Popular Song and Politics: Ary Barroso and the Sonic Signature of the Nation

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Resumo
Empreende-se uma análise histórico-musical da possibilidade de se usar a canção como instrumento de convencimento político. Por meio da observação de parâmetros que conformam a canção, almeja-se a compreensão de elementos corresponsáveis pelo engajamento do signo musical. Tal tratamento político da produção artística é observado a partir da investigação realizada num importante período da história republicana do Brasil: o Estado Novo. A escolha do recorte se dá pela efetivação de uma ditadura e pelo tensionamento de forças que lançaram mão de artifícios para a efetivação de uma cartilha ideológica. Ponto nevrálgico deste processo é a produção de representações e imagens (acústicas) capazes de acessar o imaginário de um idealizado "povo brasileiro". Os sambas-exaltação de Ary Barroso – destacadamente *Aquarela do Brasil* – são nossas fontes de informação. Suas canções foram tomadas como meio de conformação de uma fala discursivo-musical que desenha e constrói o que se convencionou chamar de "povo brasileiro".

Palavras-chave: Ary Barroso; história do Brasil República; samba-exaltação; assinatura sonora da nação; música e política.

Historical Notes

The debate over the choice between centralization or decentralization of the political-administrative organization unfolds throughout Brazilian history, from colonial times to the republican phase. During the Brazilian belle époque, for example, a staunch monarchist like Afonso Arinos made public his "choice for Unity" (Vianna, 2002, p. 54) and expressed his concern about the regionalization the country was experiencing: "Brazil is so regionalized that, for the provinces not to become completely alien to each other, a great effort is needed to strengthen the moral unity of the nation" (Vianna, 2002, p. 55). However, "unity could only

be achieved when the ‘essence of Brazilianness’ was understood, transformed into nationalist political currents” (Vianna, 2002, p. 58). Thus, the country should ‘invent’ its nationality, a set of characteristics shared by a collectivity capable of distinguishing and discerning what a nation means.

The historical period we intend to focus on is positioned at the crucial moment of the “invention” of national tradition, of the very sense of Brazilianness, and of the “Brazilian people” as a minimally cohesive category subjected to a homogenizing process that 'smooths out' social and political discrepancies. This was the moment of the consolidation of the national state and the very idea of a nation aimed at administrative centralization. This movement, in turn, was part of the universalizing impulses of modernity, where the requirement of national particularization became a *sine qua non* condition for entering the new post-war world order. We are referring to the 1930s and 1940s, a period during which, due to circumstances, the project of constructing Brazilian nationality and the effort for political and administrative centralization – conceived since the latter half of the 19th century when the development of Brazilian social thought began – was brought to fruition. It fell to Getúlio Vargas, who rose to power through the 1930 Revolution as the leader of the Liberal Alliance[1], due, in part, to the lack of ideological cohesion[2] within that alliance, to undertake a political movement of centralization, unification, nationalism, and homogenization (Vianna, 2001).

However, it is possible to observe a partial interpretative convergence that “1930 was only completed in 1937”, at least for the ideologues of the Estado Novo, instituted on November 10, 1937[3]. The new – here highlighted to mark the rupture that, in the eyes of its supporters, the revolution brought to Brazilian republican history – refers primarily to

> the political ideal of finding a “path” that diverged from both liberal capitalism and communism, two political doctrines that, since the mid-19th century and more intensely after the Soviet Revolution, competed with each other to offer a new political and economic alternative for the world (D’Araújo, 2000, p. 8).

It also refers to the perception of an unquestionable “distinction between State and Nation – government and community – and at the same time, the need to merge them through a leader or a single party”. This is the “novelty”, which becomes more evident when compared to earlier diagnoses, such as those of Silvio Romero and Mário de Andrade. Romero, in a 19th-century discourse, asserted that Brazil had a State lacking a nation that still needed to be built. Andrade,

[1] The opposition “aggregation” articulated in 1929 brought together politicians from various parties, from different Brazilian states, military leaders, and others around the candidacy of Vargas and João Pessoa for president and vice-president of Brazil. (Source: CPDOC).

[2] As an example, it is worth mentioning that the Alliance had the support of leaders from the Tenentista movement, including Luís Carlos Prestes, but also counted on the backing of the main opponents of the “tenentes”, such as Artur Bernardes, Epitácio Pessoa, and João Pessoa, not to mention the later adherence of authoritarian or anti-liberal intellectuals (Source: CPDOC).

[3] Source: CPDOC.

in the 20th century, “believed that the Brazilian State, established with Independence, was born before the emergence of a truly Brazilian people” (Travassos, 2000, p. 56). The Estado Novo would be the expression of efforts to resolve this “foundational flaw” of the Brazilian State, a task undertaken around the figure of the leader Getúlio Vargas. This can be evidenced through actions such as

> various civic commemorations [...] and also through the cult of the leader’s personality [...]. In the absence of a party, Getúlio was the political leader who symbolized the power of the State and nationality. He was the head of State and the nation. In the words of Oliveira Viana, “Our party is the president” (D’Araújo, 2000, p. 13).

Another example of the centralizing and homogenizing effort aimed at building a cohesive nation-state is revealed by the initiative taken immediately after the outbreak of the coup, reported as follows: “Neither flags nor emblems. Only the national flag will be allowed to be flown across the entire country”. This impactful measure was followed by a “ceremony of burning state flags, symbolizing the centralization of power, the affirmation of the authority of the central leader, and the end of regionalism and federalism. Brazil would become a unitary national state, obeying a single ruler” (D’Araújo, 2000, p. 25). Analysts understood that centralization and the reinforcement of the president's image would provide greater cohesion and unity to the administrative efforts of the presidency of the republic.

The task and path described thus far, especially after the institution of the Estado Novo, reveal a pursuit undertaken by the governmental apparatus – but also by other important actors, such as the intellectuals from the 1922 modernist movement – to find a “new hegemonic concept of Nation” (Contier, 1993, p. 78), understood here as an

> imagined political community – imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because even the members of the smallest nations will never know most of their compatriots, will never meet them, nor even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 1989, p. 14).

During this historical period, both political nationalism and what we call cultural nationalism developed concurrently. Understanding the latter, at least about music, is of great importance, as part of the musical production of this period is the object chosen for this study. The challenges of nationalism that permeated artistic productions aimed at “achieving a profound conversion” of artists, particularly musicians, and ensuring that the expression of individual artistic genius coincided with the “national expression” (Travassos, 2000, p. 9). In the case of the nationalist effort focused on music, the modernist impressions[4], and guidelines, guided by the work of the aesthete, poet, and musicologist Mário de Andrade, shaped and

[4] This is the modernist project conceived in São Paulo, which history has shown to be hegemonic. It is important to clarify this so that the modernist branch guided by the influence of Mário de Andrade's name is not understood as the only one that existed.

energized the discussions. The most incisive action of the modernist movement, hegemonic until the mid-1940s, was presented in the form of stimuli and precepts for the realization of artistic productions aligned with the effort to build the nation. There was a kind of aesthetic rationalization of a nationalist nature that can be summarized in five propositions:

> 1) Music expresses the soul of the people who create it; 2) the imitation of European models stifles Brazilian composers trained in schools, forcing them into an inauthentic expression; 3) their emancipation will come through disalienation, by reconnecting with truly Brazilian music; 4) this national music is in the process of formation, in the popular environment [rural, folkloric, interior], and it is there that it must be sought; 5) artistically elevated by the work of educated composers, it will be ready to stand alongside others on the international stage, bringing its unique contribution to the spiritual heritage of humanity (Travassos, 2000, p. 33).

In short, the State and modernists were undertaking the "invention of a tradition" – as understood by Hobsbawm (1991, p. 9): the adoption of certain practices of a ritual or symbolic nature, aimed at inculcating certain values and norms of behavior – which supported the new nationalist purposes. The State and part of the intellectual class, each with their respective competencies and purposes, firmly engaged in the desired task of inventing, promoting, and consistently building nationality, ritualized and institutionalized existing practices and turned to both high and popular arts in order to awaken "higher feelings" for the nation, promoting "the union and fellowship among lovers of Art and the Fatherland" (Hobsbawm, 1991, p. 14). With regard to state interests, the aim was to achieve political legitimacy. For this, it requires the construction of a scenario where ethnic and cultural boundaries and discrepancies "do not cross political borders", and supposed incongruities "do not separate those in power from the rest of the population" (Gellner, 1993, p. 12). As for the modernist intent, the nationalist ambition – and it must be said that the "modernist period did not invent musical nationalism, which had already been in vogue since the mid-19th century, even counting on advocates of the alliance between folklore collection and artistic processing" (Travassos, 2000, p. 36)[5] – understands that "the production of national music is the prerogative of artists as members of a national community" and involves the search for "a homology between individual and nation, both functioning similarly in the production of culture and artistic creation" (Travassos, 2000, p. 47).

When we separately point out the interests and guidelines that guided the actions implemented by the State, as well as by the group of modernist intellectuals, it is not desired, however, that a necessary distancing be glimpsed between the two fronts of actions. Considering the confluence of interests, there was indeed the coordination of achievements that followed under the guidance of the state apparatus.

[5] Alberto Nepomuceno, Alexandre Levy, and Brasílio Itiberê da Cunha are among the pioneers of musical nationalism in the 19th century (Travassos, 2000, p. 37).

In the domain of what is properly cultural – not only artistic production but also that which deals with the socialization and education of a community – the Getulist endeavor of forming a nationalist mentality occurred on two fronts: first, through the modernist intelligentsia and the Ministry of Education, which under the command of Gustavo Capanema encouraged a process of cultural formation of the Brazilian people focused on the knowledge of our folklore, of the *populário*[6], taking such elements as raw material to be "purified" by the erudite techniques of an art considered by them as superior; the second front was directed towards the valorization of popular manifestations, such as carnival parades - regulated since 1932 - and also by the strict control of cultural production, including popular songs. This front was spearheaded by the main coercive/co-optation apparatus forged by the State: the Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP). Coercive because it was a legitimate censor[7]. Co-opting because it encouraged opportunistic adherence through the opening of channels for the dissemination of popular art, not to mention the rewarding fees practiced. Resorting to a posture that was both paternalistic and repressive, using apparatuses such as the DIP, the Getulist government, according to Cabral – in a statement that must be nuanced given that it ignores the forms of resistance, cunning and spontaneous adherence of the artists to the Estado Novo project – from the "coup of November 10th, had absolute control of Brazilian popular music and any type of related manifestation" (Cabral, n.d., p. 40)[8]. When referring to cunning, it is intended to emphasize what some more recent works have already pointed out by minimizing the effective interference of the State, highlighting exactly that control in the artistic production of the period existed but was not total. These perspectives unveil strategies of composers to circumvent censorship by using the language of "cracks", such as the existence of a spontaneous adherence, by some kind of affinity, to the policies undertaken by the Estado Novo.

The fact that prominent intellectuals on the national scene participated in the *Estado Novo* actions does not imply adherence to the ideological principles that structured official policy. The modernist intellectual community's participation stemmed from a shared interest capable of transcending political project differences and ideological platforms. At stake was the forging of a national identity, which, among other things, involved the construction of an "autonomous cultural project", a task that engaged and "inspired poets, painters, novelists, architects, and educators since the Modern Art Week of 1922" (Cabral, n.d., p. 40). This

[6] The term is used by Mário de Andrade to highlight the reality of popular artistic production existing outside urban areas. It is almost synonymous with what is folkloric — and serves as an antonym of popularesco, that is, the artistic production of the popular classes subjected to the modernization process of large cities. The latter term is pejorative and conveys the notion that popular artistic expression in urban environments had been contaminated by a process that was still incomplete (in this case, the civilizing modernity) and, therefore, imperfect, lacking legitimacy to represent the genuine artistic spirit of the nation.

[7] According to Matos, 373 songs were censored in 1940 alone through the procedure of prior evaluation of artistic material (Matos, 1982, p. 90)

[8] See Napolitano, 2007a, Matos, 1982, and Paranhos, 2015.

relationship was not without friction, disagreements, and/or incompatibilities. However, we will leave the conflict between modernist thought and the Getúlio Vargas government to focus on the proposed theme.

Focusing on popular songs and considering the scenario outlined above, we must point to it as a kind of facilitator of the relationship between an individual and their culture, something desired by Getúlio's nationalist perspective. But for the socializing dialogue between song and individual to be effective, it is necessary that the individual targeted by this socialization “can recognize in national symbols not only their meaning” (Soares, 1998, p. 17), but also feel represented by and through them. It is possible to imagine that this endeavor will be more successful if, in the search for self-representation of Brazilian types and customs, the popular composer directs their production towards the use of “groups of sounds with culturally recognizable meaning, since the subject's musical culture equips them to recognize rules, formulas, and frameworks for interpreting songs” (Soares, 1998, p. 18). At that time, the standard of musical listening was marked by the radio broadcast of marches, choros, and, above all, sambas. It is assumed, then, that these genres or rhythms, whichever term is preferred, were part of this socially recognized and shared group of sounds during a period of strong growth in the social penetration of radio. There was a familiar sound there, well attuned to the reality of a significant part of the population, at least in major urban centers. When we talk about the broadcasting of songs, whether through the radio or through countless other cultural diffusion channels capable of shaping a listening pattern, it is important to clarify that the reality being examined is that of the federal capital, Rio de Janeiro. The transformation of samba into music of national recognition involves stories, characters, and places specific to the world of Rio de Janeiro. The rhythm developed and refined in the center, suburbs, and hills of Guanabara, the political and cultural center, a hub for the processing of trends and ideas of all kinds, had “everything at its disposal to transform into national music” (Vianna, 2002, p. 110).

Progressively, the taste of Rio de Janeiro became national taste, and samba followed this path, leaving other musical genres labeled as regionalists. But while samba carried with it the potential to establish a national paradigm in the face of the invasion of foreign music, given its popular origins and a sound tradition that increasingly incorporated it as a legitimate product of the Brazilian “mestizo” spirit, compositions marked by sensuality, suburban reality, and exaltation of idleness did not allow it to aspire, at least institutionally, to the position of musical symbol of the nation. A state seeking prosperity under the auspices of labor policies and nationalism would not see itself represented in those songs, which, truth be told, challenged its austere and conservative policies.

The debate over the control of carnal, erotic impulses, marked by the syncopations that musically characterize samba – and by the lascivious, cunning themes that permeate the poetic parameter of the songs – had already been discussed even before the advent of the

Estado Novo. The main proponents of the “sanitization” of samba’s poetry and rhythm were intellectuals and members of the bureaucracy, who were aware that, as early as the 1930s, the radio was already “playing a fundamental role in the new strategies of communication between power and the masses, especially in the civic ‘education’ and ideological inculcation of urban workers” (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 124). They were thus convinced of the need to expunge the “recalcitrant deviations” affecting popular music, given the importance it was gaining about the “official cultural policy”. A statement by Lourival Fontes in 1936, then director of the Department of Propaganda and Cultural Diffusion, a precursor to the Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP), clarifies this point. His statement, published in *Revista do Rádio*, discusses a suggestion made by the magazine itself, which proposed the “sanitization” of popular song lyrics, “avoiding ‘vulgarities’ and ‘anti-patriotism’”. Here is the statement:

> The suggestion is patriotic and seems to me to require urgent execution [...] to emphasize the importance of the suggestion, one need only look at the case of Mexico, where popular music is not only censored: it has been standardized to prevent time, foreign factors, or the composers themselves from distorting what has been established as 'Mexican popular music' (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 125 - emphasis mine).

Fontes was already openly discussing censorship procedures a year before the Estado Novo coup. He was announcing the adoption of a practice that would become institutionalized through the actions of the DIP under the auspices of the Getulist government. In practice, it was this department's responsibility to act as a general censor, from the songs broadcast on the radio to theatrical performances, including the authorization or veto of public entertainments and extending to the control of advertising and publicity services for ministries and other public administration bodies. This department carried out its duties with the goal of “constructing an ideology in line” with the official political and cultural propaganda, using the radio and sambas “to educate and discipline the consumers of this type of music” (Cunha, 2004, p. 200). In this regard, it undertook the somewhat successful task of transforming the “Getulist state” into a kind of “helmsman of the course of Brazilian popular music”, imposing a “deliberate and self-conscious cultural policy, fueled by the self-promotion of composers interested in official benefits”, which dealt with the “reconstruction of Brazilianness”, the new conservative patriotism, the ideology of racial mixing, and the ‘poetic hygienization’ of samba” (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 25). Through the co-opting of artists and censorship procedures, the DIP encouraged sambas that celebrated disciplined labor, exalted the 'Brazilian mestizo race,' sponsored grand patriotic concerts, and supported songs that glorified nationalist pride. However, it also counted on a spontaneous, undeclared “adherence” from artists who had long been constructing a musical discourse that praised and valued the qualities of the land and the “Brazilian people”. Among these composers, Ary Evangelista Barroso stands out, as with his composition *Aquarela do*

Brasil, he inaugurated the category that the history of popular music came to call civic samba or *samba exaltação*.

Ary Barroso, Samba, and the Estado Novo

For some time, popular songs had been circulating, with samba being the preferred genre. This musical genre had been refined, developed, and "cultivated" since the beginning of the century in the courtyards of the houses of the "Baiana aunts" in Rio de Janeiro. The house of Tia Ciata gained notoriety and has been consecrated by history as the mythical birthplace of samba, which would gain new life, form, and grammar in the 1930s – with the establishment of the Estácio paradigm[9] – and in the 1940s with the emergence of samba-exaltação. At that moment, it is clear that samba had broken out of the closed circles in which it had developed and had reached the streets, thus paving the way for it to attain the *status* of the musical symbol of Brazilian nationality. For clarification, samba was previously restricted to environments where the traditions of the Black, Afro-Brazilian world were cultivated as a product of the spirit of the Black community, which often found itself prevented from publicly expressing its music, customs, and religious practices.

Gradually, samba and the "places" of its manifestation would witness an approximation with the official world of the Estado Novo. In short, it is worth noting that the genre would not emerge unscathed from the control and manipulation exercised by the state's regulatory bodies (Vianna, 2002), eager to impose a kind of "civilization" of samba to instrumentalize it and transform it into a tool for the exercise of "civic and ideological pedagogy" (Napolitano, 2007a, p. 28).

A character, or rather, part of his work, would achieve a stylistic result aligned with the desires of those who sought to exercise moral and political surveillance over the poetic and musical parameters of samba. In some way, even though the process involves recruiting elements of urban popular music closely linked to the world of the cultural industry, the production we are dealing with proposes and publicizes a samba that has been profoundly altered, both structurally – with significant modifications to its poetic parameter – and formally – given the concern to dress samba in arrangements that go beyond mere "finishing" and "gesture" in such a way as to substantively transform the genre. This refers to the production of a samba, let's say, symphonic, articulated around themes that symbolically reveal the nation. A samba that, in a way, processes the "civilizing" movement of popular production by recruiting a cultured (almost pedantic, but without completely excluding other lexical possibilities) language and a "slender", "sophisticated", grandiloquent melodic-instrumental

[9] Metric alteration aimed at energizing samba, which no longer had to fit samba circles but rather the parades of Samba Schools that were taking over the streets during Carnival. See Sandroni, 2001.

form for its structural composition. Of course, we are referring to the production of sambas-exaltação, which would mark the popular Brazilian songbook and the work of its main architect: Ary Barroso. As the antithesis of the malandro posture, Barroso composed sambas that, in part, reinforced the "excellence of Estado Novo Brazilianness", in tune with the laborist blueprint's desired construction of a Brazil that integrates and unites (Matos, 1982, p. 112). His production fits into a stage marked by the semantic narrowing of the field of samba as a symbolic element, as an expression of the nation (McCann, 2004).

Had it not been for the choice of the popularesco[10], we could indeed identify in Ary's sambas-exaltação a modernist attempt to "refine" the constitutive parameters of samba, aiming to elevate the genre to the ranks of "worthy" products representative of the Brazilian artistic spirit. In this case, we could venture to say that the "new" samba would tend to reconcile the two fronts of the Estado Novo's aesthetic-political pedagogical actions – on one side, represented by the efforts of Villa-Lobos through civic musical education via "high art", and on the other, through coordinated actions to influence and transform samba into the national musical paradigm. This does not permit us to claim that Ary intentionally sought a conciliatory outcome. This is rather an observation made retrospectively, based on the historical realization of the work of this composer from Minas Gerais, born in 1903 in Ubá.

Since the 1920s, Ary Barroso had been spreading his melodies through the nights of Rio de Janeiro and other cities in Brazil. Earlier, in his hometown, Ary Barroso had already begun working as a pianist at Cine Ideal, assisting his aunt Ritinha, his first piano teacher, who, alongside his maternal grandmother, raised him after the premature death of his parents due to tuberculosis.

In 1920, Ary, heir to a small fortune left by his paternal uncle Sabino Barroso, a politician "committed to the Old Republic, having been president of the Partido Republicano Mineiro, president of the Chamber of Deputies, and Minister of Finance under the Campos Sales government" (Cabral, n.d., p. 15), arrived in the federal capital after passing the entrance exam for the Law School at the University of Rio de Janeiro. In his pocket, 40 contos de réis[11]. To give an idea, a man like Almirante (Henrique Foreis Domingues) – one of the members of the group *Flor do Tempo*, later known as *Bando de Tangarás*, with Noel Rosa and João de Barro – of middle-class background, would have to work approximately 37 years at his then-job to earn such an amount. It was indeed a small fortune. Ary managed to spend all the money in two years of bohemian living. The lack of money and the need to pay for lodging in various places, the costs of his law studies, and the desire to marry Yvonne Arantes, not to mention the needs arising from his bohemian "nature", led Ary to various stages in different Brazilian

[10] See note 6.

[11] The monetary unit of the Brazilian currency at that time.

states, transforming him first into a pianist, later into a composer, radio broadcaster, theater man, labor leader, and also city councilman (Olinto, 2003).

The year 1929 marks the moment of Ary Barroso's professionalization as a musician when he graduated in law and saw the music market open up to his compositions. The song that facilitated this breakthrough was *Vamos Deixar de Intimidade*, which quickly became a hit in the voice of Mário Reis, a singer "famous enough to record sambas by a debuting composer" (Vianna, 2002, p. 120). Indeed, the singer had already recorded Ary Barroso's *Vou à Penha* at the end of the previous year. However, it was the song released in June 1929 that brought prominence to the composer from Minas Gerais. Around this time, at the end of the 1920s, Ary Barroso had his samba *Faceira* recorded, which, according to *Revista Mundo Ilustrado*, gave his samba its personality: "In *Faceira*, in the original recording by Sílvio Caldas, you can feel the samba alive, something that had not happened in any previous or contemporary recording"[12]. Following the momentum that Reis provided for Ary's career came the abandonment of his legal career, the commitment and acceptance of his musical path, and the success of *Dá Nela* – a march that won the 1930 carnival contest sponsored by Casa Edison, giving him a "wave of popularity". According to Ary Barroso, it was largely responsible for dethroning the reign of the *marchinhas*[13]: "From that point on, only sambas caught on"[14]. Two years later, Ary debuted as a musician at Rádio Philips, where he also became a speaker with the program *A Hora do Outro Mundo*, which was "extremely important for the development of Ary Barroso as a radio broadcaster" (Cabral, n.d., p. 154). At Rádio Cruzeiro do Sul, he established the talent show *Calouros em Desfile*, which was also broadcast on Tupi, the next stop in the composer-broadcaster's career. There, he took over the leadership of the sports department. At that time, the broadcaster, especially for his role as a sports commentator, was perhaps as well-known and respected as the musician, who "never stopped composing or putting his songs in theatrical revues" (Cabral, n.d., p. 177).

It was in 1939, the year when his prestige as a musician equaled and surpassed that of a speaker, that the multifaceted Ary composed his greatest success, a song "destined" to be a kind of representation of the nation in the musical realm. I am referring to *Aquarela do Brasil*.

Aquarela do Brasil: A Samba in Tails

The series of songs that would come to be categorized as sambas-exaltação, composed by Ary Barroso and other authors starting in 1939, created a kind of syntax that would musically express the definition of what should be understood as the "truly" national, according to, of

[12] *Mundo Ilustrado* Magazine, nº. 84, Sept. 8, 1954.

[13] A popular genre that shared space with samba, particularly during carnival celebrations.

[14] A country in Aquarela. Bravo Magazine, São Paulo, year 7, nº. 74, pp. 31–37, Nov. 2003.

course, the hegemonic political forces. This moment, as already highlighted and following the argumentative line, was indeed decisive in the elaboration and consecration of a national character, a peculiar quality translated as Brazilianness. This was, in some way, being firmly sketched out and, why not say, defined with the "precious help of the pandeiro"[15] in Ary's sambas. Perhaps for this reason, he was deserving of the praise in 1953, noted in the minutes of the Sociedade Brasileira de Autores, Compositores e Editores de Música (SBACEM): "Ary Barroso should rightfully be acclaimed Brazil's Number One Ambassador, for with his unforgettable melodies, he projected the country across the world, in a giant work, worthy of this "sleeping giant in a splendid cradle," which will awaken one day"[16].

Before we delve into the semantic parameters of sambas-exaltação to understand which version of Brazil is being sung, how the national is revealed in its musical structure, and who the people-nation is that emerges in its performance, attention must be paid to the paradigm historically established by the recording of *Aquarela do Brasil*. We must say that although it is an inaugural milestone of samba-exaltação, a watershed, *Aquarela* is primarily a product of its time, incorporating the discussions and containing in its musical fabric traces of the historical moment in which it was created. Even before the recording of *Aquarela*, "musical successes from the early 1930s signaled the rediscovery of Brazilianness as a major poetic-musical theme, as in *Verde e Amarelo* by Orestes Barbosa" (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 123). Ary Barroso himself had already been experimenting with some steps of exaltação with compositions that initiated the "Baiana sequence" of praise "for the good land"[17], such as *No Tabuleiro da Baiana* and *Na Baixa do Sapateiro*, recorded in November 1936 and November 1938, respectively. In fact,

> there was a public debate, before the shaping of the Estado Novo's cultural policy, that already linked samba to "authentic Brazilianness", to racial mixing, and to the need to "elevate" the aesthetic standard of lyrics and music according to certain canons inherited from scholarly poetry, classical music, or jazz" (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 125-126).

According to Napolitano, "when the Estado Novo coup descended upon Brazil's cultural and political life, the debate around samba was quite heated, especially among intellectuals and artists who wanted a civilized and civic samba, both musically and poetically" (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 125-126). *Aquarela* was, in some way, a fundamental piece in reconciling these diverse interests by inaugurating "the first model of an urban popular song about the Brazilian nation" (Soares, 1998, p. 101). The grandiloquence of *Aquarela*, a work that assimilates and processes the "debates, dilemmas, and tensions that marked the Brazilian musical scene in

[15] Pandeiro in English is called a tambourine. However, it is important to note that the Brazilian *pandeiro* is somewhat different from the traditional tambourine found in other cultures. Therefore, in this translation, we prefer to retain the term 'pandeiro' in its original Portuguese spelling to highlight the distinction.

[16] *SBACEM Bulletin*, n. 15, December 1953.

[17] *Rio Artes*, n. 21, 1996.

the second half of the 1930s", profoundly altered the prevailing listening patterns (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 126).

That said, it is important to highlight that the "strong symbolic sense of the nation-consolidating policy" (Soares, 1998, p. 101) with which *Aquarela do Brasil* became "imbued" does not turn it into a platform or reveal a strategic disposition toward constituting the ideal song, the "quintessential" representative of "Brazilianness". If today it is acceptable to say that this indeed happened, it is necessary to investigate the factors, people, and circumstances that contributed to its success. This requires paying less attention to the knowledge of a (im)probable intention or conscious strategy of the creator and more to how the paradigm that was created was utilized, the conditions for the song's circulation, and the possibilities for the appropriation of its message—this new model that presented a new aesthetic and dominated the arrangements destined for samba during that period.

Aquarela do Brasil inaugurated the genre of samba-exaltação and later established an "ideal model of popular music that interested Getúlio's government and [was] encouraged through the DIP" (Soares, 1998, p. 101). What was surprising about this song was the fact that it reconciled, in its way, the scholarly/civilizing pretensions of intellectuals while simultaneously privileging the percussiveness of samba, which spread through the radio waves. As we have already pointed out,

> the Estado Novo oscillated between two poles – channeling popular music or promoting classical music – and often acted in a contradictory manner, trying to please the various intellectual voices that made up its bureaucracy without closing the door to the popular culture being built in the cultural environment of radio, cinema, and carnival (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 126).

In this way, *Aquarela*, although it was not initially intended to become a landmark of musical nationalism – since it was not commissioned – contained elements that encouraged its appropriation by the nationalist policies of the Estado Novo, making it a model. This was not only due to the poetic/verbal elements present in its lyrics, such as the "splendor" of nature, the exaltation of the mestizo, the *mulata*, the deification of this "land of our Lord", and the celebration of a past once covered by a "curtain", now finally revealed, but also due to the consecration of the specifically musical form, which would be endlessly revisited, as we will see later. The song achieved the "poetic sanitization" – the malandro was transmuted into the crafty mulatto, and the *mulata* into the alluring brunette – so dear to the impulses of "intellectuals and cultural bureaucrats", without losing its connection to the trends of the music market and the history of its composer, a renowned composer of sambas and carnival marches. According to Marcos Napolitano, "the 'mystery' of *Aquarela* was precisely its ability to articulate various [aesthetic-musical] vectors into a single song while still appearing to be a cohesive and unequivocal ode to the civic nationalism of the 1930s" (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 126).

It is important to note that *Aquarela do Brasil* was not always seen as the musical representation of the nation, at least in the eyes and ears of the Estado Novo. The first piece of evidence for this is that the DIP immediately censored one of the song's verses, the one that describes Brazil as the "land of samba and *pandeiro*" (Cabral, n.d., p. 180). Another indication is the song's defeat in a contest called *Noite de Música Popular*, an event promoted by the DIP in 1940 (Cabral, n.d.). A similar event had taken place a year earlier, on January 4, 1939, called *Dia da Música Popular*. The event was part of the *Exposição Nacional do Estado Novo*, which drew over 200,000 people eager to see performances by Francisco Alves, Carmem and Aurora Miranda, Sílvio Caldas, Orlando Silva, Dircinha Batista, Carlos Galhardo, and Araci de Almeida, the main names of the musical mainstream at the time, who performed songs like *Boneca de Piche* and *Casta Suzana*, both by Ary Barroso. The following year, the event was called, as we have seen, *Noite da Música Popular*, although, in practice, it turned into a contest of carnival songs. On this occasion, Ary Barroso submitted his songs to be judged by a jury appointed by the DIP and chosen with the approval of the participating composers. The jury included, among others, Pixinguinha, Luís Peixoto, and Villa-Lobos. Ary Barroso managed to get three songs into the finals: *Iaiá Boneca*, *Upa, Upa!*, and *Aquarela do Brasil*, all of which were eliminated. The person who led the rejection of *Aquarela* was Heitor Villa-Lobos, one of the jury members. The reason was prosaic: it was a contest for carnival marches, and Villa-Lobos felt that *Aquarela* did not fit the category. More interesting are the arguments and responses from the composer to justify these two moments of failure, whether it was the censorship or the jury's decision. With the censors, Ary Barroso won the battle by convincing them that he was not singing about "Brazil-Nation, Brazil-State, Brazil-Power, but rather a very special Brazil, a Brazil as I felt it, in a moment of evocation and longin'" (Cabral, n.d., p. 186). Regarding the disqualification, he responded to Villa-Lobos, who had boycotted *Aquarela* because he believed "carnival is not a celebration for patriotic or civic demonstrations", with the following argument: "I am not a civic composer. I compose marches and sambas without worrying about the complicated issues of civics" (Cabral, n.d., p. 186). The unfolding of this story is a series of actions undertaken or mediated by the Estado Novo that helped elevate the song to the status of a national monument.

According to Ary himself, *Aquarela do Brasil* was composed on a rainy night that prevented him from heading out into the night of Rio. He described that night as follows:

> I then felt an idea illuminate me: to free samba from the tragedies of life, from the sensualism of misunderstood passions, from the sensual scenery that had already been so explored. I began to feel the greatness, the value, and the opulence of our land, "giant by its nature." With pride, I revived the tradition of national paintings and struck the first chords, vibrant ones. It was a flood of emotions. The original, different rhythm sang in my imagination, standing out from the loud sound of the rain in syncopated beats of fantastic tambourines. The rest came naturally, music and lyrics at the same time. I immediately wrote down the samba that I had created, naming it

> *Aquarela do Brasil*. I felt transformed. From the depths of my soul, a samba had poured out that I had long desired, a samba that, in brilliant and powerful sounds, would depict the greatness and exuberance of this promising land, of its good, hardworking, and peaceful people, a people who love the land where they were born. This samba deified, in a sonic apotheosis, this glorious Brazil. (Cabral, n.d., p. 179).

The statement, given years after *Aquarela* had already been monumentalized, must, therefore, be evaluated carefully so as not to be understood as a "manifestation of intentions". Once the event has occurred and the story has been told, questions are resolved quickly and easily. However, even if the statement had been collected before *Aquarela* was monumentalized, it would not have been enough to reveal the song's establishment as a sonic symbol of the nation. Although we are aware that Ary Barroso was a staunch Getulist, an active participant in events sponsored and organized by official agencies of the Estado Novo – something that would happen again, for example, in 1939 when he participated as a composer in a show honoring the Brazilian Navy (promoted by the National Defense League), and in 1941, during the celebrations of the fourth anniversary of the coup – there is nothing in *Aquarela* that initially marked it as an instrument of political propaganda for the Getulist dictatorship. The song was first presented in the theatrical revue *Entra na Faixa*, written by Ary Barroso himself in collaboration with Luis Iglésias. In the show, *Aquarela* was introduced to the public by the voice of Araci Cortes, whose performance failed to excite the audience. The song had not yet been recorded. Ary Barroso, perhaps due to the lukewarm reception of Araci's interpretation, wanted to see his *Scena Carioca* performed by another Araci, Araci de Almeida, who had previously had great success with the samba *Camisa Amarela*. The only condition from the composer was that the recording not be made by one of the many regional ensembles[18] that dominated the musical scene of the time. Mister Evans, the director of Victor, did not allow Araci to record due to Ary's demands. Before the definitive 78 RPM recording that would establish *Aquarela do Brasil* in the voice of Francisco Alves[19], the song was publicly performed by baritone Cândido Botelho at a charity event organized by the First Lady, Mrs. Darcy Vargas, called *Joujoux e os Balangandans*[20]. What we know, then, is that from this event, filled with Ary Barroso's songs, to the renaming of *Aquarela*, which became *Brazil* due to Walt Disney's film *Saludos Amigos*, a product of the Good Neighbor Policy and the friendship pact between American nations, what is seen is the state's appropriation of this song or its aesthetic-musical language. Compositions began to be encouraged, and contests with considerable prizes were organized for composers willing to create that kind of "formal" samba,

[18] Trio composed of flute, guitar, and pandeiro.

[19] Original medium of the song released by Odeon: record no. 11768, sides A and B, October 1939. Available at https://daniellathompson.com/Texts/Ary_Barroso/Ary.78.cont.htm. Accessed on October 13, 2024.

[20] *Féerie in two acts*, written by Henrique Pongetti, presented at the Municipal Theater on June 28 and 30, and July 4, 11, and 16, 1939.

in “tails and top hat”, that was meant to surpass the glorification of the *malandro* and his qualities. A type of samba destined to take its rightful place “among the popular music of civilized peoples, as a dignified and elegant representative of the musical spirit of our people” (Soares, 1998, p. 102) – this is how the ears of the Estado Novo viewed it. A samba ready to enter the homes of all of Brazil (and the world, via the waves of Rádio Nacional) and reveal it. It is worth noting that the same DIP that once censored *Aquarela* would, with its “appreciation”, transform it into a symbol of Brazil.

Some arguments can help us reflect on this shift in position. To this end, it is worth emphasizing that Vargas and the Estado Novo, even if contrary to modernist ideas – which identified in popular urban artistic production (the popularesco) a degeneration of taste – at a certain point did not shy away from recognizing the importance and widespread reach that urban popular music possessed, amplified by the broadcasting power of radio stations. In this regard, the recognition of the precarious state of education and the persistence of illiteracy in Brazil “hinted” that the memorization and understanding of ideas by individuals needed to be facilitated through the production of simplified and redundant messages “to adjust their components to the conditions of their receivers” (Cunha, 2004, p. 203). Getúlio, thus, with a single move, prioritized both Villa-Lobos's orpheonic choir and the “radio choir” of the masses.

Indeed, as we have already seen, Ary Barroso’s work fulfilled this conciliatory function. Villa-Lobos's *Choros*[21] had neutralized the “defensive sanitary cordon” (Soares, 1998, p. 100) that had previously limited the action of classical musicians regarding popular song, thereby acting as a “cultural trailblazer, vigorously crossing the synapses that censor the passage of signifiers laden with sensual intensities, vital information, and repressed history”, which are characteristic of samba (Wisnik, 2001, p. 167). Meanwhile, *Aquarela do Brasil* follows the opposite vectorial path: it defines a *chorus* in the people, in the masses; it breaks the established barriers by incorporating the grandiloquence and monumentality of nationalist classical works into its instrumental and interpretative configuration.

If the poetic distinction of the lyrics accompanying *Aquarela* fulfilled the explicit desire of a group of intellectuals waging a battle for the “poetic sanitization” of samba, the musical parameters greatly contributed to the realization of the “new” samba. Ary insisted and ensured that an orchestra recorded it under the baton of Radamés Gnatalli, who was responsible for the arrangement and wrote the brass section in a syncopated tamborim[22] rhythm (Cabral, n.d., p. 182). According Gnatalli, Ary, an admirer of “the orchestral work of American music” and a

[21] A collection of compositions produced by Villa-Lobos that established a bridge between popular music and classical musical aesthetics. These choros were inspired by figures that, in some way, could represent the national identity, namely, the indigenous peoples, the caboclos, among others.

[22] In this case, the *tamborim* is a percussion instrument that shares the same name as the *pandeiro* in translation. It is an instrument struck with a stick, producing high-pitched sounds, and has a smaller circumference compared to the traditional Brazilian *pandeiro*, which is played with both hands

critic of the "predominance of standardized arrangements" for regional ensembles, he suggested using the double bass to accentuate the rhythm (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 127). However, the conductor decided to transfer the rhythm marking to the brass section, a solution that also took into account the suggestion of drummer Luciano Perrone, who asked Gnatalli for an arrangement in which all the instruments "were committed to the samba rhythm". Perrone recalled:

> Radamés and I were walking through Rádio Nacional, heading toward Almirante's office, when I asked him for a "different" arrangement. Radamés, in his usual manner, started asking: "Different how? What do you want me to do?" I explained that if he wrote the samba rhythm for the brass instruments, my life would be easier on the drums. (Cabral, n.d., p. 182).

In a statement given to the Museu da Imagem e do Som in Rio de Janeiro, Gnatalli attributed the origin of the idea to Ary Barroso: "This thing is not mine. It's Ary Barroso's. I just put it in the right place. Ary wanted me to use the theme with the double basses, but it wouldn't have had any effect, it would have turned out awful. So, I used five saxophones to do it. What I came up with was the arrangement to put his suggestion in the right place" (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 128).

As we can infer, despite the account of the epiphany that produced *Aquarela*, foreseeing the marking of "fantastic tamborins", by choosing to shift the rhythm marking from the percussion instruments to the double bass, Ary Barroso sought to nuance a sonic element that historically and culturally locates sambas: the African characteristic of the *batuques*. In this way, "the more restrained percussion, without compromising the rhythm, confirmed the attempt to overcome the 'sensualism' in Ary's vision of a 'divinized samba'" (Napolitano, 2007b, p. 127). It is important to note that Gnatalli's solution, performed by the saxophone section, lay the musical motif that would become the sonic signature of the nation.

By orchestrating the samba, a grandiose effect was imposed, which reinforces the project of totality aimed at constructing an image of a cohesive society. This aesthetic of monumentality, which will permeate the sambas-exaltação, was defined exemplarily by Santuza Naves and applied to this example. Seen and understood as a narrative trait, it "also tends to construct a homogeneous vision of the nation, in which individuals appear entirely subjected to it, [...] as a totality", evoking the idea of a "monologic public space, policed, closed, and at the same time without differences" (Naves, 1998, p. 69).

Aquarela do Brasil also brings forth the Brazilian symbolic universe – with its various shades, unified and reconciled – represented by the ideal of a nation built on the valorization of mestizaje (racial mixing), as promoted by Gilberto Freyre's racial democracy, a valorization that reveals the "choice for the 'unity of the homeland' and for homogenization" (Vianna, 2002, p. 71). This policy of valuing racial mixing became semi-official after the establishment of the

Estado Novo, contributing to the shift in perception where the mestizo and the products of racial mixing were no longer seen as the major culprits for Brazil's "backwardness" (as they had been viewed by early thinkers on Brazilian racial identity since the 19th century), but rather gained a "positive character". From then on, "the Brazilian came to be defined as a more or less harmonious, more or less conflicted combination of African, Indigenous, and Portuguese traits". Brazilian culture, defined by mestizaje, transformed into "something to be carefully preserved, as it guarantees our specificity (about other nations) and our future, which will be increasingly mestizo" (Vianna, 2002, p. 64). *Aquarela do Brasil*, once again, ambiguously, while it tempers the rhythmic pulses of the *batuques*, removes the "black mother from the cerrado" – poetically unveiling the obvious, the root of samba – and

> reaffirms the inversion of the value placed on the role of the mestizo and racial mixing in Brazilian culture. Once considered degenerative and the cause of the nation's great evils, mestizaje came to be interpreted as a positive cultural process around which (and its products, like samba, Afro-Brazilian cuisine, Luso-Tropicalist hygiene techniques, etc.) Brazilians could invent a new identity (Vianna, 2002, p. 76).

But *Aquarela* is just one of several songs that will exalt the "splendid cradle" and address a set of symbols – musical, poetic/verbal characters – invariably in the same way. This model of the song worked for "the symbolic construction of the common origin of a people, listing characteristics attributed to the nation as if it not only had its existence but, moreover, was eternal and natural in the way it was sung" (Soares, 1998, p. 106). Such was the success and impact of the musical/poetic device – including the motif recorded by the brass section – adopted in *Aquarela* that the model was repeated in several subsequent songs. As a form of commentary or citation, *Brasil Moreno* (1941), *Se Deus quiser* (1940), *Isto aqui o que é* (1942), *Rio de Janeiro – Isto é o meu Brasil* (1944), to name a few, present themselves as songs occupying the space demarcated by *Aquarela*, which is the space of national consecration in musical language. When I say that such songs fulfilled a function of commentary, I mean commentary as a kind of regulator of the random appearance of discourse, curbing discursive chance. I understand that in all societies, there are "larger narratives that are told, repeated, and made to vary; formulas, texts, sets of ritualized discourses that are narrated according to well-determined circumstances; things said once that is preserved because in them it is imagined, there is something like a secret or a treasure" (Foucault, 2006, p. 22).

We also understand commentary as the reappearance of that which is commented upon; the distinction (or gap) between discourse (the first text) and its commentary serves a role that we perceive as observable in this study: "the fact that the first text hovers above, its permanence, its status as a discourse that is always re-updatable... all of this establishes an open possibility for speech" (Foucault, 2006, p. 25). This speech is what gets updated. *Aquarela* is then perceived as this first discourse, as one of those inexhaustible larger

narratives, which will be accompanied by other compositions that re-update and invigorate its mythical capacity through commentary and citations.

Aquarela do Brasil: Musical Reinforcement and Intramusical Problematizations

Up until now, we have problematized and unveiled the historical constitution and developments of *Aquarela do Brasil*, both from an aesthetic standpoint and in terms of its alignment with political and ideological positions reflected in the song's message. Regarding the poetic aspect, we have observed that the song adopts a strategy aligned with a nationalist and "sanitary" trend stemming from Brazilian social thought at the end of the 19th century, which aimed at the "proliferation of poems that sing about tropical skies with more stars" (Vianna, 2002, p. 69). This poetic choice diverges from the majority of songs circulating during that period, which tend to focus on themes of passion, hardships, sensualism, conquests, and love lost and found in bohemian settings and carnivals. For reference, in Ary Barroso's musical output between 1937 and 1945, comprising approximately 70 recorded songs, nearly half of them address, often in a playful, ironic, and mischievous way, romantic relationships (not counting those that reference popular festivals, street-smart's life etc.). Much of this body of work was performed with regional instrumental ensembles, another feature that *Aquarela* inaugurates by favoring the sound of American jazz bands. However, we need a more thorough evaluation, which calls for an investigation into the parametric conjunction of poetry, music, and performance to more adequately understand what is embodied in the sonic appearance of *Aquarela*.

Beginning with the poetic structure, we observe that the song portrays Brazil both geographically, as the national ground, and culturally, to integrate the "casa grande" (the big house) and the "senzala" (the slave quarters). At the same time that it "tira a mãe preta do cerrado" and "põe Rei Congo no congado", it opens a path for "Sá Dona" to sweep through the halls with "O seu vestido rendado". The song establishes within its lyrical-poetic space an idealized coexistence that softens disagreements and seeks to ignore conflicts to create a symbolic condition of the presence of bodies and cultures. Brazilian types and characters are depicted in quick strokes, much like a painting – a portrait of Brazil as a nation, indeed, like a watercolor. The first-person speaker does not define a clear interlocutor. In fact, by describing the country's and the nation's attributes, the speaker tends to address those unfamiliar with these traits. It is the voice of a "native" speaking to an "outsider", or a conversation between a Brazil that is conscious of the characteristics that shape its national identity and one that has yet to recognize the attributes that define and build Brazilianness. At one point, for example, the speaker establishes a dialogue with the nation-state itself, as though it needed to affirm itself through its own "rediscovery": "Brasil, meu Brasil brasileiro / Vou cantar-te nos meus versos". Brazil is intertwined with its history and characters. It is "swarthy" but transforms into

the “cunning mulatto and a good and pleasant land”. It is simultaneously the land of “Nosso Senhor” and of “samba e pandeiro”. The language used in the poetic channel includes some uncommon and cultured words, revealing an attempt to elevate popular music to an erudite level. Words such as “merencória” (melancholy), “inzoneiro” (sly), “sestrosa” (graceful), and “trigueiro”[23] (swarthy) were not part of the vocabulary typically used in popular song lyrics until that moment. Nevertheless, the rest of the language and established syntax do not hinder the general understanding of the song. The musical arrangement accompanying the poetry also adds an erudite silhouette which, while not fundamentally changing the musical character – since we always recognize and never doubt that it is indeed a samba – introduces an aesthetic approach that is entirely different from the arrangements, accompaniments, and performances that were contemporaneous with the release of *Aquarela*. The mood of the samba is predominantly joyful and uplifting, with melodies, except for the introductory section, following a descending melodic pattern that returns to the dominant (fifth degree) of the key, preparing the tonal cadence. According to Tatit, this procedure is what maintains the “exultant tone” found in *Aquarela do Brasil.* For him, “the opening of phrases in the higher register” helps the speaker, or the poetic voice, to reveal their “prideful ecstasy” (Tatit, 1996, p. 102). In the introduction, strings and woodwinds, with precise attacks, set a tone of solemnity. When the song unfolds and declares itself as a samba, we can observe how the symphonic accompaniment stands out due to the use of different rhythmic structures in each part of the song, creating harmonic support with polyrhythms that can be noted through the identification of counterpoints, particularly in the performance of the wind instruments. This contrapuntal approach is particularly noticeable in the section that states: “Quero ver essa Dona caminhando / Pelos salões arrastando / O seu vestido rendado / Brasil!... Brasil! / Prá mim... Prá mim!”. As for the repetitive rhythmic and melodic pattern mentioned earlier, one need only pay attention to the accompaniment throughout any part of the song – except for the introductory segments of the first and second sections. Leaving aside, for a moment, the symphonic character introduced by the arrangement, it’s important to note that the percussion, and especially the *pandeiro*, plays a significant role. It is through its continuous and uninterrupted execution that the instrument restores the song's original essence as a samba.

Returning to the point about rhythmic and melodic patterns, which are repeated and reiterated in each distinct part of the song, it is clear that whenever the poetic argument reaches a conclusion or resolution – occurring after each stanza of three verses – the accompaniment shifts without altering the overall model, which emphasizes repetition[24]. Tatit

[23] Series of words characteristic of highly formal Portuguese.

[24] In the case of the initial part, consider the four-line stanzas: “Ô Brasil, samba que dá/ Bamboleio, que faz gingar/ Ô Brasil do meu amor/ Terra de Nosso Senhor” e “Ô Brasil, verde que dá/ Para o mundo se admirar/ Ô Brasil, do meu amor/ Terra de Nosso Senhor”.

explains this by identifying a technique he calls *thematization*, found in the melodic palette of *Aquarela*, which emphasizes short notes based on articulated rhythmic patterns using eighth and sixteenth notes. This persistent use of rhythm creates a sense of circularity and emphasizes the themes. According to Tatit, “the reduction in note duration and frequency, combined with the ordering of stressed syllables and consonant breaks, facilitates the construction of well-defined motifs that, when arranged in a chain, generate genuine rhythmic-melodic matrices” (Tatit, 1996, p. 94). He also argues that the exalted nature of this symphonic samba arises precisely from the compatibility between melody and lyrics, where the focus on *thematization* designs “rhythmic matrices meant to be identified” as signifiers of the song's content (Tatit, 1996, p. 98). Here, I want to highlight what is repeatedly used to cite, comment on, or re-present *Aquarela do Brasil*. What we previously referred to as the “sonic signature of the nation” becomes clear. This technique was clarified in the section explaining Gnatalli's choice of using a saxophone section to emulate the sound of *tamborins*. The signature, in musical terms, is nothing more than one of these matrices, perceptible when listening to the stanzas following those listing Brazil's attributes and beginning the poetic articulation contained in the three-verse stanzas. More specifically, in the sections starting with the phrases “Abre a cortina do passado” and “Esse coqueiro que dá coco”. This approach, transformed into a musical motif, becomes the primary sonic marker that references the discourse of *Aquarela* – whether to affirm, deconstruct, or challenge it. This is the musical representation of the nation's sonic signature.

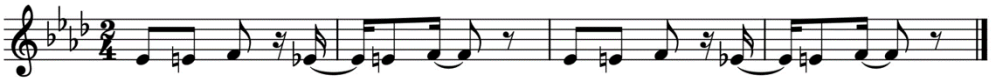

Figure 1: representation of the Sonic Signature of the Nation

Finishing the analysis of *Aquarela do Brasil*, it's important to highlight the congruence between the “mood” of the melody and that of the lyrics. The poetic lines are largely imperative and short, demanding a melody that favors rhythmic units of short duration – a thematic feature. It is precisely when the textual argument lengthens (in stanzas of three lines), forming small constructions that resemble prose, that the melody employs chromaticism to mark and distinguish this process in the narrative. Another “subject” in the soundscape that plays an active narrative role is the arrangement itself, largely responsible for the song’s solemn and symphonic tone. However, through a strategic alternation of instruments that evoke a symphonic sound, contrasted with the continuous pandeiro, which plays a prominent role, the song immediately achieves a clear distinction and establishes its cultural position – grandiloquent, Brazilian. Another factor contributing to the grandiosity of *Aquarela* is the vocal

performance of Francisco Alves. The impassioned, intense singing style of “Chico Viola”, replete with vibrato, makes his voice one of the main elements that imbue this samba with an exhortative tone, with few phrasal shifts and a refinement that aligns it with songs more commonly performed using *bel canto* techniques. His vocal gestures in *Aquarela*, to some extent, can be seen as an indicator of *passionalization*. This would introduce a tension between the thematic tendencies of the composer and the emotive performance of Francisco Alves. By singing in this way, the performer seems to challenge any harmonious interpretation of Brazil's characteristics, almost deconstructing the significance. However, the emphasis on prolonged notes and ornaments, typical of emotive projections – at least in Brazilian popular music – does not suggest a lack of distance but rather a reinforcement of sentimental values, an amplification of admiration.

Once the exultant genre was inaugurated, a good portion of Ary Barroso's later compositions would draw upon the poetic, musical, and performative parameters of *Aquarela*. A fitting example is *Brasil Moreno*, a song composed in collaboration with Luís Peixoto and released in 1941 by Odeon on record nº 12.040, sides A and B. The first similarity with *Aquarela's* recording is noticed in the arrangement of the track, which fills both sides of the 78 RPM record. *Brasil Moreno* celebrates Brazil and its natural exuberance through samba. The poetic voice is someone who identifies with Brazil and feels a certain intimacy with its essence: “Samba, meu Brasil”[25]. The relationship is one of belonging. The speaker exalts Brazil, speaking about and to the nation, highlighting its qualities as if there is a conscious effort to remember and reinforce national identity. This is expressed through an admonitory tone, seeking to prevent any possible forgetting of the country's attributes. These are revealed through the rhythm and cadence of samba, demonstrating the harmony between the genre that represents the nation and its natural and geographical elements: “Quanta harmonia/Vai no batuque no sereno/Vai, vai ouvir o teu sertão/Pontear o violão/Vai ver/O coqueiral todo a gingar/Vai ouvir teus pássaros cantar/À luz das madrugadas!”[26]. When the imperative says, “Brasil, vai ouvir o seu sertão”[27], the nation is being called upon, and there is an attempt to speak to its diverse social and geographical “places” in a unifying process, envisioning a collective that is gathered and cohesive. In summary, the poetic imagery used highlights and lists the qualities of Brazil, which are revealed almost symbiotically with the characteristic and defining elements of samba: the “morenice” (dark complexion), the “ginga” (graceful movement), the strumming of the guitar, and the *pandeiro*. This revealing song is a unifying one, aiming to reach every “quebrada” (corner) with its rhythmic grace, building, integrating, and differentiating the nation from others: “Oh! Brazil, quebrando nas

[25] “Samba, my Brazil”.

[26] “So much harmony/Goes in the rhythm in the night dew/Go, go listen to your backcountry/Strumming the guitar/Go see/The coconut grove sway/Go listen to your birds sing/By the light of dawn!”.

[27] “Brazil, go listen to your backcountry”.

quebradas/ Teu samba todo o mundo há de escutar!"[28]. *Brasil Moreno* exhibits an apotheotic tone, starting with its introduction, typical of the calls made by trumpets that demand the listener's attention. Besides the grandiose structure of the arrangement, another aspect makes *Brasil Moreno* indebted to the model inaugurated by *Aquarela*. The interval that starts the verses in the first part is the same as in *Aquarela* (a major second interval). Despite differences in key, the musical phrase where the word "Brasil" is pronounced in *Aquarela*, and the word "Samba," which begins *Brasil Moreno*, sound equivalent and are the first notes of the melody. Continuing with the analysis, the presence of sustained long notes when imperative terms are used and at the end of verses that describe the nation's qualities seem to reinforce them. Phrases often ending on high, prolonged notes also reiterate and emphasize the discourse. These are hints of the passionalization noted by Tatit, which residually works to bring more exaltation to the narrative. Regarding passionalization, Tatit clarifies:

> unlike the model of musical enunciation construction that values thematization, the passional tendency of expanding duration and frequency, combined with the prolongation of vowels and pauses between linguistic units, slows the tempo and diminishes the role of rhythmic pulses, enhancing the oscillations of melodic pitch. In the crafting of these profiles, interval leaps, permanence in high notes, and general ascensions are measured to produce vocal emission tensions reflecting the state of passion in the singing (Tatit, 1996, p. 94).

Regarding the arrangement, after the initial call, *Brasil Moreno* reveals itself as a samba accompanied by a brass section, strings, piano, drums, and pandeiro. As in *Aquarela*, the pandeiro exhibits a continuous performance amidst an orchestra that frequently presents itself with more prominent counterpoints compared to those found in *Aquarela*. The choir is activated in the second part, reinforcing the apotheotic and exultant tone through its force and intensity. However, the most significant element that highlights the connection between the two songs analyzed thus far is the presence of the musical motif found in *Aquarela*, here referred to as the *sonic signature of the nation*. This motif can sometimes be heard from the brass section, at other times from the strings (violins). It can be identified clearly in at least three moments: in the eight measures separating the introduction from the first sung notes, in the measures separating the first part from the second (between "Brasil, grande como o céu e o mar!" and "Vai, vai ouvir o teu sertão"), and right after the verse "Vai ver como te bate o coração". *Brasil Moreno* also mirrors *Aquarela* in terms of vocal interpretation. The singer, Cândido Botelho, a baritone, uses the techniques of *bel canto*, with all the possible embellishments and vocal inflections to transform the song into an operatic samba, invoking solemnity and grandeur in both performance and listening. Although *Brasil Moreno* diverges slightly from *Aquarela* – such as in its more elaborate arrangement – it still employs the same elements that mark an

[28] "Oh! Brazil, swaying in the corners/ Your samba the whole world will hear!"

apotheotic style. The poetic, musical, and performative parameters follow a similar trajectory. The arrangement leaves no doubt that *Brasil Moreno* is a continuation of the narrative begun by *Aquarela*.

Isto Aqui o que É?, released in 1942 by Odeon (record 12.112-Side B), is also part of this narrative line of exaltation. The central theme is the exposition of samba as a response to the question, a representative sample of what Brazil is capable of producing. The poetic speaker addresses anyone willing to listen, describing Brazil's qualities. This Brazil-nation that "canta e é feliz"[29] is characterized and distinguished from other nations by its sambas and the sway of the typical Brazilian morena's hips. It speaks of a strong and fearless race: "Que não tem medo de fumaça/E não se entrega não"[30]. When the poetic argument begins with the words "isto aqui é"[31], a semantic shift takes place. It not only provides an answer about what Brazil is metonymically, but it also establishes a way of describing what is happening and materializing in that performance. The samba being performed "there", whether understood as a festive gathering, as a musical genre or as a dance, is a creation, an artifact of Brazilian musical genius: "Isto aqui ô, ô / É um pouquinho de Brasil, Iaiá." Musically, despite the orchestration, the song presents itself as a little less solemn. Perhaps due to the more unrestrained percussion, it seems the legacy of the African-derived batuques has been revived with fewer restrictions. The orchestra is more discreet than in previous examples, which highlights the instruments responsible for the rhythm. The chorus calls for a samba circle and proposes a sense of collectivity, integrated and experienced in that moment of the song's performance. The melody does not present significant points of tension beyond those expected in the cadence (the key is G major), and the "atmosphere" is joyful and light-hearted – very much in tune with the spirit of a samba circle. The most evident point of melodic dialogue with the poetic parameter occurs when the lyrics shift the focus, highlighting the act of the *morena* stepping into the circle to samba: "Olha o jeito nas cadeiras que ela sabe dar/Olha o samba nos quadris que ela sabe dar/Olha o passo de batuque que ela sabe dar/Olha só o remelexo que ela sabe dar"[32]. The melody does not shift; it remains articulated through a pattern that implies the back-and-forth of two notes separated by a whole tone, using semiquavers to emulate the small and quick samba movements at that moment. The subtle vocal inflections – with the restrained use of vibrato, anticipation, and delay, maintaining the samba's rhythm – allow for a vocal performance more aligned with the traditional interpretation of samba. Taking all this into account, it is possible to say that the grandiosity of *Aquarela* or *Brasil Moreno* does not fully reappear in *Isto Aqui o que*

[29] "Sings and is happy".

[30] "That is not afraid of smoke / And doesn't give up".

[31] "This here is".

[32] "Look at the way she moves her hips/ Look at the samba in her sway/ Look at the steps she gives/ Look at her graceful movement."

É?. But before hastily concluding that there is a break from the paradigm "invented" by *Aquarela*, the brass instruments, respecting the key change and slight note variations, quickly bring back the musical motif identified as the *sonic signature of the nation*. By presenting this musical symbol as an integral part of the arrangement, *Aquarela* is referenced, and its musical, poetic, and aesthetic lineage is exposed. Whether to legitimize a choice or to challenge the aesthetic and ideological paradigm established by that song—which, despite favoring the mixed-race identity of Brazilians, performs the task of containing "Africanisms" in its musical structure – the arrangement comments on this by giving prominence to the percussion and responsorial chorus, signaling that this is, indeed, a samba, even if "adorned" with elements that may interfere with its reception.

Bahia Imortal is yet another song from the group of sambas aligned, in some way, with *Aquarela*. This samba is also part of the previously mentioned "*Bahian series*", which began with the batuque *No Taboleiro da Bahiana*, recorded by Odeon (record 11402, Side B) and released in November 1936, performed by Carmen Miranda and Luiz Barbosa, accompanied by the Pixinguinha & Luperce Miranda ensemble. The song's theme is the exaltation of Bahia and the Bahian woman. The narrator, speaking in the first person, praises the attributes of the "good land". They talk about important figures in Brazilian history, which, for them, began there: "Terra que foi o berço do Brasil"[33]. In the second part of the song, the narrator focuses on narrating and listing the qualities of the Brazilian *morena*. In other words, in a less "flattering" and more popular manner, it sings about the *morena sestrosa* from *Aquarela* in her more laid-back form. In this sort of "praise", it speaks of sensuality, the playful nature of the *mulata*, who is irresistible and leads one to sin: "Se é pecado roubar um beijinho só/ Eu vou ser pecador, juro que vou ser/ Oh, baiana faz isso comigo, não/ Quem peca não vai pro céu"[34]. The perspective is intentional, focusing on the physical and flirtatious aspect of the *mulata* who knows how to samba: "Gosto de ver o seu jeito de batucar/ As cadeiras bolindo, que é de amargar/ Oh, baiana, faz isso comigo, não/ Presta atenção e vai vendo como é/ Que a baiana dengosa, bate o pé"[35]. Initially, when Bahia is being exalted through the establishment of a relationship between the city and the nation, with a somewhat solemn tone, the poetic voice, to maintain the exalted tone, uses a refined lexicon with syntax that approaches a more formal, cultivated speech. When the second part begins, and the narrator reveals the essence of Bahia, it becomes clear that the primary interest is driven by libido. The narrator joins the dance, becoming enthusiastic and mesmerized by the swaying hips and sensuality of the *morena sestrosa*. The mood of the song oscillates between exultant moments

[33] "Land that was the cradle of Brazil".

[34] "If stealing a kiss is a sin / I'll be a sinner, I swear I will / Oh, Bahiana, don't do this to me / Sinners don't go to heaven."

[35] "I love to watch the way you batuca / Those hips swaying, it's overwhelming / Oh, Bahiana, don't do this to me / Pay attention and you'll see / How the flirtatious Bahiana stamps her foot."

and cheerful exuberance. The melody presents predictable moments of tension and release in line with the cadence. Except for the moment when a rhythmic alteration is introduced, modifying the character of the *samba* (which is promptly resumed), the focus is on a melodic pattern shaped by eighth and sixteenth notes. This pattern is responsible, once again, for the alignment between melody and lyrics, understood by Tatit as a form of thematization. This Also due to the inherent fluidity of *samba*, which operates with short metric units, articulating the melody through the syncopations that characterize it. In sections where the nation is explicitly exalted, the phrases end on prolonged high notes, emphasizing the exultant tone. However, an oddity arises in the second part, where the praise shifts to the *morena's* physical attributes. The melody adopts a more epic contour, with long high notes, more pronounced than in the stanzas praising Bahia (and, by extension, the nation). The arrangement is dominated by brass instruments, which cite the "the sonic signature of the nation" in the introduction and again in the bars, marking the transition between the first and second parts. The pandeiro and drums maintain a steady rhythm throughout the song, as seen in the other songs we've analyzed. There's a brief pause in the percussion when the samba breaks down into a homophonic accompaniment and a grandiloquent vocal performance. Once the samba returns, the pandeiro resumes, and the brass instruments offer brief counterpoints. The choir only appears emphatically at the end, providing an apotheotic conclusion. Thus, the arrangement and the dual vocalists – a woman with an ornamented, vibrato-rich voice responsible for the exultant parts and a man with a laid-back, playful interpretation – enhance the narrative, balancing between playful sensuality and solemn exaltation. This occurs primarily due to the choice of tempo changes and the shift in vocal interpretation, which moves from a section imbued with a certain solemnity into *samba*, a moment when the vocal interpretation 'relaxes' and plays with prosody, anticipating, delaying, and shifting rhythmic accentuation. The arrangement, in turn, reinforces and highlights the exaltation of the *morena* far more than the exhortation to the nation.

At least one more composition by Ary Barroso – among those recorded and released between 1937 and 1945 – signals and highlights in its performance the dialogue with *Aquarela do Brasil* through the citation of the sonic signature of the nation. This is considering the timeframe covered by the research, as the practice of referencing *Aquarela* through its most distinctive musical motif, particularly when addressing the state-nation, goes beyond the Vargas era and persists as a form of nationalist pride to this day. *Cena de Senzala* is one such example. A collaboration between Ary Barroso and George André, it was released in September 1941 by Odeon on the B-side of 78 RPM record nº. 12.034. As the title suggests, the song depicts the hardships and desires of enslaved Black people. The narrator conveys the enslaved person's yearning for freedom in a powerful cry: "Luanda". It references both the rhythms of the *senzala* (slave quarters) and their lamentation. The repetitive rhythmic and melodic construction of the introduction immerses us in a ritualistic world. After this brief

introduction, we are struck by a deep vocal interpretation, largely a cappella, later accompanied by a homophonic structure that reinforces the emotional, mournful tone of the song. There is an oscillation between the jubilation of the Black people during the *batuque* and the sorrow expressed in the sections that reveal their enslaved condition, intensified by what Tatit calls "passionalization". This formula of interpretative compatibility, which emphasizes sustained vocal emissions, highlighting intervallic leaps and deconstructing – or rather obstructing – the rhythmic sensation, can be identified in the sections where baritone Cândido Botelho pronounces "E o negro gritou: Luanda/ onde é que tu estás"[36] or in " Pela noite a dentro/Só se ouve o lamento do negro/ a chamar: Luanda"[37]. The singer, using all his vocal resources, vibrating and imposing his voice, solemnizes but also adds tension to his "pronunciation" by reaching for high notes near the limits of his vocal range, delivering almost a shout, intensifying the passion when calling for Luanda. Interspersed between these passionate segments of the interpretation is the *batuque*, the samba. During these moments, the chorus – responsible for mitigating the solemnity imposed by the baritone's voice – and the percussion take over, stepping back when the rhythm is "deconstructed" and the character shifts. Strings and winds are then activated to reinforce the enunciator's call for "Luanda". When, finally, the samba reappears in the last bars of the song ("Nego tá sambando/ e o batuque está fervendo")[38], the brass section repeats the *Aquarela* formula through its signature. Once this citation is made, the enunciator establishes a commentary by reminding that the history of Black people, their *batuques,* and laments are part of the history of this nation, which has an inextricable period of slavery. Indeed, the pacifying, unifying, and soothing tendencies contained in *Aquarela do Brasil* are here problematized and contested by exposing an unerasable past.

Final Considerations

We undertook the effort to analyze songs produced by Ary Barroso between 1937 and 1945 that, in some way, establish a dialogue with *Aquarela do Brasil*, either to reinforce or problematize it. Songs like *Carioquinha Brejeira*, *Viver assim não é vida*, *Na baixa do sapateiro*, *Salada Mixta*, *Ela não sabe o que diz*, and *No Taboleiro da Bahiana*, composed before *Aquarela do Brasil*, already anticipate elements that would come together in the samba-exaltação, which inaugurates the genre. *Aquarela* not only marked Ary's work but also inspired several other composers to reinforce its argument through citations and adoption of its paradigm. Among them are Assis Valente, Davi Nasser, and Alcir Pires Vermelho. In the same

[36] "And the Black man shouted: Luanda / Where are you?"

[37] "Pela noite a dentro/Só se ouve o lamento do negro/ a chamar: Luanda".

[38] "The Black man is dancing / and the *batuque* is heating up".

exaltative vein, we find songs like *Convite ao Samba*, *Meu país verdadeiro*, *Brasil Pandeiro*, *Brasil Novo*, *Brasil Gigante*, *Terra do Ouro*, and *Tudo tem o Brasil*.

Regarding Ary Barroso's samba-exaltação, the appropriation movement primarily occurred through the institutional apparatus maintained by the Estado Novo regime. This process involved capturing the imagery and representations provided by this musical interpretation, which was legitimized by a state discourse. *Aquarela* and other samba-exaltação songs benefited from a vast propaganda structure, which channeled and recruited a variety of symbols capable of conveying a political project while enhancing the spectacle and aestheticization of a policy guided by principles related to laborism, nationalism, and statism, implemented by the Getúlio Vargas dictatorship. It is not enough to understand that the state apparatus appropriated this discourse and began retransmitting and promoting it to comprehend the success and reach of this politicization of musical codes. The formula and conditions remain the same; it is a matter of action within the reception of messages, involving interpretative processes and negotiation between the autonomous entities involved in the transmission and reception of a text or discourse. However, the monumentalization of *Aquarela* is historically verifiable. Even today, songs that propose to speak about the nation often reference Ary Barroso's samba. The effectiveness of *Aquarela* as the sonic representation of the nation suggests that even though there is room for negotiation in how a message is consumed – allowing for different interpretations than those intended by the sender – this does not mean the intended message is always rejected. The sender's intention is part of the range of interpretative possibilities and may be accepted, but always through a negotiated process.

In the dense, orchestral, symphonic, and grandiose instrumentation of Ary Barroso's *sambas-exaltação*, the nationalist fervor sought to legitimize and reinforce the prevailing state project. It articulated, with notable vehemence, the poetic, sonic, and performative images of those songs in their task of portraying a cohesive, unified society free of fractures. These sambas were publicized with pomp and circumstance, often featuring grandiloquent arrangements and vocal performances, which downplayed negative aspects. A society was thus painted – its people shaped by a "cleansing" palette that harmonized differences and downplayed struggles. We observe the valorization of mestizaje (racial mixing), with "negrismos" – to use the term employed by Mário de Andrade – softened (which seems paradoxical given the aim to remove the pejorative connotation from *mestizo* identity), and the social challenges faced by a heterogeneous "people" ignored or overshadowed by the discourse. As appropriated, the *sambas-exaltação* echoed, in terms of the social composition of that imagined nation, the "repetition of a supposed common history" that sought to subject reality to "the abstraction of differences and the principle of forgetting an initial dissent, as a way of maintaining social unity and cohesion" (Miranda, 2004, p. 65), all in service of a particular worldview and political strategy.

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