

Editorial:

The world of syncopation: dynamics in music and culture.

Henrique Cazes and Antonio Nóbrega shared the stage for the Friday night plenary session at the twelfth congress of the Brazilian Studies Association (BRASA), in London in August of 2014. Cazes, the eminent cavaquinista and scholar of choro, delivered an illuminating lecture on the transformation of polka into maxixe, exploring not merely the rhythmic dislocation that made this transformation possible, but the social and political dislocations that provided the context and echoes for the musical evolution. Cazes's model presentation built irrefutably from one musical example to the next, walking us through the transformation of Brazilian popular music in a memorable display of precise logic.

Nóbrega, the protean dancer, musician, singer and actor, then took the stage to embody the unity within multiplicity of Brazilian dance. In a whirlwind *tour de force*, Nóbrega elucidated the diversity and unifying principles of Brazil's autochthonous dance forms, and demonstrated the ways in which these principles guided the creation of character and movement in his own work. Nóbrega closed with an impassioned evocation of the power of syncopation—both narrowly construed as rhythmic contrametricity and broadly construed as cultural disjuncture—as the beating heart of a Brazilian culture that is endlessly ample and inclusive.

The balance between Cazes's irresistible logic and Nóbrega's swirling performance themselves enacted a kind of presentational syncopation, establishing the rigorous structure of academic presentation and altering it with the disruption of ecstatic dance. This was by design—like the syncopation that characterizes much of Brazilian popular music.

The Cazes/Nóbrega panel culminated a series of five panels on syncopation at BRASA XII, co-organized by Pedro Meira Monteiro, André Botelho and Bryan McCann, covering a broad range of musical, social and literary dislocations and disjunctures, as well as extensive discussion of the uses and misuses of the term and concept of syncopation. This series of panels led to a follow-up seminar at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro in July of 2015, organized by Monteiro, Botelho and Maurício Hoelz Veiga Junior, featuring an even broader range of papers.

The dossier in this edition of *Brasiliانا* is a down payment on this series of reflections, one we expect to continue to bear published fruit in the future. It offers both some guiding precepts, in the articles by Maurício Hoelz and Enea Zaramella on Mário de Andrade, and several case studies of Brazilian syncopation in action.

Mário de Andrade is a justly iconic figure, as the first author to inquire extensively and explicitly into Brazilian syncopation. As Hoelz demonstrates, Mário's own inquiry prefigured the multiplicity and open-ended nature of our recent series of papers, while also emphasizing the balance of dissimilar elements that characterized the Cazes/Nóbrega panel.

Mário's reflections on music, and on Brazilian culture more broadly, are studied with striking pairs: lamenting the desire of some composers and critics to pin a superficial national identity of superficial or dubious indigeneity, he speaks of a "coeficiente guassú," decrying the predilection for the "esquisito apimentado." Those knotty phrases themselves are a clue to Mário's own thought on the deeper nature of Brazilian culture, one given direction and meaning by the irreducible and ultimate unresolvable disparities at its core. Nowhere was this more evident than in Brazil's music. For Mário, as Hoelz puts it, "Os ritmos populares como que cifram as contradições culturais do processo de colonização, engendrado no conflito entre os tempos divergentes da música europeia – o tempo da mensuração, do compasso, do

ritmo demarcado pelos retornos regulares, em suma, da periodicidade quadrada – e da música indígena-africana – o tempo de uma rítmica fraseológica, prosódica, caracterizada pela expansão em aberto e por uma periodicidade continuamente variada.”

It is this understanding of syncopation, rooted in specific musical disjunctures but broadly resonant in Brazilian culture, that animates our ongoing inquiry. Mário was also the first musicologist to identify what he described as a “characteristic syncopation” in maxixe, a contrametric phrase that exemplified the transition from polka to maxixe later described so effectively by Cazes. In canonical Western music, “characteristic syncopation” should be a contradiction in terms. But in Brazil, as Mário elucidated with rare power, the contradiction in terms became the structure—but did not, routinization notwithstanding, lose its capacity both to move and to knock one off balance.

As Enea Zaramella reminds us, if Mário recognized the origins of Brazilian syncopation in vast historical transitions, he also keenly evoked the sensation of feeling them in the body, in maracatu drumming so powerful that he could only recover his senses by stepping out of its wake. Our goal in this series of panels and seminars and in this initial dossier is to follow Mário’s lead, and to explore both these large-scale historical movements and the embodied feel of syncopation. To begin, we do that by identifying syncopation in some places where Brazilians are not accustomed to notice it—in, for example, the milonga of Brazil’s far south, in the música caipira of the paulista interior, and in carioca funk. Our hope is that these unusual examples, together with more explicit inquiry into the work of Mário de Andrade himself, will help illuminate the range, power and nature of syncopation in Brazil and beyond.

This issue is complemented with three papers in the General Articles section: two on Brazilian literature – one focused on Machado de Assis’s representation of madness in *Quincas Borba* and the other in the discussion on identity and memory in Bernardo

Carvalho's *O sol se põe em São Paulo* – and one on transitional justice and the concept of crimes against humanity applied to the results of the Brazilian Truth Commission.

The book review section summarizes, in some way, the main questions discussed on this issue of *Brasiliana*, with a review of a biography of Mário de Andrade, another of a book on the Brazilian military dictatorship and the last one on Brazilian contemporary literature.

Brasiliana is proud of publishing this issue in which is possible to see the consolidation of its *raison d'être*: to be a strong platform of debates on Brazilian studies with an interdisciplinary perspective.

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