



Race, Ethnicity, and Difference in a Contemporary Carioca Pop Music Scene

Frederick Moehn

In my research on popular music making in Brazil, primarily in Rio de Janeiro and largely among middle-class subjects, one of the things I have sought to analyze is how individuals conceptualize mixture, understood on a variety of levels but always in relation to the dominant discourse of national identity in the country. As you all know, this is a discourse which holds that Brazil's history of miscegenation corresponds to a natural facility with cultural mixing. Moreover, it is widely presumed that this purported capacity is most fabulously in evidence in the sphere of music making. There exists a comfortable fit between celebratory discourses of national identity as rooted in *miscigenação*, on the one hand, and the way many contemporary Brazilian musicians -- not just in Rio de Janeiro but generally in urban areas -- talk about their practice, on the other. Such talk, in turn, has real bearing on musical sound as mixture becomes almost an imperative in some scenes: to make "Brazilian" music, following this logic, *is to mix* (and not to mix risks seeming rather un-Brazilian, or at least overly traditionalist). What theoretical tools can we bring to bear on this naturalized and seemingly self-evident logic of cultural production, interpretation, and national identity? In this paper I will examine a variety of aspects of these dynamics in an effort to reflect on our central theme of rethinking race and ethnicity in Brazilian music.¹

An initial problem in such discussions is the question, What do we mean when we use the words race and ethnicity? What are we trying to isolate for

¹ Parts of this paper are from my book-in-progress, tentatively titled *Chameleon in a Mirror: Essays on Sound and Society in a Brazilian Popular Music Scene*, for Duke University Press.

analysis? When percussionist Marcos Suzano, for example, says that he wants to appropriate some of the “Afro intention” of international popular musics such as reggae and dub by accenting syncopated low frequencies on his pandeiro is he indexing race, ethnicity, or a little of both? When singer-songwriter Lenine tells me that his song “Que baque é esse?” --the opening lines to which are “Nega que baque é esse? Chegou pra me baquear. Nega tu não se avexe meu corpo remexe sem se perguntar por que” -- when he says this song does not really speak to the experience of race in Brazil, we cannot take him at his word. But what then does this song lyric tell us? If blackness and *mulatismo* are often explicitly mentioned in song lyrics or in talk about music, what does the relative lack of metaphors and talk about whiteness mean? How indeed can blackness or mulato-ness mean anything without an implied relation to whiteness? What might whiteness index in Brazilian popular music?

Where do we *look* for race? In phenotype? In origins? In rhythms? In social geographies? In talk? In metaphor? What about in the other “modalities” through which race may be experienced, as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy put it, such as gender, class, consumerism, markets, labor; in sound, dance, or in emotions like pleasure, intimacy, anxiety, fear, love, sexuality? What does it mean when samba-funk-rock diva Fernanda Abreu, who is phenotypically light -- that is, what we would call white -- and upper-middle class, from Rio's iconic South Zone, sings baiano Caetano Veloso's “A tua presença Morena”: “A tua presença entre pelos 7 buracos da minha cabeça ... A tua presença é negra, é negra, é negra ... é branca, verde, amarela ... “ over a bluesy, reggae-fied, jungle-ish groove.² Howard Winant once said, “Perhaps in no other country is it as arduous to assess the significance of race in everyday life,” and he suggested that the “salience” of race was more uncertain in Brazil than elsewhere.³ Although he endured valid criticism for regarding Brazil as a “problem case” that did not conform to experiences of race in the United States, it is true that

² Fernanda Abreu, “A tua presença morena” (composed by Caetano Veloso), on the album *Da Lata*, EMI CD, 1995.

³ Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 154-155.

it is difficult to assess the significance of what we call race in everyday life in Brazil. It is not, however, hard to recognize its salience.

Hybridity theory and difference

Let me return for a moment to the question of mixture and its association with racial contact. In Brazil, of course, we also encounter the influential modernist theory of cultural cannibalism, or anthropophagy, as a specifically artistic discourse about difference, appropriation and recombination, arising around the same time as race mixture begins to be positively valued in debates over national identity; that is, the 1920s and 30s. These modernist tendencies predate the emergence of the hybridity theory that arose in the postmodern postcolonialism of the 1980s and 1990s. As Joshua Lund has written, the resurgence of hybridity in the human sciences during these later decades “was met with the incredulous response in Latin Americanist circles that can be summed up by the question ‘So what else is new?’” Hybridity, suddenly the fashionable cultural theory, “had always been a generic mark of Latin America’s geocultural singularity.”⁴ This same fact, however, has perhaps made the refashioning of hybridity into a concept that is able to move beyond colonial-era notions of purity less feasible than some scholars would like to believe.

If Nestor Garcia Canclini’s *Hybrid Cultures* spurred vibrant debates in Latin America throughout the 1990s about the region’s heterotemporal relationships to modernity, by the year 2000 Rita De Grandis and Zilà Bernd would write that hybridity theory had reached its “boiling point,” and that a “decantation process” had begun. The notion of hybridity had become “an important analytical tool for explaining the nature and dynamics of a range of socio-cultural processes and practices,” De Grandis and Bernd observed, but scholars came to accept “its

⁴ Joshua Lund, *The Impure Imagination: Toward a Critical Hybridity in Latin American Writing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006): x.

epistemological poverty and inherent conceptual obliqueness.”⁵ Notwithstanding, hybridity seemingly had the advantage of moving beyond dialectical binarisms of “self and other in relation to identity formation,” and it highlighted “the anti-essentialist nature of identity construction and its multiplying dialectic.”⁶ With its richly figurative language, De Grandis and Bernd observed, hybridity echoes Deleuze and Guattari’s metaphor of the rhizome as a way to describe a non-dichotomic or non-dialectical configuration of identity. A rhizomatic method, they write, thinking primarily of textual manifestations “analyzes language not in terms of a system of internal structural decomposition but rather as a decentering process involving other dimensions and registers.”⁷ This kind of decentering of sonic dynamics of mixture that are allegorized through discourses of miscegenation and national identity in order to involve other dimensions and registers, and to consider subjectivities as constituted through multiplicity, is what I have tried to do in my analyses of Brazilian pop mixtures, as in, for example, my article about Marcos Suzano, “A Carioca Blade Runner,” with attention always to various dynamics of power.⁸

Indeed, while multiplicity certainly sounds like a good thing, discourses of hybridity depend on more-or-less essentialist conceptualizations of difference as their condition of possibility, as both Joshua Lund and Peter Wade have pointed out. In *miscigenação* or *mestizaje*, for example, distinctive characteristics of “the European,” “the African,” and “the Indian” come together to form something new in which purportedly “original” elements evidently remain discernible. Thus hybridity,

⁵ Rita De Grandis and Zilá Bernd, “Introduction, Hybridity: The Never-ending Metamorphosis?” in *Unforseeable Americas: Questioning Cultural Hybridity in the Americas*, x-xix (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000): x.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., xiv

⁸ Frederick Moehn, “A Carioca Blade Runner, or How Percussionist Marco Suzano Turned the Brazilian Tambourine into a Drum Kit, and Other Matters of (Politically) Correct Music Making,” *Ethnomusicology* 53/2 (2009): 276-307.

Lund writes, “as the incessant process of mixing, traces its conditions of possibility to a discourse -- race -- that legitimates and institutionalizes separation.”⁹ The very act of theorizing hybridity, he claims, “participates in racialized discourse.”¹⁰ For Wade, the recreation of blackness in such discourse “does not automatically mean that anti-black racism will be directed against that category, but the former is a necessary condition for the latter, if not a sufficient one.”¹¹ And in fact, ideologies of *miscigenação* are indebted to the will to *whiten* populations through race mixture in the early part of the 20th century.¹²

Since race mixture has historically come about under profoundly gendered relations of power, it is quite surprising how little gender has been discussed in relation to Latin American theories of hybridity. Indeed, miscegenation is not only about race and gender; it is also about sex. Musician Lenine was blunt about this when I asked him why miscegenation should be the defining characteristic of Brazilian identity when other countries also experienced racial and cultural mixture. In Brazil, he responded, the mixture of races had been more explicit than anywhere else in the world. “Think about it,” he said to me during this interview near the end of the millennium when Brazil was readying to celebrate its quincentennial, “We are completing five hundred years of what? Screwing [*fudelhância*]!” “That’s what colonization was like,” he said. The colonizers, he proclaimed, “didn’t *discover* anything.” Rather, they had sexual relations with the indigenous peoples that were

⁹ Joshua Lund, “Hybridity, Genre, Race,” In *Revisiting the Colonial Question in Latin America*, Mabel Moraña and Carlos A. Jáuregui, eds., 113-138 (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2008): 115.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹¹ Peter Wade, “Images of Latin American Mestizaje and the Politics of Comparison,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* Vol. 23, No. 3 (2004): 355-366, at 356.

¹² Michael Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power: the Movimento Negro of Rio de Janeiro and São*

Paulo, Brazil, 1945-1988 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): 8. See also Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993 [1974]).

already on the land. Miscegenation, Lenine concluded, “is in the libido, in the Brazilian character.”¹³

Lund describes hybridity discourse as operating within a “biopolitical field that regulates who participates, who belongs, and the naturalization of this inclusive exclusion.” What are the risks, he asks, “of theorizing cultural hybridity while resisting interrogation of the racialized conditions of possibility that enable theories of hybridity in the first place?” It seems likely, he answers, that “the racialized structures that undergird hybridity will reemerge, intact, and in undesirable ways.”¹⁴ Speaking of what she referred to as “the antropofagic pattern, the axis of Brazil's most influential self-image,” Heloisa Burque de Hollanda asks: “What can women or blacks do under the pressure of such an elaborate discursive technology for processing otherness, erasing conflicts and avoiding confrontation? How can visibility be claimed in a nation proudly represented by the image of the mulatta, evidencing the strong presence of gender and race at the very core of Brazil's self-representation?”¹⁵

Slipping from talk about race mixture to the hybridization of musical genres is also interesting. Genres, Lund asserts, drawing on Foucault, “require discipline, because if they are mixed, there must remain some sort of boundaries defining them.”¹⁶ Musical genres are themselves often racialized in local discourse, while simultaneously sorted into specific geographical and national categories. Consider for example an excerpt from an interview I conducted with Fernanda Abreu in which she described her musical influences to me. If Brazilian modernism represented the country as “a swallower of difference,” as Buarque de Hollanda put it, or as “the Kingdom of Hospitality, of receptive warmth revealing an inherent

¹³ Lenine (Oswaldo Lenine Macedo Pimentel), Interview with the author, 1 July 1999, Rio de Janeiro.

¹⁴ J. Lund, “Hybridity, Genre, Race,” 133.

¹⁵ Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda, 1998. “The Law of the Cannibal, or How to Deal with the Idea of ‘Difference’ in Brazil.” Available from <http://acd.ufrj.br/pacc/literaria/paper1helo.html> (last accessed 24 February 2006).

¹⁶ J. Lund, “Hybridity, Genre, Race,” 120.

predisposition to receive the Other, for Fernanda the United States is “the King of Black Music” (“o Rei de Black Music”). She elaborated a proprietary sense of anthropophagic style that is heavily racialized:

I think that the United States is “the best” [in English] in terms of funk and soul, because it is a culture from there. It is the culture of the blacks that came from jazz, and then rhythm and blues, and then funk and soul, and then hip-hop, rap ... *Black music* [in English], in the world, had so much influence -- in the United States ... in Africa, in Brazil the samba ... Because I like to swing a lot, I like to dance. Music for me is very much a matter of taste ... I could even say, wow, Bob Dylan, you're amazing -- and I know that he is, I know how to value it, but it is not my taste ... Same thing with heavy metal. Sure, I like [the Brazilian thrash metal band] Sepultura ... but I'm not going to go out and buy an album of heavy metal, or buy an album of new age, an album of country music. It's not my style. I like funk, I like samba, I like soul, I like -- I like rhythm.¹⁷

Dylan, heavy metal, new age, and country music seem to index whiteness here (and evidently a relative lack of rhythm), since Fernanda contrasts these examples with the “black music” she loves.

But is *blackness* linked to rhythm or dance in any straightforward sense in such talk? During a later interview with Fernanda I was struck by an apparent inconsistency: After telling me that she listened to “everything” I asked, What about jazz? To which she emphatically responded, “No, jazz, I don't much like.” It seemed like a closed club, she felt. “If you don't know jazz really well,” she said, “it's best not to mess with it.” Boundaries are indeed disciplined, even for an artist who has spent the better part of her career celebrating black music and mixture. At the same time, however, the meanings of specific elements of mixture -- including those that are racialized or given ethnic, national, gendered or other traits -- is rather inconsistent depending on the speaker/musician, the context, the song, and so on. The interesting part, for me, is in fact teasing out the variety of meanings these significations may take on in particular contexts.

To take this discussion of hybridity back to my earlier question of what are we trying to isolate when we talk about race and music in the Brazilian context, I agree

¹⁷ Fernanda Abreu, Interview with the author, 9 August 2007, Rio de Janeiro.

with Peter Wade that “rather than studying “races” or “blacks” or “whites” -- even as socially constructed groups” we should pay attention to *processes* of racializing, naturalizing identifications “and the racialized social relations that go with them.”¹⁸ In general, it is a good idea to recognize the emergent, processual, contextual, relational, and contingent nature of sociocultural phenomena and meanings, and in fact, discourses of mixture and national identity in Brazil highlight the incompleteness of the formation of the national subject. Difference is continually incorporated, but mixture is not done. It is for this reason that I proposed elsewhere that the word “mixing,” a gerundive noun, better captures the prevailing cultural dynamics of this setting than the term hybridity.¹⁹ It draws attention to process and practice, which is what most interests me in terms of how pop music is produced. It can also perhaps communicate more of a sense of an ambiguous temporal dimension -- García Canclini’s heterotemporal relationship to modernity, if you will -- and a continual, open-ended process, a circular stirring up of things, movement, and also an adding to without necessarily needing to take anything away. Finally, it has the advantage of evoking the process of modifying and mixing recorded sounds in recording and postproduction, which is integral to the realization of mixture in the particular music production setting on which I have focused my research.

Some scholars have noted that discourses celebrating hybridity are prominent among urban, cosmopolitan middle class subjects. In Brazil, while it is by no means the case that only middle class music makers celebrate mixture, it is probably true that they are more obsessed with talking about it than are working class subjects. This seems to stem precisely from the sentiments of between-ness or ambivalence vis-à-vis the nation that are commonly expressed in middle class world views there, and perhaps also to the greater access to the music and communications

¹⁸ Peter Wade, *Music, Race, and Nation: Música Tropical in Colombia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 14.

¹⁹ Frederick Moehn, “Music, Mixing, and Modernity in Rio de Janeiro,” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17/2 (2008): 165-202, at 167.

technologies that can accelerate and facilitate mixing that middle class individuals typically enjoy. It has never been clear to me, however, why the fact that it is urban, cosmopolitan and comparatively privileged sectors who perhaps regard hybridity as “the new authenticity,” in Simon Frith's words, should render it any less legitimate a framework through which to understand cultural production, as a number of scholars have suggested.²⁰ Indeed, it is precisely because of this social fact that I find discourses of mixture interesting.

Selected examples from the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro

I'd like to return now to singer-songwriter Lenine, originally from Pernambuco but a long-time resident of Rio de Janeiro and now well-established as a central figure of postdictatorship MPB. His song “Que baque é esse?” (What is this beat?), mentioned in my introduction alludes to Recife's Afro-Brazilian maracatu tradition in a hard-driving, funky groove with a bluesy, syncopated horn arrangement contributed by Carlos Malta (soprano, tenor, and baritone saxophone), and Marcos Suzano playing a maracatu-like rhythm on the *zabumba* bass drum, a hip-hop-inspired rhythm on the pandeiro, and a shuffling backbeat on the snare drum. Lenine provides a harmonic base in characteristically funky acoustic guitar parts, but a distorted electric guitar adds bluesy rock power chords in parts of the track. A couple minutes into the song the guitars and voice drop out for a baritone saxophone solo over a hip-hop-samba-backbeat groove. Marcos Suzano plays snare drum with brushes, articulating figures that hint at the sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth note rhythm common in samba, côco, and other Brazilian genres, while in the mix the sound of the drum is electronically panned from left to right and back, in time with the beat. Another break later in the song features the syncopated horns in tutti, with rock guitar in the background of the mix. The track is deeply funky and features a distinct mix of influences.

²⁰ Simon Frith “The discourse of world music,” in *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation*, 305– 322 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

The lyrics describe a black woman (*nega*) dancing in front of a *maracatu* street procession on a hot, sunny day in early summer. The subject of the song, presumably a male (although not specified), is infatuated with her performance. The word *baque* refers to the “thud” or “thump” of things colliding or collapsing. The word is used to describe the heavy beat of the *maracatu*, particularly of the *alfaia* bass drums. The verb form “baquear” means “to fall noisily,” or “to ruin,” “to destroy.” Lenine plays with these meanings as he sings “Ô Nega, que baque é esse? / Chegou pra me baquear,” meaning, roughly, “Hey black woman, what is this beat? / You showed up to ruin me.” Only one who follows behind the *nega* dancing to the pulsing of the *bombo*, Lenine sings, is capable of understanding all the “magic” of her dance, and of the crowd losing themselves in fantasy.²¹

The term “*nega*,” José Jorge de Carvalho observes, appears in countless songs, sometimes carrying derogatory and racist meaning. While it refers literally to a black (i.e., African-descended) woman, it is also a more generalized term of sexualized intimacy that harkens back to patriarchal setting of the colonial era, in which relations between an upper class white man and his wife remained very formalized, while white men often had casual relations with black or *mulata* mistresses.²² In this broader usage “*nega*” need not indicate the skin color of a woman. “When a man calls a woman of fair skin *nega*,” Carvalho writes, “this means she is able to preserve for him ... something of the sexual mystery attached to the real other.”²³ In “Que baque é esse?” the *nega* is similarly eroticized, although the lyrics represent the scene as natural to the context of the Afro-Brazilian *maracatu*. The reference to magic also suggests a kind of bewitching, enhancing a sense of otherness in the imagery.

²¹ Lenine, “Que baque é esse?” On the album *O dia em que faremos contato*. BMG CD, 1997.

²² José Jorge de Carvalho, “The Multiplicity of Black Identities in Brazilian Popular Music,” *Série Antropologia* 163 (1994): 1-40, at 23.

²³ J. de Carvalho, “Multiplicity of Black Identities,” p. 23. The underlying idea with the term “*nega*,” Carvalho elaborates, “is that real sexual pleasure is normally achieved outside marriage, mostly with a black woman, who comes to represent total openness, as opposed to the wife, who represents controlled and conventional desire” (ibid.).

As I mentioned above, however, when I asked Lenine if the song spoke to the way race is experienced in Brazil he referred me instead to his song “Etnia caduca” because “Que baque é esse?” was not intended as social commentary. The lyrics, Lenine said, were straightforward (*óbvias*), but the song had “a cool angle” because the rhythmic base and all the musical parts of it “reinforce the question, ‘What is this beat?’” Neither maracatu, nor samba, nor exactly hip-hop, the groove was “an innovative polyrhythm” of indeterminacy. Had the musicians played a more straightforward groove, Lenine argued, the song would end up very banal. “It could be a *samba de roda*, a pagode.” Instead, there was no *formula* to the song’s “musical path.” The indeterminacy of the rhythm in this song complements the sense of sexual mystery that de Carvalho writes is associated with “nega.”

The song “Etnia caduca” (Senile Ethnicity), by contrast, treats racial mixture rather than blackness. “It’s the chameleon in front of a rainbow / Smearing the eyes of the multitudes with colors,” Lenine sings in the opening lines. “It’s like a cauldron mixing rites and races / It’s the Mass of Miscegenation.” [“É o camaleão diante do arco-íris / Lambuzando de cores os olhos da multidão / É como um caldeirão misturando ritos e raças / É a missa da miscigenação.] The lyrics to “Etnia caduca” draw attention to stereotyped images of, for example, “um mameluco maluco,” meaning a crazy mameluco (someone with Amerindian and white European parentage), or “um mulato muito louco” (a very crazy mulatto) both of which recall positivist discourses about race mixture leading to insanity. He describes a *moreno* (light-skinned mulatto) who is together with a *cafuzo* (African and Amerindian); and a *sarará* with a *coboclo* (Amerindian and Portuguese). If some of these terms originally referred to specific ethnic pairings, however, they have long been used primarily as ways to describe appearances. The term *sarará*, for example, is used to refer to a light-skinned person who has “kinky” hair.²⁴ By *etnia caduca* Lenine meant that the idea of ethnicity (or race) “expired,” he explained (*caduca* means “senile” or “failing”). Instead, the chameleon in front of a rainbow, changing color in a form of

²⁴ Roger Sanjek, “Brazilian Racial Terms: Some Aspects of Meaning and Learning.” *American Anthropologist* 73/5 (1971): 1126-1143, at 1132.

“mimesis,” Lenine suggested, is a more appropriate metaphor for ethnicity in a globalized world.²⁵

In the listening notes for the CD on which these tracks are found, *O dia em que faremos contato*, Lenine's influential debut solo album, he added a different question: “But what color is the chameleon when it is looking in a mirror?” In the context of this song, the metaphor of the chameleon seems to suggest that subjective aspects of self-identification are in continual tension with external classifications such as race. In front of a mirror, however, the chameleon is faced with the task of choosing its color based, in theory, only on cues emanating from itself. The “environment” is negated and all that is left is self, individual, and perhaps a confused sense of volition and of identity. Lenine's evocation of the riddle in the context of a song about racial categories highlights the Macunaíma-like nature of race in Brazil, but it also would seem to disregard the social realities of prejudice and inequality that still attach to phenotype in the country.

What has this got to do with the musical sound? This short song begins with a layered, looped, and precisely even sixteenth-note rhythmic ostinato modified electronically with filters so that it is not clear what the sources were. Using different instantiations of this effect on a variety of percussive sounds contributes to the layered texture of the rhythm. In the introduction to this song the filter cycles through two beats, suggesting a duple meter typical to samba (and creating a sound somewhat like a strong wind whipping through a gully), while other, unfiltered percussive elements such as the splash sound articulated every eight beats follow longer cycles, or only articulate selected sixteenth notes rather than providing the consistent ostinato. Electric fretless bass and Lenine's customarily percussive and syncopated acoustic guitar accompaniment fill out the basic groove, while the mix is periodically adorned with odd electronically-created or modified “effects” provided by Chico Neves. Beginning about 15 seconds into the song, the percussion track fills up with Marcos Suzano playing various samba instruments: pandeiro, tamborim,

²⁵ Lenine, “Etnia caduca,” On the album *O dia em que faremos contato*.

surdo, caixa, and agogô (cowbell). Later in the song the guitar and bass drop out for an extended percussion break over which Lenine sings a rhythmic scat. The resulting rhythm is an intensely propulsive re-thinking of samba that uses a relatively streamlined instrumentation. What is the sound of samba in front of a mirror? this song also seems to be asking.

In fact, Suzano, the percussionist on this recording, has been asking that question for much of his career. He lowered the tuning on the pandeiro, used in samba, choro, and other Brazilian genres, and began playing deep bass notes on it on the off-beats. He conceptualizes the rhythmic textures he plays as divided into high, middle, and low parts, as he relates these to the three *atabaque* drums of the Yoruba-derived Candomblé religion, with the lowest part corresponding to the *rum* drum and functioning as a leading voice. Suzano's "re-readings" of Afro-diasporic grooves such as jungle or drum-and-bass, fellow percussionist Lucas Santtana told me, ended up being something different from "a drum that you can program, tss tss ftt ftt," because of the physical aspect. With two hands, Santtana said, "it is unlimited what you can do." Suzano also "woke us up to this thing about amplification," Santtana continued. Moreover, when Suzano added effects, he turned the pandeiro into "a powerful thing," a new instrument even—an electronic drum kit, "but with him playing."²⁶ The rich bottom end that Suzano sought for his pandeiro and other percussion sounds in his adaptations of techno and other Afro-diasporic beats at first inconvenienced producers, so an adjustment in the studio was required, as Suzano explained:

People would complain, "You have too much bass." . . . And I would say, "Listen, haven't you ever gone to a samba school drum corps to hear some real low end?" . . . It's a radical beating [pancada]. Maracatu [drumming has this] too. This problem with the bass, in my opinion, comes from an ignorance about our origins, because . . . in Afro-Brazilian music the low end is the soloist. The low drum, man, the *rum*, that is where it's at. The bass from reggae, the [bass runs on] seven string guitar [in Brazilian choro], the kick drum in funk, this is all *rum* man, this is Ogum . . . because the African

²⁶ Lucas Santtana, Interview with the author, 20 July 1999, Rio de Janeiro.

origin is the same. Listen to Fela Kuti in Nigeria, and you'll say that's the *ijexá* rhythm [from Candomblé], and of course it is.²⁷

Let's contrast Suzano's discourse here with the Fernanda Abreu interview excerpt I quoted above. Suzano does not specifically talk about *black music*, as Fernanda does; rather, his description seems to describe "ethnic" attributes to Afro-diasporic sounds. But here again there is metaphorical slippage, for the references to Ogum, an *orixá* from Candomblé reaches deep into the bucket of hybridity. Orthodox Afro-Brazilian religions such as Candomblé, José Jorge de Carvalho has noted, "suspend the question of who is a black" because the deities worshipped "are universal and as such put themselves on top of whatever divisions are built on racial, social, political or sexual basis." Instead of offering a black identity, he writes, these traditional religions "merely state ritually that anyone, black or white, can be an African."²⁸ Suzano is phenotypically light-skinned and does not self-identify as African-descended except to the extent that Africa is always already a part of the three peoples that are miscegenated in the received discourses of Brazilian national identity (African, European, and Amerindian).

So I return to the question of where whiteness, as a concept that helps render blackness black but which is rarely explicitly mentioned in talk, fits into all this. The only researcher I know of who has applied whiteness theory to Brazilian music is Liv Sovik, a communications scholar, but I worry, too, about the epistemological risk of using whiteness theory to talk about "white" musicians (such as Fernanda Abreu), just as talking about "race" often means talking about blackness.²⁹ Here I follow

²⁷ Marcos Suzano, Interview with the author, 20 July 2007, Rio de Janeiro. I cite this passage in my article "A Carioca Blade Summer," 293-4.

²⁸ J. de Carvalho, "Multiplicity of Black Identities," 2.

²⁹ See, e.g., Liv Sovik, "O travesti, o híbrido e o integrado: identidades brancas na música popular brasileira," in *Comunicação, Representação e Práticas Sociais*, edited by Miguel Pereira, Renato Cordeiro Gomes, and Vera Lúcia Follain de Figueiredo, 231-241 (Rio de Janeiro: Editora PUC-Rio, 2004). Sovik has observed that Brazilian sociologist Alberto Guerreiro Ramos's essay "The Social Pathology of the Brazilian 'White,'" published in 1957, is a foundational text for the discussion of whiteness in Brazil. She is to be credited, along with a handful of other scholars (France Winddance Twine, for example), for helping to establishing whiteness within contemporary academic

Alastair Bonnett in understanding that whiteness cannot usually be clearly separated from other identities and norms, nor is it necessarily dominant “in each and every racialized situation.”³⁰ The power of whiteness, rather, “continues to be generated by its relationship with social and economic hegemony ... as a symbol of freedom, of excitement, of the possibilities that life can offer.”³¹ France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher have proposed an emergent “third wave” of whiteness studies that is more international and interdisciplinary than previous scholarship, and that “avoids the tendency towards essentializing accounts of whiteness by locating race as one of many social relations that shape individual and group identity.”³² For Twine and Gallagher, first wave whiteness studies began with W.E.B. DuBois and had as their aim to expose how whiteness is a normative and hence invisible category of privilege. The second wave includes critical race theory and focuses on the ways in which “culture and ideology work to constantly recloak whiteness as a normative identity.”³³ Twine and Gallagher use the term “third wave whiteness” as a “theoretical space holder,” they write, as they seek to move “whiteness studies to broaden its empirical base and deepen its international contours.”³⁴ The key point in this recent literature is not to understand whiteness (any more than blackness -- or any other racialized trope, including mulato-ness) as

discussions in Brazil. Sovik has just released a new book, *Aqui Ninguem é Branco* (Rio de Janeiro: Aeroplano Editora, 2010).

³⁰ Alastair Bonnett, “A White World? Whiteness and the Meaning of Modernity in Latin America and Japan,” in *Working through Whiteness: International Perspectives*, edited by C. Levine-Rasky, 69-106 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002): 100.

³¹ Ibid.

³² France Winddance Twine and Charles Gallagher, “The Future of Whiteness: A Map of the 'Third Wave,'” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31/1 (2008): 4-24. See also Anoop Nayak, “Critical Whiteness Studies,” *Sociology Compass* 1/2 (2007): 737-755.

³³ F. W. Twine and C. Gallagher, “The Future of Whiteness,” 12.

³⁴ Ibid., 15.

a reductive factor, but rather to relate it to other considerations such as class, gender, power, etc., and then to consider these in relation to musical practices.

Conclusion

To conclude, while isolating race as a social variable to determine, for example, how it impacts wages, educational opportunities, and the like, is a valuable kind of research to undertake in Brazil (as, for example, Carlos Hasenbalg and others have done), in the sphere of music it is generally more revealing not to isolate race but to consider it as thoroughly interdependent with class, the body, gender, place, technology, and the market; to relate all these elements to actual sounds; and to conceptualize these as always emergent and mutable. With such a methodological strategy, we may already be beyond the hybridity paradigm.