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The Imaginary of Brazilian Popular Music

Ruben George Oliven

Resumo

Na primeira metade do século XX observa-se no Brasil uma proliferação de canções que retratam o imaginário da época. As canções que compõem a MPB (Música Popular Brasileira), nome dado ao conjunto de sambas, chorinhos e marchas carnavalescas daquela época privilegiam três temas: trabalho, mulher e dinheiro. O trabalho é rejeitado, exaltando-se a malandragem. A mulher é poderosa, sendo capaz de encorajar o homem a realizar coisas na rua porque é amado em casa, mas podendo também, por sua traição, imobilizá-lo. O dinheiro vale menos que o amor, mas é um bem necessário. Como é difícil ganhar o suficiente trabalhando, há uma simultaneidade da noção da crescente importância do dinheiro e a proposta de soluções mágicas que minimizem sua escassez.

Palavras-chave: Música Popular Brasileira, samba, imaginário brasileiro, trabalho, relações de gênero, dinheiro

Abstract

During the early half of the twentieth century there was in Brazil a proliferation of songs which depicted this period's imaginary. Songs that made up the Brazilian Popular Music (MPB, Música Popular Brasileira) – name given to the ensemble of sambas, chorinhos and Carnival marches for this period – foregrounded three themes: work, women, and money. Work is rejected, while malandragem is praised. Women are powerful, capable of either encouraging men to accomplish deeds on the streets because they are loved at home, or immobilizing them by betrayal. Money is worth less than love, but it is nonetheless a necessary good. Since it is difficult to earn enough from work, there is, at once, an increasing awareness of the importance of money and the proposal of magical solutions for minimizing its scarcity.

Keywords: Brazilian Popular Music, samba, Brazilian imaginary, work, gender relations, money

The Imaginary of Brazilian Popular Music

Ruben George Oliven

Samba and the telephone

As with other music genres, there is controversy over the first recorded song formally defined as samba. Generally, this is attributed to the famous song *Pelo Telefone*, which was registered in Brazil's National Library as belonging to this music genre by Donga and Mauro de Almeida in 1916.¹ In one of its versions (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cyq81SD--YA>), the song talks about a message delivered by telephone by Rio de Janeiro's chief of police, ordering police marshals to put an end to gambling in the city's downtown clubs. In its "popular" version, the first verses make a satire of the fact that, in Largo Carioca, right in the center of the city, people were playing roulette without the police doing anything about it (Sodré 1979: 54):

<i>The chief of police</i>	<i>O chefe da polícia</i>
<i>By telephone</i>	<i>Pelo telefone</i>
<i>Sent out news</i>	<i>Mandou me avisar</i>
<i>That in the Carioca</i>	<i>Que na Carioca</i>
<i>There is roulette</i>	<i>Tem uma roleta</i>
<i>For playing</i>	<i>Pra se jogar</i>

Besides the mention of money in reference to gambling, there are two other elements of modernity in this early samba song. The first one is an

¹ Cabral remarks that "There are those who claim that *Pelo Telefone* was not really the first samba to ever be recorded, but this is a question that only comes up during the heat of discussions. It cannot be denied that, before *Pelo Telefone*, other sambas were recorded which were not described as such on the record's seal, while other genres were recorded as samba which were not samba at all, and there were even recorded samba songs that were identified as such. It would not be difficult, then, to choose one of these records as the first samba song ever to be recorded, if *Pelo Telefone* were not the one to unleash the process by which samba would become the hegemonic music genre of songs recorded in Brazil" (Cabral 1996: 32-33).

explicit reference to the telephone – at that time, a symbol of technological progress. The second concerns the numerous controversies surrounding the authorship of *Pelo Telefone* and the fact that Donga, who was said often to appropriate other peoples' work, had been smart enough to register the song and lyrics in the National Library. That would be equivalent to filing a patent for an invention. At that time, there was not much concern about copyright, and oftentimes musical creation was a collective and anonymous process.² In this sense, samba emerged under the sign of money, technology, and the market, at the dawn of an emerging urban-industrial society and of an incipient cultural industry that took its first steps producing records and, from 1923 on, developing the radio.

Samba began to flourish in the twenties and matured during the thirties and forties. Up until the fifties, it was the hegemonic musical genre in Brazil; together with *chorinho*³ and *marcha carnavalesca*⁴, it formed what became known as MPB (*Música Popular Brasileira*, or Brazilian Popular Music) (Bastos 1995, Sandroni 2001, Vianna 1995, McCann 2004). This was a time of significant social and economic changes. Slavery, the foundation of Brazil's economy and society for three centuries, had been abolished not too long before (in 1888). Brazil had become a Republic (in 1889), and migration from rural to urban areas was on the rise. During the thirties and forties, urbanization spiked and industrialization gained new breath with the spread of wage labor (Oliven 1988a). There was growing monetization of social life, as well as a redefinition of gender roles along with a transition from the

2 In an essay called "Os Sambistas" written in the 1930's, poet Manuel Bandeira discussed the question of authorship of early samba songs. A few months after watching Sinhô "improvise" a samba song in the piano in 1929, he found a *cordel* by seu Candu published in 1927 which included the same chorus. Bandeira thus made an interesting reflection on the authorship of these cultural manifestations: "All this makes me think of how difficult it is to establish the authorship of these carioca samba songs which spring from no one knows where. Many times we are certain that it came from a Sinhô, who is royalty, but the truth is that the author is seu Candu, whom nobody knows. And who knows whether it really is by seu Candu after all? Possibly, behind seu Candu is someone who did not leave trace of his name in a samba which the entire city is going to sing. The surest thing to say is that whoever wrote such delicious chorus is neither A nor B, neither Sinhô nor Donga: it is the carioca, that is, someone from Espírito Santo [state], or Belém of Pará [state]". (Bandeira: 1993: 464-465).

3 *Chorinho* ("little cry" or "little lament") is an instrumental style that originated in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro. It has a fast rhythm characterized by improvisation, syncopation and counterpoint. Its original instruments are flute, guitar and *cavaquinho* (a small chordophone with four strings).

4 *Marcha de carnaval*, also known as *marchinha de carnaval*, is a popular music genre in carioca carnivals from the 1920's to 1960's. Some of them became classics, and were sung all across Brazil.

patriarchal to the nuclear type of family.

All these transformations and their consequences were present in popular music. During the thirties and forties – when an urban-industrial society emerged in Brazil – there was a proliferation of samba songs focusing on three themes that were often inter-related: work, women, and money (Oliven, 1999). It is on songs from this period that this paper will focus. It analyzes compositions which became classics and, as such, became part of the Brazilian imaginary during the early decades of the twentieth century, when the notion of *brasilidade* (Brazilianness) came into being (Oliven 1996). It is for this reason that Brazilian Popular Music is so crucial for the analysis of the Brazilian imaginary.

Most samba writers from this period are men, generally of humble origins and, oftentimes, descendents of slaves. Their compositions favor themes that found strong echo in a changing Brazilian society in which work, money and gender relations figured prominently. As put by Noel Rosa, one of Brazil's best known sambistas at the time, in an interview to the newspaper *O Globo* (31 Dec 1932): "Previously, the word samba had one synonym: woman. (...) Now, the *malandro*⁵ [rogue] is as much concerned with money as with women in his samba songs (...) after all, these are the only two things that matter in this world."

Why work?

Until the nineteenth century, manual labor in Brazil was considered a degrading activity, fit only for slaves. The attitude of "aversion to drudging work" – that is, rejection of work as anything positive – did not fade away with the end of slavery, but persisted well into the twentieth century. Even with the advent of industrialization, wage labor did not provide opportunities for significant social mobility since the social order continued to be marked by rigid class boundaries.

The thirties and forties in particular witnessed a proliferation of songs extolling *malandragem* – as a world view and survival strategy that rejected formal work. They expressed the refusal of some sectors of the popular

5 A *malandro* is generally an important male character in sambas, and the word is used in Brazilian society to identify a clever, easy-living trickster.

classes to submit to the discipline and monotony associated with the world of wage labor (Oliven, 1984). This is evident in the 1931 samba song *O que será de mim?* (What will become of me?), written by a devotee of *malandragem*, Ismael Silva (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5tKjYgBdAE>):

<i>If one day I am</i>	<i>Se eu precisar algum dia</i>
<i>Forced into drudging work</i>	<i>De ir para o batente</i>
<i>I don't know what will become of me</i>	<i>Não sei o que será</i>
<i>Because I live in malandragem</i>	<i>Pois vivo na malandragem</i>
<i>And there is no better life than that</i>	<i>E vida melhor não há</i>
.....
<i>Oh, there is no better life</i>	<i>Oi, não há vida melhor</i>
<i>There is no better life</i>	<i>Que vida melhor não há</i>
<i>Let them speak</i>	<i>Deixa falar quem quiser</i>
<i>Let them speak</i>	<i>Deixa quem quiser falar</i>
<i>Work is no good</i>	<i>O trabalho não é bom</i>
<i>There is no doubt about that</i>	<i>Ninguém pode duvidar</i>
<i>Oi, I will work only if I am forced to</i>	<i>Oi, trabalhar só obrigado</i>
<i>No one does it for pleasure</i>	<i>Por gosto ninguém vai lá</i>

Aversion to work, which is regarded as a source of suffering, and the extolling of *malandragem* as a lifestyle are quite explicit in this composition. These themes also appear in the 1931 samba *Nem é bom falar* (It is better not even to talk about it) by the same musician in partnership with Nilton Bastos, Francisco Alves and Noel Rosa. In it, worried composers fear that “Its better to keep quiet/ in case this life of pleasure comes to an end”, assuring us at the same time that “in this life/nobody will make me quit it”

The association between work, women and money appears even more clearly in the song *Caixa Econômica* (Savings Bank), recorded in 1933 by Orestes Barbosa and Antônio Nássara (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uD_MEzFxoPg&feature=related):

<i>You want to secure your peace and quiet</i>	<i>Você quer comprar o seu sossego</i>
<i>Watching me kill myself at work</i>	<i>Me vendo morrer num emprego</i>
<i>Just so you can enjoy yourself</i>	<i>Pra depois então gozar</i>
<i>Life is quite comical</i>	<i>Esta vida é muito cômica</i>
<i>I am not the Savings Bank</i>	<i>Eu não sou Caixa Econômica</i>
<i>Which has interest to collect</i>	<i>Que tem juros a ganhar</i>
<i>And what is it you want to buy, hum?</i>	<i>E você quer comprar o quê, hem?</i>

*You say I am a bum
Because I don't go to work
I am not a checkbook
For you to get your cash
If you live without worries
Always playing chic
Always in the front row*

*My grandpa died in the struggle
And my father, poor man
Was exhausted by toil
That's why I was born tired
And, to be fair,
I declare to those who work
That my laziness is the way I am
Inherited from my ancestors*

*Você diz que eu sou moleque
porque não vou trabalhar
Eu não sou livro de cheque
pra você ir descontar
Se você vive tranqüila
Sempre fazendo chiquê
Sempre na primeira fila
Me fazendo de guichê*

*Meu avô morreu na luta
E meu pai, pobre coitado
Fatigou-se na labuta
Por isso eu nasci cansado
E pra falar com justiça
Eu declaro aos empregados
Ter em mim esta preguiça
Herança de antepassado*

The story told in this samba is driven by a woman. It is she who accuses the narrator of being childish for not wanting to work, and he defends himself on two grounds. First, by arguing that work is useless for the working classes (“My grandpa died in the struggle / And my father, poor man / Was exhausted by toil”). Laziness is put as a hereditary trait manifested since birth – something for which, therefore, he is not responsible (“That’s why I was born tired/ And, to be fair,/I declare to those who work/ That my laziness is the way I am/ Inherited from my ancestors.”) The second line of defense is in fact a counter-attack, expressed in the accusation that the woman is an insatiable consumer (“Always playing chic”) with a predatory character (“I am not a checkbook / For you to get cash”) inasmuch as she wishes to gain stability by making her man enter the world of order, represented by wage labor (“You want to secure your peace and quiet / Watching me kill myself at work”). The man also refuses any association between himself and everything that has to do with money (“I am not a savings bank / Which has interest to collect” and “I am not a checkbook”). Besides “aversion to drudging work”, other themes are recurrent in malandragem songs. First, there is chronic lack of money. The malandro is always de prontidão (literally, readiness, or lacking money) because miserê (misery) looms large. In some of Noel Rosa’s best known compositions such as *Com que Roupa?* (With which outfit?), O

Orvalho Vem Caindo (Dew comes falling) Fita Amarela (Yellow ribbon) lack of money is ever-present. Other common subjects are braveness, cleverness, categoria (style), and scams. These are means of surviving without work which the malandro deploys in his daily affairs.

In Acertei no Milhar (I hit the jackpot), a samba written by Wilson Batista and Geraldo Pereira in 1940 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eOpqjyX6I>), hitting the jackpot represents the ideal of salvation:

*Etelvina, my darling!
What's the matter, Jorginho?
I hit the jackpot
I won 500 bucks
I am no longer going to work
I'll give all my old clothes to the poor
We can destroy all the furniture
This instant
Hand them over to me*

*Etelvina
We'll have another honeymoon
You'll be a fine lady
You'll live in a big hotel
And I will buy a name somewhere or other
Of a marquis, Dom Jorge de Veiga, of a viscount
A French teacher, mon amour
I'm gonna change your name
To Madame Pompadour*

*At last, now I am happy
I will travel all over Europe up to Paris*

And our children, hum?

*- Oh, what the hell!
- I will put them in a boarding school
Call Mané from the grocery shop
Because I don't want
To be in debt to anybody any longer
I'll buy a blue jet
To travel around South America*

*Etelvina, minha filha!
Que há, Jorginho?
Acertei no milhar
Ganhei 500 contos
Não vou mais trabalhar
E me dê toda roupa velha aos pobres
E a mobília podemos quebrar
Isso é pra já
Passe pra cá*

*Etelvina
Vai ter outra lua de mel
Você vai ser madame
Vai morar num grande hotel
Eu vou comprar um nome não sei onde
De marquês, Dom Jorge de Veiga, de Visconde
Um professor de francês, mon amour
Eu vou trocar seu nome
Pra madame Pompadour*

*Até que enfim agora eu sou feliz
Vou percorrer Europa toda até Paris*

E os nossos filhos, hein?

*- Oh, que inferno!
- Eu vou pô-los num colégio interno
Me telefone pro Mané do armazém
Porque não quero ficar
Devendo nada a ninguém
Eu vou comprar um avião azul
Pra percorrer a América do Sul*

*But then, suddenly, all of a sudden
Etelvina called me
It's time for work
Etelvina woke me up
It was all a dream, folks*

*Aí de repente, mas de repente
Etelvina me chamou
Está na hora do batente
Etelvina me acordou
Foi um sonho, minha gente*

The background for the song is prontidão and the difficulties that stem from it, such as having to work, debts to pay, and so forth. The way out is in the world of dreams. The narrator dreams that he got a lot of money from gambling, and quickly declares that he is no longer going to work. A world of fantasies follows such as a new honeymoon, international trips, living in a hotel, children in a boarding school, brand new furniture, paying off debts, and so forth. From being a mere worker the narrator climbs up the social ladder to become not a member of the bourgeoisie, but a nobleman. All this will be brought about by money. But a lot of money is only possible by hitting the jackpot, and, as discloses in the end, that was all but a dream. The woman is the object of this fantasy: it is to her that the dream will be told, it is she who will become a madame, it is also she who will call him back to reality – that is, to work. The “aversion to drudging work”, which characterizes the malandro, runs through the entire composition.

It is worth remarking that one of the composers of *Acertei no Milhar*, Wilson Batista, was involved in a famous controversy with Noel Rosa that started when the former composed *Lenço no Pescoço* (Scarf Round my Neck) in 1932 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmD6DozAGnc>):

*My hat askew
Dragging my clogs
My scarf round my neck
My razor in my pocket
I pass by swinging
I tease and challenge
I am proud
Of being such a loafer*

*Meu chapéu do lado
Tamanco arrastando
Lenço no pescoço
Navalha no bolso
Eu passo gingando
Provoco e desafio
Eu tenho orgulho
Em ser tão vadio*

*I know they talk about
These ways of mine
I see those who work
Living in misery
I am a loafer*

*Sei que eles falam
Deste meu proceder
Eu vejo quem trabalha
Andar no miserê
Eu sou vadio*

*Because I had a tendency for it
I remember, as a child
I would play samba-canção songs by ear
Not with me
I want to see who is right*

*Porque tive inclinação
Eu me lembro, era criança
Tirava samba-canção
Comigo não
Eu quero ver quem tem razão*

*And they play
And you sing
And I won't give it away*

*E eles tocam
E você canta
E eu não dou*

This samba song, which exalts the malandro (“I am proud of being such a loafer”), is an explicit and conscious rejection of work (“I see those who work living in misery”). Besides pennilessness and braveness, another image present here is the well-worn stereotype of the idle Brazilian (“I am a loafer because I had a tendency”). It is as if there were a Brazilian national character, one of its atavistic types being the character Macunaíma whose first words soon after being born were “Boy, how lazy I feel!...” (Andrade 1993). The malandro appears as a hero with no character, a source of pride for the “Brazilian race” and founder of a new logic (“I am proud of being such a loafer”): in contrast with the Protestant ethic a new malandro ethic.

Noel Rosa was a typical bohemian, something quite common among certain sectors of the white middle class to which we belonged. But despite his sympathy for, and networks with, the malandragem, his petit bourgeois origin might have led him to associate the image of the malandro showcased in *Lenço no Pescoço* with lowly, violent, and dangerous characters. Thus Noel decided to make ironies with Wilson Batista when he wrote the samba *Rapaz Folgado* (Impudent lad) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoQcm02S60o>); in it, he criticizes Batista’s “wild” view of malandragem and tells the young composer to put on shoes and a tie,

*Stop dragging your clogs
Because clogs are not sandals
Get that white scarf off your neck
Buy yourself some shoes and a tie
Throw away this razor which weighs you down
As well as the hat tipped to one side
I want you to escape from the police
By writing a samba-canção song
I have already given you paper and pencil*

*Deixa de arrastar o seu tamanco
Pois tamanco nunca foi sandália
Tira do pescoço o lenço branco
Compra sapato e gravata
Joga fora essa navalha que te atrapalha
Com o chapéu do lado deste rata
Da polícia eu quero que escapes
Fazendo um samba-canção
Já te dei papel e lápis*

*Find yourself a girlfriend and a guitar
Malandro is a defeatist word
Which is only good for
Devaluing the sambista
I'm telling civilized folks
To stop calling you a malandro
But just an impudent lad*

*Arranja um amor e um violão
Malandro é palavra derrotista
Que só serve pra tirar
Todo valor do sambista
Proponho ao povo civilizado
Não te chamar de malandro
E sim de rapaz folgado*

The malandro is here seen negatively (“Malandro is a defeatist word”); instead, he suggests a mild term (“I’m telling the civilized folks / To stop calling you a malandro / But just an impudent lad”). The controversy involving Noel Rosa and Wilson Batista may be seen not only as a dispute between two composers with different social backgrounds, but also between two conceptions of samba. While Wilson represented the samba de morro (“samba from the hills”, written in the hillside slums and rooted in the world the black urban poor), Noel – his ties with the popular sambistas notwithstanding – represented the samba de asfalto (“samba from the asphalt”, written in middleclass neighborhoods with a greater participation of whites). Another of his songs involved in the controversy with Wilson Batista, *Feitiço Decente* (Decent spell), was considered racist by Caetano Veloso, one of Brazil’s most important contemporary composers. But this accusation might have been somewhat misplaced, as ethnomusicologist Carlos Sandroni has argued (see http://www.idelberavelar.com/archives/2008/07/caetano_veloso_e_carlos_san-droni_polemizam_sobre_noel_rosa.php).

These and other compositions from that period see work as an institution which should be avoided and the incompatibility between the world of work and that of pleasure, where pleasure is almost always associated with women. The female figure is indeed vital, just as it is ambivalent. As a lover, she is a potential source of pleasure but also of sorrow if she leaves her man and makes a fool of him. In the opposite pole, as wife and mother, women are not so much sources of pleasure but of family duties, acting as agents of the reality principle – that is, by symbolizing the need to provide for the home as well as the monotony of daily routine (as in the Chico Buarque’s 1971 samba *Cotidiano* [Day-to-day]) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FB4IaqWITB8>).

This image of the woman as a token of order and a reminder of the need for man to join the productive process is also present in *Capricho de Rapaz Solteiro* (A bachelor’s caprice), a 1933 samba by Noel Rosa:

*Never again will this woman
See me working
He who lives for samba
Lives the way he likes
He'll never die of hunger
In this city of Rio de Janeiro
To be a malandro
Is a bachelor's caprice*

*Nunca mais esta mulher
Me vê trabalhando
Quem vive sambando
Leva a vida
Para o lado que quer
De fome não se morre
Neste Rio de Janeiro
Ser malandro
É capricho de rapaz solteiro*

These lyrics foreground aversion to work, which is regarded as a burden. They express the (male) pleasure that is only possible by escaping drudging work and opting for malandragem. This is regarded as a caprice which is accessible only to bachelors, since women are imagined to push man towards the monotony of work. However, once the decision is made in favor of pleasure, the solution to the issue of survival is faced in magical terms: “He who lives for samba lives the way he wants / He’ll not die of hunger in this city of Rio de Janeiro”). In other words, this is a caprice which cannot be enjoyed by all.

Even the option for work is not without its own problems. But the opposition between capital and labor is not present; rather, there is a displacement of this conflict, and its transformation into another kind of problematic. This is shown in *Izaura*, a 1949 song by Herivelto Martins and Roberto Roberti (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwJ5eR-lqls>).

*Ai, ai, ai, Izaura
Today I cannot stay
If I fall into your arms
No alarm clock
Will wake me up
I will go to work*

*Ai, ai, ai, Izaura
Hoje eu não posso ficar
Se eu cair nos seus braços
Não há despertador
Que me faça acordar
Eu vou trabalhar*

*Work is a duty
Everyone has to respect this
I will be back on Sunday
Your caresses are so good
No one can deny
If you want me to I'll stay
But that will harm me
I will go to work*

*O trabalho é um dever
Todos devem trabalhar
No domingo eu vou voltar
Seu carinho é muito bom
Ninguém pode contestar
Se você quiser eu fico
Mas vai me prejudicar
Eu vou trabalhar*

Even though this samba song talks about work, the opposition between labor and capital is turned into a conflict between work and pleasure. This opposition not only ignores relations within a class society, but deems it impossible to conciliate the spheres of work and pleasure. This could draw on the idea of a “tropical culture” where principles operating in other lands would not take hold. This view had been identified by Oswald de Andrade in the early twentieth century: according to him, in the tropics, the antipode of the bourgeois would not be the proletarian, but the bohemian.

The lyrics are marked by a firmly productivist decision (“I will go to work”), which situates the narrator at the pole of order. But the entire composition is also pervaded by a view of work as something grievous, alienating and exogenous to man (“Work is a duty / Everyone has to respect this”), rather than as a relation of men among themselves and with nature.

The lyrics also evoke the Biblical myth of the fall. In Eden, man and nature formed a whole; with original sin, induced by Eve, man is condemned to earn his bread through his own sweat. One therefore needs to work, to transform and control nature with the aid of other men. There is in this song a sharp dichotomy between work and pleasure, and it is significant that pleasure is displaced to Sundays – precisely, the only day when man is not supposed to work and therefore to act upon nature. Only then, there would be room for pleasure. Any other day, “to stay” (choose pleasure) would mean to be “harmed”.

Powerful women

In the male imaginary as depicted in Brazilian Popular Music, it is the woman who figures as a pivot in the conflict between need (or the obligation to work) and the urge for pleasure. As we have seen, she plays both roles at once. In the first, she stands for the world of order, encapsulated in the family institution, a symbol of the need for the breadwinner to bring home the bread and of the monotony of daily routine. In the opposite pole, as a lover, she is a potential source of pleasure. In this case, however, she is a dangerous persona: away from the world of order, she may easily abandon man and make of him an *otário* (fool), the reversal of the *malandro*.

Popular music is particularly suitable for an analysis of male representations on gender relations in Brazil, since most composers are men. Indeed,

MPB is one of the few arenas where men feel free to speak their minds about their feelings towards women. While in most other kinds of public discourse a man seeks to convey an image of strength and superiority vis-à-vis the opposite sex, in music he may be frank about his anxieties and fears, his weaknesses and pains, his desires. Quite often, what emerges is the picture of a fragile and helpless creature, who seems to have suffered irremediable losses.

As early as 1928, Sinhô, the “King of Samba”, spoke of men’s weakness in the samba *Gosto que me Enrosco* (I like being illuded when I hear you say) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFkgLyfRxqs>):

<i>I like being illuded when I hear you say</i>	<i>Gosto que me enrosco de ouvir dizer</i>
<i>That the weaker part is the woman</i>	<i>Que a parte mais fraca é a mulher</i>
<i>But man, with all his strength,</i>	<i>Mas o homem com toda sua fortaleza</i>
<i>Descends from nobility</i>	<i>Desce da nobreza</i>
<i>And does whatever she wants</i>	<i>E faz o que ela quer</i>
<i>They say the woman is the weaker part</i>	<i>Dizem que a mulher é a parte fraca</i>
<i>In this I cannot believe</i>	<i>Nisto é que eu não posso acreditar</i>
<i>Between kisses, hugs, and caresses</i>	<i>Entre beijos e abraços e carinhos</i>
<i>A man who is without [money]</i>	<i>O homem não tendo</i>
<i>May very well go about stealing</i>	<i>É bem capaz de ir roubar</i>

Berlinck suggested the prevalence of three female images in the samba lyrics he analyzed: the “domestic”, the “piranha”, and the “oneiric”. The first one is the submissive and passive woman, dedicated to the home, a server of her man, and who orders social relations and organizes the daily routine. The second is a woman of easy living, who satisfies her bohemian man but who is also characterized by betrayal and by unsettling social relations. The third one is a non-existent in the real world, a purely romantic invention (Berlinck 1976). One may argue that these three types, as various facets of the same picture, are in fact conflated in the MPB imaginary (Oliven 1988b).

The “domestic” paradigm is generally represented by Emília, recorded in 1941 (but most probably written before that) by Wilson Batista and Haroldo Lobo (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qEMcuy37FU>), and by Ai que saudades da Amélia (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRciNzm4PYY>),

6 Piranha is a voracious fresh water fish with very sharp teeth. Attacking in shoals, it is able to devour a person or even a cow attempting to cross a river in the Amazon area. It is a Brazilian word for a prostitute or a licentious woman.

recorded in that same year by Mário Lago and Ataulfo Alves. It is worth while fully reproducing the lyrics:

Emília

*I want a woman
Who knows how to do the laundry and cook;
Who, early in the morning,
Wakes me up when it is time for work.*

*There is only one
And without her I cannot live in peace.
Emília, Emília, Emília
I no longer can.*

*Nobody knows as she does
How to prepare my coffee.
I don't mean to demean the others
But Emília is the woman.
My Lord knows how much
I miss her.
Emília, Emília, Emília
I no longer can*

Emília

*Eu quero uma mulher
que saiba lavar e cozinhar;
que, de manhã cedo,
me acorde na hora de trabalhar*

*Só existe uma
e sem ela eu não vivo em paz.
Emília, Emília, Emília
eu não posso mais.*

*Ninguém sabe igual a ela
preparar o meu café.
Não desfazendo das outras,
Emília é mulher.
Papai do céu é quem sabe
a falta que ela me faz.
Emília, Emília, Emília
Eu não posso mais*

Oh, how I miss Amélia

*I've never seen so many demands
Nor anyone who does what you do to me.
You don't know what it is to have consciousness,
You don't see I am just a poor lad.*

*You can only think of luxury and wealth,
You desire everything that you see.
Oh, my God, how I miss Amélia,
She was a real woman.*

*Sometimes she would starve next to me
And would appreciate not having anything to eat.
And, whenever she saw me annoyed, she would say:
"My son, what are we to do?"
Amélia did not have any vanity,
Amélia was a real woman*

Ai que saudades da Amélia

*Nunca vi fazer tanta exigência
nem fazer o que você me faz.
Você não sabe o que é consciência,
não vê que eu sou um pobre rapaz.*

*Você só pensa em luxo e riqueza,
tudo o que você vê, você quer.
Ai, meu Deus, que saudades da Amélia,
aquilo sim é que era mulher.*

*Às vezes passava fome ao meu lado
e achava bonito não ter o que comer.
E quando me via contrariado, dizia:
"meu filho, que se há de fazer?"
Amélia não tinha a menor vaidade,
Amélia é que era mulher de verdade*

The most general aspect highlighted in these classic sambas is the domestic character of the female figures, their submission and passivity. Another trait is also fundamental: the security they represent. They are anchor-women, as well as compass-women, who “settle” men and give them a direction. This idea is further reinforced by the presence, in both songs, of a clear projection of the motherly figure. Amélia calls the narrator “my son”, and Emília performs very motherly tasks: she wakes him up, prepares his coffee like no one else, and so forth.

It is interesting to note how these two exceptional women are absent, possibly dead. They stand for a standard that no longer exists, which conjures up a great void. They are compared with other women, who are never capable of equaling these two mythic figures.

This type of woman, besides being unassuming, provides men with emotional security. Men, on their turn, appear in MPB as needy beings, victims of irreparable loss and in search of a mythic figure to offer them unconditional love, the vital substance (mother’s milk?) that secures their very existence. In a 1940 samba by Ataulfo Alves and Roberto Martins, “Woman makes man”, the composition and its title suggest that women are the drive behind man’s success.

But, if it is woman who makes man, she also has the power to unmake him, and that is where danger lies. She is indeed regarded as very powerful, as the vital substance that animates man so he can accomplish things, so he can be brave in the streets because he is loved at home. By the same token, when she is not there, the energy flow that man needs to pursue his struggle is cut off. She may stand either for the daily routine, the obligation to work, and pleasure. She may be associated both with nature in all its purity and with money in all its filthiness.

That is why among the key themes of samba songs from this period is the fear of being abandoned, betrayal and vengeance, and these are all linked to pleasure, work, and money.

The association between male work and female desertion takes on a classic form in *Oh! Seu Oscar*, a samba by Wilson Batista and Ataulfo Alves recorded in 1939 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ld1ZPaTULBQ>):

*I got home tired from work
And the neighbor told me at once:
-Oh! Seu Oscar
It's been half an hour
Since your wife went out
And left a note
The note said:
I no longer can
I want to live in the orgy*

*Cheguei cansado do trabalho
Logo a vizinha me falou:
- Oh! Seu Oscar
Tá fazendo meia hora
Que sua mulher foi-se embora
E um bilhete deixou
O bilhete assim dizia:
“Não posso mais
Eu quero é viver na orgia”*

*I did everything for her well-being
I even ended up in the docks
Sacrificing my body night and day
But it was all in vain
She is, she belongs to the orgy
Yes... I stopped!*

*Fiz tudo para ter seu bem-estar
Até no cais do porto eu fui parar
Martirizando o meu corpo noite e dia
Mas tudo em vão
Ela é, é da orgia
É... parei!*

Oscar is a character who “demonstrates” the uselessness of work. He works his hardest to give his wife a comfortable life, even by mortifying his own body as a longshoreman in the docks. But all this effort is useless, because his wife, in an utmost display of ingratitude, leaves him for the “orgy”, and that immobilizes him. The narrator is turned into an authentic fool, inasmuch as, in retribution for his effort and labor, his woman abandons him for a life of pleasure outside their home.

The accusations and complaints against women are common in songs from this period, often portraying work as an imposition by women upon men.

Noel Rosa has sambas where women are compared to money and bank interests. This is what we see in *Positivismo*, co-authored with Orestes Barbosa and released in 1933 (http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=positivismo+noel+rosa&q=positivismo+no):

*The truth, my love, lives deep down a well
It is Pilate in the Bible who tells us
And he also died because he had a neck,
The author of Paris's guillotine*

*A verdade, meu amor, mora num poço
É Pilatos lá na Bíblia em nos diz
E também faleceu por ter pescoço
O autor da guilhotina de Paris*

Go ahead, my dear proud woman

Vai orgulhosa querida

7 Orgia has a slightly different meaning from the English orgy. It is best translated as “life of pleasure and abandon”.

*But listen to this lesson
In the uncertain exchange of life
The pound is the heart*

*Mas aceita esta lição
No câmbio incerto da vida
A libra é que é o coração*

*Love comes as principle, order as basis
Progress should come in the end
You rejected this law by Auguste Comte
And decided to be happy without me*

*O amor vem por princípio, a ordem por base
O progresso é que deve vir por fim
Desprezaste esta lei Auguste Comte
E foste ser feliz longe de mim*

*Go ahead, heart which does not pulse
With your exorbitant interest
To turn yet another pound
Into a floating debt*

*Vai coração que não vibra
Com teu juro exorbitante
Transformar mais outra libra
Em dívida flutuante*

*Intrigue is born with a small coffee
Which one drinks to see who's going to pay
So I'll never again have to taste your poison
I've decided to poison myself*

*A intriga nasce num café pequeno
Que se toma para ver quem vai pagar
Para não sentir mais o teu veneno
Foi que eu já resolvi me envenenar*

The title of this song is an explicit reference Auguste Comte's positivist philosophy, which enjoyed great influence in Brazil from the late nineteenth to the early years of the twentieth century. The narrator accuses the woman of forgetting the positivist motto ("Love as principle, order as basis, and progress as aim") and thus abandoning him.

Life is compared to an uncertain exchange operation, in which the heart, instead of being responsible for love and affect, is equaled to the pound sterling – at that time, the strongest currency in the international financial system. That is why the woman has a heart which behaves like the stock exchange, and becomes so poisonous that her man decides to poison himself. In this samba, the woman is associated with anti-love, abandonment, money, and finally with poison.

The theme of revenge is also vaguely hinted at through the narrator's suicide, the way he eventually finds to escape his woman's machinations. Revenge is, by the way, a key topic in sambas from this period. It is the fruit of abandonment and betrayal. If woman makes man, she can also unmake him. Thus we see here a "Delilah complex" in which Samson, after having been betrayed by a woman and blinded by the Philistines, knocked everything down.

The most typical composer of this theme in MPB is Lupicínio Rodrigues. He is the par excellence minstrel of jealousy, formulating what came to be called *fenomenologia da cornitude* (phenomenology of cuckoldry). *Nervos de Aço* (Nerves of steel), first recorded in 1947 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MBYVS9mhvzU>), inaugurated a series of compositions addressing the topic of *dor de cotovelo* (jealousy). In it, helplessness caused by abandonment is the dominant theme:

<i>Do you know what it is to have a love</i>	<i>Você sabe o que é ter um amor</i>
<i>Sir?</i>	<i>Meu senhor?</i>
<i>To be crazy about a woman</i>	<i>Ter loucura por uma mulher</i>
<i>And then finding this love</i>	<i>E depois encontrar esse amor</i>
<i>Sir</i>	<i>Meu senhor</i>
<i>In the arms of another man</i>	<i>Nos braços de outro qualquer</i>
<i>Do you know what it is to have a love</i>	<i>Você sabe o que é ter um amor</i>
<i>Sir?</i>	<i>Meu senhor?</i>
<i>Willing to die for it</i>	<i>E por ele quase morrer</i>
<i>And then finding it in some arms</i>	<i>E depois encontrá-lo em um braço</i>
<i>Which can't even be part of mine?</i>	<i>Que nem um pedaço</i>
	<i>Do meu, pode ser</i>
 <i>There are those with nerves of steel</i>	
<i>No blood running in their veins</i>	<i>Há pessoas com nervos de aço</i>
<i>And no heart</i>	<i>And no heart</i>
<i>Sem sangue nas veias</i>	<i>But I don't know if had they been through what</i>
<i>E sem coração</i>	<i>I've been through</i>
<i>Mas não sei se passando o que eu passo</i>	<i>They might somehow react</i>
<i>Talvez não lhes venha qualquer reação</i>	<i>I don't know whether what I have in my breast</i>
<i>Eu não sei se o que eu trago no peito</i>	<i>Is jealousy, spite, friendship or horror</i>
<i>É ciúme, despeito, amizade ou horror</i>	<i>I just know that whenever I see her</i>
<i>Eu só sei que quando eu a veja</i>	<i>I long for death or pain</i>
<i>Me dá um desejo de morte ou de dor</i>	

In this song, there is no reference to work, money or anything else: the subject is woman tout court. And this is a woman who arouses an overwhelming kind of love. But this woman, who stirs such an intense feeling, betrays. The feeling of abandonment is so great that not even “people with nerves of steel, no blood running through their veins, and no heart” would fail to react if they were to experience what the narrator went through. It is this state of affairs that triggers a desire for revenge. Indeed, *Vingança*

(Revenge) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXFginzWtFc>) is the title of one of Lupicínio's most popular songs, recorded in 1951. It is significant that both Nervos de Aço and Vingança enjoyed great commercial success at a time when selling records in Brazil was much harder than it is today.

Money, what for?

Samba was born singing about money. As indicated early on in this article, the first verses of the “popular” version of Pelo Telefone allude to money by making a satire of the fact that right in downtown Rio de Janeiro (then the capital of Brazil) people played the roulette without the police doing anything about it.

It is claimed that Sinhô, the “King of Samba”, took part in the composition of this song. But even though he is mentioned in the lyrics, he was not registered as one of its authors (Alencar 1981). One of the places where Sinhô used to hang out was the famous house of Aunt Ciata, a woman from the state of Bahia who gathered musicians in Rio de Janeiro during the early twentieth century. Pelo Telefone was written there, and it was also there that Sinhô realized that “composing sambas could bring money, prestige and polemics, three things he greatly enjoyed. (...) His favorite topics were day-to-day activities and love stories, with a particular stress on money and women, his paramount concerns in real life” (Severiano 1988).

Sinhô's exclusion from the authorship of Pelo Telefone might have caused him to withdraw from the group that gathered at Aunt Ciata's house, and sparked the debates he waged with the group of baiano (from Bahia) composers in Rio de Janeiro. In 1918, he released Quem são Eles (Who are they), his first Carnival success. This song triggered a polemic with the group of baiano musicians from Rio de Janeiro. One of the strophes goes like this:

*You don't need to ask
I won't give it to you
I don't have any money
But I can steal some*

*Não precisa pedir
Que eu vou dar
Dinheiro não tenho
Mas vou roubar*

The topic of money appears in this song en passant, in between other issues as if it were something of lesser importance. The narrator lacks money, and in order to get it he will not work (something considered dishonorable)

but steal. Inasmuch as he presents himself as detached from material concerns, it is implicit that it is a woman who is asking him for money, and that she is not indifferent to financial matters.

O Pé de Anjo (Angel foot), a Carnival marcha recorded in 1920 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JboqkLrrI8U>), was one of Sinhô's greatest successes. In it, besides taking forward the polemic with his foe, the "King of Samba" talks about women and money in one of the strophes:

<i>The woman and the chicken</i>	<i>A mulher e a galinha</i>
<i>Are two selfish animals:</i>	<i>São dois bichos interesseiros:</i>
<i>The chicken for corn</i>	<i>A galinha pelo milho</i>
<i>And the woman for money</i>	<i>E a mulher pelo dinheiro</i>

The woman is compared to the chicken which is always pecking, and she is regarded as a selfish, money-consuming creature. The idea is that while men stand above material interests, women are constantly bringing up such an ignoble topic as money. Xisto Bahia, one of the precursors of Brazilian Popular Music, concluded *Isto é Bom* (This is good), a marcha written in 1880 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iUqorvESjQI>) for a music hall performance by saying, "Whoever wants good things / Should not love money".

In the marcha *Amor Sem Dinheiro* (Love without money), a great success in the 1926 Carnival, Sinhô discusses the relation between money and love by showing how impossible it is to live love fully without money:

<i>Love, love,</i>	<i>Amor, amor</i>
<i>Love without money, honey</i>	<i>Amor, sem dinheiro, meu bem</i>
<i>Has no value</i>	<i>Não tem valor</i>
<i>Love without money</i>	<i>Amor sem dinheiro</i>
<i>Is a flash in the pan</i>	<i>É fogo de palha</i>
<i>Is a house with no owner</i>	<i>É casa sem dono</i>
<i>Where the scum lives</i>	<i>Em que mora a canalha</i>
<i>Love, love, etc.</i>	<i>Amor, amor, etc.</i>
<i>Love without money</i>	<i>Amor sem dinheiro</i>
<i>Is a withered flower</i>	<i>É flor que murchou</i>
<i>Verses that don't rhyme</i>	<i>São quadras sem rima</i>
<i>Take me and I'll go</i>	<i>Me leva que eu vou</i>

Love, love etc.

Amor, amor, etc

Love without money

Amor sem dinheiro

Is sugarcane with no juice

É cana sem caldo

A frog in the pond

É sapo no brejo

Singing wearily

Que canta cansado

The song's argument is clear. Love requires a financial basis, without which it is no more than "a flash in the pan". It is interesting to note however that the same Sinhô released in 1928 a *partido alto* (improvised) samba⁸ called *Que Vale a Nota sem o Carinho da Mulher* (What is money good for without the caresses of a woman) which goes in the opposite direction. In the first verse, he proclaims the supremacy of love over money:

Love! Love!

Amor! Amor!

Is not for those who want it

Não é para quem quer

What is a bill good for, my dear

De que vale a nota, meu bem

Without the pure caresses of a woman?

Sem o puro carinho da mulher?

(Whenever she wants it)

(quando ela quer)

The title condenses the meaning of the song. It affirms the value of love over money, and that the latter cannot accomplish anything without the caresses of a woman. There is a pervading tension in songs of this period that deal with money. On the one hand, everyone knows that, in an increasingly commercialized society such as Brazil's in that period, money is needed to fulfill one's wishes. But since it is difficult for poor men to earn much through manual labor, they express their sour grapes by claiming that affection is much more important than wealth. These compositions from the early twentieth century are marked by the co-presence of an awareness that money is increasingly important, and the belief that affective and magical solutions can minimize scarcity. In this period, moreover, money is increasingly associated with the female figure. She can be either the Emília ou Amélia who do not complain and eventually support the *malandro*, or the housewife who is always insisting with her husband about the need to bring money home. She

8 *Partido alto* is a type of improvised samba characterized by the percussive beat of the *pandeiro* (an instrument played with the palm of the hand). It usually has two parts: a *refrão* (refrain) sang by a chorus formed by the group of persons attending the performance, and the *versos* (verses) soloed by performers who often compete among themselves.

can also be the piranha who pretends to love, but in fact is only interested in money.

A common theme in this period is woman's interest for money and the pressure she puts on man for getting it. The men reply is that they will get some, but that this is less important than all the affection they have to offer. This becomes clear in *Dinheiro não há* (There is no money) by Benedito Lacerda and H. Alvarenga, recorded in 1932 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBo_tvcAxeo):

*There she comes, weeping
What does she want?
Certainly not a blow*

*Lá vem ela chorando
O que é que ela quer?
Pancada não é*

*I know
A woman from the orgy
When she begins to cry
Wants money
And there is no money
There is none*

*Já sei
Mulher da orgia
Quando começa a chorar
Quer dinheiro
Dinheiro não há
Não há*

*I have a lot of tenderness
To sell and give away
There will be no lack of spanking either
But not money
I won't give her any*

*Carinho eu tenho demais
Pra vender e pra dar
Pancada também não há de faltar
Dinheiro, isto não
Eu não dou à mulher*

*I'll swear by the earth,
Sky and stars
If she wants me to
But there is no money*

*Mas prometo na terra,
O céu e as estrelas
Se ela quiser
Mas dinheiro não há*

The song clearly affirms lack of cash as well as abundance of love, which may even make itself felt, as in other songs from this period, through physical aggression. The woman (in this case, from the orgy) is always regarded as demanding money, when the male sambista claims he has something much better to offer her.

Tristezas não pagam Dívidas (Sadness doesn't pay debts) released in 1932 by Ismael Silva (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMPhlIdoMt8>) associates women and money by stressing how the latter is present in daily life and cannot be compensated for by affection:

*Sadness does not pay debts
Crying is no good
One should despise
A woman who does not know how to love*

*Tristezas não pagam dívidas
Não adianta chorar
Deve se dar o desprezo
A toda a mulher que não sabe amar*

*A man should know
Know his own value
Instead of doing like Inácio did
He paid for Estácio
For a long time*

*O homem deve saber
Conhecer o seu valor
Não fazer como o Inácio
Que levou muito tempo
Bancando o Estácio*

Sadness does not pay debts, etc

Tristezas não pagam, etc.

*One should never let a woman
Do as she wishes
Because no one should cry
Just for love
Nor lament
This will not defeat me*

*Nunca se deixa a mulher
Fazer o que ela entender
Porque ninguém deve chorar
Só por causa do amor
E nem se lastimar
Por causa disto eu não vou me derrotar*

Sadness does not pay debts, etc.

Tristezas não pagam, etc.

The song says that a man should forget affection (because women do not know how to love) and take care of obligations like debts that cannot be paid off with sadness caused by unrequited love. It is not a choice for the financial world. Much to the contrary, the tone of the lyrics is of great sorrow; women are being blamed for pushing men into the ignoble pursuit of filthy lucre. Instead of disdaining money, the sambista decides to despise the woman who stands for it. Although he affirms he will not be overcome, the tone of the song conveys obvious defeat.

The affection versus money dilemma is something that runs through this entire period. As in the 1920s, several songs from the thirties underscore that love is far more important than money, and that the latter cannot bring happiness. To be rich also entails the risk of losing everything, and thus of suffering. It is better to be poor but happy rather than rich and sad.

In this vein, other composers made an even sharper critique of money. This is the case of Wilson Batista, who was involved in the abovementioned musical polemic with Noel Rosa during the thirties. Not too long before he died in 1968, he wrote with José Batista *Meu Mundo é Hoje* (Eu sou assim) (My world is today [This is how I am]) (<http://letras.terra.com.br/>

[paulinho-da-viola/486092/](#)) – a song which reads almost like a testament to his philosophy of life:

*This is how I am
Whoever wants to like me
This is how I am
My world is today
For me, there is no tomorrow
This is how I am
One day I will die this way
I'll take along no regrets
Nor the weight of hypocrisy*

*Eu sou assim
Quem quiser gostar de mim
Eu sou assim
Meu mundo é hoje
Não existe amanhã prá mim
Eu sou assim
Assim morrerei um dia
Não levarei arrependimento
Nem o peso da hipocrisia*

*I feel sorry for those
Who grovel on the ground
And deceive themselves
For the sake of money or position
I was never part
Of this battalion
Because I know that, besides the flowers,
Nothing else goes along with a coffin*

*Tenho pena daqueles
Que se agacham até ao chão
Enganando a si mesmos
Por dinheiro ou posição
Nunca tomei parte
Neste enorme batalhão
Pois sei que além das flores
Nada mais vai ao caixão*

The song's title encapsulates the idea that life should be enjoyed in the present, and that from life nothing is taken save what one has lived. This is all acknowledged very serenely. It is a critique of those who had to suffer humiliation for the sake of money or position.

The critique of money was also developed in a radical way by Noel Rosa. He realized very early on that money was an increasingly pervading reality in the lives of all those living in Brazil's large cities. This position is clearly synthesized in *Fita Amarela* (Yellow Ribbon), a 1933 song co-authored with Vadico (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utUzUVEs9os>):

*When I die
I don't want weeping nor candles
I want a yellow ribbon
With her name on it*

*Quando eu morrer
Não quero choro nem vela
Quero uma fita amarela
Gravada com o nome dela*

*If there is a soul
If there is another life
I would want the mulata*

*Se existe alma
Se há outra encarnação
Eu queria que a mulata*

To tap dance over my coffin

Sapateasse no meu caixão

When I die (...)

Quando eu morrer (...)

I want no flowers

Não quero flores

Nor crowns of thorns

Nem coroa com espinho

I just want the weeping of the flute

Só quero choro de flauta

The guitar and cavaquinho

Violão e cavaquinho

When I die (...)

Quando eu morrer (...)

I have no heir

Não tenho herdeiros

I don't have a penny

Nem possuo um só vintém

I lived my life in debt with everyone

Eu vivi devendo a todos

But I haven't paid them off

Mas não paguei a ninguém

When I die (...)

Quando eu morrer (...)

My enemies

Meus inimigos

Who today badmouth me

Que hoje falam mal de mim

Are going to say that they had never seen

Vão dizer que nunca viram

Anyone as good as me

Uma pessoa tão boa assim

The composition brings a philosophy grounded in indifference towards the solemn side of life (or death), and denounces all the hypocrisy in the cult of the virtues of the dead. But such philosophy is grounded, above all, in the transience of life and in a relaxed way of living it. From life nothing is taken, and for life nothing is left. Thus value lies not in the weeping of those who remain, but the sound of music and the delight of having a mulata tap dance over one's coffin. And, of course, one should not take financial commitments too seriously.

Filosofia (Philosophy) is the name of a song written by Noel Rosa in 1933 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-VRommuacW4>):

The whole world condemns me

O mundo me condena

And no one feels sorry for me

E ninguém tem pena

Always badmouthing my name

Falando sempre mal de meu nome

Not concerned whether

Deixando de saber

I will die of thirst

Se eu vou morrer de sede

Or of hunger

Ou se eu vou morrer de fome

*But philosophy
Helps me today*

*To life indifferently, like this
In this endless prontidão
I go on pretending I'm rich
So no one will deride me*

*I don't care
If you say
That society is my enemy
I will go on singing around this world
Being a slave of my samba
Even if being a loafer*

*As for you
From the aristocracy
Who have money
But cannot buy joy
Will have to live forever
Being a slave of those
Who cultivate hypocrisy*

*Mas a filosofia
Hoje me auxilia*

*A viver indiferente, assim
Nessa prontidão sem fim
Vou fingindo que sou rico
Pra ninguém zombar de mim*

*Não me incomodo
Que você diga
Que a sociedade é minha inimiga
Vou cantando neste mundo
Sendo escravo do meu samba*

*Muito embora vagabundo
Quanto a você
Da aristocracia
Que tem dinheiro
Mas não compra alegria
Há de viver eternamente
Sendo escrava desta gente
Que cultiva a hipocrisia*

The song's philosophy is about being indifferent to prontidão, that is, the lack of money. The difficulties it brings and the criticisms made by society are fully compensated for by the fact that he does not want to be a hypocrite like the aristocrats addressed by the song, who "have money, but cannot buy joy".

Uncomplaining figures like Emília and Amélia who knew "how to do the laundry and cook" and who "appreciated not having what to eat", in this period women are increasingly reminding men that they should work hard, as in the samba *Vai Trabalhar* (Go get a job) by Cyro de Souza, recorded in 1942:

*This is not convenient for me
This does not suit me well
Me in the lesco-lesco,
By the sink
In order to make some money*

While you are in the samba

*Isso não me convém
E não fica bem
Eu no lesco-lesco
na beira do tanque
Pra ganhar dinheiro*

E você no samba

*The whole day, oh
The whole day, oh
The whole day, oh*

*O dia inteiro, ai
O dia inteiro, ai
O dia inteiro, ai*

*You understand
But pretend you don't get
That it only takes some good will
To get our life straight*

*Você compreende
E faz que não entende
Que tudo depende de boa vontade
Pra nossa vida endireitar*

*You should cooperate
Be strong and helpful
Look for a job
Quit the samba
And go to work*

*Você deve cooperar
É forte e pode ajudar
Procure emprego
Deixe o samba
E vai trabalhar*

Even though written by a man, the narrator is a woman who complains to her man that instead of going to work he goes to the samba, and is supported by her hard work. But to live by work is difficult, as shown in another samba by Cyro de Souza, *Vida Apertada* (Hard life), from 1940 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k-yruButp-A>):

*My God, what a hard life
I work but I have nothing
I live in total martyrdom
Life has no enchantment
For someone who suffers so
This way, my end will be dark
To be poor is not a fault
But unhappiness
I don't even have a right
To enjoy my youth
I leave work late
And get home half-dead
Because I have to endure work in the docks
Everyday at the harbor*

*Meu Deus, que vida apertada
Trabalho, não tenho nada
Vivo num martírio sem igual
A vida não tem encanto
Para quem padece tanto
Desse jeito eu acabo mal
Ser pobre não é defeito
Mas é infelicidade
Nem sequer tenho direito
De gozar a mocidade
Saio tarde do trabalho
Chego em casa semi-morto
Pois enfrento uma estiva
Todo o dia lá no cais do porto*

The subject of this composition wears himself out by working as a long-shoreman at the docks, just to realize that, besides not earning much, he does not even have the right to enjoy his youth.

Many compositions from this period remark that, unfortunately, one

needs to work in order to get money. One such example is *Dinheiro não é Semente* (Money is no seed), a samba by Felisberto Martins and Mutt recorded in 1941:

<i>Money is no seed</i>	<i>Dinheiro não é semente</i>
<i>That you plant and it bears fruit</i>	<i>Que plantando dá</i>
<i>If I want to see its color</i>	<i>Se eu quero ver a cor dele</i>
<i>I have to work</i>	<i>Eu tenho que trabalhar</i>
<i>If I walk around well-dressed it is because I like it</i>	<i>Se ando alinhado é porque tenho gosto</i>
<i>If I walk around moneyed it is due to my own sweat</i>	<i>Se ando endinheirado é com o suor do meu rosto</i>
<i>I don't live for seeing another life</i>	<i>Não vivo por ver um outro viver</i>
<i>I live because I understand</i>	<i>Vivo porque sei compreender</i>
<i>That without work</i>	<i>Que sem trabalhar</i>
<i>I will never be tranquil</i>	<i>Eu não fico sossegado</i>
<i>By my friend's scissors</i>	<i>Na tesoura dos amigos</i>
<i>I am always cut</i>	<i>Eu ando sempre cortado</i>
<i>Money is no...</i>	<i>O dinheiro não é...</i>

There is here a clear view that money does not grow on trees, but is a fruit of labor. There is even an allusion to the biblical myth of the fall, when man confronts the need for earning his bread through “his own sweat”. Not even the possibility of borrowing from friends guarantees money.

Besides not earning much from labor, money in general tends to disappear in Brazil, as shown in the *marcha* *Onde está o dinheiro?* (Where is the money?) by José Maria de Abreu, Francisco Mattoso and Paulo Barbosa released in 1937(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtwgSstucU>):

<i>Where is the money?</i>	<i>Onde está o dinheiro?</i>
<i>The cat ate it, the cat ate it</i>	<i>O gato comeu, o gato comeu</i>
<i>And nobody saw it</i>	<i>E ninguém viu</i>
<i>The cat ran away, the cat ran away</i>	<i>O gato fugiu, o gato fugiu</i>
<i>Its whereabouts</i>	<i>O seu paradeiro</i>
<i>Are overseas</i>	<i>Está no estrangeiro</i>
<i>Where is the money?</i>	<i>Onde está o dinheiro?</i>
<i>I will look for it</i>	<i>Eu vou procurar</i>
<i>And I will find it</i>	<i>E hei de encontrar</i>
<i>And with money at hand</i>	<i>E com o dinheiro na mão</i>
<i>I'll buy a wagon</i>	<i>Eu compro um vagão</i>

*I'll buy the nation
I'll even buy your heart*

Where is the money?, etc.

*It's not in the North
It'll be in the South
There are those who know and won't tell
It escaped by a hair's breadth
And this is the crux of the matter
One can't be happy
Where is the money?, etc.
I will go look for it, etc.'*

*Eu compro a nação
Eu compro até seu coração*

Onde está o dinheiro?, etc.

*No Norte não está
No Sul estará
Tem gente que sabe e não diz
Escapou por um tris
E aí está o xis
E não se pode ser feliz
Onde está o dinheiro?, etc.
Eu vou procurar, etc.*

Along with an implicit reference to corruption, there is the idea that with money one can buy anything, including the nation and other people's hearts. But the crux of the matter is that those who know where the money is won't tell.

In 1951 Getúlio Vargas returned to Brazil's Presidency, and, in order to curb inflation, he proposed the creation of a Ministry of the Economy. Geraldo Pereira and Arnaldo Passos wrote a song with just this name, which was recorded that same year (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHbP_kYHUGg):

*Mr. President
Your Excellency showed it for a fact
That now everything will be cheaper
Now the poor will be able to eat
Mr. President
That's what the people wanted
The Ministry of the Economy
Is going to sort it all out
Mr. President
Thank God, I'll no longer have to eat cat
There will be plenty of beef in the butcher shop
I can already live with love
I will bring
My nêga to come and live with me
And she will no longer starve to death
Life was so hard
That I had to send off my nice nêga
To face some madam's kitchen
In Copacabana*

*Seu Presidente
Sua Excelência mostrou que é de fato
Agora tudo vai ficar barato
Agora o pobre já pode comer
Seu Presidente
Pois era isso que o povo queria
O Ministério da Economia
Parece que vai resolver
Seu Presidente
Graças a Deus não vou comer mais gato
Carne de vaca no açougue é mato
Com o meu amor eu já posso viver
Eu vou buscar
A minha nega pra morar comigo
Pois já vi que não há mais perigo
Ela de fome já não vai morrer
A vida estava tão difícil
Que eu mandei a minha nega bacana
Meter os peitos na cozinha da madame*

*Now I will go and get her
Because I really like her
And the cats are the ones to laugh with joy
Up in the hills*

*Em Copacabana
Agora vou buscar a nega
Porque gosto dela pra cachorro
E os gatos é que vão dar gargalhada de alegria
Lá no morro*

In this samba, the narrator sarcastically pretends to believe that the creation of a Ministry of the Economy would solve all the poor's problems. There is also the notion that a woman should not work, except in the face of extreme hardship.

But in the fifties, the shortage of money among the poor becomes the subject of many sambas such as *O Dinheiro que ganho* (The money that I make), a samba song with lyrics and music by Assis Valente released in 1951 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jm9KsPrjys>):

*With the money that I make
I cannot hang out in the streets
Up and down, up and down
With the money that I make I can only live
In my shack, sitting on the floor
Eating flour and beans by hand
Regarding the mulata stirring the legumes
So they won't go bad*

*O dinheiro que ganho
não dá pra ficar no meio da rua
prá cá e prá lá, prá cá e prá lá
O dinheiro que ganho só dá pra viver
no meu barracão sentado no chão
Comendo na mão farinha e feijão
Olhando a cabrocha mexendo o legume
pra não azedar*

*If I am in the streets and a friend comes
I have to invite him
To have a shot, have a chat
Go for a walk, killing some time
And after that, the dinner
And also some coffee
There goes all my money
I have to walk to the Salgueiro
(I am short of money)*

*Se fico na rua lá vem um amigo
e eu sou obrigado a lhe convidar
tomar um traguinho, bater um papinho
Dar uma voltinha pro tempo passar
Depois do passeio lá vem o jantar
e também o café
Lá se vai meu dinheiro
Eu vou pro Salgueiro a pé
(meu dinheiro não dá)*

The composition is simple, and depicts someone who does not enjoy enough resources to spend time in the street. Lack of money confines him to the house, a traditionally feminine space in Brazilian society. (DaMatta 1979).

In 1958, Dorival Caymmi released *Saudade da Bahia* (How I miss Bahia), which sings the suffering of migrants from the Brazilian Northeast who fled their homes to try make a living in the South. He concludes it by declaring

that “I am sorry for those who believe / That celebrity and money will make them happy”.

Me dá um Dinheiro aí (Give me some money), written by Ivan Ferreira, Homero Ferreira and Glauco Ferreira in 1959 (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTDdd3dFPG4>) portrays the figure of the beggar, one that has proliferated in our times, from the panhandler to the flanelinha (car watcher):

*Hey, you there
Give me some money,
Give me some money.*

*Ei, você aí
Me dá um dinheiro aí,
Me dá um dinheiro aí.*

*You won't?
You really won't?
So you will witness
A big mess
That I'm gonna make
Drinking until I pass out
Give me some, give me some (oi)
Give me some money, hey, you there.*

*Não vai dar?
Não vai dar não?
Você vai ver
A grande confusão
Que eu vou fazer,
Bebendo até cair
Me dá, me dá, me dá (oi)
Me dá um dinheiro aí.*

The sixties were marked by significant social and economic changes in Brazil. Censorship which followed the 1964 coup made it harder for songs addressing topics which could be viewed as subversive. This however did not prevent some composers from talking about the social problems the country was going through. The military regime was gesturing towards education as an avenue for upwards social mobility, and there was an increase in private institutions of higher learning. In 1969, Martinho da Vila depicted in *Pequeno Burguês* (Petit Bourgeois) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9zEfDU6zoQ>) the bitterness of somebody who tried to get a better life through a university diploma:

*Great, I passed the entrance exams
But college is private
Private, it is private
The books are so expensive
So many fees to pay for
My money has been scarce
I had to borrow some*

*Felicidade, passei no vestibular
Mas a faculdade é particular
Particular, ela é particular
Livros tão caros
Tanta taxa pra pagar
Meu dinheiro muito raro
Alguém teve que emprestar*

*I lived in the outskirts
I got late trains*

*Morei no subúrbio
Andei de trem atrasado*

*From work to classes
 No dinner and very tired
 But at home, at midnight
 I always had to endure
 A bunch of problems
 Children to raise
 But fortunately
 I succeeded in graduating
 But my commencement ceremony
 I could not attend
 There was no money for the gown
 Nor for my ring
 That bald dean
 Did not hand me my paper*

*Do trabalho ia pra aula
 Sem jantar e bem cansado
 Mas lá em casa à meia noite
 Tinha sempre a me esperar
 Um punhado de problemas
 E criança pra criar
 Mas felizmente
 Eu consegui me formar
 Mas da minha formatura
 Não cheguei participar
 Faltou dinheiro pra beca
 E também pro meu anel
 Nem o diretor careca
 Entregou o meu papel*

*And after all these years
 Only disappointment, disillusion
 They say I am a petit bourgeois
 A very privileged one
 But you are the bourgeois
 I am nothing but nobody
 And whoever wants to be like me
 Will have to struggle a lot
 A good lot*

*E depois de tantos anos
 Só decepções, desenganos
 Dizem que eu sou um burguês
 Muito privilegiado
 Mas burgueses são vocês
 Eu não passo de um pobre coitado
 E quem quiser ser como eu
 Vai ter que penar um bocado
 Um bom bocado
 Vai penar um bom bocado*

The picture is one of disappointment and disillusion. The happiness brought by fulfilling the dream of entering college and all the prestige that this would still bring during the sixties is followed by numerous expenses because college is private. One needs to borrow money, go from work to night classes without dinner, and then endure the long train ride to the city outskirts in order to face one's children and a lot of problems at home. Even commencement, a ritual normally attended by the family, is foreclosed to him due to the lack of money for the gown and the "Doctor's" ring. The song concludes that the poor are indeed wretched, and are not able to move upwards in a country where income is not evenly distributed, public universities are difficult to enter, and private colleges are expensive.

In 1975, Chico Buarque, who would later on sing the end of the *malandro* for good in *A Ópera do Malandro* (The *malandro* opera), wrote the lyrics and music of *Vai trabalhar vagabundo* (Go to work, vagabond) (<http://www.>

youtube.com/watch?v=-OmgdchaKjo):

*Go to work, vagabond
Go to work, creature
God allows everyone
One crazy thing
To spend Sunday with family
Monday relaxed
And joyfully embark on the stream*

*Prepare your documents
Stamp your heart
Do not lose one minute
Lose reason
You may forget the mulata
You may forget the snooker
You may tighten your tie
Go and hang yourself
Go and give yourself away
Go and ruin yourself
Go to work*

*Don't waste this opportunity
Amass some savings
Lose three bucks in the lottery scam
Spend your Sunday in the mangrove
Monday is empty*

*In the blood bank earn enough for another day
Watch out for the viaduct, for the airplane
Do not wait another minute
Miss the question
Try to think about the future
In the dark, try to think
Go and renew your insurance
Go and become senile
Go and give yourself away
Go and ruin yourself
Go to work*

*Spend Sunday on your own
Monday is a disgrace*

*Vai trabalhar, vagabundo
Vai trabalhar, criatura
Deus permite a todo mundo
Uma loucura
Passa o domingo em família
Segunda feira beleza
Embarca com alegria na correnteza*

*Prepara o teu documento
Carimba o teu coração
Não perde nem um momento
Perde a razão
Pode esquecer a mulata
Pode esquecer o bilhar
Pode apertar a gravata
Vai te enforcar
Vai te entregar
Vai te estragar
Vai trabalhar*

*Vê se não dorme no ponto
Reúne as economias
Perde os três contos no conto da loteria
Passa o domingo no mangue
Segunda feira vazia*

*Ganha no banco de sangue pra mais um dia
Cuidado com o viaduto com o avião
Não perde mais um minuto
Perde a questão
Tenta pensar no futuro
No escuro tenta pensar
Vai renovar teu seguro
Vai caducar
Vai te entregar
Vai te estragar
Vai trabalhar*

Passa o domingo sozinho

*No father, no mother, no neighbor
Right there at the square
You will end up moribund*

*With a bit of patience
At the end of the line in the retirement fund
Go in peace, my brother
Rest in the peace of God
You left a home and a pension for yours
The child is crying
Your wife is going to wear herself out
Just to put another malandro in your place
Go and give yourself away
Go and ruin yourself
Go and hang yourself
Go and become senile
Go to work
Go to work
Go to work*

*Segunda feira a desgraça
Sem pai nem mãe nem vizinho
Em plena praça
Vai terminar moribundo*

*Com um pouco de paciência
No fim da fila do fundo da previdência
Parte tranquilo, ó irmão
Descansa na paz de Deus
Deixaste casa e pensão só para os teus
A criança chorando
Tua mulher vai suar
Pra botar outro malandro no teu lugar
Vai te entregar
Vai te estragar
Vai te enforcar
Vai caducar
Vai trabalhar
Vai trabalhar
Vai trabalhar*

The situation here is one of hardship and the character, who descended from malandro (with a positive connotation) to vagabond (negative connotation), has to fend for himself and get some money by resorting to means such as blood donations – after having been a fool and fallen for the lottery scam. This is an asphyxiating picture, compounded by “Go and give yourself away / Go and ruin yourself / Go and hang yourself”, where one needs to work hard in order to survive.

Perdoa (Forgive me), a composition from the sixties by Paulinho da Viola (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75q_zhX7QRI), addresses financial hardships head on:

*My dear, forgive me
Forgive me for my heart of a sinner
You know that I could never live
Without your love*

*I have been buying on credit
Because my money is not enough
Can you imagine if I were married
With over six children to support*

*Meu bem perdoa
Perdoa meu coração pecador
Você sabe que jamais eu viverei
Sem o seu amor*

*Ando comprando fiado
Porque meu dinheiro não dá
Imagine se eu fosse casado
Com mais de seis filhos para sustentar*

*They never made it easy for me
And I may say I am hard working
I made a deal with you
When I went over to receive and you did not pay me
But for now, my dear
My dear, forgive me... etc.*

*Call the owner of this house
I want to tell him my name
Say a very beautiful verse
And he will answer in order to satisfy my hunger*

*I, as the house owner,
Am not obliged to serve not even bananas
If you want to know my name
I am the one who hasn't eaten in a week
But for now, my dear
My dear, forgive me... etc.*

*Call the owner of the grocery store
Who is always by his hammock daydreaming
Say a very beautiful verse
And he will answer in order to quench my thirst*

*The owner of this grocery store
Cannot be forced to sell to anyone
You may pick up the guitar because today is Sunday
And there is no beer
But for now, my dear*

My dear, forgive me... etc.

*Nunca me deram moleza
E posso dizer que sou trabalhador
Fiz um trato com você
Quando fui receber você não me pagou
Mas ora meu bem
Meu bem perdoa... etc.*

*Chama o dono dessa casa
Que eu quero dizer como é o meu nome
Diga um verso bem bonito
Ele vai responder pra matar minha fome*

*Eu como dono da casa
Não sou obrigado a servir nem banana
Se quiser saber meu nome
É o tal que não come há uma semana
Mas ora meu bem
Meu bem perdoa... etc.*

*Chama o dono da quitanda
Que vive sonhando deitado na rede
Diga um verso bem bonito
Ele vai responder pra matar minha sede*

*O dono desta quitanda
Não é obrigado a vender pra ninguém
Pode pegar a viola que hoje é domingo
E cerveja não tem
Mas ora meu bem*

Meu bem perdoa

The narrator is addressing a woman whom he asks for forgiveness. He tells her about the economic hardships he has been through: how he has no money and has been buying on credit; even though he works hard, even his interlocutor owes him and won't pay back. There is then a nostalgic element in the verses, which stands in opposition to harsh reality ("If you want to know my name / I am the one who hasn't eaten in a week"). The reason for the request for forgiveness remains, however, unclear. Would it be due to man's inability to fulfill his traditional role as a provider, in a situation where he is

even prevented from procreating and thus securing his progeny (“Can you imagine if I were married / With over six children to raise?”)

At that time, work is still a struggle, and it is increasingly harder to make a living. This is explicit in *Pode guardar as panelas* (You may put away the pans) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zoZqHMzfs18>), a 1979 samba by Paulinho da Viola:

*You know that the tide
Is no piece of cake
And those who sleep without a cap
Know what it is about
I know my heart aches
When I talk the way I did
To say that the worst has happened
You may put away the cooking pans
Because today money fell short
(You know that the tide)*

*I struggled a lot
Asking for loans and no one would lend me
I went over to Mr. Malaquias
To buy on credit but he didn't let me
My salary, tight, poor thing, it's funny
It has disappeared*

*I resorted to the horses, I bet on the head
But it didn't work out
(You know that the tide)*

You know that the tide... etc.

*To get our pans full, woman
I don't know how
I have run about everywhere
I did what I could
To wait for a miracle
That would work things out
My faith has already been shaken
I don't want to be disappointed again
(You know that the tide)*

*Você sabe que a maré
Não está moleza não
E quem não fica dormindo de touca
Já sabe da situação
Eu sei que dói no coração
Falar do jeito que falei
Dizer que o pior aconteceu
Pode guardar as panelas
Que hoje o dinheiro não deu
(você sabe que a maré)*

*Dei pinote adoidado
Pedindo empréstimo e ninguém emprestou
Fui no seu Malaquias
Querendo fiado mas ele negou
Meu ordenado, apertado, coitado, engraçado
Desapareceu*

*Fui apelar pro cavalo, joguei na cabeça
Mas ele não deu
(você sabe que a maré)*

Você sabe que a maré...etc.

*Para encher nossa panela, comadre
Eu não sei como vai ser
Já corri pra todo lado
Fiz aquilo que deu pra fazer
Esperar por um milagre
Pra ver se resolve esta situação
Minha fé já balançou
Eu não quero sofrer outra decepção
(você sabe que a maré)*

This song is a shift in the way of looking at money, towards the loss of previous illusions. As a background, the refrain is constantly repeating that life is quite hard for the working classes. Even though he acknowledges that he may hurt some sensibilities, the narrator prefers to be frank and straightforward (“You may put away the cooking pans / Because today money fell short”). The effect is powerful, because money is directly associated with food. Differently from sambas from previous times, in which the word money was generally avoided, here it is explicitly mentioned. The narrator is a wage worker whose earnings are not enough to provide for the entire month. So he is forced to come up with alternative ways of getting it. But the methods previously used (to borrow, buy on credit, gamble) no longer work, and he no longer believes in miracles; hence such deep disillusionment. The very title of the song, “You may put away the pans”, suggests a retreat, that he is “taking his team off the field”, an absence of solutions on the horizon.

Paulinho da Viola is an epigone of classic samba players. He writes sambas at a time when this musical genre no longer prevails in Brazil. In this sense, he may be associated with the closure of an epoch. This was a period which began with composers affirming that money has little value and may be obtained through magical means, and ended with an acknowledgement of its importance and of the enormous difficulties involved in earning it.

The samba songs analyzed in this article were composed as an urban-industrial society came into being in Brazil and reveal the social imaginary of the time. During this time, large Brazilian cities were the stage for a rearrangement of work relations, the dissemination of wage labor, a redefinition of gender roles, and new forms of family organization. It is not surprising, then, that women, work and money were so closely interwoven in sambas composed at this time. Although the cultural industry was still at its infancy, these compositions achieved enormous success and are still sung with relish to this day. They thus echoed and continue to echo in Brazil’s imaginary.

Translated from Portuguese by Leticia Cesarino

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