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

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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 visas 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 caututor 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.

\[
\begin{align*}
Árboles raros & \quad \text{Strange Trees} \\
Dejó la nieve de Estocolmo & \quad \text{She left the snow of Stockholm} \\
Y salió a buscar otra estación & \quad \text{And went looking for another season} \\
Quiso un paisaje sin otoño & \quad \text{She wanted an autumnless landscape} \\
Y aquí llegó con la ilusión & \quad \text{And she arrived here full of expectancy} \\
Ella miraba en la avenida & \quad \text{She observed in the avenue}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{21}\) 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

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.  

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)\textsuperscript{26}

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

\textsuperscript{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.”
process of perpetual auto-(re)definition (509, 515-16).27

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)28

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)

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 char-
acter 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 connec-
tions 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 exclu-
sion 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
here / the leaves fall as well.”

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 autumnless
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.
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.³³

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

³³ 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.

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. 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:

**Aquele abraço**  That Embrace

- O Rio de Janeiro continua lindo  Rio de Janeiro is still beautiful
- O Rio de Janeiro continua sendo  Rio de Janeiro continues to be
- O Rio de Janeiro, fevereiro e março  Rio of January, February and March

- Alô, alô, Realengo  Hello, hello, Realengo,
- Aquele abraço  That embrace
- Alô torçida do Flamengo  Hello stadium of Flamengo
- Aquele abraço  That embrace

- Chacrinha continua balançando a pança  Chacrinha is still wiggling his belly
- E buzinando a moça e comandando a massa  And honking women and commanding the masses
- E continua dando as ordens no terreiro  And still giving his orders in the country

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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

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. The
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 carnivalesque 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:

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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 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.
Movement 2 - Affective Resonance

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 its many sugar plantations. 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.
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.\(^{40}\) 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

\(^{40}\) 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).  

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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 “réguia 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
Movement 3 - Insularization and Carnival

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.\footnote{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.} 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).\footnote{My translation of the Portuguese: “[A] ilha Brasil pairando eternamente a meio milímetro do chão real da América [...].”} 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.
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.
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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:

\[
\text{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)}
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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
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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
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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 (Fleiuss 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,45 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

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 military 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 possibility 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
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
isso. Nada a ver com isso.

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 ambivalence – 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.