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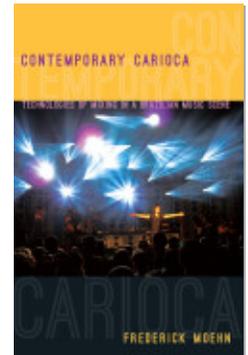
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PEDRO LUÍS AND THE WALL

TUPY ASTRONAUTS

At the same time that one has to exchange information and to mix, one must not allow genuine manifestations to be diluted, because these differences make for a good mixture.

—Pedro Luís, 26 May 1999

During a research trip to Rio de Janeiro in 2007 I stayed in an apartment located in what one local audio engineer, in reference to the proximity of a number of music recording and rehearsal facilities in this area, called the “nexus” of the South Zone music production scene. Most of this apartment (save the small bedroom in which I slept, the kitchen, and the bathroom) had been converted into a recording and mixing space called the MiniStereo Studio. Jointly owned by the guitarists and producers Junior Tostói (Lenine’s collaborator) and Rodrigo Campello, both members of Vulgus Tostoi, MiniStereo Studio features a view of the Rodrigo de Freitas lake and Ipanema from one side; in the other direction, up a steep slope, is the Corcovado, with its iconic Christ Redeemer statue. Discretion is the code in this exclusive neighborhood, where many houses are barely visible behind high walls or gates. I erred one day by leaving the street-side kitchen window at MiniStereo slightly ajar when I went out. (Although the

window did not offer a view into the recording spaces, my gracious host later remarked upon my oversight.)

On a bright August day, I walked a couple of hundred yards from the studio to the condominium of the singer-songwriter Pedro Luís, also in this hilltop neighborhood. Pedro made tea for us and we entered his small home studio to talk. Suddenly our conversation was interrupted by a loud whistling sound from the street below. “With the guest participation of the knife sharpener,” Pedro joked, by way of pointing out that the sound was captured on the digital recorder I had just turned on to document our talk. It was the ambulatory sharpener’s distinct call alerting the neighborhood to his presence. I looked out the window and saw an older man standing next to the sharpening wheel that he evidently managed to get up the hill (for it was unlikely that the man lived in this neighborhood). “We really wanted to use it on our first album,” Pedro said. “But he asked for too much. We were paying people three hundred *reais* for each guest participation; he wanted fifteen hundred. . . . The knife sharpener was too much of a ‘pop star’ for us,” Pedro chuckled.

This chapter focuses on Pedro and his band, known collectively as Pedro Luís e A Parede (Pedro Luís and The Wall), or PLAP (see figure 10). In May–June 1999, they were recording their second album, *É tudo 1 real* (Everything’s a dollar), at the nearby studio Nas Nuvens. The facility is nestled among tropical trees at a remove from the street and behind a wall with a steel door that a receptionist unlocks after verifying via intercom a visitor’s identity and the reason for his or her visit. The street is blocked to unauthorized traffic by a guarded gate. During breaks in PLAP’s recording sessions at Nas Nuvens I conducted interviews with the band members and Liminha, their producer for part of this album, and co-owner of the facility. I also attended live shows of the band that year. During my subsequent visit in 2007, I conducted follow-up interviews with Pedro and the PLAP percussionist Sidon Silva, and I attended rehearsals, workshops, and shows of their parallel musical project, Monobloco.

The singer, songwriter, and guitarist Pedro Luís was among the musicians whom journalist Mário Marques identified as making what he called *música popular carioca*, or MPC, in a 1998 article for the *Globo* (see introduction). These artists, Marques suggested, sought to balance “the charms of the South Zone” with the “blemishes of the suburbs” in their lyrics (as if Rio’s charms and blemishes were so neatly divisible). Pedro was the first to emerge from this group, he wrote, with PLAP’s *Astronauta Tupy* (Tupy astro-



naut) of 1997. Another journalist represented Pedro Luís as a “voice of the street” who is interested in “the Rio that pulsates outside of the barred condominium windows” (Tinoco 1999). How did Pedro find his voice and sound, and how did he come to lead PLAP? How do this group’s music and the views of its members on the central themes of this book shed light on Carioca identity and social relations, particularly through the key metaphors of pressure, *suingue*, *batucada*, mixture, and the “Tupy astronaut”? What was the influence on this band of the manguê beat scene and the new-found vogue for folkloric musical traditions of the Northeast? What is the relationship between manifestations of live music making and this group’s trajectory as a pop-rock band that also, of course, produces studio albums? How did the members of PLAP hone their management skills?

As the only band profiled in this book, PLAP offers the opportunity to consider ensemble dynamics. Specifically, I discuss how the group conceptualized their shift away from the rock drum kit toward the use of Brazilian percussion as a key aspect of their stage show. In association with this shift, I examine the group’s engagement with samba, which culminated in the success of the Monobloco project, a hybrid of samba instructional workshop, carnival bloco, pop stage show, and recording ensemble that the members of PLAP founded and continue to run. PLAP’s approach

to ensemble playing bears comparison with Charles Keil's preference for music that is full of "participatory discrepancies" (PDs), music that prioritizes process, groove, texture, and timbral heterogeneity over the "deferred gratification" of melodic-harmonic tensions (1987, 1995, 2002a, 2002b). For PLAP, the desire to "lay a groove in that eternal search for the perfect mantra," as the band's bassist, Mário Moura, put it during our interview, to perform with *suingue* (swing), to affirm "life-groove-play-party-pleasure-joy in the here and now" (Keil 2002b, 40), and to get their hands on as many acoustic instruments as they could took them deeper and deeper into discrepantly participatory forms of music making, and into samba especially. Their latest album, *Ponto enredo*, produced by Lenine, is in fact a pop tribute to the "sacredness" of samba and Afro-diasporic traditions.

Like Keil, the members of PLAP speak of the alienating and dehumanizing effects of market forces and globalization. They too have looked to musical forms that emerged in working-class communities for participatory inspiration. But there are also distinctly local dynamics of race, class, place, and nation that contour their musical practices. Mixture, as a method for increasing musical heterogeneity, can itself be thought of as a kind of discrepant way for PLAP—and other musicians in this scene—to participate in globalization, and they have a lot to say about it. Keil's dichotomous and intensely personal theorization of PDs through what he unabashedly refers to as a "Black vs. West" dialectic (2002a, 146; see Gaunt 2002 for a thoughtful critique) renders "groovology" an engaging but problematic framework for analysis, perhaps especially when taken out of the context of the United States, not to mention out of the "wild" (Keil 2002a, 142) and into the recording studio.

Also concerned with the distinctive dynamics of participatory music making, Thomas Turino (2008) proposes a framework of *fields* in which live performance practices are contrasted with recorded music making. He divides the former into the participatory field, in which all present take part in the performance or at least are free to do so if they wish (basically either in a musical role or as a dancer; Turino acknowledges inspiration from Keil for this one), and the "presentational," in which a clear distinction between musicians and the audience is drawn. The fields associated with recording practices are divided into those in which the role of technology is primarily oriented toward the capture of acoustically performed sounds—"high-fidelity" recording (more specifically, in which aesthetics of liveness influence the way sounds are recorded)—and those in which the

relationship to live participatory music making is largely severed—“studio audio art.” This typology can be helpful for sorting out some of the social values at stake in the developments examined in this chapter. In theory, each field of cultural production has value for those acting in it (although it is clear that Turino himself places highest value on participatory music making), and a given musical setting may draw from more than one field or may shift among them as values and goals change.

PLAP did not negate rock, pop, or technology in favor of live acoustic group music making, as Keil might prefer (nor have they ignored melodic-harmonic tension, especially on their most recent album). Rather, they found new ways to allow live and mediated (that is, recorded) fields of musicking to enrich each other. The “pressure” or “heaviness” of rock music in the 1970s was a strong attraction for these musicians during their youth, and as adults they called upon aspects of that sound in their project to invigorate Brazilian pop music. The samba schools also had that pressure, they felt, owing to the intense volume and full sound generated when so many drummers—sometimes over two hundred—perform together. “What is more rock and roll than a samba school?” PLAP drummer C. A. Ferrari asked me rhetorically. “What rocker,” he said, “if you put him in the middle of a samba school, wouldn’t be impressed with the sound?” The band describes their music as “batucada with rock ’n’ roll pressure” (*batucada* typically refers to the percussion-driven grooves of Rio samba; it derives from *batuque*, an old generic term for Afro-Brazilian dance and drumming; see, e.g., Cascudo 1999, 58–59). This dual articulation also distinguishes their efforts from the middle-class phenomenon of revivalism that Tamara Livingston (1999) has described (such as the comparatively more tradition-oriented choro scene in Rio), or that Turino has found in old-time music and dance (2008, 155–88), even while the members of PLAP do value the preservation of musical traditions.

Turino’s categories of musical practices thus usefully point to the specific goals that different spheres of music making may realize; however, his schematic (presented in a table as a continuum from participatory to studio audio art [2008, 90–91]) also seems to posit competing values as already constituted rather than emergent—as representing specific, primary, and theoretically incompatible ideals of which subjects are aware and to which they consciously aspire (even though Turino grants that these fields are not necessarily mutually exclusive). The examples of PLAP and the associated Monobloco project, I believe, reveal a richly complex web—a rhizome, per-

haps—of sometimes competing, sometimes complementary, and often ambiguous values, goals, and contingencies that may or may not coalesce into “lines of flight” (and that sometimes generate failure) but that in any case present social “cartographies,” to use Deleuze’s term. In their clarity, Turino’s terms serve as guideposts of specific musical-aesthetic mappings, but there is also more going on, or sometimes not going on, despite individuals’ desires. And there is a messiness to things.

Pedro’s Early Listening and Music Making

Pedro Luís Teixeira de Oliveira was born in Rio in 1960 to a Carioca father and a Portuguese mother who lived in a middle-class community in the Tijuca neighborhood. He grew up with eight siblings and described his childhood home as full of music, including regular singing and guitar playing, as well as listening to classical music, MPB, North American pop, and rock on radio stations such as Radio Tamoio AM, Radio Nacional FM, and Radio Eldorado FM. Radio Eldorado FM, he recalled, played progressive rock such as Yes and Led Zeppelin in the early 1970s. Pedro was attracted to the “big” sound of these bands, but especially “the sonority, the grooves, the instrumental pressure” of the English band Deep Purple: “It was heavy rock ’n’ roll played really well, and well recorded. . . . Here in Brazil, good recording did not exist at the time . . . and this hormonal energy of the adolescent went very well with that heavy sound, a kind of masculine energy, you know. So it was the combination of these things—good execution, the heaviness, and good recording—that impressed us.”¹ Live local music making, however, was equally important to Pedro’s musical foundation. There were neighborhood guitar players and carnival blocos to be heard on his street, and his home was near the morro where one of Rio’s major samba schools, Salgueiro, is located.

At school Pedro sang in choirs, including Cobra Coral (Choral Snake), which earned some notice after appearing on television and recording an independent album. With high school friends he formed his first group, Meio-Fio (Curb), in which he sang and played guitar. In the early 1980s, as the rock scene was taking shape among middle-class youths in Rio, Pedro formed a band called Urge, which mixed rock with samba rhythms and with the viola caipira steel-stringed guitar associated with rural musical traditions. He was also part of an ensemble called Paris 400, which provided the music for an experimental theater troupe called Asdrúbal Trouxe

o Trombone (Asdrúbal Brought the Trombone). In the 1990s he began to take on the role of musical director of local groups, such as the wacky pop ensemble Boato (Rumor).² For a run of shows at a new restaurant in the South Zone, Pedro put together a cover band with Arícia Mess as lead singer, Mário Moura on bass, C. A. Ferrari on drums, and Sidon Silva on percussion (with repertoire from artists such as Sade, the Beatles, Aretha Franklin, and Etta James). The instrumentalists in this ensemble began developing a conceptualization of what they call *batucada*, giving new meaning to this general term for Afro-Brazilian drumming by applying it specifically to, as Mário put it, the practice of “using percussion not as an effect,” but instead placing it “in the front line, driving the sound together with the guitar and bass.”³

When Pedro was subsequently invited to perform at an experimental poetry event, he utilized this group (minus Arícia, for whom he substituted as lead singer). They continued experimenting with the sound of *batucada*, but their repertoire focused on Pedro’s original compositions.⁴ The drummer and percussionist Celso Alvim also joined them. As a teacher at a local school (ProArt), Celso had systematized into study guides rhythms from genres such as *maracatu*, *samba*, and *maculelê* (a Bahian dance). His expertise complemented the band’s developing idea of “taking the drum kit apart and having three drummers performing the lows, mids, and highs,” that is, distinct parts distributed into specific frequency ranges, analogous to Marcos Suzano’s interest in adapting to his pop music performances the general contours of the arrangement of percussive sounds in the Afro-Brazilian *Candomblé* practice.

Batucada and The Wall

PLAP’s instrumentation, C. A. Ferrari explained, was inspired by the *forró* trio of the *zabumba* bass drum, triangle, and accordion; by the marching of the *samba* percussion corps (*baterias*) in carnival; and finally by rock, in the sense that it was functionally related to the “power trio” of electric bass, drum kit, and guitar, but elaborated by five musicians instead. An additional motivation for breaking the rock drum kit apart and instead using three percussionists pertained to showmanship: they wanted the entire group to be able to move around the stage and dance, following the traditional practice of the *bandas de pífano* of the Northeast. When, at the rehearsal for the aforementioned poetry event, Pedro asked the band

members to line up on the stage at the end of the show “like a wall,” the band found its name. Celso Alvim and C. A. Ferrari elaborated on their approach to instrumentation and performance.

CA: When you take the drum kit apart, if you are thinking in a Brazilian manner, the low frequencies will end up on . . . the zabumba or the surdo. So we began to work with these timbres, with these drums, and we began discovering the nuances within this arrangement. The zabumba has x possibility, the various sizes of surdo too have different timbres, different sounds. You cannot play phrases with a surdo [tuned] very low. It’s more for making long notes, for example, for marking the first beat of a bar. For a surdo that cuts more [i.e., that can improvise rhythmic variations], you can tune it a bit higher . . . to have less resonance, and you discover that there are things that function well for getting a good sound out of that particular surdo, playing it lightly, [while for] other things, you need to bang it hard. And that’s how it started and it became a characteristic of our sound.

FM: [So] with the drum kit you have one person playing the various parts, but in this instance you have more bodies, more people, each one with a specific part.

CA: Yeah, we even joke that there were three drummers but only one job opening, so we wrote a percussion arrangement to employ the three of us [laughs]. . . . But it is not just about reproducing the drum kit.

CAF: No drummer has six arms.

CA: Yeah . . . we create some grooves that go beyond this idea of just breaking down the drum kit. There is also the thing of sections, a section of surdos, which has a sound that a single surdo doesn’t have, or even if you record in several separate channels one person playing the three surdo parts, it just won’t have the same sound as recording five people together and on five different drums. So we use the idea of the section a lot.

CAF: The proportional “out-of-tune-ness” of one drum to another creates a different kind of tuning that only that section playing together will have—the interferences of one instrument with another.

FM: And this is something you look for?

CA: It is what already exists, for example, in a samba school, that effect of the collectivity—*massaroca*, we call it, not just in the samba school, in various other things. You can even see the way the people from samba record, everyone together in the room, and it has that *massaroca*, the sound of one invading the sound of another. So we incorporate this dirtiness, and it's a characteristic of our sound.

For music “to be personally involving and socially valuable,” Keil wrote when he introduced his concept of PDS, it “must be ‘out of time’ and ‘out of tune’” (1987, 275). Clearly, the percussionists were talking about the same phenomenon here.⁵

It is noteworthy, however, that the members of PLAP were seeking some of the “dirtiness” of samba percussion performance around the same time that in Brazil’s premier samba recording studio (Companhia dos Técnicos), also in Rio de Janeiro, the producers of the annual carnival samba album sought precisely to edit out certain elements associated with the *massaroca* (a word that suggests the sound of “the masses,” say, at a soccer game or at carnival) of the live event in their efforts to reach radio audiences for pagode samba and sell more albums. In the latter case, the producers were concerned that too much sonic “dirtiness” or “mess” would make the CD less marketable; PLAP, on the other hand, wanted some of what they regarded as the sonic grit of the collectivity who live, play music, and dance in greater proximity than what is typical of the comparatively privatized, gated spaces of the more privileged areas of the South Zone. In effect, this case approaches—from sort of the opposite direction—the same “schismogenetically mimetic” dynamic I analyzed in “The Disc Is Not the Avenue” (2005), wherein “the avenue” was the metaphor the samba producers used to index the participatory live carnival event, and the disc (that is, the CD) symbolized a commercial product for radio airplay (although there are some differences in the kinds of “dirtiness” and “messiness” that were at stake in the different settings).

Mário Moura elaborated further on the band’s choice of instrumentation for the *batucada*. The kick drum in a rock kit is a dry sound, but the *surdo*, he said, pounding his fist on his breast, “beats much more here in the chest because of its resonance.” C. A., he continued, plays the first and second *surdo* parts from samba, “boom, boom, boom, boom,” in which the two drums, usually tuned an interval of a fifth apart and one generally larger than the other, alternate the two downbeats in duple meter. In some instances, depending on how a given instrument in the *batucada* is played,

the band member may have a hand free to strike something else, multiplying the timbres and rhythmic accents. Sidon's "gigantic hi-hat" and snare drum, and Celso's various tin cans helped "fill in the spaces."

PLAP also integrate unconventional instruments (as well as traditional ones used in unconventional ways) into their concept of *batucada*. They like to use instruments, Pedro said, that can handle their way of playing loudly, with "limited technique," and with a "heavy hand." Inspired in part by the guru of Brazilian improvisatory music Hermeto Pascoal—who is known to play music on anything—the percussionists in PLAP utilize objects such as hoes, hubcaps, metal signs, a piece of the floor from a bus, and a beer keg that they brought back from Japan. They saw their project as partly building on the work of Marcos Suzano, Jovi Joviniano, and Carlos Negrinhos in their percussion ensemble *Baticum* (see chapter 1), and of Chico Science and Nação Zumbi in Recife. Another aspect of their *batucada* pertains to the use of natural drumheads instead of the manufactured nylon ones that have become standard in samba drum corps. "The sound of the skin is *very special*," Mário reflected. "It sounds different, it sounds more alive, maybe it has more of the spirit of the animal that the skin comes from, I don't know, but something cool happens [*rola uma bossa*]. You play a *pandeiro* with nylon and then one with cowhide, you *feel* a difference there . . . and this is reflected in the sound."

The ensemble also often regards the *batuque* of what Pedro is playing on the *violão* as more important than the specific notes. It was as if Pedro were playing a *pandeiro* at times, Mário explained, rather than the guitar. This emphasis on *batucada* left the harmonic dimension of the music less fleshed out; Mário tries to bridge rhythm and harmony on the bass while finding a distinct sonic place for it relative to the *surdo*. This requires a different approach from playing with a drum kit, as it is more like "playing with three drummers." Moreover, since the *surdo* and the bass can sound very similar when played simultaneously, the group conceptualizes either the *surdo* in front of the arrangement with the bass responding to it or the inverse. The idea was sort of like "I am where you are not," Mário noted, echoing a practice typical of funk arrangements. Using a five-string instrument with an additional string below the customary four, Mário likes to keep his bass parts very low in the pitch range. "I like the fifth string too much," he admitted. "I'd even take the other four off." Not interested in soloing, Mário was into *groove*. It could be two notes, he said, "but you can play them for three days without stopping."

Suingue

Christiane Gerischer (2006) analyzed the “microrhythmic phrasing” of samba and Candomblé drumming that she recorded in Bahia, seeing these as a form of participatory discrepancy. Using computer software and Nazir Jairazbhoy’s NUTS system of notating time durations (Jairazbhoy 1983), she demonstrated how percussionists do not articulate four even subdivisions (“pulses,” typically sixteenth notes) of the steady downbeats but instead generally shorten the second pulse (or sixteenth note) and lengthen, especially, the fourth one that anticipates the next downbeat. This, combined with the fact that there are temporal micro-variations between the various percussion parts as well, creates the *suingue baiano*, the swing of Bahia. Over the years, I have heard musicians in Rio de Janeiro articulate a similar idea. One such discussion occurred when I interviewed the members of PLAP about their song “Caio no suingue” (I fall into the swing), to which I return in the following pages. The carioca rhythmic suingue is sometimes explained in terms of a kind of compromise (in a neutral sense) between quadruple and triple subdivisions of the beat.

According to Celso Alvim, this phenomenon occurred when the band recorded the song “Menina bonita” (Pretty girl), on PLAP’s second album. They recorded an initial loop of caixa, surdo, and pandeiro, but when they tried to quantize it on the computer—that is, to lock the live tracks to an evenly subdivided digital pulse—they found that the groove did not correspond to a triplet or to a sixteenth-note pulse (assuming a quarter-note beat). “It’s in between, in the middle,” he observed, “but it is right there. That is what works in that moment.” Thus, C. A. added, it is what happens in between two notes that is important for the swing. “In the space in between there is a variation that is neither this nor that [*ninguem de ninguem*],” he said. “It is the territory in between the two,” Celso added. “It’s not sixteenth–eighth–sixteenth, nor is it triplets. . . . You take a guy from samba who never studied music . . . someone of the people, that’s what you get. That’s the accent of the sixteenth note in Brazil.” He had observed this phenomenon in the drumming at a Candomblé ritual he attended and in the tamborim (a small frame drum) patterns of the large samba school baterias.⁶

More metaphorically, C. A. described suingue as a “breath,” and every place, every person, and every kind of music as having “its own breathing.” Two people might play the same two notes in the same place, “but

the distance between them will be interpreted differently. . . . Each person interprets silence differently.” Sidon offered a different interpretation of *suingue* as a woman walking down the street *sambando* (i.e., moving in a samba rhythm). “That’s where the *suingue* is,” C. A. concurred, and indeed, if the “heavy” sound of rock and *batucada* tends to be associated with an aggressive masculinity, *suingue* may bear connotations of the female body and feminine sexuality in Rio. The bassist Mário Moura introduced yet another metaphor that he associated with *suingue*: “You have to have a certain *malandragem* to have *suingue*,” he said, “and to be a *malandro*, you’ve got to have *suingue*,” referring to the rogue-like archetype featured in many of the classic sambas of the 1930s and 1940s. It means being savvy. “It’s . . . knowing how to arrive in any place, any kind of environment,” Sidon added, while C. A. affirmed that *malandragem* is “knowing how to get along with various types of people, the idea of knowing how to deal with any kind of situation,” because there is “always a big mixture of people.”

If some of this seems vague, it is worth noting that Gerischer’s interviewees in Bahia spoke in similar terms (for example, that what one does with one’s body between articulations on an instrument is important, similar to C. A.’s idea of breath). As an ensemble, PLAP prizes this kind of *suingue* and the associated syncopations (on offbeat sixteenth notes, what Gerischer refers to as “double-time off beats”): it was precisely what had been removed from the commercial *pagode* popular at the time, Pedro thought. “Everything’s on top of the beat, there’s not a single syncopation,” he exaggerated. “And that’s it for the samba.” Of course, some people might disagree with Pedro on this matter, including several of those interviewed by Gerischer, but the point here is that PLAP felt they were tapping into a kind of “authentic” Brazil they saw threatened by vulgar commodification symbolized by the massive sales that *pagode* was garnering. The concept of *suingue*, in sum, speaks to how syncopations are articulated and beats subdivided in music in ways that suggest physical movement, but also more metaphorically in the local context as a kind of ability to use to one’s advantage the indeterminacy or ambiguity that may arise in social “mixing,” or that inhabits the (musical) middle ground. As Prögler concluded about swing in jazz, it is about “participation and play, about ‘touch’ and feeling your way” (1995, 50).⁷

The Tupy Astronaut

While *suingue* and the discrepant grooves of participatory music making can be talked about cross-culturally, the members of PLAP framed their broader musical methodology in relation to the established national discourses. Pedro called his music “absurdly mixed” and reprised the assertion that this is a cultural tradition that goes back to the arrival of the Europeans and the beginnings of Brazilian miscegenation. “What is most Brazilian is already mixed,” he said, and he stated flatly that his is “the country of mixture.” I wondered if the band members had familial connections with the Northeast, and our discussion about what parts of Brazil their parents were from demonstrates the tendency to talk at an “embodied level,” as Peter Wade found in Colombia, of how individuals are constituted in terms of “blood” and heritage, and to conceptualize “personal traits and abilities” such as musicality in terms of a racialized (or ethnicized) view of history (2004, 362). After C. A. Ferrari noted that his family was from the Northeast, Sidon Silva joined in the conversation to say that his mother was from the state of Goiás, and his father from Alagoas (“the land of musician Hermeto Pascoal”).

CA: My grandmother was also from Alagoas, and the father of my mother from Bahia. The father of my father is from Minas Gerais. And my great-grandmother was [Amer-] Indian and married a Dutchman. My other great-grandmother . . . married an Italian immigrant. That is to say, it is mixture from way back.

ss: Miscegenation. Brazil is all about this. It is all mixed race.

CA: There does not exist a pure race in Brazil.

ss: We are mongrels [*vira-lata*]. . . . And we are all Carioca, in this band.

Such talk may evoke well-trod narratives about Brazilian national culture (with Rio as a kind of epicenter of mixture, and with difference simultaneously preserved), but it also serves as a basic framework through which to rationalize the band’s fusions not as radical breaks with the past but rather as perfectly consistent with what—in their view and in mainstream discourse—it means to be Brazilian. As such, it seems to have taken on heightened significance in the mid- to late 1990s as subjects found themselves increasingly anxious about the potential pitfalls of processes of

globalization. That is to say, mixing elements of local or national cultural practices (such as timbral, textural, processual, and performative PDS from forró or samba) into the kinds of presentational pop-rock forms that Thomas Turino calls “cosmopolitan” (2000; 2008) provides a counterbalance to potentially alienating or homogenizing forces of (neoliberal) globalization. It remains important, Pedro said, “for you to have your national pride in order to preserve your characteristics and territory” from the economically powerful countries that have tended to exercise more control over cultural flows. There is so much information available through the communications media, and if you lack consciousness of where you live, of your culture, Celso added, “your identity may disappear.” One might think of oneself “as a citizen of the world,” he cautioned, but one can end up “not being from anywhere.”

Since this act of preservation—resistance, if you will—was accomplished through purposeful mixture, it was possible “to preserve the particular stories of your life” without rancor or the kind of xenophobia that holds that if you use an electric guitar, it is no longer Brazilian music, Pedro said, referencing a debate going back to the *Jovem Guarda* and *Tropicália* movements of the 1960s. Had music from the United States “colonized” the world? I asked the percussionists. “Totally,” Celso affirmed. “And I think it’s a great thing,” C. A. cheerfully added as he fell back—although with a degree of irony—on some stereotypes about cultural production in Brazil and the United States.

CAF: Americans have such discipline when it comes to music— not just in music but in everything. . . . But there is a bunch of good stuff here [too], which is our tribal music, without any discipline at all, extremely rustic, intuitive, [which we] ally with the discipline of American music, man. We ourselves make a music that is . . . completely filled with American music. . . . You mix good things from all over the place . . .

CA: This whole process also has to do with you knowing what it is you want. In our case, it is mixture; we are not interested in playing samba in a traditional way, or in playing funk completely American. It is precisely this mixture—

CAF: Because we play both things badly [laughter]. So we play somewhat bad samba, with somewhat bad rock, and it’s already something else, understand?⁸

As noted previously, Chico Science and his band Nação Zumbi (CSNZ) were central to the process of reestablishing national pride among middle-class youths who, we might argue, had become alienated from Brazilian music during the 1980s, when rock predominated, and disillusioned with inept and corrupt politics in the early 1990s. PLAP certainly saw their project as building on the momentum sparked by CSNZ and the so-called mangue beat. (There is some similarity in the band names.) If CSNZ “discovered that hip-hop has everything to do with maracatu,” C. A. pointed out, PLAP found that “rock ’n’ roll has everything to do with samba schools.” The point is that Chico Science “researched this space in between . . . [and] knew very well how to translate” (my emphasis). Specifically, they “opened the ears” of middle-class youths to folkloric genres like forró, baião, carimbó, *bumba-meu-boi* (a folk tale of the North and Northeast that is performed to music), ciranda, and maracatu—which they may previously have regarded as signs of underdevelopment—placed “in the middle of pop music.”⁹

As part of their own research the percussionists recorded some of the rhythms from the music performed at an Umbanda ritual (similar to Candomblé, but more common in Rio de Janeiro and southern Brazil). They utilized part of this recording on the track “Cabôco,” which ends their first album. (“Cabôco” refers to an Amerindian spirit in Umbanda, also written as *caboclo*.) For that track, the percussionists “sought to produce something closer to the authentic story,” Celso explained. PLAP did things mixed, he said, but with a sense of the contexts in which specific musical genres emerged: “When I speak about what I know about Candomblé, I mean a specific person, Mestre Caboclinho, with whom I studied, who played Candomblé during a certain period in Rio de Janeiro. [If someone says], ‘Ah, you know about maracatu,’ [what I know is] Nacão Pernambuco, who are some guys from Recife who play maracatu today. . . . It’s necessary for you to specify exactly what it is so that people begin to situate things. . . . If you have the notion of where each thing comes from in the history, you can situate what it is that you are hearing.” Bearing in mind this understanding of a certain kind of authenticity as historically and socially contingent rather than fixed, C. A. affirmed of his band: “We don’t play authentic samba, we don’t play authentic forró, we don’t play authentic rock.” Yet there is an authenticity in their project of “being real,” of saying, “I like this, this is my reality.” For Sidon, “good music” is music “made from the heart,” not, he implied, invented for the market.

This concept of authenticity is like the one developed by Turino in Music

as *Social Life*, where he describes how “given practices that serve as signs of identity may be understood as authentic when they are the result of habits that are actually part of the person producing those signs,” or, in the Peircean terminology that Turino uses, as “dicent articulations of the distinct cultural positions of participants” (2008, 161–62). Although Turino notes that this kind of argument can be used “to justify cultural appropriation, where members of dominant groups take up the traditions of less powerful groups and alternately claim them as their own,” this risk is “partially alleviated . . . precisely by being clear about the nature of the tradition being performed” (162), as the members of PLAP were in our conversation.

The image of the Tupy astronaut, which would be the title of PLAP’s first album (and the title of one of Pedro’s songs, released on their second album), illustrates Pedro’s approach to musical research and mixture. The Tupy were the indigenous group that populated the area that became Rio de Janeiro state, and that have been mythologized as quintessential cannibals of the Other. The idea was to pair the most advanced technologies of discovery with this kind of ur-anthropophagist to suggest “a being who is an explorer of a contemporary space,” but who also looks to “foundations” for creative inspiration. The Tupy astronaut can thus be understood as an updated riff on Oswald de Andrade’s modernist cannibal of the late 1920s, previously adapted by the *Tropicália* musicians in the late 1960s. Indeed, Pedro’s song “Seres Tupy” (Tupy beings), from that first album, specifically evokes Andrade’s line from his “Cannibalist Manifesto”: “Tupy, or not tupy that is the question.” (Pedro’s version is equally existential, but it introduces the problem of poverty as a dehumanizing force: “Beings or not beings / That is the question / . . . / From Porto Alegre to Acre / Poverty just changes its accent.”) Even in 2007 the image of the Tupy astronaut still framed Pedro’s work: “It is my motivation. Whatever project I am involved with will have this as one of its bases. Such research is inspiring . . . in terms of what is traditional, as well as contemporary manifestations. . . . I have a messy, nonlinear background—I went to two universities and didn’t finish either. I studied literature and music, both of them only halfway. So in reality my salvation is research, to search at the sources, and in goings-on [*acontecimentos*]. And not necessarily in music—it can be in literature, in cinema. . . . But the research is fundamental, although it is not formal.” Before discussing the *Monobloco* project, which was still more participatory, I turn to the recorded fields.

From Presentational/Participatory Ensemble to Studio Band

For their first album, *Astronauta Tupy* (Tupy astronaut), released in 1997 on the independent label Dubas Música, PLAP played all the basic tracks live as an ensemble in the recording studio, and then “built a structure on top of that” without knowing “where things would go,” Mário Moura explained. “The idea was to capture that mess that we did in shows,” he added, “capture it electronically, and transfer that to a CD.” This description matches what Turino would label a high-fidelity recording, wherein “what is worked out for live performance influences what is recorded” (2008, 68). Stated in a more technical manner, in the field of high fidelity, recording practices are organized around an ideology that favors a representational relationship between live performance and the signs of liveness in the resulting studio sound (a relationship of *dicent* in Peircean terminology [Turino 2008, 67]).¹⁰

However, the transition to album was not merely one of capturing the band’s live sound; there was also the building of the “structure on top of that.” Their producer was Tom Capone, whom I introduced in the previous chapter; they recorded at AR Studios. Band members knew him before he became an executive at Warner Music because Mário Moura had played bass in his short-lived rock group Rotnitxe; they had become close friends. Tom was able to *seduce* “a structure like Warner,” Pedro believed, because he could release more adventurous albums alongside comparatively mainstream recordings (such as Maria Rita’s first CD, which received several Grammy nominations). Tom was “deft with the modern languages of recording and mixing”; in fact, he had a reputation in this scene for exploring “the extremes of each piece of equipment, of each technological resource,” in Pedro’s words. (Tom claimed that the first thing he would do with any device he bought was throw away the manual.) He would show up at recording sessions, “drop a grenade, and then leave,” Pedro recalled, meaning that Tom would make comments that made the band members “look at things differently” and take the sound “in another direction” as they embraced the creative possibilities of studio work, in contrast to the presentational priorities of the live setting.¹¹

Tom taught the musicians in PLAP how to translate their “presentational” performance with its aspects of “participatory” aesthetics into the pop-rock album format by settling them into a characteristic and more consistent sound as a band on the recorded medium, and by introducing them to the world of studio technology (without moving them into the

field of “studio audio art,” which, in Turino’s conception, describes “recorded music that is patently a studio form with no suggestion or expectation that it should or even could be performed live in real time” [2008, 78]). Importantly, Tom did this without “exercising power” over the band but instead working with them on offbeat ideas. While most recording label executives are “very bureaucratic, or technicians, or economists,” Pedro complained, Tom was a skilled musician and producer who also happened to understand “the commercial mechanism” very well. He represented for the members of PLAP a subject who could navigate the music industry and the market without surrendering his ability to act as a creative agent, and who had control over the technology that he manipulated. He alleviated potential anxieties about the commodification and commercialization of their project, recognizing band members’ desires instead of crudely imposing industry priorities. This experience, however, altered the way PLAP approached live performance, reinforcing the interdependence between the two domains of music making.

The song “Caio no suingue” from this album is a fine example of the band’s pop batucada. It begins with the driving rhythms of caixas with surdo punctuation in a samba-reggae hybrid groove (similar to the samba-reggae popular in Salvador, Bahia), and it does indeed have the “pressure” of rock to the extent that the sound of “the wall” is loud, “tight” (i.e., “compressed,” in audio terminology, or electronically limited to a dynamic range that is kept at a high volume), and in the front plane of the mix. It is “in your face,” if you will. There is also a “rocked-out” break in the middle that abandons the samba-reggae groove and adds distorted electric guitar. Lyrically, the song emphasizes the melodic refrain: “I fall into swing to console myself / You know this life is not easy / I do this to hang on,” while the verses are essentially rapped. Arícia Mess joins Pedro for an assertive rapping of the repeat of the verses, while a call-and-response section at the end of the song between Pedro’s sung repetition of the refrain and a shouted counterpart from the band members adds to the sense of pressure. The lyrics describe the song as a funk “shot from a cannon,” a “burst from a machine gun,” to announce that Brazil is being “ambushed” by “the most unjust division.” Although the song does not specify, it seems evident that Pedro means social divisions and inequality. His protest, Pedro sings, is in the form of a prayer: “Ave Mother, children, cousins / Spirits that inhabit the planet / Make your vote, write verses, get an attitude / To change things, because it’s gotten really bad.”

Suingue here indexes, first of all, the samba-reggae-like groove, full of

the kinds of PDs Gerischer described for *suingue baiano*, but also the corporeal meanings associated with, as Mário Moura put it, “the swing of the swaying (*balanço*), the *suingue brasileira*.” In fact, when it came time to film a video for the song, they exploited the sexual meaning of the term “swing.” In the video the musicians appear nude (with their genitals covered by musical instruments, such as a hubcap for percussion), along with dozens of their friends, also naked. (The idea for this approach came from the video director.) They dance around, bump into each other, roll and writhe on the floor to suggest “swingers,” but there is nothing overtly sexual about the imagery. Indeed, there are also naked children playing and a mother nursing a baby. It is the mother, the children, the cousins, and the spirits that inhabit the planet, exposed in their bodily diversity (although most of the bodies are rather light skinned). It was not, Mário specified, an erotic clip, “except for the eroticism that the body itself maintains.” It was a “naturalist” video, in which the “nudity has an aesthetic function.”¹² What was this function? Could it have been a kind of “falling” into Keil’s “life-groove-play-party-pleasure-joy in the here and now” (2002b, 40), into humanistic participation as a form of consolation?

The track “Tudo vale a pena” (Everything is worth it), which Pedro co-composed with Fernanda Abreu, is a laid-back, shuffled, bluesy two-chord vamp, with Fernanda as a guest singer. The lyrics describe the happiness, musicality, and *suingue* that Pedro believed coexisted with poverty in Rio de Janeiro. Rio was experiencing a civil war, he lamented, “between the traffickers and the rest of the population.” Yet even so, it was not Kosovo. It was not Yugoslavia in 1999, he said, when the war was raging there, where ethnic divisions were “so deeply rooted that sometimes the people don’t even know why they’re fighting.” Rio is a city of “almost mythical” poverty, Pedro sings in the song, of heat and struggle that are partly offset by the festive nature of a people who love to fall into samba, to dance funk, who have *suingue* even in the way they look, and in the groove in their step. “Who thinks that there aren’t treasures in the favela” or that “misery doesn’t smile?” the lyrics ask rhetorically. “You see so much beauty too,” Pedro said, “and sometimes the poverty seems lighter.”

The refrain “Everything is worth it / your soul is not small” plays on the words of the celebrated Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935). In Pessoa’s “*Mar português*” (“Portuguese Sea”), the poet wrote, “Tudo vale a pena / se a alma não é pequena,” that is, “Everything is worth it / if the soul is not small.” The songwriters altered “*se a alma*” (“if the soul”) to “*sua*

alma” (“your soul”), which is phonetically similar but changes the meaning to an affirmation: “Your saints are strong / I love your smile / South Zone or North Zone / your rhythm is necessary / So everything is worth it, your soul is not small.” These lyrics potentially expose Pedro to the criticism that he has an overly rosy view of working-class life in Brazil. However, such a reading seems facile; he is obviously aware that his experience of Rio is radically different from that of the city’s poorest citizens, and that he cannot speak for the working classes. Without discounting Pedro’s own class position, the lyrics can be read as affirming Rio’s ability to swing during a period when the media dwelled on the rising violence, drug trafficking, and hardship of life in the favelas (and the threat that these posed to middle-class citizens).¹³

Another song, “Pena da vida” (Life sentence), is a criticism of the death penalty. It is an older song that Pedro performed with his band Urge and with Arícia Mess, and it became a kind of standard in the South Zone music scene as various other bands in Rio also performed it. (It even became a hit in Japan in 1998 after PLAP toured there.) In PLAP’s version, this song is treated as a rowdy rock-funk with an almost shouted call-and-response between Pedro and the band members on the refrains, a “wah-wah” effect on the guitar, and the Hammond B3 organ (performed by the guest musician Maurício Barros) adding a gospel-like dimension to this mini-manifesto. “I am in favor of the life sentence,” Pedro sings. A convicted criminal should “go to jail and pay dearly” but “pay alive.” PLAP’s music was not precisely activist (*engajada*), Celso noted in one of our interviews, but the group shared a general concern with improving conditions of living, working, and human relations.

Cleaning up the Pressure with Liminha

For their second album, *É tudo 1 real*, which is the one they were working on when I first interviewed members of the band, they recorded at Nas Nuvens with Liminha. By now, the band had “a more commercial objective,” Mário observed at the time, and PLAP arrived in the studio with various ideas for the recording. How would this “more commercial” project be executed? With Liminha producing, the musicians discerned that their sound still had “a lot of pressure,” Mário said, but it was “a clean pressure.” With Tom, by contrast, “it was a dirty pressure, with more noise, more impurity.” Neither was better, Mário diplomatically added; they were just

different. So the new sound was less messy? I asked him. “A certain messiness is always present in our work,” he reflected, but now it was “a very organized mess.” It was clean, more commercial, “oriented to people who may not have understood the first album.” It was aimed less at the Carioca public and sought instead “to take the things that are part of our local language and translate them for a larger audience.”

The band was still in the process of making the album when this interview took place. Later it became clear that there were differences of opinion between PLAP and Liminha, who is known as a kind of “hit maker” of Brazilian pop, and Mário’s responses to my questions about their new sound tiptoed around this issue. Liminha trained in the recording studios of Los Angeles, where he lived in the late 1980s. By the late 1990s, however, many of the younger bands in Brazil were looking for a different sound; they tended to disfavor the famously “clean” and well-behaved productions that had come to be associated with Los Angeles, with their reputation for technical perfection. Tom’s work, by contrast, was inspired more by indie rock, grunge, and various “heavy” or “dirty” sounds. Liminha ended up leaving the project after producing eight of the twelve tracks, while Tom finished the remainder at his home studio. With Liminha, then, PLAP seemed to reach a kind of limit as to how far they were willing to “clean up” their sound for mainstream radio airplay.

In a press release, the guitarist Laura Campanér wrote of the album: “Sonic mass. Tons of bass. Hardness of the Walls. Batuque. Movement. Accelerated rhythm of the dance. Regurgitation of raw sentences.” *É tudo 1 real*, she wrote, is rap, charme (a kind of Brazilian R&B), maracatu, axé, and hard funk (funk *porrada*). It is “rock with pinches of Olodum” (the Salvador-based samba-reggae band); it is “a refrain that sticks in your ear” and “social critique with an invitation to forget” (1999). That is to say, a radical aesthetic of mixture—even in some of the lyrics—with prominent doses of northeastern rhythms, rock, and the funk carioca grooves that would, in the following decade, circulate way beyond the local context. The title track opens the album with what seems to be a field recording of vendors at a street fair shouting about various goods for sale and chanting, “Um real! Um real!” (“One dollar!”). The song is a half-shouted funk-rap about a vendor of batteries, cassette tapes, crackers, peanut fudge, pumpkin sweets, coconut sweets, clock radios, and so forth, featuring a catchy choral chant at the end: “Water, limes, chocolate, one dollar, pah!” The second track, “Menina bonita” (Pretty girl, by Pedro Luís, Cabelo, and Alex-

andre Brasil), by contrast, begins with a mellow R&B groove (evoking the *charme* genre) with hints of *forró* in the triangle part and in some of the rhythmic accents, over which Pedro raps the lyrics. The band even recorded a version for the Japanese market with the refrain translated.

The track “*Brasileiro em Tóquio*” (Brazilian in Tokyo), a collaboration between Pedro and Miyazawa Kazufumi, draws on Recife’s lively *frevo* carnival rhythm and Rio’s similar carnival *marchinha* (fast march), mixed with a ska-like electric guitar part. It features the band Os Paralamas do Sucesso, who were known for their ska-rock in the 1980s. The lyrics are almost pure wordplay: “*Eu ska-pei pro japão,*” Pedro sings, playing with the word *ska* (as in the musical genre) and the Portuguese word *escapei* to mean “I escaped to Japan.” The song describes dropping a Portuguese dictionary on Japan from an airplane, resulting in a word “*salad*” that generated phrases like “*Tóquio arigatô pau de arara*” (a mixture of the word *Tokyo* with *arigato*, from the Japanese *domo arigato*, or “many thanks,” and *pau de arara*, a term for a kind of flatbed truck with benches used in the Northeast to transport people). Another series of phrases mixes yet more references to the Brazilian indigenous Tupy peoples, the Afro-Brazilian deity Xangô, and Buddha without making much semantic sense. The meaning is in the mixture itself. Similarly, “*Mergulho marítimo*” (Ocean swim) is a hybrid of reggae with the somewhat similar northeastern *xote* rhythm and also features lyrics full of wordplay between Portuguese and English. “*Eu disse xi! É ela / Ela disse ri! / É ele,*” Pedro sings, exploiting the *sh* sound of the Brazilian *x* and the *h* sound of the Brazilian *r* (when it is at the beginning of a word) to mean, “I said she [*xi*]! It’s her. She said he [*ri*]! It’s him.” Pedro also plays with *xote* and the English words *short* (which in Brazilian pronunciation sounds almost identical to *xote*) and *shot*, displaying a penchant for wordplay comparable to Lenine’s and to Tropicalists such as Caetano Veloso and Tom Zé (on Zé, see Dunn 2001, 196).

On the song “*Aê meu primo*” (Hey my cousin, by Pedro Luís and Pedro Rocha), the band inserts verses from two traditional songs in the public domain—the children’s song “*Ciranda cirandinha*” and the march “*Marcha soldado*”—into a funk carioca groove over which Pedro and the band sing-shout the words in call-and-response, with funk bass and electric guitar added. Pedro spits out the lyrics on a single monotonous pitch, which serves to highlight the contrast between his somewhat vague rant about the state of the planet and the lighthearted, carefree children’s dance, the *ciranda*, to which he refers. “Let’s all dance the *ciranda*,” he sings. The earth

is “tired” and “the people are confused.” It is not just Brazil, but rather a worldwide crisis. There is “a lack of structure” and “a lack of shame” and things will get worse “if we don’t do anything.” Rather than just waiting for a solution, Pedro implores, people must change things “in daily life.” Change “the system” a little. Little changes in behavior, Pedro explained, could make the world more humane. That is to say, rather than following the revolutionary dialectic of the old left, change could be an incremental project (and so it has turned out to be under the Partido dos Trabalhadores, the Worker’s Party, since 2003).

The album, which has a more dance-oriented pop sound and was released on the Warner Music Brazil label, earned PLAP a little more exposure outside Rio de Janeiro and on the radio. However, pop stardom was not in their future and band members would soon begin to devote more energy to a new project as the millennium came to an end and the music industry began to undergo radical transformation.

Monobloco: Pop Takes to the Streets

For one song on *É tudo um real*, “Cidade em movimento” (City in movement), the band decided they wanted to have “a dirtier sound.” They came up with the idea of recording a small bloco (carnival street troupe), with each of the five band members playing a single percussion instrument but using only one (omnidirectional) microphone to capture the sound (as opposed to a stereo pair, or several microphones mixed down to stereo). As it was, in effect, a bloco in “monophony,” the band thought of it as a “monobloco.”¹⁴ Subsequently, PLAP was contracted to perform for a week at the SESC Vila Mariana performance space in São Paulo. Aside from performing, they conducted workshops in which they taught some of their percussion arrangements, transcribed specifically for samba instruments. Based on their success with these workshops, they inaugurated similar weekly sessions in Rio as a way of earning some money and of creating a bloco with the students to parade during carnival.

This became the Monobloco project, and as its directors (from PLAP) grew progressively more entrepreneurial, they began to improve and professionalize their didactic methods. They were contracted to provide the bateria for regular dance parties at the Fundação Progresso space in the Lapa area of Rio on Fridays, using about 100–120 percussionists, the vast majority of them students of the workshops. They treated these shows

as preparation for their bloco street procession, which, Sidon claimed, came to draw 100,000 people. (Photographs at their website seem to support this.) At first Monobloco's audience came primarily from the South Zone middle classes (it was *elitizada*, or elite-ified, Sidon conceded), but by around 2005, when the group began to perform in various cities in Rio de Janeiro state, and to reach other parts of the country, it had begun to have a broader appeal. "Because we use samba school instruments," Sidon observed, "it is something people identify with," even while the ensemble plays a variety of rhythms with those instruments.

By 2007 the group had split off a contingent of nine people led by Celso Alvim to go to the United Kingdom for a month to conduct workshops and perform shows under the Monobloco name there (they also have an online store for selling T-shirts and other merchandise in England). They capitalized on what Sidon referred to as a global "batucada movement," or the increasing popularity of samba drumming ensembles in cities throughout the world over the past two decades (perhaps especially among middle-class "cohorts" of what Turino refers to as a "cosmopolitan formation" [2000; 2008]).¹⁵ Moreover, the development of this pop bloco coincided with a vibrant renaissance of the Lapa neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro as a center for live performances of samba, choro, and *gafieira* (a kind of ballroom samba dance generally accompanied with brass instrument arrangements) frequented by middle-class South Zone youths (see Herschmann 2007).

At the Monobloco workshop I observed in Copacabana (figure 11), the instructors used a whiteboard to write out rhythms and made sure students could clap or step certain patterns before playing them, making it similar to a classroom environment, in addition to using the more traditional watch-listen-and-repeat-after-me method for learning samba percussion. The group has a space on their website with didactic materials, including numerous short MP3s of various Brazilian rhythms, and the Monobloco grooves, as well as notated and other written materials for download. Ciranda, côco, congo, ijexá, maculelê, marcha, quadrilha, and xote are among the rhythms demonstrated there, as well as various examples of samba at different tempos. There is an online sound mixer on which the listener can raise or lower the playback volume of individual instruments in a given groove to hear how they fit together. Registrants of the workshops receive a password they can use to retrieve these materials. In short, the members of Monobloco developed a sophisticated, efficient, rational-



ized, and distinctly unmessy structure for teaching Brazilian rhythms, and thereby carved out a niche for themselves as musical entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, one of the more significant changes in the music scene of Rio de Janeiro since the late 1990s was a revival of street manifestations during carnival (as opposed to the media spectacle in the sambadrome). “The city used to empty out during carnival,” Sidon said. “Cariocas would leave. There was nothing to do. Today, there are various blocos filling up the streets, and the Carioca stays around.” He elaborated his hypothesis that carnival, long interpreted as a period of suspension, inversion, or perversion of dominant social hierarchies, came to be viewed as a relief from the violence that plagued Rio de Janeiro.

ss: No one is going to assault you [during carnival], so the Carioca takes advantage and hits the streets where the bandit and the prostitute mix—that mixture, everyone on the street. Carnival became more of a period of peace. . . . There are a lot of blocos, like in Olinda and Recife [in Pernambuco]. If you want to form a bloco, you begin by beating on a pail. The next year it already becomes a tradition. This kind of movement is going on here.

FIGURE 11. Monobloco workshop and rehearsal, Copacabana

FM: And this is more among the middle class, right? Because the working classes always stayed [in Rio for carnival], no?

ss: Yeah, I'm talking more about the South Zone, university students. The gang sticks around. What existed was [the bloco] Suvaco do Cristo here in the South Zone. Monobloco took some of that same public but also opened up to another public.¹⁶

Recife's carnival has long been famous for still being a mass street phenomenon, while Rio's had, since the construction of the sambadrome in 1984, become a more controlled and mediated spectacle. Monobloco thus tapped into local desires to, as Sidon put it, "hit the streets."

However, Sidon sought to distinguish Monobloco from other street blocos in its more precise approach to musicianship. "We are musicians so we want to hear things played correctly," he said. "In these street blocos you've got thirty tamborins and each person playing their own way. It annoys me. If the person next to you is playing wrong, you're going to want to hear it played correctly." This kind of amateurish "messiness" was not at all the sound they wanted (and not what the best samba percussionists achieve). We may think of samba as a participatory form, but it is also presentational, and acceptance into Rio's most "authentic" baterias (that is, the older samba associations rooted in predominantly black working-class communities) requires extensive training. One popular bloco in the South Zone, Sidon claimed, "rents" drummers from the working-class neighborhood of Santa Marta morro, and then at carnival the *mauricinhos*, that is, the pampered middle-class youths who do not have such training, go out to play next to them. (Mauricinho is the diminutive of the name Maurício; it came to be associated with a stereotyped spoiled and privileged young male, similar to the figure lambasted in Gabriel O Pensador's "Playboy," described in the preface.)

In other respects, Monobloco sought to be *more* presentational than conventional blocos and samba schools through greater usage of microphones and the PA system. Their sound, Sidon observed, had "weight." "We like to have pressure," he said, with the surdos well tuned, and with "the punch of rock 'n' roll." Monobloco "put on a real sound," he said proudly. They took the instrumentation and the pressure inherent to the samba school format and gave it some of the amplified "punch" (they use the English word) associated with live rock and pop shows. (Recall that Paulinho Moska also used "punch" to describe Marcos Suzano's pandeiro sound.)¹⁷ Interest-

ingly, they do not have a proprietary “samba accent” — the nuanced differences in patterns of articulation, usually on caixas, surdos, or tamborins — that often form part of the distinctiveness of the biggest, oldest samba schools. Monobloco might play a groove utilizing, for example, the snare-drum pattern from the samba school Ilha do Governador, or a pattern associated with the Mangueira school. They also created signature grooves in, for example, their mixture of funk carioca with marchinha. (In fact, they discovered on YouTube a group in California playing one of their hybrid funk grooves.)

It is probably in their repertory, however, that Monobloco is most distinct from older street samba manifestations, as it consists of an eclectic mix of pop songs: Pedro’s “Rap do real” and “Miséria S.A.,” Tim Maia’s “Imunização racional (Que beleza)” and “Do Leme ao Pontal,” Raul Seixas’s “Mosca na sopa,” Rodrigo Maranhão’s “Maracatu embolado,” classic sambas like Silas de Oliveira’s “Aquarela brasileira” and “É hoje” by Didi and Mestrinho (also in Fernanda Abreu’s repertoire), as well as various recent compositions like Pedro’s “Cirande em frente” from PLAP’s repertory, and songs by the São Paulo rappers Rappin Hood and Kis. At the Monobloco stage show I attended at the Circo Voador in Lapa in 2007, the rather young crowd sang along with and danced to all the songs, including old sambas. Even on a rainy winter night, Monobloco filled the venue with fans, and I tried to imagine a scenario in which hundreds of dancing twenty-somethings would sing along to classic repertoire mixed with pop songs in the United States. Despite being a predominantly presentational setting, it was also what Turino would classify as a participatory event allowing for a sense of social cohesion.

Their samba repertory focused on compositions from before the mid-1980s. After that, Sidon claimed, there was no classic samba (*samba antológica*). Samba had become corrupted by money and standardization, he said, voicing a common complaint (which I heard even within the samba community). Recent sambas were “disposable.” Samba had become primarily a way of making money, he lamented, as schools might, for example, make a samba celebrating a particular city in exchange for backing from that city’s government (as a kind of tourism advertisement), or about, say, steel, to gain the financial support of a major mining interest. Another general complaint was that the numbers runners (*bicheiros*) and traffickers had too much invested in the schools and controlled which song would be chosen in the annual competition, among other matters. The culture of samba in

the schools, in this interpretation, had been corrupted in a way similar to the corruption in the political sphere, and the music industry. Nevertheless, the big schools continued to serve as important sources of musical authenticity. Monobloco has, for example, often invited Mestre Odilon of the Grande Rio school to perform with them, and Sidon played for a year with Grande Rio, while C. A. Ferrari played in the bateria of the Mangueira school (and we have seen how the schools' proprietary rhythmic accents are valued). "Why did Monobloco become such a phenomenon even though it does not play on the radio or appear on television?" Sidon asked rhetorically in our 2007 interview. "Because it's bateria; the rhythm is contagious," he concluded as he produced a deft, swinging vocalization of an intense samba groove to emphasize his point.

For Pedro, what began as a modest project for the members of his band to earn some money on the side ended up becoming a phenomenon that was bigger in terms of popularity than PLAP, much to his surprise. More importantly, however, it provided the band with a forum in which to work out musical practices and administrative structures: "We became increasingly involved in creating our own structure of production, our own structure of thinking, our work philosophy. . . . Monobloco is founded and directed by we five but there are many collaborators who do this or that, from all sectors. Production, video, audio engineering—the technical team who together with us created the concept of how The Wall would sound live also helps us in Monobloco. So it is a very interesting concept of collectivity, without doubt—just as The Wall influenced Monobloco, after a while Monobloco ended up influencing PLAP too in terms of sound and structure." This collectivity that Monobloco evolved into may be emblematic of the new contours of the music industry, with more horizontal collaboration among relatively independent actors, rather than predominantly hierarchical models of corporate control.

These musicians' two parallel forums for creating and performing Brazilian popular music thus work in a complementary manner. If PLAP is primarily a pop band forum for Pedro's compositions, and for communicating about social concerns, Monobloco is aimed at the baile, the dance party, while it liaises more directly with the samba community, to some extent bridging South and North zones through musical practice. For example, at the Circo Voador show I attended, Arlindo Cruz, formerly of the roots samba group Fundo de Quintal, appeared with Monobloco as a guest singer.¹⁸ Monobloco's function in Rio, Pedro summarized, was "to bring

this tradition to pop, to bring pop to this tradition.” Even the old guard from the schools came to the workshops and overcame “their traditional prejudice against contemporary manifestations,” Pedro said, because when the group played samba, it really was samba.

Monobloco sought to translate their sound to the studio in 2002, when they released the album *Monobloco 2002*. They chose 25 percussionists out of the 150 or so who participated in the workshops and had a great number of guest participations (percussionists from the local groups *Bangalafumenga*, *Boato*, *Rio Maracatu*, *Funk’n Lata*, and *Eletrosamba*, for example; the local poet *Cabelo*; the singers *Fábio Alman* and *Pedro Quental*; certain individuals from the samba schools and the septuagenarian samba diva *Elza Soares*; and the rappers *Rappin Hood* and *Xis*). For Sidon, however, the end result was unsatisfying. “The group was very new then,” he explained, “and we wanted the sound of everybody recording together, but it didn’t work. We ended up losing ourselves in the middle of the process.” Indeed, *Monobloco 2002* does seem to lack a clear conceptualization of the production sound; in this instance, the values and goals of participation did not translate into the high-fidelity field.

They returned to the workshops, the live shows, and the carnival bloco until 2006, when Monobloco released a DVD and CD of their live show in the *Circo Voador*. This recording was to be more like the *baile*, that is, more like the show. It has a better production sound than the first album and captures some of the excitement—although by no means all—of their live performances. It features guest vocals from *Fernanda Abreu*, *Lenine*, and the *MCS Junior* and *Leonardo* and mixes songs from *MPB*, samba, soul music, *forró*, and funk.

PLAP Continues

PLAP continued to tour as the new millennium began and, in between trips, assembled a third album, *Zona e progresso (Confusion and Progress)*, at Tom Capone’s *Toca de Bandido* studio (in a building on Tom’s home property), released in 2001. They parted with Warner Music after the company asked Pedro to go solo and leave *The Wall* behind. “Being under contract with a major label with broad investments and various different artists to promote didn’t work so well for us,” Pedro told one journalist (*M. A. Barbosa* 2001). *Zona e progresso* was thus released on the local label *MPB* (which also released the collaboration between *Marcos Suzano* and *Victor Ramil*

called *Satolep Sambatown*). The album title is a play on the motto of the Brazilian flag: “Order and Progress” (which comes from Auguste Comte), where *zona* is the opposite of “order”—something like “mess” or “confusion.” It was meant to indicate the global situation during an era of “incredible technological progress” that was paradoxically accompanied by “an incredible mess in the mind of humanity [*na cabeça da humanidade*],” Pedro said in an interview, as he also made reference to the “confusion of terrorism and chemical warfare” that dominated the news in late 2001 (M. A. Barbosa 2001).

Pedro subsequently wrote the title song for the album in collaboration with Suely Mesquita and Arícia Mess. “Dionysus is the god of confusion,” he sings. “Bless this immortal confusion / That I bring to the surface.” (For Mário Moura, *zona e progresso* also characterized the very way the band had evolved.) Lenine wrote an enthusiastic press release that evokes the themes that dominated this music scene as the end of the millennium approached:

The street raised to the fourth! The refinement of rusticity! Essence and excess! Maturity in the language! The radical-ness of the party! . . .

The sound of Pedro Luís e A Parede is the face of Rio. It is the samba of the morro, the funk of the asphalt, and the peaceful coexistence of opposites. . . .

The sound of Pedro and A Parede is the face of Brazil. It is the free transit of many tendencies, the agglutination of riffs and races, it is the chameleon in front of the mirror, it is the music of the future of the world, it is promiscuity and *mestiçagem* [racial mixing].

Pedro’s Brazil of Rio is universal and cosmopolitan, malandro and versatile, and it reflects the four corners of this continental country. The sound of these guys is without match!

Music making is again understood here as an allegory of the nation, where the agglutination of musical riffs goes hand in hand with the promiscuous mixture of races. The “peaceful coexistence of opposites” turns into an embrace of confusion in the name of a better future, in contradistinction to the militaristic “Order and Progress,” rendering music a kind of “audio-topia” (Kun 2005).

The lyrics of some of the songs continue Pedro’s concern with social questions, although they tend to remain very generalized. Northeast-

ern musical influences are again important. “Não ao desperdício” (Not to waste, by Cabelo and Gláucia Saad), for example, with a groove that draws on maracatu drumming, comments on consumer society: the pharmaceutical, automobile, and tobacco industries, the lyrics complain, turn harmful things into consumer goods. “Batalha naval” (Naval battle, by Pedro Luís and Bianca Ramoneda) addresses the anonymity of Brazilians engaged in a “social war”: “In the land of happiness, country of carnival / In the marvelous city, things are going badly.” Other songs are more light-hearted. “Ciranda do mundo” (Ciranda of the world, by Eduardo Krieger) again invokes the northeastern ciranda genre, while Pedro’s “10 de queixo” (10 with slackjaws) mixes the cantoria ballad singing style and the distinctive viola steel-string guitar with a baião-like rhythm on the verses and maracatu-inspired drumming on the refrains in a song about ten males marveling at the young women dancing at a forró party. Pedro’s “Parte coração” (Break heart) is a samba-canção (slow samba song) with choro accents and treats the old theme of the suffering heart. His “Mão e luva” (Hand and glove) is the least groove- and batucada-oriented track; it could be a Beatles song.¹⁹

Tragically, Tom Capone died in a motorcycle accident in Los Angeles shortly after the 2004 Latin Grammy Awards, where he received five nominations and two awards in the categories of best Brazilian rock album (with the band Skank) and best MPB album (with Maria Rita). PLAP deeply mourned the loss and would wait several years before releasing a new album, in part because they remained busy with Monobloco, but also because they did not know who could replace Tom.²⁰

.enredo

Late in 2008 the group released *Ponto enredo*, produced by Lenine at AR Studios (of which Tom Capone had been a part owner), and at a smaller studio, Corredor 5. It is a richly layered samba-rock-pop album that seems free of the feelings of anxiety about commodification, the music industry, national identity, and globalization that characterized much of the hybrid Brazilian pop of the 1990s. Naturally, after over a decade working together, the musicians have a more seasoned sound. However, it also benefits from a more focused mixture of two principal musical ingredients: samba and rock. The result is a less “confused” musical concept than that of the earlier productions.

With Lenine, the band finally “succeeded in bringing Tom’s energy back”; he understood PLAP’s “musical language” (C. A. Ferrari, cited in Reis 2008). *Ponto enredo* is more melancholic than previous PLAP albums; it captures some of the quality of *saudade*—a sort of plaintiveness—that can be heard in some samba, while it still emphasizes danceable grooves. Pedro’s compositions are much more melodic than the rapped or even shouted verses that characterized much of his early output. Samba is “worshipped” in these songs, as the title of the first track, “Santo Samba” (Sacred samba), by Pedro, suggests. Leave all problems, hurts, and useless things behind and call your friends together for a party, Pedro implores. “I will take care to samba,” he sings. “I will sing for real / Samba is a sacred remedy / For whoever wants to live.”

The song “Ela tem a beleza que nunca sonhei” (She has a beauty I never imagined) is a rock-samba piece utilizing the partido alto style, which emphasizes improvised lyrics and audience participation on the refrains, with guest vocals from a Carioca master of that subcategory of samba, Zeca Pagodinho (Jessé Gomes da Silva Filho), as well as Zeca’s regular seven-string guitar player, Paulão 7 Cordas (Paulo Roberto Pereira de Araújo). The song begins with a distorted and filtered drone on the electric guitar with pandeiro and *repique-de-mão* (a medium-sized drum played with the hand) and a 3 + 3 + 2 rhythm predominating. Soon the cavaquinho (a small, four-string, guitar-like instrument similar to the Hawaiian ukelele) joins in with strummed chords in common variations of syncopation (such as the sixteenth–eighth–sixteenth-note figure), and Zeca says, “What’s up Pedro Luís, I was in the area. I’ll strike up a partido with you,” a characteristically informal way of beginning this kind of samba that has the effect of making it seem like a spontaneous meeting. As Pedro begins singing the first verse, the caixas join in, and soon Serginho Trombone adds short fills on his namesake instrument, which, together with trumpets, adds a gafeira flavor. Zeca sings the second verse, after which Pedro returns, and together the two sing the refrain as the samba concludes. The lyrics tell of Pedro’s encounter with a kind of muse of the samba.

Pedro composed the title song of the album (“Ponto enredo”) for a production of Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* by the theater group Nós do Morro, made up of actors from the Vidigal favela in Rio. *Ponto enredo* hybridizes the word for an Afro-Brazilian Candomblé or Umbanda hymn (*ponto*) with the word for “plot” (*enredo*), as in *sambas de enredo*, the songs composed to a specific narrative theme for carnival each year. *Ponto* also

means “dot” (or “period”) and thus hints at the “dot-x” Internet address format, as if to suggest a web address that ends in “.enredo” (*ponto-enredo*). The song begins with the percussionist Léo Leobons playing a rhythm in 12/8 meter on conga drums, to which Mário soon adds a melodic fretless bass part. As the track progresses, it increasingly incorporates rock timbres as acoustic and electric guitars and drum kit enter, while it maintains the 12/8 feel on the congas, creating an appealing hybrid.

“Mandingo” (Witch doctor) is a collaboration between Pedro Luís and the samba de roda master Roque Ferreira, from the Recôncavo of Bahia. It opens with cavaquinho and electric guitar strumming chords, the latter with a “wah-wah” effect. Then it breaks to tamborim, conga, and hi-hat, as Pedro sings the first verse. The tamborim plays variations on a common samba ostinato (akin to the so-called timeline rhythmic figure of West African music, but not as consistent). On the second verse, the cavaquinho returns, and Mário Moura enters on bass, while Léo Saad plays a counterpoint to the melody on the viola ten-string guitar. The electric guitar returns on the repeat of the refrain. Its plaintive melody in G minor and the faint echo on Pedro’s vocal give the song a melancholy, nostalgic tenor despite the rhythmic intensity it gains on the final repeats of the refrain as the drum kit becomes more predominant.

The lyrics tell of Afro-Brazilian sorcery: Be wary of the *nêgo mandingo*, for he “knows how to pick the leaf,” how to say the prayer and work his magic. His drumming attracts the *cabôco* and *orixá* spirits; his dance calls all mediums to the floor. No one can undo the knots of love he secures. He controls time, the winds, the sea, the woods. This *nêgo male* (a West African Muslim in Bahia during the colonial era) had been a king in Senegal, and “his power comes from there.” With a talisman in his pocket and a *tecebá* (a kind of rosary for Islamic prayer) on his belt, he cures with his medicine, while his poison kills. He bathed his necklace in the waters of Oxum (a Yoruba deity of rivers, love, beauty, wealth) but his Eledá (ancestral guardian) is Ogum Xoroquê. *Mandingo* is a term for an ethnic group in West Africa (of the Mande territory) who practice a form of Islam; in Brazil the term came to refer to Africans believed to have powers associated with Islamic amulets (called *mandingas*). Sylviane Anna Diouf describes how these amulets gave self-confidence to slaves, offering them “the sense of power over themselves, their family and their community that bondage denied them.” The amulets were used like sorcery “in an attempt to control the slaveholders’ behavior” (2003, 147). This image is mixed with Yoruba

Candomblé references in the song. The deity Ogum Xoroquê, for example, is said to be half Ogum and half Exu (two orixás who are already closely associated), taking the positive qualities of Exu, such as a resolute sense of purpose and principles, and the warrior quality of Ogum, resulting in a spirit of tremendous courage (Barcellos 1997, 16). Like Suzano, then, Pedro invokes the power of traditional Afro-Brazilian cultural practices in this song.

“4 horizontes” (4 horizons), by Pedro and Lenine, is another song that emulates the winding melodic contours of some classic sambas (weaving through II-V⁷-I chord patterns, or through modulations as alterations change a given chord from minor to dominant seventh, for example), against a common samba timeline-like rhythm figure (a 2 + 2 + 1 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 1 + 2 pattern of accents on cavaquinho and certain percussion). The counterpoint call-and-response between Pedro and Lenine on the repeat of the verse reminds the listener of the magnificent combination of melody and rhythm in the greatest of sambas. Lenine improvises a short vocal solo without words in a conversation with the distinctive *cuíca* friction drums of samba (an instrument that can sound a bit like a howling dog). For the final refrain, the driving, distorted rock guitar begins to take over, only to go silent, leaving a *cuíca* to have the last word (or wail, actually).

“Cantiga” (Ballad) is Pedro’s musical rendition of a poem of the same name by the celebrated Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira (1886–1968), performed as a kind of *gafieira* to a samba de roda 3 + 3 + 2 rhythm. “I want to be happy / In the waves of the ocean / I want to forget everything / I want to rest,” Pedro sings in a call-and-response with the rest of the band. Bandeira’s poem makes a reference to a traditional Candomblé hymn (*ora*) as the poet asks, “Who will come to kiss me / I want the Star of the Dawn [i.e., Venus] / the queen of the sea,” to which PLAP adds a choral response near the end of the song on the name Iemanjá (alt. Yemanjá) in a reference to the Afro-Brazilian/Yoruba goddess of the sea. The music draws on the *calango* dance popular in Minas Gerais, parts of Bahia, and rural areas of Rio de Janeiro.

“Repúdio” (Repudiation), by Pedro and the lyricist Carlos Rennó, is a bossa-rock hybrid that decries the notoriously appalling conditions in Brazil’s jails, into which multitudinous prisoners are “squeezed” like “wild beasts.” The prisoners could die of boredom, Pedro sings, until the moment when a prison revolt begins and amid the shooting there are “cries of murder and tears of blood” as “hate explodes.” Such a scene was power-

fully dramatized in the film *Carandiru* (2003, based on a book titled *Estação Carandiru* by Dráuzio Varella), about a prison riot in São Paulo in 1992 and its exceptionally violent suppression by the military police. “Luz da nobreza” (Light of nobility), by Pedro and Zé Renato, is a kind of *folia de reis* (traditional Three Kings Procession song performed between Christmas and Epiphany), with steel-stringed viola and a march-like rhythm on the snare drum, but in a 9/8 meter, rather unusual in Brazilian pop music.²¹ Pedro Luís’s wife, the singer Roberta Sá, joins him on vocal harmonies late in the song.

“Tem juízo mas não usa” (Possesses reason but doesn’t use it), by Pedro and Lula Queiroga, is a samba-funk-rock mix with several layers of distorted and loud electric guitar (the beginning recalls Deep Purple), slap bass, and heavy *batucada*, especially on the catchy refrain. The use of electronic devices such as filters and an echo effect to process the sound in the recording studio is more evident on this track, recorded with Rodrigo Campello and Jr Tostoi (the MiniStereo production duo).²² The remaining two tracks on this album are also collaborations. “Animal,” which is about physical attraction, Pedro wrote with Suely Mesquita; it combines the 6/8 *batucada* that lends it an “Afro” feel with an increasingly heavy rock guitar sound as the song progresses. “Cabô” (It’s over) is an older piece co-composed with Zé Renato; it is a lighthearted song about finding happiness through positive disposition. Interestingly, this track does not end when expected: after “Cabô” there is a brief period of silence before Léo Leobons leads a trio with Léo Saad and João Gabriel on the *batá* drums used to accompany Afro-Cuban *Santería* rituals (which bear similarities to those of *Candomblé*) in a chant to *Yemanjá*. It surprises the first-time listener, as it lacks its own track listing and is thus hidden, as if to recall the way African diaspora religious practices often had to be concealed from masters. The “sacred samba” that opens the album and the Afro-Cuban *Lucumí* (Yoruba) chant and drumming that close it thus frame the band’s identification with—indeed, worship of—Afro-diasporic music.

Virtual PLAP

“Welcome to the PLAP BLOG! The blog of Pedro Luís e A Parede,” read the announcement on the new PLAP website launched in September 2008. “This space is a virtual wall where you will be able to praise, suggest, criticize, and enter into contact with PLAP. We are expecting you. See ya, Mário Moura.” With the release of *Ponto enredo*, PLAP inaugurated a new website.

As is typical, it offers a history of the group, brief individual biographies, the latest news, press releases and reviews, photographs and videos of the band, their performance schedule, a free MP3 promotional download, contact information, a blog, and a discography. The band's entire recorded repertoire is available in streaming (non-downloadable) audio under the discography section, along with song lyrics and basic album credits. This kind of virtual space is vital for bands working independently of major labels.

Despite the impersonal nature of cyberspace, the blog establishes an informal forum for communicating that works in conjunction with both the band's live shows and their recorded albums. A brief look at some of the posts demonstrates how the "virtual" and the "real" (the live shows, specific moments spent listening to the CD or attempting to learn the songs by ear, for example) are co-constitutive. As is to be expected, fan feedback is largely positive in such forums; I translate a few of the earliest entries to the PLAP blog, preserving some of the characteristic typography.

Eliana N. says: 1 de October de 2008 @ 22:28

I was in São Luiz do Paraitinga during the Week of Brazilian Song where I saw your show and Lenine's. MYGOD!!!!!!!!!! I returned to São Paulo with a Cleansed Soul. Do you have any idea of the importance of your magnificent work? The CD Ponto Enredo is the real Tribute to the forces of nature that live in us, subtly mystical without being sentimental. It touches the bottom of the soul and vibrates in every cell of the body. Thank God not all is lost. . . . CONGRATULATIONS!!!

Cristiane says: 23 November 2008 @ 14:10

. . . I went to the show yesterday, at the SESC Vila Mariana and I loved it!!! I had already heard talk about you but did not yet know [your music]. . . . Really good! I can only praise creative and competent people like you who make this delicious mixture of our music with the influence of rock! And that is not even speaking about the lyrics, which are formidable and intelligent! . . . We are happy to know that Brazilian music is not succumbing to Americanism and to globalization! In fact, long live the globalization that allows MPB to traverse frontiers!!! . . .

Marcelo W. says: 4 December 2008 @ 14:23

Hi PLAP! Each time I listen to Ponto I get more out of the CD. What a great partnership between PLAP + Lenine. You don't have any "making

of” videos to put on the site? . . . Any plans to post cifras [the chord changes to the songs]? Hearty embrace, Marcelo

Postings like these extend the impact of specific live shows by building anticipation or through post-show praise (which can create anticipation in others who await their turn to see the band). Moreover, in offering a place for fans to record their enthusiasm for Pedro Luís’s rock-samba-Candomblé project, as well as recurring anxieties about Americanization and globalization, the virtual here offers another window into musically constituted senses of community “as real as any other human cultural production” (Cooley, Meizel, and Syed 2008, 92). PLAP has, in fact, recently added chord charts for the songs, as per Marcelo W.’s request. A major recording label would probably never have allowed that, at least not in the 1990s.

Conclusions

As youths in the 1970s and 1980s, the musicians in PLAP were, like Lenine and Suzano, attracted to the sound and instrumentation of rock bands. In the 1990s, however, inspired in part by Chico Science and Nação Zumbi, they began to rethink that instrumentation and to mix rock sounds with newly in-vogue northeastern folk genres such as maracatu and forró, for example, and especially with samba, the genre most associated with Rio de Janeiro. The band restructured to favor aesthetics that in many respects accord with the priorities Charles Keil emphasizes in his theory of participatory discrepancies. The group’s engagement with samba eventually led them to form the Monobloco group, which both capitalized on and helped augment the renewed interest among the local middle classes in that genre and in carnival street manifestations as a whole. Throughout these developments, mixture remained a kind of creed, such that even Monobloco maintained a repertoire of pop songs alongside samba, with other influences such as rap. Thomas Turino’s typology for different spheres of music making speaks to the different priorities these musicians juggled over the course of their careers and helps situate their work relative to broader currents that transcend this particular setting. But there are also other dynamics at play here that complicate, for example, the way participatory aesthetics are realized (e.g., Sidon’s insistence on playing rhythms correctly in the street parade, and on using microphone technique to get a “real sound” on the street).

Turino's mapping of different values, while nuanced and taking their contingent nature into account, seems to fall largely along class lines within an anti-modernist teleology. Both Keil and Turino have isolated important issues of musical practice—Turino's model in particular encompasses an impressive range of possibilities and historical depth—but the explanatory power of PDs and of the four fields is tempered by assumptions that human society is increasingly becoming alienated through the machinations of capitalist formations. I do not doubt that this is one narrative of modernity, but subjects make and remake, or territorialize and deterritorialize, social relations (for example, late capitalism produces participatory revivalisms [e.g., Turino 2008, 155–88]). Class cannot be the irreducible social factor; it too is constituted by “people-in-(power)-relationships-in-projects” (Ortner 1996, 13), by people pursuing “lines of flight” through global assemblages, like a Tupy astronaut, for example.²³

The trajectories of PLAP and the band's associated Monobloco project speak to the dissolution of the music industry model that prevailed through the late 1990s, and the gradual shift toward greater artist autonomy and entrepreneurship that has resulted from this development. The fact that the band settled on Lenine as producer for *Ponto enredo* further emphasizes how horizontal relationships with peers have come to characterize music recording more than the hierarchical structures of the older music industry models. “We had no idea back in 1999 when you were with us,” Pedro told me in 2007, “that we were on the eve of the death” of the old ways of distributing music. “No idea.” For about ten years, he reflected, music makers have been experiencing “an intermediate phase” in terms of the format, because it was still unclear whether musicians will release and distribute albums only virtually, and what this will mean for artists' livelihood. “I don't know either,” he mused. “I know that I continue to make music, I continue to encounter other people who . . . are inspiring.” Life, becoming, is unfinished, but new human relations continue to inspire music making.