

Echoes of Cape Verdean Identity: Literature and Music in the Archipelago

Simone Caputo Gomes

Translated by

Luís R. Mitras

Revised by

Mark Streeter

Abstract. This article addresses the close connection between music and literature in Cape Verde, which is able to harmonize those forces that are an index to Cape Verdean identity: bread, sound & phoneme. A choir of illustrious voices plays a melody (or a polyphonic composition) whose theme is the thirst for survival of the Cape Verdean people and the permanence of a Creole culture founded upon a symbolic national trilogy—corn, the discourse on music and literary discourse.

Entre sons de violão & viola
Sons uterinos da ilha que nasce
E consanguíneos do tambor que ama. [...]

Naquel fosfre de morna
polvra de koladera
E exploson de funaná
Corsino Fortes¹

Taking our lead from an observation by Tomé Varela, the renowned poet and researcher of Cape Verde's oral traditions, we will be guided by his luminous intuition: the proposal to look at the relation between literature and music as an index to Cape Verdean identity. According to Varela, Daniel Spencer's composition "Nhá terra escalabróde" is characteristic of the music produced in Cape Verde:

Pureza ta morá
 Na nha terra escalabróde
 Na nós morna, coladera
 Funaná e batuque.²

Speaking of literature, it is possible to assert that Creole writers have made superb use of the discourse of national music as a means of expressing Cape Verdean identity. *Mon pays est une musique* is the echo we hear from Mário Fonseca's lyre.³

José Luís Hopffer Almada's poem "Colina de Pedra" ["Stone Hillside"] seems to act as a response to the song "Nhá terra escalabróde," which is evidence of the bridge that has been built between the two art forms:

ouvi este som dolente
 repercutindo a saudade da minha alma
 às minhas almas ancestrais
 dos degredados e negreiros
 A *morna* é um crepúsculo de lágrima
 desta súbita e antiga recordação [...]
 O *funaná* é uma remota e dolorosa saudade
 de outros horizontes
 e nele circulam o negro e o
 negreiro no imenso rio da farsa sobre a ilha

Eia estrangeiros
 ouvi ainda
 o *batuque*, o *cola*, a *coladeira*,
 o *landum* oh a música da *tabanka*.⁴

[I heard this sorrowful sound
 reverberating with the longing of my soul
 back to my ancestral souls
 men banished to the isles and slave traders
 The *morna* is the twilight of that shed tear
 of this sudden and ancient remembrance (...)
 The *funaná* is a remote and sorrowful longing
 for other horizons

where the black man and the slave trader
walk together in the immense river of sham that's over the island

Ahoy foreigners
listen still to
the *batuque*, the *cola*, the *coladeira*,
the *landum* oh the music of the *tabanka*.]

Frank Tenaille, a French journalist and an expert on “world music,” correctly states that “*O mais fiel bilhete de identidade de Cabo Verde é a sua música*”⁵ [“Cape Verde’s most faithful identity card is its music”]; he emphasizes the plurality that arose out of the configuration of what was insular with what arose as a result of syncretism. Vasco Martins, a maestro, composer, poet and novelist, describes the principal modality of Creole music as being akin to the trade winds.⁶ Let us sum up his ideas.

A rich popular music arose out of the merging of European, African and South American⁷ cultures; this music is represented by forms such as: the *tabanca* on the island of Santiago (ritualistic, repetitive, with sea shells blown in counterpoint, drums and brass bugles), the party rhythms of the feast of the *pilão* [“pestle” or “crusher”] on the island of Fogo (the pestle that is used to pound the corn is also used as a musical instrument), the drums of San Jôm, the mazurka and the quadrille (both of European origin) developed on the island of Santo Antão, the *coladeira* (exuberant, sensual, with hints of the *cumbia* and Afro-Cuban music), the *batuque* on the island of Santiago (the African cry, the women playing percussion on their thighs with cloths and plastic pouches), the *finason* (the lament of the slaves), the *funaná* (a hypnotic trance), the Christian chant—the *divina*—of the island of São Nicolau (four women’s voices) and the nostalgic *morna* from the island of Boavista with its harmonies that are the result of musical syncretism (which originated with the Brazilian *modinha* and subsequently crossed with the *lundum*, the fado, the samba, the fox-trot and the mambo).

From the cultural point of view, and given the diversity within the islands, the Creole language, cookery, literature in the Portuguese language and music all constitute important unifying phenomena. Speaking about music, Gabriel Mariano⁸ points to the unity of the archipelago in so far as the *morna*, the violin, the guitar, the *cavaquinho* [a very small guitar], and the drum are concerned.

At the first “Encontro da Música Nacional” [“Gathering of National

Music”] António Pedro Monteiro Lima pointed out, once again, that the social function of Creole music, from the traditional to the newer versions, “*é também de fixar de forma inamovível o ideal da Unidade nacional no coração de cada caboverdiano*”⁹ [“is also the fixate, in a permanent form, the ideal of national Unity in the heart of each Cape Verdean citizen”].

Commonplace and characteristic scenes of miscegenation and syncretism on the islands are the festivals in honor of the saints’ days.¹⁰ Side by side with the celebration of devotion to the Catholic saint is the African “feeling,” which is expressed by means of the circle formed by drummers in the main square and where pairs are *colando* [lit. “sticking together” but also performing the “cola”] under a hot and exciting rhythm, their thighs touching. The *Cola Sam João* seems to us like a good example of the night-time feast rocked by the “reben-cadas” of the drums and by the *coladeira*; the woman are decked with necklaces of *midje ilióde* (corn). The night before, the host organizes the *pilão*, an activity accompanied by a dance when the guests pound the corn for the *xerém*.

In his poem “De boca a barlavento” [“From Mouth to Windward”], Corsino Fortes speaks of the

árvore E o arbusto
Que arrastam
As vogais e os ditongos
para dentro das violas.¹¹

[tree AND shrub
That drag
The vowels and diphthongs
Inside the Spanish guitars.]

On the other hand, in his re-invention of the Cape Verdean land,¹² he inserts Spanish guitars into the poetic discourse, accompanied by the pestle/crusher and the drums. Bread (*corn*), sound (the *marulho* and the pestle/crusher) and the poem (phoneme, vowels, diphthongs) are harmonized in a trilogy of nationality—food, music and words are intertwined, to enlarge on the constituent elements of the country’s symbolism:¹³

Poeta! todo o poema:
geometria de sangue & fonema

Escuto Escuta

Um pilão fala

árvores de fruto
ao meio do dia

E tambores

erguem
na colina

Um coração de terra batida

E lon longe

Do marulho à viola fria

Reconheço o bemol

Da mão doméstica

Que solfeja

Mar & monção mar & matrimônio

Pão pedra palmo de terra

Pão & patrimônio.¹⁴

[Poet! The entire poem:

geometry of blood and phoneme

I listen Listen!

A pestle speaks

fruit trees
at midday

And drums

rise up
on the hillside
A heart of beaten earth

And fa far

From the *marulho* to the cold guitar

I recognize the flat note

Of the domestic hand

That practices sol-fa

Sea & maritime monsoon & matrimony

Bread stone handful of land
 Bread & patrimony.]

Let us now proceed on a brief excursion, in company with those writers who have appropriated the Creole musical heritage, and who have made use of this as a way of reclaiming the singularity of their culture. Let us start with the *morna*, the one thing that binds together Cape Verdeans scattered all over the world.

To trace the history of the *morna* is a complex task, one that has occupied musicians, intellectuals and all Cape Verdeans alike. Some have emphasized the melancholy of the lower tones, the technical-musical basis of the *fado*. Eugénio Tavares, for example, used to compose his *mornas* with a Portuguese guitar; bit-by-bit, the Portuguese guitar came to be substituted by the *violão* [large guitar], the instrument of the *morna* par excellence, with its low ballads and transition chords. The similarities between the *fado* and the *morna* can perhaps be attributed to the (African) musical form that is at the origin of the *fado*, the *lundum*, assimilated in Brazil but which still persists in Cape Verde on the island of Boavista. Others, such as António Aurélio Gonçalves, look for the source of the *morna* in the chants of the female *cantadeiras* [lit. “woman singers”] who sang in solo and with a choir.

Vasco Martins maintains that even though its origin may have been lost in the mists of time, he insists that “*se a morna evoluiu, deveu-se a influências sobretudo brasileiras*”¹⁵ [“if the *morna* evolved at all it was largely as a result of Brazilian influences”], and this is especially true of the *modinha*, on the island of Boavista. From its earlier (more syncopated) form to the way it is performed today, the journey of the *morna* has culminated in its election as the most popular song form in the archipelago.

Eugénio Tavares and the musicians Luís Rendall, Francisco Xavier da Cruz (B. Léza), Jorge Monteiro (Jótamont), Armando António Lima (Lela de Maninha), Manuel de Jesus Lopes (Manuel d’Novas) have demonstrated the exchange that exists between poetry and music in their *mornas* interpreted by Cesária, Titina, Arlinda Santos, Mité Costa, Zenaida Chantre, Celina Pereira, Tetê Alinho, Bana, Amândio Cabral, Manecas Matos, Dudu, Djack Monteiro, Zezé di nha Reinalda, Fernando Quejas, Mário de Melo, Marino Silva, Djosinha, Voz de Cabo Verde, Tubarões, and Bulimundo, among others.

From the pre-*Claridade* days of Eugénio Tavares and Pedro Monteiro Cardoso, the authors of *Mornas, cantigas crioulas* [*Mornas, Creole Songs*]

(1932) and *Folclore Caboverdiano* [*Cape Verdean Folklore*] (1933) until our day, the musical dimension has assumed a privileged place in Cape Verdean literature.

“Mornas Passam Cantando as Crioulas Trigueiras”¹⁶ [“Mornas Go Past Singing the Creole *Trigueiras*”] in Pedro Cardoso’s *Hespérides* [*Hesperides*]. The creation of the *morna* by Toi is at the center of Manuel Lopes’s tale *Galo* [Que] *Cantou na Baía* [*The Cockerel that Sang in the Bay*] (1936). Manuel Ferreira’s collection of Cape Verdean short stories goes by the title of *Morna* (1948), and there is also the novel *Hora di Bai* (1962). In the nineties we have *Mornas Eram as Noites* [*Tender Were the Nights / The Mornas Were Night*] (1994) by Dina Salústio—the idea applies, also, to the protagonists of her texts.

Thus we see varied ways in which the relationship between the *morna* and literature is being developed. Let us look at some of the variations through concrete examples.

For Pedro Cardoso the “Morna” was the

Lídima filha, pois, da Trova lusitana!
Traduzindo a alegria e a “dor da nossa raça.”
Em ritmo polariza a Alma caboverdiana!¹⁷

[Untainted daughter, then, of the Lusitanian Ballad!
Translating the joy and the “pain of our race.”
Its rhythm splits the Cape Verdean soul asunder!]

In Jorge Barbosa’s *Arquipélago* (1941), the “Brother” identifies with the *morna* which

parece que é o eco em tua alma
da voz do Mar
e da nostalgia das terras mais ao longe [...]

o eco
da voz da chuva desejada,
o eco
da voz interior de nós todos,
da voz de nossa tragédia sem eco!¹⁸

[is just like echo in your soul
of the voice of the sea
and the nostalgia for distant shores (...)]

the echo
of the voice of the awaited-for rain,
the echo
of the voice deep within us,
of the voice of our tragedy that has no echo!]

In his invitation to the Cape Verdean poet Daniel Filipe, who was raised in Portugal to visit the islands—an invitation extended to other Portuguese poets—Barbosa adds:

Que venham ouvir
a alma do arquipélago
cantando mornas!¹⁹

[Come and listen
to the soul of the archipelago
singing the *mornas*!]

Manuel Ferreira is in agreement with the above when he emphasizes the collective nature of the musical dimension; he asks: “*até que ponto o homem crioulo não transferiu o seu sofrimento social para a dor da morna amorosa?*”²⁰ [“to what extent did not the Creole man transfer his social suffering to sorrow of the *morna* that sang of love?”]

In Ovídio Martins’s poem, which celebrates the arrival of the “Chuva em Cabo Verde” [“Rain in Cape Verde”], the dancing and playing of the *morna* is at the center of the festival:

Festa nas Ilhas
Soluçam os violinos choram os violões
nos dedos rápidos dos tocadore [...]
Nas ruas nos terreiros
por toda banda
as mornas unem os pares

nos bailes nacionais
 Mornas e sambas
 mornas e marchas
 mornas mornadas.²¹

[Celebration on the islands
 The violins sob, the guitars cry
 in the nimble fingers of their players (...)
 On the streets in the squares
 all over
Mornas unite dancing pairs
 at the “national balls”
Mornas and *sambas*
mornas and parade music
mornas mornadas.]

With respect to what it says about the dialogue between the literary and the musical arts, “Galo Cantou [Que] na Baía,” the short story that gives title to Manuel Lopes’s book, can be regarded as exemplary.

As the text unfolds it also reproduces the process of gestation of a *morna* by Toi, the *morna*-maker; the central image in the text is that of a cockerel singing in the dawn. As a kind of preamble to his composition Toi the watchman proposes a “philosophy” of the *morna*, one that makes use of Western imagery:

a morna veio do mar. Como Vénus (imagem colhida num tal Alcindo que fazia parte dum grupo literário), surgiu pura e nua das espumas do mar, e também como Vénus, é a protectora do amor, porque foi à sua sombra que os nossos avós armaram casamento e o farão também os filhos dos nossos filhos, afirmara Toi, com eloquência, num baile nacional do Tolentino.²²

[the *morna* came from the sea. Like Venus (the image he had gotten from a certain Alcindo who was part of a literary group) it arose pure and naked from the foam of the sea and, like Venus, it is the protectress of love because it is under her shadow that our grandparents got married and that the children of our children will get married; this is what Toi declared with such eloquence during a “national ball” at Tolentino.]

To compose his *mornas* Toi needs to be close to the sea:
 Quando sinto que estou para “ter morna,” procuro sombra. E sombra com mar
 diante. Só com mar diante...

A mesma inquietação voltou a formigar-lhe lá dentro, transformada em vagas
 palavras confusas e em notas de música sem sentido. Esta, não obstante, já revelava
 um ritmo embalado, de remo na forqueta, mas era, por enquanto, uma melopéia
 estranha, elementar, quase remanescente, toada de coisa recordada, sons ainda dú-
 bios em busca de equilíbrio [...].

De súbito estacou. Apurou os ouvidos. Suspenso assim alguns segundos entre a
 realidade e o sonho, escutou dentro do cérebro um chacoalhar de vozes e ecos. Toi
 reconheceu o atalho que, habitualmente, o levava aos ocultos tesouros. [...]

A quadra saía assim inteirinha, de improviso. [...] Vênus nascia completa, com
 cabeça, tronco e membros, e alma. Declamou, cantarolando, duas, três vezes a
 quadra recém-nascida das ondas do mar.²³

[When I feel “I’m getting a *morna*” I look for the shade. And shade with the sea
 before me. Only with the sea in front...]

The same feeling of disquiet began to eat at him and it was transformed into
 vague and confused words and into senseless musical notes. Despite this, it already
 revealed a lulling rhythm of the pitchfork but, for the time being, it was a strange
 melody, basic, almost the tune of a memory of something he remembered, its
 sounds were uncertain, as if they were in search of some sort of harmony (...).

Then all of a sudden he stopped. He pricked up his ears. Lost between reality and
 dream for a few seconds, he heard from within his brain the agitation of voices
 and echoes. Toi recognized the road that usually led him to hidden treasures. (...)

The stanza came out complete, and no planning was required. (...) Venus was
 born complete, with a head, trunk, members—and a soul. Crooning along, two
 or three times he recited the stanza that had been born from the waves of the sea.]

In this description of the poetic process of giving birth to the *morna*, the
 tiredness associated with the effort of composing the first stanza is com-

pounded with the difficulty of organizing the second one. It is only after the rooster has crowed and flapped its wings—a metaphor for Toi’s having found his expression—that his search will have come to fruition:

Veio mesmo do mar.—Ahn! Cantar de galo, galo canta na baía! Sonha naturalmente que está empoleirado numa árvore que balança com a aragem. Porto abandonado. É como uma casa velha, cheia de aranhas e bichinhos vagabundos. Até galo já canta na baía! Mas é poético. Se fosse rouxinol ou cotovia, como nos livros, mais poético seria. Mas não temos cotovias, temos é galo. [...] Qualquer um que o ouve cantar, fica sabendo que a manhã não tarda, o sol vem perto. Toi declama: “*Galo cantâ na baía...*” assim mesmo na língua sabe da nossa terra... [...] A segunda quadra irrompe inteirinha, numa catadupa de palavras e música:

*“Já cantâ galo na baía
Sol cá ta longe de somâ.
Comam ta longe de Maria
Scuro ta continuâ...”*

Era a linha dorsal, o eixo. Era o nascimento de Vênus. Morna salgada, morna de mar.²⁴

[It really did come from the sea.—Ah-ha! The crowing of the cockerel, the cock crowing in the bay! Naturally, it is dreaming that it is perched on a tree held in sway by the wind. Abandoned harbor. It’s like an old house, full of spiders and stray little animals. Even the cock is singing in the bay! But it is poetic. If it were a nightingale or a skylark, like it always happens in books, then it would be more poetic still. But we have no skylarks here; what we have is a cock. (...) Anyone who hears it singing will know that soon it will be morning, that the sun is close by. Toi recites: “*Galo cantâ na baía...*”—“Cock crows in the bay”—in the language of our country... (...) In a catapult of words and music the second stanza arises fully formed:

*“Já cantâ galo na baía
Sol cá ta longe de somâ.
Comam ta longe de Maria
Scuro ta continua...”*

That was the backbone, the axis. It was the birth of Venus. Salty *morna*, maritime *morna*.]

Beginning to feel that he has become a rival of Eugénio Tavares in having his art so tirelessly praised by Salibânia, Toi savors the reverence of those who play *mornas*, sambas, and Brazilian *modinhas*—so recently arrived in the country with the steamers. They wait for his new creation while they drink grog and while Jack with his fine handwriting writes out the lyrics of the *morna*. And the central image of his song gains in strength and becomes more clearly defined:

Um galo de guerra, com o seu grito de alerta, alerta está!—Sê rosto, não. Quero antes...—Cerrou as pálpebras, com raiva. Põe lá: “GALO CANTÂ NA BAÍA.”²⁵

[A warring cock with its shout of alert: Alert!—No, I'd rather have... His eyes were firmly shut, in rage. He writes instead: “GALO CANTÂ NA BAÍA.”]

The singing of the cockerel heralds the coming of the morning. Venus²⁶ is born: Toi's briny *morna*.

Let us examine in more detail the images that Manuel Lopes works around in order to produce a theory of the genesis of the *morna*. Botticelli's “Birth of Venus” (Venus as the goddess of love, beauty and conception), which is associated with the strength of Toi's creative act, appropriated the dominant ideologies of classical antiquity in pictorial form and established the norm for Renaissance beauty: humanism, harmony, ideal beauty. The Neo-platonic ideas developed in Marsilio Ficino's writing and in the poems of Poliziano, combined with certain Christian precepts, seem to be the main inspiration behind Sandro Botticelli's painting; the construction of the painting reveals a re-reading of the texts about the myths of Venus-Aphrodite emerging from the sea (*Anadiômene*) in a seashell that the Aeolian gods had taken to the beach. According to Botticelli's version—which is in agreement with the one provided by Apelles, which in turn is inspired by what Hesiod had said in his *Theogony*—Venus-Aphrodite is born out of the foam (*aphros*) in the sea, which is really a mixture of the semen and the spilled blood of Uranus (the Sky), who was castrated by his son Cronus-Saturn in a power struggle. In the Renaissance, painting the shell seems to symbolize the fertilizing and creative powers of the water.

What is important to note is that the lyricism that is present in the work of Botticelli is less concerned with action than with the adoption of a contemplative attitude, of aesthetic admiration; he is, in effect, making the apol-

ogy for the beauty embodied in the figure of Venus, an emblematic representation of totalizing perfection, the image of an imaginary beauty. If we take this Venus to be a representation of the feminine condition, what stands out from it is a sort of static aesthetic autism and, consequently, an obstacle to living life fully.

We would like now to expand on these considerations by speaking about the image of the cockerel. We recall that the image is part of the collective memory of many peoples; it stands for vigilance, creativity and the resurrection, and also for the male and for power.²⁷ A Persian tradition that has remained, despite its having been Christianized, holds that the cockerel wakes the dawn and summons humankind to greet the sacredness of perfection. In ancient Greece, a cockerel was offered up to the god Priapus (the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite) so that men could ensure their manliness and virility.

A possible interpretation for the joining of the images of Venus (Aphrodite) and the cockerel in Manuel Lopes's short story would situate the *morna*, driven by the trade winds, in the context of the power of the masculine lyre of Toi (the Guard, the vigilant watchman, the cock), a kind of creativity that summons us to contemplate perfect beauty.

The underlying vision that is behind the appearance of the *morna* in the short story by Manuel Lopes contrasts with the way this theme is treated in more recent Cape Verdean fiction written by women. In the work of these women love and beauty stand back from the sphere of *Venustas* (or Absolute Beauty), a derivation of that absolute One embodied by Venus, and instead opt for the plurality that reality has imposed on conventions. Venus escapes from the shell.

Mornas eram as noites (1994), a collection of short stories by Dina Salústio, foregrounds how women take on the *morna* just by operating within the hermeneutics of a Cape Verdean woman's daily life: "... *de como elas se entregaram aos dias*" ["of how they gave themselves to the days of their life"] is the opening quote of the work.

Bearing in mind that we are speaking about the signs that reveal that a female perspective and the reality of woman's daily life has been incorporated in literary works written in Creole, we should recall another time—which would go from the time of the *Antologia da ficção caboverdiana* [*Anthology of Cape Verdean Fiction*], which Baltazar Lopes edited in 1960, and consisted of texts written by male authors,²⁸ to the two volumes of interviews carried out by Michel Laban²⁹ in 1992, where only Orlanda Amarílis stood beside 24

writers—when the Cape Verdean canon demonstrated little openness to female authorship.

Beginning in the nineties, women, who had been silenced in the history of literature, start painting true portraits of Creole daily life, oil paints on canvas: **women with the landscapes in the background³⁰ or landscapes with women in the background**, enabling the possibility of addressing themes that speak of women themselves and to write texts and scenes where women are the main protagonists.

In an interview that Dina Salústio granted to the writer of this article on November 12, 1994 in Praia, she spoke about her recently published book and stated that it had been born out of

necessidade de publicar as inúmeras histórias de mulheres, histórias de vida que passam por mim [...]. Não são ficção, é cá um encontro que é verdade, um momento só. [...] Não fiz uma selecção desses textos, só o primeiro foi intencional, para querer mostrar o meu reconhecimento a estas mulheres caboverdianas que trabalham duro, que fazem o trabalho da pedra, que carregam água, que trabalham a terra, que têm a obrigação de cuidar dos filhos, de acender o lume. Quis prestar uma homenagem a esta mulher. [...] As histórias acontecem, ao sabor do vôo. Falo das mulheres intelectuais, daquelas que não são intelectuais, daquelas que não têm nenhum meio de vida escrito, falo da prostituta, falo de todas as mulheres que me dão alguma coisa, e que eu tenho alguma coisa delas. [...] Em Cabo Verde, quando nasce uma menina, ela já é uma mulher.

[the need to publish the countless stories of women, those life stories that I witness (...). They are not fictional stories, it's something that happens that's true, a single moment. (...) I didn't make a selection of these texts, except for the first one, which was intentional, and that's because I wanted to give credit to these Cape Verdean women who work hard, who do a laborer's job, who fetch the water, who work the land, who have to take care of their children, light the fire. I wanted to pay homage to that kind of woman. (...) These are the kind of stories that happen. I speak about intellectual women, those that are not intellectual, I speak about those that have never been written about, I speak of the prostitute, I speak of all those women that have given me something, and those that are somehow part of me. (...) When a girl is born in Cape Verde she is already a woman.]

Her texts, like condensed plots of short films, give emphasis to the *morna*:

it appears in the title, theme and structure. “The nights were music” is a possible reading for *Mornas eram as noites*. Woman’s music. But also: music of nationality and cultural identity.

A true instance of appropriating the voice and actions of women (from silence to the scream) in a Creole world, a woman’s story/song about the woman in Cape Verde, *Mornas eram as noites* reveals to us a scenario of feminine complicity and curiosity, of machismo and the reconsideration of machismo (on the part of woman and on the part of man himself), of woman’s freedom (either postponed or appropriated), madness, witchcraft, drunkenness, lesbianism, prostitution, adolescent or child mothers, domestic violence, child abuse and child prostitution, paedophilia, as well as other themes.

The short story “Álcool na noite” [“Alcohol at night”], either an allusion to or else the reason for the title of the book, exposes the tragic dimension to the lives of many women in Cape Verde; Cesária’s *morna* (*Ó mar, Ó mar!—O sea, O sea!*) is in the background:

A *noite* estava serenamente calma e o calor convidava a estar-se a olhar para as estrelas, preguiçosamente [...]. De lá das bandas do cemitério *uma voz canta uma morna*. Tudo normal se a voz não parecesse sair dos intestinos de algum bicho em vez de uma garganta humana, por muito desafinada que fosse. *Era de uma mulber*, reconheci com mais cuidado. Aliás, *eram as vozes de duas mulheres*. *A segunda faz coro* com obscenidades e a desarmonia, o desleixo transparecido e o despudor agridem os ouvidos. [...] Vêm-se aproximando. E estão bêbadas. [...] Sinto raiva. Agora posso vê-las no arco iluminado pelo candeeiro. Parecem-me jovens. [...] A noite não tinha mais magia. Acho que nem estrelas. [...] vou pensando, enquanto desço as escadas.

E os passos falam vergonha, humilhação e revolta. E pena.³¹

[The *night* was serenely calm and the heat was almost an invitation to look at the stars, indolently (...). From around the cemetery *a voice sings a morna*. There was nothing strange about this if it wasn't for the fact that the voice didn't seem to come from a human throat, no matter how out of tune it was, but seemed to erupt from within the guts of some animal. After listening more carefully I realized that voice belonged to a woman. In fact, it wasn't one but *the voices of two women*. *The second voice was like a dissonant chorus* spewing obscenities; the obvious sloppiness and the sexual candor offended my ears. (...) I see them coming. They are drunk. (...) I am enraged. I now see them in the arch illuminated by the streetlight. They look young. (...)

The night had lost its magic. And I think its stars, too. (...) I'm thinking as I walk down the stairs.

And those steps speak of shame, humiliation and outrage. And sorrow.]

Venus has refused the ideal beauty, and has taken on the imperfections and the multi-faceted riches of reality. The laughter of chickens wakes Cape Verde up as much as does the cock's crow³² (and the sound of the drum and of *catchupa* [sic] in the frying pan). Looking at it from a woman's perspective, the *morna* goes beyond the ecstasy of creation and contemplation. It is deeply rooted, as Dina Salústio's narrative tells us, in the "*esconderijos privados*" ["private hiding-places"] of Creole society; it exposes hypocrisy and extreme situations, it brings into the open those feelings fed by the waves of the sea and the screams of the night, it helps to create a space for a social conscience, education and struggle.

Salústio's text, so full of pain at times, is the text of a woman who thinks and who writes and who, over and beyond seeking to express the intimacy of a voice, wants to give voice to all women, wants to write about the communal reflection of all women, one that takes the other into account and all the many ways he has changed. The struggle for a place in society, lyricism and humor combine in these narratives, and they produce that powerful effect of discourse: communication. Daniel Spínola maintains that Dina Salústio "*inaugura uma nova forma de comunicar e um novo modo de percepção do mundo*"³³ ["introduces a new form of communicating and a new way of perceiving the world"] in Cape Verdean fiction, one that involves readers and provides them with a new way of looking at social or existential situations which have ossified or have become stagnant.]

In chorus with Dina Salústio's "solo" is the portrait of Augusta painted by Fátima Bettencourt in *Semear em pó* [*Sowing in Dust*] (1994), a text that also explores the interaction between literary and musical discourses. The sensual maidservant exposes her passions through her song (or the "secret beat" of the *coladeiras*), which end in pregnancy and in fatherless children.

Toda ela era energia pura, os pés descalços não paravam quietos, com os braços roliços abraçava o próprio busto num visível esforço para se conter. Irradiava dela uma chama que na época eu não soube compreender mas agora não me surpreende que se mantivesse acesa e nítida nas minhas lembranças de muitos anos atrás. [...] Minha mãe, meio desconfiada de tanta alegria de viver, resmungava contra o

conteúdo duvidoso de algumas músicas de sua preferência. Até que um dia ela não apareceu no trabalho e mandou uma prima avisar que estava passando mal por causa da gravidez. [...]

—Logo vi que havia mouro na costa! Bem que sempre embirrei com aquela cantiga que ela não tirava da boca “*esse frio cum tem na corp ê só bô sô ê q’ta trame ele!*”! Imaginem uma cantiga destas com o calor que tem feito!³⁴

[She was all pure energy, her barefoot feet couldn’t keep still, her rolling arms hugged her own breast in a visible effort to control herself. A flame seemed to glow out of her, one that at the time I did not understand, but now it doesn’t surprise me that this flame remained clear and alive in my memories of so many years ago. (...)]

My mother, somewhat sceptical of so much joy for life, moaned about the dubious content of some of the music she liked. Until one day she didn’t appear at work and sent her cousin to say she wasn’t feeling too well because of the pregnancy. (...)

“I knew there was a man lurking in the background! Well, I never could stomach that song she wouldn’t stop singing, ‘*esse frio cum tem na corp ê só bô sô ê q’ta trame ele!*’ Imagine how much heat this song must have generated!”]

Masterfully, Fátima is able to combine tragedy with humor, making the social critique all the more biting:

o homem que arranjou levou-a para Santo Antão e pô-la a trabalhar na estrada onde apanhou uma tuberculose. [...] Acabou morrendo, deixando o primeiro filho pois o segundo se fora por conta de uma diarreia ao sol e ao vento das estradas do Porto Novo. A minha mãe tomou conta do garoto e criou. É um dos meus irmãos adoptivos. Vive na Suécia, dedica-se à música nas horas livres, *um gosto que certamente apanhou quando boiava no útero materno.*³⁵

[the man who fixed her took her to Santo Antão and *put her to work on the road* and because of that she got TB. (...) She ended up dying, leaving her first-born behind; the second-born had already died because of some diarrhea in the sun and wind of the roads of Porto Novo. My mother took the boy in and raised him. He’s one of my adopted brothers. He lives in Sweden, and in his free time he devotes himself to music, *a taste he had certainly acquired while he was floating in his mother’s womb.*]

What we have tried to demonstrate, beginning with the opening quotation, is that music (“the womb-like sounds of an island that’s born”) has pro-

vided a rich wellspring for literary texts that wish to reclaim tradition and assert a Cape Verdean cultural identity.

The sound of the slave-ships celebrated in “Ritmo de Pilão” [“The Rhythm of Crusher”] by António Nunes, the whispering of people’s poetry in Jorge Barbosa’s “Violão” [“Guitar”], music as act of daring in “Viola partida” [“Broken Portuguese Guitar”] by Maria Margarida Mascarenhas, Zinda’s aching *morna* in the story by Ivone Aída, the thrill of the *tabankas* in Canabrava’s poetry, the distant sound of the original *batuque* in Vera Duarte’s *O Arquipélago da Paixão*,³⁶ would permit us to proceed with our song, with a choir of so many different voices, echoes, indefinitely. Because...

Na ilha do meio do Atlântico
 existe uma pequena imagem de mulher [...]
 Está em cima de um fonolito que canta quando sopram os ventos alísios.³⁷

[On the island in the middle of the Atlantic
 there’s this small image of a woman (...)
 It’s on top of a clinkstone that sings when the trade winds blow.]

Notes

¹ Fortes 1986, 31-2.

² Varela 60. “Purity resides / In my furrowed land / In our *morna*, *coladeira* / *Funaná* and *batuque*.”

³ Fonseca.

⁴ Almada 1990, 44-45; my emphasis.

⁵ Tenaille 47.

⁶ Martins 1993, 44. And also 1999, 34-38.

⁷ On the **circularity** of the Brazilian literary text, the *modinhas* and the Cape Verdean Carnival consider the comments made by Orlanda Amarílis 142. See also Vasco Martins 1989, 46, when he speaks of the profound influence the Brazilian *modinha* on what he calls the “*Morna preliminar*” [“preliminary *morna*”].

⁸ Mariano 74.

⁹ Lima 92.

¹⁰ Lopes Filho 97-113.

¹¹ Fortes 1980, 7.

¹² Leite, A. M. “ÁRVORE & TAMBOR ou a reinvenção da terra cabo-verdeana.” In Fortes 1986, 11-18.

¹³ Consider corn as an element in the Cape Verdean flag.

- ¹⁴ Fortes 1986, 8.
- ¹⁵ Martins 21.
- ¹⁶ Cardoso, P. qtd. in Ferreira 1989, 162.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem* 158. "Morna," a poem from *Folclore caboverdiano*.
- ¹⁸ Barbosa, J. qtd. in Ferreira 1989, 166. Poem "Irmão."
- ¹⁹ Barbosa 56.
- ²⁰ Ferreira 1967, 234. See also Gomes 1993, 48-49.
- ²¹ Martins, O. qtd. in Ferreira 1989, 228-229.
- ²² Lopes, M. 13.
- ²³ *Ibidem* 15-17.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem* 36-7. My emphasis.
- ²⁵ *Ibidem* 43.
- ²⁶ Recall, also, that Venus is the morning star and the star of the dawn.
- ²⁷ The cock is a symbol of power in Lusophone communities.
- ²⁸ Lopes, B.
- ²⁹ Laban, M.
- ³⁰ Research carried out at the Faculdade de Letras da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro [Faculty of Arts of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro], in the Setor de Literaturas Africanas de Língua Portuguesa [Section of African Literatures in Portuguese] (coordinated by Prof. Carmen Lucia Tindó Ribeiro Secco), from 1999 to 2001, with a research grant, Visitante Nível Especial A, from FAPERJ. Title: "Óleo sobre tela, mulher com paisagem ao fundo (a prosa de autoria feminina em Cabo Verde)."
- ³¹ Salústio 46-47. My emphasis. Consider the structure of the traditional *morna* where a female soloist was accompanied by a female choir.
- ³² *Ibidem* 40.
- ³³ Spínola 205.
- ³⁴ Bettencourt 34. "Secreto compasso," a short story. The emphases are mine; the text in Creole is a stanza from a traditional song; it means: "this cold I have in my body only you can take away."
- ³⁵ *Ibidem* 36. My emphasis.
- ³⁶ Poems by António Nunes and Jorge Barbosa, short stories by Maria Margarida Mascarenhas and Ivone Aída ("Zina ó grogue nha sina"), poems by Canabrava ("Passageiro do tempo") and Vera Duarte ("A canção do corpoamor"), respectively.
- ³⁷ Martins 1989a, 13.

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Simone Caputo Gomes is retired Adjunct Professor at the Fluminense University in Brazil. She holds a doctorate in Portuguese Language and Literature. She has published *Uma recuperação de raiz: Cabo Verde na obra de Daniel Filipe*; *Letras em Tese; África e Brasil: letras em laços*; and has co-authored a book of poetry, *Como se fosse música*. E-mail: simonecg@ar.microlink.com.br or simone@seleto.com