

***Mulheres do morro* : The Representation of Women in
Brazilian Funk**

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INTRODUCTION

Funk carioca is now a fixture in Rio de Janeiro. The music, with its throbbing beat, can be heard playing from car radios in Barra and chic clubs in the Zona Sul. The rhythm climbs up the narrow streets of Rocinha, and pulsates in the *bailes* of the Zona Norte. Though popular with Cariocas 11-30 years of age from every social class, funk music is frequently looked down upon by older generations and by the Brazilian government for its highly sexual, often vulgar lyrics and its link to gang violence.

Much like the rap that came from the ghettos of the United States, Brazilian funk was born in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro in the 1970s. Now described as a genuinely carioca phenomenon (Medeiros 9), funk music first appeared in Brazil after American musician James Brown made it popular with his 1:3 rhythm. The word 'funk' was a term coined by African Americans to describe the odour given off by the body during sex, but also to express the way one could make music more interesting by speeding up the guitar riffs.

When it arrived in Brazil in the 1970s, imported from the United States, the sound was still distinctly American. At the end of the decade, Brazil began seeing the first *equipes de som* (Soul Grand Prix and Black Power) which promoted 'black parties', but the style was still much more afro-American than afro-Brazilian. These types of groups dominated through the 1980s until, in 1989, DJ Marlboro gave funk music a Brazilian flavour, producing uniquely *carioca* sounds and lyrics. An example of his early Brazilian funk on the early compilation CD *Funk Brasil* is "Mêlo do bêbado", which described all the different types of *cachaças* (Medeiros 17). The momentum of DJ Marlboro's work

was so great that in 1990, just a year after the official ‘brazilianization’ of funk, the music industry came out with a second volume, *Funk Brasil 2*.

In the 1990s funk carioca hit its stride, and has been steadily increasing in popularity since. Originally the *bailes de funk*, organised dances with DJs mixing funk music, could only be found in the favelas and the working class neighbourhoods of the Zona Norte. Funk was heavily criticised by Brazil’s middle and upper classes, though this was not a new trend in Brazilian music. In ‘Movimento funk’, Hermano Vianna draws the parallel between the condemnation of funk and other types of ‘taboo’ music in Brazil. “Os criticos reclamam da pobreza lírica e melódica do ‘rap de morro’[...] eles só repetem as queixas de outros críticos diante do surgimento do rock, do soul, do punk, do samba, ou de tudo aquilo que não consegue entrar na sua preconceituosa cartilha de ‘musica de qualidade’ (Vianna, Movimento Funk 19). The *maxixe* dance, which was born in the poorest ghettos of Rio de Janeiro was not only thought of as “licencioso” and “imoral” by the elite bourgeoisie, it was also persecuted by the authorities, the police and even some intellectuals (Faour 255).

However, this same class that looked down upon funk a decade ago is beginning to feel the influence of the music. “Definitivamente, o funk atual exerce enorme influência sobre os filhos da classe média – a mesma que perseguiu uma década atrás” (Medeiros 11). Funk’s growing popularity is certainly not due to a dulling edge and softer lyrics. If anything, the beat is more intense, the *bailes* are sweatier, and the lyrics are even more sexually explicit. It is hardly isolated exclusive, as the critics claim, to the favelas, though it is still mainly conceived therein. “A verdade é que o isolamento do funk (e o isolamento do Rio pobre) foi mais uma ilusão de ótica” (Vianna, movimento

funk 18). It is this optical illusion that makes funk at once the dirty music of the favela and the new popular music.

Part of its popularity comes from the exact reason for its critique. Funk's lyrics are highly sexed. Unlike hip-hop and pagode, funk lyrics rarely contain any sort of political message, or direct narration of favela life. Instead, they contain mostly graphic sexual dialogue, often sung as a "call and answer" between two performers or between the performer and the audience, or a narration of a sexual experience that occurred between the "I" (the first person narrative) and the partner. Funk music has increased its popularity not in spite of its coarse lyrics, but because of them. As Rodrigo Faour states in *História Sexual da MPB*, sexual lyrics appeal to Brazilians.

Em resumo: o brasileiro sempre gostou de sexo e de uma boa "sacanagem" sem compromisso, e isso está presente em nossas canções e danças – da modinha, do lundu e do maxixe ao forró, à marchinha, chegando ao cume no atual funk carioca. (Faour 283)

Much of the increasing interest in funk comes from women, who are not only a growing audience, but are also beginning to take on the role of composer and performer. Because they dare to enter the predominantly male sphere of funk music, many performers such as Tati Quebra-Barraco and Deize Tigrona are seen as empowering by women both inside and outside the favelas, and *funk feminino* is touted by some as a new feminist movement. In 2005 Tati Quebra-Barraco, the highest selling female funk artist performed alongside other popular musicians Joyce and Elisa Lucinda as part of a series of shows to celebrate International Women's Day (O Estado 2005).

How do women fit into funk when it is such a male dominated genre of music? Female performers are not simply playing along with the sexual roles assigned to them by the male performers, they have broken out and created a new identity for themselves

within the lyrics. But though their lyrics begin to offer a uniquely female perspective on favela culture and sexuality, the results still adhere and cater to the male perception of what is considered sexy and sexual. This is especially true when looking past the lyrics at the *cultura de baile*, and the marketing of the funk product.

In order to gain a better understanding of this female phenomenon, it is essential to consider the representation of women in both the lyrical and non-lyrical aspects of funk music. I intend to conduct a careful analysis of song lyrics as a reflection of women in the favelas, both those composed by men and those composed by women. I will then examine the dance culture of the *bailes*, using video's posted on *YouTube*, and the marketing and media surrounding the music, in order to show how women both present and are represented in funk. Finally, in both lyrical and non-lyrical aspects of funk, I will determine that feminine funk opens a new dialogue of feminism for women in Brazil, but is not itself a feminist movement.

Women in Brazilian song

Before examining the portrayal of women in funk lyrics, it is essential to place the role of women within the broader framework of Brazilian popular music, or MPB, as well as in contemporary Brazilian sexuality. The *mulher brasileira* transcends all styles of music, from samba to forró, to bossa nova and rock. She is the subject of many songs, desired for her beauty or despised for her unfaithful ways. “Para cada música de exaltação à mulher havia outras cem em que ela só levava mesmo porrada” (Faour 91). Nowhere is this depiction more evident in MPB than in samba. Like funk, samba emerged from the favelas, and for many years in the early twentieth century was regarded as ‘poor black’ music, highly sexual, dirty, and a disgrace to Brazil’s elite. Eventually,

samba's popularity crossed the borders of the poor suburbs and it became not only associated with Rio de Janeiro's identity, but with Brazil's national identity.

In 'Só me falta uma mulher', the *sambista* decides that nothing can bring him more happiness than having a 'doce amada'. He has everything life could want, but concludes man is nothing without a woman.

Eu tenho tudo
Que se possa imaginar.
Um automóvel
De soberba qualidade.
Pra completar esta felicidade
Falta o melhor
Que é minha doce amada
'E homem sem mulher
Não vale nada'. (Alves and Martins)¹

The lyrics give the impression of the 'ideal' woman as soft and sweet, rather than sexually desirable. In this sense, the woman is idealised for what she represents in relation to her man. In return for occupying the ideal feminine place in the man's life, she receives a status relative to the masculine, either by way of her title as 'girlfriend' or 'wife' (or in this case 'doce amada'), or by obtaining the honour of taking her husband's name (Beltrão 76).

This same mentality that places the woman on a pedestal, also idealises her sexuality. "A visão masculina, pois, que coloca a mulher no campo do sagrado, abrangendo um endeusamento, uma adoração, é a mesma que faz da mulher um objeto que presta serviços ao homem e que a ele entrega o próprio corpo" (Beltrão 48). Many songs feature the image of the woman lusted after up close or from afar, the lyrics highlighting her various physical attributes. In "Tu!", the *sambista* sings of his object of affection.

¹ Due to a restricted word count, I was unable to include a full appendix of all song lyrics cited in this dissertation. However, this is certainly something I would include in future if given the opportunity.

He describes her using vivid imagery, comparing her eyes to a blue dream, and her lips to pink coral, and ending his description with her sensual mouth.

Teu olhar
 É um sonho azul!
 Teu sorriso
 Uma promessa louca!
 Teus lábios
 Duas jóias de coral
 No engaste sensual
 De tua boca! (Barroso)

The condition of conforming to this ideal is that the woman surrenders her body. It is important to note that this theme, found throughout the MPB (the most widely known example of the adoration of a woman and her body found in bossa nova's "A Garota de Impanema" "It was written in 1962, with music by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Portuguese lyrics by Vinicius de Moraes with English lyrics written later by Norman Gimbel."), is a dominant one in funk music, where the sensuality and sexuality of the ideal woman is often described in more explicit ways.

In the MPB, the Brazilian woman's sexuality is not always idealised and desired, held to high esteem and preserved. It is also feared and loathed, particularly when the woman in question does not keep her sexuality faithful to her man. An example of this is found in the samba "Quem mandou você errar", where the *sambista* accuses his love of "not thinking", of forgetting her obligations.

Você foi pra orgia
 Se esqueceu da obrigação
 Só voltou no outro dia
 E, por isso eu lhe deixei de mão!... (Alves and Garcez)

In this example it is clear that the sexuality of the *mulher* is not in question. What paints her in a negative perspective is the fact that she uses her sexuality improperly, by staying out all night instead of preserving her body for her man.

The *mulher* is also the subject of negative commentary when she refuses to exude any sexuality at all, either because she does not possess physical traits considered beautiful or because she does not give her body to a man, but instead shares it with another woman. The *pagode* hit “Minha sogra parece sapatão” (‘My mother-in-law looks like a dyke’) by Bezerra da Silva combines fear and loathing (the mother-in-law), and misunderstanding (the “dyke”) in a single song title.

Brazilian music does not always divide the *mulher* into distinctly good or evil characteristics, she may also possess both at once. “Recognising that women can be seen at once as fundamentally inferior, as desirable, and as threatening and dangerous is crucial to any full understanding of the Brazilian system” (Parker 49). Brazilian *música popular* represents its “muses” in many different ways, from the desired muse, to the saint, and from the sinner, to the submissive muse. But even with this variety, they generally fall into one of two categories; a version of the pure or the impure, of the spiritual or the carnal, of the sacred or the profane (Beltrão 133).

Sexuality in Brazil

In order to understand the reason for such polarity, it is essential to briefly examine the elements that make up contemporary Brazilian sexuality. This sexuality is rooted in Brazil’s history of slave trade and plantations, upon which was built the patriarchal society. As *dono* (owner) of the plantation, the man had unrestricted sexual access, not only to his wife, but to mistresses and concubines as well. He could enter into

and maintain such relations as he wished. However, the patriarch kept the sexual activities of his women strictly controlled (Parker 32).

Parker argues that it is not only the *mulher*'s relation to the *homem* that determines her sexual characteristics, she is also held against the historically converse female figures: the virgin and the whore. “[T]he *mulher*, like the *homem*, must be apprehended not merely in her opposition to him, but through figures such as the *virgem* (virgin), the *piranha* or *puta* (whore), and even the *sapatão* (literally ‘big shoes,’ but best translated into English as ‘dyke’)” (44). But what Parker fails to mention is that the sexuality of these female figures is still defined in relation to the *homem*. The virgin keeps her sexuality from the man, the *puta* gives all of her sexuality to the man, and the lesbian engages in sexual activities in which the man cannot participate.

The lyrics examined in the first section reveal that funk music, sung by both men and women, generally portrays women in the context of the figure of the *puta*. However, in the world of funk, the *puta* is not necessarily an evil or undesirable character. Chico Buarque popularized the phrase “não existe pecado ao sul do equador”, and funk lyrics certainly reflect a world where “entre quatro paredes tudo pode acontecer” (another popular expression in Brazil). In funk songs performed by men, the *mulher* is encouraged to experiment with her sexuality, to embrace her inner *puta*, but only so far as she keeps that sexuality faithful to her man. And even within that faithfulness, it is clear from the lyrics that some displays of female sexuality are often viewed as dirty and immoral.

MALE FUNK LYRICS

The Evolution of Sex in Funk Lyrics

The lyrics examined in this section reveal that funk music, performed by men about women, generally portrays women in the context of the figure of the *puta*. However, in the world of funk, the *puta* is not necessarily an evil or undesirable character. Chico Buarque popularized the phrase “não existe pecado ao sul do equador”, and funk lyrics certainly reflect a world where “entre quatro paredes tudo pode acontecer” (another popular expression in Brazil). In these songs, the *mulher* is encouraged to experiment with her sexuality, to embrace her inner *puta*, but only as long as she keeps that sexuality faithful to her man (and according to funk lyrics, she rarely does). Even within that faithfulness, it is clear from the lyrics that displays of female sexuality are often viewed as dirty and immoral.

It is these contradictions, combined with undertones of violence and a shockingly ‘gynaecological’ vocabulary that help give funk its edge. “O funk choca porque, além do ritmo violento, não fala do ato da paquera ou do sexo por meio de metáforas como se dava até então em nossa música, agora se dá nomes aos bois, quase como num exame ginecológico” (Faour 270). The reason funk lyrics evolved to the point of graphic sexual description is due to the society from which the music emerged. Funk carioca reflects the violence in the favelas (by far the most dangerous areas of Rio de Janeiro), a violence which Micael Herschmann argues is central to the cultural dynamic of a society. “A violência é uma das peças fundamentais do dinamismo das sociedades, estando relacionada às diferenças, à heterogenidade presente em cada sociedade” (Herschmann, *O*

Funk, 61), and since the favelas experience more conflict than other areas of the city, it is natural for their music to reflect it.

Unlike similar types of music born out of difficult environments (Cuban underground rap, Brazilian hip-hop), funk has virtually no political agenda. “O funk não ensina nada, apenas reflete o que já existe em alguns extratos sociais” (Faour 265). It was allowed to reflect this existence precisely because of the discrimination against it. In one of DJ Marlboro’s more ‘light’ songs, he does away with violent references and sexual language in favour of simple lyrics describing how funk itself does not discriminate, but is condemned by outsiders. “É som de preto/ De favelado (demoro!)/ Mais quando toca ninguém fica parado/ O nosso som não tem idade, não tem raça, e nem vê cor/ Mas a sociedade pra gente não dá valor/ Só querem nos criticar pensam que somos animais” (“Som de preto”, DJ Marlboro).

This condemnation led funk to produce most of its music by way of MP3 CDs rather than signing with record companies. Pirate CDs gave funk the chance to prosper without restrictions. Within these pirate CDs, *funkeiros* can listen to prohibited funk (threats made by criminal gangs of Rio in their battle against the police), songs full of favela slang, and raw references to sex (Essinger, insert p.12). It is most notably the sexual content of funk that has flourished.

The Brazilian Language of Sex

Before delving into this sexual content, I think it worth noting that the Brazilian sexual language is extremely varied. Brazilians derive almost as much pleasure playing with verbal sexual innuendo as they do from the sexual transactions themselves. Desire,

*tesão*², can be described as feeling hot (‘estou com calor’) or an increase in appetite (‘estou com fome’). Indeed, *comer* can mean to eat, or to engage as the active participant in a sexual exchange. These expressions lend themselves to a host of vocabulary for *sacanagem*, playful and prankish and sometimes sinister, in social situations and within funk lyrics. Adjectives such as *deliciosa* or *gostosa* go hand in hand with the notion of *comer*, and “not surprisingly, the notion of *fogo* (fire) is easily incorporated into this set of images as a particularly appropriate metaphor for both desire and excitement” (Parker 106).

Terms for the male and female sex organs are just as colourful, though some can conjure violent or unpalatable images, such as *carne mijada* or *boca mijada* for ‘vagina’, and *arma* and *faca* for ‘penis’. In general, it is the slang for vagina that invokes a reaction of disgust, though the term ‘aranha’ is often used in funk, and depending on personal perceptions of spiders and context of the lyrics, the connotations may vary. Slang for the penis emphasizes strength and dominance. “In the play of words, the phallus becomes, figuratively if not literally, an *arma* – a weapon, an instrument of metaphoric aggression” (Parker 37).

Women in Male Funk Lyrics

The variety in language reflects the variety of ways male funk portrays women. The typical subject of a funk song wants to please her man, and of course, her man invariably pleases her to the point where she screeches and hollers, and even cries. “Ela quer, ela dá” by Mr. Catra is in most ways the archetypal funk song. Repetitive lines describe the need for Mr. Catra to find some ‘putaria’. There is no mention of who the

² For a complete list of vocabulary, refer to glossary.

woman is, only repetitive references to the act of sex, with the woman in question screaming, collapsing (from euphoria?) and crying. “Ela senta, ela grita/ ela deita, ela chora/ Pirocada na xoxota/ vem,vem,vem me dá/ vem,vem,vem,vem, me dá!!” (“Ela quer, ela dá”, Mr. Catra). There is also no mention of what he might be giving her in return, except maybe a vocal workout. All this might be perceived as a simple case of good sexual fun if it were not for Mr. Catra’s specific reference to the Taliban regime (the fundamentalist Islamic regime of Afghanistan which denied women their basic human rights and freedoms). “O bagulho aqui ta louco no estilo Talibã.” This line removes all doubt that “Ela quer, ela dá” could be about anything other than the sexual dominance of women by men.

Not all funk portrays women as objects to be dominated, some simply revels in the beauty of women. Despite its origins in a country like Brazil, which places a lot of emphasis on the concept of ‘body beautiful’, funk is surprisingly open to different looks and different women. “Mulher é bom” is a song celebrating all women, with no negative connotations whatsoever. “Vem branquinha/ Vem pretinha/ Vem loirinha/ Vem moreninha/ Vem magrinha/ Vem gordinha/ Vem sardinha.../ Mulher é bom/ Mulher é muito bom” (“Mulher é bom”, Bonde do Tigrão). Fat, skinny, brown, fair, Bonde do Tigrão tells them he will happily take them all. The only presumption, of course, is that they will all want to be with him.

In spite of this inclusive attitude, some women are not only unacceptable as partners, but also unacceptable to funk society. In “Melô da mulher feia”, DJ Marlboro sings of a woman so ugly she offended all the *funkeiros* at the *baile*.

Já fazia mais de um mês banho ela não tomava. Pôr que?
Mulher feia cheira mal como urubu

A danada da mulher tinha um bundão
 E de longe o teco-teco parecia um avião
 Que corpinho, que corpinho
 Violão, violão
 Mais a cara, mais a cara
 Parecia um canhão (“Melô da mulher feia”, DJ Marlboro)

This “mulher feia” smelled as though she had not bathed in a month, and though the lyrics do stop to wonder why, they continue as though the reason she stinks does not really matter, only that the stink is offensive to all near her. Her body is the body of a woman typically lusted after by men, curvy in all the right places, but her face is that of a “dog”.

References to women as “dogs” are common in male funk lyrics. Like in “Melô da mulher feia”, the association with dogs can refer to a woman’s lack of beauty. It can also refer to her sexual promiscuity. “Sabe esses dias que tu acorda de ressaca?/ Muito louco, doidão/ Sua roupa tá cheia de lama e a cachorra tá na cama/ É o dia que a orgia tomou conta de mim...assim éhh” (Adultério, Mr. Catra). Mr. Catra does not name the woman lying in his bed, nor is there any indication in the lyrics of his even knowing her name. She is simply the “cachorra na cama”. Journalist Rodrigo Faour claims the use of the term “cachorra” to refer to women in funk music is not offensive because it is just part of funk’s tendency to describe in graphic detail what goes on behind closed doors. However, the example he chooses to illustrate this point is Tati Quebra Barraco’s song “Me chama de cachorra”, in which she requests her partner call her a bitch (Faour 272). In this he fails to take into account that choosing to call oneself a bitch and receiving the title unsolicited are not comparable situations.

On the other hand, Faour is right that funk music has taken away some of the taboo of what occurs “entre quatro paredes”, or at the very least placed the taboos out in

the open. In “Hora da sacanagem”, Bola de Fogo addresses the topic of anal sex as an alternative. In catholic Brazil, it has been traditionally seen by women as an alternative to sex in order to keep the virginity intact, though still considered unmentionable. In the case of “Hora” anal sex becomes the substitute for when his partner is menstruating. “Eu chamei ela pra meter, ela falou que ‘tava menstruada/ Ai eu falei assim, ‘não tem problema não por que/ Ta de chico é o caralho, cala boca vagabunda/ Se a xota ta com sangue, eu vou botar na sua bunda” (“Hora da sacanagem”, Bola de Fogo). Though this song certainly brings the subject out into the open in a very frank way, there is no indication if his partner has any choice in whether or not she actually wants to participate.

What is not addressed in most funk songs is safe sex. Like in love scenes on screens where the characters do not halt the moment to bring out a condom or discuss sexually transmitted diseases, in funk the “safe” part is secondary to the sex itself. In “Camisinha?” by Bonde do Tigrão, the condom is only mentioned as the way to procure the sex. “Eu ganhei minha tchutchuquinha/ Mentira mentira tu perdeu, tô sem camisinha/ Cão você tá enganada, a camisinha ‘tava guardada” (“Camisinha?”, Bonde do Tigrão). It is a two part song, with the female voice telling her partner he’s lost the game because she has no condom, whereupon he informs her that he had it the entire time.

Yet another example of the man getting what he wants by winning the game is DJ Marlboro’s “Melô das aranhas”. In this song, the challenge he faces is not a lack of condoms, but another woman. The man sees two women engaged in a sexual act which “isn’t normal”, and proceeds to conquer them with his “snake”.

Subi no muro do quintal
 E vi uma tranza que não era normal
 E ninguém vai acreditar
 Eu vi duas mulher botando a aranha pra brigar

Soltei a cobra e ela foi direto
 Pro meio das aranhas pra mostrar o que é certo
 Cobra com aranha que da pé
 Aranha com aranha sempre deu um jacaré

Venha cá mulher deixa de manha
 A minha cobra quer comer sua aranha (“Melô das aranhas”, DJ Marbloro)

When he brings out his *cobra* to “mostrar o que é certo”, one of the women immediately abandons her partner in favour of heterosexual sex. The lyrics assume that the two women engaged in sex were doing so because they had no better way of achieving pleasure until a man showed up. Moreover, they state that lesbian sex is not right and is even dangerous because “Aranha com aranha sempre deu um jacaré”. “Melô das aranhas” cannot conceive of a situation where women could derive more pleasure from each other than from being with a man. Though he does not go so far as to call the woman a dyke (*sapatão*), the lyrics show that in funk music the lesbian woman is beyond the comprehension of the man because he is unable to participate, and he must therefore change the rules of the game so that he is eligible to enter the sex act.

In the world of funk, the *mulher* is misunderstood and is more often than not a means to satisfy male desire. It could simply be that many male funk artists are only doing what the other genres of the MPB have done, and are simply putting the *mulher* on display to be appreciated. In this nation of samba parades and half-naked, beautiful Bahianas wearing glittery costumes, the *mulher* has been granted a place in Brazil’s national identity precisely for her display. Certain funk lyrics suggest that the men of the favelas love all types of women because “mulher é bom/ mulher é muito bom”. But more often than not, this ‘love’ does not extend to a respect for who she is, but rather what he can get out of her. She becomes not the object desired from afar, but the object

attainable. And while this makes her a more real subject than the “Garota de Impanema”, it also takes away many qualities that make the *mulher* special, mysterious and erotic.

FEMALE FUNK

Women in Female Funk Lyrics

While funk remains a traditionally male-dominated sphere, in the last ten years it has received a growing audience of women from both inside and outside the borders of the favelas. This is not because the lyrics written by men have become any less provocative and demeaning to women, but because women themselves are taking over the funk industry. The popularity of female singers has risen to the point where the most famous performer, Tati Quebra-Barraco, has represented Brazil internationally. Does this mean that funk lyrics no longer express the same level of machismo? In an interview with Mr. Catra, the MC denied funk ever having a macho agenda.

[O funk] não era um meio machista. Mas é que as mulheres sempre tiveram aquele pé atrás de falar a verdade. Aí um dia chegaram a Deize Tigrona e a Tati Quebra-Barraco, umas meninas que não são providas de beleza, mas são providas de atitude, né? E mulher é atitude. Mulher não é beleza. (Medeiros 96)

It is this attitude that has caught the attention of Brazilian women and the Brazilian media. In the sphere of Brazilian popular music, where traditionally the men made up the rules (Faour 92), *funkeiras* like Tati Quebra-Barraco and Deize Tigrona seem to be breaking the mould. Their lyrics can be even more sexually graphic than those written by men. They do not sing of love, but instead of lust. They tell stories of conquering, not being conquered, and of dominating instead of being dominated. In the patriarchal society of Brazil, they are seen as strong, independent women who know how to get what they want. And just like in male funk lyrics, what they want is sex.

Such lyrics are a bit of a novelty within the MPB, but sexually explicit lyrics written by women are not a new phenomenon within the world's music industry. Female

rappers like Missy Elliott sing much in the same style as Tati and Deize. “I wanna make you mine/ I wanna know/ Do you got a girl/ Is she good to you/ I bet she won’t do the things that I’ll do to you” (“Release the Tension”, Missy Elliott). The 1980s and 1990s saw the popularity of Madonna’s provocative lyrics and performances, and also the rise of the “confessional” singing style, exemplified by Liz Phair’s revolutionary indie rock album “Exile in Guyville”.

Phair’s debut was a revolution for women listeners in particular. A mix of indie rock, power pop and folk, *Exile* attracted attention for its sexually frank content and confessional nature, and amid all its talk of blow jobs, fucking and running, there was also an emotional openness that brought a vulnerability to Phair’s swagger. The same woman who sang ‘Every time I see your face/ I think of thing unpure unchaste/ I want to fuck you like a dog/ I’ll take you home and make you like it’ also spoke with a pang of romantic longing [...] ‘I am a feminist, and I define myself,’ Phair said at the time. (Barton 18)

But while Phair identified herself as a feminist, Tati Quebra-Barraco does not take the same approach. “Ícone máximo dessa discussão, Tati Quebra-Barraco nega ser feminista: ‘Eu não fico preocupada com o que dizem de mim. Se as mulheres querem se espelhar em mim, é bom que sejam em mim mesmo, e não no meu trabalho’... E sua concorrente Deize Tigrona segue a mesma linha. ‘Não me considero feminista. Mas se ser feminista é dizer o que quer, então nós todas somos’” (Medeiros 88). Tati and Deize seem to have no problem speaking up. Their lyrics are sometimes even more provocative than male funk lyrics. While the male lyrics brag about good times to be had in bed, Tati Quebra-Barraco is not afraid to tell her fans about the bad times. In an interview with DJ Marlboro, the DJ said that Tati has broken with the tradition of men talking about women in bed, and reversed it for her own agenda. He stated, “se o cara não for bom de cama, ela fala” (Essinger 216).

It is this openness that has made Tati so famous. Born Tatiana dos Santos Lourenço, she is also the mother of three children, the first of whom was born when Tati was just thirteen years old. She was one of the first women to find success in the funk industry, and her music continues to be successful today, as well as being a constant subject of debate, which is why I choose to focus mainly on her lyrics. Listening to the lyrics it would seem that, as DJ Marlboro claims, Tati Quebra-Barraco is mirroring male funk. However, pop singer Fernanda Abreu argues that Tati is not simply singing about men the same way as men sing about women, but instead is speaking the truth about a woman's dominant side. This, according to Abreu, is the secret of her success.

All women do not herald this success as a good thing. Journalist Janaína Medeiros writes, "Para o grande público, Tati foi uma das primeiras mulheres a fazer sucesso na mídia com uma música em que pedia para ser jogada na parede e chamada de lagartixa. Um pesadelo para qualquer feminista de plantão" (80). Though Medeiros herself seems to lean towards the idea that feminine funk can also be feminist funk, the idea does seem to contradict the ideals of a more traditional type of feminism. On the one hand, some of Tati's lyrics can be seen as making a case for strong, sexually independent women. On the other hand, she often contradicts herself, and while her songs advocate a certain attitude of sexual truth, the fact that a woman is singing them, as opposed to a male DJ, does not make them feminist material.

No one can deny the fact that Tati Quebra-Barraco's lyrics make women more aware of themselves in sexual situations. Her song, "Motel", for example, highlights a common situation in Brazil. As many young cariocas of all classes remain living with their parents until they are in their twenties (and sometimes thirties), it is common for

sexual encounters to take place in one of the many motels in Rio de Janeiro offering pay-by-the-hour rates.

Então discuti
 motel com hidromassagem
 tira onda pra elas
 é viver de sacanagem
 o gatinho até gosta
 mas não sabe como é
 mas se ele paga o motel
 ela faz o que ele quer (“Motel”, Tati Quebra-Barraco)

In “Motel”, the balance of power in a sexual encounter is taken into account. Women are impressed by jacuzzis in the motel, and the *gatinhos* want to impress them, but they also know that if they pay for the motel, the *mulher* will do whatever he wants her to.

Financial power is linked to sexual power; the person who has financial control exerts sexual control as well, which could be why another of Tati’s songs states, “Eu fiquei 3 meses sem quebrar o barraco,/ Sou feia mais tô na moda,/ Tô podendo pagar hotel pros homens isso é que mais importante/ Quebra meu, meu barraco (“Sou feia mais tô na moda”, Tati Quebra-Barraco).

“Sou feia mas tô na moda” also criticises Brazil’s obsession with the idea of “body beautiful”, the appreciation of looks above all other qualities. According to Tati’s lyrics, one can be ugly but still be in style enough to pay for having sexual control. At the same time, however, contradictory lyrics can be found in “Vou botar você na pista”, where Tati is quick to remind us that while she may be ugly but stylish, she likes her men fit and tanned. “Saí com um cara bonitinho, cheio de marra de safado/ ele malha todo dia e tem o corpo sarado”. Just like in male funk lyrics, Tati sees men as “attainable”, and when the sex is unattainable, she is quick to cast them aside. “Foi caí na madrugada dizendo que tá cansado/ então deu uma da manhã e o cara deitou pro lado./ Estou com

raiva desse cara nem usei meus artificios/ vou botar você na pista e nunca mais saio contigo.”

Most of Tati Quebra-Barraco’s lyrics address this “attainable” sex, often in very descriptive ways, highlighting what she expects of her partner and describing various activities in which she would like to participate. “Bota na boca, bota na cara/ bota onde quiser” (“Montagem pidona”, Tati Quebra Barraco). It seems to allude to a certain attitude of sexual liberty in the sense that she is open to whatever her partner decides to do with her. And though these lyrics evoke a sense of submitting herself to the whims of her partner, “Motel” reminds us that Tati is not one to give without first taking for herself. “O tempo já é moderno/e sexo tem que variar/ se eles quer que você mama/ manda eles te chupar (“Motel”, Tati Quebra-Barraco). At the end of the song, it is unclear whether the “give-take” is equally balanced because the lyrics do not indicate what her partner receives in return, if he receives anything at all. This attitude is consistent with the male lyrics in the previous section, which describe mostly what the men receive from their women with few specific references to what they give. In this sense Tati Quebra-Barraco is, in fact, singing about men the same way the men sing about women, but just because she is a woman, and because it is a new phenomenon in a fiercely patriarchal society, does not necessarily make it feminist.

Tati and other female funk artists also undo any feminist progress by pandering to a common competitive attitude between women. Many of their lyrics contain references to sexual activities with men who “belong” to other women. “No melô que tá na moda, com seu gato eu vou meter/ Te boto de quatro, de lado, por trás, mete tudo eu vou gemer” (“Motel”, Tati Quebra-Barraco). The first line informs the other woman that Tati is with

her man, the second is sung as though to taunt her, describing what Tati is doing with him. Tati portrays herself as the sexually superior woman, while simultaneously labelling the other woman as inferior to have let her man stray. There is no mention of the fact that it could possibly be the man who takes any of the blame for such indiscretions.

Along the same lines, female lyrics often reflect a possessive nature towards men. Even their titles, such as “O Marido é meu” by MC Kátia, serve as a warning to other women not to get involved. “Pras amantes eu mando assim óóóó/ O namorado é meu/ Quando voce tiver disposição/ Tu vai encontrar u seu/ Quando tu encontrar o seu Todo mundo vai querer” (“Pras amantes”, Tati Quebra-Barraco). Again there is no mention of a warning not to stray directed toward the man. The onus is on the woman to control him, and only those with “disposição” are able to find a good *namorado*. This attitude seems to hold forth in favela life, as well as in funk music. In an interview conducted by Silvio Essinger, Tati Quebra-Barraco said she did not expect men to be faithful. “Que seja fiel, não adianta, porque o homem não nasceu para ter uma mulher só” (Essinger 219). This attitude not only considerably lowers women’s standards, but also takes an individualistic approach that denies any solidarity between the women themselves. This lack of solidarity runs counter to all types of feminist movements, and is partly responsible for making “feminist funk” a contradiction in terms.

There is more contradiction to be found in the lyrics of female funk. In “Tapinha” by MC Beth, the MC insists that a little tap never hurt any woman. It is, as Medeiro puts it, a song filled with machismo but sung by a woman (91). “Se te bota maluquinha/ Um tapinha eu vou te dar/ Porque: Só um tapinha!...doí/ um tapinha não doí/ um tapinha não

doí” (“Tapinha”, MC Beth). Inspired by the success of this song, Tati Quebra-Barraco composed a response entitled, “Tapinha nada”. “Escuta aqui meu preto que agora eu vou falar,/ Pra tu fechar comigo vai ter que me respeitar./ Tapinha nada no meu homem eu dou porrada... Para de marrar e desce desse palco,/ Que aqui no meu cafofo sou eu que falo mais alto.” Some argue that this response is part of a larger agenda in feminine funk of women speaking up for themselves, reacting against the machismo of funk, and taking control, both inside and outside the bedroom.

While these lyrics send the message that Tati does not endorse the “tapinha” and shows this by instead taking control of the situation (“aqui no meu cafofo sou eu que falo mais alto”), this is not her only song with references to the controversial subject of hitting women during sex. Her song “Tapinha atrás, tapa na frente” sounds much like MC Beth’s “Tapinha”. “Tapa na frente, tapinha atrás, ai gatinho tá bom demais/ Tapinha atrás, tapa na frente/ Que jeitinho envolvente” (“Tapinha atrás tapa na frente”, Tati Quebra-Barraco). In this song, there is an obvious pleasure in the masochistic activity of receiving a few slaps. Tati is certainly entitled to this pleasure, but because of the contradictions between these two songs, it becomes more difficult to argue that Tati Quebra-Barraco’s “Tapinha nada” is anything more than a provocative response to cash in on some of MC Beth’s success.

Neofeminism in Funk?

Advocates of funk’s *neofeminismo* claim that feminine funk helps liberate women from the ideal that society expects them to uphold; to marry and have children, to prefer romance over purely physical sex. Funk has undoubtedly broken the musical barrier in ways samba and pagode never did. Those who listen to funk do so because of its raw

character, and many don't enjoy funk for the same reason. Even Tati Quebra-Barraco admits that her audience expects her lyrics to be provocative. “Não posso cantar música romântica. As pessoas não esperam isso da Tati” (Essinger 218). Is feminine funk really a new type of feminism created in the favelas for a generation looking to gain their sexual rights?

According to Kate Lyra, feminism in Brazil is divided into three parts: the struggle for the right to vote in the 1920s, the struggle for working rights in the 1960s, and the struggle for sexual rights and sexual equality in the 21st century. When interviewed, she said the cause of the most recent break between generations of feminism was because “as mães que lutavam por essa igualdade, para não ser tachadas de objetos sexuais, deram origem a essa terceira onda que diz ‘nós somos sexuais, sim, nós somos seres sexuados e temos esse direito’” (Medeiros 88). In “A ‘nova’ moral sexual das revistas femininas”, an article written in the 1970s, Maria Quartim de Moraes explains that women are prisoners confined to the private sphere because the public sphere is male-dominated.

A sexualidade feminina é prisioneira, portanto, dos estreitos limites sociais em que se desenrola a vida da mulher. A sociedade fragmenta o indivíduo tanto por causa do modo em que as condições materiais de existência são produzidas e reproduzidas (separação do produtor dos meios de produção; atividade econômica orientada pela busca do lucro e não pela satisfação das necessidades do homem), quanto pela divisão sexual das atividades e da vida social de modo geral. (Quartim de Moraes 70)

If forty years later, according to Lyra, Brazilian women have effectively moved into the public sphere, then it would seem that feminine funk is about combining the private and the public sphere. But whether this crossover can be considered a feminist movement is doubtful. It is much more likely that feminine funk is about capitalising on

the private, the things that happen *entre quatro paredes*, by bringing it into the public sphere. This is because sexuality in both the private and public spheres is still defined by men, and feminine funk does little to gain the right for women to define their own sexuality. These male-oriented sexual ideals of the woman willing to do anything, the woman willing to submit to *tapinhas*, and the women fighting over men (the proverbial “catfight”), make up most of the material of feminine funk. The rest is made up of a reversal of roles, with women singing about men the way men sing about women, and in the world of funk music neither approach can be considered feminist.

DANCE CULTURE AND MEDIA

While this analysis of the representation of women in funk has so far focussed on the lyrics, the dance culture of the *bailes* and the marketing and media surrounding funk must not be overlooked. The *bailes* are not simply dances or shows put together for a group of listeners, they are composed of an entire funk subculture, of ritual and rules. “É importante considerar não apenas o baile, mas todo o ritual que o precede, bem como as relações que se estabelecem for a deste *lugar* e que nele assumem formas diferenciadas” (Herschmann “Na Trilha do Brasil contemporâneo” 71). Most *bailes de funk* take place in Rio de Janeiro’s poorer suburbs of the Zona Norte, though they have been expanding more and more into the Zona Oeste and Baixada Fluminense, and even the Zona Sul as funk’s popularity with the middle and upper classes increases. The *bailes* take place in a variety of locations, and occasionally the designated area is incompatible with the number of attendees, with the result that the space is too small. “Os bailes são realizados em antigos clubes de bairro, quadras de algumas escolas de samba, terrenos baldios e até Cieps (Centro Integrado de Ensino Público)” (Cecchetto 146).

Bailes do not only provide the *funkeiros* with a place to dance and hang out in groups, they also provide a set space for rival gangs to meet on neutral territory to fight each other. According to Cecchetto, the fighting is actually organised, with the baile often being the cover for two rival gangs to meet (146). One video on *YouTube* shows two rival gangs beating each other at a *baile*. In this particular video there appear to be no weapons, although this does not necessarily mean none were involved. The rivals hit, punch and scrap with each other, semi-controlled by mediators in the middle of the floor wearing red vests and white gloves to identify themselves as neutral (“Baile de funk”,

YouTube). This gives us some insight into why the music contains such violent lyrics. If the *baile* is secondary to the fighting, then the most effective music for pumping up the groups' adrenaline would contain a heavy bass and violent lyrics.

The *baile* also has a second agenda in the creation of sexual encounters. “Os bailes funk são freqüentados também por casais ou por jovens somente pelo gosto da música e pela possibilidade da realização de ‘encontros’” (Valenzuela Arce 154). Not only can young people meet a new partner, but existing couples can come to dance and heat things up before returning home. The dancing fuels the sexual atmosphere and the erotic dimension of the *baile* includes moves like the *bundinha* and the *cachorrão*, simulating sex. Examples of this type of dancing can be found on *YouTube* videos, and a quick search for “baile de funk” will often suggest links to “putaria”. In one such video, girls are handpicked at a show to go up on stage and dance with the male performers. They dance back to front, some girls facing the crowd and swivelling their hips as the men make pelvic thrusting moves towards their buttocks. Some dance front to front with the men, occasionally picked up by the hips and held so that the crotch areas make contact (“Putaria” *YouTube*).

This is not a new phenomenon. Hermano Vianna, in his book that paved the way in 1988 for other studies into funk culture, observed this pornographic aspect in the *bailes*. “Nos momentos mais animados, todos os dançarinhos entoavam refrões pornográficos” (Vianna, *O Mundo funk carioca*, 11). According to Micael Herschmann, the erotic element is due to the fact that the ambience is very masculine, and men make up the most active part of the *baile*. However, the female presence is essential, both as a

seductive distraction and to stir up rivalries (Herschmann “Na Trilha do Brasil contemporâneo” 72).

But while this presence is necessary, it does not account for the fact that both men and women attend the *bailes* on the sole promise of sex, and not as an accessory to the violence. They are attracted to the sexual element of the lyrics and the dancing, and Brazil is not the only country in which highly sexual lyrics and explicit dancing have evolved together. In many other countries in Latin America, such as Venezuela, Peru, Colombia, Puerto Rico and Cuba, *regeton* music is the equivalent of Brazilian funk. The lyrics are similar in content, and the dancing is described as “a dance which sensualises the bottom and pelvis in fetishistic fashion” (Fairly 477). Fairly’s study, conducted in Cuba, describes similar events to the *bailes de funk*, and emphasizes like Herschmann the male dominated atmosphere.

Talking with these dancers about *regeton*, including posing the question, ‘what’s in it for the women?’, the answers I got were a) it is fun, b) it can be erotic for both parties as the man caresses his partners body including neck, shoulders, hips and buttocks. Women dancers stressed you would only dance it with your boyfriend or someone you knew well. It was mentioned that it was all about sex, and that occasionally when people danced *regeton* in the right place and time, sex might occur. The explanation given was that there are few places for young people to meet in private as most live with their families often sharing a bedroom with a sibling or other family member. (Fairly 480)

No actual sex is filmed in the videos on *YouTube*, but this could be due to the restrictions of the website, and it is entirely possible that sex does occur at the *bailes*.

One of the main reasons for dancing in the fashions mentioned above is for the man to put his partner on display. This not only allows him to appreciate her, but also to show his “prize” to the other men. It has become so central to funk that MC Créu composed a song and dance specifically for this purpose. The “Dança do Créu” is a

dance for women, where they gyrate their hips and thrust out their buttocks at increasing speeds (“Dança do Créu”, *YouTube*). There are 5 speeds, starting at the slowest speed and moving faster and faster to the final speed, “número cinco”.

All can participate, but at MC Créu’s concerts it is danced by “professionals” on stage with MC Créu. When the chorus of “Créu Créu Créu Créu Créu!” (*ad infinitum*) is heard, the dancers stand with their backs to the audience, their hands placed on the wall to the back to the stage. They then gyrate their hips, making their buttocks swing up and down in time to the rhythm. The “Dança do Créu” became a hit in 2008 and *YouTube* is inundated with various videos of women (and men for the purpose of humour) going through the moves. One such video sees the dance steps replicated by two girls who look no older than 13 years of age (“Dança do Créu, nosso passarinho”, *YouTube*). It is obvious from the video that they have posted their dance purely for fun. The fact that these girls like to dance is no cause for concern, but what is distressing is that they are emulating a dance that is not only highly sexual, but also about explicit sexual display. While it is natural for 13 year old girls to be learning about their sexuality, it is worrying that the funk phenomenon encourages them to display that newfound sexuality to millions of internet users.

Luiz Carlos Maciel believes that this phenomenon of sexual display is also due to a false sense of sexual liberty, and that an actual “sexual revolution” is far from becoming a reality because today’s sexual liberty is linked with marketing and commercialism in the “industrialization of eroticism”. “Tudo fica condicionado a interesses econômicos. E isso impede que as pessoas tenham vida sexual saudável, ou seja, espontânea. Parece que fica tudo dirigindo pelo mercado. Tudo bem que a cachorra sacuda a bunda, mas ela tem

que ter vontade de fazer isso mesmo, e não para aparecer na televisão” (Faour 345). The media is capitalizing on funk music because sex sells, and *funkeiras* are capitalizing on the media attention.

On the other hand, some *funkeiras* claim to have another agenda; they see funk as a way of helping them achieve a university education. Kamilla Pereira of the Danadinhas says, “Quero fazer faculdade de química. Tenho consciência de que a beleza do corpo um dia acaba” (Corrêa, *Jornal do Brasil Online*). Alexandra Viera of Xana e a Gang agrees, “Pago minha faculdade de psicologia com o dinheiro que ganho fazendo show nos bailes. Faço funk por opção” (Corrêa). The money they make performing is much more than what they would be making in an ordinary student-type job. They know that they must make the most of their beauty before it fades, and invest in their long-term futures.

However, it is unclear whether they would be able to afford the education were it not for funk, and it becomes hard to tell where to draw the line on what constitutes sexual exploitation. In the United States, where college tuition fees are extremely high, some students resort to stripping and erotic dancing, justifying their “choice” by saying they use the money for education. It may be a choice to perform for money, but it is the money that dictates what that performance entails. And with money as the motivation, as the only means to creating opportunities outside the poverty of the favelas, it becomes clear that the “sexual liberation” is not on the *funkeira*’s terms.

The “sexual revolution” is at the mercy of music industry, which has the obvious objective of increasing revenue. Take, for example, three albums released in 2004. Two were albums by extremely popular and well-known artists, MC Serginho and Andinho, and the other was a mix-CD with tracks by various lesser-known artists. MC Serginho’s

cover of his album, “Vai Serginho”, showed him posing wearing sunglasses and pointing his fingers to look like guns. Andinho’s cover of “Já é sensação” showed him posing shirtless in the foreground, and another photograph of him in the background wearing a white, casually elegant outfit. The cover of “Big Mix de Verão 2004” revealed the back of a woman wearing nothing but a thong. “No entanto, para vender as coletâneas de sucessos do funk, a cara mais eficiente não era nenhuma dessas duas: era a bunda de uma bela moça” (Essinger, insert p.13).

If the objective for the music industry is to increase its revenue, and the image most likely to achieve this is based on female sexual display, then it follows that women’s choice is compromised. While she may enter the funk industry of her own accord, the *funkeira* is still confined within the parameters of what sells albums and shows. She may choose to “shake her ass”, as Maciel puts it, in the street or in the bedroom if she wants to. She may even choose to swivel her hips, half naked, on stage for an audience. But as soon as she combines that action with money, her choices become limited, and limited choices do not constitute female empowerment.

CONCLUSION

In Brazil, there is no common consensus on funk. The culture surrounding the music and its lyrics generates fierce debate, and funk is either praised for its groundbreaking portrayal of everyday favela life, or condemned for its unabashed encouragement of violence and sexual promiscuity. Up until recently, the media coverage of funk was mostly one-sided, and as it demonized funk's link to violence, titles emerged such as “‘Arrastões atterorizam Zona Sul’, ‘Hordas na praia’, ‘Galeras do funk criaram pânico nas praias,’ ‘Pânico no paraíso’, ‘Movimento funk leva à desesperança’, que incremenetavam o clima de terror” (Herschmann, *O Funk e o Hip-Hop invadem a cena*, 96). However, in the last ten years as its popularity has grown, the media has been quick to change its tone. Funk is not only more popular throughout Brazil, but performers such as DJ Marlboro and Tati Quebra-Barraco have represented Brazil in international music festivals as far away as the United States and Germany.

It would almost seem as though funk has become another type of “national dance music” for Brazil. According to Fairly, “social and gender inequalities and imbalances created the climate in which tango, *danzón* and samba (which have all become ‘national’ dances) emerged. Each were regarded as deeply transgressive at the time, and each shocked western sensibilities with their explicitness” (483). Funk has all of these elements and, like samba, has crossed the borders of the favelas, the different Brazilian states, and even Brazil's own national borders. But despite funk's growing recognition as “true” Brazilian music, it remains shocking and provocative even within its own industry, as more and more women are entering the sphere traditionally dominated by men.

The industry has also been provoked from within by the emergence of gay-friendly funk. This is perhaps even more shocking than female funk, as the genre has always retained its initial machismo. Rodrigo Faour, when discussing homosexuality in the MPB, touches on the subject of gay funk. He mentions MC Serginho and his song “Machão”, which describes the secret life of a gay man pretending to be straight during the day, and going out to find what he really wants during the night. “Isso cantado aos berros por um sujeito com a voz bem dura como a deste MC não deixa de ser um recado contra a homofobia” (Faour 430). The fact that MC Serginho is sending a message against homophobia by using a medium that is in itself inherently homophobic, is a sign that funk, once content to simply describe the violence and sex without engaging in social commentary, is slowing using its popularity to try and gain influence both within and beyond its own social sphere.

This is also true of the topic of safe sex, which has been vastly promoted by Non Governmental Organisations but largely ignored in favela communities. “Camisinha” by Gaiola das Popozudas is a funk song promoting safe sex. “Você trabalha o dia todo/ Depois quer se divertir/ Só não pode se esquecer/ É claro de se prevenir/ Você sai com a gatinha/ Com a danada e o travesti/ Se não usa a camisinha/ Seu caralho vai cair” (“Camisinha” Gaiola Das Popozudas). Considering how many young men and women in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas listen to funk, songs that encourage the use of condoms will most certainly have at least some effect, if only to increase the popularity of the idea of safe sex.

There are, however, very few of these types of role models who promote tolerance or responsible sexual activity. Even Tati Quebra-Barraco, of funk’s so-called

neofeminismo is in favour of using condoms, but admits in an interview that she herself does not.

- “ – Você é favor da camisinha?
- Sou!
- Mas exige camisinha?
- Não, rá, rá!” (Essinger 219)

This is yet another of Tati’s contradictions. On the other hand, it could be said that feminist funk is itself a contradiction in terms, and that performers like Tati best represent it because they don’t attempt to change the machismo of male funk lyrics, choosing instead to work with it and adapt it to their songs.

It is clear that Tati Quebra-Barraco’s work has paved the way for discussion about women’s rights. It has even caused her brother, Márcio (who collaborates with her on songs), to think about funk’s affect on women. In an interview, Márcio stated, “Às vezes homem ofende a mulher na música e ninguém critica... Tudo o que eu não gostava que uma mulher dissesse para mim eu escrevi para ela dizer para todo mundo” (Essinger 218). However, just because Tati, Deize Tigrona, and other performers are bringing women into funk’s spotlight does not mean they are at the head of a major feminist movement. To do so they would have to use their music to advocate women’s rights, both in and out of the bedroom. Instead, their music is intrinsically pandering to an ideal established by men about what women’s “sexual liberty” ought to be, i.e. a willingness to perform any sort of sexual act.

Still, it cannot be said that Tati Quebra-Barraco does not represent some women. At the very least, she represents herself and her own point of view. When performing at the celebrations for the Día Internacional da Mulher in São Paulo in 2005, Tati symbolized only one of many aspects of femininity. “Tati Quebra Barraco, também

simboliza outro aspecto da femininidade. Com apenas um CD, Boladona, que ganhou a tarja ‘desaconselhável para menores de 18 anos’, faz sucesso entre manos e gays, adolescentes e adultos, e vem servindo de modelo de comportamento não só às ‘cachorras’ do funk, como a patricinhas de classe média. Ela não se arvora a ser porta-voz de quem quer que seja, mas uma de suas máximas é: ‘Toda mulher, entre quatro paredes, é cachorra’” (O Estado, 4 March 2005).

Of course, many women disagree with Tati’s statement about who they are “entre quatro paredes”. Female funk brings the privacy of the bedroom out into the open, but by claiming this as a movement, one ignores the fact that a handful of women’s sexual escapades cannot be said to represent the private spheres of all women. A true “sexual rights” movement must first determine women’s basic sexual rights, upon which they are free to determine their own personal preferences. Female funk shows only the personal preferences, which supporters of funk’s *neofeminismo* claim to represent all women’s basic sexual rights. In this sense, female funk is emphatically not feminist funk.

Nevertheless, it has created the space for women to discuss who they are and what they stand for. Tati Quebra-Barraco brought many more young women to the Día Internacional da Mulher, an audience that previously may never have known about the women’s international awareness day had it not been for her. And while Tati does not admit to being a feminist, the fact that many young *funkeiras* are identifying with her as such helps to combat some of the stigma surrounding feminism in Brazil. However, if these female performers truly had a feminist agenda, they would use their popularity to deliver further messages about women’s sexual (among other) rights, but this has not yet proven to be the case. Instead, the popularity of the lyrics where they portray themselves

as “cachorras entre quarto paredes” only encourages more lyrics of the same material in order to profit as much as possible.

Still, many women think female funk is feminist, and funk genuinely makes them feel empowered. This means that young women are no longer afraid to broach the topic of feminism, despite its negative stereotype in an industry and a country full of machismo. Female funk has reopened the discussion about feminism and introduced it to a new generation of Brazilians, contributing to their sense of empowerment. And to create such a sense of empowerment, regardless of whether its source is genuinely feminist, is certainly of value to women in Brazil’s patriarchal society.

GLOSSARY

Aranha: Vagina, literally “spider”.

Arma: Penis, literally “weapon”.

Baratinha: Vagina, literally “little cockroach”.

Bonde: An alliance between *galeras*.

Boca Mijada: Vagina, literally “mouth with urine”.

Boceta/Buceta: Vagina, literally “box”.

Buraco: Vagina, literally “hole”.

Cacete: Penis, literally “club”.

Caralho: Penis, literally “small stick”.

Carne Mijada: Vagina, literally “meat with urine”.

Cobra: Penis, literally “snake”.

Comer: Expression to describe the act of sex (both oral and penetrative). The person who “eats” is the dominant one.

Delicioso(a): Delicious, to describe a person or event that provides sexual satisfaction.

Demorô: A term that expresses or emphasizes approval. Similar to “Isso mesmo”.

Estar com calor: “Hot and bothered”, wanting sex.

Estar com fome: “Hungry” for sex.

Faca: Penis, literally “knife”.

Fogo: Sexual fire, heat.

Galera: A group of friends who do not live close to one another, but who frequent the same *bailes* and beaches.

Gostoso(a): An expression to describe a person who is attractive, “tasty”.

Madeira: Penis, literally “wood”.

Pau: Penis, literally “wood”.

Pica/Pirocada: Penis, literally “prick”.

Quebrar o barraco: slang for wild and satisfactory sex.

Sacanagem: Prankish play, humour sometimes with a sinister nature.

Sapatão: Derogatory term for “lesbian”, literally “big shoe”.

Tchutchuca: Girl, woman.

Tesão: Sexual tension.

Xota/Xoxota/Chochota: Vagina, literally to “become weak or dry”.

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