of the “other”,

and has important implications for the larger Brazilian society. The focus of the book is the 1993 massacre by police of twenty one innocent people in Vigário Geral, a favela in Rio, and the anti-violence social movement "Viva Rio" which grew out of it, a movement which has grown since that time into a very important, very large group of NGOs in Rio. Ventura's basic thesis is that Rio's society is undergoing an ever increasing polarization into rich and poor groups: the rich are becoming more and more terrified of the poor; the poor, on the other hand, are becoming increasingly frustrated as the result of the lack of effective participation in society with which they are faced. Ventura eloquently states the urgency of the problem of citizenship, connecting it with the growing level of violence in Rio. Ventura's reading of the socio-political climate of the late twentieth century is strikingly reminiscent of the classic study of the Brazil of the "litoral" versus the Brazil of the "arid hinterland" in *Os Sertões*, by Euclides da Cunha. In his analysis, da Cunha associated the coastal regions and the Republic with European influences and the notion of "progress," while the backlands people were presented as racially inferior and backwards, a dichotomy da Cunha ambiguously supported even as he came to lament it and eventually denounce it. Ventura's model of the "dividing city" points out a similar tendency on the part of the elites of Rio to see themselves, as did those of the "litoral" perspective, as the white heirs of superior European culture, while viewing the favelas and other working-class neighborhoods as a "backlands" of black racially inferior barbarians.<sup>22</sup>

While Ventura's work does suggest race nuances in his class-divided city concept, as did the work of da Cunha a hundred years ago, it never really explores the possibility that racial identity may also be becoming more polarized in Rio. Problems such as racism and

the social exclusion of the poor are not new, nor are they limited to the lives of people living in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, but rather they are a fundamental part of the 500 years of history since the first Portuguese began arriving on Brazilian soil. The slavery and genocide of African and indigenous peoples so important in the history of Brazilian civilization has resulted in a highly complex racial make-up in the country and an equally complicated racism. There is an extensive tradition of thinking about the question of race in Brazil that is crucial for the consideration of this issue in the culture of the favela and I could not hope to do justice to a discussion of the topic in the present study.<sup>23</sup> The racial component of the identity of the people of favelas is one that cannot be overstressed, though as a part of Brazilian racial identity it is as complicated as one would expect, and the culture of funk may yield some clues. Certainly, in the case of the ideology of the rule of the favelas by traffickers in funk, race and class do seem to be conflated in what one could term a process of “blackening” of racial identity. This may explain in part why efforts at consciousness-raising by the Black Movement in Brazil have not found greater acceptance in favelas. Still, if the construction of the identity of the favela resident is in some ways typical of freyrian notions of “racial democracy,” it is made in contrast to a parallel construct of “whitened” racial identity of the asphalt.<sup>24</sup> In other words, though the favela may be projected in funk as a non-white and indeed “brown” space, the middle and upper-classes tend to be portrayed as “white.” In the case of funk and the identity of people in favelas, communities in which a widely mixed group of people of different racial types lives in close proximity, it is not surprising that race and class should be conflated as they are in the following refrain from a song by MCs Júnior and Leonardo,

MCs who themselves are not black, “Eu quero mais paz e amor, justiça, liberdade para o pobre, para o negro.”

Each favela has a unique history and there is a wide variety of demographic make-ups in various favelas, often related to the age of the community. Also, since most favelas have sprung up and/or exploded in size within the last 40 or 50 years, the question of where people came from originally or where their parents came from originally is often an important part of an individual’s identity and must also be accounted for in the unifying process. Older favelas, like Mangueira, for example, tend to have more black residents, in part because the population is comprised of people who have histories in Rio and in part due to the immigration of large segments of people from Bahia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Newer favelas, such as Rocinha and the sprawling Rio das Pedras, in Jacarepaguá, have boomed amidst the massive immigration of people from other places in the Northeast, usually from the dry region of the *sertão* in states like Ceará and Paraíba, that has occurred in more recent decades. Further complicating the racial identity of favelas is the fact that the favelas tend to be looked upon by the middle and upper-classes as spaces of racially inferior “non-white” people. Of course, racism does exist in the favelas, too. For example, many Northeastern immigrants look down on blacks and even those who are very dark indeed are likely to consider themselves as white, or at least *pardo*, or brown. As a consequence, some residents of favelas like Rio das Pedras and Rocinha might think their favelas are better than other favelas having more blacks.

If we think of the space of the favela as a hybrid space of overlapping levels of pre-modern and post-industrial consciousness in which past Brazilian ideologies still hold their ground and share space with more recent ideological features, it seems possible that

both the classic “whitening” influence and the freyrian “racial democracy”-type thought could exist, despite the fact that they are largely antithetical. In other words, while it is important for the notion of the unity of the people of favelas as a group of mostly non-white people who are oppressed and discriminated against by the larger society, in reality many negative racial stereotypes continue to operate within the social order of favelas. In Rocinha, for example, though it is common to find black people in the gangs, the majority of higher ups tend to be lighter in color. This reminds me a bit of Brazilian soccer, which could be pointed to as an example of Brazilian “racial democracy” in action, except that most coaches are white and most players have white wives and girlfriends, two details very relevant to the subtleties of race relations and racial hierarchies in Brazil. If a person wants to win a soccer game, or win a gun battle against the police, it is advantageous to field all the best players, regardless of race. Still, hierarchies do exist, and whereas a black person might be socialized to be a basic soldier or striker, society may teach him that he lacks the intelligence or moral authority to lead. If the Black Movement in Brazil has had trouble getting people to see the racial dimensions of Brazilian society, this may be in part because many of the poor non-white people in Brazil live in communities such as the favelas of Rio where the myth of racial democracy is still effective, even if that racial democracy is seen as being limited to the world of the favela itself and not as a real part of the larger system. Still, in the assimilation project of the drug traffickers, in which they attempt to smooth over differences between individuals members of the community, emphasis is given to the “brownness” of the favela and used to solidify the allegiance of the population against the white dominant social groups. In any event, the construction of a racial and class identity

in the favela is a complex topic that will be better left to the next and last chapter of this study, a chapter that explores the favela as a Diaspora community.

*Conclusion: Rebels and Businessmen in the Backlands of the City*

Ah, essa noite começou com tiroteio  
 Favela tava cercada não dava pra sair  
 E a criançada tava com desespero  
 Pelo amor de Deus, papai, tira a gente daqui  
 E aí então uma lágrima desceu  
 E vi que as minhas forças vinham das forças de Deus  
 Só peço àquele moço antes de apertar o gatilho  
 Que pense em seus filhos antes de matar os meus  
 Mas eu só quero entrar na minha casa, seu moço, seu moço,  
 E dar um beijo nas criança, beijar minha patroa  
 Ter o pão de cada dia, eu só quero é ser feliz<sup>25</sup>

Whatever the motives of individual drug traffickers may or may not be, be they greedy or revolutionary, they do work within the culture of the favelas to legitimize their de facto governance.<sup>26</sup> Although the illicit nature of their activities necessarily places the rule of the drug traffickers outside of the formal system, they would never be able to legitimize their control of the favelas if they were entirely oppositional to the status quo. By this I am not referring to the de facto involvement of the police in drug trafficking, or that of elites at the highest levels of organized crime. Though these two realities do work to reinforce the legitimacy of the drug traffickers, they are largely incidental to the actual

hegemony of organized crime in the favelas. That is not to say that the drug traffickers of Rio de Janeiro could maintain their power without the complicity of state agents like police and politicians, or at least that they would be considerably less powerful without the cooperation of these agents. Additionally, the incompetence and corruption of state agents do serve to further legitimize the traffickers and in such ways as those suggested in the opening passage of this chapter, through their abusive treatment of people living in favelas. What I do mean is that the hegemony of drug traffickers depends upon the success of their ideological project and its relationship with the culture of favelas. As I have suggested above, this culture of the favela is an extremely hybrid one in which many forms of consciousness overlap and intermix. As a result, the leadership of the favela, especially that of the drug traffickers, employs ideological strategies involving elements of pre-modern and post-industrial societies. So no matter how “revolutionary” they may seem, the rule of the drug traffickers is mostly, as Hobsbawm might say, reformist and actually operates principally within a very traditionally Brazilian ideological framework. In fact, in some ways many constructs of Brazilian identity are even more deeply engrained in the minds of their residents than in people of the middle and upper-classes and the social formation of the favela is a microcosm of extremely conservative ideas of religion, race, class and gender. In the end, the ideological foundation of the rule of the drug traffickers ends up being ambiguous, at once reinforcing the national hegemony even as it challenges and undermines it.

On the one hand, it may be for this reason that the middle- and upper-classes have been able to live with the reality of the ‘favelification’ of their country for so long; the favelas have not been the breeding grounds for revolutionaries. Ironically, the

revolutionary spirit of Brazilian hip-hop, notwithstanding Tema's comments above, does not seem to evoke the kind of visceral response funk does amongst people of the Brazilian middle- and upper-classes. Perhaps the liberal ideals of hip-hop in Brazil, ideas that call for a complete restructuring of society, are modern enough to make sense to the status quo. Being a "revolution through words," it is likely to be even less scary; in many ways, Brazilian hip-hop is something quite democratic and modern. Not so funk, which is infinitely less theoretical and future oriented. In the end, funk is not really a "revolt through words," as I suggested earlier, but much more the musical expression of the reality of a present and ongoing "revolt through firearms." Ultimately, however, the same non-revolutionary spirit that made the favelas tolerable for so long for the middle- and upper-classes is what is making them increasingly intolerable. Elites in Brazil can only tolerate the 'favelification' of the country as long as it does not spill over too much into their lives, as long as those 'crimes of legitimate self-defense' don't become too rampant. This is because underneath the status quo attitude of looking the other way is a fear far greater than that of revolution; the fear of barbarism and the revolt of some pre-modern unconscious masses of backlands fanatics and cold-blooded gunmen.

The drug traffickers of the hills and favelas of Rio de Janeiro: demonized and romanticized, pre-modern and post-modern, social bandits who are oddly millenarian even as they are anti-revolutionary, the fear, neglect and complicity of the middle- and upper-classes have allowed them to come to power and helped them to stay there. The poor have made them their champions, albeit reluctantly, and they have come to occupy a crucial role in the administration of power in the larger Brazilian social order. It could be said that the War of Canudos, fought between federal troops and the followers of

Antônio Conselheiro in the 1890's, was the great challenge after the monarchy for the Brazil of the First Republic. Now, the "divided city" is the great challenge for the restored democracy in Brazil in the years after the military dictatorship. This brings to mind a line from perhaps the all-time most popular song of the funk movement, the "Rap da Felicidade," recorded in 1995 by Cidinho and Doca, was sung as a letter to the authorities in Brazil. The song captures this sense of the poor people wanting justice and decent lives in the new democratic order, even as it implies the threat that if justice does not come from above, they will make it happen from below:

Sofri na tempestade agora eu quero a bonança.

Povo tenha força, só precisa descobrir

se eles lá não fazem nada faremos tudo daqui<sup>27</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This opening piece is meant to be a partially fictitious representation of the type of conversation and social interaction likely to occur at Beer Pizza on the day in November 2001 when the police did invade the favela and fly over the population for several hours in a helicopter while aiming rifles at various residents.

<sup>2</sup> Translation:

You head's nuts; you're crazy in the head,

Rocinha is Comando (Vermelho) to the vein,

If you want to take it over you'd better bring an bazooka...

<sup>3</sup> For more information about the mechanisms of conflict resolution in favelas, see Corinne Davis-Rodrigues.

<sup>4</sup> In November of the year 2000, a stunning number of rounds of ammunition were fired between about 8:15 and 9:00 o'clock one evening in Rocinha. The sounds of the shots were mixed with other explosions, of fireworks and perhaps some grenades, and could be heard slowly making their way down from the top of the favela to the area of the Valão at the bottom. Many people assumed this to be a terrible gun battle; children were crying all over the neighborhood, folks ran for cover and stayed low down on the floor. Later that night, the rumor that the police had invaded was circulating, but the next day I learned that it had not been a gunfight at all. That incredible display of power, in which thousands and thousands of rounds of ammunition were fired, had been a celebration by the traffickers after they had successfully negotiated the ransom of the boss from the police, who had captured him earlier that day. It was a sort of hot lead party, a bit like the ones that happen when Brazil scores a goal in a big soccer game, but it was so huge and

so loud that residents were scared and confused. While there may be any number of meanings to such an event from psychological and anthropological points of view, it is clear enough that this gun party did serve as a form of communication declaring the power of the drug traffickers in the community.

<sup>5</sup> Translation:

I'm going to tell you how it is, don't run away,  
 The ten commandments here in the favela  
 The first commandment is not to rat  
 A rat can't live in the favela  
 The second commandment I'll tell you right now  
 Don't mess with the women of your friends  
 The third commandment I'll also say  
 Is to be down with the gang and not to double-cross anybody  
 The fourth commandment is not difficult to say  
 The favela is a good school but you can't rob here  
 The fifth commandment is that I'm pissed off  
 I'll cut down any son-of-a-bitch with my G3

<sup>6</sup> The word *cagüeta*, or *cagüete*, derives from the word *alcagüeta*, which comes from *alcoviteiro*, a person who acts as a go-between on behalf of two lovers.

<sup>7</sup> Translation of dialogue (the lyrics can be found in their entirety in the lyrics appendix):

Yo, citizen, it's pay-off time.

What the hell, boss? Again? Shit. You're nuts.

Hey, my salary sucks, you know?

Oh, want some dough, then sell me a narc.

Translation of the quoted lyrical stanza:

He acts like your friend, he's just pretending,

Son-of-a-bitch has got to get it,

Because of him my homie died,

The gang, all their work, he weakened,

And he caused lots of deaths leaving unhappy

The families of the homies who died,

The neighbors are dying to get him

They all have their eyes open looking for him,

The Boss has been arrested and has sent us the word,

The sentence we'll execute

With AK bullets

<sup>8</sup> See Leticia Helena, "Rap exalta lema do Comando Vermelho," *O Globo* 22 Sept 1995. Júnior told me that they did not know that the words "Peace, Justice and Liberty" were considered to be the slogan of the *Comando Vermelho* and that, in fact, they have never have found *proibidão* to be a very interesting artistic option. They are not gangster MCs, like the two who sing verses quoted at the top of this chapter, whose names I will not mention to safeguard their integrity.

<sup>9</sup> Personal interview with Nêgu Tema in Rocinha, March 14, 2002. Translation:

Funk is a protest with "Rap da Silva" and it's also a protest when it talks about the power of our brothers from the *Comando Vermelho*, and so what? That's also a

protest. It's like, "Shit, they never gave me nothing, the system never gave me a chance, so, hey, I'm from Rocinha and I not scared of the Terceiro Command, wanting to disrespect me... "Yo, dog! Come sell me a narc, grab your money and beat it."

<sup>10</sup> Translation: "Our crime is one of self-defense, one of legitimate defense."

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Tema (continued). Translation:

I consider myself a gangster... I consider myself a criminal, just like Galo, just like Catra, only a different kind of criminal... a different kind of criminal, but with more hate than them. I've never forgotten the prejudice I suffered... I haven't forgotten, brother.

<sup>12</sup> Here is an extended passage from the interview with Nêgu Tema in which he discusses crime as a response to a life of discrimination and his notion of the hip-hop 'intelligent criminal':

Bom, tem uma coisa, ainda... que é uma só. Tem o crime em volta. E o mundo não pode ser em volta só ao crime, certo? Assim, ... Mas acho que é muita atenção que é dada ao crime, mas o crime que nós cometemos, do mundo do crime, quando falo do crime do primeiro mundo, o crime dos políticos, ...o nosso crime é de auto-defesa, de legítima defesa... tu acha que o primeiro mundo acha do terceiro, tu acha que os ricos acham do pobre, tu acha que o branco acha dos nordestinos e dos negros... que um cara ali do prédio dali no Joá acha da filha dele namorando um cara daqui da Rocinha? Um cara que trabalha, um trabalhador, trabalha no Fashion Mall ou no campo de golf da Rocinha, ali em baixo, ali no Itanhangá Golf Clube ou no, no... O que ele acha, desse namoro?

Vai achar que o negão no mínimo tá se aproveitando, tá fazendo tudo que o funk manda ele fazer, com a filha dele, tadinha... “Botei talco no bumbum da minha filha para ela tar vivendo com esse negão na favela, meu Deus do céu!” Sabe? Se ele já acha que aqui só tem o crime, se ele ouvir a música daqui só falando do crime ele vai falar, “Porra, então é isso memo!” Agora, o mais perigoso para ele é ele saber que a filha dele tá dando po Nêgu Tema, que o Nêgu Tema é um rapper da favela da Rocinha, e que em muitas músicas do Nêgu Tema, o Nêgu Tema tá falando que ele é um filho da puta, que eu tou sofrendo aqui porque a empresa dele não me dá oportunidade e tou aqui na merda... por que eu estudei pa conseguir arrumar um emprego. Por causa da minha cor e do meu cabelo. Ele sabe que a filha dele tá ouvindo as palavras que tou falando no ouvido dela, e que ela tá se identificando comigo, como homem, como pessoa, como atitude e como palavra... Isso é “public enemy”... Eu me considero gangsta... eu me considero criminoso, igual ao Galo, igual ao Catra, só que um criminoso diferente... um criminoso diferente, mas com mais ódio do que eles. Eu nunca me esqueci do preconceito que eu sofri, não... eu não esqueci, mano... Eu como todas as gringa pensando assim, “Filho da puta, tu vai tomar, agora toma,.” E elas ficam amarradonas, já dá tudo que eles escondem delas, sabe? E a mina falou para mim, brasileira, filha de alemão, nós dois falando esse negócio de filho, ai ela fala que o pai dela falou que se o negro e o branco tiverem filho nasce problema de dentes. Como é que pode uma pessoa pensar isso? Em 2002?

<sup>13</sup> Zaluar is quite emphatic as to the primacy of violence over authority in the rule of the drug traffickers, as is suggested by the paragraph in which the above quote appears:

Por deter meios de coerção física poderosos, ou seja, as armas de fogo, e por enriquecerem, os bandidos acabam virando uma força política e montando um esquema político no local. Muitos de seus métodos se assemelham ao do Estado moderno: seu poder está baseado em última instância na capacidade de fogo de suas armas e, com base nisto, às vezes cobram pedágio em pontes, taxas de proteção a comerciantes, etc. Mas não gozam de legitimidade do Estado e, se ganham a aceitação dos moradores locais como protetores e justiceiros, suas relações com aqueles trazem sempre a marca da ambivalência. Tanto mais que alguns deles abusam das técnicas repressivas aprendidas na sua experiência como membro das classes subalternas diante do aparelho repressivo do Estado e acabam empregando meios sempre violentos para manter seu poder. Reproduzem o que aprenderam da relação dominador-dominado sobre aqueles que ficam momentaneamente sob seu domínio, um domínio constituído na base do uso ou da ameaça do uso de sua arma. Esta é, aliás, a característica dos assaltos que mais ressaltavam: a sensação de completo controle sobre o outro, o da ordem que tem que ser obedecida, o da *sugestão* acatada e sem resposta. (77)

<sup>14</sup>The use of the phrase “faith in God” in these verses, in addition to any reference to religious sentiment it may contain, is a reference to a slang greeting of gangsters in the Comando Vermelho. The translation is as follows (for the song’s complete lyrics, see Appendix, “Bandidos de Cristo”):

Bandits of Christ, have a lot of faith in God,  
 Bandits of Christ, have a lot of faith in God,

For this life you've gotta have determination,  
Just ask the Boss

Rebel got pissed off and called a meeting  
“I want everybody armed and at the top of the Big Hill.  
Fireworks guys with AR-15s, the manager with a G3,  
the chiefs with pistols, I'll only say it once.  
The soldiers of my gang come with 762  
The watchers with tracers, the signal is two by two.”  
When the gang is cool, the community knows it,  
Rebel comes at the lead with an AK-47.

<sup>15</sup> Translation:

Yo... Check this out.  
Because there's always some guy who thinks being a gangster, brother,  
Is screwing over your friend, using other people as a trampoline, you know?  
And really the true gangster respects in order to be respected  
Treats people well so they treat him well  
So, I going to send this one out more or less like this, yo...

<sup>16</sup> For explanations of these ideological strategies, see Terry Eagleton (45).

<sup>17</sup> Eagleton writes:

Ideologies are usually internally complex, differentiated formations, with conflicts between their various elements which need to be continually renegotiated and resolved. What we call a dominant ideology is typically that of a dominant social

bloc, made up of classes and fractions whose interests are not always one; and these compromises and divisions will be reflected in the ideology itself. Indeed it can be claimed that part of the strength of bourgeois ideology lies in the fact that it ‘speaks’ from a multiplicity of sites, and in this subtle diffuseness presents no single target to its antagonists. Oppositional ideologies, similarly, usually reflect a provisional alliance of diverse radical forces.(45)

<sup>18</sup> This composer, whose name I withhold, told me about his song in an interview taken on March 13, 2002.

<sup>19</sup> One of the best known theories about the circuit of production and consumption is that espoused by Stuart Hall in his article “Encoding, Decoding.”

<sup>20</sup> Translation (complete lyrics can be found in the appendix):

My movement (selling of drugs) is socio-political, my trafficking is cultural

My movement is socio-political, my trafficking is cultural...

I’ll tell you, there’s black and white, young sir,

Yes, there is, involved in its well-being,

The favela is socialist, it gave me an overdose of consciousness,

Religiousness, faith in God we carry in our hearts

Peace, justice and liberty, war for the good without destruction

<sup>21</sup> In the mass-media dominated world of late-capitalism, the influence of this consumerist notion of “happiness” and human life in general cannot be over-estimated, but it is not total and rather coexists, albeit incoherently, with competing notions of “happiness,” such as those from the Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions, which would see happiness as independent of pleasure. It might be said that happiness for the Greeks

was a sort of spiritual health comparable to physical health, a personal well-being that came through the balance of virtues. In Christianity, happiness could in some ways be described as the result of the experience of grace and love that come through salvation, usually conceived of as an internal experience. For both, the pleasures of euphoria are shunned by as illusory and as potentially detrimental to the “true” happiness of the individual person. Of course, in contemporary Brazil, the Catholic and Pentecostal views on happiness are not exactly the same and certainly a plethora of other notions of happiness still exist in Brazil besides, notions coming from Marxism or those that have existed amongst Afro-Brazilian and indigenous peoples in the country throughout its history of ethnic and racial mixing.

<sup>22</sup> A very good commentary on the war of Canudos and the book *Os Sertões* is Robert Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revising the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>23</sup> In fact, it will be better to leave the treatment of the intricacies of Brazilian race relations and their implications for funk and the culture of the favelas for chapter four. For the time being I should clarify that the sort of “blackening” of racial identity I am talking about is not a process which occurs at the level of political consciousness but rather as an emergent form of lived consciousness. This means that while it may not yet be directly useful to the Black Movement in Brazil as the basis of political mobilization, it is an important part of the social cohesion of the favela as a subculture.

<sup>24</sup> By “freyrian,” I am referring to the general theories of racial harmony and democracy espoused by Gilberto Freyre, particularly in his seminal work, *Casa Grande e Senzala: formação da Família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal..*

According to this view, the intimate contact in Brazil of the European, Indigenous and African racial groups, particularly in the relationship between the children of the wealthy landowners and their Afro-Brazilian nannies, has resulted in a somewhat unique situation in which racism per se does not exist. Freyre associated certain attributes of the human personality to the different races in a stereotypical fashion, for example, that intelligence comes from the European influence and human warmth, musicality and sensuality come from African influence. Since the introduction of these ideas in the early 1930s, an introduction which occurred as a reaction to the even more racist notions of eugenics and attempts at *embranquecimento*, or the “whitening” of the Brazilian population, Freyre’s ideas have come to occupy a central place in the Brazilian national ideology. More recently, the idea has been attacked precisely for the sort of racial hierarchy it presupposes as well as for masking and denying racial disparity in Brazil. Today, the success of Freyre’s ideas has been considered one of the chief obstacles for the mobilization of the country’s black movement, since even many people of color believe that Brazil is racially democratic.

<sup>25</sup> This excerpt is from a song by Cidinho and Doca, most famous for early funk hit “Rap da Felicidade.” Translation:

Oh, that night started with a gunfight

The favela was surrounded, you couldn’t get out

And the children were scared

“For the love of God, Daddy, get us out of here.”

And then a tear came down my face

I saw that my strength was coming from God

I only ask that young man that before he pull the trigger

That he think about his kids before killing mine

But I just want to go into my house, young man, young man,

And kiss my kids, kiss my wife,

Have my daily bread, I just want to be happy

<sup>26</sup> It can be argued that politicians and the other powers that be in any given society always have some degree of machiavellian self-interest motivating them whenever they take the actions that they do. Others believe that human beings can at least sometimes act in the interests of the well-being of their communities. While I will not argue that the drug traffickers are essentially any different from other leaders, I will say that the notions of success and power that drug traffickers in favelas in Rio might have are likely to be contingent on their experience as people born and raised in their own particular social formation. The drug traffickers are native residents of their own communities, not some invading army, even as they are residents of Brazil, and as a result, the pursuit of money and power on the part of the drug trafficker is not likely to take on the same form or entail the same values as that of people from the middle-class and elite segments of the population. For example, even the highest of drug traffickers never expects to become the president of the Republic, or a judge, lawyer, banker, engineer, doctor, or even to go to college at all. He knows he will never have prestige in the larger society, nor does he expect to enjoy pleasures such as foreign travel and fine dining. To the contrary, he is aware that he will not even be able to move about freely within his own city, but will be forced to either remain hidden within the favela or wear a disguise to occasionally leave its confines. Furthermore, once he has become at all integrated within the world of organized crime, he knows it will be difficult and dangerous to quit. Perhaps most

importantly, the drug trafficker expects to die a violent, early death or at least to be locked up in prison for significant portions of his life.

<sup>27</sup> Translation:

I suffered in the storm, now I want the calm

People, be strong, all you need to see

Is if they don't do nothing there we'll do it all from here

## Chapter Four: Brazilian Funk, Utopia and the Found Sounds of the Black Atlantic

Eu só quero é ser feliz

Andar tranqüilamente na favela onde eu nasci

E poder me orgulhar

E ter a consciência que o pobre tem seu lugar

-“Rap da Felicidade”, by Julinho Rasta and Kátia<sup>1</sup>

### *Kiddy Funk at the Emotions Club*

From high atop his father’s shoulders, a toddler in a tank-top sways to the pervasive beat of the music coming through the massive speaker stacks at the Clube do Emoções. It is Sunday evening in the summer and the *matinê*, or young people’s *baile funk*, is packed with kids eight to eighteen dancing amidst the swirl of lights and music that permeate the sweaty air of the enormous nightclub. They are dressed in close imitation of the slightly older crowd that will replace them here in a couple of hours. Girls wear tiny skirts, little bareback tops, skin tight stretchy jeans. Many boys are dressed in Bermuda surfer shorts, Gracie jiu-jitsu shirts and tennis shoes, some having close-shaved heads that are tinted a peroxide-blond or even light orange. Others among the young people in the club are more dressed-up, with long pants or pastel dresses. The bone-rattling volume of the funk music at Emoções limits most conversations to short phrases spoken up close to the ear, hand shaking and little kisses, as well as a good deal of eye-contact and flirting. The music is so loud as to be physical, a sort of sonic massage in which the base of the amps can be felt in the chest and the tiniest hairs on the body.

Despite the fact that Emoções is at the foot of the favela of Rocinha, it is crowded with people from other favelas and neighborhoods as well, such as nearby Vidigal on the other

side of the Dois Irmãos mountain, Cidade de Deus and Rio das Pedras in Jacarepaguá. People mix about, greeting one another, seeing and being seen. Some dance, either in lines, pairs or groups of three, four, sometimes up to fifteen friends. Most keep to the large open space of the middle of the club, either on the dance floor or by the enormous bar, others move about on the top floor balcony areas, leaning against the railing and watching the crowd from above. More stand along the steep ramp leading down from the door and the group of security guards who are searching a group of kids coming in. Still others crowd around the vending carts on the outside of the street in the Estrada da Gávea, between a line of a hundred motorcycles and the heavy flow of traffic on Rocinha's busiest street.

On stage is an MC in a camouflage shirt, baseball hat and a gold chain, a man commonly referred to as "the greatest all-time singer of funk." He is black, in his mid-twenties, a local from Rocinha itself, and is a familiar presence at Emoções. He moves only very slightly as he holds the mike straight out from his mouth, rattling off his rhymes like machine gun fire. The MC is with the Comando Vermelho, the criminal faction that controls Rocinha and his message to the kids is exactly the same as the one he will sing at the adult dance later tonight. He sings with pride and love of the power and unity of the gang, of the power and unity of the community, of sorrow and death and of missing friends who are no longer here, of how not to get oneself killed or lost in a hard world of drugs, violence and poverty. He praises the local thieves who steal outside of the favela and laughs at the coke addicts who sell their Bermuda shorts for drugs. There by his side in front of the DJ, the MC's beautiful wife stands on the stage in an

aqua blouse and a skintight pair of Gang jeans, swaying modestly to the music, serenely proud of her famous and talented husband.

The sweatiness and smoke of the air intensify, the lights spin and electronic sounds pulsate and hum. A long train of teenage boys winds its way through the crowd of dancers in the middle of the hall. The toddler on his father's shoulders moves his little body to the beat. He makes a gun with his thumb and fingers and gestures along with the MC's music and the digital gunshots of the song- bang, bang, bang! <sup>2</sup>

### *The Structure of Utopian Feeling in Funk*

In the complicated knot of interdependencies connecting the space of the favela with the formal city, the balance of power between organized crime and the various levels of government is a subject of critical importance and one that lays at the very heart of the problem of social exclusion in Rio de Janeiro. Since the death of Tim Lopes in June of 2002, after he was discovered by drug traffickers as he secretly filmed their activities in a *baile* funk in the favela of Vila Cruzeiro in Rio, the climate of open warfare between the Comando Vermelho and the state has continued to worsen as the criminal faction has carried out an increasingly audacious strategy of terrorist guerrilla tactics. According to a recent article on page three of the *New York Times*, drug trafficking gangs in the favelas have been “a serious problem” for a long time but “... in the last month the gangs have been attacking government buildings, shopping centers, hotels, buses and even the highways linking the city to the airport, virtually unchallenged, apparently in direct defiance of government authority.”<sup>3</sup> The article quotes the superintendent of the Brazilian Federal Police in Rio, Marcelo Itagiba, as saying that, “The city is immersed in an urban

guerrilla war, promoted by armed and organized terrorists groups.”(Rohter) Whatever may be said about such a characterization of the situation, it is clear that the problem of organized crime is critical and continues to be one of the great challenges in Brazilian society today.

In the preceding chapters of this study, I have argued that the culture of funk in the favelas is a symbolic site for the hegemonic project of organized crime in those communities, in particular in the *baile de comunidade* and the sub-genre of funk music known as *proibidão* in which the power of the criminal factions is affirmed. Still, there are obviously many other aspects of funk that must be considered and many possible approaches for studying the practice of funk music in the context of the social formation of Rio’s favelas. Just as an individual MC must decide if he or she is going to “puxar o lado do crime”, or “push the part about organized crime” in funk, a critic must choose whether to focus on such things as drug traffickers and the “corridor of death” style gang fights in dances or other tendencies and themes. I am all too aware that by attempting an ideological formations critique of my earlier chapters on the power of organized crime in the favelas, I run the risk of further stigmatizing these communities and the people who live there. The fact is that funk is a musical culture and a form of entertainment, a pleasurable leisure activity for people who could be doing something else if they wanted, and as such it can be seen as somewhat of a coping mechanism that helps people in satisfying their needs to experience such things as joy and fellowship in the harsh reality of low-income neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro. By focusing on funk as entertainment, I can examine fundamental aspects of its practice as a dimension of the culture of favelas in Rio that go beyond questions of crime and violence, without ignoring the specific

socio-political and historic contexts in which funk has arisen and which are indeed intrinsic to its essence both aesthetically and culturally.

In this chapter, I will de-emphasize the directly political dimensions and the role of drug traffickers in funk and instead discuss it in more aesthetic and cultural terms. The comments and observations I make throughout this section of my study have been inspired by years of participant observation in the world of funk and favelas, along with a framework of theory drawn from literary and cultural studies. It is not my intention to present these observations as science, *per se*, but rather as somewhat philosophical reflections on a complex and polemic issue. My hope is that through such an approach I will be able to suggest some new pathways for discussing funk and popular culture in Rio de Janeiro, and contribute to the discussion of funk by scholars who have helped to bring the issue beyond the facile condemnation often made of funk that it is violent, pornographic, infantile and artless. In part, such reactions are the inevitable result of the distance between musical educations of listeners, particularly those due to class divisions and such notions as high and low art. From a distance, funk may be indistinguishable from other massified and commercial forms of cultural production, especially since one of funk's most basic characteristics is the unashamed appropriation it makes of other world musical styles, from movie soundtracks to country music. The low-cost production value of the music and the *baile funk* itself are fundamental to its aesthetic because it "brings it to the people," making it more affordable to write, sing, listen to and dance to funk music. As a result, the musical education necessary to produce and consume funk is readily available to people from low-income communities in the experience of their day-to-day lives.

In order to understand what makes funk a meaningful and indeed pleasurable practice for its fans, I will consider the cultural specificity of funk as a form of culture from Rio de Janeiro, a city known for its Carnival, and as one that is most prevalent among young people from low-income neighborhoods. Next, I will examine funk as a utopian form of entertainment in the cultural space of the socially excluded in Rio de Janeiro. In order to do this, I will begin by discussing funk through a framework employed by Richard Dyer in his analysis of the utopian tendencies of the culture of American musicals, a suggestive point of departure but ultimately one involving revealing differences. The level of audience involvement in funk and the communication between the performers and dancers skew traditional notions of production and consumption in ways studied by Ángel Quintero Rivera in his work on the “tropical” music of Caribbean cultures. After exploring this added dimension of the utopianism of funk music in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, I will enter into a slightly more literary aside, one which attempts to characterize funk in terms of more general tendencies of 20<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian culture, such as Brazilian *modernismo*, and popular music. Tying these various lines of argument together, I will suggest that the utopian impulse at the heart of funk is a fundamental dimension of its roots and essence as a Black Atlantic cultural form, in the sense explored by Paul Gilroy in his work on the spirit of African Diaspora cultures. From this point of view, the practice of funk within the community of the favelas of Rio can be seen as an example of what Gilroy calls the “politics of transformation,” a counterculture in which politics are played, sung, danced and acted and new modes of friendship, happiness and solidarity are enacted that are “... consequent of the overcoming of racial oppression on which modernity and its antinomy of rational, western progress as excessive barbarity

relied.” (Gilroy, 38) Whatever counter-discourse it may present, funk is principally a counterculture consisting in emotional and physical practices conjuring up and sustaining a politically charged and powerfully moral musical space through which the community of the *baile funk* is unified, emotionally lifted beyond the inadequacies of poverty and brought into a spiritual state that makes available the feeling of what it would be like to live in a better world.

### *Utopia and Entertainment in Funk*

Art’s Utopia, the counterfactual yet-to-come, is draped in black. It goes on being a recollection of the possible with a critical edge against the real; it is a kind of imaginary restitution of that catastrophe which is world history; it is a freedom which did not pass under the spell of necessity and which may well not come to pass ever at all. -Theodor Adorno <sup>4</sup>

Despite its apparent superficiality, entertainment, and indeed leisure activity in general, more often than not have a rather important function in human life. The somewhat somber quote above from Theodor Adorno is very appropriate to the question of the utopianism of funk music in Brazil because it highlights the fact that the utopian impulse is born of a radical dissatisfaction with the world as it is in the face of real history and everyday life. The advantage of opening the discussion of funk as entertainment on such a note is that in some ways it links the question to the issues addressed earlier in this study of the culture of funk and the power of the drug traffickers as an alternative and counter-hegemonic order. To a degree the question of utopia has

been present in the discussion from the beginning, most obviously perhaps in the issue of the cult of the trafficker as social bandit and the quasi-messianic undertones and of some *proibidão* funk.

Perhaps it may at first seem strange to some critics of funk to talk about utopianism in a musical practice that is as controversial for being violent as is funk and that is considered by many to be at least pornographic, childish and lacking art. In the first place, I do not mean here the sort of utopia of theoretical plans for the creation of an ideal world, or even of a specific, conscious plan of how to transform society for the better. I am thinking instead of the sort of entertainment-based utopianism Richard Dyer describes in his study of American musicals in which he characterizes utopianism as the feeling of how it would be to live in an ideal world.

Entertainment does not, however, present models of utopian worlds, as in the classic utopias of Sir Thomas More, William Morris, et al. Rather the utopianism is contained in the feelings it embodies. It presents, head-on as it were, what utopia would feel like rather than how it would be organized. It thus works at the level of sensibility, by which I mean an effective code that is characteristic of, and largely specific to, a given mode of cultural production. (373)

The “given mode of cultural production” Dyer most closely relates to utopian practices is music, which he claims to be the most “felt” performance medium. (373) The musical dimensions of practices like American musicals, the object of Dyer’s study, and Brazilian funk involve participants in an extra-rational, mostly emotional experience that embodies utopian feelings through a series of ‘non-representational’ signs. For Dyer, signs like “... colors, texture, movement, rhythm, melody...”(373) are even more fundamental to the

utopian impulse of entertainment than the formal ‘representational’ ones, such as song lyrics and movie scripts.

The utopianism in entertainment is, according to Dyer’s argument, a sort of escapist flight from the stark inadequacies of real day-to-day life, inadequacies that correspond to the failed promises of patriarchal capitalism in America. Nonetheless, Dyer does not condemn this fugitive aspect of entertainment as necessarily breeding apathy but instead suggests that the flight from reality itself stems from some unconscious, revolutionary urge. He writes:

Two of the taken-for-granted descriptions of entertainment, as ‘escape’ and as ‘wish fulfillment’, point to its central thrust, namely, utopianism. Entertainment offers the image of ‘something better’ to escape into or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don’t provide. Alternatives, hopes and wishes- these are the stuff of utopia, the sense that things could be better, that something other than what is can be imagined and maybe realized. (373)

Whether an entertainment culture be a movie, a show or a *baile*, the specific characteristics of the escapism it offers make up what its particular utopianism. By this I mean the ways in which a specific utopian form corresponds to the particular conditions and inadequacies of the society in which it arises and the ways in which it interacts with the means of ideological production of that society. For instance, American musicals, especially those of the 1930s, 40s and 50s analyzed by Dyer, relate to inadequacies perceived in real life vis-à-vis the presentation of the ‘American Dream’ by the media and popular culture of that period. In a similar way, the utopianism of funk meets specific

demands of young people from favelas and other low-income areas in Rio in relation to what could be called the ‘Brazilian Dream.’

In addition to the fact that funk entertainment exists in a different socio-political and cultural context than American musicals, the much higher degree of co-participation between the performers and the audience in funk make it necessary to slightly revise or adapt Dyer’s notion of entertainment. For Dyer, entertainment is a commercial mode of cultural production that he contrasts with performances in other contexts, such as tribal, feudal or socialist. Entertainment is “...a type of performance produced for profit, performed before a generalized audience (the ‘public’) by a trained, paid group who do nothing else but produce performances which have the sole (conscious) aim of providing pleasure.” (372) In funk, however, especially in the space of the *baile*, the audience is made up of performers much in the way of the classic Carnival. Furthermore, the semi-ritualized space of the *baile*, from the “corridor of death”-type battles to rites of courtship and dance practices, aspects that have existed and been studied throughout the history of funk, indicate that at some level funk entails something more akin to ritual performance than pure entertainment.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, for me the mixture of performance and audience does not lessen the force of the utopian urge in funk, but rather constitutes a fundamental aspect of its particular brand of ‘escapism’ as entertainment. In the end, this involvement of the fans as performers in funk makes up an important part of the ‘feeling’ of living in a better world accessible in the space of the dance as the individuals of the audience themselves are transformed into stars.

An application of the criteria set by Dyer in his study on the utopianism of American musical opens up relevant perspectives for the case of funk, as I will explain. But first, it

is worth considering a bit more some of the fundamental differences between musicals as entertainment and the practice of funk. As I have pointed out, the infinitely higher level of active participation on the part of the audience in funk is the factor that most greatly separates it from forms of passive entertainment like musicals, which more conveniently fit into traditional notions of the circuit of production and consumption. Funk can easily be seen as an example of what Puerto Rican sociologist Ángel Quintero Rivera has called *músicas mulatas* and the tendencies of Afro-Caribbean culture with which he identifies them. Quintero Rivera identifies five major characteristics of *músicas mulatas* that make overturn traditional divisions between things like performance/audience and production/consumption. To begin with, the act of composition itself is done with the intention that space will be left for vocal and musical improvisation, improvisation that is understood as a vital part of the resulting communication between the performers and their audience. Second, the vocalist is expected to spontaneously add-lib additional lyrics, sounds and gestures in his personal interpretation of the original composition. Also, improvisational musical breaks, such as jam sessions or *descargas*, are built into the songs, and individual musicians of an extremely wide variety of instruments are given space to play and interact with the crowd and vocalist. Next, the public itself is an active participant in the performance of the music, clapping out syncopated beats with their hands, singing along with the songs (especially choruses), demanding energy from the stage and dancing. One final characteristic he highlights is what he calls the *polivocalidad*, or polivocality, of Afro-Caribbean musical forms through which an extreme hybridity is formed. According to Quintero Rivera, sounds and instruments are strategically borrowed from European, African and indigenous sources alike, and mixed

with other elements appropriated from world popular and mass culture in a way that democratizes and overturns the hierarchy of instruments and voices.<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that these features, which Quintero Rivera identifies as typical of “tropical music,” are in fact also typical of Afro-American music, and indeed African music, in general, as can be seen in varying degrees in the traditions of forms like gospel, blues, jazz and hip-hop.<sup>7</sup> According to Paul Gilroy, these tendencies are characteristic of the cultures of peoples of the African Diaspora in general, as I shall explore later in this chapter.

In the context of these observations, it is noteworthy that the *baile funk* is indeed a *baile*, or dance, and not a “funk show”, something that makes it fundamentally different from forms of entertainment such as musicals. It may be the case that Brazilians in particular like to participate actively in their entertainment, as is apparent, for instance, to anyone who has attended a soccer game in Brazil or watched the Brazilian national team in a World Cup match on TV and seen the large numbers of fans beating on drums and calling out chants. In the case of funk, I would say that in a sense “true funk” only exists in the space of the *baile*. Other instances of funk, such as listening to the music in the car or at home, are somewhat two-dimensional and crystallized moments of funk that tend to work in reference to the more quintessentially funk culture of the *baile*, live and improvised in a community of *funkeiros* who are as much a part of the spectacle as the paid performers. Indeed, this is one of the reasons I have referred to funk throughout this study as a ‘practice’ and a ‘culture’ and not just as ‘music’. Funk is an organic confluence of living signs, melding and mixing together in a flow of sights, smells, sounds and gestures. In this sense, the stage in funk ends up spilling out throughout the dance and among those in attendance, overturning traditional divisions between the spectacle and

the spectators and between production and consumption. As a result, the central locus of the consumption of funk, the *baile*, is also the principal point of production of funk.

The mixture of consumption and production in funk may be a good part of the reason it is so unpopular among people who have never gone to a *baile*, as it limits the ability of the traditional consumer to even understand funk. True, there has always been a funk song or two that gains national popularity, like MCs Leonardo and Junior's "Rap do Centenário", about the hundred years of the Flamengo soccer club; Claudinho and Buchecha's ultra-smooth and romantic "Nosso Sonho"; Bonde do Tigrão's raucous "Cerol na Mão" and Serginho's "Pocotó", a children's song about a little horse that dominated Carnival across the nation in 2003. Still, access to these songs is not really access to funk, in the sense of the high level of audience participation that characterizes it. In truth, funk has never consistently maintained national or even city-wide popularity throughout the social classes in Rio. Even some poor people from neighborhoods other than favelas, such as the suburbs of the Baixada Fluminense, may have a more limited access to the complete culture of funk because, for one thing, the *Proibidão*-style songs about the drug gangs and criminal factions are not played on TV and radio and in fact are often not played in nightclubs outside of favelas. A person exposed to the forms of funk that are more easily marketed by the mass media in Rio and Brazil will experience only a limited brand of funk, one largely divorced from the improvised experience of the *baile*, and one which communicates the pleasure of the utopian dimension of funk to a much lesser degree.

This may offer some clues as to why, of all contemporary musical styles in Brazil, perhaps only *sertanejo* country music elicits anything like the degree of dislike, and even

disgust, from non-fans as does funk. *Sertanejo*, in my opinion, is another example of utopian entertainment, one which projects an imagined simplicity of an idealized and noble rural life, implicitly contrasted to the noisy pace of modernized life. *Sertanejo* is another Brazilian musical style which has appropriated a considerable dose of American culture, that of country music, and a fairly unsophisticated level of musical virtuosity. This makes it somewhat unpleasant to a great many Brazilians who are not fans, yet, in terms of sales, *sertanejo* is indisputably one of the most popular styles in the country. I would argue that the appeal of *sertanejo* consists less in its musical merits than in the specific socio-historical and cultural context in which it is enjoyed, a sort of ‘pastoral return’, especially in a country characterized by fairly recent emigration from the countryside to the great urban centers and the accompanying fragmentation of the communities and values of rural life in the face of rapid modernization.

If *sertanejo* is a ‘pastoral return’, funk is the somewhat corresponding ‘city dominated’ utopian view. As is the case with *sertanejo*, in funk it is ironically their very participation that enables its fans to derive pleasure from it. Because of this participation, those same aspects of funk that make it intolerable to many non-fans, such as its multiple layers of violence, sexuality and playfulness, are experienced and interpreted differently by fans. The question of who ends up liking funk, and why, is very complex and certainly not merely a question of social class. Even people born and raised in the favela are likely to say, “I see absolutely no culture in funk.” Others, even people from wealthy, middle-class neighborhoods, may say, “Funk is a very sensual rhythm!”<sup>8</sup> Still others will say that funk is misogynist. Earlier I explained that of the reasons that I refer to funk as a ‘culture’ or ‘practice’, as opposed to merely a style of music, is the high level of audience

participation in the production of funk as entertainment in the space of the *baile*. The other reason is that funk is closely related to and indeed dependent on the specific cultural and socio-historic context in which it exists. This is true both in terms of funk's ties to the power of the drug traffickers and its relationship to the cultural legacy of poor people in Rio de Janeiro, a legacy closely tied to Carnival and globalization mediated by tendencies of cultural cannibalism and the musical survival tactics of the African Diaspora. Funk as a culture and practice is also related to the specific inadequacies in the lives of people in the socio-political terrain that is specific to poor people in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, the 'culture' of funk is not merely a question of a language or class barrier, strictly speaking, although in important ways language and social class are determining factors.

### *Utopia in the Baile Funk*

While the individual motives that lead one person to enjoy funk while another person hates it are extremely complex, I feel it is safe to generalize and say that the fans in one way or another experience a sort of cultural preparation which enables them to enjoy funk. Dyer's work on utopianism offers some basic strategies for understanding how this cultural preparation is related to the lived experiences of poor people in Rio and their frustrations with the inadequacies of their lives. (376) Earlier in this study, I suggested a reading of the *baile funk*, and in particular the *baile de comunidade*, as a platform for the staging of the power of the criminal factions in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Now I would like to offer some observations regarding the *baile* as the principal locus of the

utopian dimensions of funk, according to the following characteristics of social tensions and utopian solutions suggest by Dyer:

*Social tension/inadequacy/absence*

- A. Scarcity (actual poverty in the society; poverty observable in the surrounding societies, e.g., Third World); unequal distribution of wealth
- B. Exhaustion (work as a grind, alienated labor, pressures of urban life)
- C. Dreariness (monotony, predictability, instrumentality of the daily round)
- D. Manipulation (advertising, bourgeois democracy, sex roles)
- E. Fragmentation (job mobility, rehousing and development, high-rise flats, legislation against collective action)

*Utopian solution*

- A. Abundance (elimination of poverty for self and others; equal distribution of wealth)
- B. Energy (work and play synonymous), city dominated or pastoral return
- C. Intensity (excitement, drama, affectivity of living)
- D. Transparency (open, spontaneous, honest communications and relationships)
- E. Community (all together in one place, communal interests, collective activity) (376)

Despite the great differences in the level of audience participation in the cultures of American musicals and funk, parts of Dyer's analysis on the utopianism of musicals is still tremendously useful in understanding funk. In examining his definition of entertainment, it seems to me that his main point is that the purpose of entertainment is to produce pleasure and that the performance/audience dichotomy he suggests is secondary and even dispensable. For me, the main purpose of funk is the production of pleasure, despite the instances of consciousness-raising that occur within funk culture or even the use made of it by drug traffickers to naturalize their power. The high level of co-participation between the audience and the performance in funk only strengthens this tendency and makes funk more pleasurable for its fans. As was the case regarding the definition of entertainment used by Dyer in his study, so too will these categories need to be slightly adapted to match the characteristics of funk. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that any separation of the utopian impulse in terms of such categories is somewhat artificial since in reality they cross over into one another.

*Abundance:* While there are different types of *bailes* and different levels of actual wealth present in them, it is a common characteristic of the dance that it is a space of abundance. Perhaps it's best to begin by describing this space of as one of consumption, not only of funk music but of a myriad of pleasure-and beauty-producing goods from drugs and alcohol to name-brand tennis shoes and clothing. The specific characteristics of abundance in funk do take on something of a 'favela aesthetic', as opposed to one of, say, a middle-class nightclub. In a sense, the space of the *baile* becomes the space of the favela itself transformed and elevated into a fantastic idealized stage in which the people and values of the community are preserved even as its fundamental poverty is overcome.

Such a transformation occurs even at the seediest and most criminal dances, such as a Friday night dance along a large, open sewage drain at the bottom of a favela near Rocinha. The smell and unseemly sight of this sewage canal and the shack-like houses and shops that surround it reveal the reality of poverty in the favela as well as just about any other aspect of the physical neighborhood. The presence of the gangsters throughout the dance, mingling with their oversized weapons throughout the crowd, selling drugs and counting money on tables in the middle of the dance, is another stark symbol of the fact of the social exclusion of the community. Yet in the music and energy of the *baile* everything is transformed as people drink, laugh and dance, dressed in *Gang* pants and *Bad Boy* shirts, wearing Nike tennis shoes, eating hot dogs and grilled meat on long, thin sticks. The signs of poverty are present, they even become central tropes in the aesthetics of consumption in the *baile*, but it is an idealized poverty without hunger or inadequacies which is turned into a feast.

*Energy:* Another key element of the *baile* that manifests itself in innumerable ways is the heightened level of energy in the space of the dance. The situation of the worker in Brazil is difficult and educational opportunities that could lead to an interesting job are limited. The result is that many poor people who are employed earn low wages and work long, hard hours. They face a tiring commute in crowded buses and trains and come home to noisy, overpopulated and dangerous neighborhoods. In contrast, the space of the *baile* transforms the world of the poor into one of energy and relaxation. Dances often start late, sometimes after one o'clock in the morning, and can go until dawn. Loud booming music, dancing, flirting and fighting are all energetic elements of funk dances, and despite the rigors of urban life, it is uncommon to see people yawning or even sitting

down at a dance. In my opinion, a good deal of the energy in the funk dance comes from the music itself, not only rhythmically or even emotionally but from a sonic standpoint. In the music, the constant chaotic and individual sounds of the city and the favela are drowned out by the wall of speakers and melded into one unifying harmonious flow of music. The music is so loud that it becomes a physical presence as the booming sound waves massage the mass of bodies before the amps as each hair on them vibrates to the beat. This sonic wall provides a certain peace in the *baile*, a utopian mysticism that joins together with the threat of violence or the hope of sensual contact as the participants let go and allow themselves to be swept away.

*Intensity:* In almost all dances there are some sort of flashing lights, smoke machines and pyrotechnics, and the use of alcohol and drugs further intensifies the experience, making it drastically different from the dreariness and predictability of everyday life outside the *baile funk*. In general, the dances follow certain basic scripts as to the order of performances, beginning with the DJ, followed by the lesser well known singer/dance groups (such as Bonde das Louras or Os Carrascos), and finishing with big-name MCs who sing for about a half hour. Still, an individual fan doesn't really know what is going to happen at a *baile* since he or she could end up kissing someone, witness a fight or even be involved in one. The loudness of the music itself is exciting and the bass of the amps can be felt like an exaggerated heartbeat in the chests of the fans. In dances taking place outside of clubs, in the streets of favelas, the presence of armed drug traffickers further adds an air of excitement and danger to the atmosphere of the dance. Even people who hate funk dances seldom list boredom as a factor for not liking them. In *bailes* taking place in clubs, where fights sometimes break out, the security guards regularly eject

hotheaded young men who get into altercations, causing people nearby to stop and pay attention. Every now and then, these fights explode into mob scenes that can bring the music to a halt. More often, the MC keeps singing, telling the people to stop fighting as he or she performs. In the dances outside of favelas where semi-ritualized gang fighting is a part of the spectacle, such as the infamous and now defunct dance at the Country Club in Jacarepaguá, the gradual rise of intensity leading up to the combat is part of the script.

*Transparency:* Certainly one of the most striking aspects of the culture of funk is the blatant sexuality evident in so many of its aspects. Lyrics of songs are often explicitly, if playfully, sexual. The song “Vai, Serginho”, by MC Serginho, in which the MC describes a slow descent of kisses starting at the woman’s mouth and ending at her vagina, is an infamous example of this tendency.<sup>9</sup> The sexuality of funk goes far beyond the lyrics of funk songs into the suggestiveness of the dance moves, courtship practices and generally sensual atmosphere of the *baile funk*. Indeed, there is something almost orgiastic in the funk dance, as crowds of people hug, kiss and rub up against one another in clothing that is often very tight, shiny and small. The loudness of the music itself forces people to talk right up into the ear of the other person, bringing people into even closer contact. Also, dance steps and choreographies may imitate sex acts, as lines of people of both sexes grind against each other to the music with their hands on their knees or make other pumping and thrusting gestures. The aggressive style of flirting, in which both women and men approach one another, is another aspect of the prevalence of sexuality in the *baile*. It is not uncommon for a man or woman to kiss various partners in one dance, sometimes kissing people he or she did not previously know, and such behavior on the

part of either is not generally considered reprehensible in funk culture. In this sense it is difficult to imagine a better example than the *baile funk* of the flight from bourgeois values, a flight Dyer characterizes as one of “open, spontaneous, honest communications and relationships.”

While some people who are not fans of funk consider it misogynist, I found in interviewing female fans of funk that they did not agree. Despite words like *cachorra*, which means a female dog (but which does not transmit the same as the American slang, “bitch”, in its connotation as a mean, unpleasant woman), the female fans of funk that I interviewed generally found funk to be fairly egalitarian in regards to gender. Both sexes are somewhat objectified in funk, a fact that leads some women to feel empowered and placed at the same level as the men.<sup>10</sup> Funk transforms women too into hunters and aggressors, so to speak, who have the same right as a man to view a member of the opposite sex as an object of consumption to be obtained. It’s not difficult to understand why people would accuse funk of being misogynist, with MCs like Serginho singing that what he really wants to do is to “morder o seu grelinho” or “bite your little clit.” On the other hand, Tati Quebra-Barraco, whose name roughly translates as “Tati Screw Me”, expresses a similar attitude in dealing with men. She sings that she doesn’t like “little dicks, “Não gosto de piru pequeno,” and graphically describes what she does to the men she catches. She is perhaps the most enduring and widely known female entertainer in funk and almost all of her songs play with the objectification of men and the liberation of the female libido.

While the subject of sexuality in funk is deserving of a separate study, it seems to me that the sexuality in funk is more a question of the rejection of bourgeois values than

mere hedonism and misogyny. John Fisk has suggested that excessive elements in popular culture are often vehicles for contradicting and drawing attention to largely unseen features of dominant ideologies:

Popular culture is often excessive, and is frequently criticized by those who do not understand it for being “sensational.” Excessiveness, sensationalism, and exaggeration are stylistic devices of contradiction, and, as I have argued, the contradictory is characteristic of popular culture. Each of these devices takes ideological norms and then exceeds them, magnifies them so that their normality is brought to our attention and is not allowed to continue its ideological work unseen: its powerful position of the “taken for granted” is thus disturbed. They promote a norm and then exceed it, spilling over beyond its ideological containment. This excess then becomes a resource that people can use to interrogate or contradict the norm, the excessive is meaning that has escaped the control of the norm. (328)

In any event, the blatant sexualization of funk is not constructed in the sort of “battle of the sexes” that appears in American hip-hop and its characteristic negative portrayal of women is not typical of funk. In addition, there is a certain androgynous sexuality in funk reminiscent of MPB, or the Brazilian Popular Music of performers like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, and axé music of such groups as *É o Tchan do Brasil* from Bahia. This is evident in the dance styles used by men and women both, dance moves that are quite often directly influenced by axé music, a much less polemic style that is also highly sexualized. MC Serginho’s enormously popular dancer Lacreia is a good example of the playfulness with which gender roles are treated in funk. Lacreia is a transvestite who

dances in a frenetic centipede-like fashion, as her Lacaia name entails, and who became something of a national celebrity in 2003 who became more famous than MC Serginho himself. This serves to illustrate that the non-representational level of cultural practice can often be more powerful than the formal level of such things as lyrics. Not surprisingly, *proibidão*, however, does not share this androgynous nature and there are no major female MCs that sing about the power of drug gangs and criminal factions.

Beyond the “bathroom humor” of the lewd and childish rhymes often heard in funk music, there is a further ‘infantilization’ of the space of the *baile* in which the spheres of adult life and childhood ambiguously mix together. This is another dimension of the transparency and openness in relationship in funk, for the childlike expression of emotions and desires is much less restricted by the bourgeois idea of acting like a grown-up. This attitude may reflect the inadequacies of childhood itself among many poor people in Brazil, people who have to grow up fast relative to their middle-class and elite counterparts, either because they do not have as much time and space for recreation, or because they are exposed to the harshness of reality on a daily basis in the violence and poverty of the favelas. At the same time, this ‘infantilization’ works both ways and the space of the *baile* and culture of funk offer a more typically adult experience to the children that are in contact with it. The participation of children in funk is striking and is not limited to hearing and writing songs on the block or even the *matinê* dances. Even kids who live in the most stable and affluent homes of the favela are likely to pass through dances in the street, or hear the music booming through the walls of their houses at all hours of the night. Furthermore, the poorest kids in the neighborhood are often found at the adult community dances that take place in the streets. These kids may be

street kids who come into the favela for protection, or they may be the children of the least stable families of the community who often receive very little attention, guidance or material support from their parents. More often than not they are the same ones that work selling things at stoplights or painting their faces and juggling in traffic. In a sense, they are children and grown-ups at the same time who mostly work and barely go to school, if at all. With very little parental supervision, or none at all, these kids sometimes engage in sexual relationships and in criminal activities such as drug delivery and prostitution. In the space of the community dance, the expectations and experience these grown-up kids have are not very different from those of their older counterparts.

*Community:* The dimension of the creation of community in the culture of funk and the space of the *baile* is one of the most complex aspects of its culture. Before I discuss the racial dimension of the community of the *baile funk* as a quintessentially Brazilian form of African Diaspora cultures in the next section, I want to mention some of the other aspects of the community that is created in the *baile funk*. One of the most important attributes of the performance space of funk is that it is a “dance” and not a “show.” This is not merely a question of semantics. That the *baile* is a dance and not a show makes it a mobile community in which there are no seats, or at most a very few situated in some remote locations, and no territory is staked out in any permanent way. In a show, even in one of general admission in which there are no assigned seats, people tend to stay in the same spot. Fans of funk usually attend certain *bailes* regularly enough that they may have favorite areas within the space of the dance, a good vantage point or one where many people can pass through, for example, but the crowd remains fluid with groups of friends constantly streaming through in long lines. This means that the *baile funk* is a place in

which the division between audience and performance is significantly reduced, as is that of production and consumption, and indeed the dancing, flirting, fighting and general socializing of the audience is as big a part of the show, and the utopian experience, than the performers on stage.

The repetitive nature of the dances is another aspect of the imagined community of the *baile* as a utopian space. As the fans get comfortable with the setting of a particular dance over a period of months or years, it becomes something like the square of a small town in the interior of the country. Indeed, in communities like favelas that rarely have any central square in which people from all over the neighborhood can come and socialize, the space of the *bailes* has become one of the most important alternatives, especially for the young people who attend them. In the case of Rocinha, for example, it could be argued that the beach in São Conrado has this function and that many courtship and friendship ties are developed and maintained on the beach. In fact, the population of Rocinha has virtually taken over both São Conrado and Pepino beaches and the middle-class people from the neighborhood are much less evident there, other than those involved in the hang gliding circles towards the far end of the beach. At night, the beach is less popular and the people of Rocinha meet in thousands of other smaller places throughout the favela. There are some small plazas and parks, but normally nothing brings together as many people as the *baile*, be it the somewhat upscale one at Emoções (which can bring together as many as 4,000) or the street dances in the Via Ápia, especially during Carnival. (in which upwards of 20,000 people can crowd the relatively small street).

In addition to what might be called the formal aspects of community formation, as those which can be inferred from Dyer's utopian criteria mentioned above (all together in one place, communal interests, collective activity), a significant aspect of the community which is given life in the dance is one of racial dynamics. While it is clear that the *baile* and indeed funk culture in general are associated with blackness and low-income communities, there is an anti-essentialism in them that embraces the characteristically Brazilian dream of racial harmony and democracy to a striking degree. While I will discuss this situation at greater length in my comments on the implications of Gilroy's 'black Atlantic' for funk, here I want to make the argument that within the space of the dance the feeling is created of what it would be like to live in a society free of racism and class warfare. The *baile* is one of the few places in Carioca society where middle-class and rich young people, who are almost exclusively white, can have extensive contact with young people from favelas and other low-income neighborhoods on a somewhat equal footing. I would argue that the desire of many of Rio's wealthier adolescents and young adults to frequent the *baile funk*, while a complex subject, is in some way representative of their own desire to transcend the class and race differences that are so blatantly omnipresent in their daily lives. While the skin-tone of the crowd in the *baile* is likely to be varying shades of brown, MCs, DJs and dancers are, like the fans, of a variety of colors ranging from black to white. Even the music played is non-essentialist; in most *bailes* blocks of other styles of urban music are played in addition to funk, such as hip-hop, pagode and even hard rock, and whatever class and racial connotations these styles might have tend to be ignored. This does not mean that a black racial identity is lost in

funk, just that it eschews any facile dichotomy and presents itself, in a sense, as the realization of the Brazilian cosmic race.<sup>11</sup>

Another very important dimension of the community that is created in the experience of the dance is its elevation to the status of a fantastic or idealized version of the space of the favela, discussed above in my comments on ‘abundance’. When one stops to consider the notion of community constructed in *prohibition* so fundamental to the hegemony of the drug traffickers, the sort of ‘we of the favela’ versus the ‘them of the asphalt’ discussed in chapter three, it is clear that the construction of this idealized utopian community in funk is convenient to the social order of organized crime. In the end, such a construction greatly intensifies any sort of messianic intensity implicit in funk in general and *proibidão* in particular.

Besides the distinctive inadequacies evident in people’s lives in any given socio-historical context, another fundamental aspect of the specificity of utopia is the culture of the group seeking to escape the world as it is. In the case of funk, I have discussed at length the presence of the culture of drug traffickers in many of the principal communities where funk is practiced. What remains is to explore the specific cultural dimensions of funk in terms of local Carioca Carnival, the legacy of cultural cannibalism in national Brazilian civilization and the international tendencies of the double-consciousness of modernity in the African Diaspora. Such is no small task and I will content myself to make some general comments and observations to this effect.

*Funk as a New Carnival*

Over the years, there has been a great deal of research done on the subject of Carnival in general and the Carnival of Rio de Janeiro in particular. This research has been conducted from a variety of points of view, from anthropological ethnographies to literary and ideological studies of concepts such as resistance in Carnival.<sup>12</sup> The potential of Carnival in Rio as a utopian practice and one involving poor people in particular is well documented. (da Matta) Still, as the result of a gradual but steady process of commercialization and status quo appropriation, Carnival presently occupies a position of diminished importance with regard to the lives of poor people in Rio. The ironic and subversive spirit of Carnival has been transferred to other cultural forms that have become the new spaces of the utopian impulse among the poor, spaces such as funk (and, I might suggest, the Pentecostal movement). While Carnival still has a degree of relevance for poor youths in Rio de Janeiro, funk culture has largely replaced the space of the Carnival in Rio as the principal leisure activity of poor youths both in content and form. Certainly, many of the observations made by Bahktin in his work on Carnival apply to the culture of funk, and it can be said that funk provides a place in which to express energies and needs suppressed in modernized life, displacing and inverting normal social hierarchies. Furthermore, applying Dyer's categories listed above to contemporary Carnival, it is clear that it is no longer the defining musical form of social order of the favelas nor that of the identity of the poor youths in Rio.<sup>13</sup>

Before entering into a discussion on changes in the utopian potential of the culture of Carnival in contemporary Brazil and comparing it to the practice of funk, I want to briefly explain a few things about my contact with this rich and beautiful culture. While I

do not consider myself an expert on Carnival by any means, I am a fan and do have a fairly wide range of experience of Carnival culture and practices in Brazil. Ever since my first visit to Brazil in 1990, when I first read Alma Guillermoprieto's book *Samba* and subsequently visited various samba schools, I have found Carnival to be a fascinating and suggestive facet of Brazilian society. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to participate in Carnival on several occasions, either watching the parades at the *Sambódromo*, a sort of stadium for the samba school's in Rio, or on TV. I have also participated in many street events in Rio during Carnival, in Rocinha and other neighborhoods, and even recently had the chance to spend Carnival of 2003 in the small town in the interior of the state of Pará with my wife, Jeyla, and her family. In addition to reading scholarly work on samba and Carnival, I have also followed it closely in magazines and newspapers, as well as enjoyed friendships with people deeply involved in the culture of samba and the world of Carnival in Rio de Janeiro. Finally, some of my impressions with regard to Carnival were formed in the classes I took with Professor Severino Albuquerque at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in particular one on Brazilian civilization in which the co-optation of forms of popular culture by the Brazilian status quo was a central theme.

This process of co-optation is one of the main reasons for the diminished importance of Carnival and samba in the lives of poor youths in Rio. Different from its beginnings as a marginalized and even illegal practice of mostly Afro-Brazilians, throughout the twentieth century the culture of Carnival has gradually become a status quo culture and today samba is the musical style most readily associated with the Brazilian national identity both at home and abroad. An important result of this has been that the space of

the poor, although still acknowledged as the backbone and root of Carnival, has become increasingly limited in its de facto celebration. To a large degree, Carnival has been taken out of the street, contained and commodified. Anyone who has ever gone to the *Sambódromo*, a sort of street/stadium where the big parades are held, in Rio at Carnival has seen that wealthy people and tourists have the best seats, often in company box seats or along the actual avenue at the street level. While the cast of personalities present in the parades itself still includes many people from favelas or who are traditional figures of the world of samba, more and more attention has been focused on the white stars of the Globo and other Brazilian television networks, singers and musicians and the like. Carnival has become synonymous with the world of big Brazilian entertainment and is somewhat of a who's who of the dominant Brazilian popular culture. Furthermore, stars of alternative cultural practices in Brazil, such as hip-hop singers or *funkeiros*, are not generally highlighted in Carnival and are unlikely to appear on top of a float in the parade. Perhaps the relatively newfound popularity of Carnival in the Northeastern city of Salvador over the past two decades has occurred as somewhat of a reaction to the commercialization of the Carnival, as the desire to bring Carnival back to the streets and back to the people. But by now the Bahian Carnival has become primarily another big entertainment culture and at this point most ordinary people still don't have enough money to be in the parade of a *bloco-afro*, for example. In Rio de Janeiro, as is the case throughout the country, the culture of small street *blocos* has seen a significant rise in popularity in recent years in a similar effort to reclaim Carnival as a non-commercial practice, although these efforts seem to come as much from the middle-class as from poor people living in places like favelas.

Because a similar process of co-optation has not occurred in funk, and at least for the time being seems unlikely, the utopian dimensions once available to poor people in Carnival still exist in the practice of funk culture. The experience of watching unattainable beautiful and famous people enjoying themselves on the TV screen in Carnival or even live at the parades in the *Sambódromo* does of course offer some degree of escapism for the spectator, but this is infinitely less powerful than the chance to participate in the spectacle itself to the degree offered by a *baile funk*. As I argued above, in funk the audience becomes the stars, just as was once the case with Carnival; the audience becomes the *destaque*, as the people on the floats in the Carnival parades are called. The ‘abundance’ that is obviously present in Carnival is less powerful as a utopian symbol because it is fundamentally not an abundance of the poor. Instead, it may even serve to alienate people who are “not invited to the party”, so to speak. In a similar way, the ‘energy’ and ‘intensity’ offered in the experience of Carnival is considerably less for many poor people, because one has to be involved in the event to really feel these to any great degree. Indeed, the rigid codification of Carnival in the parades of the *Sambódromo* may in some ways cause it to be somewhat predictable. The fact that it is run and organized by official authorities and not that there are no gangsters brandishing guns in the middle of the performance also makes it a more mundane, safe space in which the rules of regular life are more applicable.

As a platform for the presentation of the spectacle of the world of Brazilian entertainment, Carnival is full of marketing images and advertising to such a degree as to be manipulative and consumerist and has thus become considerably less ‘transparent’ than funk. Also, while there is a good dose of playfulness in regards to gender roles and

sexuality present in Carnival that may in some ways rub against the grain of bourgeois values, it has become overshadowed by the somewhat hedonistic objectification of women. Carnival does not generally transform the woman into a hunter in the way funk does, and her sexuality generally consists in a femininity understood as the ability to provide pleasure for males. I do not want to overemphasize this point because there is still in Carnival a powerful level of transgender and homosexual play which, although less often emphasized than the level of pretty models in feathers and glitter, is still an important part of the irony and indeed utopia of Carnival. Additionally, despite the co-optation of Carnival by the status quo and mass media, and the enormous amount of money spent on advertising in Carnival, it is an extremely rich and powerful cultural form and one that continues to offer at least some space for subversive ideas and the contestation of social values. My point here is that Carnival has become so generally neutral in terms of race and class through this process of appropriation that its utopian dimension is severely restricted with regard to the poor.

Furthermore, the dimension of ‘community’ in Carnival has changed considerably as it has become a form of the dominant culture in Rio. Particular noticeable is the “whitening” of Carnival as the rich and famous have appropriated it. Despite its clear roots as a form of African Diaspora culture, the capacity for Carnival to transmit or preserve any sort of connotation of racial community has become so thoroughly diluted as to be practically impossible. Instead, a clear hierarchy of race is evident in Carnival more attuned to the actual racial dynamics in Brazil than to the imagined racial dynamics of a *baile funk*. Carnival is just multi-racial enough to appear to represent the sort of racial harmony or racial democracy that is so fundamental to the Brazilian national

ideology. All the shades of brown are visible in Carnival, from the Indian to the mulatto to Italian immigrants, and many Afro-centric and indigenous themes continue to be chosen by the samba schools for their yearly parades. Nevertheless, the representation of race in Carnival often occurs in a hierarchical sense in which whiteness becomes associated with progress and civilization and blackness with a somewhat folkloric musicality and primitive sexuality. Despite the formal content of the parades, as a sort of subversive text, the commercialization of Carnival ends up whitening the whole event in a de facto sense at the informal, non-representational level of the performance. In other words, even though the composers and organizers of the various samba schools do come up with some very subversive and powerfully ironic parades each year, much of their power as a utopian culture is lost and overcome by the less textual dimension of carnival as a media and advertising event of the dominant white order in Brazil.

In the light of this discussion, it is interesting to consider the samba music and parades of contemporary Carnival culture in terms of the five characteristics suggested by Quintero Rivera of “tropical” Caribbean music discussed at the beginning of the chapter. In most ways, this culture can be seen as an example of the sort of *música mulata* he describes, but the high degree of audience passivity inherent in the growing divide between performer and audience occurring in the commercialization of Carnival has somewhat distanced it from these forms. On the one hand, the composition is still made to allow for improvisation and the singer still seeks to spontaneously improvise and interact with his or her audience, as do the musicians (and particularly the percussion drum line). Also, the music is still extraordinarily polivocal in the sense described by Quintero Rivera, and multiple levels of what he calls *timbres*, or “tone-colors,” do

intermix in the rich musical play typical of the sambas of Carnival and indeed the images with which they are presented in the actual parades. Still, the level of interaction and real communication between the public and the spectacle is clearly reduced in the modern massified Carnival. Even if one is not watching the parades of the Rio's big samba schools on TV, as does the great majority of people in the Carnival audience, and one does go to Rio's Sambódromo, for example, one tends to be somewhat removed in the bleachers. People do sing and even dance a bit, but anyone expecting the sort of high degree of participation typical of street Carnival celebrations will be disappointed. On the other end of the spectacle, the emphasis on attractive and/or famous people on floats also restricts communication, which typically is limited to smiles, waves of the hand, jumping up and down or dancing. Due to the increasing divide between the public and the performance that has occurred in the evolution of the practice of Carnival over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has become somewhat less of one Quintero Rivera's *músicas mulatas* and instead more similar to the culture of American musicals studied by Richard Dyer.

In any event, the problem of mass commercialization and co-optation is much smaller in the culture of funk, even though money is being made in funk and inevitably some of the larger society's racial hierarchy is bound to infect it in some ways. Still, funk is by and large offensive to middle-class sensibilities and has thus far been spared anything but momentary flashes of status quo appropriations (such as the presence of DJ Marlboro on Xuxa's Saturday morning program Xuxa Hits during the mid-nineties). As a result, funk remains principally a space for the poor people and the black people who inhabit Rio's favelas and low-income areas. The *baile funk* is generally very cheap or even free in the

case of the community dances, and it is a party to which everyone is invited, even the rich and white people living in elite neighborhoods (“*bairros nobres*”) of the Zona Sul.

Whereas Carnival appears to be the realization of a culture of racial democracy, funk culture presently offers its fans a much more intense utopian feeling of what it would be like to live in a world of racial harmony. The community created in the space of the *baile* is not one of any essentialist definition of ‘blackness’, even though as a form of Diaspora culture it performs something of “blackening” of racial identity on this community. Still, the practice of funk is presently something much more counter cultural than that of Carnival and the community created in the *baile funk* is a quintessential space of cultural inversions, turning taboos into totems as it raises up the space of the favela to the realization of the Brazil of the dream of racial and class inclusion.

### *Transforming the Taboo into Totem*

Queremos a revolução Caraíba. Maior que a revolução Francesa. A unificação de todas as revoltas eficazes na direção do homem. Sem nós a Europa não teria sequer a sua pobre declaração dos direitos do homem. A idade de ouro anunciada pela América. A idade de ouro. E todas as girls. (Oswald de Andrade)

Beyond its relationship with Carnival, another aspect of the specific brand of utopianism evident in funk is the aggressively eclectic spirit of cultural cannibalism that it shares with the legacy of Brazilian modernism. *Modernismo* was officially launched in São Paulo during the *Semana de Arte Moderna* in February of 1922 as a rebellion against the staid artistic sensibilities of the time and the sort of traditional embellishments of European high culture. Although the *modernistas* who participated in the event did not

consider themselves to be members of a school, per se, they were united by the desire to break the cultural domination of Brazil by Europe and to create art that was more relevant to the specific personality of the country. The *modernistas* embraced the use of humor, an emphasis on colloquial language and popular culture, and a combination of primitivism with a passionate acceptance of technology, the rapid pace of life and the fragmentation of the traditional order characteristic of industrialized civilization.<sup>14</sup> *Modernismo* gave the artist in Brazil the power to transform, mutate and mix foreign cultural trends with elements of national and regional culture in a way that turned the previous circuit of production and consumption on its head. *Modernismo* did more than reject foreign influences in Brazilian culture; it embraced a spirit of appropriation of international currents into newly Brazilianized hybrid forms. The aggressively eclectic nature of *modernismo* made it a somewhat post-modern project from its outset, one which shared the post-modern tendencies of musical forms such as funk and hip-hop for which an aesthetics of pastiche and bricolage is so characteristic.

Without a doubt, one of the most striking symbols of the iconoclastic attitudes of Brazilian *modernismo* was the *antropofagia*, or cultural cannibalism, heralded by Oswald de Andrade in his “Manifesto Antropófago.”<sup>15</sup> The document presents a series of aphorisms announcing the revolution against a dominant order in Brazil built around the culture of white, rationalist European civilization. In the manifesto, Oswald de Andrade, playfully invoking the culture and the race of the Tupi-Guarani Indians who were living in Brazil when the Portuguese first arrived in 1500, says, “Só me interessa o que não é meu. Lei do Homem. Lei do antropófago,” which could be translated as, “I’m only interested in that which is not mine. Law of man. Law of the cannibal.” (Cândido and

Castello, 65) The cannibalism of these tribes was practiced as a means of adding the courage and strength of powerful warriors defeated and captured in combat into the blood of the tribe. By invoking Tupi cannibalism in this way and suggesting it as a model for counter-cultural resistance, Oswald de Andrade attacked the legitimacy of the Western tradition, and the history of violence that has characterized it, and suggested the possibility of a better world built at least in part by non-Western ideas. According to Cândido e J. Castello in their anthology of *modernismo*:

Oswald propugnava uma atitude brasileira de devoração ritual dos valores europeus, a fim de superar a civilização patriarcal e capitalista, com as suas normas rígidas e os seus recalques impostos, no plano psicológico.(17)

In this way, the *modernismo* proposed by the “Manifesto Antropófago” was more than another new artistic trend, aesthetics or nationalist post-colonial discourse. *Modernismo* appeared as a radical artistic praxis problematizing the complicity of Western rationalism and Progress with the history of violence, slavery and genocide.

In the context of the present discussion on funk in Brazil, it is worth noting that modernist poetry, like its symbolist predecessor, was associated with musicality from early on, particularly in Mário de Andrade’s notion of *simultaneidade*, or simultaneousness, which he also called *polifonia*, or polyphony. In the preface to his book *Paulicea desvairada*, of 1922, the “Prefácio interessantíssimo,” Mário de Andrade, who was also a music professor and critic as well as being the author of several books on Brazilian music, points to the relationship between modernist poetry and music, favoring the effect of the musical poetic phrase as a totality of fragmentary images implying an extra-logical and non-linear *comoção*, or “commotion.” He writes:

Mas se em vez de usar só palavras soltas, uso frases soltas: mesma sensação de superimposição, não já de palavras (notas) mas de frases (melodias).

Portanto: polifonia, poética. (23)

This polyphony is closely tied to the notion of everyday experience in modern existence in the hectic and fragmentary world of the industrialized city:

si você já teve por acaso na vida um acontecimento forte, imprevisto (já teve, naturalmente) recorde-se do tumulto desordenado, das muitas idéias que nesse momento lhe tumultuaram no cérebro. Essas idéias, reduzidas ao mínimo telegráfico da palavra, não se continuavam, porque não faziam parte de frase alguma, não tinham resposta, solução, continuidade. Vibravam, ressoavam, amontoavam-se, sobrepunham-se. Sem ligação, sem concordância aparente- embora nascidas do mesmo acontecimento- formavam, pela sucessão rapidíssima, verdadeira simultaneidade, verdadeiras harmonias acompanhando a melodia enérgica e larga do acontecimento. (25)

Mario de Andrade's poetics widened the scope of art to include the sounds, colors and feelings associated with experience in the modernized world of the places like the big city, images previously considered unworthy of poetic expression before the modernist revolution. Furthermore, bringing the poetic into such close proximity with music, Mario de Andrade de-emphasizes the rationality of the text and supremacy of representational signs. Instead he opens the way for an utopian praxis capable of transmitting, through an emphasis on non-linear signs and emotion, things such as the feeling of what it would be like to live in a better world.

The early *modernistas* tended to symbolically appropriate images from Amerindian culture as the principal vehicles of their artistic revolution, from Oswald's Tupi to the mythology of Mário de Andrade's modernist rhapsody *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter*, in an attempt to construct a mythical Brazilian identity with cultural roots going back before the arrival of the Portuguese. Despite the indigenous emphasis of *modernismo*, over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a 'post-modern' Brazilian modernism awakened that moved beyond the construction of a new national hegemony and began to further the emancipation of the myriad of subaltern subjects within the national territory. As a part of this process, a certain re-Africanization has taken place that has cannibalized the cannibals, merging the hybridization of Brazilian modernism with more specifically diaspora cultural tendencies into a very powerful non-essentialist Afro-Brazilian cultural movement. As Brazilian *modernismo* continued to thrive and evolve, the Afro-Brazilian roots and nature of the country came to occupy an increasingly important place in artistic production. In the regionalist fiction of the 1930s, considered to be the second wave of *modernismo*, writers like Jorge de Lima, José Lins do Rego and Jorge Amado began to explore the Afro-Brazilian soul of the country. Indeed, Gilberto Freyre and his notion of racial democracy, a concept that would impact the national ideology so profoundly, was a pivotal actor in *regionalismo*.

Despite the fact that *modernismo* has continued to evolve since the early 1920s, its legacy of cultural cannibalism and a utopian poetic praxis has remained relevant in the panorama of Brazilian artistic production to this day. The *tropicália* movement of the sixties, in which artists such as Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil and Os Mutantes undertook a daring eclecticism that aggressively mixed elements of a globalized world musical

scene with Brazilian culture, is widely considered the musical successor of Brazilian modernism. (Perrone, 1996) In the nineties, the brilliant and highly innovative movement known as *mangue bit*, from Recife, took up similar themes. *Mangue* even had a manifesto, like the manifestos of the modernist groups like *Pau-Brasil* and *Anta*. According to this manifesto, the “symbolic image” for the project of the *movimento mangue* was “uma antena parabólica enfiada na lama,” or “a satellite dish stuck in the mud” of the fertile coastal swamps of the city of Recife, picking up world currents of alternative and revolutionary culture.<sup>16</sup> Groups like Chico Science e Nação Zumbi, Mundo Livre, S.A. and Mestre Ambrósio sought to mix traditional musical styles from the Northeast, such as *maracatu*, *embalada* and *farró*, with styles like rock and reggae.<sup>17</sup> Thematically, they took the Brazilian modernist project, one which had always possessed a rich and complex construction of a subaltern subject at its core, to the next logical step; like the second wave of modernism, the *regionalismo* of the thirties, *mangue* de-emphasizes the nationalist dimension and explores a Brazil that is a highly fragmented amalgamation of class, race and regional identities. While the question of the Afro-Brazilian essence of Brazilian culture was central in *mangue*, it also highlighted other issues of social justice, such as crime and the exclusion of the poor.

While funk is not self-consciously a modernist movement and has issued no ‘manifestos’, in practice it has developed into something very closely related to the anti-rationalist and utopian disposition of the cultural cannibalism of Brazilian *modernismo*. This modernist character of funk is evident both at the formal level of the funk music as a text, and a cultural artifact, and in its less representational signs, such as the dance moves, gestures and clothing that are a part of the experience of the *baile funk*. Funk was born

out of the movement of Black soul music in Rio throughout the seventies and eighties, and as time passed more and more international and local influences were mixed into it in a process that led funk away from racial, or even musical, essentialism. (Herschmann, 2000) Urban dance cultures such as hip-hop and techno were of particular importance in the development of funk, and the beats of early hip-hop DJs like Afrika Bambaata can still be heard practically unaltered in funk music to this day. As songs and mixes emerged with lyrics in Portuguese during the early nineties, more and more elements of national culture became a part of the funk sound. Samba and Brazilian pop melodies were used in funk together with those of international hits, and Portuguese language samples were superimposed into the highly fragmentary musical montages of funk along with digitalized rhythms of the *berimbau*, one of the principal instruments of the Afro-Brazilian martial art/dance *capoeira*. As is generally the case with the musical cultures of the African Diaspora, and indeed Brazilian pop music, originality is less important than the meanings and feeling new versions of pre-existing songs can be given. At the same time, by aggressively embracing so many pre-existing currents of local and international musical culture, funk emerged as a very distinct and very Brazilian hybrid which was not only original but also very relevant to the specific conditions of the lives of the poor people in Rio de Janeiro who cultivated it.

In order to explore similarities of funk culture with modernist tendencies, I will discuss it in terms of some of the fundamental characteristics of *modernismo*. Firstly, funk is colloquial both in terms of the words that appear in its songs and the beats and samples that make up the music. Certainly the type of speech employed in funk is one that is prevalent in favelas and other low-income areas and its use implies a certain class

association. By actively embracing the use of slang and grammatically incorrect Portuguese, funk makes a primitivist affirmation of the more intense humanity of the low-income population and rejects the superiority of middle-class sensibilities. Beyond the lyrics, the stolen melodies, beats and samples of funk are also colloquial in the sense that they come from samba, forró, and songs made popular by radio and TV soap operas and are part of the terrain of popular culture of which funk is a part. The act of transforming foreign elements into a part of the local colloquial dialect, and using them alongside local syntactical elements, is a form of the cultural cannibalism that is close indeed to the spirit of modernism.

Hannah Arendt, in her well-known study on violence, makes the claim that humor is the most effective way to subvert authority. Humor and irony, additional elements typical of Brazilian *modernismo*, are pervasive throughout all types of funk music. This is true when an MC sings like a gorilla to imitate the sounds made by the girl next door crying, or when Serginho's sings about a little horse galloping or the boogeyman coming to get you, or the inclusion of absurd effects and samples in songs, like cows mooing, cowboys yelling or digitally altered voices. The first funk song in Portuguese, "Melô da Mulher Feia" released in 1989, was intended to be funny. "Feira de Acari", recorded by MC Batata in 1990, is a humorous song about the enormous clandestine marketplace off the Avenida Brasil where stolen goods are sold. According to the song, there is a shack in the market where if you buy the batteries, they throw in the radio for free. Even in *proibidão*, it is common for the MC to make fun of two-bit criminals of low character or other trouble-makers who are only concerned with their own tough guy images and have no

moral righteousness. Of course, the playful sexuality of limerick-type rhymes, plays on words and double-entendres of many funk lyrics also opens space for humor.

The primitivism of funk is also striking, but instead of embracing the Tupi Indian, the primitivism in funk consists in the construction of a favela identity, one based at least in part upon something of a mixed-race connotation, a sort of urban “tribal” society that is sexualized, violent and emotionally unrestrained. I have placed the word tribal in quotes in the last sentence to denote something of the intricacies of the primitivist construction and the problems with my use of the term, particularly the set of stereotypes it evokes which have become fundamental to Western notions of the “other” and have been elaborated by Edward Said in his understanding of “orientalism.” Indeed, the primitivist tendencies of funk may be an example of a subordinate people appropriating an idea used by the dominant order to justify its power over them and playfully transforming it for themselves as a means of affirming the differences and worth of their own identity. In any event, the colloquial use of language in funk may be understood as part of this primitivism, as can the use of direct, raw and unsophisticated humor in funk. Even the construction of the legitimacy of the drug traffickers in *proibidão* may be understood as being related to the primitivist impulse of funk. In tribal orders, it is blood relations that make up the majority of the social bounds, as opposed to the more abstract theoretical considerations of Western political philosophy. The traffickers are the warriors of the tribal world of funk in which the authority of the dominant order is rejected and democracy and modernity themselves are questioned. Furthermore, the rough, throaty vocal delivery that has come to dominate the funk aesthetic is another example of the tendency toward primitivism in funk, as is the yelling and persistent call and response

organization of songs. The percussive nature of the music, with its booming base and pounding drum beats is another element of funk's primitivism, as is the frequent use of samples of the *berimbau* in funk, a sound which very directly harkens a this mythical Africanized tribal culture.

At the same time that funk operates within an anti-rationalist primitivism, it also embraces an urban aesthetic of life in an industrial civilization. According to Piers Armstrong, a cultural critic who has worked extensively with popular culture and music in Brazil, "Abrupt juxtapositions of the archaic and the modern are characteristic of many Third World societies, which undergo industrialization at a speed and rhythm more rapid than in the organic development of capitalist society in Western Europe and the US."

(171) Such appears to be the case regarding funk for despite the primitivist dimension of its aesthetics, funk music also flaunts its adoration of electricity and the quite recent technology of mixing boards, samplers and computers. The power of the enormous stacks of speakers is fundamental to funk, and at its heart is an infatuation with digital sounds, flashing lights, smoke machines and pyrotechnics. Globalization itself, one of the most obvious signs of the life in an industrialized, modern society, is embraced in funk. As mentioned above, funk self-consciously identifies itself with other big city musical styles, in particular American hip-hop and techno. That singers are often called "MCs" and songs referred to as "raps" is further evidence of the ties between funk and hip-hop. While the DJ of funk does not improvise to the degree of the hip-hop DJ, by spinning records, scratching, beat juggling or the like, he does create sample electronic beats and other sounds in the studio or on a computer to create the musical backdrop of funk. The funk DJ's most creative act is perhaps the recording of the *montagem*, a montage of

beats, samples and musical snippings that is quintessentially polyphonic in the way described by Mário de Andrade.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, funk is a sort of musical *Macunaíma* in which the folk roots of the diverse mixture of everyday people in Brazil shift and change their character as they interact with the global influences of modernity, resulting in a personality that has “no character” even as its character is precisely the ability to create a hybrid culture for itself on the frontiers between Western rationalism and local primitivism.<sup>19</sup>

To conclude this section, although there are suggestive similarities between the aesthetics of funk and the tendencies *modernismo* in Brazil, it is impossible to say to what degree the former can be considered as a part of the legacy of the latter. Perhaps the two cultural movements have arisen as the part of some deeper cultural trait of the Brazilian personality and society. Maybe the similarities between the spirit of *modernismo* and funk are the result of Brazil’s nature as something of a black Atlantic society, in this sense of Paul Gilroy’s ideas. On the other hand, perhaps their similarities can be better understood as examples of the tactics of resistance of subaltern populations facing situations of struggle against their domination by groups from without and the tendencies of the sorts of “cultures of making do” described by John Fiske in his theories of popular culture. Whatever the case may be, the two movements certainly entail suggestive implications as counter-cultural utopian practices and share a spirit of playful rebelliousness that make their similarities worth considering.

*Black Atlantic Utopia*

Black music's obstinate and consistent commitment to the idea of a better future is a puzzle to which the enforced separation of slaves from literacy and their compensatory refinement of musical art supplies less than half the answer. The power of music in developing black struggles by communicating information, organizing consciousness, and testing out or deploying the forms of subjectivity which are required by political agency, whether individual or collective, defensive or transformational, demands attention to both the formal attributes of this expressive culture and its distinctive moral basis. (Gilroy, 36)

The aggressive eclecticism of the subaltern, which Oswald de Andrade symbolized so brilliantly in his "Manifesto Antropófago," is not peculiar to Brazilian *modernismo*, funk or even Brazilian culture in general but rather is something Paul Gilroy has defined as one of the most significant characteristics of the various African American cultures of the Diaspora. His seminal work, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, has become a constant reference for cultural critics dealing with issues of race in the West in general and scholars of Brazilian music in particular.<sup>20</sup> Although the study is dense and highly theoretic, it is thoroughly grounded in a broad range of examples from the vernacular of African American musical cultures from the time of slavery to world hip-hop today. His concept of the black Atlantic encompasses the Caribbean and Brazil, though the actual examples in the book tend to limit themselves somewhat to the English-speaking world. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy dedicates a great deal of space to the discussion of American hip-hop as the quintessential form of the utopian character of African Diaspora cultures in contemporary society. Though he never mentions Brazilian

funk directly in his study, a brief discussion of his ideas will show that funk, too, is a quintessentially 'black Atlantic' cultural form in the sense of Gilroy's work and is indeed one of the most representative Brazilian cultural practices of the tendencies he identifies.

Basically, Gilroy identifies a fundamental duplicity in black Atlantic understanding of the nature of modernity that has resulted in the privileged place of musical culture in black identity construction, the transmission of wisdom, and the political dimensions of the utopianism of African Diaspora peoples. Gilroy also argues that the experience of slavery has given rise to a 'double consciousness' among them with regards to Western notions of rationalism and Progress. On the one hand, Enlightenment ideals such as liberty, equality and human rights have fueled the utopian impulse of the Diaspora experience and indeed exasperated the sense of the injustice of the world as it is.

According to Gilroy, at the same time that some of the ideals of Western civilization may fuel the utopian impulse of these black Atlantic cultures, they are possessed of a 'double consciousness' that recognizes the complicity of these same ideals and modernism in general with institutionalized violence, racism and genocide that have characterized recent centuries.

For Gilroy, the double-consciousness of African Diaspora peoples has manifested itself as a black Atlantic counterculture for which the experience of slavery and the subsequent mixing together of diverse ethnic groups and cultures have left indelible marks. Under the oppression of slavery, music took the place of the written text of rationalist discourse as the principal form of identity construction and the transmission of wisdom. This has been the case because slaves and many of their descendents were largely deprived of written texts and because the people forced into slavery came from

societies for which musical and oral cultural forms were already important. Furthermore, as Gilroy asserts in the quote at the beginning of this section, music is a powerful means of conveying a subversive utopianism that simultaneously rejects the world of the racist oppressor and conveys a feeling of what it would be like to live in a better one. Beyond the emotional nature of musical cultures, there is also a great deal of space in them for other creative and powerful means of resisting the dominant order through the use of humor, irony, double-entendre and the like. In this way, the utopian dimension of African Diaspora cultural forms entails significantly more than 'escapism' but rather a form of spiritualized power for resisting social injustice and reshaping the world. In the counterculture of black Atlantic peoples, the purposefully fragmentary dramaturgical dimension of representation becomes the main weapon of cultural resistance and the propagation of the utopian dream in the face of the intensely harsh realities of racial oppression and inequality.

The power of black music for resisting oppression, from gospel and R&B to reggae and hip-hop, and the importance of black music in the American civil rights movement have attracted a great deal of attention by scholars. (Werner) Commentators of hip-hop have pointed to the ways in which hip-hop has empowered black youth by turning the circuit of production and consumption on its head. (Potter) The claim has been made that hip-hop is, "...unarguably the most culturally significant style in pop, the genre that speaks most directly to and for its audience...the single most creative, revolutionary approach to music and to music making that this generation has constructed."(Light 897) Gilroy is similarly enthusiastic about hip-hop as a locus for the black utopian "politics of

transfiguration” he associates with it, pointing to the “... deliberately fractured...” structure of its music. (104) He writes:

Acoustic and electric instruments are disorganically combined with digital sound synthesis, a variety of found sounds: typically screams, pointed fragments of speech or singing, and samples from earlier recordings- both vocal and instrumental- whose open textuality is raided in playful affirmations of the insubordinate spirit which ties this radical form to one important dimension of blackness. (104)

As does the cultural cannibal of Brazilian *modernismo*, the hip-hop artist subverts the authority of the dominant White European culture and constructs a fragmentary, countercultural identity through the use and ironic reinterpretation of these ‘found sounds’.

I consider funk in Rio de Janeiro today to be an offshoot of world hip-hop and a local hybrid of the international movement that began in the South Bronx in the late seventies and has since spread across the planet to innumerable countries. The open playfulness and irony of hip-hop, along with its force as a countercultural discourse to modernity, have made it very relevant to socially excluded communities in a variety of contexts.

Furthermore, the American mass culture industry has guaranteed a high level of exposure for the hip-hop culture across the globe. Nonetheless, the fact that hip-hop is something of a parent of Brazilian funk does not mean that it is a purer form of African Diaspora culture. At present, due to a commercialization of mainstream American hip-hop that has rendered it somewhat trendy and compromised its initially subversive spirit, Brazilian funk is in some ways more representative of early hip-hop and of black Atlantic cultural

practices. One could say that the ‘found sounds’ of the culture of hip-hop were eventually found and “eaten”, so to speak, by Brazilian funk. Musical production in funk is also “deliberately fractured” and involves all of the elements mentioned in the passage above, yet funk is not content merely to be or become another “hip-hop”. Instead of rapping, for example, one of the most fundamental aspects of the culture of hip-hop, funk MCs tend to sing. True, an MC may occasionally rap, as he or she might imitate a samba melody, but rapping is not an essential or even typical element of funk. More important than any particular formal difference between American hip-hop and funk, however, is the fact that people engaged in funk culture do not even identify it as a Brazilian hybrid of American hip-hop (as does Brazilian hip-hop, for instance), but rather as its own independent culture. Perhaps the fact that funk does not recognize that it is the musical offspring of hip-hop is a testimony to the openness of both styles. It demonstrates the relevance of hip-hop to marginalized communities as a source of countercultural resistance and its adaptability to local contexts, even as it shows the ability of people from Rio to mold international currents into a new hybridized local culture that is self-consciously independent from any of its parent tendencies.

Given the fact that Brazilian funk shares many of the same influences as early American hip-hop and has even borrowed so much from it, I find it interesting that a separate Brazilian hip-hop musical culture has also arisen. Various styles of American hip-hop have developed in different geographical locations throughout its history, such as the East Coast and West Coast rap styles, and Miami base, but they are all still identified as hip-hop. In Brazil, funk and Brazilian hip-hop are considered to be two different, if not opposing styles, even though both are powerful musical cultures which embody the kind

of black Atlantic double-consciousness of Gilroy's views. Earlier in this study, I applied the implications of Hobsbawm's understanding of primitive rebels to the question of funk and hip-hop, exploring the differences between the two movements as differences in the degree of revolutionary consciousness possessed by each. At the heart of funk, I suggested, was a sort of "revolt" stemming from dissatisfaction with the dominant order in terms of the values of a traditional order. Brazilian hip-hop, I argued, possessed a more highly developed and radical revolutionary consciousness that made it a "Revolution through Words", or "Revolução Através da Palavra" (RAP). It is interesting to note that even though Brazilian hip-hop is self-consciously "revolutionary" it has been far less demonized in Brazil than funk. Perhaps this is because the references to violence in Brazilian hip-hop are less explicit than those appearing in funk and are typically presented as part of a rather unambiguous critique of society. Furthermore, the sexuality of Brazilian hip-hop is not only less than that of funk, but it is considerably less than the sexuality of even mainstream Brazilian culture and musical expressions such as Carnival, *axé* music, and pop.

There are two additional considerations that may shed some light on the reasons for which these two similar but separate practices have arisen. The first is the rather complicated matter of the degree to which both styles resist becoming what Gilroy calls 'essentialist', a tendency that narrowly defines and demarks the boundaries of a cultural practice and therefore weakens its power as a tactic in the politics of transformation. The second is the geo-cultural specificity of each and the fact that hip-hop is largely from São Paulo and funk from Rio. To put the matter of the "geo-cultural specificity" in somewhat simplistic terms, São Paulo has a far more fragmented cultural landscape in which racial

dynamics are more similar to those of the United States and the presence of ethnic groups and youth tribes (from punks to skin heads and indeed fans of hip-hop) is more pronounced. Rio, on the other hand, is a culturally more homogenous space, despite the enormous racial miscegenation and stark differences in social class that characterize it. Also important is the fact that crime in São Paulo is less “organized” than in Rio and that its favelas are less likely to be controlled by criminal factions. This is a fundamental difference since musical practices are at least to some extent outgrowths of a particular social organization of their environments. This is one of the reasons Brazilian hip-hop artists do not tend to sing about the power and justice of criminal factions in favelas as do funk artists. São Paulo’s largest criminal faction, the Primeiro Comando da Capital, or PCC, is not typically mentioned in hip-hop songs as is the Comando Vermelho in funk. The sort of crime typically represented in hip-hop tends to be “unorganized crime”, stories of individual acts often recounted in a spirit of lamentation that portrays them as symptoms of the violence and failings of the larger system. Survival in hip-hop becomes something quite different from the “Ten Commandments of the Favela”, or the rules of organized crime in the favelas, and is more a question of individualist tales of survival, cunning and desperation in the no-man’s-land of the São Paulo periphery.

The utopian vision of Brazilian hip-hop, as a result, is not centered upon a performance place, such as the *baile funk*, but rather the spiritualized vision of the interior world of the hip-hop artist as it exist in a recorded album. The fact that much hip-hop is produced in and around prisons, as is the case of the albums of 509-E (recorded from inside the notorious Carandiru prison) and Escadinha (the infamous Rio crime boss turned hip-hop missionary who has been incarcerated since 1985), further emphasizes the

distance between the impoverished physical reality of the rapper and his dream of a better world. The mind is the place of the utopian dimension of Brazilian hip-hop, a mind which nostalgically projects into the past and imagines what the world could be as the body endures the harshness of life in the present. The performance dimension of hip-hop becomes somewhat sacred in this context, and much less humorous, sensual and playful than funk. It is for this reason that Brazilian hip-hop is almost not even “entertainment,” in the sense that the dimension of pleasure in it is greatly de-emphasized. As the result of its hardcore, somewhat Manichean prison aesthetics which de-emphasize pleasure and spiritualize the utopian impulse, Brazilian hip-hop loses some of the playfulness, irony and the obstinate insistence of black Atlantic cultures to continue to enjoy life. This is not to say that pain and suffering have not always been a part of the Diaspora experience, nor that a powerful sense of brotherhood is not fundamental to Brazilian hip-hop. The fact remains, however, that Brazilian hip-hop is a much more self-contained and essentialist culture than either American hip-hop or Brazilian funk. It is a testimony to the cultural cannibalist nature of funk that the music of Brazilian hip-hop artists like Racionais MCs and MV Bill is played at the *baile funk*, and that their music is often sampled in funk recordings. On the other hand, Brazilian hip-hop tends to limit its beats and samples to itself and does not even sample American hip-hop songs very often. That funk has produced a figure like Mr. Catra, one of the greatest and most active MCs of funk, is also a testimony to the eclectic nature of funk. Catra is extremely versatile, performing songs that show an influence of several styles of black music, from R&B to gospel, and when he performs or records hip-hop, Catra is accepted by the hip-hop community as a legitimate member. In contrast, there is no major hip-hop artist who crosses the lines

between styles in this way or plays with, or even samples them. In this sense, funk seems to me to be a better example of a non-essentialist, hybrid black Atlantic cultural practice than Brazilian hip-hop.

While the musical personality of Brazilian hip-hop is certainly not as multifaceted as that of funk, and it is more self-consciously representative of ‘black music’, the essentialism it tends towards is not really racial. In other words, the racial make-up of the performers and fans of Brazilian hip-hop are not necessarily black, nor are they seen as less legitimate if they are not. The racial demographics of hip-hop in Brazil tend to reproduce those of poverty in Brazil in general, and a performer’s legitimacy is more dependent on a sort of ‘blackness by proxy’ granted him or her by virtue of being from a poor, urban background. The same is true for funk, though certainly blackness in funk is a less self-conscious dimension than in Brazilian hip-hop. Due to their hybrid nature and the high degree of the appropriation of world cultural currents evident in Brazilian hip-hop and funk, and this lack of racial essentialism, both have been at times considered to be foreign imports and criticized as less authentic forms of Brazilian culture. Looking at them in terms of Gilroy’s theories, on the other hand, the absence of racial essentialism in Brazilian hip-hop and funk becomes a sign of the vitality of these practices as black Atlantic cultural forms and of their capacity to offer avenues for the resistance of Diaspora peoples. He states:

My point here is that the unashamedly hybrid character of these black Atlantic cultures continually confounds any simplistic (essentialist or anti-essentialist) understanding of the relationship between racial identity and racial non-identity, between folk cultural authenticity and pop-cultural betrayal. (99)

In a sense, the absence of racial essentialism contributes to the power of Brazilian hip-hop and funk as cultural cannibals capable of identifying with and borrowing from other Diaspora styles representative of the duplicitous stance towards modernity. It helps them expose the class and racial fissures hidden by facile concepts such as “Brazilian music” and the north/south dichotomy and to find hope in identifying with other marginalized groups of the Diaspora, the poor and disenfranchised. In this way the non-essentialist character of these practices serves to further weaken the hegemony of both the local national dominant order and the culture of modernity in general.

The issue of essentialism, both racial and political, is extremely relevant to the debate about the political mobility of blacks in Brazil, and has important implications for the argument that the reliance on musical and cultural forms of organization and resistance over more explicitly political means has reduced the power of blacks in Brazil.

(Hanchard) For me, the sort of overt political mobilization these critics wish to see among black and other marginalized populations is one that depends upon the sort of bourgeois ethos of an economically middle-class population of which poor black people in Brazil are unlikely to possess. The double-consciousness of modernity that Gilroy ascribes to African Diaspora cultures gives the poor residents of Rio’s favelas a duplicitous political soul which matches the duplicitous reality of state and criminal power in their communities. On the one hand, these people will vote, sue and participate in the bureaucratic functions of the formal democratic state, even as they depend upon the power of the bosses of criminal factions for protection, recreation and social welfare. More importantly, perhaps, is that they will act in ways that are less easily identifiable as “political” according to the Western rationalist understanding of the term, and often

seemingly innocuous cultural activities like musical practices will embody powerful moral dimensions with real effects and consequences in political life. Gilroy describes these moral dimensions in terms of the utopian impulse that drives them:

In the simplest terms, by posing the world as it is against the world as the racially subordinated would like it to be, this musical culture supplies a great deal of courage required to go on living in the present. (36)

Perhaps black people and other poor people in Brazil, and other countries as well, have not managed to elect as many black politicians as some critics and intellectuals might like, nor sufficiently mobilized to change laws that would further advance the cause of equality. Nonetheless, through cultural practices African Diaspora groups such as those involved in funk and hip-hop in Brazil have managed to survive hundreds of years of violence and to preserve their fundamental humanity throughout a history of oppression.

### *Conclusion: Musical Macunaíma and the Power of Funk*

This chapter has meandered along the paths of different arguments deriving from a variety of approaches to the study of funk culture in Rio de Janeiro. Inevitably, theoretical considerations have left less room for the voices of everyday fans and residents of the favelas than I would have liked. Still, although this chapter is less an ethnography than a sort of thought piece, I hope that it successfully transmits something of the energy and creativity of those who are engaged in the practice of funk culture. I have suggested that funk has taken on some degree of the significance of Rio's Carnival for many young people of its favelas and other low-income areas. I have also explored the nature of funk music as a utopian practice related to the legacy of the cultural

cannibalist spirit of *modernismo* and as an example of the counterculture of black Atlantic peoples. Perhaps for the critics of funk who see it as an apology of crime, the cause of teen pregnancy and a generally tasteless, harmful practice, any exploration of the “utopian” dimension of funk may do little to legitimize its existence. Still, whether or not I have been successful at proving conclusively any of these connections, I hope that in suggesting them I have been able to contribute to an understanding of the significance of funk as a utopian form of entertainment with important cultural implications for people in a climate of social exclusion so prevalent in the panorama of contemporary Brazilian society.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Translation:

I just want to be happy

To walk tranquilly in the favela where I was born

And to be able to be proud

And know that the poor have their place

<sup>2</sup> This scene at Emoções was observed on January 13, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> This is cited from Larry Rohter's article "As Crime and Politics Collide in Rio, City Cowers in Fear," appearing on page A3 of the *New York Times*, May 8, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> This quote from Theodor Adorno is taken from Paul Gilroy's discussion on the utopia of art on page 38 of *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*.

<sup>5</sup> In one of the first ever studies on funk, Hermano Vianna examined aspects of dancing in the *baile funk* from an anthropological point of view as more a form of ritual than mere entertainment. (Vianna)

<sup>6</sup> This explanation of the characteristics of *músicas mulatas* appears in chapter one of Quintero Rivera's 1998 book *¡Salsa, sabor y control! Sociología de la música tropical*, pages 35-92.

<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed exploration of these tendencies in African American music, see Craig Werner, *A Change is Gonna Come: Music, Race and the Soul of America*, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> This quote comes from an interview with Penelope, a 21 year-old middle-class salesperson at *Yes Brasil* in the Fashion Mall of São Conrado, beneath Rocinha, on February 8, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Here are the lyrics of a song Filipe, a 12 year-old boy from the Valão area of Rocinha, wrote one day in the shower and sung to me in an interview at the Escola Moranguinhos on March 28, 2002:

Eu sou um relaxado, estava cozinhando,  
 Saí pra passear, deixei panela queimando,  
 Pegou fogo na favela, os bombeiros chegou  
 A mangueira enfiou e a mulher gritou  
 O fogo tá queimando, o bombeiro tá machucando,  
 Quando eles enfiam a mangueira a mulher fica gritando

As Filipe sung the words of the song to me in an interview, his friend Erick, a 13 year-old, vocally added in the sound effects they had decided should accompany the song: when the fireman puts the hose in, they said, a woman's voice would be heard moaning in pleasure, Oh! Oh!" The song roughly translates as:

I'm a laid back guy, I was cooking  
 I went out for a while, I left the pan burning  
 The favela caught on fire, the firemen came  
 They stuck the hose in and the woman yelled  
 The fire is burning, the fireman is hurting her  
 When they stick in the hose, the woman starts yelling

<sup>10</sup> The first person to express this opinion to me was Aline Damasceno during a debate about sexism in funk at the Congresso dos Estudantes de Letras do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, in Volta Redonda, in November of 2001. Subsequently, various formulations of this attitude were expressed during subsequent interviews by numerous women who go to

the *baile funk* in Rocinha, including Clisna (January 3, 2002), Cleide, Fernanda and Barbara (January 13, 2002), Denise and Silvana (February 5, 2002), and Nani (March 5, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the construction of race in funk is again somewhat freyrian in the manner of the racial identity evident in the hegemony of the criminal factions discussed in chapter three, page 40 through 43 of this study.

<sup>12</sup> See Alma Guillermoprieto and Barbara Browning, respectively.

<sup>13</sup> Carnival continues to thrive in Rio de Janeiro and to be an extremely relevant part of cultural life in the city for people from all socio-economic classes. I am not arguing that funk has completely replaced Carnival in any essentialist way, rather that the significance of Carnival as a utopian practice of the poor has been greatly reduced and has found a new outlet among young people in funk music. Still, the cultural terrain of the favela is greatly varied, as I have argued, and is made up of an enormously rich variety of musical practices and styles. In fact, something of a cross-fertilization has occurred in recent years between funk and the samba music associated with Carnival. It is telling that many samba schools have playfully included funk beats in the rhythms of their drum lines. Also, an album was recorded in the mid-nineties with classic samba singers matched up with the new generation of funk performers. (Afegan 441079/2-482221)

<sup>14</sup> For a more thorough description of *modernismo*, see Antônio Cândido and J. Aderaldo Castello.

<sup>15</sup> The “Manifesto Antropófago” was first published in 1928 in São Paulo in the first issue of the *Revista de Antropofagia*.

<sup>16</sup> By “manifesto”, I am referring to the passage entitled “Caranguejos com Cérebro”, written by Chico Science and Fred Zero Quatro and appearing in the insert of the first album by Chico Science e Nação Zumbi. The album, called *da lama ao caos*, was released in 1994.

<sup>17</sup> For histories of Chico Science e Nação Zumbi and Mestre Ambrósio see Crooks and Murphy respectively.

<sup>18</sup> While it would take an enormous amount of space to catalogue the rich diversity of beats, samples and sound effects offered on CDs sold for the use of funk DJs, a brief glance at examples such as *Pipo's Clássicos dos Efeitos* (PIP 022-2, 2000) and *The Very Best of Sound Effects: Pipo's Vol. 2* (PIP 006-2, 2002), will reveal the extraordinarily wide range of elements from other musical styles typically mixed into funk music. Beats are borrowed from twenty years of international popular music, from hip-hop and techno, to rock music and movie soundtracks.

<sup>19</sup> This analogy is made in reference to the protagonist of Mário de Andrade's seminal modernist work *Macunaíma: o herói sem nenhum caráter*, published in 1928, in which Macunaíma undertakes a fantastic/comic odyssey through a mythical Amerindian world and the modern landscapes of São Paulo. Symbolizing the amorphousness of the cultural cannibalist tendency of the Brazilian nation at the time of its writing, Macunaíma undergoes a constant metamorphosis throughout his adventures, changing his race and character to suit changing needs and circumstances.

<sup>20</sup> In my recent review of Perrone and Dunn's 2000 book *Brazilian Popular Music and Globalization*, I remark on how almost every article contained in the anthology makes reference to Gilroy's work in the *Black Atlantic*. (Sneed, 154).

## Conclusion

Cuidado com a cuca

Que a cuca te pega

Te pega daqui te pega de lá

“Minha Eguinha Pocotó,” by MC Serginho

### *Cachopão*

It’s nine o’clock on a Sunday night and the soccer court by the street known as Rua da Raia in the Cachopa area of Rocinha is bustling with activity. For the moment no one is playing soccer, although it is not unusual for soccer games to literally go on all night and for the cries of the players and the whistle of the referees to echo on into the morning. Space for leisure activities is a precious commodity in the favela of Rocinha, and this soccer court is almost always in use, either for actual soccer games, volleyball matches, *capoeira* classes, kids funk *matinê* dances, birthday parties, and even an occasional launching or two of a great big, beautiful balloon. Even though the court is just a patch of open concrete surrounded by four walls, some high fencing and two or three short rows of cement bleachers at one end, it is so incredibly in demand that gangsters in Cachopa have adopted it and made themselves responsible for its upkeep. Not long ago, in the early nineties, when Dudu was the boss of all of Rocinha and spent most of his time in Cachopa, the soccer court was in a sad state of neglect, a place where the gangsters would throw hand grenades for fun and where Dudu himself is said to have assassinated a former rival, Aranha, in cold blood. A few years ago, after Dudu had been captured and his reign of terror put to an end, the local boss of the *boca-de-fumo* of Cachopa ordered that the court be repainted and reformed and then placed one of his men in charge of all

scheduling of events taking place there. Even since this man, nicknamed “da Rocinha,” was killed by police in an invasion in 2002, the Cachopa gang of Rocinha has found time to keep up the soccer court. It probably doesn’t hurt that it also makes a great vantage point to watch the steep ramp below for police or rival gangsters and light firecrackers to warn other drug traffickers. Then again, the gangsters also like it because it’s a convenient place to plug in a boom box, to socialize and to set up a fireworks stand at Christmas. I myself once bought a three-foot rocket there that shot some five hundred feet into the air! But tonight, there’s a birthday party in the soccer court for an eight year-old little girl named Daiane.

Leaning against a parked car on Rua da Raia just above the court, I can see the little girl in the crowd, running back and forth in her puffy blue satin dress, beaming happily amidst the hundred or so guests and the elaborate decorations. Running around with her are her three best friends, Kátia, Kelly and Uli, who all have ribbons in their hair and are all dressed up in the birthday party attire. On the table by the huge amplifiers is a big cake, lots of little *salgadinho* pastries and chocolate bonbons. A giant Styrofoam statue of Disney’s *Beauty and the Beast* rises above the tables in the middle of a long cluster of matching gold and blue balloons. The people at the party are young and old alike, little old grandmas, middle-aged folks and teenagers who have come with the hoards of boys and girls. The music playing is a silly song by MC Serginho about running around with a little mare, “Minha Eguinha Pocotó,” one of those rare funk songs that has become a hit across Brazil. I wonder for a moment if the song can really be about a horse and watching out for the Boogeyman, or if it’s not all really some kind of sexual pun. “Pocotó pocotó pocotó pocotó, minha eguinha pocotó.” I decide it really must be a song about a horse.

Just then, Daiane's 19 year-old sister, Silvana, spots me and my friends leaning on the car and comes running up out of the party to offer us a tray of the little pastries. She gives all three of us kisses on both cheeks, asking us if we want cake, too, or if we're coming down to join the party.

"I've gotta go to work." Alex tosses a *salgadinho* into his mouth in one piece and wipes his hand. He is a waiter at the Hotel Intercontinental down below Rocinha on the beach in São Conrado. "I'm already late... Falou, pessoal!" he says as he clasps my hand and that of Nilton, the other friend that's with us. Then, he takes Silvana's hand gently in his own and thanks her warmly for the invitation. She blushes a little and smiles as he stares into her eyes.

"I'm taking off, too," says Nilton. "My cousin's waiting for me to go to work." What Nilton refers to as "going to work," however, is actually just breaking into houses in the Recreio neighborhood, far from Rocinha. Nilton and his cousin, a professional thief from the Rua Quatro area of favela, take a bus out to Recreio and come back by cab. Even though they are proud of robbing houses unarmed and Nilton has allegedly never hurt anyone or done any time, I have a feeling that he's definitely going to get into trouble sooner or later. And to think that just a few years ago he was working for a firm in Niterói, taking night classes at college and working out regularly at the gym. Now he's out of school and unemployed.

As Nilton shakes my hand to leave, one of the local gangsters, André, walks over to our little group. Unlike some of the soldiers from the gang, who occasionally stroll by holding UZIs or AK-47s, André is unarmed. Instead he has a clipboard in his hand and is going over the schedules for a soccer tournament that is starting up tomorrow at the court.

He shows the list to Nilton, one of the referees for some of the games, and the two nod their heads as they discuss which teams are coming in, from where and at what times. Silvana gives me a look of irritation and I know she wants to get away from André and back to the party. It doesn't matter that André is personally a very likable guy or that the Cachopa gangsters are the people renting the soccer court to her family for the birthday party, Silvana has never particularly liked or trusted any of the people associated with the drug gangs. When she was a little girl, drug traffickers killed her father over a small amount of money he owed for drugs. Then again, when she was fifteen, the drug traffickers didn't help her in a moment of need. It was the time when a drunken neighbor murdered her uncle in broad daylight after he had gone on his roof. Her uncle was looking for his little son's kite, which had landed on the drunken neighbor's roof, so he jumped the short wall between the houses to retrieve it. The neighbor picked a fight with him at the time and then later that day cut his jugular vein with a broken bottle. On her way home from school, Silvana found her uncle bleeding to death in the narrow alley way that led to her house. She put her hand over the cut to try and stop the blood, but it was messy and when her fingers would slip off blood would shoot out like the squirt from a water gun. Her uncle told Silvana to keep his little boy away from him as he lay there and slowly died. Despite the fact that Silvana had never liked the gangsters, she was so devastated and traumatized by the experience that she sought them out at the *boca-de-fumo*. She pleaded with them to punish the murderer, but they didn't want to get involved and ended up saying it was not their problem. Soon after, the murderer moved away from Rocinha and was never heard from again.

Silvana goes back down to the party and I am left alone by the car. People walk to and fro and an occasional car or motorcycle taxi goes by. Coming up the ramp at the end of the Rua da Raia I see my old friend Apolônio, a mechanic from Minas Gerais who was a boxer in the sixties. He is bare-chested, with a fishing cap on his head and a bamboo fishing pole balanced over his shoulder as he makes his way home for the night. A few minutes later, seu José and his family come up the ramp from church. He and his wife, dona Josirene, stop to shake my hand and their little daughter Sara runs up and gives me a hug. Shortly after, their 19 year-old, Valda, passes by on the back of her boyfriend Igo's motorcycle. He beeps and they wave to me as they go by, smiling in the warmth of another Rocinha night. At the party below, as MC Serginho's other big hit of the year, "Vai Lacreia," plays, the kids laugh and jump and dance like centipedes.

### *Killers and Heroes in the Utopianism of the Favela*

Given the increasing tensions between the government and organized crime in Rio, the heightened fear of much of the population and the central place of a *baile funk* in the death of Tim Lopes, it seems particularly important to raise questions about the culture of the city's favelas. I have presented my study, "Machine Gun Voices: Bandits, Favelas and Utopia in Brazilian Funk," as a series of linked reflections on a common set of themes attempting to look at life in a favela in Brazil through the utopian urges of funk music. In chapter two, I provided background on the problem of violence in Rio and on the social organization of Rocinha, arguing against the notion that drug traffickers rule solely by the force of their arms and affirming that their power involves a culture of drug trafficking. In chapter three, I analyzed the features of the ideology of this power of

organized crime and the ways it is negotiated through the medium of *proibidão* funk, especially regarding the construction of the drug trafficker as Hobsbawm's 'social bandit.' In chapter four, I explored the utopian dimensions of funk, contrasting it to less participatory forms of utopian entertainment, like Hollywood musicals and the present culture of Carnival in Rio, giving emphasis to its nature as a form of subaltern popular culture and an African Diaspora practice. What remains to be done in this conclusion is to tie these essays together and explore what they have in common or what they suggest about one another. In particular, I will suggest some ways in which the construction of the drug trafficker as a social bandit can be understood in terms of the larger utopian tendencies characteristic of funk culture.

Back in college in 1991, I wrote my first paper on the question of the rule of drug traffickers in Rio, called "Between Killers and Heroes: The Struggle for Order in the Favela of Rocinha." Although I have never particularly liked that title much since, some twelve years later it seems to me that it suggests something interesting about the fundamental ambivalence in the way in which drug traffickers in Rio de Janeiro are regarded by their favela communities. While many residents may fear and resent these drug traffickers, others feel a deep level of trust and admiration for them. Whatever the motives and intentions of individual drug traffickers, and however deplorable many of their actions might be, organized crime as such has somewhat effectively pandered to the view that gangsters are some kind of heroic and legitimate defenders of the people, at least in part by patronizing artistic forms like the *baile funk* and *proibidão* in favela communities. The figure of the gangster in the favelas of Rio is ambiguous, both in life and in its portrayal in funk music; neither is he a revolutionary, nor a traditional mafia

boss, nor a cold, calculating businessperson who only thinks about money and pleasure. The nature of the drug trafficker is as fragmented and hybrid as the complex socio-historic terrain in which he has arisen; he is violent and religious, a bully and protector, a murderer and an avenger. In the vignette at the beginning of this conclusion, I tried to represent something of this ambiguous nature and to show the deep involvement of drug traffickers in so many facets of everyday life. Given the fact that they are not particularly competent in administering the needs of their communities, even when they indeed intend to do so, and that their economic base depends upon such dubious and harmful activities, it really is quite striking that so many people in favelas would accept their rule, trust in them and consider them to be the just and righteous leaders of their communities.

There is something about the population of the favelas of Rio and their special social situation as subordinate people in an oppressive social order that makes them seek for, and indeed find, leadership among the criminals who live there. To begin with, the characterization of the drug traffickers as some sort of wily tricksters who can pull the wool over the eyes of the police, beat the system, and defend people in favelas seems to me to make sense as a subaltern survival strategy. Furthermore, by proclaiming the criminals as protectors the population has engaged in the practice of “making do” that John Fisk talks about in his model of the workings of popular culture. This is the way people from subordinate groups tend to construct their strategies of resistance and survival through a process of expropriating and reinterpreting images and ideas made available to them through the mechanisms of the social control of the dominant order. In this sense, seeing the drug trafficker as a social bandit can be viewed as a creative act, not just on the part of composers of funk songs, but by any resident who interprets them in

this way. I believe there is a utopian edge to this creative process, and certainly if we look back on the categories proposed by Dyer for understanding such practices, almost all of the utopian urges he pointed out are fully realized in the figure of the drug trafficker. In a world of scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation and fragmentation, who better to represent the dream of abundance, energy, intensity, transparency and even community than the figure of the drug trafficker of the favelas of Rio de Janeiro?

In addition to understanding such an oppositional reading of the drug traffickers and their role in society as stemming from the utopian urges of subordinate groups in general, it seems to me that there is something else about this view that relates specifically to favela communities in Rio de Janeiro. Unlike the figures in a Hollywood musical, or a TV broadcast of a “novela” soap opera, the “heroes” of the Comando Vermelho are not seen by the residents of the favela as idealized characters who are impossibly removed from them in a fictionalized world. Instead, drug traffickers are people like others in the community; they didn’t start with the advantage of being richer, more intelligent, more physically attractive or more athletic than anyone else. If any person in the favela, and particularly young people, is willing to pay the price of giving up everything else, like their standing in the community and the hope of being normal and having a long life, he or she can join the traffickers. This is not to say that the idea of becoming a drug trafficker or of having one’s children get involved with organized crime in the favelas is not often people’s worst nightmare. But there is an ambiguously utopian side to this fear in the awareness that if a person were ever to go over the edge, he or she could join the community of the gang and live one day at a time free from the inadequacies of poverty in a world of energy and intensity. Such aspirations are not very realistic, especially when

one looks at the statistics about just how many people in drug trafficking die violent deaths and go to prison. Nevertheless, in the utopianism of the favela, awareness that one could join the gang carries with it a grain of hope in the possibility that one could be transformed into a powerful warrior, a favela star, or even a legend.

*Funk after Tim Lopes and "Literature of the Marginalized"*

In 2003, the year following the infamous murder of Tim Lopes, the chain of events triggered by his death led to a critical level of tensions between the Brazilian government and organized crime. As a result of his death, invasions by the police of favelas across Rio increased, especially those controlled by the Comando Vermelho, Elias Maluco was captured and charged with giving the orders to torture and kill Lopes, and the gang in Rocinha decided to suspend funk dances in the streets of the favela. By way of a counter-attack, a series of small-scale terrorist acts was ordered from within Rio's Bangu 1 maximum security prison by leaders of the CV. Authorities linked Fernandinho Beira-Mar, the arms dealer and drug trafficker with ties to the FARC in Colombia and imprisoned in Bangu 1, to a series of guerrilla-style attacks across Rio de Janeiro. In June of 2002, City Hall was raked with machine gun fire and a bomb was thrown at the Rio Sul shopping mall. Shortly after, the CV staged a daring prison uprising in which they took control of Bangu 1 and assassinated important leaders of a rival criminal faction, the Amigos dos Amigos (ADA). In January 2003, Fernandinho Beira-Mar was temporarily transferred to a maximum-security prison in Presidente Prudente, São Paulo. The prison's warden immediately denied his lawyer's request that the crime boss be granted special meals and privileges. The lawyer also demanded that he be returned to Rio so he could be

close to his family, actually arguing that imprisoning the drug trafficker in São Paulo was “disciplinary.”

In February of 2003, several buses were burnt in the rich Zona Sul area of Rio and one elderly woman died in the fire. In March, Fernandinho Beira-Mar was transferred to a federal prison in Maceió, Alagoas. One of his allies in the CV, known as Sombra, or “Shadow”, was arrested in a massive police invasion of the favela of Rocinha, an incursion which lasted three days and was made up of units from military, civil and federal police, including ground and helicopter sniper support. They claimed that Rocinha was the base of operations for Fernandinho Beira-Mar’s cartel, that weapons provided by the FARC in Colombia (where he had been arrested) were coming into the city via Rocinha and that FARC specialists in guerrilla tactics were training members of the CV there. Furthermore, Sombra was accused of being responsible for the February bus burnings. A general order was issued to break down any doors that did not open of whatever houses the police wanted to search. As a result of the operation, Sombra was arrested along with a Chilean known as “Gringo,” accused of training members of the CV in guerrilla tactics. On Sunday, March 30, the story was run as the cover story of the Rio newspaper *Extra*, “Rocinha: base do cartel no Rio- Inteligência da polícia conclui que a favela é o entreposto do narcotráfico da Colômbia na cidade.” (Xavier)<sup>1</sup> Interestingly enough, the article overshadowed a smaller cover story about the eleven day-old war of the US against Iraq. In the photo accompanying the article, Police are shown tearing down the wall of a house in Rocinha on which the words “Território CV Colombiano FARC” were written in graffiti. Unfortunately, Sombra’s arrest did not put an end to the guerrilla activities of the CV and days after, in the middle of the night, more buses and a

passerby's car were burnt along Avenida Brasil, a bomb was exploded at the metro station and another next to the five-star Meridien Hotel in Copacabana. The relatively low number of casualties in the CV's terrorist campaign and its largely theatrical nature have led some to speculate that it has been intended as a means to force the state and its agents to go back to turning a blind eye on organized crime, both in Rio's prisons and on the city's streets, to a similar degree as before the Tim Lopes scandal.<sup>2</sup>

As relevant as the study of drug traffickers and the way they are perceived by the populations of Rio's favelas might be in the wake of the Tim Lopes murder and the subsequent crisis between the state and organized crime, the climate of violence in Rio de Janeiro is by no means new and in fact has characterized the city for the past few decades. Over this time span, there has also been an increasing number of books, movies and studies about favelas, prisons and crime in Rio and about problems of social exclusion in Brazil more generally. Many of these works are very poignant and inspired and help draw attention to problems of violence and crime in Brazil. Some also make it a point to show that there is more to the lives of people in favelas than gunfights, prisons and cadavers. Others are not so successful at this and instead end up representing poverty through facile stereotypes that ultimately render an attempt at social commentary into something of an instrument of the very prejudice it seeks to combat. A crop of non-fiction best sellers about crime in Rio has sprung up in recent years, some good, like *Cidade partida*, mentioned several times throughout this study, some rather hollow and sensationalist, such as *Narcoditadura: O caso Tim Lopes, crime organizado e o jornalismo investigativo no Brasil*. Non-fiction and semi-non-fiction books about prisons have also appeared, such as *Estação Carandiru*, *Caldeirão do Diabo* and *Quatrocentos*

*contra um: Uma história do Comando Vermelho*, by William da Silva Lima. Many fictional works of various calibers about the world of crime and favelas have also been published, such as Paulo Lins' enormously popular novel *Cidade de Deus*, Júlio Ludemir's *Meu coração no Comando*, Ferréz's *Capão Pecado* and *Inferno*, by Partícia Melo. Also, a special issue of the excellent social and political magazine, *Caros amigos*, was dedicated to what it called "Literatura do marginalizado," or literature of people on the "margins," giving space to a variety of disadvantaged poets and short story writers, many of whom are in prison. In addition, two of the most important Brazilian films of the last three years, *Cidade de Deus* and *Carandiru*, have highlighted the question of crime and violence in social exclusion, and have won both national and international recognition. Even the ingenious comedy *Cidade dos homens*, produced as a mini-series counterpart to the violent *Cidade de Deus* by the Globo network, does not stray far from the existence of the drug traffickers and their control of the favelas. In addition, the gloomy periphery/prison style hip-hop of artists like MV Bill and 509-E has become so popular among middle-class youth that Mano Brown, of Racionais MCs, recently refused to perform at a show in Rio because it was filled with "playboyzada," which roughly translates as "a bunch of little rich boys."

I see my own study here as a part of this growing culture of literature of marginalized people in Brazil and the accompanying trend of the social sciences to investigate the reality of communities on the periphery of Brazilian society. I have attempted not to overemphasize the importance or presence of violence and drug traffickers in the community while at the same time recognizing the fact that such things do make up a rather big part of the social landscape of the favela. In any event, without wishing to

further sensationalize the issue or suggest that funk is the key to understanding everything about the complex socio-political terrain of Rio de Janeiro, I hope this study has been able to offer some relevant perspectives about the relationship between bandits, favelas and the culture of funk music. It has been a labor of love and the product of some rather special circumstances, circumstances I would be unlikely to ever reproduce with any other subject matter. As I sat and wrote about funk music in my house in Rocinha, I was often accompanied by some very loud noises. The neighbors' five dogs ceaselessly barked beneath my window, police helicopters regularly circled overhead, funk, forró and rock music blared from the bar across the alleyway, or young gangsters would let loose non-stop barrages of firecrackers. Despite all this noise, and my awareness of all the serious problems it faces, I have come to love the community of Rocinha in the years since 1990. I have also come to love funk, through all the phases of its evolution, which like other social realities in Rio hasn't really changed very much since Tom Lopes. I honestly don't think too many *funkeiros* or other residents will ever read this study that they have helped me to write, but it is my hope that I have managed at least to make some useful social commentary about their lives without worsening outside perceptions of their world. I also hope that I have been able to let the light and the love that so many of them have shared with me shine through these pages.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Rocinha: Base of Cartel in Rio- Police Intelligence Concludes that the Favela is Connection for Colombian Narco-Trafficking in the City” (my translation)

<sup>2</sup> It was suggested to me by my colleague Júlio Ludemir, author of *Meu Coração no Comando* and an expert on the Comando Vermelho, that the so-called “war” between the State and organized crime that was occurring in 2003 was been largely theatrical. He pointed out that the CV managed to effectively carry out its “terror campaign” with relatively few casualties, including police, exceptions being a nursing student at the Estácio de Sá university and an elderly woman who died in the first bus burning in February. In all subsequent bus burnings, the passengers were forced to get off the buses before they were torched. Despite the fact that almost all of the bombings were carried out in the middle of the night when the places that were attacked were empty, and that the shootings were aimed at buildings and not, say, crowds, the CVs terrorist campaign caused great fear in the population. I noticed during this period that the media in Rio often made the claim that the city was in the midst of the worst ever crisis of crime the city had ever known. In the short term, such an approach by the CV seemed likely to me to invite more draconian measures on the part of the state. They also lost some degree of street credibility, since many Rocinha residents I talked to felt that the CV was unfairly targeting poor people, who were more likely to be on buses than middle- and upper-class people. The CV must have decided that in the long run, it was a risk they were willing to take to see if they could scare the government into making deals and playing ball. While the authorities in Rio were criticized for their incompetent handling of the crisis and their

desperate lack of any apparent plan whatsoever for dealing with the matter, it is also striking that the CV would be desperate enough to take such a risk.

**Appendix: Lyrics of *Proibidão* and Other Funk Songs****I Proibidão****a) MC One** (from the favela of Rocinha)

- “Sou da Rocinha”
- “Vacilou, levou”
- “Venho alerter”
- “Papum, papum”
- “Bonde do chi-cheiro”
- “Bonde dos ladrões”
- “Hoje eu sonhei”
- “Bonde da fé”

**b) MC Two** (from the favela of Formiga)

- “Cachorro”
- “Terror da boca”
- “Cadê o esqueiro”
- “Simpático”
- “Traficando cultura”

**c) MC Three and Four** (from the Cidade de Deus)

- “Bota preta”
- “Cuca louca”
- “Rap da CDD”
- “Favela Cercada”

**d) MC Five** (from the favela of Rocinha)

- “Bandidos de Cristo”

- “Quem comanda a favela da Rocinha”

- “Somos vermelho”

e) **MC Six** (from the favela of Vidigal)

- “Avisa lá”

- “Menino sofredor”

f) **MC Seven** (fro the favela of Borel)

- “Rap da cadeia”

- “Terceiro fraco”

g) **MC Eight** (from the favela of Rocinha)

- “Seus alemão safado”

h) **MCs Nine and Ten** (from the favela of Borel)

- “Rap do Borel/Versão Comando”

**II Tati Quebra-Barraco** (of the Cidade de Deus)

- “Montagem assadinha/69”

- Montagem pidona”

- “Montagem cartão magnético”

- “Montagem cardápio do amor”

- “Montagem bota na tcheca”

**III Some Funk Songs of the Mid-Nineties**

a) “Rap da Felicidade” (MC Cidinho and Doca)

b) “Rap das armas” (MC Leonardo and Júnior)

c) “Rap da liberdade” (MCs Willian and Duda)

“Rap da Rocinha” (MC Galo)

*Notes on selection of songs*

Songs that have specific gang references are illegal in Brazil and therefore are not played on the radio or sold in official CDs and albums. As a result, often more than one version of a song is written, one that is legal and can be played at all dances and on the radio, and one that is typically played live and sold on pirated CDs and tapes. This situation has many fascinating implications for the study of funk music. At one level, it reflects a certain democratization of recording technology in the availability of recording devices for cassette tapes and CD burners, as well as a well developed informal economy for the reproduction and distribution of such recordings in mass quantity. Additionally, since the people most directly profiting from the production and distribution of such recordings are the bootleggers and their salespeople, no money goes directly to the composers or composers who write and/or perform the songs. Nowadays, MCs often bring a computer disk to the show with the beats they want to sing along to. The DJ then simply plays this disk or mixes its beats together with other sound effects and musical samples. As a result, it is easy enough for the DJs and sound teams who are providing the music for the *baile* to make reasonably high quality recordings right through the equipment that is being used in the show. Many *proibidão* songs borrow the melodies of pop, samba, forró and even religious songs. The ironic word play, sampling, live improvisation and double-entendre in these illegal raps are typical characteristics of the aesthetics of Diaspora musical forms and strategies of subaltern popular culture in general, as is discussed in chapter four of this study.

In this appendix, I am including three types of songs. The first are songs that can be classified as *proibidão* per se, whether or not they are actually illegal. In most cases, they

are, as will be suggested by the blatant glorification of the violence of specific gangs or drug traffickers. Because all of these songs were collected in Rocinha, a Comando Vermelho community, none of them speak for or praise either the Terceiro Comando (TC) or the Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) organizations. The lyrics of the *proibidão* songs have been transcribed from live, underground recordings made at *bailes de comunidade*, or community funk dances in favelas. In some cases, words that mention current leaders of the Rocinha Drug gang or the names of thieves and the like have been taken out. In addition, despite the desire to credit the composers and/or performers of these songs, given the fact that some individuals have been harassed, arrested and sued it seems more prudent to withhold their names. As I have mentioned in this study, some singers have experienced legal troubles for the content of their song lyrics, such as MCs Leonardo and Júnior, who are not even *proibidão* style performers (even much more mainstream acts outside of funk, such as the rock group Planet Hemp, famous for its apology for the use of marijuana, and hip-hop artist MV Bill, who used armed drug traffickers in his famous video for “Soldado do morro,” have had considerable legal problems for their art and have even spent time in jail). The Tim Lopes scandal aside, it is not so common for police to confiscate *proibidão* CDs, fine vendors or harass funk singers, and when I asked a police officer on the beach in the Leblon neighborhood of Rio whether or not he would personally arrest anyone over *proibidão*, he told me that he likes such music and that he buys it for his kids!

The second group of songs is a collection of verses from *montagens*, or musical/lyrical montages, by Tati Quebra-Barraco. These I have included for two reasons: first, they are representative of the tendency in funk to use heavily sexual lyrics and metaphors; second,

Tati is a huge figure in funk and the only female MC who has had the kind of permanence of male MCs like Galo, Catra, the duo Cidinho and Doca, Duda or Mascote. The third group of songs is comprised of lyrics of legal songs that were big hits in the mid-nineties and are typical of many of the characteristics of mainstream funk. Since the lyrics to such songs are somewhat easily available in other sources, I have only included four in this appendix. While transcribing lyrics for this appendix, no attempt has been made to make lexical, morphological or syntactical corrections. In the place of words that could not be deciphered due to lack of sound clarity, dots have been added. Any words purposely taken out to protect specific thieves and drug traffickers, the symbol ### has been added.

***I Proibidão:***

A. **MC One** (from the favela of Rocinha)

“Sou da Rocinha”

Sou da Rocinha não dou mole pra Terceiro Comando querendo esculachar,  
vai tomar de AK papum

Sou da Rocinha não dou mole pra Terceiro Comando querendo esculachar,  
Bota o fuzil pra cantar!

É bonde que fortalece o Valão, quero ouvir, papum papum,

é o bonde que fortalece o Valão, vamos lá

A união dos irmãos, que eu venho falar quem quiser venha formar

Para andar lado a lado com o bonde tu não pode vacilar

O ritmo é frenético é disposição nosso bonde é boladão

Plantado dia e noite fortemente armado, aqui na área do Valão

Bota o fuzil pra cantar,  
é o bonde que fortalece o Valão, quero ouvir,  
Sou da Rocinha não dou mole pra terceiro comando querendo esculachar,  
vai tomar de AK,  
Sou da Rocinha não dou mole pra terceiro comando querendo esculachar

Na continuação se liga meu mano não sou simpático a ninguém  
Armamento pesado bote na sua mente, igual a Roça não tem  
Puxa o bonde Bigode, Bil, Buiú, Cavanhaque, 21, Marcelinho, Marino, e o 99  
não esqueçam de Magu  
Domar, Dewilson, Molejo e o Bel os restantes estão no céu, Bahiano, Batatinha, o meu  
amigo Serginho, Trola o braço fiel para finalizar de AK na mão Soldado e o Cabeção,  
braço Magu, Naiba, se liga Bil não esqueço dos irmãos,

Bota o fuzil pra cantar!

É o bonde que fortalece o Valão, quero ouvir  
Tô cansado de falar mais eu tenho que explicar, se mexer com o Buiú toma tiro de AK  
Tô cansado de falar, mais eu tenho que explicar, se mexer com o Lelé toma tiro de AK  
Se mexer com o Buiú toma tiro de AK

“Vacilou, levou”

Vacilou, levou, o comando é vermelho, se cagüetar, levou o comando é vermelho  
Se não fechar, levou o comando é vermelho, fazer o queixa, levou o comando é  
vermelho

Se tu é CV na mente anda com o fuzil na mão,  
vem comigo a chapa é quente, o comando é vermelhão

Vem no clima da Rocinha, no ritmo do morrão  
é a comissão de frente garantindo a contenção

Mas vacilou levou, o comando é vermelho, cagüetou levou, o comando é vermelho  
Se não fechar levou, o comando é vermelho, se bulir levou, o comando é vermelho  
Sigo fortemente armado de AR e de G3, lança-granada e traçante é a turma da sem lei  
Se os vermes pintar na pista, de ralelê vão ficar,  
desço o bonde do morrão, de cigui e de AK

Cagüetou levou, o comando é vermelho, vacilou levou, o comando é vermelho  
Se bulir levou, o comando é vermelho, vacilou levou, o comando é vermelho  
Mas se liga laufranhudo no que agora eu vou falar  
Vê se bota na cabeça usa chapéu quem sabe usar,  
Tem o bonde da Rocinha querendo jogar na mala, Mr. M simpatia vai de pedra lá vai bala  
Se cagüetou levou, se tu bulir levou, se fazer queixa levou, mais vacilou levou, o  
comando é vermelho

A Rocinha é CV e comanda não é comandado, mando um alô pra Mineira, Pavãozinho  
e Canta Galo, a Grota e a de Deus, o Borel e a Varginha, Vidigal, Andaraí e o bonde da  
Fazendinha, Formiga, a Nova Holanda o Serra pra completar o Falete, o Fogueteiro e o  
Turano e a Cruzada

Vacilou levou, se cagüetar levou, o comando é vermelho, se bulir levou,  
o comando é vermelho, vacilou levou,

sou da Rocinha não dou mole pra terceiro comando querendo esculachar  
Vai tomar de AK, papum,

sou da Rocinha não dou mole pra terceiro comando querendo esculachar  
Bota o fuzil pra cantar

“Venho Alertar”

Tô bolado, tô bolado,  
tô bolado, tô boldado!

Maluco venho alertar, só mesmo vendo pra crer  
Se não vive pra servir, não serve para viver  
Porque no mundo do crime ganhar respeito e poder  
Mas o final deste filme eu tô cansado de ver  
Periferia é mil grau  
Pra quem tem conceito forte  
A todos os do bonde do mal  
Violento conta com a sorte  
O que os olhos não vêem o nosso coração não sente  
Por isso a sociedade anda sempre contente

Já na revolta com a vida querendo lançar os panos  
Não é preciso ser inteligente pra ver o que acontece com os manos  
Maluco na revolta, a molecada começa a roubar  
De menor vai parar lá na FEBEM  
De maior vai parar lá no DACA

Neurose aí violento  
Já tô te ligando a fita  
Pa tu ficar por dentro e não perder a vida  
É só lazer tu tá ligado  
E tá bolado só pra variar  
Terrorista de salão Pikachu,  
melhor amigo não contrariar  
só para variar a mente, maluco, legalizou  
por que eu sou o Galo da Roça  
e os amigos abalou  
eu tô em pé sem cair, tô deitado sem dormir  
preparado sem fazer pose  
é o bonde dos MC

Eu sou daqueles antes que bem só do que mal acompanhado  
Se não faz tua cara, não atrase meu lado

Pense bem no que você tá dizendo pra não bater com a língua nos dentes

Pra X-9, cagüete, maluco, descarrego o pente

Ande sempre pelo caminho certo

Não queira ser mais do que ninguém

Já vi muito mano esticado no chão

por querer ser grande também

fama, dinheiro e poder, claro que todo mundo tá de olho

mas como diz o ditado quem vai pela cabeça dos outros é piolho

“Papum, papum”

Cheguei da batalha bolado

Se liga em que aconteceu

Quando eu cheguei no morro soube que mataram um amigo meu

E eu fiquei revoltado

Vim pra Rocinha formar

O Bigode sentiu firmeza e jogou no meu peito um AK,

Papum, papum,

Com a pistola .45, um fuzil lança-granada

E tu vem com os irmãos formando o bonde da pesada

Eu sou negão e tô bolado

Não tenho arrego, não

E vou descer com o meu bonde

E vou quebrar os alemão

Quero ouvir só de AK

La la iá, estufa o peito vou furar

La la iá e só passa tracante no ar

La la iá estufa o peito vou furar

La la iá e só passa tracante no ar

E o tempo vai passando

Com o comando eu fechei

E tá tudo dominado

É o bonde dos sem lei

Na favela da Rocinha

O comando é consagrado

Se mexer com nosso bonde vai sair todo furado,

Papum, papum,

Or irmãos estão na pista

Sem neurose sem caô

Nosso bonde é sinistro

é o bonde quebra-quebrou

O catuque já foi dado eu não vou mais repetir

Tenho um grande conceito

Sou local MC

Quero ouvir só de AK

La la iá estufa o peito vou furar

“Bonde do chi-cheiro”

Essa vai pra rapaziada que gosta da Alcione, tutti-frutti, escama de peixe,

Gal Costa e muito mais, né!!! Aquela branquinha , bonde do chi-cheiro.

E meu irmão vou te dar umas dicas aí, boca do Valão, ta ligado né,

Pó de cinco de dez, tem o pó de vinte que é bom pra caralho, hein?

Ei ô bonde do chi-cheiro, vou dar um teco maneiro na área do Valão, como é bom

Ei ô bonde do chi-cheiro, vou dar um teco maneiro, eu vou ficar é pancadão, pancadão

A brizola faz a gente emagrecer, faz a gente perder peso e não querer comer

Mais depois vem aquela esticação, se não tiver dinheiro vai ter que virar um ladrão

Mais depois vem aquela esticação, se não tiver dinheiro vai empenhar o seu cordão

Vamos lá fungador, se tiver de sola cheira, cheira, cheira,

ocê não vai dispensar não, não, não

Tu vai cheirar a noite inteira até ficar pancadão,

Tu vai vender sua bermuda e o seu quepe da cantão,

Tu vai vender sua panela e o seu relógio e o fogão, cheira,cheira, cheira

Ei ô bonde do chi-cheiro, vou dar um teco maneiro na área do Valão, como é bom

Ei ô bonde do chi-cheiro, vou dar um teco maneiro, eu vou ficar é pancadão, pancadão

A brizola faz a gente emagrecer, faz a gente perder peso e não querer comer

Mais depois vem aquela esticação, se não tiver dinheiro vai ter que virar um ladrão

Mais depois vem aquela esticação, se não tiver dinheiro vai empenhar o seu cordão  
Vamos lá fungador, se tiver de sola cheira, cheira, cheira, você não vai dispensar não,  
não, não

“Bonde dos ladrões”

Um alô mané, é bonde do ladrão que gosta de roubar um carro forte,  
Fazer um seqüestro neurótico, tá ligado né mane, roubar um banco  
E as menozadas que gosta de meter ums toca fita ta ligado né  
A peça é essa ta ligado né, rapazeada hamm, então vai

A letra desse rap vai pra geral se ligar, eu falo dos amigos que se amarram em roubar  
Na área do Valão os ladrões são sangue bom, vai em Botafogo, Ipanema e Leblon  
Na Barra da Tijuca o bonde vai geral, vai de pino, vai de lixa e até de pica-pau  
Quero ouvir, quero ouvir, já roubou, demorou de bá, demorou de bá  
O Valão, Roupa Suja demorou de bá, solta o pancadão DJ pra galera delirar  
Depois de sacudir eles vão se divertir, vão comprar é roupa nova, para o baile vão curtir  
Bermuda da Ciclone ,Camisa da Toulon, quepe importado e um tremendo relojão  
Mizuno, Nike, Kenny, tá ligado também é tradição  
Quem usa essas peças Roupa Suja e Valão,

Quero ouvir, quero ouvir, já roubou, demorou de bá, demorou de bá  
Mais demorou de bá, agora meus amigos se ligue que eu vou falar  
O nome dos amigos que se amarraram em roubar

Vem o amigo Liu, que é um cara sangue bom, vem o ##### ,

#####,#####,##### (etc)

E o ##### que pilota de montão, faz Miura, Catete e até grande fu

Quero ouvir, quero ouvir, já roubou, demorou de bá, demorou de bá

Não beba whiskey, beba Nescau, não fume cigarro a maconha é três reais

Não beba whiskey, beba Nescau, não fume cigarro a maconha é três reais

É na palma da mão o bicho vai pegar, eu estou idignado vou fumar um classe A

Estico ra ta tá, mantando eu vou ficar, se liga rapazeada que o bicho vai pegar

Formiga de tamanco não sobe parede não, nem perna de barata é serrote não

Barata viva não atravessa galinheiro, porque o Galo esta lá e é um cara maneiro

Paz na mente e na consciência seu cabeça de bosta, rio que tem piranha jacaré nada de  
costa

Se fui pobre não me lembro se fui rico me roubaram, morena trás o esqueiro pra acender  
meu baseado

Já fui lá e já voltei, foi com meu cigarro, morena trás o esqueiro pra acender meu baseado

Já fui lá e já voltei, passei ali por perto, sangue bom faz o canudo que eu vou bater um  
teco

Sangue bom faz o canudo que eu vou bater um teço, vai dar um vai dar duas você vai  
ficar esperto

“Hoje eu sonhei”

Vamos lá, hoje eu sonhei viajando no Valão,

ia ter um baile bom no lugar onde eu morava  
Minha Rocinha estava enfeitada, o DJ era o Buzunga, locutor era o Bolado  
Mas de repente chegava o Ronaldo com sua metralhadora no pescoço pendurado  
Aí então eu fiquei muito animado, ao ver toda aquela gente sorridente do meu lado  
É , sem perceber chegou Tebererê minha perna ficou bamba não vou mais sair daqui  
Quero ouvir, Mario Heleno, Zé do Queijo e Osnê,  
Geraldete e o Cândi já passaram por aqui  
Mais derepente eu vi Vicente e Ademir, o Herinque com Zequinha,  
o Yoyo com Parazinho  
Bebendo um choppe com amigo Bagulhão, que saudade dessa gente Rocinha recordação  
  
Ai, ai meu Deus eu não posso acreditar,  
isso mais parece um sonho me da vontade de chorar  
Recordações me explique por favor, onde está toda essa gente, diga meu nosso senhor  
e logo depois, chegou o Fernandinho com Gato do Vidiga, Rafael e o Chiquinho  
Sem esperar desceu o bonde lá da Um, vi Comprido e o Pet, Jorge Chefe e mais um  
Era o Bicudo que não deu pra conhecer,  
quando ele chegou junto foi que eu pude perceber  
Até o Pantera, Santos, Cleber e o Ramon foram parte desse sonho,  
foram muitos sangue bom  
Ouvir dizer que o Cassiano estava lá, o Lecão e o Bilisca mas ficaram de vagar  
Melhor ficou pintou o Lula e o Zana, Raxini e o Vere dança com Paulo Caxanga,  
É , olhei pro canto vi seu Jorge e Lelé, com o seu velho charuto perguntei como é que é?

Logo em seguida, imagina eu vi Dedé, Brasilerinho, Beto Fal, mas estavam de rolé  
Léo de Menor, o Pitanga, Carne Seca, que saudade lá do bar, tio Celson era o cabeça  
Deixo um abraço do fundo do coração o amigo de Leandro eternamente o Padrão  
Eu sou o Galo, sou contente ator aqui, eu não posso me esquecer do Lobão e do Gordinho  
Sem desejar, o Bigode é sangue bom, quando arde o coração para o Bil que é meu irmão  
É , vamos lá, oi demorou de bá, segura DJ...

“Bonde da fé”

Recordação é viver, e o bom da vida é curtir, sonhar me dar mais prazer  
Por isso eu canto tão feliz, alô rapazeada esse é o bonde da fé,  
Com Gordinho, Cassiano e Fernandinho e Dedé  
Alô rapazeada esse é o bonde da fé, da fé, da fé  
Mas com Gordinho, Cassiano e Fernandinho e Dedé  
Pra mim é um grande prazer contar a sua história  
Falar de amigos guerreiros que não me sai da memória  
Vi Buzunga, Geraldete, Zé do Queijo e Bolado, com Ademir,  
Nelson Batina não dá pra ficar parado  
O Cadi, Mario Heleno, Naldo e o Tibiriri a Rocinha tem conceito e eu não vou sair daqui  
Tão contente eu vi Vicente, Generoso e o Ademir,  
com Henrique e o Zequinha o Yoyo e o Parazim  
O meu rap está rolando é da fé que emoção,  
ai meu Deus tanta tristeza quando eu canto esse refrão

Recordação é viver, e o bom da vida é curtir, sonhar me dar mais prazer

Por isso eu canto tão feliz, alô rapazeada esse é o bonde da fé,

Com Gordinho, Cassiano e Fernandinho e Dedé

Alô rapazeada esse é o bonde da fé, da fé, da fé

Mas com Gordinho, Cassiano e Fernandinho e Dedé

Roberto e o Sabará, o Aranha no sapatinho com Gato do Vidigal o Rafael e o Xiquim

Vi comprido Jorge Chefe, o Pet fez uma presença,

o Luciano e o Bicudo não queriam violência

O Pantera, Santo escreve melodia e o Ramon,

chegou com Paulo Caxanga, Rachini e o Molecão

Vi Bilisca com São Jorge, Beto, Falcão com Lelé, Dimenor,

Brasileirinho, Carne Seca deu no pé

O Pitanga com o Zano, Lula fez a formação acordei com tio Cefo,

ó Deus e vi que era ilusão

Recordação é viver, e o bom da vida é curtir, sonhar me dar mais prazer

Pó isso eu canto tão feliz, alô rapazeada esse é o bonde da fé,

Com Gordinho, Cassiano e Fernandinho e Dedé

Alô rapazeada esse é o bonde da fé, da fé, da fé

Mas com Gordinho, Cassiano e Fernandinho e Dedé

Pra mim é um grande prazer contar a sua história

Falar de amigos guerreiros que não me sai da memória...

B. MC Two (from the favela of Formiga)

“Cachorro”

-Aí, cidadão, é o arrego.

-Qual é, Chefia, de novo? Porra. Tá maluco.

-Pois o salário tá bravo, né?

-Ah, quer dindin, então vende X-9 para mim.

Tá ligado?

O, tá mandado, já voltou mas tá queimado

Se faz de amigo, só faz de conta,

Sujeito safado tem que apanhar,

Por causa dele o meu mano morreu

O plantão, todo o trabalho, ele enfraqueceu

E causou muitas mortes deixando infeliz

Famílias dos mano que eram raíz

Os moradores já querem pegar

Até grampearam o seu celular

O patrão já tá preso e mandou avisar

Sua sentença já vamos executar

É com bala de AK

Cachorro, se quer ganhar um dindin,  
vende X-9 pra mim, vende X-9 pra mim  
Cachorro, cachorro, me entrega esse canalha  
Deixa ele bem amarrado, pega o dinheiro e rala

Sujeito safado já sabe de cor  
O endereço contato lá do DPO (Departamento de Polícia Operacional)  
Comédia fodido que entrega o irmão,  
Se pego esse verme não tenho perdão  
Pago quanto for, mas me dá o canalha  
Eu vou comer esse verme na bala  
De qualquer modo não vai escapar  
Eu tenho para ele uma bolsa de AK

“Terror de Boca”

Se liga nessa então, se liga hein, é mais ou menos assim, ó...  
Pra quem não conhece a disci, eu vou te apresentar,  
A disci é disciplina basta você aguardar, violar as cosias dos outros não fortalece em nada  
Quando a gente não pensa é com a vida que paga, e na disciplina eu não deixo pra depois  
Se Leonardo da Vinci porque eu não posso dar dois,  
E tô ficando na onda sem vacilação, Mr. Catra só dá papo reto, consciência meu irmão  
Mr. Catra só dar papo reto, consciência meu irmão  
e o terror de boca é chupeta, não adianta chorar,

e quando a chapa esquenta ele pede colo querendo mamar

Terror de boca é chupeta, não adianta chorar,

e quando a chapa esquenta ele pede colo querendo mamá

Vem mamar, vem mamar, ajoelhou você tem que rezar

Vem mamar, vem mamar, na ponta do bico do meu AK

Vem mamar, vem mamar, ajoelhou você tem que rezar

“Cadê o esqueiro”

Só um esqueiro, um esqueiro, DJ, legaliza

Sem neurose, sem neurose, na humilde eu vou assim, ó

Ooooó, ó cadê o esqueiro, demorou formar o bonde dos maconheiros

Ooooó, ó cadê o esqueiro, demorou formar o bonde dos maconheiros

De doideira, me deu uma louca vou abrir a boca

e falar do preconceito dessa sociedade escrota

Fiz tudo que faço, e do que faço eu me orgulho

Confesso pra vocês gosto muito é de fumar um bagulho

Tu não gostar tá um direito seu, agora não vem discriminar o direito de fumar que é meu

Fumo e fumo mesmo, assumo pra você, e de chiar, meu Deus, nunca vi ninguém morrer

Como pode fazer mal, isso me deixa feliz, se eu experimentei foi porque eu sempre quis

Se sou assim não depende disso, se eu sou assim é porque eu tô de bem comigo

Mas se tu não tá não é bom experimentar,

porque não é com uma planta que você vai solucionar

Os seus problemas e nem melhorar o seu astral, pense nisso amigo cai na real

Ooooó, ó cadê o esqueiro, demorou formar o bonde dos maconheiros

Ooooó, ó cadê o esqueiro, demorou formar o bonde dos maconheiros

Pára, pára tudo

Deixa acontecer naturalmente eu não quero não você chorar

Deixa que o amor encontre agente nosso caso vai eternizar

“Simpático”

Então, então, sem neurose, sem caô com marra de cão vem um vacilão de bobeira no movimento

Sei que tá mancado a massa está sacando, tamo ligado no procedimento

Simpático ao brutro, não é do justo, dos irmãos se desfaz errado vira certo, se acha esperto

Só fortalece que tem mais, o tempo é o remédio, o proceder se mostra no dia a dia

A caôzada a simpatia já ta virando epidemia,

Eu falei uma vez, tô bolado e novamente vou falar pra cura safado o ator tá ligado, vacilão é bala de AK

Por isso que eu digo, toma cuidado meu bonde bolado é um perigo

Comédia fudido, garoto metido é cartucheira de bandido

Porque ele vive na sombra do patrão, agradar vagabundo é sua profissão

Confunde ganância e ambição simpatia comédia vacilão

vive na sombra do patrão, agradar vagabudo é sua profissão

Confunde ganância e ambição simpatia comédia vacilão

Quem é? O simpático para de formar caô! Para de arrumar caô.

O simpático para de formar caô! Para de arrumar caô.

O simpático para de formar caô! Para de arrumar caô.

“Traficando cultura”

Pintam na sua frente abordando o negão Sebá, pergunta se esta portando

por isso vai lhe interrogar

Ofendem, são intolerantes, marginalizam só pra variar dizendo favela é local suspeito

Por isso eu vou lhe revistar e responde Sebá

Meu movimento é político social, meu trafico é cultural, meu movimento é político  
social, meu trafico é cultural Vem comigo,

vamos traficar cultura, desentoca as peças marca atividade o negócio é plantar

Vamo lá, vamo lá vamos traficar cultura,

desentoca as peças marca atividade o negócio é plantar

Vou te dizer, tem preto e tem branco moço tem sim, empenhado no seu bem está

A favela é socialista me deu overdose de consciência,

Religiosidade, fé em deus, trazemos no coração

Paz, justiça e liberdade, guerra pelo bem sem destruição

E responde Sebá, meu movimento é político social, meu trafico é cultural, meu

movimento é político social, meu trafico é cultural

Vem comigo, vamos traficar cultura,

desentoca as peças marca atividade o negócio é plantar

Vamo lá, vamo lá vamos traficar cultura,

desentoca as peças marca atividade o negócio é plantar

Tem preto e tem branco moço tem sim, empenhado no seu bem estar...

**C. MCs Three and Four** (duo from the Cidade de Deus)

“Bota Preta”

Parado na esquina sabe o que aconteceu, sabe o que aconteceu

Mais de dez D20 lá na Cidade de Deus

E é por isso que os amigos de plantão botaram pra cantar

E fizeram realidade o “Rap do parrá pá pá”

Seja no outono, primavera ou no inverno eu, eu mais ou menos assim

Vou caçar os vermes até nos quinto dos inferno

E é por isso que vou botar o meu tocão e vou botar a minha luva

E é por isso que as mulheres dos caninhas todas vão ficar viúvas

Tá ligado neguinho, é, tiro de nove, de doze e bereta, cadê vocês bota preta

Você na frente eu atrás só fazendo claquebum,

DJ cruz credo isso dá um caô fudido

“Cuca Louca”

Tá ca a cuca louca, tá lêlê da cuca,

A Rocinha é Comando na veia,

se quiser tomar tem que vir de bazuka

762- nós tem, AK- nós tem, G3- nós tem, Desert também (2x)

lá na Rocinha eu vou dizer como é que é  
o bagulho é sinistro, shock, pode levar fé, por quê,  
facão amolado, bico afiado, somos soldado  
Pavãozinho descontrolado  
E tem menor bolado

“Rap da CDD”

Lá onde nasci tem que saber viver, estou me referindo à minha CDD  
Malandro desde pequeno sempre em busca da paz  
Nós somamos, dividimos mas de menos jamais  
A nossa união é coisa natural e a simplicidade é mesmo divinal  
Mas se tu tá de mancada, você ver virar raíz, mexe e morre pela boca  
Chapado se liga eu vou dizer como é que é  
Coração de vagabundo bate na sola do pé  
E se o Gato passar, não se assuste não  
E se a chapa esquentar é cobrança, irmão  
E se tu quer jogar, vê se joga no Espelho  
O Gato é preto a chapa é quente e o Comando...  
Quero ouvir o chapadão cantando assim...

“Favela cercada”

Ah, essa noite começou com tiroteio  
Favela tava cercada na dava pra sair

E a criançada tava com desespero  
Pelo amor de Deus, papai, tira a gente daqui  
E aí então uma lágrima deceu  
E vi que as minhas forças vinham das forças de Deus  
Só peço aquele moço anted de apertar o gatilho  
Que pense em seus filhos antes de matar os meus  
Mas eu só quero entrar na minha casa, seu moço, seu moço,  
E dar um beijo nas criança, beijar minha patroa  
Ter o pão de cada dia (2x)  
Eu só quero é ser feliz

**D. MC Five** (from the favela of Rocinha)

“Bandidos de Cristo”

Bandidos de Cristo, tem muita fé em Deus  
Para esta vida tem que ter muita disposição  
Pergunte pro Patrão

Vou subir, vou subir, vou subir o meu morrão  
Com um alô pra os amigos  
E um abraço pro patrão (2x)

Um alô pro Bangu Um, Água Santa e Bangu Três,  
Onde vive os irmãozinhos, que saudades de vocês

Quando subo a favela e passo naquele lugar  
Que o Patrão tirava onda dá vontade de chorar  
Mas eu tenho fé em Deus e na pura santidade  
Que em breve eu verei o Patrãozinho em liberdade  
Pra gente zuar juntinho pelas partes do morrão  
Desejando a liberdade dos amigos sangue bom

Um alô para os fregueses do meu Rio de Janeiro  
Vai de preto ou vai de branco é do puro brasileiro  
Pra quem são da Zona Norte, Zona Oeste ou Zona Sul,  
Zona Leste também vem, pelo jeito vai dar um  
Um abraço pros amigos que protege as favelas  
Obrigado pela força que vocês dão para ela  
O vapor, o fogueteiro, o gerente e o ladrão  
E a todos os soldados que protege o Patrão

O Rebelde ficou bolado e fez uma reunião  
Quero todo mundo armado lá no alto do morrão  
Fogueteiro AR-15, o gerente de G3,  
o vapor vem de pistola, eu vou falar só um vez  
os soldados do meu bonde vêm de 762  
os olheiros de traçante, o aviso é dois em dois  
o contexto quando é sangue, os amigos reconhecem,

Rebelde vem no comando de AK-47

“Quem Comanda a favela da Rocinha”

O ##### é quem comanda a favela da Rocinha,  
quero ouvir! Rocinha! Geral! Tá ligado, né mané!

Com vários bondes, vários bicos fazendo a conteção, pesadão,

A nossa base é no alto do morrão

Só irmãos, nós somos 100% Vermelhão

Com o #####,

não tenta que vai levar um sacode,

sem neurose, são vários bondes vindo de caça android

vê se pode, Rua Um, Valão e 99

com a Rocinha, tá ligado, ninguém pode

A Vía Ápia, a Paula Brito, Cachopa,

Fundação, Terreirão,

Os bondes prontão sempre de AK na mão,

boladão, observando a sua vacilação,

fé em Deus para o Comando Vermelhão

“Somos vermelho”

Somos Vermelho até o osso,  
É paz, justiça e liberdade  
eu tô trepado até o pescoço  
E o bonde está demais  
Por isso a gente é fé em Deus  
e o comando cresce mais  
Aqui quem sabe é nós  
Se caia chuva ou faça sol  
Defendo a favela nem se for a vida inteira

E o X-9 a gente quebra na ladeira, irmão  
E o X-9 a gente quebra na ladeira, irmão,  
Do meu quartel vejo a praia,  
Rocinha é minha área  
Fim de semana e pura diversão  
Tô fortemente armado e o CV preparado  
Tá ligado!...

E. **MC Six** (from the favela of Vidigal)

“Avisa lá”

Avisa cambada de alemão, que o bonde vai partir a qualquer dia

Vai chegar o comando vermelhão, não adianta esculachar nossas famílias

Avisa que Roça vai chegar para botar o morrão na disciplina

Tá ligado que o bonde do Valão, é Rocinha fechando com Vidiga

Avisa lá, avisa lá, avisa lá que sou Comando Vermelho

Avisa lá, avisa lá, avisa lá que sou Comando Vermelho

Então, avisa cambada de alemão, que o bonde vai partir a qualquer dia

Vai chegar o Comando Vermelhão, não adianta esculachar nossas famílias

Avisa que Roça vai chegar para botar o morrão na disciplina

Tá ligado que o bonde é só bicão , é a Rocinha formando com Vidiga

Avisa lá, avisa lá, avisa lá que sou Comando Vermelho

Avisa lá, avisa lá, avisa lá que sou Comando Vermelho

Fafá de Belém, você é sangue puro, é responsa tem que vir formar com nós

Mais tem que ser vermelho, vermelhasco, vermelhusco, vermelhante, vermelhão

Se liga sangue bom, não seja um demente, o Comando é chapa quente

É melhor pensar direito, se tu tá afim de formar com a gente

Meu coração, é vermelho, e vermelho é o nosso morrão

Eo, eo, eo se liga Mr. M não vem perder a linha

Morro do Vidiga fechando com Rocinha

Vermelhão, Vidigal o bonde é sinistro o bonde tá na moral

Vermelhão nossos irmãos o bonde da Rocinha é pura disposição, disposição, disposição

“Menino sofredor”

Era um menino sofredor que um dia se revoltou

E foi formar com irmãos da boca, do tá tá tá ele gosto do tu tu tu ele adorou, muito mais  
do rá ,tá, tá, tá

Era um menino sofredor que um dia se revoltou

E foi formar com irmãos da boca, do tá, tá, tá ele gosto do tu, tu, tu ele adorou muito mais  
do rá, tá, tá, tá

Eu quero ouvir, vem pro CV, pega uma pistola e vem formar na boca

Mas consciente que aqui chapa é quente e essa guerra é louca, louca

Eu quero ouvir, vem pro CV, pega uma pistola e vem formar na boca

Mas consciente que aqui chapa é quente e essa guerra é louca, louca

Então vem, vem, vem pro bonde vermelhão, tem que ter disposição

Se não tem peça pra forma vem de machado e o facão

Vem, vem, vem pro bonde vermelhão, tem que ter disposição

Se não tem peça pra forma vem de machado e o facão

Eu quero ouvir sangue bom...

#### F. **MC Seven** (from the favela of Borel)

“Rap da cadeia”

E aqui no Valão, aos demais amigos que se encontra na luta do dia a dia

Tá ligado, da Rocinha, alô Valão, alô Via Apia, alô Rua Um, já é, é nós na fita...

Tá ligado, vivo somos traídos, presos esquecidos, mortos só deixamos saudades

é paz , justiça e liberdade

Vivos somos traídos, presos esquecidos, mortos só deixamos saudades

é paz , justiça e liberdade

Morro do Borel o Potal do Catrabi, Formiga o Salgueiro, a Rocinha é aqui  
Morro do Borel o Potal do Catrabi, Formiga o Salgueiro, o Valão é aqui  
DJ seja burro use e abuse dos irmãos, ram ram ram,  
Encendeia, encendeia, encendeia, encendeia, encendeia,  
Encendeia, encendeia, encendeia, encendeia, encendeia,  
Gosto de cantar pros manos, muita gente não sabia,  
É no morro do Borel que eu faço rap na maresia  
E na indiana shock no prédio Maracai,  
Quando eu olho pra você, Valão, rola pra mim,  
Não é melhor e nem pior, não temos pena não temos dor,  
É lá de Pernambuco é bom, é a cabrobrooó, rei lá  
No morro do Borel, chapadão na Rua São Miguel e na Conde de Bonfim,  
Formiga, Usina e Cachambi, lá rei laá,  
No morro do Borel, chapadão na Rua São Miguel e na Conde de Bonfim,  
Formiga, Usina e Cachambi, se liga de processor, esse rap está demais,  
Como disse o pensador, que veio com o cachimbo da paz!  
E continua a queimação, o alfe falando na minha mão,  
depois que eu torrar eu toco para o Valão  
No morro do Borel, chapadão na Rua São Miguel e na Conde de Bonfim,  
Formiga, Usina e Cachambi, lá rei laá,  
No morro do Borel, chapadão na Rua São Miguel e na Conde de Bonfim,  
Formiga, Usina e Cachambi, um alô para os funkeiros, com orgulho recebemos  
Foi no morro da Barrão que eu conheci o ouro preto

Termino esse rap shock, aí chapadão, repetir, sou do morro do Borel sou eu Duda MC

“Terceiro fraco”

Vejo o Terceiro está tão fraco e tão triste  
Fica sem graça essa aventura de invadir  
Mas o Comando é fortemente preparado  
Para encarar tudo que possa, somos CV  
Vejo o Terceiro caminhando sem destino  
Não vende nada, até no meio da multidão  
Mas o terceiro vai acabar é brevemente  
Deixe eles verem quem está de frente então  
Comando Vermelho, tudo é tão bonito  
Comando Vermelho, é a pura disposição  
Com o Comando, fico no paraíso,  
Com pistola e vários bico  
No Borel, morro do Chapadão

G. **MC Eight** (from the favela of Rocinha)

“Seus Alemao Safado”

Alô, rapaziada,  
Vamos sacudir, né, mano,  
Humildemente, chapa quente na Rocinha,  
Vamo lá, geral, cantar com MC Fornalha

Mais ou menos assim...

Se tu invadir e ficar de bam bam bam

Vai tomar de fuzil ou de pistola e de sadam

Por que o bonde não é papo furado, então eu digo,

E fortemente preparado de fuzil e de AR-15,

o Ruegre 223 eu não posso esquecer

oi canta AK, canta G3, mas o G3 e uma arma potente

o bonde forte da Rocinha anda armado até os dentes

você vê,

olha só seus alemão safado

se invade a Rocinha vai sair todo furado

mas olha só, seus alemão safado

a Rocinha e o Comando e nunca vai ser comandado

Se tu é um alemão, ou então um policia,

Melhor não invadir a favela da Rocinha,

Por que se tu invadir tu vai ficar de Bigode

Se vir de peito aberto

E so tirao de caca androide

Demorou, por que o bonde nao deixa a desejar

Solta o pino da M9 e manda os alemão pular

Então olha a granada que é sempre alisada  
Para todos os alemãos que ficarem de mancada  
Dizendo vai invadir a favela da Rocinha  
Então eu digo, e, só não pode perder a linha  
Por que se perder a linha não vai encontrar mole não  
Por que .30 e de 50  
Oi na Roça tem de montao

Olha só seus alemão safado  
A Rocinha é o Comando e nunca vai ser comandado  
Olha só seus alemão safado  
Se invadir a Rocinha vai sair todo furado

Tá ligado, né, mano,  
é o Comando e nunca vai ser comandado,  
Fé em Deus, Paz, justiça e liberdade  
É nós memo, alô, rapaziada presente,  
um alô pra geral, sem neurose, é nós memo,  
MC Fornalha, humildemente, vai escutando a seqüência  
que a Rocinha é chapa quente  
tá gostando? A Rocinha,  
é nós memo, mano...

H. **MCs Nine and Ten** (from the favela of Borel)

"Rap do Borel/Versão Comando"

Vou mandar esse rap com toda felicidade

Gente, essa letra é a pura realidade

Escuta massa funkeira, preste muita atenção

no rap que vai tocar e tem a consideração

pensa na eternidade não arruma confusão

paz, justiça e liberdade, muito amor no coração...

Para aqueles que se foram, nesse céu tão lindo

podes crer, eu sei que eles estão na paz!

Liberdade para todos nós, DJ!

Oi demorou pra abalar!

La la la ô, la la la uê,

chega de ser violento e deixa a paz renascer

la la la ô, la la la uê

paz, justiça liberdade, eu sou Borel somos CV

Se liga minha gente em o que nós vamos falar

é de um morro tão querido e a letra vão abalar

Isaí e Tico do Comando Vermelho

Paz, justiça e liberdade neste morro abalou

Agora minha gente nós vamos falar  
 o nome daqueles amigos que estão naquele lugar  
 é um lugar tão triste, tão triste e tão cruel  
 nós estamos falando é dos amigos do Borel...  
 olha coração, jamais vou te deixar  
 então por isso o Borel pede a liberdade já  
 o morro está tão lindo e não falta nada não  
 só está faltando é a liberdade dos irmãos.

## **II Sensual Lyrics of Tati Quebra-Barraco (of the Cidade de Deus)**

A) “Montagem assadinha – 69”

69 frango assado, de ladinho a gente gosta, 69 frango assado, de ladinho a gente gosta

Se tu não tá agüentando pára um pouquinho, tá ardendo assopra

69 frango assado de ladinho a gente gosta, 69 frango assado de ladinho a gente gosta

Se tu não agüentando para um pouquinho, tá ardendo assopra

Tá ardendo assopra, tá ardendo assopra, fica de joelho faz um biquinho e chupa

minha.....(piroca)

Tá ardendo assopra, tá ardendo assopra, fica de joelho faz um biquinho e chupa

minha.....(piroca)

b) “Montagem pidona”

Bota na cara, bota na boca, bota onde quiser,

Bota na cara, bota na boca, bota onde quiser

Bota tudo, huu e faz gostoso huu, bota tudo, huu e faz gostoso huu

Uma salada thola baby, ahaaaaaaaaaa, huu huu,

Bota na cara, bota na boca, bota onde tu quiser,

Boca na cara, bota na boca, bota onde quiser

Bota tudo, huu e faz gostoso huu, bota tudo, huu e faz gostoso huu

Uma salada thola baby, ahaaaaaaaaaa

Bota tudo, huu e faz gostoso huu, bota tudo, huu e faz gostoso huu

c) “Montagem cartão magnético”

Abre as pernas mexe e gira, abre as pernas mexe e gira, já viu como é que faz

Abre as pernas mexe e gira, abre as pernas mexe e gira, já viu como é que faz

O mané bateu com o carro, quis me levar pro mato

É na suíte do Mirante que eu quebro o meu barraco

Lugar luxuoso não entra mané, só sobe de carro que ver subir a pé

Se liga na Tati o ritmo é frenético, pra você abrir a porta só com cartão magnético...

d) “Montagem cardápio do amor”

Cardápio do amor, cardápio do amor,

Cardápio do amor, cardápio do amor, tu tem que saborear

Com vários tipos de delicias você tem que provar

Se pedir café completo, tu vai comer todinho,

com chantilli nesse corpinho vou lamber ele todinho

Na hora da refeição se você quer sua carne prepara seu espeto

é só lingüiça pra mais tarde...

e) “Montagem comigo ninguém pode”

Sou igual aquela planta, comigo ninguém pode

Já cansei de Pikachu eu quero é caçador de andróide

É ele que eu amo e o meu barraco explode

Quebra o meu, quebra o meu, quebra o meu, quebra o meu...

f) “Montagem bota na theca”

Bota na theca, bota na theca, bota na theca, vem garotinho, theca theca

Bota na theca, bota na theca, bota na theca, ahaa ahaa ahaa

Bota na theca, bota na theca, bota na theca, vem garotinho, theca theca

Bota na theca, bota na theca, bota na theca, ahaa ahaa ahaa

Bota tudo, e faz gostoso, vem garotinho

Bota tudo, e faz gostoso, ahaa ahaa ahaa..

### **III Funk Songs of the Mid-Nineties**

a) “Rap da Felicidade” (by Julinho Rasta and Kátia)

Eu só quero é ser feliz

Andar tranqüilamente na favela onde eu nasci

E poder me orgulhar e ter a consciência que o pobre tem o seu lugar

Fé em Deus, DJ

Minha cara autoridade não sei o que fazer

Com tanta violência eu sinto medo de viver  
Pois moro na favela e sou muito desrespeitado  
A tristeza e a alegria aqui caminham lado a lado  
Eu faço uma oração a uma santa protetora  
Mas sou interrompido a tiros de metralhadora  
Enquanto os ricos moram numa grande e casa bela  
O pobre é humilhado esculachado na favela  
Já não agüento mais esta onda de violência  
Só peço a autoridade um pouco mais de competência

Diversão hoje em dia não podemos nem pensar  
Pois até lá nos bailes eles vêm nos humilhar  
Fica lá na praça que era tudo tão normal  
Agora virou moda a violência no local  
Pessoas inocentes que não têm nada a ver  
Estão perdendo hoje seu direito de viver  
Nunca vi cartão-postal que se destaque uma favela  
Só vejo paisagem muito linda e muito bela  
Quem vai pro exterior da favela sente saudades  
O gringo vem aqui e não conhece a realidade  
Vai para a Zona Sul para conhecer água de coco  
E o pobre na favela passando sufoco  
Trocada a presidência uma nova esperança

Sofri na tempestade agora quero a bonança  
O povo tem a força só precisa descobrir  
Se eles lá não fazem nada faremos tudo daqui

b) “Rap das armas” (MCs Júnior and Leonardo of the favela of Rocinha)

O meu Brasil é um país tropical  
A terra do funk, a terra do carnaval  
O meu Rio de Janeiro é um cartão postal  
Mas eu vou falar de um problem nacional

Metralhadora AR-15 e muito oitão  
A Entratek com disposição  
Vem super 12 de repetição  
45 que ´um pistolão  
FMK, m-16  
A pisto UZI eu vou dizer para vocês  
Que tem 765, 762 e o fuzil da de 2 em 2

Nesse país todo mundo sabe falar  
Que favela é perigosa, lugar ruim de se morar  
É muito criticada por toda a sociedade  
Mas existe violência em todo canto da cidade  
Por falta de ensino falta de inforação

pessoas comprem armas cartuchos de munição  
se metendo em qualquer briga ou em qualquer confusão  
se sentindo protegidas com a arma na mão

vem pistola Glock, a HK  
vema intratek Granada pra detonar  
vem a caça-andróide e a famosa escopeta  
vem a pistola magnum, a Uru e a Bereta  
colt 45, um tiro s'o arrebenta  
e um fuzil automático com um pente de 90  
estamos com um problema que é a realidade  
e é por isso que eu oço paz, justiça e liberdade

Eu sou o MC Júnior, eu sou MC Leonardo  
Voltaremos com certeza pra deixar outro recado  
Para todas as galeras que acabaram de escutar  
Diga não a violência e deixe a paz reinar.

c) "Rap do Borel/da liberdade" (Willian and Duda of the favela of Borel)

Liberdade para todos nós DJ!

Demorou pra abalar...

Lalalaô, lalalauê

chega de ser violento e deixa a paz nascer

Lalalaô, lalalauê

funkeiros sangue bom somos Borel até morrer

Se liga minha gente no que nós vamos falar

é de um morro tão querido e a letra vão abalar

lá no Borel amigo é união, paz e amor

na comunidade vai pra gente abalou

o morro mais humilde o bairro Tijução

porque meus amigos nós somos todos irmãos

lá é como uma família, é gente de montão

no morro e na favela só tem gente sangue bom

porque meus amigos, lá na comunidade

nós fazemos festas em troca de amizade

é uma destas festas para os morros sangue bom

para poder fazer amizade com outros irmãos.

Agora minha gente o Willian e Duda vai falar

do morro mais humilde o endereço eu vou te dar

é uma rua linda, é na Rua São Miguel

nós estamos falando é do morro do Borel

olha meus amigos, muitos lá se foi

e isto entristeceu foi muita gente e também nós dois

foram muito amigos que foram pra o céu  
por isso William e Duda pede a paz pro Morro do Borel  
viemos cantar, para poder lembrar  
um pouco dos amigos que se foi pra nunca mais voltar  
pois o nosso mundo é azul igual o céu  
é um lugar do mundo está o Morro do Borel

Massa Tijuca escute o que vamos falar  
dos nomes mais bonitos que agora vamos citar  
Morro do Borel, o Amor e a Mineira  
Nova Holanda, e Vigário, Antári e a Mangueira  
Morro da Galinha, Cruzada, Abolição  
Andaraí, Rocinha, Iriri é o Estadão  
..... Paúna, ....., Gardênia Azul,  
Turano, Vila Kennedy, eu falei um por um  
Jacaré, Manguinho, ..... e Ar de Deus,  
nós cantamos esse rap no Unido, ele quase esqueceu,  
põe a zoação gente, pulando até suar,  
gente, nos escutar pra eles pedir pro baile não parar

Não vamos esquecer os amigos MCs  
que no Rio de Janeiro estão cantando por aí  
Garrincha e Julinho, Dande e Tafarel

ai, que bonito gente o Willian e Duda do Borel  
olha meus amigos, eu vou mandar também  
tem MC Mascote e MC Nemêm  
Infelizmente, shock, o rap vai parar aqui  
Eu sou MC William, eu sou Duda, MC  
Valeu!

d) “Rap da Rocinha” (MC Galo of the favela of Rocinha)

Quando eu saí de casa só saí com a intenção  
É de chegar no baile e as equipes dando som  
Com os grandes DJ que também é emoção  
Com as equipe maneiro agitando galerão  
Quero ouvir

Olelê, olalá, a Rocinha pede a paz pro baile não acabar  
Olelê, olalá, a Rocinha tem conceito em qualquer morro que chegar  
Só você! Só você!

É que eu sou da Rocinha e estou curtindo o clima  
Da maior favela da América Latina  
Zona Leste ou Zona Oeste, Zona Norte ou Zona Sul  
A favela número um, a rosa da Zona Sul

E pra quê tu dá porrada?

E pra quê tu dá paulada?

Pra quê soco na cara?

Isso é maior mancada

Pra quê brigar, se o futuro é amar?

É que hoje você pega e amanhã vão te pegar

A Rocinha não quer ver você caído nesse chão

Com a cara cheia de tiro e com formiga de montão

Nem andando de ambulância tampouco de rebecão

Vem pro baile meu amigo c'as equipes dando som

Mas se liga meus amigos no que agora eu vou falar

O nome das áreas que vocês vão se amarrar

Vêm a Rua Um, a Rua Dois, e a Rua Três

E também a Rua Quatro não esquece de vocês

Cachopa, Fossinho, Vila Verde e Terreirão

Cidade Nova, Curva do S, Fundação

Via Ápia, Paula Brito e Boiadeiro

Roupa Suja e o Valão sempre têm que vir primeiro

Não esquecemos também do 99, meu irmão,

É que fica do outro lado mas faz parte do morrão

Mas se liga, sangue bom, ou então preste atenção

E agora vou falar as galeras sangue bom

Galeras da Cruzada, Santa Marta e do Pavão,  
Tabajara, Mineira e a Providência, sangue bom  
Cidade Alta, Juramento, Catete e Vidigal,  
Leme e o Galo, olha aí o Serra Coral,  
Verde e rosa a Mangueira, a Primeira Estação,  
Morro dos Prazeres e a Coroa é sangue bom,  
Jacarezinho, Formiga, Macaco  
Sapê, Borel, Chácara do Céu,  
Serrinha, Pedra Lisa, Estácio e Acari  
Iriri, Icomprida e Andaraí,  
Niterói, meu amigo, olhai o Tuiuti,  
Não podemos esquecer do morro do Boa Vistão,  
que lançou aquele rap e agitou o galerão.

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