

FORRÓ'S WARS OF MANEUVER AND POSITION

Popular Northeastern Music, Critical Regionalism, and a Culture of Migration

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Abstract: The article is a schematic cultural-historical analysis of a major genre of regional popular music in Brazil, baião (the precursor to today's forró). Using Gramscian terminology appropriate to a discussion of hegemony and resistance, I argue that the early proponents of baião had to wage a cultural war of maneuver to challenge the existing hegemony of the Rio de Janeiro culture industry and to gain new respect for the northeastern Brazilian people and their culture. After success in this initial endeavor, subsequent generations of musicians have carried on a war of position to maintain baião's, and later forró's, prominence on the national stage. The article also analyzes certain common themes in forró (e.g., saudade, or nostalgia, for the home region and a critical view of the urban Southeast) as tactics that have contributed to forró's continuing relevance to Northeasterners and to its successful struggles of maneuver and position.

In his seminal study of the nationalization of carioca (Rio de Janeiro) samba, Vianna (1999, 78) frames the rise of this genre to national prominence as a form of colonization: "Only in the 1930s did Carioca samba 'colonize' Brazilian carnival and become a national symbol. Thereafter, samba would be considered representative of the nation, while other Brazilian musical genres would be considered merely *regional* styles."

This framework for understanding samba's cultural significance in Brazil not only reveals the kind of hegemony that the music achieved in the national popular culture but also reveals the necessarily subaltern positions that it forced other genres of popular music to occupy. If we consider one such "regional" genre, that of the northeastern *baião* (later broadened beyond this rhythm and dubbed *forró*), it becomes clear that musicians of subaltern genres had to negotiate the difficult terrain of samba's hegemony to achieve national recognition in the postsamba era. *Baião*

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is particularly relevant to such a discussion because the success of this and related northeastern rhythms, along with the rise to fame of their major proponent, the singer and accordionist Luiz Gonzaga, brought about the first major opening of space for regional music in the national culture industry in the wake of samba's consolidation of cultural hegemony. The rise of the baião began a decade-long era (1946–1956) during which Gonzaga was Brazil's most frequently recorded musical star and northeastern popular music challenged samba's dominance in the recording industry and radio airplay (Crook 2005; Vieira 2000).

This article attempts to address what this process has looked like since the early days of the baião genre in the 1940s. Using Gramscian terminology appropriate to a discussion of hegemony and resistance, I argue that the early proponents of baião had to wage a cultural war of maneuvers to challenge what Vianna (1999, 78) calls the "total domination" of samba (Gramsci 1999). Here "war of maneuver" refers to an effort—rising out of popular initiative—to directly challenge the dominant social forces, in this case, those that supported the ideology of national cohesion around a common popular music, samba. Gramsci (1999) opposes the war of maneuver to a war of position (also called a passive revolution) that focuses on consolidating, fortifying, and perhaps gradually reforming a given social order. Through their own cultural war of maneuver, Gonzaga and the musicians he sometimes called his shock troops (Dreyfus 1996) successfully challenged the hegemony of samba. In so doing, they gained new respect for northeastern popular culture while simultaneously giving a voice to the people of the region in the national media. Successive generations of northeastern musicians and other artists, beginning in the 1970s, have transformed this struggle for baião into a war of position for its successor, forró. This newer struggle continues to the present day, seeking to maintain respect for northeastern traditions and continuing to expand the array of traditional genres and musicians that achieve national recognition while carefully innovating with those traditions and thus forming new subgenres of forró.

After considering, in the first section of this article, the origins of this counterhegemonic struggle that to a certain extent "nationalized" regional music in Brazil, I analyze two tactics or approaches that forró musicians have developed in their musical expression, first to promote solidarity among Northeasterners dispersed throughout Brazil and second to resist the temptation to assimilate their music to the dominant influence of urban popular culture. First, despite the mass migration of northeastern workers out of the region in search of economic opportunity, forró contributes to the maintenance of strong psychological ties to the Northeast by expressing and emphasizing the diasporic affect of northeastern migrants called *saudade*. *Saudade* in forró is a form of collective nostalgia that celebrates the home region and imagines a redemptive return for all those forced

to leave. Celebrations where forró is performed bring together emigrants from the Northeast both physically and emotionally throughout Brazil. Second, by focusing on the social space of the Northeast and especially the *sertão*, or rural backlands, *forrozeiros* (forró musicians) resist cognitively mapping the social space of the city, especially the metropolises to which many Northeasterners were forced to migrate, like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. By avoiding the incorporation of urban realities into their music despite the fact that the culture industry and many migrants are based in those urban industrial corridors, the musicians help drive a critical regionalism. This regionalism is critical in the sense that it is one thesis of a negative dialectic between city and countryside (or Northeast and Southeast) in Brazil, as I describe further herein. Nevertheless, I also address the fact that in the newer subgenres of forró called university and electronic, there are signs that urban popular culture is gradually making its presence felt in forró performances and, to a lesser extent, in its lyrical discourse.

In the following section, *forrozeiros'* great power and accuracy in portraying the migratory experience is revealed with reference to several studies from diverse academic fields as well as migrant testimonials. It is clear from this evidence that forró musicians collectively have an impressive ability to represent the millions of poor and working-class people who felt compelled to leave the Northeast in search of economic opportunity over the course of the twentieth century. However, the studies also reveal that, in their quest to achieve national recognition for northeastern culture and thus challenge samba's hegemony, northeastern musicians have not been able to capture the full diversity of migrant standpoints. The most obvious lacuna in forró lyrics is the lack of representation of the female migrant experience, which tends to be underrepresented in a genre whose lyrical protagonists are predominantly male. A look at some of the same studies of migration and the migrant experience reveals that women are, and have been, a very significant component of the migrant population that has yet to be given its own unique voice in forró—despite the increasing presence of female artists in the genre.

Finally, can *forrozeiros'* war of maneuver to challenge Brazil's hegemonic cultural industry serve as a model for working-class or subaltern musicians in a global context? The concluding section of the article attempts a schematic answer to this question, considering what lessons the rise of forró in Brazil might hold for anyone wishing to promote a more egalitarian process of disseminating music in the world.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BAIÃO AND FORRÓ'S WAR OF MANEUVER

In this section, I briefly trace forró's progression as a cultural war of maneuver to represent the Brazilian Northeast as the baião rhythm matured and gained national acclaim. We can trace the genre's history from

this early form of forró called baião, disseminated primarily by the “King of Baião” (the accordionist and singer Luiz Gonzaga) in the 1940s and 1950s, to the later expansion and consolidation of the genre as forró. In the sphere of popular culture, this consolidation consisted of a war of position that Gonzaga himself waged, along with his contemporary Jackson do Pandeiro and the younger generation of musicians who rose to fame in the 1970s. Gonzaga, in his *cangaceiro* (northeastern bandit) attire, was the national symbol of the Northeast in the years of the war of maneuver for baião. More recently, the genre has broadened beyond the original baião rhythm, consolidating its place in national popular culture as forró and developing enough complexity to boast three main branches split largely along class lines: *forró tradicional* (traditional), *forró eletrônico* (electronic), and *forró universitário* (university). The original war of maneuver for baião was a necessary one given the hegemonic position of the Rio de Janeiro culture industry in the 1940s, which at that time could accept Gonzaga and his collaborators’ representation of baião only as an alternative to samba. Later, though, continuing on from Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro’s legacy, a younger generation would be able to join them in a war of position that maintained forró’s national recognition while more holistically representing the Northeast and northeastern cultural production.

If we take a closer look at Luiz Gonzaga’s career more generally, as well as that of the other big name of the early years of forró, Jackson do Pandeiro, we can more fully realize the nature of forró’s war of maneuver and the subsequent beginnings of a war of position to consolidate national representations of the popular culture of the Northeast. First, Gonzaga stylized the baião rhythm with his collaborator Humberto Teixeira “to condense a wide range of musical experiences within the commercial baião that referenced both northeastern Afro-Brazilian and sertão culture” (Crook 2005, p. 263). Related to this strategic musical condensation of northeastern popular culture, Gonzaga forced his way onto the national stage wearing a bandit costume akin to that of his childhood hero, Lampião. Bandits, or *cangaceiros*, are said to have developed one of forró’s major musical subgenres, the *xaxado*. After seeing another performer, Pedro Raimundo, in the costume of gaucho cowboys from southern Brazil, Gonzaga hit on the idea of dressing up like a cowboy of the Northeast, with a *cangaceiro* hat to recall the antihero Lampião. With respect to his war of position, it is significant that Gonzaga chose to invoke Lampião as an icon, a man (in)famous for violently resisting the authorities of several states.

Gonzaga at first met with some resistance to his attempt to stylize himself as a traditional northeastern singer. He had previously made his name as an accordion player in the early 1940s who played a variety of non-northeastern genres popular at the time, such as polkas and waltzes. But the accordionist then made a conscious effort to portray the Northeast through costume, rhythm, and lyrics. Of course, a *cangaceiro* uni-

form, like the baião rhythm with regard to music, cannot but be a symbol that portrays the Northeast while hiding whatever people and places that do not correspond to that symbol, be they areas and workers outside the sertão, or northeastern women more generally. As he started to popularize the genre of baião nationally, Gonzaga also established what would come to be considered the most important and characteristic forró instruments: the accordion, the steel triangle, and the large drum called a *zabumba* that typically keeps the baião rhythm. As the war of maneuver for baião was won and a war of position succeeded it, the instrumentation, too, would expand as other traditional instruments like the *rabeca* or fiddle came to be known as forró instruments, as did modern electronic instruments including keyboard and guitar.

As Luiz Gonzaga became a national star, he accepted his title “King of Baião” and, in his relations with other musicians, seemed to evoke some of this monarchic bearing. He saw fit to deem what was northeastern music and what was not, and he liked to help young musicians grow famous under his own tutelage and aegis. He assembled a group of musical royalty and nobility around him including a “queen,” “baron,” “prince,” and “princess” of baião (Dreyfus 1996, 169, 172, 196). Rather than being primarily about his own ego, although that was probably involved, Gonzaga played the part of king and patron of forró because this type of symbolism is what he understood to be necessary to successfully commodify and circulate northeastern culture. For it was not until Gonzaga developed the powerfully symbolic imagery and performance of the cangaceiro uniform and the baião rhythm and dance that northeastern musicians began to be able to have professional careers as such. Gonzaga’s relationship with Jackson do Pandeiro is illustrative of how he positioned himself as symbolic mediator of baião and forró during his career’s apogee and throughout its decade-long fall from national popularity in the 1960s. To understand this relationship a little better, though, we should consider some of the distinctions between the two artists’ career paths as professional forrozeiros.

As detailed in Moura and Vicente’s (2001) definitive biography, Jackson do Pandeiro did not go directly to the center of the hegemonic national culture industry in Rio de Janeiro to begin his professional career like Luiz Gonzaga did. His first involvement with the media of mass communication was as part of the cast of a radio station in Paraíba’s capital, João Pessoa. There he was allowed to perform in a two-man comedy act with a lyricist he would later write many songs with, Rosil Cavalcanti. Although comedic, the act also demonstrated the type of representations of the rural Northeast that were deemed acceptable at the time, as Cavalcanti and Jackson dressed up as two *matutos*, or hicks, and the jokes were accordingly related to their ignorance and backwardness vis-à-vis the cosmopolitan coastal cities. Thereafter, he was soon recruited to become a member of both an orchestra and of a smaller band on the Northeast’s biggest station

at the time, Rádio Jornal do Comércio in Recife, Pernambuco. Once installed in Recife, Jackson's unique performance style and stunningly agile vocals gained attention, and he was featured as a performer in a duet with his future wife, Almira Castilho. Jackson's signature genre of popular music was the *coco*, native to the littoral sugar plantation regions of the Northeast; however, he also performed *baião* and various other *forró* subgenres and rhythms. In fact, it was during the apogee of Jackson do Pandeiro's career in the mid- to late 1950s that *forró* began to be recognized as a diversified genre encompassing many northeastern musical rhythms and styles as it is today. The contemporaneous success of Jackson and the birth of *forró* as a genre indicate how Jackson do Pandeiro's performance style, his collaborative approach to music making, and his ability and willingness to play percussion and sing to any rhythm in Brazil helped displace the *baião* as the major cultural symbol of the Northeast and to shift cultural producers like himself, Gonzaga, and many *forrozeiros* toward a more expansive, complex representation of the region. As he would say in 1981 after *forró* had shifted to the war of position it maintains to this day, "I invented *forró*. . . . It was in 1950 . . . when, during a recording session, I ordered that the guitar play *choro*, the *cavaquinho* samba and the *bumbo* play *baião*" (Moura and Vicente 2001, p. 369). Clearly, *baião* would become just one of many rhythms under the rubric of *forró*, and even rhythms and genres that are not exclusively northeastern like *samba* would be admitted or at least claimed as influences.

Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, and a group of other northeastern musicians, many from Gonzaga's native state of Pernambuco, would rise to fame in the 1960s and 1970s, carrying on and expanding Gonzaga's project as well as that of Jackson do Pandeiro. These artists included Elba Ramalho, Alceu Valença, Quinteto Violado, Zé Ramalho, Dominginhos, and Raimundo Fagner, among others. Many of these musicians would become consecrated along with Gonzaga as stars of "MPB," the acronym for Brazilian pop music. They have helped expand both the recognition of northeastern culture and the space available in the national culture industry to represent the region. Along with his strengthening of ties to this younger generation, Gonzaga also approached Jackson do Pandeiro in 1972 to perform on the weekly *forró* show that Jackson hosted at the time on the radio in Rio. For the first time, Gonzaga found himself in the position of needing a favor from a fellow *forrozeiro* rather than handing them out. Thus, the two great progenitors of *sertanejo* (backland) and littoral *forró* came together to celebrate the genre, and Gonzaga implicitly accepted Jackson's style as a legitimate alternative to his own within the genre.

In addition to some help from his old rival Jackson, some of the performers mentioned earlier, such as Ramalho and Valença, emphasized the historical significance of Gonzaga's work. These *forrozeiros* would wage a

war of position that involved not only introducing Gonzaga and Jackson's repertoires to vast new audiences of the younger generation but also emphasizing the importance of the two as representatives of the northeastern people and their history, including their subaltern culture. Ramalho continues to do so, as can be seen in her album and concert tour titled *Elba Canta Luiz* (2002). Going beyond the realm of music, Gilberto Gil explores the importance of Luiz Gonzaga's biographical roots in the backlands of Pernambuco in Andrucha Waddington's (2004) documentary *Viva São João*. Since the 1970s, various musicians throughout Brazil have also contributed to the war of position by developing the offshoots from traditional forró known as university and electronic. Both of these variations cater to new, younger, and often more urban audiences and thus have helped keep the genre both relevant to and representative of the younger generations of northeastern migrants and transplants in the wake of mass rural-urban migration. Beyond the migrant community and its descendents in the urban centers of Brazil, careful innovation in forró by Northeasterners and other Brazilians has helped maintain national interest in the genre from non-Northeasterners as well. Thus, Luiz Gonzaga, his collaborators, and subsequent generations of forrozeiros, through their war of maneuver for baião and the subsequent war of position for forró, have collectively provided an effective regional antithesis to the "thesis" of twentieth-century Brazilian popular music, samba.

SAUDADE AS NORTHEASTERN DIASPORIC AFFECT IN FORRÓ

Having considered forró's insertion into the national culture industry and its development as a genre, we can proceed to explore its continued loyalty to a redemptive imaginary for Northeasterners, based in a profound diasporic attachment (*saudade*) to the social and ecological environment of the sertão, or rural interior. In general terms, *saudade* is the Portuguese word used to describe a profound, bittersweet nostalgia for a person, place, time, or other memory from which one has been separated. Thus, forrozeiros easily appropriated this concept for their own purposes of remembering the Northeast and its people. In this section, I consider a few musical examples that demonstrate *saudade's* characteristic telescoping of time and space, and the related irony of celebrating and "making present" a desired place, person, or lifeworld through music and dance while simultaneously recalling one's real separation from that object of desire. Ultimately, it will become clear that the lyrical expression of *saudade* binds together the community and culture of Northeasterners across the gulfs in space and time caused by interregional migration.

In forró, *saudade* is uniquely developed as a collective diasporic affect. In traditional forró, desire is collectivized most commonly through the imaginary of a rural idyll that is a repository of traditional culture and

values as well as the place in which Northeasterners' lovers, families, and communities await their return. These are constant themes that are present in the genre to this day, although in more recent, so-called electronic forró there is more and more emphasis on interpersonal romance over collective diasporic affect. This is due to an increasing discursive convergence of electronic forró with the melodrama of urban popular culture, most famously present in telenovelas. In contrast, the version of the genre for urban middle-class audiences, university forró, has developed its own unique collective *saudade*—in this case, a middle-class nostalgia for popular authenticity represented by the musical traditions of the Northeast. The two latter subgenres are signs of the national scope of forró and the growing influence of younger generations of musicians and audiences throughout Brazil, and they are considered further herein.

First, though, I present two musical examples from the traditional forró repertoire that thematize *saudade*. Luiz Gonzaga and Hervé Cordovil's "A vida do viajante" ("The Life of the Traveler") is a poignant song that emphasizes the migrant's incessant journeys through Brazil. Beyond this, the work mimics the logic of *saudade*, knitting together the network of social relations and psychological-affective attachments that is the lifeworld of migration. The song is a *toada* ("tune," "ballad") first recorded by Gonzaga in 1953. The singer's very life "is to walk through this country / to see if some day [he] will rest happily" (Gonzaga and Cordovil n.d.).¹ In his migrations, he carries with him the memory of "the lands through which he passed" and "the friends that he left there" (Gonzaga and Cordovil n.d.). *Saudade* is precisely this memory that the migrant in question carries with him, a memory that makes him feel less lonely on the road. Because of circumstances beyond their control, migrants cannot settle down in one place for their lifetime. However, they will still carry *saudades* with them for the people and places they have gotten to know along the way. *Saudade* is the melancholy or bittersweet paradigm through which all these memories are linked and organized. In this epistemology of lack hides always a profound hope for a return to an idyllic origin, or at the very least to a place one holds dear. "A vida do viajante" stresses the affective links produced by *saudade* and the continuity that feelings of nostalgia provide even to someone whose experience is spatially scattered. Over and across time, *saudade* creates a continuity that ameliorates the vagrant condition. The song also has a personal resonance for Luiz Gonzaga, who for much of his life traveled throughout Brazil to share his music with Northeasterners and the nation as a whole. Thus, it was also the song that he sang upon announcing his retirement from regularly performing and touring to enjoy the peace and quiet of his ranch in his native Exu.

1. My translation here and throughout, unless noted otherwise.

"Qui nem giló" ("Like a *Giló*") is the other song from the traditional forró repertoire that I discuss here, as it offers an explicit evaluation of saudade and its potentialities. This baião was written by Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira, and first recorded by Gonzaga in 1950. A *giló* is a fruit used in northeastern cuisine, which could be compared in shape to a small eggplant but has a reddish-green color and a distinctive bitter flavor. Thus, the bitterness of the native fruit characterizes the suffering that saudade can cause for Northeasterners. However, the song begins with a different perspective—saudade can be good if we remember to savor past loves and the happiness they once gave us. After all, the root cause of saudade is a pleasant stimulus in one's memory, so perhaps it need not necessarily bring with it negative associations. But this first phrase of the song is, not surprisingly, followed by a caveat, for saudade is never quite that simple and always occupies a very ambiguous space between the more straightforward feelings of joy and sadness. Saudade is bad, sings Gonzaga, if it makes us "dream / about someone that we desire to see again." The lyrics continue: "I cast this [painful saudade] from me" (Gonzaga and Teixeira n.d.).

Yet the chorus that follows seems to undermine this rejection of the tantalizingly agonizing side of nostalgic longing. The first two lines cite the perspective of someone suffering from an acute longing for reuniting with his or her love, "Ah, if only some one would allow me to return / to the arms of my sweetheart" (Gonzaga and Teixeira n.d.). The next two lines then explain that this longing is more bitter than any *giló*. However, the final lines of the chorus suggest that the singer himself is not immune to this sort of bittersweet yearning and must find other means to sooth the anguish of separation:

But no one can say
That he saw me sad and crying
Saudade my remedy is to sing (repeat) (Gonzaga and Teixeira n.d.)

These lines sum up the powerful potential of forró to combat feelings of sadness and alienation in exile. Rather than merely repress the complicated and sometimes heartbreaking emotions described by the word *saudade*, the singer chooses to sublimate his suffering through the musical genres of his home region. Thus, saudade becomes the very *raison d'être* of forró in the diaspora of Northeasterners in the Brazilian South. It serves a dual function as both the source of artistic inspiration for forrozeiros and their target in their attempts to lessen the suffering of exile, or "matar [kill] saudade"—that is, to assuage their collective nostalgia. Because they are inevitably unable to eliminate this great lack, both for themselves and for Northeasterners as a whole, forrozeiros find saudade to be a continuous source of musical productivity, a neverending desire. As "Que nem giló" concludes, singing and the associated musical gatherings can

mitigate saudade, but it can never be extinguished, and of course it reestablishes its powerful hold once the song and the celebration end. Thus, not only the affect of saudade but all the more so its representation through music and celebration serve to bind together a northeastern community scattered across Brazil.

Having discussed the traditional treatment of saudade through two lyrical examples, we can now turn to some more novel expressions of this unique feeling by university and electronic forrózeiros. In the case of university forró, characterized by its generally younger, middle-class musicians and audience who frequent forró nightclubs in Brazil's larger cities, saudade often is explored through an anthropological lense (on the origins and characteristics of university forró, see Braga 2001; Draper, 2010). University forrózeiros pay tribute to a previous era when Gonzaga was the reigning king of Baião and forró had first achieved national prominence. Especially outside of the Northeast, although there, too, among the middle class, university forrózeiros consider Gonzaga's heyday a forgotten era and in need of retrieval, or *resgate*. The era needs to be rescued from oblivion so that young music fans can recognize forró's unique importance in the pantheon of Brazilian popular music. The desire to rescue forró, especially the forró canon and its aura of authenticity, is a middle-class saudade for the seemingly timeless popular culture of rural Brazil. In the case of traditional forró, the saudade for a rural utopia was developed as a means of giving hope to poor Northeasterners in exile that they might some day return to the idyllic land of their birth described in the lyrics, or at least the hope that they would not lose the community and traditions associated with their home region. University forró has developed a different kind of utopia based on the originality of a past rural, northeastern locus of production that the musicians themselves may well never have directly experienced. This utopia is not primarily spatially oriented as in the case of traditional forró but exists as the limit of saudade for folkloric authenticity. The Northeast is not so much the referent for authenticity as one expression among others of this middle-class feeling of saudade.

Although space does not permit a detailed description of the elaborate, modern staging of electronic forró, in this context it will suffice to explain that the general lyrical emphasis of this subgenre is on interpersonal romance and sexuality. The flashy and sensualized attire of the dancers in electronic forró performances serves only to underline this emphasis in the song lyrics. Thus, electronic forrózeiros are the performers who incorporate the most influence from urban popular culture up to this point in the history of forró as a national genre of popular music. Romance and sexuality were always a part of forró, but the extent to which they appear in the lyrics in electronic forró, along with the fact that the romance is often unconnected to the history of the northeastern diaspora, reflects a sensibility similar in some sense to that of producers in urban popular

culture genres like television soap operas and *música brega* (on *música brega*, see Murphy, 2006). The repercussion of this approach to urban popular culture has rather unpredictable results for any single lyrical creation by electronic forrozeiros. The issue is further complicated by the fact that electronic forró groups are often enthusiastic to perform songs by traditional lyricists and musicians, who could not be accurately designated as organic intellectuals of the electronic subgenre.

Indeed, in many cases, electronic forró songs nostalgically reference the northeastern backlands that gave birth to baião and forró. The songs speak to the roots of electronic forró in the nonelectronic, rural interior that produced an important genre like forró despite its economic and political marginality in Brazil. Thus, this kind of expression of saudade can serve a parallel function to the saudade of resgate in university forró; however, the difference in the latter case is the element of anxiety over class alienation. Electronic forrozeiros, in contrast, do not express this anxiety because they are generally not from the middle class and most of the famous ones hail from the Northeast (e.g., the band *Mastruz com Leite* and many similar bands hailing from the city of Fortaleza, Ceará—the birthplace of this subgenre; on the origins and characteristics of electronic or modern forró, see Draper 2010; Silva, 2003). They share their humble origins with Luiz Gonzaga, the founder of the traditional line of the genre. The inclusion of nostalgic songs about the northeastern interior in the electronic forró repertoire serves the function of paying respect to the artistic heritage of the genre and to the continued importance of rural subalternity in the imaginary of forró in general. Thus, musicians of both electronic forró and university forró, in their own distinct ways, should still be considered allies with traditional forrozeiros in a war of position that maintains and deepens forró's relevance on the national stage in Brazil. I further consider their unique contributions to this popular-cultural war at the end of the following section.

COGNITIVE MAPPING AND THE NEGATIVE DIALECTIC IN FORRÓ

The redemptive imaginary of saudade finds its negative corollary outside of the Northeast in forrozeiros' common resistance to cognitively mapping the social space of the southeastern (or even coastal northeastern) cities in which many Northeasterners now live for economic reasons. The concept of cognitive mapping here refers to the process of understanding and representing urban space, in this case in the social imaginary of migrant Northeasterners (Jameson 2000). Forrozeiros do cognitively map their home region of the Northeast, but this description of the natural and human geography of that region occurs largely to the exclusion of incorporating into forró new discursive themes from the urban-industrial complex of the Southeast. Such an exclusive focus might be deemed

surprising, as so many Northeasterners have migrated to the Southeast that one would expect forró to address the experiences of the diasporic communities of Northeasterners in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro—if only from their own limited, subjective experience of these cities. But a detailed portrait of northeastern migrant communities as such is generally suppressed in favor of preserving and valorizing affective and cultural ties to the home region. No matter what innovations occur musically and lyrically, there remains this profound need to be rooted in that region and its history.

In analyzing forró's focus toward the Northeast and away from the southeastern space of migration, I take the hermeneutical approach that the phenomenon of psychological resistance, or repression, offers. This approach has the advantage of avoiding a verdict on whether forró's championing of the rural roots of Northeasterners in the city is conservative or progressive. Although forró discourse has certain qualities critical of hegemonic developmentalist policies, it would be difficult to regard the nostalgic visions of forró as calling for significant political change, especially not within the industrial core. What might have been considered conservative in the confines of the northeastern communities where forró first flourished as folk music, however, cannot be so easily categorized in the new, national context into which forró entered upon its first commodification as *baião*. In fact, I contend that the rural idyll of forró discourse, in its resistance to urban social reality, functions as a utopian critique of economic development that "discloses the complacency of the urban celebration" and forms half of a negative dialectic (Jameson 2004, 50). The other half is, of course, the urban utopia that celebrates the city and, in Jameson's (2004, 50) words, "exposes everything nostalgic and impoverished in the embrace of nature." Therefore, although forró does not present a political program, it functions as a dialectical counterpoint to the hegemonic utopia of urban development and thereby serves as a continual reminder of rural subalternity. This reminder is all the more striking when produced by means of the technology of the culture industry, in the southeastern urban, politico-economic core, or even in the larger coastal cities of the Northeast. Returning to the context of the psyche, if in forró's discourse we can find a psychological repression of the economic violence of urbanization, then we must also recognize that this repression acutely reveals its opposite number in urban consciousness. In this way, forró is a symptom in popular music, a return of the repressed for the urban core—the repressed being the core's reliance on massive levels of surplus labor, displaced from more rural regions on the periphery like the Northeast.

At this point, I briefly consider some traditional forró songs that are representative of the genre's orientation toward the city, especially the great metropolises of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo to which millions of Northeasterners migrated. A clear example of the alienation these mi-

grants experienced in the new urban environment is expressed in Guio de Moraes's "No Ceará não tem disso não" ("They Don't Have This in Ceará"), which Gonzaga recorded in 1950. The song's lyrics are typical in that they reveal very little other than the fact that the city holds many dangers for Northeasterners that are not to be found in their native region. Ceará is portrayed as free of the exploitative "sharks" of the Southeast, with the help of a regional expression—"Ceará doesn't have any of this"—reminiscent of the phrase "we're not in Kansas anymore." This is a world filled with things that, for a Northeasterner from Ceará, have no explanation ("Não existe explicação"). Most revealing of the alienation experienced by the migrant in the city are the lines "Nem que eu fique aqui dez anos / Eu não me acostumo não / Tudo aqui é diferente / dos costumes do sertão" ("Even if I stayed here ten years / I still wouldn't get used to it / Everything here is different / from the customs of the sertão") (Morais 1950/2000). As a result, the singer decides to catch a ride on the first truck back to his land ("minha terra"), presumably in Ceará.

Even songs that seem to be entirely devoted to southeastern locations do not depart far from the critical-regionalist characteristics of "No Ceará não tem disso não." "Baião de São Sebastião" (1950) is Luiz Gonzaga's ode to the city, Rio de Janeiro, which essentially launched his national career via its influential recording industry and communications media. In this song, the singer thanks his "Rio Amigo" ("Friend Rio") and mentions being impressed by the Corcovado mountain that overlooks the city, but even so, he emphasizes that he experienced great fear ("muito medo") on first arriving there. There is also an explicit challenge to the popular culture of this metropolis in the refrain "Pare o samba três minutos / pr'eu cantar o meu baião" ("Stop the samba for three minutes / for me to play my baião) (Teixeira n.d.). Thus, even in a song whose purpose seems to be to thank the culture industry of Rio for helping his career, Gonzaga sees fit to further the war of maneuver for northeastern popular music. Not to mention the fact that Gonzaga's own experience in Rio was an exception to the rule for northeastern migrants in terms of the enormous success he found there—consequently, songs like this one, detailing a successful career in the destination region of migration, are rare in forró.

The electronic and university subgenres of forró should be analyzed as well in the context of forrozeiros' resistance to cognitively map urban space. My analysis can be only a general one here, but suffice it to say that, in both subgenres, there continues to be a common avoidance of urban themes or narratives. Considering broadly the albums over the past decade of artists such as Flávio José and Mastruz Com Leite in the electronic category and O Bando de Maria, Roberta de Recife, and Falamansa in the university category, one can see that their lyrics tend to focus on personal romance when they are not citing or reworking the traditional forró repertoire (which typically celebrates northeastern nature and popular

culture). However, in terms of performance and imagery, there are some shifts to an urban sensibility, such as the aforementioned sensualized attire of the electronic forró dancers and the urban street clothing worn by the members of Falamansa and O Bando de Maria (in their performances and presented on their album covers, such as Falamansa's 2003 *Simples Mortais* and O Bando's 2004 *Tiro de bodoque*). Nevertheless, judging by these forrozeiros' and others' lyrical discourse, the newer forró subgenres still support a war of position that—even as it gradually transforms the genre's visual style for young, urban audiences from various classes and regions—continues to pay homage to the rural-regionalist ethos of traditional forró. The propensity of electronic and university bands to cover forró standards and to perform with more traditional groups underlines this respect for northeastern tradition.

FORRÓ AS THE VOICE OF INTERNAL MIGRANTS

It is particularly revealing to contextualize all of my discussion of forró to this point in a larger analysis of the migration of Northeasterners throughout Brazil. In this way, one can fully appreciate the value of forró's war of maneuver, which not only gained nationwide respect for northeastern popular culture but also helped northeastern migrants embrace their own regional identity in the face of discrimination. Forró lyrics have always featured movement, to reflect the massive internal migration of northeastern workers. In the past, these were rural workers, but increasingly people have been leaving urban areas as well, as the Northeast becomes more and more urbanized (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE] 2003). Northeasterners have migrated to all parts of Brazil; however, the primary destination has been the Southeast—and in the Southeast, the preferred location has been the most dynamic economy in the city and state of São Paulo. Through collections of interviews of migrants to São Paulo, demographic statistics related to internal migration, and related studies in the fields of sociology, social psychology, communication studies, history, and ethnography, one can fully appreciate the powerful accuracy and continued relevance of forró's discourse on the northeastern migratory experience (see, e.g., Baptista 1998; Berlinck and Hogan 1974; Cardel 2003; Durham 1978; Galhardo 2003; IBGE 2003; Januzzi 2000; Medina 1989; Santo André 2000; Vainer 2000). In contrast, a contextual analysis of this sort also broaches some of forró's blind spots from the standpoints of gender difference and life in the diaspora. These oversights, however, have not diminished forró musicians' key role in vividly imagining a redemptive return to the home region for Northeasterners. In recent times, an increasing number of displaced Northeasterners are making this dream of return a reality as the economy of their home region revives (IBGE 2003; Medina 1989). Finally, a consideration of the

genre in the context of studies of migrant psychology reveals forrozeiros' perspicacious portrayal of migrant subjectivity, along with their ability to elaborate northeastern migrants' losses and to celebrate their common cultural patrimony. Studies in the area of social psychology confirm these insights that forrozeiros have shared with, and received from, the northeastern community since the origins of the genre in the mid-twentieth century (Almeida 2003; Cardel 2003; Carignato 2005; DeBiaggi 2005).

I limit myself here to a few examples that contextualize forró musicians' great ability to capture the experience of internal migrants in Brazil. First, we can consider one emblematic oral history of a northeastern migrant woman. This is the story of Maria Odete de Lima, a migrant from Senador Pompeu in the state of Ceará. She migrated to São Paulo with her husband and children when she was eight months pregnant in 1942. She describes her journey in great detail many decades later:

Saímos do sítio no lombo de burro. Viajamos eu, meu marido, as crianças e minha irmã Creusa. Depois nós pegamos um pau de arara e seguimos viagem até pegar um vapor que transportou a gente pelo rio São Francisco até chegar em Minas Gerais. A gente teve que fazer muitas baldeações e ficávamos nas calçadas dia e noite esperando a próxima condução. A viagem foi muito difícil e as crianças sofreram muito. Em Minas Gerais nós embarcamos em um trem que chacoalhava muito. Eu estava grávida de uns oito meses e já não agüentava mais aquele balanço. Ao todo a viagem durou dezoito dias até chegarmos em São Bernardo do Campo. Sofremos muito durante a viagem. O Valmir, que tinha pouco mais de um ano, ficou doente. (We left the farm on the backs of donkeys. I, my husband, the children, and my sister Creusa were traveling. Next we took a truck and continued the journey until we took a steamboat that took us down the São Francisco river as far as Minas Gerais. We had to make a lot of transfers and we were staying on the streets day and night waiting for the next transport. The journey was very difficult and the children suffered a lot. In Minas Gerais we boarded a train that shook a lot. I was around eight months pregnant and I couldn't stand that shaking anymore. In all the journey took eighteen days to arrive in São Bernardo do Campo. We suffered very much during the journey. Valmir, who was just over one year old, got sick.) (Santo André 2000, p. 24)

The length and difficulty of the journey are typical of those mid-century migrants faced, especially those coming from the rural interior of the Northeast. Maria Odete de Lima describes her family taking at least four different modes of transportation to get to their destination over the course of almost three weeks. This is a journey that can now be completed in two days or less by bus or car, and faster still by catching a plane. The family was clearly desperate to find economic opportunities in São Paulo, as they chose to travel despite the fact that the mother of the family was in her third trimester and they had very young children. Tragically, both the one-year-old child, Valmir, and the soon-to-be born infant, Osmar, would die in São Paulo because of the rigors of the difficult journey and the lack of adequate health-care facilities for migrants in the destination city.

Real experiences like these are given epic resonance through the stories of migrant families sung by *forrozeiros*. One classic example is Patativa de Assaré's poem "A triste partida" ("The Sad Departure"), which Gonzaga recorded in its original musical version in 1964. This lyric details the arduous journey of a family from the rural Northeast to São Paulo in search of work. In fact, they come from the same state as Maria Odete de Lima's family, Ceará. The emphasis on the endurance of great suffering seen in the foregoing passage, from the perspective of a real migrant, is very much akin to that in the fictional rendition of the migrant experience in "A triste partida." Indeed, the primary difference between life and art here lies not in the material conditions and experiences described but in the point of view. In general, in traditional *forró* and northeastern popular poetry, the perspective of the singer or poet is male. This interviewee is a woman and a mother, and thus we see things a bit more from her perspective, with her concern for her children and her pregnancy taking center stage. "A triste partida" does tell the tale of an entire family's migration; however, the emphasis lies on the perspective of the father as head of the family and breadwinner. Thus, the interview also shows us that women migrants' standpoints were being overlooked to some degree in traditional *forró*. This is all the more true of Gonzaga and Teixeira's classic "Asa branca" (1947), which assumes the viewpoint of a male migrant migrating alone and leaving his beloved Rosinha behind waiting for his return. As one can start to see from the case of Maria Odete de Lima, even in the 1940s it was not uncommon for northeastern women to migrate, especially in the company of their families. This fact qualifies some of the iconic male figures emphasized by traditional *forró* but does not diminish the importance of *forrózeiros'* ability to accurately and powerfully portray, both lyrically and musically, the refugee (*retirante*) experience of many poor Northeasterners.

Yet a closer look at sociological data in migration indicates that *forró* has not been able to capture in its full complexity the distinct experience of female migrants. Especially in the context of traditional *forró*, the perspective of the singer tends to be male—whether or not the subject of the song is migration. Nevertheless, the reality is that, for several decades, women have often constituted the majority of internal migrants in Brazil (IBGE 2003; Medina 1989). In Lídia Cardel's (2003) study, the number of female migrants from the community of Olhos d'Água, Bahia, at the turn of the twenty-first century was nearly double that of male migrants. Cardel explains the greater number of women migrants in terms of the normative gender roles of their home community in the rural interior of Bahia. Men, especially men who are potential heirs of their family's land, are expected eventually to return and settle down in their place of origin. In contrast, there is more flexibility with regard to women from the community who

find husbands who are “good workers” and therefore putatively can provide for them. It is accepted that these women need to settle in the destination city (in this case, São Paulo).

Yet there is a certain danger for women who choose to migrate on their own. Again, this is an issue that is overlooked in the discourse of *forró*. According to one interviewee from a small northeastern community in the interior, women are judged to be prostitutes if they leave their community alone, unaccompanied by a male family member (Baptista 1998). On the other end of their migratory journey, women like the politician Luiza Erundina continue to have to battle against machismo if they seek to have a successful career (Medina 1989). In terms of economic opportunity, it is not surprising that female migration is significant—there is more unskilled labor available for women than for men in the service sector thanks to the demand for female housekeepers, maids, and cooks. This situation has also led to a greater number of women becoming heads of household or providers for their families since the 1980s (Baptista 1998; Clemente 1993). In general, northeastern women interviewed in various studies and surveys find a greater amount of freedom with respect to gender roles when they migrate to São Paulo. Comments made to interviewers reflect a general sense of more widely accepted lifestyle choices for women, including support for, or at least tolerance of, women as workers and as single mothers (Medina 1989; Santo André 2000). Another woman’s story highlights the relative lack of acceptance of single mothers in the northeastern interior. This woman became pregnant in the Northeast and then migrated to give birth to her baby in São Paulo, given her sense that she and her child would be shunned in her home town for not being part of a normative nuclear family (Medina 1989).

Finally, there are indeed poor migrant women from the Northeast who, whether by choice or by coercion, become prostitutes. These are likely the Northeasterners whose experience is furthest from that projected in *forró* discourse, as commonly they do not see the Northeast as a place to which they would prefer to return if they could. As explained in Pereira’s (1996) study of prostitution in São Paulo, many prostitutes are migrants who have been forced out of their homes because of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. For these women and girls, migration is an escape from their traumatic pasts, and prostitution one of the few choices of employment open to them as homeless female migrants. Thus, it is not surprising that one teen sex worker in São Paulo who had migrated from the Northeast was not very responsive regarding her biography when interviewed, commenting that she did not like to think about her past (Medina 1989). Clearly, this standpoint is far from the typical *forró* perspective that longs for return and imagines the Northeast as a redemptive space.

It is important to recognize that, especially in the context of migration, *forrozeiros* have not been able to represent these experiences of lower-class

women. As a result of the largely male perspective of traditional forró, the genre has also failed to represent the more common experience of women who migrate on their own and find legal work in the service sector of the Southeast. Another reason for this lacuna in forró lyrics is that, as argued earlier, the genre has typically resisted representations of the destination space of migration, focusing more on redemption through return migration to the Northeast. Even in the case of recent electronic and university forró, in which women participate to a greater extent in singing, lyrics, and songwriting, the experiences and epistemes of women migrants have not yet found lyrical prominence. This is also, at least in part, a legacy of a patriarchal culture in the rural Northeast, and a collective decision not to challenge the internal gender norms of that culture during the struggle to bring northeastern music to the national stage.

FORRÓ'S MULTITUDE: TRANSREGIONAL AND GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

In this final section, I outline the transformation of cultural hierarchies that has taken place since forró's early days as a result of the global integration of capitalist markets, led by dominant capitalist countries like those that constitute the G8 (i.e., the United States, the European Union, and Japan). In the case of Brazil, at the time of forró's birth into the national culture industry, Rio de Janeiro controlled the distribution and hierarchization of cultural flows and the resultant formation of a Brazilian national cultural identity. This carioca hegemony had been established since President Getúlio Vargas's rise to power and his privileging of Rio de Janeiro's samba as the representative cultural expression of the popular classes in Brazil (McCann 2004). *Vis-à-vis* the international market, various cultural agents chose samba, and later bossa nova, to represent Brazil's cultural riches. They were poetics for export—to paraphrase Oswald de Andrade (1995)—that played the role of counterpart to the country's industrial products and natural resources. But since trade liberalization during and after the dictatorship years of the 1970s, the national product has become less privileged as representative of the people, and a wave of regional cultural production has come to the fore in answer to the omnipresent influx of North American cultural flows. Successive waves of national popularity for forró, and related hagiographies of its major proponents such as Luiz Gonzaga and Jackson do Pandeiro, are symptoms of this larger rise of regionalism.² Regional production no longer need be mediated through the cultural arbitration of Rio de Janeiro for the purposes of strategic representation of the nation-state in foreign markets.

2. As are the popularity of *música sertaneja* from São Paulo and central-western Brazil (see Dent 2007) and *samba reggae* and *axé* from Bahia's Afro-Brazilian popular culture (see Gueirreiro 2000).

But thus far, this rise in regionalism has not translated into a significantly greater recognition of forró in the world market. Much like Gonzaga partnered with professionals in the economically dominant sector of Brazil to achieve national prominence, a partnership with a cultural entrepreneur or musician situated in a dominant capitalist country like David Byrne or Ry Cooder is often necessary for genres produced by subaltern groups in subordinate regions to achieve any global recognition. This is a highly hierarchical relationship, which raises the question of whether a global multitude of cultural “content producers” is presently possible (on the multitude as a global, egalitarian, and counterhegemonic force, see Hardt and Negri 2004). It is certainly conceivable as a utopian project, but what if we refer back to the national history of forró as a test case for a real transregional, transclass alliance of musicians, one that uses but is not limited to the logic of the dominant economic paradigm? It appears that the possibility, if faint and living by the double-edged sword of creative freedom (which can yield both autonomous collaboration and isolation), does exist.

Considering a bit further the issue of global cultural flows, we can conclude that because forró insists so much on its regional specificity, it is likely to circulate more freely as part of a global common only if it is allowed to do so without sacrificing this specificity (on the common as humanity’s shared social production, see Hardt and Negri 2009). One way in which this has been done in the case of other Latin American music is through diasporic and/or immigrant populations (Roberts 1999). Forró’s relative lack of such a population on the international level begs the question, is it possible to circulate subaltern music globally without the circulation of a corresponding community of listeners? The answer is that the possibility exists with current information technology, although the transnational mass media, including the big record companies as well as national radio and television, will have to become less hierarchical or will have to be bypassed altogether by independent media. The Internet provides one such possibility, but flows of Brazilian culture via digital file-sharing networks such as Kazaa or YouTube can happen only as piracy until more artists begin to circumvent the restrictive copyright laws reproduced in their contracts with multinationals. This would not be a problem, though, for younger or lesser-known musicians who have not signed such contracts.

One example of endeavors in this vein in contemporary Brazil is the advocacy of the musician Gilberto Gil, who for several years served as minister of culture in President Luís Inácio “Lula” da Silva’s government, for Creative Commons. Gil has released songs through this organization, which helps artists circumvent restrictive copyright laws and contracts with multinational corporations. Other artists who sign with major record labels, such as the electronic forrozeiro Frank Aguiar, are insisting on

affordable pricing of their CDs so that they can at least reach the subaltern regions and populations from which they receive their inspiration and loyal support (Silva 2003). Projects such as Creative Commons, combined with pressure on record labels to accept a more democratically oriented market, can help disseminate the cultural production of the global multitude of artists. Of course, a global war of maneuver on behalf of subaltern, popular music would also rely more on international audiences to actively seek out foreign music rather than just having multinationals market it to them. Support for a more participatory attitude among audiences worldwide will ultimately give further resonance not only to the music but also to the subaltern perspectives of groups akin to the people of Brazil's Northeast.

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