



2018-04-01

"Duas Tribos:" Contradictions of Political and Social (Des)esperança in the Discography of Legião Urbana

Cai Elisabeth Olsen
Brigham Young University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd>

 Part of the [Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Commons](#)

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Olsen, Cai Elisabeth, ""Duas Tribos:" Contradictions of Political and Social (Des)esperança in the Discography of Legião Urbana" (2018). *All Theses and Dissertations*. 6772.
<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd/6772>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

“Duas Tribos”: Contradictions of Political and Social (Des)esperança
in the Discography of Legião Urbana

Cai Elisabeth Olsen

A master’s thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Rex Nielson, Chair
James Krause
Brian Price

Department of Spanish and Portuguese
Brigham Young University

Copyright © 2018 Cai Elisabeth Olsen
All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

“Duas Tribos:” Contradictions of Political and Social (Des)esperança in the Discography of Legião Urbana

Cai Elisabeth Olsen
Department of Spanish and Portuguese, BYU
Master of Arts

Brazil’s 1964-1985 military regime served as one of the principle catalysts for the leftist counterculture movement, Tropicália, which gave way to a new class of *músicas engajadas*. Later, during the period of redemocratization that followed the dictatorship, musicians extended the morphed the art into new forms, particularly through the use of rock-and-roll. The sociopolitical musical criticism that was formerly cloaked under the censorship stylistically transformed itself into an open, blunt, and much louder movement. Standing at the head of this new period of *músicas engajadas* was Renato Russo, frontman and lyricist of the Brock band Legião Urbana. At the height of political turmoil following the *abertura*, Russo confessed in a 1989 interview, “Até bem pouco tempo atrás, a gente realmente acreditava que poderia mudar alguma coisa. Depois, percebemos que não ia dar mais para mudar, mas continuamos acreditando” (Assad 207). This contradictory sentiment of both hope and despair in regards to the future of Brazil is present in a number of the lyricist’s works. An analysis of Russo’s *músicas engajadas* reveals a pattern of oppositions in Russo’s relationship with the political and social state of Brazil, all of which can be categorized under the topic of hope versus disillusionment: an imagined utopian Brazil versus a perceived, present dystopia; progress versus stagnancy; and ironic criticism versus sincere aspirations for the future of Brazil. These contradictions are in part due to Russo’s conflict as both an insider and outsider of the Brazilian experience, being raised physically close to the source of political unrest, but otherwise considered an outlier in terms of education, social circle, sexual orientation, and musical taste. This work analyzes the duality of hope and disillusionment in Legião Urbana’s oeuvre in order to explore Russo’s path in both criticizing and identifying the continuous missteps within the Brazilian state, and inspiring a new generation to correct the errors plaguing Brazil since colonial times.

Keywords: Renato Russo, Brazilian rock, hope, disillusionment, military dictatorship, Tropicália, Brock, sociopolitical musical criticism

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to first acknowledge my thesis committee and their role in this project: my chair Dr. Rex Nielson for his consistent guidance, enthusiasm, and many detailed revisions throughout this project; Dr. James Krause for his initial push for my candidacy in the Luso-Brazilian Literatures program and for the encouragement, mentorship, and heartfelt conversations along the way; Dr. Brian Price for his kindness and aid in expanding my musical *conhecimento*.

I also wish to thank my family for their support throughout my program. In particular, I thank my husband, Filipe Bezerra, for his contribution to my proficiency in Portuguese and willingness to proofread assignments since the beginning of my undergraduate degree. His patience, kindness, and understanding were indispensable to this project. Additionally, I thank my father, John Olsen, for instilling in me a love for Brazilian music, and particularly for Legião Urbana, from a young age. His continued support and interest in my work have been a sustaining factor in my academic career.

Contents

“Duas Tribos”: Title Page.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: “A gente não é como esses caras:” Renato Russo as both Insider and Outsider to the Brazilian Experience.....	9
Chapter 2: Onde o Brasil Errou pela Primeira Vez: Os Índios.....	26
Chapter 3: Será que vamos conseguir vencer?: (Des)esperança.....	40
Desesperança política.....	40
Esperança.....	48
Conclusion: “O Brasil é o país do futuro”.....	56
Consulted discography.....	60
Bibliography.....	60

Introduction

Brazil boasts a long tradition of sociopolitically relevant music, where musicians become interlocutors with the larger structures that involve them. One such structure that catalyzed a number of Brazilian musical movements was the military dictatorship that engulfed the country from 1964 to 1985. Despite widespread censorship enacted by the regime through the infamous Ato Institucional 5,¹ during the regime, a leftist countercultural movement emerged in the late 1960s known as Tropicália, whose artists were primarily concerned with protesting the dictatorship as well as bringing to light the “struggle toward participatory democracy, racial justice, anti-imperialism, and dissident cultural politics” (Dunn 5). Described by Goli Guerreiro, a historian of Brazilian rock music, as “a década dos anos do sonho: o sonho de transformação da sociedade” (13), the period of Tropicália later paved the way for a new class of *músicas engajadas* that would subsequently set the scene for the politically preoccupied rock movement of the 1980s, and more specifically, the work of the band Legião Urbana.

It is first worth mentioning the origins of the term *música engajada* and its parallels to the *nueva canción* movement spreading throughout Latin America in the same time period. Jane Tumas-Serna notes in her article “The “Nueva Canción” Movement and Its Mass Mediated Performance Context” that artists of the *nueva canción* originally sought to reintroduce folk traditions into their work. Coinciding with the rise of totalitarian governments throughout Latin America in the 1960s and 70s, however, the *nueva canción* became a tool for expressing woes of social and political injustice and took root in leftist movements varying from country to country.

¹ Each president of the military regime proposed a number of *atos institucionais*, or institutional acts, that amended the Brazilian constitution of 1946. Artur da Costa e Silva, second president of the regime, initiated the most repressive period of the dictatorship, which included the installment of AI-5, the fifth in a series of 17 amendments. Through AI-5, Costa e Silva not only disbanded congress and suspended *habeas corpus* but also established a widespread censorship of print, cinema, and music.

Turmas-Serna mentions that Brazil does not have a “clear connection to the new song,” but cites Tropicália artists as creating music similar in purpose (151). Brazilian music scholar Caio Gomes affirms the connection between *nueva canción* and *música engajada* and explores the “conexões transnacionais” and manifestations of the politically engaged genre within individual Latin American countries (12). The term *música engajada*, that also appears as *canção engajada*,² came into usage in the late 1960s as *Música Popular Brasileira*,³ or MPB, became increasingly preoccupied with sociopolitical issues, but is not tied to one specific genre when referenced in relevant literature.

Due to the shadow of censorship, the lyrics of the *músicas engajadas* by Tropicalistas and other significant artists of MPB were wrought with metaphors, irony, and double entendres. With their indirect and confusing lyrical references, Tropicalistas were often able to evade government censors, but the meaning of their work sometimes similarly was lost on the public as well.⁴ As Flora Sussekind describes, “Fingindo ignorar [a esquerda brasileira repressiva], a arte do protesto falava no vazio” (Sussekind 15). In fact, leftist cultural production in the late 1960s was essentially ignored by leaders of the military dictatorship, as the regime instead opted to

² The site *Memórias da ditadura*, created by the Instituto Vladimir Herzog and partially sponsored by Brazilian government organizations, considers the term *música engajada* to be synonymous with *nueva canción* (2016).

³ In fact, Brazilian music scholar Marcos Napolitano writes in “MPB: a trilha sonora da abertura política (1975/1982), “A MPB tornou-se sinônimo de canção engajada, valorizada no plano estético e ideológico pela classe média mais escolarizada, que bebia no caldo cultural dessa oposição e era produtora e consumidora de uma cultura de esquerda” (389).

oposição e era produtora e consumidora de uma cultura de esquerda

⁴ One specific instance stands out as a blatant example of such lack of understanding between Tropicalistas and the Brazilian public. At the 1968 *Festival Internacional da Canção*, MPB artist Geraldo Vandré performed “Pra não dizer que não falei das flores,” a song that both explicitly condemns the regime and calls for Brazilians to take political action. Despite the audience’s overwhelmingly positive response to Vandré’s submission, Tom Jobim and Chico Buarque’s “Sabá,” a song that discreetly criticized the Brazilian government, took first place. Later, when Tropicalistas Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil played “É proibido proibir,” another camouflaged critique, the audience began jeering and screaming over the music. Caetano responded furiously, yelling at the crowd, “Mas é isso que é a juventude que diz que quer tomar o poder? Vocês têm coragem de aplaudir, este ano, uma música, um tipo de música que vocês não teriam coragem de aplaudir no ano passado! São a mesma juventude que vão sempre, sempre, matar amanhã o velhote inimigo que morreu ontem! Vocês não estão entendendo nada, nada, nada, absolutamente nada” (Oliveira 2007). Veloso continued his lecture for several minutes among boos from the crowd, frustrated at his public’s failure to understand the underlying meaning of his work.

extend the feeling of national pride from the prior decade by favoring art that promoted a strong national image. Dunn notes in *Contracultura* that cultural production “was limited by a rather narrow view of what constituted culture, that is, middle- and upper-class urban artistic expression. [The regime] also idealized the achievements of the 1950s and 1960s while overlooking the unique dynamics of cultural production of AI-5” (25). Regardless, the tradition of protest music did not die with the military regime but rather transformed itself into something much more blunt, open, and louder, beginning during Ernesto Geisel’s attempt at détente in 1978 and extending throughout the Brazilian rock, or Brock,⁵ movement in the 1980s. The shift here from opaque to frank poetics in the *músicas engajadas* reflects the strong tie between Brazilian music and politics.

Despite the stylistic differences between Tropicália and Brock, we cannot ignore the ways in which the first set the stage for the latter. Both styles drew heavily from the 1960s psychedelic music and 1980s rock movements from Europe and North America, transforming them with Brazilian quality and reflecting the political unrest of their respective periods. Guerreiro holds that the 1960s countercultural movement played an essential role in the birth of Brazilian rock, arguing that “é nesse contexto que vai surgir uma nova forma de fazer música—o rock, que tinha como característica fundamental o fato de veicular o ideário da Contracultura” (Guerreiro 15). And, unlike Tropicália, Brock—and particularly Legião Urbana—was able to both conjure up a large following and maintain its popularity even throughout modern-day Brazil. Like its musical predecessor, Brock not only sought to criticize social injustices but also to inspire social change, political decency, and hope for the future of Brazil, while simultaneously clearing a space for a new identity for Brazilian youth whose comportment and

⁵ Brock refers to both the punk movement, starting around 1976, and post-punk movement extending throughout the 1980s in Brazil.

musical consumption went hand in hand. This phenomenon can be described by the concept of *rock das tribos*, which Valéria Brandini defines as

uma instituição social em que indivíduos se reúnem em torno de uma ideia para transformá-la em estilo de vida [...] Com isso, os jovens lançaram sua estética e moral comunitárias por meio do rock. Produziram bens simbólicos, práticas sociais cotidianas, música e rituais de acordo com padrões instituídos e caracterizados pelo estilo roqueiro de ser. (15)

This is one way to interpret the role of Legião Urbana's frontman Renato Russo, who served as a leader within the *rock das tribos*, proposing his own liberal and political beliefs through his lyrics, and who essentially translated the state of Brazil into poetic themes of hope and disillusionment.

Like other US and UK musical trends absorbed by Brazil, Brock found its main following within the middle class, to which Renato Russo belonged. Though born in Rio de Janeiro in 1959, Russo moved with his family to Brasília in 1972, while sentiments of national pride for the miraculous new capital were still running high. Specifically, Russo's mother, Carminha Manfredini, insisted on raising her children in Brasília after visiting family in the Asa Sul⁶ in 1962. Though Russo's father, Renato Manfredini, had stable employment at the Banco do Brasil in Rio, he applied for transfer to Brasília to appease his wife. The process took 13 years, as positions in the new capital were competitive, but the Banco do Brasil gave Manfredini priority after he completed a specialization course abroad. The family's eventual move to Brasília was one of many factors crucial in shaping Russo into the interpreter of Brazilian society

⁶ Lúcio Costa famously designed Brasília in the shape of an airplane, elaborated in his Plano Piloto. Each division of the plane hosts a different feature of the city, such as the residential areas, government buildings, and hospitals, among others.

that he became. There, residing at the forefront of political unrest during the height of the military regime, he was able to perceive the gap between the optimistic, nationalistic façade projected by the dictatorship and the unjust, lackluster Brazil he experienced firsthand. As he later reflected:

Gente, eu não me lembro de ser feliz naquela época, não! Fazer redação dizendo que o presidente é maravilhoso, quando, muito tempo depois, a gente descobre que as pessoas estão sendo mortas, em nome de uma coisa que não se sabe o que é. Eu acho isso péssimo. E a música é sobre isso. A música fala especificamente da tortura, e fala dessa ideia toda de o Brasil ser o país do futuro. É sobre como seria legal se a gente encaminhasse o Brasil para ser um lance legal, porque chega de ser o país do futuro! A gente tem que ser o país do presente, a gente tem que viver agora. (Assad 86)

This split between false, forced perception and reality later characterized the body of Russo's lyrical work. He claims in the song "A fonte," "Você finge que vê, mas não vê" (1993), hinting at Russo's own honesty in the midst of a government-promoted façade.

Additionally, it was in Brasília that Russo developed his musical and political ideas, as he came to be a voracious reader and writer, consumed almost exclusively international rock, perfected his English, and became acquainted with other members of the Brazilian elite governing class, some of whom would later become Russo's bandmates. Perhaps it was in part due to the cold, isolated city, described by Carlos Marcelo as "uma menina de 13 anos: feições definidas logo ao nascer, corpo em fase de crescimento, temperamento indefinido [...] Apenas uma pré-adolescente desengonçada, sem personalidade e sem-graça" (19) that Russo was pushed towards international rock—stylistically un-Brazilian, implanted in the country by the supporters of a countercultural movement, devoured by middle and upper-class youth that lived a first-

world experience far different from the third-world majority. As Dunn argues, the international countercultural movement, including rock, provided a way for the middle class to “escape” repressive politics and societal alienation, allowing them to “pursue a modestly alternative lifestyle” through music (26). Rock provided an outlet for Russo to criticize the injustices of the world around him while simultaneously not affecting his privileged position within the middle class. I maintain that Legião Urbana’s music certainly served as an escape for both its creators and consumers. In his article “We Live Daily in Two Countries: Audiotopias of Postdictatorship Brazil,” Frederick Moehn relates Josh Kun’s concept of an “audiotopia” to music produced during Brazil’s redemocratization, which encapsulates the effect I believe Russo’s work had on the Brazilian youth. Kun defines audiotopias as “spaces that music helps us to imagine and in which one can take refuge” (qtd. in Moehn 110). Furthermore, Moehn uses Kun’s theory to present the idea of a divide between Brazilian political citizenship and Brazilian identity which can be articulated through music, where “one has the right to exile for a few transcendent minutes” (Moehn 110). Not only does this idea once more reinforce the strong link between Brazilian music and society, but this duality is necessary in understanding and characterizing Russo’s poetics.

As mentioned above, Brock continued many of the same camouflaged themes as Tropicália and 1960s MPB, particularly that of national criticism, but it brought them to the forefront of music in a loud, blunt manner. Legião Urbana’s music is no exception; it is impossible to listen to an album without being bombarded by complaints of political corruption, lamentations of the former treatment of indigenous groups, and cries of social injustice. Prior to Legião Urbana’s formation, Russo’s group Aborto Elétrico maintained a more pronounced tie to the punk tradition and consequentially composed songs much harsher, more violent, and more

critical in comparison to Legião Urbana's later body of work. Several of these songs were carried over into Legião's oeuvre, as Russo claimed once in the live performance of *Acústico MTV*⁷ that they were even more relevant to Brazil's sociopolitical state than when originally written.

However, the theme of hope for a better future is just as present in Russo's *músicas engajadas* as is disillusionment. Indeed, as Moehn proposes through Kun's theory, Russo plays the role of an engaged citizen, concerned with the dysfunctional world around him, but he also creates an imaginary space in which he may take refuge, often speculating how Brazil would be without the plague of its violent past or social discrepancy. These contradictory sentiments are perhaps best summed up in Russo's confession in a 1989 interview: "Até bem pouco tempo atrás, a gente realmente acreditava que poderia mudar alguma coisa. Depois, percebemos que não ia dar mais para mudar, mas continuamos acreditando" (Assad 207). Regardless how futile hope for social progress may have seemed in Russo's time, it was a necessary component of the audiotopia he sought to create.

An analysis of Legião Urbana's body of work, particularly of the band's most prominent *músicas engajadas*, reveals a pattern of oppositions that can be categorized as expansions of the topic of hope versus disillusionment: an imagined utopian Brazil versus a perceived, present dystopia; progress versus stagnancy; and ironic criticism versus sincere aspirations for the future of Brazil. In this work, I will analyze Russo's role as an interpreter of Brazil, focusing on the duality of hope and disillusionment in a number of Legião Urbana's songs. Given that Russo inserts sociopolitical criticism into each Legião Urbana album, I have selected songs that most strongly dialogue with the Brazilian state: from *Legião Urbana* (1985), "Será" and "Geração Coca-Cola;" from *Dois* (1986), "Índios;" from *Que país é este* (1987), "Mais do mesmo,"

⁷ Legião Urbana. "Mais do mesmo." *Acústico MTV*, Legião Urbana, 1992.

“Faroeste caboclo,” and “Que país é este;” from *As quatro estações* (1989), “1965 (Duas tribos)” and “Quando o sol bater na janela do seu quarto;” from *Descobrimento do Brasil* “Perfeição.” These songs highlight Russo’s path in both criticizing and identifying the continuous missteps within the Brazilian state. At the same time, they also inspire a new generation to correct the errors plaguing Brazil since the colonial era, as Russo points out in a number of songs. Guerreiro asserts: “a análise das canções permite desvendar os traços de comportamento dos rockers, evidenciando seus valores, posturas, emoções, atitudes, gostos e ideologias” (49). As such, I propose that Russo’s *músicas engajadas* represent a legitimate social text, able to accurately convey both the political and social unrest of Russo’s time, as well as the trajectory towards a new, improved Brazilian state. Russo’s lyrical work, rather than Legião Urbana’s musical work, stand as the focus of this thesis. Such focus contributes to the tradition among other Brazilian music scholars, such as Christopher Dunn, Charles Perrone, Goli Guerreiro, Luis Grangeia, and Angélica Madeira, among others, to analyze lyric as poetry. Finally, returning again to “A fonte,” a song that perhaps best sums up the scope of this work, Russo sings: “Esperança, teus lençóis têm cheiro de doença / ... Eu acredito em mim / Eu continuo limpo” (1993). Russo’s honest expression throughout his work in Legião Urbana captures the often contradictory sentiment of the Brazilian experience, one characterized by pride and shame, belonging and alienation, successes and frustrations, and above all, hope and disillusionment.

Chapter 1: “A gente não é como esses caras:” Renato Russo as both Insider and Outsider to the
Brazilian Experience

Though Legião Urbana’s *músicas engajadas* stand at the center of this work, the principal analysis will focus mainly on Renato Russo’s verse. Even today, the Brazilian public considers Russo to be the leader and creative genius behind Legião Urbana given that he was the sole lyrical composer and vocalist of every Legião Urbana song composed before his death.⁸ In fact, in all relevant Legião Urbana bibliography, Russo’s name appears in the text significantly more than any of his bandmates, which included Dado Villa-Lobos, Renato Rocha (who was bassist only for a short period at the beginning of Legião Urbana’s career), and Marcelo Bonfá. Additionally, the complex lyrical aspect of Russo’s work set Legião Urbana apart from the hundreds of other Brock groups that formed in Brazil in the 1980s.⁹ This divide can be explained by Russo’s standing as both an insider and outsider to the Brazilian experience, which shaped his ability to write highly perceptive lyrics. These factors will be discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to Legião Urbana, bands such as Os Titãs, Cazuza, Os Paralamas do Sucesso, and Ultraje a Rigor similarly produced a number of *músicas engajadas* and belonged to a branch of Brock known as *rock combativo*, characterized by the production of sociopolitically relevant song. The percentage of socially engaged bands is small in comparison to the sheer quantity of Brock groups, though the overarching style of the movement shares the same roots in rock. Brazilian scholar Angélica Madeira describes the Brock scene as one that “formed the poetics and musical tastes of a generation [...]. Distancing themselves from well-behaved arrangements, metaphorical, or allegorical lyrics, and the melodic tradition of Brazilian popular music, rock

⁸ Both Dado Villa-Lobos and Marcelo Bonfá continued solo careers after Russo’s death in 1996. In 2016, they played a reunion show, Legião Urbana XXX, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the band.

⁹ Madeira states in her chapter of *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship* that there were over 300 rock bands just in Brasília in the 1980s (99).

bands of the decade created unique sounds with guitar distortion, heavy percussion, a critique of all social institutions, and a poetics of disgust and abjection” (96). Similarly, Guerreiro notes, “O grupo dessa natureza [Brock] que nas décadas anteriores era restrito e marginalizado, adentra os anos 80 com enorme vigor, encontrando largos espaços em todos os centros urbanos do país” (49). Rather than dialoguing with social and political structures, the majority of Brock groups instead proposed the rock-n-roll aesthetic, postures, and values that appealed to Brazilian youth. In defense of non-political rock, Paula Toller, vocalist of the popular 1980s band Kid Abelha, stated in an interview, “O nosso som não é política em termos de letras, não é engajado, é um som pop—o que não quer dizer nada de ruim” (50). I believe, however, that Legião Urbana has remained popular even throughout modern-day Brazil because of Russo’s social engagement. As Brazil continues to suffer from political scandals, discrepancies between first-world and third-world standards of living, and corporate and political corruption, Legião’s work remains relevant on a modern stage, though the wave of punk and post-punk popularity in Brazil died down after the early 1990s. Their social applicability also explains why some of Legião’s most popular *músicas engajadas*, such as “Que país é este” and “Perfeição,” are still played at protests in Brazil today.

Though Russo’s lyrics may push the band into the realm of elitist music, the stylistic rock-and-roll component of his music was essential in initially attracting a popular audience, as the band fit in well with the growing Brock movement. Though the number of live performances dwindled as its career progressed,¹⁰ Legião Urbana was in fact the Brock group to sell the most

¹⁰ This was largely in part due to increasing violence at shows, which Dapieve notes became more common after 1986 (136). Russo also stated in a 1994 interview that although performing shows generated more money than releasing albums, the singer did not enjoy live performances (Assad 133).

albums, reported to have over 25 million sales in 2015.¹¹ Legião's predecessor, Aborto Elétrico, gained recognition within the context of the emerging punk movement in Brasília in the late 1970s, where Russo identified himself with peers who were similarly fans of The Ramones and The Sex Pistols.¹² The group's following only grew through its departure into the realm of post-punk sound, largely inspired by The Cure, in the early 1980s, which entailed the name change to Legião Urbana, a record deal with EMI-Odeon, and stylistic exploration within subgenres of rock. Returning to the concept of *rock das tribos*, Legião Urbana not only supplied musical content but contributed to the symbolic identity that the rock movement gave to its followers, particularly the youth. Ultimately, Legião's music was a vehicle for the aesthetics, values, and practices associated with rock, just as *rock das tribos* proposes and as is the case with rock movements outside of Brazil.

Stylistically, Legião Urbana was not particularly innovative in the grand scheme of the worldwide rock movement, and the group is frequently compared to other American and British bands such as The Ramones, The Cure, The Clash, and The Smiths, among others.¹³ Additionally, one of the constant struggles of the band was the difficulty playing their own instruments, an issue that Renato Russo openly expressed.¹⁴ Although the musicians perhaps

¹¹ As reported by Estadão Cultura in March of 2015 in "O cultuado Renato Russo, da banda Legião Urbana, completaria 55 anos."

¹² In his book *Brock: O rock brasileiro dos anos 1980*, Brazilian Brock scholar Arthur Dapieve writes of the formation of Aborto Elétrico which was largely supported by other punk fans at the University of Brasília in the late 1970s. (130–131).

¹³ However, the group was responsible for bringing much of the post-punk and new wave sound to Brazil and could therefore be considered innovative within the Brock movement.

¹⁴ Russo confessed in a 1995 interview that Dado Villa-Lobos barely knew how to play guitar when forming their first band Aborto Elétrico. Additionally, during the live recording of their album *Acústico* on MTV, Russo complained that "Índios," musically more complex in comparison with other Legião songs, took nearly 20 times to record. Before playing, Russo stated somewhat ironically, "Agora a música mais difícil de todas, pois a gente tinha que gravar 20 vezes... tenham paciência... eu nunca sei a letra e a gente nunca sabe tocar!" After the performance, Russo, laughing, claimed, "Vocês são tão bonzinhos, eu errei p'ra caramba!"

lacked the same musical talent of their international inspiration, Russo acknowledges the role that Legião played in creating music that was influential rather than innovative:

A única coisa que eu sei é o seguinte: as pessoas acompanham o que a gente faz não porque mostramos uma grande novidade—porque o rock não é nem um pouco original—e sim porque o que nós fazemos já estava dentro delas. Então um garoto compra um disco da Legião, dos Titãs, do Lobão,¹⁵ ou de quem quer que seja—e, antes de ir para o colégio, ele vai ouvir aquela música, vai pensar na vida, no país, no governo, na situação caótica, em ecologia, em crimes, medos, angústias, felicidade. É legal você ter uma trilha sonora. (Assad 130)

Russo's interpretation of his role within Brock reinforces the purpose behind composing *músicas engajadas* in the first place—not only to entertain but to persuade and to understand. In another interview, Russo confessed that he did not think Legião was particularly special or even good, but that they held a power to draw in an audience through empathy (Assad 90). Additionally, in his article “Os anjos decaídos,” the Brazilian music scholar Christian Vargas says of Russo's role in creating an imaginary utopia:

O imaginário cristalizado nas canções do grupo teve também um caráter produtivo e projetivo inegável, gerando estratégias de sobrevivência e práticas existenciais: ele moldou atitudes, levou a ações explosivas e altamente destrutivas em certos momentos, lançou modas, embalou protestos, canalizou raivas e angústias, prescreveu soluções, enfim, foi muito mais do que a mera trilha sonora de uma geração em busca de identidade. (181)

¹⁵ Both Os Titãs, an often politically engaged rock band, and Lobão, a multi-instrumentalist and vocalist, were popular during Russo's time.

Vargas's note is significant considering the political climate of the time period in which Brazil was completely reconstructing its government, drafting a new constitution, and attempting to expand civil rights to a larger population. The work that Russo did to construct an idyllic future amidst an unsure, changing national reality marked his generation and was as sociopolitically significant as it was musically.

Though Aborto Elétrico's harsher punk sound and values bled into Legião's body of work,¹⁶ Russo weaves an undeniable aspect of hope within his *músicas engajadas*. In order to define Russo's role as one of the principle leaders within the Brock movement, Goli Guerreiro compares the works of Os Paralamas do Sucesso, a highly successful ska/rock band from the same time, with those of Legião Urbana and Os Titãs:

Uma breve caracterização indica as diferenças: Paralamas do Sucesso apresenta um caráter vital, dançante, corpóreo; Legião Urbana apresenta um caráter messiânico, considera o refinamento espiritual uma arma política e se pretende mentor de uma geração; Titãs apresenta um caráter virulento, com um rigoroso senso crítico que desmonta as diversas esferas da sociedade brasileira. (31)

Rather than only creating enraged, loud music like their counterpart Os Titãs—although anger and frustration were certainly present in their music—Legião musically proposed the belief that love and compassion could be the solution to Brazil's problems. As Russo sings in "Quando o sol bater na janela do seu quarto," "Porque esperar, se podemos começar tudo de novo. /Agora mesmo. A humanidade é desumana. / Mas ainda temos chance. / O Sol nasce pra todos. Só não sabe quem não quer" (1989). In several songs, Russo employs the metaphor of sunshine and springtime to represent a new start for Brazil.

¹⁶ Many of the songs Russo wrote with Aborto Elétrico are included on Legião Urbana albums.

Throughout Legião Urbana's work, Russo treats the sociopolitical scene both subjectively and objectively. In the song "Será," Russo composes in the first-person plural to unite himself to his audience, insinuating that social problems can be fought as a collective whole: "Será que vamos conseguir vencer?" This is a common pattern within Russo's verses, and he notes that his lyrics are "sempre sobre emoções interiores—a gente tem muitas canções de amor, e é quase tudo na primeira pessoa" (Assad 130). In other songs, however, the surrounding political scene is treated like an outside force referred to in the third-person plural, creating an us-versus-them mentality. For example, in "1965 (Duas tribos)," Russo sings "Mataram um menino / Tinha arma de verdade / Tinha arma nenhuma / Tinha arma de brinquedo" (1989). The entity that killed the boy is not named, though it is implied in the song's title that the military regime is responsible. Grammatically, Russo avoids using the first-person plural "nós" in order to disassociate himself with the controlling structure that he does not agree with. This same duality—subjectivity versus objectivity, hope versus disillusionment—distinguishes Legião Urbana's work from other politically engaged rock bands from the 1980s.¹⁷ I propose that this divide can be explained in part by Russo's conflict as both an insider and outsider to the Brazilian experience.

In interviews as well as in song, Russo expressed contradictory feelings of being a black sheep and being part of a Brazilian *tribo* throughout his career (though the two are not mutually exclusive). In regards to his insider status, Russo was undeniably Brazilian, having been born in Rio, residing the majority of his life in Brazil, and inserting Brazilian themes into heart of his music. Yet in many ways, Russo was an elite outsider to mainstream Brazilian life in regards to his relationships with upper-class citizens, his taste for international music, his childhood spent

¹⁷ In fact, Goli Guerreiro categorizes all Brock songs into four main themes—cotidiano, identidade, amor e sexo, política—and determines that only 10% are politically involved.

in a geographically isolated city, his above-average intellect, and his pansexual¹⁸ orientation. Russo does not shy away from the theme of his life as an outsider in his lyrics either. In the song “Meninos e meninas,” Russo admits to feeling attraction towards both males and females,¹⁹ and he claims “Tenho quase certeza que eu não sou daqui” (1989). In “Quase sem querer,” Russo describes his own intellect in the line “Às vezes o que eu vejo, quase ninguém vê” (1986). Though he expressed gratitude to Brazilian artists such as Caetano Veloso and Chico Buarque for their work, he admits to drawing nearly all of his musical inspiration from international bands, such as The Beatles, The Smiths, The Clash, The Police, and Duran Duran, among others. Russo was self-aware in this regard, but he did not hold himself responsible for being un-Brazilian: “Fomos ensinados a consumir o que vem de fora, e se hoje somos o que somos não é culpa nossa. [...] Além disso, quando a gente começou a curtir música brasileira, Caetano Veloso estava exilado em Londres, e Gal Costa cantava em inglês” (Marcelo 254). While Russo blamed the tendencies of his generation to venerate the international world, one of Russo’s professors faulted his social class. Carlos Marcelo writes in Russo’s biography, “Um professor comenta que os alunos, ao entrarem na universidade, tinham se tornado parte de minoria privilegiada da população. ‘O futuro de vocês está garantido, vocês já pertencem à elite do país!’” (142). Regardless of the reasons, Russo clearly did not fit the bill for an average Brazilian, evidenced further by the fact that neither his birth name, Manfredini, nor his chosen stage name, Russo, are Brazilian.

Returning to Russo’s circle of influence, his consumption of almost exclusively international music and literature began during a physically isolating period of his life. As a

¹⁸ Pansexuality, as opposed to bisexuality, implies attraction to any gender on a nonbinary gender spectrum.

¹⁹ This is further evidence of Russo’s role as the front man and intellectual drive behind Legião Urbana. Russo uses several Legião songs as a platform to come out as pansexual, although all other band members were heterosexual.

child, Russo suffered from epiphysiolysis, a highly painful condition in which the rounded end of the bone separates from the bone's shaft. In the biography of the singer, Carlos Marcelo writes:

A rotina estudantil tinha sido bruscamente interrompida pela epifisiólise. Não podia mais frequentar as aulas do Marista [o colégio particular de Russo]. Por conta do impecável histórico escolar, a direção do colégio permite que ele continue cursando o primeiro ano, já no segundo semestre. (82)

The disease, which manifested in his legs, required several surgeries in 1975 and a recovery that entailed bedrest and the use of a wheelchair. Though he received almost daily visits from classmates bearing homework assignments, Russo spent the majority of his time reading, writing, playing guitar, and above all else, listening to music. The artist mentioned in several interviews that it was during his recovery when his deep love of international music took root. Russo notes in a 1995 interview:

Nesse período, resolve realmente me interessar por música. Ficava deitado ouvindo os discos, sofrendo, coitadinho. Tive que fazer várias operações, andei de cadeira de rodas, de muletas. Mas não estava nem aí. Era adolescente e tinha mais problemas em ter espinhas na cara do que andar de muletas. Pelo menos, ficava claro que eu era diferente. Sempre quis ser diferente. (Assad 91)

As Russo suffered through the pain and isolation, music became his metaphorical crutch which was foundational to his career. And, as he affirms, epiphysiolysis gave Russo the distinction that he desired.

In addition to his illness, the city of Brasília where Russo spent his childhood certainly contributed to his outsider status. Shortly after the city's inauguration, French author Simone de Beauvoir stopped for a visit and was immediately unimpressed with the new capital, claiming

that it was foolish for the government to have built an artificial city in the middle of a desert. In her diary, she wrote that the city would never have a soul or heart, nor flesh or blood (Marcelo 24). Indeed, Oscar Niemeyer²⁰ and Lúcio Costa's concept city was unlike anything Brazil had seen, particularly in comparison to two of the country's former capitals, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, both cities rich in culture and history. The isolated city provided a radically different experience from what Russo had in Rio or New York. Additionally, because his family moved to Brasília during its formative years, slums were essentially nonexistent,²¹ and Russo was surrounded with people just like him in terms of social class. After beginning his career, Russo lovingly referred to Brasília as a cosmopolitan city with people from all different backgrounds, and later, less kindly, the suicide capital of Brazil (Assad 40). Throughout Legião's career, Russo expressed a desire to return to his home town for performances, but he also promised to never return. Furthermore, the inauguration of Brasília gave birth to left-wing nationalism that the government of Juscelino Kubitschek religiously promoted,²² despite the failures that Brasília presented to Brazil. Russo radically opposed this nationalistic façade throughout his lyrical work.

Though Legião's popular songs such as "Índios" and "Faroeste Caboclo" gave a voice to marginalized populations—indigenous Brazilians and blacks, respectively—Russo certainly did not face these same struggles first-hand. He experienced a privileged reality in the new capital, befriended the children of politicians at school, had a stable family life, and as a young child

²⁰ Oscar Niemeyer (1907-2012) was the primary architect of the buildings in Brasília.

²¹ Though Costa did not include favelas in his original design for the city, large urban migrations, particularly in the 90s left the city without sufficient infrastructure to host all of its residents. As Globo reports, Brasília is now home to Brazil's second largest favela, Sol Nascente (Calzolari 2015).

²² Bossa nova is typically associated with early 1960s nationalism, in part due to the fact that the Brazilian government sponsored bossa nova artists to compose songs that promoted a positive image of Brazil. The Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil notes "A consonância da bossa nova com o espírito moderno que o governo Juscelino Kubitschek pretendia imprimir ao país levou o presidente a convidar Antônio Carlos Jobim e Vinícius de Moraes a compor Brasília, sinfonia da Alvorada, para que fosse executada na inauguração da nova capital, o que acabou, contudo, não ocorrendo. [...] O próprio Juscelino Kubitschek, o homem que queria modernizar o Brasil, foi chamado de "presidente bossa nova" (Kornis 2017).

lived in New York where he perfected English. Indeed, Russo occupied a space far from the struggles of citizens living in a third-world Brazil, but regardless he was keenly aware of their reality. The sociomusicologist John Shepherd claims of general musical power structures in

Music as a Social Text:

Those who function is ownership and control (as against those whose function is labour) are charged with the intellectual and abstract maintenance not only of the symbolic environment which orders our lives, but, through that, of the social, political, and economic framework within which most people live. They think while others do. Their role is one of impersonal manipulation at a distance over relatively extended time periods. So it is musically. (135)

Though not specific to Brazilian music, the phenomenon certainly applies in Russo's case. As previously stated, his music propagated a set of attitudes, morals, and practices for the 1980s youth. Additionally, the singer used his privilege and intellect to represent the perspective of the societal outsiders that suffered the prejudice and injustice, in regards to race and socioeconomic status, that he did not.

By extension of Shepherd's observation, we know that Russo was a thinker and the creative force that drove much of Legião's career. Similarly, if we return to Guerreiro's claim that Russo served as a messianic figure²³ within the Brock movement, then perhaps his purpose was to expose the plights faced by marginalized populations to a wider audience in hopes of inspiring social change. In *Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature*, Nelson Vieira calls attention to

²³ Russo, however, did not consider himself to be a Messiah of Brock. Humbly, he states in a 1994 interview "Não me vejo como profeta ou messias, nem nada. Sou um cantor de rock, um músico, um artista. Eles te colocam lá em cima para, depois, te derrubarem" (Assad 169). On several occasions, Russo reveals how his beliefs regarding kindness, justice, and spirituality should comprise basic human nature, which might explain his negation of the messianic role the public gave him.

the tendency of a large society to promote authoritarianism and a homogenous cultural identity, and its detrimental effects on minorities. He writes, “The concern with maintaining Brazilian identity, clearly evident in the literature's preoccupation with imaging a national spirit, points to an underlying cultural preference for sameness rather than difference despite a rich heritage of cultural regionalism and folkloric differences” (5). Vieira uses an insider-outsider approach to describe Jewish social standing, as “it (insider-outsider paradigm) communicates the propensity for introspection that results from a perennial state of alterity” (6), and the same method can be applied to Russo’s treatment of Brazilian alterity. The singer’s lyrics are often concerned with racial outsiders, such as Afro-Brazilians and indigenous peoples. Russo addresses these groups even more so than he does his own outsider status as a pansexual.²⁴ His lyrical work evidences both his privilege and alterity, allowing him to advocate for groups to which he does not belong. Russo himself viewed using his knowledge and position of power to create socially aware music as a positive force, and considered his residence in Brasília advantageous in obtaining information. In a 1987 interview, he stated:

Sabíamos, antes do resto do país, das declarações políticas do Congresso Nacional. Minha *tribo* também buscava informações sobre os acontecimentos – não só políticos, como artísticos e culturais. Brasília proporciona essa facilidade de acesso. Víamos filmes estrangeiros um ano antes de entrarem em circuito nacional, frequentávamos o Instituto Goethe.²⁵ Enfim, estávamos informados sobre tudo, e isso permitiu um trabalho musical mais honesto e sincero. (Assad 42)

²⁴ The specific term “pansexual” was not common in 1980s Brazilian society, and is only used once by Russo in an interview. In literature regarding Legião Urbana, Russo is classified as either homosexual or bisexual.

²⁵ According to their site, the Instituto Goethe, or Goethe-Institut, present in 98 countries, “provide information on the culture, language and other general aspects of Germany. The Goethe-Institut also has liaison offices in many countries in addition to alliances with local cultural societies, libraries and language learning centres” (2017).

Almost ironically then, the very aspects that separated Russo from the majority of Brazilians gave him a sharper perspective of the struggles faced by the lower-class, such as systemic racism which Russo implies in “Faroeste Caboclo,” to be discussed in chapter three. Such struggles are a key component of Russo’s lyrical work, and as Vieira suggests, contest the nationalism that often suppresses peripheral voices.

As mentioned above, another formative aspect in Russo’s role as an interpreter of Brazil was marginalization due to his pansexuality, which in turn caused him to be more sympathetic towards other populations within the Brazilian periphery. Of his sexuality and position in society, Russo stated:

Faço parte de uma minoria, que não é tão minoria assim, ainda mais neste país. Me considero pansexual, mas sou o que as pessoas chamariam de homossexual. O que acontece nesse país é o seguinte: se você tem uma postura de homem, você não é considerado homossexual. Chegam pessoas para mim e dizem [com a voz afetada] “não Renato, você não é gay, você não desmunheca.” Tá bom. Desde quando eu preciso botar uma peruca e sair rebolando? Isso porque somos uma sociedade católica, machista e falocrata. [...] Então, isso faz parte da minha vida. Não é um problema. É importante falar sobre isso. Se eu fizesse parte de outra minoria e se existissem coisas que me incomodassem, acho que, tendo a posição de artista, eu falaria. Não é para ser politicamente correto ou para chamar atenção. Já tive namorada, já tive filho, mas gosto de hoje poder cantar uma música de Bob Dylan dizendo “If you see him” em vez de “If you see her.” (Assad 124)

Though Russo was confident in his sexuality, he admits in a 1991 interview to being the victim of prejudice, stating, “Nem para ganhar dinheiro uma pessoa arriscaria passar pelo que eu passei.

Tem muito preconceito ainda. São os vizinhos, as piadinhas, você não é considerado uma pessoa normal” (Assad 197). Even today, the public pushes the specific classification of Russo’s sexuality under the umbrella-title of homosexuality. Despite Russo’s candor,²⁶ and despite the frequent themes of homosexuality woven into the band’s oeuvre, much of the bibliography on Russo and Legião Urbana treats his sexuality almost like a passing detail. In perhaps the most extensive biography of the singer, Carlos Marcelo’s *Renato Russo: o filho da revolução*, almost no mention is made of Russo’s romantic relationships, aside from a few crushes in his youth, or even his death caused by AIDS. Mario Luis Grangeia writes in his comparative study of the careers of Cazuza and Russo, “Quando Cazuza e Renato Russo gravaram seus primeiros discos no início dos anos 1980, a Organização Mundial da Saúde (OMS) e o Conselho Federal de Medicina consideravam a homossexualidade uma doença mental” (107), showing how any orientation aside from heterosexuality was stigmatized within society.²⁷ Gays at the time in Brazil were often derogatorily referred to as “bicha-disco.” Grangeia also notes how Russo dealt with his sexuality, writing:

Renato, no começo, se achou doente e estranho. Receou morrer e ir para o inferno, porém mais tarde incluiu a homossexualidade em suas letras. “Quando eu era adolescente, não sabia direito como funcionava o mundo e sofria uma pressão muito grande para ser igual aos outros,” declarou à revista *Manchete* o cantor, que se revelou gay à família aos 18 anos. (107)

²⁶ In Simone Assad’s *Renato Russo de A a Z*, which divides interviews and quotes from Russo into various categories, the section on homosexuality is the most extensive in the book. Despite Russo noting that people consider him to be homosexual in the cited interview, Assad did not title the section “Pansexuality,” nor does that category exist in the book.

²⁷ Homosexuality was not removed from OMS’s list of mental illnesses until 1990.

Later, Grangeia tells how Russo better came to terms with himself after a trip to New York and San Francisco, once he realized the diversity that existed among the gay community.²⁸ Russo again bases a formative piece of his identity on an experience he had abroad, distancing himself from the prejudice he was victim to in his home country. Years later, Russo would publically address his sexuality within his lyrical work. Though we cannot consider every Legião Urbana song to be autobiographical for Russo, his songs pertaining to sexuality are treated as such. Aside from his overt coming-out in “Meninos e meninas,”²⁹ Russo addresses his sexuality in some of Legião’s early songs, such as “Daniel na cova dos leões” and “Quase sem querer,” both from *Dois* (1986). In the first, he sings “Faço nosso o meu segredo mais sincero / E desafio o instinto dissonante,” implying a secretive romantic relationship that indulges his societally “dissonant instinct,” or his homosexuality. Later he sings, “Teu corpo é meu espelho e em ti navego,” a line which Grangeia interprets as the sexual union of two members of the same gender, due to the use of “espelho” (109). In the second, Russo alludes to an experience from his youth that helped him to identify his true sexual orientation: “Me disseram que você / Estava chorando / E foi então que eu percebi / Como lhe quero tanto.” The “você” of the scene refers to one of Russo’s high school crushes, Beto Pastel, the second of Russo’s documented love interests in *Filho da revolução*. Carlos notes that Russo became more fascinated with Beto upon discovering that he had burst into tears unexpectedly at school (230). The songs, as well as Marcelo’s biography of the singer, reveal that Russo came to terms with his sexuality at a young age and, as such, felt like an outsider. He admits in a 1994 interview that at a young age, he

²⁸ Elizabeth Armstrong notes in *Forging Gay Identities* notes that San Francisco was home to the propagation and acknowledgment of diversity within the spectrum of sexual orientation. The Gay Liberation movement began in 1969 within the city, and was therefore readily apparent during Russo’s visit in 1989 (1-3).

²⁹ On *As Quatro Estações*, Russo writes the line “Acho que gosto de São Paulo/ Gosto de São João/ Gosto de São Francisco e São Sebastião/ E eu gosto de meninos e meninas” in the song “Meninos e meninas.”

considered himself sick, different, and weird (Assad 123). Additionally, in “Quase sem querer,” Russo sings, “E queria sempre achar / Explicação pro que eu sentia / Como um anjo caído / Fiz questão de esquecer / Que mentir pra si mesmo / É sempre a pior mentira.” As Grangeia mentions, Russo struggled with his pansexuality in a society both overwhelmingly Catholic and oppressive towards gays; however, the lyrics imply that, although Russo does not necessarily understand his sexuality, he refuses to discount his feelings. Though Russo only came out to the public via interviews in 1990, the discography of Legião Urbana indicates that Russo coming to terms with his sexuality was a much longer process. After disclosing his pansexuality to the public, however, Russo did not shy away from speaking openly on the topic. As such, Russo played an active role within one of society’s minority groups and was therefore able to be sympathetic towards not only those marginalized sexually but racially and economically as well.

Finally, an analysis of Russo’s lyrics throughout Legião’s career illuminates the conflict between Russo’s insider and outsider status. Often this distinction is revealed through the grammatical person in which Russo writes—the use of first-person plural implies Russo’s solidarity with his fellow Brazilians, whereas lyrics in the first-person singular indicate Russo’s isolation. Similarly, when the singer does not agree or identify with a group, he often excludes himself grammatically, preferring the third-person plural. In “Geração Coca-Cola” (*Que país é esse*, 1987), Russo shows how his childhood parallels that of other Brazilian youth, as he sings, “Quando nascemos fomos programados / A receber o que vocês nos empurraram / Com os enlatados dos U.S.A., de nove as seis.” Here, he recognizes the connection between himself and the Brazilians of his generation—all were taught to venerate what came from abroad. At the same time, he distances himself from his predecessors, referring to the prior generation as “vocês,” and implying the need for change. This same pattern is found in any Legião song in

which Russo encourages his generation to progress, such as in “Será” (*Legião Urbana*, 1985) and “Tempo Perdido” (*Dois*, 1986). He sings, “Será que vamos ter que responder pelos erros a mais?” and “Não temos tempo pra perder!” respectively. In “Quando o sol bater na janela do teu quarto” (*As quatro estações*, 1989), he reminds his peers of the possibility of a fresh start with the lines “Ainda temos chance / o sol nasce pra todos.” In these songs, the aspects that differentiate Russo from his peers become insignificant, as the singer calls for all to participate in aiding during the country’s redemocratization process.

However, Russo relies less on collective social action and more on his own moral character as *Legião*’s career progresses—a prevalent feature of his lyrics that will be discussed in later chapters. The question Russo poses in “Será”—if both he and his peers will be held responsible for the errors of past generations—seems to be answered by this shift: Russo alone will assume responsibility. In fact, in a 1994 interview, Russo states, “Hoje em dia, eu acredito mais numa mudança interior [...] Eu não posso mais falar pelas outras pessoas” (Assad 172). Indeed, there are a number of *Legião* songs that suggest Russo’s individual enlightenment among a group of ignorant people and, consequentially, portray Russo as an outsider. His confidence in his own moral character appears in “Duas tribos (1965),” (*As quatro estações*, 1989), as Russo poses another question: “E você, de que lado está?” He confirms to his listeners, “Eu estou do lado do bem,” also implying a dichotomy of power within the country; like the singer, his peers must choose which side they will support. Similarly confirming his individuality, Russo begins “Metal contra as nuvens” (*V*, 1991) with the lines, “Não sou escravo de ninguém / Ninguém senhor do meu domínio / Sei o que devo defender” and later “Quase acreditei na sua promessa / E o que vejo é fome e destruição.” The song is clearly in dialogue with the government,³⁰

³⁰ Appropriately, the album *V* was released in the midst of a terrible inflation crisis. From 1986-1990, the government implemented six different plans to calm inflation, all in vain. When Fernando Collor de Melo took

portraying Russo as a disillusioned citizen who chooses to rely on his own set of principles. Two years later, Legião released “A fonte” (*Descobrimento do Brasil*, 1993) in which Russo calls Brazil “um campo inimigo,” pleading, “Me tira essa vergonha, me liberta dessa culpa / Me arranca esse ódio, me livra desse medo.” The lines suggest that Russo feels a powerful obligation to his country, but the emotional burden is too hard for him to withstand. As a solution, Russo claims in the song that in the midst of all the corruption, “Eu me mantenho limpo.” The strong lyrics suggest that Russo in fact prefers to be an outsider; if Brazil continues on such a corrupt path, Russo would rather disassociate himself completely. As these songs show, and as Legião’s career progressed, Russo identifies less as a Brazilian citizen and focuses rather on his moral characteristics as a human being. The shift in confidence in a collective group to Russo as an individual highlights the singer’s struggle to identify as an insider.

office in 1990, he promised to fight inflation and corruption; however, his plan entailed freezing bank accounts across the nation (Rohter 197). Collor resigned only two years later in order to avoid imminent impeachment.

Chapter 2: Onde o Brasil Errou pela Primeira Vez: Os Índios

Despite the end of the Brock movement in the early 1990s, Renato Russo's lyrics have found a permanent space within contemporary music as Brazil has continued on a trajectory fraught with many of the same sociopolitical problems present in Russo's day. Though creating music that would be relevant to the future of Brazil may not have been premediated, Russo intentionally maintains a dialogue with the past and particularly with the events that stained Brazil's history and adversely shaped its future. One such example is the harsh treatment of indigenous Brazilians, which Russo addresses in songs such as "Que país é este" from the album *Que país é este* (1987), "Mais do mesmo" from *As quatro estações* (1989), and, most blatantly, in "Índios" from *Dois* (1986). Each song presents a different reading of the genocide of native Brazilians—its past and future consequences and imagined outcomes had it not occurred—verifying that Russo considered the outcome of colonization to be a critical factor in interpreting the state of Brazil. Christian Vargas notes:

Todo artefato cultural está perpassado por historicidade. [...] Com efeito, toda realização humana, notadamente toda e qualquer produção artística, mantém um duplo diálogo constante e produtivo com o passado e a tradição, ainda que seja para negá-los, e com o presente, no qual vai buscar um léxico e uma sintaxe simbólicos que servem de articulação ao imaginário de um dado momento histórico. (171)

If we consider music to be a cultural artefact, Vargas' assertion recognizes and legitimizes the musical influences—both national and international—that stylistically shaped Legião Urbana's music. Additionally, the "historicity" must also affect the thematic elements of the music, confirming that Renato Russo not only engaged with 1980s social issues but also the prior conditions and injustices that provoked such problems in the first place. In *Brazil, Lyric, and the*

Americas, Charles Perrone notes that, in regards to Brazilian music in general, this historical aspect is necessary, as he states:

In wider temporal perspective, [...] lyric of the Americas must indeed include not only what is current but also essential legacies, such as colonial writing, romantic impulses, nation-building ethics, this-side-of-the-pond perspectives on linguistic revitalization, and New World modernist finds and rediscoveries. (8)

Russo relies on this historicity to articulate his disillusionment with the country in its current state and with the foundational transgressions that stained future generations of Brazil. While a few Brock artists prolonged the politically engaged movement born in Tropicália, Russo took the movement a step further by digging into the origins of a problematic society.

In his songs regarding indigenous Brazilians, Russo consistently questions whether the ends justify the means. For example, after strongly criticizing Brazilian society in “Mais do mesmo,” he ends with the line, “E todos os índios, índios, índios foram mortos mortos mortos!” to remind his listeners of what he believes to be the root cause. In “Índios,” he paints a hypothetical Brazil free from colonization, writing through the perspective of an indigenous Brazilian, repeating “Quem me dera” followed by the consequences of colonization. In all of his post-colonially relevant songs, Russo depicts a struggle between two groups with respective sets of values: ignorance, avarice, and guile on the part of the oppressor versus naiveté and innocence on the part of the oppressed. Russo’s portrayal, while perhaps oversimplified, does essentially characterize European colonization not only in Brazil, but throughout numerous other countries. Specifically, Portuguese colonizers held three main objectives: extracting the rich natural resources that the indigenous peoples protected, obtaining a labor force through enslavement of

the natives,³¹ and subjection through conversion to Christianity. Boris Fausto notes that the Portuguese taught that in order to be a good Christian, the Indians needed also to adopt the European work ethic (23). Russo focuses on the outcomes of these objectives within his lyrics, and in particular, the Portuguesees' blatant disregard of indigenous religion, traditions, and practices, as well as the rapid spread of diseases from the settlers. Fausto writes:

Os índios foram vítimas de doenças como sarampo, varíola, gripe, para as quais não tinha defesa biológica. Duas ondas epidêmicas se destacaram por sua virulência entre 1562 e 1563, matando 60 mil índios segundo parece, sem contar as vítimas do sertão.
(15)

Despite the horrific spread of disease paired with indigenous resistance, the Portuguese throne ended indigenous enslavement only in 1758, although it had slowed earlier due to the increase of the African slave trade (Fausto 24). The colonization of indigenous populations proved not only foundational to Brazil's history, but to Russo's music as well.

The first mention of indigenous Brazilians in Legião Urbana's body of work is a blatant one, with "Índios" on the album *Dois* in 1986, which is best categorized among his other songs of disillusionment. Hence, Russo employs the same historicity of colonial times within both the song's subject matter and the construction of the verses. Though the song does not stray from the first-person voice, Russo switches between narrating the verse from the perspective of an indigenous Brazilian and another unknown "I," possibly Russo himself or another Brazilian citizen in the modern day. Through both perspectives, Russo portrays two opposing forces in

³¹ Boris Fausto explains in *A história concisa do Brasil* that indigenous populations were unaccustomed to the level of intensive labor that the Europeans required in exploiting the land. Knowing the land well, however, the natives were able to resist enslavement to an extent, which contributed to the colonizers' reasons to use an African slave force. Fausto writes "Enquanto os escravos africanos se viam diante de um território desconhecido onde eram implantados à força, os índios se encontravam em sua casa" (23).

which the first-person account is always the victim of cruelty, injustice, and indifference. The lyrics begin “Quem me dera ao menos uma vez / ter de volta todo o ouro que eu entreguei / a quem me convenceu que era prova de amizade / se alguém levasse embora até o que eu não tinha,” immediately highlighting the inequality of the relationship between indigenous peoples and the colonizers, advantageous only to the second party. In fact, Russo constructs the song with the initial “quem me dera” (how I wish that) followed by a series of hypothetical situations that contradict colonial history. Russo’s use of this hypothetical structure suggests the possibility of a radically different outcome—one in which settlers would not have stripped native populations of their wealth, or “ouro.” Equally, however, his use of the past tense reinforces the fact that the colonization occurred and its consequences remain.

Russo extends the same sentiment of avarice into the second verse: “Quem me dera, ao menos uma vez / Esquecer que acreditei que era por brincadeira / Que se cortava sempre um pano-de-chão / De linho nobre e pura seda.” The imagery of a floor rag made out of fine materials accentuates, according to Russo’s interpretation, the extent to which Portuguese settlers took advantage of the natives and of the land; no expense was spared to provide the highest quality of even the simplest, quotidian objects. Furthermore, through first-person perspective of the indigenous Brazilian, Russo, the lyricist, portrays the narrator as feeling shame on the part of the indigenous Brazilians for having been exploitable. The inability to simply forget, as Russo implies, should however be shameful for 1980s Brazilian society. Of course, in regards to the historical veracity, Russo oversimplifies his lyrics for the purpose of song, but the emotional component is accurate in portraying his message. As the singer states in a 1995 interview, “O importante, para mim, não é o que está sendo dito, mas como está sendo dito. O importante é que as pessoas conseguem se emocionar com a Legião” (Assad 90). Although Russo could not have

composed the song completely disconnected from history, his poetics are what provoke a strong emotional reaction from his audience. If Russo's role is in fact to serve as a messianic figure to the Brazilian youth, as Guerreiro proposes, then "Índios" certainly meets that objective.

The third verse switches to a voice that is applicable to the modern-day, though it could just as well be from an indigenous perspective: "Quem me dera ao menos uma vez / Explicar o que ninguém consegue entender / Que o que aconteceu ainda está por vir / E o futuro não é mais como era antigamente." These lines represent some of Russo's strongest denunciations of Brazil, as he invalidates the nationalistic cries for progress and rather condemns the country to a future just as problematic as the past. Viera's observation of "Brazil's pervasive nationalistic ideology of cultural assimilation or cohesiveness" is again applicable to a country that has seemingly forgotten its origins, but Russo brings history to the forefront through these lyrics. Similarly, Russo laments the short public memory regarding the military dictatorship, stating in a 1994 interview with MTV:

Tem gente aqui no Brasil que está com esses papos de 'os militares têm que voltar'.

Imagina, isso é uma coisa que acontece. Há menos de dez anos atrás, a gente ainda tinha militar no poder. Será que nós nos esquecemos de como é ruim não ter liberdade?

(Grangeia 42)

In both of these examples, Russo's primary preoccupation is with freedom, or the lack thereof. Not surprisingly, the history of Brazil's indigenous population causes Russo so much anxiety exactly because of the lack of liberty and abuse of authoritarian power, highlighted in the "Índios" line in Russo claims that history will repeat itself. Additionally, the idea of Russo as an interpreter of the truth amidst a forgetful public is present in several other Legião songs, such as in "Que país é este," which addresses widespread corruption throughout Brazil but ends a verse

with the line “mas todos acreditam no futuro da nação!” (1987). The ironic line criticizes a public that, despite being hopeful about an improved future, refuses to change any of the systematic societal problems. In the fourth verse of “Índios,” Russo sings, “Mas nos deram espelhos e vimos o mundo doente,” further emphasizing the stain that Brazil’s history left on present society.

Though “Índios” overtly addresses indigenous Brazilians, Russo does not cite any one specific historical event or legislation regarding these groups but rather humanizes the interactions between colonizer and colonized. His verses appear to return to Brazil’s Romantic period, in which writers such as Gonçalves Dias and José de Alencar portray the native Brazilian as a national hero. Russo also plays into the myth of the “noble savage,” commonly attributed to Jean Jacques Rousseau,³² in which the supposedly uncorrupted indigenous man is held to be superior to the civilized man. Such theory is the central focus of Russo’s lyrics, though he does not specifically name the colonizer nor any particular tribe. To perhaps make colonial history more palatable for a widespread audience, Russo prefers to rely on emotion and sentiment to portray his beliefs, rather than specific historical facts. This is evident in later verses, as Russo sings, “Sua maldade então deixaram Deus tão triste” and “Quem me dera ao menos uma vez [...] acreditar que o mundo é perfeito e que todas as pessoas são felizes,” attempting to provoke a poignant reflection from his audience by relating the negative sentiment to modern society. The emotional component in his lyrics is what draws his audience in, as Russo allows the listener to sympathize with his cause. His reliance on Rousseau’s noble savage also contributes to Russo’s

³² In fact, the singer claims that his choice of “Russo” came from a desire to pay homage to Rousseau, among other great thinkers. Inspired by Fernando Pessoa, a modern Portuguese poet who had over 80 pseudonyms, Russo said of his process to settle on his stage name, “Depois tinha o Rousseau, o Jean-Jacques—eu gostava daquela coisa do nobre selvagem....Daí, tinham o Henri Rousseau, um pintor que eu amo, e o Bertrand Russo, que eu acho um cara muito legal” (Assad 227).

overall plea for a softening of the human spirit; he does not mention indigenous cannibalistic tendencies, for example, that are present in other Brazilian canonic texts,³³ but instead he depicts the native populations as inherently good. Finally, reinforcing his position on indigenous Brazilians, Russo states in a 1990 interview, “Sabe o que eu acho, se a gente tiver sorte, vai acontecer no futuro? Vamos realmente ter uma aldeia global [...] e vamos ser índios. Você vai ter sua casa com energia solar, o seu terminal ligado à biblioteca do Congresso ou o que quer que seja, e vai ter uma vida natural, uma alimentação natural. Quem dera!” (Assad 109). The idealization of a lifestyle Russo, somewhat mistakenly, attributes to native Brazilians partially explains the singer’s fascination with indigenous groups in his lyrical work.

Returning to Guerreiro’s assertion that the singer considers spiritual refinement to be a political weapon, Russo’s technique to criticize Brazilian society is to incite his audience who, only a short time prior, had suffered at the hand of a government that repressed creative expression. Russo states in 1990, “A questão mais política do momento é a espiritual. Se você resolver esse lado, se acreditar que bondade é ter coragem, que disciplina é liberdade, e compaixão é fortaleza, todo o resto vai se resolver” (Assad 95). This explains Russo’s proclivity to weave together both disillusionment and hope within his poetics, as the first incites guilt, indignation, and a will to change, while the latter provides faith that such change can take place. In the eleventh verse, Russo sings, “Quem me dera ao menos uma vez / Como a mais bela tribo / Dos mais belos índios / Não ser atacado por ser inocente.” The lyricist’s solution does not therefore entail large manifestations, but rather a transformation of the human spirit to promote the kindness and tolerance that the native Brazilians did not receive. The verse also unites the two voices of both the indigenous and modern-day narrator in a line that hints at Russo’s own

³³ Examples include “Carta de achamento” by Pero Vaz de Caminha, a Portuguese explorer, or “I-Juca Pirama” by Gonçalves Dias.

marginalization, indicated in part by the usage of the singular masculine form of “atacado.” And, though Russo believes the terrors of colonization should serve as a lesson for the future, he cries in despair that it has not.

The final line, “Tentei chorar mas não consegui,” open to several interpretations, again incites the emotional aspect that Russo so often includes within his lyrics. The line first demonstrates Russo’s attempted empathy towards indigenous groups but also his emotional fatigue towards all of the social injustice, revealing that it is far too common an occurrence. Additionally, the lyric implies that Russo has become so accustomed to his own mistreatment as a gay man that he cannot bring himself to cry. Rather, his responsive emotion is anger, expressed in the crescendo and heightened passion of his voice when singing the last verses. In the studio recording³⁴ of “Índios,” Russo performs the first several verses using a Sprechstimme³⁵ technique, in which the lyrics are not sung but rather spoken in tones to match the instrumental accompaniment. As the lyrics intensify, Russo’s voice becomes more fervent as he transitions into singing towards the end of the song. Confirming the piece’s position with Legião Urbana’s disillusionment category, Russo said of the song, “Tem coisas bem fortes [na letra]...E meu coração ali! Foi uma coisa muito difícil. Eu queria uma resposta, mas ela não vinha” (Assad 134). Later, of his political involvement Russo expressed that “a partir do momento em que fizemos músicas como Índios e Tempo Perdido, percebemos que poderíamos muito bem abordar a política sem ter que ser panfletários” (Assad 196). Lacking a response or solution, Russo’s unique dialogue with history illustrates his frustration with Brazilian society. Additionally, as the

³⁴ Russo did a second acoustic arrangement of “Índios” for Legião’s live MTV recording in 1992. The song has a distinct melody for both the vocal and guitar components, unlike the original studio version recorded for *Dois* (1986).

³⁵ The term is German for “speech-voice,” and according to Britannica, the technique became popular in the 20th century.

singer hints, the emotional aspect is key for Legião's public to comprehend the gravity of the song's political relevance.

The second mention of indigenous Brazilians comes one year later in the song "Que país é este" included on the album of the same name released in 1987, though the single itself was written in 1978. The song represents one of Russo's strongest denunciations of Brazil, and the lyrics reflect the singer's tendency to dialogue with the country's history in an attempt to interpret the future, as well as his pattern of switching voices to portray varying perspectives. Appropriately, Russo compares the song to "Índios," stating "Nas favelas, no Senado, sujeira pra todo lado' é de certa forma adolescente e ingênuo, mas, depois de uma letra como 'Índios', que trata do mesmo assunto, poderia até ser a mesma música, para onde ir?" (Grangeia 54). Despite the discrepancies in poetic complexity, which Russo recognizes, both songs rely on the same image to make Russo's point. Though the songs were written eight years apart, the singer's view on the problematic modern Brazilian society does not waver, although he has presented opposing views of the country's citizens in a number of interviews to be further discussed. This is to be expected, however, as Russo's verses fluctuate between hopeful and disillusioned perceptions of Brazil.

On par with the contentious lyrics of "Que país é este," Russo prefers a shouting, bellowing voice over his softer singing voice—fitting, considering the song was originally composed for *Aborto Elétrico*, and therefore fits better with Russo's prior punk style.³⁶ Just as in "Índios," Russo sets up a dichotomy between the victimized "I" and the ignorant "they," and in the last verse, an indignant, ironic "we." In the first verse, he notes "Ninguém respeita a

³⁶ In fact, as Mario Luis Grangeia notes in *Cazuza, Renato Russo e a transição democrática*, Russo said that songs such as "Que país é este" and "Geração Coca-Cola" are directly tied to a certain phase in his life. "Hoje, mesmo se eu falasse as mesmas coisas, eu tentaria falar de uma maneira muito mais espiritual e lírica" (125).

constituição, mas todos acreditam no futuro da nação!” Had Russo included himself in this seemingly hypocritical group, perhaps he would have written in the first person plural rather than the third person. Christian Vargas comments on the apparent separation of spaces and voices within Russo’s lyrics, as he notes:

É comum, nas letras da Legião Urbana, a representação do mundo exterior, público e despersonalizado como terreno hostil, violento e impiedoso, espécie de contraponto ao santuário das relações privadas e das afinidades cotidianas, as quais seriam o último reduto da coesão afetiva e ética. O estreitamento dos laços domésticos e de amizade, assim como o fortalecimento das íntimas vinculações orgânicas e tribais, seriam então a receita válida de resistência à barbárie e à desumanização, caminho pós-utópico para a renovação dos valores e dos indivíduos. (198)

“Que país é este” is no exception to this pattern, as Russo depicts Brazil as being so corrupt and unjust that it provokes the very question – what country is this? Although the lyrics lack any sense of hope for the future, Russo’s ultimate call for the refinement of human spirit does not waiver. He chooses rather to use irony and deplorable imagery to wake up his listener to the societal injustices, and through such contrast, provoke change.

Later, he switches to the first-person singular, highlighting the unfair treatment to which the poor working class endures: “Na morte eu descanso / mas o sangue anda solto / manchando os papéis, documentos fiéis.” Though Russo did not belong to the working class, he includes himself in the lyrics, giving a voice to a marginalized group. The imagery created in this line resonates with a sentiment commonly found in Russo’s lyrics—that the consequences of the overworked and enslaved peoples stain the present state of the nation. These verses set up for the last, most tragic lines of all that once more evoke the past injustices against the native

population: “Terceiro mundo, se for / Piada no exterior / Mas o Brasil vai ficar rico / Vamos faturar um milhão / Quando vendermos todas as almas / Dos nossos índios num leilão.” The switch to the first person plural, as well as the strong use of irony, suggests that Russo holds future progress as a collective effort, of which he also takes responsibility. As aforementioned, the promotion of aesthetic and moral values among groups was not uncommon for rock in this period; Goli Guerreiro notes:

Não se pode negligenciar que a noção de tribo tornou-se “native.” Ao longo da última década, a ideia de tribo vem sendo incorporada em larga escala por vários grupos que assim se auto-nomeiam. [...] Já que importa, principalmente, saber como se vive e como se exprime a sensação coletiva. (25)

Interestingly, the singer seems to resort to the literal image of the indigenous Brazilians to simultaneously promote his idealistic tribalism. The parallel is fitting, considering how preoccupied Russo was with both.

However, perhaps the most significant effect of the last verse of “Que país é este” is the dialogue with Brazilian history. Brazil has only quite recently shed its third-world status and entered into the realm developing countries, alongside Russia, India, and China, a point that Larry Rohter presents in his 2012 book *Brazil on the Rise*. He notes, much like Russo:

No matter how much Brazil achieves, it always seems to have fallen short of fulfilling the destiny predicted for it. As first Japan and then China and India zoomed by on their way to global prominence, and even South Korea and the “tigers” of South-east Asia won praise, attention, and investments, Brazilians have responded with a mordant counter-cliché of their own: “Brazil is the country of the future and always will be. (19)

Indeed, until recent years, Brazil has had trouble to hold its ground on a global stage, as the nation has wavered between first-world and third-world status. Of Brazil's status, Russo states in a 1989 interview "O que a gente tem que perceber é que o Brasil também é um país do primeiro mundo e que existe a possibilidade e que realmente as pessoas estão trabalhando nisso" (Grangeia 55). Though Russo seems to fluctuate in regards to his faith in the Brazilian people, Grangeia notes that the singer added that only a small part of the population enjoyed a first-world standard of living.³⁷

In "Que país é este," Russo reinforces the woefully optimistic belief held by the public that, despite rough beginnings, the country will become developed through financial stability. His reference once more to the indigenous population, however, brings about a recollection of the country's tendency to exploit the land and its people, be it through forced servitude of natives and imported African slaves, or through the cultivation and exportation of Pau-Brasil wood, sugar cane, and coffee. His choice of the word "almas" humanizes the indigenous people and adds a touch of Russo's sentimentality. The image of native Brazilians being exploited again for the financial gain of the nation presents the historical shame while also criticizing the current government's tendency towards corruption. Overall, "Que país é este" calls into question the past mistakes of the country and, like "Índios," suggests that prior exploitation is responsible for the social discrepancies of Russo's time. Though both songs doubtlessly comprise Russo's set of songs of disillusionment, the use of irony in "Que país é este" better captures Russo's indignation, while "Índios" portrays his feelings of regret and melancholy.

The final direct mention of indigenous populations comes briefly at the end of "Mais do mesmo," in a line apparently unrelated to the rest of the lyrics, where Russo sings, "E todos os

³⁷ Harvard's ReVista reports that wealth disparity in 1980s Brazil was largely due to the rapid rise of inflation, which went from 80% to 1509% in a span of only ten years (Ferreira et. al 11).

índios índios índios foram mortos mortos mortos.” Regardless, “Mais do mesmo” deserves to be categorized with “Que país é este” and “Índios,” as it demonstrates Russo’s pattern of maintaining a dialogue with the past while simultaneously criticizing the present. Furthermore, Russo acknowledges this tendency directly before the song’s recording on *Acústico MTV*, as he states “É impressionante como as músicas continuam, assim, a ter uma certa relevância, mesmo que a gente tenha escrito essa música há quase... oito anos atrás. Não, há quase seis anos atrás” (1992). This brief acknowledgement of Brazil’s lack of progress contextualized the song for a live audience, while again calling into question the factors responsible for such stagnancy. The title of the song itself suggests an absence of progress—“more of the same.” Securing the song’s position in category of disillusionment, Russo sings “Em vez de luz, tem tiroteio no fim do túnel. Ô, ô sempre mais do mesmo.” By taking a common phrase used to express hope and replacing the light with the violent image of a shooting, Russo reveals the irony of believing in the future with grave societal problems. To emphasize his despair, Russo extends the singing of his “ô”s, transforming them into cries.

In a later verse, Russo sings, “E agora você quer um retrato do país / mas queimaram o filme, queimaram o filme,” suggesting that the country refuses to learn from its past and rather prefers to exclude history from the collective memory. This line could also be perceived as a criticism of the military dictatorship that, through strict censorship of the press, media, and artistic production, suppressed direct accounts of public suffering and rather commissioned nationalistic works to praise the country. Additionally, the line hints that the country, perhaps the government, citizens, or both, refuse to learn from the past, which served as motivation for Russo to consistently address Brazilian history in his verses. Though a large portion of Legião Urbana’s oeuvre is critical of Brazilian government or the nation as a whole, Russo specifically

laments the situation of the Brazilian people, stating “Fico achando que as pessoas são cegas, não querem ver o que está acontecendo, não se ajudam, e vivem num processo de servidão voluntária. A maioria das pessoas insatisfeitas não faz nada para reverter a situação” (Assad 73). His criticism of the public resonates with the final verses of “Índios,” in which the singer complains that humanity has turned inhumane, forgetting each other’s names and failing to maintain basic cordial practices, such as giving thanks. Once more, Russo’s fundamental belief, the necessity of refining the human spirit, shines through his lyrics. As the singer has revealed through verse and interviews, “Você só consegue sair de uma situação assim se encontrar um caminho espiritual” (Assad 73). His method to reveal this position within these three songs of despair, however, is not quite so stable. The process involves ironic criticism, emotional lamentations and, above all, the evocation of the original victims—the indigenous Brazilians. These three songs establish the base for one of Russo’s most significant problems with Brazilian society and are necessary to analyze prior to other socially critical songs. The seeds of social despair that Russo plants within these songs will, in later works, blossom to reveal continued disillusionment but also Russo’s path to a brighter future. As the next chapter will reveal, however, Russo’s methods are not always clear-cut.

Chapter 3: Será que vamos conseguir vencer?: (Des)esperança

Desesperança política

An overwhelming portion of Legião Urbana's songs paint Brazil as a corrupt country fraught with social injustice. Russo is quick to criticize the world around him and slower to express hope for the future—though confident aspirations are often present in small doses and will be discussed later in this chapter. As a component of Russo's contradictory path in characterizing the state of the nation, it is worth noting the conflicting lyrics and released statements from the singer throughout his career. Though an analysis of nearly any one of Russo's *músicas engajadas* would suggest that the singer is prompting his listener to pursue social change, he repeatedly rebuffed the role of a messiah. Retrospectively commenting on his career, Russo stated, “Não me vejo como profeta ou messias, nem nada. Sou um cantor de rock, um músico, um artista [...] Eu expresso o que eu penso e o que eu sinto. Só. Quando eu falo essas coisas, não é para mudar a cabeça de ninguém” (Assad 169). Such statements seem to discredit the fervor with which Russo composes his socially relevant verses. Regardless, Guerreiro, among other Brazilian music critics consider Russo to in fact be the messianic figure of the Brock movement, particularly in comparison with other groups, such as Os Titãs, that produced angry music that lacked Russo's same spiritual sentiment.

Russo's public opinion has similarly wavered. In 1978, Russo openly condemns both the government and the public through “Que país é este,” and later states, “Embora tenha escrito ‘Que país é este’ em 1978, há dez anos, as coisas realmente não mudaram” (Assad 117). In the same year, however, he claims in an interview, “Mas eu acho que é justamente nas situações extremas que as coisas podem mudar. O povo brasileiro, na verdade, tem muito bom coração” (Assad 40), reaffirming his faith in the public. Only a few years later, however, he claims that the public is blind, stating: “[as pessoas] não querem ver o que está acontecendo, não se ajudam, e

vivem num processo de servidão voluntária. A maioria das pessoas insatisfeitas não faz nada para reverter a situação” (Assad 73). Later, in 1994, Russo goes on to say that the public is very conscious of the problems plaguing the nation (Assad 41).

Also ironically, Russo states in 1993, the year of the release of *Descobrimento do Brasil*, “A gente acredita no Brasil. Existem muitas coisas legais” (Fuscaldo 80). Chris Fuscaldo claims in *Discobiografia Legionária* that the inspiration behind the album partially came from Fernando Collor’s impeachment,³⁸ which in turn caused the lyrics to be overall hopeful (84). Yet, the album includes “Perfeição,” the anti-*carnaval* anthem and perhaps the most potent, ironic of all of Russo’s criticisms of Brazil, as he repeats the line “Vamos celebrar” followed by a list of Brazil’s problems, such as “a estupidez humana,” “nossa desunião,” and “a juventude sem escola.” While Russo never shied away from directly condemning Brazil, the most extensive, brutal commentary is found in “Perfeição.” Christian Vargas affirms that the song represents “uma poesia capaz de articular, em torno de construções verbais características do terreno da festa, da celebração e do ritual, um dos discursos mais irônicos, ácidos e virulentos da história da música nacional” (204). Indeed, to Russo, Brazil is a country of “assassinos, covardes, estupradores e ladrões,” replete with hunger, poor infrastructure, political corruption, apathetic and ignorant citizens, and subpar schools and hospitals. Despite these horrific problems, Russo notes that the public continues to celebrate the country during *carnaval*. The same year of

³⁸ In “O impeachment do presidente Collor: a literatura e o processo,” it states “Em dezembro de 1989, Fernando Collor de Mello foi eleito para a Presidência da República do Brasil com cerca de 35 milhões de votos, mais da metade dos votantes. Era o primeiro presidente a ser eleito conforme a Constituição democrática de 1988, quase trinta anos depois que o eleitorado brasileiro elegeu diretamente o seu presidente pela última vez, em 1960. Com a eleição de Collor, parecia enfim efetivada a demanda central da campanha das Diretas Já e do movimento pela democratização do país [...] Em maio de 1992 Collor foi acusado por seu irmão de associação em esquema de corrupção gerenciado pelo tesoureiro de sua campanha eleitoral. Em seguida, formou-se uma Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito que confirmou seu envolvimento. Em setembro, a Câmara dos Deputados autorizou por ampla maioria a abertura do processo de impeachment, em meio a uma onda de manifestações populares que demandavam isso do Congresso. Em dezembro, o Senado Federal aprovou o impeachment do presidente e o baniou da vida pública por oito anos” (Sallum Jr. and Guimarães, 2011).

Descobrimiento do Brasil's release, however, Russo made a statement that completely contradicts the sentiment of “Perfeição:”

Eu não sou mais tão agressivo quanto antigamente. Eu descobri que não adianta ficar batendo com a cabeça na parede, porque não vou mudar o mundo. Antigamente, eu sinceramente acreditava que eu ia poder mudar o mundo. Eu me formei em Jornalismo, eu realmente queria fazer alguma coisa por um determinado caminho. Aí, depois, eu descobri: “Olha, por aí não vai dar, Renato. E melhor você fazer outra coisa.” Hoje em dia, eu acredito mais numa mudança interior. Se eu vou conseguir resolver os problemas que aparecem com a minha família, na minha vida cotidiana, as coisas que eu tenho que resolver comigo mesmo, com meu filho, com os meus pais, com os meus amigos. Acredito neste tipo de mudança, uma coisa a nível de pessoas, bem pequena mesmo. Nada de mudar o mundo, o governo, nem nada. E isso se reflete um pouco no estilo das letras. No começo, era uma coisa muito grandiosa; agora, não. (Assad 172)

Clearly, the first four verses of “Perfeição” have nothing to do with personal spiritual refinement or social change via love and kindness, but rather is a harsh criticism of numerous aspects of Brazilian society. However, the very last verse, comprised of a short eight lines, shows Russo’s softer, hopeful side, as he sings,

Venha, meu coração está com pressa
Quando a esperança está dispersa
Só a verdade me liberta
Chega de maldade e ilusão
Venha, o amor tem sempre a porta aberta
E vem chegando a primavera

Nosso futuro recomeça

Venha, que o que vem é perfeição.

The lines present a stark difference to the prior denunciations of a lost people and government. The pattern of placing a few hopeful lines among an overwhelmingly pessimistic and critical song is not uncommon for Russo, though; the lyricist slightly offsets the despair in “A fonte” (also featured on *Descobrimento do Brasil*) with the verse “Celebro todo dia / Minha vida e meus amigos / Eu acredito em mim / E continuo limpo.” The line again suggests the maturity of Russo’s belief in his moral character rather than in the Brazilian youth. Guerreiro suggests that a 1980 Brock musician’s identity can take root in two different ways: “ou ele busca uma irreverência que chega às raias da agressividade, ou contenta-se em manifestar uma certa liberdade ou autonomia frente aos valores vigentes da sociedade” (65–66). Throughout his career, as evidenced by these songs and public statements, Russo sought to do both.

As the contradictory quotes show, Russo’s aspirations for an improved future are nearly always hindered by a heavy dose of disillusionment of his present day. In fact, the large majority of Legião’s *músicas engajadas* prefer an ironic, critical approach to portray the country rather than a light, sanguine one. One such case is “Faroeste Caboclo,” one of Legião’s most well-known hits,³⁹ a ballad comprised of 159 lines and lasting over nine minutes. Like many of the songs on *Que país é este*, “Faroeste” was written in 1979, though released nearly a decade later. “Faroeste” follows a pattern similar to “Índios”: rather than writing from personal experience, Russo adopts a voice from a group to which he does not belong—in this case, he narrates the story⁴⁰ of a poor, black man from the northeast, João de Santo Cristo. The song takes place

³⁹ In fact, “Faroeste Caboclo” was adapted for a film of the same name, directed by René Sampaio and released in 2013.

⁴⁰ Russo claims that he wanted to create a ballad similar to the style of Bob Dylan’s “Hurricane,” but with aspects of Brazilian oral tradition (Assad 103).

during the military dictatorship, and follows the life of João, who, at the age of fifteen, witnessed the military police gun down his father. João's life is characterized by theft due to necessity, even from a young age: "Quando criança só pensava em ser bandido / Ainda mais quando com um tiro de soldado o pai morreu / [...] Ia pra igreja só pra roubar o dinheiro / Que as velhinhas colocavam na caixinha do altar." When he finally receives the opportunity to travel to Brasília, which he believed "lugar melhor não há," João is initially drawn in by the Christmas lights, exclaiming "Meu Deus, que cidade linda!" As Russo sings "Não entendia como a vida funcionava / Discriminação por causa da sua classe e sua cor," João's chance at a fresh start is hindered when he realizes that he cannot live off of a minimum-wage job, and he is again drawn to crime. After spending time in prison, where he is raped by fellow inmates and consequentially becomes filled with hate, João falls in love with Maria Lúcia and once again hopes for a fresh start: "Foi quando conheceu uma menina / E de todos os seus pecados ele se arrependeu." Regardless, Russo's ballad ends tragically when Maria Lúcia betrays João, and the *nordestino* dies in a shoot-out with Maria's lover. Though the story itself is fictitious, Russo adequately expresses the prejudice and lack of opportunity faced by Black and northeastern citizens, caused by systemic racism that has plagued the country since colonial times. Similarly, Russo indicates that the new capital, to where families such as his own migrated for a new start, was unforgiving to the lower class. Of the song, Russo said, "Um motorista de taxi, outro dia, me disse que tinha um amigo que comprou a fita porque era, exatamente, a história do irmão dele. O cara tinha saído de Mato Grosso e ido para Brasília, e morreu num tiroteio no Nordeste. E a música é totalmente fictícia" (Assad 103). Russo's composition technique, much like in "Índios" or even in the non-political "Eduardo e Mônica,"⁴¹ involves creating relatable characters to draw in his

⁴¹ "Eduardo e Mônica," released on *Dois* in 1986 is among Legião's most popular songs. The song, roughly based on the story of two of Russo's friends, follows a ballad structure and tells of an unlikely love story.

audience and cause them to empathize with the story. In “Faroeste,” however, Russo opts to focus on the consequences of a racist society rather than explore the root cause, as he does in “Índios.” Finally, though Russo writes of struggles that he did not experience first-hand, his ballad illustrates the unjust experience faced by so many other Brazilians.

Only two years later, Legião released a significantly lighter album, *As quatro estações*, wrought with themes of love, melancholy, familial relationships, and friendships. The opening track, “Há tempos” begins with the line “Parece cocaína, mas é só tristeza,” which seems to set the tone for the album. The work also includes “Meninos e meninas” in which Russo overtly confirms his pansexuality (though interpreted as bisexuality). *As quatro estações* reflects the tumultuous year for Russo and the band—the other three members of Legião asked bassist Renato Rocha to leave, Russo was struggling with a drug addiction, and the singer became a father with the birth of his son Giuliano. Whereas the majority of Legião’s albums evenly distribute *músicas engajadas* amongst less politically relevant pieces, *As quatro estações* boasts only one anti-military regime song, “1965 (Duas tribos).” The song, though perhaps seemingly out of place for an emotional album such as *As quatro estações*, falls right in line with Russo’s composition style. The singer said of the track “Esta é a música mais política de todas no disco. Fala da tortura e é sobre aquela época em que fazíamos redação sobre o país maravilhoso que o Brasil seria no futuro, e em que achávamos que os presidentes eram o maior barato” (Assad 85). On par with the singer’s anger, “1965” makes a return to their heavier rock sound. Additionally, all of the components that distinguish Legião’s music from other bands are present in the lyrics: a dialogue with the past, a hint of hope among overwhelmingly pessimistic lyrics, a notion of Russo’s moral beliefs, and an ironic tagline: “O Brasil é o país do futuro!” The title references the second year of the military dictatorship, and the verses focus heavily on the torture enacted

by the government to dissenting parties throughout the regime. Carlos Marcelo describes the legal loophole manipulated by the military forces in power:

Para enfrentar os “subversivos,” os militares editaram os Atos Institucionais números 13 e 14 que facultavam ao Estado o direito de banir do Brasil as “pessoas perigosas para a segurança nacional” e permitiam à Justiça abrir processo e aplicar pena de morte [...]. Sob o pretexto de obter informações, a tortura passou a ser praticada de forma indiscriminada nos quartéis e delegacias. (40)

Russo makes a strong reference to the corrupt practice, singing:

Cortaram meus braços

Cortaram minhas mãos

Cortaram minhas pernas

Num dia de verão

Num dia de verão

Num dia de verão

Podia ser meu pai

Podia ser meu irmão.

The impact of the lyrics—particularly the reference to family members—leaves no question for the listener that Russo believed that torture and censorship affected the entire nation, and not just those who were in fact detained by the regime.

In a rare moment, Russo acknowledges the progress Brazil has made via the *abertura*, as the above verses are followed with “Não se esqueça / Temos sorte / E agora é aqui.” In regards to the song and to the redemocratization process, the singer later stated:

Esta música é sobre um momento do nosso país, em que, de repente, fechou tudo. Eu acho sempre importante lembrar — eu, pelo menos, gosto sempre de me lembrar — que hoje a situação pode estar difícil para caramba, mas a gente tem uma coisa muito preciosa, que é a liberdade. Então, eu posso vir aqui cantar, vocês podem vir aqui, vocês fazem o que vocês quiserem. Isso eu acho uma coisa muito, muito importante. A gente se esquece de que, até pouco tempo atrás, dependendo das ideias que seu pai tivesse, seu irmão, seu namorado, ia bater gente na sua casa, eles iam pegar essa pessoa, e você nunca mais ia saber o que tinha acontecido com essa pessoa. E ficou por isso mesmo, e não se fala nisso. E uma coisa muito perigosa, eu acho, a ideia: “Não, a gente era feliz naquela época.” (Assad 86)

Russo seems to relish the liberty that the redemocratization and the Brock movement provided to him, especially when considering the Tropicália and MPB artists of the 1960s that were exiled for their *músicas engajadas*. This statement from the singer, however, should not be confused as contentment with the current state of the nation. Quite the contrary, the quote indicates a driving factor behind Russo’s sociopolitical criticism: he felt the need to overtly speak out against the plague of problems as it was legally permitted, rather than resort to the camouflaged criticism of 1960s Tropicália.

Finally, no Legião song would be complete without a hint of irony. As “Duas tribos” fades out, Russo repeats the line “O Brasil é o país do futuro,” which could otherwise be interpreted as an actual vote of confidence in the country, if it were not for the overwhelmingly negative lyrics that comprise the body of the song. Russo suggests that Brazil will always be the country of the future, unable to overcome debilitating corruption and social injustice. After the song’s release, Russo stated, “É sobre como seria legal se a gente encaminhasse o Brasil para ser um lance legal, porque chega de ser o país do futuro! A gente tem que ser o país do presente, a

gente tem que viver agora” (Assad 86). Overtime, however, Russo seems to become only more disillusioned with the prospects of social change for the future. Regardless, there are hints of hope that shine through his lyrics.

Esperança

Though the songs in question up to this point reveal Renato Russo’s harsh criticisms of core problems within Brazil, the singer undeniably weaves aspects of legitimate hope for the future amidst his ironic denunciations. While Legião Urbana’s musical style evolved from punk to more a British-influenced post-punk,⁴² their vacillations between positive and negative attitudes towards Brazil did not. In fact, there does not seem to be a distinct, chronological pattern in Russo’s feelings towards the nation, as his body of *músicas engajadas* as well as interviews indiscriminately portray both optimistic and disillusioned views of Brazil. Similarly, Russo fluctuates on who he believes is responsible for sociopolitical problems, most often blaming the government but sometimes holding the Brazilian people accountable. Regardless, such inconsistencies resulted in a number of inspiring songs, such as “Será” and “Geração Coca-Cola” on their self-titled album in 1985 and “Quando o sol bater na janela do teu quarto” from *As quatro estações* in 1989. Russo, though perhaps only composing as an escape, holds in these songs that Brazil’s future is indeed bright, in part due to the efforts of the Brazilian youth.

An analysis of Russo’s earlier hopeful songs compared to his later verses reveal the evolution of the singer’s beliefs in regards to the means that would bring about social change.

Christian Vargas, who refers to an imagined, improved future as “pós-utópico” notes that Legião

⁴² Russo has acknowledged the group’s evolution, maintaining that the variation of styles can appeal to wider audiences. He stated in 1993, “Você compra o segundo, o terceiro disco e diz assim: “E...” No nosso caso, pelo fato de a gente mudar um pouco a coisa, uma pessoa pode gostar mais do primeiro disco, do que, por exemplo, do *V*. Ou, então, a pessoa que gosta do *V* não gosta muito do *Que País é Este*, que é mais pauleira. Mas todos têm um certo nível de qualidade” (Assad 57). Two years later, Russo claimed that if Legião ever changed their sound, they would also change their name (Assad 154)—a transition that did in fact happen as punk band Aborto Elétrico transformed into post-punk Legião.

Urbana realizes two tasks; on the one hand, they insert timely social aspects into their music, on the other, they seek to “avaliar o potencial de crítica social eventualmente existente em tempos de pós-utopia e de superação de determinados valores centrais da modernidade” (191). The latter technique suggests Russo’s consistent belief in a breakthrough to a better future state of the nation, though the steps to make it there vary according to Russo. Early songs show a certain dependence on the collective force composed of the Brazilian youth, as Russo seems to identify himself as a cog of a machine that would be the driving force behind social change. As discussed in chapter 1, however, later songs suggest Russo’s development of a sense of self-refinement and dependence, as well as a preoccupation with holding himself to a high moral standard.

As such, the ironic and critical aspects of Russo’s songs do not completely disappear from his more hopeful songs, nor does the singer always portray hope through lyrical, positive imagery—evident more so in earlier works that reflect the late punk movement. Despite being written years prior, “Geração Coca-Cola” was released in 1985, the same year that marked the end of the military regime and the beginning of redemocratization of the country. The song presents a harsh but youthful aesthetic with which Russo identifies: “Somos os filhos da revolução / Somos burgueses sem religião / Somos o futuro da nação / Geração Coca-Cola!” The verses follow a structure that Russo frequently employs, which pits Russo’s side (always grammatically expressed in first person) against an unnamed “they.” In this case, the opposing side is implied to be the former, more passive generation from the era of the military dictatorship. Though we know Russo will later find hope from his personal moral refinement, his earlier songs demonstrate a belief that the youthful generation is responsible for social change. Pertinent to the case of *rock das tribos* in Brazil, Simon Frith writes on the youth’s consumption of rock in general: “Shared experiences make for shared needs: adolescents seek a stability to

balance against their time of change, they seek a sense of autonomy and status and self-esteem to balance against their time of insignificance” (195). Applying this to Legião, the idea perhaps explains why Russo identifies with his generation in the early stages of his song-writing: he had not fully become self-sufficient nor quite so disillusioned, and sought to share his frustrations among a collective group. Particularly, the insignificance that Frith mentions strikes a chord with Russo’s line “Quando nascemos fomos programados / A receber o que vocês nos empurraram,” portraying his generation as robotic and lacking agency. This sentiment is overcome by Russo’s resolution: “Mas agora chegou nossa vez / Vamos cuspir de volta o lixo em cima de vocês.” Angélica Madeira refers to this type of rebellious imagery as “rude poetics,” which she holds to be caused by “young middle-class Brazilians of the 1980s taking stock of their childhood and adolescence, in a country emerging from a military dictatorship and in a world that appeared ever more labyrinthine and devoid of utopias” (100). Her evaluation applies perfectly to Russo’s intent behind writing the song.

Though a surface-level reading of the lyrics might suggest another one of Russo’s songs of disillusionment, timing is key to acknowledging the song’s overwhelmingly hopeful tone. He sings:

Depois de vinte anos na escola
Não é difícil aprender
Todas as manhas do seu jogo sujo
Não é assim que tem que ser
Vamos fazer nosso dever de casa
E aí- então, vocês vão ver
Suas crianças derrubando reis

Fazer comédia no cinema com as suas leis.

Written even before the political *abertura*, Russo was already dreaming of an enlightened future generation that would not only recognize the errors of their predecessors but break the former generation's tradition of political and social repression. In fact, despite the obvious influence of 1960s Tropicália on Legião, Russo stated of his predecessors:

O momento das esquerdas nos anos 60 não deu em nada. Agora, temos que tentar um novo caminho sem ter nenhuma saída [...] Não tem modelo, nem referencial, nem mentores que indiquem o caminho. Porque as antigas gerações, além de estarem totalmente desiludidas, jogam essa desilusão em cima dos próprios jovens. (Vargas 197)

Such idea seems to add urgency and pressure to the youth. Returning to the song's rude poetics, the lyrics do not construct a typical utopia, but nonetheless communicate hope for a more honest future, dependent on the youth's reaction. In reaction to the song's strong lyrics, Goli Guerreiro says "A música rock torna-se então um trunfo, através do qual estes jovens colocam sua faceta mais atuante, em contraposição a uma série de circunstâncias que faz dessa geração um segmento desestruturado politicamente" (67). The lyrics and style, conforming more to the punk rock tradition⁴³ than the post-punk that Legião would later compose, was necessary to progress the *música engajada* of Russo's generation.

"Será," released on the same album as "Geração Coca-Cola," follows the same pattern by referring to the new youth and stylistically upholding an upbeat, punk-esque sound. Distancing himself once more from his predecessors, Russo begins the song with "Tire suas mãos de mim / Que eu não pertenço a você," followed later by "Você pode até duvidar / Acho que isso não é

⁴³ Chris Fuscaldo mentions Marcelo Bonfá's reaction to the recording of *Legião Urbana*. "[Rick Ferreira, one of the album's producers] queria fazer 'Geração Coca-Cola' virar um country. A gente falou que não sabia fazer essas coisas, só punk rock" (22).

amor!” Though the song seems reminiscent of a typical teenage romance,⁴⁴ its release time—again at the end of the military regime—illuminates a deeper message. Russo contemplates his generation’s responsibility within the country’s redemocratization, as he sings “Quem é que vai nos proteger? / Será que vamos ter que responder / Pelos erros a mais / Eu e você?” The lines imply that the *geração Coca-Cola* cannot take a passive role in the process. Perhaps the most well-known verse, “Será que vamos conseguir vencer?” is answered by Russo himself, who sings “Ficaremos acordados / Imaginando alguma solução.” The song ultimately is a hopeful one despite the repeated use of the hypothetical “será que,” as Russo affirms that the youth should assume responsibility for the country’s state. The singer retrospectively affirmed the song’s importance: “‘Será’ é imbatível. Acho que tudo o que a gente vai falar na vida está naquela música” (Assad 235). When asked two years later about production of the group’s eponymous album, in fact, Russo suggested that “Será” was the most hopeful track of the album, declaring “Embora as letras não ofereçam soluções e *happy ends*, não acho que sejam pessimistas” (Fuscaldo 29). “Será” remains reflective of Russo’s core beliefs, despite the evolution of his style throughout Legião’s career.

Returning to Russo’s contradictory negation of his role as an influential figure for the Brazilian public, the singer clearly had a purpose in recording “Será.” After the release of *Legião Urbana*, Russo said of the song, “Coloca bem a questão da juventude, ter sonhos, fazer planos e esbarrar nesse mundo de hipocrasia, de mentira do capitalismo, de consumismo e a gente fica sem saber o que fazer” (Grangeia 39). The solution according to Russo is to not only respond to “os erros a mais,” but to preserve a sense of faith of a better future to come. Similarly, he stated “Quero uma música que atinja todo mundo. Só vou ficar feliz se essa música tocar nas rádios

⁴⁴ In fact, as Carlos Marcelo notes, the opening lines are exact Portuguese translations of Bruce Springsteen’s “Say Hello, Wave Goodbye” (282).

AM”⁴⁵ (Marcelo 281), implying that the song should provoke political discussion. Oswald Biz notes in “Mídia, educação e cidadania” that the radio, as all other forms of mass media, was largely censored during the military dictatorship, and the control of 90% of stations was given to families that were regime sympathizers (27). One such sympathizer was José Sarney, given control of the radio in his native state Maranhão, who would later become the first president⁴⁶ of post-dictatorship Brazil. Russo’s comment therefore also evokes an urgency for the youth to retake control of media outlets.

Despite the song’s style drawing closer to *Aborto Elétrico*’s sound than that of later *Legião Urbana*, “Será” reveals roots of Russo’s moral beliefs that became more prevalent throughout the singer’s career. This is particularly evident in the line “Pra que esse nosso egoísmo / Não destrua nosso coração.” Though Russo often addresses and condemns the oppressing party in his songs via the third-person plural, he chooses to identify himself among the youth in this line that comes more as an admonition than a condemnation. As such, he reveals that the solution to Brazil’s problems entails the youthful generation upholding humility and kindness, and not reverting to the base morals of their predecessors. Additionally, as Carlos Marcelo notes, the song had to be mixed four times which caused it to “perder peso” (282). Part of this sound, which is lighter than the original composition, is due to the addition of bells during the chorus. The result is a more sanguine tone, in line with Russo’s optimistic lyrics.

Four years later, *Legião* released *As quatro estações* which, as mentioned above, deviates thematically from previous albums. Russo, obviously aware of the uncharacteristic difference,

⁴⁵ Similar to radio in the United States, AM stations in Brazil have an inferior sound quality and are therefore used to transmit news and spoken word rather than music.

⁴⁶ The first indirectly elected president was Tancredo Neves, who needed to undergo a series of operations around the time of inauguration. During his recovery, José Sarney stepped up to the office of president, only to be sworn in on April 21st, 1985 on the day of Neves’ passing (Fausto 285).

said of the album “*As quatro estações*, na verdade, foi uma resposta ao *Que país é este*, que foi uma turnê de shows muito violentos, problemas em Brasília. Aí resolvemos mudar e falar de outras coisas. Na verdade, falei as mesmas coisas que sempre falava, mas usando outras imagens” (Marcelo 377). Similarly, he said “Poderia ter sido um LP das inquietações de um pseudo-popstar num país de Terceiro Mundo, mas preferimos canalizar tudo para o lado da emoção. São músicas sobre coração, espírito e Deus” (Assad 208). Fittingly, one of Russo’s most lyrical, beautiful songs “Quando o sol bater na janela do teu quarto” appears in the album’s lineup. Unlike the harsher pieces of Russo’s catalog, “Quando o sol” does not construct its message via social criticism or condemnation, but rather promotes “um caminho só”: change by self-refinement, second chances, and “o desejo de não sentirmos dor.” As the singer states, the song addresses the same themes, but employs light as the image of hope. Russo promotes social action, posing the hypothetical question “Por que esperar, se podemos começar tudo de novo, agora mesmo?” Stylistically, the song maintains an upbeat rhythm, but Russo slows the vocals to half of the speed of the guitars and drums, in turn placing more emphasis on the lyrics. The result allows the listener to contemplate Russo’s message, and its overall effect is more gentle and palatable than previous songs.

Characteristic of Russo’s lyrical style, the song is not completely devoid of disillusionment of the world around him. In one verse, Russo sings “A humanidade é desumana” and later, “Até bem pouco tempo atrás / Poderíamos mudar o mundo / Quem roubou nossa coragem?” Guerreiro takes these verses as proof to categorize the song as one “que termina por esbarrar no desencantamento do mundo.” Later, she affirms “Há nessas canções, além de um componente amargo e desiludido, um impulso para resgatar a herança de valores deixada pela geração que moveu a Contracultura” (79). However, based on his above commentary of the

album, Russo makes it clear that his goal was to inspire a new social movement among the youth, as he felt the lack of a pre-paved way for his generation. Guerreiro also seems to discount the overwhelming tone of hope; Russo responds to “A humanidade é desumana” with “Mas ainda temos chance / O sol nasce pra todos / Só não sabe quem não quer.” Grangeia echoes this sentiment, noting that the lyrics portray a present situation very fertile for a new start in the future (83). Ultimately, Russo implores for others to “Lembra e vê / Que o caminho é um só.” The root planted in “Será”—the need for refinement of the human spirit alongside action—comes full circle in “Quando o sol.” As Vargas notes,

O estreitamento dos laços domésticos e de amizade, assim como o fortalecimento das íntimas vinculações orgânicas e tribais, seriam então a receita válida de resistência à barbárie e à desumanização, caminho pós-utópico para a renovação dos valores e dos indivíduos. (198)

This perfectly summarizes the final solution of Russo towards social change. Though its origins were born in rigid, punk-esque rock, Russo’s message ultimately calls for the need of the renovation of the human spirit as the answer to social problems. The title of the album on which “Quando o sol” appears serves to reinforce Russo’s message, in favor of a fresh start. Much like these few hopeful tracks, which at appear out of place in the primarily pessimistic body of Legião Urbana’s work, Russo maintains a contradictory position on the state of the nation: “Até bem pouco atrás, a gente realmente acreditava que poderia mudar alguma coisa. Depois, percebemos que não ia dar mais para mudar, mais continuamos acreditando” (Assad 207).

Conclusion: “O Brasil é o país do futuro”

Renato Russo died on 11 October, 1996 due to complications from AIDs. Tragically, only four years prior to his death, he vehemently denied having AIDs in a public interview. Despite his illness, Russo continued to record with Legião up until his death, and at the beginning of 1996, he was in the studio working on Legião’s seventh LP, *A tempestade ou O livro dos dias*. Reflecting on the recording, Dado Villa-Lobos relates that “[Renato] já estava se sentindo debilitado, mas a gente ainda acreditava na ciência [...] O problema foi que o organismo do Renato já estava fraco” (Fuscaldo 91). The remaining members of Legião continued to perform and release collaborated albums, mostly repeating songs composed by Russo. To this day, Legião Urbana continues to maintain a presence within public discourse. In 2011, Nando Olival directed a short film to accompany “Eduardo e Mônica,” that was released through Vivo and now has over a million and a half views on Youtube. In 2013, the film *Somos tão jovens*, depicting the life of young Renato Russo was released, directed by Antônio Carlos da Fontoura. In the same year, Russo was recreated in holographic form, returning to give one last performance in a show created by Mark Lucas. And, above all, Legião’s works continue to entertain a large audience, as their songs are covered by contemporary artists and played by indignant Brazilians at protests. Russo’s lyrics never lost their relevance, as Brazil continues down a path still fraught with corruption and social problems.

What would Russo say if he knew that Collor, the president he hated, was reelected to Congress in 2006, only fourteen years after he had resigned to avoid impending impeachment? How would Russo feel about the 2016 impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, a president that made great strides to improve poverty in the northeast, but that similarly was involved in the “escândalo de corrupção de Petrobrás,” the catastrophic money laundering scandal? What song

would he write to denounce the 2014 World Cup hosted in Brazil, characterized by corruption and wrongful allotment of funds? What about the group of two dozen indigenous Brazilians that were ripped from a piece of land⁴⁷ to be used as an expansion of the largest stadium, Maracanã? How would the singer respond to entire favelas being destroyed in preparation for the 2016 Summer Olympics held in Rio? How would Russo respond to the horrifying military takeover of Rio de Janeiro, enacted in February of 2018? The untimely death of Russo does not provide us with concrete answers to any of these questions. Doubtlessly, however, the problems of corruption, poor prioritization of federal spending, failing infrastructure, and continued racial tensions would not be unfamiliar to Russo.

Indeed, Brazil seems to continue on a similar path as that of Russo's time. Reflective of the contradictory sentiment Russo wove into his lyrics, glimpses of hope within Brazilian society are often clouded by scandal and corruption. For example, Bolsa Família, a conditional cash transfer program initiated in 2003 currently stands as the largest welfare program of its kind in Latin America and provides financial aid to some 11 million households within poverty lines (Osário et al. 174). The program joined forces with existing groups that supported education and fought hunger among the lowest socioeconomic class, and its expansion represented one of the leading issues Luíz Inácio "Lula" da Silva's presidential campaign in 2006. Russo would almost certainly support the social initiative,⁴⁸ as complaints of social discrepancies were at the heart of so many of his songs. However, several aspects of Bolsa Família—such as allowance of self-reported income and the decentralized application process—have been criticized for encouraging

⁴⁷ As reported by Reuters. Boadle, Anthony. "Rio Police Evict Amazon Natives from World Cup Site." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 22 Mar. 2013, in.reuters.com/article/soccer-brazil-worldcup-eviction/rio-police-evict-amazon-natives-from-world-cup-site-idINDEE92L0FV20130322.

⁴⁸ Though, admittedly, Russo's sociopolitical beliefs are inferred from both his lyrical work and statements given in interviews. Aside from criticism within his music and spoken openly at shows, Russo did not actually participate much politically. While Brazil has a mandatory vote, Russo admitted that he always submitted a null vote (Assad 272).

unqualified citizens to take advantage of the system (Osário et al. 176). Even worse, the federal government has indicted two of the program's most prominent proponents, Lula and Dilma Rousseff, for involvement in large scale corruption and money laundering scandals, with investigations continuing even in the present day. As seen with an example such as Bolsa Família, social progress is often a process of "one step forward, two steps back;" positive strides towards an improved future are burdened by some compromising condition. Similarly, efforts to improve infrastructure for events such as the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics gave way to money laundering and misreporting of spending. In *Circus Maximus: The Economic Gamble Behind Hosting the Olympics and the World Cup*, Andrew Zimbalist notes:

In June 2013, before and during the Confederations Cup (a quadrennial international soccer competition that precedes the World Cup in the host country), more than a million Brazilians across the country took to the streets to protest the government's spending \$15–\$20 billion on new stadiums and infrastructure (much of which was never finished) to host the 2014 World Cup. Meanwhile, the Brazilian population faced woeful public transportation services, rising bus fares, deficient medical care, poor schools, and insufficient housing. Popular protests continued throughout 2013 and then reached a crescendo as the World Cup approached in June 2014. Strikes by police, teachers, and transport and airport workers erupted in many cities, and street demonstrations, though heavily repressed, accompanied the soccer competition. (3)

The similarities to Russo's account of the country in "Perfeição" are striking. The same issues Russo laments in the song—the poor quality of schools, hospitals, and infrastructure—fall far on the list of priorities as Brazil prepared to host the World Cup. As Brazil continues to be plagued

by the same problems, Legião's music remains relevant on a modern stage. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, why songs such as "Que país é este" are played on the streets at protests.⁴⁹

As 1980s Brock originally presented the concept and practice of "rock das tribos" through shared aesthetic, moral, and musical taste, Russo's lyrics perpetuate his tribe, inviting even the modern-day listener to take part in the concern for Brazil's sociopolitical well-being. Indeed, both Russo's outrage and legitimate hopes for the country would allow any Brazilian resident facing the same problems to identify with his cause. Perhaps the ideal outcome would render Legião Urbana's music obsolete, no longer compatible with a country on the verge of prosperity and political harmony. Until that day, however, Russo's ironic cry will ring true: "O Brasil é o país do futuro."

⁴⁹ Similarly, several signs spotted at protests read "Jogaram Mentos na geração Coca-Cola," referring to the explosive effect Mentos have when immersed in Coca-Cola. The message suggest the youth, using Russo's term, have become politically active.

Consulted discography

- Legião Urbana. *Legião Urbana*, EMI, 1985.
Legião Urbana. *Dois*, EMI, 1986.
Legião Urbana. *Que país é este*, EMI, 1987.
Legião Urbana. *As quatro estações*, EMI, 1989.
Legião Urbana. *V*, EMI, 1991.
Legião Urbana. *Acústico MTV – Legião Urbana*, EMI, 1992.
Legião Urbana. *O descobrimento do Brasil*, EMI, 1993.

Bibliography

- Assad, Simone. *Renato Russo de A a Z: As idéias do líder da Legião Urbana*. Letra Livre, 2000.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth. “The Transformation of the Lesbian/Gay Movement.” *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*, University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 1–30.
- Avelar, Idelbar and Christopher Dunn. *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship*. Duke University Press, 2011.
- Biz, Oswaldo, et al. “Mídia, educação e cidadania.” *Educação e cultura midiática*, Editora da Universidade do Estado da Bahia, 2012, pp. 19–46.
- Boadle, Anthony. “Rio Police Evict Amazon Natives from World Cup Site.” *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 22 Mar. 2013, in.reuters.com/article/soccer-brazil-worldcup-eviction/rio-police-evict-amazon-natives-from-world-cup-site-idINDEE92L0FV20130322.
- Brandini, Valéria. *Cenários do ROCK: Mercado, produção e tendências no Brasil*. Editora Olho d’água, 2004.
- Calzolari, Isabella. “Maior Favela Do DF, Sol Nascente é Alvo De Gangues e Grileiros.” *G1*, Globo, 27 Mar. 2015, g1.globo.com/distrito-federal/noticia/2015/03/maior-favela-do-df-sol-nascente-e-alvo-de-gangues-e-grileiros.html.
- Dapieve, Arthur. *Brock: O rock brasileiro dos anos 80*. Editora 34, 1995.

- Dunn, Christopher. *Contracultura*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2016.
- Fausto, Boris. *A História Concisa Do Brasil*. 2nd ed, Editora Da Universidade De São Paulo, 2009.
- Ferreira, Francisco H. G. et al. "The Rise and Fall of Brazilian Inequality: A Summary." *ReVista: Harvard Review of Latin America*, vol. 6, no. 3, The David Rockefeller Center for Latin America Studies, 2007, pp. 11–13.
- Figueiredo, Priscilla and Tânia Maria José Aiello Vaisberg. "Abordagem psicanalítica de imaginários coletivos sobre desesperança em canções da Música Popular Brasileira: Renato Russo." *Anais do XIX Encontro de Iniciação Científica*, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Campinas, 2014.
- Frith, Simon. *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure, and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll*. Pantheon Books New York, 1981.
- Fuscaldo, Chris. *Discobiografia legionária*. Leya Editora, 2016.
- Gomes, Caio de Souza. "*Quando um muro separa, uma ponte une*": conexões transnacionais na canção engajada na América Latina (anos 1960/70). Dissertation, University of São Paulo, 2013.
- Guerreiro, Goli. *Retratos de uma tribo urbana: Rock brasileiro*. Centro Editorial e Didático da UFBA, 1994.
- Grangeia, Mario Luis. *Cazuza, Renato Russo e a transição democrática*. Civilização Brasileira, 2016.
- Grangeia, Mario Luis. "Redemocratização e desigualdades sociais segundo Cazuza e Renato Russo." *Revista Aurora*, vol. 1, no. 12, Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, 2011, pp. 45–71.

- Kornis, Mônica Almeida. “O governo de JK: Música.” *Centro De Pesquisa e Documentação De História Contemporânea Do Brasil*, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2017, cpdoc.fgv.br/producao/dossies/JK/artigos/Sociedade/Musica.
- Madeira, Angela. “Rude Poetics of the 1980s: The Politics and Aesthetics of Os Titãs.” *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship*, edited by Idelbar Avelar and Christopher Dunn Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 96–108.
- Marcelo, Carlos. *Renato Russo: O filho da revolução*. Agir, 2009.
- Mello, Rodrigo. “O Discurso De Caetano No Festival Internacional Da Canção.” *Efemérides Do Éfemello*, 30 May 2016, efemeridesdoefemello.com/2013/09/15/o-discurso-de-caetano-no-festival-internacional-da-cancao/.
- Moehn, Frederick. “We Live Daily in Two Countries: Audiotopias of Postdictatorship Brazil.” *Brazilian Popular Music and Citizenship*, edited by Idelbar Avelar and Christopher Dunn Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 109–130.
- “Música Engajada Na América Latina.” *Memórias Da Ditadura*, Instituto Vladimir Herzog, 11 Sept. 2016, memoriasdaditadura.org.br/musica-engajada-na-america-latina/index.html.
- Napolitano, Marcos. “MPB: a trilha sonora da abertura política (1975/1982).” *Estudos avançados*, vol. 24, no. 69, University of São Paulo, 2010, pp. 389–402.
- “O Cultuado Renato Russo, Da Banda Legião Urbana, Completaria 55 Anos - Cultura.” *Estadão Cultura*, Estadão, 27 Mar. 2015, cultura.estadao.com.br/noticias/musica,o-cultuado-renato-russo-da-banda-legiao-urbana-completaria-55-anos,1659189.
- Oliveira, Ana de. “É Proibido Proibir.” *Tropicália*, Iyá Omin Produções, 2007, tropicalia.com.br/identifisignificados/e-proibido-proibir/discurso-de-caetano.
- “Organisation.” Goethe-Institut, Goethe-Institut, 2017, www.goethe.de/en/uun/org.html.

- Osário, Rafael Guerreiro, et al. "Evaluating the Impact of Brazil's Bolsa Família: Cash Transfer Program in Comparative Perspective." *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, Latin American Studies Association, 2010, pp. 173–190.
- Perrone, Charles A. *Brazil, Lyric, and the Americas*. University Press of Florida, 2010.
- Rohter, Larry. *Brazil on the Rise*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Sallum Jr., Brasília and Casarões, Guilherme Stolle Paixão e. O impeachment do presidente Collor: a literatura e o processo. *Lua Nova: Revista de cultura e política*, no. 82, 2011, pp.163–200.
- Shepherd, John. "The Analysis of Popular Music: Class, Generation, and Ethnicity." *Music as Social Text*, Polity Press, 1991.
- Sussekind, Flora. "Censura: uma pista dupla." *Literatura e Vida Literária: Polêmicas, diários & retratos*, Jorge Zahar Editor, 1985, pp. 10–41.
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Sprechstimme." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2 May 2016, www.britannica.com/art/Sprechstimme.
- Tumas-Serna, Jane. "The "Nueva Canción" Movement and Its Mass-Mediated Performance Context." *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana*, vol. 13, no. 2, University of Texas Press, 1992, pp. 139–157.
- Vargas, Christian, et al. "Os anjos decaídos: uma arqueologia do imaginário pós-Utópico nas canções da Legião Urbana." *Imaginário e História*, Marco Zero, 1999, pp. 171–205.
- Vieira, Nelson. "Introduction: The Jews of Brazil: The Outsiders Within." *Jewish Voices in Brazilian Literature: A Prophetic Discourse of Alterity*, University Press of Florida, 1995, pp. 1–8.

Zimbalist, Andrew. “What’s Wrong with the World Cup?” *Circus Maximus: The Economic Gamble Behind Hosting the Olympics and the World Cup*, The Brookings Institution, 2016, pp. 1–9.