

Vibrant: Virtual Brazilian Anthropology



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Cape Verde and Brazil

Musical Connections

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Introduction

The insertion of Brazilian music in contexts outside of the country is no longer a novelty. Indeed, the media often reports on these musical flows. For instance, newspapers and specialized magazines have played a crucial role in highlighting the presence of Brazil on the international stage through reports on Grammy Awards won by Brazilian musicians (namely, Sérgio Mendes, Milton Nascimento, Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso e João Gilberto). Another example is the increased visibility of concerts featuring Brazilian artists in other countries, such as the Brazilian Day in New York, which attracts more than a million people to the streets of that city – above all Brazilians, but also North-Americans and migrants from other countries.

However, it should be noted that the presence of Brazilian music outside of the country's borders is not necessarily related to the global cultural industry, neither to the impact of recent migration processes. Musical exchanges involving Brazilian musicians have been going on for some time, in multiple ways, following diverse routes and movements of people.

In this article, I focus on a particular trajectory that some forms of Brazilian music have taken. I refer to the Atlantic flows that allowed for the arrival of music and musicians from Brazil to Cape Verde, deeply influencing musical productions in the archipelago. Adopting an anthropological approach, I seek to engage with discourses articulated by Cape Verdeans on the role of “Brazilian music” (as they understand it) and its relationship to the music produced in Cape Verde. Following the narratives about Cape Verdean music as well as those present in the music itself, I would like to open up a space for thinking about the relationship between Cape Verde and Brazil.¹

¹ I would like to thank my colleague Doreen Gordon and the anonymous peer reviewers for their

Atlantic encounters

Luís Rendall, an important figure in Cape Verdean music, is known as a virtuoso guitar player. Cape Verdeans often comment on the influence of Brazilian musicians on his career. Luís Rendall was born in Cape Verde, in the island of São Vicente, in 1898. Working in the customs services, he was in intense contact with foreign ship crews passing by the Porto Grande de Mindelo (Great Port of Mindelo), an important refueling station in the Atlantic Ocean. Eutrópio Lima da Cruz, who published a booklet in honor of Luís Rendall, highlights the significance of this fact in the musician's career. He states that the many hours Luís Rendall spent on board Brazilian ships intensified the fruitfulness of the musical exchanges he was engaged with (Cruz 1988: 2). Luís Rendall's connections with Brazilian music are even more explicit in the following excerpt of the biography written by Eutrópio Lima da Cruz:

With much humor, Luís Rendall would remember the episode in 1930 in which, in the Church Square in S. Vicente, after giving his "show" with the guitar, he is "demoralized" by the summary decree of João Damata, with his big hands and dirty fingernails, a navigator of a Brazilian steam ship making a stop in Mindelo! Self-possessed, Luís Rendall has to lend the guitar to João Damata who, in the end, returns it with the incentive "if you keep doing it, you will learn it". The amusement of Luís Rendall cannot be hidden in the face of the art of João Damata on the guitar. (Cruz 1988: 6; my translation)

The reference to João Damata reappears in the statement of Luís Rendall, cited by Eutrópio Lima da Cruz:

The guitar is my companion, and my interest for it started when I was only a child. After the contacts that I had with the Brazilian sailor who frequently stopped at the Porto Grande, João Damata, my interest was aroused. This Brazilian man became my good friend and even wanted to secretly take me to Brazil, promising me a job for a record label, but I didn't want to. With my Brazilian friend, I learned a lot; I used to be an attentive individual, incorporating the music and normally, when the Brazilian performed a song, I listened carefully, trying to immediately reproduce it. (Luís Rendall *apud* Cruz 1988: 6-7; my translation)

insightful comments, but I take full responsibility for the content of the article.

To this day, Cape Verdeans repeatedly comment on the famous guitar solos by Luís Rendall. The conversations about the artist always make reference to his affinity to the music produced in Brazil – or better, to what they understand to be representative of Brazilian music.

João Damata, on the other hand, followed a less visible pathway. He never reached notoriety among his fellow countrymen. He was never as famous as the Brazilian musicians that in the last decades emerged on the international scene, imbued with the responsibility of spreading Brazilian musical productions abroad – even though João Damata (and others like him) had previously carried out a similar role.

Another outstanding Cape Verdean musician whose life history reflects the influence of Brazilian music is Francisco Xavier da Cruz, better known by his nickname “B.Léza”. He was also born in São Vicente (in 1905) and was one of the most important Cape Verdean composers, whose songs are still being recorded. His musical creations attract attention especially in the albums by renowned singer Cesária Évora, another Grammy Awards winner.

B.Léza was born in the streets of Lombo, a poor neighborhood in Mindelo that housed many sailors, fishermen, domestic servants, and coal workers. In this area surrounding the port, he developed his distinctive style of guitar playing. B.Léza is especially remembered for imprinting his mark on the execution of the musical genre known as *morna*. It is believed that he started a new phase in the evolution of the *morna*, frequently considered a symbol of the Cape Verdean nation. Narratives about B.Léza reveal, simultaneously, the creative genius of the musician and the influence he received from Brazilian musicians passing by the island. I highlight an extract from an interview conducted by Michel Laban, in 1985, with the Cape Verdean writer Baltasar Lopes da Silva, in his commentary on the life of B.Léza, his personal friend:

But B.Léza marks a transition in the evolution of *morna* – there is clearly one *morna* before B.Léza and one *morna* after B.Léza. Before B.Léza, the *morna* was divided in three parts... Do you know music? Do you play the guitar?... For example, in a song written in the A minor key – I will use local nomenclature – there is the 1st part, the 2nd part, and the 3rd part. The first part begins with the A minor – normally; the second part is the first in D minor and after it returns to the first part in A minor, and it finally ends with the third part in A minor. Therefore: first in A minor, first in D minor, first in A minor, third in

A minor. However, B.Léza then introduced, through the influence of Brazilian music, an accident, a chord transition, here called *Brazilian half tone*: for example, when you are in A minor, instead of passing directly to the the first of D minor, he organizes it in the following way: A minor; chord transition, which is the third in D minor; first in D minor – then he returns to the first in A minor. (...) In this manner, B.Léza’s arrangement represents a watershed moment between the old morna and the modern one. (Baltasar Lopes da Silva *apud* Laban 1992: 17-18; my translation, italics mine)

Baltasar Lopes da Silva was one of the most prominent members of the Cape Verdean literary movement known as *Claridade*. Respected as a writer, he (and the other members of the *Claridade*) also played an important role in the process of nation building in Cape Verde. Remembering his friend B.Léza, with whom he spent many nights listening to the sounds of the guitar, Baltasar Lopes da Silva constructs a version for the history of the *morna*. In this narrative, the Brazilian influence in guitar playing is clearly emphasized through the technique called “the Brazilian half tone”.

This is not the only account about B.Léza in which his close contact with sailors/players from Brazil is mentioned. There are many stories about how he acquired his nickname and its connection to Brazil. On this matter, I quote again from Baltasar Lopes da Silva:

He used to be called B.Léza, at least this is the information I have: his name means the following – in the first years of the 1920s, there used to be a great Brazilian influence here... There were many Brazilian ships that stopped here at the port and they came on shore..., the Brazilians are amicable, they associated with the locals and, once in a while, they joined them in picnics and “cocktails”, gatherings and *tocatinas*², as we would say at that time. In fact, the guitar playing technique of São Vicente is the Brazilian technique, learned from the Brazilians, it is not the Spanish technique, it is the Brazilian style. And B.Léza also learned the Brazilian *lubie*, he used to pronounce many terms in the Brazilian way, instead of “beleza” [“beauty”, in Portuguese], he used to say “bèléza” [“beauty”, in Portuguese, with a Brazilian accent]... It was just like this, as the story is told. However, there is another version that I don’t know very well... (Baltasar Lopes da Silva *apud* Laban 1992: 17; my translation)

² A *tocatina*, in the Cape Verdean Creole language, is an informal event where there is music being played, especially the musical genres *morna* and *coladeira*.

Actually, there are multiple versions of how his name came to be B.Léza, but in all of them the Brazilian influence is evident. Some say that, when a Brazilian sailor was listening to Francisco Xavier da Cruz playing the guitar, he exclaimed, with a strong accent: “Que beleza!” (“What a beauty!”). Since then, this expression was transformed into the musician’s nickname. Another version that I encountered during fieldwork, told by the musician Tony³, who usually plays in Mindelo’s bar and restaurants, is as follows:

In the olden times, people used to play in the cafés. One of these places where they used to play was the “Ti Bia”, on the street Rua do Coco. Then a Brazilian ship arrived and the crew went to this café, to listen to some music and to drink – coffee, tea, grogo⁴... Besides Luís Rendall and others, the man that until then they used to call “Frank”, Francisco Xavier da Cruz, was also playing there. The Brazilians enjoyed themselves all night and said they would be back the next day and so they did. However, on the next day, they were all there playing except for Frank. So, a Brazilian asked: “Where is the ‘Beleza’? What has become of that ‘Beleza’?” And that was it. From then on the word became his nickname and it was never forgotten. (Tony, personal interview, September 26, 2002)

The history of the *morna* is separated into two phases: one before, the other after the introduction of the “Brazilian half tone”. Similarly, the above narrative divides into two parts the life history of the musician responsible for this innovation. During the first phase, he was called Frank; during the second one, he assumed the nickname B.Léza. With the new name, the Brazilian influence was forever imprinted on B.Léza’s career.

The encounters between Cape Verdean and Brazilian guitar players in Mindelo reveal a set of themes which deserve consideration. They show us what everyday life in that port city was like during the first decades of the twentieth century, immersed as it was in a bohemian and cosmopolitan atmosphere. They mention movements of people and musical exchanges across the Atlantic. They signal the complex relationship between “popular” musicians and literate members of the Cape Verdean colonial elite. They tell us about the history of the *morna* and its association with processes of identification. They bridge the past and the present, showing the links between

3 All research participant names are pseudonyms.

4 Cape Verdean alcoholic drink.

B.Léza and Cesária Évora. In other words, they connect the music that used to resonate in the streets of Mindelo, during that port city's golden age, and the songs that today receive international recognition through the voice of *La Diva Aux Pied Nus* (The Barefoot Diva), as Cesária Évora is known world-wide. Above all, these encounters reveal how sounds are turned into music. That is, sounds become cultural constructions as names and meanings are attributed to different ways of playing, speaking and singing.

Tales of two countries

Cape Verde was born out of the encounter between Portuguese and African peoples. The economic exploitation of the archipelago by the Portuguese Crown was always oriented towards benefiting from its strategic geographic position in relation to Europe, Africa and the Americas. The island of Santiago was from early utilized as an *entrepôt*, especially for the slave trade. As Carreira (2000: 137) points out, during the sixteenth and some years of the seventeenth century, slave trade in Santiago was intense. Passing by the Cape Verdean *entrepôt*, the ships were headed to the West Indies, Central America and Brazil, as well as the Canary Islands, Seville and Cadiz. Therefore, Cape Verde was intimately intertwined with the slave regime in Brazil, mediating the commerce of slaves between Upper Guinea and some regions of the northeast of Brazil (such as Pernambuco and Maranhão).

The relationship between Brazil and Cape Verde is reflected in many other historical contexts. Both countries are still interconnected through a series of concrete actions. Those links are evident in various international cooperative projects, in the joint participation of the two nations in the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa), and in other instances, such as religious affairs and the transmission of Brazilian soap operas to Cape Verde.

It is not my intention to map and analyze all the links between Brazil and Cape Verde. Rather, the focus of the article is on Cape Verdean representations about the relationship between the two countries. These narratives don't need a historical justification. The imagined relationship between Brazil and Cape Verde is meaningful in itself, as a way for Cape Verdeans to talk about their country and place in the world. Therefore, I seek to analyze the ways in which these links are culturally elaborated, focusing in particular

on Cape Verdean discourses about music and those produced through music.

The importance attributed to Brazil by Cape Verdeans is closely connected to the perception of Cape Verde as a creole society. Cape Verdean society is structured on the fundamental opposition between an African universe and a Europeanized one. Debates on the classification of Cape Verde as an African, a European or simply an Atlantic country are far from being banal questions. This discussion is present in many national identity projects, sustained by different groups within Cape Verdean society. In this context, the relationship with Brazil, as a country with similar social formation, acquires a special significance. Brazil often appears as an important reference in order to address Cape Verde's fundamental ambiguity and to mediate these different senses of belonging, interconnecting Europe and Africa in an Atlantic triangle. One of the best examples of these representations that take Brazil as a reference to think about Cape Verde is the already mentioned literary movement *Claridade*.

Claridade was initially published in the 1930's. The journal directed readers' attention to Cape Verde's history, its social problems and the life of its people. In the construction of this particular perspective on local reality, the influence of the *Modernismo*, a Brazilian literary movement, was significant. José Lins do Rego and Manuel Bandeira, among others, inspired this literary production that shaped the debates on Cape Verdean identity in the decades to follow.

Gilberto Freyre especially inspired the *claridosos* (as the participants of this movement were known). Cape Verdean intellectuals shared the idea that Cape Verde was Brazil on a reduced scale. *Casa Grande & Senzala*, Freyre's most acclaimed book on Brazilian society, provoked in the archipelago what Baltasar Lopes da Silva called "the revelation". For this group of writers, Cape Verde would be the paradigmatic example of Freyrean conceptions.

The relationship between Brazil and Cape Verde was delineated in diverse texts published by the *claridosos*, such as poems, short stories, novels and articles. An outstanding example of this perspective can be found in a Jorge Barbosa's poem, entitled "Você, Brasil" (You, Brazil). Below are a few lines of the poem:

*Eu gosto de Você, Brasil,
porque Você é parecido com a minha terra.*

*I like You, Brazil,
because You are just like my homeland.*

*Eu bem sei que você é um mundão
e que a minha terra são
dez ilhas perdidas no Atlântico,
sem nenhuma importância no mapa.*

*I know well that you are a world unto yourself
and that my homeland is
ten lost islands in the Atlantic,
without any importance on the map.*

*Eu já ouvi falar de suas cidades:
a maravilha do Rio de Janeiro,
São Paulo dinâmico,
Pernambuco,
Bahia de Todos-os-Santos.
Ao passo que as daqui
não passam de três pequenas cidades.*

*I have already heard of your cities:
the wonders of Rio de Janeiro,
the dynamic São Paulo,
Pernambuco,
Bahia de Todos-os-Santos.
While the ones here
are only three small cities.*

*Eu sei tudo isso perfeitamente bem,
mas Você é parecido com a minha terra.*

*I know this perfectly well,
but You are just like my homeland.*

*É o seu povo que se parece com o meu,
que todos eles vieram de escravos
com cruzamento depois de lusitanos e estrangeiros.
É o seu falar português
que se parece com o nosso falar,
ambos cheios de um sotaque vagaroso,
de sílabas pisadas na ponta da língua,
de alongamentos timbrados nos lábios
e de expressões terníssimas
e desconcertantes.
(...)*

*It is your people that look like mine,
because all of them came from slaves
later mixing with Portuguese and foreigners.
It is your way of speaking Portuguese
that sounds like ours,
both full of an easygoing accent,
with stepped syllables on the tip of the tongue,
with toned prolongations on the lips
and with loving
and disconcerting expressions.
(...)*

*O gosto dos seus sambas, Brasil,
das suas batucadas,
dos seus cateretês,
das suas toadas de negros,
caiu também no gosto da gente de cá,
que os canta
e dança
e sente,
com o mesmo entusiasmo
e com o mesmo desalinho também...
As nossas mornas,
as nossas polcas,*

*The taste of your sambas, Brazil,
of your percussions,
of your cateretês [a dance style],
of your black tunes,
it also appealed to the senses of our people,
who sing it
and dance it
and feel it,
with the same enthusiasm
and also with the same discomposure...
Our mornas,
our polcas,*

os nossos cantares,
fazem lembrar as suas músicas,
com igual simplicidade
e igual emoção.
(...)

our singing,
they remind us of your music,
with equal simplicity
and equal emotion.
(...)

Eu gosto de Você, Brasil.
Você é parecido com a minha terra.

I like You, Brazil.
You are just like my homeland.

O que é – é que lá tudo é à grande
e tudo aqui é em ponto mais pequeno...

What it is – is that there, everything is big
and here everything is smaller...

(Barbosa 1956; my translation)

Throughout the poem, Jorge Barbosa alludes to multiple themes that build proximities between Brazil and Cape Verde: linguistic similarities, the cultural matrices that participated in the formation of both societies, the presence of the same coffee and alcoholic drinks, the superstitions, the disasters caused by drought, and – what especially interests us – the kinds of music created by the two countries. The author makes reference to the affinity that Cape Verdeans have for Brazilian music and affirms that singing from Cape Verde reminds one of Brazil's. In this way, Jorge Barbosa turns music into a metaphor to speak about a greater relationship: the similarity between the two countries.

The discourses conceived by the *claridosos* are reproduced in many other national identity projects. Narratives that associate Brazil and Cape Verde, as a way to define the latter, cross different historical contexts and varied strata of Cape Verdean society. The unique process of social formation in Cape Verde led to the emergence of a clearly stratified society that, however, is not characterized by practices of social segregation. The friendship between the writer Baltasar Lopes da Silva and the guitar player B.Léza serves as a paradigmatic example of the phenomena I would like to underscore. In Cape Verde, the colonial elite (especially the men) used to socialize with the common people, in balls and *tocatinas*. The lines between social strata were not always so evident in the face of the different kinds of exchanges that linked the diverse sectors of colonial Cape Verdean society.

This explains, in part, the transformation of the *morna*, originally a

cultural element associated with the popular classes, into a symbol of Cape Verdean nationhood. It also explains the similarity between the discourses of the *claridosos* and the narratives present in the domain of popular culture. In both, the encounter between Brazil and Cape Verde has served to articulate the meaning of being Cape Verdean. In other words, by imagining their relationship to other places, they situate this creole society in the world. Therefore, I highlight again the importance of narratives about music as an allegory of Cape Verde. When Cape Verdeans describe their national musical genre, stressing its ties with Brazilian music, they actively participate in defining Cape Verde's position in the Atlantic space.

The *morna* as a metaphor

A lot has been said about *mornas*. They are a recurrent theme in productions of the Luso-Cape Verdean intellectuals or even in informal conversations around a bar table. The *morna* is the object of a series of booklets that seek to preserve its lyrics and musical scores.⁵ This set of written works on the *morna* was essential in attributing meaning to this musical genre, defining it, associating it with ideas and values, consolidating its semantic field. These texts played a crucial role in the construction of the *morna* as a symbol of Cape Verde. It is described as “a desired breath of melancholy” (Correia 1938: 79) or “Cape Verde’s dismay put into music” (Sousa 1928). João Lopes (1968: 38) affirms that the Cape Verdean “responds to all aspirations and appeals from his/her soul with the *morna*, his/her typical music, all impregnated with melancholy and sweet nostalgia (...).”

In the debate on the origin of this musical genre, we get closer to the theme of this article: its relationship to Brazilian music. The attempts to trace the genesis of the *morna* appeared, during my fieldwork, as an issue of great importance to the Cape Verdeans. A major part of the literature written on that theme was inspired by the *Claridade* movement. However, even before the *claridosos*, this was already a relevant question and, since then, it never ceased to occupy a central place in intellectual conversations between Cape Verdeans. Moreover, going beyond intellectual circles, the question on the origin of *morna* circulates among ordinary Cape Verdean people, who are also

5 See, for example, Alfama 1910; Tavares 1932; Monteiro 1987a, 1987b, 1988.

interested in giving answers to it. Therefore, this is an all-embracing debate, which takes diverse directions, according to the interest of each group, in each specific moment of Cape Verdean history.

Usually, the discussion about the history of the *morna* intertwines with the discussion about the formation of Cape Verdean society. The debate turns into a play of forces between Portuguese and African cultural heritages. Authors such as Jean-Paul Sarrautte (1961), Manuel Ferreira (1985) e Mascarenhas Barreto (1973) defended the major Portuguese influence on the *morna*. Recently, the hypothesis that privileges the African heritage on the origin of this musical genre has become more popular. For example, António Germano Lima (2001) suggests that its inception may be found in the “socio-cultural substrate of afro-black origin” in the island of Boavista. The author identifies the process of creation of the *morna* in the slaves’ feelings of “pain”, “moanings”, and “lamentations” (Lima 2001: 247).

The debate is not limited, though, to a dispute between these two cultural sources. The picture becomes more complex with the introduction of other narratives, which points towards other cultural elements involved in the genesis of the *morna*. It is then that the presence of Brazil emerges as quite significant. Vasco Martins, a Cape Verdean musicologist, suggests the influence of the Luso-Brazilian *modinha* (another musical genre) on the history of the *morna* (Martins 1989: 49-52). However, in the hypothesis elaborated by Vasco Martins, this only happened during a second phase of the *morna*’s development. For him, when the *modinha* arrived to Cape Verde, a “primordial *morna*” already existed. The latter would have had its genesis in the *landu* (or *lundum*) – a kind of music of African origin that arrived in the archipelago directly from the continent through the slaves or coming from Brazil (Martins 1989: 44-46). We can then perceive Brazil’s role as a mediator. The idea of “Brazilian music” in this discourse encompasses both the *modinha* and the *lundum*, cultural elements of Portuguese and African origins, respectively. Similar to the *morna*, Brazilian music is represented as a result of diverse fluxes, functioning as a tool to describe the double link that characterises the *morna* itself.

I insist that the different versions about the history of the *morna* did not simply arise out of my own questions, but spontaneously emerged during fieldwork, confirming the interest of ordinary Cape Verdeans in the “origin” of this musical genre, as well as in the fluxes and musical exchanges related

to it. For instance, in a conversation with Zeca, a public servant and guitar player, he brought up the subject of the genesis of the *morna*. What follows below is his narrative:

In the north of the island [of Boavista], a Brazilian ship with slaves on board supposedly ran aground. The ship ran aground and the people saved themselves or were saved... And then, they stayed in João Galego, (...) it is the first settlement in the north, where we are sure that it is there where *morna* was born... Especially because of the accent that still exists in this village, it is really close to some influence of the Brazilian language, because there they say a lot of “bocê”, “você”, “bocê”, “você” and that... we would have had, we think that this would have been... because, here, these slaves stayed there for a long time... there wasn't any communication in those days, there were some problems... and they were chained. Then, when they walked from a place to another... to eat or to go to another place, they had a melody that they used to perform... without lyrics, but with a meaning of sadness, of nostalgia or of suffering... Then, we have this oral information that the *morna* was born from that environment of sadness, of loneliness, of the suffering of Brazilian slaves here in Boavista, and someone took it, someone long ago took this melody that they used to sing, without words, but just the melody... So they started putting words to the *mornas* (...) (Zeca, personal interview, July 10, 2002).

I want to make clear that the present work has no intention of revealing something such as “the true origin of the *morna*”. Therefore, it is not important to interrogate the validity of the facts as narrated by Zeca. His discourse becomes relevant as one among many narratives told by Cape Verdeans to talk about the national musical genre and, indeed, about the meaning of being Cape Verdean itself.

The version offered by Zeca makes a fundamental reference to slavery and the suffering that it caused. The slaves would be the creators of the melody that later gave birth to the *morna*. Furthermore, they were very special slaves since they would not have come from Africa - as was usually the case - but from Brazil, in the opposite direction of the slave trade. The acknowledgement of the participation of the slaves in the creation of the *morna* does not represent a direct identification with the African continent. Rather, it needs the mediation of Brazil. The affinity constructed between Cape Verde and Brazil is the essence of the narrative. Instead of arguing over the

prominence of the Portuguese or the African heritage, Cape Verde is identified with Brazil, equally hybrid, the product of the encounter between the two cultural matrices.

Finally, the narrative by Zeca becomes even more interesting when he mentions the village of João Galego. This is done in order to reinforce the argument about the Brazilian influence on the genesis of *morna*, based on the accent that can still be found in this locale. We can see from this that the different ways of speaking the Portuguese language are fundamental to the discussion about the sung word, in the form of music.

Focusing on another phase in the history of the *morna*, I return to the events presented in the beginning of this article. In the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, the *morna* went through several transformations. This process provides us with ample material to think about this musical genre and the people who produced it. In the island of São Vicente, during this period, the *morna* achieved the highest point in its development. This is closely related to the particularity of the settlement pattern on the island, which provided a favorable environment for musical experiences such as the ones which Luís Rendall and B.Léza were engaged with.

The City of Mindelo exists because of the Porto Grande. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the strategic position of Cape Verde was crucial to the trade routes of the industrial revolution. In a context characterized by the intense circulation of people and goods between Europe and the Americas, the archipelago became a crucial refueling stop for the steam ships crossing the Atlantic.

Mindelo was described as a door open to the world, an expression of cosmopolitanism and of a hectic life. For example, 1,927 ships entered the harbor in the year of 1889 (Cabo Verde 1984: 53). While the steam ships were refueled with coal, water and food, people of diverse nationalities passed through the city.

The port was instrumental in the creation of the city's atmosphere. In this environment, Cape Verdeans found a fertile space for musical exchanges. There used to be many concerts staged by Brazilian, Argentinean and English naval bands passing by the Porto Grande. There were also balls for the Mindelo elite on board the ships. Events like these are etched in the memory of Cape Verdeans. This made it possible for musical novelties from Europe and the

Americas to arrive quickly to São Vicente, influencing the local context.

Mindelo was a bohemian city. At the end of a long day, the workers of the port would find a way to relax playing the guitar in the streets, in balls, or in the many bars and brothels of the city. Foreign sailors, such as the already mentioned João Damata, would join the local people, bringing new qualities to the *morna*. While the industrial revolution was reshaping the Atlantic space, it facilitated direct contacts among individuals from the “peripheries” of this Atlantic system. In spite of their relative invisibility, the sailors were important agents of intercultural exchanges.

Once again I would like to go beyond the historical relevance of these facts. The inter-Atlantic musical fluxes, which had a point of convergence in São Vicente, form an important part of Cape Verdeans’ reflections on their national musical genre. The narratives about the *morna* incorporated, in diverse ways, these experiences of musical exchange, attributing meaning especially to the presence of Brazilian players and to the richness of Cape Verdean music itself.

The commentaries on the life histories of Luís Rendall and B.Léza, as we have seen, carefully balance references to Brazil and to the uniqueness of Cape Verde. They are, above all, narratives on the encounter of two musical experiences. During fieldwork, I even heard that Luís Rendall was “an authentic Brazilian”. Yet, the biography written by Eutrópio Lima da Cruz equally highlights the Cape Verdean character of his music, which “internalizes the [Brazilian] experience, giving it originality and the magnitude of his expertise, energy, sonority and tonal complexity, mixing it with superb melodic lines, in a characteristic style that is distinctly Cape Verdean” (Cruz 1988: 7; my translation). He also states, when writing about Luís Rendall, that “his way of performing is steeped in art where, in a mixture of the Brazilian style and his own distinctive Cape Verdean manner, he explores the guitar as someone who knows and dominates it (...)” (Cruz 1988: 8; my translation).

Something similar may be observed in the narratives about B.Léza and his importance to the evolution of the *morna*. Baltasar Lopes da Silva, cited in the beginning of this article, explains in a more technical way the exact place where the Brazilian style of playing the guitar is incorporated in the *morna*. He even shows how the Brazilian influence on the *morna* acquired a name: the “Brazilian half tone”. As Baltasar Lopes da Silva makes clear, this is not exactly the “half tone” as it is understood in Western music theory. It is

a native category, generated in the realm of Cape Verdean music (a “local nomenclature”, in the words of the writer). It is a chord transition introduced in the formal structure of the *morna*. It symbolically represents the Brazilian imprint on this Cape Verdean musical genre, through B.Léza. In the “Brazilian half tone”, we can simultaneously find the genius of the Cape Verdean composer and the influence he received from Brazilian players.

It is important to note that the connections between Brazil and Cape Verde do not only appear in the discourses *about* Cape Verdean music. The songs themselves elaborate on the links between the two countries. In other words, songs should be treated as producers of discourses – not merely reproducing ideas already present in other spheres of social life. With this in mind, I add to the discussion a *morna* composed by B.Léza, in honor of Gilberto Freyre, when the latter was in Cape Verde in 1951. The lyrics are as follows:

Brasil

(B.Léza)

*Bem conchê êss terra morena,
Onde cada crioula ê um serena.
Bem, qui nôs céu também ê di anil.
Êss nôs terra piquinino
Ê um pedacinho di Brasil.*

*Brasil... qui nôs tude tem na peito.
Brasil... qui nô tâ sintí na sangue.
Brasil... bô ê noss irmão.
Sim c'ma nôs bô ê moreno.
Nô qu'rê-bo tcheu di coração.*

*Ventos qui tâ bem di sul
Ta trazê-no na sês canto
Acenos di Brasil.
Si nô câ tâ bai,
Ês câ tâ dixá-no.
Brasil, bô ê nôs sonho
Bô ê nôs sonho azul.*

Brazil

(B.Léza)

*Come and get to know this brown land,
Where every Cape Verdean woman is a mermaid.
Come, because our sky is also indigo blue.
This little land of ours
Is a little piece of Brazil.*

*Brazil... that all of us have in our heart.
Brazil... that we feel in the blood.
Brazil... you are our sister.
Just like us you are brown.
We like you so much, with all our heart.*

*The winds that come from the south
Bring to us, in its singing,
Greetings from Brazil.
If we don't go,
It is because they won't allow us
Brazil, you are our dream
You are our blue dream.*

(Rodrigues & Lobo 1996: 130)

The lyrics are similar to the discourses that we have been following throughout this article. They are an invitation to Brazil to get to know Cape Verde. The islanders, who know so much about Brazil, demand a reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, the invitation is transformed into a declaration

of love for Brazil and an assertion of the affinity between the two countries. They are sister countries, equally brown, the children of the same process of social formation that brought into contact Portuguese and African people, generating very special syntheses. Even if the difference in territorial and population size is huge, the song is ready to find a solution: Cape Verde is a little piece of Brazil!

This same motto can be found in other songs, such as “Carnaval de São Vicente”, composed by Pedro Rodrigues and sung by Cesária Évora in the album *Café Atlântico*, recorded by Lusafrica. The song lyrics praise São Vicente, described as an island of joy and pleasure, especially during carnival, when Cape Verdeans show all their *morabeza* (amiability). In doing so, the lyrics also assert in unequivocal way that São Vicente is “a little Brazil”, full of happiness and colors.⁶

New Atlantic flows

In this section, we move on from the discussion about the *morna* to consider two other Cape Verdean musical genres. They are different musical experiences that reveal the vitality and the dynamic nature of Atlantic flows. New musical exchanges are made evident in the *coladeiras* and the *Cape Verdean zouk*, which are related to other global movements of people and sound technologies.

Similar to the *morna*, there are discussions about the *coladeira*'s origin – even though they are not as polemical in the popular imagination. The most common version points to the *coladeira* as an evolution of the *morna*. That is, the *coladeira* is a result of the transformation of the *morna* through a change in its tempo and time signature. According to this version, people attending the balls – when they wanted more animated songs for dancing – signaled the musicians, who would then accelerate the execution of the *mornas*, giving rise to the *coladeira* (Monteiro 1987a).

This narrative on the origin of the *coladeira* does not reveal much about its affinities with Brazil. Nevertheless, this theme becomes relevant in the classification of the *coladeira* sub-genres. The *coladeira* allows for great flexibility. Indeed, there is not much that distinguishes the *coladeira* from other styles of dance music. The term *coladeira* is applied to very distinct musical

6 The original lyrics, in Cape Verdean Creole: “São Vicente é um brasilin / Chei di ligria chei di cor”.

forms, encompassed by the same genre. The uniqueness of the *coladeira* is mostly related to extra-musical criteria, such as its connections to the *morna* and the use of the Creole language in its lyrics, which make this musical genre “genuinely Cape Verdean”.

The *coladeiras* were influenced by diverse foreign musical genres that, with evolutions in recording technologies and advances in broadcasting systems, reached the archipelago more quickly. Also the increase in migratory flows from Cape Verde, between the 1950s and the 1970s, contributed to the intensification of the contact of Cape Verdeans with a variety of new musical genres. This was how *samba*, *baião*, *mambo*, *cúmbia*, *merengue* and *cadence*, among others, exercised a profound influence on the composition of the *coladeiras*. I do not intend to carry out a musicological analysis, demonstrating the formal relations between the *coladeira* and these other musical genres. My objective is only to show that these links are made evident in the process of the naming of *coladeira* and its sub-genres.

Cape Verdeans usually rename the *coladeiras*, highlighting the porosity of the borders that separate the various styles. When I worked with the archival recordings of the Rádio Nacional de Cabo Verde [National Radio Station of Cape Verde], I encountered a series of new terms: *cola-cúmbia*, *cola-cadence*, *cola-disco*, *cola-zouk*, *cola-jazz* and, among others, *cola-samba*. They represented a genuine profusion of new syncretic musical styles. Usually, naming is a process that creates discrete categories, establishing borders. Yet, in this case, the names draw attention to the fragility of these borders, emphasizing the products of inter-cultural encounters. The terms mentioned above reveal diverse musical exchanges that are not limited to those between Brazil and Cape Verde. The connection to Brazil is still present in the discourse that grounds the construction of these categories. Brazil – specifically the *samba* – appears side by side with other important references, particularly the Caribbean and its musical genres. Indeed, the connection between Cape Verde and the Caribbean strongly emerges in the third and final musical genre that I analyze here: the *Cape Verdean zouk*.

The *zouk* serves here as an interesting point of contrast. During the last decades, it has been as important as the *morna* and the *coladeira* for understanding the musical experiences of Cape Verdeans. There is an intense debate in Cape Verde about this musical genre, frequently incorporating explicit assertions that this is not “true Cape Verdean music”. However, the *zouk* has

a strong presence in the musical scene of the archipelago, especially in the spaces associated with young people, like the nightclubs.

The *zouk* originally comes from the French Antilles. In the beginnings of the 1980s, the group Kassav' introduced this new style of music, created out of the mixture of multiple Caribbean rhythms: the Haitian *compás* and *cadence*, the Trinidadian *calypso*, the *gwo ka* from Guadalupe and the *chouval bwa* and the *biguine* from Martinique. All these styles were added to new technologies from the recording studios of Paris, city of residence of the members of Kassav'.

During the 1980s, the *zouk* achieved a surprising success. It conquered audiences in the Caribbean, in the European metropolises and in the African continent. The influence of the *zouk* expanded rapidly. It became a catalyst of musical experimentations, especially among francophone African musicians living in Paris. It left its mark on many genres of African popular music, such as the *soukous*, originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the *makassi*, from Cameroon.

Among Cape Verdeans, the *zouk* encountered a significant source of recreation. Cape Verdean immigrants, in their daily lives in European cities, entered into direct contact with the new genre and began to incorporate the *zouk* into their musical habits, principally the slower and more romantic variant, called *zouk love*. Originally sung in Patois, the *zouk* followed a new path, breaking into the speech community of Cape Verdean Creole. With lyrics exclusively sung in Creole, the new *zouk* captivated Cape Verdean audiences, in the archipelago and abroad. Created out of multiple and unusual encounters of diverse creole cultures in the context of migration, the *Cape Verdean zouk* developed itself as a direct product of the diaspora. It unveils the existence of new musical experiences, the result of a new cultural exchange between the “peripheries” of the Atlantic system.

Like the *coladeiras*, the *Cape Verdean zouk* is very flexible, easily incorporating elements from varied origins. Once again, we can observe the presence of Brazilian music in this set of productions. I refer here only to two representative examples.

The first one is the song “Rabola Cadera”, recorded by the Cape Verdean Neves, in the album *Infância*. This *zouk*, whose lyrics are in Cape Verdean Creole, reproduces the melody of the song “Tic Tic Tac (Bate Forte o Tambor)”, by the Amazonian group Carrapicho, which had sudden success

in Brazil in the 1990s.⁷ Another example, with an even greater impact, is the Brazilian song “Morango do Nordeste”, recorded in the rhythm of *zouk*. This song, composed by Walter de Afogados and Fernando Alves (from the Brazilian state of Pernambuco), achieved enormous success in Brazil in the year 2000, recorded by Lairton e Seus Teclados. It was later recorded by innumerable other groups and singers, such as Chiclete com Banana, Karametade and Frank Aguiar. Among these many versions, I would like to draw attention to a special one, sung by Roger (from Guinea-Bissau, son of a Cape Verdean father and a Senegalese mother) and mixed by the Portuguese DJ Beleza as part of the album *The Real Mix*. The album was recorded by Sons D’África, a musical label owned by a Cape Verdean and located in Damaia (a Lisboan suburb), where there is a large concentration of immigrants from Cape Verde. In the year 2001, this album became a best seller in the lusophone African countries and in the diaspora. Moreover, “Morango do Nordeste” was skillfully utilized in the electoral campaigns of PAICV (Partido Africano para a Independência de Cabo Verde), the African Party for the Independence of Cape Verde.

My argument is that the musical flows between Brazil and Cape Verde keep occurring, in great intensity, even though this happens through very different processes. The technological advances in the modes of recording, editing and circulation of sounds allow for new kinds of appropriations. New migratory dynamics also favor other forms of musical encounters and exchanges. What is most important is that the meanings attributed to these processes have also changed. My point is that, as a product of the diaspora, these new musical creations have another relationship with notions of identity and territory. In the *zouk*, the meaning of being Cape Verdean was never as relevant as in the *morna*. Even the *coladeira*, with all the mixture involved, emphasized a sense of national identity. Yet, a preoccupation with being “genuinely Cape Verdean” cannot be observed in the *zouk*. Similarly, the appropriation of Brazilian musical elements in the *zouk* is not evidence of a profound relationship between Brazil and Cape Verde. The uses of Brazilian music in this case are not necessarily elaborated as a discourse valorizing the links between the two countries.

7 This song was also recorded in Russian, by the musician Murat Nasyrov.

Final considerations

In the light of the data presented in this article, it is no wonder that until today we can hear, in the streets of Mindelo, gatherings of players singing old Brazilian tunes, such as “Cabelos Brancos”, by Herivelto Martins and Marino Pinto, and “A Volta do Boêmio”, by Adelino Moreira. Likewise, the frequent presence of *zouk* versions of Brazilian songs on Cape Verdean radio stations and in the nightclubs acquires another meaning as part of a historical process. They are all experiences that I lived in the field and that gained coherence while I was exposed to different information about the musical flows that have linked Brazil and Cape Verde for many years.

Hence, partnerships such as that between Cesária Évora and Brazilian singers Caetano Veloso and Marisa Monte are no longer surprising. Another example is the cooperative work between Mayra Andrade, one of the newer Cape Verdean voices in the international arena, and the young Brazilian mandolinist Hamilton de Holanda, in the album *Navega*, recorded by Sony BMG. Certainly, to explain these types of partnerships (and the mediations that made them possible) it is necessary to examine carefully the cultural industry that sustains musical productions of this magnitude. Still, we can never comprehend these phenomena without considering the continuity that binds these productions to many other musical experiences – all of them reinforcing the historical connections between Brazil and Cape Verde. As we have seen, Cape Verdeans have paid much attention to these links, elaborating on discourses that appear in articles, biographies, poems and – clearly – music.

These narratives are Cape Verdean representations about different forms of speaking, singing and playing that crossed the Atlantic Ocean and produced new syntheses. At times, these narratives make explicit reference to music. They are cultural construction about the “Brazilian style”, that is, the musical technique called “the Brazilian half tone” that so well captures the genius of the Cape Verdean B.Léza. At other times, this idea is extrapolated to the domain of speech. It is in the “Brazilian *lubie*” acquired by this same musician, according to Baltasar Lopes da Silva. It is in the accent found in the Cape Verdean village of João Galego, with “some influence of the Brazilian language”, as pointed out by Zeca. It is in the “way of speaking Portuguese” with an “easygoing accent”, shared by Brazilians and Cape Verdeans, as illustrated by Jorge Barbosa’s poem. Finally, they are all cultural constructions that attribute meaning to the fluxes and encounters of sounds across the Atlantic.

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