

Orfeu Carioca: Reassessing Orphic Mythology in Rio de Janeiro

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Influências assim sempre existiram,
só não sofre influência o que está morto

Tom Jobim

Two contrasting images of Rio de Janeiro have stood the test of time: one picturesque, the other vicious. Idyllic Rio has most recently been re-legitimized by the International Olympic Committee and FIFA has rewarded Brazil as a "pais do futuro" with the 2014 World Cup.¹ This unabashed optimism has led Jon Mark of MSN Money to proclaim that Brazil is "rich in natural resources, low in corruption and, as oil prices soar, on its way to energy self-sufficiency. It is not too late for investors to jump in -- and here's how."² Yet the urban reality of a darker Rio, symbolized by cultural theorists as a *Cidade Partida*, which I call a *Cidade Desnivelada*—because of the asymmetrical geographic and economic topography—, contrasts starkly with the iconic fetishism of beaches, *garotas* and Carnival of photogenic Rio. For Marta Peixoto the closing decades of the 20th century witnessed the proliferation of an ominous Rio, nourished on the asymmetrical democratization of violence, and consumerism, which mirrors the contrasting topography of the city, because as Peixoto points out "the urban experience is fraught with violence and the fear of violence for all residents-though here too there is inequality, since this violence and fear effects some segments of the population far more than others" (170). This sadistic realism, in Latin America as a whole, created a niche in international cinema which feeds a demand market with neorealist cinema. This niche exploits the exhibition of this *Cidade Partida*, with the most visual Brazilian cinema of last ten years heavily invested with this über-

realist genre, as is the case with Fernando Meirelles's *Cidade de Deus* (2000), Hector Babenco's *Carandirú* (2003), Paulo Morelli's *Cidade de Homem* (2007), and José Padilha's *Tropa de Elite* (2007).³

This most recent internationalization of Brazilian Cinema by Fernando Meirelles, et al. (preceded previously by the standard bearers of *Cinema Novo*),⁴ has compelled me to revisit two of the most controversial "Brazilian" films of the past fifty years: Marcel Camus's *Orfeu Negro* (1959) and Carlos Diegues's remake *Orfeu* (1999). Initially, I am drawn back to Camus's film, in large part, because of its role in the internationalization of the Brazilian image and the subsequent, and unanimous, critical crucifixion because of its supposed overt exoticism as evidenced by the work of Charles Perrone, Caetano Veloso, and Jonathan Grasse, among others. These critical perspectives vis-à-vis *Orfeu Negro* tend to be ethnographic in nature and chastise the failure of authentic Brazilian representation in Camus's film. However, all these studies undertake critical approaches to a film which is neither documentary, testimonial, nor pseudo-journalist. In fact, these studies condemn *Orfeu Negro* to representative failure, in terms of its visceral realist quality, from the onset because they overlook the film's initial agenda of rebooting a classical myth. In short, much of the film's scholarship is guilty of a functional fallacy, because Camus's melodramatic realism is misrepresented and Diegues's urban sensationalism is overstated.

My goal in the present article is to positively comment on the ways each text, starting with Vinícius de Moraes's 1953 play *Orfeu da Conceição* (from which both films draw their inspiration), through *Orfeu Negro* and culminating with *Orfeu*, participate in the "Riofication" of the classic Orphic myth by adding distinctively Carioca layers through their depiction in film and in music of daily favela life. Ultimately, I argue that each version can be mined for

characteristically Carioca cultural markers and that each film concerns itself with the infallibility of music while showcasing the frailty of the musician. The films transform Moraes's tragedy into melodrama, wherein the musical components of the films outlive and transcend the reductionist and essentialist readings of academia. However, to fully appreciate this literary and filmic transculturation, which converts the Orphic myth into a legitimate Carioca retelling of love, Carnival, favela life, and the resilience of music as cultural memory, the classical origins of the Orphic legend are indispensable.

Orfeu sedutor: o seu legado mitológico

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is ubiquitous throughout the 20th century. As a story telling of the supremacy of love and the power of music, the Orpheus legend has kept the artists and audiences of the 20th century captivated. These representations of the Orphic myth find their most modern origins in Virgil's *Georgics IV*. As W.S. Anderson explains, "Virgil's is the first surviving account of Orfeu and Eurídice which specifically focuses on his failure to recover her entirely" (27). Orpheus first emerges in antiquity as a member of the Argonauts, and it is his musical virtuosity, which enables him to manipulate humans and objects equally, which serves Jason on his quest for the Golden Fleece. As the legend of the Argonauts illustrates, Orpheus's musical virtues transcend the purely aesthetic quality of his gift, and the apotheosis of Orpheus is complete with the Argonaut story. These superhuman qualities of persuasion and manipulation will manifest themselves anew in the story for which he is best remembered, the love story of Orpheus and Eurydice.⁵

The most conventional version of the myth of Eurydice and Orpheus focuses on the regenerative power of music. In the myth, Orpheus is the son of Apollo (or Oeagrus, the King of Thrace) and queen Calliope. In the legend, Orpheus loses his wife Eurydice (also known as

Agriope) to a serpent's bite. Inconsolable, Orpheus descends to Hades, and with his music persuades the queen Persephone to return Eurydice to the world of the living. Hades and Persephone consent to Eurydice's return on condition that Orpheus should walk in front of her and not look on her face until they reach the world of the living. In a moment of weakness (arrogance) Orpheus breaks his oath and loses Eurydice. In Aeschylus's *Bassarids*, after Eurydice's death, Orpheus is torn to pieces by the Thracian Maenads, for failing to honor his previous patron, Dionysus. Ovid in *Metamorphoses XI* explains that jealousy is at the root of Orpheus's death, as the furious Maenads ripped the musician apart in an orgy of resentment and envy. The Muses buried his dismember parts in Leibethra below Mt. Olympus, and Orpheus's soul is reunited with his beloved Eurydice upon his returned to the Underworld.

As previously mentioned, the Orphic myth has continued to intrigue in the modern era. In the 20th century alone Orpheus is omnipresent in operas such as, Darius Milhaud's *Les malheurs d'Orphée* (1924), Igor Stravinsky's *Orfeu* (1947), Harrison Birtwistle's *The Mask of Orfeu* (1986), and Philip Glass's *Orphée* (1993). In cinema, Jean Cocteau's film *Orphée* (1949) and *Orpheus Descending* (1957) by Tennessee William attest to the myth's pervasiveness. To these multiple reinventions of Orphic mythology, Vinícius de Moraes adds his Brazilian perspective because of the alluring "união do poeta com o músico" (Mello 59).⁶ Moraes's play *Orfeu da Conceição*, which debuted on September 25th, 1956 in Rio de Janeiro with an all Afro-Brazilian cast, tells the tragic story of the love triangle between Orfeu, Eurídice and Mira, a character added by Moraes.⁷ Subsequently, the two films versions keep the triangular dynamic of Moraes's play and through the melodramatic staging of an *amour fou*, further contribute through music, religion and cinematography to the "Carioquizar" of the classic myth, begun by Moraes.⁸

Orfeu brasileiro: problemática de "autenticidade"

The problematic of each text's cultural authenticity dates back to Moraes's play, which has been the most favorably received by critics and audiences alike. However, the point cannot be overlooked, the initial metamorphoses of the myth, what I call synonymously "Riofication" or "Carioquization", begins with Moraes's play and the poet's desire to "pensar na vida dos negros de morros e a helenizar a suas vidas" (Mello 59). And although Moraes confesses to wanting to "helenizar" the lives of the favelados, what in fact transpires is the transculturation of the myth via its "Carioquization". As Jared Banks has underscored: "Vinicius mixed together the elements of classical tragedy . . . with a characteristically Brazilian flavour," which nevertheless was not unanimously well-received as the play was branded as "negativista . . . irreal, false e sem autenticidade da vida dos moradores do morro" (Paranhos 59)". However, as Banks emphasizes, "Vinicius, however, never intended the play to be documentary realism" (798-99).⁹ Also worth noting is Moraes's active participation in the transformation of both play and film, having firstly, transposed the backdrop for Orpheus's descent into Hades from a "gafiera, no Segundo ato, estou transpondo o carnaval carioca para o final do filme" (qtd. in Banks 793).

Another fundamental additive element originating with Moraes is the Mira character, which is ever present in all three texts and whose role is secondary only to the doomed lovers, yet central to the melodramatic denouement in all Carioca interpretations of the Orphic myth. As Oliveira has perceived Mira's importance in the play is tantamount to the doomed lover as she is "responsible for her rival's death, and it is Mira who instigates Orfeu's death as well by setting the Maenads against him" (453). Mira is more proactive in the films, physically participating in the death of the protagonist. In *Orfeu Negro*, after accepting the loss of Orfeu's affection, she throws the stone which strikes the protagonist, prompting his falling to his death. In *Orfeu*, it is Mira who instigates Orfeu's drunken ex-lovers to first mock his pain, and it is Mira who initiates

the ritualistic assault of the protagonist by inflicting the first stab. By conflating the mythical Maenads into a single lifelike character, Moraes has created a persona to signify a priori the consequences of a jilted lover's rage. In other words, the Mira character, in all three texts is the personification of the Congrevean scorned woman, which expands the emotional and psychological elements of the classic myth by indicting Orfeu as the primary instigator of his own misfortune.¹⁰

Likewise, the film versions have struggled with the burden of authenticity since their respective debuts, incurring simultaneously applause from international audiences and the indifferent wrath from the cultural collective they intend to represent.¹¹ In fact, Moraes's original intention to "helenizar" favela life has been unceremoniously forgotten, or worse still become a cultural liability to Camus's film. The critical sentiment vis-à-vis these films can be succinctly summarized in the following manner: the seemingly extrinsic representation of *Orfeu Negro* has been strongly condemned; while *Orfeu* film's neorealist representation of favela life has been commended. For Charles Perrone, the Marcel Camus film was "overly exotic or even demeaning" (51) while the *Orfeu* film was "attempting a realist demystification of a certain decomplexified image of Brazil largely associated with the previous filmic depiction" (60). Perrone goes on to contend that it is the film's agenda which has limited its acceptance on the domestic level: "in general, Camus displayed a mythifying urge, an impulse to beautify. Diegues wants to head in another direction, tempering impressive views of Rio, the energy of Carnival, and human beauty with dystopic elements" (61). For his part, Jonathon Grasse has enthusiastically commended the *Orfeu* film project as a cultural product consistent with a post-modern disillusionment, a form of "urban anthropology" (306) which through a neorealist lens reflect the hardships of Brazilian favela life in the 1990s.

Unfortunately, both Perrone's and Grasse's reductionist reading dismissively equates aestheticizing with exoticism and implicitly projects myth-building as unconstructive. Both critics seem to forget the generative power of myths, as proposed by cultural theorist, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, who have discussed the operational importance of myths in modern times, as tools for self-understanding and cultural memory. Myths create communities and continuities, they function to explicate and perpetuate the self, and as Lévi-Strauss explains "what gives the myth an operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future" (837).¹² I argue that within the filmic limitations of representation, the Orfeu films function as cultural reservoirs of music, syncretism, geographic historicism, and racial heterogeneity.¹³ Given the operational history of myths as cultural memory, then we can understand how the Orphic myth becomes particularly appealing to a culture synonymous with music, as is the case with Rio de Janeiro. As Helen Sword has explained, "Orpheus embodies both the power of art and the limitations of art- both the possibility of conquering death and the futility of the attempt" (408). This position is seconded by Veloso, one of the bitterest critics of *Orfeu Negro*: "Watching *Orfeu* and *Black Orpheus* again, I was moved by how right de Moraes had been in conceiving his play. Indeed, he unveiled Brazil as an Orphean country, a country that expresses its soul's sweetly tragic aspects through music".¹⁴ Following this vein of thought, it is possible to understand how the myth's fusion of protagonist and music, the lionization of the affective capability of music, which is in effect the simultaneous apotheosis of hero and music, becomes transplantable to a Carioca context which has likewise fused music and life.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the Camus project has been at the center of the "authenticity" debate as evidenced by the work of the aforementioned Perrone and Grasse and in Veloso's editorial for the New York Times, in which the *Tropicalia* icon states that "*Black Orpheus* wasn't much

different from Carmen Miranda's phony fruit headdress. It is from this perspective that one can understand why *Black Orpheus* was rejected in Brazil and why I stress the importance for non-Brazilian audiences to open themselves up to the realism of the new film". What I find most problematic with these critical positions is the insistence in unilaterally correlating hyper-brutality as uniquely Carioca, which in effect essentializes violence, drugs and murder as the predominant forms of cultural identity. This one dimensional appraisal of violence and drugs as the preeminent authentic expressions of the Carioca imaginary would seem to predetermine *Orfeu Negro's* fate, given the absence of a violent drug culture in the film. Yet as Peixoto, Sepúlveda dos Santos and Paul Gootenberg have explained the Brazil of the 1950s and the 1990s are two distinct historical realities, which have been altered by virulent sociohistorical factors. In fact, as Gootenberg explains in relation to drug trafficking:

Brazil continued to serve as one of three main flows of cocaine through the 1960s, but was never to become the massive channel sources predicted, as cocaine drove north through Colombia and Mexico instead. The anti-left authoritarian 1964 regime, like the later Chilean coup, blunted the potential of Brazil's free-wheeling traffickers. Only in the 1990s did cocaine return in force to Brazil, with new trans-Atlantic shipment routes, and within the country's vast slums and pleasure spots, making Brazil today the world's second leading user of the drug. (158)¹⁶

What I mean to emphasize is that the presence of a drug culture, present in Diegues's film, and for which the film's representation has been favorably credited, does not constitute a representable historical reality for the Camus film, as corroborated by the work of the aforementioned Peixoto and Sepúlveda dos Santos. This point is vital in understanding my

conciliatory position in turn Camus's film, which I argue has been historically reprimanded for unattainable "realist" shortcomings.

Another aspect of the prevailing critique of *Orfeu Negro* is predicated on what Perrone calls Camus's "impulse to beautify" in the first film. It must be remembered that this desire to beautify is not only attributed to Camus, but is an accurate description of Moraes's intent in the original play. Ironically, this will to the aesthetic is explicit in the prevailing Romanticism which permeates the Diegues film. Interestingly, regardless of the critical position taken up vis-à-vis these films the musical legacy has been unanimously extolled. *Orfeu Negro* and *Orfeu* function as signifying aesthetic spaces for the exhibition of Bossa Nova and Brazilian Rap, respectively. Here the critics consent to the importance and transcendence of the films' musical element; in fact both Grasse and Perrone stress the importance of the films as cinematic platforms for the exposition of these "Brazilian" musical forms. However, both critics fail to scrutinize the two emblematic songs which appear in the films, which I also find problematic because as I will show it is precisely in *Orfeu Negro's* Bossa Nova and *Orfeu's* Brazilian Rap where much anthropological elements rest.

Sintomas de carioquicidade: Orfeu Negro

Two songs which serve an ethnological end, and which have not been analyzed directly by any of the film's critics are "A felicidade" and "Traficando Informação". In the case of the Moraes and Antonio Carlos Jobim collaboration, the silence consists of overlooking the cultural realism of the song, which as a standard bearer of Bossa Nova, has been not regularly been praised for its dystopic and sociological quality. With Mv Bill's "Traficando Informação" the silence consists of its exclusion from the Veloso directed sound track and its intermittent and short use throughout the Diegues film. I will return to Mv Bill's work shortly.

Orfeu Negro's opening sequence which takes only a few seconds to develop is emblematic of the heterogeneous quality of the entire film.¹⁷ Showcased here is the fusion of Bossa Nova and the Samba rhythms heard during the first minute of the film with the Carnival dancers. The first eleven notes of "A felicidade" are audible during the opening sequence which is then interrupted with the breaking of the lover's frieze to introduce the palpitating rhythms of the batuque. After a few moments of uninterrupted samba, the batuque drums begin to decrescendo to introduce, anew, the strumming of the first few cords of "A felicidade". The choice of "A felicidade" is not uninformed; on closer inspection we can appreciate that the lyrics synthesize the constitutive importance of Carnival for the favelado. Furthermore, the Jobim/Moraes song is a lyrical recapitulation of the adversity of favela life, a social realism completely ignored by the film's critics.

Prominent scholars such as Nelson Lins e Barros, José Ramos Tinhorão and less vehemently Lorenzo Mammì have openly questioned Bossa Nova's lack of societal interest and even the genre's Brazilianness. For Mammì, Bossa Nova signifies a projection of middle class escapism and utopism: "Se o jazz é vontade de potência, a bossa nova é promessa de felicidade" (70).¹⁸ However, "A felicidade" represents a distinct form of musical pictography by synthesizing the prominent themes in *Orfeu Negro*: the tragic sense of life and Carnival.

And while Mikhail Bakhtin's cited reading of Carnival has focused on its characteristic as a festivity of suspension of "hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it--that is, everything resulting from sociohierarchical inequality or any other form of inequality among people" (1122-23), with Brazilian Carnival we witness a less subversive and more regenerative manifestation of the self. I argue that the song captures and communicates the central role of Carioca Carnival, specifically its practical cathecting quality,

and what Roberto da Matta calls Carnival's ritualistic "singularity," which both constitutes and differentiates Brazilian society.¹⁹ The third stanza of "A felicidade" synthesizes this dual effectiveness of Carnival and the song as a whole plays as a lyrical meditation on the pervasive adversity of favela life:

Tristeza não tem fim
 Felicidade sim
 A felicidade é como a pluma
 Que o vento vai levando pelo ar
 Voa tão leve, mas tem a vida breve
 Precisa que haja vento sem parar
 A felicidade do pobre parece
 A grande ilusão do Carnaval
 A gente trabalha o ano inteiro
 Por um momento de sonho
 Pra fazer a fantasia
 De rei ou de pirata ou jardineira
 E tudo se acabar na quarta-feira

From the two stanzas above, we can recognize that "A felicidade" is both song and poetry. What's more, the song is an existential position on the ephemeral quality of contentment. The first stanza manifests this explicitly by counter positioning the resiliency of sadness and the transiency happiness. By likening happiness to a feather, the song metaphorizes both the concomitant and capricious quality of life, which is likened to the unpredictability of the wind, an effective and dystopic simile of the ups and downs of everyday life in the favelas.

The second verse illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the favelado and Carnival through another simile. As we can see the verse also lyrically describes the unforgiving economic reality of the favelado, who is poor but continuously working, a contrasting image of the idyllic beach going troubadour associated with the genre. The resilient favelado has in Carnival his/her "grande ilusão". The year's work is rewarded with an instance of relief, a moment of creative self-projection into a "fantasia". Nevertheless, this Carioca Carnival, which is a space of fantasy and self-realization, is not merely escapist, because as the song expresses, there is a prevailing mood of self-consciousness as manifest by the poetic voice's awareness of a specific conclusion: Ash Wednesday. Furthermore, the term "fantasia" is fundamental in appreciating the poetic voice's anti-escapist position given the term's polysemic quality. The favelado's "fantasia" signifies not only the moment of self-realization via creative expression, but refers to the concrete costume fabricated by the favelado to participate in Carnival. In other words, the idea of "fantasia" connotes both the release of the favelado's creative energy and the consciousness of the performativity implicit in the costume.

Here I would invoke Freud's analysis concerning the limited possibility of happiness, which is also alluded to in the song. For Freud, "what we call happiness in the strictest sense comes from the satisfaction of needs which have been dammed up to a high degree, and it is from its nature only possible as an episodic phenomenon" (25).²⁰ Par excellence, "A felicidade" functions as a musical synopsis of the underlying melodrama of *Orfeu Negro*, forewarning of the fleeting happiness Orfeu and Eurídice will enjoy through their love affair during Carnival. Jobim's song serves to foreshadow the tragedy which the audience will witness while shedding light on the centrality of Carnival as an ambivalent cultural space of reprieve, wishes fulfillment and regeneration. "A felicidade" serves as a concise introduction into the forlorn world of the

favela. The favelado of "A felicidade" confronts the present fully aware of the capriciousness of the favelas, which is mediated by the eternally recurrent moment of celebration of Carnival, with a double consciousness of the short-lived quality of the festivities, which are not intended to subvert a previous hierarchical structure but rather to celebrate the constitutive and communal power of music.

Another inherently sociological quality of Camus's *Orfeu Negro* is cinematographic, particularly the internal panoramic shots of Rio. Beginning with chapter two, the camera's focus turns to inner frames of the labyrinthine city. The first such picture is afforded at the port market where Eurídice arrives. In a rapid sequence of shots the audience witnesses the heterogeneous population of the city, first on the steamboat itself, which carries Eurídice into Rio, which is a carnivalesque scene of black, mulatto, white and mestizo revelers. The camera follows Eurídice as she meets the blind street vendor (explicit allusion to the ferryman Charon) and journeys through the market, where the camera focuses on a black woman selling onions, followed in close succession by a black butcher and white fishermen vendors.

In chapter three, titled "Streetcar Pickup," the camera follows Eurídice as she makes her way through the downtown streets of Rio en route to her cousin's home in the *morro*. Like the steamboat which carried her into the port, the streetcar is a synecdoche of the city itself, wherein the fusion of musical rhythms of batuques and pandeiros signifies the racial heterogeneity of the population. This Carnival trolley, conducted by Orfeu, physically sweeps-up Eurídice, and takes the travelers (read audience) through the city, crossing City Hall and streets filled with revelers and spectators alike. This particular tour of downtown Rio is of documentary value because it provides actual footage of the inner streets of metropolitan Rio not just broad panoramic views from above. Furthermore, it documents the sprawling effect of Carnival in the 1950s, which

spread throughout the city itself. Thanks to the urban camera work of the film the audience is exposed to the juxtaposition of an assortment of sectors of Carioca society, as evidenced by the military bands playing alongside the Mira character as she exists city hall and the multitude of sambistas in the market and on the streets which represents the contrasting cultural realities of Carioca life where street Carnival functions as a space of social contact and unintended melodic fusions.

Added to the musical realism of "A felicidade" and the documentary value of the internal voyage provided by Camus's film, the *umbanda* scene which momentarily reunites Orfeu and Eurídice, offers a cinematic stamp of the societal importance of Afro-Brazilian religion. In the only reference to the scene by the critics, Perrone has observed, "As for real-world correspondences, the cult members, vestments and music (vocalized *pontos de umbanda* with drum accompaniment) are genuine" (57). The contact between Eurídice and Orfeu is possible because as Rafael Soares de Oliveira explains in reference to the beliefs of Candomblé "a morte não é um fim, porque fica o egum . . . ao morrerem, as pessoas continuam a fazer parte dessa força comum, não deixam de ser presença e estão em continuidade" (29). The rites depicted in *Orfeu Negro* capture these beliefs, where in Eurídice's *egum* reaches out to Orfeu, yet his lack of spiritual fortitude dooms their love. This scene retains the mythical spirit of the moment of final loss for the lovers but filters it through a religious custom which invariably reboots the classic legend into a material Carioca expression of love momentarily conquering death and the persistence of life after death. This six minute long episode in which Eurídice's spirit speaks with Orfeu through a medium is another artifactual quality of the film not dually noted and represents the climax of the "Carioquization" of the myth in which Afro-Brazilian and Greek spirituality become syncretized.

Sintomas de modernidade: Orfeu

The Carlos Diegues film has been praised for its efforts to signify the truncated and uneven socioeconomic modernity which helped spawn the Rio de Janeiro of *Orfeu*. To the film's credit, the cast of characters covers the racial kaleidoscope which represents the cultural heterogeneity of Rio de Janeiro. And although for Sepúlveda dos Santos "the second version shows caricatures" (115), I argue that the fictional Morro da Carioca houses archetypes of a dissimilar community, including white taxi drivers and white drug kingpins, an Asian barkeeper who is a Flamengo fan. To this end, this multiracial and multicultural society is punctuated by the blood relationship between Eurídice, who Orfeu repeatedly refers to as an *indihna*, and her Afro-Brazilian aunt Carmen. Another virtue of Diegues's film is the dramatization of favela justice as staged by the execution of the man implicated in an illicit relationship with the underage and angelic Deise, the daughter of Oswaldo a taxi driver who takes Eurídice to Morro da Carioca. This scene will be repeated within distinct dramatic contexts in films such as *Cidade de Deus*, *Tropa de Elite* and attested to by the trailblazing *Noticias de uma guerra particular*.²¹

However, the reality of drug-driven violence in the favelas is countered and even jeopardized by the neo-romantic quality of the protagonist. From the opening chapter of the film titled "Sunrise," the audience witnesses the film's discursive fluctuations. Following the opening credits, the voice of Orfeu is heard reciting the opening poem of the Moraes play, while a shot of a plane carrying Eurídice crosses a full moon over the night sky of Rio de Janeiro, this foreshadowing elegy warns of the "perigos de esta vida para quem tem paixão." The forewarning of the perils of/against love, together with the melodramatic backdrop contrasts sharply with the film's supposed "realistic demystification of a certain decomplexified image of Brazil" (Perrone 60). This melodramatic aperture is symptomatic of the film's disjointed neo-realist

anthropological discourse, which had aimed to reproduce the Carioca favela as "objectively representational yet narratively dramatic" (Grasse 306).

The most ambivalently ethnographic characteristic of the film is the exposition of the inroads of globalization made explicit in the Orfeu character. This protagonist is a Carioca lothario, a *bon vivant* who borders on libertine excesses and whose egocentric behavior is emblematic of the extravagances of the new class of bourgeois favelado, not too differentiated from Lucinho, the *trafficante* in the film, in terms of materialism and consumerism. What I mean to emphasize is that Orfeu is a parasitic entity in the favelas, much in the same manner as Lucinho, with Orfeu trafficking music and creating a demand base in the same, yet less virulent manner as the drug dealing Lucinho character. This *donjuanismo* of Orfeu not only creates a false sense of security based on a dependency relationship between himself and the aptly named Morro da Carioca but also endangers the livelihood of those closest to him, through his reckless sexual exploits.

Another of the symptoms of globalization, which furthers Orfeu's bourgeois mystic, is apparent in his professionalization as musician. This professionalization is paralleled by the rampant commercialization of Carnival, the space which confers Orfeu his god-like status as grand musician and director of the Carioca Samba School. Furthermore, Orfeu is the consummate modernized musician, who uses sophisticated computerized programs to annotate his music. During Orfeu's de facto serenade of Eurídice, his musical declaration of love is captured on a laptop placed directly behind him. "Sou Você" appears annotated on the laptop's screen and his song is played on an electric guitar not the traditional *violão*, seen in the opening sequences of the film. And while this depiction of Orfeu does not exude the visceral realism of other protagonists of neo-documentary Brazilian cinema, what cannot be understated is that these

electronic guitars and amplifiers not only help to spread his music throughout the morro, the scene as a whole is a symbolic representation of the massification, specialization and profitability of the Carioca musician and by extension Carioca Carnival.

One final observation is necessary concerning the ambivalent cultural production which characterizes Diegues's film, particularly regarding the "hyper-realism" attributed to the film by Perrone, Veloso and Sepúlveda dos Santos.²² As Grasse has explained, *Orfeu* is a filmic stage for the projection of Brazilian Rap. In fact, artists such as Boato, Mv Bill are heard during the panoramic shots of the Rio favelas. Furthermore, the "Voz do Morro," radio personality Mr. Zoy, is constantly advocating peace and harmony throughout the film. The aforementioned Jonathan Grasse has highlighted the realist importance of this genre of music as a textual window into the contemporary Brazilian landscape. For Grasse "Rap had become perhaps the most direct, most vitriolic form of political commentary in a country steeped in over a generation of widespread government censorship" (303).

This position is echoed by Veloso, because Rap serves a more pragmatic purpose: "Rap is in the film as a documentary element, purposely put there by the director. Melodious music is exactly what would represent the artificial and fictional". However, this primordially important cultural window of Cariquicidade is conspicuously absent from the sound track produced by Veloso.²³ The soundtrack, released in January of 2000, lists seventeen songs ranging from samba, Bossa Nova, waltz and Brazilian pop. Nonetheless "Paz para as favelas," "Pela saco," "Rap do Cartão Postal" nor Mv Bill's seminal "Traficando informação," among others are not present. I argue that for a film like *Orfeu*, with its explicit correctional agenda, Rap would serve the purposes of demythifying the supposed simplistic image projected in the Camus film, given

Brazilian Rap's "clear ideological message against racism and the state's complicity with it" (Yúdice 125).²⁴

The political-intellectual position mentioned by Yúdice is explicit in Mv Bill's "Traficando informação," a decisive piece of lyrical urbanism in the tradition of NWA, Public Enemy, MC 8, Ice T, Ice Cube, Tupac, OutKast and most recently Southern Intellect.²⁵ The song which first appeared in eponymously titled album in 1999 is a ferocious soundscape on favela existence. The composition, which consists of three extended verses with an accompanying *refrão*, also spawned a video which functions as a visual complement to the song; in it panoramic views of Rio de Janeiro are followed by street level shots of Mv Bill and other favelados. The first verse is the most representative of the bitter reality of the favelas, and although space does not permit my presenting the verse in its entirety, the following lines encapsulate the hyper-realism of Mv Bill's work:

Seja bem-vindo ao meu mundo sinistro, saiba como entrar

Droga, revólver, polícia, cachaça saiba como evitar

Se não acredita no que eu falo

Então vem aqui pra ver a morte de pertinho para conferir

Vai ver que a justiça aqui é feita à bala

A sua vida na favela não vale de nada.

Mv Bill's song is self explanatory. The song focuses on the daily co-existence of violence and the favelado, and Mv Bill is providing an expressive guided tour of a world in which death, life and justice are expendable and fickle. As Mv Bill's introduction emphasizes, moral and ethical barometers in the favela dictate that the societal representatives of order and justice (i.e. *polícia*) are to be avoided as much as drugs, guns and alcohol. This forewarning will be visually

accentuated by the police corruption depicted in films such as *Cidade de Deus* and tragically recorded in docudramas such as *Ônibus 174*. "Traficando informação" goes on to sketch out the bleak reality of Rio's favelas, in a dystopic and melodic tour de force. The song is choke-full of images of child drug users, stray bullets, gangland wars, teenage pregnancies, police death squads. However, ultimately there persists the redemptive quality of music which as Mv Bill tells us "encontrei minha salvação na cultura Hip-Hop," a posture not unfamiliar to the Orphic myth itself, which accentuates the resilience of music to transcend time and space.²⁶

The creative censorship on the part of Caetano Veloso, the musical director of the film, is paradoxical given his aforementioned position on the importance of Rap. As a confrontational musical genre, Brazilian Rap as represented in "Traficando informação" seems to meet the realistic criteria necessary "to make a tacit statement about the idealization constructed in Black Orpheus" (Perrone 61). However, this conspicuous silence of an important musical, cultural and historical marker of the film results inconsistent and counterproductive to the hyper-realism applauded of the film. Ultimately, this silencing is symptomatic of the ambivalent discourses between the local and the global which permeate the Diegues film.

Orfeu Carioca: produto cultural ambivalente

My objective at the onset of this article has been chiefly reconciliatory; I have attempted to reassess the ethnological qualities of both Camus's *Orfeu Negro* and Diegues's *Orfeu*. As I have shown, the majority of the scholarship on these films has focused on the presence and absence of cultural identity value in the films. Grasse likens the Orphic films as a contest of authority, a dispute over cultural identity copyright, so to speak:

Comparing the two films reveals differences between the neo-colonialist of *Orfeu Negro* and the urban anthropologist of *Orfeu*. Our updated favela,

a cultural authority reflecting eclectic globalism and seen in violent, 'realist terms, in an obvious break with the aim of conservative modernism and the constraints of the post-*Estado Novo* era, limitations contextualizing among other facets, Camus' naïve work. Diegues wins the war over rights of national representation. (306)

Although the war over national rights has been manifestly a one-sided fight, with Camus's film winning the international accolades but suffering tremendously in academia, all critics are agreed on each film's musical importance. As the final scenes of *Orfeu Negro* and *Orfeu* suggest, regardless of the incomprehensibility of life, music remains as memory, identity and consolation. The children musicians in *Orfeu Negro* and the sambistas of *Orfeu* attest to the generative and palliative powers of music, and with their active participation as musicians convey the sense of continuation of life after death and music after silence.

These films, in full engagement with the perlocutionary quality of the medium, can be mined for their cultural quality, which showcase through the reinterpretation of the classical Greek myth the vivacity of Brazilian music as a dialogical space of memory and identity. What's more, both *Orfeu Negro* and *Orfeu* exhibit paradoxical narrative qualities, oscillating between the local and the foreign, in what Randal Johnson explains as the dominant feature of Brazilian cultural production in the 20th century which attempted "to express or describe the local-that which is unique about Brazilian culture and society-while at the same time working within cosmopolitan or European literary conventions" (120).²⁷ Yet this cinematic ambivalence, at first assumed as a negative of each film, on further assessment opens up the deterministic critical assessments carried out by the experts. As filmic products closely allied and influenced by the ideologies of their respective eras, the ambivalent discourses present in both films highlight their

importance as cultural markers. Such a conclusion negates the over simplistic markers of exotic and realistic since each film engages in a mythological performance which reveals a deeper collective component to the Carioca world, where music as mediator and historian of the hardship of favela life continues to occupy a privileged position.

Notes

¹ Rio de Janeiro was awarded the 2014 FIFA World Cup, for the second time, on October 30th, 2007. Rio de Janeiro became the first South American city to host the Olympic Games, when the IOC awarded the city the 2016 Olympiad on October 2nd, 2009.

² See:

<<http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/Investing/SuperModels/BoomingBrazilTheNewChina.aspx>> and Newsweek's 2010 predictions as of Brazil as the "The New China":

<<http://2010.newsweek.com/top-10/world-predictions/brazil-is-the-new-china.html>>

³ Examples of tremendous realism in Latin American Cinema of the last ten years are Barbet Schroeder's *La virgen de los sicarios* (2000), Luis Mandoki's *Innocent Voices* (2004), Joshua Marston's *Maria Full of Grace* (2004), and Emilio Maillé's *Rosario Tijeras* (2005). Docudrama examples are Kátia Lund's *Noticias de uma guerra particular* (1999), José Padilha's *Ônibus 174* (2002), Matt Mochary's *Favela Rising* (2005), and Scott Dalton's *La Sierra* (2005). Also see Sylvie Debs's article on the signifying value of the *favela* in the most recent boom of Brazilian Cinema, where "el *sertão* y la *favela*, dos temas clásicos del cinema brasileño, consagrados sobre todo en los años sesenta por el *cinema novo*, volvieron a cobrar interés desde la "reactivación" del cine de los años 90" (109).

⁴ Emblematic figures of *Cinema Novo* are Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Glauber Rocha, Ruy Guerra, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Carlos Diegues.

⁵ As Edith Hamilton explains with regards to Orpheus's abilities: "Next in order came a few mortals so excellent in their art that they almost equaled the divine performers. Of these by far the greatest was Orpheus" (138). A.N. Marlow recounts that "it was by his playing that the

Symplegadae or clashing rocks in the Hellespont were fixed in their place . . . the dragon itself which guarded the golden fleece was lulled to sleep by him" (363).

⁶For Marlow "the legend of Orpheus goes to the very roots of religion as well as of music" (367). Thematically this is of interest because it helps to explain the appeal of Orpheus as a cultural symbol in Brazil, the interconnection between music and religion in the Brazilian imaginary is significant and undeniable, case in point the intimate union between the two in *Candomblé*.

⁷Note of interest, the Brazilian actress Lea García participates in all three projects. She interprets the anti-heroine Mira character in the theater production, Serafina in Camus's film and Joseildo's mother in Diegues's film.

⁸Also, it is worth recalling that the term Carioca, although specifically used to designate the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro *cidade*, while Fluminense refers to Rio de Janeiro *estado*, is synonymous with Brazilian in the Hispanic world. A clear example of the elision of the term is found in the world of soccer, where the *seleção*, or *scratch*, is known throughout Hispanic America as the *selección carioca*. As Lídia Santos explains "o fictício Morro da Carioca e a escola de samba Unidos da Carioca, do filme de Carlos Diegues, são a representação não apenas de uma localidade, mas de toda a cidade de Rio de Janeiro, já que a palavra *carioca* se refere à pessoa aí nascida" (338).

⁹Jared Banks quotes from Luiz Tosta Paranhos's *Orfeu da concepção: tragédia carioca* (1980). As Banks has pinpointed, the structural changes to the myth are first carried out by Moraes himself: "At least two of the play's structural changes within the film originate with Vinicius himself: Descent into hell is changed into Carnival, and the Furies kill Orpheus in a garden" (793).

¹⁰ In William Congreve's play *The Mourning Bride* (1697), Zara, the captive queen laments that "Heav'n has no rage, like love to hatred turn'd, nor Hell a fury like a woman scorn'd".

¹¹ Marcel Camus's film won the 1959 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film beating out Mario Monicelli's *La Grande Guerra* and Bernhard Wicki's *Die Brücke*.

¹² Northrop Frye suggests a similar characteristic of orderliness and self understanding in the work of the poet (read musician, *i.e.* Orpheus): "The poet's job is not to tell you what happened, but what happens: not what did take place, but the kind of thing that always does take place. He gives you the typical, recurring...you wouldn't go to *Macbeth* to learn about the history of Scotland-you go to it to learn what a man feels like after he's gained a kingdom and lost his soul...we constantly find things in literature that suddenly coordinate and bring into focus a great many such impressions, and this is part of what Aristotle means by the typical or universal event" (63-64).

¹³ According to Sepúlveda dos Santos: "films are as complex as the reality they propose to show to the public . . . films are multifaceted and hold ambivalent meanings. There is a practical comprehension of what each film says that goes far beyond the first act of understanding" (Brazilian Remake 51). "This practical comprehension" which transcends the first level of representation makes films such as the *Orfeu Negro* and *Orfeu* pictures suggestive fields of cultural memory.

¹⁴ Cited from Caetano Veloso's "An Orpheus, Rising from Caricature" in the New York Times (August 20th, 2000). All subsequent quotes taken from:

<https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/wash/www/orfeu.htm>

¹⁵The connection of music and cultural identity is incontrovertible in Brazil, where only soccer or *o futebol*, has generated as many luminaries. Artists such as Noel Rosa, Tom Jobim, João Gilberto, Roberto Carlos, Chico Buarque, Caetano Veloso, Gilberto Gil (Minister of Culture from 2003-2008), Gal Costa, Toquinho, and Astruid Gilberto are common household names, on par with Pelé, Rivelino, Garrincha, Zico, Socrates, Romario, and most recently the two Ronaldinhos.

¹⁶See Marta Peixoto's "Rio's Favelas in Recent Fiction and Film: Commonplaces of Urban Segregation" specifically page 170, which deals primary with the proliferation of drugs in the favelas and Sepúlveda dos Santos's "Black Orpheus and the Merging of Two Brazilian Nations" where she explains that "Whereas the first production was produced at the end of the 1950s when the Brazilian ideal of racial democracy was widely accepted, the second was produced at the end of the 1990s when mass media, violence and the rights of ethnic minorities constituted the political agenda of our times" (108).

¹⁷*Black Orpheus* (DVD). 1999 The Criterion Collection. The DVD is divided into 17 chapters.

¹⁸See *Revista de Civilização Brasileira*, Number 1 from March 1965, where Lins explains that because of Bossa Nova's "poesia intelectualizada, de ritmo reacentuado e de uma interpretação intimista, a Bossa Nova afastou-se dos caminhos tradicionais de música brasileira" (234), which in effect also questions Bossa Nova's Brazilian authenticity. Also see the well known antagonist position of Tinhorão in his 1965 *Música popular: um debate em debate*.

¹⁹See da Matta's *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes* (1991), in which the Brazilian sociologists explains "We know that in the case of Brazil such a feeling of singularity is deeply marked by Carnival as a moment when we can make sense of a series of actions, attitudes, and

relations that are perceived and experienced as creating and building not just a mere festival, but our very heart. Carnival, then, is one of those perpetual institutions that has enabled Brazilians to sense and feel (more than abstractly conceive) their specific continuity as a distinct social and political entity through and over time" (15).

²⁰ In Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he posits the question: what does man wish and aim for in life? For Freud "the answer can hardly be in doubt. They strive after happiness; they want to become happy and to remain so" (25). However more often we experience unhappiness from the following three sources: our own body (doomed to decay), the external world (with its immensely destructive capabilities) and relations to other men in society. Freud states that we employ various strategies to avoid unpleasure, such as isolating ourselves voluntarily, becoming a member of the human community (read joining Samba schools), or influencing our own organism (*e.g.* intoxication, music). Another powerful method of influence, according to Freud, is the re-channeling of energies into other activities: "The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world... One gains the most if one can sufficiently heighten the yield of pleasure from the sources of psychical and intellectual work" (29). I read Carnival and music as spaces for this re-channeling of energy.

²¹ See Peixoto's "Rio's Favelas in Recent Fiction and Film: Commonplaces of Urban Segregation," where the Brazilian critic quotes an interview with Paulo Lins author of *Cidade de Deus*: "'if I were to write about the way things are today, I would start the book with a pile of rubber tires, gasoline, and someone being burned alive' . . . a mode of killing used among traffickers in recent years" (172).

²² Continuing with the realist claims as pertains *Orfeu* see Myrian Sepúlveda dos Santos's "Black Orpheus and the Merging of Two Brazilian Nations" where she states that "The first, Black Orpheus (Orfeu Negro) was directed by the French filmmaker Marcel Camus. It is mainly recognized for its utopian view in which love and passion, race relations and carnival are represented. The second film, entitled Orfeu, was directed by the Brazilian filmmaker Caca Diegues, and has been praised for its commitment to the description of reality. In it, Diegues explored the commodification of bodies, racial conflicts, and the commercialisation of the carnival feast" (107).

²³ Product Details: Original Release Date: January 18, 2000. Music by Caetano Veloso. Music performed by Caetano Veloso. Producers: Caetano Veloso, Arto Lindsay, Jacques Morelenbaum. Engineers: Patrick Dillet, Marcio Gama, Ronaldo Lima. See appendix for list of songs on the Orfeu sound track.

²⁴ See Yúdice's *The Expediency of Culture*, in particular footnote 8 on page 378 about the transculturation tendencies of music.

²⁵ Rap songs with a socially inflammatory perspective are NWA's "F*ck tha police", Ice T's "Colors", Ice Cube's "AmeriKKKa's Most Wanted" and Southern Intellect's "Dumb Sh*t". These songs represent a distinct time in the evolution of Hip Hop culture, which has deteriorated recently into a formulaic and repetitive brand of materialism, with one dimensional misogynist caricatures, such as Lil Wayne, Soulja Boy, TI, Gucci Mane, Big Tymers and the list goes on ad nauseum.

²⁶ NWA's Easy E, Biggie Smalls and 50 Cent all transitioned from the criminal world to mainstream society through Hip Hop.

²⁷For Antonio Candido "Se fosse possível estabelecer uma lei de evolução da nossa vida espiritual, poderíamos talvez dizer que toda ela se rege pela dialéctica do localismo e do cosmopolitismo...ora a afirmação premeditada e por vezes violentada do nacionalismo literário...ora o declarado conformismo, a imitação consciente dos padrões europeus...o que temos realizado de mais perfeito...representa os momentos de equilíbrio ideal entre as duas tendências" (131). I argue that all three texts positively produce this narrative oscillation.

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Appendix

A felicidade

(Antônio Carlos Jobim-Vinícius de Moraes)

Tristeza não tem fim

Felicidade sim

A felicidade é como a pluma

Que o vento vai levando pelo ar

Voa tão leve, mas tem a vida breve

Precisa que haja vento sem parar

A felicidade é como a gota

De orvalho numa pétala de flor

Brilha tranqüila, depois de leve oscila

E cai como uma lágrima de amor

A felicidade do pobre parece

A grande ilusão do carnaval

A gente trabalha o ano inteiro

Por um momento de sonho

Pra fazer a fantasia

De rei ou de pirata ou jardineira

Pra tudo se acabar na quarta-feira

Tristeza não tem fim

Felicidade sim

A minha felicidade está sonhando

Nos olhos da minha namorada

É como esta noite, passando, passando

Em busca da madrugada

Falem baixo, por favor

Pra que ela acorde alegre com o dia

Oferecendo beijos de amor

Traficando Informação

(Mv Bill)

Seja bem-vindo ao meu mundo sinistro, saiba como entrar

Droga, revólver, polícia, cachaça saiba como evitar

Se não acredita no que eu falo

Então vem aqui pra ver a morte de pertinho para conferir

Vai ver que a justiça aqui é feita à bala

A sua vida na favela não vale de nada

Até os caras da praça, jogando uma pelada

Discussão, soco na cara, começa a porrada

Mente criativa pronta para o mal
Aqui tem gente que morre até por um real
E quando a polícia chega, todo mundo fica com medo
A descrição do marginal é favelado, pobre, preto!
Na favela, corte de negão é careca
É confundido com traficante, ladrão de bicicleta
Está faltando criança dentro da escola,
Estão na vida do crime, o caderno é uma pistola
Garota de 12 anos esperando a dona cegonha
Moleque de 9 anos experimentando maconha.
Bala perdida, falta de emprego, moradia precária
Barulho de tiro na noite
É outra quadrilha querendo invadir minha área
Na minha casa, na madrugada, todo mundo deitado no chão
Com medo da bala perdida, que não tem nome nem direção
Pow Pow, um corpo no chão, Pow Pow, de um vacilão
Um otário que agora é finado porque se achava o malandrão
Amanheceu todo furado, do lado da lojinha
Era um otário se achando malandro
igual ao pai da minha sobrinha
Fez filho na minha irmã, não assumiu, sumiu
Pai, padrinho e tio da minha sobrinha sou eu, MV Bill
Encontrei minha salvação na cultura Hip-Hop

Tem outros que entraram na vida do crime querendo ganhar Ibope

Se você tiver coragem vem aqui pra ver

A sociedade dando as costas para a CDD

(Refrão)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Eu não quero ver minha coroa cheia de preocupação

Com medo que eu seja preso confundido com ladrão

O sistema de racismo é muito eficaz

Pra eles um preto à menos é melhor que um preto à mais

CDD, Zona Oeste, Jacarepaguá, aqui o gatilho fala mais alto, pá pá pá

Os heróis da playboyzada vivem na televisão

Os heróis da molecada, aqui tão de fuzil na mão

Cocaína, maconha, revólver, cachaça

A última opção, tá na birosca, é liberada

Quase de graça, é álcool, e mata

Me lembro agora, de um cara perdido, no mundo da garrafa

Chegava bêbado em casa, querendo quebrar tudo

Porque bebeu a cachaça, a garrafa e também seu futuro

Bebe pra vacilar, por isso que eu te digo

Seu otário, se não sabe beber, bebe mijo

MV Bill, mensageiro da verdade

MV Bill, falando pela comunidade

Se tiver coragem vem aqui pra ver

A sociedade dando as costas para a CDD...

(Refrão)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Traficando Informação (Diariamente conviver com esta situação)

Preto, pobre, favela

Coroa chorando, corpo coberto, sangue no chão, ao lado uma vela

Acerto de contas, cheirou e não pagou

Os cara chegaram e cobraram com tiro na cara

O sofrimento fica pra coroa

Que sempre rezava querendo ver seu filho numa boa

Morreu por causa de pó, vê se pode

Estava bebendo uma cerva, dentro do pagode

Isso acontece porque aqui ninguém ajuda ninguém

Um preto não quer, ver o outro preto bem
Isso é verdade, não é K.O., acredite
Você tem que tomar cuidado com os convites
Convite para cheirar, convite para fumar, convite para roubar
Aqui ninguém te convida para trabalhar
Meu raciocínio é raro pra quem é carente
MV Bill, sobrevivente
Da guerra interna, dentro da favela
Só morre preto e branco pobre, que faz parte dela
O sistema faz o povo lutar contra o povo
Mas na verdade o nosso inimigo é outro
O inimigo usa terno e gravata
Mas ao contrário a gente aqui é que se mata
Através do álcool, através da droga
Destruição na boca de fumo, destruição na birosca
Fazendo justamente o que o sistema quer, saindo para roubar
Para botar um Nike no pé!
Armadilha pra pegar negão, se liga na fita
MV Bill traficando informação.
Orfeu: Soundtrack (Music by Caetano Veloso)

