

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Sounding Ceará:

Music and the Environment in Northeastern Brazil

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

by

Michael Benjamin Silvers

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

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Professor Anthony Seeger, Chair

This dissertation is an acoustic ethnography of the state of Ceará in Northeastern Brazil, with a focus on drought and the natural environment; drought is of particular symbolic and material importance to people in Ceará. One of the central narratives of life in Ceará involves migration and return. Here, I consider the discursive construction of Ceará as a natural, rural and traditional place through processes of migration and through a recording industry that saw migrants as both consumers and icons for a changing urban and national character. However, my emphasis is on the question of return. I investigate how urbanized and nationalized constructions of Ceará—often imagined as exclusively rural and unremittingly drought-ridden—impact

contemporary Ceará and its musical culture. How are sounds, musics, practices, natures, geographies, and individuals shaped by mediated representations and caricatures of those very sounds, practices, geographies and identities? Drawing from acoustic ecology (Schafer 1994), acoustemology (Feld 1996), ecomusicology (e.g., Rehding 2002; Allen 2011), and discussions of musical sustainability (Titon 2009; Turino 2009), as well as from literature on rurality, capitalism, and nostalgia (e.g., Williams 1973; Stewart 1988; Dent 2009), I discuss traditional and hegemonic knowledge in urbanized rural and ruralized urban musical and agricultural practices, including the *baião* and *farró* music of Luiz Gonzaga; I interpret soundscapes in Fortaleza, the state capital, and Orós, a small city in the interior, to discuss the political and economic control of acoustic space, especially as it relates to musician Raimundo Fagner in Orós and electronic *farró* in Fortaleza; I analyze two contemporary musical projects—an opera and a rock band—that posit distinct relationships between Ceará's nature and literary, historical, social, and musical worlds; and I investigate movements for cultural preservation as they address the sustainability of both nature and culture. I conclude that nostalgic representations of the *sertão* demonstrate the complexity and malleability of contemporary northeastern music and culture, that environmental sounds and music in Ceará are heard in ways that have been maintained through oral tradition and mediated through audio recording, and that Ceará's soundscapes are constructed through community actions and legislation, by music industries, and through conflicting subjectivities. I also suggest that discourses of musical sustainability can be complexified by the example of *farró*, which was originally commercial popular music but has since become traditional music.

The dissertation of Michael Benjamin Silvers is approved.

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2012

*Whence comes the baião? It comes from beneath the clay of the earth . . .*

*Whence comes hope, the sustenance that spreads the green from your eyes across the plantation?*

*Oh, it comes from beneath the clay of the earth.*

-Gilberto Gil, "De Onde Vem o Baião"

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Anthropologist Lea Rodrigues served as my research advisor in Fortaleza while I was on

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## CONFERENCE PAPERS AND INVITED LECTURES

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- 2011 “Ecomusicologia, Música Sustentável, e o Encontro dos Profetas da Chuva em 2010.” II Educamus: Encontro da Educação Musical do Cariri, Universidade Federal do Ceará, November 23, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará, Brazil.
- 2010 “Rain Prophets and Song: Environmental Knowledge and Musical Preservation in Ceará, Brazil.” Society for Ethnomusicology 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, November 12, Los Angeles.
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- 2009 “Class, Climate and Canção: Forró Music and Drought in Ceará, Brazil.” Society for Ethnomusicology 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting, November 20, Mexico City, Mexico.
- 2009 “Forró Music and Drought: An Ethnomusicology of Climate.” Southwest Chapter Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, April 18, Boulder, Colorado.
- 2009 “Forró and Northeastern Brazil.” Invited Lecture, Department of Ethnomusicology, Music of South America, UCLA, April 8, Los Angeles.
- 2008 “Virtually Collaborative Music Making: EnergyBr.net and Brazilian Trance Music.” Southern California Chapter Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Feb. 23, Santa Barbara.
- 2007 “Musical Creation, Reception, and Consumption in a Virtual Place: EnergyBr.net.” Southwest Chapter Meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, March 30, Phoenix.

# ONE

## INTRODUCTION:

### THEORIZING NATURE, NOSTALGIA, AND *FORRÓ* IN CEARÁ

For many people in Ceará, a state in northeastern Brazil, the sounds of *baião* (bai-‘ãu) and *forró* (fəʊ-‘hɒ) music are representative of the Brazilian Northeast and the *sertão*, a semi-arid region that spans much of the interior of northeastern Brazil. In this dissertation, I explore the diverse relationships between place—specifically, the natural environment—and musical sound. I ask: How can music sonically index the environment? Why do musicians choose to represent place? If people associate traditional music with nature, do they believe music must be preserved and maintained as nature is? How are musical preservationist movements inspired by or affiliated with environmentalist movements? Why, in an era of musical globalization, does the local retain significance to musicians in the Northeast? How does late capitalism (in its Brazilian context) impact rural places, natural environments, local epistemologies, and traditional culture, and how—and by whom—are the consequences negotiated and resisted?

Ceará is known throughout Brazil for its harsh environment. The Great Drought of 1877 killed half the state’s population, and periodic droughts and floods still plague the region. Regarding drought in Ceará, historian Frederico Castro Neves calls it “a climatic phenomenon” that “has been transformed . . . into a complex social phenomenon that includes a series of social, political, economic and cultural relations” (2007:100). I investigate music as it relates to drought as a complex social phenomenon.

This study derives from a cumulative nineteen months of research I conducted in Ceará

between 2008 and 2012 over four separate field trips. This dissertation is in part historical, as I try to understand how musical representations of the *sertão* acquired meaning over time, through repeated musical performance, the media, the recording industry, and cultural policy, achieved through research in Ceará's libraries and music and newspaper archives. This study is also ethnographic, as I investigate these historically constructed signs in their present-day contexts. I discuss not only the contemporary regionalist musical scene (specifically musicians who intend to evoke a regional imaginary through their music, and specifically through *fórró*), but also the sounds, traditions, and movements from which they take inspiration. I recorded soundscapes in Fortaleza and Orós, conducted interviews with musicians, activists, and politicians, and attended cultural festivals, organizational meetings, and rehearsals of bands and ensembles. Last, it is musicological, involving the study of regional musical elements, techniques, and performance practices, particularly in the context of regionalist performances and compositions, which I accomplished through listening to years of recordings, attending concerts, and reading scores.

While *fórró* music is the central focus of this dissertation, I also analyze music from other genres in Ceará, including regionalist popular music from the 1970s that was part of a broader genre often referred to as Brazilian Popular Music (or MPB), contemporary regional rock music that draws on Led Zeppelin as much as *fórró* and other local musical traditions, and an opera that incorporates rhythms, modes, and instruments from the Northeast.

I consider this dissertation traditionally ethnomusicological in the vein of Alan Merriam (1964), combining the study of sound (here, both musical and environmental), concept (ideas about music, nature, ethnicity, and culture), and behavior (or practice, e.g., Bourdieu (1977)). Because the study is generally concerned with anthropological questions rather than musicological ones, this work is more a “musical anthropology” (Seeger 2004) than an



“anthropology of music” (Merriam 1964).

I base my analysis on music and culture in the northeastern cities of Fortaleza, Orós, and Quixadá in Ceará, and reference practices and histories in the cities of Crato and Juazeiro do Norte in Ceará's Cariri region, as well as in the cities of Exu and Caruaru in the neighboring state of Pernambuco (see figure 2). I also discuss migrations to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (see figure 1), which are in Brazil's southeastern region (and part of a broader region known as the Central-South). Brazil's Northeast is culturally distinct from Rio de Janeiro and the surrounding region, where symbols like samba and *feijoada* black-bean-and-pork stew have been given national relevance. In the northeastern region, samba and *feijoada* are popular, but the dominant regional musical culture is *forró* and the cuisine includes sun-dried beef and a dish of seasoned rice mixed with black-eyed peas and melted cheese curds called *baião de dois*.

I use English translations of the original Portuguese terms wherever possible. For the words and terms that are most significant to northeastern culture and Cearense music, I have included a Portuguese glossary. There are only three Portuguese words that run throughout this text: *forró*, *baião*, and *sertão* (defined above). Additionally, I introduce one key term per chapter, as these are terms that refer to musical genres or locally significant sound technologies. In chapter two, that term is *cantoria de viola*, or simply *cantoria*, a genre of improvised song. In chapter three, it is *radiadora*, the local term for a loudspeaker service in the interior city of Orós. In chapter four, the term is *cabaçal*, which refers to anything pertaining to calabash (*cabaça*) and to a kind of fife-and-drum ensemble found in the interior of the Northeast (*banda cabaçal*). In chapter five, it is *paredão de som*, or *paredão*, literally meaning big wall of sound, and referring to large, mobile sound systems attached to or towed behind cars and trucks.



FIGURE 1. Map of Ceará and the Northeast in the context of Brazil and South America

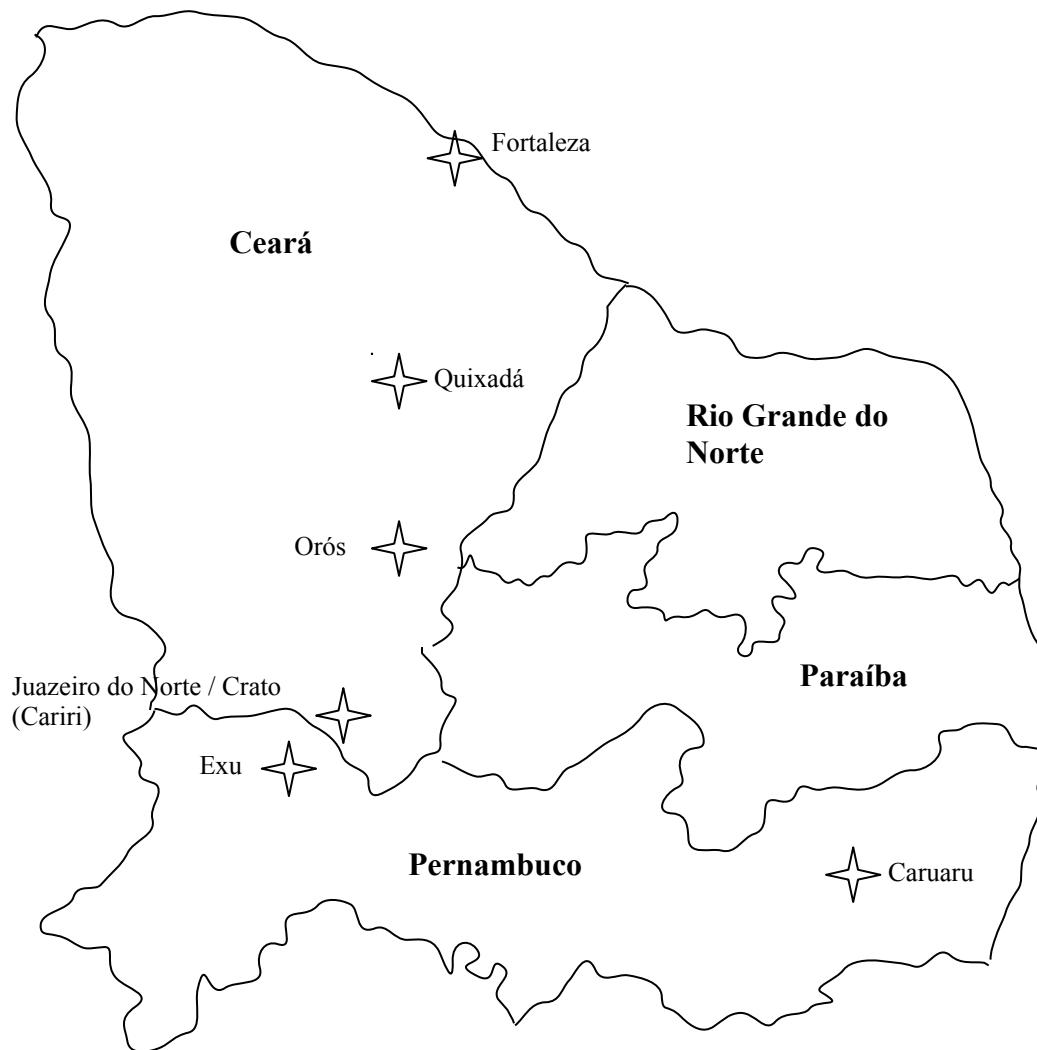


FIGURE 2. Map of cities relevant to this dissertation

SCHOLARLY LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT SOUND,  
MUSIC, AND DROUGHT

Ecomusicology and Acoustemology

In *Landscape and Memory*, Simon Schama says that landscapes are ways in which we frame the natural environment, and are products of myths and beliefs about nature, which emerge

from specific historical contexts. He says, “it was always the inherited tradition . . . that made *landscape* out of mere geology and vegetation” (1995:12). The book details a variety of specific ways humans have framed landscapes: idealized landscapes in artistic creations, park boundaries that draw borders around deliberately selected pieces of land, and man-made landscapes in (sometimes urban) natural environments. “All our landscapes,” he writes, “from the city park to the mountain hike, are imprinted with our tenacious, inescapable obsessions” (1995:18). In other words, landscapes are social constructions.

Schama's book, however expansive in temporal and geographic scope, is limited in that it defines landscapes as a product of only one of our senses: sight. (Samuels et al. describe this as “Western ocularcentrism” (2010), and Wrightson refers the problem as “eye culture” (2000:10).) Nevertheless, we can apply his argument to the sense of hearing. How do we frame landscapes with sound? Do we draw borders around the way we listen to nature by listening selectively? Do we make artistic creations to portray idealized representations of landscapes or environmental sounds? Do we fabricate and broadcast man-made sounds to occupy natural spaces, sharing (or dominating) acoustic territory with non-human sounds? Do we locate landscapes by creating maps of sounds and aural phenomena?

Composer R. Murray Schafer calls acoustic frames “soundscapes.” More specifically, he defines a soundscape as a “sonic environment,” and can refer to “actual environments, or to abstract constructions such as musical compositions and tape montages, particularly when considered as an environment” (1994:274-5).<sup>1</sup> Schafer calls the study of the relationship between soundscapes and living beings “acoustic ecology,” and terms the improvement of pre-existing soundscapes and the construction of new ones “acoustic design.”

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<sup>1</sup> Kelman points out that Schafer's term “soundscape” is loaded; Schafer intended his book to be prescriptive, not descriptive and analytic in the way it is often used (2010). While historical and analytical, the book is, in many senses, a manual on what soundscapes are acceptable to Schafer's ear, and how the modern soundscape should be reformed (explored below).

Self-described “anthropologist of sound” Steven Feld offers “acoustemology” as the name for a field of study that combines epistemology, soundscapes, and ethnography. Acoustemology, he writes, examines “local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in the culturally particular sense of place” (1996:91). In his acoustemological research in Papua New Guinea, he demonstrates how the Kaluli people sing the names of places to evoke memories associated with those places, thereby moving men to tears (1990 [1982]). He also illustrates how Kaluli singing is embedded in the ambient soundscape of the rainforest, creating a musical and acoustic aesthetic called “lift-up-over-sounding” (1996).

Some scholars (e.g., Rehding 2002, Toliver 2004) have called these various methodologies, concerns, and areas of inquiry “ecomusicology,” a concept that, despite its inclusiveness, generally derives many of its principles from the sub-field of ecocriticism in comparative literature.<sup>2</sup> Toliver identifies three tendencies in ecocriticism: (1) it is interdisciplinary, (2) it is diverse, and (3) ecocritics often “adopt an environmentalist perspective” (2004:327). In general terms, he defines the field as “the study of the relationship between culture and the physical environment” (ibid.). I find his definition vague and problematic (how would he define cultural geography, or environmental anthropology?), but he also suggests (perhaps a fourth tendency) that most ecocritics study “culture and the physical environment” through textual analysis. It is this last point—concerning methodology—that seems to link ecocriticism to ecomusicology. Aaron Allen broadly defines ecomusicology as “the study of musical and sonic issues, both textual and performative, as they relate to ecology and the environment” (2011:392), but specifies that ecomusicology “continues the trend of music

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<sup>2</sup> Watkins proposes “musical ecology” as an alternative to “ecomusicology,” describing it as holistic in the vein of “acoustic ecology” (2011: 405).

scholarship drawing on literary methodologies” (393). Excluding recent conference papers by Allen (2010) and Post (2009) on environmental degradation and instrument materials, and research on bioacoustics, the majority of self-defined ecomusicological research relies on some form of biographical or textual analysis (e.g., Grimley 2006; Guy 2009; Mellers 2001; Richards 2007; Von Glahn 2003; Watkins 2007).<sup>3</sup>

In this dissertation, I attempt to draw connections between ethnographically based acoustemology and (often) textually based ecomusicology. In Schama's work, I recognize three modes of framing landscapes: (1) the perception of pre-existing landscapes, (2) the construction of new landscapes, and (3) the artistic representation of landscapes. Here, I adapt these three frames to soundscapes: (1) the perception of pre-existing soundscapes (i.e., how do we *hear* or *listen to* soundscapes); (2) the construction of new (artificial) soundscapes; and (3) the musical representation of soundscapes and landscapes.

### Co-constructing Soundscapes

“Throughout the history of soundmaking,” Schafer writes, “music and the environment have bequeathed numerous effects to one another” (1994:112). Recent interest in the complex relationships between environmental sound and music makers, between non-human and human sounds, suggests a post-constructivist trend among ecomusicologists. Mitchell Morris, for example, wonders if the songs of whales and birds, understood to be forms of communication, offer humanity opportunities for forming relationships with animals in which we communicate musically (2009). David Rothenberg conducted an experiment in which he played his clarinet to a male humpback whale, and concluded that the whale responded to his clarinet playing in what

<sup>3</sup> More crudely defined, ecomusicology could be seen as a branch of historical musicology, with its disciplinary methodologies and preoccupations, while acoustemology could be seen as an outgrowth of ethnomusicology and anthropology. There is a long history of overlap, ambiguity and controversy concerning the distinctions between historical musicology and ethnomusicology, which will not be addressed here.

amounted to moments of either communication or duet singing (2008).<sup>4</sup> Theodore Levin artfully illustrates several examples of how music can enable kinds of direct conversation between mankind and nature in his book *Where Rivers and Mountains Sing*. For the people of Tuva, throat singing, he explains, “was part of a highly personal dialogue between humans and the natural world” (2006:24). By singing in a way that imitates the timbres of the sound of the wind—what Levin describes as “animistic sound mimesis” (29)—Tuvans are able to imagine themselves traveling to a specific place in their memories, thereby appeasing spirits and reliving past experiences. Patricia Gray, in an article exploring the genesis of human music making and comparing human music and processes of musical acquisition to the songs of whales and birds, writes, “Musical sounds form an exciting, natural conduit between members of our own species, between our species and others, and between the arts and sciences” (2001:54).

This sort of feedback loop between nature and culture recalls the post-constructivist work of biologist and gender studies scholar Anne Fausto-Sterling on sex, gender, and the nature/culture dichotomy, in some ways invoking and complexifying Cartesian dualism (2000). Describing what she calls a “biocultural system,” she argues that humanity is not merely influenced by nature, and vice versa, but that human action in fact changes nature, which in turn changes humanity and our relationship with that which we understand to be natural. Fausto-Sterling writes, “What I suggest is that . . . we see nature and nurture as an indivisible, dynamic system” (2000:228). (In *Sexing the Body*, she is specifically referring to the co-construction of sex, as opposed to gender, which has previously been described as a cultural construction (e.g., Butler 1990; Fausto-Sterling explains, “sexuality *is* a somatic fact *created by* a cultural effect”

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<sup>4</sup> Other musicians have performed music with animals. Jim Nollman, founder of Interspecies Inc., has made a career of playing music with animals; his first project involved a recording of himself singing “Froggy Went a Courting” with 300 tom turkeys for a 1974 Thanksgiving broadcast on KPFA Radio in Berkeley, CA. See Nollman 1982.

(2000: 21, emphasis in original).))<sup>5</sup>

Human and natural soundscapes are co-constitutive.<sup>6</sup> Humanly organized sound, to borrow John Blacking's definition of music (1973), is inspired by and created in the context of natural soundscapes; natural soundscapes are then modified by humanly organized sound; new humanly organized sound, which draws inspiration from these modified soundscapes, reflects and adapts to the changes in the natural environment. Describing relationships between humans and animals, Donna Haraway writes, “We are in a knot of species coshaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down” (2008:42). It is this kind of “reciprocating complexity” that occurs in the relationships between humanly organized and non-humanly organized soundscapes. To clarify her perspective, Fausto-Sterling offers an illustration—previously employed by feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz—of a Möbius strip, explaining that we could understand the inside of the strip as the body, and the outside as culture and experience, but that “the inside and outside are continuous and one can move from one to the other without ever lifting one's feet off the ground” (2000:24). Similarly, we can assign natural soundscapes to the outside of the Möbius strip, and music to the inside, thereby illustrating the interrelationship and mutual influence between the two.

Steven Feld's research on Ghanaian *por por* music in Accra somewhat demonstrates this kind of “reciprocating complexity” in soundscapes, with music taking inspiration from the sounds of horns and urban labor, as well as from animal sounds and other musical and non-

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<sup>5</sup> In her discussion of beliefs concerning the songs of birds and bees in the sixteenth century, and the application of those natural sounds and ideas concerning music and nature, Linda Austern historicizes the idea that music was seen as both natural and feminine (1998; also, see Ortner 1972 regarding the association of women with nature and men with culture.) However, it is this kind of nature/female versus culture/male binary that Fausto-Sterling hopes to challenge. See Von Glahn 2011 and her forthcoming book *'Skilful Listeners': American Women Composers and Nature* for a dynamic exploration of the musical engendering of nature in the United States by female composers over the twentieth century.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the social construction of nature in rural studies, see Castree and Braun (2006). They argue that studies focusing on the social construction of rural natures are limited by granting “the social” . . . an unwarranted degree of materiality and integrity,” and they therefore call for “a synthetic, symmetrical appreciation of 'socionatures'” (168).



musical sources (2007). The figurative musical Möbius strip consists not only of humans mimicking animal sounds and vice versa, but of urban, man-made soundscapes combining with natural ones, of music intermingling with—and becoming—noise (which Schafer defines most simply as “unwanted sound” (1994:273)), of music imitating man-made soundscapes that mimic natural ones, and so on. As composer John Luther Adams writes, “The central truth of ecology is that everything in this world is connected to everything else” (2009:1). In an MFA thesis on his compositional style that draws from Pauline Oliveros' concept of “Deep Listening,” soundscape studies, and the idea that music is a form of communication between humans and between humans and animals, composer Paul Scriver explains our connection to the environment cogently:

Humans are nature. The myriad ways in which we adapt to our environment parallel those of the millions of other species on the planet. The defining difference between humans and everyone else is of course that humans increasingly adapt the environment to themselves (2007:9).

As I explore in chapter three, one example of biocultural complexity in Ceará is evident (and easily demonstrated) with musician Raimundo Fagner, whose music and career were influenced by the natural soundscapes of his rural hometown, Orós. Specifically, he has drawn from the sounds, images and connotations of the town's reservoir, which itself is a kind of humanly constructed nature. Today, Fagner's music often plays throughout Orós, and he projects an influence over the local soundscape. Simply put, music influenced by the local soundscape has become the local soundscape.

### Music, the Environment, and Sustainability

Discourses of music and sustainability, as proposed by ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon,

are often considered part of acoustic ecology. Ethnomusicologist Aaron Fox, in fact, defines “ecomusicology” as the study of “cultural survival,” “sustainability and music-centered community activism.”<sup>7</sup> Titon suggests that music should be protected in much the same way that the environment is protected (2009), a concept which is also the basis for the “Sustainable Futures” collaborative research project currently undertaken by scholars around the globe, articulated by Huib Schippers. Titon calls music a “renewable biocultural resource” and argues in favor of sustaining music as a cultural practice—rather than as a commodity (2009:5).

Summarizing linguist Nicholas Evans' concern regarding the loss of language, Allan Marett writes, “The consequences of losing the ecological knowledge encoded in such small marginal languages are . . . potentially dire” (2010:255). Marett continues, “But if this is true for language, how much more true is it for performative systems of song and dance, particularly . . . in societies where ritual performances are credited with having the power to both create and destroy the world” (255). On his website, composer John Luther Adams compares the threat of global warming to the threat of “commercial mono-culture:”

Global warming is a disturbing manifestation of the inescapable truth that anything we do anywhere affects everything everywhere. If we choose to ignore this in our day to day lives, we may pay a terrible price on a planetary scale. The same is true for art and culture. Just as global climate change threatens the health of the biosphere, commercial mono-culture threatens the integrity of the cultural sphere, from Greenland to Australia, from Papua New Guinea to Siberia.<sup>8</sup>

In Ceará, I find emic evidence from musicians and politicians of similar arguments linking music, ecology, and the threat of capitalism, which I discuss in chapter two. The situation

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<sup>7</sup> “About Aaron Fox,” last modified November 16, 2009, accessed April 14, 2012, <http://www.aaronfox.com/?q=node/28>.

<sup>8</sup> “Global Warming and Art,” *John Luther Adams*, accessed April 14, 2012, <http://www.johnlutheradams.com/writings/globalwarming.html>.

in Ceará demonstrates a complex relationship between commercial music and participatory traditional practices.

### Music and the Rural Idyll

The most important commonality between traditional, rural music and the natural environment is what many in Ceará described to me as their greatest threat: capitalism. Raymond Williams argues that since the Industrial Revolution, capitalism has been responsible for the discursive construction of the “country” in the context of the “city” (1973). “The division and opposition of city and country, industry and agriculture, in their modern forms,” he writes, “are the critical culmination of the division and specialisation of labor which, though it did not begin with capitalism, was developed under it to an extraordinary and transforming degree” (Williams 1973:304). In Brazil, *forró* music, when considered a genre of urban, commercial music, has participated in the discursive construction of the *sertão* resulting from the socioeconomic history of Brazil. Furthermore, it has, in some instances, resulted in the transformation of the *sertão* and northeastern culture to fit the image conveyed through the music.

Describing what he calls the “transnational rural,” David Bell (2006) identifies three kinds of idylls created by global capitalism: the “media idyll,” the “tourist idyll,” and the “gastro-idyll.” He suggests these globalized portrayals of the country—through film, television and music, the expectations of tourists, and conflicting ideas about “fair trade,” organic food, and freshness—have altered rural places. As an example of the media and tourist idylls, the northeastern Brazilian town of Caruaru, Pernambuco, is a popular destination for cultural tourism, and has developed in the image of the *sertão* depicted in the lyrics of the *baião* (*forró*'s musical predecessor) hits of the 1930s, '40s and '50s, especially in the songs of musician Luiz

Gonzaga (Bishop 2003). It is also home to a Luiz Gonzaga museum. Similarly, the Pernambucan town of Arcoverde described by Daniel Sharp (2006) has experienced cultural and physical changes dictated by the needs and expectations of a growing cultural tourism industry that revolves around northeastern *coco* music. (One of Sharp's interlocutors described a bar in the town as “Disneyland for people who don't like Disneyland” (2006:151).) In this dissertation, I will explore how ideas about nature and rurality, mediated through popular music and global media, have transformed northeastern landscapes and cultures in Ceará.

### Nostalgia and Rural Performativity

Musicologist Alexander Rehding recognizes two strains in contemporary ecologically themed literature and film: the portrayal of an acute environmental crisis, and nostalgia for a lost natural world (2011). Rehding argues that because music, unlike literature or film, poorly conveys a sense of crisis,<sup>9</sup> ecomusicologists—who he understands to be environmentalist by definition—must turn to the study of nostalgia. Nostalgia, “the quieter sister of the attention-seeking apocalypse” (2011:413), has always been part of the environmentalist movement, he says, and can communicate the urgency of climate change and the degrading natural environment by illustrating what has been lost, not only in terms of the natural world, but in terms of its integral cultural value. Nostalgia, however, is never merely a facile recollection of what has been lost. Rather, it is a cultural practice (Stewart 1988) bound up in the vagaries of memory, mediation, nationalist politics, class distinction, and the reification and commodification of those memories, desires, and identifications.

Literary scholar Svetlana Boym defines two kinds of contemporary nostalgia: restorative

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<sup>9</sup> Rehding ostensibly refers here to instrumental music of the Western concert tradition, and thus excludes protest music, hip hop and other musical genres that have historically called listeners to action and raised awareness of crises.

(or utopian) nostalgia and reflective (or ironic) nostalgia (1994; 2002). The word nostalgia is of Greek origin: *nostos* means home, *algia* means longing. Restorative nostalgia is associated with *nostos* and an attempt to return to a utopian, mythical home, cloaked in a discourse of truth and tradition. It is at the root of nationalism and national memory. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, is associated with *algia* and acknowledges the impossibility of return and the contradictory conditions of modernity. It is based on social experience and memory and on particular details, as opposed to widely accepted symbols (e.g., Boym 1994:285). Much of the early music of *baião* innovator Luiz Gonzaga, once associated with an era of political populism and nation building, could be described as restoratively nostalgic. Gonzaga depicts a utopian (albeit harsh) *sertão*. It is a home to which those who have left it want to return. Much of the ironic and hybrid music of today's urban regionalist musicians in Fortaleza, however, is reflectively nostalgic. It posits a more nuanced, dynamic, and personal relationship with the *sertão* and the interior.

Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart writes that, in this era of late capitalism, nostalgia “shatters the surface of an atemporal order and a prefab cultural landscape” by allowing us to resurrect distant places and times (1988:227). Brazil, like much of the world, is a land of McDonald's, Starbucks, and Subway. Even Ceará, once considered the nation's backwater, is now home to big-box stores like Sam's Club and French-owned Carrefour. American and British pop singers Lady Gaga and Adele occupy public soundscapes, roaring out of cars and shops in frenetic downtown Fortaleza and buzzing from cellphone speakers in an otherwise placid town square in Orós, a small city in Ceará's rural interior.<sup>10</sup> In an age of “loss and unreality” (Stewart 1988: 228), nostalgia helps make Brazil Brazilian and its Northeast northeastern. Rural accordianists, urban composers, middle class romantics, retailers large and small, and cultural

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<sup>10</sup> Watkins reminds us that globalized popular music “in the same stores in malls all over the country” (and the world, by extension) serves to homogenize the consumer experience, but also liberates some listeners from local traditions (2011:407).

policymakers in Ceará cling to fading and twisting memories of Luiz Gonzaga and his brand of nostalgia, creating a nostalgia for nostalgia, reifying the reified.

In his work on Brazilian commercial country music from the nation's Central-Southern region (called *música sertaneja*), Alexander Dent defines “Brazilian *rurality*” (italics in original—to emphasize rurality as a process and to problematize the rural/urban dichotomy) as “an ideology and practice that incites an ideal country past over a debased urban present” (2009:3).<sup>11</sup> However, among *fórró* fans in Fortaleza—and arguably other coastal metropolises of northeastern Brazil—“Brazilian *rurality*” dwells not in an idealized past but in a complex mix of past and present. The interior remains actively relevant to the lives of many people in Fortaleza, not solely in the form of nostalgia, but as the location of a second home or the home of relatives. Many people in Ceará refer to the rural town where their family resides as “my interior,” and those who can afford to do so travel to “their interior” on vacation and to celebrate holidays.

In Central-Southern Brazil, in the context of Brazil's transition to democracy and neoliberalism, Dent discusses cowboys (*sertanejos*) who sing of breakups and unrequited love, and hicks (*caipiras*) who sing of man's lost connection to nature. In present-day Ceará, in an era dominated by a growing middle class, national optimism, and Brazil's entrance onto the world stage, I find electronic *fórró* musicians who sing about sex and a still-extant rural place while demonstrating an ambivalent view of the urban present, and traditional *fórró* musicians who nostalgically sing the already nostalgic songs of the 1940s and '50s, longing not for a lost home or a lost connection to nature, but for a moment in history when northeastern Brazil and its culture came to be a symbol of Brazilian national identity.

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<sup>11</sup> People in Ceará (and the rest of the Northeast) understand *fórró* as a distinct musical genre from *música sertaneja*. Some *música sertaneja* musicians play the *fórró* rhythm(s) or songs from the *fórró* repertoire (and vice versa), and the two genres share some cultural connotations, but they are vastly different styles, with different instrumentations, distinct rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic characteristics, as well as unique recording industries and histories.

Dent describes “rural performativity” as a nostalgic tool for rural migrant musicians to make sense of their new urban environment, and while this is true to a degree in Ceará, it is also through “rural performativity” that urban *fórró* fans and others in Fortaleza distance themselves from those who remain in the interior in an act of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984). Every year, during the June festivities (*festas juninas*) in celebration of St. John's day, *fórró* fans (and most everyone else) parodically dress in hickface as Brazilian hillbillies, with men wearing plaid shirts, denim overalls, and straw hats, and women wearing colorful patchwork dresses and braids, along with an occasional painted-on freckle or blacked-out tooth. While the *fórró* music of northeastern Brazilian hillbillies (real and parodied) is the traditional *fórró* repertoire from the first half of the twentieth century, the *fórró* of the contemporary youth culture in Ceará is the electronic *fórró* of entrepreneur Emanuel Gurgel, whose declaration, “Music is a product,” appeared as a headline in a major Fortaleza newspaper. Electronic *fórró* fans, who migrated to Fortaleza or are the cultural and/or biological descendants of those who came in earlier generations, are its producers and consumers.

In describing traditional music in Arcoverde in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, Daniel Sharp discusses what he calls the “taxidermic impulse,” by which practices—as well as places and sounds—from the past are posed “to appear living,” while contemporary practices are treated as if they were dead or nearly extinct (2006:179). One consequence of Arcoverde's cultural taxidermy, argues Sharp, is the “logic of reversal,” whereby illiterate and semi-literate culture bearers are treated with deference by educated members of the middle and upper classes. The reversal, he contends, celebrates poverty as a virtue, disguising the reality that these culture bearers are not illiterate or semi-literate due to a social position “radically outside of Brazilian modernity,” but due to their lower class status that affords them fewer opportunities for an

education (184). They are not taxidermically preserved outside of time. Rather, their lives are contingent upon a larger system of commerce and tourism and the expectations of musicians and tourists who seek a particular nostalgic representation of northeastern Brazil.

Sharp's "taxidermic impulse" and "logic of reversal" are relevant to Fortaleza's contemporary soundscape, as the city's tourist industry undergoes vast changes in preparation for the World Cup in 2014, and while the state and municipal governments continue to prioritize cultural patronage by supporting aging musicians and artists considered "masters of culture" and by funding community music organizations that perform during carnival and St. John's day festivals. Government funding, nevertheless, rarely comes unconditionally, and is driven by economic and political motivations. Cultural activists in Ceará see traditional music through the lens of religious values or political and pedagogical philosophies. Through an exploration of Tilton's "sustainable music," in the fifth chapter, I explore nostalgia, cultural policy and movements for cultural preservation in Ceará as they relate to its soundscapes.

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Samuels et al. argue that conducting ethnological analysis of soundscapes can be advantageous for anthropologists, as soundscapes illustrate "the enculturated nature of sound" (2010:330). They write, "[Schafer] frames the soundscape as a publicly circulating entity that is a produced effect of social practices, politics, and ideologies while also being implicated in the shaping of those practices, politics and ideologies" (ibid.). Broadly speaking, this dissertation examines the mutual interaction between the soundscape of Ceará and social practices, systems of power, and ideologies, specifically as they relate to the *sertão* as a natural, traditional, and rural place.



## THEORIZING *FORRÓ*

The word *fórró* is polysemic and dynamic (see Custódio 2009), and understanding its various meanings and uses justifies my interest in the regional imaginary, and the state's environment, its history, and its music. The word *fórró*, likely derived from the word *fórrobodó*, originally meant “party.”<sup>12</sup> Still today, one could say, “Let's go to a *fórró* tonight,” referring to a party probably featuring live music, and most certainly with dancing and *cachaça*, a kind of alcohol made from sugar cane. One of the first recorded songs to include the word *fórró* was called “Fórró do Mané Vito” (Mané Vito's Fórró), and was rhythmically a samba with lyrics about Mané Vito's party, his *fórró*. Until the accordion became popular in the 1930s, these parties in the interior of the Northeast typically featured musicians playing an instrument known as the *rabeça*, a hand-made violin related to the rebec, rebab and other Middle Eastern bowed stringed instruments that predate the classical violin (Brandão 1971). By the 1950s and 60s, the music played at the *fórrós*, formerly known by the names of specific rhythms (like the *baião*, the *xote*, the *pé-de-serra*, the *xaxado*, and the *fórró*), came to be known as *fórró* music, thereby becoming the name of a musical genre (Matos 2007). Genres of popular music, especially dance music, often have dynamic and polysemous names. Dominican *merengue típico*, for example, is quite different from more mainstream *merengue*, which in some ways has become a transnational, Pan-Latin genre, which itself is different from Venezuelan *merengue*. The word *samba* is similarly broad.

*Fórró* is also the term used to describe the dance that one does to *fórró* music, and similarly includes a collection of different dance steps that vary based on the rhythm. *Fórró* is the name of any music played by a trio of musicians with an accordion, a *zabumba* bass drum,

<sup>12</sup> There still exists a popular debate about the origin of the word *fórró*. Many claim it evolved from the English phrase, “for all,” which was presumably written on signs outside of parties held by British railroad workers—or American soldiers—living in northeastern Brazil at the start of the twentieth century. However, the consensus among scholars today is that *fórró* is a shortened form of *fórrobodó* (Silva 2003).

and a triangle. (Often, these groups play urban *choro* and other musical genres, but they are still referred to as *fórró* trios.) *Fórró* is also the term for the venue where you would hear and dance *fórró* (in giving me directions to her house, a friend told me to “turn right at the *fórró*,” referring to a dancehall).

In São Paulo, when people talk about *fórró* music, they often mean university *fórró* (*fórró universitário*), a genre of *fórró* from the 1990s that mostly employs the *xote* rhythm, and was popular among college students (see Fernandes 2005). When most people in Ceará refer to *fórró*, they usually mean a genre of popular dance music often called electronic *fórró* (*fórró eletrônico*) that was first popularized in the 1990s by a group called Mastruz Com Leite and is now associated with enormous parties, consumable, mass-produced dance music, extravagant stage shows with lighting displays, dancers performing choreographed routines, lyrics that many consider vulgar, bands with horn sections, electric guitars, and keyboards, accompanied by an accordion or two (see Pedroza 2001; Trotta 2009).

If one were to ask a musician in Ceará who plays traditional *fórró* (*fórró pé-de-serra*), he or she would likely define *fórró* as the “quality,” “authentic,” and “true” music played by a *fórró* trio, and say that electronic *fórró* is not, in fact, *fórró*. When scholars in Ceará (like professors Oswald Barroso or Simone Castro) talk about *fórró*, they either mean the music of the now-deceased musician Luiz Gonzaga and his contemporaries (who played traditional *fórró*), or the rhythm played by fife-and-drum bands in the interior of Ceará (see Crook 1991).

*Fórró* is also a musical shorthand for the Northeast, for the *sertão*, and for drought, a consequence of Luiz Gonzaga's national radio exposure in the 1940s (Albuquerque Jr. 1999). At roughly the same time that Woody Guthrie came to be associated with the Dust Bowl and droughts, dust storms, and forced migration in the United States, Gonzaga began to occupy a

parallel position in the Brazilian imaginary. Today, when a Brazilian musician wants to index the Northeast, rurality or the hardships of drought, he or she can quote one of Gonzaga's canonical songs or employ one of the *fórró* rhythms, the timbre of one of the *fórró* instruments, the common musical modes (specifically, mixolydian, dorian, lydian, and a mode that combines mixolydian with lydian containing both a flat seven and a sharp four), the visual imagery associated with *fórró* parties or *fórró* venues, or the shuffling two-to-the-left, two-to-the-right dance step.

In this dissertation, I consider all these meanings of *fórró*. I am interested in the parties, the places, the dances, the rhythms, the timbres, the instrumentations, the ambiguous and sometimes-confusing genre labels, the methods of marketing, the discourse surrounding the word *fórró*, the audiences, and the consumers. I also investigate music and musical culture—rock and opera—that musically cites *fórró* and the *sertão*. In Fortaleza, *fórró* is a metonym for Ceará, for the Northeast, for rurality, and for drought. When studied as an index of the regional geography, *fórró* (as a concept and a collection of sounds) reveals processes of the construction of musical meaning, and situates musicians and listeners in various sociocultural contexts.

In my field research in Ceará, I interviewed and studied many musicians, including Brazilian Instrumental Music (*Música Instrumental Brasileira*)<sup>13</sup> composer Ricardo Bezerra, rock band Eletrocactus, early music chamber ensemble Grupo Syntagma, instrument builder and fiddle (*rabeca*) player Francisco de Freitas, and opera composer and jazz bassist Tarcísio Lima, among many others. For all these musicians, *fórró* and the state's environment have important—and differing—meanings, which they express in various ways in their music.

For Bezerra, also a landscape architect, sonic representations of the regional environment

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew Connell calls *música instrumental brasileira* a “rather inexact term that refers to a mix of popular instrumental genres” (2002:3).

create continuity in his 2003 album *Notas de Viagens*. For Eletrocactus, musical images of the *sertão* allow the band to dialogue with ideas about local belonging and with various regional and national musical-cultural movements. For Syntagma, the religious and musical traditions of the *sertão* link regional music to beliefs about the influence of medieval culture in the region. For Francisco de Freitas, the availability of calabash gourds in the drought-prone interior inspires instrument building, performance practice, and composition. For Tarcísio Lima, musically imagining the state's geography allows him to sonically postulate what music from Ceará should sound like and permits him to mythologize the difficult lives of those in the interior who suffer due to a lack of water.

Some musicians and cultural activists in Ceará treat musical preservation and environmental conservation—and the valorization of both local musical and environmental knowledge—as related causes and see music and knowledge about the environment as inherent, intangible elements of the region and of regional identity. Because many of Ceará's biggest challenges concerning both musical culture and the environment are rooted in the state's interior, ideas and images associated with drought pervade both musical and environmental discourses. For example, at the 2010 Meeting of the Rain Prophets,<sup>14</sup> government officials highlighted the need to preserve regional knowledge about drought and about music, suggesting that both are significant local “ways of knowing” that contest mainstream points of view and urban hegemony.

I have chosen to focus on *fórró* because, as the primary genre of popular music in contemporary Ceará, it can tell us about history, social structure, media, and the construction of Ceará's environmental imaginary.

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<sup>14</sup> So-called “rain prophets” are individuals who can predict when and how much it will rain by watching patterns in nature, and often advise farmers in the *sertão* on when to plant their crops.

## ORGANIZATION

This dissertation is structured around the various approaches to soundscapes and soundscape studies proposed by Schafer and others, combining acoustemology, ecomusicology, and the study of musical sustainability. While I will vary among musical genres, analytic methods, and locations in and around Ceará from chapter to chapter, the following four themes will run throughout the dissertation: (1) the environment and climate, (2) cultural preservation, (3) the musical elements of and discourses surrounding *forró*, and (4) systems of power and modes of resistance.

In Chapter 2, “From Natural to Mediated Soundscapes: Birdsong and a Song About a Bird,” I demonstrate the epistemological importance of the natural landscape and natural sounds in Ceará, especially concerning nature—and drought—in terms of traditional practices and knowledge about nature and agriculture, as well as in relation to traditional music. Furthermore, I explore the impact of Gonzaga’s oeuvre, which took influence from the landscapes, soundscapes, and practices of the *sertão*, on contemporary traditional cultural practices.

In Chapter 3, “Acoustemology: Listening to Reservoirs, Rooftops, and Radios in Orós and Fortaleza,” I explore the interplay between natural and human sounds, the role of nature in understandings of everyday life, the role of technology in rural and urban soundscapes, and acoustic senses of place. This chapter investigates the construction of the local soundscape of Orós, the influence of the soundscape on the music of Raimundo Fagner, and the impact of Fagner and his work on the local soundscape.

In Chapter 4, “Model Soundscapes: Moacir of the Seven Deaths and Eletrocactus,” I analyze two contemporary musical projects in Fortaleza that attempt to imagine the *sertão* and Ceará. Through an analysis of the music and interviews with the musicians and composers

involved in the projects, I will examine two literary myths of the origins of the Brazilian and Cearense people (*Macunaíma* and *Iracema*) as they relate to these musical constructions of the *sertão* imaginary. I also explore the history of musical movements in northeastern Brazil in terms of Ceará's political history, and in the context of these two projects.

Chapter 5, “Acoustic Design: Fortaleza's Two *Forrós* and the Sustainability of Sound” contextualizes the ongoing battle between traditional *fórró* and electronic *fórró*, described by Chico César, musician and secretary of culture from the northeastern state of Paraíba, as “plastic fórró.” The dispute between the corporate interests of electronic *fórró* and the government entities that support traditional *fórró* highlights issues of the control of acoustic space, both on the radio and in public places.

## JUSTIFYING CEARÁ AS THE LOCATION OF RESEARCH

Several individuals have asked me why I conduct research in Ceará rather than Pernambuco, a state recognized for its valorization of traditional *fórró* culture and its role in the Brazilian music industry, having produced Luiz Gonzaga and the internationally recognized Manguebeat movement of the 1990s. Pernambuco is home to the city of Caruaru, known for its St. John's Day celebrations—a holiday closely associated with *fórró* music—that it boasts are the largest in the world. (In 2003, I celebrated St. John's day in Caruaru and the nearby town of Gravatá, and as Jack Bishop describes in his UCLA master's thesis, the city is a well-equipped, rural-themed *fórró* tourist destination, with its Luiz Gonzaga museum and rustically styled buildings where *fórró* trios and fife-and-drum ensembles play throughout the season (Bishop 2000).)

Many of the traditions in Pernambuco that are marketed and commemorated through the

media and by large tourist festivals also exist (often in distinct forms) in Ceará, but without as much government support or media recognition. Ceará's Cariri region is known as the center of religiosity in the Northeast, and individuals and neighborhood groups continue to practice many older musical and cultural traditions. Cultural heritage is highly valued in Cariri. Not insignificantly, Luiz Gonzaga was born and raised in Exu, a Pernambucan town near the border of Ceará and which was essentially a part of the Cariri region. When Gonzaga's family went to the nearest city, they went to Crato, in Ceará, and he later often referred to Crato and Juazeiro do Norte in interviews. That is to say, the traditions from the Northeast that Gonzaga grew up with and the places he sang about were from Cariri, a region that also influenced notions of state identity in Ceará.

In December 2009, I participated in a debate on the Brazilian ethnomusicology email list (etnomusicologiabr) in which a few of us argued about which Brazilian city can claim the title of “the capital of *farró*.” Wander Nunes Frota commented that people in Campina Grande, Paraíba, considered their city to be the “capital of *farró*,” but I had read in locally produced tourist literature and was told by a number of musicians (including ethnomusicologist Márcio Mattos) that Fortaleza is considered the capital of *farró*. I replied via email, mentioning this perception in Fortaleza. Felipe Trotta responded, explaining that Caruaru, Pernambuco, was the true “capital of *farró*” and that Campina Grande had the “biggest São João [St. John's Day celebrations] in the world.” As Wander Nunes Frota explained in his reply to Trotta and me, all three cities are known for *farró*, but Fortaleza's (and Ceará's) relationship with the genre (and word) *farró* is unique. Fortaleza is the birthplace and center of the electronic *farró* industry. It is the first and largest producer of touring *farró* stage shows that draw enormous crowds all over the Northeast, and, while many intellectuals and musicians will argue that electronic *farró* has little musical

value, they will also point out that the *fórró* industry is extremely powerful, and dominates the radio waves.

In much of my research, musicians expressed how they felt threatened by the electronic *fórró* industry, be they performers of improvised *cantoria de viola* music, traditional *fórró*, rock, jazz-like Brazilian Instrumental Music, or symphonic art music. The musical culture in Fortaleza, therefore, is one in which those hoping to “safeguard” what they consider to be traditional or quality music are actively debating their regional musical identities. Out of necessity, they are asking: What is *fórró*? What is Cearense music? How do you represent the *sertão*, rural tradition and northeastern culture through music? How do you represent these things in the contemporary, globalizing world? And in youth culture? How do you compete against electronic *fórró* as a working musician who values non-commercial musical culture? Acoustemology, ecomusicology, and the study of musical sustainability can elucidate the multifaceted responses to these questions, illustrating how Ceará's soundscape is represented, heard, and constructed.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DROUGHT IN CEARÁ

### A Brief Historical and Social Contextualization of Drought

At six a.m. on August 23, 2011, nearly three hundred people—farmers and their families—marched from the offices of the Rural Workers Union in Icó, a municipality in the interior of Ceará (approximately 380 kilometers from Fortaleza and 30 kilometers from Orós), to the local headquarters of the National Department of Works Against Drought (DNOCS). According to the farmers, almost twenty-five thousand acres of farmland in the region were unproductive due to a prolonged dry season—what Cearenses call a “bad rainy season”—contrary to the consensus prediction given by rain prophets in Quixadá the past January. To protest the perceived lack of



official support in repairing damaged irrigation canals and water tanks, the farmers occupied the DNOCS building, where they threatened to stay until they could negotiate with the federal government in Brasília.<sup>15</sup>

Despite news of reduced income inequality throughout Brazil and national economic growth driven by consumer spending, one and a half million of Ceará's nearly eight and a half million inhabitants continue to live in extreme poverty (defined as earning less than approximately thirty-eight dollars per month).<sup>16</sup> Almost two hundred twenty thousand families in the state still have no access to running water to drink or irrigate crops.<sup>17</sup>

Since the inauguration of the region's first dam in Quixadá in 1906 and the creation of the Inspectorate for Works to Combat Drought (IOCS, later DNOCS) in 1906, genuine efforts have been made to mitigate the impact of drought on the state's most vulnerable populations: delivering water to remote areas; building dams, irrigation canals, water towers, and railroads; funding studies and rural sanitation posts; and offering financial assistance to farmers in difficult years (Buckley 2006). However, a long history of corruption, poor oversight and communication, and rigid belief systems have made the task slow and seemingly impossible (see Finan 1999).

Northeastern Brazil—a regional designation coined after the development of DNOCS to distinguish the modernizing southeastern region from the underdeveloped Northeast—is divided into three geographical sub-regions: the *zona da mata* (literally the “forest zone”), the *agreste* (a sub-humid hilly region inland from the *zona da mata*), and the *sertão* (a semi-arid region

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<sup>15</sup> “Famílias de perímetro irrigado ocupam sede do Dnocs em Icó,” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), August 23, 2011, <http://www.opovo.com.br/app/fortaleza/2011/08/23/noticiafortaleza,2284456/familias-de-perimetro-irrigado-ocupam-sede-do-dnocs-em-ico.shtml>.

<sup>16</sup> “Governo discute ações para combater a miséria no Ceará,” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), August 8, 2011, <http://www.opovo.com.br/app/fortaleza/2011/08/09/noticiafortaleza,2277501/governo-discute-acoes-para-combater-a-miseria-no-ceara.shtml>.

<sup>17</sup> “Comunidade Santa Luzia recebe obra do Projeto São José,” Secretaria do Desenvolvimento Agrário, Governo do Estado do Ceará, September 21, 2011, <http://www.sda.ce.gov.br/index.php/latest-news/43792-comunidade-santa-luzia-recebe-obra-do-projeto-sao-jose>.

comprising the bulk of the interior of northeastern Brazil). The *zona da mata* near the coast is fertile and suitable for the growth of sugarcane, while the *agreste* and *sertão* often suffer from drought, and therefore lack arable land. The vast majority of Ceará is semi-arid (see figure 3).

Since the seventeenth century, Ceará's economy has predominantly been based on cattle ranching, cotton cultivation, and subsistence farming. Because of slash-and-burn farming and the semi-arid climate, Ceará was ill-suited for agriculture. Consequently, the land was initially used to raise cattle for leather and jerky to be sold to sugarcane farmers in Pernambuco to its south and then to the wealthier inhabitants of the mountainous and coastal regions of Ceará.

Following a drought in 1845, a belief that drought would occur every twenty years spread throughout the state (Vieira 2002:17). Drought, workers feared, was an inevitable condition. Intellectuals at the time, however, argued that there was no scientific basis to expect cyclical droughts, and thus changes to the state's economic and social structure were unnecessary.

Instead, new laws were put into place to help “discipline” and “civilize” the rural poor who had migrated to the city of Fortaleza following the 1845 drought (Vieira 2002:18). When no drought occurred in 1865, it was seen as further proof that there was nothing to fear, and for the next twelve years Fortaleza flourished. Historian José Olivenor argues that this period of growth came as a result of trading cotton with Europe, especially England, bringing “characteristics of capitalism” to Fortaleza's economy (2002:49-50). Moreover, Olivenor explains that with the entrance into the world economy, a “bourgeois elite” began to emerge. Between 1864 and 1870, Brazil was in its first “industrial era,” and the Brazilian bourgeoisie looked to Europe and Argentina for refined musical culture (Santos 2002:40).

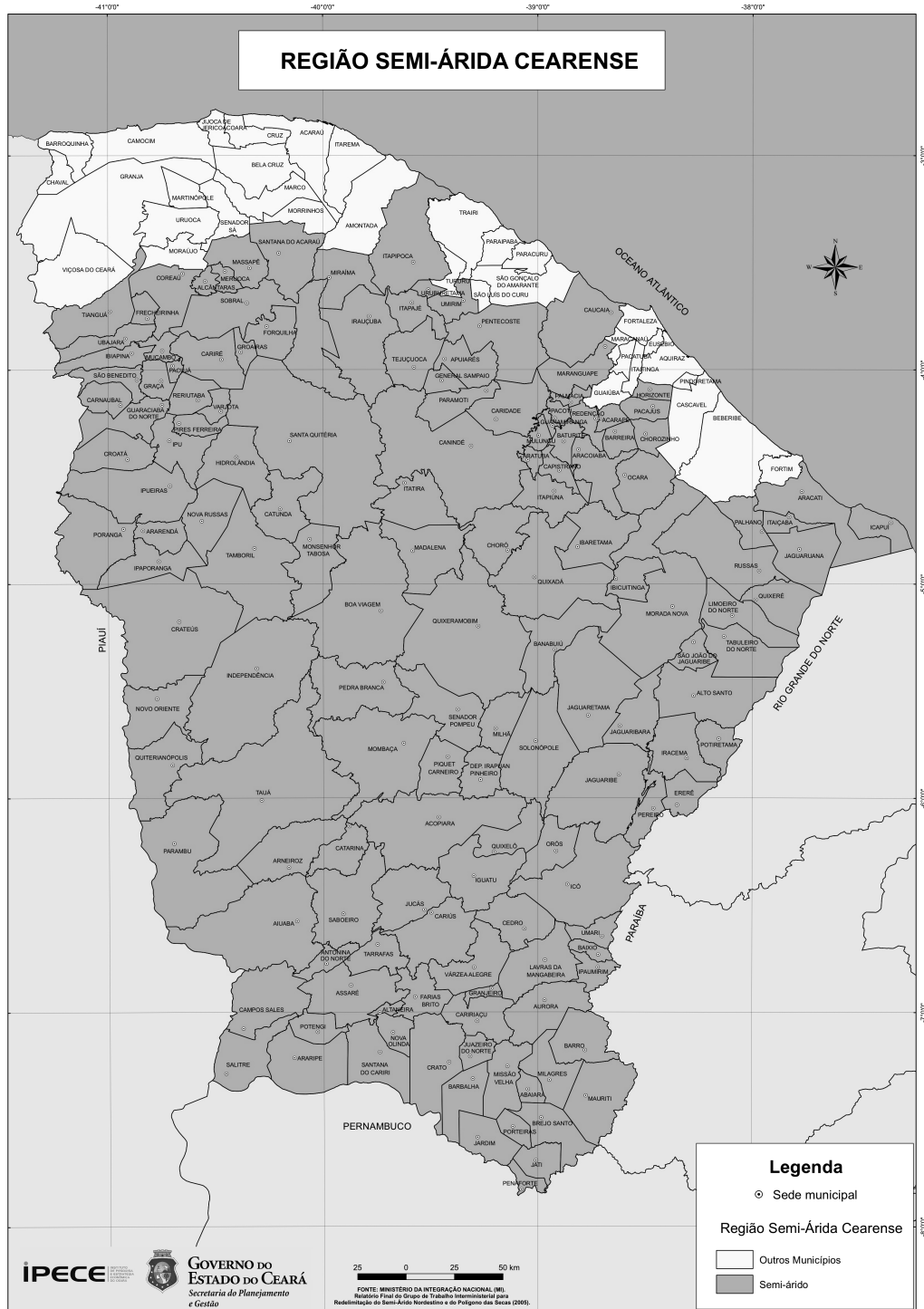


FIGURE 3. The semi-arid region of Ceará. The darker shaded area, covering all but a narrow strip near the coast, is semi-arid.

Source: Ceará em Mapas, Available on the site of the Instituto de Pesquisa e Estratégia Econômica do Ceará (IPECE), Governo do Estado do Ceará © 2007

[http://www2.ipece.ce.gov.br/atlas/capitulo1/12/images3x/Regiao\\_Semi\\_Arida.jpg](http://www2.ipece.ce.gov.br/atlas/capitulo1/12/images3x/Regiao_Semi_Arida.jpg)

This all changed, however, with the onset of the 1877-79 drought (commonly referred to as the Great Drought), when tens of thousands of migrants fled from the interior of Ceará to Fortaleza, disrupting the recent progress and bringing disease, crime and starvation. In response, the local government sent the migrants to live in concentration camps set up on the outskirts of the city. “The relationship between the urban population and the rural poor,” Castro Neves writes, “would never be the same” (2002:76).

There were seven droughts between 1888 and 1913—some lasting as long as two years. This was not a twenty-year cycle, but something unpredictable, frequent and often devastating for the region's population. A newspaper article from January 8, 1889, said, “the flow of migrants into the capital has become gigantic,” and “public works, reservoirs and railroads, which have been planned by the government, as many as there are, will still never be sufficient to provide work for all those in need” (qtd. in Castro Neves 2002:78).

Rural misery was never merely a consequence of the climate. Powerful cattle barons who owned large estates (*latifúndios*) tended to ignore the rule of law, leaving the *sertão*—and the fate of its inhabitants—subject to their whim and neglect. Inheritance practices among small-scale ranchers also contributed to an inability to withstand drought. When a rancher died, his widow and eligible sons divided his already-narrow plot of land, leaving each generation even more vulnerable than the last. Furthermore, through the corrupt manipulation of drought, commonly referred to as the drought industry, state and federal funds intended to ameliorate hunger and misery through public works instead ended up in the hands of profiteers. Frederico Castro Neves writes:

When we speak of drought, we are referring to the terrible social occurrences caused by a sudden scarcity: the destruction of subsistence crops, uncontrolled migrations, hunger, an increase in misery and malnutrition, social conflicts, invasions of cities, the looting of warehouses, corruption, political manipulation, etc. Certainly, this scarcity is related to

the irregularity of rain, but this climatic phenomenon, in and of itself, does not cause social woes nor does it favor development (2007:100-101).

During an era known as the Old Republic (1889-1930), which was Brazil's first period of constitutional democracy, a corrupt oligarchy called *coronelismo* sustained structures of inequality in the Northeast. The rural poor had learned to see drought as an inevitable, recurrent crisis, which was now “naturalized” by the media and the oligarchs. Social scientist José Farias dos Santos explains, “Following the Great Drought of 1877, all of the social and political problems of the region, which unfolded in revolts and popular protests, were explained by the phenomenon of drought” (Santos 2002:93). While in earlier decades those in power had argued that drought was nothing to fear, now they were claiming that misery was the fault of uncontrollable droughts, not social inequality. As a result, workers often saw no choice but to migrate to the country's urban centers, first to the cities of the Northeast, and then by long and arduous journeys either north to the Amazon or south to the nation's industrial capitals.

It is in this context that distinctions between the country and the city were first embedded in the Brazilian imagination. Unlike the English idyll or the American wilderness, the *sertão* has been understood as a place of starvation and suffering. Nevertheless, many characteristics of the “country” remained otherwise similar to those described by Williams: the country represents “innocence” and “simple virtue,” as well as “backwardness, ignorance, [and] limitation” (Williams 1973:1). The *sertão* came to be known (and imagined) throughout Brazil from the rapid influx of people fleeing drought. Today, people periodically describe Cearenses as “Brazilian Jews,” connoting wandering laborers and merchants whose forced diaspora sent them to all corners of the land.<sup>18</sup> With them, they took not only their culture and their memories, but

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<sup>18</sup> This term came up frequently in my interviews. At times, there was also an undertone of anti-Semitism and an implication that people from Ceará are parsimonious or wily. Nevertheless, all uses implied the meaning given above.

also the connotations of the land from which they came, reinforcing the vision of the Northeast as a drought-ridden backwater and a source of Brazilian “authenticity.”

### Mediated Representations of Drought in Ceará

While the influx of migrants brought new faces, behaviors, and practices to many Brazilian cities, urban Brazilians also learned of the *sertão* through representations in literature, the press, and the arts. Drought did not become widely recognized as a symbol of Ceará until after the Great Drought of 1877-79, and many argue that this is due in large part to literary, musical, cinematic, and journalistic representations of the region (Albuquerque Jr. 1999; Almeida 2009; Arons 2004; Buckley 2006).<sup>19</sup> In 1871, only eight years prior to the Great Drought, Brazilian author Franklin Távora portrayed the *sertão* of Ceará as “fertile” and “prodigious” (Barbosa 2007:60). From 1877 through the first half of the twentieth century, however, the depiction of the *sertão* centered around its semi-arid climate, notable in many of Brazil's regionalist literary works, including Euclides da Cunha's *Rebellion in the Backlands (Os Sertões)* (1902), Raquel de Queros's *The Fifteen (O Quinze)* (1930), and Graciliano Ramos' *Barren Lives (Vidas Secas)* (1938). Poetry, news articles, and popular mythology about Ceará and the Northeast were all part of the nationwide construction of the image of Ceará as a place of interminable drought and starvation. At the start of the Great Drought, poet Guerra Junqueiro wrote “Hunger in Ceará” (“Fome no Ceará”), which begins:

Cast a look around;	<i>Lançai o olhar em torno;</i>
The scorched earth burns	<i>Arde a terra abrasada</i>
Under the burning canopy of an oven.	<i>Debaixo da candente abóbada dum forno.</i>
She does not yet cry about the morning dew;	<i>Já não chora sobre ela orvalho a</i>
They dried up all the tears from the springs;	<i>madrugada;</i>
And the coarse tawny aridity of the hills,	<i>Secaram-se de todo as lágrimas das fontes;</i>

<sup>19</sup> See Arons 2004 for an in-depth exploration of drought in Ceará and *literatura de cordel*, a form of printed popular poetry in northeastern Brazil.

Among the narcotic flickers of the light,  
The ancient trees  
Rise into the air – athletic beggars,  
Spectral ghosts, the great bare arms.

In the desert expanse of the luminous fields  
Large thirsty oxen moo ominously.  
The birds already fall, without supporting  
themselves by their wings.  
And, exhausting herself with the enormous  
strength that ends her,  
The sun applies to the Earth  
caustic embers.

*E na fulva aridez aspérrima dos montes,  
Entre as cintilações narcóticas da luz,  
As árvores antigas  
Levantam para o ar – atléticas mendigas,  
Fantasmas espectrais, os grandes braços  
nus.*

*Na deserta amplidão dos campos luminosos  
Mugem sinistramente os grandes bois  
sequiosos.  
As aves caem já, sem se suster nas asas.  
E, exaurindo-lhe a força enorme que ela  
encerra,  
O Sol aplica à Terra  
Um cáustico de brasas.*

Cited as the first example of photojournalism in Brazil, Cearense photographer J. A. Corrêa's 1878 photograph "Victims of drought in Ceará" ("Vítimas da seca no Ceará") appeared in the magazine *O Besouro* from Rio de Janeiro, spreading the image of starvation throughout Brazil. The illustration depicts a tuxedo-clad skeletal hand holding two playing cards, each with a photograph of a dark, forlorn, emaciated child with visible ribs and a distended abdomen (see Buckley 2006).

A folktale published in 1967 by folklorist Câmara Cascudo called "The Cause of Droughts in Ceará," which he learned from Eusébio de Souza, the director of the State Museum of Ceará at the time, blames drought on the people of Ceará. Cascudo describes the tale as having a literary and "relatively modern" origin (1967:400), and it seems to be as much a warning about lack of faith as it is an explanation of the state's climate:

In days of yore, Sweet Jesus became unpopular with the Cearenses. They decided to expel him from Ceará. To do so, they prepared a raft on which they put him with the provisions they deemed necessary for his long journey. They unfurled the sail of the boat and sent the Saint into the sea, in the direction of Portugal, whence he came.

Sweet Jesus, on his agonizing voyage, already very far from the beaches of Ceará,

“between sea and sky,” began to feel thirsty. Either due to forgetfulness, or on purpose, they had not equipped the raft with drinking water. There was not a single drop of the precious liquid.

In his painful trance, feeling thirst, Jesus then uttered these words:

“Yes, ungrateful and evil people of Ceará; you too will have no water when you experience thirst.”

The East Wind, passing, welcomed the words of the Lord and, sweeping all the clouds of the sky, brought Ceará its first drought (1967:398).

### Travelers' Accounts of Drought in Ceará

Travelers to Brazil from Europe and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries observed the severity of drought in Ceará and its impact on the population and regional culture. Their perceptions of Ceará were likely based not exclusively on their own experiences, but on the introductions, explanations, and beliefs of their Brazilian guides. Nevertheless, they returned home to write about their observations and understandings, thus exporting this image of Ceará.

In 1816, English traveler Henry Koster feared that Ceará was doomed because of its climate, writing, “the dreadful droughts, prevent any sanguine hope of its rise to opulence. The commerce in Ceará is very limited and is not likely to increase” (1816:114-5). Later, he writes, “The general feature of the country about Ceará is arid; the captaincy produces no sugar, but the lands are adapted for cotton, of which however the crop this year was very trifling. So excessive had the droughts become, that a famine was feared” (1816:123). During their 1817-1820 voyage to Brazil, Bavarians Johann Baptist von Spix and Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius observe “sultry deserts” in Ceará and Pernambuco, states to which Rio de Janeiro exported “considerable quantities of vegetables, when a drought causes them to fail there” (1824:192). Swiss natural



historian Louis Agassiz and his wife Elizabeth Cabot write:

The Sertão (desert) is beautifully green now, and spreads out like a verdant prairie below. But in the dry season it justifies its name and becomes a very desert indeed, being so parched that all vegetation is destroyed. The drought is so great during eight months of the year, that the country people living in the Sertão are often in danger of famine from the drying up of all the crops (1865:459).

Fear of famine during periods of drought was, it seems, well known to even those just passing through the region. In their 1866 book *Brazil and the Brazilians*, James C. Fletcher and Daniel P. Kidder, Protestant missionaries from the United States, write about the terrain and vegetation in Ceará as they traveled through the Northeast:

After leaving Parahiba do Norte, the eye tires of the dreary shores and hillocks of white sand, herbless and treeless, save here and there a riband of green cocoanuts in the little valleys, or columnar cacti that from time to time shoot up out of the unrelieved desert as if to keep note of its utter desolation. Though, as has been observed, there is no Sahara in Brazil, there has often been much suffering from drought in this portion of the Empire (1866:528).

English explorer Sir Richard Francis Burton mentions drought—and an accusation of indolence—in Ceará in his 1869 *Explorations of the Highlands of Brazil*. Referring to a proposal to reroute the São Francisco River that would require it to be drained first, Burton writes, “It is a 'gigantic project:' it would effectually lay the horrible plague of famine, and awake from their profound lethargy the people of inner Ceará and their neighbours of the Parahyba and Rio Grande do Norte provinces” (1869:386).

Perhaps most relevant of the travelers' accounts of Ceará is that of French traveler Pierre Denis, whose 1911 book *The Coffee Fazenda of Brazil* includes a chapter about Ceará in which he outlines the history of drought in the region starting in 1692. He argues that drought is the defining characteristic of Ceará and a key factor in terms of the regional economy, law, social organization, religion, cuisine, regional celebrations, and cultural character. He writes:

Nothing mitigates the heat; the dry season, having once set in, lasts for six months or longer. Whosoever has lived in a country where a dry season alternates with a rainy season will remember the feverish, restless longing for the first rains, and the joy they bring to man and beast. But nowhere are the rains awaited with greater restlessness than in Ceará, where even the stranger is affected by the universal anxiety. This prevalent anxiety is due to the fact that the winter months occasionally fail to bring the rains. When the rainy season does fail the country is doomed to a year of wretchedness; the plague of drought invades the land (1911:328-9).

Denis explains that local mythology at the time attributed drought in Ceará to deforestation. “Man, according to this explanation,” he writes, “is but the victim of his lack of foresight; in destroying the forest he ruins the climate” (330). However, Denis contends that Ceará never possessed forests to begin with, and was predominantly “shrubby” since the arrival of the Portuguese (331). He cites drought as the cause of the region's “extreme poverty” (ibid.), describes its impact on the landscape (332), and claims that it is responsible for the “peculiar characteristics” of cattle-breeding practices in Ceará, in which cattle graze throughout the rainy season affording cowboys few responsibilities until the dry season comes, when the workers must dig temporary wells while also attempting to herd cattle that have traveled in search of sustenance (334-5). Cowboys, he later explains, can also grow cotton, a crop requiring few days' work, during the remainder of the year. “Consequently the raising of stock,” he writes, “in the manner necessitated by the climate, is at present *the dominant and determining factor in the lives of the inhabitants of the whole of the sertão* [sic] *of Ceará*” (emphasis added, 343). (I have no intention of making the kinds of generalizations and deterministic claims like those made by Pierre Denis in 1911. Rather, I use Denis to illustrate the pervasive and enduring belief that drought has a significant cultural impact on those living in Ceará.)

He also argues that life in the *sertão* of Ceará “forms a population both able to endure hardship and to enjoy idleness,” therefore contributing to the development and maintenance of

musical and cultural practices (ibid.). He writes, “As well as its traditional forms of labour it has its amusements, wholly of popular origin, which have undoubtedly been transmitted from generation to generation since the time when the first herdsmen settled in the centre of Ceará” (ibid.). He illustrates this with the example of a musical and theatrical performance called *bumba meu boi*, which, when practiced in rainy years on the day before the Catholic holiday of Epiphany, celebrates “the time when the rains are heralded by the first showers, and there is gaiety everywhere” (343-4). Denis also cites the lyrics to a song he learned during his travels: “When the months of *fêtes* are over . . . when January nears—then folk begin to listen, each hoping to hear the first growling of the thunder . . . Nowhere is life so gladdened—as ours in the bush—when the year gives a goodly winter, and the thunder rumbles in the sky” (333).<sup>20</sup>

These lyrics indicate that Cearenses sang about rain and drought as early as the start of the twentieth century. Throughout the rest of this dissertation, I will examine musical references to rain, draught, and the *sertão* from the 1940s until the start of the twenty-first century, exploring the reasons for the creation of the music and the subsequent impact of the songs on northeastern culture and northeastern landscapes and soundscapes.

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<sup>20</sup> The song's title is unknown, as are its original Portuguese lyrics. Denis translates the lyrics directly into French in the original edition: “Quand s'arrête le mois des fêtes,” -- dit une chanson populaire, -- “pour l'entrée de janvier, -- le peuple se prend à écouter qui entendra le premier gronder l'orage..... -- Il n'y a pas de vie si satisfaite -- que la nôtre dan le sertao, -- quand l'année donne un bon hiver, et que dans le ciel gronde l'orage” (1910:272).

## TWO

### FROM NATURAL TO MEDIATED SOUNDSCAPES:

#### BIRDSONG AND A SONG ABOUT A BIRD

The Laughing Falcon sings endlessly  
Through summer,  
Amid afternoon silence, auguring,  
Inviting drought to the *sertão* . . .

In the joy of winter  
Sing the river frog, the tree frog, the toad,  
But in the sorrow of drought  
You hear only the Laughing Falcon

-Zé Dantas, “Acauã”

According to rain prophet Erasmo Barreira, whose predictions about rain each year help farmers determine how and when to plant their crops or prepare for impending hardships, the call of the *acauã*—the Laughing Falcon—is a common indicator of drought for rain prophets in the foothills of Ceará's Central *Sertão*. “The ‘*cauã*,” he explained to me, “is one of those occurrences that lots of times, that when she enters January singing loudly in the bush, someone once said you call this an ‘augur’ (*agouro*), you know? Auguring (*agourando*) that the rainy season won't come. This is the ‘*cauã*.”<sup>21</sup> In stating that the Laughing Falcon's song is a sign of drought for rain prophets, Barreira quoted “someone” else's use of the word “auguring.” One “someone” who described the Laughing Falcon's prophetic cry as “auguring” was musician Luiz Gonzaga, whose 1952 recording of Zé Dantas' song “Acauã” is a Brazilian classic and a standard in the *baião* and traditional *forró* repertoire.

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<sup>21</sup> Erasmo Barreira (rain prophet, radio announcer, retiree), interview by the author, September 3, 2011, Quixadá, Ceará.

Barreira's intertextual explanation of rain prophecy led me to wonder: Did mass mediated popular music influence Barreira's present-day knowledge of rain prophecy, a practice generally considered “traditional” and deeply rooted in an understanding of the natural world and natural sounds and patterns? And, more generally, how (and why) do systems of power and processes of mediated representation affect local epistemologies, traditional practices, and concerns about local autonomy, and in what ways and by whom are they contested and complexified?

In this chapter, I argue that rural soundscapes and traditional knowledge related to nature—exemplified by the practice of rain prophecy—were mediated through Brazilian popular songs of the mid-twentieth century. Through the radio, popular music in turn reintroduced rural sounds, knowledge, and images to the Northeast. Today, these soundscapes, conceptions, and practices take on new meaning in an era in which their commercial, mediated forms have been naturalized and integrated into rural, “traditional” culture in Ceará's interior and urban Northeastern culture in Fortaleza.

Traditional knowledge is a cultural practice rather than a body of information, and many individuals—including some associated with Ceará's rural culture—believe that “the vitality of the production of traditional knowledge” must be preserved (Cunha 2009:309). Anthropologist Karen Pennesi cautions that rain prophecy in Ceará cannot be considered a homogenized body of knowledge, because fluctuations and variations among prophets and their methodologies prevent any consolidation of the community's wisdom (2007:35). Indeed, anthropologist Manuela Carneiro da Cunha affirms that unlike scientific knowledge, traditional wisdom is always contingent upon local conditions, and “welcomes divergent explanations with equal confidence or skepticism” (2009:301).

Due to this adaptability, these practices can be seen as vulnerable to the mediated

practices that they incorporate. Consequently, traditional knowledge in Ceará, including the practices of rain prophecy and *cantoria de viola*—a genre of improvised sung poetry often performed in competitive duels and accompanied on steel-stringed guitars called *violas caipiras*—has been maintained to resist hegemonic systems of knowledge and dominant cultural practices, including those promoted by government agencies and recording industries. This is done despite the fact that contemporary traditional knowledge has already undergone mediation through urban hegemonic entities, such as the Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo-based recording industry of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> Pennesi writes, “[Practices of rain prophecy] build solidarity in opposition to exclusionary systems of government and science” (Pennesi 2007:12). I extend her assertion to musical culture, also contemplating the reciprocal impacts of mediation.

In my analysis, I also invoke Jeff Todd Titon's four principles of music and sustainability (2009). Titon, who worries that “heritage management”-type efforts to sustain musical culture are “doomed to the paradox of constructing stage authenticities” (2009:119), writes that musical conservation should follow the four principles of conservation ecology: (1) diversity, (2) limited growth, (3) interconnectivity, and (4) stewardship (122). These principles are simultaneously manifest and complexified in Ceará, where commercial and traditional music intertwine in meaningful ways: traditional participatory musical and cultural practices like rain prophecy and *cantoria* music inspired commercial music, which ultimately influenced those same rural participatory practices. Like Argentina's “rural” *chacarera* folk music, an urban construction that has been preserved and reproduced through audio recordings, thus “[blurring] the line between performance and mediation, production and consumption” (Carlson 2011:23), *forró*'s contemporary traditional repertoire came into being through mass mediation, muddying the task of sustaining musical practices in the face of commercial music and capitalism (e.g., Turino

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter one for a discussion of the mediated construction of the *sertão* through literature, film, and the press.

2009).

In Ceará, cultural practices that directly link individuals to nature and agricultural life, which have been mimicked, imagined, and reproduced in urban mass-mediated contexts and then reintroduced to natural and rural settings, are malleable, and are thus apt to incorporate these hybrid or caricatured practices. Some musicians, rain prophets, and cultural activists have considered popular music and government-derived knowledge a threat. The underlying fear, then, is that some musical and cultural practices, which have utility for farmers and individuals in Ceará's interior, will be subsumed by commercial or power-laden simulacra of themselves (or more accurately, simulacra of simulacra of themselves). However, this fear, while warranted, is perhaps exaggerated, as the relationship between traditional/natural/rural and mediated/unnatural/urban is never this direct, as can be observed in efforts for cultural preservation and in contemporary urban covers of songs that nostalgically represent rurality.

Considering these issues, I discuss two participatory practices, briefly explore the history of the mediation of these practices, and assess the resultant impact of mediation on those practices, all while considering fears about culture loss and efforts for cultural preservation. First, I examine the acoustemological importance of birdsong and natural soundscapes in Ceará for rain prophets, which illustrates the relevance of nature, natural sounds, and traditional knowledge for individuals who live in Ceará's interior. Next, I discuss the Meeting of the Rain Prophets in 2010 to explore affinities between rain prophecy and *cantoria de viola*, demonstrating methods and discourses of cultural preservation and the sustainability of ecological knowledge. Then, I examine the influence of rural acoustemes and traditional knowledge on the musical career and output of Luiz Gonzaga, and discuss his representation of these soundscapes and concepts and the cultural consequences of his representations. Finally, I conclude with an analysis of several

present-day performances of Gonzaga's most famous song, “Asa Branca” (White Wing), with lyrics that mention a bird that escapes drought in the Brazilian Northeast. All this shows how cultural practices that help individuals make sense of (and survive in) a harsh natural and rural environment have been repackaged as commodified culture, and then returned to their place of origin, altering traditional culture and leading to fears about cultural loss, which are tempered by examples of resistance and the dynamic, socially constructed nature of rural/urban, natural/synthetic, and traditional/modern dichotomies.

#### BIRDSONG AND RAIN PROPHECY

Rain prophecy is a social practice in the *sertão* in which individuals observe natural patterns to predict if and when rain will fall, and then share their predictions with farmers and others. Birdsong and natural sounds serve as acoustic forms of marking time and predicting productivity while enabling farmers and individuals in the interior of Ceará to understand the natural world and make crucial agricultural and financial decisions. Birdsong is one of many indicators of rain or drought observed by rain prophets. In addition to birdsong, prophets observe the direction in which birds construct their nests, the behavior of ants, the time of year when flowers bloom, the arrangement of stars, and numerous other natural patterns. There is no standardized rain prophecy practice, and it is transmitted orally and hereditarily. Furthermore, predictive techniques are not exclusively known by so-called rain prophets (Taddei 2006:4).

Rain prophet José Erismá, who learned rain prophecy from his mother and transmitted the knowledge to his daughter—the youngest practicing rain prophet in Quixadá and one of the few female prophets—listens to birdsong as one of his primary forecasting methods.<sup>23</sup> He says:

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<sup>23</sup> José Erismá (rain prophet and accountant), interview by the author, September 3, 2011.



On the first day of the year, at the passing of the thirty-first of December to the first of January, the birds sing differently, like in a party, so they gather and make their show among themselves since they are happy for the good year that will appear in the rainy season, in the wintry period in Ceará, and also because this is the Northeast. . . . They sing more. They have a different song.

When Erismá hears birds singing loudly in large flocks at the start of the year, he understands their calls to be announcing the new year and predicting rain. Not only is their acoustic volume and the size of their chorus greater than it is throughout the rest of the year, but their song itself, as he hears it, changes.

Predicting rain based on natural patterns has Biblical roots, and until the early twentieth century predictions were predominantly shared in markets, at religious, athletic, and political meetings, and at other social gatherings (Taddei 2006:5). Erasmo Barreira grew up observing his father, a rain prophet, predict to farmers in his home. He says:

But I followed my father, my whole life at home . . . They'd schedule a day in December, on some Sunday or another Saturday in December, to talk about how it was going to be the next year, the perspective for the next year, you know? And here it was as if it were a meeting of any kind of official organization. And one person would argue, and another would say that the rainy season wouldn't be good because there wasn't I-don't-know-what, the prophecy of whoever and such didn't work . . . ninety percent [of the farmers] would go to hear my father's conversation, and I would go along. Each time I went.

The gatherings Barreira attended as a child were informal but nevertheless significant for local farmers as a source of information and establishing a sense of community. Although rain prophecy still serves as an important source of information for many farmers in the *sertão*, the communication of prophetic knowledge is no longer as informal as it once was.

## THE MEETING OF THE RAIN PROPHETS

Today, prophets perform their forecasts at the Meeting of the Rain Prophets in the municipality of Quixadá, attended by the television and print news media that publicize and generalize the findings, often—it seems—with the headline, “Rain Prophets Predict a Good Rainy Season.”<sup>24</sup> Since 1997, the Meeting of the Rain Prophets, held annually on the second Saturday of January, has brought prophets and farmers together to celebrate rain prophecy as a local, traditional practice. As a social, oral tradition that is described as having importance to life in the *sertão*, rain prophecy has nevertheless undergone mediation through the radio, the staged, structured Meeting of the Rain Prophets, and the television and print media.

Anthropologist Renzo Taddei argues that rain prophecy, or at least the “prophet-celebrity” identity, is a relatively recent occurrence. It was due to the radio, he writes, that “the activity of prognosticating rain defined the social identity of those who did it” (2006:5). With a class of individuals who identified as rain prophets and were skilled in public performance, two individuals in Quixadá—João Soares and Hélder Cortez—founded the event.

In January 2010, I attended the Meeting of the Rain Prophets, held on Friday night and Saturday morning. João Soares is the president of the Institute of Research of Ten-String Guitars and Cultural Popular Poetry of the Central Sertão (*Instituto de Pesquisa de Violas e Poesia Cultural Popular do Sertão Central*), and he sees the two-day event as a way of sustaining regional culture and traditional ways of knowing.

On Saturday morning, the prophets gave their diverse predictions to an audience of nearly two-hundred farmers, students, journalists, and businesspeople at the city's reservoir, built at the turn of the twentieth century—begun by order of Emperor Dom Pedro II in 1890 and completed

<sup>24</sup> Taddei offers a critique of the heavily mediated Meeting of the Rain Prophets, writing, “The prophet transforms himself into an attraction of the circus of economic development, while the rural population that he supposedly represents, in the urban imaginaries, remains marginalized with regard to the ways groups of local and national power imagine the political and economic direction of [Brazil]” (2006:10).

in 1906—as an early effort to mitigate the impact of drought. The central dam of the Ceder Reservoir is an impressive and visually striking curved stone embankment, and local oral history attributes its construction to slaves, who allegedly lived in the still-standing slave quarters, now a dilapidated brick building with a caved-in roof.<sup>25</sup> To introduce the occasion, a performer sang, followed by presentations from local politicians. Going in order, prophets predicted from late morning to early afternoon, each including an explanation of his or her methodology and a piece of material proof, when appropriate, like a map or a bird's nest. One man recited a humorous poem, and another recited a poem in honor of his mother, both in the style of *cordel* literature. Throughout, journalists and camera operators fought for space near the microphone.

### Cantoria and Drought

When not organizing the Meeting of the Rain Prophets, João Soares' Instituto sponsors monthly concerts of *cantoria* singing throughout the year. *Cantoria* is a genre of music with improvised sung poetic verses, set rhyme schemes, predetermined topics, and, depending on the song form or style, a prewritten refrain. Singers accompany themselves and each other on a steel-stringed guitar (*viola caipira*). The music is often performed in competitive duels (called challenges—*desafios*) and the two singers (called *repentistas*) attempt to outsmart or outperform the other, with clever lyrics and rhymes. Soares views *cantoria* and rain prophecy as related traditions that express and make sense of the realities, needs, and hardships of life in the *sertão*.

While rain prophecy and *cantoria* are both relevant to rural life, what makes them vulnerable to threats from mediation and popular culture is that both practices are orally transmitted, improvisatory, and performed for live audiences. Both rely on knowledge derived

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<sup>25</sup> This aspect of the reservoir's creation is disputed: Construction of the dam took place between 1890 and 1906, beginning six years after the abolition of slavery in Ceará and two years after the abolition of slavery in Brazil. Silva Cruz (2006) writes that the reservoir was built by local workers and not enslaved Africans.

from lived experience, and while they have undergone technological and organizational mediation, they continue to be essentially local (or regional) practices with discernible use value for their audiences. Furthermore, the improvisatory nature and adaptability of the practices to new technologies and circumstances maintains their relevance and utility.

Ethnomusicologist Larry Crook claims that *cantoria* singers play a role as “social critics, historians, philosophers, and organic intellectuals” (2009:195). Because drought has arguably been the single-most influential and symbolic concern for the people of rural northeastern Brazil, it comes as no surprise that the climate remains a topic of song and improvised verse among musicians today. In her monograph on *cantoria* in Ceará, folklorist Simone de Castro, for example, cites several singers of *cantoria* who sing about drought, as it is central to the social and economic struggles of life in the *sertão* (2011). Furthermore, several individuals at the Meeting of the Rain Prophets in 2010 claimed that traditional culture and music, including *cantoria de viola*, expresses the concerns of life in the *sertão*.

The Meeting of the Rain Prophets began on a Friday night with a concert of improvised *cantoria de viola* songs held at the Centro Cultural Rachel de Queroz, named for Quixadá native and author Rachel de Queroz, whose novel *O Quinze* describes life during the drought of 1915. Friday's show, called Encanta Quixadá, featured pairs of musicians (all men) who took turns improvising verses to an audience of approximately one hundred people, singing about rain prophets, about drought, hunger, and life in the rural interior, about corruption and politics, and about sex, love, and women. There was even a song about Barack Obama.

João Soares explained that the Meeting of the Rain Prophets used to be a one-day event with no music. In 2006, he added a night of *cantoria* to make it a “bigger party.” The two attractions, he explained, draw the same audience: “those who like to hear the prophets also like

to hear *cantoria*, and so people can come to hear both.”<sup>26</sup> Soares emphasized that Quixadá is also a tourist destination, known for its reservoir and for its unusual rocky outcroppings, especially one that is described as looking like a roosting hen.

For him, visitors could come to the Meeting of the Rain Prophets for the music, the information, and the scenery. However, he further emphasized to me that his intent was not necessarily to valorize rain prophecy over government predictions, but to celebrate the kinds of skills, talents, and values that come from life in the *sertão*. He sees both traditional and institutional knowledge as valid, and also invites scientists and representatives from FUNCEME—the Meteorological and Hydric Resource Foundation of Ceará—to the event every year.

*Cantoria* singer João de Oliveira explains his understanding of the connection between *cantoria* and rain prophecy, saying, “In some form, we are associated with those who have knowledge of the weather. We certainly have importance for their daily lives. Our singing may have no value for some, but for many we represent the stimulus for the start of the fight in the fields, and we provide relief after a grueling day's work in the stinging sun.”<sup>27</sup>

On the morning of the Meeting of the Rain Prophets, singer Guilherme Calixto improvised a song about the similarities between prophecy and poetry:

Prophets, I'm telling you, all of you are wise.  
Let's ask for little rain from our omnipotent father,  
because if too much comes, it will ruin our Quixadá.  
I fully admire your conviction to wisely research with total dedication,  
and afterwards pass on to us whether or not it will rain.  
This great tradition affects even my spirit.  
It seems as if the prophets follow the right path,  
because I wanted to give up my verse to become a prophet.  
A prophet is almost a poet in the way he thinks and creates.  
The poet thinks about verse and sacred poetry,

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<sup>26</sup> João Soares, interview by the author, January 9, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Alex Pimentel, “Falsos profetas serão barrados em encontro,” *Diário do Nordeste* (Fortaleza, CE), December 30, 2008.

and the prophet acquires lessons about our daily lives.

To Calixto, prophecy and poetry are similar creative processes related to the quotidian experience of life in the *sertão*, based on research, thought, and communication. In that sense, both practices are improvisatory, yet dependent upon local conditions and learned through oral transmission and personal experience.

### Sustaining Culture

Ethnomusicologist Jeff Todd Titon, paraphrasing Thomas Turino, writes, “Persons sustain music, and music sustains people” (2009:122). Their sentiment is similar to that expressed by João Soares regarding the rain prophets event, and the opinion of singer João de Oliveira, who believes that *cantoria* music helps sustain farmers and rain prophets. Titon's four principles—diversity, limited growth, interconnectivity, and stewardship—are evident in the two-day event organized around the Meeting of the Rain Prophets and the efforts of João Soares and his Institute of Research of Ten-String Guitars and Cultural Popular Poetry of the Central *Sertão*.<sup>28</sup> Soares allows for diversity in performance techniques and approaches among both singers and rain prophets, he limits the event and acknowledges its relatively small scale, he finds ways to connect musical culture to other practices that he values and sees as related, and he offers a venue for the continuation of the traditions. In Quixadá, a critical element that connects these oral traditions and makes them relevant to the people in the *sertão* is that they are both means of vocally expressing the role of the environment in their lives. However, the national scale of recording legend Luiz Gonzaga's *baião* music and the increasing mediation of the Meeting of the

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<sup>28</sup> To clarify, I do not intend to suggest that the maintenance of rain prophecy is an example of conservation ecology. Nevertheless, rain prophecy is a cultural practice that helps people directly understand nature, and depends upon a protected, predictable environment.

Rain Prophets seem to have a positive impact on the cultural practices celebrated in Quixadá; Títón's second principle, limiting the growth of a particular musical practice to manage musical “resources and their renewability,” seems to have questionable relevance to both rain prophecy and *forró*.

Ethnomusicologist Elizabeth Travassos argues that *cantoria* is not a threatened tradition. She says, “Even though *cantoria* has not found a niche within the media of mass communication, remaining restricted to an autonomous parallel circuit, it does not seem to be a threatened tradition, making it rather unique” (2000:64). She elaborates that another scholar, Luciano Py de Oliveira, observed a decline in invitations for *cantoria* singers to perform, but Travassos maintains that her own data suggests no such concern. Simone Castro agrees that *cantoria* is not at risk of extinction, but she does indicate that the practice is changing as *cantoria* becomes a more urban tradition with a younger demographic. She says:

I don't believe that *cantoria* is a threatened tradition, in the sense of its non-existence in the future . . . [T]he generation of [*cantoria* singers] who have been making art for more than forty years consider the new generations to be not good *cantoria* singers . . . However, members of this younger generation seem like good singers, they work more on their performances, and they attract a younger audience because of their songs. . . . In particular, I consider that *cantoria*, as an improvisatory art, will not disappear.<sup>29</sup>

Castro understands that changes in *cantoria* are inherent to the practice's improvisatory nature and to its social function, and as such, the practice is not at risk. Yet at the 2010 Meeting of the Rain Prophets, some people involved directly with the tradition voiced concerns about a perceived threat. Organizer João Soares explained his fear in a newspaper article from Fortaleza's *Diário do Nordeste* in 2008:

This was the way we found to fight for the preservation of two important habits of our people. Popular science and *cantoria* run the risk of dying by being discredited and

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<sup>29</sup> Simone Castro, e-mail message to the author, November 4, 2010.

fading into oblivion if we don't do something for them. While they seem like simple customs, in reality, they carry the cultural and poetic essence of our people. We hope that everyone understands them and, principally, collaborates with us to maintain our identity.<sup>30</sup>

Soares argues that these are living, changing traditions, and creates space for this cultural flexibility in his event. Not only did he invite scientists from government agencies to share their predictions (none showed up in 2010, but I am told they come most years), but he also invited others who do not identify as rain prophets to participate. The first presenter in 2010 was a college-educated sailor who predicts weather patterns with maps and by watching the sky. In the *cantoria* show, most of the singers incorporated current themes into their improvised verses. These traditions are maintained in a state of flux. Because they are cultural practices intended to express the knowledge of the prophet or singer, they necessarily incorporate contemporary situations, images, and sounds.

Still, Patrícia Soares Holanda, João Soares's daughter and a physical therapist in her early twenties who helps her father with the event, confessed to me that despite her father's efforts, many people interested in the tradition of *cantoria* are older; her generation is more interested in popular *farró* dance music and mainstream Brazilian and American pop music. About commercial *farró*, rain prophet Ribamar Lima said, “Today, there's no more music. There's noise. Today's music, three or four months later nobody listens to it anymore. It's ephemeral. But traditional music is good. It's an inexhaustible resource.” He said he helps with the event “so that culture won't disappear.”<sup>31</sup>

The primary threat to *cantoria* and the cultural traditions of the *sertão*— as perceived by Patrícia Soares Holanda and Ribamar Lima—is electronic *farró*, a contemporary genre of music

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<sup>30</sup> Alex Pimentel, “Falsos profetas serão barrados em encontro,” *Diário do Nordeste* (Fortaleza, CE), December 30, 2008.

<sup>31</sup> Ribamar Lima, interview by the author, January 9, 2010.



that developed from the traditional *forró* of the mid-twentieth century, which itself was an outgrowth—and an urban representation—of the soundscapes, knowledge, and practices of the *sertão*. Traditional *forró*, moreover, has already been incorporated into the body of knowledge and practices in the *sertão* that are considered “traditional.” The threat lies at the interface of music (and knowledge) as a cultural practice with music as reified, mediated sound. Still, music in Ceará, however mediated and commercial, often seems to become a social practice.

## LUIZ GONZAGA'S MEDIATED SERTÃO

### Brazilian Radio and the Creation of Northeastern Brazilian Folklore

The career and music of Luiz Gonzaga (1912-1989) emerged from northeastern oral traditions—including rain prophecy and *cantoria*—and homogenized and reified these practices in Ceará and the Northeast through the radio. Ethnomusicologist Elba Braga Ramalho calls Luiz Gonzaga's mediated *forró* music an outgrowth of the improvisatory tradition of *cantoria* (1997:92), and literary scholar Jack Draper claims that *forró* musicians like Gonzaga participate in a northeastern prophetic tradition associated with the folk Catholic religious leaders of the *sertão* (2010:190). Indeed, Gonzaga's work extended rural oral traditions, while also reifying a musical canon, constructing a particular image of the *sertão*, and teaching Brazil—and northeasterners—what it means to be from the Northeast.

In 1915, the Northeast suffered one of its most severe droughts in the twentieth century, compelling northeastern workers to migrate to Brazil's Southeast in search of work. Seven years later, the Northeast reappeared in national headlines because of a bandit named Virgulino Ferreira, better known as Lampião, who traveled the Northeast, pillaging homes and running from the police, raping and murdering along the way. Lampião and his gang maintained

prominence in the news between 1922 and 1938 when he was killed (Chandler 1978). Among the disempowered rural poor (living in both rural and urban areas), he became a national folk hero.

Headlines about Lampião were among the ways displaced northeastern migrants maintained an imagined relationship with their homelands. Changing communication technologies, writes Expedito Leandro Silva, aided the growth of urbanism and industrial development. He writes, “The man from the interior . . . could integrate himself better with urban society, without leaving his place of origin; this occurred above all due to the principal vehicle of communication of the era, the radio” (2003:43). In 1924, Rio de Janeiro aired its first radio broadcast. Through the remainder of the 1920s and '30s, radio purchases soared throughout Brazil, turning the medium into a widespread source of national mass communication in the 1920s and a source of propaganda and national unity under President Getúlio Vargas in the 1930s (see Maia 2009; Loveless 2010; Skidmore 1999). Not only would listeners have heard news about Lampião, but they would have been able to hear shows that specialized in rural musical traditions, including live *cantoria* duels.

In Ceará, the radio was seen as a democratizing force. An article in *Revista Rádio* from Rio de Janeiro in 1924 implored the “conservative classes” and “public authorities” for recognition of the value of the creation of the Cearense Radio Club (*Rádio Clube Cearense*) by referring to the “highly patriotic, instructive, and recreational achievement that radiotelephony provides all classes.”

In 1930, President Vargas established policies that encouraged migration from the Northeast to the Southeast (see Santos 2002). In 1939, a young accordionist named Luiz Gonzaga, who first left his rural home in the Northeast in 1930 to join the army, moved to Rio de Janeiro to pursue a career as a musician. In 1940, he started appearing on “amateur hour” radio

programs in which he performed popular music of the time: waltzes, fox trots, polkas, and tangos. However, with competition from other musicians playing similar styles, Gonzaga found little success.<sup>32</sup>

According to a well-worn myth, his fate changed after meeting a group of students from Ceará in a bar. “Play one of those songs from up north,” they requested. He obliged, and—his story goes—it was then that he realized he could take advantage of the growing potential market for his music.<sup>33</sup> His newfound strategy followed a significant change in the Brazilian recording industry of the 1930s, whereby the working class had acquired the ability (and desire) to consume regional recordings and the industry responded by expanding, attracting American record labels, and segmenting the market by region and genre (see Tinhorão 1998 and Silva 2003).

In Gonzaga's earliest recordings, radio and recording producers asked him to refrain from singing. Despite efforts to shed his northeastern accent, his voice was considered “too nasalized and northeastern in sound” (Crook 2009:166) and, once, “like shredded bamboo” (Loveless 2010:207). One radio executive hung memos on the walls of the studio: “Luiz Gonzaga is explicitly prohibited from singing, as he has been contracted as an accordionist” (ibid.). In 1945, he finally released his first songs in which he sang. By the late 1940s, his fame spread nationally and his voice had become irrevocably associated with the *sertão*. He no longer made efforts to speak with the accent from Rio de Janeiro, and instead adopted an almost-caricatured northeastern stage persona.

### Gonzaga and the Soundscapes of the *Sertão*

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<sup>32</sup> See Rodrigues and Silva 2009 for a history of the radio in Ceará in the 1940s.

<sup>33</sup> Vargas' ideology was staunchly anti-regionalist. (McCann 2004:100). While this may seem at odds with Luiz Gonzaga's regionalist self-presentation (discussed below), McCann clarifies, “Vargas bureaucrats sought the wellsprings of national culture in folklore” and disseminated “local folk customs deemed appropriate to the ethos of the regime” (2004:100).

Historian Bryan McCann calls Luiz Gonzaga the “ur-nordestino” (or ur-northeasterner) (2004:98). Gonzaga's entire stage presentation was intended to evoke the *sertão*, and, as Albuquerque Jr. argues, he was in part responsible for crafting the northeastern imaginary in the Brazilian consciousness (1999). Many scholars have discussed and dissected Gonzaga's role in the discursive construction of the *sertão*, emphasizing his role in the nationalization of northeastern migrant identity, and exploring the growth of the northeastern migrant demographic in Brazil's southeastern region (e.g. Albuquerque Jr. 1999; Vieira 2000; Draper 2010; Loveless 2010; Santos 2002; Silva 2003).

Through his self-presentation and music Gonzaga assembled a set of pre-existing images and stereotypes into a meaningful (and marketable) product. As an admirer of Lampião who was aware of his significance among the working class, he began wearing Lampião's iconic leather hat on stage and in interviews. His nasal, oaken voice at times cracked and quavered like the northeastern cowboy singers of *aboio*, a kind of vocalization used by ranchers to herd cattle. His accordion-playing style was unlike that of other musicians before him. He rapidly opened and closed the bellows of his piano accordion as if he were playing the kind of diatonic button accordion typically played in the *sertão*. Written across the front of one of his most recognizable accordions were the words, “*É do Povo*,” it's of the people.

The lyrics of the songs he performed and recorded, only some of which he wrote or co-wrote, contributed to the naturalization of drought, promulgating the notion that migration and suffering were exclusively due to the climate, not to land ownership and corruption. He sang of drought and the struggles of the northeastern worker, but often portrayed them as symbols of strength and masculinity. In recalling the beauty of the *sertão*—the hills, the moon, the women, the food, and the celebrations—he invoked the homesickness (*saudade*) of the worker who

dreamed of returning to the Northeast (see Draper 2010). Ethnomusicologist Janet Sturman demonstrates how Colombian musician Carlos Vives employed technology to reach the rural and working-class population of Colombia with his romanticized vision of rural natures (she calls this process *techno-macondismo*) (2003:155). Similarly, through the radio and musical performance technologies, Gonzaga was able to bring a romanticized *sertão* to a large population of northeastern Brazilian migrants who found his nostalgic representation of northeastern natures authentic and meaningful.

Birdsong and rain prophecy appear frequently in Gonzaga's songs, as do songs that refer to birds in other metaphorical contexts, describing their flight, their cages, etc.<sup>34</sup> The cover of his 1962 album *Ô Véio Macho* (Oh Old Macho) shows Gonzaga holding his accordion with a parrot perched on the bellows, staring at the musician's smiling face. Many of his songs that reference birdsong do so by describing the meaning of the bird's call in relation to the arrival of rain or drought. For example, the song "Pássaro Carão" (1962), by Gonzaga and José Marcolino, describes the call of the smooth-billed ani as a sign that "rain will fall." In a filmed segment intended for television in the 1970s, which never aired, Gonzaga introduces his performance of "Acauã":

There are also many songs about birds, like the story of *assum preto*, *asa branca*, *bem-te-vi*, the *juriti*. And there's the story of the *acauã* (the Laughing Falcon). The *acauã* has a different story. It's an auguring bird, a bird that nobody wants to hear sing, because it calls the drought. It always brings bad news, which isn't what happens with the *vem-vem* [the purple-throated euphonia, literally "come-come"]. When the *vem-vem* starts to sing, the people say there is good news there, *vem-vem*, in the road and the street, *vem-vem*, *vem-vem*. Everyone hopes to hear something good, good news . . . But the *acauã*, when it sings near a poor rural farmer's house, he does everything to send her away, to remove her . . . because she's going to sing an inferno near his house, because she's bringing, she's auguring something bad.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Both Vieira (2000:45) and Loveless (2010:223) refer to the prevalence of birds in Gonzaga's songs.

<sup>35</sup> "Luiz Gonzaga Canta Acauã," accessed October 17, 2010, [http://www.luizluagonzaga.mus.br/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=648&Itemid=47](http://www.luizluagonzaga.mus.br/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=648&Itemid=47).

Following his introduction, in which he contrasts the meaning of the Laughing Falcon's song to that of the *vem-vem*, the purple-throated euphonia whose northeastern Brazilian name onomatopoeically describes its call in addition to the meaning its call is given, Gonzaga begins his slow and mournful rendition of Zé Dantas' song. The first few phrases of the refrain, which starts with the word “*acauã*,” begin on an accented, cried flat seven. The piercing timbre of Gonzaga's voice and the melodic tension of the flat seven, while also outlining the song's mixolydian mode, imply the bird's ominous news. In the song's coda, he sings the word “*acauã*” repeatedly and quickly in a syncopated rhythm for nearly twenty seconds, cawing the word in a scratchy falsetto to mimic the falcon's cry. By voicing birdsong and recalling rain prophecy, Gonzaga links his music to the soundscapes and practices of the *sertão*.

#### The Reception of Gonzaga's *Sertão* in Ceará

Sulamita Vieira describes Gonzaga's *baião* as a “*sertão-city-sertão*” bridge, created through language (2000:29). Indeed, the lyrics to Gonzaga's music, as well as the rest of his presentation, discursively construct the *sertão* in the terms of the conditions of urban life.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the values he espoused in his lyrics were specifically those of the northeastern migrants who found themselves in the alienating metropolis. While his “*sertão-city-sertão* bridge” is apparent in his lyrics, it was through the radio and touring that Gonzaga's musical depiction of the Northeast returned to the people of the Northeast. *Forró* became as significant

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<sup>36</sup> Draper argues that the claim that *forró* is a hybridized *sertão*/city, rural/urban genre—articulated by Vieira and others (e.g. Silva 2003)—is incorrect, and stems from the intellectual “hegemonic” discourse of hybridity and synthesis (2005:166-176). He says it is not the “*sertão* in the city,” but the “*sertão* despite the city.” However, I tend to agree more with Vieira et al. due to the influence of the media and urban musical culture on Gonzaga's music. Certainly, Gonzaga made an effort to maintain and celebrate rural culture, however, his music did differ from the rural practices from which he took inspiration. For example, he grew up playing and hearing the diatonic button accordion, but adapted the music for a chromatic piano accordion once in Rio de Janeiro, giving his music a different character and timbre, a different performance technique, and an urbanized instrumentation. Both Draper and Vieira, it should be noted, emphasize lyrical analysis in their studies.

for northeasterners who remained in the Northeast as it was for migrants in the Southeast who found it symbolically meaningful. Loveless explains that the radio “actually resulted in transmitting the imagined forroscape back to its rustic place of origin” (2010:166).

Gonzaga made local radio appearances throughout the Northeast, in addition to performing on stage and visiting northeastern towns. In November 1951, for example, he performed a series of live radio shows in Fortaleza, making a stop in the religious town of Canindé to make a vow to the local patron saint before returning home to Rio de Janeiro.<sup>37</sup> In April of 1953, he performed in a festival in the Cearense town of Iguatú around the time local officials met to plan the construction of the town's radio.<sup>38</sup> In May of that year, he starred in a “radiophonic show” promoted by Fortaleza's Rádio Iracema, and then appeared again in June 1956 in Fortaleza in a radio special called the “Festa do Radialista.”<sup>39</sup>

Gonzaga was a national icon throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s. Between 1946 and 1955 he sold more records than any other artist (Santos 2002:54). Many other singers and groups followed his example, and joined in on the *baião* fad, which was later termed *forró*. The year 1956 marked the beginning of the decline of Gonzaga's popularity. Santos writes, “the determinant factors in the urban ostracism of the accordionist [Gonzaga] are related to the political and cultural transformations occurring in Brazilian society between 1956 and 1967” (2002:62). In January 1956, Juscelino Kubitchek assumed the presidency, and with him came plans to modernize and improve the Brazilian economy, which included the expansion of the consumer economy. Sales of televisions eclipsed those of radios, which were responsible for *baião*'s success, and Elvis and rock and roll, followed by samba and bossa nova, dominated the mediated soundscape (62-3). The front page of Fortaleza's *Jornal o Povo* on December 29, 1956,

<sup>37</sup> “Luiz Gonzaga vem novamente ao Ceará!” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), November 5, 1951.

<sup>38</sup> “Iguatú festejará o primeiro de maio,” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), April 27, 1953.

<sup>39</sup> “Hoje na festa do radialista estréia de Luiz Gonzaga o rei do baião,” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), June 20, 1956.

featured two striking headlines across the top of the page: in medium black letters appeared the words “Greater possibilities of peace for the world” (“*Maiores possibilidades de paz para o mundo*”), and immediately below it, in similarly sized black letters, “Fortaleza in 78 rotations” (“*Fortaleza em 78 rotações*”), with a sub-headline in very large blue print below that, “The album took over the city” (“*O disco tomou conta da cidade*”). The article began, “Record stores—where Bach mixes with Luiz Gonzaga—proliferate, national music loses ground, and a tide of luck pushes the ship of adaptors of foreign music.” Implying that Brazilian music is less refined than foreign music—by specifically referencing Gonzaga—the article argued that 78 rpm records would bring “an increase in culture to Fortaleza” in the “fight against ignorance.”

The *baião*, writes Silva, “came to be seen as a species of folkloric musical preservation” (2003:45), and Gonzaga's career shifted primarily to the Northeast, where he maintained only some of his fame. By 1960, when he returned to Fortaleza to perform in a daylong celebration of the fifth anniversary of Rádio Iracema, he was relegated to perform at nine thirty in the morning, finishing his brief thirty-minute set three hours before João Gilberto “and his 'bossa nova'” took the stage, and seven hours before the performance of the headlining act, Carlos Nobre, a popular romantic balladeer of the time.<sup>40</sup>

That same year, Gonzaga recorded a series of campaign jingles for center-right presidential candidate Jânio Quadros, whose conservative platform blamed inflation on outgoing President Kubitchek. Quadros won the presidency, resigning less than seven months later in an ill-conceived political tactic (see Skidmore 1999:150). Through the sixties, Gonzaga toured the cities of the Northeast for Eveready Batteries, performing from the back of a truck while shilling for the company.<sup>41</sup> He also appeared in Eveready print advertisements, which ran a photo of him

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<sup>40</sup> “Programa Irapuan Lima Rádio Iracema,” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), July 2, 1960.

<sup>41</sup> “O Precioso,” last modified February 1, 2009, accessed November 18, 2011, <http://revivendoteixeirinha.wordpress.com/category/novidades/>.



with his characteristic hat and accordion, and which reproduced the lyrics to two jingles, also naming the northeastern rhythm for each song.<sup>42</sup> One of the songs (in a *xaxado* rhythm), called “A Pilha Pulo do Gato” (The Holy Grail Battery), says, “he who uses Eveready knows / what he has in his hand / It’s the hottest battery / From North – Central – South – to the *sertão*.” In an unverified and undated recording, he can be heard imploring an audience to join in as he sings an Eveready jingle with a slow *xote* dance rhythm.<sup>43</sup>

Gonzaga recorded jingles for a wide range of products, including Wilkinson razor blades, Fram oil filters, cornmeal, flip flops, coffee, *cachaça* sugarcane liquor, and salt licks for cows.<sup>44</sup> What unites these products, other than the sound of Gonzaga’s voice and accordion, is an association with the Northeast (battery power, cornmeal, flip flops, coffee), masculinity (razor blades, oil filters, booze), and agriculture (salt licks).

Despite the decline in his popularity throughout the sixties, Gonzaga had earned a solid reputation as an icon of the Northeast by the 1970s, and people in Ceará regarded him proudly. In 1975, he was made an honorary citizen of the Cearense town of Barbalha, and less than two months later he was made an honorary citizen of the state of Ceará. One newspaper article that year said, “The large amount that Luiz Gonzaga has done for Ceará and for the Northeast deserves to be seen and highlighted, since he was always a defender of our music, of our tradition and customs, publicizing Ceará and Cariri in all of his shows performed in Brazil.”<sup>45</sup> Another article called him “a true ambassador of Ceará.”<sup>46</sup> In 1989, Luiz Gonzaga died in his

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<sup>42</sup> “Causas dos reis: Pilhas Eveready,” accessed online February 2, 2012,

[http://www.luizluagonzaga.mus.br/index.php?Itemid=32&id=14&option=com\\_content&task=view](http://www.luizluagonzaga.mus.br/index.php?Itemid=32&id=14&option=com_content&task=view).

<sup>43</sup> “Jingles: Pilhas Eveready,” accessed online February 2, 2012, <http://www.luizluagonzaga.com.br/jingles/12.htm>.

The unofficial website, [www.luizgonzaga.com.br](http://www.luizgonzaga.com.br), contains an online archive of recordings in which Gonzaga can be heard performing political and commercial jingles. I cannot authenticate the recordings on the site, but the voice in the recordings does sound like Gonzaga’s.

<sup>44</sup> See Dreyfus (1996: 210) for more on Gonzaga’s career in advertising.

<sup>45</sup> “Luiz Gonzaga vai ser cidadão barbalhense.” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), October 2, 1975.

<sup>46</sup> “Luiz Gonzaga é afinal cearense.” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), November 27, 1975.

sleep at seventy-six years old.

Pennesi writes that for individuals in the interior of the Northeast, the conditions of life and the personal narratives of drought—characterized by poverty, hunger, and death—are associated with emotions like “fear, anger, desperation, disappointment, abandonment, relief, gratitude, and hope” (2007:79). For that reason, she suggests, the work of rain prophets serves not only a practical function, but an emotional one as well. Similarly, for those in the Northeast, Gonzaga's music came to stand not for Northeastern migrant identity or nationalism, but for the emotions tied up in his sounds and lyrics, and for their relevance to northeastern life. To a northeastern audience, his music—and the music of northeastern musicians like him, including Jackson do Pandeiro, Trio Nordestino, Marinês, and others—was never symbolic of northeastern culture; it *was* northeastern culture. This is why, for example, rain prophet Erasmo Barreira cites lyrics to Gonzaga's song “Acauã” when offering an example of the kind of knowledge involved in rain prophecy. And while he likely quoted the lyrics to me because I was a researcher who had already expressed an interest in music, the fact that the song immediately materialized in his consciousness and speech while explaining rain prophecy is nevertheless suggestive of Gonzaga's reciprocal relationship with life in the *sertão*.

### The Reified *Sertão*

Through his radio and recording career, stage presentation, and involvement with advertising, Gonzaga reified practices, symbols, and sounds that were inherently—and necessarily—improvisatory and in flux. Rain prophecy varies from prophet to prophet, farm to farm, and year to year. *Cantoria* lyrics change with the times, and *cantoria* practices, means of transmission, and performance venues and contexts adjust to new technologies and

circumstances. Drought, furthermore, is cyclical and variable, and has never been a totally constant factor in the *sertão*. The music of Gonzaga, however, cemented these sounds and concepts into his mediated and well-known genre of music, which is now often thought of as “northeastern music,” and considered a basis of the “traditional” repertoire.

The “forroscape's” influence on self-perception and the expectations of tourists led to what Jack Bishop describes as the institutionalization of St. John's Day celebrations in the northeastern city of Caruaru in the interior of Pernambuco (2003:191). In his fieldwork, Bishop found no evidence to indicate that St. John's Day was celebrated as “organized communal festivities” before World War II, and he suggests that, therefore, stereotypes and perceptions of the holiday, which were memorialized extensively in Gonzaga's music, are responsible for contemporary celebrations in Caruaru (Bishop 2003:191).

Geographer David Crouch writes that in rural tourist destinations, cultural and natural features “associated with ideas of 'the rural' are interspersed with the content of television and film” (2006:357). They are also interspersed with the content of music. During St. John's Day season, Fortaleza becomes the site of what geographer Timothy Edensor calls staged ruralities, “a nexus between media and place” (2006:489). The city is perhaps best known as a beach destination to tourists, but those who come between May and July expect to find celebrations like those depicted in the media. Much of the coastal city, with a metropolitan area population of nearly three and a half million, transforms into a nostalgic, cartoonish rural landscape. As vacationers exit the Pinto Martins Airport baggage claim in June most years, they are greeted by a *farró* trio and dancers performing stylized *farró* dance steps. Along the city's active boardwalk, in public squares throughout the city, in school presentations, and at upscale restaurants that specialize in the food of the *sertão*, tourists and local residents can watch quadrilles, competitive

square dance performances accompanied by live *forró* music. The dancers often wear garish costumes designed to recall Lampião and his gang of bandits, or like imagined farmers from the *sertão*, with pigtailed dresses as reminiscent of Kansan Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz* as of any Brazilian women.

Quadrilles, furthermore, characterize the St. John's festivals in and around Fortaleza; nearly every neighborhood on the outskirts of the city sponsors a quadrille dance group, and these groups compete for municipal funding to defray the costs of transportation, costuming, and so on. In 2008, the municipality of Maracanaú, just outside of Fortaleza, invested R\$2.5 million (approximately US\$1.5 million at the time) in their St. John's Day quadrille celebrations.<sup>47</sup>

Advertising during the season also draws on St. John's Day imagery and typical decorations. Newspaper advertisements for cars, shoe stores, the lottery, health insurance, and countless other products and services depict the holiday's multi-colored bunting, drawings of straw hats, and cartoon hillbillies with blacked-out teeth, leather sandals, and plaid shirts. A St. John's Day advertisement for grocery chain Planeta Supermercado from 2008 features a drawing of a smiling accordionist wearing a straw hat, his bellows pulled open to reveal the words, “Vem pra cá!” (Come here!). Across the top of the ad appear the words, “*Êta São João danado de bão!*” (Whoa, damn good St. John's Day!)” recalling the title to one of Gonzaga's songs, “Danado de Bom” (Damn Good). A 2008 advertisement for cars, with a photo of a dancing man in a plaid shirt and straw hat, refers to their sale as a St. John's Day party (an *arraiá*), saying, “This here is too good,” (“*Isso aqui tá bom demais*”) which is the title of a well-known traditional *forró* song by musician Dominginhos.

In the small interior city of Orós, the St. John's Day season is celebrated with *forró* parties and quadrille competitions. Although the town square and markets—at least in 2009—

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<sup>47</sup> Marcus Peixoto, “Bairros no ritmo do arrasta-pé,” *Diário do Nordeste* (Fortaleza, CE), June 17, 2008.

were devoid of the rural decorations characteristic of Fortaleza during the season, the performance of Luiz Gonzaga's music nevertheless permeated local celebrations, including places like a hardware store, where elderly townspeople gathered on Mondays and Thursdays to hear a *fórró* trio play the traditional classics. In early July, weeks following St. John's Day and still considered part of the holiday season, the town's youth celebrated for several consecutive nights in the nearby municipality of Icó, where two stages featured non-stop alternating performances of electronic *fórró* (combined with a few traditional *fórró* groups like Ceará's accordion virtuoso Waldonys, and some singers of *brega*, romantic ballads). In a small hair salon in Orós, run by the choreographer of the town's quadrille, the sound of electronic *fórró* filled the space and glossy magazines about electronic *fórró* sat on the side table next to the chair where costumers waited their turn. One of the magazines called traditional *fórró* “out of fashion.”

In September 2005, President Luiz Inácio “Lula” Da Silva declared a “national day of *fórró*.” The decree, Law number 11.176, issued by President Lula and the Brazilian National Congress reads, in part, “Article 1: The thirteenth of December is hereby instituted as the 'National Day of *Fórró*,' in homage of the birthdate of musician Luiz Gonzaga do Nascimento, the 'King of Baião.’”

In Fortaleza in December 2009, the city held a week of free concerts to celebrate the holiday. An article from *Jornal o Povo* claimed that the “national day of *fórró*” was necessary to preserve *fórró*, which it called a “perfect amalgamation of the ethnic influences that compose the formation of our people.”<sup>48</sup> The article suggested that electronic *fórró* was corrupting local culture:

Our *fórró*, such a genuine cultural manifestation, began to be affected, transformed, disguised by the demands of a cultural industry motivated exclusively by the commercial returns of that which it produces.

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<sup>48</sup> “Sobre o fórró.” *Jornal o Povo* (Fortaleza, CE), December 12, 2009.

In recent years, a passion for *fórró* has served as a justification for the creation of an aesthetic devoid of meaning, of information, and of concept. In the name of *fórró*, this industry of bands developed itself in the construction of a music that has diminished us in its sonorous and literary disqualification, associated with sectors of the media, having provoked enormous damage to the conservation and the due enhancement of such a strong cultural heritage, and which so represents the northeastern people.

It seems contradictory to describe one form of commercial popular music (electronic *fórró*) as inauthentic and driven by the capitalist desires of the culture industry, while describing another (the *fórró* of Luiz Gonzaga) as “traditional” and “genuine.” However, Gonzaga's mediated *fórró* has so thoroughly been incorporated into the folkways of northeastern culture that its commercial roots have been mostly forgotten or forgiven. It is as indigenous and inherent to Ceará and the Northeast today as rain prophecy and *cantoria*. Present-day concerns about cultural loss in Ceará revolve around electronic *fórró*, not about traditional *fórró*, which is seen not only as non-threatening, but as threatened.

#### ASA BRANCA: THE ANTHEM OF THE NORTHEAST

Gonzaga's most famous song, “Asa Branca,” is often described as the “anthem” of the Northeast, and its recontextualization into contemporary northeastern life and musical practices—both in the coastal state capital and the rural interior—symbolizes a synthesis of Gonzaga's constructed *sertão* with the extant, changing, modernizing Northeast.

In the town of Exú, less than five minutes by car from Luiz Gonzaga's former estate, an accordion repairman named Benedito described the significance of Gonzaga's most famous song: “Everyone wants to play 'Asa Branca.' Everyone. And it became the anthem. . . . It's the first thing.”<sup>49</sup> The song's pentachordal melody makes it suitable as one of the first pieces many

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<sup>49</sup> Benedito (accordion repairman), interview by the author, April 26, 2010.

Brazilian children learn on an instrument. In a show in Fortaleza on July 12, 2008, Oswaldinho do Acordeon explained on stage that when learning the accordion, Brazilian children first learn “Asa Branca.” After starting accordion lessons as a boy, he claimed, his father required him to perform “Asa Branca” for every guest who came to visit.

Still, the song's ubiquity in present-day Ceará suggests that there are more than pedagogical reasons for the song's popularity. Over the course of my field research in Ceará, I heard the song in various seasons, in different contexts, and in contrasting musical arrangements. Like Gonzaga, the song's melody and lyrics—written by Cearense lyricist Humberto Teixeira—have become musical synecdoches of the region. In the documentary film *The Man Who Bottled the Clouds (O Homem que Engarrafava as Nuvens)*, the ex-wife of Teixeira says, “If you listen to 'Asa Branca' you can feel the drought.”

The song is named after the Picazuro Pigeon, a bird native to northeastern Brazil. In the lyrics, a worker, who must leave the *sertão* because of drought, compares his departure to the migration of the pigeon, who also “beats his wings from the *sertão*.”

So I said,  
“Farewell Rosinha  
Hold close  
My heart . . .

I wait for the rain  
to fall again  
So I can return  
to my *sertão*.

The melody, copyrighted to Gonzaga and Teixeira, is now understood to be a folk song that predates its copyright. Cearense composer Tarcísio Lima calls the song a “very characteristic part . . . of our collection of musical gems,” but qualifies that “it's a common melody, a melody from the public domain, a melody from before Luiz Gonzaga. It wasn't he who simply created it.

He could have given it an arrangement, a feeling, an introduction, an accompaniment, and such.”<sup>50</sup> In her analysis of the song, Elba Braga Ramalho confirms that “Asa Branca” was originally a work song (1997:153).

Anthropologist of art Oswald Barroso distrusts the song's commercial legacy and compares it to the drought industry, a term for the exploitation of drought for financial gain. “Asa Branca,” he said, “is about the guy who leaves [because of drought] and wants to return home.”<sup>51</sup> He continues:

This issue of drought was somewhat exploited by the very authorities. It was basically an industry. . . . It was used by the government, by governors, to get resources for the Northeast. . . . And “Asa Branca” is a musical symbol of this, of the invention of the Northeast. I have doubts about this business of [calling it] the anthem of the Northeast.

In the so-called drought industry, landowners and corrupt politicians would steal or misuse funds intended for drought relief. Barroso applies the concept more broadly, not referring necessarily to corruption, but to the idea that Luiz Gonzaga exploited the misery and memory of drought—throughout his discursively “invented Northeast”—for personal financial gain.

Regardless of Gonzaga's role in commodifying the Northeast and drought, or perhaps because of it, “Asa Branca” is seen today by many people in Ceará as one of the region's classic songs, unofficially anthemic like Woody Guthrie's “This Land is Your Land” is to many Americans. Many musicians in Ceará have performed the song to mark their music and themselves as Cearense. I twice heard it performed on sidewalks in Fortaleza by an Andean pan flute ensemble dressed as Hollywood “Indians” with large feather headdresses, playing the song as if to musically demonstrate their connection to Ceará.

In April 2010, I attended a concert of a Jewish music group called Banda LeChaim in

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<sup>50</sup> Tarcísio da Lima, interview by the author, April 16, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Oswald Barroso, interview by the author, April 17, 2010.



Fortaleza. Near the end the show, the band began to play the *baião* rhythm and descending melodic introduction to “Asa Branca.” But when the singer joined in, he sang the Hebrew words to the prayer “Adon Olam,” a liturgical text that is often set to popular melodies.<sup>52</sup> The singer, who also acts unofficially as Fortaleza's only synagogue's religious leader, explained that they decided to include “Asa Branca” in their repertoire. However, they felt the need to change its lyrics, since Teixeira's text includes the word “*judiação*,” which the singer defined as “mistreatment,” calling it an implication that Jews mistreat others. “Asa Branca” allows them to address stereotypes about Jews in the Northeast.

In March 2004, Cearense rock band Eletrocactus appeared in a segment on the national evening news, *Jornal Hoje*. In a voiceover with footage of the band walking onto an empty outdoor stage, a reporter says, “After many rehearsals, they can already dare to create new rhythms and reinvent sounds.” The audio cuts to them playing a blues rock “Asa Branca,” the electric guitar wailing while the singer warbles Teixeira's lyrics and the video shows the band members appearing individually from behind a *mandacaru* cactus. Later in the segment the reporter says, “They are Eletrocactus because of their musical style,” and Roberto, the singer, clarifies, “The sound of the electric guitar with the regional sound in the drum, and with the force of the northeastern blood, the Cearense blood. So that's how we became Eletrocactus.” Then it cuts to them rocking out, with Roberto howling, “*porque tamanha judiação*” (why so much ill-treatment) as the electric guitar heterophonically grooves around the melody on a blues scale. Their rock “Asa Branca” is part of their broader regionalist and preservationist ideology that attempts to create a uniquely local rock expression (see Cruz and Silvers 2011).

In a 2009 Christmas concert sponsored by the City of Fortaleza, early music ensemble Grupo Syntagma, directed by flutist Heriberto Porto, performed for a small audience in the

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<sup>52</sup> See Koskoff (2001: 185) on Hasidic nigun singing and the incorporation of popular melodies.

amphitheater of the Parque do Cocó. That night the group consisted of eight instruments: a viola da gamba, a classical guitar, percussion, a bassoon, three different-sized recorders, and a transverse flute. Their repertoire includes works by John Dowland, Lobo de Mesquita, Giuseppe Sammartini, and others. In the Christmas show, they concluded their set with Liduino Pitombeira's complex arrangement of “Asa Branca,” with delicate polyphonic counterpoint played by the woodwinds, while the percussion and continuo—the viola da gamba, guitar, and bassoon—sustained a *baião* rhythm. Their arrangement of “Asa Branca” is a deliberate, scholarly attempt to demonstrate the Medieval origins of northeastern Brazilian music as a way of valorizing local culture and emphasizing its long history.<sup>53</sup>

Regarding “Asa Branca” in the interior, McCann writes that the song was the “unofficial theme” of agrarian reform rallies in the 1970s, and continues to be prevalent at gatherings of the MST, the Landless Workers' Movement (2004:125). “Asa Branca” is an ever-present element of the traditional *forró* repertoire and incorporated into countless quadrille routines and dance parties accompanied by *forró* trios during St. John's Day celebrations. What once mimicked the sounds and memories of the *sertão* has unquestionably become the sound of the *sertão*.

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When I asked radio host and rain prophet Ribamar Lima, who was involved with the Meeting of the Rain Prophets, about the relationship between *cantoria*, rain prophecy, and life in the *sertão*, he intertextually incorporated the lyrics of one of Gonzaga's best-known songs in his response:

When you see an ant leaving a low place to find higher ground, it's because it's going to protect itself. It knows. It has a god-given gift. When we see, for example, the *mandacaru*—which is a plant characteristic of the Northeast, a cactus—when it blooms during drought, it's a sign that rain has arrived in the *sertão*, which was said by Luiz Gonzaga. So these are small things that we see, that we start to observe, that make sense,

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<sup>53</sup> See Gifoni 2005 on Grupo Syntagma and postmodernism.

that work. Here we lack water to drink, for home use, and for the animals to drink, which is the worst. Sometimes we have to get water from far, from other states, because we have neither water nor pasture. So we have eternal suffering. And from that comes the northeastern lament.

“When the *mandacaru* cactus blooms during drought, it is a sign the rain has arrived in the *sertão*,” Lima quotes. These words are the opening lyrics of the popular song, “Xote das Meninas,” written by Luiz Gonzaga and Zé Dantas in 1953. The song, about the maturation of an adolescent girl whose only interest is love, is now a standard part of the repertoire of *forró* music. Gonzaga uses the blossoming *mandacaru* as a metaphor for the girl's maturation, but his metaphor is unique to the lived experience of those in the *sertão*. Gonzaga, thus, transmitted traditional knowledge through popular music, giving the practice symbolic value by utilizing it as a sign of the Northeast, of drought, and of naiveté and rurality. To Lima, on the other hand, Gonzaga's music perfectly illustrated the knowledge associated with rain prophecy, and also provided evidence of how northeastern music derives from the “eternal suffering” of the northeasterner. At the Meeting of the Rain Prophets in 2012, a rain prophet held up flowers from the *mandacaru* cactus, recited lyrics from “Xote das Meninas,” and announced that a good winter would come. Like *cantoria* and rain prophecy, the music of Gonzaga expresses the conditions of life in the *sertão* and helps northeasterners make sense of their surroundings—natural, rural, urban, or otherwise.

Contemporary fears about cultural loss in Ceará do not concern the music of Luiz Gonzaga, which is seen by many as a mediated extension of rural and natural practices. Rather, those who have expressed fear worry about electronic *forró*, which they view as an ersatz *forró* twice removed from the rural sources that inspired its creation.

In the city of Fortaleza, Gonzaga's *sertão* has at times stood for tradition and rurality, and

has been incorporated into urban practices in ways that are meaningful for musicians and listeners who are part of diasporas and possess self-consciously postmodern and regionalist aesthetics. In the interior, Gonzaga's *sertão* similarly stands for tradition and rurality, but as an affirmation of rural beliefs and practices, and is incorporated into rural knowledge, seen as part of a fading oral culture. In both Fortaleza and the interior, individuals have taken action to promote this apparently threatened culture, and in both cases, those actions have included an acknowledgment that culture must be allowed to change in order to survive. As a result, rain prophecy, *cantoria*, and Luiz Gonzaga's repertoire and recordings continue to coexist, integrated into northeastern folkways.

Thomas Turino writes that musical cultures are threatened by the conversion of music as a social activity (which he calls “participatory performance”) to music as a commodified “sound object,” including both recorded sound and “presentational performances” (2009:109). He writes, “Ecological resources and *this* community-sustaining resource stand in a similar relationship to the core ethical value and legally defined responsibility of corporations—monetary profit” (110). In this chapter, I have offered an example in which music as a social activity—“participatory performance”—was related to ecological resources, also demonstrating how a social practice regarding the natural environment and a musical practice have been similarly sustained in opposition to monetary profit and corporate interests. However, I have also sought to complexify the relationship between participatory music and music as a “sound object,” offering an example of commercial, mediated sound that drew from participatory music, traditional knowledge, and natural soundscapes and then became recontextualized within the participatory culture from which it drew, becoming embedded in the traditional practices it originally mimicked. The sentiment behind Titon's call to apply the principles of environmental

sustainability to musical cultures and Turino's statements regarding commercial music are pertinent in Ceará—musical and environmental practices are seen as similarly threatened. However, the reality that individuals adapt, resignify, and update music, regardless of its commercialism and mediation, makes their recommendation too broad to apply to musical culture in Ceará, where participatory culture became commodified sound, but then became participatory culture once again.

In the film *The Man Who Bottled the Clouds*, Gilberto Gil, musician and former Brazilian Minister of Culture, said (regarding the music of Humberto Teixeira, Gonzaga's first songwriting partner), “The music is full of landscape, and the landscape is full of music.” From the auguring call of the laughing falcon to the migratory flight of the Picazuro pigeon, I have also attempted to show how—and why—the music of the Northeast is full of the *sertão*, and how and why the *sertão* is full of northeastern music.

### THREE

#### ACOUSTEMOLOGY:

#### LISTENING TO RESERVOIRS, ROOFTOPS, AND RADIOS IN ORÓS

In April 2008, residents of the small interior city of Orós measured the water level of the local reservoir every day to predict when it would finally overflow, or bleed (*sangrar*). The bleeding of water over the dam into the Jaguaribe River confirms a good rainy season and transforms a still, dry cement spillway into a massive, roaring waterfall. April 2008 was the first time the reservoir overflowed in four years,<sup>54</sup> and, according to one newspaper, over ten thousand tourists visited the body of water that month.<sup>55</sup> I first learned about these measurements on a DVD my sister-in-law's brother, Neto, played one afternoon that June; it was my (then-future) sister-in-law's going away party before moving to the United States to live with my brother, and her siblings had come to another sister's house in Fortaleza to say goodbye.

We all gathered on the sofa and around the television, near a framed, enlarged photo of the gushing spillway, to watch an amateur documentary celebrating the day in April when the reservoir exceeded its capacity. The video began with footage of fireworks exploding over the shimmering reservoir and of celebrants dancing *forró* into the night. The mayor gave a speech from the overlook at the edge of the dam—speaking from a small stage just behind a statue of former President Kubitschek—and a local brass band played an arrangement of “Asa Branca.” The remainder of the movie displayed footage of water. Water flowing over the dam. Water

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<sup>54</sup> Honório Barbosa, “Orós sangra após quatro anos,” *Diário do Nordeste*, April 7, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Honório Barbosa, “Sangria do Orós atrai 10 mil pessoas,” *Diário do Nordeste*, April 15, 2008, <http://diariodonordeste.globo.com/materia.asp?codigo=529143>.

running downstream. Water crashing against boulders. And over the images of water, with the original sounds of splashing and babbling and cascading still audible, the video's editor dubbed a soundtrack of music by Raimundo Fagner, a nationally known musician who has strong personal ties to Orós.

The family sat rapt, while Neto, who beamed proudly as his native city's two claims to fame appeared on the screen before us, pointed at the images of water and explained the importance of that day, the excitement for the city, and the impact on local tourism and agriculture. And then he began to sing. With the sounds of water, the voices of children playing, and the poppy ballads of Fagner streaming from the speakers at the side of the television set, Neto joined his voice in the sound, singing along by heart and gesticulating, as if his living room were a pub and Fagner's songs were rousing chanteys. My sister-in-law then turned and said, “Water: the happiness of a northeasterner.”

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In this chapter, I explore the images and sounds that made Neto's DVD meaningful for him. The situation led me to wonder: What is the significance of water in Orós? What is the significance of Fagner and his music? What does Orós sound like, and how do its sounds correspond to the sounds in the film? Here, I examine the interplay between natural and human-made soundscapes, acoustic senses of place, and questions of power and class in relation to broadcasted sound. This is, more specifically, a study of the construction of the soundscape of Orós and an analysis of the meaning of certain sounds in its public spaces. I argue that the sounds of Orós acoustically construct it as a place that is marked by drought and by the associated connotations of life in the *sertão*, including a valorization of Catholicism, community, and—above all else—water. The most potent elements of the soundscape include natural sounds,

mass-mediated representations of the landscapes and soundscapes of Orós, and broadcasted sound; their histories and meanings demonstrate issues concerning local values, aesthetics, power, and technology.

Layers of reciprocating complexity in which nature influences culture, and culture in turn influences nature, characterize Orós. There, the popular music of Raimundo Fagner took inspiration from a local sense of place—the city's reservoir, its streets, and its people—but has since acoustically and semiotically reconstructed senses of locality. His influence over the local soundscape is audible and appreciated by people from Orós. But his role is complicated by his social position as a part of the global bourgeoisie, putting his own aural values into discordance with local subjectivities. Without trying, Fagner possesses a position of authority over the local soundscape. Other sounds in Orós, however, also convey meaning and authority, and the relationships among the sounds demonstrate power and class within the city, particularly in respect to the relationship between Fagner and everyone else.

As far as one's sound can be heard, one's presence and message can be felt. Broadcasted sound in this sense, then, is simultaneously a representation of power (an acoustic reminder of the Panopticon's gaze) and a sonic imposition of power. Jacques Attali writes that sound is “a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality, it is what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all its forms” (1985:6). Artist Sophie Arkette, referring to urban environments, writes that “sound . . . is never a neutral phenomenon. Each sound is imbued with its own lexical code: sound as sign, symbol, index” (2004:160).

Professor of media and culture Michael Bull might call the sonic production of power a form of “aesthetic colonization” (2004), illustrated by his reference to Taussig's depiction of a



scene in Werner Herzog's film *Fitzcarraldo*, in which Fitzcarraldo travels by ship down the Amazon River playing a recording of Caruso on his phonograph for the Amerindians on the river's shores. This is also what professor of media and communications Julian Henriques might call “sonic dominance,” a term he uses to describe the “all-embracing sensory environment” of a Jamaican dancehall sound system and its corporeal impact (2007:287). But in Orós, sonic authority relates to semiotic control, not colonial or somatic domination. The power of sound in Orós is expressed through its pervasiveness and its ability to convey local meaning.

Power—and, by extension, class—can also be communicated through the silencing of sound. Ethnomusicologist Lise Waxer associates class and sound, surmising that her fieldwork on salsa music in Colombia was facilitated by residing in a working-class neighborhood where noise was unrestricted. “Had I lived in a more affluent neighborhood,” she writes, “this would not have been possible, since these *barrios*, like their North American and European counterparts, are characterized by a respectful observance of social distance, which includes keeping one's music at a discreet and unobtrusive level” (2002:xiv). Deborah Pacini Hernández similarly writes that “the ubiquity of sound” characterizes lower-income Dominican “barrios,” in contrast to bourgeois neighborhoods, where “silence indicates refined culture and social distinction” (1995:xxi). Pacini Hernández also suggests that while the bourgeoisie dislikes noise, the working class seems to enjoy cacophony: “no one seems to mind: sound, after all, is vibration and vibration is movement, and movement is life” (*ibid.*). The cramped, vibrant neighborhoods of Santo Domingo described by Pacini Hernández, however, are unlike the cobblestone streets of Orós, where life often moves slowly. Sound in Orós—and cacophony, moreover—indicate not only the pace and movement of life, but also the values, concerns, and needs of the city, and relate to the history of commercial music considered (and marketed as) “northeastern” and to its

reception in the Northeast.

Broadcasted music and sounds in Orós also construct, consolidate, and delineate what Schafer calls an “acoustic community” (1994). Metaphorically referring to the ability of bats to perceive objects and space through reflected sound, Paul Carter, borrowing a concept from Roy Wagner, uses the term “echolocation” to describe the way we fill space with sound in order to recognize ourselves (Carter 2004:47). Carter also applies “echolocation” to his own concept of “echoic mimicry,” by which we listen for imitations of our own voice in the voices of others (Carter 2004:46-7). Through echolocation, radios and loudspeakers create acoustic communities in Orós, where broadcasted music is at times representational of Ceará's soundscapes, landscapes, and values, allowing listeners to hear representations of themselves in the sound.

I begin this chapter with an introduction to the quotidian soundscapes and landscapes of Orós. Next, I discuss a local broadcaster whose sounds convey local meaning, ordering space, time, and values. I then explore the career and biography of Raimundo Fagner, who depicted Orós on the national stage, and who gave much back to the city. I examine the reception of his music and his image in Orós, and his direct influence on the local soundscape. Last, I analyze the impact of new technologies and transnational sounds on the soundscape and on local meaning.

### Landscapes and Soundscapes of Orós

In the small city of Orós, located in the interior of Ceará, a five-to-eight hour drive from Fortaleza (depending on the condition of the roads and who drives), most homes, including some made of mud and stick, sport satellite dishes on their roofs (see figure 4). In June and July of 2009, a *fórró* trio played twice a week in a hardware store. Orós is known for its environment and its music, and with over 20,000 inhabitants it is not an untouched paradise, but a place with a

striking combination of rural and urban characteristics, natural and man-made elements, traditional and popular music, and old and new audio technologies.



FIGURE 4. Home with Satellite Dish in Orós

The city's landmark is a large dam constructed on the Jaguaribe River between 1958 and 1961 as part of Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek's public works program under the National Department of Works Against Drought (see figure 3). In her book *Despertar da Memória*, sociologist Erotilde Honório Silva (2006) writes that government officials neglected to assist inhabitants of the region flooded by the dam's construction, leaving them to fend for themselves after their homes and farms were submerged. The reservoir, thus, is a source of fear and sadness for those who live with the memory of the devastation it once inflicted on the surrounding areas. Until 2003, it was the largest reservoir in Ceará (the largest in the country by some accounts), and despite its history, remains a primary source of pride for the present-day residents of Orós. It provides water for the city and for agricultural irrigation throughout the region, sending water as far as Fortaleza through the “Worker's Canal” in times of extreme

drought. In periods when the dam overflows, the thundering of water down the spillway overwhelms the Orós soundscape. A local P.E. teacher told me the sound requires her to shout so students can hear her directions. A banker compared it to the roar of a jet engine.



FIGURE 5. Orós Reservoir and Spillway

The reservoir is also a tourist destination for people from other parts of the interior of the state. It is an impressive man-made structure, but most visitors come to see it because it is a natural oasis in the middle of the *sertão*. Tour buses bring sightseers to a lookout point perched near the edge of the dam, where they gather under a towering statue of President Kubitschek to pose for photos with mountains, the city, and the river running from the reservoir in the background. On the shore of the reservoir, colorful fishing boats rest in the sand and a floating bar serves beer and fried fish. Local residents use the surrounding bars, the reservoir's beach, and the overlook as meeting places, especially on weekends, when teens sunbathe, children splash in the water, and adults sing together around a guitar and shared liters beer.

On a Saturday afternoon in 2009, I sat in Orós' central plaza, minutes by car from the

reservoir, to interview a local musician. Behind us, a car with an open trunk, equipped with subwoofers, played electronic *farró* hits so loudly I had to lean forward to hear him. The square is home to a pharmacy, a law firm, two bars, a pizzeria, an internet café—where teenagers download music, play video games, and chat online—and a small market. Around the corner is the main street of the city, with several grocers, a few clothing boutiques and shops, another internet café, and the agency—run by my sister-in-law's father—where you can buy bus tickets and popsicles and place a bet on the “animal game” (the *jogo do bicho*), a kind of Brazilian lottery.

In the plaza, just after dawn on a Monday morning in January 2012, the distant sound of crowing roosters gave way to singing birds and the sounds of passing motorcycles and fruit trucks over cobblestone streets. Shop owners opened the metal grates armoring their storefronts and the hum of electronic *farró* bleated from radios and cellphones. At six a.m., a ballad played over a set of loudspeakers on a hill, waking the city as early shoppers began to haggle over prices and cars pattered and rumbled. Throughout the morning and late afternoon, the sometimes-bustling sounds of commerce, radios, and announcements from speakers attached to the backs of moving motorcycles filled the air. Lunchtime was quiet in the square. After dark, bars, restaurants, and parked cars with open doors blared a cacophony of competing electronic *farró*, the out-of-sync *zabumba* rhythms and *farró* timbres creating a sonic wall of triangle, accordion, and pop vocals. As I argued in chapter two, *farró*—which once conveyed an image of the interior of the Northeast to the rest of Brazil—is now the sound of the interior of the Northeast, embedded in the soundscape like the sounds of roosters and motorcycles.

## Dantas: The Voice of Liberty

Writing about bells in the French countryside in the nineteenth century, historian Alain Corbin explains, “Bells shaped the habitus of a community, or, if you will, its culture of the senses” (1998:97). Bells, he argues, constructed a local sense of place for a migrant proletariat, defined town boundaries, conveyed alarms and messages, made public spaces sacred, and were believed to have the power to scare away demons and storms. Steven Feld calls bells in Europe “part of an acoustic ecology that joins space and time in history” (Feld and Brenneis 2004:469). He says bells “are to European space-times what birds are to rainforest space-times,” they “make communities audible,” and they can express authority and “disruption” (ibid.). In Orós, the *radiadora*, a set of six loudspeakers mounted to the roof of the home of José Ribeiro Dantas, its host, functions much like a European village bell.<sup>56</sup> Its broadcasts order space and time in Orós, create an acoustic community, convey messages, and initiate or indicate sacred or solemn moments of time. The *radiadora* is also what Schafer would call a “soundmark,” “a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community” (1994:274). It has both functional and symbolic significance for Orós.

Nearly every morning since 1972, the people of Orós have been awakened at six a.m. by the sound of the *radiadora*. On weekdays, children “wake with Dantas” and his “musical alarm clock” to get ready for school, the sound of his morning song entering homes through pane-less windows and gaps between tile roofs and concrete walls. His broadcasts reverberate off houses and hillsides, as if dozens of loudspeakers were scattered throughout the streets.

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<sup>56</sup> See Vasconcelos Solon (2006) for a historical study of the loudspeaker service in Teresina, Piauí, in northeastern Brazil, which was removed from the city's downtown in 1952. Through oral histories, Vasconcelos Solon depicts the role of the loudspeakers in commerce and community, as well as its contemporary role in the memory of his interlocutors.



FIGURE 6. *Radiadora* in Orós



FIGURE 7. *Radiadora* in Orós (close)

Following six chimes, Dantas plays a recording of an announcer who wishes the people of the city a good morning and thanks god for the sun. He then plays ballads like the 1938 recording of crooner Carlos Galhardo singing “Linda Borboleta” (beautiful butterfly). “One morning,” the song begins, “one of those mornings full of light / among the roses of the garden / I saw passing / a gentle butterfly.”

After his “good morning” song, Dantas makes the first announcements of the day: a cellphone was left in the square overnight, and can be retrieved at the home of the good samaritan who found it; the hardware store is having a sale; a boy was bitten by a dog, and his family seeks information on the animal; the church is looking for donations of food for a congregant who recently fell on hard times. Local shops, community groups, and individuals can purchase advertisements on the *radiadora*, more commonly referred to simply as “Dantas.” The two *real* (~US\$1.00) fee helps Dantas maintain his service—he also works as a speaker repair person—although he never charges for announcements related to the church, schools, the hospital, funerals, or causes that he sees as essential for the community.<sup>57</sup> In the afternoon at 5:30, Dantas makes his second and last broadcast of the day. Until not long ago, he ended around six with a recording of “Hail Mary,” the “prayer of the angel.”<sup>58</sup>

Following each series of ads, Dantas plays a song—generally recordings of singers from the early twentieth century, including Luiz Gonzaga<sup>59</sup>—from one of two boombox-style CD players he keeps on a desk, and holds the microphone up to one of the speakers to broadcast the sound. But Dantas is more a source of information, a projection of local values, a citywide alarm clock, and a creator of an acoustic community than a source of entertainment.

In most years during the rainy season, when people of Orós routinely measure the water level of the reservoir, a representative from the National Department of Works Against Drought calls Dantas with readings of the measurement. Dantas then announces the reading on his morning's program. Each year that the reservoir overflows, Dantas informs the city.

When my sister-in-law's mother died, she and my brother flew from Los Angeles to

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<sup>57</sup> Regina Dantas, interview by the author, December 13, 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Regina Dantas claims that in the past several years, Dantas, her father, has only played “Ave Maria” for funerals and masses.

<sup>59</sup> Dantas claims to own the entire Luiz Gonzaga collection.



attend the funeral. That morning, Dantas announced that the funeral would begin once the daughter of the deceased arrived from the United States. Once they landed in the nearby Juazeiro do Norte airport, word was sent to Dantas, who announced that the visitors had landed in Brazil, and would be in Orós soon thereafter. Like the radio weddings and funerals of the 1920s in the United States (Taylor 2002:432), Dantas and his *radiadora* played a crucial role in the funeral of my sister-in-law's mother in Orós. Life-cycle events, religion, and the daily affairs of Orós are the basis of Dantas' broadcasted soundscape, thus establishing and re-enforcing these values among those who live within listening range.

On the blog *Portal Orós*, journalist Josemberg Vieira wrote about a power outage in December 2010 that left Dantas unable to broadcast one morning:

This morning something different happened in our city: the children arrived late for school, workers were late for work, and many people did not wake at the right time, all because the VOICE OF LIBERTY that for almost forty years has woken the city of Orós did not work; but this only happened because on the block where the Voice of Liberty resides, your friend Dantas is without energy since 1:30 in the morning. This good person and a friend of our people deserves our respect and admiration, Mr. Dantas who provides a service of indispensable public utility to our dear Orós, waking and informing our people every day for almost forty years.<sup>60</sup>

Dantas, now 84 years old, explained that he decided to install his loudspeaker service, as *radiadoras* are more formally called, after noticing that children were arriving late to school and missing class. Having worked in Fortaleza as an audio technician and loudspeaker service announcer before moving to Orós, he had the knowledge and skills to start his own service. He approached the mayor and asked for permission, and was granted formal authorization. With a sense of freedom and accomplishment from building his own loudspeaker tower and setting up

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<sup>60</sup> “Seu Dantas, Voz da Liberdade,” accessed April 14, 2011, <http://portaloros.blogspot.com/2010/12/seu-dantas-voz-da-liberdade.html>.

his own studio, he named his *radiadora* The Voice of Liberty.<sup>61</sup>

In 2002, Dantas received the title of Cidadão Oroense (Citizen of Orós) from the Municipal Chamber of Orós. Dantas himself claims that his *radiadora* provides an essential service for the city, and calls himself “number one for the workers in the city.” Refusing to broadcast political advertisements, Dantas understands his role in Orós as a provider of a public service. His broadcasts are shaped by his belief in Catholicism and his commitment to his community. The Voice of Liberty, then, is the sound of the Orós community, an acoustic manifestation of its values and beliefs as they are defined by Dantas.

### Raimundo Fagner and the Mediation of Orós

After the reservoir, nationally known popular musician Raimundo Fagner (b. 1949) is the second major source of pride for people in Orós. He is claimed by Orós' residents as a native, and sources often cite the city as his birthplace.<sup>62</sup> That he was actually born in Fortaleza, nevertheless having spent much of his childhood in Orós, is of little importance to the city's sense of attachment to the singer, and he continues to call himself an “Orós native of the heart.” While his music is often hybridic and infrequently regionalist in tone or sound, he has still often found ways to evoke the *sertão* and the Orós reservoir, referring to the city on stage, in interviews, and in his music. Orós, for him and his career, offers authenticity as a musician by linking him to rural traditions, the natural environment, and the struggles of the people of the northeastern interior.

In 1971, Fagner earned a national reputation following a competition in Brasília, where

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<sup>61</sup> José Ribeiro Dantas, interview by the author, December 13, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Fagner has in fact contradicted himself regarding his place of birth. In his interview with Ana Bahiana (2006), he claims he was born in Orós but raised in Fortaleza. He says exactly the opposite in his performance in the 2001 TV program, “Ensaio,” later released as a CD/Book, “A Música Brasileira Deste Século por seus Autores e Intérpretes – Fagner.” The confusion is due in part to the fact that Fagner claims he falsely registered his birth in Orós when he was young.

he studied architecture at a federal university. His performance of the song “Mucuripe,” which he wrote with Cearense musician Belchior,<sup>63</sup> won first place. The song, about a beach in Fortaleza, became a national success through the voice of Elis Regina, whose iconic status has been compared to that of Janis Joplin and Billie Holiday by NPR.<sup>64</sup> Brazilian journalist Ana Maria Bahiana calls Fagner “the most romantic of the northeasterners [who play] post-Tropicalista fusion” (2006:290). Fagner was part of the Folks from Ceará (*Pessoal do Ceará*), an unofficial group of musicians from Ceará who achieved national recognition in the 1970s. In an era in which the Tropicalistas from Bahia were dominating the national popular music scene (see Dunn 2001; Favaretto 2000; Béhague 1980), the Folks from Ceará opted to join together as a way of breaking into the music industry in Rio de Janeiro and presenting themselves as an alternative to the better-known group of northeastern musicians that included Caetano Veloso, Maria Bethânia, Gilberto Gil, and Gal Costa, as well as to other musicians from the states of Pernambuco and Minas Gerais who were successful at the time.<sup>65</sup> The individual musicians of the Folks from Ceará were distinct, and unlike the Tropicalistas they had no unified musical aesthetic or artistic philosophy. In an interview with sociologist Mary Pimentel, Fagner said:

The Folks from Ceará were basically a new thing, a new breath, but we were never constituted as a group, as dependent; we were people from a generation that tried to be professional, but each one with his own work. We arrived very strengthened in the south of the country (1995:120).

Despite these musicians' efforts to deny regionalist motivations, the end of the 1970s nevertheless came to be known as the “boom *nordestino*” by some in the Brazilian music industry, and, as anthropologist Rita Morelli writes, “these artists also never stopped being seen

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<sup>63</sup> There are accusations on the internet, which I can neither refute nor confirm, that the song was plagiarized from an earlier song by Brazilian composer Henrique Vogeler.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Moon. “Elis Regina: The Feeling Between the Notes.” March 8, 2010. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124357584>.

<sup>65</sup> See Pimentel 1995; Saraiva 2008.

as songwriters and singers who were above all else northeastern” (2009:83).

Larry Crook sees Fagner as part of a wave of northeastern musicians who, since the 1980s, have combined *fórró* with MPB (2001:333). Although Fagner did release a *fórró* album with Luiz Gonzaga in 1984 and participated in other *fórró* recordings, his own music has always been more rock, more fusion, and more MPB than it was *fórró*, and even early songs like “Manera Fru Fru, Manera” subtly incorporated urban rhythms like *maracatu cearense* from Fortaleza's carnival parades. Other songs have hybridically included Indian tabla drums or the style of ballads like those of Roberto Carlos. Although some of Fagner's songs use rhythms associated with *fórró* and some of his arrangements include accordions, triangles, and *zabumbas*, he maintains that his music is not deliberately or ideologically regionalist. He explained:

I never do it on purpose. It may be true that I write songs more connected with the Northeast. . . . But I make international music, with the elements that it uses: aggressive guitars, the normal instruments that are played in any place, that you record in any place. In the way I recorded in the U.S., I also recorded in London. I recorded in Spain, where I drew a little more on northeastern regionalism mixed with Spanish music, but I record the musical foundations here as if I were recording anywhere. I'd be able to use any international musician. . . . I may make a disc of northeastern music . . . I'm not going to carry an accordion. I make my music. Maybe it has a very northeastern feeling. But I make music listening to the Beatles, the same foundation that they have, the *jovem guarda*, a little traditional Brazilian music when it works. Really mixed music. Not even I know what I do.<sup>66</sup>

Fagner was raised in a musical family and his father, who was Lebanese, would sing songs from Lebanon at home. But he mostly grew up hearing Luiz Gonzaga. “In the *sertão*,” he said, “there used to be lots of *baião*, lots of Luiz Gonzaga. . . . That's what we heard. He was very much the voice of the northeastern people.”<sup>67</sup> Many associate Fagner with Gonzaga because of the latter's influence on the former, and because of the friendship that later developed between the two musicians (Fagner and Gonzaga even once performed together in Orós). Regarding

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<sup>66</sup> Raimundo Fagner, interview by the author, December 21, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Gonzaga, Fagner said, “Until today I think I still carry a little of [his influence in my music], despite not playing the accordion . . . But people always relate me to him, they connect me a lot with him.”<sup>68</sup>

Ceará's influence is audible in the sounds and lyrics of many of Fagner's songs, and references to Orós, the *sertão*, and water have been direct and consistent throughout his work.<sup>69</sup> In 1968, then only eighteen years old, Fagner competed in a music festival in Fortaleza's Teatro José Alencar. He came in first place, beginning his career as a musician (Castro 2008). His winning song, “Nada Sou,” which he cowrote with Marcus Francisco and never recorded, began, “I am not myself / I'm a scuffle hoe in the clay of the ground / I'm the *sertão*.” In 1977, Fagner released an album called *Orós*, its cover showing him bathing in the reservoir, his long, wet hair obscuring his face. The album features jazzy avant-garde arrangements by Brazilian composer Hermeto Pascoal, and the title track includes the sound of gurgling and howling, rich harmonies, and a *fórró* triangle. The third song from the album's A side, “Esquecimento,” co-written by Brandão, opens with violins playing an undulating pattern, imitating the sounds of flowing water, underscoring a simpler accordion line. Fagner then enters, singing: “Love never fit me / but it always overflowed / The river of memories that one day drowned me / And in this current / I stayed to navigate.” The references to water in the violin arrangement, the lyrics, and the cover art are not trivial; water is what makes *Orós* meaningful and noteworthy in a land of drought.

In the 1982 song, “Orós II,” composed by João do Vale and Oséas Lopes, Fagner sings: “Don't just speak of drought / There's not only drought in the *sertão* / My world almost ended / When Orós flooded / If it [the dam] snaps, it kills / Everything that we planted / If it's not drought, it's a flood / Ai, ai, How we are sufferers.” In his song “Cariribe,” from the 1991 album

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> In her article, “Palmilhando um chão sagrado: a construção da topografia nas canções do Povo do Ceará” (2007) linguist Maria das Dores Nogueira Mendes writes that the “discursive topography” of the Folks from Ceará helped position them in a larger Brazilian musical milieu.

*Bateu Saudade*, his lyrics directly recall the hunger, the drought, and the machismo of the *sertão*, referencing his roots in Orós. He sings:

I'm from the Cariri <i>sertão</i>	<i>Sou lá do sertão Cariri</i>
I'm from the <i>sertão</i> of Orós	<i>Sou lá do sertão de Orós</i>
...	...
I'm the cicada and the ant	<i>Sou a cigarra e a formiga</i>
The drought and the flood	<i>A seca e a inundação</i>

Like the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, and like Luiz Gonzaga, Fagner sings the names of places (e.g., Orós, Mucuripe, the *sertão*) to evoke emotions and memories associated with those places. For a national audience, the name of Orós could conjure images of drought, migration, hunger, perseverance, and perhaps its reservoir, leading listeners to feel the anguish or longing conveyed in Fagner's lyrics and emotive voice. Fagner was also promoted that way. The concert program notes for a show at the Teatro Tereza Rachel, a now-defunct theater in Rio de Janeiro, at the time of the 1977 release of the album *Orós*, compared Fagner, his music, and the geography of Orós:

Now we are in Orós. Not the disc, but the town of Orós. And the sun already rises stinging the skin. Those who awoke at dawn saw the big, wild rats called *cassacos* entering the yard and eating the growth.

For the Indians who lived in Ceará before white colonization, Orós meant “rare stone.” Today, Orós signifies stinging, vast sun, and the continuous work of the men who have already grown accustomed to living between suffering and music, between the ground that has a surface cracked by the sun and a soft landscape with a reservoir that alleviates the drought, but that one day broke its barriers and flowed out, killing and destroying everything in its path. Orós also signifies the pain of the *cassacos*. Not the pain of the rats, but the pain of the human *cassacos*, who were thus nicknamed because of the sub-human level of life to which they are submitted on the occasion of drought. It was the *cassacos* who constructed the dam of Orós. When the dam broke, it was the *cassacos* who died. . . .

Orós also signifies this rare stone exposed on the stage of Teatro Tereza Rachel, Orós is the new music of Raimundo Fagner. . . .

In another spot in the auditorium, Abel Silva [lyricist for Fagner] informs everyone who doesn't yet know that Orós read backwards means “SERUM” and can also serve to nourish the people who agonize about Brazilian Popular Music.<sup>70</sup>

The romantic depiction of Orós in the program notes written by Aloysio Reis—as a drought-ridden backwater characterized by hardworking men and a reservoir that is both an oasis and a source of suffering—is specific to Orós, but in many ways it is typical of Brazilian portrayals of the *sertão*, not considerably different from the representation constructed by Luiz Gonzaga. Nevertheless, depictions like those in Reis' program notes are meaningful because Fagner himself invokes Orós for its nostalgic value.

#### Fagner's Social Responsibility to Orós and the *Sertão*

Fagner has also demonstrated a commitment to the Northeast as a social cause. In 2000, he inaugurated the Raimundo Fagner Foundation (*Fundação Raimundo Fagner*) in Orós and later in Fortaleza. The Foundation is a non-profit organization—apparently the first in Orós—that teaches music, theater, visual arts and sports and offers after-school tutoring to at-risk youth. It has won awards from groups associated with UNESCO and UNICEF, and from several Brazilian and Cearense organizations.

In 1985, the same year as Live Aid and the release of USA for Africa's “We Are the World” and the year following the release of “Do They Know It's Christmas?,” one hundred fifty five Brazilian musicians came together to record *Nordeste Já*, a vinyl EP intended to raise money for victims of drought in the Northeast. Many of Brazil's biggest stars of the second half of the twentieth century, including Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Maria Bethânia, Tom Jobim, Chico

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<sup>70</sup> Aloysio Reis. 1977. ““Reflexões sobre a vida de Orós (Pedra Rara)” [concert program]. Teatro Tereza Rachel, Rio de Janeiro, September 7-18.

Buarque, Roberto Carlos, and Luiz Gonzaga, gathered in a studio in Rio de Janeiro over three days to support the region that had suffered during the previous five years from alternating droughts and floods. Fagner was involved with the project from the beginning, and held some of the rehearsals at his home. The single was expected to sell a million copies, and discs were sent to radio stations around Brazil. The cast also filmed music videos for both songs, much like the video for “We Are the World,” showing singers soloing emotionally into a studio microphone and swaying together as a chorus during the refrain.

The EP's A side was a song called “Chega de Mágoa,” composed by Gilberto Gil, with additional lyrics by musicians involved in the album. Fagner sang the last line, “chega de mágoa / chega de tanto penar” (no more grief / no more suffering), before the chorus of stars joined in, echoing Fagner's words. Fagner helped acquire the lyrics for the B-side track from Patativa do Assaré, Ceará's most respected folk poet, often considered a genius. He recalled:

At the time in which we made that song for *Nordeste Já*, “Chega de Mágoa” (no more grief), which in Ceará they jokingly called “Chega de Água” (no more water), and I called Patativa and I said, “Patativa, I want your lyrics speaking about this moment for our people, about the drought, about the floods, and all of that sort of thing.” And the next day he called me and I was impressed because he passed the song over the phone to me and I copied it down (2003:43).

Several musicians involved in the production adapted Patativa's poem into a *farró* song, “Seca d'Água.” In Fagner's brief duet in the song with Elba Ramalho, the two perform the chorus in two-part harmony, singing, “Drought without rain is bad, but an endless rainy season is worse.”<sup>71</sup> The song ends with a coda: the descending, alternating melodic accordion motif from “Asa Branca.”

Fagner's website<sup>72</sup> explains that he was disappointed with the results of the project. Few

<sup>71</sup> The Portuguese lyrics are “A seca sem chuva é ruim / mas a seca d'água é pior.” The word “seca” (drought) in this case refers not to a lack of water, but to a lack of agricultural productivity. Thus, a “seca sem chuva” is a bad crop due to a lack of rain, and a “seca d'água” is a bad crop due to too much rain.

<sup>72</sup> “Chega de Mágoa,” *Raimundo Fagner*, accessed on April 14, 2012,



radio stations played “Chega de Mágoa,” which was intended to be a national radio hit, and they never achieved their goal of selling a million copies. According to the site, Fagner laid the blame on radio broadcasters. Today, he remembers the project differently, saying it achieved its goal: to raise awareness about drought and suffering in the Northeast. He also contends that the similarities to “We Are the World” were merely coincidental.

In a TV interview later released as a CD and transcribed in a book, Fagner recalled a concert in Natal, the capital of Rio Grande do Norte, for victims of drought in the Northeast that he performed with Luiz Gonzaga, calling him a close friend (“since Exu is so close to Orós”) and a father figure.<sup>73</sup> The two sang “Súplica Cearense,”<sup>74</sup> a song in which a rural worker begs god for forgiveness, shouldering responsibility for Cearense floods because he prayed for rain excessively. Fagner said:

We had one of the most incredible moments of all my life, on an occasion in which we were singing for drought—to end the drought—for those afflicted by drought, in Rio Grande do Norte, in Natal, in a football stadium. It had been three years since it last rained and, at the moment we began to sing “Súplica Cearense,” it started to rain, with the multitude of approximately fifty thousand people crying. This is something very strong that I will never forget in my life (2003:57).

His interview conveys not only the nostalgia typical of his career, but several levels of meaning. Lyrically, the song “Súplica Cearense” is about drought and suffering in Ceará. Musically, the song is more ballad than dance song, but with an insistent *pé-de-serra* triangle beat and accordion accompaniment, marking it as northeastern. By performing the song in a concert to raise awareness about drought—with Luiz Gonzaga, moreover—Fagner employs the song to protest the problems addressed in its lyrics. Lastly, by discussing it years later on television, he reminds the audience of his northeastern roots, he establishes musical,

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[http://www.raimundofagner.com.br/cheга\\_magoa.htm](http://www.raimundofagner.com.br/cheга_magoa.htm).

<sup>73</sup> Fagner also recounts the incident in an interview in Regina Echeverria's book *Gonzaguinha e Gonzagão: uma História Brasileira* (2006: 271).

<sup>74</sup> “Súplica Cearense” was written by Waldeck Artur de Macedo and Nelinho, first released in 1967.

northeastern, and symbolic credibility with his association with Luiz Gonzaga, and he demonstrates his values and commitment to the challenges facing those in the Northeast.

Fagner worries that consumer culture has led to what anthropologist Kathleen Stewart describes as “an atemporal order and a prefab cultural landscape” (1988:227), creating a society in which individuality, variation, and quality are valued less than the market-driven concerns of late capitalism. “I bring the past into the present,” Fagner said. “People are without a present. . . . People are without identity. Everyone is really connected with the same thing of consumerism, of whatever, and I think that this is my passion for music, for poetry, for artistic results. I think that this comes from artistic results.”<sup>75</sup> Fagner's use of nostalgia—his references to Orós, to the reservoir, to Luiz Gonzaga, to playing marbles as a child—brings the past into the present. It makes his music unique and uniquely northeastern.

### The Reception of Fagner in Orós

For those who live in Orós, Fagner's efforts to advertise his personal connection to the city and the *sertão* on the national stage is an affirmation of the city's significance. Like the rock music from Liverpool, England, that was commercially marketed to a global audience as the “Liverpool sound” and heard by Liverpudlians in ways that locally constructed “a sense of difference and distinctiveness” (Cohen 1997:133), individuals in Orós hear the nationally targeted music of the “northeastern boom” in particularly local ways. Just as the act of singing placenames is “a truly transformative locus of naturalized culture and culturalized nature” for the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea (Feld 2001:205), the act of listening to recordings of Fagner sing about Orós *in* Orós establishes local senses of belonging and place and transforms the relationship between local nature and local culture.

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<sup>75</sup> Raimundo Fagner, interview by the author, December 21, 2011.

“Unlike other musicians from the interior,” said Orós native Janett Lima Silvers (my sister-in-law), “Fagner always publicly announced his love for his hometown on national television and radio.” On prime-time variety shows and late-night talk shows, she said, Fagner often mentioned his friends in Orós by name, and talked about the city, the reservoir, and the *sertão*. His national reputation brought Orós to a national stage. His reception in Orós and personal involvement with the city, on the other hand, makes his national sound locally meaningful. What is heard as a musical representation of nostalgic rurality to a southeastern urban audience is an example of echoic mimicry to those from the city.

Today, Fagner lives predominantly between his apartments in Rio de Janeiro and Fortaleza, but he also owns a home on an island in the middle of the Orós reservoir and another on the top of a hill in the city. He is the source of local mythology, which involves rumors of spotting him with other Brazilian celebrities, like children's television host Xuxa. In the past, Fagner would walk around Orós barefoot and shirtless, drinking beer with friends at local bars and chatting with people in the streets. Fagner's extended family in Orós is large, and he still has many friends in the city. When he visits, he often plays soccer. On some occasions, he closes the local community center and invites friends on an exclusive guest list to party with him. Once, he paid for a new pool table at Chico Pinto's bar, where he has brought a number of his celebrity friends to drink.<sup>76</sup> Many people in Orós consider him a friend and say, “We drink beer with him” when he visits, and they downplay his difference by saying, “he's *just* another person from Orós.”

In January 2012, Fagner returned to Orós for a tennis tournament he organized at his foundation. With nearly a hundred fifty people from town, I pressed my face against the net

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<sup>76</sup> Meirismar Augusto Paulino, “Sob o Céu de Orós,” *Jornal o Povo*, May 30, 2003, <http://www.opovo.com.br/app/opovo/vida-e-arte/2003/05/30/noticiavidaeartejornal,257035/sob-o-ceu-de-oros.shtml>.

surrounding his clay court to watch him play the final doubles match. His partner, a young, fit ringer, helped lead him to victory over two heavy-set, gray-haired opponents. Everyone listened intently as the ball thwacked off the red earth and against rackets, the sound accompanied by whispers and the amplified voice of the referee who called out the score. The match was faintly backgrounded by Catholic hymns from a nearby church. At one point, a harsh grinding noise—I was told it was a water pump—interrupted the game. With one hand, Fagner held his racket, and with another he angrily and swiftly pointed toward the source of the sound. Someone scurried up the hill and into the street, and the grinding abruptly ceased. After the game, people ran to pose for photos with the star. While he showered, they snapped images of themselves with the racket he left on a table near the bathroom. “For Orós,” Janett said, “he is a god. Orós doesn't exist without Fagner. And Fagner wouldn't exist without Orós.”

With his reputation, Fagner is incapable of being merely another person from the city. “We live under his influence,” Janett said. “Everyone has posters in their houses, you hear his music at parties, in stores.” A tire repair shop displays a large poster of Fagner next to a poster of a girl in a bikini on a motorcycle. A barbecue restaurant in the square has two posters on its wall: one of the reservoir's spillway and one of Fagner. A local woman hangs photos of herself as a child posing with Fagner on her wall among family portraits; in permanent marker, his signature and a personal note decorate an adjacent wall.

Fagner's music is integral to the sound of Orós, both because it imagines the city and because it plays there. One evening, a series of Fagner concert DVDs played on a loop on a small television in a restaurant facing the reservoir. A bar in the town's hills played a video of one of the concerts late into the night, the sound of the music spilling into the street. A restaurant on the main street played his music in the morning as the owner swept the floor. A local man has a

reputation for performing impersonations of Fagner, and he is said to sing and play with an uncanny resemblance to the star.

In the past, Fagner has exerted political influence in Orós, specifically in terms of his support for the Batista family, one of the city's major political families. Fagner grew up as a close personal friend of theirs. His father's first wife was a Batista, and Fagner once had plans to settle down with someone from the family. The night before election day in a year in which Eliseu Batista ran for mayor, Fagner gave a free concert in Orós. Regarding Fagner's involvement in state politics, Wellington Batista said, "The paving of the road that provides access to the reservoir . . . was done quickly thanks to his request [to the Ceará state government]." <sup>77</sup> Eliseu Batista said, "When things get tough, we call him: 'Raimundo, let's go to the governor.' And then everything works out." <sup>78</sup>

Today, Fagner avoids visiting the city center. Too many people asked for money, help, or an impromptu concert, and he grew weary of the responsibility. When out at night, locals used to offer to sing Fagner's songs to him. Now he prohibits the live performance of his music in his vicinity. Bar owner Chico Pinto said, "If someone takes out a guitar, he doesn't like to hear his own songs. I think he's gotten sick of it." <sup>79</sup> Lately, Fagner has been reluctant to spend long periods of time in Orós. According to local gossip—no news sources seem to have reported on this, but Fagner alluded to it in our interview—Fagner's nephew, who was also his accountant, emptied the singer's various bank accounts after learning a password. He then fled the country, taking seven million of Fagner's eight million *real* fortune, the remainder of which was in assets. As a result, Fagner has been forced to start touring again. The situation highlights Fagner's insider/outsider status in Orós, where he is simultaneously seen as an abstract icon, a financial

<sup>77</sup> Meirismar Augusto Paulino, "Sob o Céu de Orós," *Jornal o Povo*, May 30, 2003, <http://www.opovo.com.br/app/opovo/vida-e-arte/2003/05/30/noticiavidaeartejornal,257035/sob-o-ceu-de-oros.shtml>.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

provider, and kin.

### Orós FM: The Sound of the Waters

Fagner's relationship with Orós can be described as benevolent and avuncular. Nonetheless, his habitus and authority (consequences of his artistry, his wealth, his cosmopolitanism, his legend, and his political leverage) have clashed on occasion with the local soundscape. What may seem like insignificant hobbies or concerns to Fagner have the potential to transform the sound of Orós in meaningful, lasting ways.

In March of 1992, following the suggestion of a friend in Brasília, Fagner converted a small room off the foyer of his hilltop home in Orós into a radio station he called Orós FM, “O Som das Águas,” the Sound of the Waters. The radio, now self-sustaining through advertising, was initially created by Fagner as a hobby. He told me:

The radio is something that I have, but I don't participate in it. I made it more for pleasure . . . It was something that happened without me having committed much. . . . So since I don't live there, at first I was still interfering, I was doing the programming. Because, at the time I got the radio I had more than fifteen thousand CDs, I produced a lot of CDs, and I was inside the labels, and I received the recordings from all the labels, so I had lots of discs. And one of the things that made me have the radio was the possibility of using those discs. So at the start of the radio, I was really in love. I stayed doing the programming in my own way, for my own taste. And it wasn't—that is a region where there's another kind of audience, an audience from the real *sertão*, so I don't participate. I don't see what the programming is, programming directed at that kind of listener from the interior of the *sertão*.<sup>80</sup>

With an unused collection of CDs, Fagner founded a radio station—often called “Fagner's radio” by people in Orós—that he saw as a diversion. He realized, however, that people in Orós were *listening*, that his radio station had an impact and an audience, and that his own aesthetic preferences were unlike theirs. He handed the radio's programming over to its staff—today it

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<sup>80</sup> Raimundo Fagner, interview by the author, December 21, 2011.

employs two workers and two interns—who could better program music for “an audience from the real *sertão*.” Despite Fagner's attestations to the Brazilian public that he is an “Orós native of the heart,” his experience of the world and his tastes share little in common with those of his fans and his radio listenership in Orós. Today, the radio station's programming is a mix of electronic *fórró* (including *fórró* covers of older American and British successes: its current rotation includes a *fórró* version of Foreigner's 1984 “I Want to Know What Love Is,” recently re-popularized by Mariah Carey),<sup>81</sup> *brega*, *música sertaneja*, and mainstream Brazilian and international radio hits, including Ivete Sangalo, Justin Bieber, and Rihanna. Part of each day's programming on Orós FM also comes directly from a major radio station in Fortaleza.

Around the time Fagner opened his radio station, he is rumored to have taken a public stand against Dantas's *radiadora*.<sup>82</sup> The noise, it is said, bothered him, and he made his displeasure known. The majority of Orós sits on two facing hills, and the principal street runs through the valley between (see figure 8). Fagner's home sits at the apex of one hill, and the broadcast tower above Dantas's home sits high on the other (see figure 9). Fagner complained that the sound traveled directly into his second story bedroom window. He felt so inconvenienced by having his sleep disrupted early each morning that on three occasions he sent an officer to order Dantas to stop his morning broadcasts.

To Fagner, the sound of the *radiadora* is noise—unwanted sound—while to people in Orós, it is a meaningful soundmark. As Schafer writes, “One man's music may be another man's noise” (1994:273). Here, a city's soundmark is another man's noise. Fagner, whose habitus includes the proclivities and behaviors of the global bourgeoisie—especially in terms of how he

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<sup>81</sup> Dent describes covers of American songs by *música sertaneja* artists in São Paulo as “cross-cultural texts,” arguing that they should not be seen as facile examples of cultural imperialism (2005). He also calls for further study of “the dynamics of cultural exchange within a Hick Atlantic” (2005:221). It is worth noting that according to Billboard Brasil, Mariah Carey's cover of “I Want to Know What Love Is” has the distinction of being the longest-running number-one hit. It was the number-one hit in Brazil from December 2009 until May 2010.

<sup>82</sup> José Hilton Dantas, interview by the author, December 10, 2011.

conceives privacy and hears sound—was at odds with a city that values and appreciates its “musical alarm clock,” which many people in Orós describe as a “public service” and understand as both practically and symbolically important.

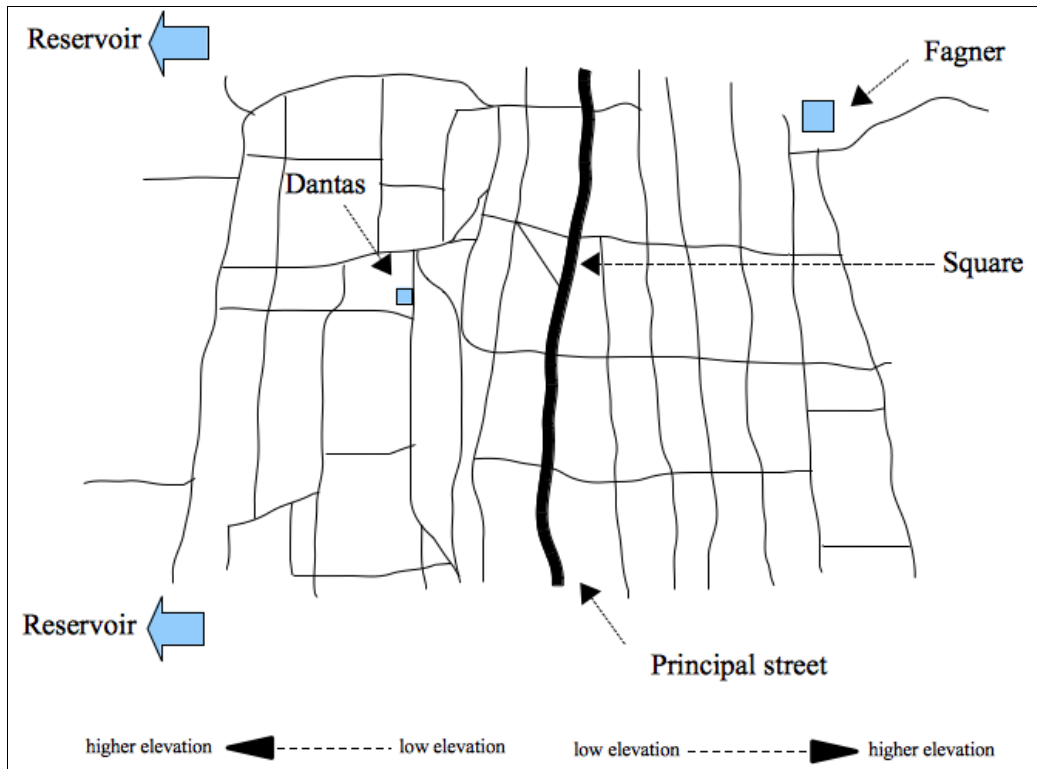


FIGURE 8. Road map of Orós, Ceará, indicating Dantas and Fagner. Based on Google Earth 2011. Drawn by author.

The residents of Orós—a church group, members of the Orós Social Center, and others—came together in protest and signed a letter requesting that Dantas be allowed to resume his six a.m. announcements. Regina Dantas, who periodically substitutes for her father, estimates that they collected one thousand signatures in her father's support. They brought the letter to a local judge, who granted permission for Dantas to resume his broadcasts. Fagner has now constructed walls and windows that block out the sound, and Regina claims that today residents “believe in



the *radiadora* more than the radio.” When Dantas begins his announcements, people turn off their radios to hear what he has to say.

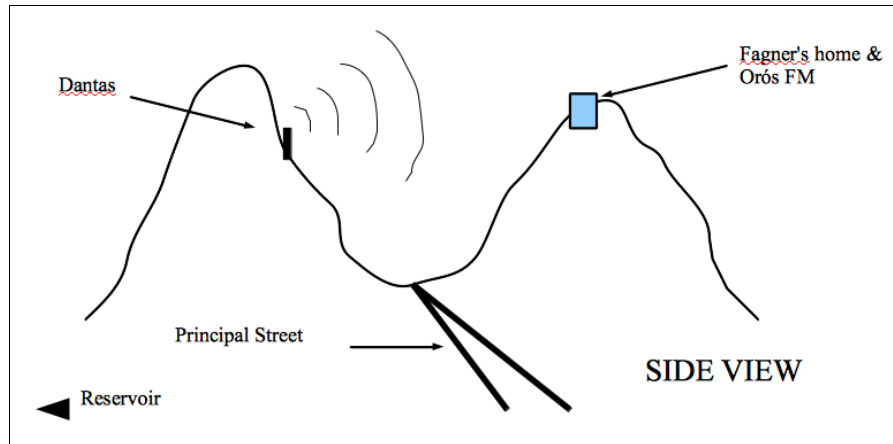


FIGURE 9. Dantas broadcasting to Fagner in Orós, side illustration. Not to scale.

Regarding those who oppose his *radiadora*, Dantas said:

There are many ignorant imbeciles who ignore my work for reasons having to do with the sound bothering them, that this and that and thus and such, but in any case, I think the following: When these people have this criticism against me, this is what I say: God already gave you twice what I have ever expected in life.<sup>83</sup>

If bells and broadcasted sound can denote territories of influence, then the *radiadora* has influence over the town of Orós, while the radio broadcasts into thirty towns and cities throughout the Jaguaribe Valley, into the Cariri region in southern Ceará—including the cities of Iguatu and Juazeiro do Norte—and extending into the states of Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte. In November 2009, Orós FM made its broadcasts available for live streaming over the internet. Like the water of the Orós Reservoir, the Sound of the Waters reaches Fortaleza and beyond.

<sup>83</sup> “Entrevista com Seu Dantas Voz da Liberdade 18 de Junho de 2011,” accessed online February 1, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeSJoTJHNM4>.

### Transnational Mediated Soundscapes Heard Locally

To suggest that the sounds of Orós are exclusively those of water, Fagner, the *radiadora*, and *fórró* implies that Orós is somehow disconnected from global trends and flows. Like many places in the world, Orós is a place where the local soundscape incorporates foreign sounds in significant ways; both traditional *fórró* and international popular music are meaningful in Orós.

In June 2009, my brother and sister-in-law wed in Orós in the courtyard of the Fagner Foundation. Following the ceremony, a local quadrille troupe performed with a live *fórró* band in celebration of St. John's Day and the wedding. A typical northeastern quadrille includes the reenactment of a wedding, and thus the performers acted out a wedding within a wedding before performing their dance routine to Luiz Gonzaga *fórró* standards. Fagner's countenance in the form of a large painting presided over the dance floor. After their presentation, guests joined in the quadrille. Once the party had ended, I accompanied the dancers from the quadrille to a plaza, the original town square, near the Fagner Foundation. Shortly after the discussion turned to a conversation about the queer identities of many of the dancers, one of them—a person well versed in local music and dance traditions—pulled out his cellphone and began to scroll through its menu. He placed it upside down on the plastic table where we sat, and the small speaker on the back of the phone began to play Lady Gaga's "Poker Face," the international pop hit of the summer. Remaining in his seat, another dancer began to perform the dance moves from the song's music video, which he claimed to have learned from Youtube on a computer in one of the local internet cafés.

In July of 2011, the city of Orós opened its first community radio station, Rádio Nosso FM, authorized by the Ministry of Communications, and run by the *Associação Amigos da*

*Cultura*, the Friends of Culture Association. That station has since closed, and another local station—rumored to have a greater listenership within Orós than Fagner's radio—has opened. The owner of the new station has attached small speakers to many of the telephone posts that run along the main street, and he occasionally broadcasts into the street. There is now a multiplicity of broadcasters and means of accessing and hearing recorded music in Orós, and its citizens can choose among various options.

Many of these sounds lack the kind of direct significance to Orós that is inherent to the music of Fagner and *farró*. Yet the sounds of national and global popular music also resonate in Orós. When an individual from Orós listens to Fagner, he or she can recognize himself or herself in the sound. Today, the same is also true for some individuals in Orós who listen to Lady Gaga and other global and national popular musics. Like individual Suyá Indians of the upper Xingu River who listen and dance to cassettes of *música sertaneja* as an expression of their habitus and for social and personal reasons other than cultural imperialism per se (Seeger 2003; 2010), the dancers in the Orós quadrille likely heard Lady Gaga simultaneously as a transnational expression of queer aesthetics and as a particular way of being in and from Orós. The acoustic community of Orós remains intact, while individuals within it are able to tap into other communities (even distant ones) that hold personal significance. The cellphone speaker, furthermore, turned our plastic table into the site of a short-lived acoustic community.

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These are the soundscapes of Orós, real and imagined: the music of Fagner, running water, the broadcasts from Dantas, the jaunty sounds of accordion-driven *farró*, and Lady Gaga emitted from cellphones and internet cafés. They can be heard throughout the city over the

*radiadora*, as soundtracks to home movies, or from the top of the lookout point at the reservoir's edge.

Neto's DVD illustrates the web of significance that gives meaning to the soundscapes of Orós. For a national audience, the sounds of Fagner can index Orós, water, and the struggles of life in the Northeast. For listeners in Orós, the sounds of Fagner sound like home. Yet Fagner—the man, not the legend—is in some ways distanced from the aesthetic and aural subjectivities of Orós, and his disproportionate authority can turn fleeting hobbies and minor annoyances into powerful restructurings of local sound and senses of time and place.

In chapter two, I argued that the popular music of Luiz Gonzaga, which depicted an idyllic yet harsh *sertão* for a national audience, is now meaningful in Ceará, where the traditional knowledge conveyed through Gonzaga's mass mediated music has become part of the process of the transmission of traditional cultural practices. Here, my argument is similar. I posit that Raimundo Fagner presented Orós to a national audience, and his mass-mediated music is now a significant part of the Orós soundscape. I have also demonstrated how broadcast technologies project power and create acoustic communities, allowing listeners in Ceará to experience recorded music in ways that are embedded with meaning and social structure.

My broader argument is that acoustic socio-natures in Ceará demonstrate cycles of reciprocating complexity involving the natural environment, people, and their music, illustrating the influence of nature on culture, and the cultural constructedness of nature. What is of interest is not merely that Fagner (or Luiz Gonzaga) sang about drought, water, and life in the *sertão*, but that the nationally popular music was received by individuals who live in the *sertão* in ways which were uniquely meaningful, incorporating mass-mediated representations of themselves and the places where they live into their local soundscapes and practices. In the next chapter, I

explore further the musical and literary construction of Ceará's landscapes and analyze two contemporary musical contexts in which Ceará's music and landscapes help construct, convey, and contest regionalism, ethnicity, and class.

## FOUR

### MODEL SOUNDSCAPES:

#### *MOACIR OF THE SEVEN DEATHS AND ELETROCACTUS*

*Imagine it is the most scorching hour of your afternoon nap.  
The midday Sun darts rays of fire on the native sands; the birds fall quiet; the plants languish.  
Nature is influenced by the powerful tropical radiation, which produces the diamond and the  
genius, the two brightest expressions of creative power.*

*-José de Alencar, Iracema*

José de Alencar's novel *Iracema, Legend of Ceará* (1865) and Mário de Andrade's novel *Macunaíma: The Hero with no Character* (1928) are what literary scholar Doris Sommer calls “foundational fictions” (1993); they are widely read in Brazilian schools and frequently portrayed in film and on stage as creation stories of the Brazilian people. In a study of Latin American novels that attempted to construct national unity, fabricate incomplete histories, and project visions of the future, Sommer argues that these works recounted stories of romance, in particular, to conceive national identity, “[investing] private passions with public purpose” (1993:7). Alencar's *Iracema*, for example, is a work that was intended—and understood—as a history of the Brazilian people. Written in an era of nationalism—a literary period that was known as *ufanismo*—and environmental determinism, Alencar's novel simultaneously constructed a unified Brazilian identity and implied the erasure of the Amerindian population and the colonization of their land (Helena 1993). Mário de Andrade's *Macunaíma*, on the other hand, written in an era of modernism, describes a story not of simple miscegenation, but of an

impossibility of the characterization of a singular Brazilian ethnic or racial identity. Professor of Brazilian cultural studies Lúcia Sá writes Andrade himself was ambivalent about seeing Macunaíma—the novel's protagonist—as a representation of national identity. His intent, she suggests, was precisely that Brazil's national character, like the book's hero, was yet unformed (Sá 2004:38). Literary scholar Lucia Helena, in comparing the two works, describes *Iracema* as about the “topic of origins,” and *Macunaíma* as about the “topic of the erasure of origins.” (1993:87). Both works, in fact, search for national origins, but one claims to identify them, and the other remains perpetually searching for them. Unlike *Iracema*, which posits that Brazilians come from Indians and the Portuguese, *Macunaíma* depicts the “myth of the three races,” with African ancestry as the third “race,” leading ethnomusicologist Suzel Reily to describe the book's protagonist as the “tri-ethnic product of the tropics” (1997:72). She calls for a critical reevaluation of the myth of the three races to better understand the meaning of Brazilian music (Reily 1997:94), which is what I intend to do here in the case of contemporary Ceará.

In giving driving directions in Fortaleza, people often distinguish between two sides of the city: the beach side and the *sertão* side. These two places—beach and *sertão*—are prominent in the local imaginary, and are a result not only of geography, but also of the history of local migration, labor, and tourism, as well as mediated representations in literature, the press, and music. Fortaleza is a beach destination—a growing domestic tourism market and a hotspot for Europeans—and is also home to many drought-fleeing migrants from the interior. Water—or the lack thereof—characterizes much of the local imaginary in one form or another (see Taddei 2005). The city, thus, is at once paradise and a consequence of suffering in the rural interior.

In his analysis of Euclides da Cunha's novel *Os Sertões*, another influential Brazilian work that discusses both ethnic identity and the natural environment, ecocritic and professor of

Spanish and Portuguese Mark Anderson writes that Cunha depicts two Brazils (Anderson 2010). One is paradise—a term that Anderson complexifies, explaining how in the era of Alencar, paradise meant beautiful, fecund nature and human innocence, whereas following the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, it came to be seen as unstable (Anderson 2010). “Once paradise becomes inhabited,” he writes, “it ceases to be paradise and enters history” (2010:212). The other Brazil is what he calls an “ecology of abjection,” referring to the *sertão* and later the Amazon Rainforest, defining it as:

depicting uninhabitable geographies characterized by an unbearable climate and hostile nature, including monstrous and/or parasitical flora and fauna, and physical topographies that defy the 'natural' order and Western aesthetics, which contribute to the evolution of lazy, immoral, irrational, deformed, and dark-skinned humans who have undergone pernicious adaptations to the adverse environment (2010:213).

It was in this republican era that ecologies of abjection became “the dominant mode of representation” in literature, he explains (ibid.). He also writes that Cunha's geographically deterministic work suggests that to overcome these ecologies of abjection, the *sertão* must be transformed through “technological modifications of the environment, hygiene, civic education, and even, for some, eugenics, in order to conform to their notions of Brazilian territoriality” (2010:228).<sup>84</sup>

In this chapter, I discuss two musical projects—one an opera, the other a rock band and its first full-length album—that reset the “foundational fictions” of *Iracema* and *Macunaíma* in different contexts in Ceará, including in the *baião*-and-*forró*-filled *sertão*, demonstrating two contemporary visions of *sertão* and paradise. In the opera, paradise (embodied by *Iracema*) is sacrificed for an ecology of abjection in a nostalgic retelling of Ceará's history and an

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<sup>84</sup> The very name of the nation, Anderson points out, comes from the tropical *pau brasil*, the Brazilwood tree, “the tree whose wood formed the foundation of the early colonial economy” and is now part of “a kind of national nature in the Brazilian imagination” (2010:228). See Allen 2010 for an ecomusicological discussion of the Brazilwood tree and violin bows.



implication of the consequences of what was lost. This ecology of abjection, however, is not one that *causes* social ills and determines Cearense character. Rather, the opera more ambivalently depicts how society has reacted to the harsh environment over time, combining history and folklore as Alencar did. For the rock band, the *sertão* and the sea combine in a nebulous, slippery imaginary of present-day Ceará, as impossible to define as Macunaíma or the Brazilian national character in general.

My analysis derives less from my own exegesis of music and musical projects as texts than from the interpretations and meanings given to them by the musicians and composers responsible for their creation. I also contextualize both projects within larger social and musical trends in Fortaleza, demonstrating their historical and contemporary relevance. In the previous two chapters, I explored the musical representation—and discursive construction—of the *sertão* on the national stage and the reciprocal impact of that music on places and practices in the *sertão*. In this chapter, I ask what musical representations of the *sertão* created in Ceará for (mostly) Cearenses can tell us about attitudes towards the *sertão*, Cearense cultural history, and ethnic identity.

I treat opera and rock music as symbols of urban cosmopolitanism, youth culture, and class distinction (e.g., Regev 2003; Magaldi 1999; Bourdieu 1984), but not as direct signifiers of European or American cultural imperialism. Opera and rock music both have complex histories in Brazil that indeed pertain to Brazilian foreign affairs, globalization, and the economic, political, and cultural hegemony of Europe and the United States at varying moments, which will only partially be discussed in this chapter. But in both examples studied here—*Moacir* and *Eletrocactus*—opera and rock are deliberately chosen vehicles for musically expressing and constructing particular images, histories, and ideologies of Ceará.

## MOACIR OF THE SEVEN DEATHS

### Iracema and the City of Fortaleza

José de Alencar's *Iracema* tells the story of Iracema, an Indian woman—a Tabajara—from Ceará who is “discovered” by Martim, a Portuguese warrior. The Christian man and the Tabajara woman fall in love at first sight and conceive the first “native-born” son of Ceará, a product of Indian and Portuguese miscegenation, a result of the scorching tropical sun. To protect Martim and their unborn son, Iracema betrays her own people, killing many of her kin with poisoned arrows. They flee from the Ceará's interior to its coast, and in a tragic conclusion, she dies shortly after childbirth, immediately after Martim returns from battle. She names her son Moacyr, the son of pain. Following her death, Alencar writes, “thus it happened that one day, the river where the palm tree grew, and the fields through which the river snakes, came to be called Ceará” (2006:248).<sup>85</sup> Iracema's death resulted from the birth of the “first son” of Ceará, and led to the formation of Ceará itself. In his foundational metaphor, Alencar is direct: Cearense ethnic identity—Brazilian ethnic identity, furthermore—comprises a combination of indigenous and European blood. The Indians themselves, however, were largely eradicated—and conceptually erased—in the process. Alencar illustrates this not as a critique of colonialism, but as a way of glorifying the unique Brazilian roots, showing how Brazil sprung from what he saw as the natural, innocent world of the Indians.<sup>86</sup>

Iracema, it should be noted, is an anagram for America: she is representative of the American soil itself. Ecocritic Greg Garrard (2004) identifies literary associations of indigenous

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<sup>85</sup> My translations of passages from Alencar's *Iracema* are generally my own, but I also consulted Isabel Burton's 1886 translation, *Iracema, the Honey-Lips: A Legend of Brazil*.

<sup>86</sup> Barbosa (2007) writes that in his various works, Alencar's depiction of the *sertão* changed over time. In *Iracema*, the *sertão* was a verdant land of innocence populated by Amerindians. In his work *O Sertanejo*, it was an uninhabitable desert.

peoples with the natural environment as early as the sixteenth century. German scholars in the nineteenth century explored the idea, calling indigenous peoples “naturvölker,” natural people (e.g., Von Humboldt 1801; 1850; Waitz 1860; Gerland 1868). Garrard suggests the idea experienced a resurgence in academia in the United States with Shepard Krech's controversial work *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999) (also see Harkin and Lewis 2007; Sá 2004). In the case of *Iracema*, the issue is not merely a conflation of indigeneity with ecology, but an association of Indian women, in particular, with the land. In her book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), feminist scholar Anne McClintock writes that in the colonial era, the conquest of land was metaphorically and materially associated with the conquest of women, calling the yet-to-be-colonized frontier—Africa and the Americas—“a porno-tropics for the European imagination” (1995:22). Indigenous women and new lands were seen as virginal, “passively awaiting the thrusting, male insemination of history, language and reason” (30). Furthermore, she argues, the act of naming land was part of this colonizing process. (In Ceará, as was common in the Americas, colonizers named cities and geographical features with indigenous words or after indigenous groups as a way of memorializing the indigenous past while appropriating their lands.) Alencar's *Iracema* was willing to betray her own for the sake of Martim, and her death and her people's dispossession of their land were depicted as necessary steps for Ceará to be named and to come into the full ownership of the colonizer.

*Iracema* is often described as a prose poem, and when discussing the ways of the Tabajara, Alencar privileges aurality. He portrays them as perceiving the natural world through sound—listening to birds, to the ground, to the weather, and so on. He writes, “Each slight sound of the forest had a meaning for the savage daughter of the desert” (Alencar 2006:119), and indeed, throughout much of the book, he illustrates these sounds and meanings. He cites the call

of the *acauã* (the laughing falcon) and the *sabiá* (the rufous-bellied thrush), both later to become titles and topics of songs by Luiz Gonzaga. He also uses sound to convey mood: “The forest distilled its mild fragrance and exhaled harmonious arpeggios; the sighs of the heart diffused into the whispers of the desert” (173). The sounds of Iracema and Martim's love merged with the sounds of the landscape. The jandaya parakeet, who sang Iracema and Moacir's names, appears in the book's final passage: “The jandaya still sang upon the crests of the palm tree, but no longer repeated Iracema's fond name. On this Earth, all things pass!” (2006:253). Iracema—the land and people she represented—was erased even from the mimicking call of the parakeet. Yet the very word Ceará likely derives from the Tupi word *siará*, which means “song of the jandaya,” and thus her call is remembered in every utterance of the word Ceará.

Today, the story continues to be invoked as a myth of the origin of the Cearense people, a state where most of the people are still understood as having mixed-indigenous-Portuguese ancestry, which is known as *caboclo*. Unlike other states in northeastern Brazil, Ceará is understood as having a relatively small population of African descent. In conversation, Cearenses often attribute this to the claim that Ceará was the first Brazilian state to abolish slavery, which, as historian Eurípedes Antônio Funes argues, associates Afro-Brazilians exclusively with slavery and ignores the continual presence and contributions of (free) Afro-Brazilian laborers since the beginning of the nineteenth century in Ceará (Funes 2007). In fact, Ceará did have relatively few African slaves by the time of abolition (*ibid.*). Mariana Almeida Assunção writes that the 1870s were economically challenging years for Ceará: because of economic restructuring in the United States, there was decreased demand for the exportation of Cearense cotton, and the Great Drought of 1877-79 decimated cattle and reduced agricultural yields, making slave labor both unnecessary and difficult to support (2002:13). As a result, she argues, Cearense slave holders

began selling their slaves to Central-South Brazil, divesting themselves of 9,753 slaves between 1872 and 1879 (ibid.). When slavery was abolished in Ceará in 1884, slavery was already a small-scale operation in the state. (Slavery was abolished federally in 1888.) Nevertheless, an Afro-Brazilian population has consistently remained in Ceará, and the discursive erasure of its Afro-Brazilian peoples has had cultural, religious, and even musical consequences (Funes 2007; also see Cruz 2011; Barroso 1996; Conner 2009).

Iracema is now a symbol of the city of Fortaleza. On the beach of Mucuripe—the same beach immortalized in song by Raimundo Fagner, the same beach where Alencar shows Iracema waiting with Moacir for Martim's return from war—stands a modernist statue, now in a state of disrepair, of Iracema. She holds a bow and arrow—aimed at the ground—as she faces Martim, her Portuguese husband, and Moacir, who sits in a basket in his lap. Japi the dog stands near her side. In Iracema Beach, now a tourist destination known for prostitution and European sex tourism (it is undergoing vast and rapid renovations in efforts to alter the city's tourism industry and prepare for the World Cup in 2014), there is a large steel statue of Iracema. Guardian Iracema, as it is called, faces the ocean and holds a bow in front of her. In the neighborhood of Messejana, a statue of Iracema juts out of a lake, where it was installed in a celebration in 2004 as the culmination of a project called Iracema – the Muse of Ceará.<sup>87</sup>

Alencar was a native of Fortaleza, and claims to have written his book for readers in Ceará, specifically. In the preface to *Iracema*, he writes:

This book is Cearense. It was imagined there, in the cleanliness of that sky of crystalline blue, and then poured into my heart full of the vivid memories of a virgin imagination. I wrote it to be read there, on the porch of a rustic house, or in the fresh shade of an orchard, to the sweet lullaby of a hammock, among the whispers of the wind that crackles in the sand, or rustles in the coconut palms (Alencar 2006:92).

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<sup>87</sup> “Prefeito entrega estátua de Iracema na Lagoa de Messejana,” *Diário do Nordeste*, April 30, 2004, <http://verdesmares.globo.com/v3/canais/noticias.asp?codigo=90474&modulo=178>.

Today, “Alencarino” is a term used to describe a person from Fortaleza. His childhood home in the Messejana neighborhood, where he lived until the age of eight, is now owned by the Universidade Federal do Ceará, and houses the university's music education department and functions as a museum. The city's most revered theater, also a tourist landmark, is the Teatro José de Alencar. His memory and the story of Iracema are paramount to the symbolic construction of contemporary Fortaleza.

### The Northeastern Opera Project

If, as Helena (1993) argues, *Iracema* is about the creation of Ceará, with the erasure of indigenous identity and peoples as a subtext, then the opera *Moacir of the Seven Deaths or the Not Unhappy Life of a Red-blooded Man* is about the history of Ceará beginning with the mythical story of Iracema, with a subtext about Ceará's ecologies of abjection. Furthermore, the intent of the opera (and its conception, creation, and eventual production) is, in part, to overcome the abjection conveyed in its plot and music.

The opera began with Paulo Abel do Nascimento (1957-1992), a male alto—an endocrinological castrato to be exact—who was born and raised in Ceará, where he lived until he turned twenty and left to study voice in São Paulo and later Florence, Italy. Nascimento, whose voice could have been a consequence of childhood malnutrition, grew up very poor (Matos 2008). But by 1988, following his move to Europe, he had appeared as a castrato in the Hollywood film *Dangerous Liaisons* with Glenn Close, John Malkovich, and Michelle Pfeiffer, in which he can be seen and heard singing Handel's “Ombra Mai Fu,” from the 1738 opera *Serse*. His 1986 recordings of Scarlatti cantatas for the French label Lyrinx were released in 1993, and in 1990, he recorded a collection of Brazilian folk songs and art songs—including pieces by

Heitor Villa-Lobos and Alberto Nepomuceno, also for Lyrinx. Musicologist Roger-Claude Travers criticizes Nascimento, writing, “[his] richness in harmonics, facility in passage-work and variety of colours could not compensate for the strangeness of his throat production, the 'clucking' sound heard in melismas and the upsetting changes of timbre” (2009:306). But he nevertheless performed successfully on stage in Europe and the United States.

In 1985, Nascimento began returning frequently to Fortaleza where he was already fêted by some as a success who had made a career abroad (Matos 2008:76). To gain exposure and fame in his hometown, and with the goal of improving the quality of music education in Ceará, Nascimento dreamt up a northeastern-themed opera in which he could star. He approached a number of local musicians about composing and ultimately producing the work, and professor of music Izaíra Silvino at the Universidade Federal do Ceará agreed to help with his project. Silvino, however, worried about the feasibility of producing an opera in a city that had no school of music aside from a local “conservatory”—the Alberto Nepomuceno Conservatory, where she herself had studied—that offered music lessons to the children of the elite. To rectify that, she suggested they create an opera as an impetus to also create a school of music at the Universidade Federal do Ceará and others elsewhere in the state, describing the work as an “opera-school,” and terming their endeavor Projeto Ópera Nordestina, the Northeastern Opera Project. It would take an opera, they agreed, to be able to convince the university administration of the need for a music school. With students sufficiently trained in orchestral and vocal technique—not exclusively in the European concert tradition—they could eventually perform the work. They also justified the project by arguing that Ceará already possessed a rich theatrical tradition, including its seasonal quadrilles, *reisados*, and *bumba meu bois*.<sup>88</sup> The work would draw from and reinforce those traditions. Silvino Moraes said, “The school was the creative process; a

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<sup>88</sup> See Reily 2002 on *folias de reis*, the term for *reisados* elsewhere in Brazil.

didactic, northeastern opera.”<sup>89</sup>

Their intent was as social as it was aesthetic. Nascimento believed in earnest that music education could help eradicate the kind of poverty in which he was raised, and, at the very least, ameliorate the suffering of urban youth (Matos 2008:78). That same year—1985—they sought out a composer, librettist, and researcher: Tarcísio de Lima, Oswald Barroso, and Eugênio Leandro, respectively. At the time, Tarcísio de Lima was a composer of popular music and had written arrangements and compositions for chamber orchestra, string quartet, and brass band. Oswald Barroso was already an established poet, playwright, journalist, and folklorist in Fortaleza. Eugênio Leandro was a law student and musician who had already released his own CD.

Those involved in the project were aware of the issues of class distinction inherent in the production of an opera. All of them were affiliated with the federal university in some capacity, and none of them—at least at the time of the Northeastern Opera Project—were subjected to the kind of abject poverty that Nascimento experienced as a child and that continues to exist in the peripheral neighborhoods of Fortaleza. But despite any apparent contradictions in the idea of creating an opera—a work in the European concert tradition associated with the elite—about Ceará and its past, their motivations were to create a project to encourage music education and to celebrate local culture and talent.

The Northeastern Opera Project was only one of Nascimento's contributions to musical culture in Fortaleza. In 1992, for example, he encouraged the local secretary of culture to implement a music education program in the city's poorest neighborhoods and in rural areas around the state. Nascimento's social status may have risen in Europe, but in Fortaleza, he refused to see himself as part of the elite, despite performing music associated with the upper

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<sup>89</sup> Izaíra Silvino Moraes, interview by the author, July 25, 2010.



class. In a radio interview, Professor Elvis Matos, who was a student and a member of the choir at the start of the Northeastern Opera Project and now holds a doctorate in education and is a professor of music and a director of the choir, reflected on the changed attitude towards Paulo Abel upon his return to Fortaleza:

We still have a fetish for European music, which is a great problem. There are people who say that we inherited European music, but oftentimes—it's that thing that Bourdieu says—that inheritance is of the heir, but on the contrary we don't have much autonomy under this music, because it's not ours. It's not our culture. So we submit to it very easily, because it's the music of the colonizer, of those who dominated us. Today, the domination has moved a bit, so these happen in a different way.<sup>90</sup>

The opera demonstrates the changed dominance of the European concert tradition in Fortaleza. Instead of those involved in the Northeastern Opera Project submitting to the inherited form of the elite, they created something entirely northeastern, in terms of form, function, and content, acknowledging the inherited tradition, but modifying it to make it their own. Nascimento's popularity in Ceará was due in part to his association with an upper-class European tradition, a society to which he felt he never belonged, and he took it upon himself to alter the connotations of opera and music in his home state.

In 1985, Eugênio Leandro and Oswald Barroso completed the libretto after eight months of work, at which point Tarcísio de Lima began composing the opera's music. In 1986, Cearense artist Descartes Gadelha designed the scenery. In 1987, Nascimento conducted the choir in a performance of the opera's fourth scene for the Brazilian Association of Psychiatry's national conference in Fortaleza. In 1992, Paulo Abel de Nascimento died suddenly at the age of thirty-five from complications from AIDS. The Northeastern Opera Project, however, continued. In 2008, the Universidade Federal do Ceará opened its Instituto de Cultura e Arte, the first

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<sup>90</sup> Elvis Matos, interview by Pedro Rogério, “Documentário Paulo Abel: Ombra Mai Fu,” *Musicultura Rádio Universitária FM 107.9*, podcast audio, February 8, 2012, <http://musiculturaufc.blogspot.com/2012/02/musicultura-32-entrevista-gabriel-peter.html>.

academic department of the performing arts at the university, including a major in music education. In June 2009, the University Press of the Universidade Federal do Ceará published the full score of the opera—hard-bound, five hundred forty-seven pages, with a picture of a *mandacaru* cactus on its cover—in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the UFC Choir, and the UFC Choir performed three of its scenes with piano accompaniment. In January 2010, Fortaleza's Orquestra de Câmara Eleazer de Carvalho performed the opera's overture at the Teatro José de Alencar in a celebration of the theater's centennial. Two other campuses of the Universidade Federal do Ceará—in Juazeiro do Norte and Sobral—now have music education majors. Oswald Barroso explained that ultimately the opera will be performed in a traveling performance around the state. There are seven scenes and seven geographic meso-regions in Ceará, and the hope is that each region will have musicians trained to perform their scene in what will result in a patchwork, geographically and temporally disjunct realization of the opera, culminating in a performance of the work in its entirety in the capital. The Northeastern Opera Project—the opera-school—is ongoing and dynamic. Elvis Matos explains:

The Opera Project is there. It's still working. It hasn't stopped. We published the complete score, and we'll do other things. One day the opera will be staged. But it's not worth staging the opera if we have to call an orchestra from elsewhere, calling singers from elsewhere. That won't work. It has to be done the way it was thought up. We really need to educate the people, which is an enormous task, but it's the challenge put before us. So Paulo Abel wakes us up to this, that this is possible. Based on the story of his life, we can believe that these things will work.<sup>91</sup>

### Moacir's Cearense Geographies

*Moacir of the Seven Deaths or the Not Unhappy Life of a Red-blooded Man (Moacir das Sete Mortes ou a Vida Desinfeliz de um Cabra da Peste)* recounts the history of Ceará in seven

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<sup>91</sup> Elvis Matos, interview by Pedro Rogério, “Documentário Paulo Abel: Ombra Mai Fu,” *Musicultura Rádio Universitária FM 107.9*, podcast audio, February 8, 2012, <http://musiculturaufc.blogspot.com/2012/02/musicultura-32-entrevista-gabriel-peter.html>.

scenes. The opera's protagonist, Moacir—written for the voice of Paulo Abel do Nascimento, but an octave lower so it could also be performed by a baritone<sup>92</sup>—travels through time and space as the first son of Ceará, as Ceará's history itself, as the “son of pain.” The plot demonstrates the destruction of paradise for the creation of an ecology of abjection. Iracema had to be killed for Ceará to come into existence. She dies at the end of the opera's first act, and in her erasure we see what was lost. Her absence and Moacir's centrality is an implicit story of nostalgia, conveying the consequences of environmental, cultural, and ethnic destruction. In Moacir's adventures, we hear a story of drought, war, poverty, and abjection. Through the use of musical and textual elements from Ceará—e.g., *baião* rhythms, *aboio*-style singing, poetic forms from *cordel*, *cantoria* duels, and the mixolydian mode—combined with elements from European concert music, the opera suggests, as Alencar does, that Ceará and *cearensidade* (Ceará-ness) emerge from a deliberate marriage of local and foreign, in which the local elements exist as integral and yet subordinate parts to the overriding cosmopolitan form. Moacir is half Tabajara, and yet he lives as the son of a Portuguese man, in the Portuguese man's society. Paradise is exchanged for pain, or rather, the natural world and innocent tradition are engulfed by and incorporated into the harsh circumstances of the *sertão* and the modern world.

The intent of the Northeastern Opera Project further complicates this, as it intends to teach local youth to play music, but in a way that does not privilege orchestral music over popular and traditional practices. Those involved in the project saw opera as a vehicle for Nascimento, and as a way of producing a musical and theatrical spectacle that would combine many arts, many symbols, and many skills, and would give birth to a new music scene in Ceará.

In the introduction to the opera's score, Izaíra Silvino writes:

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<sup>92</sup> In a footnote in the score, the decision to write Moacir's part for baritone is explained as a request by Nascimento, who wanted the part written so that another man could perform it “*when he eventually could not*” (italics in original). “And thus it is done:” the score indicates, “our Moacir, sexless figure, was destined for the register of *Mezzo* or Baritone” (2009:xxix).

*Moacir of the Seven Deaths or the the Not Unhappy Life of a Red-blooded Man* is an opera full of singularities, which can be expressed in some characteristics that are its very own: it was written for a soloist with a castrato voice; the presence and the constant—and uncommon—intervention of the choir, dialoguing with all the solos; the text in the mode of northeastern *cantoria*; the journey through all the northeastern-Brazilian genres and rhythms—the *chorinho* sung by a character who frequents the home of Bárbara de Alencar is beautiful, the initial song of the female Indians who sing songs in a European genre is beautiful; the apparent paradox of the rich dialogue between the new—the *cearensidade* sought in *baiões*, *aboios*, *cantorias*, certain harmonies—and the old—the choice of *bel canto*, by the use, in some moments, of a Baroque orchestra, the modal passages; there is also the choice of themes that characterize the locus of the creation, like the conscious use of segments of the Hymn of Ceará; the pedagogical ideology: every moment of the opera is an opportunity for growth and study for initiates to concert music, everything as a moment for learning; the beautiful, wonderful, and wild in every corner; the cinematic feeling as a principal aesthetic characteristic of the work (full of modernity, in all its conflicts and formal paradoxes, as well as in the pluralism of grammars and styles used and that complement one another to compose the equilibrium of the work) that, thus, lends itself to the staging in an Italian theater, in a theater of sand or of the street; among so many other singular and original elements.

While the idea of a northeastern opera—and a Cearense opera in particular—was original, as Silvino indicates, it is also rooted in a larger tradition of northeastern concert music. In 1970, the Department of Cultural Extension at the University of Pernambuco in Recife created its Orquestra Armorial, directed by playwright Ariano Suassuna. Suassuna, founder of the Movimento Armorial, believed (and continues to believe) that northeastern artists—musicians, poets, painters—should create work inspired by the traditions of the Northeast (Santos 2009). He rejected any affiliation with prior Brazilian movements that took inspiration from northeastern rural traditions, calling them globalized and nationalist. The work he encouraged—through the Orquestra Armorial, the Quinteto Armorial, and other publications, expositions, and so on—was decidedly rural and derived from the culture of the *sertão*. However, none of those involved with the Northeastern Opera Project with whom I spoke—including Izaíra Silvino, Oswald Barroso, Tarcísio de Lima, and Elvis Matos—mentioned any direct connection to the regionalist ideas of

Suassuna.

The choir at the Universidade Federal do Ceará has performed “northeastern” art music since 1981 when Izaíra Silvino became its director. Pedagogically inspired by the philosophies of Paulo Freire (1970), who argued that education should be a tool for social change and guided by the interests and needs of the students, both Silvino and Matos have sought a repertoire for the choir that would appeal to the students. Matos suggests that Silvino's pedagogy, moreover, was motivated by the period (and values) of re-democratization following Brazil's military dictatorship (Matos 2008). Silvino not only taught students about vocal music, but had them read academic articles, debate politics, and discuss local identity. Matos recalls a time when, as an undergraduate student of Silvino, he was asked to create a character for a performance—a piece composed by Patativa do Assaré at the request of Silvino called “Nordestinos Somos” (we are northeastern)—based on the typical cearense identities: from the “swollen cities,” the “poetic coast,” or the “bedouin *sertão*” (Matos 2008:134). These were the three Ceará's Silvino suggested to her students. Today, the students are taught to dance and move as they sing—both directors explained to me that this is an important element of local music making—and they often sing with nasal tones that lack vibrato and that recall the religious singing of the *sertão*. The choir continues to sing popular music, arrangements of songs by Luiz Gonzaga, and original pieces like the *Missa Nordestina* composed by Elvira Drummond, which incorporates the dorian and mixolydian modes and *baião* rhythms. In one show, a student accompanied the choir on an eight-button accordion, the kind played by Luiz Gonzaga's father.

The opera—its plot, libretto, music, and orchestration—are directly related to the kinds of values, concerns, and skills Silvino and her successors have emphasized in the UFC Choir. It searches for local identity in an exploration of the geographies, histories, and sounds of Ceará. In

the opening scene of the opera, Iracema and other Indians stand on the shore of Ceará at the beginning of the seventeenth century. The male Indians can be seen and heard playing fifes (*pifanos*) while the women bathe “happily” in the sea, among them Iracema, who is “bright and boisterous.” Together, they sing a litany of indigenous words that are now the names of places in Ceará, including *iracema*, *iguatu* (name of the hometown of Humberto Teixeira), *messejana* (neighborhood and the lake where a statue of Iracema rises out of the water), *cariri* (the region from where Luiz Gonzaga came), *jaguaribe* (region, city, valley, and the river that runs through the Orós reservoir), *mucuripe*, and thirteen others. By singing the names of places that were once indigenous words—some the names of indigenous groups—the librettist recalls the initial indigenous possession of the land and language that was ultimately usurped.

The Portuguese then enter—Martim, others, and a group of soldiers. The soldiers sing:

Earth, spread open the green that covers you!  
Fold the flower of your knee  
To receive he who discovers  
The red sun of your virginity!

Barroso, it seems, offers a reading of *Iracema* that acknowledges Alencar's conflation of land and indigenous women. Unlike the plot of the novel, the opera omits the journeys and battles of Martim and Iracema, as well as Iracema's betrayal of her people. Still at the shore—where Barroso sets the entire first scene—Martim joins with the Indians to fight against the French, but determines to behead them while they sleep. He then beheads the Indians as well. As he does this, Iracema throws herself on him, and while they struggle, Moacir is born and Iracema dies. The chorus then concludes the opening scene:

Opening your own path  
with a river suffocated by cement  
that bursts  
ruptured the offspring in premature birth.

Son of hate and of suffering  
came in the light of the future  
Moacir was born, created pain.

Moacir begins the next scene by announcing his determination to “search for a land without evil,” as his mother's people had attempted to do, and so he remains in Ceará to either “build a life in this land / or flee in retreat.” No longer in a land of paradise and peace-seeking Indians, he is left to confront the struggles, inequalities, and harsh landscapes of the future. Throughout the second scene, with the rhythms of the games, dances, and performances associated with the interior, including the *bumba-meu-boi*, *ciranda*, *caboclinho*, *reisado*, *forró*, and *marchinha*, he interacts with characters from Cearense folklore that appear in *reisado* performances: an ox, a *jaguará* (a beast that looks like a bird or a giraffe with a horse or crocodile skull as a head), a *guriabá* (a hybrid human/animal beast who drinks alcohol and wears red), Zabelinha (a girl who rides a donkey and dresses like a king in a red sequined coat), the angel Gabriel, the Devil (dressed like Mephistopheles), Babau (an old man in an old suit who rides a beast with a donkey's skull for its head and straw for its body), the “captain of the field,” and Catirina (an ex-slave) (see Barroso 1996). The ox warns Moacir, “We will go in search of pasture / Here the foliage has already dried.” The *jaraguá* reminds him, “this life of a cowboy / is worse than that of the cattle.”

The third scene takes place in a plantation house in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The music and meter of the scene is that of a *desafio*, the sung duels of *cantoria de viola*, and two *cantadores* sing for a colonel and his family on the porch of the Big House, while Moacir sits with the lower-class Indians, blacks, and *caboclo* cowboys. The scene explores the deference paid to the colonel and the shift from a cattle-based economy to one based on cotton at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The fourth scene, set in the party room at the Big House, recalls the history of revolutionary Bárbara de Alencar, who was born in Exu, the hometown of Luiz Gonzaga, and later moved to nearby Crato in Ceará. She was a member of the agrarian aristocracy and a leader in the Pernambucan Revolution of 1817 against the Portuguese, declaring herself president of the Republic of Crato. Her leadership and incarceration made her a symbol of the revolutionary movement at the time. She was also the grandmother of José de Alencar. In this scene, which opens with a Portuguese *fado* rhythm, Bárbara de Alencar, in the style of *chorinho*, sings to the guests about her plans for revolution and argues with a captain. The guests sing:

The libertarian torment  
sweeps America  
raising the fearless flag  
of the Republic.  
For the Portuguese thief  
the remedy is the rifle.  
Die colonization  
Long live the northeastern motherland!

The Colonel, who had excused himself from the party, returns with a soldier at the end of the scene to arrest Alencar as Moacir pleads for her to run.

The fifth scene is set in Fortaleza, opening with the rhythm of *maracatu cearense*, the music of Fortaleza's carnival processions associated with Afro-Brazilian religious practices, and in which many participants paint their faces in blackface as a simultaneous celebration of blackness (Conner 2009) and, arguably, an erasure of local black identity (Cruz 2011). The scene depicts both slavery and its abolition on the shores of Ceará. An Englishman comes to announce the abolition of slavery, and Moacir, who is described as black by an abolitionist, begs for the emancipation of his family. The scene ends with a declaration of the abolition of slavery in Ceará, watched over by Dragão do Mar, a historical figure in Fortaleza who is often credited with leading a strike that ended the state's slave trade. In the last moment of the scene, Moacir



sings, “This is a party for the English to see,” referring to the Portuguese expression “*pra Inglês ver*” (for the English to see), which initially referred to the false end of slavery in Brazil, seen as a sham so the English would continue to trade with Brazil. Today, the term refers more generally to anything that is done merely for appearances. Barroso seems to suggest that although slavery was legally abolished, it continued to exist.

The sixth scene is set in the *sertão*, and intertextually combines many characters, images, and sounds associated with drought and the interior. It begins on a dark stage, with a solo female voice speaking, as if in prayer, “The rainy season passes, the dry season passes; for the poor nothing changes.” A choir of women join in, speaking in an aleatoric, monotonous, nasal recitation “in the style of the Hail Mary:” “When on the ground it lacks rain, death comes with his scythe.” Catarina—*reisado* character from the the second scene—is now Moacir's wife, and she stands with her dead son before he is buried.<sup>93</sup> She sings:

They say my house is hospitable land,  
when the drought does not abuse.  
But death teaches me that it is only  
a seed planted in strange lands  
that stays, made of a heart outside the chest,  
at the hour of change.

Catarina's solos imitate the sound of *incelenças*, funeral songs from the interior, and following the child's burial, Tarcísio de Lima quotes a public domain melody performed by *cantadores de viola*, but here “with deep alterations in the tempo, very slow, with a mournful character.”

Religious pilgrims, led by Severino Tavares—a religious leader in Juazeiro do Norte in the early twentieth century—enter and sing: “Green days announce themselves in the *sertão* of

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<sup>93</sup> See Scheper-Hughes (1992) on the death of children in the *sertão*.

Juazeiro.” Catarina refuses to believe in the miracles of the religious leaders, and, following a miracle in which José Lourenço (another historical religious figure from the time) offers Catarina communion, which turns to blood on her tongue, Severino Tavares warns his followers that the blood suggests the coming of the Wild Beast. Severino is eventually arrested, and the bandit Lampião and his wife Maria Bonita enter the stage, arriving to the rhythm of *xaxado*, a dance rhythm associated with *forró* and believed to have been created by Lampião and his gang. The pilgrims transform into bandits and they dance on the stage, performing a *maneiro-pau*, a rhythm and performance that enacts a fight and is part of the *reisado*. The *maneira-pau* rhythm is here accompanied by a melody quoted from a recording of a song heard at the entrance to the public market in Messejana performed by a blind beggar who accompanied herself on the *rabeca* fiddle. (Tarcísio de Lima writes that the theme appears throughout the opera, often altered.)

The scene concludes with the arrival of the Wild Beast, announced with sirens, lights, and an electronic voice. The Wild Beast is “an enormous electronic flying dragon” who fights the bandits with lasers and “sophisticated artifacts.” In his electronic voice, he calls out to kill the people and lock them up with “tanks and latches” in a halting recitation of words that mostly begin with “tr,” creating literary consonance that is aggressive and imitative of gun fire. The libretto then directs the electronic voice to continue “with phrases in English,” not specifying which. Three “sinister figures” arrive—one of whom looks like Martim, the Portuguese warrior—and behead Lampião and Maria Bonita.

In the seventh and final scene, an ox carcass stirs on stage among the dead bandits. Moacir emerges from the carcass, looks around, attempts to escape, and then crawls back inside the dead animal. He attempts to leave again and notices Catarina, who is also still alive. The two laugh, and the scenery changes around them from *sertão* to a city square. In an “ironic ritual,”

they change into the clothes of street vendors from the city's periphery. Using the style of *embolada*, a fast, *cantoria*-like singing technique associated with the *coco* rhythm, they sing about their wares: from Japan and Peru, bracelets, a gold ring, snake oil. Moacir transforms into a priest, and then, after getting caught in a workers' protest broken up by the police, he and Catarina become *cordel* literature vendors who retell the story of Moacir's seven deaths in the meter and rhyme scheme of *cordel*.

The opera is rich in allusions to Ceará's culture, history, and geography, and Tarcísio de Lima incorporates many rhythms, modes, and sounds from Ceará. His orchestration includes not only woodwinds, brass, strings, and a piano, but also an accordion, a *viola caipira* (ten-string guitar), and many of the percussion instruments associated with Ceará's traditional music: *forró* and *maracatu cearense* triangles, an *agogô*, a *ganzá* shaker, *matraca* ratchets, a *pandeiro* (a Brazilian tambourine), a *pandeirola* (a small *pandeiro* without a drumhead), and *zabumba*, *atabaque*, *bumbo*, and *alfaia* drums. Melodically, he cites Alberto Nepomuceno's "Anthem of Ceará" throughout much of the opera.

Lima writes:

This is the most frequent theme of the opera. For a work that intends to speak of the life and of the action of the Cearense man in all the periods of the history of this land, from colonization to the current day, this is, without doubt, the most appropriate musical border, the most emblematic melody of this *cearensidade*.

Over the course of the opera, Moacir is many individuals: the son of Iracema and Martim, a cowboy, a cotton farmer, a witness to revolution, a slave, a street vendor, a priest, and a poet. In this populist narrative, he is always a member of the proletariat and history is something that seems to happen to him. This story about his lack of agency is, however, not to be heard as one

of his defeat. Rather, the opera itself—the Northeastern Opera Project—is a story of redemption. Despite paradise which was lost for abjection, and despite the powers of the Wild Beast of globalization, this work inverts an upper-class form, transforming it into an expression of popular culture and a tool for social change.

ELETROCACTUS<sup>94</sup>

### Macunaíma and Brazil

Literary critic Gilda de Mello e Souza calls Mário de Andrade's modernist novel *Macunaíma* a “meditation on the system of borrowing among classical and *popular* (traditional) music” (Souza 2003:25). As Suzel Reily explains, Andrade considered his book a rhapsody, “bringing together a variety of popular motives based on some unifying principle” (1997:72). Andrade took many of the book's multiple narratives directly from indigenous sources and ethnographies, which he interwove with songs and sayings (see Sá 2004). The primary narrative concerns the journey of the protagonist Macunaíma, “*moleque preto e retinto*” (a kid with jet-black skin), with both Indian and black brothers, and who transforms into a white, blue-eyed prince. Macunaíma travels Brazil in search of the “*muiraquitã*,” a magic amulet which is continually lost and found throughout the work.

Unlike *Iracema*, *Macunaíma* shows a *mestizo* Brazil made of three racial components: European, indigenous, and African. Furthermore, while Alencar carefully researched the Tupi language, which he incorporated throughout his work as a way maintaining indigenous elements despite his erasure of indigeneity, Andrade incorporates indigenous tales, language, and imagery in *Macunaíma* to create an intertextual *brasilidade* (Brazilian-ness) that never suggests origins

<sup>94</sup>This section on Eletroactus is adapted from an article I co-wrote with Danielle Maia Cruz. Special thanks to Danielle for permitting me to re-use portions of our article: Cruz, Danielle Maia and Michael B. Silvers. 2011. “Maracatunaíma: Musical Semiotics, The Northeastern Imaginary and the Sound of Fortaleza.” *Vibrant* (8)1: 228-259 ([http://www.vibrant.org.br/downloads/v8n1\\_cruz\\_silvers.pdf](http://www.vibrant.org.br/downloads/v8n1_cruz_silvers.pdf)).

but describes the pastiche and plurality of Brazilian culture. The music of rock band Eletrocactus similarly demonstrates a Brazil and Ceará that are in flux and that intertextually comprise elements from its various components.

*Eletrocactus and Regionalist Popular Music in Ceará: 1960-2010*

On June 10, 2010, the Ceará Philharmonic Orchestra played a medley of Luiz Gonzaga songs in the courtyard of the Theatro José de Alencar in downtown Fortaleza in one of many events celebrating the theater's centennial (see Barroso 2002). Their symphonic “pops” arrangement of *baião* melodies—which they frequently perform at civic festivals—concludes with “Asa Branca,” and on that particular evening, the piece's finale also marked the beginning of a celebratory night in which a play appeared on the theater's main stage and a local rock band, Eletrocactus, played at a CD release party on the stage of the theater's gardens, designed by famed Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx.

Eletrocactus' album was their first full-length recording, and its release party—while hardly their first gig in Ceará—firmly established them within the local scene. Their music is deeply local, and like *Macunaíma*, it combines various elements of the region's (and world's) music, geographic imagery, and language in an intertextual dialogue with various definitions and representations of Ceará, the Northeast, and Brazil. Their music is at once about the city and the *sertão*. In fact, almost every song they write refers to the *sertão* in one way or another. One of the members of the band explained to me that they use regional rhythms like the *baião* to musically evoke Ceará's interior, and *maracatu cearense* for Fortaleza and urban life. Songs have names like “Calango Eletrônico” (Electronic Lizard), “Fogo do Sertão” (Fire of the Sertão), and “Seco Sertão Sangrado” (Bled Dry Sertão). The title track of their album is called “O Dia em que

a Fome Morreu de Sede” (“The Day that Hunger Died of Thirst”). At times the singers’ vocal styles mimic rural traditions like *cantoria* and *embolada*, and the melodic and harmonic foundations are mostly blues and rock. They constantly combine images of the city and the *sertão*, tradition and modernity, local and global. Gleucimar, one of the group’s lyricists and singers, explained the major intent of Eletrocactus is to “make music that represents the average person from Ceará.” Roberto, the lead singer, reiterated, “We want to make music in which Cearenses can recognize themselves.”

Their intent, however, is not only one of self-representation, but also one of cultural preservation and promotion. They worry that traditional music from Ceará is undervalued and poorly known, and Gleucimar argues that “culture is ephemeral” and must be “preserved.” This idea—that culture must be resurrected and taught so as not to be forgotten—at times contradicts the very principle that their music represents people from Ceará. How can people recognize themselves in something they do not yet know? According to Aragão (2005), in the second administration of the so-called “Government of Changes”<sup>95</sup> in Ceará, the state has actively promoted a new touristic image for Ceará. Consequently, the primary representations of Ceará put forth by the media, the government and the local tourism industry until recently involved the sun, the ocean, and the beach, images that were part of the 1991 public policy campaign in which the state adopted the slogan, “Ceará Terra do Sol,” Ceará Land of the Sun (Aragão 2005:91).

While some members of Eletrocactus are strongly influenced by rock, they imagine the group as a product of a diverse intellectual and musical lineage that includes Oswald de Andrade’s *Manifesto Antropofago* from the Semana de Arte Moderna in the 1920s within the

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<sup>95</sup> The “Government of Changes” was a political period in Ceará from 1987-2002 with successive administrations of mayors and governors affiliated with the PMDB and the PSDB. See Barbalho (2005). In 1994, Governor Ciro Gomes supported the production of a *novela*, which was set in Ceará, on the national television network Rede Globo; Gomes required the network to show off Ceará’s tourist infrastructure and modernity (Gondim 2007:418).

national sphere, the so-called Folks from Ceará of the 1970s within the state-wide scope, and the Movimento Cabaçal of the early 2000s, a musical movement which primarily limited itself to the city of Fortaleza (but also included a band from Juazeiro do Norte and another from Itapipoca). The band's musical and philosophical antecedents—specifically, the music of the Folks from Ceará and the Movimento Cabaçal—generated and promoted many of the musical and visual signs of the national and regional imaginary used by Eletrocactus. However, some of the signs employed by Eletrocactus' musical and visual imaginary are also original. By combining already recognized images and sounds with new ones, Eletrocactus demonstrates the ambiguity of local, regional and national identity. Fortaleza is not represented by either *sertão* or sea; it is represented by both.

Eletrocactus was initially formed in 2001 by siblings Gleucimar and Gledson, who moved to Fortaleza from Rio de Janeiro in 1993. The two often performed music together at home—Gleucimar wrote lyrics, while Gledson wrote melodies—and decided to play together at an event called the Feira de Jiriquiti in Fortaleza. According to Gleucimar, a producer heard them singing at the function and invited her and her brother to perform Gledson's musical arrangements of her poetry at another event. The two had no band, much less a repertoire, so they invited three of Gledson's friends, a group of rock musicians who already played together, to accompany them on stage. Thus was born Projeto Cactus, as they first called their band.

After arriving in Fortaleza, Gleucimar says that she already felt a strong sense of belonging and an attraction to many of Ceará's cultural manifestations, including *literatura de cordel*, a kind of folk poetry, and *maracatu cearense*, a rhythm associated with Fortaleza's pre-Lenten carnival celebrations. Gleucimar also took an interest in the music of the Folks from Ceará, including Ednardo—Gleucimar's favorite—Fagner, and Belchior. After marveling at the

local culture, which to her seemed different from that of urban Rio de Janeiro, she felt compelled to take part in a movement for cultural preservation. As she explained, if “ephemeral” culture is not preserved, it will cease to exist, a sentiment that recalls Alan Lomax's fear of “cultural grey-out.” Yet in the case of Gleucimar, her method of “preserving” regional culture was to modify it, to combine her love of regional culture with her brother's affinity for heavy metal and Led Zeppelin. Nonetheless, she understands Eletrocactus as one of many possible tools for maintaining regional music and culture.

Regionalist musical movements are not new to the popular musical scene in Ceará, and central to many prior examples of regionalism are allusions to the geography and climate of Ceará. Beginning in the early 1960s, a student movement known as the União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE), founded in Rio de Janeiro before becoming active throughout the nation, helped spread a cultural-political ideology that gave rise to regionalist and nationalist cultural movements. The UNE's Centro Popular da Cultura (CPC), its cultural wing, stood by a motto, “*fora da arte política não há arte popular*” (outside of political art there is no popular art). In 1964, the same year as the coup d'état that began the twenty-one year military dictatorship, a group of students at the Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC), mostly actors and musicians, came together to form CACTUS, an activist art/theater/music organization to realize the mission of the CPC through concerts and theatrical performances. Their shows included songs by well-known bossa nova musicians like Nara Leão and Edu Lobo. However, as political repression began silencing activists and musicians throughout Brazil, CACTUS was denounced as a communist organization, and as sociologist Mary Pimentel implies, members were thrown in jail. Despite the group's losses to the military regime, CACTUS reconfigured in 1965, mostly by students from the physics department at UFC who refocused its efforts on cinema. Members like



Rodger Rogério created a traveling “caravan,” and toured the interior of Ceará and the nearby state of Rio Grande do Norte showing films as their newly adopted method of cultural-political activism (Pimentel 1995:76-8).

In 1966, a second Fortaleza-based organization called GRUTA (Grupo Universitário de Teatro e Arte), comprising students predominantly from the College of Architecture and Urbanism at UFC, took up the CPC's mission of populist political art. Members, including landscape architect and songwriter Ricardo Bezerra, Fausto Nilo, and Petrucio Maia, viewed GRUTA as a regionally and locally focused organization, in contrast to CACTUS, which utilized more nationalist discourses and a musical, theatrical, and cinematic repertoire that came from the Brazilian Southeast. GRUTA's songs, plays, and performances were generally written by local musicians and writers, and they toured the nation in “cultural caravans” to spread what they understood as *Cearense* culture (Pimentel 1995:79-80). The names of both organizations drew on the two primary images of Ceará's geography: cactus, an easily recognizable index of the *sertão*, and *gruta*, meaning cavern, many of which can be found in beach towns along Ceará's coast, including Taíba and Canoa Quebrada. Dating at least as far back as *Iracema*, these two geographical images—the *sertão* and the beach—have competed for space in the local imaginary. Today, these are the primary images put forth not only by bands like Eletrocactus, but by Fortaleza and Ceará's tourism industry.

In the late 1960s, CACTUS and GRUTA, along with the concomitant musical and political climate, gave rise to a new musical scene in Fortaleza, and musicians like Fagner, Belchior, and Ednardo—the Folks from Ceará—who began to compete in nationally televised music festivals, gained national recognition.

In an analysis of the image of Ceará in the music of Ednardo, Gilmar de Carvalho argues

that by citing places and rhythms from Ceará in his music, Ednardo created original *Cearense* music that was neither anthropologist nor preservationist. “Folklore enters his music as a starting point in his creative process, and not as a diluted pastiche among modern arrangements or enclosed in pretentious structures” (Carvalho 1983:11). Gleucimar understands the regionalism of the Folks from Ceará as deriving from the modernist ideas of Oswald de Andrade. She asserts, “The *Semana de Arte Moderna* did not arrive in Ceará until the 1970s.” As she sees it, the Folks from Ceará were the first wave of musicians and artists in Ceará to create art inspired by local traditions, following the principles of the event that occurred in 1922 in the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. At the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week), artists and intellectuals strongly influenced by aesthetic ideas from Europe presented paintings, sculptures, poetry, literature and music. It was considered the beginning of Brazilian Modernism, an era that looked to the European avant-garde and was not exclusively nationalistic.

As discussed in the previous chapter, many of the Folks from Ceará enjoyed popularity throughout the 1970s, due in part to the fact that many of them deliberately referenced the *sertão* and the Northeast to give themselves an air of Northeastern authenticity and distinguish themselves on the national scene from musicians from other regions. Fagner's hit “Mucuripe,” for example, was included on his LP “Último Pau de Arara,”<sup>96</sup> its title track (composed by Venâncio, Corumba, and José Guimarães) about a man's reluctance to leave his drought-ridden home in the *sertão*. Ednardo also drew on the visual imagery of the state, as in his 1991 music video for the song “O Romance do Pavão Misterioso” (originally recorded in 1974), which was filmed from the top of a dune at Cumbuco beach approximately twenty-five kilometers from Fortaleza. In the original recording of the song, a *maracatu cearense* rhythm accompanies the melody. Ednardo can be seen from atop another dune in his video for “Terral,” a song frequently

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<sup>96</sup>The album was released as both “Último Pau de Arara” and “Manera Fru Fru, Manera.”

described as the “anthem of Fortaleza.” For “Terral,” the visual choice was fitting: the lyrics begin, “Eu venho das dunas brancas/onde eu queria ficar” (I come from the white dunes/where I wanted to stay).

Glucimar believes that Ednardo and his music are representative of the city of Fortaleza, while Fagner's music represents the rural interior. She explains, “Ednardo was a city man, and you can see it in his musicality, even in the *maracatu*, which you only have in the state capital and not the interior.” On the other hand, Fagner “was a man of the interior . . . he had contact with Arabic music.” Not only was Fagner of Lebanese descent, but many people describe the music of the interior of Northeastern Brazil as having Arabic influences, especially the intonation, the instruments (like the *rabeca*), and the scales, which are also often associated with Medieval church music (Brandão 1971; Paz 2002).

Maria das Dores Nogueira Mendes confirms the plurality of signs, images, and visions of Ceará evident in the music of the Folks from Ceará. They “think of Ceará and the Northeast in their various realities, almost always through the prism of questions and the characteristics of each space, thus instituting an identification with a plural place that overcomes those already known homogenizations created by other discourses” (Mendes 2007:414).

In 2001, another regional musical/cultural movement known as the Movimento Cabaçal appeared on the scene in Ceará. The word “*cabaçal*” refers to calabash gourds (*cabaças*), which are grown in the dry interior of Ceará, and also to a kind of fife-and-drum ensemble (called *banda cabaçal* or *banda de pífano*) from the interior of the Northeast. The four original bands associated with the Movimento Cabaçal were Dona Zefinha, Dr. Raiz, Jumentaparida, and SoulZé. Their mission was to combine “international” rock music with traditional instruments and genres from Ceará, including the fifes and *zabumba* drums of *cabaçal* music, the triangles

and accordions of *forró* and *baião*, and the iron triangles and drums associated with *maracatu Cearense*. In the movement's conception, rock music and electronic instruments were considered signs of contemporaneity and global youth culture. For them, traditional *Cearense* music was representative of the state and the region. They saw their music as a way of updating, celebrating, and preserving local culture.

Cristina Magaldi writes, “Symbols of *Brasilidade* have to share space with symbols of youth and symbols of modernity.” (Magaldi 1999:313). This is also true for signs of *Nordestinidade* (Northeastern-ness) and *Cearensidade*, which also must share space with youth culture and modernity. In an interview, Orlângelo Leal, the lead singer of Dona Zefinha, based in the city of Itapipoca, asserted that these images share space in his work. He described his music as poetry “which speaks of the fears, the longings, the desires about technology; which speaks of the Northeastern man who lives in this amalgam of technology and ritual, sacred and profane, of urban and rural, of traditional and contemporary.” The music of Dona Zefinha, the only one of the four groups of the Movimento Cabaçal still performing in Fortaleza, combines the music and theatricality of *reisados* – a musical and theatrical tradition associated with Epiphany, a Christian holiday celebrated January 6, and practiced year-round in the Cariri region in Ceará's interior – with the instrumentation and sensibility of rock. Their stage show often includes *mestres de cultura*, singers and dancers from rural areas who are usually older and continue to practice the kind of traditional culture celebrated by the Movimento Cabaçal. In one of Dona Zefinha's shows in 2010, Orlângelo, a *mestre de cultura*, and a Brazilian tap dancer who had trained in New York City shared the stage as they each danced their interpretation of the *sapateado*, a kind of Northeastern tap dancing.

It is important to distinguish between the Movimento Cabaçal and the better-known

Manguebeat Movement from Recife. Just as Manguebeat differed from the Tropicalismo of the popular Bahian musicians in terms of “social origins,” “initial aesthetic options,” and differing attitudes towards politics and ideology, the Movimento Cabaçal also differed from both Tropicalismo and Manguebeat (Vargas 2007:80-81). The music of Manguebeat combined Northeastern traditional music, especially *maracatu Pernambucano*, with hip hop, electronica, and rock, among other styles, but was neither political nor intended to be mainstream like Tropicalismo. The Movimento Cabaçal drew from a smaller set of international influences than either Tropicalismo and Manguebeat and made intentional use of music from Ceará. For example, Dr. Raiz, from the city of Juazeiro do Norte in the Cariri region of Ceará, combines distorted guitars and screamed heavy metal-style vocals with *zabumba* drums and fifes, and the band has no drum set. Dona Zefinha, which is as much a theater group as it is a band, sees itself today as part of no political or social movement, but as part of a larger community of Brazilian musicians, artists, dancers, and playwrights. The group has traveled to Europe and the United States to represent Brazil in festivals, so they feel more connected to Brazil as a whole than to Ceará specifically. Orlângelo Leal explains that Dona Zefinha “belongs” to Brazilian culture in general, and the Northeast is simply “one more element.”<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, the Brazilian musicians and music that he cites as his greatest influences are mostly from Ceará and the Northeast, including *cantoria* music, *coco*, *embolada*, Luiz Gonzaga, and Geraldo Azevedo, a Pernambucan singer.

Since the dissolution of the short-lived Movimento Cabaçal, new bands that play Northeastern-influenced rock have begun appearing in Fortaleza. Groups including Água de Quartinha, Cordão de Caruá, Vigna Vulgaris (known for playing *maracatu Cearense*) and Eletrocactus began to perform in the city as a kind of unofficial second wave of the Movimento

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<sup>97</sup> Orlângelo Leal, interview by the author, March 13, 2010.

Cabaçal (and have sometimes been referred to as such).<sup>98</sup> In January 2007, the Banco do Nordeste do Brasil (BNB) hosted its first annual monthlong rock festival called Rock-Cordel, which took place in both Fortaleza and Juazeiro do Norte and involved bands that played various rock styles and sub-genres. The lineup included newer groups like Eletrocactus and Vigna Vulgaris along with Dona Zefinha, Cidadão Instigado (arguably the best-known contemporary rock band from Fortaleza, now based in São Paulo), Calé Alencar and his *maracatu* Nação Fortaleza, and Ednardo. In 2010, the Rock-Cordel festival in Fortaleza had less of a regionalist tone, and featured more cover bands than anything else. In an open letter to the president of the Banco do Nordeste (dated November 26, 2009), the Associação Cultural Cearense do Rock (the Cearense Cultural Association of Rock) wrote that the event created “cultural spaces for a segment of the population that is often considered marginal and stigmatized,” and proposed modifications to the event, mostly concerning the expense of performing and the R\$250 per group payment, seen as meager by the association. Because of the low pay, a number of musicians, many of whom come from lower-income backgrounds, refused to perform that year. The original members of Eletrocactus all live in a neighborhood called José Walter, over fifteen kilometers from the city's downtown and considered part of the periphery. They performed in the 2010 Rock-Cordel, but in Juazeiro do Norte and Sousa, Paraíba, and not in Fortaleza.

In 2010, a new movement called Ceará Autoral Criativo (Creative Authorial Ceará) released a CD called *Bora!* (meaning, “let's go!”) with recordings by bands affiliated with the movement and its philosophy, which is to valorize original music composed by musicians from Ceará. Eletrocactus is one of twenty groups to appear on the CD.

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<sup>98</sup> The second wave of the Movimento Cabaçal is referenced in the blog *Todos os Sons*, for example (<http://flautuando.blogspot.com/2006/02/eletrocactus-nova-gerao-do-movimento.html>).

### Maracatunaíma: The Song without Character

Just as the rhapsodic, intertextual *Macunaíma* demonstrates a fragmented Brazil, so too the music of Eletrocactus intertextually dialogues with the diverse sounds, identities, and images of the Cearense landscape. In their song “Maracatunaíma,” they incorporate entire passages of text from *Macunaíma*, as Andrade did with indigenous mythology and ethnographic texts.

The “cadenced” *maracatu cearenese* rhythm—played on an iron triangle, *caixa* (snare), and *bumbo* (bass drum)—slowly fades in, beginning Eletrocactus' original recording of “Maracatunaíma” on their EP *Ver Viajar*. The snare plays quarter-note triplets over the first two beats in 4/4 time, the bass drum on beats three and four, and the triangle on all four beats, muted on beats one and three and fully sounding its shallow, dull timbre on beats two and four. After twenty seconds of nothing but *maracatu Cearense*, the electric guitar and electric bass enter, playing a twelve-bar blues riff that sounds more rockabilly than rock and roll, like a twangy caricature of the blues. Gledson enters on vocals another twenty-five seconds later, growling the melody with clipped enunciation and a warbling tone, before ending the first phrase with a “who” reminiscent of Warren Zevon's “Werewolves of London.” Roberto joins in on the harmony of the chorus, and the *maracatu* percussion drops out, with the drums, bass, and guitar only emphasizing the downbeat of the measure and the following eighth note, and later reiterating the quarter-note triplets of the *maracatu*. Following the refrain, a blues harmonica solo improvises around the melody with the drums now playing a rock beat, and then Gledson takes a solo on the electric guitar through the next verse and refrain. Roberto's vocals and the *maracatu* rhythm return for two last verses and refrains, and the song ends abruptly on a tonic chord with an added flat seven, suggesting the mixolydian mode, common to blues and much Northeastern Brazilian music.

The 12-bar blues of the bass and guitar is juxtaposed with the *maracatu Cearense* of the percussion throughout the song's verses, the two sounds layered but distinct, and their rhythms only synchronizing during the song's chorus. During the blues harmonica and guitar solos, the *maracatu* rhythm vanishes altogether. Yet the sentiment remains clear: this song is a playful example of Eletrocactus' deliberate attempt to combine blues and rock with music from Ceará. Gleucimar explained how blues was a lingua franca among the musicians in the group. When they began penning “Maracatunaíma,” they needed to research *maracatu*, not the blues. They had to learn the technique to play the iron triangle, for example. “People already know the blues,” she said, “so you have to research what is from here, which is the irony.” It was rock and roll—and not *maracatu Cearense*—that “formed our generation,” she said. At a music festival in 2007, they performed “Maracatunaíma,” and as they recall, nobody understood what they were playing. People complained that they were playing blues improperly. The *maracatu* rhythm was not only unintelligible to the audience, but it was mistaken for a poorly played blues rhythm. Calé Alencar happened to be attending, and later told the band that he tried explaining to people around him that if they ignored the electric guitar, they could hear the *maracatu* beat, but the listeners remained doubtful.

The members of Eletrocactus understand their musical project not as a reflection or product of globalization and flows, but rather as an updating of what is already theirs, or rather, taking something which they identify as their own—rock music—and inserting themselves into it—*maracatu Cearense*. Although rock music was an example of American or English musical hegemony through the 1980s, its ubiquity has since decontextualized and deterritorialized it, making the “rock aesthetic the core practice of popular music in the world” (Regev 2003:222). Gleucimar emphasizes, “It's great to see yourself represented in a film, and that doesn't happen in



Brazil.” Roberto continued, “When you see a photo of yourself in a friend's photo album, you feel happy. You feel a sense of pride when you see yourself. We want people to recognize themselves in our music.” In their minds, they are not mixing Cearense music with American music. They are creating rock music in which they and their listeners can feel a sense of regional pride and can partake in global musical dialogues.

From the band's point of view, the juxtaposition of *maracatu* with Macunaíma indexes the local, regional, and national. In the year Mário de Andrade published *Macunaíma*, he also published his “Essay on Brazilian Music,” in which he called on Brazilian composers of Western art music to find a national compositional voice by invoking elements of local Brazilian musics. This is, more or less, what Gleucimar has in mind with Eletrocactus: to transcend the local by indexing it, becoming regionally or nationally relevant by first expressing a local sound. By combining these two signs of miscegenation (one local and musical, and the other national and literary) in this song, they articulate various dimensions of belonging, both racial and geographical. In addition, the band's intent is similar to Macunaíma's purpose: the search for belonging. Describing the song, Gleucimar points out that *Macunaíma* is a book about a “hero without character”:

And we live in this confusion. Who are we? We're all this. We're nobody. This is the identification that we want to have [in the song]. Where do we come from? There's so much miscegenation. This is our Brazilian birthright.

The song's lyrics include words like *paxiúba*, *Iriqui*, and *muiraquitã*, suggesting indigeneity, contain references to a “*moleque preto retinto*,” a kid with jet-black skin—Macunaíma himself—and list the names “Piaimã,” “Pietro,” and “Pedro,” referencing both indigenous and European ancestry. The song's narrative describes the “*moleque preto*” dancing *maracatu*, itself an allusion to the idea of African ancestry in the formation of Brazil.

*Brasilidade* (Brazilian-ness) is most visible with the band members in light of their intention to insert themselves into global flows (Appadurai 2003). Gleucimar and Roberto both mentioned that they hope to perform abroad, specifically in Europe and the Middle East. As they begin to expand their scope, it seems that they begin to prioritize *Brasilidade* over *Cearensidade*, the national over the regional.

The first recording of “Maracatunaíma” emphasized *maracatu* presumably because they were thinking of themselves and their recording in a regional context. Making music in which people from Fortaleza can recognize themselves is relevant in the context of the city or the state. *Cearensidade*, representing the state as a whole, is relevant on a national scene. And representing the nation (as well as an internationalized youth culture) becomes relevant in an international milieu.

The recording of “Maracatunaíma” from their new CD—much like their performance at the CD release party—differs in several significant ways from the original EP recording described above. The song begins with a swing ride rhythm played on the hi-hat, and after only one second of solo percussion, the guitar and bass enter. The familiar guitar riff from the previous recording and a new, more complex walking bass line begin at ten seconds, when the ride rhythm gives way to a subtle *maracatu Cearense* rhythm, played on the drum set rather than *maracatu* drums. The iron triangle is also quiet and buried in the mix, and is accompanied by a hi-hat and a steel triangle—the kind used in *forró*—that has a higher and tinnier timbre. The guitar and bass parts seem more complicated than before, more blues-like, less rockabilly, and the counterpoint between the two creates most of the song's interest. Gledson's voice is restrained, only growling the first syllable of the first word of each phrase, singing with a clearer, straighter tone in general. The “who” before the refrain is replaced with the band members

shouting what sounds like, “Yeah, boy!” in English. Roberto's harmonies in the chorus are quieter. And there is no harmonica solo, leaving the song one verse shorter, now only three minutes, twenty-two seconds, as opposed to five minutes, eighteen seconds in the EP version. Like the earlier recording, this version also ends with a tonic seventh chord. Even though the triangles play the *maracatu* pattern through the refrain, this recording is generally more blues than *maracatu*.

As the band tries to enter the mainstream, striving for radio play and exposure to audiences outside of the Northeast and even outside of Brazil, their music seems less self-consciously *Cearense*. Roberto explains the change:

Before we had a real aesthetic concern. Now we make music the way we like, without references. We don't need to worry about mixing things. Before, they would say, “Let's do a *baião* with blues.” Now it's just like, “Matuto Blues” (Northeastern hillbilly blues). Blues, played the way we play it.

Roberto emphasizes the notion that they want their fans (or potential fans) to identify with Eletrocactus' music. But he also confirms the problem that many of the images they hope listeners will identify with are new to their audiences and to themselves. He explains:

We want people to be able to identify with what we play. [...] (Our EP) “Ver Viajar” talks about the beauty of nature, like the passionfruit flower, which was on the cover of our EP. But even I didn't know what a passionfruit flower was.

Gleucimar interjected: “Because Ceará isn't only *sertão*. It's hills and *sertão*.”

Roberto continued: “There are many here, but I had never seen a passionfruit flower.”

Eletrocactus began by self-consciously combining pre-existing signs of the region and of their identities as young musicians from the periphery of Fortaleza. Now they make “matuto blues,” not half Northeastern hillbilly/half blues, but a synthesis of the two. On their Myspace

page, Eletrocactus writes:

Does a truly *Cearense* music exist? This is the latent question in each chord intoned by the musicians of the band Eletrocactus, whose music provides a soundtrack to routes in search of a *Cearense* music that dialogues amiably with the many disparate tendencies of regional, Brazilian, and international music.

Rather than answering this question, their music seems to continually ask it.

\* \* \*

In this chapter, I have argued that musical regionalism does not merely reflect ways in which musicians and composers localize cosmopolitan forms, but that these individuals—and others—imagine and create regional music to dialogue with and confront specific and changing understandings of local environments and local ethnic and cultural identities. *Moacir of the Seven Deaths* is not merely an opera made northeastern. It is, instead, a deliberate utilization of opera to critique colonialism, inequality, and globalization, and to improve the quality of education and thus the quality of life in Ceará. Eletrocactus makes rock music that not only sounds *Cearense*, but that constructs *cearensidade* and acknowledges the impossibility of such an idea.

I have also shown how visions of the natural environment have been tied up in ideas of ethnicity and musical practices. For *Moacir*, paradise—and thus the ocean—is associated with indigeneity, while the *sertão* and the city are associated with *caboclos* and Afro-Brazilians. For Eletrocactus, the city is represented by *maracatu cearense*, whereas the *sertão* is represented by *farró* and *baião*. For both, the landscape is a site where history, identity, and music are contested and played out.

As in the previous two chapters, I have explored the musical impact of nationally

mediated representations of the *sertão* and the Cearense landscape on musical culture in Ceará, and on understandings of the acoustic environment in a contemporary context. This chapter also demonstrates how the semiotic construction of Ceará and the Northeast is a dynamic, ongoing process, related to social and cultural movements. It did not end with the work of Gonzaga of Fagner, but continues the process Turino calls “semantic snowballing,” whereby symbols gather new meaning over time, building on prior significations (2008:9). In the next chapter, I return to *fórró* culture in Ceará, exploring how the sounds and symbolism of the Gonzaga era have transformed into tools for cultural policy and capitalism, and help shape and construct understandings of the contemporary relationships between the city and the *sertão*.

## FIVE

### ACOUSTIC DESIGN:

#### FORTALEZA'S TWO *FORRÓS* AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF SOUND

In this chapter, I explore modes of producing, supporting, and hearing *fórró* in Fortaleza. Why are musical representations of the rural interior heard as the dominant sound of the urban, coastal capital? What can this tell us about the city of Fortaleza and the state of Ceará, their economies, their landscapes, and the values and subjectivities of those who live there? And what can we learn about the relationship between the contrasting landscapes of the city and the *sertão*, particularly in relation to capitalism, politics, and tourism?

Here, I also return to questions of musical sustainability with the intent of complexifying the argument by exploring what is at stake and what is perceived as a threat. Turino calls participatory music “antithetical to capitalist ethics” (2009:110). I investigate his assertion through the lens of contemporary *fórró* in Ceará, where one sub-genre of *fórró* offers an example of what Strom (2003) calls “culture as development”—that is, the state support of culture as a tool of economic development—and another *fórró* treats music as a commercial industry that thrives on economic growth. The two *fórró* sub-genres in Ceará are both participatory and presentational in Turino's sense of the terms. Individuals, musicians, and policymakers in Fortaleza ask: What forms of musical culture are worthy of government support? And why? In what specific ways does the culture industry threaten traditional culture? And how do the market and the government privilege certain practices and soundscapes, for whom are they privileged,

and how is this privilege contested?

There are, as I have explained earlier in this dissertation, at least three recognized sub-genres of contemporary *forró* in Brazil: traditional *forró* in the style of Luiz Gonzaga; electronic *forró*, which includes saxophones and keyboards; and university *forró*, which was popular in São Paulo in the early 2000s, and which saw itself as an intellectual contemporization of traditional *forró*, and which I will not discuss further here. The two most prevalent sub-genres of *forró* in Fortaleza are traditional *forró* and electronic *forró*.<sup>99</sup>

The two sub-genres are often at odds in Fortaleza, and can be compared to *música caipira* and *música sertaneja* in central-southern Brazil (Dent 2009): they are *caboclo* (mixed-Portuguese-indigenous) practices; they are rural (or “rural”); and they are nostalgic. Like *música caipira*, the lyrics of traditional *forró* nostalgically depict both a lost connection to nature and a longing for a simple, rural past. Like *música sertaneja*, electronic *forró* evokes a contemporary rurality that is at once urbanized and technologically modern.

In his study of the rural central-southern genres, Alexander Dent describes the practices of the musicians and music he studies as representative of a generalized “Brazilian rurality,” which he defines as “an ideology and practice that incites an ideal country past over a debased urban present” (2009:3). However, he fails to differentiate between central-southern Brazilian rurality and other Brazilian ruralities. In the Brazilian state of Acre, for example, cowboys look to the United States and elsewhere in Brazil for their rural culture—they enjoy country music, which they call *contri*, as well as *forró* and *música sertaneja*—but also listen to *brega* balladry, which has few rural connotations.<sup>100</sup> Traditional and electronic *forró* differ from *música caipira*

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<sup>99</sup> Electronic *forró* is also referred to as *forró estilizado* (stylized *forró*), which refers to the dance more than the music and is a less common term in Ceará. In the mid-1990s, the genre was known as Oxente Music, seen as an alternative to a popular music from the state of Bahia known as Axé Music. The word “*oxente*” is an interjection and a stereotypical example of rural northeastern vernacular speech.

<sup>100</sup> Jeff Hoelle, personal email with the author, February 23, 2012. Hoelle, an anthropologist, wrote his dissertation on cattle husbandry in the Amazon.

and *sertaneja* in several significant ways: Traditional *fórró* is characterized by trios—accordion, triangle, and *zabumba* drums—while the rural music of central-southern Brazil is characterized by *duplas*, pairs of men who are (or sing as if they were) brothers; the “soundmark” of northeastern music is the timbre of the accordion, whereas these central-southern musics are characterized by the *viola caipira*, an instrument rarely found in *fórró*; *fórró* is dance music whereas the music studied by Dent is emotive balladry—indeed, much of Dent's argument hinges on the emotional content of the music and the emasculating “embarrassment” caused by performing love songs. In this chapter, I argue that rurality manifests dually in Fortaleza's *fórrós*: (1) in traditional *fórró*, as a nostalgic practice that incites Luiz Gonzaga as a source of regional pride, entangled in cultural policy, government funding, and tourism, and (2) as the locus (real and symbolic) of electronic *fórró* culture, which is guided by capitalism and a desire for market control. I also argue that the dominance of electronic *fórró* in Fortaleza has been tempered by laws governing the local soundscape.

Ethnomusicologist Felipe Trotta (2009) draws a distinction between the two genres, describing traditional *fórró* as primarily about the *sertão*, and electronic *fórró* as about partying and sex, suggesting that one is seen as wholesome and authentic, and the other is what he calls “malicious,” by debasing northeastern values. He cites a blogger who, referring to electronic *fórró*, writes, “I want my *sertão* back” (Trotta 2009:12). Megwen Loveless similarly describes this dichotomy, mentioning “widespread opposition” to the genre (2010:306), especially among “*pé-de-serra* traditionalists,” who see the genre as “commercial,” “crass,” and lacking “roots.” Paradoxically, she also credits electronic *fórró* for helping to re-popularize traditional *fórró* in Pernambuco.

In Ceará, many upper-middle- and upper-class individuals speak of electronic *fórró* in a



similarly negative fashion, and the genre is perceived as having posed a threat to traditional *fórró* (and by extension the livelihoods of traditional *fórró* musicians) in terms of radio airplay, presence at local celebrations, and commercial success. However, both Trotta and Loveless fail to take into account broader shifts in the music industry, in the northeastern and Brazilian economies, and in cultural values. Electronic and traditional *fórró* are lenses through which we can understand contrasting subjectivities, conflict over acoustic space, capitalism in Ceará, and shifting connections between the city and the *sertão*. I hesitate to directly associate these sub-genres with types of people. There are musicians who play both electronic and traditional *fórró*, there are musicians who play one but appreciate the other, and there is occasional overlap between the two in terms of repertoire, performance venues, etc. Traditional *fórró* is often associated with the middle class and with the middle-aged and elderly, and electronic *fórró* is generally associated with the lower-middle- and lower class and youth. There are, nevertheless, fans of electronic *fórró* who also enjoy traditional *fórró*: traditional *fórró* is popular among young intellectuals in Fortaleza, and there are many upper-middle- and upper-class individuals in Fortaleza—some of whom are in their thirties and forties—who listen and dance to electronic *fórró*.

In this chapter, I will first discuss the history and present context of the electronic *fórró* industry in Ceará. Then, I explore the traditional *fórró* scene in Fortaleza and examine the concerns of traditional *fórró* musicians in relation to electronic *fórró*. Last, I discuss cultural policy as it relates to sound and *fórró* in Fortaleza.

## ELECTRONIC FORRÓ

The predominant genre of music in Ceará today is electronic *fórró*, generally referred to

simply as *forró*. Since the era of Luiz Gonzaga, *forró* has changed substantially with the incorporation of electronic instruments and drum sets, *lambada*-influenced dances, and quicker tempos. Presently, many individuals envision a clear dichotomy between Gonzaga's *forró* and its contemporary electronic iteration. The history of the incorporation of electronic instrumentation and rock and pop hybridity into *forró*, however, is nuanced and complex. Luiz Gonzaga himself performed electrified, amplified *forró* in 1972—released on CD in 2001—in the Teatro Tereza Rachel in Rio de Janeiro, with an electric guitar and an electric bass in his band. According to ethnomusicologist Márcio Mattos, Gonzaga and his oeuvre were experiencing a national resurgence in popularity at that time due to the incorporation of *baião* into Tropicalia by musicians like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil. And although Gonzaga's national reputation had waned in the 1950s and '60s, his northeastern fans continued to celebrate him as their aging, symbolic “King of Baião” throughout the era. That he included electronic instruments in his later performances seemed of little importance to his fans, and other *forró* and *baião* musicians, including João do Vale and Marinês, incorporated electronic instruments as well.

Other musicians throughout the 1960, '70s, and '80s—including the pop rock *jovem guarda* (youth guard), the Folks from Ceará and the Tropicalistas—updated the *forró* sound with rock instrumentation, contemporary lyrics, and blues- and bossa nova-influenced vocal techniques. *Jovem guarda* pop singer Sylvinha recorded a cover of Luiz Gonzaga's “Paraíba” in 1971, with guttural, wailed vocals and distorted rock and roll electric guitar, leading one music journalist to call her the Brazilian Janice Joplin.<sup>101</sup> Her version of the song resignified the lyrics about the stereotypically strong, masculine women from the state of Paraíba, by turning what was once responsible for the use of the word “Paraíba” as a derogatory appellation for “lesbian”

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<sup>101</sup> “Cantora Sylvinha Araújo, da Jovem Guarda, morre em SP,” *GI*, June 26, 2008, <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Brasil/0,,MUL614639-5598,00-CANTORA+SYLVINHA+ARAUJO+DA+JOVEM+GUARDA+MORRE+EM+SP.html>.

into a rocking affirmation of feminine strength. Her husband, *jovem guarda* pop singer Eduardo Araújo, recorded Gonzaga's iconic “Juazeiro” in 1971 in a similar style, singing “Juazeiro, yeah, yeah, yeah!” each refrain. Other musicians like Elba Ramalho, who is sometimes known as the “Queen of *Forró*,” Alceu Valença, Geraldo Vandré, and Fagner made *forró* popular for new audiences through audio recordings, televised music festivals, touring, and the radio throughout the 1970s and '80s.

Northeastern audiences that continued to enjoy *forró* as dance music, however, saw *forró*-influenced MPB and rock—sometimes referred to as *forrock*—as something other than *forró* itself, which musicians (including Gonzaga) also inflected with rock instrumentation and vocal techniques. For example, a Cearense singer named Eliane, who also refers to herself as the “Queen of *Forró*,” released her first album, a four-track EP called *Brilho das Estrelas* in 1983. (She was fifteen years old at the time.) The title track, a love song, features a Moog synthesizer sustaining notes throughout the recording. Another song, “Amor pra Mim,” in the *pé-de-serra* rhythm, includes both an accordion and a saxophone.

It was in the 1990s, an era characterized by neoliberal zeal that began gradually in the 1980s and altered the Brazilian political economy under the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso beginning in 1994 (e.g. Mollo and Saad-Filho 2006), that *forró* in Ceará underwent a deliberate transformation. In Fortaleza in 1989, an entrepreneur named Emanuel Gurgel, a soccer referee and owner of a t-shirt manufacturing company, decided to change careers and enter the music business. He began by managing a *forró* band called Black Banda, a task that offered him insight into the music industry in Ceará. He noticed how dancers cleared the floor when musicians took breaks, and he heard party-goers complain that shows ended too early in the night.

He decided, then, to leave Black Banda and create his own *farró* band based on his marketing strategies. Like the Monkees or the boy bands of the 1990s in the United States (see Stahl 2002), Gurgel carefully auditioned musicians to craft his ideal, marketable ensembles. He called his first dance band Aquarius, which played 50% *farró* and 50% other kinds of popular dance music. His second group, Mastruz Com Leite, formed in 1991, was his first band to achieve great success. The name, which means epazote (a kind of medicinal herb) with milk, refers to a common home remedy in the Northeast. Gurgel designed the band based on his observations from working with the other bands: more *farró*, longer parties, and marketable sounds and lyrics. Mastruz Com Leite, with three singers and eleven musicians by 1992, could play non-stop sets for five hours from eleven p.m. to four a.m. It had three drummers, two electric guitarists, two bass players, a saxophonist, and three accordionists, so individual musicians could take breaks while the band continued to play.<sup>102</sup> They played only *farró*, and within their first two years of existence they had acquired a repertoire of approximately three hundred fifty songs, including the classic *farró* standards of the Gonzaga era, the contemporary hits of Eliane and others, and original songs. Gurgel founded a recording studio, called SomZoom, and his business, including his bands, employed nearly two hundred workers by 1992. Gurgel's early empire comprised sound equipment, a sound system car, four tour buses, an audio engineer, and a small factory that produced t-shirts, signs, and posters. Each show employed approximately fifty individuals, including security guards, ticket salespeople, drivers, stage crew, sound and lighting crew, and musicians.<sup>103</sup>

By 1994, Gurgel had created seven bands, each with a distinct but not substantially different “personality.”<sup>104</sup> (This can be compared to the marketing variances between boy bands

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<sup>102</sup> Fernando Sa, “Mastruz com leite’, a indústria do farró,” *Jornal o Povo*, February 20, 1992.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Christiane Viana, “Oxente, é Farró: O mercado cearense foi invadido por centenas de bandas e mais de 70 já

like 'N Sync and the Backstreet Boys, where each group had a different style, but all were marketed to the same demographic and were similar in format and sound despite the superficial differences.) By 1996, Gurgel had twenty-nine artists under SomZoom's management.<sup>105</sup> Today's *fórró* bands trade some of their musicians and singers as if they were athletes on professional sports teams. A 1993 newspaper article from Fortaleza's *Jornal o Povo* describes the similarity between the groups: “The difference between the bands is small, almost imperceptible, only remaining in the principal voices and in the vocal part that shouts the names of the bands in the middle of the tracks.”<sup>106</sup> To distinguish between the groups, Gurgel had his bands call out their names in the middle of songs during shows, allowing radio broadcasters to play the live recordings without needing to pause between songs to announce the band's name.

A copyright scandal in 2010 called the WikiLeaks<sup>107</sup> of *Fórró* revealed striking similarities between the sound, songs, and format of Cearense *fórró* band Aviões do Fórró (Airplanes of *Fórró*), which was considered the number one *fórró* band at the time, and copycat competitors, also from Ceará, Garota Safada (Nasty Girl). The two groups allegedly recorded the same song within twenty-four hours, initially failing to acknowledge the existing copyright of a musician from Pernambuco, who was also accused of plagiarizing the song's refrain from a 2006 children's song. The scandal was revealed on an anonymous blog—hence the allusion to WikiLeaks—and the story was eventually picked up by the mainstream press, including Fortaleza's *Diário do Nordeste* and the nationally distributed *Revista Globo*. When asked about the scandal by *Revista Globo*, Neto Leite, vocalist for Mastruz Com Leite, responded, “Everyone has the same voice, the same drive. Put it on to listen to, without seeing the images, bands a, b, c,

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gravaram disco,” *Jornal o Povo*, June 25, 1994.

<sup>105</sup> “Fórró via Satélite,” *Jornal o Povo*, December 26, 1996.

<sup>106</sup> “Megaempresário Controla a Noite,” *Jornal o Povo*, September 19, 1993.

<sup>107</sup> WikiLeaks, the online organization created in 2006 by activist Julian Assange that publishes classified documents, has been widely publicized in Brazil.

d... You can't identify who's playing. They lack identity. But Mastruz is a brand. Like Coca-Cola, like the Hollywood sign.”<sup>108</sup> Leite's analogy is accurate: If Mastruz Com Leite is Coca-Cola, then Aviões do Forró is Pepsi and Garota Safada is RC Cola. The WikiLeaks of *Forró* scandal illustrates the continued prevalence of Gurgel's format from the 1990s, now evident in bands managed by production companies Luan Produções and A3 Entretenimentos, currently the biggest *forró* management company.

Ethnomusicologist Nonato Cordeiro identifies six strategies underlying Som Zoom's early business model: (1) the studio owned the copyright to its own compositions, and multiple bands recorded and performed the same songs, (2) all musicians earned fixed salaries, (3) the studio's arrangers wrote the arrangements for all groups, (4) it mass produced recordings, (5) its advertising was centralized, and (6) it distributed music nationally via the radio and television (Cordeiro 2009).

Cordeiro also explains the musical transformations from traditional to electronic *forró*, as crafted by Gurgel: the drum set plays the part of the triangle and *zabumba*; saxophones, electric guitars, and synthesizers play the traditional accordion lines; whereas traditional *forró* was sung in unison or in thirds, electronic *forró* involves backup singers who sing homophonic harmonies, creating a dense vocal texture; and traditional melodies, with short note values, short pauses between phrases, and meandering, modal melodic lines, gave way to longer note values, longer pauses between phrases, and a smaller melodic ambitus. Cordeiro also explains that while cover songs were uncommon in traditional *forró*—with the exception of musicians re-recording their own songs or other well-known *forró* hits—in electronic *forró* cover recordings of non-*forró* popular music are very common. Electronic *forró* also includes dance moves associated with

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<sup>108</sup> “WikiLeaks do Forró na Revista O Globo,” *Cabaré do Timpin*, March 27, 2011, accessed online March 9, 2012, <http://musicaoriginalbrasileira.blogspot.com/2011/03/wikileaks-do-forro-na-revista-o-globo.html>.

*lambada*, which was popular in Brazil (and internationally) in the 1980s (Cordeiro 2009).

Today's electronic *fórró* includes horn sections, professional dancers who share the stage with musicians, and elaborate stage lighting and effects. Its studio recording aesthetic, as Trotta and Monteiro (2008) indicate, includes the use of reverb, equalizers, compressors, and filters.

Gurgel's approach was not solely about updating *fórró* music for a youth demographic that likes to dance until four in the morning, but also about creating a music-based empire with business tie-ins and vertical as well as horizontal integration. In the mid-1990s, he controlled the majority of the *fórró* industry in Ceará and around Brazil. Early on, Gurgel rented the venues in which his bands performed, so he earned revenue not only from ticket sales, but from drinks, merchandise, and record sales. SomZoom's bands performed simultaneously in different venues, so the best options for his target demographic on any given night were all SomZoom-controlled bands and venues. Individual bands also performed in multiple venues in a single night. In 1993, he signed a ten-year lease for a radio station—FM Casablanca—to play SomZoom's recordings.<sup>109</sup>

Ultimately, Gurgel acquired his own venues, established a music publishing house, created his own speaker and amplifier factory, founded a production company that produced events and rodeos, and opened his own CD shops, including one in Fortaleza and one in São Paulo (Oliveira Lima 2007).<sup>110</sup> In 1995, Gurgel, who in 1993 became president of Ceará Sporting Club, the organization behind the professional Ceará soccer team, sought corporate tie-ins linking soccer, Mastruz Com Leite, and milk companies, including the milk brands Leite Betânia and Parmalat. A 1995 sports editorial from *Jornal o Povo* quips, “Gurgel intends to utilize the brand of the group together with that of a sponsor. We can soon have on our black and white

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<sup>109</sup> “Rádio Satélite Vai Levar Fórró ao Sul,” *Jornal o Povo*, September 29, 1996.

<sup>110</sup> “Conquista Público e Aire Mercado no Ceará,” *Jornal o Povo*, September 29, 1996.

shirts [the colors of the Ceará team] Mastruz com Leite Betânia, or even Mastruz com Parmalat.”<sup>111</sup>Gurgel earned six million US dollars in 1995 with SomZoom, in part due to promoting his bands and records on FM Casablanca in Fortaleza, and on two radio stations he owned in the interior Cearense city of Sobral and another in beachside Canoa Quebrada.<sup>112/13</sup>

Gurgel also took a number of steps to market rurality as part of the SomZoom *forró* brand. In 1996, frustrated with payola—called *jabá*—he founded his own satellite radio station, which he called SomZoom Sat. On the satellite radio, which is streamed and broadcasted on local radio stations around Brazil and also accessible over the Internet, his announcers present in a northeastern accent and promote SomZoom concerts throughout the nation. Musicians who are not affiliated with SomZoom but who wish to have their music played on the station are charged payola, either in cash or unpaid performances. As of 2001, SomZoom Sat broadcasted twenty-four hours per day on ninety-eight stations in ninety-five cities in fifteen Brazilian states. Gurgel also founded the Mastruz Com Leite Rodeo Circuit, and created *Revista Conexão Vaquejada* (Rodeo Connection Magazine), which advertised the rodeo circuit, the SomZoom bands, the satellite radio station, and the rural lifestyle promoted through his company (Pedroza 2001).

The electronic *forró* model has changed only slightly since the mid-1990s. Because of the prevalence of CD piracy in northeastern Brazil (see Bishop 2005) and mp3 downloading, contemporary electronic *forró* bands now distribute CDs for free to those who attend shows, parties, and rodeos. In turn, fans play the recordings loudly on their car stereos as they drive through Fortaleza's streets, or they play from parked cars and trucks on sound systems called *paredões de som* (singular: *paredão de som*, meaning big wall of sound) attached to trunks, truck beds, or rooftops, or sometimes towed behind vehicles, filling acoustic space in neighborhoods,

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<sup>111</sup> “Que time é o teu, Mastruz?” *Jornal o Povo*, August 14, 1995.

<sup>112</sup> “Conquista Público e Aire mercado no Ceará,” *Jornal o Povo*, September 29, 1996.

<sup>113</sup> Viana, Christiani. “Indústria do Forró,” *Jornal o Povo*, May 11, 1995.



in parking lots outside of *farró* shows, or at beach parties with the sound of *farró*. The electronic *farró* practice in which musicians shout their band's name has expanded to include the shouted names of businesses and products. These “shout-outs” are called “*alôs*” (hellos), and companies will pay between R\$500 and R\$1000 (approximately US\$280 to US\$565) to have a band announce its name in the middle of a song during a live performance. Posters with the companies' names are placed on the floor of the stage or held by someone in front of the stage as reminders to the vocalists, who shout, “Alô” followed by the name; businesses can assume the performance will be recorded, distributed on CD or online for free, and then played loudly over sound systems at bars or parties, or in neighborhood streets. Another consequence of the widespread recording of live concerts, according to a 2011 article in the *Diário do Nordeste*, is that recording studios in Fortaleza have been hurt by the decline of *farró* bands recording studio albums.<sup>114</sup>

Anthropologist Hermano Vianna (2011) has observed that in the northern city of Manaus in the state of Amazonas, the poor buy *farró* concert DVDs from street vendors. He surmises that they buy DVDs because televisions with embedded speakers and DVD players that can also play CDs are less expensive for lower-class consumers or bar owners than a “reasonably good sound system” (Vianna 2011:245). However, I would suggest that this is not due to the inexpensive cost of DVD players versus sound systems, but rather due to the considerable growth of consumer spending among the lower middle class and lower classes in Brazil, which are known as classes C, D, and E, and are buying sound systems for their vehicles and flat-screen televisions, DVD players, and other electronics for their homes with consumer credit and increased disposable income. In 2010, class C (defined as those with a monthly household income between R\$1,530

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<sup>114</sup> “Evolução da tecnologia pesa sobre gravadoras,” *Diário do Nordeste*, April 3, 2011, <http://diariodonordeste.globo.com/materia.asp?codigo=957549>.

—approximately US\$870—and R\$5,100—approximately US\$2900) spent R\$864 billion (around US\$490 billion) on consumer goods, nearly matching the consumer spending of classes A and B combined.<sup>115</sup> Consumption among classes D and E grew 4.2 times between 2002 and 2010. The consumption of televisions, video players, and home sound systems by class C, called the “new middle class,” accounted for 44% of domestic spending in Brazil in 2011.<sup>116</sup> Also, as I described in chapter three, the practice of singing along with DVDs at home can be meaningful in Ceará.

Throughout the year, electronic *forró* bands play at crowded parties in the interior of Ceará, at times overtaking town squares, or filling large outdoor *forró* venues that are generally little more than fields—with beer and alcohol vendors and a stage in the back, all of it surrounded by cement walls. Although Brazil is known internationally for its unique pre-lenten Carnival celebrations—the samba schools of Rio de Janeiro, the *trios elétricos* of Salvador, and the *frevo* street parties of Olinda—Ceará's carnival celebrations are similar to its other seasonal holidays, like New Year's Eve and the St. John's Day season (in part). Most young adults from Fortaleza who can afford to do so celebrate Carnival on the beach, partying to the sound of electronic *forró*. In the interior of Ceará, individuals celebrate Carnival at electronic *forró* shows.

## CONTESTING ELECTRONIC *FORRÓ*

Electronic *forró* offers us an example of (mostly) unregulated capitalism in a musical context in northeastern Brazil, and demonstrates the subjectivities and the increased consumer spending of the Northeast's growing middle class. The electronic *forró* industry lies outside the

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<sup>115</sup> Fellet, João. “Consumo da classe C cresce sete vezes desde 2002, diz estudo” *BBC Brasil*. December 17, 2010, accessed online March 8, 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2010/12/101217\\_classec\\_consumo\\_jf.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2010/12/101217_classec_consumo_jf.shtml).

<sup>116</sup> Gomes, Wágner. “Classe C puxa consumo no Brasil” *Agência O Globo*, February 28, 2012, accessed online March 8, 2012, <http://br.noticias.yahoo.com/classe-c-puxa-consumo-brasil-153727281.html>.

mainstream Brazilian and multinational music industries, and functions with its own set of rules and parameters, all guided by late capitalism and a contemporary northeastern rural subjectivity. Because of the prevalence—and acoustic volume—of mobile sound systems, the distribution of free CDs, and the dominance of local radio broadcasting, other musicians in Ceará often see electronic *fórró* as a threat. As discussed in chapter two, individuals associated with *cantoria* in the interior city of Quixadá perceive it as a threat to the future of rural musical traditions. Regional rock musician Orlângelo Leal, the lead singer of Dona Zefinha, expressed to me his concern that his band was unable to afford distributing CDs for free at their shows, and so the expectation among fans for free CDs at shows (generated by the culture of electronic *fórró*) posed a threat to his livelihood. Much music in Fortaleza is seen in opposition to electronic *fórró*; there is *fórró*, and there is everything else. A t-shirt I found in the Galeria do Rock—a cluster of tattoo parlors, heavy metal-themed clothing stores, and CD shops in the dark and hidden top three stories of a dilapidated shopping center in downtown Fortaleza—characterizes this dichotomy simply. It reads: Fórró bad. Metal good (see figure 10).

For musicians of traditional *fórró*, the threat of electronic *fórró* is a common topic of discourse. As one traditional *fórró* musician explained to me, there is not a fight between the two genres; rather, because of the dominance of electronic *fórró* in Fortaleza, traditional *fórró* musicians must compete for acoustic space so the two can coexist. Traditional *fórró* has a smaller audience and less control of the market than electronic *fórró*, so musicians depend on state-run cultural policy, seeking support from the government or other organizations by way of legislation, grants, and inclusion in civic festivals.



FIGURE 10. Forró bad, Metal good.

In early 2010, many of Fortaleza's more prominent traditional *forró* musicians united to officially form the Cearense Association of *Forró* (ACF). The organization includes nearly four hundred musicians—accordionists, triangle players, *zabumba* players, and others—and between fifteen and forty musicians attend the group's weekly meetings, held at Kukukaya, a traditional *forró* venue decorated in the style of a mud-and-stick home from the *sertão*. The owner of Kukukaya, Walter Medeiros, is also the president of ACF and presides over meetings. The organization exists to promote traditional *forró*, to identify and create new venues, spaces, and opportunities for the performance of traditional *forró*, to apply for government funding, and to lobby for cultural policy that privileges traditional culture over commercial culture. The members of the association are careful to refrain from speaking out publicly against electronic *forró*. Nevertheless, the discussions at meetings tend to demonize the commercial genre, drawing a distinction between what they perceive as wholesome traditional *forró* and commercial, base

electronic *farró*.

There are two predominant lines of reasoning offered by members of ACF (and others) as to why traditional *farró* is “true” and “authentic” and why electronic *farró* is unworthy of the *farró* genre label. The first concerns instrumentation. Accordionist Adelson Vianna, who began his career as an instrumentalist who accompanied Fagner, Dominginhos, and others on stage in national tours and is now one of Fortaleza's most respected traditional *farró* musicians (he also performs as a musician of Brazilian Instrumental Music and owns of a recording studio), explains the difference:

Electronic *farró*'s beat is something with less swing, based on the *vanerão*, a style from the South, by musicians who didn't have much lived experience with traditional *farró*. But it's a culture that's important, and I wish them success. We defend another kind of music, the true *farró*, because we consider that to be *farró*. It needs to have *zabumba*, accordion, and triangle as the basic elements, just like rock has electric guitar, bass, and drums. So we think these three elements can't be hidden, and in electronic *farró* we perceive that what appears most aren't these three elements, but the production itself: the dancers, the drums, the horns. So it's a music with . . . more percussive elements. *Farró* isn't. It has the rhythm that's purer, truer, and these three elements are more evident. . . . In truth, I think this all descends from the *lambada*, and I think it shouldn't be called *farró*, because *farró* is something else.<sup>117</sup>

Vianna asserts that for *farró* to be considered *farró*, it needs the typical trio of accordion, triangle, and *zabumba*, which, he suggests, must not only be present, but must be emphasized. When Vianna performs *farró* before audiences, he sings and plays his accordion center stage, with a *zabumba* player to one side and a triangle player to the other, and with a drum set player, a bass player, and an electric guitarist behind them, obscured by the trio in front and by dimmer stage lighting.

The second argument against electronic *farró* concerns lyrics and the nature of *farró* parties. Traditional *farró* lyrically discusses the *sertão*, they say, whereas electronic *farró*

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<sup>117</sup> Adelson Vianna, interview by the author, June 8, 2010.

emphasizes sex and partying. Vianna says, “Traditional *fórró* talks about things that are more about the daily lives of our people.”<sup>118</sup> Both *fórrós* do talk about the conditions of life in the Northeast, but they talk about different conditions. Felipe Trotta and Márcio Monteir (2008) argue that electronic *fórró* owes its success to its “content,” which he calls the “trinomial party-love-sex,” suggesting that the lyrical content enables and underlies the social context in which individuals hear the music. Indeed, contemporary electronic *fórró* lyrically and thematically addresses sex, partying, and love more often than drought, rurality, and bittersweet suffering. One popular contemporary band, for example, is called Calcinha Preta, or black panties, and many of their more popular songs are love songs. Still, there are exceptions in which electronic *fórró* bands discuss “traditional” rural themes, and it is also worth noting that a large number of the songs performed by electronic *fórró* bands are covers of *música sertaneja* hits from Central-Southern Brazil or popular songs from the United States or Europe. Two of Calcinha Preta's popular love songs include the titles “Faço Chover” (I Make It Rain) and “Não é Chuva de Verão” (It's Not Summer Rain), which is a cover of a *sertaneja* song. While the lyrics refer to rain only metaphorically, they do so in a way that could nevertheless be seen as recalling the work of Gonzaga and others. Mastruz Com Leite performed a song on their 1993 album *Coisa Nossa* (Our Thing) called “Raizes do Nordeste” (Roots of the Northeast), which lyrically depicts a romantic *sertão* and mentions the song of the *sabiá* bird—the rufous-bellied thrush—and the strength and virtue of the northeastern worker:

In my *sertão* there's a bit of everything  
Of the good that you can imagine  
It's got the bright sky  
There where the *sabiá* sings

There's goodness in the eyes  
Of the working man

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<sup>118</sup> Adelson Vianna, interview by the author, June 8, 2010.

Who wears a straw hat  
With humility, yes sir

Many of Mastruz Com Leite's songs have rural topics, and although their popularity peaked in the 1990s, they have remained famous as the first popular electronic *fórró* band, they still tour, and many current groups still cover their songs.

Traditional *fórró* also had sexualized lyrics. Gonzaga's work (and the work of Jackson do Pandeiro, Dominginhos, Trio Nordestino, and others) depicted sexuality less explicitly than the *fórró* of the turn of the twenty-first century, but the *fórró* of the mid-twentieth century was dance music just as electronic *fórró* is dance music, and was presumably also associated with drinking, dancing, and amorous and erotic encounters. Many of Gonzaga's best-known songs, especially those associated with St. John's Day, lyrically describe partying and dancing. I have been told that Trio Nordestino's 1972 hit "Procurando Tu" (Looking for You) was at times jokingly sung as "Procurando Cu" (Looking for Ass). The name of contemporary *fórró* group Cheiro de Menina (Smell of Girl) has been cited to me as an example of the vulgarity of electronic *fórró*. We can juxtapose it with lyrics from Luiz Gonzaga's 1949 "Vem Morena" (Come, Dark-skinned Girl), which he co-wrote with Zé Dantas and is often considered a classic, and which is no less sexual:

This, your salty sweat  
Smells nice and has flavor  
Since your sweaty body  
With its smell of flowers  
Has a seasoned taste  
Of the flavor of love

Seventy-year-old Cearense musician Messias Holanda, whose biggest *fórró* hit was "Pra Tirar Coco" in 1981, complained in January 2012, "Today they have forgotten the poetry of the music. They're demeaning to women. In my music I talk about *cachaça* [Brazilian rum] and

women, but I tell stories without offending.”<sup>119</sup> At an ACF meeting on June 8, 2010, one musician called electronic *fórró* “vulgar,” and claimed that the genre promotes prostitution and *cachaça*. He argued that the city government invites electronic *fórró* musicians to perform at local events and on civic holidays because it is what the people want. Another musician agreed and said that the support offered by the government is misguided. If the mayor wants to give people what they really want, he joked, it would be cheaper to supply the population directly with *cachaça* and prostitutes and forget the electronic *fórró*.

References to sex may be more explicit in electronic *fórró* than in traditional *fórró*, but this is likely due to changes in sexual expression that have occurred in Brazil and elsewhere in the last half of the twentieth century, and not to a cheapening or debasing of traditional *fórró* per se, as many scholars, intellectuals, and musicians contend. Furthermore, and contrary to what Trotta argues, the *sertão* remains equally relevant to both genres of *fórró*. The difference lies in the relationship between audiences and the *sertão*. Early fans of traditional *fórró* consumed the music because it constructed a *sertão* imaginary that reminded them of distant homes and the values and images they left behind before migrating to urban metropolises. Contemporary fans of traditional *fórró* enjoy it as an expression of northeastern culture. Electronic *fórró* fans—at least those in Ceará—live in or near the *sertão*, and the music fills rural soundscapes, including town squares, rodeos, and rural-themed parties on the outskirts of northeastern capitals like Fortaleza. Sulamita Vieira describes traditional *fórró* as dynamic because it involved the construction of the *sertão* in the context of the city. Electronic *fórró* is dynamic because the relationship of listeners to the *sertão* is dynamic—if they live in Fortaleza, they may have come from the *sertão*; they return to the *sertão* for vacation; much of the *sertão* imagery and cultural practices remain relevant to life in Fortaleza; many *fórró* fans live in the interior. Traditional *fórró* is music *about*

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<sup>119</sup> Naiana Rodrigues, “Uma vida dedicada às tradições do fórró,” *Diário do Nordeste*, January 18, 2012.



the *sertão*. Electronic *farró* is music of the *sertão*.



FIGURE 11. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tomara Que Chova Billboard, Quixadá, Ceará

In 2010, a *farró* venue in the interior city of Russas, Ceará, hosted its second *farró* party called Tomara Que Chova, I Hope It Rains (see figure 9). At the third I Hope It Rains, held April 23, 2011, partygoers were promised a free glass of wine if it rained the night of the event. Drought, the *sertão*, and the importance of rain remain materially—if not semiotically—relevant to electronic *farró* and the dance and party culture associated with it.

The most significant distinction between the two *farrós* is the underlying financial structure of each. To survive, traditional *farró* needs funding and support from the city and state governments. As mentioned above, until the creation of ACF, the city often chose mainstream electronic *farró* bands rather than traditional *farró* bands to play at government-sponsored

events.

At ACF meetings in 2010, musicians expressed a sense of resentment about the government supporting electronic *fórró* and musicians from outside the state. At the meeting on June 8, 2010, association members fretted about the image of St. John's Day propagated by the media and the city. The newspaper *Jornal o Povo* had run a series of articles celebrating the longevity of electronic *fórró* in Ceará and the career of Emanuel Gurgel, and ACF musicians found the articles troubling: It was the St. John's Day holiday season—the June festivities—and electronic *fórró* groups were performing at the major parties and stealing headlines in the paper. Messias Holanda mentioned that he was asked in an interview with *Jornal o Povo* about his feelings regarding electronic *fórró*, and he told them that the biggest threat to traditional *fórró* was not the large electronic *fórró* bands, but the small ones, because they tended to undercut traditional *fórró* musicians. “Because they charge so little,” he said, “they play lots of parties, which means that we have to go running after space. . . . Our money's been used up.” At a meeting on June 25, 2010, the day after St. John's Day, a musician complained that a *música sertaneja* duo, Victor & Leo, originally from the southeastern state of Minas Gerais and based in São Paulo, was going to play a St. John's Day party the following night at the high-end Marina Park Hotel. “We should be supporting northeastern music,” she said, “not music from the South during this festival, which is symbolic of the Northeast.” A *sertaneja* duo, as opposed to a *fórró* trio, represents the wrong Brazilian rurality for her. Another musician lamented that a compilation *fórró* CD produced in the northeastern state of Piauí selected an electronic *fórró* band to represent Ceará. Adelson Vianna expressed his concerns to me:

The municipality supports *fórró* principally during this season [St. John's Day], but they could support it more. But there exist financial interests behind this: Electronic *fórró* aggregates, gathers, generates much more cash than traditional *fórró*. This is because

there are impresarios behind it, behind all of the politics that make it happen, and this is important. . . . What is in the media the most is electronic *forró*, but that doesn't mean that there aren't groups and musicians who are preserving and sharing roots music. It's an issue of the scene. . . . If it were a little more balanced, divided, if there were space for both, it would be ideal.<sup>120</sup>

In the northeastern state of Paraíba, musician and state Minister of Culture Chico César found a solution for the imbalance of power between the two *forró*s. In April 2011, he announced that the state of Paraíba would only contract traditional *forró* performers, and not electronic *forró* bands, which he referred to as “plastic *forró*,” during the St. John's Day season. He said:

As secretary of culture, I say that the state will neither contract nor pay musical groups and artists whose styles have nothing to do with the heritage of the northeastern musical tradition, which has its apex in the period of the “June festivals.” It will not. I will not pay *forró* bands that don't characterize themselves as traditional northeastern culture. But we would never intend to prohibit or suggest the prohibition of any such tendencies.<sup>121</sup>

Secretary César's announcement became a widely publicized controversy, and many northeastern musicians took sides and issued statements. He was ultimately forced to clarify his position and his use of the term “plastic *forró*,” which many saw as inappropriate. He said, “The two [*forró*s] are legitimate, and I'm part of the market myself, but these bands don't need the support of the state [of Paraíba] to survive, as is the case with the historical bands of *forró*. Our job is to give visibility to those who have no market.”<sup>122</sup> In an interview with *Jornal o Povo*, ACF President Walter Medeiros expressed a similar belief, saying, “It is not the role of the State to finance the deconstruction of popular culture. And the largest sponsor of these plastic bands is

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<sup>120</sup> Adelson Vianna, interview by the author, June 8, 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Araújo, Glauco. “Chico César diz que não apoia banda de *forró* eletrônico no São João da PB” *GI*, April 20, 2011, accessed online March 15, 2012, <http://g1.globo.com/pop-arte/noticia/2011/04/chico-cesar-diz-que-nao-apoia-banda-de-forro-eletronico-no-sao-joao-da-pb.html>.

<sup>122</sup> Buarque, Daniel. “Chico César tentar apagar polêmica do ‘*forró* de plástico’ no São João” *GI*, June 23, 2011, accessed online March 15, 2012, <http://g1.globo.com/brasil/noticia/2011/06/chico-cesar-tentar-apagar-polemica-do-forro-de-plastico-no-sao-joao.html>.

the Governor of the state of Ceará.”<sup>123</sup> At a meeting of the ACF before St. John's Day, Medeiros asked, “What *fórró* is this? What St. John's Day is this?” He continued, “We must have this conversation with the people who have the task of preserving culture.”

Some state politicians see ACF as a valuable constituency and are willing to partake in the dialogue desired by Medeiros. In 2010, an election year, two candidates for state deputy, the equivalent of a state representative in the United States, visited ACF meetings to campaign. On July 6, 2010, candidate Tony Nunes gave a speech in which he argued that electing him would benefit the traditional *fórró* community. Nunes, formerly a singer, is the presenter of a television show called “Forrobodó” on TV Diário, an affiliate of Rede Globo. The show features *fórró* bands performing in the TV studio, and Nunes described it as the only show in Ceará dedicated exclusively to *fórró*. In his speech, he appealed to the morality associated with traditional *fórró*. He claimed that *fórró* is stereotyped as a musical culture associated with crime, prostitution, and alcohol, but that, despite the negative stereotype, no single *fórró* musician in Ceará had committed a crime in the past twenty years. “Musicians are good,” he said, “but this is ignored because of the attitude perpetuated by electronic *fórró*.” His solution was to change the role of traditional music in Fortaleza, requiring that fifty to sixty percent of all musicians paid with municipal or state funds be from Ceará. “This will even save the city money,” he argued. “This culture is ours, this culture of *fórró*,” he said, and emphasized that if he were elected, he would “moralize” *fórró* and find new venues for traditional musicians.

On August 3, 2010, Luiza Lins, another candidate for state deputy, attended the meeting. Lins, a member of the Worker's Party (PT), the same party as Presidents Lula and Rousseff, is also the mother of Luizianne Lins, the mayor of Fortaleza since 2004. Lins came dressed in a red shirt and wearing a star necklace and star earrings, recalling the iconography of the PT. In her

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<sup>123</sup> “Quem paga o arrasta-pé no são João?” *Jornal o Povo*, April 25, 2011.

speech, she spoke about healthcare for musicians, and took credit for organizing free traditional *fórró* concerts on Sunday evenings at the newly renovated Pine Nut Market, where the majority of ACF members have performed. A musician told her that while he appreciated the Pine Nut Market gigs, the city took too long to pay musicians. She blamed local bureaucracy, and reminded them that she only allows local *fórró* musicians to play there. Chico Pessoa, a *fórró* musician born in the neighboring state of Paraíba yet who moved to Fortaleza in 1982—where he began an illustrious career—came with Lins to speak on her behalf. Pessoa was perhaps a questionable choice for Lins: at the July 6 meeting when Tony Nunes spoke, ACF members complained that Chico Pessoa was hired by the mayor to play at an event organized by ACF, but was not a member of the association. One person said, “Chico Pessoa isn't a part of the association, so he doesn't deserve to perform under its name. People who come to meetings should be rewarded.”

Since 2010, ACF has been successful with many of its initiatives. A plan for the creation of the first Cearense “sanfonic” orchestra (*sanfona* is the term used in the Northeast for accordion, as opposed to *acordeão*, which is used elsewhere in Brazil) has come to fruition, and the group, comprising thirteen ACF-affiliated accordionists, has performed several times in Fortaleza. The celebrations for the Municipal Day of *Fórró* in honor of Luiz Gonzaga were organized by ACF and funded by the Secretary of Culture of Fortaleza (SECULTFOR). The Secretary of Tourism of Fortaleza (SETFOR) sponsored Sunday evening *fórró* concerts, organized by ACF, on the city's boardwalk in July and August 2010, the tail end of the St. John's Day season in Fortaleza. On its Web site, SETFOR explains:

With the objective of strengthening the festive and hospitable characteristic of the city, “Holidays in Fortaleza” unites attractions like Chico Pessoa, Neopineo, Diassis Martins, Adelson Viana, and Os Januários to demonstrate the best of *fórró* to our visitors who will pass these holidays in the capital. And, for more interaction and fun with the public

during these five weekends, four couples of dancers will occupy the plaza and will teach the tourists to dance the rhythm of *forró*.<sup>124</sup>

Ceará's tourism industry is undergoing many changes as Fortaleza prepares for the 2014 World Cup. The city of Fortaleza, which was promoted as a beach paradise during the “Government of Changes” that ended in 2002, is now promoted for both the sea and the *sertão*. The Secretary of Tourism of the State of Ceará is constructing a large aquarium on Iracema Beach, the city is working rapidly to finish its light rail, and has begun constructing a tram that runs the length of the boardwalk, from Iracema Beach to Mucuripe Beach. Music and arts from the *sertão* are often promoted as if they were Fortaleza's traditional culture, and the government runs a chain of handicraft shops—many of the items come from the interior—and also heavily promotes its St. John's Day concerts and quadrilles. Interior cities like Quixadá, where a national chain constructed a luxury hotel and conference center in 2011, are beginning to acquire large-scale tourism infrastructure and are being marketed for their natural landscapes and picturesque traditional cultural practices and handicrafts. These works, projects, and initiatives for tourism and culture are funded by local, state, and national entities in large part due to the preparation for the World Cup, which is expected to bring seven hundred eighteen thousand tourists to Ceará in June and July of 2014.<sup>125</sup>

At ACF meetings, members have proposed a number of strategies—aside from organizing local events—for increasing the visibility and viability of traditional *forró*. One plan involved forming a coalition with the Association of Radio Listeners, which similarly felt that electronic *forró* had disproportionate and unfair control of the radio. Another strategy involved

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<sup>124</sup> “Férias em Fortaleza, a Capital da Alegria anima a alta estação,” SETFOR, July 13, 2010, [http://www.fortaleza.ce.gov.br/turismo/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=150](http://www.fortaleza.ce.gov.br/turismo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150).

<sup>125</sup> Sara Maia, “Capital terá 718 mil turistas na Copa,” *Jornal o Povo*, February 1, 2012, <http://www.opovo.com.br/app/opovo/economia/2012/02/01/noticiasjornaleconomia,2776443/capital-tera-718-mil-turistas-na-copa.shtml>.

an alliance with the Catholic community, which also saw electronic *forró* as sinful and promoting prostitution and alcoholism. In October 2009, the Fortaleza municipal government created a Municipal Council of Cultural Policy through its Secretary of Culture primarily intended to oversee, create, and evaluate cultural policy and projects. Fortaleza's cultural council is an outgrowth of musician Gilberto Gil's tenure as Brazil's Minister of Culture (2003-2008), when he promoted culture as having three distinct roles in Brazil's development: as the symbolic construction of nationality, as a right and an element of citizenship, and as a component of the economy (see Moehn 2011:123). Gil was succeeded by Juca Ferreira, who held the position at the time of the creation of Fortaleza's Municipal Council of Cultural Policy, and later by Ana de Hollanda in 2011.

At ACF meetings in July 2010, members encouraged one another to become involved politically by voting for representation on the Municipal Council. Any citizen who registered with the Secretary of Culture could vote for one of the council's twenty-one representatives—each creative sector has one representative, with the exception of “traditional and popular culture,” which has two—and ACF members debated the idea of registering themselves as from both “traditional and popular culture” and “music” categories so the association could elect two representatives to the council. The council includes representatives from municipal agencies, including the Secretary of Tourism, the Secretary of Culture, the Secretary of Economic Development, and the Secretary of the Environment and Urban Control, among others. Elected representatives from the creative and cultural community include Walter Medeiros from the ACF, the president of the Association of Quadrilles of Ceará, and the president of the Cearense Folklore Commission.

## QUIETING ELECTRONIC *FORRÓ*

When asked his opinion of electronic *fórró* in 2009, composer and landscape architect Ricardo Bezerra explained that what bothered him about the genre was not the quality of the lyrics or music, nor the monopoly-like enterprises behind it, but the volume at which it is played. Electronic *fórró*, said Bezerra, is “noise pollution.” He explained how he was bothered by the sound systems—the *paredões do som*—that loudly play electronic *fórró* at all hours of the day regardless of neighborhood or day of the week. Indeed, many individuals in Ceará, especially (but not exclusively) in upper-income neighborhoods, considered the *fórró* from the sound systems obtrusive.

As explained before, these sound systems are common means of broadcasting and listening to electronic *fórró*, and are central to the business model that includes publicly playing recordings of bands that shout out their own names and the names of local businesses in the middle of songs. A hit *fórró* song from early 2012, Aviões do Fórró's “Toca Meu CD,” which criticized copycat bands by calling them “clones,” lyrically refers to the importance of sound systems, suggesting their ubiquity in *fórró* culture:

Play, play, play my CD  
Change, change, change that CD . . .  
Any *paredão* worthy of being called a *paredão*,  
Any *paredão* worthy of being called a *paredão*,  
Only plays Avião [Aviões do Fórró]

*Paredão* sound systems are status symbols among *fórró* fans and can convey both taste and purchasing power. They also convey acoustic power, as explored in chapter three, by allowing individuals to dominate space with sound. As a result, they permit members of the lower and new middle class to possess public spaces in a Bakhtinian carnivalesque reversal (Bakhtin 1965). However, while individuals may experience their personal control over acoustic



space as a form of staking claim to public areas to which they are otherwise socially and economically denied access, the music they broadcast is nevertheless perpetuating the market control of the electronic *forró* industry and the business interests of the companies mentioned in “Alô” shout-outs, thus simultaneously contesting and upholding the current social structure.

If public noise can be correlated with class, then it can also be correlated with economic development. As Fortaleza's middle class expands and the city prepares to welcome an onslaught of foreign and national tourists, a distaste for unwanted sound has grown.<sup>126</sup> Yet as the city grows and develops, it also becomes noisier. A January 9, 2012, article from the *Diário do Nordeste* begins with a quote from Brazilian author Mário Quintana: “Progress is the insidious substitution of harmony for cacophony.”<sup>127</sup> In Fortaleza, this apparent contradiction—that urban growth leads to both noise and a preference for quiet—has been negotiated legislatively. Signed into law by the mayor of Fortaleza on March 4, 2011, Municipal Law 9756/11 now poses a threat to electronic *forró* culture and its presence in the local soundscape. The *Paredão* Law, as it is commonly known, is a noise abatement ordinance that prohibits the use of mobile sound systems in public spaces or in private spaces to which the public has access, like gas stations or parking lots. It also limits the volume of mobile sound systems in commercial locations to a maximum of seventy decibels between six a.m. and ten p.m., and a maximum of sixty decibels at all other hours. For most infractions, authorities confiscate the sound systems and charge the perpetrator a fine between R\$849 (US\$472) and R\$8,490 (US\$4,720). Individuals playing music louder than eighty-five decibels run the risk of imprisonment. The *Paredão* Law is enforced by the

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<sup>126</sup> To clarify, I am not arguing that the poor necessarily have a subjective preference for noise. Rather, I am arguing that quiet is associated with wealth and economic development, and that perhaps individuals with less economic or social influence are not as capable of quieting noise they find displeasing. As individuals gain status and wealth in Fortaleza, their ability to purchase sound systems increases, as does their ability to seek recourse against acoustic disturbances.

<sup>127</sup> Luana Lima, “60,8% das denúncias registradas na Semam são de poluição sonora,” *Diário do Nordeste*, January 29, 2012.

Municipal Secretary of the Environment and Urban Control (SEMAM), which, in 2011, received more noise complaints (60.8%) than any other kind of environmental complaint.<sup>128</sup>

*Paredão* sound systems characterize Fortaleza's Carnival celebrations as well as the street parties each weekend between New Year's Eve and Carnival known as "Pre-Carnival." During the 2012 Pre-Carnival and Carnival season, SEMAM promoted the law heavily through the television, radio, and the newspaper, and advertised the phone number and website for issuing complaints. Fortaleza's Secretary of Culture Fátima Mesquita issued the following statement in January 2012:

In addition to being illegal, *paredões de som* disturb the public order and disrespect the common good, as well as harm the good progress that was organized by us so that carnival celebrants could enjoy themselves the best way possible. We will work with the police, and, principally, with the population, in the sense of monitoring and inhibiting this type of practice, through public complaints.

The topic of the complaint hotline became an internet meme during the Carnival and Pre-Carnival season in Fortaleza, and middle- and upper-class individuals reminded one another of the law and the disturbance caused by *paredões de som* on Facebook and Twitter. The image in figure 12 (a screenshot of a Facebook post) depicts a pickup truck with a large *paredão de som* in its bed, and the text reads, "Does this bother you? Then call SEMAM 3452-6923." In one weekend during 2012's Pre-Carnival, SEMAM confiscated five sound systems. An article in the *Diário do Nordeste* about the law featured a photo of a police officer holding a decibel reader near a *paredão de som*.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Luana Lima, "60,8% das denúncias registradas na Semam são de poluição sonora," *Diário do Nordeste*, January 29, 2012.

<sup>129</sup> Alex Pimentel, "Paredões de som são apreendidos em Fortaleza neste final de semana," *Diário do Nordeste*, January 23, 2012.

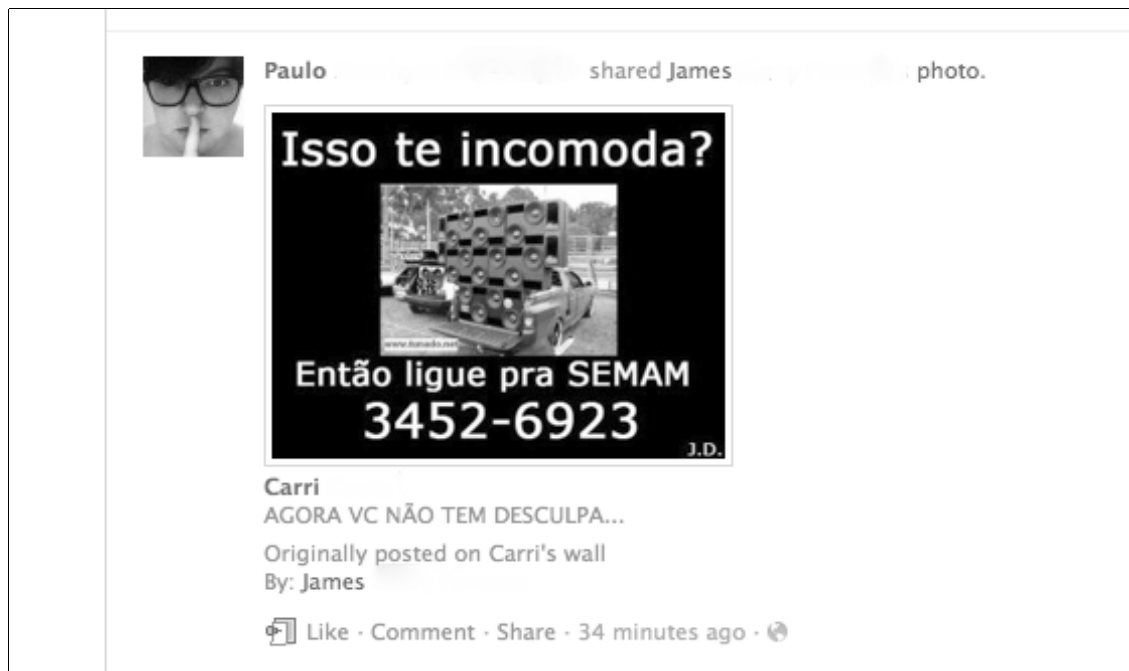


FIGURE 12. Sound System Complaint Hotline, Facebook Post

Individuals affiliated with electronic *forró* voiced opposition to the law. A Fortaleza-based electronic *forró* band called *Forró Estourado* released a song in 2011 in protest to the law. The song is called, “Não Proíba o Paredão (Lei do Paredão)” (“Don't Prohibit the Sound Systems (*Paredão* Law)”), and argues that those who like electronic *forró* are “good,” “peaceful,” and just seeking to enjoy themselves:

Hello Mayor, City Councilman  
 We're peaceful, please listen to me . . .  
 Our parties cause no turmoil . . .  
 There's no crime  
 There's just enjoyment  
 It's *forró* that's contagious . . .

No! No! Don't prohibit the *paredão*!

No! No! We just want to have fun . . .

Despite the *Paredão* Law, sound systems remained prevalent, perhaps less so than in previous years, at Fortaleza's 2012 Carnival and Pre-Carnival celebrations, and were dominant in Ceará Carnival parties in towns and cities outside the state capital, where mobile sound systems remain legal in public spaces. *Paredões de som* and sound trucks are also important tools in political campaigns, as they drive through the streets of Fortaleza and other northeastern cities playing *fornó* campaign jingles. Mayor Luizianne Lins' 2008 campaign jingle, “Eu Quero Mais,” sung by a choir with an underlying *xote* rhythm and an accordion emphasized in the mix, became a soundmark of the city and the election season while she campaigned for re-election. The long-term consequences of the law on the electronic *fornó* industry remain to be seen, but many have speculated about its potential impact on future political campaigns—some suggest that politicians will make an exception for themselves.

\* \* \*

Both sub-genres of *fornó* articulate relationships between the city and the *sertão*. One depicts it lyrically and, perhaps, musically—first because of migration, nationalism, and nostalgia, and now because of cultural tourism, the valorization of local music, and an ideology concerning traditional culture. The other involves rodeos, rural performance venues, a rural aesthetic, and a direct connection to the material conditions of *sertão* life in Ceará, where urban migration continues to increase, where urban media is easily accessed in rural areas, where rodeos and *fornó* parties remain popular, and where many individuals are rising out of poverty and into the new middle class.

The significant distinction between the two *forrós* is that one treats music as a commodity, exemplifying a particular expression of capitalism in northeastern Brazil, while the other treats music as a social good, necessary for maintaining a unique local identity and encouraging traditional values, and now dependent upon cultural policy and taxpayer funding. Those with a vested interest in traditional *forró* voiced little animosity toward electronic *forró* itself aside from their moral criticisms. Their primary concern with electronic *forró* was, specifically, that it limited access to audiences and acoustic space by way of unfair business practices. Quasi-monopolistic control of venues and radios, disregard for copyright law, and an endless pursuit of profit left traditional *forró* musicians struggling to survive in the local soundscape. With the creation of the Cearense Association of *Forró*, traditional musicians have gained a voice in local cultural politics and have strengthened their position in the soundscape. Nevertheless, cultural policy is also dependent upon the tourist economy and the local political climate.

In this chapter, we have seen the creation and growth of the electronic *forró* industry, the quasi-unionization of the traditional *forró* community—and its response to electronic *forró*—and the passing of a noise abatement law that directly impacts electronic *forró*'s acoustic presence in Fortaleza's soundscape. From this example, we can see that it is neither capitalism per se nor the mere existence of commercially driven electronic *forró* that threatens traditional *forró*. Rather, the threat is due to a lack of regulation governing business practices in Fortaleza's music industry in an era of economic growth. Noise abatement laws can tell us about changing urban subjectivities regarding *forró* and may impact the consumption and experience of electronic *forró*, but *payola* (*jabá*), copyright scandals, and other unethical or questionable practices continue to prop up an inequitable musical environment in Fortaleza.

## CONCLUSION

The Jandaya Parakeet is a small bird with feathers colored like the Brazilian flag, excluding its reddish-orange breast, with a yellow head, green wings, and a blue-tipped tail. According to José de Alencar, its call, a high-pitched, metallic screech, is responsible for giving Ceará its name: from the Tupi words *cemo*—“to sing loudly, clamor”—and *ára*—“small macaw or parakeet” (Alencar 2006:258). Ceará is marked as a land of drought and marketed as a beach paradise. Birds, birdsong, and the images of rural natures have been used in the construction of the Northeast and the *sertão* for a variety of political, social, and commercial reasons, and have also reciprocally influenced understandings of and relationships with the *sertão*, while also influencing the *sertão*'s landscapes and soundscapes themselves.

## MUSIC AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Throughout this dissertation, I have approached the study of music and the environment through a combination of acoustemology (Feld 1996) with ecomusicology (Rehding 2002; Toliver 2004; Allen 2011). By combining these methodologies—one textual, the other ethnological—with a study of cultural history, I have been able to investigate popular music as a meaningful practice for musicians and listeners alike. In the example of Fagner, this allowed me to discuss his musical depiction of the *sertão*, his position within a larger musical context in the late twentieth century, the reception of his music in Orós, and his personal connection with the city and those who live there. I was thus able to explore the interaction between music about the environment and music in that same environmental context.

I have also applied Simon Schama's (1995) historical and literary approach for the study of landscapes to the study of soundscapes in the sense intended by Schafer (1994). I have examined how music and sound in Ceará are frames through which Ceará has been constructed, heard, and comprehended, especially in terms of its cultural history, economy, and environment. As I argue in chapter one, the three frames I identify in Schama's work—the representation of landscapes, the perception of landscapes, and the construction of landscapes—can be applied to soundscapes. In the Northeast, musicians have represented the region's soundscapes and landscapes for diverse reasons, ranging from migration to local affirmation. The ways individuals perceive and hear soundscapes in Ceará have been influenced by cultural practices that have been both passed down through oral tradition and mediated by audio recording and the music industry. Ceará's soundscapes have been constructed through cultural policy, capitalist drives, and aesthetic and cultural values. I begin this concluding chapter by returning to some of the arguments and examples from this dissertation, organized topically—rather than by chapter—to review the ways in which Ceará's soundscapes and landscapes have been represented, how they have been perceived/heard, and how they have been constructed. In doing this, I also assess acoustemological and ecomusicological arguments specifically concerning the representation, perception, and construction of the Cearense sound. To conclude, I address the discourse of musical sustainability as it relates to the natural environment.

### The Representation of Northeastern Soundscapes and Landscapes

Musicologist Alexander Rehding advocates the use of nostalgia as an ecocritical lens for ecomusicologists who wish to explore the ways composers convey attitudes and opinions about the lost natural environment. However, I have also argued that nostalgia is imbued with

mediation, politics, and capitalism. In Ceará, nostalgia is a product, a marketing device, and a tool for regional differentiation, participating in the construction of local identity in the face of urbanization, the national media, and globalization. In each chapter, I have explored a different musical, nostalgic representation of Ceará.

The northeastern landscape and soundscape constructed by Luiz Gonzaga in the 1940s until his death in 1989 was one in which the *sertão* was a nostalgic place of the past. It was an imaginary in which northeastern migrants who had fled drought and moved to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, among other locations, could visualize and hear what they had left behind, justify their decisions to leave their homes and loved ones, create and consolidate communities of migrants in similar circumstances, and construct new ways of being northeastern in a southeastern metropolis. The northeastern imaginary constructed by Gonzaga was also in harmony with the ideologies and strategies of Vargas-era politics, with the growth of regionalist recordings in a Brazilian music industry that was both segmenting markets and promoting nationalist sounds, and with advertising to sell products associated with the Northeast, rurality, and masculinity.

In the music of Raimundo Fagner, the musical and lyrical depiction of the city of Orós and its reservoir helped to distinguish him as a musician from other popular musicians of the 1970s. Despite its affinities with other Brazilian hybrid forms of popular music from the era, his music—and the music of other musicians associated with the Folks from Ceará—was considered regionalist and was thus associated with the landscapes and conditions of the interior of the Northeast. The promotion of his work, his involvement with efforts like *Nordeste Já*, his references to Orós, and his lyrical, musical, and visual allusions to water all portrayed the *sertão* as a harsh landscape with a population in misery.



The opera *Moacir of the Seven Deaths* depicted a paradise that was innocent, indigenous, and peaceful, which, due to Portuguese colonization, was replaced by a *sertão* that was inhospitable and characterized by inequality, misery, and corruption, much like the “landscape of abjection” described by Anderson (2010) in his analysis of Euclides da Cunha's novel *Rebellion in the Backlands*. According to Anderson's analysis, Cunha believes that technology is required to overcome the abjection of the *sertão* (2010:228). In the opera, however, technology is portrayed as a violent threat to Ceará, as a symbol of globalization and American hegemony. Interestingly, the conception, composition, and eventual performance of the opera itself are intended to overcome the various forms of abjection conveyed through its libretto.

In the music of rock band Eletrocactus, music nostalgically recalls the *sertão* through allusions to *forró*, it evokes the traditions of Fortaleza's carnival through the rhythms and timbres of *maracatu*, and it pays homage to the 1970s, when the Folks of Ceará brought mainstream musical regionalism to the state. Their song lyrics and titles, furthermore, juxtapose rural and urban imagery—as in their song “The Electronic Lizard”—thus utilizing nostalgia to “[shatter] the surface of an atemporal order and a prefab cultural landscape” (Stewart 1988) and make music in which their listeners can identify themselves. It is an example of Boym's “reflective nostalgia” (2001). These references to the Ceará's landscapes also help them assemble a new Cearense sound that challenges the notion that singular, essentialized Cearense or Brazilian identities exist.

The *sertão* portrayed in the music of Fortaleza's traditional *forró* scene is the nostalgic *sertão* of Luiz Gonzaga, but seen through the contemporary lens of urban Fortaleza. It is performed by musicians as an affirmation of local culture, an expression of conservative, Catholic values, and a form of maintaining regional traditions. It is supported by government

entities and politicians to strengthen local traditional arts, to demonstrate a concern for history and local identity, and to construct Fortaleza and Ceará as unique tourist destinations. Electronic *forró*, on the other hand, portrays the *sertão* not nostalgically, but as the location of contemporary rural *forró* culture. Electronic *forró*'s *sertão* is a place characterized by cowboy culture, rodeos, and all-night dance parties. It is a place where technology and tradition combine in a way that is wholly modern and associated with unregulated capitalism and corruption.

Taken together, these differing portrayals of Ceará's rural interior and tropical coast demonstrate a diversity of Cearense and northeastern imaginaries that has shifted over time. *Forró* began as a nostalgic representation of the Northeast; today it occupies a prominent role in the northeastern soundscape. I demonstrate neither a *sertão* in the city (Vieira 2000) nor a *sertão* despite the city (Draper 2010), but a *sertão* that varies from perspective to perspective and moment to moment, contingent upon a tourist economy, shifts in migratory patterns, and various marketing and political strategies and motivations. Unlike Dent's notion of a singular Brazilian rurality (2005), I see multiple—sometimes conflicting—ruralities. Like the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea (Feld 2001), nostalgically singing about places in the *sertão* evokes memories and emotions associated with those places, but in Ceará it also evokes connotations given to those places by the news media, literature, and prior popular music.

### The Perception of Soundscapes in Ceará

In this dissertation, I have shown how listening is a cultural practice in Ceará, and is modeled, learned, and practiced in ways that depend upon traditions, mediation, technology, and differing subjectivities. The practice of rain prophecy, for example, depends upon a learned perception and observation of the natural environment. Rain prophets have learned to hear the

sound of certain bird calls or to see the blossoming of certain flowers on cacti as signals of impending rain or drought. The lyrics of many songs performed and recorded by Gonzaga have helped prophets to maintain, explain, and celebrate elements of the practice. Today, the tradition, the relevant lyrics from Gonzaga's *baião*, and the knowledge associated with the perception of nature as it relates to rain and drought are mediated and maintained by the yearly Meeting of the Rain Prophets, and by the mainstream news media that films and reports on the event and the practice.

In the introduction to this dissertation, I discussed the idea of “reciprocating complexity” (Haraway 2008), drawing on Donna Haraway's notion that humans and their pets have complex effects on one another, and I explained Anne Fausto-Sterling's ideas about the human “biocultural system” in which our bodies are at once natural and products of culture and cultural decisions. Applying these ideas to music, I explain how natural soundscapes can influence music that can in turn reciprocally influence the very soundscapes from which that music drew. This cycle is evident in the example of the rain prophets, in which rain prophecy was initially a rural practice involving the perception of nature, then became a symbol of rurality and the *sertão* in Gonzaga's music, which then influenced the practice of rain prophecy and the very sound of the *sertão*. Today, Gonzaga's song “Asa Branca” can be heard in countless contexts in Ceará as the anthem of the Northeast, and is no longer merely a song *about* the *sertão*, but a symbolic and material sound *of* the *sertão*.

Another example of this kind of reciprocity can be heard in Orós, where Raimundo Fagner's music, once inspired by the local landscape and soundscape, is now a meaningful element of the local soundscape. Paul Carter's concept of “echoic mimicry” (2004), which he uses to describe language, is also especially relevant there, as the city's residents listen for

musical representations of themselves and their hometown in Fagner's music. That is to say, his music is heard differently in Orós than it is elsewhere, since it is often both music *about* and *of* Orós.

### The Construction of Cearense Soundscapes

There are many elements involved in the construction of Ceará's soundscapes: technology like automobiles, mobile sound systems, and fixed *radiadora* loudspeakers; markets and industries like the electronic *fórró* industry; laws like the *paredão* noise abatement law; petitions like those signed by the residents of Orós in favor of keeping the *radiadora*; and cultural policy geared towards economic development and cultural tourism.

In the town of Quixadá, João Soares supports *cantoria* music and rain prophecy to maintain traditional knowledge and support local culture. By hosting monthly *cantoria* concerts and his yearly rain prophecy event, he is shaping the soundscape of the interior by celebrating and perpetuating oral traditions that are nevertheless technologically mediated.

Schafer writes that soundscapes can create “acoustic communities” (1994). Corbin (1988) argues that bells can define town boundaries and construct a local sense of place, and Feld (2004) writes that bells can unite space and time with history. The acoustic community in Orós is constructed through sounds of Fagner's music, traditional *fórró*, and Dantas' *radiadora*. The community's acoustic values are most apparent when put into contrast with the subjectivities and sounds of Fagner, who dislikes the sound of the *radiadora* and prefers regionalist Brazilian popular music to electronic *fórró*.

The electronic *fórró* industry has taken many steps since the early 1990s to dominate Ceará's soundscape. The music is audible at live shows at large *fórró* parties, on several radio

stations, on DVDs played on home televisions, over the Internet, and—most commonly—over *paredão* mobile sound systems that play on streets, at beaches, in parking lots, in parks, and elsewhere, and broadcast “hello” advertising shout-outs and names of *fórró* bands to advertise the industry.

Fans of electronic *fórró* play the music loudly on mobile sound systems to acoustically possess spaces from which they are otherwise socially and economically excluded. I argue, however, that by playing electronic *fórró* in public places, these individuals are also upholding the structure they contest by broadcasting the advertisements that support the industry and expanding the reach of electronic *fórró* music. A law prohibiting these mobile sound systems now threatens the presence of electronic *fórró* in Fortaleza's soundscape, but they remain prominent in coastal towns and rural cities like Orós and Quixadá. Ultimately, the law may impact the electronic *fórró* business structure and the practices associated with political campaigns.

The traditional *fórró* community in Fortaleza has tried to attain prominence in the soundscape by creating and locating new venues, fighting for political representation, and lobbying for inclusion in activities related to local cultural celebrations and tourism. Due to these efforts, traditional *fórró* can be heard performed live in bus terminals, at the airport, on the city's boardwalk, and in many city squares, parks, and public venues. Traditional *fórró* is central to the sound of the St. John's Day season, but is also audible during the remainder of the year. Despite benefits of cultural policy for practitioners of traditional music, Dan Sharp reminds us of some of its potential pitfalls. For one, it creates an illusion that traditional musicians (and traditional music) are “taxidermically” preserved outside of modern time thus allowing patrons to overlook the conditions responsible for the poverty, hunger, and struggles of lower-class musicians, and in

theory helps to uphold those very conditions. Musicians, still, are able to use music as a source of income and to improve their lot in life, as Luiz Gonzaga himself did.

Sharp's concern highlights another form of reciprocity in the Northeast, which is that the so-called traditional recordings of Gonzaga and others have created an imaginary and a set of expectations for Brazilians who visit the Northeast, hoping to encounter the place they heard depicted in the music. Fortaleza's efforts to expand cultural tourism, aided by lobbying and planning from the Cearense Association of *Forró*, take into consideration the mediated *sertão* imaginary, especially during the St. John's Day season when tourists expect to find images of rurality in the coastal capital.

Perhaps one of the central lessons we can learn about the construction of the Cearense soundscape is that the local, regional, and national soundscapes are diverse and in flux. As we see with Eletrocactus, there is no essential Cearense soundscape and no singular northeastern sound. Rather, these terms are contested, malleable, and imbued with power and inequality. When the city of Fortaleza hires a musician to play at a St. John's Day concert or on the Municipal Day of *Forró*, it is making a statement about its idea of the Cearense sound. When Fagner hands his radio station in Orós over to local programmers, he is acknowledging that his subjectivity is unlike that of the people of Orós, giving them the ability to control their own soundscape.

## MUSICAL SUSTAINABILITY

The discourse of musical sustainability is underscored by an assumption that musical culture, like a biological ecosystem, is living, diverse, interconnected, reproducing, and sustainable. It raises a difficult question, however: What music is worth sustaining? Or put

differently, what music is most “natural”? For Tilton, “natural” music is music that is a cultural practice rather than a product. For Turino, it is participatory music rather than staged performances or audio recordings. For the Sustainable Futures Project, it is what they refer to as “small musics”—including some major world genres like Western opera and Mexican mariachi—that are threatened. Generally speaking, music that is described as being “natural” is perceived as timeless (or having deep roots), as inherent to a particular culture or group of people, and as meaningful in ways that contribute to the maintenance of communities. This analogy breaks down in Ceará, however, when we examine how today's traditional music was, in fact, commercial music in the 1940s. Although *fórró* developed from a number of rural musical practices—including *cantoria*, fife-and-drum music, and religious music—the *fórró* that is considered “traditional” today is the music of Luiz Gonzaga and other popular musicians from the mid-twentieth century. Suggesting that certain cultural practices are analogous to the natural environment, furthermore, is reminiscent of a colonial discourse, like that of José de Alencar, who depicted Iracema and her indigenous kin as natural, feminine, and primitive.

If we see traditional music as a part of a natural ecology, and commercial music as, say, boll weevils, we are oversimplifying the relationship between traditional music and commercial music. If we alter the common musical taxonomy from traditional music, art music, and popular music instead to participatory performance, presentational performance, high-fidelity recording, and studio audio art (Turino's four categories), we still encounter blurred boundaries between meaningful participation and commerce. Recordings can be heard in participatory, meaningful ways, like Neto with his DVD of Fagner's songs. Participatory practices in which people dance to live music can be inherently commercial, as with electronic *fórró*. Government-funded presentational performances can include elements of participation and can be meaningful for

local participants and tourists alike, as with quadrille dances during the June festivities. I cannot deny that some musics are threatened by larger forces and are, to quote Anthony Seeger, “disappeared.” Yet, in the example offered by *fórró* in Ceará, it makes little sense to refer to musical sustainability in the language of environmental sustainability.

Titon's description of music as a “renewable biocultural resource” requires unpacking. His term helps to align these musical efforts with contemporary, mainstream, environmentalist efforts, and is a timely strategy. But is *fórró* renewable? We can see that it is ever-changing, but the use of the term *fórró* is contested, and some individuals believe that specific iterations or sub-genres of *fórró* are not, in fact, *fórró*. If the very definition of the term is debatable, it is hard to know what is renewed and what is something altogether different. Perhaps if traditional *fórró* were to disappear, it could be renewed through audio recordings, but this is not yet necessary. Can *fórró* be described as “biocultural?” In my argument about “reciprocating complexity,” I suggest that *fórró* has been influenced by landscapes, soundscapes, and practices associated with nature, and that it is a product of human cultural behavior, so I would say that it is biocultural. Is *fórró* a resource? It has been used as such: Farmers are said to derive strength from *cantoria* music; *fórró* has helped migrants establish northeastern communities in São Paulo; Fortaleza's tourist industry uses music to attract tourists and create a unique but familiar destination; and so on.

What makes this argument so complicated is that music is both an activity and a kind of sound. Sound results from the activity. Which is the resource? The activity? The sound? Although *fórró* could be described as a biocultural resource, I have yet to see how such a description strengthens my understanding of *fórró* or clarifies arguments for its need to be sustained. Traditional *fórró* should be sustained for traditional *fórró* musicians because it is a



primary (and essential) element of their cultural identity and their sense of what it means to be from Ceará. Luiz Gonzaga's oeuvre should be sustained in the interior because, to offer one example, it is important and useful for rain prophets. The songs of electronic *fórró*—perhaps—require no support, because they are intended to be disposable like any other commodity. But the dance and party culture associated with the sub-genre is surely important for many individuals, and the sounds of the music are significant to individuals who play electronic *fórró* to assert their social distinction—their ability to buy *paredão* sound systems, for example—and sonically possess public spaces.

As I have shown in this dissertation, music in Ceará can tell us about its natural environment and we can see how it has affected ways in which nature is heard. Nevertheless, we must not overstate the relationship between the two. Humans are nature. Nature influences human behavior. Human behavior also influences nature and the way we perceive it. But the products of human behavior and nature are not one and the same.

Let us turn to birdsong for clarification. Generally, ecologists work to save bird species, not birdsong.<sup>130</sup> One could argue that there are two threats to birdsong: (1) the extinction of birds and (2) noise. Environmental sustainability allows us to make sure that enough birds remain alive to be able to reproduce and maintain their species. And it goes without saying that when birds become extinct, so do their songs. Yet, we also know that birdsong changes as birds encounter new environments and hear new sounds. My Meyer's parrot, for example, learned to imitate the buzz of a smoke alarm after we moved into an apartment with an overly sensitive detector positioned directly over the stove. Is her new vocalization a threat to the other sounds she used to make? No. It is, however, displeasing to me. So, this is the quandary with musical

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<sup>130</sup> There are exceptions to this. For example, in the UK there have been efforts to curb the growth of deer populations to save the song of endangered nightingales. Deer, nevertheless, threaten nightingales, and not their songs *per se*.

sustainability. The bird species should be sustained. Its song, however, comes naturally. Any time we determine what songs or practices are to be maintained, we are basing our decisions on our own circumstances and subjectivities.

I argue that in Ceará, traditional *fórró* culture is best sustained by inclusion in cultural policy making, and by regulation of the electronic *fórró* industry. Payola and monopolistic business practices threaten the survival of smaller, meaningful musics. I have offered several examples of musical conflict throughout the dissertation: *cantoria* is perceived as losing popularity to American popular music and electronic *fórró*; Orós and its *radiadora* have been challenged by the aesthetic preferences of Fagner, who hears its musical alarm clock as noise; there are internal conflicts within the Northeastern Opera Project—attacking poverty through a widely recognized symbol of wealth—and Eletrocactus—using international rock music to construct meaningful local music; and electronic *fórró* has created a difficult environment for other musicians, especially those associated with traditional *fórró*. In each case, musical subjectivities are corollated with socioeconomic class or cultural hegemony, highlighting imbalances of power. Nevertheless, I have also provided examples in which these imbalances have been contested or complexified. *Fórró* and the *sertão* are tools with which people in Ceará have constructed and contested images of themselves and the local landscape, creating a Cearense sound that dialogues intensively with national representations of Ceará, global sounds, and local history.

## GLOSSARY

***aboió.*** A style of singing associated with cowboys and herding cattle.

***acauã.*** The laughing falcon (*Herpetotheres cachinnans*).

***asa branca.*** The Picazuro pigeon (*Patagioenas picazuro*). Also, the title of Luiz Gonzaga's most famous song.

***baião.*** The musical precursor to *forró*; a syncopated rhythm and dance genre popular in mid-twentieth century Brazil.

***brasilidade.*** Brazilian-ness; the quality of representing Brazil or Brazilian identity.

***brega.*** Literally, tacky. Also refers to a genre of Brazilian music typically characterized by romantic ballads.

***Bumba-meu-boi.*** A theatrical tradition that involves the resurrection of a bull. Often called *boi* in Ceará.

***cantoria (da viola).*** Sung duels from northeastern Brazil that involve improvisation and set rhyme schemes, and are generally accompanied on a ten-string guitar called a *viola caipira*.

***cearensidade.*** Ceará-ness; the quality of representing Ceará or Cearense identity.

***choro.*** Urban popular music from Rio de Janeiro (late nineteenth/early twentieth century, currently undergoing a revival).

***coronel.*** Wealthy, powerful farmer in the interior of the Northeast.

***coronelismo.*** Corrupt oligarchy in northeastern Brazil in which *coroneis* (coronels) gained control through fraud and political favors.

**desafio.** Literally, a challenge. Refers to the sung duels of *cantoria*.

**forró eletrônico.** A genre of contemporary popular dance music originating in Ceará.

**forrobodó.** A term for a working-class party (sometimes derogatory).

**forrozeiro.** A fan of *forró eletrônico* music and dance. Also a *forró* musician.

**latifúndio.** Large rural estates; a system of unequal landownership, where wealthy individuals own disproportionate amounts of land.

**mandacaru.** A cactus (*Cereus jamacaru*) that grows in the *sertão*.

**maracatu cearense.** Fortaleza's Carnival parade tradition that reenacts the coronation of the “black kings” and is characterized by the use of blackface. Also, a slow rhythm associated with the tradition.

**matuto.** Hick, sometimes derogatory.

**Música Instrumental Brasileira.** Literally, Brazilian instrumental music. It often refers to contemporary Brazilian jazz (not bossa nova).

**nordestinidade.** Northeastern-ness; the quality of representing the Brazilian Northeast or northeastern identity.

**paredão do som.** Mobile sound system towed behind or attached to roof of or set in trunk of motor vehicle.

**pé-de-serra.** Literally, foothills; also, the name of the fast *forró* rhythm and synonym for “traditional *forró*.”

**Pessoal do Ceará.** Literally, Folks from Ceará. An unofficial group of musicians from Ceará who attained national popularity in the 1970s and 1980s.

**pífano.** Fife.

**rabeca.** A four-stringed bowed composite chordophone; handmade fiddle typical of

northeastern Brazil.

**radiadora.** An informal term used in Orós, Ceará to describe its “loudspeaker service,” in which an announcer broadcasts announcements over a set of loudspeakers attached to the roof of his home.

**reisado.** A musical and theatrical tradition practiced on Epiphany, January 6.

**repentista.** A northeastern singer (often associated with *cantoria*) who improvises verses following a specific metrical pattern and rhyme scheme.

**sabiá.** The rufous-bellied thrush (*Turdus rufiventris*).

**sertão.** A semi-arid geographical and cultural region occupying most of northeastern Brazil, extending as far south as the state of Minas Gerais and Bahia and as far north as Ceará and Piauí.

**Tropicalismo.** A national musical genre/movement that began in the 1960s and emphasized a philosophy of cultural anthropophagy.

**viola caipira.** A ten-string guitar used in northeastern Brazil.

**xaxado.** A dance, popularized by a gang of northeastern Brazilian bandits.

**xote.** A northeastern dance rhythm, related to schottische, often compared to reggae by contemporary musicians.

**zabumba.** A bass drum used in *forró* and fife-and-drum ensembles.

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