3
THE TROPICALIST MOMENT

Within several months after Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso introduced the "universal sound" at the 1967 festival of TV Record, their music was dubbed "Tropicalismo" in the mainstream press. As noted in the introduction, the name of the movement referenced Veloso's composition "Tropicália," which in turn took its name from an installation by the visual artist Hélio Oiticica. The term was rich in connotations since it played on images of Brazil as a "tropical paradise" that date back to the letter written by Pero Vaz Caminha in 1500 to the king of Portugal relating the "discovery" of Brazil. Following Brazil's independence, mid-nineteenth-century Romantics celebrated their nation's tropical landscape as a symbol of Brazil's distinctiveness in relation to Europe. The designation also recalled "Luso-tropicalismo," a theory developed by Gilberto Freyre in the 1940s that exalted the Portuguese colonial enterprise in the tropics. For the tropicalists of the late 1960s, these official representations of Brazil provided ample material for ironic appropriation.

The tropicalists critiqued certain forms of cultural nationalism, including the conservative patriotism of the regime and the visceral anti-imperialism of the left-wing opposition. They satirized emblems of *brasilidade* and rejected prescriptive formulas for producing "authentic" national culture. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret the tropicalist movement as antinational or detached from Brazilian culture. Veloso has claimed that Tropicália promoted "aggressive nationalism" as opposed to the "defensive nationalism" of the

anti-imperialist Left.[1] The work of modernist iconoclast Oswald de Andrade, which had been neglected since the 1920s, became central to the tropicalist project.[2] At the time, the concrete poets were engaged in producing several critical volumes of his work, which they imparted to Veloso and Gil. The tropicalists were particularly attracted to Oswald's notion of *antropofagia,* or cannibalism, as a strategy for critically devouring foreign cultural products and technologies in order to create art that was both locally inscribed and cosmopolitan. Veloso has stated that "the idea of cultural cannibalism fit us, the tropicalists, like a glove. We were 'eating' the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix."[3]

Oswald de Andrade seemed to hover like an irreverent specter over much of Brazilian cultural production, especially in popular music, theater, and film during the late 1960s. Renewed interest in the work of Oswald de Andrade was part of a more generalized revival of allegorical representation in the Brazilian arts. Like Oswald, the tropicalists revisited the question of national formation, but they also used allegory to represent and critique the regression to military authoritarianism in Brazil. The allegorical mode was not a constant in tropicalist song, but it surfaced intermittently in songs addressing the urban experience, political violence, and the geopolitical position of Brazil.

As hard-line forces within the military gained ascendancy in the regime, the redemptive power of art to change society seemed increasingly illusory and vain. There was a sense of skepticism regarding the notion that artists and intellectuals could serve as an enlightened vanguard leading the masses toward social revolution. The teleological march of history toward national liberation and revolution gave way to disenchantment and self-criticism. Artists began to gaze inward, exploring with caustic humor the social contradictions of middle-class urban intellectuals. The cultural manifestations associated with Tropicália were, as one critic has noted, an expression of crisis among artists and intellectuals.[4]

TROPICALIST CONVERGENCES

In the history of Brazilian popular music, Tropicália stands out as a movement that was particularly receptive to other artistic fields. Two events of 1967 were particularly influential: The release of Glauber Rocha's film *Terra em transe* (Land in anguish) and Teatro Oficina's production of *O rei da vela* (The candle king) under the direction of José Celso Martinez Corrêa. Both productions marked radical departures from both directors' previous work and signaled

transformations within their respective artistic fields. In distinct ways, these events announced the political and existential crises of left-wing artists and intellectuals during the early period of military rule. They expressed a sense of disenchantment with the political and cultural populism of the Brazilian Communist Party, the CPC, and postcoup protest artists.

Glauber Rocha's films of the early 1960s conformed to the CPC's vision of a "revolutionary popular art." His 1964 film *Deus e diabo na terra do sol* (Black god, white devil) portrayed the violence and misery of the northeastern backlands perpetuated by the *latifúndio*, a monopolistic system of landownership that exploited disenfranchised workers. After killing an unscrupulous rancher, a poor cowherd and his wife join a radical millenarian religious movement that is eventually destroyed by federal authorities in concert with the Catholic Church. Following the massacre, the couple encounters a group of *cangaceiros* (rural bandits of the Brazilian Northeast), with whom they remain until tracked down by the same federal bounty hunters. The final shot shows them fleeing through the scrublands of the *sertão*, suggesting the possibility for popular redemption, despite the limitations of millenarian religious movements and banditry.[5]

First exhibited in April 1967, Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe* signaled the artist's turn from redemptive utopianism to radical disillusionment. Set in an imaginary Latin American nation, Eldorado, the film critically portrays the position of artists and intellectuals in peripheral societies. The main protagonist is Paulo Martins, a poet and journalist with grandiose pretensions of working for radical transformation. He is a romantic revolutionary who believes that artists and intellectuals must serve as an enlightened vanguard and revolutionize the masses. Yet he ultimately despises and fears the dispossessed people for whom he claims to speak. Paulo goes to work for Felipe Vieira, a caricature of a populist politician who is running for governor. He is joined by Sara, a stalwart of the Communist Party who supports populist reformers as a gradualist strategy for a future proletarian revolution. The film represents populism as the carnivalization of politics in which a charismatic "man of the people" manipulates the popular classes through ostentatious displays of solidarity and promises for social reform. At Vieira's campaign rally, his followers hold up blank placards, suggesting a lack of substance in Vieira's electoral promises.[6] Like carnival, the populist political rally brings together people of all social classes for an exuberant celebration of popular will. Just as carnival ends on Ash Wednesday and order is restored, the populist leader typically perpetuates the status quo once he is in office.

Indeed, after the election, Paulo finds himself obliged to personally sup-

A still from Glauber Rocha's 1967 film *Terra em transe*. Vieira courts the masses at a populist rally while supporters below hold blank placards and musicians on the right play samba. (Photofest)

press and remove a group of landless peasants who have occupied the lands of Colonel Morais, one of Vieira's propertied clients. Pre-election promises to the peasants are ignored, and the security forces end up killing Felício, a peasant leader. It is a stark moment in which theory is effaced by practice and the left-wing utopian imagination is undercut by the cynical defense of class interest.[7] The most startling scene of the film takes place at a mass rally to protest a right-wing coup led by Porfirio Diaz (named after the Mexican dictator of the early twentieth century), who represents conservative oligarchic interests backed by foreign capital. As Diaz assumes the presidency of Eldorado, Governor Vieira and his political cronies join the masses to dance samba in a useless gesture of popular resistance. Disgusted by the populist farce, Sara exhorts a local union leader, Gerônimo, to speak on behalf of the people. As the music fades, a paternalistic old senator approaches Gerônimo and orders him to express his grievances: "Do not have fear my child, speak. You are the *povo.* Speak!" After several moments of awkward silence, Gerônimo stammers a few words about the class struggle and the present political crisis

but ends with the submissive recommendation that "the best route is to wait for the president's orders." He is immediately accosted and muzzled by Paulo. With his hand over Gerônimo's mouth, Paulo faces directly into the camera and sarcastically provokes the audience: "Do you see who the *povo* is? An imbecile! An illiterate! A de-politicized fool! Can you imagine Gerônimo in power?"

Rocha's film was a bitter self-critique aimed at left-wing artists who had embraced the Romantic notion that art could instigate and guide social revolution. At one point in the film, Sara consoles Paulo, telling him that "poetry and politics are too much for one man alone!" The actual relations of power, which structure class antagonism between peasants and landowners and between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, expose the underlying contradictions of progressive intellectuals at the precise moment of conflict. Paulo and Sara attempt in vain to convince Felipe Vieira to resist the coup. When the populist governor refuses, Paulo quixotically strikes out on his own but is shot by security forces. He dies on the beach as Diaz is crowned, surrounded by Portuguese and Catholic symbols of colonial conquest. *Terra em transe* was an allegory of the collapse of populist politics and the ascension of an authoritarian regime in 1964. The film suggests that the nationalist and putatively "progressive" bourgeoisie ultimately share class interests with the conservative oligarchy and its multinational patrons. The poet, meanwhile, loses faith in the political efficacy of his art and dies while resisting the coup.

Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe* had an immediate and profound impact on artists in other fields. Caetano Veloso later claimed that "all of that Tropicália thing was formulated inside me on the day that I saw *Terra em transe*."[8] Another artist who claimed Glauber Rocha's film as inspiration was José Celso Martinez Corrêa (a.k.a. José Celso), who directed the Teatro Oficina's production of Oswald de Andrade's *O rei da vela* in the fall of 1967. After seeing the film, José Celso felt that Brazilian theater had fallen behind cinema in terms of audacity and aesthetic innovation. Oswald wrote the play in 1933, but it was not published until 1937, the same year that Getúlio Vargas established the authoritarian Estado Novo. It was censored by the Vargas regime and then later ignored by directors and critics during the 1940s and 1950s when Brazilian theater companies such as the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia (TBC) aspired to present elaborate productions modeled after Broadway.

Oswald wrote *O rei da vela* around the same time that the French dramatist Antonin Artaud published a series of manifestos and articles outlining his theory of a "theater of cruelty." For Artaud, mainstream theater had become a sterile, overly psychological exercise that restricted itself "to probing

of a few puppets, thereby transforming the audience into Peeping Toms." He sought to "bring back the idea of total theater, where theater will recapture from cinema, music-hall, the circus, and life itself, those things that always belonged to it." Theater was for Artaud a kind of collective ritual involving direct contact between actors and the audience.[9] Some of the techniques and theories of Artaud were incorporated into Oficina's staging of *O rei da vela*, although never in an orthodox or programmatic fashion. Oficina cannibalized Artaud to create its own theatrical practice grounded in the Brazilian context. José Celso stated at the time that he no longer believed in the efficacy of rational theater; the only possibility left was "theater of Brazilian cruelty, of Brazilian absurdity, anarchic theater."[10]

Within the field of theatrical production itself, Teatro Oficina positioned itself against "bourgeois" theater such as the TBC, as well as nationalist-participant theater of Teatro de Arena and Grupo Opinião. José Celso argued that Brazilian theater and its public were blinded by certain "mystifications" regarding the efficacy of protest theater: "Today it is necessary for the theater to demystify, to place this public in its original state, face to face with its misery, the misery of its small privileges gained at the expense of so many concessions, so much opportunism, and so much castration and repression, and of so much misery of a people. . . . Theater cannot be an instrument of popular education, of transformation of mentalities through do-gooderism. The only possibility is precisely through diseducation, the provocation of the spectator." If the productions of Teatro de Arena attempted to establish common ground between the stage and the audience, the "guerrilla theater" of Teatro Oficina sought, above all, to provoke the audience into confronting its own complicity with forces of repression.

David George has noted that Oficina's production of *O rei da vela* represented the first attempt to apply Oswald de Andrade's concept of cannibalism to Brazilian theater. The text itself "cannibalized" *Ubu Roi* by French playwright Alfred Jarry.[11] The play focuses primarily on forms of "low cannibalism" described in Oswald's "Cannibalist Manifesto" as "the sins of catechism—envy, usury, calumny, murder." Economic dependency, foreign imperialism, and the cynical preservation of class interest during times of economic crisis are the central themes of the text.

The play revolves around the "candle king," a prosperous and brutal loan shark, Abelardo, who takes advantage of the international financial crisis of the early 1930s to exploit the disenfranchised. On the side, he also runs a brisk business selling candles, symbolically multivalent objects referring to death (i.e., objects used in funeral rites), underdevelopment (i.e., sources of light

in the absence of electricity), and sexual dominance (i.e., phallic objects). His equally unsavory partner, Abelardo II, proclaims himself to be "the first socialist to appear in Brazilian Theater" and states his intentions to eventually take over the business:

> Abelardo I: From what I see, socialism in backward countries starts off like this . . . Striking a deal with property . . .
>
> Abelardo II: Indeed . . . We're in a semicolonial country . . .
>
> Abelardo I: Where we can have ideas, but they're not made of iron.
>
> Abelardo II: Yes. Without breaking tradition.[12]

The "socialist" might harbor radical ideas, but these are flexible enough so as not to threaten the "tradition" of class privilege.

The central plot involves a ruined coffee planter aristocrat, Coronel Belarmino, who arranges for his daughter, Heloísa de Lesbos, to marry the upstart bourgeois candle king in order to save his family from financial ruin. The second act, set in Rio de Janeiro, features a cast of bizarre and deceitful characters of the Belarmino family, who are all vying for the attention of Abelardo. Heloísa's aunt, Dona Poloquinha, openly flirts with Abelardo while proclaiming her virtue and aristocratic pedigree. Her fascist brother, Perdigoto (apparently a member of the Integralist Party), attempts to secure Abelardo's financial support to organize a "patriotic militia" to suppress the labor movement. Abelardo himself is completely subservient to Mr. Jones, the American investor who ultimately claims his "right" to have Heloísa.

Oficina's staging of *O rei da vela* was a phantasmagoric farce that satirized official pomp, openly derided "good taste," and reveled in the grotesque. The scenographer, Hélio Eichbauer, borrowed techniques from German Expressionism to create outlandish scenes. A revolving stage produced a delirious, merry-go-round ambiance in which the actors and the set were in perpetual motion. In the first act, Abelardo II is dressed as an animal tamer as he subjugates a group of caged debtors with a whip, suggesting a circuslike atmosphere of their brutal enterprise. The second act, which is set on an island beach near Rio de Janeiro, features the cast on vacation. Eichbauer's garish backdrop portrays Abelardo dressed as a tropical dandy and holding dollar bills. Banana leaves and coconuts frame a panorama of Guanabara Bay with popular tourist destinations, Sugar Loaf Mountain and Corcovado, in the distance (plate 11). For this scene, José Celso incorporated the low-class, semipornographic style of the Brazilian Teatro de Revista, as well as elements from the B-grade popular and musical comedy films, or *chanchadas*.[13] An inscription over the set ironically quotes Olavo Bilac, the fin de siècle Parnas-

A scene from the second act of Oswald de Andrade's *O rei da vela*, produced by Teatro Oficina, 1967 (Fredi Kleeman/Multimeios-PMSP)

sian poet noted for his gushing patriotism: "Criança, nunca, jamais, verás um país como este!" (Child, never, ever, will you see a country such as this one). The third act treats the tragicomic death of Abelardo, the ascendance of Abelardo II, and the intervention of Mr. Jones as ultimate arbiter of power. José Celso opted for operatic melodrama by punctuating the scene with music from Carlos Gomes's opera *Lo schiavo* (The slave) (1889), thereby alluding to the vassal-like dependency of Brazil.[14] José Celso's use of opera during the final act was most likely inspired by Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe*, which featured operatic excerpts from Gomes's *Il Guarani* and Verdi's *Otello*.[15] In both productions, opera was used to create an aura of phony artifice and deceit.

José Celso later claimed that his staging of Oswald's play was partially inspired by foreign stereotypes of Brazil: "When I was studying *O rei da vela*, the cover of *Time* magazine featured a color photo of President Costa e Silva with a green and yellow banner in the background. Inside, a story with photos, for the foreigner to see, of 'our people' and 'our riches.' This shocked me: the other side of the story reverberated in my ears."[16] On one level, this state-

ment suggests that Oficina's staging represented a capitulation to "banana republic" stereotypes that its contemporaries sought to combat. But it also suggests a reading of Brazilian culture that was attuned to the "other side of the story," which had been obscured by the regime's efforts to project an idyllic image at home and abroad. Teatro Oficina sought to ironically appropriate stereotypes about Brazilian culture and society in order to make a statement about dependency and exploitation under military rule.

Teatro Oficina's production of *O rei da vela* was a milestone event in the Brazilian stage. In 1968, the troupe performed the play in international festivals in Italy and France and produced several revivals of it after returning to Brazil.[17] In the early 1970s, José Celso initiated production of an experimental film of *O rei da vela* that was completed in 1984 but never distributed. In the cinematic version, the sequence of the play was substantially altered, producing an extended, nonlinear film featuring a mixture of stage scenes, archival footage, and improvised "happenings" shot in public.

Like all of the arts in Brazil during the 1960s, theater productions were increasingly scrutinized by state and federal censors. By 1968, government intervention had become so intense that the theater community in São Paulo declared a general strike to protest censorship.[18] Even more sinister forms of interference and repression subsequently threatened the theater community. Following *O rei da vela*, José Celso directed *Roda viva* (Wheel of life), a play written by Chico Buarque about the cynical manufacturing of pop stars for mass consumption. José Celso's experiments with theater of cruelty were further radicalized in *Roda viva,* in which the stage and the audience became almost indistinguishable. In one scene, the pop star protagonist, Ben Silver, is ritually crucified and pieces of raw liver are distributed among spectators, who thereby become implicated in the cannibalistic consumption of the pop idol. Another scene features the Virgin Mary in a bikini, gyrating in front of the phallic lens of a TV camera. One character merely circulates throughout the theater shouting obscenities at the audience. The staging of *Roda viva* would eventually provoke the ire of right-wing elements in Brazilian society. During one performance, a right-wing paramilitary organization, the Comando de Caça aos Comunistas (CCC, Command for Hunting Communists), invaded the theater, destroyed the props, and beat up the actors, alleging that the play was "immoral" and "subversive." When *Roda viva* toured to Porto Alegre, the CCC kidnapped the lead actor and actress and threatened to execute them.[19]

Teatro Oficina's *O rei da vela* was well received by theater critics and had a significant impact on the elaboration of the tropicalist project. Although Caetano Veloso had composed his song-manifesto "Tropicália" before see-

ing the play, he acknowledged its influence in an interview in late 1967: "I am the 'Candle King' of Oswald de Andrade produced by the Teatro Oficina." [20] Seeing the play, Veloso realized that there was a convergence of sensibilities in several areas of cultural production that suggested the outlines of a formal "movement." [21]

Not all critics and artists were so enthusiastic about *O rei da vela.* Roberto Schwarz argued, for example, that Oficina's aggressive theater, which often involved the physical and verbal taunting of audience members, played with "the cynicism of bourgeois culture faced with its own image." Oficina's tactics ultimately amounted to "psychological manipulation" that closed off all avenues for political action.[22] While Schwarz remained skeptical of the redemptive and communitarian spirit of the Opinião and Arena productions, he was particularly disturbed by the nihilism of Oficina, which seemed only to demoralize the Left.

Augusto Boal, the director of Teatro de Arena, wrote the most severe critique of Teatro Oficina's "guerrilla theater." It is useful to examine his attack because it echoed more general denunciations of the tropicalist movement. In late 1968, Boal organized the Primeira Feira Paulista de Opinião, a festival that brought together artists, mostly theater directors and popular musicians, including Edu Lobo, Sérgio Ricardo, Caetano Veloso, and Gilberto Gil. In the festival program, Boal published the essay "O que você pensa do teatro brasileiro?" (What do you think about Brazilian theater?), in which he analyzed the main currents of leftist theater in Brazil. In this essay, Boal explained that the intention of the event was to foster unity among a divided left-wing artistic community. Yet his essay turned out to be a broadside attack on the Teatro Oficina and the tropicalist movement in general. He critiqued the tropicalist movement on several grounds, claiming that it was "neo-Romantic," because it only attacked the appearances of society, and "homeopathic," in that it was only capable of criticizing through ironic affirmation of *cafonice* (bad taste). He asserted that tropicalist satire was "inarticulate" since it ultimately provided entertainment for privileged audiences, instead of shocking them: "[I]t intends to *épater,* but it only succeeds in *enchanter les bourgeois.*" Finally, he argued that the tropicalist phenomena was "imported" since the musicians imitated the Beatles and the theater directors emulated the Living Theater (an experimental theater troupe from the United States). Other critics echoed Boal's allegation that the tropicalists were imitative. One journalist writing for *Última Hora* derided tropicalist musicians for "copying" foreign pop: "It's necessary to establish a parallel between the work of the young tropicalists and the English original. The Beatles demonstrate more clearly

their creative impulses. It's basically a difference of cultural evolution." [23] In other words, for these critics, Tropicália was no more than a second-rate imitation of metropolitan models.

Boal concluded that Tropicália was misguided and potentially dangerous for left-wing artists because of its "absence of lucidity." He seemed to be most disturbed by the iconoclastic and ambiguous attitude of the tropicalists, and he vigorously defended his own camp, the *sempre de pé,* or "always standing," faction, which included the Teatro de Arena. He defended a binary, or "Manichaean," view of culture and politics that had no patience for ambiguity: "Let this be clear: the 'always standing' faction, its specific techniques, Manichaeanism and exhortation—all of this is valid, activating, and functional, politically correct, forward looking, etc., etc., etc. Nobody should be shy about exalting the people, which is what seems to have happened to the shamefaced left. . . . The dictatorship is Manichaean. Against it and against its methods left-wing art must rise up Manichaeistically." [24] The "politically correct" stance of Augusto Boal, rooted in the populist experience of the CPC, found little common ground with the anarchic and ironic attitude of the tropicalists.

The tropicalist musicians also maintained a dialogue with the visual arts, especially with Neorealismo Carioca and Nova Objetividade, two distinct currents based in Rio de Janeiro. Neorealismo shared many of the same characteristics found in Anglo-American pop art—a rejection of modernist "high" art; an interest in popular media such as graphic design, comics, and newspaper photos; experimentation with mass production; and a focus on quotidian urban life. In comparison with metropolitan pop art, however, the neorealists were more engaged in social and political critique.

Rubens Gerchman, for example, produced a series of paintings, *Os Desaparecidos* (The disappeared) (1965), based on stark black-and-white photographs of missing people, presumably the victims of military repression after the coup. Other Gerchman paintings from this period appropriated kitsch iconography of urban popular culture. *Concurso de Miss* (Beauty pageant) (1965) features a line of somewhat awkward-looking women in bathing suits with plastic smiles before a group of photographers and onlookers. Unlike Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe series, the female contestants representing various Brazilian states utterly lack glamour and fame.[25] Gerchman's *O rei do mau gosto* (The king of bad taste) (1966) is a multimedia piece incorporating the insignia from a local soccer team, a heart containing the words "Amo-te" (I love you) surrounded by ornate beveled glass, and a lacquered serving tray featuring two parrots, a palm tree, and the Sugar Loaf Mountain at sunset (plate 8).

The use of these items suggested that the "popular" could be found among the seemingly mediocre objects and emblems of the urban masses. His most famous piece from the 1960s, *Lindonéia,* was the inspiration for a tropicalist song by Caetano Veloso that will be discussed below.

The most radical innovator and theorist of Brazilian visual arts during the 1960s was Hélio Oiticica.[26] Much in the spirit of vanguard movements such as Dada, Oiticica was concerned with abolishing the separation between art and life. In other words, the question for Oiticica was not how reality was represented in art but how experiments in art could be applied to life. His conceptualization of vanguardist practice was not based on aesthetic innovation but rather on the creation of what Brazilian critic Mário Pedrosa called "ambient antiart" that would create sites and contexts for collective behavioral experiments. Art was to be an "experimental exercise in liberty" capable of transforming individuals through sensory experience.[27]

For Oiticica, the artist should be a "proposer of practices" and not a creator of artistic objects for passive contemplation.[28] In the early 1960s, he first experimented with ambient antiart that required the active involvement of spectator/participants. During this time, he developed a close relationship with members of the Mangueira samba school, who inspired him to explore the performative dimensions of visual art. His first experiment along these lines was the creation of *parangolés,* a series of multicolored and multilayered capes to be worn by active participants who become the work of art itself. The designation *parangolé* was a slang expression used in Rio de Janeiro to describe a spontaneous and sudden "happening" that produces joy. According to Oiticica's annotations, the use of *parangolés* requires "direct corporal participation," since "it beckons the body to move, to ultimately *dance.*"[29] The first public exhibit of the *parangolés* in 1964 at the Museum of Modern Art featured samba dancers from Mangueira.

Oiticica further radicalized his experimentation with ambient antiart in 1967 when he presented the installation *Tropicália* at the collective show Nova Objetividade Brasileira at the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro (plate 9). He conceived the project as a critique of international pop art and its Brazilian manifestations, seeking to create a "new language with Brazilian elements" by creating a three-dimensional ambient space inspired by the *favela* of Mangueira. The installation referenced the "organic architecture" of the *favelas,* the unfinished constructions, the vacant lots, and other material forms of an urban space in the process of formation. Oiticica described *Tropicália* as the "very first conscious, objective attempt to impose an obviously Brazilian image upon the current context of the avant-garde and national art

manifestations in general." The work consists of two structures, called *penetráveis* (penetrables), made of wood and brightly colored printed fabric, which are reminiscent of *favela* shanties. Sand and pebble paths and tropical plants circle the structures, and live parrots flutter about in a large cage. The main *penetrável* invites the participant into a dark, labyrinthine passage at the end of which is a functioning television. The structure "devours" the participant in the incandescent glow of the televised image. Mindful of Oswaldian poetics, Oiticica called it the "most cannibalistic work of Brazilian art." [30] The use of such a ubiquitous symbol of modern communication placed within a shanty-like structure surrounded by parrots and flowered cloth underlined the disjunctions of modernity in a developing country, where gaps between the technological and the tropical, the modern and the archaic, the rich and the poor create stark contrasts. This sort of juxtaposition, which suggested that underdevelopment was inscribed in the process of conservative modernization in Brazil, would become a hallmark of tropicalist cultural production. The secondary *penetrável* is an open structure containing the inscription "Pureza é um mito" (Purity is a myth), a tropicalist maxim that suggests the impossibility of native authenticity.

There is some debate as to whether these manifestations in film, theater, and visual arts should be regarded as tropicalist. Antônio Risério has argued that "Tropicália was essentially dreamed up by Caetano" and in no way constituted a general artistic movement.[31] In fact, Tropicália only coalesced as a self-conscious movement in the field of popular music. Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe*, Teatro Oficina's *O rei da vela*, and Oiticica's installation *Tropicália* were identified as tropicalist only after the emergence of the musical movement. In 1967, when these works were shown, they were not necessarily understood as part of the same cultural logic that cut across artistic fields. They were interpreted within the specific fields of film, theater, and visual arts, respectively. This being said, it is nevertheless important to recognize the profoundly dialogic nature of late-1960s cultural production in Brazil. Veloso himself has consistently affirmed that *Terra em transe* and *O rei da vela* were crucial events that revealed to him a "movement that transcended the sphere of popular music." [32]

Even within the more restricted realm of popular music, Risério's "Caetanocentric" appraisal underestimates the contributions of his Bahian cohorts and their allies, which are registered on tropicalist solo albums from 1968–69 by Gilberto Gil, Tom Zé, Os Mutantes, Rogério Duprat, Nara Leão, and Gal Costa. Even Veloso's sister, Maria Bethânia, who did not formally participate in the tropicalist movement, recorded a live album in 1968 featuring

tropicalist songs. Veloso was the leading voice of Tropicália, especially after it coalesced as a formal movement, but he worked collectively with the Bahian group and in dialogue with artists in other areas who were articulating similar ideas.

THE RELICS OF BRAZIL: TROPICÁLIA AND ALLEGORY

The watershed cultural events of 1967, especially Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe*, Teatro Oficina's *O rei da vela*, and Hélio Oiticica's *Tropicália*, signaled a revival of the modern allegory. In its classical Greek definition, allegory denotes any verbal or visual representation that "speaks otherwise" (*allos-agoreuein*), often generating meaning obliquely through figural abstractions. In Greco-Roman mythology and in biblical exegeses of the medieval and baroque periods, allegory was a mode of representation that evoked correspondences between material reality and the spiritual world. In the nineteenth century, Romantic poets rejected allegorical conventions as mechanical and arbitrary allusions. In opposition to the allegory, the Romantics privileged the symbol as a mode of representation that crystallized eternal and universal truths. Whereas the allegory merely alluded to a concept, the symbol was the very incarnation of the idea.

Modern formulations of allegory are particularly indebted to Walter Benjamin's critique of the Romantics in his study of the *trauerspiel*, the melancholic "sorrow play" of the German Baroque. Benjamin detected similarities between the baroque period and post–World War I Europe, which were both marked by decadence, and defended allegorical expression as particularly relevant to the dilemmas of modernity. The use of allegory is often identified with artistic expressions of political defeat or disillusionment.[33] Whereas the symbol constructed images of organic totality, Benjamin asserted, the allegory represented history as a heterogeneous ensemble of fragments: "Allegories are, in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things."[34] Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe* and Teatro Oficina's staging of *O rei da vela* might be read as modern Brazilian *trauerspiel* in which the colonial past and the neocolonial present were rendered as spectacles of political defeat and decadence.

Not all tropicalist allegories of Brazilian history and culture were as caustic and despairing as *Terra em transe* and *O rei da vela*. One of the most striking national allegories of this period was Glauco Rodrigues's painting *Primeira missa no Brasil* (First mass in Brazil) (1971), produced after the height of the

tropicalist movement but clearly inspired by its allegorical insights (plate 12). Rodrigues's painting was a tropicalist parody of a celebrated painting of the same name produced in 1861 by Vitor Meirelles, an academic artist of the late Romantic period in Brazil. Meirelles's painting represents the first mass celebrated by Portuguese explorers following the arrival of the fleet led by Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500. In the painting, a priest and a retinue of clerics and soldiers, who seem to ascend toward the heavens, consecrate the newly discovered tropical lands in the name of Portuguese Christendom. Native Brazilians hang from trees and kneel reverentially on the ground to witness the event with great awe and curiosity. Meirelles's naturalist painting enacts two dominant themes of nineteenth-century Euro-American Romanticism: the epic encounter between Civilization and Nature and the catechism and domestication of the "noble savage."

Rodrigues maintained Meirelles's basic schemata with prelates and conquistadors ascending upward toward the left corner of the frame. Several Portuguese celebrants almost seem to have been lifted directly from the original painting. Yet Rodrigues's painting also features a host of anachronistic and displaced figures of diverse historical temporalities, social classes, and cultures. A white middle-class beach bum saunters by, observing the ceremony with casual interest. He is adorned with an indigenous feather headdress, a tooth necklace, and body paint, yet he also wears the sunglasses, yellow swim trunks, rubber sandals, and blue towel of a modern habitué of a Copacabana beach. Behind him to the right stand a *porta-estandarte* (flag bearer) and a *passista* (dancer) of a samba school from Rio de Janeiro. In the foreground, an *iawô* (initiate) of the Afro-Brazilian religion, Candomblé, sits in trance. In Meirelles's painting, the Indians are rendered as objects of nature or as reverent converts to the colonialist faith. In Rodrigues's painting, by contrast, two native Brazilians with their backs to the ceremony directly confront the viewer as if to question our perception of this foundational moment of the colonial enterprise. Aside from two cartoonish parrots and some tropical plants, there is no evidence of nature. There is only a white background, as if to suggest that the nation, past and present, cannot be apprehended as a coherent totality but only as an incomplete tableau of "so many irreconcilable Brazils," as one critic noted.[35] The religious solemnity of the first mass is humorously satirized in Rodrigues's carnivalesque allegory of Brazilian history and culture.

Veloso's song-manifesto "Tropicália," the opening track on his first solo album of 1968 (plate 3), is the most outstanding example of allegorical representation in Brazilian song. As a national allegory, the song evidences both

the bitter despair of Rocha's film and the carnivalesque exuberance of Rodrigues's painting. The lyrics of "Tropicália" form a fragmentary montage of events, emblems, popular sayings, and musical and literary citations. Although unnamed, the most immediate referent in the song is Brasília, the monument to high modernist architecture and developmental modernization that became the political and administrative center of the military regime after 1964. "Tropicália" alludes to the trajectory of Brasília from a utopian symbol of national progress to a dystopian allegory of the failure of a democratic modernity in Brazil. Veloso has explained: "It was an image of great irony, a more or less unconscious expression of what it was like to be in Brazil and be Brazilian at that time: you'd think of Brasília, of the *planalto central* [central high plains] and you'd expect to derive a certain feeling of pride from the architecture, and yet it was not at all like that. The feeling was more like 'What a monstrosity!' And this is because Brasília was built, and then the dictatorship came, and so Brasília remained there as a center of this dictatorship."[36] In the song, Brasília is presented as a "monument" made of "papier-mâché and silver," suggesting that the brilliant grandeur of the exterior conceals a fragile structure, just as the triumphant completion of the futuristic capital obscured a larger context of underdevelopment and social inequality.

Veloso's "Tropicália" is also an ironic monument to Brazilian literature and culture that includes textual references to Romantic writer José de Alencar, Parnassian poet Olavo Bilac, composer Catulo da Paixão Cearense, and pop icons Carmen Miranda and Roberto Carlos. The song opens with a declamation that cleverly parodies a foundational text of national literature. As the sound engineer, Rogério Gauss, was testing the microphones for the recording, the drummer Dirceu extemporaneously parodied the *Carta de Pero Vaz Caminha*, a letter to the king of Portugal written after the Cabral fleet had landed on the South American coast in 1500. "When Pero Vaz Caminha discovered that the Brazilian land was fertile and lush, he wrote a letter to the king saying that all that is planted grows and flourishes. And the Gauss of that time recorded it." Attuned to aleatoric and comic gestures in vanguard music of the 1960s, the conductor-arranger of the session, Júlio Medaglia, decided to incorporate the anachronistic parody over the "primitive" sounds of drumbeats, bells, and high-pitched, birdlike whistles. Following the witty anachronism, the sound of a brass and string orchestra enters, creating an atmosphere of epic suspense and drama.

The song is narrated in the first person, as if Veloso himself were the main protagonist of this surreal journey through the heartland of Brazil. In the first stanza, the narrator positions himself as a leader surveying Brasília: "I orga-

nize the movement / I orient the carnival / I inaugurate the monument / in the central high plains of the country." The first refrain introduces a binary opposition between the modern and the archaic that structures the discourse of the entire song: "viva a bossa-sa-sa / viva a palhoça-ça-ça-ça." Bossa nova, the sophisticated "finished product" associated with modernity is coupled with *palhoça*, a type of mud hut common in the Brazilian interior. Subsequent refrains rhyme *mata* (forest) and *mulata*, Maria and Bahia, Iracema (the female protagonist of José de Alencar's Indianist novel), and Ipanema (the upscale beachfront neighborhood of Rio). Veloso's "Tropicália" updates the Oswaldian binary metaphor of the "forest and the school." Augusto de Campos would later note the song's affinities with Oswald de Andrade's modernist poetics, calling it "our first Pau-Brasil song." [37]

As the narrator approaches the entrance to the futuristic monument in the second stanza, spatial and temporal contexts collapse into the archaic realm: "the monument has no door / the entrance to an old, narrow, winding street." Inside the monument, we find "a smiling, ugly, dead child extending his hand" as if to plea for alms. More than any other, this passage resonates with the Benjaminian allegory: "Everything about history that, from the very beginning, has been untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, is expressed in a face—or rather in a death's head." [38] The specter of the dead child allegorizes the defeat of redistributive modernization and the maintenance of abject poverty.

Celso Favaretto has noted the ways in which "Tropicália" specifically allegorizes the Brazilian political context of the 1960s through references to right and left hands.[39] In the third stanza, for example, Veloso parodies a traditional *samba-de roda*, replacing the second phrase of the line "a mão direita tem uma roseira / que dá flor na primavera" (the right hand holds a rose bush / which flowers in the spring) with "autenticando a eterna primavera" (authenticating eternal spring), a phrase that suggests the willful manipulation of nature to project an image of eternal paradise. The subsequent phrase, however, undermines the idyllic scene with a pointed reference to scavenger birds, a sign of impending death when the Northeast backlands are afflicted by drought: "in the gardens the vultures circle over the sunflowers all afternoon." The left, meanwhile, is rendered as an armed bandit who incongruously tries to wield a gun using his wrist. His failure to act is compensated by an appeal to popular culture, suggested by the phrase "his heart jumps to a samba on the tambourine."

The final stanza alludes directly to the popular music scene of the 1960s. Unlike the metasongs of Chico Buarque and Edu Lobo, which reflect on the

redemptive value of music, "Tropicália" satirizes the central conflict of post-1964 popular music between the second generation of bossa nova and the rock stars of the Jovem Guarda:

> domingo é o fino da bossa
> segunda-feira está na fossa
> terça-feira vai à roça, porém
> o monumento é bem moderno
> não disse nada do modelo do meu terno
> que tudo mais vá pro inferno meu bem
>
> Sunday "O fino da bossa" is on
> Monday is the pits
> Tuesday on the farm, however
> the monument is quite modern
> you said nothing about the style of my suit
> to hell with everything else my love

Elis Regina's popular television program "O Fino da Bossa," broadcast on Sunday afternoons, the *fossa,* a popular idiom denoting angst and depression used to describe a melodramatic vocal style from the 1950s, and the farm, a reference to rural Brazil, suggest a regression from the modern to the archaic. He also cites Roberto Carlos's hit song from 1965 and his personalized line of clothing. The song erupts euphorically in the final refrain—"viva a banda-da-da, Carmen Miranda-da-da-da"—which couples Chico Buarque's 1966 festival hit, "A banda," with Brazil's first international star for export.

With the repetition of the final syllable of "Miranda," Veloso also invoked Dada, an avant-garde project that sought to expose, and ultimately undermine, the social, cultural, and institutional mechanisms involved in producing and consuming an object recognized as "art." In the 1960s, pop artists enacted a similar attack on high modernism, epitomized by abstract expressionism, by generating representations of banal objects and icons of mass society such as the Campbell's soup can and Marilyn Monroe. Veloso once remarked that citing Carmen Miranda in this song "was like Andy Warhol putting the soup can in his painting."[40]

Several critics have interpreted tropicalist recycling of dated or banal material as a form of parody involving ironic ridicule akin to modernist practices oriented toward an aesthetic of rupture with past styles and cultural discourses.[41] Yet Veloso's "Tropicália" seems more attuned with pastiche, which maintains a neutral stance in relation to the past. According to Fredric

Caetano Veloso (right) and Gilberto Gil relax backstage in 1968. (Abril Imagens)

Jameson, pastiche is "devoid of any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction." It is a "blank parody" involving the "random cannibalization of all styles of the past," a characteristic of much postmodern cultural production.[42] Although tropicalist songs often convey a sense of ironic distance in relation to literary texts and cultural discourses that shaped Brazilian national identity, there are several instances in which they express a more "neutral" attitude proper to pastiche aesthetics.

Veloso's own reading of "Tropicália," especially his provocative reference to Carmen Miranda at the end of the song, suggests an aesthetics akin to pastiche. The song itself was not a musical pastiche of Carmen Miranda, since it made no mimetic reference to her unique vocal style. Instead, its relationship to pastiche aesthetics may be detected in the "neutral" way, free from sarcasm, in which her name is invoked as a cultural icon. Noting that his first exposure to American pop art at the XIX São Paulo Biennial in 1967 had "confirmed a trend we were exploring in tropicalismo," Veloso describes his relationship with Carmen Miranda, a figure who had become a "culturally repulsive object" for his generation:

> [Y]ou want to bring in an object that's culturally repulsive, so you go embrace it and then you dislocate it. Then you start to realize why you

chose that particular object, you begin to understand it, and you realize the beauty in the object, and the tragedy involved in its relationship with humanity . . . and finally you begin to love it. . . . But before that, there's a moment when you arrive at that neutral point, when you become uncritical in relation to that object. This was the case with Andy Warhol, who I think stayed at that point right to the end of his life: you cannot think that he is saying: "Look how this is tacky, kitsch, horrible, we should transcend it." Not at all; he's at that neutral point when the object is just the object: Bang! It's in your face and it has nothing to say about itself. So Carmen Miranda, at the time that I wrote "Tropicália," had reached that point of neutrality for me. . . . She had been recovered: a kind of salvation.[43]

Although not articulated explicitly as such, Veloso's commentary suggests that he was reading the past (i.e., Carmen Miranda) through the "neutral," although not necessarily dispassionate, lens of pastiche. He was not proposing a rupture with Carmen Miranda and all that she represented as a samba stylist and international emissary of Brazilian popular culture. By citing Miranda at the end of "Tropicália" and reflecting on the "tragedy" of her vexed relationship with the post–bossa nova canon, he was reading her as an allegory of Brazilian culture and its reception abroad.

The allegorical impulse in Tropicália was further developed on the group album *Tropicália, ou panis et circencis,* which featured the core members of the tropicalist group: Veloso, Gil, Tom Zé, Gal Costa, Os Mutantes, Rogério Duprat, and poets Torquato Neto and José Carlos Capinan. Nara Leão, the erstwhile "muse" of bossa nova and protest song, also participated after adhering to the tropicalist project. Favaretto has aptly described the album as the "tropicalist summa" that "integrates and updates the tropicalist aesthetic project and language experiments."[44] It was recorded in May 1968 and was released in late July. By October the album had already sold twenty thousand copies, which were strong sales for that time.[45]

Tropicália, ou panis et circencis was Brazil's first concept album integrating song lyrics, musical arrangements, visual material, and a text in the form of a discontinuous movie script on the backside of the album cover. Authored by Veloso, the movie script played with the idea of Tropicália as a media phenomenon. In the opening scene, a chorus of international celebrities sings "Brazil is the country of the future" as Veloso quips "this genre is out of fashion," an acerbic reference to patriotic *samba-exaltação* (samba-exaltation). Subsequent scenes featured various members of the tropicalist group discussing their musical project: Torquato Neto and Gal Costa ponder the mean-

ing of references contained in several tropicalist songs, while Nara Leão and Os Mutantes argue about the merits of Brazilian music in relation to international pop. Tom Zé reads the concrete poetry journal *Noigandres* and takes notes. In the last scene, João Gilberto sits in his house in New Jersey (where he was living at the time), telling Augusto de Campos to inform the tropicalists that he is "looking at them from here." Veloso's homage to João Gilberto in the film script/liner notes reaffirmed the tropicalists' affinity with bossa nova and their position in the "evolution" of Brazilian popular music.

The album cover of *Tropicália, ou panis et circencis* was a parody of a bourgeois family photo (plate 1). Costa and Neto appear as a conventional, well-mannered couple; Gil sits on the floor in a bathrobe printed with tropical motifs holding a graduation portrait of Capinan; Duprat daintily holds a chamber pot as if it were a tea cup; Tom Zé plays the northeastern migrant, holding a leather satchel; Os Mutantes ostentatiously show off their guitars; and Veloso is seated in the middle holding a large portrait of Nara Leão wearing a floppy beach hat. The cover photo was a visual allusion to the title track of the album, "Panis et circenses" (Bread and circus) (Gil-Veloso), which satirized the conventions of a traditional bourgeois family. The title of the song and the album refers to the famous statement by the classical poet Juvenal, who expressed his disdain for ancient Roman citizens who were placated by the calculated use of "bread and circus."[46] In the song, a first-person poetic voice unsuccessfully attempts to rouse the family from its state of immobility and mediocrity: "I tried to sing / my illuminated song / I unfurled the sails over the masts in the air / I set free the lions and the tigers in the backyard / but the people in the dining room are busy being born and dying." Recorded by Os Mutantes with arrangements and sound effects by Rogério Duprat, "Panis et circenses" is reminiscent of several Beatles recordings of the time, which was no coincidence.[47]

When the tropicalist album appeared, it was heralded as a Brazilian response to The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.[48] The Beatles' famous concept album of 1967 was a major innovation in modern rock that was qualitatively different from their previous albums. A purposeful mix of various styles, it was a commentary on the history of popular music that self-consciously played with clichés of the British music hall tradition. In a comparable fashion, *Tropicália, ou panis et circencis* incorporated a broad array of old and new styles of national and international provenance such as rock, bossa nova, mambo, bolero, and liturgical hymns. Veloso has explained the concept behind the album: "Instead of working as a group in order to develop a homogeneous sound that would define a new style, we preferred to utilize several

recognizable sounds from commercial music, making the arrangements an independent element that would clarify the song, but also clash with it. In a way, we sought to 'sample' musical scraps and we used the arrangements as ready-mades." [49] With arranger Rogério Duprat, the tropicalists were beginning to experiment with concepts and techniques that were current among vanguard composers and cutting-edge pop artists.

Their appropriations of dated material on the concept album oscillated between parody and pastiche. More parodic tracks included a slapstick rendition of the Cuban mambo "Três caravelas" (Three caravels) (Algueró-Moreu), a jocular pseudotribute to Christopher Columbus sung in a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese. Other songs were recorded in a manner that was remarkably "straight" and lacking in ironic distance. Veloso's rendition of "Coração materno" (Maternal heart), a melodramatic paean to motherly love and dedication, was strikingly genuine; any residual parodic effect depended solely on his position as a young pop star. The song was composed and recorded by Vicente Celestino, a pre–bossa nova radio singer who starred in several popular *chanchada* films. Within the context of the concept album, with its panoply of past styles, Veloso's rendition comes off more like a pastiche rather than a parody of Celestino's sentimental ballad. The album closed with a rendition of "Hino ao Senhor do Bonfim," the official hymn of the Bonfim Church in Salvador. The tropicalists recorded an upbeat version of the hymn, mixing traditional brass band processional music with bossa nova stylizations.

Tropicália, ou panis et circencis featured the other principle song-manifesto of the tropicalist movement, "Geléia geral" (General jelly), written by Gilberto Gil and Torquato Neto. The concept of *geléia geral* was first advanced by concrete poet and critic Décio Pignatari following an argument with modernist writer Cassiano Ricardo, who had suggested that the concrete poets would eventually have to relax their inflexible position regarding formal experimentation. Pignatari retorted that "in the Brazilian *geléia geral* someone has to exercise the function of spine and bone!" [50] In other words, vanguardist rigor was needed to provide form to the protean mélange of Brazilian culture as it was broadcast in fragments through the mass media. Torquato Neto appropriated the trope in a highly ambiguous fashion that simultaneously expresses critique and complicity with the *geléia geral.* Of all the songs on the concept album, "Geléia geral" was most closely aligned with the ironic stance of parody.

Gilberto Vasconcellos called attention to the juxtaposition of the "tropical universe and the urban-industrial universe" that occurs throughout "Geléia geral." [51] As discussed in Chapter 1, this binary structured Oswald de An-

drade's "Brazilwood Manifesto," which attempted to reconcile the "forest and the school." Unlike Veloso's "Tropicália," which poses the opposition between the archaic and the modern as an aberration, "Geléia geral" is a buoyant song that proposed a synthesis. In the refrain, for example, the traditional folkloric dance *bumba-meu-boi* (buck my bull) and Brazilian *iê-iê-iê* merge into one dance: "É bumba-iê-iê-iê / É a mesma dança meu boi" (It's bumba-iê-iê-iê / It's the same dance my bull). By suggesting the possibilities of new cultural hybrids based on traditional dances and rock, the song challenged prevailing notions of cultural authenticity in Brazil. In a scene from the pseudoscript on the *Tropicália* album cover, Torquato Neto preempts criticism by expressing disingenuous anxiety over how a renowned Brazilian folklorist will interpret the song: "Do you think that Câmara Cascudo will think that we mean that *bumba-meu-boi* and *iê-iê-iê* are the same dance?"

Like Oswald's manifesto, "Geléia geral" also appropriates the symbolic repertoire of the Brazilian literary tradition in an effort to satirize the pomposity of "high" culture. This irreverent gesture was brilliantly enacted on the cover of Gil's 1968 tropicalist solo album (plate 4). Created by Rogério Duarte, Antônio Dias, and David Zingg, the album cover featured a photo of Gil dressed in the official attire of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, a group of forty peer-elected "immortals" consisting at that time entirely of white males. He is wearing bifocals similar to those used by Machado de Assis, the first president of the academy from 1897 until his death in 1908. Machado de Assis was of partial African descent, but his position as the most consecrated literary figure in Brazil gained him access to white elite social circles. The image of a black popular musician dressed as an "immortal" ridiculed the academy's elitism by making a subtle allusion to the ambiguous position of Machado de Assis and by implicitly questioning the academy's refusal to acknowledge the literary value of popular song.

"Geléia geral" is the most self-consciously "literary" composition of the tropicalist songbook in that it parodies ornamental language and conventional verse while also using montage techniques similar to those used by Oswald de Andrade. The first stanza invokes the figure of the official poet who praises Brazil's natural beauty.[52] Using a barrage of rhyming clichés that are reminiscent of the fin de siècle poetry, the song satirizes patriotic discourse and belles lettres pomposity:

> o poeta desfolha a bandeira
> e a manhã tropical se inicia
> resplandente, cadente, fagueira

num calor girassol com alegria
na geléia geral brasileira
que o *Jornal do Brasil* anuncia

the poet unfurls the flag
and the tropical morning commences
resplendent, refulgent, radiant
in joyous sunflower heat
in the general jelly of Brazil
that the *Jornal do Brasil* announces

Gil's flamboyant vocal delivery establishes ironic distance in relation to the patriotic celebration of tropical exuberance. Famous literary passages of consecrated writers are parodied throughout the text, including Gonçalves Dias's "Canção do Exílio" (Song of exile) (1843) and Olavo Bilac's "Hino da Bandeira" (Hymn to the flag) (1906). Rogério Duprat added musical citations of Carlos Gomes's opera *Il Gaurani* (1870) and Frank Sinatra's "All the Way." Even Oswald de Andrade, the literary and spiritual godfather of Tropicália, does not escape tropicalist parody in this song. His maxim from the "Cannibalist Manifesto," "a alegria é a prova dos nove" (happiness is the proof of nines), is followed by the line "e a tristeza é teu porto seguro" (and sadness is your safe harbor). Oswald's utopian "matriarchy of Pindorama" outlined in the 1928 manifesto is ironically heralded as the "country of the future," an allusion to flag-waving patriotism.

Shifting from Parnassian verse to modernist verbal montage, the middle of the song features a declamatory interlude in which Gil recites an inventory of quotidian sayings, clichés, and references to popular culture, forming an allegorical panorama of everyday life in Brazil. In this section, Torquato Neto's lyric recalls the *poemas piadas* (joke poems) of Oswald de Andrade's *Poesia Pau-Brasil* that stitch together fragments of verbal "ready-mades" devoid of poetic language.[53] The elliptical references describe public and private spheres of national life ironically exalted as the "relics of Brazil":

doce mulata malvada
um elepê de Sinatra
maracujá mês de abril
santo barroco baiano
superpoder de paisano
formiplac e céu de anil
três destaques da Portela

carne seca na janela
alguém que chora por mim
um carnaval de verdade
hospitaleira amizade
brutalidade jardim

sweet wicked *mulata*
an LP of Sinatra
passion fruit in April
baroque Bahian saint
superpower of the peasant
formica and blue skies
three highlights of Portela
dried meat in the window
someone who cries for me
a true carnival
hospitable friendship
brutality garden

These heterogeneous emblems of *brasilidade* recall García Canclini's description of popular culture as the product of "complex hybrid processes using as signs of identification elements originating from diverse classes and nations."[54] The modernist stereotype of the "sweet wicked *mulata*"—so reminiscent of the characters of Jorge Amado novels—is juxtaposed with an "LP of Sinatra," a foreign cultural icon adored by the Brazilian middle class. Further down, a grandiose stock phrase of patriotic poetry used to describe Brazil's blue skies, *céu de anil*, is coupled with a mundane industrial product, *formiplac* (formica). Images of a bucolic and folkloric Brazil are juxtaposed with banal items from an urban-industrial Brazil.

The critique of *brasilidade* turns mordant in the final two lines, which juxtapose "hospitaleira amizade" (hospitable friendship), a reference to Brazilian cordiality, and "brutalidade jardim" (brutality garden), a line from Oswald de Andrade's 1924 novel *Memórias Sentimentais de João Miramar.*[55] Oswald's phrase is particularly striking because it does not follow Portuguese syntax (i.e., "jardim da brutalidade") in which the garden would necessarily be the site of brutality. Instead, the phrase constitutes a cubist montage in which the two halves contaminate each other but never cohere. The garden and brutality coexist in contradictory juxtaposition. Oswald's phrase captures the ambivalent stance of the tropicalists, who were fascinated with the Edenic national mythology yet also cognizant of its ideological premises and insidious uses.

The military regime sought to represent Brazil as a peaceful "garden" even as it brutally suppressed its opposition. Oswald's paradoxical phrase, alluding to violence within a tropical arcadia, telegraphically encapsulates the drama of Brazil in the late 1960s as seen through the tropicalist lens.

Roberto Schwarz was the first to note the use of allegory in Tropicália.[56] According to him, the military coup had created the conditions for the revival of archaic social forces and retrograde cultural values. Yet the military regime was also committed to capitalist modernization by intensifying Brazil's integration into the international economy. The coup signaled a victory for the traditional landowning elite and for modernizing urban technocrats, such that, according to Schwarz, the "archaic world" became an "intentional instrument" of conservative modernization. By subjecting archaic or anachronistic emblems to the "white light of ultramodernity," the tropicalists generated an allegory of Brazil. The tropicalist allegory was painfully revealing—"like a family secret dragged out into the middle of the street, like treachery to one's own class." The private dramas of the bourgeoisie were conflated with the public life of the nation, a typical feature of allegorical representation, as Jameson has noted.[57] Schwarz conceded that, in its most caustic and ironic manifestations, Tropicália could "capture the hardest and most difficult contradictions of present intellectual production." Ultimately, however, he argued that the tropicalist allegory was an "absurdity" because it posited the simultaneous existence of the modern and the archaic, or, in economic terms, the developed and the underdeveloped, as an aberration and not as a contradiction to be resolved dialectically through social transformation.

Schwarz argued that the "anachronistic conjunction" of the archaic and the modern in tropicalist productions lacked critical value since "the 'ready-made' images of the patriarchal world and imbecilic consumerism start signifying on their own, in a shameless, unaestheticized fashion." In other words, the recycled images—generated by the conjunction of a traditional, patrimonial society and its attendant conservative, antimodern social values, on the one hand, and a modernized facade of consumer society, on the other—effectively lose their critical impact when they take on a life of their own. Once stripped of ironic intention, these images may be appropriated, reproduced, and acritically consumed within capitalist society. In short, they become affirmative and celebratory, instead of negative and ironic.

For Schwarz, the tropicalists posited an "atemporal idea of Brazil" in which these contradictions were fatalistically rendered as timeless "emblems" of national identity. As several critics subsequently noted, Schwarz's critique of the tropicalist allegory was informed by the work of Hungarian

philosopher György Lukács.[58] In contrast to Benjamin, Lukács was highly critical of allegorical representation, arguing that it produced a phantasmagoric view of history that could not be grasped as a coherent, socially determined totality. According to this position, a politically efficacious work of art ought to propose or insinuate a dialectical resolution of historical contradictions. As a counterpoint to Tropicália, Schwarz referenced the work of Paulo Freire, the radical educator from Recife who directed a massive literacy campaign in the early 1960s under the auspices of the Movimento de Cultura Popular and with support from the progressive governor of Pernambuco, Miguel Arraes. Unlike Tropicália, Freire's literacy method was founded on a dialectical concept of history: illiteracy, poverty, and "the archaic nature of rural consciousness" could be overcome by popular education and redistributive modernization. In Schwarz's view, the tropicalist allegory reified historical contradictions (i.e., the coexistence of the archaic and the modern) by obscuring their basis in class society and pushing them into the realm of aesthetics.

Schwarz's analysis raises important questions about the roles of artists and intellectuals in Brazilian society and elsewhere. Comparing Paulo Freire to the tropicalists was somewhat analogous to comparing Martin Luther King Jr. to James Brown, or Noam Chomsky to Frank Zappa in the North American context. The comparison seems to overlook the considerable differences between the work of an activist engaged in popular education and artists elaborating a project of aesthetic renovation and cultural critique within the realm of mass media. Sartre made a useful distinction between intellectuals, who pursue theoretical and practical research, education, and political activism, and writers engaged in artistic production. For Sartre, the "true intellectual" is one who resists the universalist claims to bourgeois humanism, recognizes his or her own class position, and resolves to serve exploited classes by helping them obtain practical "knowledge of the world in order to change it."[59] Freire's literacy method, which has clear affinities with Sartre's principles, draws upon the everyday experience of learners so that they may attain literacy and "situate" themselves in class society. Sartre claims a separate, but related, role for the writer, which applies to artists in general: "The writer can testify only to his being-in-the-world, by producing an ambiguous object that suggests allusively." Veloso's own self-fashioning as an artist was informed by Sartre's notion of "being-in-the-world."[60] For a middle-class artist in urban Brazil at the end of the 1960s, this meant an encounter not only with military repression, student activism, and incipient guerrilla activity but also with domestic and foreign mass culture. The tropicalists produced an

"ambiguous object" that shed light on the contradictions of Brazilian modernity but did not advance any concrete program for collective action.

The tropicalist allegory simply did not fit into Schwarz's dialectical view of history in which the simultaneous coexistence of the archaic and the modern only could be perceived as a series of absurd "anachronisms" or "a real historical abyss" produced by "a juncture of different stages of capitalist development." There is a curious parenthesis in Schwarz's essay that is particularly revealing in this regard: "For the purposes of this argument, we are not interested in the celebrated cultural variety of Brazil in which it is true that one finds African religions, indigenous tribes, workers sometimes sold as slaves, share-cropping and industrial complexes." What is crucial for him is the "systematic character of this coexistence." Schwarz brackets this "cultural variety" because for him it merely represents different *stages* of capitalist development. While it may be true that slavery, sharecropping, and industrial production represent different stages of capitalism, it is less clear that African religions and indigenous tribes may be located, presumably as premodern residues, within the same temporal scheme. His analysis presupposes the progressive development not only of productive forces but also of culture itself toward an ideal model of Western modernity.

Schwarz's text became a key point of reference for subsequent analyses of the movement but also drew criticism for its dialectical rigidity. Silviano Santiago, for example, argued that the absurd was a category of "traditional Western thought" used to discredit anything that did not conform to its logical premises. He criticized Schwarz for not paying adequate attention to the specificity of Brazilian culture: "It's essential to perceive that certain radical stances sometimes contain a dose of Eurocentrism that when confronted with the revolutionary 'Brazilian' object, belittles it to the point of destroying its combative potential simply because it doesn't follow the *model*."[61] Whereas Schwarz analyzes the coexistence of the archaic and the modern in Brazil as a symptom of its economic dependency in a global capitalist system, Santiago flags it as a mark of Brazil's constitutive difference in relation to metropolitan centers.

Instead of focusing on the contradictions of class society, Santiago understood Brazilian society in relation to its history of colonial domination that set up a hierarchy of cultural values in which Europe became the universal model. Colonialism set up a relationship of dependence in which Brazil was exploited for its raw materials and its cultural life was reduced to a pale imitation of metropolitan thought. Santiago interprets colonization as a "narcissistic operation" in which "the Other is assimilated as the reflected image of

the conqueror." Despite its emancipative ends, the Hegelian-Marxist model of dialectical progress was not innocent of European ethnocentrism. According to Santiago, historical materialism was capable of understanding "minorities" (i.e., blacks and Indians) only in terms of "their total and definitive integration into the process of westernization."[62] Recognizing the agency of the Other within a global system of colonialism (and various forms of neocolonialism), Santiago proposes the notion of "differentiated universality" to describe the way in which dependent cultures subvert Eurocentric hierarchies. Universality exists either as a "colonizing process" leading toward total westernization or as a "differential process" in which dependent cultures disrupt the colonial relationship by asserting their alterity in relation to metropolitan cultures.[63]

Several years later, Veloso himself responded to Schwarz in the song "Love, love, love" from the LP *Muito* (1978). He did not take issue with Schwarz's reading of Tropicália as an "absurdity," acknowledging with wry humor that Brazil may be *absurdo*, but it is not *surdo* (deaf):

> absurdo o Brasil pode ser um absurdo
> até aí tudo bem nada mal
> pode ser um absurdo mas ele nõ é surdo
> o Brasil tem ouvido musical que não é normal
>
> absurd Brazil may be absurd
> nothing wrong with that
> perhaps it is absurd but it can hear
> Brazil is extraordinary for its musical ear

At first glance, Veloso's punch line seems to confirm Schwarz's suspicions about the tropicalists' "fatalist" view of Brazil, but it also delineates a space of national difference premised on a specific form of cultural competence that frequently combines the pleasurable with the political.

MADE IN BRAZIL: TROPICÁLIA, MASS CULTURE, AND THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

As described in Chapter 2, most tropicalist singers and songwriters came from small towns in Bahia before moving to Salvador for schooling. In the mid-1960s, they moved to Rio de Janeiro and eventually to São Paulo, where they began to elaborate their musical project. São Paulo was the ideal site for

the tropicalist movement. It was home to the concrete poets, the vanguardist composers and arrangers of the Música Nova group, and Os Mutantes, Brazil's first truly original rock band. The city also served as the base of operation for Brazil's largest television networks, TV Tupí and TV Record, although these two stations would soon be eclipsed by TV Globo in Rio de Janeiro. Perhaps more importantly, São Paulo was a city that was outside of prevailing standards of "good taste" defined largely by the cultural elite of Rio de Janeiro. Most tropicalist songs depict some aspect of urban life, from the disparities of uneven modernization to the shifting perceptions of technology, space, and affective experience. The tropicalists expressed fascination with the urban ambiance of São Paulo, with its large billboards, media networks, and heavy industries.

Veloso would later compose a famous tribute to São Paulo titled "Sampa" (the city's nickname) in which he reflected on his first impressions of the city during the tropicalist period. The song, featured on his 1978 LP *Muito*, conveys a sense of detached wonder in relation to this immense and unattractive industrial city that was so far removed from the glamour and style of Rio or the baroque charm of Salvador:

> é que quando cheguei por aqui
> eu nada entendia
> da dura poesia concreta de tuas esquinas
> a deselegância descreta de tuas meninas
>
> when I arrived here
> I understood nothing
> about the hard concrete poetry of your street corners
> the discrete inelegance of your girls

Above all, "Sampa" pays tribute to artists who "translated" the city for him, including the concrete poets Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, Rita Lee of Os Mutantes, José Agrippino de Paula (author of *Panamérica*), and the members of Teatro Oficina. The tropicalist movement was to some degree a product of the creative tension between the Bahians and the cosmopolitan cultural milieu they encountered in São Paulo.

Several tropicalist songs dramatized the experience of northeastern migrants who were forced to leave the impoverished rural Northeast to try to make a living in the large industrial capitals of center-south Brazil. Gilberto Gil's "Coragem para suportar" (Courage to persevere), for example, is reminiscent of *Show Opinião* songs in depicting the dire social conditions in the

sertão that force people to migrate. Veloso's song "No dia que eu vim-me embora" (The day I left home) describes the sad farewell of a young man who, after leaving behind his family, realizes to his chagrin that his leather satchel, although cured, emits an awful stench as he travels "all alone to the capital." In contrast, "Mamãe Coragem" (Mother courage) (Veloso-Neto), which was featured on the tropicalist concept album, describes an imaginary letter from a migrant who, after declaring he'll never return, consoles his mother by telling her to read a popular romance to keep from crying. The city offers him excitement, a chance to "play in carnival," and an opportunity to live independently and anonymously in a city "with no end."

In marked contrast to bossa nova songs, tropicalist compositions tend to eschew the convergence of nature and affective experience. One of Veloso's first tropicalist songs, which he composed while he was living in Rio de Janeiro, explicitly subverted the poetics of "ecological rationality" in bossa nova. In "Paisagem útil" (Useful landscape), from his first solo album (1968), technology becomes a surrogate for nature. The song's title is a parody of Tom Jobim's "Inútil paisagem" (Useless landscape), a bossa nova standard that declares with melancholy and pathos that the natural landscape (i.e., sky, sea, waves, wind, flowers) of Rio de Janeiro is "useless" in the absence of a lover. Veloso's song, in contrast, effaces nature altogether in favor of the luminous beauty of the Rio cityscape at night, with its "lights of a new dawning" and its speeding cars that "appear to fly." The song suggests affinities with the avant-garde poetics of futurism in its celebration of the city lights, machines of velocity, and modern urban-industrial life. In the final stanza, Veloso conjures the moon, a celestial body often associated with romance in popular songs:

> mas já se acende e flutua
> no alto do céu uma lua
> oval vermelha e azul
> no alto do céu do Rio
> uma lua oval da Esso
> comove ilumina o beijo
> dos pobres tristes felizes
> corações amantes
> do nosso Brasil
>
> suddenly it lights up and hovers
> high in the sky a moon
> a red and blue oval

high in the sky over Rio
an oval moon of Esso
inspires and illuminates the kiss
of the poor sad happy
loving hearts
of our Brazil

At this point, Veloso's voice waxes melodramatic in the style of Orlando Silva, a great romantic crooner from the 1940s and 1950s.[64] The moon in "Paisagem útil" is most inauthentic: "the oval moon of Esso." Instead of the eternal, symbolic moon of nature, Veloso invokes a historically determined, allegorical moon produced by a multinational company. An incandescent logo of a North American oil company hovers above as a simulacrum of nature, yet the lovers find romance anyway under the sign of foreign capital.

As elsewhere in the developing world, the mass-mediated, larger-than-life icons of the American culture industry, including Hollywood stars and comic book heroes, have been ubiquitous in Brazilian cities at least since World War II. Several tropicalist songs evoke these figures much in the manner of American pop art such as Warhol's assembly-line screenprints of Marilyn Monroe and Roy Lichtenstein's dramatic cartoon paintings. As an "impure genre" that combines iconic and literary cultures and has mass appeal across class lines, comic strips epitomize the sort of hybrid cultural practices that emerged with modernization and urbanization.[65] One song from Veloso's 1968 album, "Superbacana" (Supergroovy), invokes the hyperbolic, pyrotechnic world of cartoon superheroes in command of an arsenal of technology used to defeat the forces of evil. Set to a fast-paced *frevo*, an up-tempo carnival rhythm, the song adopts the condensed, discontinuous narrative structure of comics, citing in rapid-fire succession a series of fragmented images and characters. Veloso introduces an imaginary Brazilian comic strip hero, "Superbacana," who flies around Copacabana and does battle with Uncle Scrooge (known in Brazil as "Tio Patinhas"), the miserly character in Donald Duck cartoons who controls economic power. Resistance to U.S. imperialism is humorously rendered as the epic struggle of a Brazilian cartoon superhero against the forces of evil represented by Uncle Scrooge and a battalion of cowboys. As one critic has observed, Veloso's "Superbacana" is reminiscent of José Agrippino de Paula's "pop-tropicalist" novel, *Panamérica*, in its portrayal of international confrontation between developed and underdeveloped societies.[66]

Another song based in part on the world of superheroes was "Batma-

cumba" (Gil-Veloso), featured on the tropicalist concept album and on Os Mutantes' first recording. The musical arrangement foregrounds the conga drums, combining a heavy rock beat with Afro-Brazilian rhythmic sensibilities. Along with several other tropicalist compositions, the formal structure of "Batmacumba" was indebted to concrete poetry in its use of verbal montage and nondiscursive syntax.[67] The song is based on one poetic fragment ("batmacumbaiêiê batmacumbaobá") containing a series of semantic units pertaining to popular comics (Batman), Brazilian rock (iê-iê-iê), and Afro-Brazilian religion, sometimes referred to as *macumba* (bá, obá). With each line of the song, a morpheme is dropped until only "bá" remains and then gradually expands to the original phrase. Augusto de Campos later transcribed "Batmacumba" as a visual poem with two triangular "wings" meant to suggest a bat in flight.[68] "Batmacumba" is perhaps the most hybrid song in the entire tropicalist repertoire. Its formal structure is based on concrete poetry, while its semantic elements make reference to sacred and secular cultural domains. Campos related to the song the literary conflicts of the 1920s: "Instead of the nationalist '*macumba* for tourists' that Oswald [de Andrade] condemned, it seems that the Bahians decided to create a 'bat-*macumba*' for futurists."[69] By intentionally fusing these diverse elements, "Batmacumba" suggests that products of the multinational culture industry like Batman and rock have been "Brazilianized" and, conversely, that Afro-Brazilian religion is central to Brazilian modernity and not to a folkloric vestige of a premodern past.

As suggested by the songs discussed above, Gil and Veloso generally embraced São Paulo's mass-mediated commercial culture with palpable enthusiasm. Tom Zé, on the other hand, observed his new urban environment, which offered a dazzling array of commodities and media attractions, with irony and skepticism. His first solo album of 1968 may be read as a satiric chronicle of his first impressions of São Paulo, especially its aggressive capitalist culture. Recorded with two Jovem Guarda bands, Os Versáteis and Os Brazões, and arranged by vanguard composers of the Música Nova group, Damiano Cozzela and Sandino Hohagen, the album featured startling combinations of organ- and guitar-driven *iê-iê-iê*, rural *sertanejo* music, jinglelike ditties, experimental music, and the aleatoric noises of everyday urban life. It was originally released on Rozenblit, an independent label from Recife that went out of business in the 1970s. When the album was finally released on CD over thirty years later, critics heralded it as a lost treasure of Brazilian popular music, or, in the words of one critic, as the unjustly overlooked "side B of Tropicália."[70] The album cover (plate 2), somewhat reminiscent of Ruben

Gerchman's pop aesthetic, features a cartoon facade of a São Paulo street with neonlike signs and billboards advertising sales, discounts, bingo, toothpaste, gasoline, movies, free newspapers, raffles, striptease shows, and even blatant rip-offs like "Take 2, Pay for 3." A photo of the artist framed within a television screen appears under the advertisement "Grande Liquidação: Tom Zé" (Big sale: Tom Zé), an ironic acknowledgment that as a pop artist he too was a commodity for sale.

The album was conceived as a satiric critique of the culture industry with its false promises of bliss and plenitude for urban consumers. In some ways Tom Zé's perspective echoed the famous critique outlined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, two leading Marxist theorists of the Frankfurt School who argued that the culture industry was a standardized system of "mass deception" that stifled individual creativity and critical thought. They argued that the culture industry "perpetually cheats its consumers" with promises of material abundance, freedom, and happiness but ultimately blinds them to the drudgery and exploitation of everyday life under capitalism.[71] Tom Zé advanced a similar critique in the liner notes to the album, which open with the wry observation: "We are an unhappy people, bombarded by happiness." He goes on to describe a world completely saturated by cheerful media images, in which "television proves on a daily basis that nobody can be unhappy anymore."

The song lyrics evoke an urban milieu replete with hurried businessmen honking in traffic, unscrupulous loan sharks offering easy credit, and models with glorious smiles selling products to the masses. One song, "Catecismo, creme dental e eu" (Catechism, toothpaste, and me), suggests that consumer capitalism has become the new bourgeois religion that indoctrinates the public to buy personal hygiene products:

> um anjo do cinema
> já revelou que o futuro
> da família brasileira
> será um halito puro, ah!
>
> an angel of the cinema
> has revealed that the future
> of the Brazilian family
> will be fresh breath, ah!

In another song, Tom Zé lampoons the social conventions that discriminate against the poor, who obviously do not have the means to fully participate

in the culture of consumer capitalism. "Curso intensivo de boas maneiras" (Intensive course in good manners) parodied the elitist discourse of a well-known social columnist of the time, Marcelino Dias de Carvalho, who dispensed advice for gaining acceptance in "respectable" social circles: "First lesson: stop being poor / because it's quite unsightly."

In several compositions, he employed the musical form of hard-sell capitalism, the jingle, to great parodic effect. The song "Sem entrada, sem mais nada" (No down payment, nothing more), opens with the lament:

entrei na liquidação
saí quase liquidado
vinte vezes, vinte meses
eu vendi meu ordenado

I went for the sale
and was sold down the river
twenty payments, twenty months
I sold my salary

This warning against the dangers of easy credit is then ironically effaced by a celebratory jingle that serves as the refrain to the song:

sem entrada, sem mais nada
sem dor e sem fiador
crediário dando sopa
pro samba já tenho roupa
oba, oba, oba

no down payment, nothing more
no pain, no guarantor
credit is easy
for the samba party I now have clothes
oba, oba, oba

A parody of the classic samba by Noel Rosa, "Com que roupa?" (With which clothes?) (1933), about a poor man with no clothes to wear to a samba party, Tom Zé's song pokes fun at the hoopla, or "oba oba," surrounding credit-driven consumerism.

Tom Zé's "Parque industrial" (Industrial park), featured both on his solo album and on the tropicalist concept album, lampooned the civic pride generated by the inauguration of a new industrial complex. In the recording, a brass band and crowd ambiance evoke the official pomp of a military parade. The

lyrics, sung by Gil, Veloso, Tom Zé, and Gal Costa, address the crowd using the *vós* imperative typically associated with liturgical rites and lofty patriotic discourse, which further reinforces the satiric effect of the song:

retocai o céu de anil
bandeirolas no cordão
grande festa em toda nação
despertai com orações
o avanço industrial
vem trazer nossa redenção

touch up the blue sky
streamers on a string
a great national festival
rise and hear the orations
industrial progress
has brought our redemption

As with "Geléia geral," the stock phrase of Parnassian poetry, *céu de anil*, announces the parodic gesture. If in Veloso's "Paisagem útil" nature is effaced by multinational capital, in "Parque industrial" it is subjugated to the state ideology of industrial progress. The sky has fallen, so to speak, into mundane immanence; it no longer evokes celestial transcendence. The fabled blue sky, symbolizing natural splendor, is subtly reduced to a polluted artifice that needs "touching up" for the grand occasion. The following stanzas satirize an array of consumer products vying for attention in the urban space: the billboards featuring tender airline stewardesses, the "bottled smile" that can be reheated for use, the working-class newspaper, and the tabloid magazine relating the "sins of a movie star."

As several critics have noted, "Parque industrial" satirizes developmentalist zeal, as suggested in the ironic claim that "industrial progress has brought our redemption."[72] Industrial development certainly had not brought "redemption" for millions of urban workers whose bargaining powers had been severely curtailed by the military regime. Furthermore, by 1968, the environmental effects of irresponsible development had begun to have horrendous consequences for many poor communities, most notoriously in Cubatão, an industrial city between São Paulo and the port of Santos.[73] Although the excessively sanguine language suggests satire, there is also a measure of pride in the modernization of Brazil. Tom Zé has claimed that the tropicalists "had a passion for the industrial park" since it was so important for the nation's

development.[74] The finale ends with the resounding refrain in English that exalts, with a mixture of sarcasm and affirmation, export products that are "made, made, made / made in Brazil." As in most tropicalist songs, there is a mixture of critique and complicity in relation to the satirized object.

Veloso's exquisite pop song "Baby" may be understood as a companion piece to "Parque industrial." While Tom Zé ridicules blind faith in the redeeming powers of industrial production, Veloso satirizes unbridled consumption among the urban middle class. Using up-to-date youth lingo, the lyric parodies hard-sell advertisements, creating an inventory of all the items one "needs" to be happy and successful in consumer society: swimming pools, margarine, gasoline, ice cream, songs by Roberto Carlos and Chico Buarque ("Carolina"), and finally, English lessons, the key to success and a rite of passage for Brazilian middle-class youth. An anonymous voice of commercial publicity interpellates middle-class youth and creates needs for the consumer. It is not clear whether the song is critically questioning or affirming the value of these products. Gal Costa's demure and sensitive vocal interpretation suggests a degree of blissful satisfaction. The last stanza affirms: "I don't know, all is cool with me / all is peaceful with you / we live in the best city / of South America." Veloso has claimed that he was referring to Rio de Janeiro, where he had lived for a while before moving to São Paulo.[75] Given the climate of political conflict in Rio de Janeiro, the blithe celebration of the city is ambiguous. "Baby" can certainly be read as a song that was "alienated" from the harsh reality of urban Brazil under a dictatorship, but it can also be interpreted as an ironic critique of complacency and consumerism. All of these tropicalist songs are marked by similar ambivalence in relation to the mass media and consumerism.

ATENÇÃO! TROPICÁLIA AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Although most tropicalist songs were musically upbeat and jubilant, quite often they conveyed, both subtly and overtly, an atmosphere of violence and official repression in Brazilian cities during the late 1960s. In March 1967, hard-liners within the military assumed control of the government under the leadership of a new president, Artur da Costa e Silva. The tenuous alliance between conservative civilian politicians and the military leadership unraveled, while more radical sectors of the opposition intensified their campaign against the regime. In early 1968, middle-class university and high school students staged a series of protests in Rio de Janeiro over rising fees,

Art and commerce. Caetano Veloso exhibits a toy stove in 1968.
(J. Ferreira da Silva/Abril Imagens)

poor facilities, and budgetary cuts for education. During one demonstration in March, a young student was shot and killed by the military police, provoking another round of antigovernment rallies that were violently suppressed. Around the same time, metalworkers staged strikes in Contagem, a town in Minas Gerais, and in Osasco, an industrial suburb of São Paulo.

In late June 1968, broad sectors of civil society, including students, professors, artists, clergy, workers, and liberal professionals participated in a massive demonstration known as the *Passeata dos cem mil* (March of one hundred thousand) in downtown Rio de Janeiro. Several key figures of MPB appeared at the event, including Gil, Veloso, Chico Buarque, Edu Lobo, Paulinho da Viola, Milton Nascimento, and Nana Caymmi, along with José Celso, Ítala Nandi, Renato Borghi of the Teatro Oficina, Cinema Novo actor Paulo Autran, and writer Clarice Lispector. The march took place without incident, but the government reacted immediately by prohibiting further public demonstrations. Violent confrontation in the streets was not limited solely to police repression. In September 1968, students of the conservative Mackenzie University attacked the School of Philosophy of the University of São Paulo, which was noted for its left-wing sympathies. Members of the CCC, the anticommunist paramilitary organization responsible for attacks on the Teatro Oficina, participated in the siege, injuring several students and destroying the school's main building. A month later, police arrested nearly a thousand members of the UNE, who were meeting clandestinely in Ibiúna, a small town in the interior of São Paulo.

As opportunities for nonviolent opposition in civil society diminished, greater numbers of antiregime militants joined clandestine guerrilla organizations. The earliest acts of armed resistance to military power took place soon after the coup of 1964 but only really began to have an impact in 1968. Dissidents of the Brazilian Communist Party, which generally eschewed armed struggle, formed several of the most important groups. The most celebrated novel of the period, Antônio Callado's *Quarup* (1967), portrayed the political and existential dilemmas of a left-wing priest who leaves the Catholic Church to join a rural guerrilla movement. Of the nearly three dozen armed organizations, however, most were based in the urban areas and involved few artists and intellectuals. The emergence of an armed opposition movement marked a turn away from symbolic activism associated with the CPC and postcoup cultural protest in which artists and intellectuals sought to fashion themselves as a revolutionary vanguard that would "raise consciousness" among the masses. Alex Polari, a member the Vanguarda Popular Revolucio-

Brazilian artists participate in the March of One Hundred Thousand in June 1968. In the front row, from left to right: Edu Lobo, Ítala Nandi, Chico Buarque, Aruíno Colassanti, Renato Borghi, José Celso Martinez Corrêa, an unidentified student, Caetano Veloso, Nana Caymmi, Gilberto Gil, and Paulo Autran. Placards express solidarity with the student movement and denounce censorship and repression. (Hamilton Corrêa/Agência JB, *Jornal do Brazil*)

nária (VPR), claimed that the guerrilla movement emerged "without artists, poets, critics, novelists, dramatists, dancers, therapists, writers." Corroborating this view, Ridenti has shown that left-wing artists constituted less than 1 percent of the guerrilla movement.[76]

The most prominent guerrilla leader, Carlos Marighella, a member of the Ação Libertadora Nacional (ALN), argued that the guerrilla movement was the vanguard of revolutionary transformation. To this end, guerrilla organizations robbed banks to fund their operations, raided arsenals for guns and munitions, and bombed army barracks and U.S. military installations. The most notorious operation involved the ALN and the Movimento Revolucionário 8 (MR-8), which kidnapped the ambassador of the United States, Charles Elbrick, in September 1969. In exchange for the ambassador, the government was forced to broadcast the group's revolutionary manifesto on all

Brazilian radio stations and to free fifteen imprisoned guerrillas, allowing them to go into exile in sympathetic nations. With the success of this guerrilla operation, the VPR carried out kidnappings of Japanese and West German diplomats in 1970. With each operation, the government intensified efforts to liquidate the guerrilla movement. Clandestine organizations were brutally suppressed, and their members were invariably tortured and often murdered once apprehended by military agents.

Caetano Veloso has claimed that the tropicalists secretly admired Marighella and other guerrilla leaders, which was evident in their tribute to Ché Guevara in "Soy loco por tí, América" (discussed below). Fernando Gabeira, a former member of the MR-8 who participated in the Elbrick kidnapping, recalls listening to a song while he was hiding from his eventual captors in which Gilberto Gil makes a veiled reference to Marighella, who had been assassinated in São Paulo by police agents that same year.[77] He was likely referring to Gil's song "Alfômega," featured on Caetano Veloso's second solo album (1969), in which Gil exclaims "iê-ma-ma-Marighella" at one point in the song. Polari has asserted that the tropicalists were "in tune" with his sensibility: "[T]ropicalismo and its diverse manifestations were without doubt the perfect cultural expression for that which we incipiently represented in politics."[78] More conventional protest singers, notably Geraldo Vandré, paid homage to the guerrilla struggle in several songs from his 1968 album *Canto Geral*, but Polari was more interested in the countercultural attitude of Tropicália, which seemed to promise new ways of integrating politics, individual behavior, and artistic practice.

Several songs on the concept album, *Tropicália, ou panis et circencis*, alluded to a general context of political violence in the urban areas. The opening track, "Miserere Nobis" (Gil-Capinan), critiques the ideological and coercive mechanisms that maintain structures of inequality in Brazil. The song begins with solemn chords of a church organ, abruptly interrupted by the ring of a bicycle bell, followed by the upbeat strumming of an acoustic guitar. Gil intones the liturgical Latin phrase of the title, which venerates the nobility of poverty, but then subverts it by questioning the promise of future redemption: "[I]t's in the always will be, oh, mamma." Expressing impatience with the fatalistic acceptance of poverty, the song calls for equality in the here and now. Given the church's historic complicity in maintaining the status quo in Brazil, it was vulnerable to critique by the antiregime opposition. But the song should not be read as an indiscriminate attack on the Catholic Church, which was at the time politically divided among progressive, conservative, and moderate wings. Its ranks included several important opposition leaders, notably

Dom Helder Camara, the archbishop of Olinda and Recife, and Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, the archbishop of São Paulo, who would later organize a scathing report on the use of torture by successive military regimes in Brazil.[79]

"Miserere Nobis" might be interpreted instead as a denunciation of complacency, whether spiritual or political, in the face of injustice. The tone of irreverence and defiance intensifies in the final stanza: "Let us spill wine on the tablecloth, soaked in wine and stained with blood." The line ironically alludes to transubstantiation, in which wine symbolically becomes the blood of Christ, but also insinuates a climate of violence. Toward the end of the song, Gil spells out, letter by letter, the words "Brasil-fuzil-canhão" (Brazil, rifle, cannon), a message that was perceptible to attentive listeners but subtle enough to avoid censorship.

In another song from the tropicalist concept album, "Enquanto seu lobo não vem" (While Mr. Wolf is away), Caetano Veloso creates a frightening, surrealistic view of Rio de Janeiro based on the "Little Red Riding Hood" fable. Beginning as an amorous invitation to "take a walk in the forest," the song proceeds to make subtle references to street demonstrations and rural guerrilla movements: "Let's travel through the United States / of Brazil / Let's travel clandestinely." This invitation may be read as an allusion to the exodus of student leaders and urban guerrillas from the cities to avoid arrest and to organize rural *focos*, moving pockets of revolutionary resistance in the hinterland.[80] In the final passage, references to the political context are no longer oblique: "let's go underneath the streets / underneath the bombs, the flags / underneath the boots." The presence of bombs, flags, and boots clearly suggests guerrilla activity and official repression. As Veloso sings these words, Gal Costa repeatedly intones in a high distant voice "os clarins da banda militar" (the clarions of the military band) that reinforce the presence of official order.

The foregrounding of political and cultural conflicts is most pronounced in "Divino maravilhoso" (Divine marvelous), a rock song written by Veloso and Gil. Gal Costa performed this song at the TV Record music festival of 1968 and then later featured it on her first solo album from 1969 (plate 5). In this song, Costa employs the sort of rock histrionics that were typical of American female vocalists like Janis Joplin or Grace Slick of Jefferson Airplane. Toward the end of 1968, the tropicalists adopted the title as the name of their television program on TV Tupi. "Divino maravilhoso" dramatically expressed the mood of the late 1960s, which was simultaneously an exciting period of countercultural experimentation and severe political repression. Nearly every line begins with the warning "atenção!" (attention) leading up

to the repeating refrain, "everything is dangerous, everything is divine marvelous." The second stanza urges the listener to "pay attention to the stanza, to the refrain" of the song while suggesting that it is necessary to reflect critically on their meaning. In this sense, it is another metasong on the position of the artist, the role of reception, and the primacy of open interpretation. The song also calls attention to the *palavra de ordem* (political slogan) and *samba-exaltação*, suggesting a critique of left-wing orthodoxy, on one hand, and conservative patriotism, on the other.

The final stanza alludes to the very real dangers of armed conflict between military agents and opposition groups:

> atenção para janelas do alto
> atenção ao pisar no asfalto o mangue
> atenção para o sangue sobre o chão
>
> pay attention to the windows up high
> pay attention while stepping on asphalt the swamp
> pay attention to the blood on the ground

The reference to "windows up high" is oblique, but one might speculate that it is an allusion to police agents who took positions in the high-rise buildings of the downtown area during protest marches. Political conflicts are situated within a social context in the next line, which hints at the distance between the ideals of modernization and the reality of precarious infrastructure, contained in the opposition asphalt/swamp (i.e., urbanized center vs. underdeveloped periphery). The aftermath of political violence—blood on the ground—bears witness to military repression.

Other tropicalist songs addressed the violence of everyday life in Brazilian cities and how it affected those not directly involved in contesting the regime. Veloso's "Lindonéia," performed by Nara Leão on the tropicalist concept album, narrates the story of a young woman from the working-class suburbs of Rio who mysteriously "disappears" in the bustle of the city. The song was directly inspired by Ruben Gerchman's print *Lindonéia, a Gioconda dos subúrbios*, a rendering of Leonardo da Vinci's "La Gioconda" (plate 7). Gerchman's portrait depicts a young female victim of domestic violence with a swollen lip and a black eye. A glass frame engraved with kitsch flowerlike designs surrounds the battered image of Lindonéia (i.e., *linda/feia*, or beautiful/ugly). Over the frame an inscription recalls the headlines of the crime page in the popular press: AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE—THE BEAUTIFUL LINDONÉIA—DIED INSTANTLY AT AGE 18. Veloso's musical rendering of Gerchman's *Lin-*

donéia imagines her life before she disappears "behind the mirror" and reappears "in a photograph on the other side of life."

Veloso's "Lindonéia" is a bolero, a Cuban genre of love song noted for its sentimentality and melodrama that was popular in Brazil in the 1940s and 1950s. The urban Brazilian sophisticates who created and consumed bossa nova regarded the bolero as the epitome of Latin American kitsch associated with working-class taste, which is precisely why Veloso used this form for a song about a poor suburban woman. The song describes Lindonéia's quotidian life as a single woman of color in the city, referencing the ubiquitous presence of the mass media, urban violence, and police surveillance. Favaretto has speculated that Lindonéia is a domestic servant from the working-class periphery who escapes from her tedious existence by consuming radio and television *novelas* (soap operas).[81] That she "disappeared in indolence, in progress, in the hit parade" may suggest that she drifted into the fantasy world of mass culture. Yet the legalistic terms that describe her in the song—*solteira* (single), *cor parda* (brown-skinned)—are denominations used in the census and police reports, which suggest that Veloso may have also read Gerchman's painting more literally. In either case, Veloso's song portrayed the experience of a marginalized urban woman, focusing on her solitary existence and lack of options in life.[82]

"Lindonéia" also alludes to the violence and repression of quotidian life in the city under military rule:

> despedaçados, atropelados
> cachorros mortos nas ruas
> os policiais vigiando
> o sol batendo nas frutas, sangrando
> ai, meu amor
> a solidão vai me matar de dor
>
> ripped to pieces, run over
> dead dogs in the street police
> surveilling the scene
> the sun hitting the fruit, bleeding
> ay, my love
> the pain of solitude will kill me

Within the context of late-1960s Brazil, the trampled dogs recall the victims of state violence. The reference to fruit in the sun suggests tropical abundance, but even this cheery image is undermined by the gerund "bleeding."

This image is followed by the repeating refrain "ai, meu amor / a solidão vai me matar de dor" (ay, my love / the pain of solitude will kill me), an obvious cliché that, unlike the rest of the song, conforms to the poetic conventions of the bolero form. Veloso's songs oscillated constantly between personal and public registers, suggesting how official repression circumscribed the everyday life of urban citizens, even those who were not directly engaged in opposition struggles.

FIM DO MUNDO: TROPICÁLIA ON THE MARGINS

In an interview from 1968, Caetano Veloso remarked: "I cannot deny where I live, nor can I forget what I have read."[83] For artists and intellectuals situated on the periphery of global political and economic power, the dialectic between sense of place and cosmopolitan affinities is often simultaneously a source of anxiety and inspiration. Veloso was, of course, living under a military dictatorship in an unevenly developed nation. He was "reading" the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix, as well as Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean-Luc Godard, the concrete poets, and Oswald de Andrade.

Since the early 1920s, samba composers and musicians had assimilated musical information from abroad, including tangos from Argentina, especially jazz and fox-trot from the United States, and boleros from Cuba. The first generation of bossa nova dialogued with West Coast jazz, and the Jovem Guarda embraced American rock 'n' roll. Even the "nationalist-participant" artists were influenced by Latin American *nueva canción* (new song) and, perhaps to a lesser extent, American antiwar protest singers. The tropicalists, of course, drew freely from British and American rock, Latin American rhythms, and international vanguard music. The lyrical content of most Brazilian popular music of the 1960s, however, focused primarily on local or national contexts. In general, tropicalist songs were no different in this regard, yet there were notable exceptions that situated Brazil within Latin American and/or global contexts.

Tom Zé occasionally advanced anti-imperialist critiques that were similar to agitprop songs of the CPC in the early 1960s. One song from his first album, "Profissão ladrão" (Profession thief), described a poor northeastern migrant with "many professions" in the informal economy who is arrested for petty theft. In long convoluted verses reminiscent of rapid-fire *embolada* singing from the northeastern *sertão*, the arrested man protests to the police officer, reminding him that theft and corruption is rampant among all classes.

Only the poor are stigmatized for their transgressions while the wealthy and powerful are often rewarded, as suggested in the proverb of the fourth stanza:

> Sei que quem rouba um é moleque
> aos dez, promovido a ladrão
> se rouba cem, já passou de doutor
> e dez mil, é figura nacional
> e se rouba oitenta milhões . . .
>
> I know that he who robs another is a waif
> after ten, he's promoted to thief
> if he robs a hundred, he becomes a respected expert
> and ten thousand, he's a national celebrity
> and if he robs eighty million . . .

At this point, Tom Zé inserted a pop instrumental interlude driven by a brass section that contrasts sharply with the colloquial discourse and vocal delivery of the northeastern protagonist. This ironic juxtaposition of musical styles sets the stage for the punch line to the unfinished verse:

> é a diplomacia internacional
> a "Boa Vizinhança" e outras transas
>
> it's international diplomacy
> the "Good Neighbor" and other schemes

When the entire nation (at the time Brazil's population was around 80 million) is exploited, it is called "international diplomacy," exemplified here by the "Good Neighbor" arrangement between Brazil and the United States during the 1940s. Tom Zé's use of proverbial knowledge to critique global power in this song is comparable to strategies later employed by postcolonial artists such as Bob Marley and Fela Kuti.

Another key tropicalist song, "Soy loco por tí, América" (I'm crazy for you, America) (Gil-Capinan), positioned Brazil within the context of anti-imperialist struggle in the hemisphere. First recorded by Caetano Veloso on his solo album of 1968, the song made an appeal to Latin American solidarity, which suggested that the tropicalists were aware that their movement had continental implications.[84] The appeal to *latinoamericanidad* operated on a musical level as well. The song mixed several different Latin American rhythms, such as Colombian *cumbia* and Cuban mambo, and its lyrics were in *portunhol*, a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish. For Augusto de Campos, the song represented "anti-Monroe Tropicalismo," since it implicitly denounced

North American dominance in the hemisphere as sanctioned by the Monroe Doctrine.[85] Like Eldorado, the fictive nation depicted in Glauber Rocha's *Terra em transe,* the song is meant to transcend nationality. In Capinan's lyrics, all national symbols are elided; only the "sky serves as the flag" for this "country without a name." The central though unnamed icon of the song is Ché Guevara, the Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary who was hunted down and killed by the Bolivian army in 1967. The Brazilian regime prohibited the circulation of his name in the mass media. In "Soy loco por ti, América," he is simply referred to as "el hombre muerto" (the dead man). The song shares affinities with protest music in its expression of redemptive hope that Guevara's vision might be consummated "before the definitive night falls over Latin America."

On his second solo album (1968), Gilberto Gil recorded "Marginália II" (Gil–Torquato Neto), a song that explicitly situates Brazil within the context of Third World struggles. Although the lyrics are somewhat melancholic, invoking an image of Brazil as the *tristes tropiques,* the music is upbeat and affirmative, based loosely on the northeastern *baião* rhythm with brass arrangements. Beginning with the dramatic lines "I, Brazilian, confess," Torquato Neto's lyrics offer the revelation of guilt, affliction, degradation, secrets, and dreams to an imagined audience of compatriots. The entire song oscillates between a tone of dramatic seriousness and blithe sarcasm. One line, for example, quips, "[T]his is the Third World, ask for your blessing and go to sleep," which may be read as an ironic critique of religious fatalism.

In the final stanza, Neto parodies "Canção do Exílio" (Song of exile), by Romantic poet Antônio Gonçalves Dias, which begins with the lines: "Minha terra tem palmeiras / onde canta o sabiá" (My land has palm trees / where the song-thrush warbles). In sharp contrast, Neto's lyric made explicit reference to political violence and economic dependency:

minha terra tem palmeiras
onde sopra o vento forte
da fome do medo muito
principalmente da morte . . .
a bomba explode lá fora
agora vou temer
oh yes nós temos banana
até pra dar e vender

my land has palm trees
where strong winds blow

of hunger and great fear
mostly of death . . .
the bomb explodes outside
now I have fear
oh yes we have bananas
even to give away and sell

"Canção de Exílio," probably the most parodied work of the Brazilian literary canon, expressed a longing for an Edenic tropical homeland of natural beauty that modernist writers such as Oswald de Andrade, Murilo Mendes, Cassiano Ricardo, and Carlos Drummond de Andrade found so useful for ironic appropriation.[86] In his poem "Canto do regresso à pátria" (Song of the return to the fatherland) (1925), for example, Oswald de Andrade substituted "palmeiras" (palm trees) with "Palmares" (the largest and most famous runaway slave community in Brazilian history), a reference to a history of oppression and resistance. In parallel fashion, Torquato Neto replaced Gonçalves Dias's images of bucolic tranquillity with allusions to political upheaval and fear under military rule. The last two lines cited the title of an old samba, "Yes, nós temos bananas" (1938), which satirized Brazil's status as a producer of raw materials for export. By the 1960s, of course, Brazil was no longer only a producer of raw materials and certainly did not conform to the "banana republic" stereotype, yet Torquato Neto's citation served as a reminder of its subaltern position in the global economy.

The refrain of the song, "aqui é o fim do mundo" (the end of the world is here), which is repeated several times, further reinforces a position of marginality. An idiomatic expression, the phrase expresses something like "we're in the middle of nowhere" while maintaining residues of more apocalyptic connotations. In subverting the ideal of Brazil as a serene tropical paradise, "Marginália II" stakes out a political and ethical position in global terms. In this sense, marginality connotes not only a political and economic reality but also a critical position vis-à-vis dominant nations. More than any other tropicalist song, "Marginália II" presaged the more overtly third worldist stance of Gil's work in the 1970s.

CONCLUSION

Tropicália was a cultural movement articulated primarily in popular music but with significant manifestations in other artistic fields. Inspired by the

radical iconoclasm of Oswald de Andrade, Tropicália proposed a rereading of Brazilian culture that critiqued the nationalist and populist assumptions that oriented much of the protest culture being produced at the time. The vehicle of this critique often involved the cultural products originating from, or mediated by, the United States and Europe, which elicited charges of political alienation and inauthenticity. José Ramos Tinhorão, for example, suggested that there was an organic link between the international orientation of Tropicália and the economic program of the military regime with its heavy emphasis on multinational capital investment. In his estimation, the tropicalists "served as a vanguard for the government of 1964 in the realm of popular music."[87] Among other limitations, this homology does not encompass the ways in which Tropicália foregrounded the glaring social contradictions and the repressive mechanisms of modernization under military rule. The tropicalists elaborated their own critique of the conservative Right, participated in public manifestations against authoritarianism, and recorded songs that alluded to a context of violence in urban Brazil.

As hopes for political redemption began to fade, the tropicalists made use of allegorical representations to reflect on some of the contradictions of modernity in Brazil. At the same time, they embraced the urban experience, with its plethora of mass-mediated images and sounds, and sought engagement with a cultural industry increasingly subjected to the interests of the regime. Although tropicalist recordings provoked controversy among artists, critics, and fans, the censors largely ignored them. As the tropicalists gained visibility and notoriety in 1968, however, their irreverent performances would prove vexing for the military regime.