

## Intermédialités

Histoire et théorie des arts, des lettres et des techniques

## Intermediality

History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies

intermédialités  
revue de théorie des arts, des lettres et des technologies

# Intermedial Maps: The Street as Site of Cultural-Political Regulation in Modern Brazil

Justin Read

Numéro 14, automne 2009

bâtir  
build

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/044414ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/044414ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Revue Intermédialités (Presses de l'Université de Montréal)

ISSN

1705-8546 (imprimé)

1920-3136 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Read, J. (2009). Intermedial Maps: The Street as Site of Cultural-Political Regulation in Modern Brazil. *Intermédialités / Intermediality*, (14), 143–170. <https://doi.org/10.7202/044414ar>

Résumé de l'article

Depuis la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, la croissance de Rio de Janeiro s'est effectuée selon deux axes principaux : la ville (*cidade*) planifiée et régularisée où se concentrent la richesse et le pouvoir ; et la butte (*morro*) déréglementée où l'on retrouve la frange la plus défavorisée de la société. L'histoire sociale du Brésil moderne ne découle pas de la ville en soi mais plutôt des rues qui lient *morro* et *cidade* – les espaces qui canalisent le mouvement entre les zones qui sont régulées et celles qui ne le sont pas. On pourrait avancer que la modernisation du Brésil, amorcée au début du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, suit la cartographie des rues de Rio qui remonte à la même époque. Cette affirmation nécessiterait une cartographie « alternative » ou « intermédiaire » constituée de différents médias évoquant un éventail d'impressions suscitées par les rues de la ville. Cet article se propose de produire une cartographie intermédiaire des rues de Rio par le biais de la poésie moderne, de l'architecture moderne et de la télévision postmoderne.

# **Intermedial Maps: The Street as Site of Cultural- Political Regulation in Modern Brazil**

JUSTIN READ

143

Maps are not physical-geographical representations of landmasses or territories. At the very least, they are not just the kinds of representations containing images of continents, oceans, or countries that one would view from a position hovering in the “outer-space” of the map. Rather than mere representations of space, maps allow one to perceive all sorts of inter-subjective and/or subject-object relations that are produced in space and by space. Maps allow one to perceive movement through space and through the social, cultural, political, and economic relations therein. Such perception may prove to be vitally important in societies where such “socio-spatial” relations enter into extended periods of flux. A key example in this regard is the “modernization” of Brazil over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as manifest in the nation’s most iconic city, Rio de Janeiro.

Although Brazil has never had a true revolution, its social transformations since roughly 1890 have been dramatic. The movement from a slave-based agrarian order to a wage-based urban-industrial order created massive megapolitan urban complexes; produced whole new demographic sectors seeking political representation in one form or another (whether through state power, mass movements, or local community organization); and exacerbated extant antagonisms between social groups and cultures (whether between the military and civilian state institutions, between races, or between socio-economic classes). In theory, a proper reading of maps of Rio de Janeiro would yield knowledge of how certain spatial-temporal transformations of Brazilian society were permitted to occur, and even regulated and managed, while other sorts of transformation were not. This would be the case provided that “proper” maps of the city could be located, and provided that said maps could be “properly” read once they were

found. This essay is an initial attempt to achieve such propriety. In particular, I would like to pay attention to Rio's streets, how its streets relate to other geographical and historical aspects of the city, and most importantly, how people in Rio may actually utilize or traverse the street.

Such a "proper" road map – or at least a starting point in a discussion of how maps might be read as appropriate or inappropriate – may be found on the cover of Chico Buarque's recent album, *Carioca*.<sup>1</sup> The cover image presents a subtly disturbing juxtaposition of subject and object: a head-shot of the artist dressed in a white T-shirt set against a white backdrop, with a hand-drawn street map of central Rio de Janeiro projected over his face. The cover presents a strong image of identity: the person and the city merge to form a comprehensive civic (and national) identity, both *carioca*<sup>2</sup> and *brasileiro*. But which way does the projection of identity flow? Is the object (street map) projected onto the subject (Chico Buarque)? Or is the subject projecting himself into the object? Does the person stand prior to the projected representation, or vice versa? With his tan skin and light blue eyes, Chico Buarque is an iconic star of *música popular brasileira*, and his white clothing is a subtle reference to the *malandro* – the street-smart "rogue" of Rio, a posture assumed by many male *samba* singers over the course of the past century.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Chico Buarque appears to position himself on the album cover as the iconic *carioca* – the embodiment of the mixed *mestiço* or *mulato* Brazilian subject, also incarnated in that most *mestiço/mulato* of musical forms, the *samba*.

1. Chico Buarque, *Carioca*, DRG Records B000GYHR5Q, 2006. Cover image available through Chico Buarque's official website: [www.chicobuarque.com.br/discos/mestre.asp?pg=carioca\\_06.htm](http://www.chicobuarque.com.br/discos/mestre.asp?pg=carioca_06.htm) (last access May 17, 2010).

2. A *carioca* is a resident of Rio de Janeiro.

3. Including Chico himself. The hard-drinking, hard-gambling, and woman-chasing *malandro* is typically a local street character who dons a white suit and hat, and smokes a thin cigar. This posture was assumed by many popular *sambeiros* such as Moreira da Silva, and would be picked up (at least as a point of reference) by Chico Buarque throughout his career. For further critical discussions of the *malandro*, one should begin with Antonio Candido, "The Dialectic of Malandroism" ("A dialética da malandragem") in *On Literature and Society*, ed. and trans. Howard S. Becker, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995; Roberto DaMatta, *Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*, trans. John Drury, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1991; Hermano Vianna, *The Mystery of Samba: Popular Music and National Identity in Brazil*, trans. John Charles Chasteen, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1999 and Roberto Schwarz, "Pressupostos, salvo engano, de 'Dialética da malandragem,'" in *Que horas são?*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1987.

Set against this iconography of the individual Brazilian subject, however, is a kind of urban-spatial iconography. The map projected over Chico Buarque's face depicts the areas of Praia do Flamengo and Santo Amaro in the center of the city, one of the most iconic areas of Rio, Brazil, and Latin America. Flamengo beach borders Guanabara Bay with Pão de Açúcar (Sugar Loaf) in the background. Moving inland from the beach, one would cross a wide highway in parallel to the shore, through an area of high-rise residential buildings constructed since the 1950s, then through residential and commercial neighborhoods built-up starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and then up the slopes of the *morro* (hill) of Santo Amaro topped by *favelas*. Throughout this "commute," one would see images deeply ingrained in the civic and national psyche: the touristic geography of beaches and rock formations; "modernized" urban developments of the past century or so (occupied primarily by whites and *mestiços*); and the desperate underdevelopment of Rio's (primarily black and mulatto) slums. Not coincidentally, a similar urban transit marks the history of Rio's culture, albeit in reverse: the *samba* was created by residents of the *morro* of Santo Amaro (among other *morros*), and brought down from the hill towards the beach and into the *cidade* (city) through such events as Rio's famous Carnival parades. The iconography of Flamengo/Santo Amaro is not only visual or photographic, therefore, but also aural, musical, ritual, historical, and cultural. Here, then, one must think of the city's iconography in terms of synesthesia, since sights displayed in the city immediately conjure sounds, emotions, memories... It is this kind of synesthetic iconography, on one hand, that has allowed *cariocas* to locate themselves as Brazilians; on the other hand, it is a location whose iconography has been utilized-manipulated by the powers-that-be to form *cariocas* into Brazilian citizens.

Chico Buarque's album cover therefore raises problems of subjective power. Is the artist's formation as a subject immanently bound into the city's streets? In this sense one could see the image in terms of agency, as a free-speaking (free-singing) subject projects and liberates himself into the streets, as he grows into and becomes himself in relation to the city. Perhaps Chico will sing lovingly of the city, thereby enunciating his own individual power as a subject. However, might these same city streets also be prison bars? In this alternate sense, the city streets are projected into the subject (not the other way around), coercing him to identify with the city and nation-state, mediating and interpolating his existence as a citizen through their oppressive mechanisms of regulatory control. Unfortunately, the singer's passionless expression and the map's literal depiction of city streets do not provide a clear insight on the question.

Rather than entering into a debate about subjective agency – which neither the album cover nor this essay really does – it would be far more interesting to investigate how relations between subjects and objects (institutions, governments, nations) have been played out as a matter of urban cartography. The fact that the album-cover image uses a map (rather than, say, a photo or drawing of Flamengo or Santo Amaro) is quite important in this respect. There are no laws or politics without cities; indeed the very word “politics” is thinkable only in regards to the *polis*. From the standpoint of political-juridical philosophy, there can be no political engagement and no legal culture without a physical space-a *polis* or *agora*-in which citizens might assemble. The *urbs* always precedes *civitas*, even though the actual places where people live are often thought to be degraded and dirty. One of the hallmarks of modernity (especially after Hausmann) is the idea that control of physical urban space could be purposefully utilized to assert juridical and political control over the movement of the people.<sup>4</sup> Rather than an “empty” or “absolute” space in which a people are placed and where they congregate, modern space is typified by its “abstraction” insofar as urban space compels certain productive relationships among the city’s anonymous denizens.<sup>5</sup> People no longer simply move through the city, but rather workers commute to their workplaces along prescribed routes; the construction of their residences is controlled by zoning ordinances; and they must shop, trade, work, vote, or relax in areas specifically zoned for such purposes. The medium of the street map is vital to the production of such abstract space, since it provides the city planner full panoramic perspective over urban space, allowing him or her to imagine new means to regulate the circulation of people and things.<sup>6</sup> The street map presents a direct instance where symbolic representations translate into concrete effects. For this reason, the street map has without a doubt become an interesting object for (post-structural) critical speculation.

4. This statement seems to be an axiomatic truth of contemporary urban studies. For more refined theories of the matter, one would first turn to Henri Lefebvre’s *Urban Revolution* [1970], trans. Robert Bononno, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003; David Harvey’s *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985 and Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge (Mass.), The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002.

5. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Malden, Blackwell Publishing, 1991.

6. Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Stephen R. Rendall, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

However, this model of spatial or “panoptical” control – so elegantly theorized by the likes of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Michel Foucault – does not quite apply in the case of Rio de Janeiro. To be sure, much of the city has been planned, zoned, and constructed around the Hausmannian model. This was especially the case towards the end of the Brazilian Empire (1822-1898) and the beginning of the First Republic (1898-1930). Rio de Janeiro had been the capital of Brazil since the colonial era (and remained so until the completion of Brasília in 1960), but leaders in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century began to design a “rational” capital city organized around wide avenues, plazas, and public parks. Nevertheless, great portions of the city have traditionally been (and remain to this day) unplanned, unzoned, unmapped, and informal “invasions”-*favelas*. In this sense, Rio de Janeiro is not just one city, but really two or more. On one hand there is the regularized *cidade*, which – rationally or not – has some sort of urban order that is controlled by political-juridical institutions. And on the other, there is the *morro*, which remains uncontrolled – and which resists cartographic representation. Significantly, amidst the black outlines of streets on the cover of *Carioca*, there is a blank, “unmapped” space in the white t-shirt covering Chico Buarque’s chest, over which is inscribed the word “Morro.” As a blank space on the map, the hill (*morro*) is a geological object that lacks political or institutional representation.

The history of social order in modern Brazil may not flow from the city *per se*, therefore, but rather from the streets that link *cidade* and *morro*—the spaces that channel movement between regulated and unregulated areas of the city. Rio de Janeiro is in many ways the cultural heart of Brazil. Not only is it the image of Brazil most often projected internationally; the city’s culture is also something to which many Brazilians identify in terms of a national culture or “peoplehood.” In many ways, moreover, the modernization of Brazil – the transformation of the country into a “developed” nation – since 1900 has followed from the mapping of Rio de Janeiro’s streets over the same period. But my use of “mapping” here must be highly qualified, since, to reiterate, I do not define “map” in the typical cartographic sense, such as what one might find in an atlas. Rather, I would like to think of a kind of “intermedial” map of Rio de Janeiro, in which various media have been employed to evoke a wide range of sensorial impressions of the city’s streets. In this sense the cultural object – the literary, architectural, or visual work-of-art-is not merely the symbolic representation of some extant reality. Cultural productions may in fact provide synesthetic figurations of urban space that affect how people locate themselves in real space. Thus, I would posit that the modernization of Brazil has occurred in dynamic interrelation to the intermedial mapping of Rio’s streets through modernist poetry, modernist architecture, and post-modern television.

## CARNIVAL AS STREET MAP

Carnival is the exception that proves the rule. Following from Bakhtin<sup>7</sup> and DaMatta,<sup>8</sup> the “carnavalesque” must be understood in terms of inversion: sin becomes norm and the poor become rich, as the spatial “voids” of city streets become “solids” inhabited by the city’s residents. In the case of Brazilian *Carnaval*, one must think of the carnivalesque in terms of a *double* inversion: whereas Carnival was originally a “carnal” celebration that nonetheless reaffirmed the “divine” theocratic order of the Catholic Church, Brazil’s Carnival reaffirms both the syncretic paganism of *candomblé* and the “profane” order of the modern nation-state. Even as *Carnaval* retains a nominal Catholicism, it is the celebration of an African-derived transcultural tradition as the model for a *national* culture.

148

In this sense one is well served to consider Brazilian Carnival and its “inversions” in terms of the production of space. The critical difference between the carnivalesque in general and the Brazilian Carnival’s particularity parallels the difference between absolute and abstract space in the work of Henri Lefebvre. In the absolute space of pre-modernity (i.e., up to 1500 AD), subjects and societies were inextricably tied to their place-of-origin as determined by the divine-cosmological order, and administered by the Church.<sup>9</sup> Carnival is, after all, the Catholic celebration of Lent and the beginning of the Easter season; it remains at its root, therefore, the reaffirmation of Christ’s Passion and Apotheosis, placing (and re-placing) the earth firmly between Heaven and Hell. Accordingly, one should not be able to participate fully in Carnival without a belief in Catholic cosmogony. Nevertheless, as a national ritual Brazilian Carnival operates simultaneously on another spatial order. With the emergence of bourgeois capitalism after 1500, Lefebvre argues that a new space has been produced – abstract space-in which the ties between subjects, place, and the universe is re-mapped by abstract social relations. As he states, “Abstract space functions ‘objectally,’ as a set of things/signs and their formal relationships.”<sup>10</sup> In short, a subject’s place in

7. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* [1965], trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984.

8. DaMatta, 1991.

9. “A fixed sphere within a finite space, diametrically bisected by the surface of the Earth; below this surface the fires of Hell; above it, in the upper half of the sphere, the Firmament – a cupola bearing the fixed stars and the circling planets – and a space crisscrossed by divine messages and messengers and filled by the radiant Glory of the Trinity.” In Lefebvre, 1991, p. 45.

10. *Ibid.*

the world is no longer defined by her or his relation to the community, its land, or its myths. Rather, “place” becomes a function of one’s position within a social hierarchy structured by the exigencies of economic production.

Despite its fundamental “objectivism,” however, abstract space almost seems to function *subjectively*, as an individuated organism. That is, abstract space almost seems to have a life of its own, as if it could mature over time and fulfill a destiny of total self-realization. In order to accomplish its “life’s ambition,” therefore, abstract space compels subjects and whole societies to forego their own individual desires and submit to the needs of “progress,” whether or not it is in their own self-interest to do so. Modern, abstract space – usually that of large cities, but by no means limited to them – is one in which space itself seems to be alienated from nature and the environment, just as social relations of production work to alienate subjects from the fruits of their labor.<sup>11</sup> According to Lefebvre, in absolute space, subjects *are located* in space insofar as they have been born into a certain community ruled over by a fixed universe and gods. In abstract space, by contrast, subjects appear to *locate themselves* in space. The space in-between one subject and another becomes supplemented by an abstract relationship: citizenship, socio-economic class, gender, race, sexual orientation – all of which are psycho-social identifications that would seem to be immanent (unconscious) projections of subjectivity in itself. In fact, this is merely appearance (“simulacrum” perhaps) since the “immanent” subject is still displaced and alienated by and from space itself. Abstract space comes to have a life of its own; it begins to act *as if* it were a subject in its own right. Space becomes the ultimate subject-position to which all other subjectivities must conform.

11. Lefebvre writes that abstract space “sets itself up as the space of power, which will (or at any rate may) eventually lead to its own dissolution on account of conflicts (contradictions) arising within it. What we seem to have, then, is an apparent subject, an impersonal pseudo-subject, the abstract ‘one’ of modern social space, and – hidden within it, concealed by its illusory transparency – the real ‘subject,’ namely state (political) power. Within this space, and on the subject of this space, everything is openly declared: everything is said or written. Save for the fact that there is very little to be said – and even less to be ‘lived,’ for lived experience is crushed, vanquished by what is ‘conceived of.’ History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret – as a horizon fast disappearing behind us. This may explain why affectivity, which, along with the sensory/sensual realm, cannot accede to abstract space and so informs no symbolism, is referred to by a term that denotes both a subject and that subject’s denial by the absurd rationality of space: that term is ‘the unconscious.’” *Ibid.*, p. 51.



This is most clearly seen in the notion of national “development” after 1800, although the colonization of the Americas prior to that date is no less abstract than the formation of nation-states. The modern nation (and its political economy) occupies a physical space bounded by its own collective “development” that is nonetheless independent of any one individual. The nation thus develops in terms of *Bildung*, both as an object that develops from lesser to higher degrees of order, and as an organism that develops from infancy to adulthood. The space of the nation appears to have its own historical destiny (the “life of the nation”) to which individual citizens should be contributing; in fact, the “life” of this abstract space acquires more significance (power or biopower in the Foucauldian sense) than the life of any one of the subjects within it. Or rather, the regulation of abstract space by political and economic institutions of the nation should translate into the regulation of human life within that space. Experience bears out the fallibility of such translation.

Brazil is surely a modern formation of abstract space; yet it is a territory that was produced (ca. 1500) precisely at the cusp of the transformation of absolute space. As such its early history was marked by the uneasy co-existence of abstract and absolute: one might say that absolute spatial forms (Catholic dogma, feudal order by “divine” right) were deployed to make abstract relations (such as the trans-Atlantic slave trade, sugar production, the extraction of precious minerals) appear to be totalized and immutable. With the decline of the colonial empire,<sup>12</sup> not only did new productive relations come to the fore, but a new, abstract notion of culture was required in order to justify them. As Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha has rightly argued, “modern” cultural productions *circa* 1900-1930 – whether poems, songs, or even advertisements or literary criticism – proved crucial in re-defining Brazil and “Brazilian-ness,” largely with respect to Rio’s Carnival.<sup>13</sup>

An important example of such “cultural-political” re-mapping is provided in the modernist poetry of Mário de Andrade. Mário is widely viewed as the first Brazilian *modernista* poet, and his 1922 volume *Paulicéia desvairada* is widely seen as the first *modernista* text – a poetic volume that represents class-antagonisms and cultural/racial antagonisms in the new metropolis of São Paulo in terms of

12. Here I do not only mean the Portuguese empire, but also the post-independence Empire of Brazil which persisted between 1822 and 1889.

13. Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha, *Ecoss da folia: Uma história social do carnaval carioca entre 1880 e 1920*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2001. In particular, Pereira Cunha’s chapter on the “translation of tradition” (“A tradução da tradição,”) p. 240-304, provides an excellent cultural history of Carnival in the 1920s.

harmonic dissonance.<sup>14</sup> In subsequent works, Mário would often leave São Paulo and enter into the ethnography and ethnomusicology of regional Brazil – an ethnographic turn would culminate in the novel, *Macunaíma*. Mário's work of the 1920s is therefore marked by a kind of “heroic” blend of modernism, indigenist primitivism, anthropology, and nationalism<sup>15</sup> – a blend perhaps best evidenced in the 1927 poetic volume, *Clã do Jabuti* (*Clan of the Jabuti*), a work that has not garnered as much critical attention as either *Paulicéia desvairada* or *Macunaíma*.

The indigenism of the title is unmistakable, in that the Jabuti is not only the name of a turtle held to be a sacred trickster/creator figure by several Tupi-Guarani tribes, but also the name of an indigenous group that continues to live in the northern state of Rondônia. The poems of the volume freely mix modern and indigenous Brazil: poems dedicated to figures like Carlos Drummond de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral commingle with poetic reformulations of native folklore and legends from Amazonas, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Norte, Rio Grande do Sul, and Acre—in short, from all corners of Brazilian territory. Moreover, the volume is “anchored” by two long poems: one in homage to the modern city of Belo Horizonte (“Noturno de Belo Horizonte”, 1924, which I will not discuss here), and the other, a treatment of Rio's Carnival written in 1923 (which I will comment).

The free-verse “Carnaval carioca”<sup>16</sup> is a quasi-narrative poem in which the poet expresses his impressions of the urban spaces of Rio de Janeiro. The poet (whom I will call “Mário”) begins his discourse at the beginning of Carnival, commenting on how his own *paulista* frigidity<sup>17</sup> begins to melt amidst “Risadas e danças/Batuques maxixes.” (V. 20–21)<sup>18</sup> The supernatural sensations he finds in the celebration lead him to ponder his own mystical and religious function as a poet:

14. Justin Read, “The Reversible World: America as Dissonance in Mário de Andrade's *Paulicéia desvairada*,” in *Modern Poetics and Hemispheric American Cultural Studies*, New York, Palgrave, 2009.

15. After the consolidation of Getúlio Vargas' dictatorship, Mário would move away from his initial “heroic” nationalism in the 1930s.

16. Mário de Andrade, “Carnaval carioca,” *Clã do Jabuti*, in *Poesias completas*, ed. Diléa Zanotto Manfio, Belo Horizonte, Villa Rica, 1993, p. 163–173. Quotations will be cited by line number. My English translations of cited verses will appear in endnotes.

17. As Brazil's two largest cities, a certain rivalry has developed between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. People from São Paulo (*paulistas*) are perhaps perceived as more industrious and hard-working than *cariocas*, but also more uptight, unfriendly, and cold.

18. “Smiles and dances/Drummings maxixes.” The *maxixe* is a dance/song-form that immediately pre-dates the *samba*.

Ânsia heróica dos meus sentidos  
 Pra acordar o segredo de seres e coisas.  
 Eu colho nos dedos as rédeas que para o infrene das vidas,  
 Sou o compasso que une todos os compassos  
 E com a magia dos meus versos  
 Criando ambientes longínquos e piedosos  
 Transporte em realidades superiores  
 A mesquinhez da realidade.  
 Eu bailo em poemas, multicolorido!  
 Palhaço! Mago! Louco! Juiz! Criançinha!  
 Sou dançarino brasileiro!  
 Sou dançarino e danço! E nos meus passos conscientes  
 Glorifico a verdade das coisas existentes  
 Fixando os ecos e as miragens.  
 Sou um tupi tangendo um alaúde  
 E a trágica mixórdia dos fenômenos terrestres  
 Eu celestizo em eurtimias soberanas,  
 Ôh encantamento da Poesia imortal!

Onde que andou minha missão de poeta, Carnaval? (V. 93-111)<sup>19</sup>

The poet, not unironically, affords himself the sacred function of transubstantiation: to awaken the secrets of all things and beings, and transport them to “superior realities” and celestial realms by means of the poetic Word. Such

19. *Heroic anxiety of my senses*  
*To awaken the secret of beings and thing.*  
*In my fingers pull the reins that halt the unleashed passions of life,*  
*I am the compass that unites all compasses*  
*And with the magic of my verses*  
*Creating distant and pious environments*  
*The meanness of reality.*  
*I dance in poems, multicolored!*  
*Clown! Wizard! Crazy! Judge! Infant!*  
*I am a Brazilian dancer!*  
*I am a dancer and I dance! And in my conscious steps*  
*I glorify the truth of all things that exist*  
*Fixing echoes and mirages.*  
*I am a Tupi strumming a lyre*  
*And the tragic jumble of earthly phenomena*  
*I celestialize in sovereign eurythmias,*  
*O enchantment of immortal Poetry!*  
*Where did my poetic mission go, Carnival?*

sacredness is tied directly to his sense of being “Brazilian” and “Tupi”: “I am a Brazilian dancer” and “I am a Tupi strumming a lyre.”<sup>20</sup>

The power of the *carioca* street, the power of the people’s celebration of Carnival, however, overwhelms this sacred function, for in the end of the citation he asks himself, “Where did my poetic mission go, Carnival?” Later he further laments, “Carnaval.../Porém nunca tive intenção de escrever sobre ti.../Morreu o poeta e um gramofone escravo/Arranhou discos de sensações.” (V. 137-140)<sup>21</sup> On one hand, the poet loses all will to write about Carnival, if indeed any such volition existed in the first place. On the other, the force of the celebration is such that Carnival begins to *inscribe the poet*, so that rather than announcing his own thoughts and emotions, the poet can only inscribe the collective will of the street as if mechanically. The verses just cited effect a metonymic transposition: the act of writing with the human hand is displaced by the mechanized act of scratching grooves into gramophone records. In the process, the individual subject gives way to the collective nation.

The question before the poet is therefore this: How does one represent the power of what is, after all, the Catholic, pre-Lenten religious celebration of Fat Tuesday, when the power of that celebration thoroughly exceeds the power of religion itself? Two concepts of “*brasilidade*” come into play at this point, each with its own implicit chain of signifiers. At the start of the poem’s second section, the poet writes: “Em baixo do Hotel Avenida em 1923/Na mais pujante civilização do Brasil/Os negros sambando em candência./Tão sublime, tão áfrica!” (V. 141-144)<sup>22</sup> Here the poet locates the “sublime” pulsations of the people (*povo*) on the street; consequently, the “street” carries resonances of the foreign, the primitive, blackness, *samba*, and the place from which *negros* and *samba* have come – not the *morro*, but rather “Africa.” Yet the poet himself does not appear to reside with the people on the street, but rather as a tourist in the Hotel Avenida, a semi-private place of “civilization” just beyond the street and just above its black street denizens. In this context, during Carnival, the unbridled force of the (unseen and unnamed) *morro* seems to overwhelm the civilization of the *cidade*; the power of the street definitely outstrips the power of any church (or hotel) located on that street, even though the *povo* engage in a church-related ritual.

20. This last verse is lifted directly from the poem “O trovador” in the earlier *Paulicéia desvairada*.

21. Carnival.../Yet I never intended to write about you.../The poet died and a gramophone slave/Etched discs of sensations.

22. Below the Hotel Avenida in 1923/In the most robust civilization in Brazil/The blacks dancing samba in rhythm./So sublime, so Africa!

What follows in the latter half of Mário's "Carnaval carioca," then, is an effort to inscribe the uncontained power of the street and of the people into some kind of legible (or rather, mechanically reproducible) form. Mário's descriptions of Carnival scenes are marked by chaos (usually registered in phonemic jumbles that border on nonsense) and depictions of lurid sexuality. The nominal Catholicism of the event gives way to laudatory elegies to saxophones, xylophones, jazz, samba, chorô, mulattoes, and "O que permanece através das festanças virtuosas e dos gozos ilegítimos." (V. 221)<sup>23</sup> Fairly quickly the poet begins to compare Rio to Rome – albeit the Rome of the pagans and not the Vatican:

154

Pão e circo!  
 Roma imperial se escarrapacha no anfiteatro da Avenida  
 Os bandos passam coloridos,  
 Gesticulam virgens,  
 Semivirgens,  
 Virgens em todas as frações  
 Num desespero de gozar.

Homens soltos  
 Mulheres soltas  
 Mais duas virgens fuxicando o almofadinha  
 Maridos camaradas  
 Mães urbanas  
 Meninos  
 Meninas  
 Meninos (V. 232-246)<sup>24</sup>

23. *What remains behind the virtuous celebrations and illegitimate joys.*

24. *Bread and circus!*

*Imperial Rome sprawls out in the amphitheatre of the Avenue  
 And bands pass in colors,  
 Virgins gesticulate,  
 Semi-virgins,  
 Virgins of every fraction  
 Desperate to enjoy.*

*Single women  
 Single men  
 Two more virgins gossiping around the cushion  
 Husbands comrades  
 Urban mothers  
 Boys  
 Girls  
 Boys*

“Meninos” pile on top of “meninas,” both orthographically and, presumably, literally; men climb on top of women, husbands upon mothers, and virgins of any and all degrees upon virgins and “semi-virgins.” The orgy culminates with the abandonment of civilization altogether: “Vitória sobre a civilização! Que civilização?... É Baco.” (V. 270)<sup>25</sup>

However, civilization and social order are nonetheless *constituted* through this carnivalesque spectacle, not dissipated through it. In the final strophes, the “Bacchic” celebration culminates in ecstasy, an *ec-stasis* in which the poet may both step outside of himself and thus encounter himself. In short, the poet experiences a personal – and yet somehow highly nationalistic and Brazilian-catharsis. As the festivities end, Mário lays down to sleep on the sidewalk:

Lentamente se acalma no país das lembranças  
A invasão furiosa das sensações.  
O poeta sente-se mais seu.  
E puro pelo contacto de si mesmo  
Descansa o rosto sobre a mão que escreverá.

Lhe embala o sono  
A barulhada matinal de Guanabara...  
Sinos buzinos clácons campainhas  
Apitos de oficinas  
Motores bondes pregões no ar,  
Carroças na rua, transatlânticos no mar...  
É a cantigo-de-berço.  
E o poeta dorme.

O poeta dorme sem necessidade de sonhar. (V. 340-353)<sup>26</sup>

25. Victory over civilization! What civilization?... It's Bacchus”

26. Slowly the furious invasion of sensations  
Grows calm in the country of remembrances.  
The poet feels more himself.  
And pure through contact with himself  
He rests his head over the hand that will write.

Dreams envelop him  
The dawn-time noise of Guanabara...  
Bells horns klaxons churchbells  
Work whistles in offices  
Motors streetcars vendors' calls in the air  
Carts on the street, trans-Atlantics on the sea...  
It is a lullaby.  
And the poet sleeps.

The poet sleeps without needing to dream.

The poet is left in a liminal state between consciousness and sleep, dream and reality, suggesting that he maintains a mystical power to unite natural and supernatural realms. But by this point, the nature of transubstantiation has become entirely social and material. The poet feels “more himself” and “more pure through contact with himself.” This is achieved by having the commotion of the street rock him to sleep: the morning noise along Guanabara Bay, “Bells horns klaxons peals whistles” calling *cariocas* out to work. The nursery rhyme/lullaby of Brazil is that of street vendors and industrial workers moving on motors, streetcars, and (presumably) loading Brazilian-made products onto transatlantic ships. The poet no longer needs to dream, because his dream has already been made reality; he has ascended to heaven, as it were, without ever having to leave the street.

156

As such, transubstantiation between physical and metaphysical domains becomes a curious form of Apotheosis indeed, since it is entirely mediated by modernization. In essence, the poet has harnessed the power of the *povo* and the *morro* by means of representing the chaotic movement of the *morro*'s people through the street in a way that is legible. But rather than elevating the “soul” of the people to heaven, the poet *returns* their power to the street in a *useable and productive form*, as a national-collective force. The poem creates – on the level of symbolic representation at least – a circuit of power that originates *from* the street and its people upwards and outwards, and then *back to* the street and the nation. This circuit forms a dynamo which will energize Brazilian industry and national catharsis, *national self-awakening*. In this sense, the purpose of poetic representation is to channel certain kinds of movement through the street. The poem does not, of course, orient the reader in terms of cardinal directions, street names, or routes between point A and point B. Nevertheless, its cartography is unmistakable, in terms of how its poetic and its narrative structure attempt to promote certain forms of productive relationality. Mário's poem begins in the middle of the *centro* of the *cidade*, but it makes no attempt to move from the *centro* towards the *morro*, to how people live there, or how they got to the *morro* in the first place (beyond the fact that they are “African”). Instead, Mário and the *carioca* people move from the *centro*, through its streets, and down towards the Bay, where they do *not* find Portuguese galleons or transatlantic slave ships importing “goods” to Brazil; rather, one finds motors and mechanized vessels presumably exporting Brazilian-made products across the Atlantic. One mode of (modern-colonial) production has been erased by another mode of (modern-industrial) production, and it is almost as if the dream could not have been any other.

## THE CONCRETE OBJECTIFICATION OF THE STREET

One might say that “Carnaval carioca,” at least in the symbolic register of literary texts, inaugurates an “intermedial” cartographic process that is closely aligned with industrial modernization in Brazil. Significantly, this cartographic process was concretized in Rio de Janeiro over the remaining course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Although Mário de Andrade had a rather complex and complicated relation with state power, the popular sentiments of early works such as “Carnaval carioca” appear to dovetail with incipient populist ideologies of the Brazilian state after 1920. Instead of slave laborers working in an extraction economy of primary materials and agricultural products, modernization would increasingly require wage-laborers to produce industrial goods ready for international export.<sup>27</sup> Instead of subjects and “property” absolutely bound to a sovereign monarch or patron, therefore, modernity required Brazil to fashion citizen-workers tied to an international, transatlantic industrial economy.

Accordingly, political processes in Brazil would be dominated by populism between 1930 and 1964, as the state worked to incorporate “citizen-workers” rather than merely dominating subjects. In essence, the Brazilian state sought to unify previously unrepresented or under-represented sectors of the populace, and to incorporate these populations through state patronage and the expansion of industrial wage-labor. By doing so, it was thought that permanent political and economic stability would be achieved, thus vaulting Brazil into what would come to be known as the “First World” of developed industrialized societies. Such discourse reached a zenith in the construction of the modernist capital Brasília in the late 1950s.<sup>28</sup> But developmentalist populism also led to dependence on foreign credit, massive fluctuations in the economy, and precisely the kinds of political instability it was intended to mitigate. Such instability proved to be a major cause of the military *coup d’état* of 1964 that led into over two decades of military dictatorship. The military governments, it can be said with great certitude, had little interest in popular representation even as they remained firmly focused on industrialization. In order to concentrate on industrial economic development and social order, the military curtailed civil liberties, tortured its own

27. Slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888. The Brazilian monarchy, and with it the Brazilian Empire, would end in the following year in 1889. The end of empire gave way to a series of republican and dictatorial regimes over the next century.

28. For a discursive reading of Brasília’s design, see Justin Read, “Alternative Functions: Oscar Niemeyer and the Poetics of Modernity,” *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 12, n° 2, April 2005, p. 253-272.



citizens, and generally operated through intimidation and violence. The utter ineptitude of the military on political and economic fronts itself reached a crisis by the 1980s, and with this, official populist politics began to return to Brazil. Indeed, after 1980, many of the same political leaders who had risen through the pre-military (nominally democratic) civilian regimes would merely return to office after what amounted to a quarter-century hiatus. I would argue here, therefore, that return to civilian rule after 1980 was accompanied by a return to a particularly modernist mode of mapping the street – albeit in a far more “concrete” form than previously. After 1980, we definitely move from a kind of discursive-poetic mapping to a “concrete-poetic” mapping of the street.

158

A case in point is the leftist politician, Leonel Brizola (1922-2004). Elected as governor of Rio de Janeiro state in 1983, Brizola began his career under the populist dictator/president Getúlio Vargas, as a deputy of Vargas' Partido Trabalhista Brasileira (1945-1955 and 1962-1964); he would continue under the populist presidency of Juscelino Kubitschek as mayor of Porto Alegre (1955-1958), and governor of Rio Grande do Sul state (1958-1961). In his post-dictatorship reincarnation as Rio de Janeiro's governor, Brizola's first administration was marked by two major architectural infrastructure projects, both of which effectively re-inaugurated official populism in Brazil. First, he enlisted anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro to spearhead educational reforms through the creation of the Centro Integrado de Educação Pública (CIEP, the “Integrated Center for Public Education”). Ribeiro's stamp on the CIEPs is unmistakable. Built in proximity to impoverished areas, the CIEPs were to provide nutrition (feeding students), medical and dental services, sports, and cultural activities, in addition to primary and secondary education. In this way they were not only “integrated” social service centers, but also worked to “integrate” poor subjects into state institutions as fully-formed and well-fed citizens. To build the CIEPs, moreover, Brizola contracted none other than Oscar Niemeyer, who provided designs of pre-fabricated concrete that could be built quickly and cheaply. Wherever they are built in the city, Niemeyer's CIEPs are instantly recognizable: two-story rectangular buildings of exposed concrete, with oval shaped windows covered by retractable, corrugated iron blinds. On their interior, the CIEPs are likewise made of exposed concrete, with regular square classroom spaces distributed throughout, and floors linked by elongated concrete ramps. Outside there is typically a playground of equal size to the footprint of the building, surrounded by a concrete wall. Both the simplicity of this design, and the use of pre-fabricated components for nearly all the construction, assured that CIEPs could be built quickly and cheaply, and thus be built in sufficient numbers to service many different areas

of the city. In sum, the CIEP perfectly embodies the principle characteristics of Brazilian modernist architecture: high functionalism (economical construction, use of pre-stressed/pre-fabricated concrete), mixed with surprisingly “uneconomical” and non-functional aesthetic flourishes (e.g., the curvature of the CIEP’s windows, the elegant elongated ramps). Form follows function – until it doesn’t and gives way to the poetic gesture.

The design and execution of the CIEPs are directly related to Brizola’s second major state project: Niemeyer’s Sambódromo (Sambadrome), which was completed in 1984 in just under three months, and which has literally and figuratively shaped Rio’s Carnival ever since. Similar to the philosophy of the CIEP, the celebration of Carnival has come to integrate culture and social welfare. The first *escolas de samba* most certainly emerged spontaneously, as more or less informal groups of *sambistas* who would “descend” from the *morro* to parade on the Praça Onze.<sup>29</sup> Over time, however, the competition between *escolas*, their *sambas de enredo*, *desfiles*, and ever-more elaborate costumes, has been officialized in several distinct ways. The Grêmio Recreativo Escola de Samba (GRES) has developed into a community center that operates year-round, providing a range of social services for their respective locales. Moreover, the GRESs have been organized into official leagues (with first and second and third divisions) with each “team” receiving substantial state and corporate sponsorship, upwards of several million dollars *per annum* for the first division schools like Mangueira or Imperatriz Leopoldinense. In fact, soon after their initial formation in the 1920s, the *escolas de samba* were almost immediately placed under direct, and rather strict, state control. As Bryan McCann has written: “As early as 1934, then, parade officials imposed limitations on musical innovation, required folkloric representation of samba’s roots, and encouraged patriotic expression. Such efforts were later redoubled when Vargas’s federal bureaucracy took over sponsorship of the parade.”<sup>30</sup>

The Sambódromo in which Rio’s official Carnival is now celebrated works to transform the street into a stadium. Or rather, the Sambódromo *literally is* both a stadium and a street: the Avenida Marquês de Sapucaí, the paved surface of which was recently re-dubbed the Passarela do Samba Professor Darcy Ribeiro. In his design for the site, Niemeyer has effectively “encased” this avenue in pre-stressed, pre-fabricated concrete, such that the street becomes both an official *place* and

29. Bryan McCann, *Hello Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2004, p. 41-95.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 60.



Fig. 1: Frontal view of the Passarela do Samba Darcy Ribeiro, Avenida Marquês de Sapucaí (Sambódromo), Rio de Janeiro. Photo by André Claudio V. C. Mendonça, courtesy of the artist.

160

an aestheticized architectonic object. The Sambódromo opens at its intersection with the Avenida Presidente Vargas in the *centro* of Rio de Janeiro, and leads to a closed terminus at its southern end. The Avenida Marquês de Sapucaí, however, lacks sidewalks for spectators to view the spectacle of Carnival. Instead, on the eastern side of the Passarela Darcy Ribeiro there are open-air banks of stadium seating, where most affordable seats can be bought. On the western flank one finds what looks like large enclosed verandas opening onto the parade route, the “windows” of which may be closed during the year with retractable metal shutters. During Carnival these serve as expensive “boxes” for upscale patrons. But during the rest of the year, these are not luxury boxes at all – they are *classrooms*. Although Carnival only happens once a year, the Sambódromo is a mixed-use facility that functions year-round. In fact, the enclosed western side of the Sambódromo integrates a CIEP into the stadium-street.

In this way, the Sambódromo operates under the aegis of an abstract concept: “integration.” The CIEP integrates state-run education, cultural, legal, and health and human services. The CIEP, in turn, is itself integrated into a larger modernist complex that fulfills the “form-follows-function” dictates of International modernism with surprising efficiency. Most of all the elements used in the construction of the Sambódromo complex were pre-fabricated off-site and merely assembled on-site. Bearing in mind that this occurred just as Brazil was entering the longest and most profound economic crisis in its history (the Debt Crises of the 1980s), the Sambódromo was built so quickly only by utilizing cost-effective materials and cost-effective labor, integrating the efficiencies of industrial production and industrial wage-labor. Above all, however, the modernist object works to integrate the street, its children, and the popular



Fig. 2: Façade of the Centro Integrado de Educação Pública (CIEP) (Oscar Niemeyer, 1984). Photo by André Claudio V. C. Mendonça, courtesy of the artist.

celebration of Carnival into the institutional space of the government so that all may be recognized and promoted as *Brazilian*.

The “nationalization” of the street, however, is accomplished only by means of sharp contradiction. With only a single entrance from the Avenida Presidente Vargas, the Sambódromo is in fact a cul-de-sac, access to which may be strictly enforced. Like every cul-de-sac, from an urbanistic perspective at least, closure and access-control are designed to promote public safety. The closure of the street allows certain people in and leaves others out. The site is effectively cordoned off from the rest of Rio’s streets so that spectators may appreciate the public spectacle of Carnival without fear of robbery, assault, or any other danger from typical “street-elements.” The Sambódromo is therefore a street that has been systematically removed from the street. It is a public space that has been systematically removed from freely accessible public space-so that a *limited* public of spectators may attend festivities there, and so that images of these festivities may be readily broadcast electronically to a mass public TV either at home or any other *private* location. Paradoxically, then, the Sambódromo ends in public space. Its end-point is a public square that is named – rather incredibly – the Praça da Apoteose (Plaza of the Apotheosis). Upon the plaza, at the very end of the Sambódromo facility, Niemeyer has designed a rather dramatic stage and band-shell, which may be utilized during the year for public concerts.

Like most Niemeyer constructions, the band-shell of the Praça da Apoteose is loaded with poetic significance. Starting at broad feet rooted in the grounds at either end of the stage area, the concrete shell vaults vertically and dramatically towards the sky, as if the ground of the plaza were ascending to the heavens. In short, the band-shell shapes Apotheosis for us – but, perhaps paradoxically,



Fig. 3: Band-shell on the Praça da Apoteose at south end of the Sambódromo (Oscar Niemeyer, 1984). A *favela* of Santa Teresa lines the hill slope in the background. Photo by André Claudio V. C. Mendonça, courtesy of the artist.

162

Apotheosis only in the sense of the cultural-mechanical “dynamo” as seen at the end of Mário’s “Carnaval carioca.” Instead of remaining on-high, the concrete flows back down to earth towards a slender, minimal point aligned with the center of the stage, as if forming a protective umbrella above whatever spectacle is meant to be performed there. The form of the vaulting concrete creates the appearance of opposing circular motion: the band-shell takes potential energy from the street and converts it to kinetic energy that flies into the sky, only to return that energy back to the ground, whence the movement may repeat indefinitely, *perpetually*. In this regard, the band-shell serves as an aestheticized frame: the empty spaces – perhaps one should say “*abstract spaces*” – in the band-shell’s two halves also serve as windows looking onto the *favelas* on the slopes of Santa Teresa behind it. The band-shell frames the *favela* for our aesthetic appreciation. And in this way, the Sambódromo not only integrates the street, it also integrates the *morro* and the *cidade* into a common vision of Rio de Janeiro.

It is important to reaffirm here that, although it is a project of concrete and asphalt, Sambódromo is most powerful as a symbolic, representational, *abstract* work of art. Niemeyer’s design seeks to integrate *carioca* subjects symbolically. In the off-season, the CIEP on the site operates to provide social services for Rio’s underprivileged residents, but does so in order to produce “integrated” subjects now made available to live and work as productive citizens. During the Carnival season, the Sambódromo works to re-inscribe the city street: it concretizes the *carioca* avenue as a site of ritualistic displays of modern nationalism, but it also does so by carefully regulating who may pass through the street and who may not. At its terminus, the Praça da Apoteose creates avenues for spectacular, “integral”

vistas of the city, yet only those subjects whom this highly structured street-space has allowed to enter may obtain such visions.

In this way the Sambódromo is not just modernist, but especially *Brazilian* modernist; it is not modernist so much as it is *modernista*. In certain respects, the site adheres strictly to the functionalist dictates of CIAM modernism: its components are industrially produced, its facades contain little or no ornamentation, and it can adjust to multiple uses with maximum efficiency. Yet at the same time, the structure functions most completely towards the aestheticization of space: rather than merely housing aesthetic spectacles, the Sambódromo transforms the street into a poetic object, and hence it aestheticizes any experience one may have on that street. Thus, as one moves through the structure – either as a spectator or participant in an aesthetic spectacle – one’s experience is instantly coded (mapped) in terms of place; it is instantly *Brazilian*, and one knows this because the Sambódromo itself draws a vision of Rio de Janeiro’s recognizably *carioca* topography (*morro* and *favela*) down into the regulated spaces of the street and *cidade*. The site plays perfectly into the “civilizing mission” of the CIEP integrated into the structure: that of regularizing (and regulating) participation in official state power.

163

#### STREETS AND NON-STREETS (VIRTUAL AND CONCRETE)

Of course, the Sambódromo operates (or fails to operate properly) by means of a paradoxical inversion: the concrete structure concretizes citizenship and participation symbolically; yet for all its symbolism, the structure itself does not truly inaugurate concrete change in the city. One can say with great certainty that the scope and gravity of poverty in Brazil’s *favelas* grew enormously under the military regimes of the 1960s and 1970s. The macroeconomic projects of the military governments were tied to the expansion of industrial output, industrial infrastructure, and the financial interests of the upper classes. While these regimes remained focused on large national projects, they tended to take a *laissez-faire* approach to urban planning, such that the development of large cities was largely handed over to private real estate interests. Consequently, while policing of urban areas (both rich and poor) became harsher and more militaristic, the growth of *favelas* became more rapid, unchecked, and unplanned.<sup>31</sup> The debt crises and economic restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s only deepened the divide between *cidade* and *morro*. To this day, the *favelas* of Rio and São Paulo

31. See Teresa P. R. Caldeira’s *City of Wall: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2000, for perhaps the most detailed and thoughtful account of urban policing and real estate markets in 20<sup>th</sup> century Brazil.

remain largely working class (lower and lower-middle class) areas by Brazilian standards, although many *favelas* are underclass areas of unspeakable poverty. Nevertheless, these areas remained notably underserved: many lack running water or regular sewage; electricity is regularly pilfered from the grid, if it flows at all; and the extension of health care and other benefits remains problematic if not impossible. Worse yet, due to official negligence, civic power in the *favela* has largely been ceded to heavily armed drug gangs. Indeed, any full-scale police incursion into many of Rio's *favelas* would likely set off a civil war, replete with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

The problem in this regard is not that the *morro* remains under-represented or unrepresented, whether on a map or in the halls of official power. Rather, the problem is that any representation of the *morro* by the powers-that-be in the *cidade* may incite a whole host of unforeseen social problems. A case in point is the recent television series (originally broadcast on Brazil's giant Globo network), *Cidade dos homens* (*City of Men*, 2002).<sup>32</sup> The series, created and produced by Kátia Lund and Fernando Meirelles,<sup>33</sup> has gained recognition both nationally and internationally for its use of amateur actors drawn directly from the *favela*, primarily from non-governmental cultural-service organizations like Nós do Morro.<sup>34</sup> As such, *Cidade dos homens* veered sharply away from typical Brazilian television fare, with its melodramatic *novelas* largely populated by white actors playing upper-class aristocrats. Many Brazilian academics immediately took notice: *Cidade dos homens* was intended by its producers as a "statement," giving *faveleiros*<sup>35</sup> presence in both the national mediascape and popular imagination.<sup>36</sup>

32. *Cidade dos homens: The Complete Series* [2002], Palm Pictures/TV Globo PALMDV3141 (3 DVD discs), 2006.

33. Along with Walter Salles, Fernando Meirelles is one of the most successful Brazilian directors of the current generation. The international success of his debut, *Cidade de deus* (*City of God*, 2002) allowed him to move into the Hollywood system with such films as *The Constant Gardener* (2005) and *Blindness* (2008). Notably, *Cidade de deus* used many of the same actors that would later re-appear in *Cidade dos homens*.

34. Like many non-governmental social welfare programs, Nós do Morro ("We of the Hill") uses culture as a means to effect societal and political change. For a more comprehensive study of this tendency in Brazil and Latin America, see George Yúdice's *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2003.

35. Residents of the *favela*.

36. See Ivana Bentes, "A pobreza criadora da folkmiúdia," *Jornal Brasileiro de Ciências de Comunicação*, ano 6, n° 247, 2005. See [www2.metodista.br/unesco/jbcc/jbcc\\_mensal/jbcc267/dialogos\\_pobreza.htm](http://www2.metodista.br/unesco/jbcc/jbcc_mensal/jbcc267/dialogos_pobreza.htm) (last access May 17, 2010).

Although the series takes place in the fictional Morro da Sinuca (“Snooker Hill”), the setting is quite obviously a *favela* near the city center of Rio, since the characters continually cross borders between the impoverished hillside and high-rise residential areas. *Cidade dos homens* centers on the perspectives of two adolescents in Morro da Sinuca, Acerola and Laranjinha. Especially in the series’ first season, the narrative structure of each episode is typically meandering: the boys encounter a small problem of daily life which sets off a chain reaction of events that requires them to wander in and out of the *favela* in search of a solution. Ironically, most of their “problems” would not be problematic elsewhere, except that Acerola’s and Laranjinha’s situation in the *favela*, caught in movement between official and unofficial modes of social control, raises stiff barriers to any easy resolution.

The first episode entitled “The Emperor’s Crown,” for instance, begins in a CIEP, with the boys’ teacher giving a lesson on the installation of the Portuguese court in Rio de Janeiro in 1808 – an event caused by the Napoleonic invasion of Portugal in 1807. The teacher informs the class that they will be making a fieldtrip to the former royal palace in Petrópolis (just outside of Rio) to see the royal jewels first brought to Brazil on the royal transatlantic crossing of 1808, so long as each student pays R\$ 6.50 (about US \$2). Since Laranjinha does not have the money, he goes to the middle-class house where his mother works as a servant and cajoles her white, bourgeois employer to give him \$10, which the employer pulls from his wallet thoughtlessly. On the way home, however, Laranjinha is assaulted by one of the *favela*’s gangs who are trying to take over new territory. Acerola then goes to their local gang on Laranjinha’s behalf to get a refund, but unwittingly sparks a gang war before he can get paid. Acerola’s grandmother then promises them the money if they can go down the pharmacy, and sell her *empanadas* (meat pies) in exchange for her medicine. Before they can return up to her house, however, the gang war blocks access to her home. In an aside, Laranjinha explains how one gang controls the lower half of the *morro*, and another the upper half where they live. Since the pharmacy is below, they cannot return to grandmother’s house above. The boys explore a number of pathways and walkways to get home, all of them blocked, until the decisive moment when the war breaks and they provide grandmother her pills. Finally, the boys return to the CIEP just before the fieldtrip, but the teacher – thinking no one has listened to her lessons – threatens to cancel the Petrópolis visit unless someone can explain the history of the Brazilian-Portuguese monarchy. Laranjinha stands up and explains (correctly) the Napoleonic invasions in terms of gang wars for turf



among the French, British, Spanish, and Portuguese nobility, a war that compels the Portuguese crown to seek a new “morro” in Brazil.

“The Emperor’s Crown” demonstrates the incomplete integration of Acerola and Laranjinha into official power. The episode begins and ends in the CIEP (to repeat, the *Centro Integrado de Educação Pública*), the site where they should be inscribed into the citizenry as productive members of society. Their education is not entirely public, however, since they have to invest their own capital (R\$ 6.50, a princely sum for them) for the fieldtrip. To raise this capital, they go through several distinct informal economies: domestic labor, food vending, barter, and of course, the gang-controlled drug trade. In doing so the boys map the *favela* for the viewing audience: they expose the division of the *morro* into zones dominated by powerful economic interests (drugs) fueled by illicit consumption from the *cidade*; this spatial-economic division both spurs and blocks their movement through a chaotic network of informal streets, which are little more than hillside trails that have been lined with concrete over time by *favela* residents.

166

This “cartographic” representation of the *morro* on the television screen, however, allows Laranjinha to re-map his place in Brazilian history. In effect, Laranjinha ends by producing an “inverse” genealogy of Brazilian power. He fundamentally errs in characterizing the geopolitical crisis of absolute monarchical power in 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe in terms of local conflicts over gang territory in 21<sup>st</sup> century Rio de Janeiro. Yet his speech is amusing, of course, because Laranjinha’s fundamental error is still fundamentally correct. The chain of events in history is more unfortunate than the cause and effects of the episode: the wealth of the Portuguese crown was based almost entirely on the forced migration and exploitation of black slaves in Brazil; the reliance on slave-derived wealth (and little else) caused the crown to slip into decadence by 1800, making Portugal an opportune target for foreign domination, first by England and then by France; the Napoleonic invasion propelled the escape of the Portuguese crown to Rio; the slave trade brought Acerola’s and Laranjinha’s forefathers to Brazil; slavery thus caused the vast and racist disparities of wealth that ultimately produced the *favela*, encouraged the criminal drug trade, and caused the two boys to become entangled in violent struggles for livelihood. Laranjinha thus unwittingly narrates his own placement in Brazilian history – his own role in the production of space in Rio de Janeiro – albeit in terms only germane to his own existence. The representation of his narrative over the course of an episode on television provides “presence” and validity to his spatial and historical argument, which as an oral speech remains more an informal genealogy (in the Foucauldian sense) than an authorized history of state power.

The problematic division of official vs. unofficial control of streets becomes more pronounced in the third episode, “The Mail.” Like the first episode, “The Mail” begins with a seemingly innocuous issue: mail cannot be delivered to the *favela* because the mailman cannot cross the border between *cidade* and *morro*. Since *faveleiros* have no official addresses (and because they live in a violent area), the mailman is forced to leave piles of undelivered mail at the entrance to the *favela* where residents may or may not retrieve it. The residents cannot complain to the government about the problem, however, because their interests obviously are not represented there. Instead they turn to the only sovereign they know, the local drug lord, who forces Laranjinha (under penalty of death) to dress in a yellow t-shirt and deliver *all* of *favela*’s mail. Enlisting the help of Acerola, Laranjinha tries to establish a new mail route, but his efforts, too, are frustrated by the lack of addresses. Yet the situation is no better beyond the *morro*. At one point, Laranjinha and Acerola attempt to deliver a letter to a forwarding address in the *cidade*, only to learn (after crisscrossing Ipanema and Leblon all the way across town) that the correct street is in some place called São Paulo. Along the way on this misadventure, someone hands them a map of Rio de Janeiro, whence they discover that the *morro* has no map, being represented as just a void in the middle of the city. The two therefore set about to create a map of the Morro da Sinuca, assigning their own street and place names throughout the *favela* and enlisting the work of *faveleiros* (paid for by drug money) to create street signs. Laranjinha, however, is innocently caught up in a police drug raid, and a police captain takes hold of Laranjinha’s hand-drawn map. The police then set about to use the map as a surveillance tool in order to wrest control of the *favela* from the drug gangs, arresting the gang’s top leader. But before the police manage full control, Acerola and Laranjinha (under threat from the gang) quickly rearrange all of the newly posted street signs. This is enough to confuse the raiding officers who are using photocopies of Laranjinha’s map; the confounded police are cast out of the *favela*, and life returns to “normal.”

“The Mail” exposes the fissures produced by control of the street in Rio. On one hand, the residents of the *favela* require governmental services like mail and police protection; on the other hand, these same governmental services pose direct threats to their livelihoods. They organize initially to seek a political resolution to a relatively minor problem. Yet, because they have no effective representation in the state, they must turn to an “alternate sovereign” – a warlord who holds exceptional power over life and death because he has money and guns. The police in fact turn predatory precisely because, given that the *morro* lacks any political representation, there is no public check on their power, thus increasing

the warlord's stature as the sole provider of social services. In this sense the *favela* is caught in limbo between two kinds of streets: the solids represented as lines on the official street map of Rio, and the voids (not) represented as empty spaces on the same map. There are streets in the *cidade* and non-streets on the *morro*; yet the *faveleiros* experience the city streets as inaccessible foreign space and suffer severe realities on non-streets. Laranjinha's cartography of these voids does not at all solve problems, however, but only inflames them. His map, although unofficial, ultimately permits official power to seek panoptical control of the *morro* in an effort to subdue the area by force. Indeed, it is only through a crafty bit of "unmapping" that the *favela's* non-streets return to "safety" and "normalcy" as non-entities – that is, when they return to the unmitigated power of violence and drugs left unprotected by the state that for all intents and purposes still (mis)represents them and their immanent power.

168

However, perhaps the ultimate irony is that this official "exclusion" of the *favela* is in fact "included" through media representations transmitted, commodified, and sold by one of the world's most powerful media empires (TV Globo). Accordingly, shows like *Cidade dos homens* participate in what Beatriz Jaguaribe, guided by Georg Simmel, has described as a "defamiliarizing shock of the real." Speaking specifically of Rio de Janeiro, Jaguaribe convincingly claims that, in contrast to "heroic" depictions of urban poverty like the Cinema Novo of the 1960s, contemporary depictions of the *favela* tend to operate in a graphic realist mode. Such depictions do not yield unmitigated access to reality for the spectator, however, but rather assault the spectator's sensibilities so that she or he will be estranged from the immediate comforts of daily existence. As Jaguaribe writes:

[T]he aesthetics of realism resurfaces as both a shock response and as a means of reworking the connections between representation and experience in an attempt to engender interpretive frameworks that produce a vocabulary of recognition in the midst of the tumultuous uncertainty of Brazilian cities. As the focal site of urban unease, the favelas are once again thematized, but now they are no longer buffered by the modern narratives of future utopian redemption that prevailed in the agendas of the Cinema Novo and much of the previous modernist inventions. Contemporary depictions of the favela provide defamiliarization without radical aesthetic experimentation because this "strangeness" may demolish the petrification of daily habits, but it channels perception to specific interpretative vocabularies and aesthetic codes.<sup>37</sup>

37. Beatriz Jaguaribe, "Cities without Maps, Favelas and the Aesthetics of Realism," in *Urban Imaginaries: Locating the Modern City*, ed. Alev Çinar and Thomas Bender, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. 116.

Here Jaguaribe clearly does not favor radical modernist “utopian” (“carnavalesque”?) practices that would channel “strangeness” into limited aesthetic vocabularies and codes. At the same time, it is difficult to ascertain whether she sees any improvement of the situation in contemporary realism. Realism provides a “shock of the real” without fundamentally changing reality; at best, Jaguaribe argues that new realisms are opening new forms of social discourse in Brazil, although she does not mention any resolution to current crises. Significantly, in media representations like *Cidade dos homens*, urban poverty is still represented over a media network, but it is not clear if the poor have created new ways to represent themselves.

In any case, I have attempted to argue throughout this essay that dislocations of abstract space in Brazil are progressively charted by aesthetic representations of street-spaces in Rio: Mário de Andrade takes the carnivalesque “inversion” that typifies the Catholic order of things, and re-inverts the street-spectacle into a material movement so as to mark Brazil’s entrance into industrial order; Oscar Niemeyer then concretizes this “re-inversion” literally and materially, so that the concrete of his architecture is used to “integrate” and “re-map” subjects into abstract relations at the very moment they move through the architectural object; finally, the characters of *Cidade dos homens*, initially located within one of Niemeyer’s concrete structures (the CIEP), completely dis-articulate both the displacement of the power of colonial monarchy and the violent displacements brought on by exploitative capitalism. At each step, the city street is re-mapped and rearticulated: in Mário’s poem the street merely becomes an object that can be represented, harnessed, and channeled both aesthetically and productively; in Niemeyer’s design the street becomes objectified as an aesthetic object through which subjects and subjectivities may be produced; in Globo’s television series the objectifying power of aestheticized streets is openly questioned, albeit in a way that nevertheless brings previously “uncharted” streets, places, and subjects into view.

Such a trajectory goes well beyond the use of maps by a sovereign monarch as a means to visualize territories under his control. Moreover – and this is the aspect of this essay that is perhaps the hardest to conceptualize at the present moment – I would like to go beyond the mapping of streets and cities for the purposes of militaristic surveillance and panoptical control over populations. That is, the abstract space of modern capitalism may have been considered “abstract” insofar as the *concrete* demands of economic production required the production of *virtual* identities: slave, worker, wage-earner, citizen, constituent. The modern street map and urban plan became vital to this process of “virtualization” in that

they allowed the dominant classes to control the production of space and channel the movement of (virtual) subjects through it. In the case of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil, however, something much more complex may have occurred over the past century. In order to enter into the modern world order, a simple piece of paper was not sufficient; rather the street was mapped through a barrage of media images-poems, music, dances, buildings, videos-in order to articulate or disarticulate virtual identities as needed by political and economic systems (i.e., the “pseudo-subjective” political-economic development of the nation). By the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, a curious form of cartographic inversion has taken hold: whereas in the past people, things, and places had to be real before they could be mapped, represented, or known, it now seems that nothing may be known until it has first been mapped as a representational virtual reality.

170

This is not to say life in the *favela* is not real – both beautifully real at times, and brutally real most others. Rather, the cruel inversion of globalization, as expressed on the local level, is that concrete realities have no social meaning until they have first been mapped as virtual realities in a mediascape (film, TV, print, internet, architectural design, etc.). There can be no doubt that something both distinctly *carioca* and Brazilian emerges from the *morro*, that in fact there may have been no such thing as *carioca* and Brazilian without the *favela*. The problem is that the *morro* has no social “content,” and hence no possibility for political engagement, until it can be envisioned, mediated, and known *virtually*. Thus, to walk through the concrete maze of Rio’s streets is now to walk through a virtual, intermedial map of these same streets simultaneously – the object mapped and the mapping of that object are one the same. In some parts of this map, coherent bits of information can be recognized – buildings, people’s faces, songs, smells; and in other parts, one can only sense static and noise until some representation emerges to rectify one’s vision. Art no longer imitates life. Instead, in the age of globalization, virtual reality itself produces the concrete – the social network – with which the world’s streets will be paved and the globe’s cities will be built.