Sonic resistance: Diaspora, marginality and censorship in Cuban and Brazilian popular music

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In this study I argue that popular music can testify to experiences of censorship, marginality and diaspora in spite of the difficulties that giving account of these experiences imply. Focusing primarily on Cuba in the late 1980s and Brazil in the early 1970s where censors obliged musicians to reaffirm, through their music, a hegemonic image of a national identity, the songs I analyze resist censorship through sonic forms of expression, which I will approach through their narrative, auditive and expressive characteristics. The musicians whose songs I analyze, consisting of Gilberto Gil (Tropicália), Jards Macalé (marginais) and Milton Nascimento (Clube da Esquina) in Brazil and Carlos Varela (topos generation) and Telmary Diaz (Interactivo project) in Cuba, are dealing with what I call affective diaspora, an experience of alienation from the homeland that does not require physical separation from it. I connect this experience of a blurring of the border between inside and outside to the way these musicians circumvent censorship by questioning, from a marginal perspective, the parameters of its operation. Their strategy of destabilizing the separation between inside and outside of hegemony, of the homeland and of legitimized speech or musical harmony is what I call detuning. To approach and do justice to these detuned musical narratives, I propose a strabistic way of listening that, like cross-eyed vision, is capable of reading the decentered testimony of these songs as also testifying to censorship itself.
Sonic Resistance

Diaspora, Marginality and Censorship in Cuban and Brazilian Popular Music

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It has taken me more than six years to come to the final version of this dissertation. More than six years of squeezing the maximum of productivity out of the always too short weekends in between sales targets and something of a social life. Small islands of time that were pervaded by the linear time of the world outside where things always appeared to be moving forward at a much faster pace. For this reason the process of writing was not just a journey through time, but also through space. And space not only in the metaphorical sense of the word. I also refer to the multiple places where the writing somehow had to be done. Bars, offices, trains, planes, dining tables, beds, in different cities and countries, or somewhere in between, places that still appear before my mental eye when reading the parts of my theses that were written there. And with the evocation of these different places come the memories of the people associated with them, whom I want to thank for the different ways in which they affected the body in becoming of this dissertation.

The office is inextricably connected to the three people who have guided me through the process of preparing, writing, rewriting, rewriting and finishing the dissertation. It all started in a virtual space, mainly on Skype, when I started having brainstorm sessions with Cornelia about the possible focus of my research. Throughout the years her presence has continued to be a primarily virtual one due to physical distance, but our sessions have always been productively challenging. In spite of the sometimes frustrating difficulty of putting our intuitions to words (the sonic has many ways of resisting language) I remember our conversations as moments of inspiration that resulted in the discovery of some very important insights, the hidden sidetracks to my dominant lines of thought.

The physical office space, the one that consists of actual tables, chairs and fluorescent lighting, where the sometimes romantic idea of doing academic research meets the reality of plain and simple disciplined labor, is the space inhabited by Esther. She has been the most present person throughout the entire process, reading god knows how many versions of the same Movements yet never
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missing the smallest details that had to be taken out, corrected or emphasized.
I admit to having some moments of being disheartened at seeing how the result of
months of writing and suffering can be sent back within a few hours – colored red
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on various occasions with my overly ambitious writing. “You don’t need to be
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got close to that stage – at least there was less and less red towards the end – but
if I have learned something from Esther, she has been teaching it by example.
With her pragmatism and enthusiasm she helped me overcome every inevitable
moment of writer’s block, which in Academia occurs every three paragraphs.
Especially in my situation where the writing had to be done in short and scarce
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And then there is this in between space where the office door opens up
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not in one’s capacity to drift off into philosophical meanderings, but precisely in
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with such ease, pinpointing the truly important subjects in my blur of ideas – she
mainly encouraged me to find my own voice in my writing. “If you refer to these
authors looking for a voice, then why don’t I hear yours?” My writing has never
been the same since that remark. Suddenly I felt I did not have to fill pages with
seriousness, that I was allowed to improvise, to play, to embrace the moments
when my analyses did not resonate harmoniously with the theory at hand. The
office could also be a lighter place; a door had been opened to something beyond
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Time for a shift to another dynamic space of sales and numbers, innovation
and competition, set-backs and victories, chasing and being chased – my life from
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Home is never confined to a single place, especially when that home is Cuba. The island of Cuba that became the place of my other family through endless talks on the balcony with Orestes, Ivette and Frank, the coffee and conversations with abuela Gladys and her endless curiosity about everything, my marvel at abuelo Bernal’s talent to release reality from its straightjacket of simple facts, listening to bisabuela Nena whose century of accumulated memories were spread out before her like the rice grains she sorted by hand every morning, following the gaze of abuelo Próspero and the way it rested on his loved ones in the living room, and sharing laughter and songs with the family in Cuba’s east: tía Olga, abuela Amanda, tía Chela and tío Koqui, tía Dania and tío Felín, and all the children and grandchildren who both light up and tear down the place.

Manzanillo, the town and the house, the Cuban Macondo of Marcelo who still lived there in the 1950s and who never got to see it again.

Havana: the noise, the traffic, the waves that beat against the Malecón, the place where music on the streets is not the same as the songs that people sing behind closed doors. The place where Conchita taught me that music could also be poetry and poetry was nothing more than daily reality, where Joaquin Borges showed me that attentive listening could also compensate for vision, and were Elieser surprised me about how close intellect can be to folly as he and his stray dogs climbed the big pile of books he had made at the center of his book store – a place where the prohibited books had once been so neatly separated from the obligatory ones before his term in prison. But also Havana’s presence through jam sessions with Ulises on our balcony in Barcelona, through the poetry I was introduced to by José Felix at his place in Barceloneta, through Denis’ musings
over cigarettes and *tambor de boniato* in Stockholm, and through the endless and sometimes surreal stories Dayron would tell us his living room in Zürich.

And then finally there is the home where you hang your hat, here in the Netherlands. The place where my travels began in their imaginary form, through photographs and documentaries, before I had set foot outside Europe. Where I discovered Surinam through the stories my mother and my aunts would tell me, and where the travels went as far back as Madeira, the island of my ancestors, during the traditional Christmas dinners with my grandfather’s recipe of *carne vinho d’alhos*. It is a place of protection, which I owe to the inexhaustible care and love I continue to receive from my father, my mother and my big little sister. A place where Raymond has helped me realize that things that are never lost can still be found again. But this home has also become a place of arrival since Ivette left her island to join me on the other side of the Atlantic. And with that arrival it is also the starting point of a new journey, who knows where it will take us.

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Amsterdam, March 20th 2016
Opening Sequence
Sonic Resistance

In this study I argue that popular music can testify to experiences of diaspora, marginalization and censorship through a sonic form of resistance that operates at the level of narrative structure, auditive composition and performance. To show how such sonic resistance operates, I analyze in some detail a number of songs by marginalized musicians in Cuba after the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in Brazil during the years of the military dictatorship in the early 1970s. Conceiving of songs as complex interactions between lyrics, melody, rhythm, use of instruments (including the voice of the singer) and performance, I focus on how their narrative, auditive and expressive dimensions interact with each other and with the respective Cuban and Brazilian socio-political contexts in which they were written and performed.

In spite of obvious differences between the right-wing technocrat military regime in Brazil and the socialist “Revolutionary” government in Cuba, they both sought to attain political coherence through the construction of a neatly defined national identity.¹ Their political messages were passed on to the people through artistically mediated forms of expression, and music was given a particularly prominent role in this. This meant that, although both the Cuban and the Brazilian authorities exercised strong control over all forms of artistic production, censorship was not only concerned with the prohibition of what they perceived as situated outside officially legitimized discourse, but also with the enforcement

¹ In accordance with most of the literature related to Cuban Studies, I will use the word “Revolution” with a capital R in order to refer to the socialist state form and ideology that has marked Cuban politics, entertainment, arts, research and education since the overthrow of the Batista regime in January 1959. I want to emphasize that I am not using the capital R in the same way it is employed in Revolutionary discourse itself. Rather than capitalizing the grandeur of its achievement – without denying the importance it had in its beginning – my capital R stresses the fact that now, almost 52 years later, the word “Revolution” has mostly come to signify the opposite of what the lower-case term “revolution” implies. The analysis of the song “Los Revolucionarios” (2005) by Telmary Diaz in Movement 9 will elaborate on these thoughts.
of what the legitimized discourse should consist of.

Whereas nationalist discourse in both countries was aimed at establishing a clear demarcation between the inside and the outside territory of the nation as a geographically fixed place, the outside world could not be prevented from traversing the interior space. In 1980s and 1990s Cuba, a large part of the population had settled elsewhere, whereas during the dictatorship in Brazil many people were expelled from the country as a result of being charged with subversive activities. Thus, diaspora marked the cultures of both countries as an experience that, I will argue, not only affected the ones who had left, but also those who stayed behind. The way in which people on either side of a physical or discursive separation can continue to touch each other is what I will refer to as affective diaspora. Affect here refers to a possibility for resonance between people including their bodies that is independent of direct physical contact. In addition, I consider affect the key factor that permits musical forms of expression to destabilize the rigid inside-outside demarcations the Brazilian and Cuban authorities sought to install and maintain through censorship.

The musicians whose songs are analyzed in what follows all occupy a position that is neither completely internal nor completely external to legitimized nationalist discourse. In the periods concerned, the regimes of both Brazil and Cuba wished to attain hegemonic power by creating a strictly defined image of what was supposed to be part of the nation and its culture, and what was not. Because music was an important tool in the creation of this image, strong control was exercised over what artists produced. My specific focus is on the Cuban generación de los topos, “Generation of the Moles” and the Brazilian margináis, “marginals” because they both consisted of musicians who consciously occupied marginalized positions within a hegemonic system, seeking to subvert it from the inside. In my analyses of various songs from these musical movements, I introduce the concepts of detuning, strabistic listening and the membrane (as applying to musical performance and perception) to explain how these songs mobilize a form of sonic resistance that is able not just to avoid censorship but also to testify to it and enable listeners to pick up on this.
Cuba and Brazil in Dialogue

Comparative studies of literature, music, cinema and visual or performing arts in Brazil and Cuba are fairly rare. Typically, the comparisons are based on historical or anthropological accounts of the slave-trade legacy in both countries and on similarities between their shared Nigerian socio-religious practices, introduced as a result of the import of slaves from the same African region. Other common comparisons are concerned with the countries’ economic and political histories, but do not thoroughly touch on the cultural practices related to these histories, which exceed the African inheritance. Two comparative works that are of importance for the current study are Mariana Martins Villaça’s *Polifonia tropical*, which compares musical experimentalism in Cuba and Brazil between 1967 and 1972, and *La experiencia opaca* by Florencia Garramuño, analyzing literary practices during the dictatorial regimes of Argentina and Brazil. Although this last work does not compare Brazil with Cuba, its focus on comparing marginal literary identities in dictatorial Brazil with those in Argentina opens up the possibility of approaching cultural marginality from a transnational perspective.

My comparison between the Cuban *topos* and the Brazilian *marginais* is not based on a direct connection, but focuses on similarities in the dynamics between state interference with artistic production and the way artists dealt...
with this. Nonetheless, for the purpose of contextualization, a few words should be said about the economic relations between Cuba and Brazil, which have a long history of mutual goodwill and cooperation. With the currently improving relationship between the United States and Cuba, the gradual lifting of the embargo and Cuba taking small steps to re-insert itself in the global economy, the relationship between Cuba and Brazil will probably remain important to both countries. This expectation is supported by the fact that Brazil has recently invested in the development of Cuba’s Mariel port, creating for itself a strategic hub for export to the Latin American and Caribbean region against an attractive cost per container (Grogg). As Benício Schmidt explains, political and economic relations between Cuba and Brazil became tighter after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, with Brazilian presidents Jânio Quadros (president between January and August 1961) and João Goulart (president from 1961 until 1964) acting as important supporters of the new left-wing state. This situation was interrupted by the military coup and installation of a right-wing regime in Brazil in 1964. After the fall of this regime in 1978, friendly encounters between Cuban and Brazilian politicians were resumed. Official diplomatic relations, however, were not reinstalled until 1986 (Schmidt 152-54). For this reason my study focuses primarily on a period in time in which Cuba and Brazil were not maintaining official relations.

Widening the historical perspective on the similarities between Cuba and Brazil, the period of the slave trade is a painful yet important shared experience, as both countries were primary destinations for slaves from the regions of Nigeria and Benin, brought over in order to work on the sugar plantations. Consequently, the Yoruba culture of this region in Africa became an important element in religious and artistic forms of expression in both countries, as is still visible in the religious practice of santería in Cuba and candomblé in Brazil (Hernández 143-44). The strong similarity of these religions is not only visible in religious expressions, but also in cultural forms born from them. In music, this is manifest primarily in the use of similar rhythms and instruments in musical styles such as Brazilian samba and Cuban rumba, but elements of this inheritance have also been integrated into more contemporary musical currents. One example is the “mangue beat” style of the group Chico Science & Nação Zumbi from Recife in Brazil, which, in their song “Malungo,” they characterize as “hip hop e batucada”
Opening Sequence - Sonic Resistance

(Agerkop 156). Others are the “rockasón” crossover by Cuban rock band Lucha Almada and the “funky blues con guaguancó” experiments of the Cuban rock/pop project Habana Abierta, whose participants, including the members of Lucha Almada, all migrated to Spain in order to record and perform their music free from the restrictions imposed by the Cuban government censors (Pijpers 2008: 43).

In her aforementioned book Martins Villaça argues a link can be made between Cuban left-wing cultural politics and Brazilian control of artistic production after the military coup by right-wing technocrats in spite of the vast political differences between the regimes. She points out how the formulation of cultural politics by the Brazilian communist party before the coup had stressed the importance of a popular revolutionary art form whose political message could become accessible to the masses by structuring it according to popular and familiar formulas (Martins Villaça 69). It was this policy that was implemented after the coup of 1964, using mass media to give art – and music in particular – a wider audience among the people whose views could supposedly be influenced by it. In Cuban cultural politics after the Revolution music was similarly conceived of as an artistic form of expression capable of cementing the relationship between the left-wing Revolutionary state and the people. Referring to the Cuban discourse that sought to define the function of the music in relation to the socialist project, Martins Villaça quotes the words of Ernesto Che Guevara in his book El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba: “ya vendrán los Revolucionarios que entonen el canto del hombre nuevo con la auténtica voz del pueblo,” ‘the Revolutionaries will come who sing the new man’s song with the authentic voice of the people’ (59). Thus, in both military-ruled Brazil and post-Revolutionary Cuba, music became the principal medium through which the desired image of a newly defined national identity was passed on to the people.

Fidel Castro, in his 1961 speech “Palabras a los intelectuales,” defined the role of art and censorship in Cuba as follows: “dentro de la Revolución, todo. Contra la Revolución, nada,” which may be translated as “within the Revolution, everything. Against the Revolution, nothing.” This formulation resonates with the way in which Brazilian musicians were critiqued by the political left if their music did not show enough political engagement. I will analyze the implications of this definition of art and censorship in Part 3 of this study. Here, it is invoked to
indicate how a lack of political engagement in music was considered to be an act against the Revolutionary authorities in Cuba, whereas in Brazil, after the tightening of state control in 1967, censorship applied to artistic forms of expression that gave the impression of being politically engaged. For the politically left groups in Brazil, consequently, an absence of political content in art was seen as an act of siding with capitalist ideology and hence with the military regime. Related to this, developments in Brazilian music that had always been disapproved of by left-wing critics included the integration of jazz in early bossa-nova, the use of electrical guitars in so-called “iê-iê-iê” music and the adaptation of influences from European rock music in many compositions of the Tropicalistas. These musical styles were seen to serve as mere entertainment for the masses and to allow the authenticity of Brazilian musical traditions to be contaminated by foreign styles (Martins Villaça 71-5).

During their first years in power, the Brazilian military authorities did not yet provide a very strict definition of their ideological framework. This created the conditions for the left-wing legacy of Brazilian cultural politics to become integrated into the post-coup military cultural politics, causing politically engaged music to be considered an important vehicle for getting the desired image of a Brazilian national identity across to the masses. However, the prominent presence of music programming on radio and television not only served to spread the political message of the authorities but provided an accidental platform for subversive artists. This caused the Brazilian popular music movement MPB (Musica Popular Brasileira), which was closely related to the South-American protest song known as “la canción nueva,” ‘the new song,’ to become a platform for fairly expressive and militant criticism that was surprisingly present and popular in the Brazilian musical scene even during the dictatorship (Martins Villaça 71).

It is important to elaborate on these details at this stage because they allow me to outline the shared field of tension in which Cuban and Brazilian

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4 The name “iê-iê-iê” was used to indicate a style of Brazilian music influenced by North-American and European pop music of the 1960s, with the Beatles as the most prominent role model. The name is an onomatopoeic rendition of the words from the refrain of “She Loves You” by the Beatles: “she loves you, yeah yeah yeah” (Martins Villaça 75). Singer Roberto Carlos is considered the founder and most famous representative of this particular style (Cambraia Naves 48).
musicians were operating, in spite of the obvious differences in the politics and state form of both countries, which should not be forgotten. The Brazilian military coup was a shift in power that was imposed according to a top-down principle. The main focus of the technocrats who defined the new political and economic strategy was the insertion of Brazil into the globalized economy and the boosting of production without specific consideration of the working class (Treece 311). Cuba's left-wing politics and Revolutionary state form, in contrast, were the result of an insurgency against a dictatorship. It triumphed with the help of large groups of the population, including students and both the urban and agrarian working classes. The primary concern of the freshly installed Revolutionary authorities was the nationalization of capital and the empowerment of formerly marginalized groups (Martins Villaça 55). In other words, where Cuban Revolutionary politics and notions of social reform were strongly inspired by socialist models from the Soviet Union, according to which state power could be secured through the education and mobilization of the people, the Brazilian military politics of economic reform were aimed at maximizing production and stimulating economical growth, with the masses mainly seen as “manpower” whose cooperation with the system could be enforced by the authorities (Martins Villaça 55-9).

Yet both Cuba and Brazil operated on the basis of a clearly centralized power structure and a strong nationalist discourse. Nationalism, according to Hannah Arendt’s article “The Nation,” denotes “the conquest of the state through the nation” in which power becomes tied to a specific territory. And the state, “as a legal institution [which] has declared that it must protect the rights of men,” restricts the specificity of this protection to “nationals” (208). In such a system, regardless of the difference between inward-directed Cuban politics and the Brazilian desire to open up to a globalized market-economy, one’s legitimacy as a “national” is defined by an inside-outside dichotomy of either belonging or not belonging to a national identity and territory. In late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba and 1970s Brazil, censorship was put in place to strictly define the norms of this national identity, first of all according to the politically engaged attitude to which artists were supposed to abide, as discussed above, and second by recurring to certain culturally embedded images. As I will discuss in more detail below, Carnival in Brazil and the image of “el Hombre Nuevo” in Cuba became
blueprints for what national identity should look like and how it should be reaffirmed in music and other forms of artistic expression.

What is particularly relevant about this strategy of appealing to a national identity based upon certain cultural norms and habits that were already embedded in Cuban and Brazilian day-to-day life is that it suggests an effort on the part of centralized power to become hegemonic. I mean this in Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s sense of a system where “pure exteriority is impossible” because it “also embraces what opposes [it]” (111, 139). The selection of art forms and imagery that appealed to the majority of the population not only made it possible to have people incorporate politics on an affective level, minimizing their distance to centralized power, but it also articulated its hegemony on the basis of cultural forms of expression that were already part of people’s day-to-day lives.

In Cuba, where the Revolutionary state was established with the consent of a large part of the population, political power was easily incorporated in daily life on an affective level. This power only began to be questioned on a larger scale after a second generation of people, born after the Revolution, started distancing themselves from the burden of the Revolutionary commitment. In Brazil, where military rule was imposed through a coup, left-wing cultural politics were maintained as a way of attaining hegemony because the people had already incorporated these forms of artistic and cultural expression. As Beasley-Murray notes, “hegemony theory presents social order as the result of either coercion or consent,” but, he adds, “pure coercion is unthinkable, so hegemony theory posits that there is always at least a residue of willed acquiescence” (63).

Because it was the hegemonic characteristics of the Cuban and Brazilian regimes that sought to establish political power on the affective level, music’s potential for sonic resistance to censorship is not to be found only in lyrics that – either explicitly or through the use of metaphors – critique centralized power. As Laclau and Mouffe remind their readers in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, any articulation of opposition in a hegemonic system “is defined by the internal parameters of the [hegemonic] formation itself” (139). For this reason I will not primarily focus on expressions of explicit criticism but rather on particular narrative structures or forms of sonic and performative expression that seem to defy hegemony on another level than that of plain opposition.
Of course, the use of lyrics that were considered too critical was punished in both countries with different levels of severity. Where Revolutionary Cuba is known for large-scale incarcerations of “prisioneros de consciencia” and alleged torture, Brazil’s military forces operated a punishment system based on imprisonment, expulsion, torture and murder. As I will show, to avoid these oppressive measures, subversive musicians followed the same strategy as that pursued by the state authorities aspiring for hegemony by operating precisely on the affective level. This level, which, in addition to the narrative content of the lyrics, comprises the song’s sonic characteristics and its performance situation, appeals to emotions and cultural memory. They trigger a physical response by touching directly on the body instead of working through intellect and reason.

Before elaborating further on how I will analyze the affective impact of specific Cuban and Brazilian songs as part of a strategy of sonic resistance, I give an overview of the relevant socio-historical contexts in Cuba and Brazil in which the songs selected for analysis were written and performed.

Cuba and the “Generation of the Moles”

The sold-out concert by marginalized Cuban artist Carlos Varela in Habana’s Chaplin Theater in April 1989 was an exceptional event when taking into account the circumstances under which he and the other musicians of his generation operated as cantautores (Borges Triana 2009: 41-2). Together with Varela, musicians such as Santiago Feliú, Frank Delgado, Xiomara Laugart and Gerardo Alfonso could only be active in a relatively underground music scene because the sometimes critical attitude towards Cuban society they took in their music did not accord with the message the authorities wanted musicians to spread. They were hardly given any airplay on the radio or on television, and their concerts had to

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5 Instead of the English hyphenated term of “singer-songwriter,” indicating someone who writes and sings his or her own songs, I use the Spanish term cantautor, a contraction between cantante (‘singer’) and autor (‘author’). The inclusion of the word for “author” invests the song lyrics with a more literary value than “songwriting” as a process exclusively legitimised in relation to music or, worse, to the mass production of songs based on success formulas in the popular music industry.
be arranged through an informal circuit and take place in small venues (Pijpers 2007, 1). Of the four, Feliú and Varela had most exposure to bigger audiences as Silvio Rodríguez, their musical mentor from an earlier generation, whose fame had already been established, regularly invited them as support acts at his own concerts. That Varela managed to become so popular that he was able to fill the Chaplin and the Carlos Marx Theaters of Havana, in spite of his almost complete absence from official – state controlled – media channels was therefore not only because he managed to “capture the spirit of the younger generation,” as Borges Triana convincingly argues, but also thanks to Rodríguez’s promotional efforts (Borges Triana 2009: 42; Moore 162).

Varela’s enormous popularity laid bare the authorities’ preoccupation with artists who, in expressing criticism of the Revolutionary regime and of contemporary society, captured the general – yet practically unspoken – view of a large part of the Cuban population. Eyewitness reports of concerts by Varela in these years note that the police used to block all connecting roads to the theater, denying hundreds of people access to the concert. Inside, large parts of the audience consisted of state officials and previously instructed high school students who had been transported there shortly before the show started. The instructions given to these students during their bus trip to the theater stressed the need to keep the ambience reasonably calm and to report any suspicious behavior to the school staff or UJC presidents.6

Taking a few steps back to draw the bigger picture of the circumstances

6 Although no written sources testify to this episode, various people who, as students, were surprised at the end of a school day with an excursion to a Carlos Varela concert have told me about their experiences. The abbreviation UJC stands for “Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas,” ‘Young Communist Union,’ whose ‘presidents’ are specially selected, well-performing students (Martins Villaça 49). Between January and July in 2004 when I followed courses at the University of Havana I had conversations with both UJC members and other students who had rejected membership. I learned that, officially, the function of the UJC is to maintain Revolutionary political awareness and dedication within Cuba’s educational institutions. To this aim, it demands the organisation of and visible presence at political rallies from its members. In practice, however, the UJC has turned into an inconvenient obligation for many students, as it takes up a lot of time that cannot be dedicated to studying. Voluntary applications are scarce, and in many cases the students who do join the UJC voluntarily do so in order to have less difficulty in obtaining the documents required to travel abroad – not rarely with the aim of leaving Cuba to build a life elsewhere.
in which Varela and the cantautores of his generation received their education as musicians, it is important to note that ever since the Cuban Revolution in 1959 relations between musicians and state authorities had not been without conflict: the authorities did their best to include young generations of musicians in their political project without being able to control them completely. State Revolutionary discourse focused strongly on the empowerment of formally marginalized groups and the creation of “el hombre nuevo,” ‘the new man,’ who, according to Ernesto Che Guevara, was the Cuban man of the future mirroring the discipline and dedication of the combatants who, under Castro’s and Guevara’s guidance, had overthrown the Batista regime. In his 1965 text “El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba,” Guevara mentions a capacity for and dedication to disciplined self-education as one of the key characteristics of this new man (4). He adds that only the (self-) education of this vanguard figure makes him capable of sacrifice because he understands its urgency within the bigger picture of the political struggle of which he partakes (Guevara 7). This sacrifice, according to Guevara, also includes the willingness to live without luxury if this is required in the struggle against an enemy (12). These characteristics of the hombre nuevo

7 In these fragments, it is noticeable that the discourse of Revolutionary Cuba is masculinist in an unquestioned and restrictive way. In her article “Participación vs Identidad,” Cecilia Bobes explains that although social and economic equality between men and women increased after the Revolution, stimulating the participation of women in social and political life, there was nevertheless an absence of feminist or female-centered discourse until the late 1980s due to the general taboo on discourses emphasizing any group’s desired separation from the homogeneous mass posited by early Revolutionary discourse (112). Abel Sierra Madero’s book Del otro lado del espejo about (homo)sexuality and the construction of a Cuban national identity analyzes the role of Cuba’s “new man” discourse in post-Revolutionary policies concerning homosexuality. As an example, he states that homosexuals were supposed to mobilize their self-control in order to act “according to socially established norms of cohabitation” and that homosexuals were denied access to jobs as teachers or political leaders because they were considered “unable to act convincingly as role models in front of their students” (Madero 200, my translations).

8 The emphasis on the capacity to resist the temptation of luxury is also related to a discourse of the political left in Latin America that Pablo Rodríguez Ruiz, in Los marginales de las Alturas del Mirador, describes as “the dignifying of the poor” (20). As he explains, this discourse not only serves the empowerment of marginalized groups, but also the goal of pacifying possibly antagonistic groups in society by emphasizing how poverty is a matter of choice in a society where marginalized groups are no longer excluded from political discourse (Rodríguez Ruiz 23-4). Rodríguez Ruiz’s study provides further information on marginal culture in Havana and constitutes a rare inquiry from...
also constituted the guidelines for the musicians who, as noted in the discussion above, were expected to pass on the political message of the Revolution to the people. What was born from this educated and humble role model was the new concept of the Cuban *trovador*.

The musicians from this first generation of *trovadores* included Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés, Noel Nicola and Sara González. Their education as musicians and as young Cuban nationals growing up in the early years of the socialist, Revolutionary state caused them to live by the example of the *hombre nuevo* in the sense that they were well-educated and politically engaged. In 1966, the poet Guillermo Rodríguez Rivera wrote the manifesto “nos pronunciamos,” ‘we speak up,’ which he signed together with other poets such as Víctor Casaus, Luis Rogelio Contreras and Jesús Díaz. It declared that they would make art “of, from and for the Revolution,” implying, besides political engagement, that art should deal not only with elevated matters but also with supposedly base everyday issues: “we consider all words to fit in the poetic vocabulary, be it dick or heart” (Rodríguez Rivera 11). According to López Sánchez, the manifesto caused the young poets and *trovadores* to come together because of their shared ideas about poetic and political aestheticism (49). This active mutual engagement manifests itself in the poetic and narrative complexity of *trova* song lyrics after the Revolution.

Because the *trova* after 1959 was not only about intellectualism and politics but also about the expression of everyday emotions and themes, the young *trovadores* soon reached a broad audience. In Cuba the term *trovador*, reminiscent of the wandering *troubadour* in medieval Europe, became associated with the image of the poet and his guitar (Palmer 1988: 301). The appeal of this humble figure caused the young musicians – in particular Rodríguez and Milanés – to become immensely popular not just among students and intellectuals, but also among the urban and agrarian working classes (Pijpers 2006: 57). As the state authorities recognized the strategic value of their popularity, the young musicians were given

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9 My translation from Spanish: “Consideramos que toda palabra cabe en la poesía, sea carajo o corazón.”

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a Cuban perspective into marginality and racial questions in relation to Cuban socialist politics.
a place to develop their activities in the Casa de Las Américas in Havana and state funding for concerts and instruments. In 1972, this support was formalized with the inauguration of the “Nueva Trova Movement,” or MNT for Movimiento de la Nueva Trova, which converted the Movement into a nation-wide platform to support and educate young musicians (López Sánchez 63, 71).

The institutionalization of the MNT as a state-funded movement not only meant financial and promotional advantages for the musicians, but also implied certain norms and expectations with respect to the content of their song lyrics. According to Noel Nicola in an interview included in López Sánchez’s book, the main problem of the young MNT musicians was the bureaucrats not understanding that their affiliation with the Revolution was of an aesthetic nature, not merely a political one (158-59). In other words, the Revolutionary authorities did not fully accept the hombre nuevo that emerged from the MNT.

Towards the late 1980s, the musicians mentioned at the start of this section made their first public appearances on stage, marking a new tendency in Cuban trova music. Carlos Varela, Gerardo Alfonso, Frank Delgado and Santiago Feliú were all born after 1959 and were considered to represent the second generation of the Nueva Trova. Although the MNT founders had trained them as musicians, the young trovadores started to differentiate themselves from their mentors mainly because they no longer shared the same sense of involvement with the Revolutionary project.

The years of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, one of Cuba’s most important political and economical allies in a divided world, were characterized

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10 The division of artistic tendencies into “generations” is a common classifier in post-Revolutionary Cuban sociological and literary theory, and is also used for the classification of musical movements. See, for example, Amir Valle Ojeda’s work on literary movements in the Cuban 80s and 90s, Brevísimas demencias, Antonio López Sánchez’s La Canción de la Nueva Trova and Joaquín Borges Triana’s CONcierto Cubano. Because this study does not aim to elaborate an alternative classifying system, I will use the division of “first” and “second” generation in the Nueva Trova without questioning the discourse of “newness” in the post-revolutionary musical tradition. For research exposing some clearly distinguishable period-specific characteristics of different generations of writers, see Salvador Redonet’s introduction to Los últimos serán los primeros, ‘the last ones will be the first,’ an anthology of short stories by young Cuban writers of the late 1980s (published in 1993) and Margarita Mateo Palmer’s Ella escribía poscritica, ‘She Wrote Post-Criticism’ (published in 1995), about postmodernism in Cuban literature since the late 1980s, which also includes a chapter on the musicians from the topos generation.
by economical hardship and a growing silent disgruntlement with the political situation in Cuba. The economic situation in the country had been precarious since the U.S. trade embargo imposed after 1962 (Morley 237). However, it was with the Mariel crisis in 1980 that the most visible manifestation of public dissent occurred as a large group of people entered the Peruvian embassy to obtain permission to leave Cuba. Confronted with an unstoppable flow, the Revolutionary authorities designated the port of Mariel as the place from where the “escoria” or “scum” that wished to leave could embark for the United States. This resulted in the exodus, within a year, of approximately 125 Million Cubans who left in search of better economical conditions or, in the case of artists such as the writer Reinaldo Arenas, a place where they could enjoy more freedom of expression (Pedraza 318; Armengol). In 1990, when, a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the scarcity of resources in Cuba reached a historical high, Fidel Castro, in a speech at the Carlos Marx theater, appealed to the fighting spirit and the unity of the Cuban people for the difficult years to come, which he coined as a “período especial en tiempos de paz,” ‘special period in times of peace’ (Castro 1990, 1).

Castro’s appeal for unity and dedication to the Revolution did not resonate with all parts of Cuban society. Particularly the younger generations, who, like the musicians of the second generation of the Nueva Trova, had been born after the Revolution, did not feel the same affinity with the Revolutionary project as earlier generations. Two cultural objects testify to this generational gap: the first is the 1959 poem “El otro” by Roberto Fernández Retamar, and the second is the poem “Generación,” written by Ramón Fernández Larrea in 1987 (Sánchez Aguilera 43-4). Where Retamar poses the question about his indebtedness to the martyrs of the Revolution with the words “nosotros, los sobrevivientes / a quiénes debemos la sobrevida?” ‘we, the survivors / to whom do we owe our survival?’, Larrea answers this question nearly three decades later with the words “nosotros, los sobrevivientes, nadie debemos la sobrevida,” ‘we, the survivors, owe our survival to nobody’ (Aguilera Díaz 29).

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11 For further reading on the events surrounding the imposition of the Cuban trade embargo during and after the missile crisis of 1962, see Morris Morley’s *Imperial State and Revolution*. Written during the late years of the Cold War, it offers a meticulous account of the details of U.S. politics, though leaving the Cuban perspective largely out of the equation.
In the same way, the second Nueva Trova generation no longer saw it as their duty to defend the cause their parents had fought for or to endure the ongoing difficulties resulting from that struggle. In their song lyrics they no longer agreed to omit – for the sake of the censors – some very present aspects of their daily lives, and they started to sing about the friends and family members who had fled to the U.S. and who were not supposed to be mentioned in public. Thus, in Frank Delgado's song “La otra orilla,” ‘the other shore,’ on his 1997 album *La Habana está de bala*, the lives of Cubans living in Havana and Miami are presented as not so different from each other in spite of the contrasting political and economic circumstances. Nevertheless, both “shores” of this single realm constituting Cuban diasporic space are kept invisible to each other in public and political discourse. In this context, the lyrical subject wonders why his aunts and uncles, in spite of their ceaseless presence in his family’s memory, cannot be mentioned in public places “because they have abandoned their people.”

Another emblematic song that captures the spirit of this period is Carlos Varela’s “Guillermo Tell.” It became a symbol for a new generation that started to make itself heard through a discourse of implicit criticism that defied censorship. Through this discourse the younger generation of *trovadores* gave expression to a sensation of distance and alienation from the society they were meant to be a part of and which, according to the normative standards of the Cuban Revolution, they were supposed to construct and protect unconditionally. “Guillermo Tell,” narrating an alternative version of the story of William Tell in which the son refuses to always be the one with the apple on his head, captured the general sense of distance that the young generation of Cubans experienced in relation to the society their ‘fathers’ had created.12

Because of this detachment from the Revolutionary ideal, it was no longer possible for the state authorities to exercise indirect subtle control over these musicians by incorporating them in their own machinery of ideological expression. Censorship now consisted in ensuring the almost complete absence of these musicians from all forms of media, and in denying them any spaces to perform or record. Nonetheless, the musicians managed to continue their activities and

12 In Movements 4 and 5 of this study I will analyze this song in detail, reflecting on how its lyrical content and performative characteristics both represent and defy censorship.
to gain popularity in an underground scene by performing for small groups at home and in public spaces such as parks and deserted theaters, and by recording albums with foreign labels. Because of this, they were given the name “la generación de los topos,” ‘generation of the moles,’ referring metaphorically to their underground activities (Borges Triana 1988: 1).

Carlos Varela’s 1989 performance in one of Havana’s biggest theaters was a sign that his popularity could no longer be ignored. The concert program consisted of songs he had written over the years, which he finally managed to record in Spain. His very activity as a musician, then, was a symptom of his detachment from his contemporary social and political environment. More literally, the concert and Varela’s *En vivo* album (1991), which was a recording thereof, are examples of how the outside world filtered into Cuban culture in spite of the island’s apparent geographical and political isolation. Although Cuba’s outside world was a taboo, a place that officially did not exist, it was still manifestly there, changing not only musical activity, but also the way in which these musicians perceived their homeland.

Consequently, the marginal status of the topos did not render them fully invisible, but rather provided society’s margins with a face and voice. The topos showed that Cuban society’s “outside” also occupied certain spaces on the island, within the capital, and that it shaped a generation’s discourse and sonic fingerprint. This inherent multiplicity of the homeland in which the outside realm permeates the inside space – not only in terms of the presence of different political influences or the visibility of other geographical spaces but also in terms of the unavoidable underground, fringes and black-spots of the society itself – is what makes it possible to approach diaspora by focusing on marginal musicians located inside Cuba and Brazil. Showing that no physical separation is needed for people to become alienated from their homeland, and that the definition of a society’s inside or legitimized realm may be cannibalized from the inside, I argue that marginality within the homeland is also a diasporic experience, specifically an affective one.
Brazil's marginália

Two decades before Varela's concert at the Chaplin theater, in July 1969, the Brazilian musicians Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil gave a last concert in the city of Salvador in order to collect the money that would pay for their one-way trip to London. Having completed a four-month prison term, the two most prominent personalities of the Tropicália movement were forced to leave the country on the charge of "subversive musical activities" (Cambraia Naves 56-57). Gil’s and Veloso’s departure from Brazil marked the end of Tropicália as an influential artistic and musical movement in Brazil, and can be considered as the start of what will be explained below as marginália. The early 1970s are often referred to as an era of “vazio cultural,” ‘cultural emptiness’ due to the fact that many artists disappeared from view because they had left the country, had been incarcerated or simply kept a low profile in order to avoid persecution.

In his Master’s thesis “Eu, Brasileiro, confesso minha culpa e meu pecado,” Frederico Coelho contests the “vazio cultural” terminology by arguing that during these years the production of magazines, movies, books of poetry and music albums did not stop, but took place in marginal, underground circuits instead of through the state-supported channels of mass media (163). It is important to focus here on how marginália relates to Tropicália not just because Tropicália has exercised a strong influence on Brazilian music from the 1960s until the present day, but, more importantly, because these musical currents have a similar way of dealing with – and being dealt with by – censorship.

Returning to Gil’s and Veloso’s expulsion from Brazil, the question arises what their musical activities had consisted of to make them so threatening in the eyes of the military authorities. As argued above, the censors’ response to Tropicália is surprising considering that the MPB musicians, who were much more explicitly critical and militant in their song lyrics, were not harshly prosecuted. This suggests that besides the contents of the lyrics, the performative characteristics of their music, through which most of the Tropicália values were visually expressed, was considered important by the censors. The complex dynamics between artists and state censors can be clarified by taking a closer look at the strict censorship of music and other artistic, intellectual or cultural expressions implemented in
March 1968 with the fifth Institutional act (‘AI-5’).

The military coup of 1964 had put an end to the popular-nationalist politics of the Goulart administration. Instead, a form of capitalism was imposed that was to insert Brazil into the world economy. As David Treece explains in *The Gathering of Voices* (co-written with Mike Gonzalez), the first years of military rule in Brazil were dedicated to the consolidation of the regime. Consequently, some semi-democratic mechanisms continued to exist in spite of the increasing centralization of political power. In 1968, however, a new coup within the existing one marked the beginning of an era of severe repression of the working classes, designed to attain maximum productivity in a move towards industrialization. In the pursuit of an “economic miracle,” all methods that could ensure economical growth were allowed, giving the authorities absolute power over possible subversive elements in Brazilian society, including the cultural scene (Treece 307-312).

The state authorities, after the military coup of 1964, did promote all cultural expressions that emphasized Brazil’s modernity and its insertion in the global economy, using mass media channels to spread an image of a harmonious and modern Brazilian identity that was closely related to the carnival celebration as it was being invented during the Vargas era and as we still know it today.

13 The content of this institutional act, which concerns the application of censorship in Brazil, will be discussed in detail in Movement 12.

14 In “Tango, Samba, Modernity and Nation,” Florencia Garramuño points to the sometimes contradictory way in which Latin American modernity draws on what was conceived as “primitivist imagery” in the creation of a modern, national identity. Although the decades of industrialization (the 1920s and 1930s) were characterized by an emphasis on the modern character of the nation, the particularities of this national identity were mostly expressed, in literature, poetry and music, through what Garramuño describes as a combination of “the primitive and the modern” (2007: 1). Whereas Garramuño refers primarily to samba in Brazil and tango in Argentina as instances where the inheritance of African counterrhythmic musical structures was absorbed and redefined in national music styles, she also links this tendency to the concept of anthropophagy as it was developed in Brazilian modernism. In 1928 the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade introduced the idea of cannibalism to illustrate how a new Brazilian identity could only consist of devouring and digesting the European inheritance according to indigenous traditions. He argued that this act of physical absorption would allow Brazil to create something truly new and of its own rather than simply copying artistic traditions or economic models from overseas. See De Andrade’s “Manifesto antropófago,” the introduction to the first number of the *Revista de Antropofagia*. For further reading on modernity and literary modernism in Brazil, see Saulo Gouveia’s *The Triumph of Brazilian Modernism*.
Under the rule of Getúlio Vargas, from 1934 until 1945 and then again from 1950 until 1954, samba had been promoted as the official national music that, through the “ritual” of carnival, symbolized the mix of African, Indigenous and Portuguese cultures that had resulted in the modern Brazilian identity. Samba-schools, or blocos, were given the role of relating Brazilian history through thematic representations performed in samba processions. These representations emphasized how the Portuguese (white) victory over minority groups had resulted in the modernization of the country. At the same time, carnival also became a folkloristic cliché aimed at the expansion of the tourist industry.

In this context, the musical style of Tropicália, which mixed elements of international commercial rock and pop music with Brazilian Bossa Nova, was turned into a product that aligned with the new Brazilian national identity the military junta wished to construct. The internationally oriented popular element served the image of Brazil as a culture with a global orientation, whereas the Bossa Nova element had already proven to be a successful musical formula abroad, providing an apprehensible mix between “folkloric” elements and subtle jazz influences. Because the military authorities initially promoted this music, which could give international recognition to Brazil’s supposed harmonious confluence between “exotic” and “western” sounds, the Tropicalistas were given a lot of exposure in the mass-media. This visibility made it possible for them to earn their popularity, but also made them dangerous in the eyes of the regime (Treece 311-314).

The Tropicália attitude of aesthetical non-commitment soon opened them up to attacks from the political and artistic left and right. For the traditionalist groups on the political left, the use of the electrical guitar and of melodic and rhythmic structures seen to belong to North American or European pop music constituted an intrusion of imperialist elements into the “purity” of the Brazilian cultural tradition. Right-wing groups, including the military, objected to the fact that Tropicália also used the rhythms and melodies of folk songs of the rural Nordeste (Brazil’s poorest state). According to them, the pursued image of modernity and progress was being jeopardized by this musical “contamination” with “primitive” elements of Brazilian culture (Treece 315-16). In a pursuit that was never understood by left- or right-wing groups, Tropicália aimed to create a
Brazilian music with a potential for constant renewal that was not impeded by the rigidity of historical or cultural legitimization, or by the limitations of a binary discourse that divided culture into “high” (erudite) and “low” (primitive/popular) forms of expression.

The music of Tropicália, as noted above, explores the cultural richness of Brazilian music and does so in a non-hierarchical way, combining musical styles that were created in the rural areas of Brazil – such as forró – with rock instruments and lyrics that could be Concretista poems (Cambraia Naves 57-63). Poetry by the Brazilian Concretistas expressed a fascination with a poem’s typographic layout, related to the country’s rush to industrialization. A typical poem of the Concretismo movement only refers in a visual way to its own content (Treece 309). An example of a song resembling Concretista poetry is “Batmacumba,” by the group Os Mutantes on the Tropicália project debut-album Tropicália: Oupanis et circensis from 1968. In this song, every consecutive verse cuts a syllable at the end of the verse “Batmacumba-yeye, Batmacumba-oba.” When only “Bat” remains, syllables are added one by one, until the verse is complete again. The lyrics of “Batmacumba” can be considered a Concretista poem, because, when written out completely, they resemble the shape of a bat. At the same time, a clear Tropicalista element in this song is the contraction of “Batman” and “macumba” (a word that refers to the practice of African spirit worship in Brazil). This allows the song to reflect on Brazil’s hybrid reality between (global-oriented) modernization and (local) tradition.15

In the case of marginália, there is a thematic tendency towards violence, poverty and death, aspects that are closely related to life in the favelas, and also to madness. These aspects of social exteriority constitute both the physical and symbolic locus of Brazilian (artistic) marginality. Marginália is not so much concerned with the construction of a new form of Brazilian identity through music, but departs from the idea of a non-identity situated on the outer limits of aesthetical and cultural norms – and, in the case of the favelas, even beyond the limits of juridical and civil representation. Also, marginália’s stylistic tendency towards rock or jazz does not necessarily strive to enrich the Brazilian musical tradition,

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15 For a detailed account of Concretista poetry in Brazil in relation to Brazilian history but also placed in dialogue with contemporary poetical movements in other Latin American countries, see The Gathering of Voices by David Treece and Mike Gonzalez.
Opening Sequence - Sonic Resistance

as was the case in *Tropicália* and, before that, *Bossa Nova*. Instead, it evinces an outward look through which the younger generations of musicians take a certain distance from Brazilian culture as it was represented by the military propaganda. In this propaganda, Brazil’s rich cultural and ethnical history was simplified into what Hélio Oiticica, a prominent representative of *marginália*, calls a “folklorized” image of a historical course that had supposedly culminated in the contemporary (predominantly white Portuguese) harmonious modern nation (115). At the same time, all associations with existing poverty were silenced and musicians or intellectuals who refused to spread this ideal image were jailed or expelled. More than just a way of avoiding censorship, for Oiticica, marginality was a way of refusing to commit to what was officially legitimate.

The young artists of *marginália* returned to what they consider to be their cultural roots by deconstructing the historical meaning attributed to certain styles of music in the larger context of a constructed Brazilian cultural identity. Their use of these musical styles allows a reconsideration of the role these musical styles can play in an alternative moment of cultural self-definition by voices that do not necessarily represent the centralized and centralizing power of the state authorities. For example, the iconic musician of *marginália* Jards Macalé, on his second album *Aprender a Nadar* (1974), uses extensive fragments from old songs of the melodramatic *samba-canção* in a sometimes contrasting, sometimes complementary dialogue with this music style from his position as a musician with a rock and jazz background.¹⁶

A similar practice of cultural alienation is used by the group Novos Baianos, whose members eventually created a commune in the countryside and in this way

¹⁶ The complete title of the album, *Apresenta a Linha de Morbeza Romantica em Aprender a Nadar*, which is simply referred to as *Aprender a Nadar*, announces how, on this album, “Jards Macalé Presents the Trend of Morbid Romance.” “Samba-canção” is the name of a subgenre in the samba tradition in which more emphasis is put on the lyrics and melody than on the rhythmic, danceable character. Although the first compositions of the slower *samba-canção* date from as early as the 1920s, it was in the 1950s that the genre became more popular and occupied a proper space within the samba tradition. Its main characteristics are its orchestral compositions with elaborated melodic structures that resemble the Cuban and Mexican *boleros*, while the lyrics are predominantly sentimental, mostly mourning a lost love (Cambraia Naves 21-2). *Samba-canção, fratura e paixão* by Beatriz Borges offers further insight into this genre in the context of a discussion of the use of kitsch in Brazilian music.
distanced themselves from the city as a space that symbolized authoritative order and thus repression. Originally a rock band, Novos Baianos returned to samba music on their album *Acabou Chorare* (1972). Avoiding the discourse of historical legitimization, they re-discovered the genre from the outside-in perspective of performers with a different musical tradition and cultural memory.

A musical movement worth mentioning here is the so-called “Clube da Esquina,” or “The Corner Club,” which combines characteristics of both *Tropicália* and *marginália*. Originating in 1963 in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, and moving to Rio de Janeiro in 1970, it has often been considered as an “outside” answer to Rio-centered *Tropicália* (De Oliveira 17). Márcio Borges, Beto Guedes, Wagner Tiso and Ronaldo Bastos are related to this movement, but the person most closely associated with it is Milton Nascimento, whose song “Milagre dos Peixes” from his eponymous 1973 solo album will be analyzed in Part 3 of this study. The music of Clube da Esquina is similar to that of *Tropicália* in the sense that it can be characterized as experimental, combining multiple music styles that are either rooted in Brazilian traditions or in foreign rock, pop and jazz. Where they differ from *Tropicália* is that their project did not have a well-formulated goal and politics, nor a clear conceptualization of the “how” and “why” of its musical characteristics (De Oliveira 18-21). What links the Clube da Esquina to *marginália* is that their overall discourse is based on a local and urban, personalized micro-narrative, as opposed to *Tropicália*’s tendency of addressing the bigger question of Brazilian national identity. In the specific case of Nascimento’s “Milagre dos Peixes,” what corresponds directly to *marginália* is the way in which the use of language reflects the speaking subject’s search for a relative invisibility, or marginality, in order to circumvent censorship. The section below clarifies the approach I take to analyzing the songs’ sonic resistance and explains how this study is structured.

**Approach and Outline**

Throughout this study my method is that of cultural analysis. Four elements of this critical practice are of particular relevance to the way in which I analyze
song lyrics and their performance. First, cultural analysis is based on Mieke Bal’s contention that cultural objects should not be approached through the restrictive application of methods, as this presupposes a disciplinary straightjacket that disregards the fact that a single object can hold multiple meanings and can trigger a variety of associations if it is approached from a multidisciplinary perspective (2002: 4-5). Instead, Bal proposes a concept-based approach in which concepts are not fixed and passive tools to be applied to an object, but can come to mean and achieve different things as they travel between different disciplinary contexts. In addition, concepts can also be transformed by the analysis they facilitate. In Bal’s words, then, concepts are not firmly established univocal terms but […] dynamic in themselves. While groping to define, provisionally and partly, what a particular concept may mean, we gain insight into what it can do. It is in the groping that the valuable work lies. (2002: 11)

The openness to contingency of this concept-based approach is important because it allows an approach of the object on its own terms instead of treating the object as a passive receiver of the concept’s application. An analysis should always be a two-way street: “the object should [also] enlighten the concept, establishing […] an intersubjective movement of dialogic interaction” (Peeren 2005: 3). Accordingly, throughout this study, the main concepts of diaspora, hegemony and testimony are introduced in relation to objects that not simply reaffirm their established definition, but work to extend, relate and sometimes destabilize them. The objects, in this case the analyzed songs, therefore, help to discover new aspects of these concepts that, in turn, deepen the analyses.

The second element of cultural analysis that is relevant to my approach is this active role of the object, which appears as another active subject taking part in the process of analysis by, in Bal’s words, being allowed “to speak back” (2002: 45). When the analyst does not merely theorize but also gives the object a voice in the process of the analysis, the object helps to “divert” and “complicate” the analysis (2002: 45). This implies that the analysis is not only about the interaction between concept and object, but also about the interaction between the analyst
and the object as the analysis takes place.

This introduces the third central element of cultural analysis, which is that of close reading. As Jonathan Culler has argued, close reading is difficult to define but has to do with the detailed examination of a text in all its dimensions, which, in music, includes the sonic aspects and the performance, and with “a respect for the stubbornness of texts, which resist easy comprehension or description in terms of expected themes and motifs” (2010: 3). According to Bal, close reading does not indicate that “the text speaks for itself” and that the analysis should therefore remain internal to it, but rather that “no text yields meaning outside of the social world and cultural makeup of the reader. […] A text does not speak for itself. We surround it, or frame it, before we let it speak at all” (2002: 8). The way in which I practice close reading in this study is therefore related to the way in which I frame the analyzed songs’ lyrics, their sonic elements and their performance not only in their historical context, but also within their function as a narrative and within my own field of perceptions. For example, when I introduce detuning as a concept that is not only characteristic of music by the Brazilian margináis but that can also be understood as a way of subverting the unitary narrative of legitimized discourse, a first prerequisite is that I recognize the disturbing sonic effect produced by multiple, non-harmonious tones. Only by understanding the effect that this had on me can I try to understand the conceptual ways in which it functions in the object. In Culler’s words, cultural analysis is about “recognizing that your analysis is conditioned by your own place in the present, and is thus involved in that which it seeks to analyze” (1999: 342).

Because of this emphasis on the present moment of the analysis, a fourth element of cultural analysis should also be mentioned here. In explaining Bal’s notion of cultural analysis, Peeren describes it as an approach that “seeks to understand the past as part of the present (1). According to Peeren, this entails taking cultural objects and theories from the past, not excluding the very recent, and examining their function in the present as part of the contemporary cultural memory of which the cultural analyst partakes. (2005: 1)
Objects from the past acquire meaning in, from and for the present. Thus, my analysis of songs from late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba and 1970s Brazil is not just an effort to understand these historical contexts from the perspective of present. More importantly, the way in which the songs provide new ways of understanding the discussed concepts and analyzed strategies of sonic resistance is considered relevant for understanding the present itself.

To underscore this study’s focus on music and its argument that the sonic can be read like a text and text can be read through its sonic manifestation, I have structured it like a musical piece. Thus, instead of being divided into chapters, the body of this work consists of Movements (which also points to the status of my concepts as traveling ones). In musical terminology, “movement” is used to indicate a subdivision of a larger whole (a concerto, a symphony) that, because of its “self-sufficiency in terms of key, tempo and structure,” forms a separate unit (Oxford English Dictionary). In spite of its potential independence from the rest of the composition, a movement usually plays with some of the musical themes that traverse the composition and ensure its coherence. However, these themes are placed in a variety of sonic perspectives within the different Movements.17 In a similar fashion, the Movements of this study constitute separate sections that focus on different central concepts but are nonetheless interconnected by the repetition of these concepts, which are looked at from different perspectives. Typically, a song by either a Brazilian or a Cuban cantautor is analyzed in one or sometimes two Movements, with each Movement introducing a different concept to the analysis. Sometimes a concluding Movement brings together the songs analyzed in the previous ones. By using this structure, each Movement is seen to stimulate the travel of a concept as it progresses through the different analyses.

Each group of Movements constitutes a Part preceded by an introductory “Pickup Note” and concluding with a “Fermata.” The term “pickup note” refers to the note that marks the “anticipatory weak beat, […] anacrusis or upbeat” before the first heavy downbeat of the new bar (Gauldin 22). Where the new bar constitutes the start of a musical theme in a determined meter, speed and pitch, the pickup note preludes the real start, as if it were a moment of gasping for breath.

17 I am aware of the fact that “perspective” derives from a predominantly visual register. In Movement 8 I will argue for an alternative terminology that places auditive perception at its center by introducing the concept of strabistic listening.
before singing the first tone. Translated to this study, the Pickup Note, in which “note” also refers to “commentary” in the textual sense, is the introduction to a group of Movements converging around a central theme. What closes this group of Movements is the Fermata, which draws the Movements together. In music, the fermata is indicated with a symbol that can mark either a slight moment of rest, holding back the tempo after a melodic phrase, or the moment of pause for the orchestra towards the end of a movement in the composition, when the soloist plays the cadence, improvising on the central theme of the composition (Gauldin 49). The final conclusions of this study are presented in a Coda, indicating a more definite (though still open) final movement marking the end of a musical piece (Gauldin 50).

The study is divided into three Parts, focusing on, respectively, the narrative, auditive and expressive characteristics of the songs that are analyzed and of the bodies through which they are produced. These bodies refer, among others, to the physical presence of the cantautor and his or her performance, to the body of an audience whose interaction with a song becomes a performative expression of the lyrics and to the body of the Caribbean island as the diasporic homeland. Each Part consists of the analysis of two songs, one by a Cuban and one by a Brazilian cantautor, that are placed in dialogue with each other around a central concept.

In Part 1, the central concept I develop through my analyses is that of affective diaspora. Looking at the main perspective of the analyzed songs, the narrators’ voices and the homeland as narrative body, I explore how, in a context of diaspora, both the homeland and the subject as narrative constructions become multidirectional. In my analysis of Cuban cantautor Carlos Varela’s song “Árboles raros” (1989) in Movement 1, diaspora is introduced as an affective phenomenon that causes the supposedly closed-off inside world of the homeland to be traversed by different, foreign narratives and thus to become multiple. The capacity of affect to resonate between bodies so that they can mutually impinge on one another is further analyzed in Movement 2 through the song “Aquele abraço” (1969) by Brazilian cantautor Gilberto Gil. The idea that affect, as resonance, is capable of working not only in a linear way but also laterally is developed by considering the way the song’s narrative can also be read as a horizontal progression...
of music in which its lateral connections function as the vertical connection of simultaneously played notes, which constitutes musical harmony. I refer to this phenomenon as affective resonance. Finally, in Movement 3 I situate both songs in the particular contexts of censorship in late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba and 1970s Brazil. Exploring how censorship sets out to establish a strict separation between the inside and the outside of either national territories or legitimised discourses, I suggest that insularization and carnival function as affectively diasporic narratives in the songs by Varela and Gil, capable of circumventing censorship by displacing the center of its discourse.

Movement 4 starts with an analysis of the song “Guillermo Tell” (1991) by Carlos Varela in which the Oedipal theme of the son wishing to take the place of his father also comes to signify the dynamics of closeness and distance between the younger generations of Cubans and the Revolutionary authorities. Through a discussion of the concept of hegemony and of the contingent potential to subvert it from the inside, I explore the audience’s rhythmic distortions of Varela’s song, audible in the recorded performance as possible subversions of a hegemonic system on an auditive level. My subsequent reading of “Let’s play that” (1972) by the Brazilian cantautor Jards Macalé in Movement 5 explores the subversive motive of the angel appearing in the lyrics of this song in relation to the figure of the angel as the representation of a multiplicity of worlds in postmodern theory. Exploring how multiplicity can be subversive, I introduce the concept of detuning to explain how singing out of tune can subvert a hegemonic system from the inside. I elaborate on this idea by introducing the concept of membrane as a body that is neither manifested in an inside or an outside space, but that detunes the supposedly neat separation between both realms. Because an auditive reading of a detuned discourse cannot be conducted in a linear way, in Movement 6 I suggest a strabistic mode of listening that does not censor the detuned discourse but, in being strabistic (cross-eyed), aligns with its inherent multiplicity.

The reason why the title of the song is not completely capitalized is because it is not a translation. The original Portuguese title is in English. In the Portuguese and Spanish notation of titles only the first word is capitalized.
The concluding Part 3 focuses on the expressive qualities of bodies and uses the concept of testimony to understand how a censored song may nevertheless give an account of being censored. In Movement 7 I focus on Cuban rapper Telmary Diaz’s 2005 song “Los Revolucionarios,” exploring the textual and performative ways in which the word “revolution” is presented as a fragmented concept that can even come to signify inertia.\(^{19}\) By introducing the concept of enunciation in relation to the song, I argue that the speaking subject, in a similarly fragmented way, can come to speak from a position external to itself, metadiscursively vocalizing an alienation from itself. My analysis of the Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento’s 1973 song “Milagre dos peixes” in Movement 8 explores non-language as testimony’s way of voicing the silence imposed on it by censorship, drawing mainly on Giorgio Agamben’s concept of testimony. In Movement 9 I dig deeper into the mechanisms of censorship in Cuba and Brazil, and ask, in relation to Jacques Derrida’s argument about the inherent impossibility for testimony to give a full account of the event, whether it is not precisely this quality that enables it to express what censorship does not allow. Bringing Nascimento’s and Telmary’s songs together, I conclude by suggesting the concept of the carrier-voice as proposing a voice that is able to testify where normal speech does not. Representing a multiplicity of speaking subjects, this voice is only expressive in its bodily, sonic qualities that are performative and affective. Returning to the central question of this study, I argue that it is this sonic form of expression that, because it does not follow censorship’s rules and therefore does not articulate an opposition from the outside, destabilizes and thus resists the boundaries that define censorship’s inside space.

\(^{19}\) The decision to include a song from a more recent period of Cuban history is motivated by the fact that also in this period of time the main concerns addressed by the Cuban artists in the previous analyses still apply to this period.
Opening Sequence - Sonic Resistance
Part 1

Narrative Bodies: Affective Diaspora in Songs by Carlos Varela and Gilberto Gil
In the Movements of this first Part, I conduct close readings of two songs that allow for a comparative analysis of diasporic experience in, respectively, late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba and early 1970s Brazil: “Árboles raros” by the Cuban cantautor Carlos Varela and “Aquele abraço” by the Brazilian Gilberto Gil. My analyses do not focus on the exodus of people and their settlement in countries far away from home. Nor do they set out to explore the similarities and differences between diasporas in two very different political contexts and periods of time. Instead, I explore diaspora as an affective experience where the sense of dispersion and alienation also touches those remaining in the homeland. As the title of this part indicates, I will use the concept of affect to analyze the mutual impingement of the homeland and the outside world. Introducing the term affective diaspora, I ask how, in the contexts in question, diaspora, as a performative construct, resonates between bodies in a way that exceeds spatial or temporal linearity. The main focus of my analysis is how this affective resonance manifests itself at the narrative level of the two songs. This level mainly consists of the lyrics, but also includes narrative aspects embedded in the song’s performance and its sonic characteristics. Additionally, the fact that both songs relate to circumstances of strict nationalist politics that resulted in state censorship of artistic production, and both have lyrics that contain implicit subversive messages leads me to explore the ways in which censorship and artistic expression interact in situations of affective diaspora.

In Movement 1, the lyrics of “Árboles raros” will be submitted to a close reading. On the basis of this reading I will frame diaspora as an affective experience, a permeation of an inside realm by an outside world that is no longer clearly separated from it. In the song, this experience is presented through encounters between different climatological elements, temporalities and narrative perspectives. To conceptualize diaspora as it functions in the song, I will focus on its production of multidirectional identities in African and Caribbean contexts, through
readings of Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, and on the way it negotiates encounters between dominant and marginal groups, through the work of James Clifford and Ernst van Alphen. The impact of diaspora on identity construction will, moreover, be related to its performative character as described by Esther Peeren.

In Movement 2, my analysis of “Aquele abraço” will dig deeper into the function of affect, both in relation to the diasporic experience in the homeland and as a tool for narrative analysis. First, I discuss recent studies by Ernst van Alphen and by Melissa Gregg and Gregory Seigworth, which give an overview of its extensive use and of the important nodal points in the shifting definitions affect has received in a variety of theories. Subsequently, I use the work of Brian Massumi and that of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to elaborate on the way affect emerges as an intensity circulating between bodies, which, through my reading of the song, I relate to resonance and harmonic musical representation. This allows me to reflect on the dwelling in multiple worlds that is presented in the song’s narration and on its layering of performative characteristics, which, together, allow it to interact with the listener on an affective level.

Finally, in Movement 3, Gil’s “Aquele abraço” is looked at in more detail in order to reflect on the function of insularity and carnival in the expression of affectively diasporic identities in the specific contexts of Cuba and Brazil. Through the work of Antonio Benítez-Rojo and Édouard Glissant the role of the image of the island (as a space of both isolation and connection) in the construction of Caribbean identities is explored, with a special focus on attempts to resist dominant discourses of the island and the continent through the constitution of an archipelagic self (Nanne Timmer) and through the use of insularizing narratives (Mireille Rosello). Referring back to Movements 1 and 2, I examine the impact of the strong presence of nationalist discourses and state-regulated censorship in the contexts of the songs on the experience and expression of affective diaspora they evoke. I do this by showing how insularizing and carnivalesque narratives, in dialogue with the socio-political realms in which they are written and performed, allow for potentially critical reflections on identity formation in situations of repression.
By the end of the 1980s, Cuba was facing increasing economic difficulties due to the impending fall of the Soviet Union as Cuba's political ally and prime supplier of goods. These circumstances, combined with a repressive politics towards all potentially subversive elements in Cuban society, caused a continuing outflow of Cubans leaving for other countries, which had been given a new impulse since the Mariel boatlift. Many Cubans found a way to escape either by obtaining visa's in all sorts of creative – not always legal – ways or by drifting off on handmade rafts that, with a bit of luck, would take them to the coast of Miami ninety sea miles away. What stimulated this movement of the so-called balseros, which translates as ‘rafters’ or ‘raft people,’ was the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act instituted by the U.S. authorities, which granted every Cuban who set foot on U.S. soil the right to a residence and work permit. But Europe and particularly Spain, too, was a popular destination for Cubans looking for a better future elsewhere (Baquero 278).

Regardless of its enormous impact on daily life on the island, its pivotal role in the dislocation of families and the resulting disturbance of the Cuban demographical balance, the Cuban diaspora was a taboo subject in all state-regulated discourse. Apart from the fact that it testified to the existence of people who were seen as disloyal to the Revolutionary project, it also represented a successful victimization of Cuba by the United States. Consequently, it was not a

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20 This law, by which “Cuban natives or citizens and their accompanying spouses and children” have a right to obtain a U.S. Green Card, treats Cuban immigrants in an exceptional way, stating that their right to permanent residence “may be approved even if they do not meet the ordinary requirements.” It further specifies that “a Cuban native or citizen who arrives at a place other than an open port-of-entry may still be eligible for a green card” (http://www.uscis.gov/green-card/other-ways-get-green-card/green-card-cuban-native-or-citizen). This stipulation shows that Cuban immigration largely consisted of people literally washing ashore on the U.S. coast after having drifted over from Cuba on self-built rafts, some more resistant to weather circumstances and shark attacks than others.
subject that could be broached openly in cultural forms, including music. With all songs having to pass the censors before they could be recorded, the subject of the Cuban diaspora could only appear covertly and will therefore have to be looked for between the lines of the lyrics.

This Movement will use such a reading between the lines to trace the intertwining of affect and diaspora in the song “Árboles raros” from the 1989 album Jalisco Park by Cuban cautautor Carlos Varela. With a particular focus on the lyrics, on the narration’s focalization and on its interplay of performance and performativity in a context of state-controlled censorship, I will discuss the ways in which the song produces, at the level of its narrative, an understanding of diaspora as an affective experience.21

Strange Trees and Layers of Focalization

Varela’s “Árboles raros” is a narration about a female protagonist who leaves “the snow of Stockholm” to come in search of “another season” to Cuba, where she eventually finds that her new destination is not so different from what she has left behind. With the aforementioned socio-political background in mind, it is significant that the overt theme of the song inverts the much more common trajectory of Cuban migrants leaving for other countries.

Árboles raros                     Strange Trees

Dejó la nieve de Estocolmo         She left the snow of Stockholm
Y salió a buscar otra estación    And went looking for another season
Quiso un paisaje sin otoño         She wanted an autumnless landscape
Y aquí llegó con la ilusión         And she arrived here full of expectancy
Ella miraba en la avenida          She observed in the avenue

21 For the use of focalization, I adhere to Mieke Bal’s explanation of the concept in her book Narratology as “the relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen,’ perceived” and her emphasis on the importance of making “a distinction between those who see and those who speak” (1997, 142-43).
Movement 1 - Inside Out Perspectives

Esos árboles raros de boliches verdes  Those strange trees with green bulbs
Sus hojas son como estos días  Their leaves are like these days
Que a pesar de la lluvia  That in spite of the rain
Tampoco florecen  Do not blossom either

Pasó seis años y otro poco  She spent six years and a little more
Viviendo igual, pero soñando  Living the same, but dreaming
Y hasta cantó con esos locos  And she even sang with those fools
Que el tiempo ya nos va cansando  That time is starting to wear us out

Pero ella vio en la avenida  But she saw in the avenue
Esos árboles raros de boliches verdes  Those strange trees with green bulbs
Sus hojas son como estos días  Their leaves are like these days
Que con el viento sucio  Of which some die
Algunas se mueren  From the filthy wind

Dejó la nieve de Estocolmo  She left the snow of Stockholm
Y salió a buscar otra estación  And went looking for another season
Quiso un paisaje sin otoño  She wanted an autumnless landscape
Y aquí llegó con la ilusión  And she arrived here full of expectancy

Dejó la nieve de Estocolmo  She left the snow of Stockholm
Y en mi ciudad paró su tren  And her train halted in my city
Quería un paisaje sin otoño  She wanted an autumnless landscape

Y se encontró  And then found
Que aquí las hojas  That here the leaves
Se caen también  Fall as well

The lyrics refer to the female protagonist in the third person from the perspective of a first-person narrator. This first-person narrator, who, towards the end of the song, identifies himself as an “I” by means of the possessive pronoun

22 Throughout this study, all translations of song lyrics are mine.
“mi” (my), does not take part in the story he tells, but is situated on its outside. Yet he does share a physical space with the protagonist as he narrates the story from the perspective of a “here” later specified as “my city.” This narrating “I” is not only a so-called “lyric” entity as traditionally identified in prose or poetry, but also has an audible presence through the sound of a voice with a certain timbre, emotion, presence, volume, rhythm and rhyme. From now on, I will refer to this first-person entity in song lyrics as the **Sonic I**, a term proposed by Cornelia Gräbner to refer to the narrative subject in poetry or music that is being performed and that, in turn, performs the lyrics in their corresponding melodic and rhythmic embedding (198-200). Although the Sonic I in this song is only tangentially part of the narration he tells, he is present as a narrative entity in a second narrative layer of the song. In fact, it could be said that the lyrics are multilayered and tell the story of the Sonic I narrating the story of the visitor from Stockholm.

The Sonic I narrates from a “here” or “my city” the experience of the Scandinavian protagonist, but at the same time presents this city to the listeners through the eyes of this foreign visitor. In doing so, the Sonic I adopts both an inside and an indirect outside narrative perspective. The reason why it is important to pay close attention to the song’s narrative structure is because, in the end, it is the construction of interchangeable and layered perspectives and voices that allows the Sonic I to narrate a story he is not allowed to tell. The taboo on the subject of diaspora in Cuba and the ensuing censorship, which forced artists to be hyperaware of what they expressed in their songs, stimulated them to look for creative ways of broaching sensitive subjects. The listeners, then and now, are left with the task of unveiling and interpreting the political content that is hidden below the polished surface – the inside story that unfolds on the song’s outside.

The images used in the lyrics of “Árboles raros” are a good example of this. The Sonic I’s evocations of ecological circumstances are closely related to nature’s temporality and metonymically refer to certain spaces. The snow of Stockholm is a synecdoche of the city, which is represented by its cold climate, whereas the “autumnless landscape” conjunction typifies Cuba by its reputation – primarily in tourism adverts – as a country of an eternal summer and therefore an always attractive destination for travelers from cold climates. At the same time, the “otra estación” that the protagonist searches for can either be translated as
'another season' or as 'another (train) station.' Considering the song's later verses, which explicitly evoke the image of a train, "her train halted in my city," the word estación opens up the possibility of imagining the alternation of the seasons as a movement through time that is paralleled by a journey through physical space with different stops along the way. In this way, the presence of the protagonist in the city of the Sonic I becomes the cause of an encounter between the different ecological and spatio-temporal circumstances of both narrative entities.

The Sonic I, moreover, is not the same person as the author or cantautor; they, too, inhabit different narrative levels. This claim is obvious in literary analysis nowadays, but in song lyrics that are performed from a first-person perspective it can be harder to disassociate the Sonic I from the singer, as their voices and the bodies that produce and carry them are the same. In Part 2 I will explore the relation of this bodily presence of the singer and/or Sonic I in more depth through Roland Barthes' concept of the "grain," but here I will focus on the way in which this sonic presence of the narrator presents multiple narrative perspectives to the listener in a performative context. In her book Narratology, Mieke Bal explains that in a narrative context a clear distinction can be made between internal focalization, "when focalization lies with one character which participates in the fabula as an actor," and external focalization, when "an anonymous agent, situated outside the fabula, is functioning as focalizor" (148).

In "Árboles raros" in particular, as well as in the songs by Cuban and Brazilian cantautores analyzed in the Movements to come, the distinction between an internal and an external focalizer, where the external focalizer is not the same as the singer, is easy to make as long as the song is perceived as a performance of a narration. But when the song can also be interpreted as a disguised commentary on the socio-political context in which its performance takes place – in other words, when the performance, because of censorship, explicitly presents itself as a performance in order not to claim responsibility for a possible subversive message – it also becomes performative.

Performativity, in the words of Jonathan Culler, "[does] not describe but perform[s] the action [it] designate[s]" (2000: 505). According to Bal, memory is

23 Whereas in Bal's book the spelling "focalizor" is used, I prefer the more common "focalizer."
the element that binds performance to performativity, as it replaces the function of a text or score that structures the performance (2002: 181-82). Any (affectively) diasporic performative operation of re-imagining the homeland is also inevitably a performance because of the internal forces that structure it (memory) and/or the external power structures that confine it within particular discourses (censorship). Translated into the terms of the above discussion, once the narrative structure of a song’s lyrics is considered as an overlapping of performance and performativity, the distinction between the inside and the outside of the narration, and/or that between the internal and the external focalizer is likely to become blurred.

The perspectives referred to in the song are the external focalization of the Sonic I and the internal focalization of the Swedish protagonist. The third-person narrative of the female protagonist is presented through the Sonic I’s account of her actions and observations. As stated above, the lyrics do not suggest that the Sonic I as a narrator takes part in the narrative events. But in the stanza “she observed in the avenue / Those strange trees with green bulbs,” the question arises whether the focalizer of the observation “strange trees” is the Sonic I or the protagonist. Does the Sonic I consider these trees to be strange and does the focalization of this fragment imply that he simply sees the protagonist observing the trees, or does the observation of “those strange trees” belong to the protagonist? Mikhail Bakhtin characterizes this phenomenon as double-voiced discourse, which “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author” (1981: 324). The overlap between the view of the protagonist and that of the Sonic I, then, is a moment in the narration where their voices and experiences resonate with and affect one another, even though they are not actually looking at the trees together and even though the way they experience the trees’ strangeness is, in Bakhtin’s words, refracted by their different perspectives. Most likely, it is not a coincidence that this moment of resonance between the outsider’s and the insider’s experience of Cuba also provides the title of the song.

This encounter between an outsider’s and an insider’s experience of Cuba is what connects the narrative construction of this song to what I want to characterize as the affective experience of diaspora. The alienation from the
Cuban homeland is incorporated in the song’s narrative plot through the use of focalization, as the shared experience of estrangement of the local Sonic I and the foreign protagonist emerges in the double-voiced observation of the trees’ strangeness. The perspective of the Sonic I, who voices a sense of alienation from his homeland by narrating another person’s experience of displacement in a foreign context, reveals the characteristics of what I will refer to as affective diaspora. Affective, in this context, refers to a relation of intensity – or resonance – between bodies that creates a potential for mutual impingement without the necessity for direct, physical contact. Accordingly, affective diaspora indicates that the sense of alienation and disorientation associated with diaspora does not require a physical removal from the homeland, but may also be experienced in the homeland in relation to those who left it.24

Diasporic Readings

In contemporary studies that are in some way concerned with culture or identity – or both – the concept of diaspora is frequently evoked in the context of globalization and modernization, characterized by an increase in mobility and communication. Initially referring to the scattering of Jewish and African people, it is now a pivotal concept in studies on a variety of migratory trajectories and their complexities. This includes work on the African diasporic culture as not only originating from the African continent but as also a movement in the inverse direction (Gilroy); on migration routes leading from the periphery to the richer – predominantly Western – countries and the imagining of the homeland in a similar inverse movement (Van Alphen 2002); and on diasporic voices that, from the fringes of dominant globalizing discourses, create alternative ways of identity formation (Clifford). In addition, there are studies that focus on migratory itineraries amongst countries within present-day Europe (Verstraete), manifestations of Galician culture in Europe or the Americas (Hooper), Cuban routes to (and through) the U.S.A. or the European continent (Rojas), and African and European

24 A more detailed account of how “bodies,” “resonance” and “impingement” are defined in this affective context is provided in Movement 2.
trajectories that traverse the Caribbean, where they are ambiguously reinforced and subverted (Hall). Most significantly, diaspora’s traditional signification of being detached from a physical space that is the homeland has increasingly been nuanced, as both “detachment” and “homeland” have turned out to be far from simple physical or geographical signifiers. Diaspora, then, can also indicate an exclusion from (economic) power relations within a particular socio-political realm (Verstraete; Bilal) or a displacement that is also in time (Peeren 2006).

An approach that is of particular relevance here concerns diaspora in the context of the Caribbean. In Movement 3 this approach by, among others, Gilroy and Glissant, will be examined in more detail and situated specifically in relation to the concept of insularity. It is important to state at this point, however, that the definition of “the Caribbean” can differ according to the chosen perspective. Based on geographical, political, cultural or linguistic characteristics, some countries are excluded from one definition while they are explicitly included in others. Thus, whereas geographically Cuba is considered part of the Caribbean area, it is not included in the United Nation’s “CARICOM” secretariat, counting instead as part of Latin America. Brazil, for its Portuguese language but also because of its attachment to the mainland of the South American continent is excluded from most definitions of the Caribbean. For my analysis, I follow Benítez-Rojo’s definition of the “Caribbean basin,” including the countries that were “the first American lands to be explored, conquered and colonized by Europe” (430). This makes it possible to also include Brazil.25

For the current discussion on diaspora, what is relevant is Stuart Hall’s observation that the Caribbean consciousness of many of its people’s cultural descent from Africa is in no way related to Africa as a continent. It is no longer a physical place to which a return is possible in order to recuperate the loss of the homeland. Since the deportation of the African slaves to Latin America “[...] the original ‘Africa’ is no longer there. It too has been transformed. History is, in that sense, irreversible” (Hall 231). Consequently, Hall defines diaspora as a process of becoming that is

25 In Movement 3 I will elaborate on this by arguing for a particular reading that fully includes Brazil in the imaginary realm of the Caribbean archipelago as defined by Benítez-Rojo and Glissant.
Movement 1 - Inside Out Perspectives

[...] defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity [...]. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (235)

In his article “Imagined Homelands: Re-Mapping Cultural Identity,” Ernst van Alphen describes a similar constant re-definition of the diasporic identity that is based upon the reference to a non-locatable homeland. This space of the homeland, instead of a fixed spatio-temporal situation, is a performative construct, or, as he calls it, an “imaged place” of reference that is in no way “imaginary”:

A place is somewhere “out there” in the world, whereas an imaged place is an act of the imagination, with a subject responsible for performing this act in relation to a place. This subject [...] does the imagining. [...] If the cultural identity of the migrant [or the diasporic subject] is shaped in terms of imagined place, it means that this identity was not carried along wholesale from homeland to destination. It is, rather, actively created and recreated in an act of identification with the homeland. (2002: 56)

An emphasis is added to this characterization of the homeland by van Alphen’s statement that, even though in a diasporic situation the connection between a culture and a place is no longer an obvious one, this does not mean that place has become irrelevant: “The difference is that we are no longer talking about place in the same sense of the word. We are no longer speaking about geographical place, but rather about imagined place” (2002: 55-6). This also means that, if the homeland as an imagined space of reference is not tied to a particular geography, the diasporic experience of the constant re-definition of the self in relation to this imagined space is no longer limited to the ones who have physically left the homeland. Through technological advances that have led to an increase in mobility and communication, a global reality has emerged in which cross-cultural contact changes (affects) the perception of a certain space by both those who are dispersed and those who remain in the homeland. In van Alphen’s words:
Even those peoples who have never migrated – peoples who have lived in the same homogeneous community – do not live in the same “local” culture as before because of radio, television, film and the internet. (2002: 55)

This statement does have to be nuanced when applied to Cuba in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Due to harsh restrictions on travel to and communication with the world outside, the inside territory of Cuba was fairly isolated, while the information that entered was carefully filtered and selected by the authorities. Until the present day, this state control is maintained through the limited availability of open Internet and other communicative media to Cubans. Cuba still has its own national “Intranet,” consisting of a limited selection of available web pages. Most communication with people in the outside world, therefore, has to take place by telephone or through Cuban company-owned email addresses that can send and receive email from international providers. An added problem is that few people have their own computers, while some families do not even have a telephone connection. Internet access at hotels or Internet-café’s costs about 6 Euros an hour, which is half of the average Cuban monthly wage. Moreover, until very recently, Cubans were officially forbidden from entering these places. The prohibition on private access to the Internet is only now starting to be loosened, since the announced reconciliation between the Cuban and U.S. governments at the start of 2015. Nonetheless, in spite of its relative isolation from globalized politics, Cuba has never been completely cut off from the global reality referred to above.

The assumption of a geographically fixed homeland to which the exile or the refugee supposedly still belongs is also questioned by Liisa Malkki in her article “Refugees and Exile.” Suggesting that it is precisely the impossibility for people to remain in their homeland in a peaceful way that makes them exiles or refugees, Malkki points out that the people who “stay behind” in spite of a certain crisis also suffer cultural alienation, which she calls “emplacement” and which she argues should be directly linked to any form of displacement as an unfinished

26 For more on the issues related to the online Cuban intellectual canon, see Nanne Timmer’s article “La Habana Virtual: Internet y la transformación espacial de la ciudad letrada.”
Nico Israel, in *Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora*, reflects upon diaspora within the literary tradition, explaining how its emphasis on the performativity of cultural construction subverts the presupposed fixity of a space of departure or arrival that is maintained in the term “exile”:

[...] by definition “exile” and “diaspora” present two overlapping ways of describing the predicament of displacement. Yet there is a subtle, though important, distinction to be made between the words. In terms of contemporary literary and cultural studies, at least, “exile,” perhaps most closely associated with literary modernism, tends to imply both a coherent subject or author and a more circumscribed, limited conception of place and home. Maintaining a stronger link to minority group solidarity and associated with the intersection of postcoloniality and theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism, “diaspora,” by contrast, aims to account for a hybridity or performativity that troubles such notions of cultural dominance, location, and identity. (Israel 3)

As noted above, in “Árboles raros” the arrival of the Swedish protagonist at the “train station” in the city of the Sonic I is presented through the image of an encounter between two different temporalities. This suggests that diaspora not only brings about a multiplication in the way a particular space is experienced, but also causes different temporalities to coexist. Esther Peeren has used Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope to characterize diaspora as a performative construction of a particular time-space in a situation where group identity can no longer be based on a communal geography or history. As she puts it, diaspora is

[...] characterized by the way in which dispersed communities connect

27 Although Malkki refers to “exile” and “refugees,” her central argument is also applicable to my conceptualization of diaspora.

28 Israel’s connection of exile to a more circumscribed concept of the homeland can be related to exile’s etymological provenance from the Latin indication for ‘banishment’, the contracting of ex- ‘out’ and sal- ‘to go’ departs from the idea of a defined point of origin and the subject’s subsequent absence from it.
themselves to each other and the homeland by forging relationships across space and time through a shared performative (habitual and mnemonic) construction of time-space: a shared chronotope. (2006: 73)

She adds to this observation that, apart from experiences of displacement, the forced settlement of nomadic or non-sedentary cultures within a particular space can also be considered a diaspora, signifying an exclusion from an established and trusted chronotopic construction of time-space as mobile (Peeren 2006: 74).

Taking into consideration these observations on the performative character of the homeland and connecting them to the discussion of the diasporic homeland by Hall, van Alphen and Malkki, I can conclude that a performative enactment of the homeland is not exclusively an act of creating cultural connections in a situation of dispersal. In fact, a performative enactment of dispersal can also be shared between the people that have left the homeland and the people who are still there. The cultural connection that is thus created is not based on a shared positivity, but rather on a shared sense of loss that affectively resonates between the people on the inside and the outside of the homeland’s time-space.

In the lyrics of “Árboles raros” the temporal perspectives that come to overlap on the different narrative levels parallel the multiplication of temporalities in the affective experience of diaspora. The fabula of the woman from Stockholm forms a closed narrative realm with a clear beginning, middle and end that takes place in the past; her journey has concluded. At the level of the narrator’s “here,” however, the narration takes place in the present tense, causing some moments referred to in the lyrics to take place simultaneously in the past and the present. This happens when the “strange trees” are mentioned, but also in the first and second refrain, where the Sonic I compares the falling leaves to “these days,” a construction that introduces a reference to the presence of both the Sonic I and

29 A similar argument is made by Melissa Bilal in her article “Women’s Solidarity as a Resistance Strategy Against Liberal Identity Politics in Turkey,” where she characterizes the marginalized status of Armenians in Istanbul as diasporic because of their exclusion from the dominant power relations that constitute a discursively structured Turkish “home.” As a strategy to reaffirm their identity, Armenians recur to cultural expressions – through music, mythology and language – in order to create a sense of belonging to a space that is not dependent on Turkish definitions of “history,” “culture” or “home” (Bilal 58-59).
the *cantautor*, a gesture towards the socio-political context in which the song was written. This doubling or even tripling of narrative space and time in the song can be related to Homi Bhabha’s interpretation of Jameson’s “third spaces,” which encapsulate the temporal and physical liminality of the diasporic experience. According to Bhabha, “[t]he non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space – a third space – where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences” (312).

Also related to borderline existences, Ginette Verstraete, in her book *Tracking Europe*, discusses the contemporary European context where the disappearance of the borders between EU countries has led to a politicization of cultural differences. From this perspective she explains how “artists and cultural theorists have used the notion of diaspora, rather than those of mobility and migration, as an interpretative frame through which to imagine Europe differently” (Verstraete 112). Diaspora then converts itself into “a way of broadcasting” from the margins of a certain society instead of indicating a unidirectional outward movement (Verstraete 112).

This implies that the outward movement of certain groups of marginalized people also adds a new voice to the polyphony of inward-directed discourses that constitute a society, causing it to change as well. In Galician Studies, the analysis of the influence of diaspora on the process of cultural formation takes into account the reciprocal relation between the homeland and its – outside – diasporic space. Kirsty Hooper explains in her article “Galicia desde Londres desde Galicia: New Voices in the 21st-century Diaspora” how Galician national politics are largely determined by the Galician people living in the Americas and other European countries, as they maintain their right to vote in the country’s general elections. This has urged Galician politics to rethink the concept of “national identity,” which is no longer defined by Galicia’s territory, but now includes its diasporic spaces (Hooper 171-73). The homeland itself thus becomes a space that is created within a diasporic conscience through the mediation of memory and/or nostalgia. This conscience not only belongs to the ones who have left the national territory, but also affects the ones still at home, because of their political or cultural proximity to those now living elsewhere.
In his book *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy uses the example of African musical culture in Africa – which is also influenced by new sonorities from its diasporic (transatlantic) territories – to show that African diasporic culture should not be reduced to a flow from east to west, but also includes an affective exchange in the opposite direction (95-96). The trajectories that have changed those who left the homeland also revert upon the homeland to change it. Neither departures nor returns can therefore be seen as linear progressions through time and space. Rather, they are cyclical, like the seasons that play such a prominent part in “Árboles raros.” Seasons, significantly, incorporate a notion of change: a season can return, but is never exactly the same as the year before; a tree can blossom again, but this process of regeneration is also part of a progression through time in which the tree ages and grows.

**Singing Fools and the Narrative Return to the Homeland**

In “Árboles raros,” the search of the protagonist for “another season” is based on a perception of time and space that is linear. Her movement through space on a train that halts at the station of the Sonic I’s city is also presented as a journey through time that takes her along different estaciones or ‘seasons,’ as discussed above. This suggests that both the protagonist’s autumn and the eternal summer of the Sonic I’s city are like stops along a railway instead of representing real seasons that change cyclically over time. “Her train halted in my [the Sonic I’s] city” therefore also indicates that the other season she was looking for is like a place where she can stop instead of one that is always moving through time. Significantly, the protagonist’s experience is conveyed as “ilusión” in Spanish, which, apart from my translation to ‘expectancy’ can also be interpreted as ‘illusion’ in the sense of wishful thinking or “the […] act of deceiving […] the mental eye by false prospects” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Where the English translation emphasizes the term’s association with deceitfulness, in Spanish the expression still implies a spark of hope. In spite of these nuances, both translations apply to the situation of the protagonist: her expectancy of not having an autumn anymore in Cuba and her discovery of this as a false prospect when she finally sees “That
Significantly, the song’s refrains refer differently to the strange trees and their leaves. In the first refrain, they “do not blossom either,” in the second “some [of the leaves] die,” and in the final one “the leaves fall as well.” Although this progression refers to the circular temporality of seasons passing, it does not proceed as it should. The Cuban trees are “strange” because they only represent a process of dying; “in spite of the rain,” they do not blossom as would be expected. The metaphor of the strange trees evokes an image of perverted rootedness in the Cuban soil, as the rain is not absorbed through these roots to nourish the leaves and to prevent them from dying. The strangeness of the trees that cannot root in the Cuban soil reflects the impossible relation of the Sonic I to his homeland. In this situation of affective diaspora he needs to reencounter his space not on the basis of a fixed geographical orientation, but based on a definition of space that is also temporal, in movement.

Instead of dying from a natural cause, the leaves in the song are dying, according to the Sonic I, because of “a filthy wind.” It is telling that he attributes a physical and moral characteristic – “filthy” – to something as ungraspable as the wind. Even more so because he also assumes that this wind causes the death of the leaves instead of merely being what makes them fall after dying a natural death. This anomaly triggers two questions: firstly, what is it in the character of the wind that causes the death of the leaves, and secondly, what does this death stand for within the symbolic order of the song?

An answer can be found in the word “diaspora” and its etymological provenance from spora for ‘sowing’ or ‘seed’ (Oxford English Dictionary). This provenance marks diaspora as an experience of being dispersed like seeds – by the wind or by hand – on a global scale, of landing on a new soil without roots. Relating this to the observations about the strange trees above, one could think of the wind in the song as a metaphor for the ‘casting across’ of seeds on a global scale, with the spreading of spores appearing in the song’s narration as leaves, which in turn stand for Cuban people at the narrative levels of the Sonic I and the cantautor. But the wind here does not have a regenerative character, as the song does not suggest a new beginning or a hope that seeds will grow on other soils. Instead, the wind is “filthy”; it is a destructive force that disturbs the temporal
process of nature, which, in a cyclical manner, should lead to rebirth after death. The movement of the wind is unidirectional, and the death of the leaves thus implies a casting away, a diaspora, from which a return is not possible.

What this wind represents in the song is a disruption of the supposedly static situation in the city of the Sonic I. For the Swedish protagonist, the wind represents the element that makes the leaves die and fall, which resembles the autumn she was trying to leave behind. The wind therefore confronts her with the illusionary character of the “expectancy” with which she arrived in Cuba. Bearing in mind that the protagonist’s travel places her in a particular socio-political context, this illusionary expectancy can be related to the double-faced character of ilusión in the Cuban Revolutionary project. On the one hand, her experience can be seen to refer to the euphoria, among sympathizers both on the inside and the outside of Cuba’s national territory, after the overthrow of the Batista regime and the ascendance to power of the bearded rebels from the mountains, as well as to the expectancy of all the positive changes they were going to bring to Cuba. Outside of Cuba, this image of a socialist society implemented against all odds and persisting until the present day despite the U.S. embargo, provokes fantasies of a utopian island where time has been brought to a halt and the Revolution of 1959 lives on. On the other hand, the song’s reference to ilusión captures the disenchantment of the Cuban people with a project that, with the years, has not brought the radical change it initially promised. As noted in the Opening Sequence of this study, in spite of important achievements such as the general right to schooling, housing and medical care, the change from a right-wing dictatorship to a socialist state form has not put an end to poverty, to certain forms of (political) elitism and to state interference and censorship of alternative discourses.

The Swedish protagonist’s expectation of encountering “an autumless

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30 As I will discuss in the Coda, in recent years the political and economic relations between Cuba and the U.S. have changed significantly, opening up the possibility of travel and trade between both countries. In the Coda I will also address the change in Cuban internal politics with regard to allowing private businesses as an important first move away from a fully state-controlled economy. Nonetheless, the tourist industry has always promoted the image of an unchanged 1960s Revolutionary Cuba. Although in the last two years the pictures of Revolutionary murals and Che Guevara’s famous photograph by Korda have gradually disappeared, there is still hardly any promotional material that does not show pictures of old-timers. See, for example, websites such as www.intrepidtravel.com/cuba, or www.micuba.nl.
landscape,” apart from its reference to Cuba’s climate, can thus also be related to the image of Cuba as a place where time has been arrested. At first, it seems that the protagonist is not fully aware of the fact that the new place does not offer her what she is searching for. In the first refrain, she “observes” the strange trees that “do not blossom,” a formulation that supposes a certain distance between the protagonist as observer and what she sees. In other words, the image is perceived, but does not affect the observer. This refrain is followed by the stanza in which she spends “six years and a little more,” adapting to the way of life in Cuba: she “lives the same,” but nonetheless does not really see reality because she is “dreaming.” The next refrain, in which she realizes that in Cuba, too, the leaves fall and die, starts with “but” as a way of indicating a contrast with this dream-state: “but she saw the strange trees in the avenue.” At this point, the distance between the protagonist and what she sees disappears, as the image is processed. She no longer “observes” from the outside, but “sees” and is therefore susceptible to being affected by what she sees. The fact that she sees “some of the leaves” dying confronts her with the deceptive character of her expectation that in Cuba she would not encounter another autumn.

The dream-like experience of reality is another moment where the experiences of the protagonist and the Sonic I come together, but its meaning differs. Whereas for the female character from Stockholm this dream-state refers to her not yet realizing that she will not find in Cuba the eternal summer she had hoped for, the Sonic I relates this dwelling in a parallel dream-realm to the complaint of Cubans that “time is starting to wear us out.” Significantly, in many of Varela’s songs, dreaming is closely related to dealing with the repressive daily reality in Cuba, either in the sense of a constant longing for a spiritual escape from this reality or in the sense that this reality is experienced as a dream. As an example, consider the lyrics of the song “Apenas abro los ojos” from Varela’s album Nubes, recorded in 2000: “From the moment I open my eyes / all the silence is gone / and with my breakfast / I swallow the noise and the smoke / that come from the city […] / I cross the street running / I lose myself amongst so many people / wanting to fantasize / and the quotidian / makes me dream / from the moment I open my eyes.”

31 My translation from the Spanish: Apenas abro los ojos / todo el silencio se va /
chaos of urban life from which sleep is the only escape. The lyrics end with the Sonic I saying that it is the quotidian that makes him dream, suggesting a circular return to the start of the song where he opens his eyes. The implication is that he wakes up to a daily reality that, because of its oppressiveness, is only bearable in a dream-state.

Whereas for the woman from Stockholm the realization about the dying leaves is a disruption of her dream, dreaming as a day-to-day way of being is related to the same reality where the leaves die and “fall as well.” It is all part of a dream-like reality in which time does not seem to progress, which, far from being a liberation, is what has started to wear Cuban people out. Instead of being a time in which nothing dies because there is no autumn, leaves fall in Cuba as a result of the violent, unidirectional movement of the filthy wind, an unnatural force that is not counteracted by the spring as a period of renewal and blossoming that normally follows upon autumn and winter. The Swedish protagonist, when she finally sees that “here the leaves fall as well,” is therefore not confronted with the same autumn she ran away from, but with a perverse performance of it.

Picking up on my earlier discussion of theories of the imagined, performative character of the diasporic homeland, various observations come together at this point. The focalization of the narration from the perspective of a foreign visitor and its sometimes simultaneous focalization through the Sonic I causes the two views of Cuba to affect each other. This allows the Sonic I to expose an alienation from his homeland that at some points coincides with the view of the woman from Stockholm, but has a different meaning: he is “worn out” precisely by the lack of temporal progression the protagonist expects to find in Cuba. Earlier, I suggested that the fabula of the visiting European is a narrative strategy to be able to address the Cuban diasporic situation in a context of strict state censorship. From this perspective, the estranged view of the protagonist also comes to represent the affectively diasporic experience of the Sonic I and the alienation he feels towards his own city, which the regime (the “filthy wind”) has already caused so many to leave. The invoked image of the dream-state suggests that, while he lives there, he actually dwells in a parallel chronotopic construction.

y con el desayuno / me trago el ruido y el humo / que viene de la ciudad [...] / cruzo la calle corriendo / me pierdo entre tanta gente / queriendo fantasear / y lo cotidiano / me hace soñar / apenas abro los ojos.

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of a homeland that performatively re-enacts a reality that was left behind. The insufficiency of this re-enactment is signalled by the way the autumn the protagonist encounters in the falling leaves does not accord with the natural, regenerative cycle of the seasons.

The protagonist herself is not just a person from Stockholm, but figuratively refers to Cubans and their affectively diasporic experience, both within and outside the homeland. The autumn she comes to recognize is not a real autumn that will eventually lead to regeneration, but represents a situation of incessant decay. The dying leaves, in the context of the Cuban affective diaspora, allude to the outflow of family and friends caused by the regime as a “filthy wind” that blows only in one direction and does not allow a return. The image of the tree confirms that the affective character of diaspora works both ways, as the experience of alienation and separation from loved ones touches both those who have left (the leaves blown off) and those who stayed behind (the leaves still on the tree): neither can blossom.

The song not only presents the perspectives of the protagonist and the Sonic I, but also includes the voice of the author, or cantautor, in the narration. This constitutes a third narrative level. In the stanza “time is starting to wear us out” the use of the plural first person “us” is significant because it is not logically connected to the preceding indication from a distance of “those” fools, nor is there any other plural first person introduced in the lyrics. In accordance with my analysis above, the plural first person could indicate the confluence of the voices of the protagonist and the Sonic I with the choir of “those fools.” However, the fact that these fools express their discontent through music may also point to the particular context in which the song was written, opening up the possibility that, through this “us,” the author, Carlos Varela, is presenting himself as part of the singing fools. The fools would then be the group of singers that constitutes the generation of the topos, whose disqualification from the Revolutionary nationalist discourse gave them a marginalized status. This gave their speech the same value as that of a fool. However, although their marginalization made them invisible in most official media, it also earned them relative freedom of expression in other circuits.32

32 In Part 2, I will elaborate on the relation between madness and marginality in
This discursive auto-disqualification by the *cantautor* can be related to James Clifford’s explanation of the relationship of diaspora to repressive contexts in his article “Diasporas,” where he argues that the resistive potential of diasporic cultures is precisely inscribed in their ambiguous liberation from and entanglement with censoring ventures:

Diaspora cultures are, to varying degrees, produced by regimes of political domination […]. But these violent processes of displacement do not strip people of their ability to sustain distinctive political communities and cultures of resistance. […] As counterdiscourses of modernity, diaspora cultures cannot claim an oppositional or primary purity. Fundamentally ambivalent, they grapple with the entanglement of subversion and the law, of invention and constraint – the complicity of distopia [sic] and utopia. (319)

In the case of Cuba at the time when “Árboles raros” was written and performed, the political domination Clifford refers to had to be taken into account. The fact that the song, with its image of the singing fools, creates a multiplicity of embedded discourses that do not allow the listener to clearly distinguish which of the voices present is the one speaking makes it impossible to claim or assign responsibility for what is being said.

The implied presence of Varela as the *cantautor* joining the choir of fools therefore creates the possibility of perceiving the song’s narration itself as being part of what these fools sing about. From this perspective, the fragment can be understood as an instance of *mise en abyme*, of “the embedded text presenting a story that resembles the primary fabula […] comparable to infinite regress” (Bal 1999: 57). In the narrative fragment, the voice of the Swedish protagonist joins the voices of the fools. They sing the same words, but convey opposite messages. The protagonist comes looking for a form of stagnated regenerative time (eternal spring/summer), which she tries to find by dreaming along and singing along with the local people, who, in contrast, wish to escape the situation of stagnant time because they know it precludes regeneration.

relation to subversive discourses in contexts of censorship.
As noted above, the *mise en abyme* of the woman singing with the fools can also be seen as a representation of the song as a performance by the *cantautor*. The narration thus creates a multi-layered embeddedness where the voice of the foreign visitor sings along with the narration of the *cantautor* who focalizes through a Sonic I who focalizes through a woman from Stockholm. At the origin of this chain of voices is the author of the narration, the *cantautor* Carlos Varela. As suggested above, through the use of “us,” the song includes aspects of Varela’s daily life as a marginalized *cantautor* in Cuba. Significantly, this inclusion is covert: the author is not explicitly presented as the ultimate owner of the narration, but is immersed in it as one of the singing fools being sung about by the Sonic I and sung along with by the protagonist.

This narrative structure recalls the image of the Möbius strip with its entire surface both inside and outside of its warped shape. The Möbius strip is a mathematical model introduced by August Ferdinand Möbius in his 1827 book *Der Barycentrische Calcul*. It consists of a flat strip of parallel A-A and B-B lines, whose ends are joined through a half twist, connecting A to B, causing a movement along the strip’s surface that will infinitely pass both the model’s inside and outside space. The Möbius strip is used metaphorically in relation to Latin American history by Jonathan Amith in his book *The Möbius Strip: A Spatial History of Colonial Society in Guerrero, Mexico*, where he describes it as the “creation of an illusion of dimension where it is in fact nonexistent” (27). My argument here is the opposite, as I see the Möbius strip hinting at a hidden dimensionality where its surface at a first glance does not reveal it.\(^3\)

Applying the model of the Möbius strip to the narrative structure of “Árboles raros,” I see the move from multi-layered narration to a type of narration that includes a supposedly external voice to warp the narrative space into a new dimensionality where inside and outside continue into each other instead of remaining separate or separable. If this inseparability of inside and outside is projected onto the imagined homeland, which, in the song’s lyrics, is the affectively diasporic space of Cuba, it becomes a space that encloses an outside world in its supposed inside space, while at the same time the inside is also part of the

\(^3\) In musicology, the model of the Möbius strip is part of a spatial computing language that can make it possible to visually re-create and solve mathematical problems underlying existing theories of harmonics (Bigo, Spicher and Michel 1).
outside.

The inevitably spiral move of the diasporic search for the supposedly originating homeland recalls what Stuart Hall describes as the “symbolic journey” of desired return to that place, which is “necessarily circular” (232). The circularity he refers to here does not imply an incessant return to the same unchanging point. Instead, any return journey to a desired isolated inside space will inevitably carry along the experience of the outside.

Hall illustrates this by referring to Tony Sewell’s biography of Marcus Garvey and his quest for his African legacy as a Jamaican:

[Sewell’s biography] tells the story of a “return” to an African identity which went, necessarily, by the long route – through London and the United States. It “ends,” not in Ethiopia but with Garvey’s statue in front of the St. Ann Parish Library in Jamaica: not with a traditional tribal chant but with the music of Burning Spear and Bob Marley’s Redemption Song. This is our “long journey” home. (232)

Garvey’s journey ends up at the same place where it started because the affectively diasporic homeland of Jamaica as the place of dislocation was, regardless of its foreignness, also the place where the image of the desired African homeland was born. Affective diaspora, as an experience lived in the same homeland from which the subject becomes alienated, causes the homeland to become both the place of dwelling and of dispersion, both of physical presence and imagined return. It is the internalization of the outside that also causes the inside to become irremediably external. This is the reason why, in the image of the Möbius strip, in Hall’s example and in “Árboles raros” the journey seemingly ends up at the place of departure, but with an effect of estrangement: “here the leaves / fall as well,” yet it is not a homecoming. I will connect this idea of the diasporic homeland that is both the inside and the outside space of a geographical location to the image of the Caribbean island in Movement 3. Before that, in Movement 2, I will elaborate on the concept of “affect” as a way of understanding how bodies on either side of a supposed inside-outside demarcation are nonetheless connected and can impinge on each other.
Movement 2

Affective Resonance

Paul Gilroy’s description of the African diasporic space discussed earlier referred to music in order to show that stylistic influences on both sides of the Atlantic are involved in an affective exchange that works in two directions. The diasporic experience that I have related to the situation of the generación de los topos in Cuba and the Margináis in Brazil similarly impacts those remaining in the homeland in addition to those who left for other places. For this reason I use the concept affective diaspora. Here, diaspora refers to a replacement of the traditional politico-geographical location of cultures and countries by performative practices that define one’s belonging to a space that is not geographically or politically fixed – or at least not necessarily so. Meanwhile, the adjective “affective” designates the space of intensity between bodies that not only allows one to cause a change in the other, but also makes it possible to be acted upon (affected) by other bodies. It is important to mention at this point that these “bodies” are “defined not by an outer skin-envelope or other surface boundary but by their potential to reciprocate or co-participate in the passages of affect” (Seigworth & Gregg 2). The term affective diaspora thus refers to a diasporic experience that is passed on between bodies and that simultaneously defines the dynamics by which these bodies are no longer separated from one another.

In this Movement, I use the song “Aquele abraço” by Gilberto Gil as my object of analysis in order to explore not only how affect operates in the performative dynamics between author and audience or listener(s), but also how it works through the lyrics, which evoke affect as they reflect on the affectively diasporic situation of the author and/or the Sonic I. In both Gilroy’s and my own approach music is brought forward as the vehicle for an affective exchange between cultures and countries, and between performer and perceiver. Accordingly, Gilroy argues for a performance-oriented analysis which
[...] has a wider significance in the analysis of black cultural forms than has so far been supposed. Its strengths are evident when it is contrasted with approaches to black culture that have been premised exclusively on textuality and narrative rather than dramaturgy, enunciation, and gesture – the pre-and anti-discursive constituents of black metacommunication.

(75)

My analysis focuses on diasporic musical expression in the Latin American context, to which, besides its relation to the African diaspora due to the slave trade, more recent forms of (affective) diaspora are also relevant. Although I would contest Gilroy’s description of aspects of performance such as dramaturgy, enunciation and gesture as pre- or anti-discursive, I do want to suggest that these forms of expression, which explicitly involve the body, put a stronger emphasis on affective intensity than textual art and can therefore not exclusively be approached in terms of discourse analysis. When it comes to music in particular, the sonic dimensions, more than the lyrics, are capable of producing a direct affective stimulation of the listener’s senses.

Affect: Tracing the Concept

Music’s pivotal role in the (cultural) articulation of the African diaspora during the era of slave labour in Latin America and the Caribbean can be related to affective operations in a context of censorship and repression. Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic*, mentions the preference for music over language and writing in the African legacy due to the fact that “the slaves’ access to literacy was often denied on pain of death” (74-75). He also refers to Edouard Glissant when he stresses the role of the body in forms of communication that work through dance and music. Glissant himself speaks about the “silent universe of the plantation” in the Caribbean context in order to illustrate that, even if there were forms of language through which songs and tales were orally expressed, a fragmentary and discontinuous format was required in order to disguise their content (2008: 86). With regard to the musical traditions within the diasporic and dictatorial contexts of Cuba and
Brazil at stake in this study, it can be said that they are rooted in a similar necessity to hide certain content from the censors by eschewing a coherent structure and instead creating connections on the level of the affective.

Affect, as defined by Seigworth and Gregg in their introductory chapter to The Affect Theory Reader, constitutes “an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation as well as the passage [...] of forces or intensities” (1, emphasis in text). They explain intensities as “resonances that circulate about, between and sometimes stick to bodies” (1). Such resonances cannot be captured by “conscious knowing,” but their fluctuation “can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension” (1). Affect thus refers to a body’s capacity to act or to be acted upon, “to affect or be affected,” but resides in the imminence of its movements and thoughts, not their concretization (2).

The resonance metaphor used by Seigworth and Gregg helps to see the connection between affect and music. Technically speaking, as explained by Edward W. Large in his article “Resonating to Musical Rhythm,” in relation to music, resonance “refers to the response of an oscillation, exposed to a periodic stimulus, whose frequency stands in some particular relationship to the oscillator’s natural frequency” (198). This can, for example, refer to a note that is transferred from one string to another, where the oscillation of one is picked up by the other due to a relative proximity in frequency. The relation between strings that respond to each other’s frequencies because of resonance is like that of bodies which, through affect, either act or are acted upon. Like resonance, affect is a phenomenon that can only be known by its effect (the resonating string), not by the medium of transference itself, which is situated in the in-between of the bodies in their relationship of affective proximity.

In his article “Affective Operations of Art and Literature”, Ernst van Alphen stresses that affect as a concept is not to be confused with feelings or emotions (2008: 24), as these refer to the result of an affective exchange, a translation to a subjective experience that can be classified or put to words:

Although affects are social, that is, they are the result of an interactive process from without, the linguistic or visual content or thoughts attached
to that affect belong to the person to whom the affect is transmitted. (2008: 25)

It is because of this non-subjective characteristic that inanimate objects such as artworks or literary texts are capable of working through affect. Affect, just like resonance, exists only in the in-between of subject and object. Not directly tied to the particular emotion, or frequency, that it strums in the receptive subject, it is the space through which the affective transmission takes place and where the connection between subject and object exists on the basis of the event of this exchange.

In “The Autonomy of Affect”, Brian Massumi recognizes this ungraspable nature of affect as a hurdle for “theories of signification that are wedded to structure [...]” and argues that, by focusing on, for example, linguistic or narratological structures, such approaches fail to capture “the expression event” (Massumi 87-8, emphasis in text). He later adds to this that “affect is unqualified. As such, it is not ownable or recognizable, and is thus resistant to critique” (88), which would suggest that affect, by nature, also resists analysis. Taking into account the passage from Van Alphen quoted above, an analysis of affect can therefore only focus on affect’s results as it is translated into social or subjective experience – when, in other words, it becomes structured.

Massumi explains this by referring to Spinoza’s philosophy of affect, in which the experience of an impingement of the body (affect) is accompanied by an unconscious idea of this impingement. Conscious reflection on the affect can only take place if there is “an idea of the idea of the affection” (92, emphasis in text). He summarizes this as:

[…] the philosophy of the becoming-active, in parallel, of mind and body, from an origin in passion, in impingement, in so pure and productive a receptivity that it can only be conceived as a third state, an excluded middle […]: affect. This “origin” is never left behind, but doubles one like a shadow that is always almost perceived, and cannot but be perceived, in effect. (93)
Consequently, I will not talk about “affects” as countable and classifiable, but of affect as a singular noun, indicating a space of contact, event and movement.\textsuperscript{34} My analysis focuses on the effects of affect, while the objects of analysis can be either the affected subject – including the subject performing the analysis – or the mechanisms by which the affective transmission takes place. In the analysis of Gilberto Gil’s “Aquele abraço” on which I will now embark, the focus on affect requires an awareness of why and how certain affectively induced responses by the audience of the live event or the listener of the recording can be observed or deduced. The lyrics of the song are represented below, already giving an impression of the rhythmic and interjectory character of the song:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ll}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aquele abraço</th>
<th>That Embrace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O Rio de Janeiro continua lindo</td>
<td>Rio de Janeiro is still beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Rio de Janeiro continua sendo</td>
<td>Rio de Janeiro continues to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Rio de Janeiro, fevereiro e março</td>
<td>Rio of January, February and March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alô, alô, Realengo</td>
<td>Hello, hello, Realengo,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquele abraço</td>
<td>That embrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alô torcida do Flamengo</td>
<td>Hello stadium of Flamengo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aquele abraço</td>
<td>That embrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chacrinha continua balançando a pança</td>
<td>Chacrinha is still wiggling his belly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E buzinando a moça e comandando a massa</td>
<td>And honking women and commanding the masses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E continua dando as ordens no terreiro</td>
<td>And still giving his orders in the country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{34} By making this statement, I differ from theories that draw on the work of Silvan Tomkins, whose psychological work on affect was introduced in cultural theory by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank through their article “Shame in the Cybernetic Fold: Reading Silvan Tomkins.” The article explains and defends Tomkin’s argument that (plural) affects, although experienced in the mind, are rooted in the body and can be analyzed and classified there. My decision to follow Deleuze and Massumi’s definition of affect as a (singular) space of intensity, or, in my musical analysis, resonance, places affect in the space of transmission that can be either in the body, between bodies, between continents or even across chronological or diachronic time. The classifiable bodily aspects, in turn, are related to what Van Alphen calls emotions or the effects of affect.
Alô, alô, seu Chacrinha  Hello, hello, sir Chacrinha
Velho guerreiro  Old warrior
Alô, alô, Terezinha  Hello, hello, little Tereza
Rio de Janeiro  Rio de Janeiro
Alô, alô, seu Chacrinha  Hello, hello, sir Chacrinha
Velho palhaço  Old clown
Alô, alô, Terezinha  Hello, hello little Tereza
Aquele abraço  That embrace

Alô moça da favela  Hello girl from the suburbs
Aquele abraço  That embrace
Todo mundo da Portela  All of the samba school Portela
Aquele abraço  That embrace
Todo mês de fevereiro  All throughout February
Aquele passo  That procession
Alô banda de Ipanema  Hello band of Ipanema
Aquele abraço  That embrace
Meu caminho pelo mundo eu mesmo traço  I draw my own travels around the world
A Bahia já me deu régua e compasso  Bahia already gave a ruler and a compass

Quem sabe de mim sou eu  I am the one who knows about me
Aquele abraço  That embrace
Prá você que me esqueceu  To you who has forgotten me
Aquele abraço  That embrace
Todo o povo brasileiro  All Brazilians
Aquele abraço  That embrace

Resonant Bodies

The first time Gil performed “Aquele abraço” live was at the concert in 1969 that was to pay for his flight to London. He and Caetano Veloso had been incarcerated for a month, after which the Brazilian military authorities ordered them to leave
the country for an indefinite amount of time. They were allowed to organize a final concert to earn the money for their flight to London. Gil wrote “Aquele abraço” specifically for this concert as a way of saying goodbye to his country. The song is a salute of the Sonic I to Rio de Janeiro, with the city standing, pars pro toto, for the whole of Brazil, as Veloso explains in Verdade Tropical. Because the imminent departure of Gil and Veloso was not known to the public yet, and also because they did not want to provoke the authorities too much during this concert, the message of the song was disguised in such a way that, for the censors and the audience, it could just as well be a cheerful samba or a loving tribute to Brazil, instead of a message of goodbye (Veloso 290). For this reason, the song’s rhythm, melody and lyrical structure resemble a happy carnival samba. As for the textual content, the lyrics of the song are a salute to Rio de Janeiro, a ‘hello,’ “alô,” by a Sonic I who returns, after his “travels around the world,” to his beloved city with its urban spaces, its habits and its characters. At different levels, a tension between contradictory situations is thus created: the narrative of the Sonic I tells the inverse story of what the author is about to experience, and the sound of the song triggers a celebratory response from the audience that contrasts with the sad circumstances under which the song was written. In this case, then, affect can be approached either as a space of resonance between the bodies of the narrator and the Sonic I or as an intensity in the performance capable of triggering different emotional responses, depending on whether or not the listener knows about the author’s situation.

To start with the song as a performance: its affective character can be deduced from the song’s emphasis on participation by the listener or the audience. The repeating chorus of “aquele abraço,” which, in the refrain, is alternated with the inserted lines of the artist or the Sonic I, functions as a question and answer structure that is easily picked up on even a first listening. Gilroy refers to this call and response structure of “antiphony” as one of the “principal formal feature[s] of [black] musical traditions” (78). Another affective aspect of the song resides in the danceable rhythm that invites the body (or a part of it: feet, hips, head, fingers) to move along to an upbeat rhythm. The listener or the audience therefore constitutes the affected body, the object to which the performance is directed and which becomes part of the performance because it is touched by it. The combination
of this rhythm with the uplifting sound of the major chords that the song consists of is more likely to bring a smile to one’s face than, for example, a melancholic minor tonality. The affective transmission through which the listener tunes into the cheerful character of the song and therefore aligns with the emotion that is being expressed, is what Van Alphen refers to as “entrainment” (2008: 25).

The concept of entrainment, denoting an alignment of emotions, can also be approached from a musicological perspective. A technical definition of musical entrainment is given by Clayton, Sager and Will, who describe it as “two rhythmic processes [that] interact with each other in such a way that they adjust towards and eventually ‘lock in’ to a common phase and/or periodicity” (3). They also stress the difference between entrainment and resonance. Entrainment is composed of a combination between two or more autonomous oscillators whose rhythmic processes (oscillations) are not dependent on interaction. The difference from resonance is that resonance does not consist of two autonomously active components, as becomes clear from the example of a resonance box that stops producing sound once the tuning fork is removed from it (Clayton, Sager and Will 3-4). Resonance therefore needs an empty receiver, whereas entrainment implies two actors that eventually synchronize their movements. If brought to bear on my reading of resonance as equivalent to affect, this view of resonance would imply an image of affect as a passive process. Entrainment, then, would seem to be a more appropriate concept. However, I want to argue that, from a musicological perspective, affect is neither one nor the other, but brings together key elements of both. In the following, therefore, my use of resonance to clarify the workings

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35 The question why major tonalities are related to positive emotions and minor tonalities have more negative connotations still lacks a clear, uniform answer. In the context of psychoacoustic studies, two possible arguments are given by Marianna Pinchot Kastner and Robert Crowder as a part of their experiments with major/minor perception by young children. The first argument follows the theory by the physicist Hermann von Helmholtz, who argues that the minor tonal spectrum, because of the complex frequency relations resulting from the smaller intervals in its harmonic configurations, is more prone to cause an effect of roughness for the listener and hence an association of negativity. The other argument, following Crowder’s own theory, suggests that the response is culturally induced, as most of children’s lullabies are sung in major tonalities. The higher level of familiarity with these tonalities triggers more positive responses. In my own arguments in this Movement, I tend more towards the theory of cultural induction, although the theory revolving around the perception of roughness will be an important reference for my use of detuning, a concept referring to subversion from within, in Part 2.
of affect, specifically in music, also includes the characteristic of autonomy taken from the concept of entrainment.

Returning to the performance of “Aquele abraço,” the effect of the audience’s happy response to the cheerful carnival rhythm is not based on an effect of affect as linked to the above description of resonance, in which the audience functions as an empty vessel. This is because the performance of “Aquele abraço” as a samba composition took place in Brazil, where a cheerful response is likely to have been culturally induced for a large part of the audience. In other words, the results of the song’s affective operations are structured by cultural memory. A samba performance in Brazil is supposed to be a happy celebration with people expected to smile, dance and sing along. The audience also takes an active part when it comes to translating affect into an emotional response by situating it within a cognitive structure. The audience, therefore, functions as an autonomous “oscillatory system” that also partly conditions the other system as they oscillate together and tune into one another. The exchange is affective in the sense that it involves two bodies that not only act, but are also being acted upon, in reciprocal fashion. Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus*, express this reciprocity of “affect as becoming” by saying: “I cannot become dog without the dog itself becoming something else” (285).

By now it should be clear that although “Aquele abraço” may have been perceived as a happy song, it was actually much more than that. While the carnival resemblance is one of the reasons why neither the censors nor probably most of the audience picked up on the sad reason for the song, this does not fully undo its melancholic undertone. Melancholy, however, can probably only be felt (or, in other words, experienced as an effect of affect) if the story behind the song’s existence is known by the listener. Both types of responses, be they induced by cultural memory or by knowledge about the reality behind the song’s narrative, show that emotions are triggered by affect, but are not directly connected to it. The effects are structured by culture or by cognitive processes, not just by affect itself. Considering affect as resonance, from this perspective, does not imply that its objects function as empty vessels in reaction to a dominant, active subject or oscillatory system. Resonance is rather the affective connection between two (or more) bodies that are not necessarily aligned emotionally.
link with entrainment, therefore, is that affect relates to the connection between two or more bodies, where these bodies trigger a (rhythmic) change in each other – which, in the human body, leads to an emotional perception of that change – without necessarily synchronizing emotionally. They tune into one another through the resonance of affect, which is itself still empty of emotional definition.

Focusing on the performance of “Aquele abraço,” a contrast between the song’s performance and its performative aspect can be observed. In the performance, the author play-acts a happy carnavalesque samba, whereas on the performative level he is actually saying goodbye to his country. For the spectator, however, the performance does not contradict the performative unless the story behind the song is known. Without the extra-narratorial information about Gil’s imminent departure, the song is about a return to Rio de Janeiro, whereas knowing about the journey that awaits the *cantautor* places the narration about the happy reunion with the city of Rio in a completely different perspective. In this case, affect can be recognized by its results, which are mediated by the (linear) narrative of the facts that are available to the spectator. Either cultural memory is likely to trigger a cheerful response to the samba or the imminent goodbye to the homeland that lies behind the samba will prompt a melancholic reception. As explained above, the emotional response is set in motion by affect, but the translation into a particular emotion occurs by way of a particular narrative.

At the same time, the cheerful samba can also be seen as a performative expression of love towards the homeland caused by the affectively diasporic experience of the author. The imminence of his departure already induces him to start perceiving the homeland retrospectively, as a place left behind. From this perspective, the author, through the Sonic I, is performing his role as a diasporic subject. This performance is not mediated by memory, as in Bal’s theory of performance cited in Movement 1, but by a projection of the future as an inverted memory. What this suggests is that affect can also resonate between narratives. In this case, between the narrative of the Sonic I and the author, where one narrative does not dominate the other because of the different narrative levels in play. Here, my analysis adds an important point to Massumi, who states the following about the difference in character between intensity and narrative:
Intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonance and feedback which momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future. (86)

As argued above, the affective resonance between different narratives also makes it possible to perceive a non-linear potential in narrative.

Massumi’s idea of resonance is, once again, best explained when related to music. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari refer to the same image of non-linear dynamics when they explain the difference between memory as a linear system and becoming as the non-linear forming of blocks. After stating that “becoming is an antimemory,” they continue:

Musical representation, on the one hand, draws a horizontal, melodic line, the bass line, upon which other melodic lines are superposed […]. On the other hand, it draws a vertical, harmonic line or plane, which moves along the horizontals but is no longer dependent upon them; it runs from high to low and defines a chord capable of linking up with the following chords. (324-25)

In this image of musical notation, harmonics is used to show how the (vertically arranged) consonant relation between different notes in a chord proceeds to other chords in a movement that is not dependent on the way in which the musical theme moves on, but that works according to an auditory logic instead. Connecting this to my analysis of “Aquele abraço,” it suggests that the combination of the narrative of the Sonic I who returns to the homeland with the story of the author/artist who is yet to leave creates a vertical resonance between two apparently separate worlds. This resonance creates an alternative narration that, adding nuance to Massumi’s characterization, does proceed along a horizontal axe, to stick to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s terminology, but according to different rules: what makes the narrative of the author and that of the Sonic I interact is not to be found within the logic of their separate narrations, but in the affective resonance between both.

The way to read this interaction of narratives is by approaching it indirectly,
through the relation of proximity by which apparently separated worlds affect each other through a resonance that is vertical instead of horizontal: affective diaspora.\textsuperscript{36} The Sonic I of “Aquele abraço” narrates a return to the homeland whereas the author who speaks through this Sonic I has not yet left the country. In other words, the author is capable of performing this imagined return because he is affected by the imminence of his own departure, which, in a non-chronological, non-linear narrative, allows him to give an account of his own return, through the eyes and the voice of the Sonic I, from an outsider’s perspective, or, stated differently, from the perspective of the returning traveler. This affectively diasporic experience is captured in the stanzas “Meu caminho pelo mundo eu mesmo traço / Bahia já me deu régua e compasso,” which can be translated as “I draw my own travels around the world / Bahia already gave me a ruler and a compass.”

The Sonic I says that he “draws” his “travels around the world,” as if he were marking his itineraries on a world map. The remark that Bahia provided him with the measuring tools (ruler and compass) to draw out these itineraries suggests that Bahia predetermines the routes taken by the Sonic I. The starting point and final destination of the Sonic I’s travels, however, is not Bahia but Rio de Janeiro, which the Sonic I perceives as “still beautiful.” This observation only makes sense if the Sonic I already feels a distance towards the city even though he has not left it yet. At the same time, it refers to an experience that he could only have upon his return after a physical separation of a certain period of time. The itinerary he draws around the world, therefore, is a travel that is both a departure and a return, or neither. The fact that the Sonic I is capable of perceiving Rio de Janeiro as “still beautiful” even before his departure implies that the outside world is already inscribed in the city as it is in the present. By the same token, the implied future return is not a homecoming to a fixed place of origin. Bahia, as the element that provides the Sonic I with the measuring tools to draw his travels around the world, always already invests the traveller with an irredeemable experience of...

\textsuperscript{36} My use of the expression “relation of proximity” could be misinterpreted as suggesting that affective diaspora is only metaphorically present in the narration. This is not the case. Affective diaspora refers to the actual experience of the author, into which the song offers an artistically colored insight. The \textit{relation} between the actual experience and the way in which the narrative works, however, is metaphorical in the sense that one can be read as analogous to the other.
foreignness. The lyrics emphasize the way in which Bahia pervades the outside world through the travels of the Sonic I: “I draw my own travels around the world / Bahia already gave me a ruler and a compass.” In these verses, a second possible translation of the word “traço,” related to the verb “traçar,” is suggested, in which it becomes “trace” (Oxford Dictionaries). This translation suggests that the lines drawn on the world map by the Sonic I are also traces, referring both to the trace Bahia has left in him and the trace he is now leaving, through it, on the outside world.

Significantly, the reference to Bahia also creates a direct link with Gil’s personal life, as it was his place of birth. Situated on the east-coast, Bahia was not only an important point for the arrival and dispatching of African slaves in Brazil, but itself had a big slave population due to the its many sugar plantations.37 After the abolition of slavery, Bahia remained the primary area of settlement of slave descendants, resulting in the region’s being known, until the present day, for the vividness of its African artistic, culinary and religious traditions. Gil’s reference to Bahia is therefore not a mere invocation of his place of birth, but of his inheritance of the African diaspora as a slave descendant. Above I argued that the Sonic I, at his return, introduced part of the outside world into the homeland. The current interpretation of the lyrics suggests that the inverse movement also occurs: the outward travel introduces the homeland into the external world in the form of a referential framework through which the journey is experienced. More importantly, however, it shows that the homeland had already been pervaded by the outside world long before the Sonic I began his travels, due to the African diaspora. The Bahian inheritance of the “ruler and the compass” inevitably leads the Sonic I along the old routes of the slave trade, following the traces of his inheritance, be it at his departure or his return: the affective character of his diasporic experience thus resonates in both directions.

There is also another way of translating the word “compasso,” which does not just translate as “compass.” Carnival, as an important element of the African legacy kept alive in Bahia, is characterized by group processions in the streets

37 Stuart Schwartz’s book *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society* is an influential historical work on slavery and the sugar plantations that focuses on Bahia.
during its annual celebration: the marches of the so-called blocos.\textsuperscript{38} Because “Aquele abraço” is an interpretation of a carnival song, the compasso as part of the Bahian inheritance of the Sonic I can therefore also allude to “compass” in the sense of the Latin contraction between \textit{com-} (together) and \textit{passus} (step), which refers to “keeping step in a march” (\textit{Oxford English Dictionary}). Although this other possible meaning of compass still involves a measuring device, “régua e compasso,” it adds a possible affective dimension to the Sonic I’s inherited diasporic itinerary. In this alternative reading, “régua” can be read as an allusion to “ruler” in the musical sense of “measure,” the horizontal divide of music as a progression along a notebar. This refers back to the earlier quote from Deleuze in which the horizontal progression and vertical harmony of musical notation are no longer dependent on one another, but can nonetheless resonate with another. The itinerary that the Sonic I draws with the help of the “régua and compasso” as musical measuring tools is therefore more than a linear progression. It indicates a movement that leaves traces by connecting worlds and bodies on the affective level, causing them to resonate with each other.

In other words, instead of being guided by a device that points only in one direction and that has to be interpreted with the intellect in order to keep a steady direction, the rhythmic, affective compass as guidance works on the body of the Sonic I and is multidirectional in its quality of resonance. The compass is therefore an \textit{allusion} to how the outer world was already working through the body of the Sonic I since his birth, how it will continue to do so during his absence from the homeland and how the imminence of departure, which resonates with the author instead of the Sonic I, has already caused a change in his bodily perception through affect. I emphasize the word “allusion” in order to stress how its affective character takes it beyond the status of metaphor. Bal has argued for the use of allusion over metaphor because it is truer to the relation of proximity between an object and that which it refers to. In addition, it does not replace one meaning by another in the way a metaphor does, but includes the latter meaning.

\textsuperscript{38} In her book \textit{Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won}, Kim D. Butler elaborates on the double function of Carnival in Brazil as both a tradition that kept the African inheritance alive and a festivity that, for political reasons, became a platform to reaffirm modernity. Butler also discusses how the creation of Carnival clubs that set out to revive their African inheritance had to deal with state interference based on prejudices.
in the former:

Allusions, as distinct from metaphors, are small and unobtrusive, and yet ‘in touch with’ what they allude to; they preclude collapsing meanings, but they also preclude distance. (2009: 47)

Allusions, according to Bal, suggest a message, through the mediation of an image, “by affect, and not by the poor logic of persuasion” (2009: 47). Accordingly, the function of the compass in Gil’s sonic narrative is not only a reference to the inclusion of the outside world in the body of the Sonic I, but also affectively includes the outside world into this image.

Returning to Gilroy, his recourse to music in order to argue for the necessity of an affective approach towards cultural expressions relates directly to my choice of music as an object marked by Cuban and Brazilian affective diaspora and censorship. Music, from this perspective, is a form of expression that does not only work through discourse in order to be apprehended by the intellect, but that also resonates affectively at the level of the body, a resonance that can be understood only by what its (bodily) effects are or by how it is mobilized through the performance. Apart from what it is able to do at the level of the affective, music also shows how affect works. Gilroy uses the example of a song that circulates between America, Europe and the Caribbean, where the African origins of the composition are re-interpreted with every new recording of the song, to show how diaspora does not consist of a “one-way flow of [African] culture from east to west” (96). Instead, diaspora works affectively, in all directions, changing and being changed by all the bodies it touches. This also becomes clear in my analysis of “Aquele abraço,” where the African diaspora is seen to affect the culture of Bahia, which is in turn seen to affect the perception of the world of the Sonic I and his imminent departure and fictive return. In Gilroy’s words:

The very least which […] music and its history can offer us today is an

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39 In her article “Temporal Turbulence” from 2015 Bal further notes that “an allusion enfolds the alluded into what we see” (13). This article was published in German translation in Günter Blamberger’s book Sind alle Denker Traurig? I am quoting from the English version.
analogy for comprehending the lines of affiliation and association which take the idea of the diaspora beyond its symbolic status as the fragmentary opposite of some imputed racial essence. (95)

These “lines of affiliation and association,” reminiscent of the ideas exposed in the earlier quotes from Massumi and Deleuze, are not based on a horizontal connection between notes, geographies or bodies, but allude to a vertical resonance that destabilizes the position of notes or bodies as fixed points on a horizontal progression of melodies, narratives or diasporic trajectories. In a similar fashion, affective diaspora alludes to the experience of bodies that resonate with each other on both sides of apparently separated realms, destabilizing them both. No longer part of a horizontal line of progression within a single melody, narrative, discourse or nation, they are traversed vertically, pervaded by parallel narratives and discourses, resonating with other bodies through affect.

What the image of the abraço, the embrace from the song, teaches us is that affective resonance makes it possible for bodies to touch each other in a way other than through direct contact. Resonance, for example, travels through sound waves and can literally impinge on the body through these vibrations. Depending on the frequency and the volume of the receiving body, a sound can be either heard by the resonance it causes in the ear-drums or felt directly as a vibration on the skin. Its potential for touch is therefore multiple, even if the receiving body tends to translate it into a singular experience, as when affect is translated into an emotion. The abraço in Gil’s song exceeds the potential of a physical embrace between two people, because it is capable of touching different types of bodies at the same time. In fact, the song itself functions as the all-encompassing embrace of Rio de Janeiro, the “Realengo” neighborhood of the military headquarters, the “girl from the favela,” Chacrinha the “old clown” and “all Brazilians.” The embrace is affective in the sense that, like resonance, it is multidirectional and therefore

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40 In his book *Sonic Warfare*, Steve Goodman approaches the concept of affect and its psychological and physical effects on bodies, in sound art but also in the use of acoustic weaponry in modern warfare. To demonstrate the physical effects that can be caused by resonance, he refers to a U.S. Army report about a “vortex ring generator,” a “nonlethal” acoustic weapon that is used to disperse big crowds by causing a bodily impact on targeted individuals. The weapon does this by emitting “concussion pulses at frequencies near the resonance of human body parts” (Goodman 109).
Movement 2 - Affective Resonance

capable of touching all the entities mentioned in the song at the same time.

But the allusion to the embrace is multiple in character. As observed earlier in this Movement, the embrace is both a gesture of a reunification of the Sonic I with his homeland and of a goodbye to it; the conclusion of an approaching movement between bodies and the starting point of a movement of separation. In addition, the Sonic I does not merely celebrate positive aspects of the city, but also embraces the neighborhood where Gil was incarcerated by the military. By the end of the song he even embraces “you who have forgotten me,” which evokes the image of the embrace as an antidote to oblivion and as a way of reaffirming one’s existence through the act of touching. Ultimately, the embrace also suggests the simultaneousness of opening and closing; opening oneself up to another body in order to affect or be affected by it, and at the same time, in closing one’s arms around another body, forming a new, multiple unity of two bodies that separates itself from a bigger whole. In “Aquele abraço” the opening up of the embrace connects the Sonic I to the rest of the world, yet at the same time the rest of this world is kept at a distance by the “régua e compasso” that Bahia gave him and that confined the randomness of his “travels around the world” to the repetition of the trajectory inherited from his ancestors.

The simultaneity of apparently antagonistic gestures included in the affective gesture of the embrace in Gil’s song creates a point of connection with the image of the island in the context of the Caribbean archipelago, which may also be characterized by its openness to the rest of the world and its simultaneous particularity. In the next Movement, I will use the concept of insularization to explore how the different ways of presenting the image and perspective of a marginalized insular territory in Varela’s “Árboles raros” and Gil’s “Aquele abraço” can subvert the centeredness of dominant, “continental” discourse. In addition, by connecting the grotesque images in “Aquele abraço” to Bakhtin’s theory of medieval carnival, I will explore how dominant discourse can also be subverted by the construction of a multiple, decentered identity.
Movement 3
Insularization and Carnival

Up to this point, two issues have played a pivotal part in the process of understanding the affectively diasporic subject: the one pointing to its location in time-space and the other its effort of finding alternative ways to perceive and express itself as a subject. In Movement 1, the concept of affective diaspora provided a way of understanding how a supposedly clear orientation of a homeland and a subject in geographical space and chronological time is destabilized because an outside world (that of those who left the homeland) traverses it. As I concluded in my analysis of Carlos Varela’s “Árboles raros,” in spite of the fact that the outside world is kept as far and separated as possible from the inside territory in Cuban official nationalist discourse, it is inevitably part of this territory because of people’s connections to those that have left. This outside-inside space has a destabilizing potentiality in causing the affectively diasporic subject to feel alienated from the homeland. It prompts, in the affectively diasporic subject, the creation of a new, imagined version of the homeland that is different from the homeland as a clearly defined geographical and political space. From this perspective, diaspora is no longer only an indication of physical dispersal, but, also for those still in the homeland, a performative practice of identity constitution consisting of an ongoing, dynamic negotiation between a multiplicity of antagonistic forces.

In Movement 2 I further conceptualized affect in relation to the diasporic subject, the homeland and their inevitable connection to that which surrounds and changes them. This connection was explained in terms of a musical resonance between bodies. By relating resonance to music – as an allusion but also as the object of analysis – I suggested that, apart from horizontal and chronological displacement, a body, like a musical note, can also become different to itself and others through vertical resonance with other bodies. This helps to understand the inherent multiplicity of the affectively diasporic subject and the homeland as a
result of their status as resonating elements in a harmonic constitution. The identity of such an element is not fixed, but depends on its becoming through (musical) performance, while its unstable vertical resonance is independent from its horizontal movement through space and time – or on the note bar. Consequently, any return to a fixed origin is impossible.

Significantly, in the songs I have analyzed, the unstable vertical resonance between the homeland and the outside world – which, in turn, is staged by the cantautores in the resonance between the different narrative levels and between the songs as both performances and performative expressions – is also constrained by the state-controlled censorship of, respectively, Cuban cultural politics in the 1980s and early 1990s, and the Brazilian military control of cultural production in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Affectively diasporic identity formation as a process of constant redefinition, but also the act of imagining of the homeland as a construction that is not bound to a particular space or time, are therefore performative acts constrained by nationalist discourses defining a clear inside and outside space of the nation. The censorship that was exercised as a part of Cuba’s and Brazil’s cultural politics obligated the cantautores to use metaphorical language to disguise some subjects in their songs, to obscure narrative responsibility by creating different levels of narrators and focalizers, and to emphasize the performance aspects of the songs in order to hide their performative potential.

In this Movement, I want to focus on the image of the island (of countries in isolation from the rest of the world), which defines the context of both “Árboles raros” and “Aquele abraço,” and, I will argue, at the level of their narrations, functions as an insularizing defiance of dominant discourses. This implies that the island’s open character is being used as the perspective through which these dominant, or continental discourses are being re-read. I invoke the theories of Chris Bongie, Antonio Benítez-Rojo and Édouard Glissant about the function of the island and the archipelago in Caribbean identity construction, and relate them to both Cuba and Brazil. Articles by Nanne Timmer and Mireille Rosello, moreover, offer perspectives on Caribbean identity construction that elucidate the ambiguous interiority and exteriority of the homeland and national identity.

41 Whether this harmonic resonance is consonant or dissonant is another question. In Part 2, the destabilizing potential of dissonance for the inside of a harmonic constitution will be approached through the concept of detuning.
discourse in the lyrics of “Aquele abraço” and “Árboles raros.” Continuing my analysis of “Aquele abraço,” I will also focus on narrative and performative uses of carnivalesque imagery in a dynamics of simultaneous compliance with and defiance of censorship. This will be related to Mikhail Bakhtin’s work on medieval carnival’s simultaneous liberation from and affirmation of feudal power structures.

The Caribbean and Insularization

The island can be perceived as an isolated geography but also as a space that is connected to all that surrounds it. Chris Bongie has used this image of ambiguity to relate insularity and Caribbean – or what he refers to as creole – identity to exile, which, in spite of the different terminology, relates to the concept of diaspora used in Movement 1 as it, too, presupposes a form of identity that is dispersed but also performatively constitutes itself in relation to this dispersion:

The island is a figure that can and must be read in more than one way: on the one hand, as the absolutely particular, a space complete unto itself and thus an ideal metaphor for a traditionally conceived, unified and unitary, identity; on the other, as a fragment, a part of some greater whole from which it is in exile and to which it must be related – in an act of (never completed) completion that is always also, as it were, an ex-isle, a loss of the particular. (18)

The image of Cuba as an island presented in Carlos Varela’s “Árboles raros” resembles the island as Bongie characterizes it. Cuban nationalist discourse, which has also defined the expectations of the Swedish visitor, emphasizes the country’s separation from the rest of the world and its unity in the face of this world. The fact that a connection with the rest of the world does in fact exist is evoked through the image of the falling leaves as a metaphor for the Cuban diaspora, which makes Cuba – the island – also an affectively diasporic space, site of an identity that can only be fragmentary.

The reason why the image of the island is of importance here is not only
the simple fact that Cuba is a Caribbean island. I even want to argue that insular qualities also apply to Brazil. At a figurative level, the island is principally related to the way in which nationalist discourses and censorship set out to clearly define the outlines of the nation (and of the national identity) as if it were completely turned in upon itself. At the same time, if taken in Bongie’s sense, the island implies that such isolation is always illusionary, as there are always connections or resonances that blur any straightforward separations between the inside and the outside realm. Especially in the Cuban and Brazilian contexts I am writing about, the nationalist discourses that in both countries seek to reaffirm the impermeability of the inside territories are constantly challenged by affective diaspora as well as by colonial histories that attest to the fact that these discourses lack an absolute value.

In fact, Brazil speaks particularly to the imagination here, as an ambiguous combination of insular and continental qualities can be attributed to the country. Caetano Veloso, in his autobiography Verdade Tropical, narrates Brazil’s coincidental discovery in 1500 – eight years after Columbus’ discovery of the South-American continent – by Portuguese explorers, who stumbled upon what they thought was an island.42 Further exploration of the land soon proved their mistake, but for Veloso this origin of the only Portuguese-spoken country on the continent makes it an island until the present day: “the island-Brazil that eternally hovers at half a millimetre from America’s real land” (19).43 Various insularizing narratives come together in this historical anecdote. First, there is the attribution of island qualities to a country that actually forms part of the continent, the mainland. But second, and no less important, the country represents the Latin American repetition of the rivalry between Portugal and Castile as two competing centers of power from the European continent, or, maybe even more stimulating to the imagination, from the Iberian Peninsula that is itself only in part connected

42 Another approach to this historical event is proposed by Darlene Sadlier, who, in her book Brazil Imagined, places the Portuguese colonizer Pedro Vaz Caminha’s reference to the discovered land of Brasil as “the Island of Vera Cruz” in the larger context of the discursive construction of Brazil’s history through different national and foreign (literary) sources.

43 My translation of the Portuguese: “[A] ilha Brasil pairando eternamente a meio milímetro do chão real da América [...]”
to the European mainland. The discovery by the Portuguese of the “Island of Vera Cruz” can therefore be considered an insularizing reading of the South-American territory that belonged to the Castilian continental narrative, which can also be interpreted as the creation of Latin-America as Europe’s island – the periphery to its center.

Even more interesting is the history of the Treaty of Tordesillas, a line drawn in 1493 by Pope Alexander VI that gave Castile the right to all land discovered on the west of the Cape Verde islands, and Portugal everything on the east of it (McAlister 74). The encountered land of Brazil, which was first considered to be an island east of that line, later became a source of dispute between the Castilian and the Portuguese crown. The Portuguese, who, according to the Tordesillas line, had the right to a tip of land on the far right of the South American continent, had expanded deep into the Amazonian lowlands by 1777, up to the start of the Andes, when the Treaty of San Idelfonso established Brazil’s borders as they are known until the present day (Hecht 96, 188). The penetration by the Portuguese of the Spanish-American continent, therefore, eventually became another continental form of colonial expansion, with the image of the island as an initial mistake and subsequent excuse for a transgression of established frontiers.

If, then, instead of keeping to the frontiers that were created during the period of colonization, the act of establishing boundaries between the inside and the outside space of a territory is translated to the discursive practice of circumscribing the nation’s limits, the narrative of the island can figuratively and literally subvert these established limits. The censorship related to the nationalizing discourses in Brazil and Cuba that set out to create a clear separation between the inside and the outside territories in the real world can therefore be contrasted with an insular discourse that does not allow for the demarcation of a clearly distinguishable inside or outside space of the narration as such. Translated to the objects of this analysis, in relation to the creation of the songs by Varela and Gil, the presence of censorship caused these cantautores to emphasize that the narrations of their songs were performances of fictional narratives and not the performative acts of resistance they, clandestinely, also were. Thus, a direct connection is created between the limitations established by the censors and the definition of the inside and the outside space of the narration.
The clandestine inclusion of performative Caribbean identities can be related to the inheritance of the plantations and the need for African slaves to use music in order to communicate affectively – in rhythm or in dance – what could not be communicated in words referred to in Movement 2. Where censorship corresponds to the intent of limiting the narration to an enclosed, fictional performance of words, the affective, performative potential of the songs I analyze creates a connection with the bodily presence of the cantautor that opens up space to the outside, just like each Caribbean island connects to the rest of the archipelago (and the rest of the world).

The Caribbean island, however, is not exclusively an image of openness to the world. An important statement Cuban writer and theorist Benítez-Rojo makes in his article “The Repeating Island” is that defining the Caribbean exclusively in terms of fragmentation and instability is a move of convenience made by non-Caribbean, post-industrialist theorists. He critically characterizes these efforts as an application of “the dogmas and methods that have served them well where they came from, [but they] can’t see that these refer only to realities back at home” (Benítez-Rojo 431). Instead, he proposes another way of approaching the Caribbean, a second reading after the first post-industrialist characterization that consists in comprehending the Caribbean archipelago through the image of a “repeating island” for which every “repetition brings necessarily a difference and a deferral” (Benítez-Rojo 431-32).

This idea of repetition echoes the diasporic movement in circles that characterizes the trajectory of the Sonic I in “Aquele abraço,” whose travels around the world repeat the trajectories of his African ancestors, bringing him back to the point of departure. The multiple character of this space, which is both a point of departure and a final destiny, is captured in the stanzas “I draw my own travels around the world / Bahia already gave me a ruler and a compass.” In these verses, as I argued in Movement 2, Bahia is the place that provides the Sonic I with an orientation in the outside world, while also indicating how this outside world, due to the African diaspora, is already inscribed in the homeland. What Benítez-Rojo’s theory adds to this analysis is that the repetitions within this circular trajectory also

44 The article, published in 1985, formed the foundation for Benítez-Rojo’s eponymous book from 1996.
establish a difference, which breaks the circularity and causes a certain progression. In the terminology from Movement 2, the multiple bodies (located on the inside and the outside of the island) that are inscribed in the image of the island affect each other through vertical resonance, which also creates a potential for horizontal progression that is not singular or sequential. As such, the island itself comes to imply movement.

Along a comparable line of thought but applied primarily to Francophone cultures in the Caribbean, Édouard Glissant states that Caribbean identity is neither static nor completely instable. He describes a process of connecting separated elements “cleared of a priori values” through what he calls “the poetics of Relation” (1997: 91). According to this idea, any construction of the subject or the homeland consists not of a piecing together of various autonomous elements or fragments, but is based on the interactions that are established through their interrelations:

The only discernible stabilities in Relation have to do with the interdependence of the cycles operative there, how their corresponding patterns of movement are in tune. In Relation, analytic thought is led to construct unities whose interdependent variances jointly piece together the interactive totality. (Glissant 1997: 92-3)

The expression of being “in tune” that Glissant uses here connects to the image of harmonic vertical connections through affective resonance evoked in Movement 2 and as exposed in reference to Benítez-Rojo above. It suggests that the different elements gain expressive quality through (harmonic) resonance with other elements or bodies, without completely merging together.

Linking this concept of Relation specifically to Cuba in its physical and figurative qualities as an island connects Cuba’s affectively diasporic character to the Caribbean as conceptualized by Glissant. Yet this connection, as Nanne Timmer argues in her article “The Island and the Madhouse,” should also be problematized. Timmer analyses the 2010 novel Desde los blancos manicomios, “From the White Madhouses,” by the renowned Cuban theorist and writer Margarita Mateo Palmer. In the novel, the protagonist’s stay in the madhouse is related to a disorienting experience of self-loss, followed by a struggle to reconstruct what Timmer
Movement 3 - Insularization and Carnival

presents as an “archipelagic self” in dialogue with Glissant’s theories of relational identity construction in the Caribbean archipelago (2014: 68). The decentered and present-yet-absent narrative I, through reading literary texts by Cuban and other Caribbean authors as well as letters from her sister in Miami, replaces the absence of her own voice with these other voices in order to reconstruct herself through an intertextual narration of the self.

Timmer presents Glissant’s notion of the archipelago as a space that the fragmented identity of the Cuban (literary) subject can reconnect to, but she also draws attention to the problematic flipside of this, as the archipelago’s decentered character “points toward an extreme disintegration and even a loss of self” (2014: 60). She takes Cuba as an example to show how Glissant’s proposal of a non-singular, rhizomatic Caribbean identity is counterbalanced by Cuba’s “strong notion of nation and national literary canon,” which suggests that Caribbean forms of identity cannot exclusively be alluded to in terms of fragmentation and relation (Timmer, 2014: 56). Timmer proposes to use Giorgio Agamben’s idea of the threshold to signify an insular way of being that is not completely unbound or clearly circumscribed, but consists of a “being-within an outside” (Agamben qtd. in Timmer, 2014: 61). Subsequently, she uses a passage from the novel where the protagonist, in a narrative play, turns into an island in order to propose the space of the self as an alternative territory for an archipelagic, performative way of becoming:

The island aroused is not an island represented as female, as a sort of national allegory, but rather as a woman-island. [...] The island in question is not a representation of the nation but rather a national, regional, and even universal [...] experience lived through the self with no boundaries. (Timmer, 2014: 63)

Here, the subject has no boundaries but is nonetheless a space through which “the national” can be reread. This process in which the subject reconnects to the different aspects that constitute her “self” is not one of establishing new boundaries. In Timmer’s words: “Identity transforms into a voyage, a process, a taking place” (2014: 61). This resonates with Benítez-Rojo’s way of thinking identity as
“fluvial and marine” instead of terrestrial (439). Referring to the role of culture when it comes to the identity question in the Caribbean archipelago, he observes:

We’re dealing here with a culture of bearings, not of routes; of approximations, not of exactitudes. […] If I were to have to put it in one word I would say: performance […] if I could add again another word, it would be this: rhythm. (Benítez-Rojo 439, 443)

In Gil’s “Aquele abraço” the Sonic I feels guided on his journey around the world because “Bahia already gave me a ruler and a compass.” As discussed in Movement 2, this compasso can also be read as a rhythmic march, connecting to Benítez-Rojo’s idea of an identity that is performative, but also rhythmic. This rhythmic character, which recalls the ways of expression and communication of African slaves on the plantation who had no right to the written word, was recognized in Movement 2 as an affective form of expression.

Affect and rhythm are connected in the work of Deleuze and Guattari: both represent a resonance in the body and both escape cognitive translation and do not have a singular structure encapsulating them. In A Thousand Plateaus, the difference between “rhythm” and musical “meter” is therefore explained by characterizing meter as dogmatic, operating on the basis of regularities in a closed “milieu,” whereas rhythm is critical, “always undergoing transcoding” and “passing from one milieu into another” (346). Staying away from definitions of space in terms of geographical or physical dimensions, Deleuze and Guattari define “milieu,” the space of rhythm and meter, as

[…] a periodic repetition, but one whose only effect is to produce a difference by which the milieu passes into another milieu. It is the difference that is rhythmic, not the repetition, which nevertheless produces it. (346)

Although this suggestion, if linked to the conceptualizations of the island discussed above, seems to simply take the argument back to Benítez-Rojo’s statement that the repetitive character of the island produces difference, the detour via Deleuze and Guattari teaches us that the island, as a milieu, is both closed off from and
open to the world because of its metric and rhythmic qualities, but that its capacity to create this difference resides precisely within rhythm. When the Sonic I from “Aquele abraço” says “I draw my own travels around the world,” his departure and his return can both be perceived as repetitions of the diasporic trajectories of the slave trade. However, because the compasso that guides him does not originate in Africa, but in the space that represented the slave’s diasporic destination, “Bahia já me deu régua e compasso,” the repetition is not a regular, circular and closed return to the origin, but a rhythmic reproduction of endless dislocation.

What draws attention in this particular fragment from the song is that the diasporic inheritance of the Sonic I is not related to the departure of the slaves from the African continent, but seen as radiating outwards from the metonymic (insular) space of the plantations, Bahia. The dominant voice in this identity discourse is therefore not speaking from the African continent, but from the affectively diasporic homeland. Mireille Rosello reflects on the dynamics between the originary discourses of the continent and the less centered ones of the island or the diasporic territory in her article “Caribbean Insularisation of Identities in Maryse Condé’s Work.” She proposes a reading that steps away from the necessity of defining the island in terms of the lack of a continent and questions the metric qualities of the continent as a stable point of reference by taking away the necessity of thinking and defining the island in these terms:

I suggest that the so-called failure to adopt the Continent or be adopted by it, is, in fact, a powerful re-appropriation of the function of the island as a provider of identity, a move from ‘insularity’ to what I will call the insularization of identity. (Rosello 569)

Rosello makes clear that “it is not a mere reversal, for insularization is not oblivious to the power structure that dominates the present relationship between the island and the continent” (571). Rather, insularization constitutes a “fragmented and diverse society, whose ‘differences within’ [...] are neither erased nor naively celebrated as always already desirable” (Rosello 571).

From the different readings of the Caribbean island it becomes apparent that it is possible to move away from ways of defining the island in terms of
hegemonic Western colonial projections. In relation to Rosello’s argument, it is important, however, to also recognize the island’s entanglement with power structures, which in my analysis relate to the concrete nationalist dynamics in the Cuban and Brazilian contexts. This entanglement indicates an affective relation that works both ways. As Rosello indicates in relation to insularization: “the perspective moves from the island outwards, toward other sites which find themselves constituted as islands” (572).

In a passage where she analyzes the subversive but incomplete inversion of the continental definition of Caribbean identity by means of a world map that made islands out of mainland places, Rosello turns to Europe as a continental presence in the Caribbean. Related specifically to the role of Europe in the contemporary Caribbean that “Árboles raros” also addresses and critiques, she concludes:

But the critique of the first continental center (today, more than ever, “Europe” as a new economic unit) makes every new center a parody, an act of mimicry. The model thus ironizes on the construction itself and temporarily liberates itself from what Glissant would call “the Obsession of the One.” Insularization is an imaginary process which turns each territory into an island. Insularization is no longer the island (a far away, exotic, incomplete parcel) calling for the (self-contained, original) continent to make it complete, but a way for the island (or any reading subject) to read continents as islands. In a sense, this is both deconstructive and usurpative (carnivalesque): the authority and legitimacy of the center is shattered while its symbolic power is appropriated through the metonymy of its own presence (to use Bhabha’s terminology). (Rosello 576)

Rosello’s reference to the mimicking of the continent by the island through which a parodic, carnivalesque image of the continent as another island can be created may be related to the performance Benítez-Rojo mentions in relation to the cultural practices constituting a Caribbean identity. Rosello’s notion of insularization makes it possible to propose the island as a narrative reformulation of the – dominant – continent without necessarily undoing or denying existing
power structures. In the current analysis, this explains how Brazilian and Cuban *cantautores* can express an affectively diasporic experience through an ambiguous inclusive exclusion in dominant nationalizing discourses. The fact that Rosello recognizes this reformulation of the continent from an insularizing perspective as a carnivalesque form of expression, moreover, invites a further inquiry into the main characteristics of carnival and its role in the Cuban and Brazilian context in enabling a dialogue between dominant and subjugated bodies.

Carnival: Christ’s Embrace and Chacrinha’s Horn

After referring to embraces of different people, social groups, public spaces and neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro, “Aquele abraço” ends with an embrace of “all Brazilians”: “todo o povo brasileiro / aquele abraço.” This all-encompassing embrace of a supposedly unified Brazilian people creates an image that recalls the Christ statue on the Corcovado mountaintop, which has come to symbolize the city of Rio de Janeiro, but which is also supposed to represent the unity of a modern Brazilian identity. Of course, the statue represents a limiting and exclusive image of a Brazilian people united under Christianity and economic progress (the statue’s exclusion of marginal elements in Brazilian society will be further analyzed in Part 2), but it is appropriated by the song in a different, more open way. This appropriation of an image to tell an alternative story is structurally similar to the way in which Gil inverts the narrative of his forced departure by turning it into a (possible) return, as well as to the way in which he invokes the memory of his slave ancestors’ diasporic history to show how the forced goodbye to his country is also part of his Brazilian identity and to draw attention to an aspect of Brazilian history that did not fit in with the image of the happy melting-pot of cultures promoted by the technocrats of the military regime. In the same manner, the image of the Christ as symbolizing the triumph of a modernizing nationalist project is re-appropriated in a carnivalesque way by making it refer to an open space of Brazilian identity that includes the marginalized characters saluted in the song (a clown, a girl from the suburbs and a samba school) within the organic realm of an embracing body. Significantly, the places saluted – and thus marked
as belonging to this expansive Brazilian identity – include the Flamengo neighborhood football stadium and the Realengo neighborhood where Gil and Veloso spent their term in prison.

Gil’s use of carnivalesque images as a way to characterize a multifaceted Brazil different from the dominant national discourse of Brazilian identity at the time resonates with Veloso’s rejection of Brazil’s continental status by referring to it as an island. From this insularizing perspective, Brazil’s carnivalesque character does not reside so much in the images used, but in the way in which the island-Brazil, during the colonial period, penetrated its continental Spanish-American neighbour in a grotesque way.

The grotesque, as characterized by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*, is any image that

[…] reflects a phenomenon in transformation, an as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image we find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis. (1984: 24)

Through this image of the grotesque, Brazil’s ambivalences can be traced: it is both European and indigenous, both Spanish and Portuguese, both island and continent. But, most of all, the grotesque Brazil is a place of unfinished identity.

The unfinished character of Brazil brings me back to the start of “Aquele abraço,” where the Sonic I states that “Rio de Janeiro is still beautiful / Rio de Janeiro continues to be / Rio of January, February and March.” The phrases “still beautiful” and “continues to be” suggest that the place has not changed, but that this unchanging character is not static and completed. It is a reaffirmation of how the city constantly and actively constitutes itself as unchanging and will also “continue” to do so in the future. Rio de Janeiro is therefore a city that, in spite of time’s progression (“January, February and March”), continues to regenerate itself like the cyclical movement of the seasons. This movement of the seasons is included in the name Rio de Janeiro, which, in English, would translate as “River
of January." It refers to the city's discovery in January 1502, when the Portuguese colonizers (once again) mistook the bay for a river mouth (Fleiss 26).

The image of Rio de Janeiro as a river mouth suggests an incomplete separation from the rest of the world. To the image of Rio as “the river of January,” the Sonic I in “Aquele abraço” adds February and March, extending its temporal reach. These months, not coincidentally, are the months in which Brazilian carnival is celebrated. Apart from the reference to the carnival celebration, it presents Rio de Janeiro as a body that is not a fixed geographical space, but that is moving through time. Together, these elements point to Brazil's carnivalesque becoming as an island that is also a grotesque, ambivalent body. The image of Brazil penetrating the neighbouring continent under Castilian rule or, before that, the image of a native land being penetrated by colonizers or mistaken for a river mouth invokes the openness of Bakhtin's grotesque body:

[...] the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it [...] the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth [...] in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, the throes of death, eating, drinking or defecation. (1984: 26)

Representing the simultaneous narrations of the Sonic I's arrival to and (implicit) imminent departure from Rio de Janeiro, “Aquele abraço” as a story is located at the threshold of the carnivalesque death and rebirth of the affectively diasporic subject. The Sonic I's death is suggested in the song's oblique references to Gil's imminent departure and in the apostrophic address at the end of the song “to you who has forgotten me,” which invokes his disappearance from the memory that ties him to the place he has left behind, and thus a way of ceasing to exist. But the sonic I also signals his rebirth through auto-consciousness: “I am the one who knows about me.” Here, we encounter a constitution of the archipelagic self in Timmer's terms. By “drawing [his] own travels around the world,” this
self is capable of narrating his affectively diasporic return through his imminent departure.

The world that the Sonic I evokes and salutes at the projected moment of his return is, not surprisingly, a carnivalesque representation of Brazilian society as capable of encompassing the opposite experiences represented in the Sonic I’s narrative. This inclusive territory is presented as under the command of Chacrinha, who, in line with Bakhtin’s definition of the grotesque body, is “wiggling his belly” and “commanding the masses,” where “masses” playfully conflates the Portuguese word for belly as an ‘accumulation of meat’ with that for ‘multitude.’

Chacrinha, whose real name was José Abelardo Barbosa de Medeiros (1917 - 1988), was a famous presenter on one of Brazil’s most popular television shows, *Buzina do Chacrinha,* which contained many carnivalesque elements. In the show, the audience played a prominent role and was often shown on screen. The people cheered and laughed at Chacrinha’s clownesque behavior, and made themselves heard as he judged talent-contests and danced in carnival processions as he sung. The salute of the Sonic I to Chacrinha, in which he calls him “old clown,” evokes the role of the clown in making the stage disappear as a hierarchical separation between actors and spectators in medieval carnival (Bakhtin 1984: 7-8). The fact that Chacrinha is seen “commanding the masses” and “giving his orders in the territory” is therefore not a reference to a top-down way of ruling the people, but to his being among them. Furthermore, on the television show, Chacrinha’s way of giving orders and commenting on candidates and dancers consisted of blowing a horn he always carried with him⁴⁶. Thus, it was not his voice that conveyed authority through linguistic orders, but the carnivalesque honking of a horn.

Chacrinha is also saluted by the Sonic I as “old warrior,” which supposes a bellicosity that contrasts with his clownesque ways. This could be an indirect

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⁴⁵ Between 1957 and 1988 – the year of his death – Chacrinha was a prominent figure on different Brazilian broadcasting canals. His show *A Hora da Buzina,* which was later called *Buzina do Chacrinha,* was broadcast between 1967 and 1972, alternating with his other show, *Discoteca do Chacrinha.* His last show, *Cassino do Chacrinha,* was on television between 1982 and 1988 (Rohrer 19, 41).

reference to the military forces, which, at the time of Gil’s performance, were
governing the country – literally “giving orders in the territory” and “commanding
the masses” by controlling and determining the Brazilian mass media. The clown’s
ridiculous and clearly illegitimate control over the people then is transferred to the
military, portrayed as a group of warriors who, instead of dedicating themselves
to defense and warfare, are, laughably, interfering with cultural matters. From this
perspective, the use of the horn as the medium through which the leader of the
masses makes himself heard is not only a way of pointing to Chacrinha’s lack of
an authoritative voice, but also ridicules the authoritarian discourse of Brazil’s mil-
itary governors. The trumpet, as a melodic instrument that can translate military
orders into different tonal sequences, is replaced with the horn, an instrument that
is neither discursive nor melodic, but which can only honk repetitively on a single
tone. Moreover, whereas playing the trumpet requires controlling the pressure of
the lips in order to create the right frequency, the horn consists of a grotesquely
opened mouth directly connected to a lung that, when squeezed, emits a blaring
sound. Because of the abrasive sound it makes, it could even be said that what is
at stake here is the replacement of the phallic trumpet with the farting horn.

That “aquele abraço” contains carnivalesque imagery is undeniable, but
how subversive is the carnivalesque? Glissant links carnival to a limited possi-
ability for ritualized relief in the Caribbean slave plantation: “each Plantation was
defined by boundaries whose crossing was strictly forbidden; impossible to leave
without written permission or unless authorized by some ritual exception, such
as Carnival time” (2008: 64). Bakhtin also relativizes the subversive potential of
carnival, as it is only “a temporary suspension of the entire official system with all
its prohibitions and hierarchic barriers” (1984: 89). He uses the image of the island
to indicate the limitations of carnival, but also remarks that the creation of these
islands was not at the authorities’ discretion; rather, “the marketplace” demanded
these spaces of freedom as “concessions”:

During the entire medieval period the Church and state were obliged to
make concessions, large or small, to satisfy the marketplace. Throughout
the year there were small scattered islands of time, strictly limited by the
dates of feasts, when the world was permitted to emerge from the official
routine but exclusively under the camouflage of laughter. Barriers were raised, provided there was nothing but laughter. (1984: 90)

The fact that the marketplace was able to “oblige” Church and state to create these islands, at which barriers were raised (signifying openness rather than isolation), connects them to their outside and puts into question their strict separation from what occurred the rest of the year.

The carnival evoked in “Aquele abraço” moves beyond the ritualized carnival as a punctual feast on the medieval agrarian calendar or as an indulged moment of celebration on the Caribbean plantations. Instead, by equating the image of Brazil with that of Rio’s carnival period between January and March, the Sonic I turns the carnival period into the normal state of things that “continue to be.” The carnival celebration that connects different, opposing elements to each other – the inside and the outside of the body, authoritative and marginal figures, departure and arrival, but also past, present and future – enables an escape from and critique of the official routine in the space of the song. Yet, although the space and moment of the carnival are extended, appearing not as islands but as encompassing the whole of Brazil – thus representing its insularization – this is still only possible “under the camouflage of laughter” in Bakhtin’s words; a laughter that is not just invoked by the descriptions of Chacrinha, but also by the cheerful rhythm of the song.

The carnival and the generalized atmosphere of laughter in “Aquele abraço” manage to transgress the limits of dominant discourse within the narration of the song. Its subversive potential thus resides primarily in the realm of the symbolic. At the level of the cantautores, however, their music was felt to have a clear social and political impact, leading to Gil’s and Veloso’s incarceration and forced departure from Brazil. Still, both artists, as well as the other tropicalistas, never proposed a direct opposition to the military forces, expressing their opposition to the regime primarily through nonconformist artistic and cultural attitudes. The fact that Tropicália was not only feared by the military, but also encountered sharp criticism from the politically engaged and anti-military left-wing groups, makes it possible to argue that its carnivalesque modes of expression resonated affectively within social groups that interpreted these modes differently according to their
Movement 3 - Insularization and Carnival

political orientation. The subversive potential of Tropicália’s carnival is therefore based on the affective resonance between the narrative content of the songs and the social contexts in which they were received. To show how this worked, I will conclude this movement with an analysis of a momentous event from Tropicália history involving Veloso.

The Transgressions of Tropicália

As emphasized by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, “it actually makes little sense to fight out the issue of whether or not carnivals are intrinsically radical or conservative, for to do so automatically involves the false essentializing of carnivalesque transgression” (14, emphasis in original). They specify, quoting Barbara Babcock, that “transgression” should be seen as “any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes” (Stallybrass and White 17-18). It does not indicate the actual subversion or overthrow of the dominant system, but hints at the possibility of destabilizing the symbolic foundation of its discourse of dominance.

At the 1968 Festival de MPB (Festival of Popular Brazilian Music), Caetano Veloso was confronted with a furious response by the audience when he started his performance in a black plastic outfit combined with exotic necklaces. The year before, he had already been booed by the audience for using electrical guitars, which were considered symbols of Northern American capitalist culture and therefore as a corruption of the purity of Brazilian popular music. This time, the protest by the spectators was of such a magnitude that Veloso was unable to sing over the noise they produced. His song, “Proibido proibir,” ‘forbidden to forbid,’ addressed the censorship in Brazil through a reference to a banner from the 1968 revolts in Paris proclaiming “Il est interdit d’interdire.”

Earlier at the same festival, the people in the audience had wildly cheered and applauded the song “Pra não dizer que não falei das flores,” ‘to not having to say that I did not speak about flowers’ by Geraldo Vandré, signaling that they expected a less playful, more militantly rebellious attitude from the artists.
Vandré’s song explicitly criticized musicians who “believe that flowers / will defeat the cannon” and called for an uprising incited by music: “we are all soldiers / armed or not / walking and singing / and following the song.” It is therefore not surprising that the spectators who had cheered and sang along to Vandré’s song did not connect to the Tropicália performance by a Veloso wrapped in plastic, citing graffiti from an alien European revolution. When comparing Vandré’s lyrics to those of Gil’s “Aquele abraço,” it becomes clear that they invoke the same type of symbolism, but with different functions and implications. For Vandré, the reference to “soldiers” is related to the heroism of a group that marches, with a clear purpose, to the meter of a militant song, while Gil’s evocation of the exploits of the clownesque “warrior” Chacrinha and the affectively diasporic Sonic I’s rhythmic march to Bahia’s “compasso” does not have a clear endpoint but sees them wandering endlessly along different trajectories.

While not recognized by the audience, a transgression of “cultural codes” by proposing an alternative can indeed be recognized in Gil’s and Veloso’s carnivalesque imagery. Vandré’s call to arms, although more overtly critical of the regime, only shifts paradigms within the existing discourse of military dominance. During his performance, Veloso, recognizing the seriousness of the situation, started shouting at the audience, condemning them for not recognizing the truly revolutionary work he and Gil were undertaking. This work, instead of calling for different people to take power within the same system, sought to attack the “structure” of the system itself. Those opposing it were seen as colluding with the military censors in “policing Brazilian music”:

**Mas é isso que é a juventude que diz que quer tomar o poder? Vocês têm coragem de aplaudir, este ano, uma música, um tipo de música que vocês não teriam coragem de aplaudir no ano passado! São a mesma juventude que vão sempre, sempre, matar amanhã o velhote inimigo que morreu ontem! Vocês não estão entendendo nada, nada, nada, absolutamente nada. [...] Eu hoje vim dizer aqui, que quem teve coragem de assumir a estrutura de festival [...] e fazê-la explodir foi Gilberto Gil e fui eu. [...] O problema é o seguinte: vocês estão querendo policiar a música brasileira. [...] Eu quero dizer ao júri: me desclassifique. Eu não tenho nada a ver com**
But is this the youth that says it wants to take over the power? You have the courage to applaud, this year, a song, a type of song that you did not dare applaud a year ago! You’re the same youth who will always, always, wait for tomorrow to kill the old enemy who already died yesterday! You understand nothing, nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing. [...] I came here today to say that who had the courage to take on the structure of the festival [...] and make it explode, were Gilberto Gil and me. [...] The problem is this: you want to police Brazilian music. [...] I wish to say to the jury: disqualify me, I have nothing to do with this. Nothing to do with this. (www.tropicalia.com.br)

With these words, Veloso referred to the dependence of the audience on dominant discourses that defined for them what styles of music could be included in the legitimized Brazilian canon and applauded. With that attitude, they would always end up fighting for causes that had already been won by others ("kill the old enemy tomorrow who died yesterday"). Veloso’s main goal, instead of merely opposing and critiquing the military censors, was to claim his right to constitute his (archipelagic or insularized) identity through a carnivalesque connection between apparently contradictory elements. It is this embrace of ambivalence that constituted a challenge not just to the “structure of the festival,” but to the structure of Brazilian society as a whole. Just like Gilberto Gil in the song “Aquele abraço,” Veloso did not want to be positioned either on the outside or the inside of a political discourse or territory, but claims the right to inhabit both worlds, the simultaneous experience of departure and return, the performance that is also performative, the continent that is also an island, the clown who is also a warrior. In order not to be judged on whether he fits in one discourse or another, he requested his disqualification from the festival, defiantly stating he had “nothing to do with this.”

What this event shows is that Tropicália’s carnivalesque attitude, by not simply opposing the censors but transgressing cultural norms in their narratives and performances, transgressed the dynamics at play in the power structures of
the Brazilian military dictatorship. The tropicalistas’ expressions of cultural ambi-
guity – making no clear separations between dominant and subjugated groups, and proclaiming their openness to the world in their proposal for an affectively diasporic Brazilian identity – were fiercely opposed by both the military right and the aspiring revolutionary left. This indicates that both sides of the power spectrum were contesting each other on the basis of the same inside-outside dichotomy. This is comparable to the dominance of the continental discourse as recognized by Rosello, where the question of either belonging to the continent or lacking it is contested through an insularizing narrative that endorses the idea of an open, unfinished and non-singular identity. When this image of the island is translated into the unfinished grotesque body, as in Gil’s song, it can be open to the world around it without disregarding the specific power of censorship and nationalist discourses in both Cuba and Brazil.
Fermata

In the Movements of this first Part about affective diaspora, I have analyzed the way in which the sonic and textual content of songs by Carlos Varela and Gilberto Gil defy any clear separation between the inside and the outside space of the song’s narrative structure. Because affective diaspora not only refers to a sense of dispersion without displacement, but, in the socio-political contexts of both cantautores, is also an experience closely related to repression and censorship, the objects of analysis are seen to actively negotiate contradictory forces of dispersion and circumscription. On the one hand, this means that diasporic experiences, which challenge the dominant, strongly nationalist and isolationist socio-political discourses of the contexts in which they were written and performed, shimmer under the narrative surface. On the other hand, censorship and the expected role of musicians in the construction of national identity in both contexts oblige the cantautores to play with the reversibility of the inside-outside dialectic. This play allows them to avoid censorship by causing confusion about what is fictional performance and what is performative expression, and about who is speaking. It also leads them to create narratives in which the border between the inside and the outside space is as blurred as the border defining the outlines of the imagined homeland in situations of diaspora.

These blurred borders were presented in Movement 1 as the oscillation between and convergence of narrative layers, and as the muddling of discursive presence, making it impossible to distinguish which of the different narrative voices is speaking when and through whose eyes the events are being seen. In Movement 2 the space in which the inside and the outside realms impinge on each other was explored by conceptualizing affect as a form of resonance between bodies, where any linear progression through physical or narrative space is derailed through a vertical, harmonic resonance between bodies and narrative layers. Movement 3, in its turn, explored how this affective and ambiguous in-between space of the affectively diasporic homeland was recreated in the analyzed songs through the narrative construction of insularized Caribbean identities and
the mobilization of grotesque, unfinished bodies.

After this Part’s analysis of narrative constructions and their effects, the focus of Part 2 will be on the sonic characteristics of songs and their auditive reception. Looking at songs by Carlos Varela and Jards Macalé, the dynamics between performer and audience in both live performances and recordings will be explored. The analysis of the songs will be related to the Cuban and Brazilian contexts, with a particular focus on the way in which they enter into a dialogue with hegemonic discourses. Prompted by the way in which the songs make use of rhythm and harmonic dissonance I develop the concepts of detuning and the membrane to indicate how marginalized discourses can potentially subvert hegemonic systems.
Part 2

Auditive Bodies: Carlos Varela, Jards Macalé and the Detuning of Hegemony
Pickup Note

In the first part of this study the analysis of songs by Carlos Varela and Gilberto Gil focused primarily on the narrative quality of the lyrics and their sonic embedding, as well as on the ways in which these narratives related to the experience of the affectively diasporic subject. By proposing music as an affective form of expression, I argued that the analyzed songs’ narratives are not exclusively structured according to a linear progression of melody and lyrics, but are rendered multidirectional by a harmony between notes or the presence of different narrative layers, creating a space of resonance in which different bodies can touch and change each other. This affective character relates to the experience of diaspora, in which both the diasporic subject and the homeland can be perceived as bodies that are not separated from what surrounds them, but resonate with other bodies. From this perspective, the subject that has not left his or her country can nonetheless feel disoriented and alienated when confronted with an outside world, either through the diaspora of others, as in the song “Árboles raros,” or through the prospect of having to leaving the country, as in “Aquele abraço.” This suggests that diaspora also changes the homeland by blurring the boundaries that separate it from the outside world.

In this second part I introduce Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of hegemony as a way of shifting the focus from the affectively diasporic subject in a global context to the marginal subject in a hegemonic system. Such a system can characterize anything from the socio-political context of the nation-state to the context of a particular musical performance. The analyses in the following Movements focus mainly on the auditive dimensions of the musical event as the vocal performance of the cantautor in a recorded song or the interaction between performer and audience during a live performance. In either case, it is the sonic dimension of musical expression that, I will argue, gives the marginal subject the potential to subvert the fixity of an apparently closed, self-affirmative hegemonic system. More specifically, this potential lies in the possibility of coming to occupy alternative discursive positions that are still part of the hegemonic system but
that do not necessarily accord with the parameters constituting its inside territory. In the songs and performances discussed in the following Movements, such alternative positions are made expressive through moments of rhythmic chaos or melodic disharmony, leading me to introduce the concept of **detuning**.

In order to visualize the ambiguous exterior interiority of marginal elements in a system of hegemonic articulation and of the marginal subject in a hegemonic socio-political context, I will, in addition, introduce the concept of the **membrane** to indicate the realm of simultaneous separation and connection that appears in situations where the inside and the outside of a system can no longer be clearly defined. The membrane encapsulates the position of the marginal subject without placing it outside the hegemonic articulatory system. Rather, it allows the marginal subject, through sonic mediation, to reshape and potentially expand his or her own boundaries, and thus to cause a change within the hegemonic system. It is precisely this stretching of boundaries from a marginal position that links the marginal subject of Part 2 to the affectively diasporic subject of Part 1. However, whereas in Part 1 the focus was mainly on the **affective resonance** between bodies as mutually impinging yet separated physical or geographical realms, here I am concerned with the way the sonic membrane allows for a conflation of realms normally separated according to the parameters imposed by the authorities.

The first Movement of this second Part will focus on the song “Guillermo Tell” by the Cuban cantautor Carlos Varela, with rhythm central to the analysis of a recorded live performance. The relation between marginality and hegemony is explored through the lyrics’ narrative argument in which the subordinated son wants to take over the leading role of his father. This narrative argument not only alludes to Cuba’s socio-political context at the time but is also taken up in the dynamics between audience and performer during the live performance. The function of the song’s *refrain*, which I connect to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s use of this concept, is approached as a sonic way of transgressing the usual separation between author and audience, and is related to the way in which marginality can subvert hegemony through rhythm.

In Movements 5 my analysis of “Let’s play that” by the Brazilian musician Jards Macalé will allow me to introduce the concept of detuning not only as a
form of harmonic dissonance, but also as a way of performatively expressing the non-harmonious encounter of realms that legitimized discourse perceives as separate. The image used in the song to express this transgressive encounter is that of a crazy, cross-eyed angel. Macalé’s deliberately unpolished studio recording of the song is related to Roland Barthes’ concept of the grain as the element through which the physical presence of the performer questions the separation between the performance of a song and its performative character as conceptualized by Judith Butler. I approach the blurred separation between these realms, which I relate to the inclusive exclusion of marginal subjects in a hegemonic system, through the concept of the membrane.

In the final Movement of this second Part I use the work of Chela Sandoval and Jeroen de Kloet to look at what detuning does to hegemony and censorship. I will focus in particular on the Cuban and Brazilian contexts in which these apparently exclusive manifestations of power overlap. I present detuning as the circumvention of a system that upholds the separation between both hegemony and censorship, emphasizing the playful character of detuning and the way in which its subversive potential also lies in its temporal layeredness. Here, Bryan Hulse’s theory of temporality in music will be read together with Giorgio Agamben’s concept of play. Finally, as a way of approaching the multiple character of detuning without reducing it to a single – and thus reductive – perspective, I propose a strabistic mode of reading or listening that takes the form of validating a simultaneous multiplicity of perspectives.
Movement 4
Rhythmic Subversion of Hegemony

When approaching music as a narrative, it is important to keep in mind that the song cannot be analyzed through its textual content alone, but that the sonic content of its rhyme, rhythm, melody and the voice of the singer also play a decisive role in its narration. Whereas a song’s textual content can lead a separate life from the melody and the voice of the singer, its rhythm is an element that traverses the textual and the sonic realm, creating their irrefutable interconnection. Thus, if a song is considered as a narration that is being read on various sensory levels by its listener, the possible slowness or fastness of a “reading” is heavily dependent on the pace dictated by the song’s performance. Nonetheless, pace is not an absolute value, as it may depend on the particular performance of the song, on the mood of the performer or on a particular type of interaction between audience and performer. Especially in the latter case, during a live performance, the active participation of the audience can change the way in which a song is performed. An important question that results from this suggestion is what such audience interference means for the question of authorship: who is in charge of the performance – who is the narrator?47

Because the notion of authorship is an important element in Cuban trova music, I will focus on the relation between the author/singer and the reader/listener in the context of a live performance through the analysis of a song that marked a turning point in the post-Revolutionary trova tradition: “Guillermo Tell” by Carlos Varela. Specifically, I will explore the mutual interference of different narrative levels that are usually considered separately: the fabula told in the lyrics, the song’s narrative construction and the event of its performance. The socio-political context of late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba in which the live performance was recorded is seen to influence all three levels. At this time, as noted in the

47 For more on the implications of musical performance for questions regarding the narrative structure of music (focalization, authorship, position of the narrator), see Vincent Meelberg’s New Sounds, New Stories.
Movement 4 - Rhythmic Subversion of Hegemony

Opening Sequence to this study, the difficulties that the Revolutionary authorities were experiencing in securing their position during a period of economic crisis in which the younger generations of Cubans also became more detached from the Revolutionary ideals created a situation in which hegemonic operations had to secure the centralized power of the state. My analysis addresses the possibility of interfering, from a marginalized position, with a discourse that is enunciated by an authoritative figure that can be either the state authorities, the performer as the author of the song or the subject of a narration. I will start by identifying the different narrative entities in the song and their interrelationships, which I will later place in a dialogue with my analysis of the extranarrative event of the performance.

Guillermo Tell | William Tell
---|---
Guillermo Tell no comprendió a su hijo | William Tell did not understand his son
Que un día se aburrió de la manzana en la cabeza | Who one day got bored with the apple on his head
Echó a correr, y el padre lo maldijo | He ran off, and the father cursed him
Pues cómo entonces iba a probar su destreza? | Because how was he going to show his mastery?

Guillermo Tell, tu hijo creció | William Tell, your son grew up
Quiere tirar la flecha | He wants to shoot the arrow
Le toca a él probar su valor | Now it’s his time to show what he is worth
Usando tu ballesta | Using your crossbow

Guillermo Tell no comprendió el empeño | William Tell did not understand the plan
Pues quién se iba arriesgar al tiro de esa flecha? | Because who was going to risk himself for this shot?
Y se asustó cuando dijo el pequeño | And it scared him when the little boy said
Ahora le toca al padre la manzana en la cabeza | That now it’s the father’s turn to put the apple on his head

Guillermo Tell, tu hijo creció | William Tell, your son grew up
Quieres tirar la flecha
Le toca a él probar su valor
Usando tu ballesta

William Tell no le gustó la idea
Y se negó a ponerse la manzana en la cabeza
Diciendo que no era que no creyera
Pero qué iba a pasar si sale mal la flecha

William Tell, tu hijo creció
Quieres tirar la flecha
Le toca a él probar su valor
Usando tu ballesta

William Tell, no comprendió a su hijo
Que un día se aburrío de la manzana en la cabeza

Of the Father and the Son

Four different narrative entities can be distinguished in the song. The most visible of these, and the only one whose name is mentioned, is William Tell. Second, there is the son, the object of the narrative argument aspiring to become its subject, giving him a prominent role in the way the narrative develops. The boy “ran off,” disturbing the established pattern because he “grew up” and now aspires to “shoot the arrow”: “now it’s the father’s turn to put the apple on his head.” The third entity is the Sonic I, the voice that narrates the stanzas but also the one speaking to William Tell in the refrain. The fourth entity, the narration’s addressee, is only present on the outside – the extradiegesis – of the song-as-narration. It comprises those to whom the Sonic I speaks in the stanzas and among whom the Sonic I stands when he addresses William Tell in the refrain. In the recorded
live performance, this addressee can be heard taking on an active role in the song-as-performance.

A telling detail related to the lyrics is that the facts of the story are presented in a language full of expressions and images closely related to the key values of Cuban Revolutionary ideology. The fact that, in addition, the song tells a story that inverts a well-known popular myth already raises the suspicion that the song's author, or the “Sonic I” who sings for this author, does not identify with the ideological interpretative framework within which he places the narration. The early-medieval tale of William Tell was originally about a Swiss rebel who is punished because he refuses to pay his respects to an Austrian nobleman. Because Tell is famous for his mastery of the crossbow, his captors tell him that he will be granted his freedom if he is able to shoot an apple off his son’s head. The fact that a Cuban cantautor embeds in his song the myth of a Swiss national hero who represents the struggle for the independence of a nation associates it with the history of the Cuban Revolution. That revolution also took on mythical proportions: it became the heroic story of bearded rebels who, supported by the people, came from the mountains to overthrow a military regime that was better equipped and had an army that greatly outnumbered the rebels.

On a deeper level, the topic of the father and his son can be seen to draw upon the imagery of the Cuban Revolution in which “the youth,” ‘los jóvenes’ are supposed to submit to the will of a state headed by a paternalistic central figure in the construction of a utopian “new” society. The slogan that young Cuban scouts use until the present day, “seremos como el Che”, ‘we will be like Che’ makes reference to the young militant idol who was willing to sacrifice himself for the Revolution and who eventually died fighting for the socialist cause. This reference to Che, whose martyrdom has granted him eternal youth in the Cuban Revolutionary discourse, links the image of “the son” to the willingness to (possibly) be sacrificed for the father’s struggle, and explains how the character of William Tell’s son is used in this song as a metaphorical reference to the Revolutionary ideal of “the youth.”

At the time Varela wrote and performed his song, the younger generations of Cubans did not experience the same unconditional dedication to the Revolution as their parents might have felt when the Batista government had only
recently been overthrown. They were starting to question the way things were instead of simply sacrificing their own desire to lead a “normal” life for a struggle—supposedly “against the imperialist enemy”—that was no longer theirs. The conflict between the father and the son in the song, illustrated by the potential inversion of their established roles, thus reflects the way in which the generations of Cubans that grew up or were born after the installation of the Revolutionary state—those who did not experience the struggle against the terrors of the preceding dictatorship—lived in a situation of mutual misunderstanding with the older generations that actively participated in the construction of a new society. This image of “newness,” by which the Revolutionary discourse up until the present day paradoxically posits its eternal youth, is contested by the Sonic I in the refrain: “William Tell, your son grew up.” In this way, the song’s Sonic I confronts the father figure with the new Oedipal reality he is unwilling to accept: his offspring is no longer the object submitting to his mastery, but has become a subject ready to take his place.

The Cuban youth’s alienation from the older generation is presented literally in the image of the son who “runs off,” away from his father, the authoritative parent. The author’s choice for this particular expression of the son “running off,” followed by the father, who “cursed him,” also evokes the event of the Mariel boatlift as referred to in the Opening Sequence of this study. The Mariel boatlift represents a painful moment in Cuban history, because it was marked by so-called “actos de repudio” or ‘acts of disavowal.’ As soon as it became known that certain people were about to leave for the U.S., they were cut off from water and electricity, and people from their neighborhood would gather in front of their houses to scream Revolutionary slogans or insults and throw eggs. Sometimes crowds would even physically attack the people as they were heading towards Mariel. This was accompanied by official speeches in which Fidel Castro referred to these people as “escoria,” ‘scum’ and “gusanos,” which reinvokes the image of “worms” Fidel Castro had used in the early years of the Revolution to refer to

48 Obviously, not all Cubans shared this enthusiasm, as the restructuring of Cuban society after the Revolution according to the new national-socialist guidelines also meant that many wealthy Cubans were deprived of their property. This was one of the reasons why a large group of people left the country shortly before and after the Revolutionary coup in 1959 for Miami, to await the overthrow of Fidel Castro.
those who fed on the rotten elements of society (Castro 1961: 1).

The distance between father and son in the song can thus be related to a historical act of geographical separation from the homeland – perhaps the most powerful and traumatic way in which distance can be experienced. The fact that the Mariel exodus aroused the anger of Fidel Castro is reflected in the resentment of William Tell, who is left wondering how to “show his mastery” without his son to support him. In other words, how to defend the cause of the people’s Revolution when the very people are taking off to the enemy’s land?

The expression “your son grew up” also indicates a conflict between different temporal experiences. The father is confronted with the fact that ‘time has passed him by’ and the sudden distance from his son also makes him aware of the speed at which time is actually moving. This awareness is followed by the introduction of the possibility of the inverted action, where the son would be the one shooting the arrow while the father has the apple on his head. Fast-moving time causes the son to be distanced from his father, who “does not understand [him]” and who is “scared” by the idea of inverting the established roles. Paradoxically, the son also moves closer to the father by aspiring to take over his role; he even wants to use his crossbow. Thus, perhaps the conflict between the different temporal experiences is not as radical as William Tell fears, as the son’s request for an exchange of roles does not imply a change in these roles themselves or a change in the enacted scenario. In the song, the reason why the son is rebelling is that he became “bored” and no longer wants to adjust to his father’s rhythm and repetition of action, which he feels he has outgrown. The son wants to actively take control of the events instead of being a mere prop.

Similar to the rebellious act of the son towards his father, which threatens to remove the boundary between them, the borders between traditionally separated realms are also transgressed at other levels of the song, both narrative and performative. At the level of narration the song starts by evoking the heroic third-person protagonist of a classic tale, usually considered unapproachable. But the almost sacred distance that is to be kept from this authoritative father figure is transgressed when the Sonic I suddenly switches to the second person and

49 For further reading on the impact of the Mariel episode on social life in Cuba, see Roberto Bach’s article “Socialist Construction and Cuban Emigration: Explorations into Mariel.”
addresses William Tell directly, at the same diegetic level. Where the Sonic I is an invisible narrator in the third-person narration of the stanzas, in the refrain he assumes a second-person address as he explains the new situation which William Tell “do[es] not understand.” Standing in for the son, he admonishes the father to accept the fact that it is now the son’s time “to show what he is worth.” Thus, the Sonic I assumes an authoritative, fatherly register every time the refrain sets in, telling the protagonist to hand over his crossbow to his son.

In the narrative construction of “Guillermo Tell,” the changing position of the Sonic I in terms of how the narrative is focalized already reflects the change of roles that William Tell’s son aspires to, a change of roles that is also sought by the younger Cuban generations, who feel ready to take control of Cuba and no longer want to passively subject themselves to the rules of the Revolutionary project as it was constructed by “their fathers.”

The Sonic We

Whereas so far I have focused on how the textual message of “Guillermo Tell” invokes the social and political context of late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba, I now want to move to the sonic content of the song and its performance during a concert. This leads me to address the effects of the interaction between performer and audience on the song’s narrative content. I will ask whether the audience can also assume the role of narrator in the song’s performance, and, if so, where this leaves the cantautor. The dynamics between performer and audience will be related to the Cuban socio-political situation through the concept of hegemony. Music’s auditive dimension, in particular rhythm, will serve to explain how the supposedly fixed dynamics of hegemony can be challenged at the level of the sonic.

What happens when we listen to the recorded live performance of “Guillermo Tell” as if we were reading a narrative? What does the presence of the audience do to the narrative construction? When the song is performed in front of a live audience, the narration takes place in a space that is physically close to the listener. In this particular narration, when the Sonic I switches to the second
Movement 4 - Rhythmic Subversion of Hegemony

person in the refrain, the narrative also makes a move towards the listener. At first, the third-person narration is something that is told to the listener as a passive entity that exceeds the audience present at the moment of the live performance’s recording. However, when the Sonic I directs himself towards the protagonist, William Tell, he gives the listeners the possibility of ‘watching over his shoulder’ as he speaks, or even to join him as he addresses the authoritative father figure. At the level of the narration, the Sonic I thus potentially becomes a collective entity, a Sonic We, that includes the audience as an external focalizer with an active role. This is the multiple voice that can be heard on the recording, where the audience sings along with Varela for almost the entire song. More than just singing along, the audience members can be heard to respond to the lyrics by clapping, screaming, whistling and cheering, to the extent that sometimes Varela’s voice almost blends with the collective voice.

Significantly, on the recording Varela’s voice is relatively soft and remains so throughout the song, even in the passages where the audience screams. This quiet performance is especially telling in a political climate where almost all discourses are delivered in a highly excited register of loud – predominantly masculine – voices that allow no interruption or disavowal. In contrast to the public speeches by Fidel Castro, where the audience was not allowed to interrupt by clapping but had to show its silent approval by waving small paper Cuban flags, Varela’s subdued performance gives the dominant voice to the audience, assigning them an active role in the process of narration. Crucially, this effects a similar reversal of roles to the one advocated in the lyrics between William Tell and his son. Transgressing the distance between audience and performer, as well as between the youth and the authoritative father figure, the performer allows the audience to address the father directly, as “you.” Thus, what is audible on the recording is not just a Sonic I telling William Tell that the tale has changed, but the collective voice of the Cuban youth, forged into a Sonic We, telling Fidel Castro, the father of the Revolution, that they have outgrown their role as enabling the perpetuation of a struggle that is no longer theirs.

I use the term “performance” because the soft singing is intentional. It is not a question of lack of vocal power, as Varela’s voice does allow him to switch to other registers; he even screams in some songs. In this case the soft performance serves to underscore the lyrics’ content.

50
Refrain and Performativity

The fact that it is in the refrain of the song that certain divisions between tradition-
ally separated authoritative roles are destabilized invokes Deleuze and Guattari's
concept of “the refrain,” which they present in A Thousand Plateaus as the content
of music that “is essentially territorial, territorializing or reterritorializing” (331).
According to Deleuze and Guattari, this construction of a territory implies that
the directional force of music as a creative process is being encapsulated within
a repetitive pattern – as in a bird song that literally marks a territory or in the
deteriorating move of turning “music into a ditty” that moves in circles within its
own closed realm of signification, of cause and effect (334):

The refrain is rhythm and melody that have been territorialized because
they have become expressive – and have become expressive because
they are territorializing. We are not going in circles. What we wish to
say is that there is a self-movement of expressive qualities. (Deleuze and
Guattari 349)

The refrain, understood in this way, appears in Varela’s song as the circular
movement within the repeating tale of William Tell, which, time and again in the
moment of its narration, confirms the father’s mastery. In other words, its repet-
tiveness is the self-movement that makes the father’s authority “expressive” by
reconfirming its own content; the tale itself becomes refrain. The son’s rebellion,
which causes a crack to appear in the self-confirmative repetitiveness of the tale,
is thus an act of deterritorialization of this refrain. However, because it is the
song’s own refrain that challenges William Tell’s authority, in this inversion of the
classic tale it is also the refrain that deterritorializes.

The same goes for the performance, where a deterritorialization of the
narration takes place in the part of the song where the diegetic roles change and
where the narrative seems to open up. Musically speaking, there is no significant
difference in melody, motive or rhythm when the refrain sets in, and the fact that
the performance of the song is a repeatable formula that is being recognized,
memorized, and duplicated by the audience in the moment of the performance
Movement 4 - Rhythmic Subversion of Hegemony

makes it possible to consider the entire song as a refrain. Even though the voice of the audience at times almost drowns out that of the performer, this does not cause a crack in the so-called self-movement of the song but rather reaffirms its “expressive qualities,” as Deleuze and Guattari would say. But if considering a song as a performance depends on it being memorized and acquiring a citational quality (as explained in reference to Bal in Movement 1), how can the emotional response of the audience in this recording of “Guillermo Tell” be understood as performative or, in other words, as a moment in which the musical content of the narrative opens up and allows the young Cubans in the audience to become the rebellious son stepping up against his father?

Within Cuban politics, performance as citation takes shape in the almost mechanical repetition of the Revolutionary paternalistic discourse, which not only defines the content of speeches, announcements and hymns, but resonates in all forms of speech that are part of the public space. Performance is thus what, to a certain extent, defines the public function of every Cuban: the role of “the good son” one has to play “out there,” outside of the private sphere of the home. To give an example, referring to someone as “una persona humilde,” ‘a humble person,’ as a way of expressing appreciation, is a way to value him or her according to the Revolutionary ideal of someone who is willing to sacrifice himself for the so-called “good cause,” just like the son of William Tell. Yet this is not what all Cubans imply when they use the word humilde, indicating that the sonic content of the word can become detached from its ideological function.

According to Slavoj Žižek in his book Looking Awry, it is precisely the “dumb repetition” of language that empties it of its ideological content (214). He gives the example of the song “Lily Marleen,” which was popular amongst German soldiers in the 1940s. The song’s popularity, however, also extended to the soldiers of the allied forces, leading to its eventual prohibition by the Nazi censors. What matters for my argument here is that the song caused all these different effects while the lyrics never changed. According to Žižek, this explains how simple repetition can isolate a textual context from its original – ideological – function (216). The effect that music adds to this is that of the sonic dimension, of the way the expression sounds, the way it is embedded in a certain rhythm and melody, or the way in which it becomes associated with the person who sings
it. Eventually, the sonic aspect can become more important than the linguistic content of what is being said or sung. This leads to the conclusion that the performance of certain prescribed and remembered formulas as a citational act does not preclude the possibility of a simultaneous performative act that may fulfill the opposite function of the performance through which it is brought to the fore. When the audience sings along to the lyrics of Varela’s song, therefore, it is still possible for them to make this act of citation performative in a way that subverts the traditional separation between a passive audience and an active performer. This performativity is attained at the level of the sonic.

Hegemony

The question remains, however, what the singing along of the audience means for the narrative structure of “Guillermo Tell” as a recorded performance. Although there is a performative element in the way the audience sings along with the lyrics, this does not mean that the cantautor is completely overruled as their author. Nor is the singing along of the lyrics based on an empty repetition that reduces them to their sonic aspect, to meaningless sounds. I want to relate the nuanced manner in which the recorded performance of “Guillermo Tell” connects performance and performativity, with neither fully displacing the other, to a broader question concerning hegemony: how can an act inscribed within a predetermined set of norms begin to negotiate with hegemonic power by changing these norms through the act itself?

In *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, written together with Laclau and Žižek, Butler pinpoints the similarities between performativity and hegemony by stating that both relate to the ways in which power is negotiated in a (social) system (2000: 20). Although the audience in the recording of “Guillermo Tell” occupies a marginal position in both the song’s narrative structure and the political context within which it is performed, its performative act of singing along with the lyrics creates a realm where interference with an established power structure becomes possible and where performance does not simply stand in opposition to performativity. Singing along is thus not only a citational act in which power relations
Movement 4 - Rhythmic Subversion of Hegemony

are being reaffirmed, but can enable the event of the performance to become performative by transgressing the boundaries within which this performance is supposed to take place. At the same time, it shows that performativity will always be dependent on and structured by a certain degree of performance, a certain level of citationality that envelops any event within a normative framework – or, in other words, a territorializing refrain.

This can be related to Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s characterization of hegemony in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, where they observe that:

[a] hegemonic formation also embraces what opposes it, insofar as the opposing force accepts the system of basic articulations of that formation as something it negates, but the *place of the negation* is defined by the internal parameters of the formation itself. (139, emphasis in text)

This explains why, for example, any counter-Revolutionary discourse in Cuba, in spite of its effort to emphasize its distance to Revolutionary ideology, remains tied to this very ideology as an opposing, negating force circulating within the same discursive formation. An important question that now presents itself is that of subversion: is subversion possible in hegemonic or performative contexts that include both affirmative and counter-affirmative elements within the same field of possibilities? In order to answer this question, it is helpful to trace the different steps Laclau and Mouffe take as they re-conceptualize hegemony by approaching it through post-colonial and post-Marxist theories.

Their first statement is that the theoretical field around hegemony is dominated by “articulation” as its primordial category: “We will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau and Mouffe 105, emphasis in text). Thus, Laclau and Mouffe develop a theoretical context for hegemony that no longer departs from a social context consisting of different – fixed – social classes between which the claim to political legitimacy can be exchanged and negotiated. Instead, they argue that this stable class context is an ideological construct that does not exist: “there is no sutured space peculiar to ‘society,’ since the social itself has no essence” (96). They emphasize how the transitory character of hegemony
as articulation is based upon the instability of the very system called “the social,”
the integral elements of which are inherently multiple and non-essential; these
elements are merely fixed within a particular social context according to “the
establishment of a certain order” (98).

Laclau and Mouffe continue by stating that the totality structured through
hegemonic formation can be characterized as a discourse, as a system the coher-
ence of which is based upon what Foucault calls “regularity in dispersion” (105).
Within the interior of this discursive system, all integrating elements occupy a
specific position, but these positions are never completely fixed. The theory of
discourse will always imply that it is limited by other discourses in which the same
elements can have different positions:

If we accept […] that a discursive totality never exists in the form of a simply
given and delimited positivity, the relational logic will be incomplete
and pierced by contingency. […] A no-man’s-land thus emerges, making
the articulatory practice possible. (Laclau and Mouffe 111, emphasis in
text)

A connection can be made between this image of a discourse that is always po-
tentially subverted by contingency and the notion of affective diaspora I present-
ed in Part 1 of this study. There, I showed how this contingency means that the
homeland can no longer be perceived as completely separated from the outside
world. The affectively diasporic space of the homeland is not only surrounded by
different discursive spaces, but is also affected by them, converting the fixed image
of the geographically located homeland to a discursive space that is constantly
articulated anew. In the recorded live performance of Varela’s “Guillermo Tell,”
contingency is located in the performativerealm: The Sonic I interferes with the
narrative subject, the audience interferes with the performer and the socio-politi-
cal circumstances interfere with the event of the live performance at the time of
the recording. This contingency allows marginal actors to interfere with that from
which they were excluded according to the hegemonic articulation. Thus, the
Cuban situated in the homeland can also be seen as a diasporic subject, located
within the diasporic realm of Cuban identity; the performer can become part of a
collective Sonic We that includes the audience; and the event of the performance can be converted into a performative critique of the Revolutionary authorities.

Nonetheless, the fact that elements can be articulated according to alternative hegemonic parameters does not necessarily mean that the “original” hegemonic context is actually being changed or subverted. It merely shows that the hegemonic framework within which any articulation takes place is never absolute, or, in the words of Laclau and Mouffe, is never a sutured space. The elements that constitute one particular discourse are constantly confronted with the possibility of alternative ways of becoming:

For the same reason that the social cannot be reduced to the interiority of a fixed system of differences, pure exteriority is also impossible. In order to be totally external to each other, the entities would have to be totally internal with regard to themselves: that is, to have a fully constituted identity which is not subverted by any exterior. (Laclau and Mouffe 111, emphasis in text)

This observation brings me to the particular role of marginality when it comes to subversion within a hegemonic context. Subversion, from this perspective, mobilizes the multiple potentialities of difference that hide within every single element constituting a hegemonic system. The presence of these potentialities is marginal in the sense that, although they are not necessarily present in a recognizable way, they are nevertheless there. Marginality, then, consists of the potentiality of establishing relations among elements according to a variety of criteria, subverting the supposed fixity of the criteria that establish hegemony’s inside territory. Because it is this potentiality for difference that constitutes the articulatory character of hegemony, marginality is an integral part of every hegemonic system.

Marginal Rhythm

If the Cuban musicians of the *topos* generation are perceived through the lens of the view of hegemony explained above, their marginality does not indicate their
complete exclusion from the hegemonic articulatory practices that are mainly constructed according to Revolutionary discourse. Rather, these marginal musicians are both separated from and connected to the hegemonic system. They use the same images and language of Revolutionary discourse, yet they are, on occasion, able to reframe these discursive elements by reorganizing them according to alternative criteria of relation.

Such a reframing, however, does not necessarily change the elements that make up the hegemonic system. At the first diegetic level of “Guillermo Tell,” for example, the son wants to be the one to shoot the arrow, but does not seek to liberate himself from the obligation of having to show what he is worth. What is advocated is a reversal of positions, not a changing of the structure of the event itself. Similarly, the audience turns the voice of the Sonic I into a Sonic We in order to address William Tell, but it does not break free from the metaphor of the story to directly shout a message at the Revolutionary authorities or Fidel Castro. Even if the audience was to address the political authorities directly, its demand for the young to take the place of the old does not change the essence of the relation between the elements that constitute the hegemonic system. This demand could therefore be quite easily incorporated in what Laclau and Mouffe call “the internal parameters of the formation itself.” In this case, therefore, it seems that language is not enough to contest hegemony. But language is not the only level of the song at which a reorganization of hegemonic elements takes place; the song also reframes through its sonic qualities, including its use of rhythm.

In the recorded live performance of “Guillermo Tell,” rhythm subverts the limits established by hegemonic articulation, where power is separated from subordination, father from son, artist from audience, performance from performativity. The audience, after numerous moments of cheering and applauding suddenly starts clapping in a way that apparently aims to mark the beat. At first, this clapping is hardly distinguishable, in the background, and seems to come from the back of the theater. Because the physical distance causes it to be out of sync with the momentum of the actual beat of the song, the clapping falls behind and seems to slow the song down. However, as the audience gradually takes up the clapping, the sound swells. It moves closer to the stage and to the microphones that catch the sound, and the beat of the clapping accelerates. There
are some moments of rhythmic chaos where the rhythm of the song that is being performed on stage does not coincide with the clapping in the audience, but this does not mean that the rhythm of the performed song is completely overruled. Rather, the metre of the song serves as a nodal point around which the rhythmic distortion takes place, whereas the difference in perceived rhythms indicates the multiplicity of possible rhythmic interpretations.

The rhythmic distortion taking place at this level can be linked to the temporal distortion at the level of the narrative, in which, as discussed earlier, the father is confronted with his son’s temporality as different to his own. The father and the son live in the same era, but they perceive its temporality differently. The son is ready for time to move on, with him now taking the lead instead of his father. The father wants time to stay the same; he is stuck in a past where his son is there to support him. The conflict of perceptions this triggers – which, as noted before, does not amount to a rejection of the system itself – can also be heard in the recorded live performance at the rhythmic level: the audience is not aiming to distort the rhythm of the song as it has been devised by the artist, but is following this rhythm from another point of listening, introducing it to variation.51 The audience’s distortion of the rhythmic structure of the song underlines how subversive elements are part of a hegemonic system: the overall metric structure of the song includes multiple possible interpretations of its rhythm, some of which are actualized when the performer is joined by the audience to form a Sonic We.

The people in the audience, in other words, come to act as the floating signifiers within a hegemonic system that Laclau and Mouffe consider to be necessary for any articulatory practice to take place. If these floating elements were not present, “the principle of repetition would dominate every practice within this system and there would be nothing to hegemonize” (Laclau and Mouffe 134). Perceived in this way, rhythm as a sonic aspect of the recorded performance of “Guillermo Tell” makes these floating signifiers audible as they prevent the song from becoming merely a territorializing, self-repetitive refrain. Rhythm, as explained in Movement 3 with reference to Deleuze and Guattari, constitutes the moment of chaos in which different milieus are constantly moving into one

51 Here, I considered the expression “point of listening” to be more appropriate than “point of view” as the event described is predominantly sonic in character.
another. It is the sonic manifestation of a movement that blurs the separation between milieus as different blocks of spacetime. As Laclau and Mouffe explain, “[hegemony’s] effects always emerge from a surplus of meaning which results from an operation of displacement,” preventing a self-affirmative, sutured discursive space from being established (141).

My analysis of “Guillermo Tell” has underlined that a hegemonic system never completely manages to secure its inside realm. In the song, this is demonstrated by the multiplicities inherent in the song’s narration and, more prominently, its rhythmic performance. At the same time, my analysis has also suggested that the subversion of hegemony does not rely on a complete transgression and replacement of its articulatory system. Rather, the subversion of hegemony occurs through the destabilization of the apparently absolute value of hegemony’s inside and outside realms when marginal elements make themselves heard. In this particular recorded performance, this happens most insistently through a sonic operation that takes the form of rhythmic interference. Rhythm, however, is not the only sonic operation capable of making marginal elements perceptible. In the following Movement, I focus on the song “Let’s play that” by the Brazilian cantautor Jards Macalé in which the interference with hegemony is melodic and the surplus of meaning contained within the floating signifiers that form part of any hegemonic articulatory system is expressed through what I call detuning.
Movement 5
The Cross-Eyed Angel

Jard's Macalé's song “Let's play that,” from his 1973 album Aprender a nadar, is considered to be an emblematic song of the Brazilian marginária scene and of its diasporic space. With lyrics by the poet Torquato Neto and put to music and interpreted by Macalé, the song compresses the essence of the marginária philosophy, in which marginality is not a passive status of victimhood, but an attitude of resistance that finds agency precisely in the adoption of a discourse closely related to categories of social disqualification that gave no access to a legitimized discourse: rebellion, madness, poverty and violence. The way in which “Let's play that” presents this marginária philosophy invites a detailed analysis of both its lyrics and its performance.

Similar to Varela's “Guillermo Tell,” three diegetic levels can be distinguished in “Let's play that” as a musical narrative. The first two diegetic levels are analyzed in this Movement. The first level consists of the realm of the narration as such, the intradiegesis where the interaction between the Sonic I and the figure of an angel takes place. Here I will introduce the concept of detuning, not only as melodic dissonance but also as social and political subversion. At the second diegetic level the artist as a narrator becomes audible. His audible presence interferes and intertwines with the narration's intradiegesis. In this part of the analysis I will use Barthes' concept of the grain as pointing to the performative physical presence of the performer, and introduce the concept of the membrane as an indefinite separation between realms that makes it possible for each to expand into the other. This expansion is explained as a sonic effect.

The third diegetic level, analyzed in Movement 6, includes the presence of the listener or the analyst and his or her way of understanding the detuning of the recorded song. The difference with the recorded live performance of “Guillermo Tell” discussed in the previous Movement is that in this case the audience is confined to the listener, who cannot interfere with the performance of the event in a
direct way. Movement 6 will also explore in more detail the effects of detuning, which the current Movement introduces as a melodic form of sonic interference with hegemony.

Be Marginal, Be a Hero

An important reference for understanding the lyrics of “Let’s play that” is a work by the artist Hélio Oiticica that visually captures *marginália*’s strategy of resistance in one image. The work, entitled “Seja Marginal, Seja Herói,” shows an image of the outlaw Cara de Cavalo, Oiticica’s friend from the *favelas* of Rio, lying on the ground after having been shot by the police in October 1964 (Figure 1). The story of Cara de Cavalo had become exemplary of the ongoing violent conflict between the police and the outlaws from the favelas. Responsible for the death of a policeman, Cara de Cavalo was chased down by an official death squadron, literally called “Esquadrão da Morte,” that is said to have fired more than a hundred shots when liquidating him[^52].

[^52]: Also see my article “Artimanha, the Precise Moment of Being” (2011). For further reading on Cara de Cavalo, the *Esquadrão da Morte* and drug trafficking in Brazilian favelas in the 1960s, see Otavio Ribeiro’s *Barra Pesada*.

![Figure 1: Hélio Oiticica’s “Seja Marginal, Seja Herói” (1968).](http://memoriasdadtadura.org.br/obras/seja-marginal-seja-heroi-1968-de-helio-oiticica/)

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Although the image of Cara de Cavalo lying dead in the street reappeared multiple times in various creations by Oiticica dedicated to him, the most famous frame was the picture of the corpse accompanied by the words: “Seja marginal, seja herói,” ‘Be marginal, be a hero.’ Here, Oiticica shows how his idea of marginality as resistance, or *marginália*, refers to the heroism of daring to defy institutionalized borders, either at the level of social codes or aesthetic attitude (Coelho 143). Taking the prominence of the dead body into account, the presented heroism can also be said to be about daring to not-exist, or to cease to exist as a consequence of a self-chosen marginality. The corpse of Cara de Cavalo is the physical representation of this non-existence. If, then, marginal resistance has recourse to the ability to be – or to become – invisible, the very tools of repression that the authorities resort to when trying to force potentially dangerous groups into oblivion are turned against them. The double character of this image, which represents both absence and presence, both the death and the victory of a marginal figure, highlights the ambiguous role marginal elements play in a hegemonic system.

As noted, Macalé’s song expresses this idea of marginality at various narrative levels. I will start by analyzing the first level, that of the song’s fabula, in order to show how Oiticica’s example of the marginal hero is captured in the image of a particular kind of angel. The narration is presented through the eyes of a first-person focalizer, the Sonic I, who is also the protagonist of the story and who tells about his encounter with a strange angel at the moment of his birth. Apart from the fact that the story is apparently being told to someone, there is no direct interaction with an audience.

Let’s play that Let’s Play That

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quando eu nasci</th>
<th>When I was born</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Um anjo louco</td>
<td>A mad angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um anjo solto</td>
<td>An angel out of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Um anjo muito torto</td>
<td>A cross-eyed angel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veio ler a minha mão</td>
<td>Came to read my hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Não era um anjo barroco</td>
<td>It was not a baroque angel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Era um anjo muito solto It was an angel out of control
Doido, doido Disturbed, disturbed
Com asas de avião With wings of an airplane
E eis que o anjo me disse And so the angel told me
Apertando minha mão Squeezing my hand
Entre sorriso de dentes Grinning

Vai, bicho desafinar Come on, man, and detune
O coro dos contentes The choir of the satisfied

Let’s play that Let’s play that

The song starts with the announcement of the birth of the protagonist, which coincides with the visit of an angel who comes to read his hand. With the words “when I was born,” the protagonist not only announces the start of the narration, but also evokes the moment in which he came to life and first acquired the ability to pronounce himself an “I.” The protagonist’s claim to the status of narrator of the story thus coincides with his coming into existence. The angel, seemingly disqualified from any possible claim to legitimized discourse because of its madness, also gains a position in the narrative structure as the song ends with the angel’s words.

The madness ascribed to the angel and the marginalized status of this figure in the narration evokes Michel Foucault’s book Madness and Civilization. There, Foucault evokes the history of madness as both a social and a clinical (dis)qualification in order to analyze its ambiguous position as a category on the outside of society – but not quite. Starting his study in the early Middle Ages, when lepers were banned from cities and had to establish themselves in so-called “cities of the damned,” Foucault argues how, a few centuries later, after leprosy had disappeared from Europe, this world outside the city walls still represented the realm of the “non-human,” outside of what was considered to be “community.” By that time, the category of the leper was projected onto other marginalized groups that could not – or would not – comply with the existing norms of labor and social community, and were consequently excluded from society. These groups
included the poor, criminals and the mad.

Foucault also recognizes a certain fascination of the early medieval church with leprosy, which was seen to testify to the scornful presence of God. Therefore, rather than being completely banned, lepers were kept at a “sacred distance” in a religious construction which implicated “social exclusion but spiritual reintegration” (Foucault 1989: 8). This same ambiguous separation was, in a later era, applied to the poor, criminals and madmen, with the establishment of prisons and asylums. By creating places where these socially disqualified people could be put away, “civilization” found a way of including them in a non-inclusive manner. This group of people therefore preserved a possibility of religious salvation without being able to unduly disturb public life (Foucault 1989: 1-5). Hence, these marginalized subjects represented an in-between category Foucault calls “the interior of the exterior, and inversely” (1989: 9). This in-between category recalls the ambiguous position of marginal elements in a hegemonic system described in Movement 4.

In Macalé’s song, the inclusive exclusion of the madman is radicalized metaphorically by the figure of the angel. The angel, a character in the narration told by the Sonic I, is part of an apparently chronological account of events that took place right after the protagonist’s birth. From the start of the song, the angel embodies the opposite of normality. Far from being a conventional baroque angel, the Sonic I describes it as “mad,” “cross-eyed” and “out of control.” This angel can therefore be related to Butler’s concept of the “constitutive outside” as the necessary negativity against which a naturalized “normality” defines itself. Explained in terms of the performativity that Butler sees as constituting normatively gendered bodies, this constitutive outside is “the unspeakable, the unviable, the nonnarrativizable that secures and, hence, fails to secure the very borders of materiality” (1993: 188). Again, this evokes the way hegemony, in the previous Movement, was said to be incapable of creating a stable inside realm.

What is striking about Macalé’s song, however, is that the angel, despite being seen as mad, eventually does get to speak. By reading the latter’s hand, moreover, the angel disrupts the chronological narrative with an act that is

53 Whereas the example refers to madness as the constitutive outside of sanity, Butler uses this concept in relation to heterosexuality’s positioning of homosexuality.
associated with fortune-telling, with the prediction of the future. The Sonic I's life is thus anachronistically reinterpreted through the eyes of the mad angel and the words of the angel are invested with a certain visionary authority, also because they are the last words that are spoken.

Notably, as in Varela's “Guillermo Tell,” the refrain which in Macalé’s song consists of the verse “Let’s play that” is the part in which the deterritorialization of the dominant, legitimizing discourse by the mad angel takes place. In Varela’s song, the refrain allowed the Sonic I (from the edge of the narrative) and the audience (from outside it) to address William Tell, standing in for the Cuban authorities, whereas in “Let’s play that” the voice of the mad angel comes from within the narration to call for the subversion of coherent, legitimized discourse. The refrain tells the Sonic I – and, by implication, the listeners – to “play that,” and therefore to act out the destabilization the refrain is about.

But what is the specific role and function of the angel in the song? From the moment of its appearance, it claims the focus of the narration for itself. The opposite of a baroque angel – a divine entity believed to be a God-sent messenger –, this angel is mad, cross-eyed and out of control. As such, it does not seem to be trustworthy or divine. The description of the angel as “torto,” ‘cross-eyed,’ is an allusion to “Poema de sete faces,” written in 1930 by the Brazilian poet and novelist Carlos Drummond de Andrade, where the lyrical subject is told by a cross-eyed angel that he should be different from the rest.54 Tellingly, the poem revolves around the lyrical subject’s struggle with the carnal temptation that this angel from the shadows lures him into (Drummond de Andrade 11-12). The cross-eyedness or strabism of the angel is thus not only a symptom of its non-divine status, but also represents its closeness to the human body, its status as anything but an ethereal entity. This makes it less surprising that the cross-eyed angel from Torquato Neto’s later poem predicts the narrator’s future by reading his hand rather than delivering a message from God. As an angel that belongs to the shadows, it seems fitting that it engages in a profane act based upon the reading of the human body.

54 The poem starts with the words “Quando nasci, um anjo torto / desses que vivem na sombra / disse: vai, Carlos, ser gauche na vida,” which can be translated as: When I was born, a cross-eyed angel / like those that live in the shade / said: go, Carlos, be contrarious in life. (Drummond de Andrade 11-12).
In his article on the function of the angel as a prominent figure in postmodernist popular culture, Brian McHale has pointed out that angels should not only be seen as messengers, but also as markers for the existence of another world (49). This observation makes it possible to avoid categorizing the angel in Macalé’s song as either a divine or diabolic entity, and to view it instead as the most radical form of otherness humans can be confronted with. In the words of McHale, angels are “figures of ontological plurality – of the plurality of worlds” (50). McHale considers the angel to be a symptom of postmodernism because it exemplifies postmodernism’s emphasis on the multiplicity of realities, points of view and associations (49).

Although the angel in the 1930s poem by Drummond de Andrade dates from an era in which modernity and modernization, with their penchant for homogenization, were being glorified in Brazil, it does relate to a multiplication of worlds in the sense of Brazil’s insertion into a global economy during the first presidential term of Getulio Vargas (1934-1945), the emergence of new working classes because of industrialization and the explosive urbanization that led to a growing variety of cultures and classes within the microcosms of the larger cities. The Christ statue that was constructed on the Corcovado hilltop in Rio de Janeiro in the 1930s was the symbol that crowned Brazil’s insertion into the modern world. Observing the present-day urban landscape of Rio de Janeiro, where self-constructed favelas cover hills that emerge like islands from a sea of residential houses and large buildings, the open-armed Christ, who lovingly embraces all these contrasting elements within the legitimized inside territory of the city, recalls Foucault’s account of the ambiguous exclusive inclusion of non-normative groups.

The image of the Christ statue leads me back to the image of Cara de Cavalo in Oiticica’s representation of marginal heroism described at the start of this Movement. The image of the bullet-ridden corpse lying on the ground with widespread arms, its feet pointing towards the upper corner of the frame, is like a crucifix turned upside down – like a reflection of the Christ on the Corcovado in a pool of water on the muddy streets in the favelas, the shadow of Brazil’s announcer of modernity and Christian salvation. This body, which became the icon of marginália, can be considered to represent the kind of plurality of
worlds that for McHale characterizes postmodernism. It signals the possibility of an alternative point of view, which in the previous Movement I related to the presence of unstable marginal elements in a hegemonic articulatory system and to the moment of rhythmic chaos audible on the recorded live performance of “Guillermo Tell.” In the current analysis, the presence of alternate points of view on the margins, inside-outside the hegemonic system, appears in the image, itself multiplied across different poems, a song and an artwork, of a cross-eyed angel or upturned Christ.

Detuning the Choir of the Satisfied

The angel visits the Sonic I of “Let’s play that” at the moment of his birth, with “wings of an airplane” that are a playful allusion to Brazil’s modernization project and that also mirror the widespread arms of the Christ statue, as well as Oiticica’s image of Cara de Cavalo. The angel is cross-eyed because its point of view is radically different from the legitimized, clear-eyed and apparently undistorted hegemonic view governing Brazilian society; cross-eyed also because all that it perceives carries within itself a multiplicity caused by the overlapping of different perspectives, focal points and readings. Consequently, it is not surprising that the angel’s message, as it reads the hand of the Sonic I, refers to detuning as an act of rebellion through multiplication.

The concept of detuning is based on the proliferation of worlds, perspectives or, in music, tones. However, detuning implies more than just producing multiplicity, as the presence of multiple viewpoints does not mean they all exert influence or are capable of disturbing the normative perspective. The mere existence of favelas in Rio de Janeiro does not change life in the rest of the city, just like in music the simultaneous emission of different tones does not necessarily cause dissonance. Instead, the disturbance occurs when different realms overlap: when the people from the favelas come to the city or when within one musical note there is an irregular resonance of slightly different tones. In music theory, detuning is mostly explained in terms of “dissonant intervals” that refer to a sense of listener discomfort if the tonal distance between simultaneously emitted notes
Movement 5 - The Cross-Eyed Angel

does not fit the mathematical ratios that define the clear separation of notes. The disturbing resonation perceived is caused by the failure to make two or more simultaneously played notes sound as one or to form a harmonious whole from different, separate notes. The perception of detuning is culturally defined and can therefore not be explained by physics (Gauldin 16-7).

The metaphor of the “choir of the satisfied” used in Macalé’s song helps to explain the concept of detuning. A choir is a key example of musical harmonic multiplicity: multiple voices that produce multiple melodies (except when all voices sing unisonously), which makes up a harmonious piece of music. To achieve harmony, all voices need to adapt to the same metric and melodic structure. Of course there will be a multiplicity of melodies and rhythmic structures, but they are all part of the same mathematical model in which rhythm and its counterpoint, melody and its harmony, are in balance with each other. In other words, as long as the sonorous voices are identical to themselves, the choir can be harmonious or, in the terms of “Let’s play that,” satisfied. The opposite of this would be when all metric and melodic elements and all voices are radically different, without a balanced structure, which would produce noise.55 However, in a situation where there are voices that do reproduce the overall structure but that sit slightly on the in-between of different notes or melodies, dissonance occurs within the harmonious whole. In that case, detuning results in a similar unsettling simultaneousness of multiple unstable – marginal – elements in a hegemonic system as occurred during Carlos Varela’s recorded live performance due to the rhythmic interference of the audience.

Detuning thus appears as another sonic way in which marginal elements

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55 I am aware that my use of the word “noise” here does not reflect the complexity of this concept as it has been developed in the humanities. Paul Hegarty refers to it in Noise / Music as pure negativity, not only because noise is unwanted and unstructured but also because it exists as a relationality with respect to all that it is not (5). Greg Hainge takes this a step further by stating that noise consists of the process of this relation of negativity, in which it is “the artefact of the relation in which being expresses itself in its actualization” (16). He summarizes his argument by stating that noise “expresses the nature of the relation and deconstructs the binary oppositions that generally channel our attention towards a discrete and isolated aspect of an expression: form and content, for instance, or medium or message” (17). Although these conceptualizations provide an interesting starting point for further research on how noise relates to my concepts of affective resonance and detuning, there is no room to develop this connection in the current study.
can gain expressive qualities within the articulatory practices of a hegemonic system in Laclau and Mouffe's sense. It is through the distortion of the harmony that marginalized voices – normally silenced by the harmonious choir of the satisfied – can make themselves heard, without necessarily aiming to create a new harmony. When, in “Let’s play that,” the angel tells the Sonic I to detune, the imperative is not to stop the music produced by this satisfied choir or to sing another song, but to join in the refrain and play with it: “Let’s play that.”

The Grain

The second diegetic level of Macalé’s song is where the physical presence of the performer interferes with the song, which no longer is merely a poem with a certain rhythm and melody, but also has a timbre, volume and ‘feel’ of its own, which is difficult to express or analyze in technical terms. Roland Barthes pinpoints this struggle related to the analysis of music in his article “The Grain of the Voice,” where he contends that musical criticism tends to remain confined to the use of the adjective, which leads to a highly subjective way of translating into words what happens in music. He proposes a change in the way in which the object is perceived by focusing, in sung music, on the bodily manifestation of the voice – “the grain of the voice” – in its “dual production of language and music” (179-81). He also states that he is not so much interested in the technical aspects of sung music, because this dimension of music is culturally “coded” and therefore predefined. Instead, he is looking for something “[that] is there, manifest and stubborn, […] beyond (or before) the meaning of the words” (180-81). The difficulty Barthes experiences is that most sung music, especially in recordings, has been polished to such an extent in its aim for a perfect rendering of the notes that the body that is behind the music becomes imperceptible: “never the tongue, the glottis, the teeth, the mucous membranes, the nose” (183).

When listening to various songs on Macalé’s album Aprender a nadar, his mumbling way of singing some of the lyrics not only forces the listener to come closer to the speakers in order to distinguish what he is saying, but also makes it necessary for the recording devices to be put closer to the performer, with less
possibility of drowning out small imperfections in the recording. The ear of the listener is positioned so close to the performer’s body that some bodily noises cannot be censored or smoothed. Macalé can be heard as he breathes, swallows, prevents himself from drooling, and at certain moments there is even the sound of his nails scratching the strings of his guitar. The grain that Barthes refers to is therefore abundantly present throughout the album. However, the emphasis on its presence raises the suspicion that this is a strategy on the part of the performer, which already makes the grain coded – and therefore, according to Barthes, culturally (pre)determined.

Because of the mumbling way in which the lyrics are sung, which sometimes is so extreme that the instrumental background seems to drown out the singer’s voice, the Sonic I that is being presented almost disappears. The performance of the song therefore creates uncertainty with regard to who occupies the central position in the story’s narration: the Sonic I or the singer. Although the Sonic I is still the one telling the story, the way the song is sung does not allow him to lay claim to the legitimacy of his own discourse, at least in terms of its semantic content. The mumbling presentation makes the lyrics of the song and its narrator less important than the voice singing it.

At the same time, the mumbling also acquires narrative meaning. Because it is most intense at the beginning of the song, where the Sonic I introduces his birth, it draws attention to the voice’s influence on how the Sonic I constitutes itself through discourse. Whereas the birth of the Sonic I – literally effectuated by the enunciation of “I” – might suppose to be an event that clearly defines a circumscribed identity for the subject, the voice that enunciates seems to subvert the firmness of this speech act. The voice of the Sonic I, understood in this way, could again be seen to point to the marginal elements that prevent a coherently delimited inside realm – in this case of identity – from emerging.

According to Barthes, “the voice is not personal: it expresses nothing of the cantor, of his soul; it is not original […] and at the same time it is individual: it has us hear a body which has no civil identity, no ‘personality,’ but which is nevertheless a separate body” (182). What can thus be distinguished behind the textual content of the song – or, rather, what is draped around it – is a mumuring body that is material, physical and in the world, but that at the same time is not
culturally coded and without essence or identity. The relationship that the listener has to this body, this grain, is one of an evaluation that exceeds culture, a process Barthes describes as follows:

If I perceive the ‘grain’ in a piece of music and accord this ‘grain’ a theoretical value (the emergence of text in the work), I inevitably set up a new scheme of evaluation which will certainly be individual – I am determined to listen to my relation with the body of the man or woman singing or playing and that relation is erotic – but in no way ‘subjective’ (it is not the psychological ‘subject’ in me who is listening; the climactic pleasure hoped for is not going to reinforce – to express – that subject but, on the contrary, to lose it). The evaluation will be made outside any law, outplaying not only the law of culture, but equally that of anticulture […] (188)

I want to suggest that the Sonic I of “Let’s play that” does not consist solely of this non-subjective body that represents the grain of the language it produces, because, as noted above, the way in which the cantautor’s body interferes with the language of the song also establishes a dialogue between performance and lyrics. When the Sonic I mumbles the event of his birth, this gives expression to the way in which his presence as a subject in a society constructed as a hegemonic system is marginal, as an entity lacking a clear, proper voice. Later in the song, when the angel reads the Sonic I’s hand in the stanzas “vai, bicho, desafinar o coro dos contentes,” ‘come on, man, and detune / The choir of the satisfied,’ it is the angel who is speaking and the sonic register of the singer changes to a loud, shrieking, at times screaming voice in a high, off-tune pitch. In both vocal registers, therefore, the use of the voice is coded because the registers serve the purpose of expressing – or rather, creating – the bodies that are part of the narrative.

In her analysis of performative gender in Bodies That Matter Butler emphasizes that the power behind any apparently deliberate discursive act is based on its citational character, its tendency to fall back on a “chain of binding conventions.” She takes as an example the pronunciation of “I” to show that the subject is not the one who “stands behind discourse and executes its volition or will through discourse,” but that there is “first a discourse which precedes and
enables that ‘I’ and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will” (1993: 225). In accordance with Barthes, who recognizes in the grain of the voice a characteristic of the speaking or singing body that is not personal, Butler characterizes this pronunciation of ‘I’ as “a citation of the place of the ‘I’ in speech, where that place has a certain priority and anonymity with respect to the life it animates” (1993: 226).

The application of Butler’s and Barthes’ observations to the analysis of music and lyrics suggests that performance as a deliberate citation of a musical score or a social norm is always already subverted by a performativity that precedes this citation and even the subject who produces it. An important difference between the two points of view, however, is that for Barthes the impersonal dimension that lies beyond language’s meaning is located in the body and is therefore not reducible to cultural norms, whereas for Butler all language originates in discourses that are historical and political, and is therefore prior to its possible materialization of and in the body.

The body, in both cases, is the nodal point where discourse is either constituted or deconstructed as it is enunciated: a no-man’s land between acts of creating and unmaking through language, yet always within language’s reach. The body therefore never completely dissolves into nothing – as shown above with respect to “Let’s play that,” the grain of the voice can also be coded – nor does it completely constitute itself through discourse without this discourse to some extent being cannibalized by the body it produces. The body can be seen as the material representation of a hegemonic articulatory system that is always potentially cannibalizing itself by contingency. The angel in “Let’s play that” then comes to represent this potential cannibalization, subversion or detuning when his cross-eyed reading of the Sonic I’s hand – as an extension of the body – lays bare the inherent multiplicity of possible alternative articulations that, however dormant, are present in the body itself.
The Membrane

Within the sutured space of a social system that can be understood as a “choir of the satisfied,” the body does not stand out from the bigger mass as long as it adapts to the internal rules of hegemonic discourse or musical harmony. When the body claims its role in discourse or harmony as a separate entity, two situations can arise: either discourse becomes activated through its enunciation, making the speaking subject appear to itself as it says “I” and thus causing a slight interference within the same voice between the speaking and the spoken “I”; or, alternatively, the body that produces discourse is “grained” and therefore independent of its semantic production, causing the voice of the “I” speaking through language to interfere with the purely sonic entity that speaks through its body. In both cases, detuning is what takes place when the body experiences an internal difference that makes it resonate in a non-harmonious way with itself. In the definition of detuning given earlier, cultural preceptions of what is harmonic and what is not were seen to form the hegemonizing context, which, in this discussion, is captured in the image of the body. Translated to language, detuning occurs when a perceived multiplicity within an enunciation cannot be reduced to the realm that is supposed to represent the speaking body. From a hegemonic point of view, the body constitutes a physical presence with a specific function within the systematic whole. If this body is – potentially – multiple, it can no longer be seen as merely singular (individual) or plural (group).

This is where I want to introduce the concept of the membrane. Within a hegemonic system, as explained earlier, it is impossible to establish a sutured space of signification without eliminating the possibility of articulation, which is the core characteristic of a hegemonic system. This means that the elements that make up a hegemonic system, or rather, the enunciating bodies that constitute a discursive realm, can never be completely self-identical, as this would take away their capacity of pronouncing “I” as an affirmation of their existence. After all, pronouncing “I” as a reaffirmation of one’s subjectivity already implies an inherent multiplication in which the subject can reflect upon itself. As discussed through the theories of Barthes and Butler, the performative speech act of saying “I” implies a non-subjective voice that, by citation, pronounces its particular
position in a discursive whole. Conversely, the discursive system needs a voice in order to give the position of “I” in discourse a physical allocation. The body therefore emerges where sound and language, grain and discourse meet and materialize. The membrane designates this ambiguous space of contact, where one term (sound, grain) is neither identical with nor completely external to the other (language, discourse).

In the *Oxford English Dictionary* a membrane is defined as “a thin sheet of tissue [...] usually serving to cover or line an organ or part, or two separate or connected parts.” It is thus given a double function of separation or connection and placed both inside (lining an organ) and outside (covering it). In addition, the etymology of the word provided by the same dictionary emphasizes the physicality of the membrane, as its Latin origin, *membrána*, means “flesh,” whereas the provenance from *membranus* or “parchment” refers to the membrane as an organic and palpable bodily tissue that does not form an impenetrable barrier between two things or between the inside and the outside of a thing, but that is part of both realms.\(^\text{56}\)

Related to Barthes’ theory of the grain, the membrane can represent the physical manifestation of the “separate” body that transmits the grain in music, but that nevertheless does not attain a full “civil identity” in discourse and is therefore not so clearly different from other bodies as to constitute a subjective identity. In the same vein, the performative body that Butler perceives as able to enunciate “I” in order to reaffirm its presence in the material world may be considered encapsulated by a membrane that binds the abstract system of discursive possibilities to a delimited physical entity in a relationship of mutual dependency. In both cases, the membrane – as a stretchable tissue – explains how it is possible for voice and discourse to reach deeply into each other’s realm without dissolving.

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\(^{56}\) This conceptualization of the membrane comes close to the way Jacques Derrida, in *The Truth in Painting*, uses the concept of the *frame* in relation to Kant’s idea of the *parergon*. Kant’s *parergon* is defined as a “hybrid of outside and inside” which, according to Derrida, escapes definition because it can be either exteriority or interiority or “the surface between the two limits.” The difference with the concept of the membrane as I use it, however, is that the membrane is organic and related to a performative act, a moment in time, whereas Derrida, through Kant, ponders the possibility of establishing a “limit between work and absence of work” in a more static and definite sense (1994: 63-4).
My analysis in this Movement of the sonic aspects of “Let’s play that” has shown the usefulness of the membrane for conceptualizing a detuned sonic realm in which the body is present without completely becoming part of the larger discursive system within which it is situated. In relation to the hegemonic system, the potential for marginal elements to subvert this system was based upon the possibility of alternative criteria of articulation that these elements represented. Here, I have explained how the inherent multiplicity of the subject may be revealed, on the one hand, through foregrounding the body as a pure voice or grain that is (largely) independent of discourse, and, on the other, through emphasizing the ambiguous position of “I” in discourse. The next Movement will focus on how such operations of detuning are received by raising the question of how to listen to detuned music or, in other words, how to “read” detuned narratives.
Movement 6
Strabistic Readings of Detuning

Where my analysis of the first and second diegetic levels of “Let’s play that” has focused on the textual and auditive narration of the song respectively, my approach to the third diegetic level of the song is primarily concerned with the way in which the sonic content of the performance promotes interaction with the audience, in this case the listener to the recording. Because the earlier discussion has emphasized the importance of the body in the musical performance as narration, a logical next question now presents itself: what exactly does this body do? The sonic aspect of the performance is the element that fills the space between the performer and the audience. It is the space where bodies can affectively resonate, touch and change each other. Sound allows the body to act, to affect, to detune. An important starting point for the analysis of musical performances by marginal artists is the assumption that the bodily presence of the marginal performer is part of a deliberate act of detuning. If this assumption is made, then the body is not pre-discursive, nor does it transcend discourse. Instead, the performer’s body moves between the both realms, actively detuning itself. This is why the concept of detuning – a verb that refers to active subversion – is more productive than the passive musical concept of “dissonant interval” referred to in Movement 5.

This Movement asks how detuning allows the marginal subject to subvert hegemony and how detuning can be “read” through an analysis of music’s auditive dimension. What the theories by Chela Sandoval, Jeroen de Kloet, Bryan Hulse and Giorgio Agamben that are introduced in this Movement have in common is that they all address the simultaneousness of, respectively, different power systems, tonalities and temporalities. Detuning constitutes a non-harmo nious overlapping, an encounter that consists neither of plain opposition nor of a merging. The socio-political contexts in which the Cuban and Brazilian musicians under discussion made their music are presented as realms in which co-optive power operations that seek to attain hegemony and the coercive power...
operations of censorship meet. At the level of a song’s performance a similar encounter between different, conflicting dimensions, diachronic and synchronic, is staged. In-between these dimensions is where the membrane represents the ambivalent space of separation-connection and where detuning expresses this non-harmonious simultaneousness.

What I will propose in this Movement is that, in order to understand how detuning operates, it is necessary to perceive its multiplicity without censoring it from a singular perspective. I propose strabism as the most suitable concept because its derivation from cross-eyedness implies a simultaneousness of different perspectives. Translated to the auditive dimension, strabistic listening is attuned to detuning as the performance of a similar simultaneousness. In addition, my approach in this Movement, in which discussions of hegemony and censorship are combined with theorizations of temporality in music and play, can also be perceived as a form of analytical strabism.

Between Coercion and Co-Option

In music, when detuning occurs, the minimal differences at the boundaries of a tone cause the membrane to vibrate in a disturbing way, causing a maximum level of intensity between what is on either side of it. The resonance is no longer harmonious and an overload of impulses ensues that cannot be translated in an orderly fashion. The Oxford English Dictionary calls this phenomenon “beat,” defining it as “a throbbing or undulating effect taking place in rapid succession when two notes not quite of the same pitch sound together.” The throbbing effect occurs because

the combined note alternates rapidly between the minimum of sound produced by the minimal interference of their vibrations, and the full effect produced by the coincidence of their vibrations.

(Oxford English Dictionary)

This is why a detuned signal always gives the impression of being louder than
Movement 6 - Strabistic Readings of Detuning

it is, and why its sound is abrasive to the ear. Relating this to society’s exclusive inclusion of the marginal subject, who is present in it but also separated from it as if by a membrane, detuning provides a way of acting through this membrane to disturb the status quo of power relations. Detuning is capable of producing beat only because the multiply produced tones are not separated but partially overlap each other. In a similar way, marginality can only detune because it is neither completely separated from nor identical with the power system it resists. Therefore, the relation between hegemony and censorship needs to be scrutinized here.

In her book *Methodology of the Oppressed* Chela Sandoval refers to the hegemonic form of power structures in society as being typical of a postmodernism in which the traditional top-down models of domination and subordination have been replaced by “a globalized, flattened but mobile, gridlike terrain” (73). Within this gridlike totality, movements that advocate social change have shifted from talking about “oppositional actors” in a vertical top-down structure to formulating horizontal alternatives that describe oppositional movements occurring from ‘margin to center,’ ‘inside to outside,’ that describe life in the ‘interstices’ or ‘borderlands,’ or that center the experiences of ‘travel,’ ‘diaspora’ [or] ‘immigration’ [...] on the grid.’ (Sandoval 73)

According to Sandoval, approaching the discourses of these oppositional movements from either an oppositional or supportive point of view becomes a painstaking, exacting attempt to find ways to speak about, to, or against any positionality across flattened social distances in a necessary transcoding, but the failure or success of any such effort only painfully leads to a greater apartheid: the radicalization, genderization, sexualization of theoretical domains. (73; emphasis in text)

It is important to observe at this point that both the Cuban *topos* and the Brazilian *marginális* share a reality in which postmodernism as Sandoval defines
it is only partly present. Although in Cuba and Brazil the authoritative regimes invested a lot of effort in attaining hegemony by asserting a subtle form of control over political, social and cultural discourse, their ways of exercising power were still fairly centered and top-down. Censorship is an important factor here because it is the oppressive force that, by marking the boundaries of what is allowed and what is not, gives meaning to the idea of detuning. It also makes it possible to refer to the subversive character of the lyrics that are analyzed in this study without implying that their content diametrically opposes itself to centralized power. If the situation in Cuba and Brazil was postmodernist in Sandoval’s sense, any subversive act through artistic forms of expression would be qualified as what Fredric Jameson calls “pastiche,” or “a radical difference […] which is composed of separate pieces, but whose aggregate is, in sum, meaningless,” implying that “the human ability to organize and unite in a great dissident and oppositional ‘collective project’ has been shattered” (85). The subversive acts of sonic resistance that are referred to throughout this study, however, are neither meaningless due to a complete immersion in the hegemonic system, nor do they operate in full opposition against the censoring apparatus. Instead, the situation is more complex and requires a more strabistic reading.

In his book *China with a Cut* Jeroen de Kloet addresses the difficult subject of how to understand censorship in relation to hegemony through an analysis of Chinese rock music. He refers to the strategy of the Chinese socialist state to co-opt artists into its system, which diminishes the necessity of constant state-control, but stimulates an attitude of auto-censorship (de Kloet 182). This strategy resembles the Cuban Revolutionary discourse about the self-critical “new man” and the institutionalization of *trova* music as described in my Opening Sequence. De Kloet relates the strategy to the Gramscian idea of hegemony, in which “coercive control – manifested through direct force or its threat” makes way for “consensual control, in which individuals ‘voluntarily’ assimilate the view of the state” (182). Explaining how the auto-censorship of Chinese rock musicians is often related to Gramsci’s idea of a “velvet prison,” de Kloet critiques this analogy in three ways, stating that
It is violent, as it imprisons artists in a position of compliance with the authorities. It is paternalistic, as the subtext reads that true artists ought to resist any cooperation with state institutions. And it is over politicized, as it reduces complex cultural realities to a stereotypical dichotomy of artist vs. the state […]. (182)

The above observations are important for the current discussion because they point to some important aspects of the Cuban and Brazilian contexts discussed in this study. First of all, the Gramscian consensual control de Kloet describes may have been the final aim of the Cuban and Brazilian authorities in their efforts to include artists in the project of constructing a national identity able to secure their dominance, but the truth is that coercive control was very present in both political systems (as it is, to an extent, in China). Of course, the level of threat and violence was more extreme in the case of the Brazilian military dictatorship, but in Cuba political prosecution and political forms of bullying were and are applied in relation to artistic forms of expression considered (potentially) subversive. In Movement 9 I will go into more detail about the particular ways censorship was applied in Cuba and Brazil.

De Kloet’s critique of the analogy of the velvet prison highlights that, in perceiving songs by Brazilian and Cuban cantautores as either fully in opposition to or fully in cooperation with their respective political contexts would mean to perform the analysis according to the same criteria as those of the imposed forms of censorship. Thus, the mumbled discourse in Macalé’s “Let’s play that” is not solely an act of subverting hegemonic power from a marginal position, but also expresses a wish to have the freedom to “play” in a position of relative invisibility. Here, detuning is not about the dichotomous construction of an “oppositional collective project” in the words of Jameson, but about creating room for alternative forms of sonic articulation and reception.

As de Kloet states in reference to Chinese rock music,

the relationship between state and rock […] is neither that of full compliance, nor that of plain opposition. It is necessary to release […] artists from the discursive construction of the velvet prison, and to search for
understandings that interrogate the political by highlighting the tactics used by bands, companies, and state-owned publishers within the system, in order to circumvent the system. (182-83)

I propose that, in the Cuban and Brazilian songs analyzed, detuning appears as one of these circumventory tactics. Just like the affectively diasporic character of the Caribbean archipelago replaces continental discourses by a more fluid, insularized narrative, detuning is capable of translating hegemonic discourse, from within, into alternative, non-linear and sonic articulatory practices. And just as insularization subverted the static character of continental discourse, detuning also operates through movement. Again, movement not only implies a horizontal progression, but also a vertical resonance, which, in this analysis, is related to the auditive characteristics of the analyzed songs instead of to their narrative structures. Movement refers to the temporality in music. Not to its metric structure or to its notation on a note bar, but to its physical manifestation, to the fact that music takes place in time as a performance. The expression “playing” music therefore refers to something more than just reproducing in sound what is noted in a musical score. Instead, it refers to music’s capacity to detune, to produce imperfections that situate the performance in time and that play with the temporality of the musical event.

Play and Temporality

In his article “Thinking Musical Difference; Music Theory as Minor Science,” Brian Hulse draws on Deleuze’s concepts of repetition and difference in music to show how they are not necessarily opposed. He explains how repetition in music is a rhythmic event, rather than metrical:

False or empty repetition is repetition of the identical, which is what occurs in the notion of units of time being identical to one another in the measure of time as in meter. Real repetition is rhythmic, which always involves inequalities [...] (28)
Movement 6 - Strabistic Readings of Detuning

Such inequalities, according to Hulse, are at the foundation of music’s “mutant” function, through which it can be perceived “diagonally.” Ordinary approaches to music are only capable of focusing on its vertical and horizontal functions, referring to, respectively, its simultaneous harmonic combinations and its melodic unfolding in time (Hulse 30-1). As he proceeds to explain how this diagonal quality of music expresses the impossibility of analyzing music’s expressivity “without reducing [it] to traditional modes of recognition,” Hulse quotes Peter Hallward’s assertion that “[whereas] repetition names an identifiable difference, […] what repeats is not identity, but difference, pure difference” (31-2). To analyze this unidentifiable difference in music, it is necessary “to connect with it intuitively – which can be done directly, immediately” (Hulse 31).

A link can be made here with Barthes’ approach to the grain of the voice, in which a direct, physical connection with the body of performer is the key to a successful evaluation. Through this link it becomes clear that the ungraspable difference in music is situated in the body of the performer and that of the audience: the imperfection of repetition manifests itself in the enunciation in the present, where the body and its situation in space-time form an unstable context that is different every time. To take the parallel one step further, when it comes to detuning as a deliberate grain, as a non-coincidental difference introduced musically, the body is the realm where this strategy of sonic resistance against hegemonic classification can be “played,” to put it in the words of Macalé’s mad angel.

It thus becomes clear that “Let’s play that” is not only an invitation on behalf of the performer to detune in the sense of musical, discursive or political subversion. The angel’s cry for detuning is also an invitation to the listener – or the academic – to join the game and connect to the present moment in which the detuning takes place and schemes of evaluation are being undone. The concept of playing thus represents a radical form of the subject’s connection to the present moment of becoming.

Hulse explains this characteristic of the present as the realm of becoming through the theories of both Gilles Deleuze and Christopher Hasty, who, according to Hulse, agree that the present is an unstable, ever-moving construct of multiple temporalities. Its intelligibility is not predetermined, but based upon a
process of constant “redrawing” (Hulse 37). He explains the present’s multiplicity as follows:

Past and future relate fundamentally to the present to the point where the present itself becomes inseparable from a presence of a past and a presence of a future incorporated within it. [...] What interests Hasty and Deleuze is how multiple events, both past and yet to come, constitute coextensive dimensions of a present becoming. (Hulse 37)

The implication of such a perception of the present is that the instant of the “now” is split between its value as a diachronic passing through time, moving immediately from one instant to the other, and its synchronic character of being a virtual image of future and past present moments that coalesce within its actual presence. Hulse translates this image to music by explaining how the duration of a tone “expands backward, into the past” as one listens to it, but, during the act of listening, the tone “simultaneously extends forward, into the future – as a potential image which may be repeated” (39).

Hulse’s explanation is based on the emission of a single note, the inherent multiplicity of which is based on its simultaneous backward and forward expansion into a virtual past and future. If detuning is introduced into this image, the single note becomes multiple within itself, without the appearance of a second separate note with its own past and future. Instead, the detuned note lays bare an inherent multiplicity – or layeredness – in the present, but, what is more important, it also opens up a new spectrum of potential virtual pasts and futures that all coexist as they resonate disturbingly in the present. Detuning, perceived in this way, allows the performing body to escape the chain of causal relations that confine it to mere cause and effect, and to enter a multiple present that is no longer tied to a singular past and future, but that sits at the nodal point of numerous possible pasts and futures.

Detuning, as a concept denoting a playful interaction of the human body with its situatedness in time, can also be related to Giorgio Agamben’s theory of “play.” In his study Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience Agamben theorizes play by placing it in a counterposed but complementary
Relation with “rite.” He explains how the function of rite is “to adjust the contradiction between mythic past and present, annulling the interval separating them and reabsorbing all events into the synchronic structure” (Agamben, 2007: 83).

In contrast,

play [...] tends to break the connection between past and present, and to break down and crumble the whole structure into events. If ritual is therefore a machine for transforming diachrony into synchrony, play, conversely, is a machine for transforming synchrony into diachrony. (Agamben 2007: 83)

Agamben further explains that pure diachrony and pure synchrony are impossible to attain within human experience, which is why history as the manifestation of the human experience of time is based on a continuous passing between diachrony and synchrony. For this reason, he states, ritual and play are never completely separated from one another, but should be seen as parts of the same machine. The function of ritual and play is to assure the continuous process of exchange between the dead and the living, between synchrony and diachrony (2007: 83-5).

Societies in which all play has been transformed into ritual and where, in the words of Agamben, “the diachronic interval between past and present would have been totally transcended,” would culminate in an impossible situation where people would live an eternal present (2007: 86). Nationalist discourses and censorship in Cuba and Brazil are an example of how play can be transformed into ritual. Specific cultural or linguistic forms of expression can only be acted out according to strict ritual guidelines within a highly politicized context, yet such ritualization is never complete because it has little control over what happens outside of the public sphere and, more importantly, it can never determine the intentions of the people performing the ritual. Both in Cuba and Brazil, certain prescribed formulas derived from political discourse may be enunciated with a certain ironic tone of voice or in situations that change the content of what is being said.

Various examples of this can be given, until the present day. In Cuba, during the so-called apagones, or power outages, which occur frequently due
to technical issues or as part of the government’s strategy to save energy, the first moment of sudden darkness and silence is often followed by a voice shouting, ironically, “viva Fidel!” echoing through open windows and neighboring stairways. When visiting Rio de Janeiro, I once heard my taxi driver mumbling “ordem e progresso,” – the words on the Brazilian flag that mean ‘order and progress’ – while we were stuck in a chaotic traffic jam in the city center. These moments of enunciation allow diachrony to interfere with what is meant to sustain pure synchrony. Detuning can therefore signify the inevitable room for play that allows marginal artists to disturb the static, eternal present and to enter a multi-layered, progressive present. The angel’s call for detuning through the act of playing in Macalé’s “Let’s play that” thus announces a way of preventing the world from being tangled up in synchrony, where all behavior is determined by ritual preconfiguration.

Detuning, then, is an event that shifts playfully between diachrony and synchrony. As seen in Movement 5 detuning causes the body to oscillate between its synchronic situatedness in discourse on the one hand (Butler) and its diachronic independence of politics and individuality (Barthes) on the other. Censorship’s aim is either to classify the body synchronically as ally or enemy, insider or outsider, for or against, or to discharge the marginal body as representing pure diachrony, as a harmless, empty package that can only create an ephemeral effect in the pure present. Detuning, however, resists such censorship because it lays bare the unstable function of the body as what Agamben calls the larva, the threatening in-between being or unstable signifier that, like the baby or the ghost, cannot be classified as either ancestor or adult:

[…] Just as death does not immediately produce ancestors, but ghosts, so birth does not immediately produce men and women, but babies, […] a dead-living or a half-alive person. […] The dead person is not the ancestor: this is the meaning of the ghost. The ancestor is not the living man: this is the function of the child. (Agamben 2007: 92-3)

Detuning creates bodies that oscillate between diachrony and synchrony, bodies that can be marginal but that do not cease to distort the membranes that separate
Movement 6 - Strabistic Readings of Detuning

them from – but also connect them to – the so-called legitimate inside space of society.

These larval bodies are like the corpse of Cara de Cavalo, which, through Oiticica’s manifesto, continued to have a disturbing presence in the world of the living in spite of the fact that it already belonged to the realm of the dead, or like the angel in “Let’s play that,” who visits the newly born protagonist – this other larval being – in order to incite him to assume a role in society that is not defined by ritually prescribed norms, but based on play(fulness). Similar to larvae from the insect world, these intermediate beings are both separated from and connected to the outside world through the membrane that envelops them. It is perhaps no coincidence that the image of the larvae also connects with Castro’s insult of gusanos leveled at the people he considered to be traitors of the Revolution, as observed in Movement 4.

The reason why larval beings are conceived of as threatening, especially in hegemonic state forms that aim for a ritual way of structuring society, is that they create events that can disrupt the supposed order of things. Such events, however, would not be disturbing if they were purely diachronic, because then they would vanish into air the very moment they occurred without having a real impact, as in Jameson’s perception of postmodern art. Instead, the events created by larval beings do have some ritual value, some synchronic function, derived, for example, from the rules that structure theatrical or musical performance. At the same time, in spite of the fact that a musical event is bound to structural repetition and predictability – as discussed in the analysis of Varela’s performance of “Guillermo Tell” – this does not stop an event from taking place. What is more, the fact that a playful event can be born from ritual means that it can leave a trace of diachrony within a synchronic whole. It is therefore not just an ephemeral event, but creates an affective potential because it causes a change in the context where it occurs and in the bodies it touches: it becomes, in other words, performative.

For this reason, an analytical approach of the sonic dimensions of a performance runs the risk of censoring the event by fitting it into a synchronic chain of cause and effect, undoing its political impact by discharging it as an event that has no links to the past and that will disappear in the future, according to Agamben’s theory. This is why Hulse suggests that the only way to perform real
musical analysis is to approach it diagonally by respecting both its synchronic and diachronic functions. This two-dimensional approach, however, is only effective when it concerns tuned music – or at least music that aims to be in tune. The real challenge presents itself in the analytical approach to detuning, when the inherent multiplicity of the diagonally moving present event adds a third dimension to the model. Because of this third dimension, the image multiplies, shifts at the borders and becomes blurry.

Strabism as an Analytical Approach

The approach to detuning that I want to propose through my reading of “Let’s play that” follows the example given by the angel in the song: what detuning requires is a cross-eyed reading. In undertaking such a reading, the listener (or analyst) approaches the event from the same cross-eyed perspective as the angel’s, adapting to the multiplicity of the image. The effect is like putting on the glasses provided to watch stereoscopic – or 3D – cinema: in doing this, the blurry image on the flat screen, which, without 3D glasses, gives the impression that one is actually cross-eyed, is filtered into separate pieces of information for each eye through the glasses, after which the brain can make its own reconstruction of the image as being an event with simultaneous sources of input from slightly different perspectives. This is how the effect of depth is created (Beardsley & Devernay 11-2). The brain is permitted to make its reconstruction of two slightly different versions of the same image – the combined input of the left and the right eye – which, when combined, situate an image threedimensionally in space. What is of particular interest to this analysis about 3D-cinema is that, for it to work, the effect of cross-eyedness has to be simulated on the screen.

The function of the screen as the visual medium that transmits the inherent multiplicity of the image resembles that of the membrane, conceived metaphorically as the sonic realm that represents the simultaneous connection and separation of a marginal element in a hegemonic system. It is the connection

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For further reading on the subject, *Foundations of the Stereoscopic Cinema* by Lenny Lipton is a somewhat outdated but comprehensive study on the mechanics of stereoscopic or 3D cinema.
between the screen and the membrane that creates the link between cross-eyedness and detuning. The blurry scenery that emerges when multiple versions of a different image are projected on a flat screen is like the disturbed resonance of the membrane when its input consists of simultaneous tones that only differ slightly. In both cases, the medium is too limited to capture the multiplicity, the multi-dimensionality of the input it receives. At the same time, if – in the case of music – the membrane is the only medium that a marginal artist possesses to transport his or her signal, detuning is what makes it possible to pass on this message with all its dimensions intact. The only difficulty, then, is how to listen to this apparently disturbed input. Or, to return to the parallel I have made with the screen, how to read a blurry image. In the cinema, putting on 3D glasses allows viewers to do this. In the sonic domain, a similar mode of listening has to be developed. I want to propose cross-eyedness, or, in medical terms, strabism, as such a mode: auditive strabism can synthesize multiple tones as they reach listeners in detuned fashion, allowing them to perceive their three-dimensional content.

As I have argued in this final Movement of Part 2, the detuning performance of “Let’s play that” is not merely a representation of the angel’s madness, but allows the body of the performer to allow the subversion of hegemony to reach across the limits of the event of the performance. The “play” of the performer consists in the act of “detuning of the choir of the satisfied,” which is no longer only an act of subversion in the Brazilian socio-political context in which the song was originally recorded, but also plays with the listeners of the recording until the present day. The recording is therefore not a mere performance dramatizing the textual content of the lyrics; it is also performative because its synchronic function gives it the ability to affect bodies located, spatially and temporally, outside of its own context. The inherent multiplicity of the marginal body not only detunes the harmony of the musical event, but also obliges the listener – or the analyst – to adapt to this multiplicity in order to “read” its playful performance. Any attempt to read this detuning narrative in a two-dimensional realm, however, means censoring a multi-dimensional expression in order to adapt it to the order of a hegemonic system where all elements are fixed in their specific place and function.
A way of reading detuned music without censoring it is by adapting to the multiplicity of the medium itself, which I contend can be achieved by developing a strabistic mode of listening and analyzing. In the different analyses of this study, the strabistic character of my approach lies in the fact that I look closely at what happens in a song’s lyrics, in its sonic dimension and in its performance, not as separate elements, but in terms of the simultaneousness of music’s narrative, auditory and expressive qualities. I allow these qualities to resonate with each other, while also paying attention to moments of detuning in which, for example, the performance counters what the lyrics express or the sonic dimension interferes with the performative one. It is at such moments that the object resists a univocal interpretation and that the possibility of simultaneous different readings or listenings causes the analysis itself to remain in movement, fluctuating and resonating.
In Part 2 of this study, the sonic content of a musical recording and of the recorded live performance of a song has emerged as the realm where the subversion of hegemony by marginal elements is made possible. Within a hegemonic articulatory system, where all integrating elements are part of an apparently sutured space of meaning, alternative articulations that could potentially subvert this order are always present, although this presence is never reaffirmed by the self-repetitive movements that delineate the system’s inside realm. Marginality, as designating the potentially subversive elements that are contingently part of any hegemonic system, is both separated from and connected to the hegemonic center, in the manner of a membrane.

In my analyses of the songs “Guillermo Tell” – recorded during a live performance in Cuba – and “Let’s play that” – captured on a deliberately unpolished recording in Brazil – the hegemonic context constitutes the unwritten rules that structure the events of live performance and studio recording. The subversion of these hegemonic systems cannot be accomplished through the modes of expression that coincide with the self-affirmativeness of hegemony’s inside parameters, which structure its language, its hierarchy, its metric structure and its melodic harmony. Subversion, instead, resides in the sonic realm of the membrane that, because of its double inside-outside position, has the capacity of retaining the multiple potentialities of its elements. This multiplicity expresses itself in the two songs as, respectively, moments of rhythmic chaos and moments of melodic disharmony or detuning.

Likening the act of properly listening to marginal sonic expressions that are inherently multiple (without dismissing them as noise) to trying to read a blurry image, I have proposed a strabistic mode of listening that takes up the simulation of strabism in 3D cinema and the image of the cross-eyed angel in “Let’s play that.” Because strabism consists of a simultaneousness of multiple perspectives, the two-dimensional character of the membrane as a screen or eardrum can be overcome in order to perceive the three-dimensionality of the rhythmically

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chaotic or melodically detuned song.

In the Movements of the third and final part of this study, my analysis moves from the auditive characteristics of musical detuning to the expressive function of strabism in relation to censorship. Through an analysis of songs by the Cuban rapper Telmary Diaz and the Brazilian cantautor Milton Nascimento, I suggest that semantic language, if it departs from the idea of a centered subject with a single space of enunciation and if it is subject to the limitations imposed by censorship, cannot give expression to the full experience of the affectively diasporic subject. Sonic aspects of musical expression, however, are seen as capable of speaking strabistically in the sense of enunciating from different perspectives simultaneously. I introduce testimony (approached through the theories of Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida) as a concept that highlights the impossibility of giving an account of an experience in language that fully represents the experience and avoids fictionalizing it. Simultaneously, however, testimony can testify to its own limitations on a metadiscursive level, allowing the subject to give voice to his or her incapacity of speech. In relation to the context of affective diaspora and censorship in which the analyzed songs were written and performed, I propose to use the concept of the carrier-voice to refer to a voice that is able to speak from a multiplicity of perspectives or that can recur to a bodily, sonic form of language. As such, the carrier-voice can express what censorship does not allow it to express in semantic language with a clearly identifiable single speaker. I argue that this sonic way of speaking is capable of testifying to the experience of being censored precisely by drawing on the limitations that censorship imposes.
Fermata
Part 3

Expressive Bodies: Testimony, Censorship and the Carrier-Voice in Telmary Diaz and Milton Nascimento
Affective diaspora and censorship have been the central focus of my analysis of song lyrics in their performative and sonic embedding in the previous two Parts of this study. In Part 1, the lyrical and sonic content of the analyzed songs, as well as the speaking subject and the homeland, were all conceived as narrative bodies. In a context of affective diaspora in which the diasporic experience passes as an affective resonance between bodies, the transgression of traditionally conceived separations between bodies caused the demarcations between the inside and the outside of the nation, the subject and the narration to also become blurred. At the same time, the presence of censorship in both Cuba and Brazil meant that a sustained effort was made to secure the separation between the legitimized inside and the non-legitimized outside of the nation, the national subject and the narration as discourse. From an ambiguous position simultaneously situated on the inside and on the outside of the narration, legitimized discourse and the national territory, the analyzed songs by Carlos Varela and Gilberto Gil managed to give expression to this affectively diasporic experience without being censored.

In Part 2 the simultaneous inside-outside position of the affectively diasporic subject was translated into the ambiguous position of the marginal subject as an exclusively included element in a hegemonic system. The marginal position of Carlos Varela and Jards Macalé led them to recur to sonic forms of expression (rhythmic and melodic) with which they could evoke multiple different articulatory systems at once and thus develop a way of subverting hegemony through what I have called the detuning of the apparent harmonious coherency of its inside realm. Consequently, the main focus of Part 2 was on the auditive quality of marginalized bodies, whose capacity to speak from multiple positions simultaneously was seen to require an equally multiple, strabistic form of listening.

Part 3, which closes this study, focuses on the expressive qualities of songs by the Cuban rapper Telmary Diaz and the Brazilian cantautor Milton Nascimento, and argues that the use of a sonic rather than a semantic form of musical speech allows the songs’ Sonic I’s to testify, in a performative manner, not just to the
experience of affective diaspora but also to the experience of being silenced by censorship. In Movement 7 I analyze Telmary Diaz’s song “Los Revolucionarios,” in which the Cuban idea of the Revolution as a perpetual state of insurgency and heroic resistance against a particular enemy is placed in a direct relationship with the banality and boredom of day-to-day existence in Cuba, which transforms its meaning. This transformation is performatively enacted by the vocal fragmentation of the word “Revolucionarios” in the song, which also points to the fragmentation of the censored and affectively diasporic Sonic I. The absence of a clear point of origin or expressive body in which the Sonic I can locate her enunciation is underscored by the technological multiplication of her voice on the recording. In Movement 8 I analyze Nascimento’s song “Milagre dos peixes,” placing its mumbling performance in the context of a situation of military censorship in which many artists looked for forms of language whose unclear or ambivalent sonic expression could not be censored from a logocentric perspective. I relate this to Giorgio Agamben’s concept of testimony as a language that gives an account of its own incapacity to produce testimony. In the final Movement 9, the songs by Telmary and Nascimento are related to Jaques Derrida’s argument about the inherent impossibility of testimony as direct witnessing. I argue that the particular ways in which both songs relate to censorship in their respective socio-political contexts paradoxically allow them to testify to the very impossibility of testimony through their sonic and performative use of language.
Movement 7
The Unfinished Revolution

At the start of 2006, the Cuban musical project of various musicians who occasionally work together under the name Interactivo won the prestigious Premio del Cubadisco award for the album *Goza Pepillo.* Apart from praising their instrumental and vocal talent, and the overall quality of the recording, the primary reason for the jury to award the prize to this album was its “innovative sound within the Cuban musical tradition,” the result of an experimental search for new sonorities (Muñoz). The different musical styles that can be distinguished on the album vary from jazz and *timba* to rap, rock and *guaguancó,* with no apparent effort made to privilege one style over the others. Also notable is the insertion of foreign influences in the song lyrics; some of the songs contain English fragments or are sung entirely in English, which is still a fairly uncommon feature in Cuban productions.

In his book *CONcierto cubano,* Joaquin Borges Triana refers to Interactivo’s style as one that “finds its beat in its variety, upheld by the clear rhythmic role of its music.” He then states that it is in the strong rhythmic basis of the Cuban musical tradition that the variety of influences is forged together (Borges Triana 2009: 131). Here, however, the question arises of why exactly this bringing together of different musical influences made Interactivo award-worthy, especially considering the fact that only a few decades earlier the musicians of the *topos* generation were criticized for foreign rock influences on their music. In other words, what is the new conception of the Cuban musical tradition that is being referred to by the jury and what is its relation to the rhythmic character of the music that expresses it?

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58 The Interactivo project at the time of the *Goza Pepillo* album consisted of Roberto “Robertico” Carcassés, Yusimil López Bridón better known as “Yusa,” William Vivanco, Francis del Rio and Telmary Diaz.

59 My translation of the Spanish: “[...] en la variedad se encuentra su clave, sostenida por el claro protagonismo rítmico de la música.”
Maybe not surprisingly, a good place to look for possible answers is in Interactivo’s music, which frequently reflects on what it means to be Cuban. To characterize Interactivo exclusively as a project that aims to look for new ways to define a Cuban identity, however, would mean to disregard the thematic variety and musical dynamism of their work. Interactivo’s music does not consciously aim to create a new coherent Cuban sound; rather, what it does is represent the sonic worldview of young Cuban musicians who, in their daily lives, are surrounded by all kinds of music, not just from Cuba. Moreover, their songs, in spite of their focus on the private domain, include a particular perspective on political issues related to identity and geography such as the experience of affective diaspora and how this influences one’s conception of being Cuban. The name “Interactivo” can be analyzed in different ways. It can refer to the way in which the musicians cooperate alongside their own personal careers, where the recording studio and the stage become the playground for a dynamic musical encounter between different worlds. But the interactive character of the project can also be found in the way their music enters into dialogue with the different socio-political realities within which their musical careers, separately and together, take place. Thus, the name of their project points to their blurring of separations such as inside and outside, private and public, familiar and foreign at different levels.

In this Movement I will analyze “Los Revolucionarios” by rapper Telmary Diaz, part of Interactivo and better known under her artist name Telmary. The song brings together some of the key issues addressed in the music of Interactivo, which, as noted, revolves in different ways around the question of what it means to be Cuban in an affectively diasporic reality. But although the Sonic I seems to propose, in the song lyrics, a better way of dealing with this Cuban condition, I am more interested in the way in which the narrative structure and the performance of the lyrics give expression to her experience. As shown in the previous Parts, it is not only censorship that keeps artists from referring to certain subjects such as diaspora in their lyrics; it is also difficult to testify to the experience of affective diaspora because it multiplies the location and temporalities from which the subject speaks. Equally important to “what” is being said in songs about this affectively diasporic experience, therefore, is “how” it is being said. In what follows I will therefore focus on how the Sonic I’s experience of fragmentation as an affectively
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diasporic subject is being performed in the song. I will do this by looking at the fragmentation of the term “Revolution” in the song’s narrative structure, at the technologically mediated multiplication of the Sonic I’s voice, and at the use of the voice as a way of reproducing this effect of sonic strabism.

Revolution, Perpetuation

Telmary’s “Los Revolucionarios” addresses conflicts between Cubans living in different places all over the world, with Havana and Miami as spatial references that function as synecdoches for Cuba and the United States. The Sonic I describes the rivalry between the two groups (those who remain and those who left) as “old hatreds” for which the original reasons have been forgotten, but that still cause a separation between Cubans. This separation is geographical when it refers to the wave of – mainly wealthy – Cubans that left the island the moment the victory of Castro’s Revolution was a fact, but it is also ideological when it comes to the implications of this geographical separation into two camps, where each side blames the other, either for leaving the homeland in order to secure one’s own well-being or for indirectly supporting a repressive socialist government by staying put without trying to change the situation. Another bone of contention are the properties that were confiscated by the Cuban state from the people who left for Miami after 1959 in order to wait for the Castro government to fall. In some cases these properties were given to poorer Cubans or “the people,” leading Cubans in Miami to accuse Cubans in Havana of having taken what was not rightfully theirs.

The song mentions these struggles as a condition that still marks the Cuban diasporic territory, where people that live in different places are different but also alike, loving and hating each other at the same time, “just like [in] a bad marriage.” The Sonic I contends that it is necessary for “Cubans all over the world [to] unite as brothers” in order to break this condition that is a day-to-day repetition of the same old disputes “that keep their reasons forgotten.” She wonders how much longer this condition will persist and appeals for a search for other ways of being Cuban in this situation of cultural, ideological and geographical separation.
Las Revolucionarios  The Revolutionaries

A diario, los revolucionarios  Day by day, the Revolutionaries

Tenemos que luchar con una suerte de problemas cotidianos  We have to struggle with a variety of daily problems

No me pidas que, digan lo que digan, me quede aquí callada  Don’t ask me that, whatever they say, I stay here and shut up

Sentada, encantada de la vida  Sitting down, being happy

Los cubanos están todos regados por el mundo  Cubans are spread all over the world

Preguntando: por qué de esta maldición de estar todos tan separados  Asking: why this curse of being all so separated

Por viejos odios que mantienen olvidadas las razones  Because of old hatreds that keep the reasons forgotten

Que nos hicieron tan distintos, tan iguales, tan peculiares  That made us so different, so much alike, so peculiar

Me pregunto si mi hijo heredará esa condición que hoy se mantiene  I wonder whether my son will inherit this condition that persists until today

De unos pocos que se odian, que se quieren, que se parecen  Of a few that hate each other, love each other, look like each other

Que son como un matrimonio mal lleva’o  That are like a bad marriage

Hasta cuándo, vida mía, cruzar mares para verte será una pesadilla  How much longer, my love, crossing seas to see you will be a nightmare

Hasta cuándo tenemos que esperar por la promesa de ese día?  How much longer do we have to wait for the promise of that day?

A diario, los Revolucionarios  Day by day, the Revolutionaries

Vamos buscando otra manera de viajar a tiempo completo  Let’s look for other ways of traveling as a full-time job

A curar esta humanidad, cada en sí  To cure this humanity, every one

No escoge al vuelo un idioma, un grano, un argumento,  Does not pick on the fly a language, a seed, an argument

Una sociedad, una sola edad  One society, one single era

Nosotros juntos somos el pueblo  Together we are the people
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Hagase en demasía nuestra voluntad Let our will be done in excess
Sin ser masividad dispersa, sin conocimiento Without being a dispersed mass, not knowing
De cuáles diferencias reconciliar What differences to reconcile
Hasta cuándo tengo que ir y regresar cargando How much longer do I have to leave and
algunos cabos sueltos return carrying loose ends (loose capes)
de mi identidad, hasta cuándo Of my identity, how much longer
voy luchando, My struggle
“nosotros, los revorevolverolucionarios de “We, the authentic, authentic
verdá, verdá revorevolutionaries
luchar nos pone en pugna con nuestros Fighting will confront us with our objectives…”
objetivos.”
Legalicen la paz, anímense a amar Legalize peace, be motivated to love each
other
cubanos de todos los países Cubans of all countries
unios como hermanos unite as brothers
A diario, los revolucionarios Day by day, the Revolutionaries
Tenemos que luchar por la We have to fight for the
promesa de ese día promise of that day
A diario, los revolucionarios Day by day, the Revolutionaries
Cubanos de todos los países Cubans of all countries
unios como hermanos unite as brothers
[samples contestador] [samples voicemail]
[samples aeropuerto] [samples airport broadcast]
[canto a Obatalá] [chant to Obatalá]

In the lyrics, the word “Revolucionario” occupies a central position. The Revolutionaries referred to in the song are still connected by circumstances that they have mainly come to feel disconnected from, such as their ambiguous involvement in a Revolution that took place half a century earlier but that continues to dominate the discursive construction of Cuban identity all over the world. Therefore, “Revolucionaries” refers not just to the Cubans who are actively engaged with the protection of the current Cuban political system on
the island. Rather, the Sonic I uses the word in a more general fashion, as “los cubanos” spread all over the world, or “cubanos de todos los paises,” ‘Cubans of all countries,’ without specifying whether these Cubans subscribe to the official Revolutionary ideology or not. In this way, “being a Revolutionary” becomes a characteristic that is just as ambiguously fixed as “being Cuban” is in reference to one’s identity and one’s place of birth (or, in the case of second-generation Cuban migrants, the place of birth of one’s parents). To use the word “Revolucionario” for all Cubans, wherever they are and whatever their political convictions, shows, in its clear incongruity, that it is impossible to speak simply of Cubans and to neglect the variety of geographical, political and cultural associations that this term now invokes.

At the same time, using the term “Revolucionarios” to ascribe a single characteristic to this heterogeneous group does seem to indicate that there is a strong common denominator, whether or not those designated actively feel it or carry it out. Having one’s roots in Cuba means to be Cuban, and having been born after the Revolution means that to be a Revolutionary is a condition one will simply have to deal with. By bringing together those in Havana and those in Miami, Revolucionario fragments the metaphor of the rebel who fights for the cause of the Revolution into an image that can just as well mean its opposite. If Revolucionario is such a fragmented metaphor, is it viable to say that it refers to a constant battle for change, or is it more reasonable to assume that it serves to depict the opposite of a rebellious attitude? Being a Revolutionary could then also mean that one adapts oneself passively to the image of the perfect Cuban as it has been prescribed by a nearly unchanged political system during the last 50 years, an image that is radically different from that of the fearless rebel who risks his or her life to fight against a dominating, oppressive power. If, on the other hand, the metaphor does not imply passivity but creates the image of a revolutionary as someone fighting for change, then the question is what dominating power is meant to be battled through this revolution: is it still a fight against a clearly defined common enemy, or is the rebellion now directed towards the very Revolution it came from? In other words, does the metaphor still allow for the image of the struggle against a dominating power from the fringes, or has the Revolution been irrevocably converted into another hegemonic system that is always potentially
subverted from within?

The first stanza of “Los Revolucionarios” speaks to this quandary. The phrase “Tenemos que luchar,” ‘we have to fight,’ affirms the image of the revolutionary as someone involved in a struggle against a dominant power system, ultimately in the form of armed combat. The fight referred to in the song, however, is not exactly a guerrilla war in the jungle of the Cuban highlands against the troops of the Batista army, but a struggle “con una suerte de problemas cotidianos,” ‘with all sorts of everyday problems.’ This can refer both to life as an immigrant in a foreign country and to life in Cuba, where economic hardship and scarcity resulted from the Cuban Revolution and, later, from the imposition of the U.S. embargo and the economic crisis initiated by the fall of the Soviet Union. The initial image of a fight against a common enemy is thus turned into that of an individual struggle with multiple problems encountered in the effort to make it through the day. Hence the use of the words “A diario,” ‘day by day,’ which indicate that it is its repetition on a daily basis that makes this struggle a tedious event. Instead of an insurgence by a group of people fighting for rupture or change in society, this Revolution is split up into thousands of individual struggles that are fought in the intimate setting of the family and the household, leading to nothing but the continuation of the status quo.60

Nonetheless, there is another aspect to this fight which appears in the following stanzas: “no me pidas / que me quede aqui callada / sentada, encantada de la vida,” ‘don’t ask me / that I will shut up and stay here / sitting down, being happy.’ When related to the use of the term “Revolucionario” to refer to Cubans as guerrilla fighters, this can indicate the potential involvement of the people – intellectuals, factory workers, farmers, etc. – in the Revolutionary struggle once their need for change has become bigger than their fear of falling in combat. It evokes the urge to help make the change happen instead of staying at home trying to live life as if everything were normal, hoping for others to win the battle in one’s place. In fact, Che Guevara has claimed that the Cuban Revolution was won in this way, with the support of the Cubans living in the mountains and in the

60 Here, one can legitimately pose the question of how different this situation is from daily reality in a neoliberal capitalist society. The main focus of the current analysis, however, is on how the reality described in the song is radically different from the Revolutionary discourse it refers to.
countryside, who, with their knowledge of the local area, served as a source of information and orientation for the rebels, providing more than simply manpower. In his book *La Guerra de Guerrillas* about the fundamentals of guerrilla warfare, Guevara mentions the following three lessons of the Cuban revolution, which, according to him, have changed the nature of opposition on the South American continent: “Popular forces can win the war against an army. […] It is not always necessary to wait for the perfect conditions for a revolution; the insurrectional spark can create them. […] In underdeveloped America the terrain for armed struggle has to be the countryside (4).”

Returning to the song’s previous stanzas, however, the struggle that is referred to is not so much a battle of arms as a day-to-day survival. Hence, the sense of urgency that is being expressed here is also of another kind, to which the unwillingness to ‘shut up’ is an important clue. For the Sonic I it is impossible to cope with the daily struggles without being able to make herself heard. She does not want to be a passive victim of circumstances who has to pretend to be simply enjoying life, but wants to be able to speak up when she feels like it. Breaking the silence is thus posited as a possible way out of the day-to-day struggles, an act that can cause a change in the routine. Another option is to simply leave for another place where no silence is being imposed on the Sonic I: “don’t ask me / that I will shut up and stay here.” It is as if a choice is being given: “if you want me to stay, don’t tell me to be silent, for if I am not allowed to speak my mind here, I will do it somewhere else where they let me.”

This sequence implies that the imperative to not speak up is in some way related to the restriction of free movement by someone else. The Sonic I is apparently ordered “to shut up and stay,” which she refuses to accept: “Don’t ask me” to do this. Here, the socio-historical framing of the song interferes with the lyrical content, as one is reminded of the fact that the artist who speaks through the voice of the Sonic I is a young Cuban woman who left Cuba for Canada in order to be less limited in her possibilities of having an artistic career. When the album containing “Los Revolucionarios” came out, in 2005, Cuba was a difficult place...

61 My translation from Spanish: “Las fuerzas populares pueden ganar una guerra contra el ejército. […] No siempre hay que esperar a que se den todas las condiciones para la revolución; el foco insurreccional puede crearlas. […] En América subdesarrollada el terreno de la lucha armada debe ser fundamentalmente el campo.”
to work as an artist, in terms of speaking one’s mind in song lyrics and traveling to
give concerts. Although censorship had shifted from control over what was being
recorded to control over what was being expressed in public, particularly during
mediated concerts, when it came to travel permissions, artists were rarely granted
visa’s to travel abroad for concerts, probably out of fear that they would stay in
another country where no control could be exercised over what they said. In this
context, the unwillingness of the Sonic I to comply with these requirements re-

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flects the struggle of a still relatively marginalized artist against the Revolutionary
authorities, suggesting that this Revolution, just like any hegemonic system – as
explained in Part 2 –, also includes antagonistic forces amongst the elements that
constitute it as a whole.

Although the Sonic I seems to make a connection between free move-


62 Almost a decade after the recording of Interactivo’s album, restrictions have
been loosened significantly. Nonetheless, artists are still restricted more than other
groups when it comes to obtaining travel permits, and censorship is also still applied.
One event in particular is worth mentioning here. In September 2013, Interactivo was the
closing act for a concert at the “Anti-Imperial Tribune,” Havana’s open-air theater on the
Malecón, not coincidentally situated right next to the Embassy of the United States. The
concert was dedicated to demanding the freedom of Cuba’s “five heroes,” five spies that
were captured and held as prisoners in the United States until the settlement between
the Obama and Castro administrations in 2015. At a certain point during the concert,
Robertico Carcassés left his piano to improvise some verses, accompanied by the au-
dience answering him with a recurring pregón or “chorus.” In the verses, he asked not
only for the liberation of “Los Cinco,” ‘the five,’ but also expressed his desire for other
freedoms, such as the legalization of marihuana, free access to information and the right
to vote for a Cuban president through a different electorial system. The fact that this
performance was captured on live television caused quite a scandal and resulted in the
official suspension of Carcassés from the Cuban music industry. This banishment was
lifted a few days later after a private conversation between Carcassés and representers of
the Cuban Ministry of Culture (Flores, OnCuba).
up and stay." Rather, it refers to a nightmarish entrapment in what she later calls “viajar a tiempo completo,” ‘traveling as a full-time job,’ a situation of constant upheaval she is not able to escape from. Like the Revolution as a changeless day-to-day struggle, this sort of traveling is not one of progression, but a back-and-forth movement where the crossing of boundaries (seas) does not bring the Sonic I closer to the person she addresses.

In the song, traveling back and forth does not lead to the recuperation of somebody or something lost which will in the end make the life of the Sonic I complete. Instead, traveling is an inherent condition of the fragmented identity of the Sonic I: “hasta cuándo tengo que ir y regresar cargando algunos cabos sueltos / de mi identidad,” ‘How much longer do I have to leave and return carrying loose ends / Of my identity.’ At either end of the trip these “loose ends of [her] identity” have to be carried along, without the possibility of a final destination where the missing links can be tied together. In addition, the Spanish expression “cabos sueltos” for ‘loose ends’ contains the word “cabo,” which means “cape” in the sense of “land’s end.” Taking this into account, the Sonic I does not simply travel back and forth between capes as fixed and clearly identifiable points of departure and arrival, but carries these capes along with her as loose, floating landmarks that represent her nightmarish never-ending travel. There is no prospect of ever reaching a final destination or of ever truly leaving Cuba behind, just like she cannot shake off the condition of being a Revolucionario.

The fact that the inside realm of the nightmare consists of loose ends, or loose capes, signals that being in this nightmare makes it impossible to situate oneself in a fixed place. Traveling is thus the inherent condition of the Sonic I, who finds herself trapped within a realm that is fragmented from the inside – a realm that can be seen as the Cuban diasporic space, which stretches from Cuba to the United States and to Spain; as the insular realm of Cuba, where the national space is also affectively diasporic; and even as the body of the speaking subject, whose identity and discourse are fragmented.

Apart from the instability of ideological and geographic orientation, the song’s lyrics also point to the temporal aspect of what the Sonic I is dealing with: “Hasta cuándo?” ‘How much longer?’ The question seems to express the boredom of the ever-repeating daily routine, a desperate hope for the day-to-day
struggles to finally stop. In the context of the song, “hasta cuándo” also resonates with “hasta siempre, comandante,” ‘forever, commander,’ the words of Carlos Puebla’s eponymous song from 1965 – only recorded on album in 1968 – which was a tribute to Che Guevara and his famous revolutionary slogan “hasta la victoria siempre.” But now, instead of expressing a belief in the final victory and a never-ending dedication to fighting for it, the Revolutionaries are bored of waiting for a moment that never seems to arrive.

This sense of boredom is also expressed in the sonic support to the lyrics. The melody of the song is initially played on the kettledrum in the introduction, after which there is a break and the rapping starts. Kettledrums are rhythmic devices but they have a particular melodic sound that tends to sing around more than, say, the rather dry thump of a snare drum. For this reason, kettledrums have different settings of tension of the membrane, which defines their tuning and prevents them from being out of tune with the melodies they are supposed to support rhythmically. Nonetheless, they are not used a lot to mark the melody in a piece of music precisely because of their limited harmonic reach. Thus, the use of the kettledrum for the melody of this song causes it to sound rather monotonous, expressing in sound the tediousness about which the Sonic I is complaining. It acts like the sonic translation of the question that keeps being repeated in the lyrics: ‘how much longer’?

As the song progresses, more instruments are added while Telmary starts rapping at a medium fast pace, her dry and slightly harsh voice equally monotonous as the kettledrum as she proceeds through the lyrics. Amongst the instruments, one can distinguish a drumming device that plays the basic metre and also fills the in-between of the square beat with different syncopated motives, and also two electric guitars, one of which adds a distortion to the kettledrum melody by doubling it, with the other one playing hints of higher notes that are not part of the melodic and rhythmic structure but that rather soar above it, later converting into minimalistic rhythmic riffs. But the instrument that stubbornly marks the square beat throughout the entire song without any variation is a cowbell. The regularity of its 1-2-3-4 beat recalls the constant, invariant ticking of a clock. Once again the question of ‘how much longer’ is given expression in a sonic way as the despair of not being able to escape the daily struggles and the nightmarish entrapment.
in a situation that does not change is synthesized in the sound of time ticking by. But instead of only boredom, there does seem to be a particular event that is being awaited: “Hasta cuándo tenemos que esperar por la promesa de ese día?” ‘how much longer do we have to wait for the promise of that day’? Apparently, the Revolution started with a concrete promise that still has not become reality, putting the Revolution – and its ongoing movement – into question and rendering it tedious (a passive waiting rather than an active striving). Importantly, because the content of the promise is never concretized in the song, it literally lacks both a point of departure – the “what” of the promise – and a point of arrival – the establishment of that “what.”

In order to fathom the depth of this reference to waiting for a promise to be made good on, one that apparently needs no further explanation in the song, it should be borne in mind that this idea goes further back in Cuban history than just to the Cuban Revolution of 1959. In his book *Tumbas sin sosiego*, the Cuban historicist and literary critic Rafael Rojas refers to this phenomenon as “la Revolución Inconclusa,” ‘the unfinished revolution,’ which he presents as Cuba’s most prominent political myth ever since the first war of independence in the 19th century (2006: 61). The fact that all the different state forms there have been in Cuba since the first war of independence in 1868 were implemented through revolutionary struggles leads Rojas to conclude that in Cuban history after the 19th century, revolutions rather than institutional power transitions have given access to power (2006: 61-5). Common to all these revolutions is that they claimed their legitimacy by drawing upon the discourse of José Martí, the poet and political thinker who became the voice of Cuba’s war for independence and who is now perceived as the acclaimed father of the homeland and national hero.  

Rojas explains how in Cuba the need for “myth” in the active construction of a national identity in the present and towards the future leads to the appearance of the figure of a messiah, in this case Martí (2006: 66-7). On a deeper level, this

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63 José Martí (1853-1895), whose full name was José Julián Martí y Pérez, was a Cuban poet and diplomat who played an important role in Cuba’s wars of independence against Spain (1868-1878 and 1895-1898). Apart from writing poems and political essays, he actively organized the Cuban insurgency against Spanish rule between 1871 and 1895, mainly from exile in Spain, Guatemala, Mexico and the US. Almost directly after returning to Cuba in 1895 he died in combat. See Alfred J. López’s *José Martí: A Revolutionary Life* (2014).
need stems from a sense of lacking a historical background of tradition, culture, past and civilization, as a result of colonialism (Rojas 2006: 54-6). Myth, according to Rojas, opens up the possibility of creating a singular symbol of origin that can remain free from historical analysis. He uses the examples of Martí and the Cuban use of revolutionary discourse to show that this mythical construction disregards differences between historical periods and contexts (Rojas 2006: 66). The unfinished Revolution therefore becomes a notion that, because of its mythical status, brings multiple historical references together in a featureless simultaneity that does not allow for any development.

When the Sonic I asks “how much longer do we have to wait for the promise of that day,” the question can thus refer to the persisting wait for the return of the messiah, or “the apostle” as Martí is often referred to in Cuba. This messiah represents the unity of the people and the freedom gained through victorious revolutionary struggle. In the affectively diasporic context of a song like “Los Revolucionarios,” however, the supposed unity and freedom to be gained is just as ambiguous as the Revolution that is being referred to. In this way, the song lyrics lay bare the ambiguous character of commonplaces in Revolutionary discourse, and indicate how the persisting use of these expressions has only come to augment the ambiguousness of their meanings. In essence, the Revolution is not just a struggle for change and for a completely new and different future, but also an expression of a yearning for past or lost ideals.

Mexican poet and diplomat Octavio Paz, in his book El laberinto de la soledad, characterized this ambiguous character of the revolution in terms of the contrast between rational and mythical ways of thinking and acting. Apart from the rational endeavour to mould society into a new shape in the foreseeable future, every revolution, according to Paz, is based upon the predicament of an “eternal return” through the creation of a mythical reality (59). The question of “hasta cuándo” in the context of the revolution as it is presented in this song is therefore not only a look into the future, but also a backward glance to what has been repeated over and over again.

In “Los Revolucionarios” the use of the word “revolution” expresses the ambiguous character of the term in a sonic way. Towards the end of the song, a wordplay can be heard when the voice of Robertico Carcassés softly sings:
“Revolú-, revolú. Revolú-, revolú.” The repetition of only the first part of the word “revolución” creates a connection with the verb “revolver,” which according to the Larousse Dictionary means “to turn over,” “to stir” or “to turn back.” The first meaning of the word accords with the concept of “revolution” as an insurgency that causes a radical change by turning around existing power relationships. The rhythmical repetition of the curtailed word, however, combined with the relaxed tone of voice in which it is pronounced, suggests a reiterative occurrence that is not radical at all. This performance of the word seems to be more related to revolver in the sense of ‘stirring,’ where a substance is calmly being moved around, preparing it to cook or ensuring that different ingredients are properly mixed, with the final stadium of completion not reached yet. The word revolú is itself an unfinished version of revolución, as if indicating repeated intent to reach some kind of result that does not come; the sonic representation of Rojas’ “la Revolución Inconclusa.”

In El arte de la espera, “The Art of Waiting,” Rojas presents a reading of the Cuban Revolution’s emphasis on movement and disruption that makes it possible to perceive the evocation of an inertia, of a day-to-day routine, as a subversive act:

Times of peace are, for the memory of the Revolution, the dead weight of the past. And underneath that death declared by a totalitarian ideology, underneath those tombstones constructed by the power, lives the oblivion of its subterranean life. A simple retrospective view would provide the insight that, in Cuba’s history, peaceful periods are much longer than those of war, just like the revolutionary periods are less extensive than those of evolution. But in the official memory this almost infinite lapse of normality, this pacifist lentitude […] has little importance. The power is interested, more than anything, in the allegoric energy of certain scenes, the metaphorical violence of certain passages. (1998: 21)

My translation of the Spanish: “Los tiempos de paz son, para la memoria de la Revolución, el peso muerto del pasado. Y bajo esa muerte decretada por una ideología totalitaria, bajo esas tumbas edificadas por el poder, vive el olvido su vida subterránea. Una simple mirada retrospectiva informaría que, en la historia de Cuba, el tiempo de la paz es mucho más largo que el de las guerras, así como el de las revoluciones es menos
According to this argument, the Revolution emphasizes the violent and disruptive moments of its history, appealing to the imaginative power of these images. The affective way in which they resonate in the collective national memory can then compensate for the relative small role the Revolution has played in Cuban history if it is compared to the normality of everyday life. More importantly, Revolution’s memory of violence serves to cover the times of peace under the cover of amnesia. This is what resonates in “Los Revolucionarios,” when the Sonic I says: “old hatreds that keep the reasons forgotten / that made us so different, so much alike, so peculiar.” What is kept forgotten by the “old hatreds” of the Revolution, according to her, is the fact that the Cuban people cannot be divided into two groups according to a binary logic of being “with” or “against” the Revolution. I will discuss this binary in more detail in the last Movement of this Part, but an important suggestion at this point is that the statement by the Sonic I points to a diversity that characterizes the reality of Cuban culture, where people do not have either one characteristic or the other, but are simultaneously “so different, so much alike, so peculiar.” The peaceful normality that is rendered forgotten by Revolutionary discourse, therefore, is the acceptance of these differences in the normality of a day-to-day existence.

Returning to the sonic wordplay of “revolú-revolú” above in the analysis of “Los Revolucionarios,” the third meaning of the verb revolver, which is “to turn back,” provides an additional interesting insight which suggests that the Revolution is not only subverted by exposing how it has turned into a normality, but also by suggesting that it includes a movement of reversal. As Carcassés rhythmically repeats the unfinished word, the listener gets the impression of a needle stuck on a record. Where a spinning record suggests a circular movement that nonetheless includes progression towards a finish, a hanging needle means that a certain movement infinitely turns back to its starting point. Understood in that way, the meaning of “turning back” in revolver is the constant return to a starting point that does not allow for progress. Furthermore, the progression of a needle...
on a record is spiral, which implies that it spins towards a center. Where “center” automatically generates associations with clearly defined power relations, identity or singularity in terms of a defined origin or destination, the lack of forward movement of the hanging needle can also be read as a resistance to singularity. In its reiterative jump backwards on the record, the needle creates a sonic multiplication of “Revolución,” whose repetition deprives it of the uniqueness it is assigned by Cuban hegemonic discourse. If this multiplication is conceived as a potential decentering of the Revolutionary project as such, it exposes the diverging – individual – projects and interests of the Revolution’s actors. In an earlier sequence of the song, where it appears that there is a sudden error in the recording, Telmary can be heard saying “revorrevorre” as if stuttering the word – albeit in a rapid way. Here, the word is not without a conclusion, but it multiplies its starting point as if various voices have started pronouncing the same word with a minimal interval of time between them.

This stuttering recalls the notion of sonic strabism I introduced at the end of Part 2, where a multiplicity of perspectives are combined in a single, distorted vocal or instrumental expression. In the fragment from “Los Revolucionarios” the sonic strabism consists of an apparently single voice that detunes the singularity of Revolution by uncovering, in a sonic way, the multiplicity it entails. Fragmenting the Revolution by emphasizing its multiple points of departure automatically also multiplies the directions in which it can move as a project. More than a static fragmentation, then, this sonic strabism becomes a fragmentation in movement: a divergence. As the movement progresses, the diverging lines become more and more separated from each other. And if this movement is infinite, as with the unfinished character of the Cuban Revolution charted by Rojas, the diverging lines will eventually move in opposite directions, cancelling out the direction of the movement that gave them their initial impulse. In other words, detuning an unfinished Revolution by multiplying it will ultimately make it disappear.

The act of detuning in “Los Revolucionarios,” however, does not reach this level of radicalism. The strabistic forms of speaking only appear in small fragments that do not completely unsettle the narrative structure of the lyrics or the melodic and rhythmic structure of the song. However, while my analysis has primarily focused on the textual content of the song, the sonic use of the voice and the
different effects that were added in its post-production deserve further attention in order to determine whether they reinforce or problematize the observations I have made so far.

**Mediated Enunciation**

Similar to the performative elements in the recording of “Let’s play that” by Jards Macalé discussed in Movement 5, the recording of “Los Revolucionarios” is not performative in the sense of featuring an interaction between audience and performer during a live event, but in the sense that the recording makes itself heard as being a recording or, in other words, performs its own condition of being a recording. In my analysis of Macalé’s song this explicit presence of the recording was seen to correspond with the function of the little imperfections in the cantautor’s voice that were not censored in the final mix of the recording. In the current analysis of “Los Revolucionarios” the grain of the recording – to use Barthes’ terminology – is based the conscious insertion of technical flaws and the imitation thereof by the voice of the performer.

The reason why these technologically reproduced imperfections are of interest here is because they seem to question the function of technology as a medium that allows for an uncorrupted reproduction of the recorded voice, a repetition free of difference. The performance of technological imperfections then suggests that the reproduction of a recorded event also implies a translation, a repetition that is not objective but that is stooled on interpretation. The fact that there are also some fragments in the song in which the voice imitates these technological imperfections asks for some further thoughts on the function of these sonic characteristics in relation to the textual content.

Different types of media reproduce the voice of the Sonic I towards the end of the song. The first sequence of fragments sound like messages on an answering machine, interrupted abruptly by beeps in the middle of sentences and with messages also overlapping. The sound quality is poor and the voice’s timbre is transformed into the less personal, muffled, topped-off and metallic sound so typical of telephone microphones and speakers. The recording is intimate in
the sense that the voice of the Sonic I sounds close to the microphone and the volume is low, suggesting that the ear of the listener should also be close to the hearing device. At the same time, the constant interruption of the messages and the different messages overlapping creates an effect of fragmentation and simultaneousness, multiplying the voice of the Sonic I in a multi-layered sonic space.

In the second sequence of fragments, the voice of the Sonic I is heard through echoing loudspeakers in a large spacious ambience, recalling the sound of a broadcasting device in an airport. The quality of the sound is not as poor as that of the answering machine fragments, but this time it is the echo of the recording that makes it difficult to discern what the Sonic I is saying. Upon an attentive listening it turns out that the fragments of both the answering machine and the airport are snippets from the song's lyrics. In the airport fragments, the voice of the Sonic I is not interrupted or multiplied. Instead, an effect is added in which the voice moves from the left to the right speaker in the stereo recording. The effect of this is disorienting for the listener as it becomes hard to keep track of where the voice of the Sonic I comes from. Significantly, while the space of enunciation of the Sonic I is constantly shifting, the position of the listener is fixed, with the listener positioned either as a passenger in an airport hall or as a listener to the recording whose perception of the song can be manipulated by sound effects.

Apart from the technological effects, “Los Revolucionarios” is littered with fragments where the Sonic I's voice fulfills a rhythmic or melodic function by imitating instruments, whispering gibberish or stuttering. These fragments present alternative ways of using the voice that are not necessarily linguistic, or that at least follow different rules of grammar and speech. As with the technologically added effects of the superposed voicemail messages or the left-to-right shifting airport announcements, the vocal sound effects also disorient the listener when trying to identify and locate the speaking subject. What happens when it is difficult to trace the origin from where discourse is put into practice, or when the form of discourse is not linguistically structured, is that the concept of enunciation becomes troubled. In order to understand enunciation's function when speech becomes strabistic it is first necessary to grasp what this concept actually implies.

Michel Foucault, in The Archealogy of Knowledge, distinguishes three modalities of enunciation that define the position of the speaking subject in
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discourse: 1) who speaks, 2) from what position the subject speaks, and 3) the position the subject occupies towards its object. The point he makes that is of interest for this analysis is that discourse is not the space of synthesis of these different modalities where the self-conscious subject chooses his or her position. In contrast, discourse is a “space of exteriority” where the dispersion of the subject is manifested, and where synthesis takes place through discursive practice within an extensive field of possibilities (Foucault 1972: 82-90). Enunciation is thus a performative practice that works on discourse in order to give the speaking subject an orientation in the present in which he or she speaks. But what happens if semantic speech is being detuned by a use of the voice that does not follow the rules of speaking in the sense of meaning transmission? What if the voice is recorded and broadcasted in an interrupted, layered way, its multiplicity disturbing the clarity of a single message? What if a voice is intentionally presented as being recorded within an already recorded song, and the layeredness that this creates within the recording itself? What if the voice is used as a melodic or rhythmic device, detuning its functionality in a linguistic context?

The fact that in “Los Revolucionarios” the intervention of the recording device is made explicit by not filtering out its characteristics – the thin, scratchy sound of the voice on a one-speaker answering machine, or the overwhelming echo of the somewhat nasal voice through an airport speaker-system – makes it clear that the voice does not address the listeners directly, but that it is mediated. The intervention of technology is not flawless, and thus the sonic characteristics that allow for the type of device to be recognized by its particular flaws are like a technological version of Barthes’ grain of the voice. In my discussion of Barthes in Movement 5 the grain represented the unfiltered presence of the mechanism prior to the sonic production of speech or music, which, according to Barthes, was the culturally uncoded body of the cantor, but which, according to Judith Butler, was the omnipersonal citation of “I” in discourse that precedes its materialization in the individual body of the speaker. In the current example of the technological grain, however, the effect is the inverse. The sonic flaws that make audible the device that is the carrier of discourse do not lead back to the discursive position of “I” or the origin of the voice, but precisely to its fragmentation and disorientation through the reproduction of the recording and the added
effects. The voice is speaking from a multiplicity of bodies that are alternated in the overlapping recordings of the answering machine. The voice also speaks from a shifting place of enunciation in the left-to-right shifting of the airport broadcast recording. Ultimately, both effects imply that the voice can occupy any position in relation to the listener, its object, thus rendering all three of Foucault’s premises for enunciation insecure. What is left is discourse and articulation.

No-Man’s Land

In my discussion of hegemony and discourse in Movement 4, I showed how the realm of discourse is not a completely isolated sutured space of meaning within itself, but is constantly subverted by the existence of other discourses. The same elements that constitute one discourse can have a different position and function within another one. What determines the function of each element is articulation, which, according to Laclau and Mouffe, is the performative practice out of which a certain discourse or hegemony is being constructed. As introduced in that same movement, the possibility for articulation is located in what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as a “no man’s land,” the space of absence of a pre-given system of discourse or hegemony. This image reverberates with what is presented above as the impersonal space of the recording where articulation can take place from a sonic position of minimal discursive predetermination.

At another level, this no-man’s land is also represented by the space of the airport and the voicemails. The fleeting space of airports, for example, holds neither origin nor destination but is the representation of a constant “heading towards” between departure and arrival. The people at the airport are like the elements that constitute the realm of a discourse. It is not the location where they are that determines their function (the airport as discourse), but it is the direction of their movements, the articulation of where they came from and where they are heading, that determines the system they belong to. The same argument applies to the voicemails: it is not the fact that a voice and an ear encounter each other in a voicemail that creates the connection between the two. Rather, it is the address of the discourse from a “me” to a “you,” the articulation of a message, that
determines whether the voicemail is the space of encounter of both subjects, or not. If somebody else hears a voicemail left for another person, he or she is situated in a discursive space that is completely alien to him or her, because the space was created for the person who was supposed to receive the message. Returning to what the Sonic I of “Los Revolucionarios” referred to as the nightmare of traveling “as a fulltime job,” the answer machine and the airport are spaces that allow for the sort of perpetual traveling that is not necessarily a physical displacement, but a constant dwelling in the in-between spaces of geographies, bodies and discourses.

Here it becomes interesting to take a closer look at the effect of the voice of the Sonic I. Returning to the part of my analysis where I argued that the Sonic I is entrapped in a realm where she has to endlessly travel around in circles carrying around loose ends rather than fixed origins and destinations, the voice of the Sonic I is now captured inside the realm of technological reproduction in non-places such as voicemails and airports, which undoes the fixity of her origin of enunciation. The voice is thus as fragmented and layered as the condition of the affectively diasporic Cubanness of the Sonic I. In the voicemail recordings, for example, her messages are unfinished, interrupted halfway through her sentences and repeatedly superimposed with other messages. This gives the impression that various messages were recorded, cut into fragments and ordered randomly so that in the end no coherent message can be discerned from them. The airport messages, too, are not giving the usual cues for orientation to the traveling masses, but consist of dispersed fragments from the lyrics that are not specifically directed to anyone. So it is not only the space of enunciation that becomes superfluous, but also the space of reception that is transformed into a discursive no-man’s land.

Several effects of earlier observed peculiarities about the use of the voice in “Los Revolucionarios” come together here. As already mentioned, the voice of the Sonic I is not only distorted through technological intervention, but also imitates and reproduces these distortions, as in the fragmentation of the word “Revolution.” The Sonic I’s stuttering in the verse “We, the authentic, authentic Revorrevorrevolucionarios” indicates that the definition of Revolutionaries is just as fragmented as the people to which the term applies, causing the space of enunciation of this stuttered expression to become shattered across all of Cuba’s...
affectively diasporic spaces. The stuttering multiplies the starting point of the word, pronounced by a multitude of voices speaking from different positions. This slightly distorts the rhythm in which the word “Revolutionaries” is being pronounced, which recalls the rhythmic detuning of the “Guillermo Tell” recording discussed in Movement 4, but can also be related to the overlapping messages of the answering machine later in the song.

As also observed before, the repeated singing of “revolú-revolú” as an unfinished word with multiple starting points indicates a divergence or a difference in movement. The shifting position of the Sonic I’s voice over the airport’s broadcasting system, which alludes to the space of the airport as a point of departure to and arrival from different, dispersed destinations, displaces this divergence from the time of enunciation to the space of enunciation.

These observations render perceptible the irony in the emphatic, stretched-out way in which the Sonic I says “nosotros, los Revolucionarios de verdad, verdadá,” putting exaggerated stress on the expression “de verdad,” which means “for real” and which I have translated as “authentic.” The sonic performance of this fragment, rather than convincing the listener that the Revolutionary is a coherent, authentic entity, has the opposite effect, an effect reinforced by all the other sonic elements indicating the fragmentation and multiplicity of the Revolutionary and of the position from which he or she speaks.

**Multiplied in Translation**

The question of realness or authenticity brings the discussion back to my earlier observation that the explicit technological reproduction of the voice (as opposed to the implicit technological reproduction of the voice in the song as a whole, which, of course, is itself also a mediated recording) constitutes a particular form of translation. Without digging into all the possible connotations of a concept as extensively studied as translation, I do want to include some of its characteristics that can give a better understanding of the explicitly reproduced voice’s performance in “Los Revolucionarios” and its function. As Walter Benjamin points out, the difficulty of translation resides in the fact that it is mostly understood
to operate on the basis of a getting across of information, which, in a work of art, is not at all its most essential aspect (70-1). He also stresses two important differences that come to the surface in translations as traditionally conceived: first, the fact that “the relationship between content and language is quite different in the original and the translation,” and second, that the intentions with which the original text was written are different from those of the translation in the sense that “the intention of the poet is spontaneous, primary, graphic; that of the translator is derivative, ultimate, ideational” (Benjamin 75-7).

These characteristics do not seem to apply to the mediated representation of the voice in “Los Revolucionarios,” because there is no translator who seeks to faithfully reproduce the original text and who only unwillingly interferes with it. In the case of the song, however, technology is not an objective, neutral medium but is made explicit in its function as an imperfect intermediate between performer and listener. As a result, it becomes possible to perceive the first characteristic of translation mentioned by Benjamin in the presented recordings, which markedly change the relation between content and language. Whereas in the rest of the song the Sonic I produces content in a language that functions according to the chronological structuring of words and sentences, the sonic fragments reproduced through the answering machine and the airport broadcasting system scramble the content by presenting it through interruption and superimposition.

Therefore, although the media that reproduce the voice of the Sonic I are meant to be derivative, meaning that they are supposed to reproduce a message without change, they are not capable of doing this without distortion. This is in keeping with Benjamin’s conclusion where he argues that the task of the translator is one of “re-creation” in the translator’s own language (80). The performative imitation of the mediated voice in “Los Revolucionarios” suggests precisely such an inevitable distortion from which technological intervention is also not exempt.

In other words, a translation is never an exact replica of the original but produces difference. In her book Bakhtin and Beyond Peeren relates this effect of translation to the way in which identities constantly remake themselves by stating that translation “is remade to produce a form of agency situated in-between identity and alterity, self and other, transparency and opacity, domestic and foreign, authentic and false, original and copy” (2007: 154). When related to
the role of technological intervention as translation in “Los Revolucionarios,” this suggests that the performative function of the sonic discourse that is produced in the answering machine and airport broadcast fragments is the articulation of an affectively diasporic identity characterized by a similar in-betweenness.

For Peeren, who also draws on Benjamin, translation should therefore not be seen as a faithful reproduction of the original, but as a creative process that is, in fact, bi-directional:

Translation becomes dialogic, featuring an ongoing, contextualized struggle between the other’s word and the self’s understanding of this word, where neither remains the same and any notion of originality or authenticity is undermined. (2007: 156)

The fragments in “Los Revolucionarios” of the answering machine and the airport broadcast can be seen as translating, in a dialogic sense, the fragmented identity of the Sonic I as an affectively diasporic Revolutionary into a technologically constructed strabism. The place from which the Sonic I speaks is multiplied and this technologically mediated translation also makes it impossible to distinguish between replica and original. This extends to the voice of the Sonic I in the rest of the song, which is exposed as no less recorded and mediated than the answering machine messages and the airport broadcast. Thus, the place of enunciation becomes fully diasporic.

The fact that the Sonic I in “Los Revolucionarios” also imitates technological flaws by using her voice means that the possibility of a strabistic mode of speech is incorporated as a form of sonic strabism. The Sonic I is capable of producing a fragmentation within herself, becoming other to herself to the extent that an original “identity” can no longer be reconstructed. In this way, she is performing her affectively diasporic identity. This strabism is once again rooted in a sonic form of expression that escapes the restrictive synchronism of spoken language, as observed in Movement 6. The sonic language that is thus produced is not translatable in the traditional sense, as it cannot be reduced to its function of transmitting information. However, it does translate in a dialogic way. Consequently, it can only be expressed and interpreted in movement, in
the process of an ongoing mutual redefinition of the differences that are being produced and reproduced in translation.

As a way of capturing this discussion in a sonic way, the song finishes with a fragment of a chant to the deity or orisha Obatalá. The chant initially is only heard in the background, but when all instruments but the percussion have faded out, its melody concludes the song. In the Afro-Cuban santería religion, which has its roots in Nigerian Yorubá culture, Obatalá is the creator of the earth, lives both in the sky and on the earth, is both man and woman, and represents purity, peace and liberty (Rivero Glean and Chávez Spínola 412). This orisha thus represents the harmonious coexistence of the diversity of people on the earth, without reducing them to a single, unified center, as indicated by its double gendering. In the santería religion, Obatalá’s color is white, representing the harmonious combination of all possible colors into a whole that nonetheless does not represent a center. In contrast to the Christian habit of praying, which occurs primarily through the word, the act of invoking the orishas requires the performance of a combination of rituals that include chant, dance, wardrobe, artefacts and nourishment. Articulation as a coherent form of speech in song and prayer is thus overruled by its performance through rhythm and movement.

When the Sonic I of “Los Revolucionarios” says that she does not want to be asked to “shut up and stay,” her longing for movement can also be understood as a wish to express herself in a way that is not necessarily verbal or linguistic. Censorship, from this perspective, refers to a repression of a subject’s freedom of expression by reducing it to verbal ways of getting information across. A performative form of expression in movement, in which sonic strabism replaces singular, centered content, can therefore also constitute a form of sonic resistance to censorship. In order to better understand how such sonic resistance works, the following Movements will focus on how sonic forms of expression became a strategic way of circumventing but also highlighting censorship during the Brazilian military dictatorship and the Cuban Revolutionary regime.
Movement 8
Mumbled testimonies

By 1973 the harshest years of repression by the military dictatorship in Brazil had been left behind, although censorship and military control on song lyrics continued to be exercised. An important event during this period that has also been documented on video – although large parts of it have been destroyed – was the festival organized by Phono Records (now Universal Music) in São Paulo, May 1973. Of this event, some video material is collected on a DVD that appeared only recently in 2005, which is the visual material I will draw on when referring to the Phono festival.65 This event brought together all of the artists who had been points of reference for Brazilian music history during the previous two decades: Vinicius de Moraes and Toquinho from the bossa-nova era, Erasmo Carlos from the pop-oriented “yeyé” movement, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil from the Tropicália movement, Jards Macalé, Raul Seixas and Sergio Sampário from the marginais, among many others.

When Chico Buarque came on stage together with Gil, they started playing the song “Calice,” which Buarque had written together with Gil especially for the occasion of the festival, but which had been forbidden by the censors just before the event. Both musicians decided that, instead of singing the song, they would mumble the lyrics without using the actual words. Thus, on the video, Gil can be heard mumbling to the melody, whilst Buarque interrupts him after every phrase with the title of the song, “Cálice.” As a result, the word that refers to the Holy Grail in the Christian tradition suddenly begins to sound like the Brazilian Portuguese interjection “cale-se,” for ‘shut up.’ In the original lyrics, the Sonic I actually says: “father, take this chalice away from me, filled with red wine of blood.” By evoking, in the same word, both this cup filled with blood and the imperative to shut up, the Sonic I implicitly refers to the violence of censorship, which he rejects by saying “take this chalice away from me.” These words refer

to the biblical passage in which Christ prays in the garden of Gethsemane, aware that he is about to be sacrificed and asking God to spare him: “O my Father [...] let this cup pass from me” (*Bible: King James Version*, Matthew 26. 36-42). Thus, the blood-filled cup in the song refers to a refusal to be sacrificed for the father.

The gradual sonic change in the song from “cálice” to louder interjections of “cale-se,” ‘shut up,’ can be understood in different ways. Related to the observations above, the outcry of “shut up” can be seen to come from the Sonic I, rejecting the father’s – or the authorities’ – imperative to sacrifice himself. The son refusing to be sacrificed for the father’s sake recalls the refusal of William Tell’s son in Part 2, to continue to be the one with the apple on his head. What is significant in the performance of “Cálice,” however, is that the song is written for two voices, with the interjections of “cale-se” by one voice drowning out the lyrics of the other voice that says: “How difficult it is to wake up silent / when the silence of the night despairs me / I want to cry out an inhuman shout / which is a way of being listened to.”

In this way, the voice shouting *cale-se* imitates the censors that wish to shut up the Sonic I, and, as a result, the *cálice* fills with the blood that is shed because of this censorship.

At the live performance, Buarque and Gil did not get the chance to sing the lyrics about the chalice. As soon as Buarque started to insert more of the words and verses of the song, his microphone stopped working. He tried various other microphones on stage, but they had all been disconnected by the censors present at the concert. Buarque was therefore literally shut up by the censors and, in a parallel to the story of Christ, was unable to refuse this sacrifice. It can be argued, however, that the obviousness of the censors’ interference only helped Gil’s and Buarque’s performance to become performative, giving more expressive strength to the lyrics precisely by their prohibition.

Although the “Cálice” performance was the moment of the festival when the persisting censorship was most visible, other artists also evoked its silent presence by drawing attention to what was explicitly *not* being said. As in the case of “Calice,” the absence of certain verbal expressions made the censorship performative. Another salient moment during the festival was the performance
by Sergio Sampaio, one of the *margináis* who, some years earlier – in spite of his marginalized position – had had a small hit with the song “Eu quero é botar meu bloco na rua,” which can be translated as “I want to lead my samba group out into the streets.” In the lyrics, the Sonic I states that he is thought to be passive and afraid of speaking up, but actually wants to “lead [his] samba group out into the streets,” where he says he will sing, scream and swear. As seen in Part 1 of this study, carnival, in the Brazilian context, is often presented as a festivity during which the rules that are set by authorities are inverted in a playful way. Consequentially, it is not surprising that the Sonic I’s wish to rebel against the authorities is expressed through the allusion to a carnivalesque street parade.

Apparently, though, the rebellious aspirations of the Sonic I have led him no further than expressing his desire to go out into the streets, suggesting that he has not actually done this yet. During the live performance, however, towards the end of the song, Sampaio – who sings all the refrain’s lyrics off beat, squeezing them in between the lines of the background singers – repeatedly shouts the words “botar, botar” as he gets up from his stool and walks around, turning his microphone stand until his back is facing the audience. A brusque pelvic movement accompanies every exclamation of “botar,” imitating the sexual act and giving the verb “botar” for “to put” or “to throw” additional connotations of penetration (to put in) and ejaculation (to throw out). Sampaio’s grotesque performance of his desire to “botar” in this way becomes performative, as the audience no longer merely observes the performer but becomes part of the carnival procession, following the performer, who leads the way. The grotesque performance of “fucking the system” becomes a collective act, disguised by the performative of a carnival procession, whereas the lyrics go no further than expressing the desire of a single, abstract Sonic I.

From the fragments of film material that remain it seems the response from the audience to Sampaio’s performance was limited to one person standing up and dancing ecstatically amongst the sitting audience, which is cheering and laughing at him. The hip and arm movements of this man, who wears a red afro hairdress and large earrings, suggest an explicitly performed homosexuality, which draws the attention because of homosexuality’s prohibition under Brazilian
military rule. This response in the audience, however small and isolated it appears in the footage of the concert, nevertheless suggests how Sampaio’s performance could be followed as in an actual carnival procession on the streets. The man in the audience is tuning into Sampaio’s rhythm and performance, making it a shared event. Furthermore, he seems to give Sampaio’s act of “botar” yet another connotation through his apparent homosexuality, which is publicly exposed in a carnivalesque way. So, apart from multiplying the performing subject, the fact that the man joins Sampaio also fragments the allusion to the carnival procession into multiple potential transgressions of the regime’s norms.

Sampaio’s display of the sexual act on stage is both a transgression in a moral sense, exposing an act that is supposed to be performed in the realm of the private, and in a political one, because it connects sexuality to politics as a system, based on the act of possessing or the role of being possessed. The fact that the singer turns his back to the audience can therefore be recognized not only as a transgression of the normal division between performer and audience, but also as causing confusion about who sings and who listens, who penetrates and who is being submitted to the politically burdened sexual act, who takes to the streets and who is being thrown out? And, ultimately, who silences and who is being shut up?

Apart from Sampaio’s performance, other songs at the festival also expressed alternative ways of resistance to the dominant image of Brazilian culture as the military government’s mass media strategy was marketing it. In the government’s view, everything revolved around the image of Brazil as a country that was moving forward into economic prosperity by actively taking part in the global economy. This cultural image of a prosperous Brazil was being presented as the end product of a harmonious integration of African and indigenous cultures. Carnival, as the ultimate expression of this festive cultural mix, accompanied this strategy, whereas other aspects of Brazilian reality, such as the poverty in the Northeastern regions and the suppression of indigenous groups in the inlands, did not. The Tropicália movement already recognized this problem in the mid-1960s, leading them to integrate music from these marginalized regions, groups and

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67 For a well-known and often cited study on homosexuality in Brazil’s 20th century, consult **Além do carnaval: a homossexualidade masculina no Brasil do século XX** by James Naylor Green, Cristina Fino and Cássio Arantes Leite.
traditions into popular music in order to create alternative encounters of sonorities that were also part of Brazilian culture.

Although the 1973 Phono festival was not a Tropicália event, it nonetheless showed a revival of less-celebrated aspects of Brazilian culture at a mainstream musical event. Gal Costa and Maria Bethânia (Caetano Veloso’s sister) sang the song “Oração da Mãe Menininha,” ‘Prayer for Mother Menininha,’ dedicated to an iconic Mãe de Santo or an Afro-Brazilian religious priestess of Bahia, who was a descendant of slaves and an important defender of the African Candomblé tradition in Brazil (Echeverria and Nóbrega 23). The song was performed with the traditional accompaniment of the accordion, faithful to the nordestino tradition, but the women singing were Maria Bethânia, a renowned singer of sentimental and orchestral samba-canção compositions, and Gal Costa, who started her career with the Tropicália moment but who later became the female muse of Brazilian rebellious youth during the marginália era.68 In addition, there was Jorge Ben, who sang his song “Zumbi,” a reference to Zumbi dos Palmares (1655-1695), who was the leader of the “Palmares” quilombo, an independent community of escaped slaves and other marginalized subjects in Brazilian society at that time (Murphy 56). Raul Seixas performed his rock-song “Loteria da Babilônia,” influenced by both Jerry Lee Lewis and the Beatles, while, during the performance, drawing on his chest the symbol of the Sociedade Alternativa – an anarchic society that he was planning to start together with his friend and co-lyricist Paolo Coelho, among other people, but which was never realized because of interference by the military authorities (De Lima Boscato 59, 153).

Amongst this group of songs exploring alternative musical styles of Brazilian culture, Caetano Veloso’s performance of “A volta da asa branca,” ‘The Return of the White Feather [Pigeon]’ – a song by Luiz Gonzaga, a folk singer from the Brazilian North-East region – stood out as the most remarkable. First of all, Veloso’s appearance was, according to Tropicália habits, provocative: he wore a

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68 In Brazil, Gal Costa was seen as the face of the so-called desbunde. Desbunde and its verbal use desbundar describe an uninhibited attitude that is closely related to the American hippie lifestyle of the 1960s. It includes the African word “bunda,” which stands for “bum.” According to Caetano Veloso, the reference to the bum is a synecdoche for the entire body in an attitude of completely surrendering to one’s bodily drives (469). Also see my article “Artimanha, the Precise Moment of Being” (2011).
multi-colored, almost clownish outfit which contrasted with the introverted style in which he sang the lyrics. In addition, the song was interrupted regularly for vocal codas, sometimes quite long, that did not allow for the song to progress in an easy-listening, comfortable way. The choice of the song was also noteworthy, as its lyrics describe the return of the “asa branca” or ‘white feather’ pigeon to the Northeast region as a sign that the land was becoming fertile again after a period of drought. The song follows an earlier composition by Luiz Gonzaga called simply “Asa branca,” telling the story of how the bird left the region because of drought and fires. As for Veloso’s performance, the choice of a northeastern song is not only a Tropicália aesthetic statement, but also points to Veloso’s recent return to Brazil after his period of exile.

The vocal intermissions in the song, or the fermatas, are extensive and sometimes even unbearably long fragments of vocal experimentation that are not just non-verbal melodies or imitations of instruments. In these fragments, Veloso explores an extensive register of interbocal, nasal and glottal hums, vocally supported breathing sounds that accompany unintelligible mumbling and growling, and different labial, alveolar, palatal and glottal plosives and clicks, as well as a simultaneous melodic humming. The combination of the vocal chords and the body around them functions as a way to create multiple instruments that can be played simultaneously by a single performer.

I will first compare the sonic use of the voice on Veloso’s experimental 1973 album Araçá azul to the non-linguistic use of the voice on Milton Nascimento’s album Milagre dos peixes, also from 1973. After that, I will analyze the lyrics of the song “Milagre dos peixes” on Nascimento’s eponymous album, in order to explore how the lyrics manage to testify to the experience of being censored in a situation where censorship attempts to prevent testimony. In doing so, I will compare the conceptualization of testimony by Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman from a trauma-theory perspective with Giorgio Agamben’s approach to the concept from a linguistic-philosophical point of view. Extracting the concept from its embeddedness in a holocaust context and relating it to censorship in the Brazilian context, I will examine in what ways the non-linguistic use of the voice in Nascimento’s song aligns or contrasts with testimony’s performative or ineffable character as described, respectively, by Laub and Felman and by Agamben.
Experimentalism on the Albums Araçá azul and Milagre dos peixes

Veloso’s vocal experimentalism in the performance of “A volta da asa branca” during the Phono festival typifies the general content of his album Araçá azul, released a few months earlier. For example, on the track “De conversa,” ‘In a conversation,’ Veloso imitates talking sounds without using words, simply interpreting the vocal registers that remind of mumbling conversations, people saluting each other, somebody shouting something, women speaking and laughing in high and loud voices, etcetera. Sometimes small sounds are isolated, such as the sucking of teeth or palatal clicking sounds of the mouth – much used in Latin America as signs of disapproval – and repeated until they become rhythmic or even melodic again. By playing percussion on his own body, beating on his chest, cheeks and legs, Veloso provides a bodily instrumentalization and rhythm (Veloso 485). Veloso also includes gargles, vibratos and whistling. Both in fragments of the CD and during the live performance of “A volta da asa branca,” Veloso’s voice switches between registers including high-pitched nasal oriental prayer, laughs, the almost mechanic jabber of a madman, crying, and so on.

Here, detuning returns, discussed in Part 2 as a body’s non-harmonic resonance with itself due to the experience of an internal difference. The above examples of imitations of speech can be considered a detuning of language, as what is expressed is not quite language but still recognizable as something very similar to it. By making language sonic, Veloso not only detunes its function as a vehicle of communication, but also shows how some of the sounds that seem normal in speech sound strange when isolated and repeated mechanically. Detuning is also performed melodically on the album. The track “Gil misterioso” consists entirely of the repeated verse “Gil engendra em Gil rouxinol” which translates as “Gil engenders a nightingale in Gil.” Whereas the nightingale is a well-known metaphor for a good singer, the song features long interruptions of the singing during which a voice and a guitar string detune and harmonize to one another as the voice slowly bends its tone upwards and downwards whilst the guitar string is being slightly pulled up or released to elevate and lower its pitch. Taken together, Veloso’s detunings express an attitude of not wanting to conform to normative
guidelines. On his album, this leads to transgressions of linguistic, melodic and aesthetic norms, but in the overall historical framing of the album, this non-conformism can be related to a rejection of any kind of censorship.

Although Araçá azul is an experimental album, it does not only give the impression of being a project with modernizing aspirations when it comes to its musical tone. It sometimes breathes a strongly organic or even tribal atmosphere in the fragments of multilayered voice recordings. The idea for the album was born from Caetano Veloso's contribution to the soundtrack for the 1971 movie San Bernardo, directed by Leon Hirszman, about agricultural life in the Brazilian outback, or sertão. The idea for this soundtrack was to add Caetano's vocal improvisations to one another in four layers of recording, in order to create an organic sound that was not directly music as such, but would function as a background for the images on screen (Veloso 484). Maybe because of this background, the sound that Veloso creates in some of the fragments on Araçá azul is less obviously vanguard than, for example, the album Ou não by Walter Franco, released a little earlier in 1973. On Franco's album the vocal and experimentalism is more elaborately manipulated by technological interventions such as added echoes, extreme sound compressions to voices and synthesized instrumental soundscapes.

The second song on Veloso's album is a composition by a singer-songwriter from a younger generation, Milton Nascimento. According to Veloso, the track is also a dedication to this other artist, who has very little in common with the Tropicália movement but who he greatly admires (485-6). Nascimento, only a year later in 1974, would release the album Milagre dos peixes (Miracle of the Fishes) after the Brazilian censors had rejected its first version. The singer-songwriter was so frustrated by this decision, especially because he considered the lyrics critical in character but in no way explicitly political or aimed directly at the dictatorship, that he substituted most of the song lyrics by vocal sounds. In the final version of the album, only three out of eleven songs have lyrics (José 1).

The vocal sounds on the Milagre dos peixes include the singing of open vowels to melodies, mostly in the high-pitched falsetto voice which is typical of Nascimento's singing style. On some occasions, these melodies are put on top.

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69 Soundscape or “ambience” is the sonic equivalent to landscape, a realm that constitutes an auditive spatial background on a recording that creates depth, as in the different layers of a painting.
of the lyrics, making it harder to distinguish what is being sung. Other vocal performances on the album include the interpretation of animal sounds – monkeys and birds – in various voices, creating the impression of jungle noises being integrated into a melodic and rhythmic structure. Significantly, the compositions on Nascimento’s album are always recognizable as music and are not experimental ways of recreating noises. Another important difference between the albums by Veloso and Nascimento is the fact that Veloso’s project was consciously intended to be experimental and abstract, whereas Nascimento turned to alternative vocal resources when the censors did not allow him to pronounce what was originally in the song lyrics. The censors permitted the second recording of the album because most lyrics were absent, but what possibly also influenced their indulgence was that it had become a rather abstract work of art that was unlikely to resonate with a large audience.

Although the album does not go as far as to integrate bodily sounds like the gargles and growls of Veloso’s *Araçá azul*, it does exude an organic, natural atmosphere in the sense that animal noises are imitated or that some of the outcries of male voices are not polished melodically but expose a grain, in Barthes’ terms (see Movement 5). The sonic presence of nature and the uncontrolled sounds of the body are particularly significant in the context of a censoring military apparatus whose technocratic project was all about technological advancements, the exclusion of marginalized elements in the national musical canon and the reaffirmation of the slogan “order and progress” from the Brazilian flag. This does not mean, however, that technology is completely absent. Especially on the album *Araçá azul*, where Veloso is the only singer on most of the songs, technology was used to record his voice, instrumental tracks and bodily percussion on different channels after which they were added as additional layers in the final mix (Veloso 485-6).

In Movement 7 I focused on the affective diasporic experience of the Sonic I in “Los Revolucionarios” by Telmary, where the technological transformation of her speech expresses her inability to put words to her situation. Her experience of being part of a multiplicity of worlds causes her position of enunciation as a subject to become blurred, leading to what I characterized as a *strabistic* form of speech enunciating from a variety of perspectives at the same time. This strabistic
speech allows her to speak both as an insider and as an outsider in relation to the demarcation of Cuban national territory. Her discourse thus subverts the separation between the inside and the outside of the national realm, making it impossible to approach her lyrics from a perspective based upon an inside-outside dichotomy. The Sonic I’s in the projects by Veloso and Nascimento take recourse not to technology but to an image of nature in order to speak strabistically. In Veloso’s case, his situation of having recently returned to Brazil from his exile in the UK can be related to the affectively diasporic experience of Telmary. Even though Veloso was able to return to the homeland, the experience of alienation from this homeland in a society dominated by military rule makes for an ambiguous experience of homecoming. As seen in Part 1, both staying at home and returning to the homeland can produce a similar experience of affective diaspora to when the homeland is physically left behind, as what affectively resonates through these experiences is a sensation of alienation from this homeland.70

For Milton Nascimento, who did not leave Brazil but who nevertheless experienced diaspora affectively due to the absence of an entire generation of artistic role models (Veloso and Gil from Tropicalia, Oiticica and Neto from Marginália, and so on), censorship constituted an additional trigger for his disorientation as a speaking subject. The control that the authorities exercised on his speech, deciding what he can and cannot sing, was what led him to record an album mostly consisting of sounds. This, I contend, makes his expressions strabistic in the sense that his position of enunciation cannot be characterized as being part of a dominant discourse or clearly situated outside this discourse. Rather, it captures the intrinsic multiplicity of positions that live within this discourse as a hegemonic system. Translated to the concrete example of Milagre dos peixes: after the censors forbade Nascimento’s lyrics, these lyrics came to represent the opposite of centralized power; the re-recorded version of the album with mostly non-language sounds was allowed to be produced, indicating that

70 In Verdade tropical, Veloso tells of an episode that occurred shortly after his return to Brazil, when he saw a sticker on his brother-in-law’s car that said: “Brasil, ame-o ou deixe-o,” “Brazil, love it or leave it,” a slogan introduced by the military authorities. What shocked Veloso was how this showed him that the love he felt for his homeland was not a legitimized form of love, as it was directed towards a memory of Brazil that no longer corresponded with what it had become or what the military wished it to be (455).
it was considered legitimate by this same centralized power; consequently, the absence of the lyrics does not simply evidence a surrender to censorship but simultaneously stresses the absent presence (or present absence) of the disallowed lyrics. This effect would have been absent had the lyrics simply been adapted, because then it would require one to know the story behind the censorship in order to capture the message behind the new recording. In the end, the Sonic I of Milagre dos peixes speaks – without using words or, better, by explicitly not using words – from a position that challenges the inside-outside dichotomy of the military power structure; his world is not divided into power and its external opposite, but structured as hegemonic, where the possibility of subversion is part of the system.

In his book Conocer desde el sur, Boaventura de Sousa Santos criticizes what he calls “metonymic reason,” which represents the dualistic thought-system of occidental sociology. He explains this dualistic thought system as a way of understanding the world in which all separate elements can only be understood in their relation to a bigger totality. In this system of thought, for example, the South cannot be understood without the North, feminine cannot be understood without masculine, and so on. He furthermore states that this apparently horizontal way of dividing the world into interrelated dualities is based on a belief in hierarchies, where one of both dualities becomes referential for the totality of both: South is modelled with respect to North, femininity is characterized by its differences from masculinity. “Metonymic reason” thus refers to a pars pro toto way of perceiving the world, which “produces a non-existence of what does not fit in its totality,” qualifying these marginalized elements as “invisible, unintelligible or erasable” (Santos 75). This explains the acceptance of Milton Nascimento’s re-recorded album by the Brazilian censors, which, from this perspective, constitutes not so much a confirmation of its inclusion in the realm of what was politically acceptable, but an indication of the censors’ perception of it as unintelligible and therefore irrelevant and not worth erasing.

In spite of this, however, the album was not prevented from causing any effect, because, according to Nascimento, “it sold well, in spite of the fuss it...
caused” (José). This made the album less invisible and erasable than the authorities probably expected. In contrast, Veloso’s album Araçá Azul is the album that, in all of Brazil’s musical history, has most often been returned to the stores by angry customers (Veloso 486). While the experimentalism of Veloso’s album was not so different from that of Nascimento’s project, the latter’s vocal experimentalism was a much clearer critical statement. Although the question remains whether its critical message was picked up on by those who did not know about the album’s history of censorship, certain elements did make oblique reference to it. For example, the song “Hoje é dia de ‘El Rey,’” ‘Today is the day of El Rey,’ originally consisted of a dialogue between a father and a son. Of this dialogue, only the initial words of the father in his answers to the son were not censored: “filho meu,” ‘my son.’ On the recording, Nascimento sings the open vowels of what once were the son’s words, after which the voice of another singer, Sirlan, introduces a different rhythmic movement with the words “filho meu” and continues his melody with vowels in a lower voice. In addition, the credits on the album say “lyrics by...” for the songs that were recorded instrumentally, pointing to their erasure (Coan 14-6). Veloso’s album lacks this particular framing, which might have prevented audiences from linking its experimentalism to the issue of censorship, keeping them at an unintended distance.

Cornelia Gräbner, in “Critital Utopias,” proposes a “poetics of absences” in order to address poetic practices that in metonymic reason are marginalized because they are rendered non-existent. Adapting Santos’s “sociology of absences,” which focuses more generally on social practices, both approaches presuppose the analysis of an object not in relationship to a dominant totality that declares them impossible, but on its own specific terms of existence as an alternative social construct or poetic expression (Santos 75; Gräbner 2013: 1-2). From this perspective, the audience’s positive reception of Nascimento’s album can be understood as an acceptance of the object as an alternative social construct.

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72 My translation from Portuguese: “O disco vendeu bem, fora a repercussão que causou.”
Testimony as the Inner Ring of Speech’s Dark Margin

In this subsection I will introduce the concept of testimony in order to approach the type of language based on a lack of understandable, identifiable speech used by Veloso and Nascimento. Related to a context of censorship, testimony will be seen to refer to the way in which a marginalized speaker can testify to a speech that is made impossible on the basis of the impossibility of testimony itself. Since testimony has been conceptualized by various theories that refer to the experience of the holocaust, I will invoke the work of Giorgio Agamben and that by Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman in order to extract from them those aspects of the concept that are productive for my analysis of the very different contexts at stake in this study. The experiences from which testimonial speech arises in the songs “Los Revolucionarios” and “Milagre dos peixes” are clearly not in the least comparable to the holocaust, so I will distill from the theories discussed a general notion of testimony as referring to a situation in which there is a certain inaccessibility to language and a witness attempting to give an account of this inaccessibility.

In the theories that refer specifically to the holocaust, testimony is considered impossible because it entails a relation to an unexpressable trauma or even the physical annihilation of the witnessing subject. This causes testimony to be seen as either a performative act that is out of the witness’s reach, as in Laub and Felman’s theory, or to become a metaphysical concept that reflects on the relation between speech and language in general, as is the case in Agamben’s work. In my use of the concept, the presence of censorship provides a concrete demarcation of the boundaries within which speech is possible in the sense of being allowed and legitimized by the authorities; outside of this demarcation, it is made impossible or at least actively discouraged through the instruments of censorship. What is also important to stress is that in my analyses the illegitimate speech of the Sonic I or the “speaking” subject is based on a conscious choice to make language unintelligible, as a performative act that is within reach of the subject but out of the reach of the censors.

In view of the above statements, it is no surprise that on Nascimento’s album Milagre dos peixes the frame of reference within which the non-semantic
or absent lyrics are situated is censorship itself. In other words, censorship required most of the lyrics to be removed, and the album’s instrumental character, combined with the singing of vowels and the drowned-out lyrics, expresses precisely what this censorship wished to accomplish. The artist does not aim to change the rules set by the censors, so the line drawn around what is and what is not allowed to be said is not transgressed. Instead, Nascimento’s move towards alternative forms of sonic expression that are not necessarily semantic speech makes use of the insufficiencies of a logocentric censoring apparatus. According to Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology*, the concept of logocentrism refers to the limiting way in which the logical – written or spoken – representation of language “limit[s] the internal system of language in general by a bad abstraction” (1997: 44). Nascimento’s resistance to censorship, precisely because it does not qualify as logocentric, does not get tangled up in a quarrel about what can and cannot be said, but criticizes and subverts the very foundations upon which this system of censorship is built.

The Sonic I expresses himself from a position that is both the inside and the outside of the dominant (hegemonic) system. Both his inclusion in this system and his exclusion from it are indefinite, unstable. The element that allows for resonance in both realms is the membrane. As discussed in Part 2, the membrane represents a simultaneous separation and connection between different realms, such as discourse and the voice. At the point of contact between the impersonal field of potential speech that is discourse and the personal concretization of discourse into speech through the human voice, the membrane represents a space where the first is neither completely identical to nor completely different from the latter. Importantly, this space of contact is not static, but allows each realm to expand into the other. In the current discussion of Nascimento’s project, the membrane constitutes the moving point of contact between intelligible and unintelligible language, but also between forms of expression that are legitimized or prohibited by censorship. The sonic dimension of the project is what creates these dynamics. It is important to emphasize here that “the sonic” is not the same as “sound,” but is in fact the politicized space of sound, where subjectivities and messages are being produced through the accompaniment of timbres, rhythms, melodies and registers (i.e. the tone of a voice that connects it to a specific person, lyrics whose
performance can affirm or contrast with what they state semantically, etc.).

In other words, the membrane operates on the level of the sonic because it resonates in the realms of both semantic speech and its vocal production. The membrane detunes language as something that constitutes the subject’s self-manifestation by subverting the basis upon which the subject pronounces him- or herself as “I.” The form of I-identity that is challenged suggests the existence of a coherent subject who can be clearly located on the inside of a homeland, a political context, a culture, a body – and who has a language available in order to perform this self-affirmative speech. The detuned speech of the Sonic I, whose identity is less fixed because of the experience of affective diaspora (as discussed in Part 1) or the experience of the marginal subject’s exclusive inclusion in a hegemonic system (as in Part 2), is therefore enunciated simultaneously from an inside and outside perspective, and serves to constitute a subject who is equally fragmented. As noted above, the sonic potentiality of language plays an important part in finding a detuned, strabistic way of speaking.

Because testimony in a context of censorship is primarily about a subject’s attempt to give an account of the fact of being silenced, it implies a form of language that is capable of reflecting its unavailability to its speaker in a regular, linguistic sense. For this reason I wish to explore a possible connection between a detuned, strabistic way of speaking and testimony. But let us first focus on semantically coherent language and its possible unavailability to the speaking subject in his or her attempt to testify. This experience is a focal point in trauma theory, where the witness struggles with the act of giving an account of a traumatic experience. Trauma theory is often related to the holocaust as the most extreme experience of the subject’s loss of its human condition and of a language to testify to this – as Primo Levi put it in *If This Is a Man*: “human eyes would not witness it and survive” (6). As noted above, I want to suggest that certain elements of the concept of testimony as developed in trauma theory can also be used to analyze objects that are situated in radically different contexts.

In Laub and Felman’s book *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, the sense of disorientation caused by trauma is argued to be an inevitable characteristic of testimony, both for the listener and for the speaker. Their analyses focus on traumatic experiences, the overwhelming nature
of which makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the witness who has experienced them to put them into words:

The speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, not available to its own speaker. (15, emphasis in text)

Laub and Felman stress the performative nature of testimony, how it is “a discursive practice […] to accomplish a speech act, rather than to simply formulate a statement” (5, emphasis in text). They contend that testimony is a necessary process that the witness – and his or her respondent or psychologist – has to go through in order to regain some sense of orientation:

The narrator herself does not know any longer who she [is], except through her testimony. This knowledge or self-knowledge is neither a given before the testimony nor a residual substantial knowledge consequential to it. In itself, this knowledge does not exist, it can only happen through the testimony. (51, emphasis in text)

An important characteristic of testimony in Laub and Felman’s analysis is that the subject’s speech is censored by internal, psychological dynamics that have to be overcome by a performative practice. Structuring a certain narrative therefore becomes, much like the process of therapy, a way for the narrator or the patient to re-create a sense of self by reconnecting to a narrative coherence that is hidden under an obfuscating linguistic surface. What is of particular interest for the present analysis, however, is not the relief testimony can offer traumatized subjects as a reconstructing narrative, but testimony as the type of narrative that can give an account of the fragmented state of an affectively diasporic subject or of the experience of a censored subject who consciously reproduces his or her inaccessibility to language. In “Milagre dos peixes” and “Los Revolucionarios” it is the effort of testifying to these experiences that causes the Sonic I’s language to become fragmented as well.

Giorgio Agamben’s conceptualization of testimony in relation to
language's unavailability to the subject provides a helpful insight at this point. He, too, is speaking about the holocaust. In his book *Remnants of Auschwitz* he departs from the distinction between his concept of testimony and Michel Foucault's concept of the "archive" in order to explain how testimony has to be approached from the perspective of its taking place as an enunciation, instead of focusing on the linguistic content of its statements. As explained in the previous Movement in reference to Foucault, enunciation refers to the place from where the subject speaks and what his or her position is in relation to its object. In short, it addresses "not what is said in discourse but the pure fact that it is said, the event of language as such, which is by definition ephemeral" (Agamben 1999: 138). In relation to Émile Benveniste's proposal for a study of enunciation, Agamben asks the following question:

> If enunciation, as we know, does not refer to the text of what is uttered but to its taking place, if it is nothing other than language's pure reference to itself as actual discourse, in what sense is it possible to speak of a "semantics" of enunciation? (1999: 138)

The concept that makes it possible to approach enunciation is the archive as defined by Foucault, which Agamben summarizes as follows:

> As the set of rules that define the event of discourse, the archive is situated between *langue*, as the system of construction of possible sentences – that is, of possibilities of speaking – and the *corpus* that unites the set of what has been said, the things actually uttered or written. The archive is thus the mass of the non-semantic inscribed in every meaningful discourse as a function of its enunciation; it is the dark margin encircling and limiting every concrete act of speech, […] the unsaid or sayable inscribed in everything said by virtue of being enunciated. (1999: 144)

If these observations are related to my discussion of the Phono festival and Nascimento's album *Milagre dos peixes*, how can the conscious search for a non-semantic form of speech be theorized? For, this is a form of sonic expression
that, by virtue of its taking place, refers to the absence of a semantic content that was forbidden by the censors. In the case of the festival and the album, the absence of a textual content infuses the event of speech with a signification that can be seen as a semantics of enunciation. The concept of the archive does not offer an appropriate framework for this analysis as it focuses on the relation “between the unsaid and the said,” whereas it is more relevant to focus on the relation between the “sayable and the unsayable,” which Agamben proposes as the basis for his concept of testimony (1999: 145). He explains how this shift in perspective brings back the importance of the speaking subject, who, in the case of the archive, is reduced to an empty space through which discourse takes place. Instead, he argues:

Precisely because testimony is the relation between a possibility of speech and its taking place, it can exist only through a relation to an impossibility of speech – that is, only as contingency, as a capacity not to be. [...] It concerns the subject’s capacity to have or not to have language. The subject is thus the possibility that language does not exist, does not take place – or better, that it takes place only through its possibility of not being there, its contingency. (1999: 145-46, emphasis in text)

Departing from Agamben’s concept of testimony as a way to reflect on the subject’s capacity or incapacity of speech in general, the censorship that the cantautores of the cultural objects discussed in this Part are exposed to narrows the application of testimony to the marginal subject’s contingency in a hegemonic system. Translated to the situation of Nascimento or the Brazilian marginais at the Phono festival, the non-semantic potentiality that surrounds the “speech” of the musicians as it is controlled by the censors is less abstract than Agamben’s idea of the contingency of speech. In fact, their non-spoken language specifically points to particular forbidden words, sentences and expressions defined by the censors as potentially constitutive of critical or inciting discourse against the regime.

In relation to what in the quote from Agamben is described as the archive’s non-semantic, dark margin that encircles any concrete act of speech, I would like to propose conceiving of testimony in a context of censorship as encircled by an
inner ring within this dark margin, in which a specific set of non-spoken words encloses the register of words that are allowed to be spoken. This inner ring is not impermeable, but encloses a language that also has the capacity of not existing. Much like in the discussion of hegemony in Part 2, this language can be strabistic in the sense that it can situate itself on the inside of the hegemonic system and simultaneously resonate outside it. As in Sampaio’s song “Eu quero é botar meu bloco na rua,” the lyrics of a song may semantically comply with the rules set out by state censorship, while, at the same time, its metaphorical content can make it resonate with the space outside of the inner ring. In the case of Nascimento’s album *Milagre dos peixes* the absence of words or the foregrounding of their non-semantic content also resonates with the realm outside the inner ring, as it explicitly marks its presence. The membrane thus represents the affective space of encounter between both worlds, what I have conceptualized as the inner ring of the archive’s dark margin, where strabistic speech resonates in both directions.

**The Miracle of the Fish**

As one of the few songs on Nascimento’s album that was not censored in its entirety, “Milagre dos peixes” allows for an analysis of its lyrics. As argued above, the fact that the instrumental melodies and vocal experimental sounds on the album are related in concrete terms to censorship makes it possible to analyze them as wordless narratives. What makes the lyrics of this song particularly interesting, however, is that both their content and their narrative structure constitute a reflection on the act of giving testimony through alternative forms of language.

*Milagre dos peixes*  
*Miracle of the Fish*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eu vejo esses peixes e vou de coração</td>
<td>I see these fish and I dive in, heart first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eu vejo essas matas e vou de coração à natureza</td>
<td>I see these plants and I dive in, heart first, into nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Movement 8 - Mumbled testimonies

Telas falam colorido de crianças coloridas
Screens speak colorful of multi-colored children

De um gênio televisor
Of a genius television

E no andor de nossos novos santos
And in the procession of our new saints

O sinal de velhos tempos:
The signal of old times:

Morte, morte, morte ao amor
Death, death, death to love

Eles não falam do mar e dos peixes
They don't speak of the sea and the fish

Nem deixam ver a moça, pura canção
Nor do they allow to see the girl, that pure song

Nem ver nascer a flor, nem ver nascer o sol
Nor to see the flower grow, or see the sun rise

E eu apenas sou um a mais, um a mais
And I am just one more, one more

A falar dessa dor, a nossa dor
To speak of this pain, our pain

Desenhando nessas pedras tenho em mim
dellas as cores
Drawing on those stones, I have in me all the colors

Quando falo cousas reais
When I speak real things

E no silêncio dessa natureza, eu, que amo
And in the silence of this nature, I who love
meus amigos
my friends

Livre, quero poder dizer
Free, I want to be able to say

Eu tenho esses peixes e dou de coração
I have these fish and I give from the heart

Eu tenho essas matas e dou de coração
I have these plants and I give from the heart

The first important element is the song’s title and the allusions it contains. Clearly, “Miracle of the Fish” alludes to the biblical story in which Jesus needs to feed five thousand people with only five loaves and two fish available. Miraculously, he is able to feed everyone in such a way that plenty of food remains afterwards (Bible: King James Version, Matthew 14. 13-21). This topos of abundance created out of apparent scarcity is also present in the song’s title’s alternative allusion to the “milagre económico,” ‘economic miracle,’ as the name for a project initiated by the military regime in the late 1960s. Through a technocratic
programme of economic, social and political reforms, the military authorities set out to make Brazil a relevant player in the globalizing world economy. Their strategy was to stimulate internal productivity and industrialization by all possible means, giving them the excuse to repress any element of resistance that stood in the way of attaining this economic miracle.

In both cases, the miracle that either happens or is pursued requires the people to have faith in the miracle workers, creating a parallel between religious devotion to a prophet and submission to the authorities in a military dictatorship. Accordingly, the Sonic I sings of “our new saints,” portraying the military as a revered cast of authoritarian figures in the age of modernity. They are the “saints” to whom the carnivalesque procession of multi-colored children is dedicated. The way in which this image of a carnival procession is related to the veneration of technological advancement, given that the carnival procession is witnessed by “a genius television,” also evokes what I explained in Part 1 as the carnivalesque celebration of Brazilian modernity and the pre-fabricated image of cultural harmony that it supposedly implies. But instead of being a celebration of harmony, the song characterizes the festivities celebrating the technocrats’ heartless focus on economic growth and productivity as a “death to love.”

The “new saints” of the song also do not allow for images of beauty, such as those of a growing flower, the rising sun or a girl whose beauty the Sonic I describes as “a pure song,” to be seen. The Sonic I mentions pain, which he immediately qualifies as “our pain,” referring to a larger group of people who also suffer because they are not allowed to see the beauty of nature. When the Sonic I then says that he is “just one more” to speak of this pain, this may be seen as a meta-reference to the censorship of Nascimento’s album, about which he complained by arguing that his criticism, as voiced on the recordings, was nothing more than what people on the streets expressed in everyday talk.

But what is this world of sea and fishes that the “new saints” do not speak about and that forms the main theme of the song? Apparently, this world is a place that holds a certain relation to the emotional inner world of the Sonic I. As he accesses this world, he says that he “dives in,” not head first, as would be the conventional way to dive into the water, but “heart first,” which emphasizes the opposition of head and heart as symbolic representations of, respectively,
intellect and feeling, reason and emotion. The submarine world of the fish, or the realm of emotions, is also presented as “nature” standing in opposition to the world of reason and technological advancement (the land world represented by the “genius television”). The lyrics mention that “they,” the “new saints,” “do not speak of the sea and the fish,” suggesting that in their discourse the submarine world is non-existent and censored, just like the other images of natural beauty.

This relates to my comment earlier in this Movement that the subversion of Nascimento’s practically lyricless album resides primarily in its undermining of the logocentric character of censorship. The difference between reason and emotion that comes to the surface in the lyrics of “Milagre dos peixes” is connected to the difference between the restraining world of technocratic, logocentric, metonymic reason and the liberating force of the sonic as that which can make the membrane between worlds expand into the territories of both.

A short digression is necessary here concerning the distinction between “falar” and “dizer,” or ‘speaking’ and ‘saying’ as it emerges from the lyrics of “Milagre dos peixes.” The verb “speaking” is used to refer to the television images that transmit a one-dimensional image of Brazilian culture (telas falam coloridos / de crianças coloridas) and to stress the absence of “the sea and the fish” in the discourse of the “new saints” (eles não falam do mar e dos peixes). The verb falar is also used to refer to the discourse of the Sonic I, where he is “just one more to speak of this pain, our pain.” This speaking only affirms the suffering imposed by censorship; it is incapable of creating an independent universe in which the Sonic I can take refuge from the repressive reality. Such an independent universe is created only when the Sonic I talks about the sea and the fish; here, other forms of expression suddenly appear, such as drawing on stones and speaking real things: “falo coisas reais.” Here, love is not dead because the Sonic I identifies himself as someone who loves his friends. The freedom that is necessary in order to narrate this world is related to the fact that the Sonic I no longer needs to “speak of” something, but is able to “say”: “livre, quero poder dizer.” The verb dizer is different from falar in that it is directly related to the content it pronounces. Falar as a verb refers either to the act of speaking in general, which can be about anything, or, if it is related to a specific subject, it is already “about” something that is summarized. The verb dizer, in contrast, is followed by a direct discourse. It calls
to life and therefore makes the content that is being evoked performative. This is related to the only part in the lyrics where the word *falar* is used in a different way, which is in the grammatically peculiar construction “quando *falo* coisas reais,” ‘when I speak real things.’ The Sonic I does not say he speaks *of* real things, which would be “*falar de* coisas reais,” but constitutes reality as he pronounces it.

These observations give insight into the ways in which the act of sticking to semantic, logocentric speech is related to the limiting character of censorship, and to the way in which it is different from the “miraculous” use of language that can create as it pronounces. The latter is not limiting in nature, but expansive, like the miraculous multiplication of fish in the Biblical narration. This also points to the fact that censorship is present not only when silence is imposed by means of force, but also when forms of expression abide by the rules of dominant discourse and no longer explore their own creative potential.

A concept that elucidates this line of thought is what Gräbner, drawing on Paul Éluard, has called “phantom language,” a discourse that is disconnected from the objective and experienced reality it refers to. In her article “From the Intersection of Pain and Hope,” this concept is explained in relation to neoliberal discourse, of which the key terms that sustain its legitimacy are only interpretable from within its own frames of reference. Gräbner draws on theories by David Harvey and John Holloway in order to explain how terms like “freedom” and “choice” are emphasized in order to mask the class power structures behind the neoliberal agenda, which has led to a situation in which these terms, in a similar way to Santos’ metonymic reason, have become so all-encompassing that they include their own opposites (2012: 64-65).

This phantom language is therefore disconnected from the reality and experience it is trying to frame, causing it to impose a different form of silence than the prohibition of words – as was the case with Nascimento’s album. Instead, phantom language attempts to arrest words within certain borders, outside of which they can no longer signify. Returning to the lyrics of “Milagre dos peixes,” the “new saints” or the technocratic military authorities hide behind a phantom language of “multi-colored children,” whereas they actually proclaim the same “death to love” as their more openly repressive predecessors.

Significantly, Nascimento’s song presents the discourse used by the
“genius television” as shallow and limiting. It consists of “screens,” surfaces of one-dimensional material that “speak colorfully of multi-colored children.” This seems to refer to a very different dimension of colors than when, later on, the Sonic I, as he constitutes reality by pronouncing it, states that he has within himself “all the colors.” The colored screens displaying multi-colored children are merely a technological manipulation of colors in order to re-create reality. They do not constitute the same abundant resource as the Sonic I, who has in him “all the colors,” from which a new reality emanates and which he can always retreat to in order to bypass censorship.

A new reality is established when the lyrics of the song shift in the end to “I have these fish” instead of “I see these fish,” suggesting that the Sonic I has the world of the fish inside him as a world that consists of a broader spectrum of dimensions and that cannot be controlled by a uni-dimensional, logocentric form of censorship. The freedom that the Sonic I refers to when he says he wants “to be able to say” is a sonic form of freedom, which is a freedom to create and not simply freedom of speech or freedom of expression, which, in neoliberal discourse, is more and more openly tied to its opposite, the repression of marginalized groups.

At the same time, the submarine world of the fish is described by the Sonic I in terms of “the silence of this nature.” The self-evidence of this description comes from the association with the submarine world as a silent place, and from the idea of fish as animals that make no sound. They open their mouths, but no sound is emitted; to our mind, they have no form of speech or communication that makes use of the medium of sound. The song’s image of fish as animals that are silent by nature, but also silenced by censors who “do not speak of [them]” recalls the song “Como los peces,” ‘just like fish,’ by the Cuban singer-songwriter Carlos Varela on his eponymous album from 1995, in which he metaphorically describes the world of the Cubans who silently carry their suffering as the silent world of fish. Cubans are presented as prisoners in the silent world of water that also is their way of escaping to other worlds: “quietly they take off to the sea and leave.”73 This image of fish is therefore an image of being cast out from the world
of human speech, with the difference that, in Varela's song, the world of the fish is that of a silent resignation that eventually makes them leave for other places, whereas in Nascimento's song, the Sonic I takes refuge in the silent world of fish that he accesses with his heart.

Within this silent nature, the Sonic I of “Milagre dos peixes” also gains the possibility to “speak reality,” with the construction of the song suggesting that he creates this possibility through a performative speech act. He adds that he “[draws] on stones” and has within himself “all the colors.” For the second time in the song, colors are used to transmit a message, but this time the message does not hail the “genius television,” but allows the Sonic I to “speak reality.” The message, this time, does not signal a “death to love”; on the contrary, the Sonic I characterizes himself as “I who love my friends.” The Sonic I relates this freedom to the act of speaking, and, consequentially, to creating through the act of speaking: “free, I want to be able to say” (dizer).

The narrative space that is being created is a nature in whose “silence” the Sonic paradoxically wishes to be “free to say.” This draws attention because the performative act of speaking in this parallel world that is being created is a way of speaking that is silent. The ability of the Sonic I to speak about this silent world, where he sees the fish, emerges precisely by entering this world and narrating its silent character by appropriating its silence, as indicated by the shift to “I have these fish.” In a similar way, narrating the experience of being silenced by the censors is to appropriate this silence and make it explicit.

In view of Agamben’s theory of enunciation, Nascimento’s song not only expresses something through what it says in words, but also through the fact that it is being narrated, through its conversion to enunciation, which is the performative dimension of its lyrics. Nonetheless, the performative dimension of the lyrics is not completely independent from their semantic content, because they end up performing what they initially only spoke about. This might be why, at the end

los peces / [...] Los muchachos hablan de desilusión / y en silencio van al mar y se ligan / como los peces.” My translation: ‘Churches talk of salvation / and the people pray and ask things in silence / just like fish [...] Parents no longer want to talk about the situation / they survive as prisoners and get used to be silent / just like fish [...] In the news they speak of resignation / and people swallow and look each other in the eyes / just like fish [...] The youngsters speak of disillusion / and quietly they take off to the sea and leave / just like fish.’
of the song, which is the start of the narration’s repetition, the wording changes. Now, the Sonic I does not see the fish, but owns them: “I have these fish.” Could this be related to “the owning of enunciation,” which, according to Foucault, is impossible to achieve for the speaking subject? And could this be the “miracle” of the fish that is hidden in a deeper layer of signification in the song’s title?

I want to suggest that the Sonic I, by multiplying the narration through an infinite conversion to its own meta-narration, is able to pronounce a discourse that is silent and to own an enunciation that cannot be pronounced. Yet, at the same time, this performative of circular self-reference is not a “pure event of its enunciation” in the Foucauldian sense, because it is politicized. The Sonic I, by returning to his own narration, gives an account of his inability to speak, taking us back to what Agamben says about the character of the witness whose authority “consists in his capacity to speak solely in the name of an incapacity to speak” (1999: 158).

In the next and final Movement, I will elaborate on testimony as a way of giving expression to the experience of being silenced. By focusing on the ways in which censorship was institutionalized in Cuba and Brazil in the periods during which the analyzed songs were written and performed, I will examine how testimony and censorship dialogue with each other and how they either reinforce or subvert one another. Also, I will discuss Derrida’s conceptualization of testimony as a narrative genre that is always and inevitably in part fictional. In relation to Agamben’s theory of the witness whose limit experience only makes him or her capable of testifying to his or her own incapacity of speech, Derrida’s work makes it possible to conceive of the witness as also a narrative subject. By focusing on the ways in which the Sonic I’s of Telmary’s “Los Revolucionarios” and Nascimento’s “Milagre dos peixes” evoke precisely the characteristics that according to Agamben and Derrida problematize testimony, I will show how testimony can enable alternative forms of speech even when the witness is confronted with censorship.
Movement 9
Testimony and Censorship

Up to this point, the analyses of Telmary’s “Los Revolucionarios” and Nascimento’s “Milagre dos peixes” in, respectively, the Cuban and the Brazilian context, have revealed different forms of narrative locations and temporalities interfering with the testimonies – at multiple levels of enunciation – of the Sonic I and the cantautor. In the previous Movement, I focused on Agamben’s notion of an impossible testimony to the limit experience of the subject, translating the extreme situation of the holocaust into the impossible testimony of a subject silenced by censorship. In this Movement, I engage with Jacques Derrida’s conceptualization of testimony, which is also applied to the limit experience of a subject suspended between life and death. Derrida, however, uses this example to expose how an element of fiction is always already inscribed in any testimony that nonetheless “claims to testify in truth to the truth for the truth” (2000: 27). The analyses of this Movement will focus more closely on the inevitably dispersed and decentered character of testimony as a specific form of narration and as a sonic form of discourse. Through Derrida’s theory of testimony, I approach the lyrics of both songs as forms of testimony that emerge from and enter into dialogue with the contexts of censorship in which they were written and recorded.

Both in “Los Revolucionarios” and in “Milagre dos peixes,” testimony gives an account of the speaker’s difficulty to testify. The Sonic I of “Los Revolucionarios” is speaking in the name of “Cubans of all countries” in order to testify to a shared affectively diasporic reality, but ends up producing overlapping and interrupting fragments of multi-layered discourses because she is speaking from a fragmented position of enunciation. In “Milagre dos peixes,” the Sonic I refers to his wish to testify to images of beauty as he sings of images “they” do not allow him to sing about. At the same time, an overlapping recording of his voice drowns out his words. Although in both cases there is no clear, centered discourse, this does not mean that testimony is impossible. On the contrary, I
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want to suggest that it is precisely this decentering of discourse that allows for a testimony to the circumstances that censor the Sonic I’s speech. Because in both songs technological intervention plays an important role in the sonic representation of the Sonic I’s voice, I will analyze how this intervention not only allows for a repeatable testimony, but can also produce another kind of testimony that is capable of testifying to the very experience of being censored.

Vocalizing Censorship

Before, I presented the first-person narration through which the Sonic I testifies to an ever-repeating present in Telmary’s “Los Revolucionarios” as a decentered discourse because of the way it plays with the temporality of the enunciation. I argued that the circular character of the Revolution as a process that keeps returning to its own starting point is expressed by the way the singing of “revolú-, revolú-” imitates a needle stuck on a record. Another form of decentering appeared in how the song superimposes different recordings of messages on answering machines. Having one message interrupt the other not only multiplies discourse, but also suggests the fragmentation of the Sonic I as a witness by attesting to different realities and different perspectives in a single recording. Technology is what allows for this fragmented subject to speak, but the emphasis on technology’s limitations simultaneously reveals the problematic side of producing testimony through technology.

Nascimento’s “Milagre dos peixes,” too, presents a situation in which it is difficult to identify a clearly recognizable and centered testifying subject. The layeredness of the Sonic I is again accomplished through technological interventions by recording the voice of the cantautor on different tracks and replaying them simultaneously. The recording of “Milagre dos peixes” uses the Sonic I’s voice to overlay the lyrics and the melody with vowel sounds, making it difficult at times to distinguish the words he is singing. However, technology is not as explicitly represented or imitated as in Telmary’s song.

In Brazilian music of the 1970s, overlapping song lyrics with non-verbal recordings frequently manifests itself as a form of protest against censorship. The
song “A pesar de você,” ‘in spite of you,’ by Chico Buarque is a well-known example. The lyrics of this song, written in 1970, recreate what could be an argument between a Sonic I and his or her very dominant partner, but what, in the context of Brazil’s military rule, can also be read – and is hard not to read – as a protest against a repressive, dictator-like character in spite of whose oppressing presence beautiful things will not perish. A fragment from the second refrain goes as follows: “A pesar de você / amanhã ha de ser outro dia / inda pago pra ver / o jardim florescer / qual você não queria,” ‘in spite of you / tomorrow has to be another day / I would happily pay / to see the garden flourish / that you didn’t want.’ In the refrain of the song, the Sonic I is accompanied by a choir of voices singing the lyrics with him, but towards the song’s end, the choir starts singing a simple “laialaia” over his words, blurring them. The Sonic I finishes the refrain and, after starting the first lines of another one, joins the “laialaia” instead of articulating more lyrics.

The lyrics to “A pesar de você” give an important clue to the function of this wordless joining of voices, which is different from that of the “laialaia” refrains of popular samba songs, designed to make it easier for spectators to sing along. Although this song is not a samba, it does borrow some of its characteristics, such as the “laialaia” singing and its rhythm. In contrast to most samba songs, however, “A pesar de você” emphasizes the presence of its abundant, poetically and argumentatively elaborate lyrics. In an accusatory tone, the Sonic I addresses the authoritative third person in the following way:

Hoje você é quem manda
say it’s said, there’s no discussion
falou, tá falado, não tem discussão
today my people
a minha gente hoje anda
speak sideways looking at the floor […]
falando de lado e olhando pra o chão [...] how are you going to forbid
como vai proibir
when the rooster insists on crowing […]
cuando o galo insistir em cantar […]
cuando chegar o momento
when the moment arrives
esse meu sofrimento vou cobrar com juros,
I will have my suffering paid for with insults, I
juro
swear
todo esse amor reprimido, esse grito contido,
this oppressed love, this contained scream
Thus, the Sonic I reveals a strong wish to express himself, which will not be suppressed “in spite of” the will of the addressed “you.” The choir singing over these lyrics is not just a reference to a testimony being drowned out by censorship, but exemplifies the fact of testimony taking place in spite of censorship. The song also shows that what cannot be silenced is not necessarily a semantic message; it can also be a samba, a scream or the crow of a rooster.

In the case of Nascimento’s “Milagre dos peixes,” it is not a choir but the Sonic I who drowns out his own words. He does this by singing vowels over the lyrics that do not harmonize with the vowels of the lyrics. For example, the “o” in the word “dor” of the phrase “A falar dessa dor, a nossa dor,” ‘to speak of this pain, our pain,’ is doubled by an “ei” (as in “beijo”). In vowel harmony diagrams applied to Portuguese pronunciation, the “o” sound is located as a medium opened vowel in the back of the mouth, whereas the “ei” is a closed vowel in the front of the mouth (Quicoli 300). Combining these opposite sounds has the effect of making them drown each other out. This effect becomes significant when the lyrics reach the stanzas that specifically refer to censorship – “They don’t speak of the sea and the fish / nor do they allow to see the girl […]” – where the Sonic I is “just one more to speak of this pain, our pain.” The first time this pain, or “essa dor,” is mentioned, the overlying vowels shout “ei,” so that the word referring to pain can hardly be distinguished.

As in the above example of the “laialai” singing in “A pesar de você,” or the “Cállice” performance by Chico Buarque (where the microphones were disconnected by the censors, as described in Movement 8), it is through the performative act of silencing – which can either consist of blocking sound altogether or of drowning it out by an excess of noise – that a sonic account is given of censorship. This can be related to Agamben’s statement that “testimony takes place where […] the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his
own speech” (1999: 120). Whereas Agamben uses this notion to refer to a surviving but unintelligible non-language capturing the ineffable experience of the speaking subject’s death, Nascimento’s song employs a technological blurring of the witness’s speech that, in the end, testifies to the experience of being censored. Crucially, this testimony cannot be censored because it already performs its own being silenced. In fact, the more it performatively silences or drowns out the words of the lyrics, the more powerful the sonic testimony to censorship will be, because censorship is primarily logocentric.

Before focusing more on the operations through which testimony can either reinforce or subvert censorship, it is important to point out that testimony is not only decentered through sonic interventions that detune spoken language, but that narrative elements may also cannibalize it from the inside. Returning first to “Milagre dos peixes” and its narrative structure, it can be observed that its temporality is circular. The end of the song is also a return to the lyrics at the start but, as explained in relation to the hanging needle in “Los Revolucionarios,” this does not imply a full return to the starting point. In the lyrics of “Milagre dos peixes” there is a slight but significant shift in words when the song returns to its opening. Instead of saying “I see those fish,” which is how the song starts, the Sonic I now sings “I have those fish.” Moreover, the fact that the return to the starting motive (and melody) of the song is introduced with the stanza “I want to be able to say:…” indicates that the song here also enters another narrative level. The lyrics can now be read as an indirect discourse that is being pronounced within the space of the narration and no longer in a space that directly addresses the listener. With the return to the start, the Sonic I of this second narrative layer is focalized through the Sonic I of the first level, indicating that what he is giving an account of through this song is not a first-hand testimony. The testimony that he “wish[es] to be able to say” will always introduce an indirect discourse that quotes the wish of the Sonic I, but that does not confirm itself in a way the expression “I am able to say” would.

While at the first narrative level the Sonic I can only testify to his being censored and his wish to testify, within the second narrative layer the Sonic I’s transition from the perception of something (I see those fish) to its appropriation (I have those fish) suggests that he has closed in on the object he was giving an
account of. He therefore constitutes a narrative space in which he is able to create by ‘speaking real things,’ “falo coisas reais,” instead of attempting to re-create them through testimony. At the same time, he is only capable of attaining this constitutive language by creating a different narrative layer and thus fragmenting the Sonic I’s voice. It is within the second narrative layer that speech becomes constitutive as it creates another discursive system with different rules. At the first level, the Sonic I has to comply to the rules of a discourse that is only capable of giving testimony to what he sees and experiences within the narration in an extra-narrative realm. It is in this external space that images are being shown on the one-dimensional “screens” of a “genious television,” whereas the Sonic I is submerged “heart first” in a “silent nature” consisting of images that are virtually absent in the external world: “they don’t speak of the sea and the fish” and “they do not allow to see.”

In the previous Movement, testimony was already presented as a concept that inhabits an in-between realm between what can and cannot be attained through language by the witness, and that therefore cannibalizes itself from the inside in the same way as hegemony does. Derrida, in *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, explains how testimony “claims to testify in truth to the truth for the truth” yet nonetheless “always goes hand in hand with at least the possibility of fiction, perjury, and lie” (2000: 27, emphasis in text). His book consists of an intense close reading of Maurice Blanchot’s short story “The Instant of My Death,” an autobiographical narration that recounts Blanchot’s last-minute liberation from a firing squad in the Second World War. For the author, it felt as if he had died although his death did not in fact take place. This event allowed him to pronounce the ultimately impossible testimony of “I died.” Derrida takes this confluence of two contrasting realities (the one in which Blanchot died and the one in which he lived) as the basis for the concept of testimony, which is necessarily an impossible account because it implies a survivor who narrates his own death – or, vice versa, the dead author who nonetheless recounts the story of his survival. The contraction between fact and fiction, truth and lie, within testimony is thus presented by the most radical example of an impossible testimony: a testimony to one’s own death. According to Derrida, because this death has just as much taken place as it is forever in suspension, and because the testimony that testifies to it is both fact
and fiction, the instant of death to which the witness is testifying is always kept in abeyance (2000: 101).

Derrida reaches this conclusion by stressing the importance of “the instant” for juridically legitimized testimony to be made possible:

To testify is always […] to do it at present – the witness must be present at the stand himself without technical interposition. […] One must […] raise one’s hand, speak in the first person and in the present, and one must do this in order to testify to a present, to an indivisible moment. […] If that to which I testify is divisible, if the moment in which I testify is divisible, if my attestation is divisible […] it is no longer reliable. (2000: 32-3)

Nonetheless, the indivisible character of the testimony, its witness and the moment of its enunciation, necessary to make the testimony reliable, is subverted by the very conditions under which testimony takes place. This is because testimony always implies a temporal lapse between the instant of attestation and the instant the testimony refers to, but also because the act of spoken testimony always spills over from the actual instant:

Ocular, auditory, tactile, any sensory perception of the witness must be an experience. As such, a constituting synthesis entails time and thus does not limit itself to the instant. […] The instant one gives testimony, there must also be a temporal sequence – sentences, for example – and, above all, these sentences must promise their own repetition and thus their own quasi-technical reproducibility. […] But this repetition carries the instant outside of itself. (Derrida 2000: 33, my emphasis)

In both “Los Revolucionarios” and “Milagre dos peixes,” it is precisely the narrative play with repetition that disables a centered discourse. Thus, the movement in circles that, in “Los Revolucionarios,” represents daily life for the Sonic I is directly related to a nightmarish, never-ending journey between two shores that represent her experience of fragmentation. Also, the fact that “Revolution” in this song has become something that is repeated on a day-to-day basis fragments it in
such a way that it can even signify its opposite: a never-ending tedious routine, expressed through the imitation of a hanging needle: “revolú-revolú.” In “Milagre dos peixes,” the return to the start of the song is accompanied by a slight shift in meaning and by the fragmentation of the Sonic I, who focalizes a second narrator’s voice in another narrative layer. In relation to Derrida’s reference to the effect of repetition on the witness’s discourse, both songs let repetition cause the space of enunciation, the central narrative argument or the narrator’s voice, to be “carrie[d] outside of itself.”

But it is not only within the narrative that testimony is subverted in these songs. On the enunciative level, too, where the act of narrating the song’s lyrics can be perceived as testimony, technological ways of creating repetitions enlarge the effect of “quasi-technical reproducibility” that Derrida refers to. Their application is even more radical, as they not only “carr[y] the instant outside of itself” but create different overlapping layers of such instants, either by using interrupting answering-machine messages, as in “Los Revolucionarios,” or by having a voice drowned out by its own duplicate, as in “Milagre dos peixes.” As Derrida specifies above, “the witness must be present at the stand himself without technical inter- position,” yet in the songs analyzed, it is precisely technological intervention that allows a testimony to experiences of dispersion and censorship to emerge. The affectively diasporic Sonic I in “Los Revolucionarios” enunciates both from Cuba and from the outside diasporic territory when she speaks in the name of “Cubans of all countries.” Likewise, the double track of the Sonic I’s voice in “Milagre dos peixes,” split between semantic discourse and the singing of vowels, allows him to testify both to the colorful world of “the sea and the fish” and to his experience of being censored.

Based on these observations, the conclusion can be drawn that both songs emphasize precisely the elements which, according to Derrida, are counterproductive for producing testimony in a juridical setting. Within this particular form of discourse, the presence of an author, narrator or character would cripple an undivided testimony, whereas in a narrative context the awareness of these different entities actually enhances one’s capacity of expression. Derrida disputes the idea of the undivided subject in juridical discourse in the following way:
No one will dare assume the right, because no one will ever have it, to say that these three I’s [of author, narrator and character] are the same […]. It is a fiction of testimony more than a testimony in which the witness swears to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. (2000: 72, emphasis in text).

He then reiterates his argument about the impossible testimony to an experience of death, which, in the analyses above, I have related to the impossible testimony to the experience of being censored, adding that:

Without the possibility of this fiction, without the spectral virtuality of this simulacrum and as a result of this lie or this fragmentation of the true, no truthful testimony would be possible. (2000: 72, emphasis in text)

The fragmentation of the witness and his or her testimony therefore does not undermine testimony as such, but subverts its juridical legitimization. The question of whether the two songs can produce testimony, then, is dependent on who is listening, and from what perspective. If the listener is willing to perceive the testimony as a narrative, he or she will be more likely to accept that there is a multiplication of voices and narrative layers that can mutually interfere with, interrupt or even drown out one another, but that these interruptions and this layeredness also convey a message and are therefore an integral part of the narrative structure. If the listener, however, is searching for a testimony to affective diaspora or to censorship that can also be applied in court, the songs will not provide it.

Significantly, the juridical requirements of testimony were what laid the foundations for the censorship the cantautores of both songs had to deal with. The fragmented testimony produced through the songs is capable of testifying precisely because censorship, which relies on juridical categories, does not recognize it as such. More importantly, such testimony can also potentially subvert some key principles upon which censorship is built. Therefore, a logical next step in my analysis is a more detailed examination of the way in which censorship operated in the Cuban and Brazilian contexts.
Music and Censorship

Considering that censorship was, to varying degrees, a real condition under which both songs were written, recorded and performed, the *cantautores* could not produce a clearly articulated social critique, as that would have led to political persecution. In the Cuban and Brazilian contexts I am analyzing, it was not impossible to testify because of a limit experience of life and death, but because of the limitations imposed on the use of language by censorship. Testifying to the taboo subject of diaspora was, then, not a question of being situated between an inside and an outside of language as such, but of being suspended between the alienated experience of the homeland and the presence of a hegemonic, nationalist discourse. When testifying to the experience of being censored, the language of the witness is suspended between, on the one hand, what Derrida calls “fiction” and, on the other, the sonic representation of a drowned-out language. Such an experience is impossible to express within the discursive boundaries that the legal witness has to abide by.

In “What Is Music Censorship?,” the introductory chapter to his book *Shoot the Singer*, Martin Cloonan poses the question of what exactly music censorship entails. He departs from the basic idea that decisions to prevent musicians from performing made by a specific person or institution constitute censorship, but nuances this definition by stating that contemporary examples not only include political restrictions but also selections made by radio stations on the basis of taste and ethical, moral or religious motivations. Censorship, seen from this perspective, is not only an ideological tool in authoritative societies, but also underlies regulations in supposedly democratic societies where decisions are made about how, when and where musical content dealing with, for example, pornography, drug use or euthanasia may and may not be performed (3-5). As I have emphasized throughout this study, in the contexts of Cuba and Brazil I am looking at, censorship in both the strict and the broader definition occurred.

In post-Revolutionary Cuba, censorship was closely related to the political and educational role that music – and other arts – were assigned. An event that marked an important moment in the definition of Cuba’s cultural politics took place in 1961, when Fidel Castro organized a meeting with a group of what were...
referred to as the “intellectuals” of that time. These included theorists such as Roberto Fernandez Retamar and Graziella Pogolotti, but also the marginalized writers José Lezama Lima and Virgilio Piñera (Ramírez 1). The meeting took place at the National Library of Havana and was triggered by a discussion that started after the prohibition of the movie *PM*, directed by Sabá Cabrera Infante. *PM* is an experimental documentary about nocturnal life in the port of Havana, showing marginalized groups drinking, dancing and fighting. The documentary is without commentary and does not take a moralizing stance toward what it exposes to the viewer (Miskulin 83). The two-hour speech by Castro that resulted from the four-day meeting, titled “Palabras a los intelectuales,” was a response to this movie and set out the rules for all artistic production in “Revolutionary Cuba” from that moment on (Ramírez 1).

In his speech, Castro makes jokes about the fact that he has not seen the film in spite of all the attention it has received, and refers to the complaint that the movie has been censored in the following way:

> […] hay algo que creo que no se puede discutir, y es el derecho establecido por la ley a ejercer la función que en este caso desempeñó el Instituto del Cine o la comisión revisora. ¿Se discute acaso ese derecho del gobierno? […] si impugnamos ese derecho entonces significaría que el gobierno no tiene derecho a revisar las películas que vayan a exhibirse ante el pueblo. Y creo que ese es un derecho que no se discute.

> […] there is something that I believe should not be discussed, which is the right established by law to carry out what the Cinematic Institute and the revisionary committee did in this case. Can you even question that right of the government? […] If we reject this right it will mean that the government will not have the right to review movies that will be exhibited to the people. And I think that this is a right that cannot be questioned.74

As he continues, he states the famous words that mark the radicalization of

state-controlled censorship in Cuba, but presents it as a specific form of artistic liberty:

[… su espíritu creador [del artista] tiene […] libertad para expresarse. Es decir, dentro de la Revolución. Esto significa que dentro de la Revolución, todo; contra la Revolución, nada.

[.] the creative spirit [of the artist] has […] the freedom to express itself. That is to say, within the Revolution. This means within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution, nothing.

Through his speech, Castro reinforces the notion that the state censors reserve the right to control all cultural production, because of their obligation to protect the Cuban people from being exposed to ideas that distract from the Revolutionary project. Furthermore, he establishes a definition of artistic freedom of expression, which is relative as it can only be legitimized by and within the Revolution. Going a step further than the inside-outside dichotomy that characterizes nationalist discourse, he departs from the radical definition of art being either “within” or “against” the Revolution. That which is not within the Revolution is not simply absent or marginal, nor is it similar to the outside world that borders the outlines of the nation. Instead, all that is not within is necessarily hostile, legitimizing defensive measures from a juridical point of view.

The Cuban Penal Code was updated in 1987, creating “Law 62,” which “defined outlines for social conduct” and “socialist morale” (Gonzáles Monguí 233). This law was in force when all of the songs I have analyzed in this study were written and performed. The guidelines by which censorship of “hostile propaganda” was established can be found under article 103:

**Propaganda Enemiga**

**ARTÍCULO 103.1.** Incurre en sanción de privación de libertad de uno a ocho años el que:

a) incite contra el orden social, la solidaridad internacional o el Estado socialista, mediante la propaganda oral o escrita o en cualquier otra forma;
b) confeccione, distribuya o posea propaganda del carácter mencionado en el inciso anterior.

2. El que difunda noticias falsas o predicciones maliciosas tendentes a causar alarma o descontento en la población, o desorden público, incurre en sanción de privación de libertad de uno a cuatro años.

3. Si, para la ejecución de los hechos previstos en los apartados anteriores, se utilizan medios de difusión masiva, la sanción es de privación de libertad de diez a quince años.

Hostile Propaganda

Article 103.1. Punishable by deprivation of liberty of one to eight years is the person who:

a) incites against social order, international solidarity or the socialist State, using oral, written or any other form of propaganda;

b) assembles, distributes or possesses the aforementioned form of propaganda.

2. The person who distributes untruthful news items or malicious predictions that are prone to cause alarm or discontent in the community or public disorder will be punishable by deprivation of liberty of one to four years.

3. If, for the execution of the described facts in the anterior subsections, media of mass diffusion are used, the punishment will be deprivation of liberty of ten to fifteen years.75

Some of the terminology used in article 103.1 draws attention for its susceptibility to broad interpretation, which suggests its broad – if not random – applicability in the execution of the law. As seen above in the quote from Castro, any form of artistic expression that is not “within the Revolution” can be punished.

75 My translation from Spanish. Although article 103 is published on the official website of the Cuban justice department, www.gacetaoficial.cu, as cited by González Monguí in the study referred to above, this website is, interestingly, unavailable because of a “HTTP 403 Forbidden” error. I have therefore used the citation of this law on the United Nations affiliated CEPAL (Economical Committee for Latin America) website: http://www.cepal.org/oig/doc/cub1987codigopenalley62.pdf
as an “incitement against the socialist State.” Also, the description of “malicious predictions” that “cause discontent” leaves a lot of space for interpretation. Added to this, the punishment’s augmentation in case of the use of mass media under article 103.1.3 is telling, because it confirms the importance that was given to these media in the Revolutionary cultural politics. Especially when taking into account the censorship of music, this article is important because it is through the mass media that music is predominantly distributed.

In Brazil, the formulation of the “Ato Institucional No 5” or ‘fifth Institutional Act,’ (mostly referred to simply as AI-5) in 1968 was even more radical in the definition of its punishing measures. Apart from the increased killings and disappearances executed by the police and the military from this moment on, it was this Institutional Act through which cultural censorship was tightened (Pereira 12; Napolitano 3). Amongst its articles, AI-5 states:

Art. 10 - Fica suspensa a garantia de habeas corpus, nos casos de crimes políticos, contra a segurança nacional, a ordem econômica e social e a economia popular

Art. 10 The guarantee to habeas corpus will be suspended in the case of political crimes against the national security, the economic and social order, and the popular economy.76

Similar to what we see in the Cuban law, the rather vague descriptions of crimes against “the economic and social order” or the “popular economy” suggest a foundation of arbitrariness upon which these laws can be enforced. The AI-5, by also explicitly suspending habeas corpus, cancels the necessity of motivating an accusation in a court of law, so as not to slow down the process of consolidating a Revolutionary state without internal hostile elements.

The reference to movement in relation to the Revolutionary project is explicitly formulated in the opening considerations of the AI-5, referring back to the AI-2 of 1965. This second Institutional Act declared a state of siege during

76 My translation from Portuguese. Quoted from the official website: http://legis.senado.gov.br/legislacao/ListaPublicacoes.action?id=194620
which, in the name of the Revolution, the military gained significant freedom to define and act against acts of subversion (Pereira 71). As quoted in the AI-5:

[O] Poder Revolucionário, ao editar o Ato Institucional nº 2, afirmou, categoricamente, que “não se disse que a Revolução foi, mas que é e continuará” e, portanto, o processo revolucionário em desenvolvimento não pode ser detido.

[The] Revolutionary Power, edicting the Institutional Act No. 2, affirmed categorically that “it has not been said that the Revolution was, but that it is and that it continues” and hence, the evolving revolutionary process should not be stopped.77

Noteworthy in this passage from the AI-2 is that the guarantee that the Revolution will persist is secured by the speech act that says “it is” and “it continues.” In itself, the performative potential of language stands in close connection to juridical discourse, but the fact that it can be related to the censorship of testimony makes it relevant to this analysis. In the previous section of this Movement, my analysis of “Milagre dos peixes” led to the conclusion that the constitutive power of language in the expression “when I speak real things” was only possible within the narrative realm and belonged to another category than legal testimony. In the Brazilian military legislation, however, the testimony to the existence of the Revolution in the present with the words “it is” and the recognition that it is a process by saying “it continues,” is seen to secure its existence. In this respect, Brazilian law parallels the Cuban legislation, where “malicious predictions” are not only seen as an aberrant testimony – as prolepsis instead of retrospection – but considered capable of producing a future reality in which the Revolution does not continue. From this perspective, the fact that the Sonic I in “Milagre dos peixes” speaks “real things” would be punishable according to Brazilian military law, were it not that this speaking hides behind a second narrative level focalized through another Sonic I, and therefore remains unrecognizable to the law as a

Movement 9 - Testimony and Censorship

direct challenge to the Revolution.

In “Los Revolucionarios,” testimony is predominantly sonic. Although it is set in a different context than that of military Brazil, its inheritance of Cuban contemporary history also produces a testimony to a continuing Revolution, which can be read in the combination of “day by day, the Revolutionaries” and in the Sonic I’s question of “how much longer?” The song testifies to the Cuban people’s Revolutionary heritage as one of the factors that has made the Revolution “continue” from 1959 until the present of the Sonic I in Telmary’s song. But the Revolutionary reality that this song testifies to is expressed in a monotonous, flat melody, by a cowbell that ticks mechanically like a clock and by the imitation of a hanging needle, all movements that, instead of a forward progression, signify stagnation and boredom. If expressed literally, this testimony could be punishable under Cuban law, but the fact that its insinuations proceed through the sonic construction of the song makes them less palpable for the censors. Also, the exclamation “hasta cuándo” for “how much longer” is interpretable as a question that addresses the persisting hostility amongst Cubans towards different positions in the affectively diasporic situation rather than as a question asking for the end of the Revolution.

Testimony can thus work its way around censorship by staying close to the laws in terms of the basis on which it operates. In a similar fashion to how censorship founds its legitimacy on broadly defined concepts in Cuban and Brazilian law, testimony leaves room for different interpretations of its narrative or sonic discourse in order to attain a relative freedom in what it is capable of expressing. An interpretation of the songs that could point to a punishable fact will not lead to the accusation of the cantautor as responsible for this, because, apart from the fact that his voice is fragmented into different narrative entities, the interpretation of his sedentary discourse demands a certain complicity of the listener. In “Milagre dos peixes,” for example, the virtual presence of an audience or a listener is performed at the end of the song, where it returns to the melodic structure of the start with only a slight shift in the lyrics. The fact that the lyrics are not finished a second time, while the melody continues with the vocalized vowels, suggests an audience or listeners who already know what is coming and can therefore fill in the blanks – or can decide to do something different. As a
result of this, they become narrators as well, further adding to the fragmentation of the voice that speaks through the song’s lyrics.

The Carrier-Voice

The presence of an audience and the awareness of their role in the interpretation of the song lyrics is a thoroughly politicized characteristic in the Cuban and Brazilian music that is the focus of my analysis. As discussed above, the involvement of the listener is an important factor in getting a prohibited message across without making it explicit enough for the censors to recognize it as such. But what should also be kept in mind is that the environment of state-controlled cultural politics, both in Cuba and Brazil, initially stimulated a younger generation of musicians to write music that was politically engaged and that searched for an articulation, through music, of a national identity that coincided with the image the authorities wished to create. In Cuba, artistic expressions were supposed to support the Revolutionary project of educating the people, as can be deduced from the above quotes from Fidel Castro’s speech. In order to foment a Revolutionary political awareness through music, cantautores were given a platform from which they could reach the maximum amount of Cuban people. In Brazil, too, the cultural politics that the military inherited from their left-wing predecessors were combined with a mass-media strategy of creating a Brazilian national identity, partly through music. The younger generations of musicians in both countries, such as the topos generation in Cuba and the Tropicalistas and marginais in Brazil, were thus brought up in a tradition where it was common practice to reflect, through music, on questions of political and cultural identity. It is then not surprising that, over time, they started to use their music as a platform for a more critical and challenging attitude. This eventually led to the marginalization of both the topos and the Tropicalistas, whereas the marginais movement operated from this position of marginality as its foundational premise.

I want to suggest that where musicians from earlier generations of musicians served as a portavoz or “spokespersons” for the authorities’ national and cultural identity discourses. Instead of the term spokesperson, however, I wish to
introduce the concept of *carrier-voice* as a more literal translation of *portavoz*: the younger musicians became carrier-voices of their generation and of marginalized groups. Assigning them the role of carrier-voice emphasizes the function of the voice in this process, where the voice speaks from – or on behalf of – multiple subjects. In “Los Revolucionarios,” the Sonic I speaks in name of “Cubans of all countries” and includes herself in this group by saying, for example, “we have to fight for the promise of that day.” In “Milagre dos peixes” the Sonic I literally says: “I am just one more, one more / to speak of this pain, our pain.”

However, the Sonic I is not simply one more voice that cannot be distinguished from the rest. In “Los Revolucionarios” the voice of the *cantautor* echoes through the words of the Sonic I when she states “don’t ask me that […] I stay here and shut up,” which, in Movement 7, I connected to Telmary’s own decision to move to Canada. But her status as a musician is also what makes her words heard in Cuba, which is something she does not want to give up. Nonetheless, censorship does not allow her to speak up there. Similarly, in “Milagre dos peixes,” although the Sonic I says he is “just one more” to express his pain, his capacity to create a narrative in which he can “speak real things” is related to his creative work as a *cantautor*. From this position, he is able to say “I have those fish / and I give from the heart,” converting the biblical story of Jesus multiplying the fish to feed his followers into a metaphor for the way in which the *cantautor* can share his capacity of speech with others who cannot “speak of the sea and the fish.” He, “who love[s] his friends,” wishes to be able to say “I have those fish” so that he can speak for these friends. Nonetheless, the fact that he “wishes” for this suggests that he has not yet accomplished it, because censorship does not allow him to be “free.”

The idea of the witness giving testimony in the name of those who cannot speak resonates with Agamben’s theory. In reference to one of Primo Levi’s story’s about Hurbinek, a little boy who survived the death-camp in which he was born and who only spoke through “inaarticulate sounds” (Agamben 1999: 37), Agamben concludes the following about testimony to the holocaust experience:

What cannot be stated, what cannot be archived is the language in which the author succeeds in bearing witness to his incapacity to speak. In this
language, a language that survives the subjects who spoke it coincides with a speaker who remains beyond it. This is the language of the “dark shadows” that Levi heard growing in Celan’s poetry, like a “background noise”; this is Hurbinek’s non-language (mass-klo, matisklo) that has no place in the libraries of what has been said or in the archive of statements […] so the complete witness, according to Levi’s paradox, is the one we cannot see, the Muselmann. (1999: 161-62)

In Agamben’s analysis a non-language transcends the subject in order to speak in his or her name for the ineffable experience of the holocaust, while the Sonic I’s in “Los Revolucionarios” and “Milagre dos peixes” recreate this incapacity to speak, which is externally imposed by censorship, through a non-language that also makes the speaking subject less visible.

The complex narrative structures that blur the songs’ central messages and the sonic ways of drowning out the Sonic I’s language do not have to be sought on the abstract level of what Agamben calls a discourse that survives its speaker, but appear as forms of expression that provide censored and marginalized subjects with a language to testify, obliquely, to their experiences. This testimony can be related to the experience of being situated in a hegemonic system where the marginalized musician speaks from a position that is not a clearly recognizable inside or outside space of legitimized discourse, but it can also refer to the affectively diasporic experience in which the subject’s space of enunciation is endlessly shifting between the inside and the outside of the homeland. Consequently, the language that can be resorted to in order to testify is just as multiple and diffuse as the diasporic, marginal subject. This language, which speaks from a simultaneity of different narrative layers and through a confluence of voices, can be considered strabistic, to refer back to the concept I introduced in Movement 6. It is a language that, like strabistic vision, registers and represents two overlapping yet slightly different perspectives in a single – visual, auditive or expressive – frame.

There is an important difference between Agamben’s evocation of Hurbinek as the sole survivor of an ineffable experience and the way I represent the cantautores of the analyzed songs. Hurbinek, for Agamben, “speaks” in the name of an absence, from the unfathomable silence of millions of voices that
have been drowned out forever. In contrast, the cantautores in the analyzed songs, through the voice of the Sonic I in each narration, speak in the name of those who are omnipresent. In Agamben, both the invisible Muselmann and the speechless survivor are dealing with an experience that paralyzes speech. In my analyses, the cantautores as marginalized or affectively diasporic subjects recur to a non-language which makes possible another form of speech that cannot be censored. As the Sonic I of “Milagre dos peixes” expresses it: “I have in me all the colors / when I speak real things / […] in the silence of this nature.” His language is strabistic and testifies to the multiplicity of voices that drown each other out. It testifies to the combination of all the colors that makes a neutral white and it also testifies to a silence that, although it recalls the “background noise” Levi refers to, was born instead from an excess of sound.

To conclude this Movement, I return to the final fragment of “Los Revolucionarios,” the Sonic I’s chant to Obatalá that can be heard as a fading echo when the music stops and only some sparse percussion carries on. The role of the singer or dancer who, in the Nigerian Santería and Candomblé religions in Cuba and Brazil, invokes the orishas is to function as a medium between the world of the spirits and the audience present at the ritual. This is similar to the way the carrier-voice function of Cuban and Brazilian musicians within the Revolutionary project and, later on, from the fringes of society, acts as a medium between two worlds. Benítez-Rojo explains how this intermediary is not simply the owner of a message that he or she conveys to the audience, either through a religious chant or through this example of a dance to the deity Changó:

When the individual dances Changó and incorporates him through the spell of the dance within the group of participants, he places himself in the position of “reader,” of “what is being read” and of “the act of reading” in the invocation of Changó. (176)\footnote{My translation from the Spanish: “Así, al individuo bailar Changó e incorporarlo a través del trance danzario al grupo de participantes, toma la posición de “lector”, de “leído” y de “lectura” en lo que toca a Changó” (176).}

First of all, this passage refers to a practice in which the deity is incorporated in the group of listeners through the physical intermediation of the dancer. If
the chant to Obatalá in the final fragment of “Los Revolucionarios” is approached from a similar perspective, but placed in the context of testimony, then the Sonic I does not convey a literal message, but establishes a sonic way of becoming witness, becoming what is being witnessed and becoming the act of witnessing at the same time. With her invocation of the deity who, as discussed in Movement 6, lives both on earth and in the sky, and is both man and woman, the Sonic I is trying to create a space where it would be possible to enunciate a multiple testimony from both the inside and the outside of the homeland; from both the inside and the outside of hegemonic discourse; and both interior and exterior to the language that is legitimized by the censors.

It is at this point that the discourse of the Sonic I of “Los Revolucionarios” becomes merely sonic, appearing as unintelligible speech, without mechanical interference. The final fragment does not give the impression of an involuntary impossibility of speech, as is the case with the examples of impossible testimony Agamben gives, but seems to be a deliberate performance of testimony, a fiction of testimony as Derrida calls it, this time situated on the sonic rather than the semantic level. What it performs is the idea of the voice that remains when there is no longer a single, centered subject behind it who uses speech semantically. In the terms of my analysis, the voice performs the strabistic speech of the fragment-ed Sonic I whose affectively diasporic experience can only be expressed on the in-between of the homeland and its outside space. Instead of being a carrier-voice that speaks in the name of either the Revolutionary discourse (bounded by the limits of censorship) or the marginal subject (potentially silenced by censorship), the performance of strabistic language by this carrier-voice expresses the wish to make itself independent from the limiting bodies it is supposed to carry.

But this strabistic speech is, as stated above, a performance. The affectively diasporic subject may experience difficulties in expressing him- or herself within a certain limited discourse that is not capable of rendering testimony to the experience of dispersal, but he or she is not truly silenced in the way the exterminated death-camp prisoners and its survivors were. The strabistic language used by Telmary encompasses both the possibility of a non-language and the possibility of speech.

Derrida refers to the testimony of this simultaneously virtual and factual
reality in relation to the impossible confrontation with death:

Perhaps it is the encounter of death, which is only ever an imminence, only ever an instance, only ever a suspension, an anticipation, the encounter of death as anticipation with death itself, with a death that has already arrived according to the inescapable: an encounter between what is going to arrive and what has already arrived. [...] What has arrived has arrived insofar as it announces itself as what must inescapably arrive. Death has just come from the instant it is going to come. [...] What can an unexperienced feeling signify? How would one experience it? (2000: 65)

From this perspective, an experience that is always in abeyance, like death, is experienced in an impossible way from the moment that it is “announced,” from the moment it is testified to in advance, as a prolepsis. What is impossible, then, is either the experience or the language that testifies to it, and it is this impossibility that Telmary performs through the unintelligible sounds at the end of “Los Revolucionarios.” But if her language is understood not in terms of an impossible intent to testify to an impossible experience through semantic language, but rather as a sonic performance of a simultaneous becoming witness, becoming what is being witnessed and becoming the act of witnessing, as suggested above, then the impossibility and the possibility of speech or experience become equally possible. The performance of strabistic speech requires no preference for one perspective over the other; both are equally present and possible. The affectively diasporic subject is just as alienated from the homeland as he or she belongs to it. The language of the silenced witness, then, is both attainable and unattainable. The performance of strabistic language is a performance of the witnessing to this fact. In that way, it represents also a strabistic way of reading or a strabistic way of listening that does not censor its fragmented, detuned content.
Fermata

Throughout this final Part the difficulties of expressing oneself in a context of affective diaspora and censorship have been the focal point. In my analyses of the songs “Los Revolucionarios” by Telmary and “Milagre dos peixes” by Nascimento, semantic language proved incapable of testifying to the experiences of the Sonic I’s, leading the cantautores to turn instead to sonic ways of expression. Through the technological multiplication of the Sonic I’s recorded voice in different overlapping layers and through an experimental use of the voice, the sonic dimension of the two songs manages to give expression to, respectively, an experience of fragmentation and an incapacity to speak freely without being censored.

In Movement 7, I argued that the Sonic I of “Los Revolucionarios” speaks from the perspective of a Cuban and a Revolutionary while reflecting on the unnecessary hatreds between Cubans in different countries, who remain connected by a shared experience of being a Revolutionary. At the same time, the Revolution is depicted in this song as a repetitive, tedious day-to-day routine that has come to signify its own opposite. Both representations of Cuban and Revolutionary identity are thus fragmented, either by geographical dispersion or because of the contradictions that the idea of Revolution entails. The fragmentation of the Sonic I’s testimony is underlined by the use of recording techniques that multiply her voice. Layering these recordings so that they overlap or interrupt each other, however, also creates a difficulty when it comes to understanding what the Sonic I is saying. Her testimony, therefore, becomes sonic instead of semantically coherent and centered.

Movement 8 focuses on the song “Milagre dos peixes” on Nascimento’s eponymous album, where the sonic use of the voice is presented as a way of testifying to the experience of being censored. Testimony is presented as a form of discourse through which the witness testifies to its own incapacity of speech. At the same time, on its second narrative level, the song also suggests the ability to speak as that which gives the Sonic I the potential to create an alternative reality. This narrative potential of testimony, which also creates the possibility
of fiction and which subverts the juridical, legitimized function of testimony, is presented in Movement 9 as effecting not only a subversion of the mechanisms of censorship, but as also creating a sonic or strabistic language that stimulates other ways of reading or listening. By focusing on the characteristics of testimony and its interactions with censorship in Cuba and Brazil during the period in which the songs were written and performed, I direct attention to the function of the voice of the cantautor as not only speaking through a narrative Sonic I, but as a vehicle that allows a speaking in the name of a larger group of people. This function of the carrier-voice, which can either be a vehicle of state propaganda or a way of representing marginalized groups, causes it to be censored. Testimony, from this point of view, refers to the way in which the cantautor searches for a way to use the voice to speak from a multiplicity of discourses in order to perform a type of sonic, strabistic language situated neither fully within nor fully outside the hegemonic system but on its edge.

There is a circular movement inscribed in the act of giving testimony. The subject who testifies to his or her own situation will inevitably end up speaking either in the name of a legitimized, dominant discourse, or in the name of those who are incapable of testifying. At the same time, speaking in the name of a larger totality will always encounter the physical limitations of the listener’s ear or of the speaker’s voice, both of which do not necessarily have the capacity to speak or to listen strabistically within a linguistic, semantic framework. This suggestion echoes the reference made to Stuart Hall’s work in Movement 1, where the diasporic return to the supposedly original homeland inevitably led back to the diasporic space where the image of the imaginary homeland was initially born. The imagining of the homeland by the affectively diasporic subject will inevitably be tied to the consciousness of being separated from it, which will always make the image multiple; a space that is both inside and outside, like the Möbius strip. At the same time, the act of imagining is always censored by the image of the homeland, which means that the affectively diasporic subject can only speak strabistically of his or her experience of fragmentation through the act, the performance, of imagining. Because creating a new image of a supposed affectively diasporic homeland will inevitably be expressed or perceived as either a re-appropriation or a loss of the original homeland.
Translating these observations about the affectively diasporic subject to the censored witness, the strabistic language of the Sonic I of Telmary’s “Los Revolucionarios” is only capable of re-creating the fragmented, dispersed experience of being Cuban and being a Revolutionary by having technological interventions multiply her voice or by performing, in the final fragment of the song, an unintelligible form of language. At the same time, if the strabistic language of the Sonic I in Nascimento’s “Milagre dos peixes” testifies to the fact of being censored, it cannot be read or understood without also being censored in a certain way. Just like the affectively diasporic homeland that can only exist through an act of imagining that consists of a constant transgression of the limit between an inside and an outside realm without being defined by either, the testimony of the affectively diasporic subject in a context of censorship can only take place in – and can only be read through – the process of its performance: its simultaneous becoming witness, becoming what is being witnessed and becoming the act of witnessing.
Coda

The analyses in this study have shown that, in both Cuba and Brazil, the lyrics, auditive dimensions and performance of certain songs worked together to challenge the fixity of narrative, geographical, physical, hegemonic, melodic and discursive spaces that censorship sought to achieve and maintain, and thus amount to a strategy of sonic resistance. Crucially, this strategy is aimed not solely at circumventing or challenging censorship, but also at making its mechanisms perceptible for the song’s audiences.

In Part 1 I analyzed the affectively diasporic experience of the different Sonic I’s as one that could resonate between different geographically separated spaces, just like bodies can affect each other in ways that do not always imply physical contact. Affect, in this sense, implies a space of resonance that is not necessarily traversed by means of a chronological, linear movement through time and space. I related this to how a song’s sonic and performative representation could be independent from the linear, chronological structure of its narration, creating the possibility of a narration that is also readable in its vertical structure, parallel to how, in music notation, the harmony of multiple simultaneous notes can be read as vertical chords. In the analyzed songs by Carlos Varela and Gilberto Gil the context of censorship manifested as a discursive construction of a national identity by the state authorities based on a strict separation between the inside and the outside of the national territory and of the officially legitimized discourse. Censorship, in this form, strives to secure the borders of a geographically identifiable territory and a rationally understandable discourse, whereas the subversive potential of the analyzed songs derives from sonic and affective characteristics that resonate vertically in spite of censorship’s firm control over the horizontal bar.

The main focus of Part 2 was on how the analyzed songs, within their performance, presented ways of subverting different norms of musical performance, such as the separation between performer and audience or the neatness of musical harmony. I related this to the political contexts in late 1980s and early
1990s Cuba and 1970s Brazil as authoritarian systems that intended to establish a hegemony. In these contexts the marginality of the *cantautores* in question opened up the contingent possibility of subversion that any hegemonic system includes. I argued that it is not the mere fact of reaffirming one’s marginality that subverts hegemony just like a performance of a subversive act is still a performance. Because censorship is related to the way in which a hegemonic system aims to maintain a certain harmony between the multiple elements that constitute it, I introduced the concept of *detuning* to show how a minimal distortion of the established harmony can subvert hegemony because it destabilizes its boundaries. It does this in the manner of an expanding and receding *membrane* rather than by establishing a clearly identifiable outside. Through my analyses of songs by Carlos Varela and Jards Macalé I argued that, in cases where censorship aims to secure hegemony within the singularity of its discourse, effective sonic subversion is based on a sonic *strabism* that renders audible multiple, simultaneous discourses.

In Part 3, I presented the strabism of sonic resistance as a way for marginalized musicians to render perceptible their experiences of *affective diaspora* and censorship. Precisely this strabism, which, in the analyzed songs by Telmary and Milton Nascimento, is created through technological or performative ways of subverting the coherence of the speaking voice, allows the musicians to express the impossibility to testify: the disorientating experience of affective diaspora becomes palpable through a multiplication of the speaking voice, whereas the stifling effects of censorship are made manifest in the enunciation of incomprehensible speech. These testimonies do not take the form of horizontal and logically structured narratives or singular, harmonious languages, as that would render their engagement with the restrictive characteristics of censorship observed in Part 1 and 2 invisible. Rather, I argue that these sonic testimonies to censorship require a strabistic mode of listening that is capable of reading the vertical, affective dimension of the songs and their performance. In such a mode, the message conveyed by *what* is being said is of lesser importance than the one conveyed by *how* it is expressed. Sonic resistance, then, can be located not just in the lyrics, but also in seemingly meaningless or accidental elements of songs and their performance, such as mumbling, stuttering or technological glitches.

The central factor that has connected my analyses of the Brazilian and
Cuban songs is their engagement with the strong presence and pressure of a centralizing regime (military in Brazil and Revolutionary in Cuba) attempting to consolidate a fixed discourse of national identity. Drawing this study to a close, however, it should be noted that in the present-day situation, the role of the state and the dominant politics are significantly different.

In Cuba, Raul Castro assumed state leadership in 2008. Since then, he has implemented some important changes in the Cuban economic system, such as, in 2012, allowing citizens to have private companies instead of all being employees of the state (Meléndez). Also, negotiations with the Obama administration in the U.S. have led to a significant relief of the travel and export prohibitions put in place in the early 1960s. The new system, in which the Cuban political system is still socialist in ideology but also inserts itself in a practical way in the global capitalist market, is often compared to the Chinese model (Roque Cabello). As in China, in spite of new economic freedoms, artists, bloggers and musicians who criticize the authorities or the Cuban political system are still under threat of punishment and incarceration. A pertinent example is Gorki Águila, the lead singer of the rock band Porno Para Ricardo, whose extremely provocative lyrics have caused him to be repeatedly imprisoned.  

In recent years there have also been cases of arrests of artists who expressed less overt forms of criticism than Porno Para Ricardo. Consider, for example, the incarceration of performance artist Tania Bruguera after she planned to stage her project “El sussurro de Tatlin,” ‘Tatlin’s Whisper’ on the Plaza de la Revolución in Havana, where Castro’s speeches are traditionally held. The performance artwork, consisting of a microphone on a stand, a white dove and

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79 The website freemuse.org reports that Gorki has been imprisoned or arrested at least 6 times since 2003 (Freemuse.org). For an idea of the extent to which Porno Para Ricardo’s lyrics are not only critical about political issues but outright provocations of the regime, consider the refrain of the song “El coma andante,” ‘The Walking Coma,’ released in 2006, the year when Fidel Castro started to disappear from view for long periods due to his repeated hospitalizations for intestinal cancer (El Mundo Internacional). In the song, the Sonic I sings in a harsh voice: “no comas tanta pinga comandante,” ‘don’t talk so much shit, commander.’

80 The artwork’s allusion to Tatlin’s tower, the monument to the Third International that was planned for Petrograd after the Russian Revolution but never built, suggests a whisper that was never pronounced, implicitly referring to the persistence of censorship in Cuba.
two people in military outfits flanking the stand, allows for one-minute speeches by people from the audience or passers-by. Its obvious reference to the setting of Castro’s speeches already caused the work to be scorned by the authorities upon its first staging in the arts center of Havana in 2009, especially since some people had used their minute of speech to request freedom of expression and democracy. Bruguera’s plan to install the same artwork at the Plaza de la Revolución in 2014, however, led to her incarceration, which was widely commented on in the international press (Hoby).

In Brazil, Dilma Rousseff’s left-wing Partido dos Trabalhadores (Worker’s Party) is currently facing nation-wide protests because of the country’s economic decline and the bad working conditions, as well as major corruption scandals at a time when Brazil is struggling to prepare itself to host the 2016 Olympics (The Guardian, August 2015). Apart from creating uproar about the excessive investments made to build stadiums around the country as Brazil is facing economic problems, the preparations for the Olympics and for the soccer World Cup in 2014 have also given more visibility to more profound, long-term social problems, especially poverty and violence. The forced eviction of people from favelas situated close to (future) stadiums has drawn global attention to these issues and to Brazil’s inability to reduce the extreme gap between rich and poor (The Guardian, June 2015).

Thus, the differences between the present-day contexts and those framing the analyses in this study are obvious: Cuba is no longer closed off to the capitalist world as hermetically as before, and Brazil has a democratic government. However, lingering similarities are not difficult to find: Cuba still has a socialist system, an authoritarian leader who was not democratically elected and an active censorship system, while in Brazil the wish to be a significant player in a globalized world economy (as one of the BRIC countries) has led to an effort to erase marginalized groups from public life. What I do see as important shifts are, in Cuba, the diminishing visibility of the political authorities in everyday life and, in Brazil, the growing willingness of people to engage in public protest. In Cuba, Raul Castro does not have the same overwhelming presence as his older brother Fidel did. He does not deliver the same hours-long speeches and he is less dominantly present in the media. Although measures of control and punishment
are still taken to protect the political system, there is a less openly pronounced discourse legitimizing these measures than before. In Brazil, public speeches by Rousseff are often met with people taking to the streets banging pots and pans, which caused her to skip her 1st of May speech in 2015 (Galvão).

Because of these changes, the conditions under which present-day cantautores write and perform their music provide space for more explicitly expressed criticism (albeit less so in Cuba than in Brazil). What has not changed, however, is music’s role as a medium through which marginalized voices can make themselves heard by invoking alternative discourses, including from the past. An example is Brazilian rapper Criolo’s song “Cállice,” an *a capella* tribute to Gilberto Gil’s and Chico Buarque’s 1973 song of the same name – referred to in Movement 8 – that the rapper improvised at a little street stand, with the video instantly becoming a Youtube hit in 2010. Criolo’s version, which maintains the melodic, metric and lyric structure of the original, adapts the lyrics to refer to contemporary problems on the fringes of Brazilian society. Criolo, who grew up in a *favela* in São Paulo, is often seen as a voice speaking from these fringes, something he also emphasizes in his lyrics and his performance (Neff). Also worth mentioning here is the fact that Criolo’s “Cállice” has become one of the anthems often sung and played at the recent Brazilian protests (Rossenblum).

Where Gil and Buarque’s song alluded to the military regime’s censorship as a blood-filled chalice or *cálice* from which the Sonic I refused to drink, Criolo’s Sonic I pleads with his father to take the *biqueira* away from him, using a word that in street language refers to the place where drugs are being sold. This version therefore revolves around present-day Brazilian problems such as poverty, violence, drug trafficking and racism:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cállice</th>
<th>Chalice / Shut up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Como ir pro trabalho sem levar um tiro</td>
<td>How to go to work without getting shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voltar pra casa sem levar um tiro</td>
<td>Return home without getting shot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se as três da matina tem alguém que frita</td>
<td>If someone is high at three in the morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E é capaz de tudo pra manter sua brisa</td>
<td>And will do anything to uphold his oblivion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Os saraus tiveram que invadir os botecos
Pois biblioteca não era lugar de poesia
Biblioteca tinha que ter silêncio,
E uma gente que se acha assim muito sabida

Há preconceito com o nordestino
Há preconceito com o homem negro
Há preconceito com o analfabeto
Mas não há preconceito se um dos três for rico, pai.

A ditadura segue meu amigo Milton
A repressão segue meu amigo Chico
Me chamam Criolo e o meu berço é o rap
Mas não existe fronteira pra minha poesia, pai.

Afasta de mim a biqueira, pai
Afasta de mim as biate, pai
Afasta de mim a coqueine, pai
Pois na quebrada escorre sangue, pai

An important difference between the original version and Criolo’s remake is that the challenge to institutionalized and state-coordinated censorship in the 1973 version of the song has been replaced by the claim that the problems of the marginalized neighborhoods of the present day can only be represented by non-official forms of expression such as Criolo’s conception of poetry as disturbing the silence required by the elite frequenting “the libraries.” Now, the plea to the father is not to lift the silence imposed on the Sonic I, as was the case in Gil and Buarque’s version, but to take away the problems caused by drug- and prostitution-related violence.

The silence required in libraries by “people who think they are wise” because they read books is contrasted with the streetwise poetry that finds its place in noisy locales, such as bars, where the spontaneity of poetic expression that can
rescue people from their “oblivion” is represented by the *saraus*, jam sessions that include not only music but also dance and poetry. In the next stanza, the Sonic I emphasizes that *nordestinos* (people from Brazil’s poor North-East region) but also people of color and those who are illiterate suffer from prejudices that can only be escaped by becoming rich.

Significantly, the song also insists that the past still influences the present through the Sonic I’s references, in the present tense, to “the dictatorship” and “the repression” that follow his friends Milton [Nascimento] and Chico [Buarque]. The allusion to these musicians from a different generation is not only historical, but functions to indicate that the friends of the Sonic I who share his harsh reality of living in suburbs where one can get shot while going to work are being silenced just like these musicians were, only in a different manner.

The word *biqueira*, with which Criolo replaces “cálice,” is interesting in this respect, since, in Brazilian Portuguese, it can also refer to a bag that is placed over an animal’s snout (*bico*) to prevent it from eating. While this allusion is easily associated with the Sonic I’s request not to be silenced, as in the original version of the song, it also suggests something else: the bag placed over the mouth of the Sonic I not only prevents him from speaking, but also prevents him from ingesting, signaling that, as a rapper whose poetry represents the poor and their blood that “flows in the outskirts,” he should not partake of the rich people’s Brazil.

With these observations in mind, the lines “rap is my cradle / but father, there are no borders to my poetry” can be placed in their proper perspective. The fact that the Sonic I, who, through these lines, identifies himself with the rapper Criolo, mentions an absence of borders to his poetry recalls the blurring of separations between geographical spaces that I have recognized as an important characteristic of affective diaspora throughout this study. In this particular song, however, the boundaries evoked are the literal boundaries that separate the Brazilian *favelas* and their violent reality from the supposedly peaceful or “silent” day-to-day life of the cities in which they are exclusively included. These same boundaries are seen to apply at a discursive level, with the archive of “the libraries” not accepting the poetry that represents the voices of the poor. Criolo, in claiming that his poetry does not have boundaries, suggests that the “rich” Brazilian society that wishes to keep marginality invisible is like the logocentric...
censorship of language, alluded to by the image of the libraries, the “silence” of which can be disturbed or detuned by a poetry that does not abide to the limitations imposed on it.

Significantly, just as in my earlier analyses, music here refers to marginality while also enunciating from a marginalized position in order to subvert the mechanisms that are trying to inhibit the expression of certain ideas and problems. This strategy is not only revived in contemporary Brazil. In present-day Cuba, the members of the rap-group Los Aldeanos (The Villagers) also emphasize their marginal status as politically critical rappers and make it part of their performance. Marginality, in the case of Los Aldeanos, is expressed in their band name, which evokes associations with the periphery, the “other” (usually poorer) space from an urban point of view.

The lyrics of Los Aldeanos songs are critical towards the Cuban regime in a very explicit way, contrasting with the subtle, metaphorical and sonic forms of expression developed in the face of censorship analyzed throughout this study. The explicitly critical character of Los Aldeanos’s lyrics, but also those of other Cuban rap-artists such as El Crítico or El Primario y Julito and the aforementioned punk-rock group Porno Para Ricardo, does not signal that censorship has been lifted. All of these artists are dealing with restrictions when it comes to giving performances or appearing on radio and television, and all have been or are imprisoned. The role of the internet in the diffusion of their songs, Youtube in particular, is key for the visibility they manage to have in spite of their marginal and policed status. Maybe it is this escape from anonymity that makes their lyrics more explicitly critical than those of Varela and Telmary were in the past, because having visibility outside Cuba can at least dissuade the authorities from imposing certain punishments or from incarceration. It is also possible that it has to do with the slight loosening of censorship in Cuba in the last years, but these are questions that cannot be answered within the scope of this Coda.

What is clear is that music continues to play an important role in subverting political or ideological mechanisms of repression and, in certain contexts, attracts censorship because of this. This is the case not just in Cuba, but also in Russia, where members of the feminist punk-rock band Pussy Riot were incarcerated; in China, where the recent detainment of rap-group IN3 is only one...
of many examples; in Turkey, where the critical Kurdish Grup Yorum has been repeatedly jailed; and in many other countries. At www.freemuse.org cases of musical censorship around the world are monitored and reported, with the long list of contemporary cases giving an idea of the prevalence of music censorship and rendering the analysis I have conducted of how it works and how it might be circumvented, countered or exposed relevant also in today’s world.

Present-day cases of censorship underscore my point about the relevance of looking not just at what is expressed (or not) in a song’s lyrics but also at its sonic dimensions because such cases are seldom exclusively related to what is sung. In the case of Pussy Riot, for example, their repression is also based on their identity as feminists and their violation of religious norms, while for Grup Yorum it is their Kurdish background that makes them controversial as public figures. Los Aldeanos not only express criticism of the Cuban regime through their lyrics, but also through their flamboyant performances, while the marginality expressed by Criolo not only resonates with the Brazilian protesters because it refers to life in the favelas, but also because it touches on a sense of discontent with the Brazilian elite on a national scale. Thus, as I have argued throughout this study, music’s potential subversive force does not only lie on the narrative level, but also in what it transmits on the sonic level – performatively, affectively.
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Audiography


Summary

Sonic Resistance: Diaspora, Marginality and Censorship in Cuban and Brazilian Popular Music

In this study I argue that popular music can testify to experiences of censorship, marginality and diaspora in spite of the difficulties that giving account of these experiences imply. Analyzing a number of songs from late 1980s and early 1990s Cuba and from early 1970s Brazil, and conceiving of these songs as complex interactions between lyrics, melody, rhythm, the use of instruments (including the voice of the singer) and performance, I focus on how their narrative, auditive and expressive dimensions interact with each other and with the socio-political contexts in which they were written and performed. The songs make perceptible what I call affective diaspora, an experience of alienation from the homeland that does not require physical separation from it. I connect this experience of a blurring of the border between the inside and the outside of the homeland to the way these musicians circumvent censorship by questioning, from a marginal perspective, the parameters of its operation. Their strategy of destabilizing the separation between the inside and the outside of hegemony, of the homeland and of legitimized speech or musical harmony is what I call detuning. To approach and do justice to these detuned musical narratives, I propose a strabistic way of listening that, like cross-eyed vision, is capable of reading the decentered testimony of these songs as also testifying to censorship itself.

Throughout this study my approach is that of cultural analysis. Four elements of this critical practice are of particular relevance to the way in which I analyze the songs and their performance. First, cultural analysis is based on Mieke Bal’s contention that the analysis of cultural objects should not disregard the fact that a single object can hold multiple meanings and can trigger a variety of associations if it is approached from a multidisciplinary perspective. Concepts can come to mean and achieve different things as they travel between different disciplinary contexts and can also be transformed by the analysis they facilitate.
Throughout this study, the main concepts of diaspora, hegemony and testimony are introduced in relation to objects that do not simply reaffirm their established definition, but work to extend, relate and sometimes destabilize them. The second element that is relevant to my approach is the active role of the object, which appears as another active subject taking part in the process of analysis. This implies that the analysis is not only about the interaction between concept and object, but also about the interaction between the analyst and the object as the analysis takes place. The third central element of cultural analysis is that of close reading. According to Bal, close reading implies that no text “speaks for itself” but that the analyst frames it by approaching it from his or her own cultural, disciplinary or situational perspective. This characteristic is closely related to the fourth element, which consists of the fact that I seek to understand the past as part of the present instead of isolating the analyzed object in its particular historical context.

The body of this dissertation consists of three Parts, each containing three Movements. In each Part, one Cuban and one Brazilian song are first analyzed separately in the first two Movements, before being placed in dialogue in the third. In Part 1, the central concept I develop is that of affective diaspora. I explore how, in a context of diaspora, both the homeland and the subject as narrative constructions become multidirectional. In my analysis of Cuban cantautor Carlos Varela’s song “Árboles raros” (1989) in Movement 1, diaspora is introduced as an affective phenomenon that causes the supposedly closed-off inside world of the homeland to be traversed by different, foreign narratives and thus to become multiple. The capacity of affect to resonate between bodies so that they can mutually impinge on one another is further analyzed in Movement 2 through the song “Aquele abraço” (1969) by Brazilian cantautor Gilberto Gil. The idea of affect as resonance is connected in this Movement to the theory of musical harmony, where a horizontal progression of notes, like a linear narrative, is accompanied by a vertical connection of simultaneously played notes, which is what harmony consists of. I relate this vertical harmonic resonance between notes to the way in which affect allows bodies to touch each other independently of physical separations or the linear structure of narrative progression. Finally, in Movement 3 I explore how censorship sets out to establish a strict separation between the inside and the outside of national territories and legitimized discourses. Returning to the
songs by Varela and Gil, I suggest that insularization and carnival function as affectionately diasporic narratives, capable of circumventing censorship by displacing the center of its discourse.

Part 2 takes on the perspective of the auditive body to reflect on the concept of hegemony. Movement 4 starts with an analysis of the song “Guillermo Tell” (1991) by Carlos Varela in which the Oedipal theme of the son wishing to take the place of his father comes to signify the dynamics of closeness and distance between the younger generations of Cubans and the Revolutionary authorities. Through a discussion of the concept of hegemony and of the contingent potential to subvert it from its inside realm, I explore the audience's rhythmic distortions of Varela's song, as audible in the recorded performance, as possible subversions of a hegemonic system on an auditive level. My subsequent reading of “Let’s play that” (1972) by the Brazilian cantautor Jards Macalé in Movement 5 explores the subversive motive of the angel appearing in the lyrics of this song in relation to the figure of the angel as the representation of a multiplicity of worlds in postmodern theory. Exploring how multiplicity can be subversive, I introduce the concept of detuning to explain how singing out of tune can subvert a hegemonic system from the inside. I elaborate on this idea by introducing the concept of the membrane as a flexible body of connection-separation that detunes the supposedly neat demarcation between what is inside and what is outside. Because an auditive reading of a detuned discourse cannot be conducted in a linear way, in Movement 6 I suggest a strabistic mode of listening that does not censor the detuned discourse but, in being strabistic (cross-eyed), aligns with its inherent multiplicity.

The concluding Part 3 focuses on the expressive qualities of bodies and uses the concept of testimony to understand how a censored song may nevertheless give an account of being censored. In Movement 7 I focus on Cuban rapper Telmary Diaz’s 2005 song “Los Revolucionarios,” exploring the textual and performative ways in which the word “revolution” is presented as a fragmented concept that can even come to signify inertia. By introducing the concept of enunciation in relation to the song, I argue that the speaking subject, in a similarly fragmented way, can come to speak from a position external to itself, metadiscursively vocalizing an alienation from itself. My analysis of the Brazilian singer Milton Nascimento’s 1973 song “Milagre dos peixes” in Movement 8 explores
non-language as testimony’s way of voicing the silence imposed on it by censorship, drawing mainly on Giorgio Agamben’s concept of testimony. In Movement 9 I dig deeper into the mechanisms of censorship in Cuba and Brazil, and ask, in relation to Jacques Derrida’s argument about the inherent impossibility for testimony to give a full account of the event, whether it is not precisely this quality that enables it to express what censorship does not allow. Bringing Nascimento’s and Telmary’s songs together, I conclude by suggesting the concept of the carrier-voice as proposing a voice that is able to testify where normal speech does not. Representing a multiplicity of speaking subjects, this voice is only expressive in its bodily, sonic qualities that are performative and affective. Returning to the central question of this study, I argue that it is this sonic form of expression that, because it does not follow censorship’s rules and therefore does not articulate an opposition from the outside, destabilizes and thus resists the boundaries that define censorship’s inside space.

In the final remarks of the Coda, I relate my analysis of the songs and the historical contexts in which they were written and performed to the present situation in Cuba and Brazil. Giving a rough sketch of recent political changes in both countries, I argue that, in spite of Brazil’s democratic state form and Cuba’s gradual economic and political opening up to the rest of the world, censorship and marginalization have not disappeared. Through a short analysis of a song by the Brazilian rapper Criolo, which cites a cantautor from the generation this study focuses on but which can also be related to examples of sonic resistance in contemporary Cuba, Russia, China and Turkey, I show the continuing validity of my conclusion that political criticism in music and its censoring can be based on much more than the explicit contents of song lyrics. Resistance to censorship and marginalization may also be situated on the level of the performative, the affective and the sonic, where it is more difficult to silence by the censors but also demands a more active, strabistic listening stance from the listener.
Samenvatting

Sonisch Verzet: Diaspora, Marginaliteit en Censuur in Cubaanse en Braziliaanse Populaire Muziek

In dit onderzoek beargumenteer ik dat populaire muziek kan getuigen van ervaringen met censuur, marginaliteit en diaspora, ongeacht de moeilijkheden die het afleggen van getuigenissen van deze ervaringen impliceert. Door een aantal muzieknrums te analyseren uit het Cuba van eind jaren 80 en begin jaren 90 en uit het Brazilië van de vroege jaren 70, en door deze nummers te beschouwen als complexe interacties tussen songeteksten, melodie, ritme, het gebruik van instrumenten (inclusief de stem van de zanger) en performance, concentreer ik mij op de wijze waarop er een wisselwerking plaatsvindt tussen de narratieve, auditieve en expressieve dimensies ervan en de socio-politieke omstandigheden waarin ze geschreven en uitgevoerd werden. De nummers maken iets tastbaar dat ik *affectieve diaspora* noem, een ervaring van vervreemding van het thuisland zonder er noodzakelijkerwijs fysiek van verwijderd te zijn. Deze ervaring van een vervagende grens tussen de binnenzijde en de buitenzijde van het thuisland breng ik in verband met de manier waarop deze muzikanten censuur omzeilen door de parameters van haar werkwijze in twijfel te trekken vanuit een marginaal perspectief. Hun strategie om deze scheiding tussen de binnenzijde en de buitenzijde van hegemonie, van het thuisland en van ge legitimeerde spraak of muzikale harmonie te ontwrichten, is wat ik *ontstemmen* noem. Om deze ontstemde muzikale narratieve te benaderen en deze recht te doen, stel ik een *strabistische* manier van luisteren voor die het mogelijk maakt om, als het ware met een schele blik, de gede centreerde getuigenissen van deze nummers te lezen alsof ze eveneens van de censuur zelf getuigenis doen.

In dit onderzoek hanteer ik de benadering van culturele analyse. Vier elementen van deze kritische praktijk zijn van specifiek belang voor de manier waarop ik de nummers en hun performance analyseer. Allereerst is culturele analyse gebaseerd op Mieke Bals uitgangspunt dat de analyse van culturele objecten...
niet uit het oog moet verliezen dat een enkel object meerdere betekenissen kan hebben en een veelheid aan associaties kan oproepen als het vanuit een interdisciplinair perspectief benaderd wordt. Concepten kunnen verschillende dingen betekenen en teweegbrengen naargelang ze tussen verschillende disciplinaire contexten reizen, en kunnen daarnaast getransformeerd worden door de analyses die ze mogelijk maken. In dit onderzoek worden de voornaamste concepten van diaspora, hegemonie en getuigenis geïntroduceerd in relatie tot objecten die niet simpelweg hun bestaande definities bevestigen, maar deze oprekken, met elkaar in verband brengen of, op sommige plekken, ontwrichten. Het tweede element dat relevant is voor mijn benadering is de actieve rol van het object, dat zich manifesteert als een actief subject dat deelneemt aan het analyseproces. Dit impliceert dat de analyse niet alleen de interactie tussen concept en object betreft, maar ook de interactie tussen de analist en het object gedurende het analyseproces. Het derde centrale element van culturele analyse betreft close reading. Volgens Bal impliceert close reading dat geen enkele tekst “voor zichzelf spreekt” maar dat de analist deze omlijst door hem te benaderen vanuit zijn of haar eigen culturele, disciplinaire of tijd- en plaatsgebonden perspectief. Deze eigenschap is nauw verbonden met het vierde element, dat inhoudt dat ik het verleden als onderdeel van het heden probeer te begrijpen, in plaats van het geanalyseerde object te isoleren in zijn specifieke historische context.

Dit proefschrift bestaat uit drie delen, die elk drie Passages omvatten. In elk deel wordt één Cubaans en één Braziliaans nummer afzonderlijk geanalyseerd in de eerste twee Passages, voordat ze met elkaar in dialoog worden gebracht in het derde deel. In deel 1 is affectieve diaspora het centrale concept dat ik uitwerken. Ik onderzoek hoe het thuisland en het subject als narratieve constructies multidirectioneel worden in een context van diaspora. In mijn analyse van het nummer “Árboles raros” (1989) van de Cubaanse cantautor Carlos Varela in Passage 1 wordt diaspora geïntroduceerd als een affectief fenomeen dat ervoor zorgt dat de zogenaamde geïsoleerde binnenwereld van het thuisland doorkruist wordt door verschillende, vreemde narratieve, die deze wereld verveelvoudigen. De mogelijkheid van affect om te resoneren tussen lichamen waardoor ze elkaar wederzijds kunnen beïnvloeden wordt verder geanalyseerd in Passage 2 aan de hand van het nummer “Aquele abraço” (1969) van de Braziliaanse cantautuur Gilberto Gil.
idee van affect als resonantie wordt in deze Passage gerelateerd aan de theorie van muzikale harmonie, waarin een horizontale progressie van noten, net als in een lineair narratief, gepaard gaat met een verticale connectie tussen gelijktijdig gespeelde noten, waar harmonie uit opgebouwd wordt. Ik breng deze verticale harmonische resonantie tussen noten in verband met de manier waarop affect het mogelijk maakt voor lichamen om elkaar te raken, onafhankelijk van fysische verwijdering of van de lineaire structuur van narratieve progressie. Tot slot onderzoek ik in Passage 3 hoe censuur een strikte scheiding tracht aan te brengen binnen de binnenzijde en de buitenzijde van nationale territoria en ge legitimeerde discoursen. Teruggrijpend op de nummers van Varela en Gil suggereer ik dat insularisatie en carnaval fungeren als affectief diasporische narratieve, die in staat zijn om censuur te omzeilen door het centrum van haar discours te verschuiven.

Deel 2 vertrekt vanuit het perspectief van het auditieve lichaam voor een bespiegeling op het concept van hegemonie. Passage 4 begint met een analyse van het nummer “Guillermo Tell” (1991) van Carlos Varela, waarin het Oedipale thema van de zoon die de plaats van de vader wil innemen verwijst naar de dynamiek van nabijheid en verwijdering tussen jongere generaties Cubanen en de Revolutionaire machthebbers. Door middel van een bespreking van het concept van hegemonie en de contingente mogelijkheid om deze van binnen uit te ontregelen, onderzoek ik de ritmische verstoringen door het publiek van Varela’s nummer, zoals deze te horen zijn op de opname van de performance, als mogelijke ontregelingen van een hegemonisch systeem op auditief niveau. Mijn aansluitende interpretatie in Passage 5 van “Let’s play that” (1972) door de Braziliaanse cantautor Jards Macalé, plaatst de subversieve houding van de engel in deze songtekst in verhouding tot het karakter van de engel in postmoderne theorie, waar deze figuur de multiplicatie van werelden vertegenwoordigt. Om te onderzoeken in hoeverre multiplicatie een subversieve actie is, introduceer ik het concept van ontstemmen waarmee ik uitleg hoe vals zingen een hegemonisch systeem van binnenuit kan ontregelen. Ik werk dit idee uit door het concept van het membraan te introduceren, een flexibel orgaan van verbinding-af scheiding dat een ontstemming teweegbrengt in de ogenschijnlijk nette demarcatie tussen binnen en buiten. Omdat een auditieve interpretatie van een ontstemd discours op lineaire wijze niet mogelijk is, stel ik in Passage 6 een strabistische manier
van luisteren voor die een ontstemd discours niet censureert, maar die door zijn strabistische (schele) karakter afgestemd is op de intrinsieke veelheid daarvan.

Het afsluitende deel 3 concentreert zich op de expressieve kwaliteiten van lichamen en gebruikt het concept van *getuigenis* om te begrijpen hoe een gecensureerd nummer toch kan getuigen van het feit dat het gecensureerd is. In Passage 7 concentreer ik mij op het nummer “Los Revolucionarios” (2005) van de Cubaanse rapper Telmary Diaz, waarin ik onderzoek hoe in de tekst en performance het woord “revolutie” gepresenteerd wordt als een gefragmenteerd concept dat zelfs inertie kan betekenen. Door het concept van *enunciatie* te introduceren in relatie tot het nummer, stel ik dat het sprekkende subject, op een soortgelijk gefragmenteerde wijze, uiteindelijk kan spreken vanuit een positie buiten zichzelf en zo op een metadiscursieve manier uitdrukking kan geven aan de vervreemding van zichzelf. Mijn analyse in Passage 8 van het nummer “Milagre dos peixes” (1973) van de Braziliaanse zanger Milton Nascimento, verkent het niet-talige als een manier waarop een getuigenis de stilte kan verwoorden die het door censuur opgelegd heeft gekregen. Hierbij baseer ik me voornamelijk op Giorgio Agambens concept van getuigenis. In Passage 9 ga ik dieper in op de mechanismes van censuur in Cuba en Brazilië en stel ik de vraag, gerelateerd aan Jacques Derrida’s argument dat een getuigenis nooit volledig verslag kan doen van een gebeurtenis, of het niet precies deze eigenschap van de getuigenis is die het mogelijk maakt om uit te drukken wat de censuur niet toestaat. In het laatste deel van Passage 9 breng ik Nascimento’s en Telmary’s nummers samen en introduceer ik het concept van de *woordvoerder* of de *stemdrager*. Dit concept stelt een stem voor die kan getuigen waar normale spraak dat niet kan. Als weergave van een veelheid aan sprekkende subjecten is deze stem alleen expressief door zijn lichamelijke, sonische kwaliteiten, die performatief en affectief zijn. Terugkerend naar de centrale vraag van dit onderzoek, bepleit ik de visie dat het deze sonische vorm van expressie is die, door het niet volgen van de regels van de censuur en daardoor ook het niet artificeren van een oppositie van buitenaf, de grenzen van het interne territorium van censuur kan ontregelen en dus ook kan verwerpen.

In de concluderende observaties van de Coda breng ik mijn analyses van de nummers en de historische contexten waarin ze geschreven en uitgevoerd werden in verband met de huidige situaties in Cuba en Brazilië. Aan de hand van
een grove schets van de recente politieke veranderingen in beide landen, stel ik dat ondanks de democratische staatsvorm in Brazilië en ondanks de geleidelijke politieke en economische toenadering van Cuba tot de rest van de wereld, censuur en marginaliteit nog niet verdwenen zijn. Door een korte analyse van een nummer van de Braziliaanse rapper Criolo, waarin een cantautor geciteerd wordt uit de generatie waar dit onderzoek zich op toespitst maar waarvan de tekst ook in verband gebracht kan worden met voorbeelden van sonisch verzet in hedendaags Cuba, Rusland, China en Turkije, laat ik de aanhoudende geldigheid zien van mijn conclusie, namelijk dat politieke kritiek in muziek en de censuur daarvan gebaseerd kan zijn op veel meer dan de expliciete inhoud van songteksten. Verzet tegen censuur en marginalisatie kan ook plaatsvinden op het niveau van het performatieve, het affectieve en het sonische, waar het moeilijker het zwijgen opgelegd kan worden door censors maar waar ook een meer actieve en strabistische luisterhouding van de toehoorder verlangd wordt.