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Title	Tom Zé's Fabrication Defect and the "Esthetics of Plagiarism": a postmodern/postcolonial "Cannibalist Manifesto"
Author(s)	Rollefson, J. Griffith
Publication date	2007-06-26
Original citation	Rollefson, J. G. (2007) 'Tom Zé's Fabrication Defect and the "Esthetics of Plagiarism": a postmodern/postcolonial "Cannibalist Manifesto"', <i>Popular Music and Society</i> , 30(4), pp. 305-327. doi:10.1080/03007760600834853
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03007760600834853 Access to the full text of the published version may require a subscription.
Rights	© 2007, Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in <i>Popular Music and Society</i> on 26 June 2007, available online: http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/03007760600834853
Item downloaded from	http://hdl.handle.net/10468/4032

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Tom Ze's *Fabrication Defect* and the "Esthetics of Plagiarism":

A Postmodern/Postcolonial "Cannibalist Manifesto"

Abstract

On his 1998 album *Fabrication Defect* the Brazilian composer-performer Tom Zé articulates the discourses of postmodernity and postcoloniality. More than simply touching on various aspects of "post-ness," Zé forges from them an updated manifesto premised on Oswald de Andrade's 1928 "Cannibalist Manifesto." The former Tropicália musician proposes an "Esthetics of Plagiarism" as a way to appropriate and then reformulate the products of Western techno-capitalism. In this discussion, I will argue that the composer reconfigures the *modernist* and *colonial* tropes of primitivism and cannibalism in a subversively technophilic *postmodern* and *postcolonial* fashion—an oppositionality embodied in the album's "defective android" figure.

Introduction

On his 1998 album *Com Defeito de Fabricação* [Fabrication Defect] the Brazilian composer-performer Tom Zé comments on subalternity, hybridity, agency, and a host of other foci in the discourses of postcoloniality and postmodernity. As the central idea of this concept album, the "Fabrication Defect" stands in as a metaphor for the postcolonial agency of the Third World underclass. Zé argues that despite their domination by multinational corporations, these "mechanized" wage laborers have managed to find a voice through artistic creation. As Zé writes in the album's provocative liner notes:

“these ‘androids’ reveal some inborn ‘defects’: they think, dance, and dream.” The “defect” that Zé speaks of is thus essentially a rupture in Western capitalist hegemony—an anomaly present throughout the history of colonialism in Latin America.

On the album, Zé also proposes an “Esthetics of Plagiarism” as a way to appropriate and then reformulate the products of Western capitalism and its electronic media. This second pillar of Zé’s concept album deals directly with the postmodern discourses of digital technology, fragmentation, recombination, and resignification. While the postmodern condition has been theorized in novel and despairing terms by Euro-American cultural theorists and ethnomusicologists—most notably Fredric Jameson and Veit Erlmann—Latin American scholars such as Chela Sandoval and Renato Ortiz have found elements of postmodernity to be at the same time familiar and hopeful. Zé’s *Fabrication Defect* and its “Esthetics of Plagiarism” speak the language of this latter postmodernism fluently and in a way that is both artistically innovative and steeped in a “New World” intellectual tradition that anticipated the postmodern moment long before Jameson’s theories set off alarms in the Euro-American academy.

Rather than touching on various aspects in the discourses of “post-ness,” Zé thus forges from them a unified ideology—an updated manifesto premised on the Brazilian modernist Oswald de Andrade’s 1928 “Cannibalist Manifesto.” In this discussion of Zé’s sonic manifesto, I will argue that the composer redeploys the *modernist* and *colonial* tropes of primitivism and cannibalism in an aggressively oppositional and subversively technophilic *postmodern* and *postcolonial* fashion. Where Oswald focuses on the cannibal, Zé focuses on the android. In the end, Zé’s project attempts to not only materially undermine First World economic hegemony but to ideologically destabilize

Western logocentrism and the discursive practices that privilege the First World's answers to Third World problems.

Tropicália and the Legacy of Cannibalism

In 1928, the Brazilian modernist poet Oswald de Andrade published a widely influential declaration of anticolonial principles under the title “Manifesto Antropófago” [Cannibalist Manifesto]. The manifesto took its name from the legend of the Tupinambá Indians of Brazil “who were believed to ritually cannibalize vanquished enemies in order to absorb their physical and spiritual powers” (Dunn *Brutality Garden* 18). The Brazilian people, argued Oswald, should rise up, wrest the technological and institutional control from the hands of the colonizers, and appropriate—or *devour*—their modernity to harness the power of their oppressors. To add insult to injury, the resulting regurgitated cultural products should then be sold back to the oppressors as exports, thus undermining their cultural *and* economic hegemony. The Cannibalist movement's political and esthetic strategy of appropriation and deformation is nicely encapsulated in Oswald's irreverently catachrestic appropriation of William Shakespeare, symbol of Western literature *par excellence*. Referencing the man-eating Indians Oswald writes: “Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question” (Bary 38). Though focused on Brazilian poetry, Oswald's project has had far-reaching effects on the discourses of Brazilian culture at large (Bary 1991).¹

The trope of cannibalism served Oswald with a perfect metaphor with which to articulate a radically anti-colonial cultural nationalism without resorting to an essentializing, isolationist, and ultimately untenable pre-colonial position. Indeed, Oswald defined his Cannibalist movement largely through its opposition to one such

nativist movement: the Brazilian ultranationalist *Verdeamarelismo* [Greenyellowism]. The Greenyellowists maintained an economic and cultural protectionist stance while proclaiming a unifying “essence of feeling” among the Brazilian folk (Dunn *Brutality Garden* 17). Inspired by the technology-glorifying Italian Futurist movement, however, Oswald believed that the Brazilian people could turn imported modern technologies back on their oppressors, the reticent colonial interests in Brazil after “independence” in 1822 (Bary 35). As the Brazilian musician Caetano Veloso remarked, Oswald’s project offered Brazilian nationalists an ideology premised on “an aggressive attitude, not a passive and defensive nationalism” (quoted in Perrone “Topos and Topicalities” 6).

In 1968, forty years after the “Cannibalist Manifesto” was published, the Tropicália movement emerged in Brazilian politics, art, and most visibly in music. The early Tropicalists, including the musicians Zé, Veloso, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, and the band *Os Mutantes* [The Mutants], looked to Oswald and the “Anthropofagists” for tools of political dissent against a new postcolonial hegemony comprised of a rightist military dictatorship with strong ties to multinational capital.ⁱⁱ The Tropicalists employed Oswald’s critical formulation of “the forest and the school” which described imperial exploitation as a brutal combination of the decimation of Brazil’s natural resources (the forest) and the embedding of colonialist ideologies in Brazil’s people (the school). The Cannibalist project thus called for the liberation of Brazil’s colonized minds and post-encounter lands that would take what it wanted from the colonizers to build a modern nation. As Christopher Dunn writes in his *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of a Brazilian Counterculture*, the Tropicalists seized upon Oswald’s vision wherein “the forest and the school, the primitivist and the futurist, the natural and the

technological, the local and the cosmopolitan, and the past and the present exist simultaneously” (16-17). In short, the Tropicalists saw no conflict of interest in appropriating Western ideas for their own political aims or otherwise collapsing binaries as long as they maintained their oppositionality.ⁱⁱⁱ

At the heart of Oswald’s studied malapropism “Tupi or not Tupi” and its resonance with the Tropicalists is the widely remarked-upon historical condition of doubleness in Latin American life. Oswald’s injection of Third World Brazilianness into this marker of First World Englishness is at once primitive and modern, new world and old world, vernacular and cultivated. Brazilian sociologist Renato Ortiz describes this “*sentido duplo*” as a fact of the Latin American experience of cultural duality since 1492—a cultural and political condition that resonates deeply with W. E. B. Du Bois’s “double consciousness.” Notably, it is the self-conscious deployment of the tension inherent in this hybridity that provides the platform for the cultural critiques of Oswald and the Tropicalists.

The Tropicalists fashioned their critiques through the appropriation and deployment of a wide array of cultural and political signifiers. While their music was grounded in the rhythms of samba and other Brazilian idioms, the Tropicalists also looked to the music of countercultural movements in Europe and the U.S. for their protest strategies. Despite their appropriative attitude towards Western pop culture, however, this Brazilian new school maintained oppositionality toward the West *via* Oswald’s formulation. Veloso, the most visible and outspoken member of the Tropicália movement explains in his memoir, *Verdade Tropical* [Tropical Truth]:

The idea of cultural cannibalism fit us, as tropicalists, like a glove. We

were ‘eating’ the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix. Our arguments against the defensive attitude of the nationalists found here a succinct and exhaustive formulation (247).

The Tropicalist musicians appropriated the electric guitar driven style of Western rock and roll, styled their cultural critique after European Dadaist absurdity, and infiltrated the commercial recording industry as popular artists. All the while, however, their music sounded a covert protest through symbolic language and musical allusions that escaped understanding by the military regime’s legion of censors. In effect, the strategy cast the musicians as wolves in sheep’s clothing as the Tropicalists used an often saccharine form of seemingly harmless popular music as a means to counterhegemonic ends. With the model of Oswald de Andrade’s “Cannibalist Manifesto” *Tropicália* became the popular music of the Brazilian youth and thus helped to garner immense opposition to the military regime across racial, ethnic, and class lines.

As with Oswald’s Greenyellowist adversaries, the Tropicalists also positioned themselves in contrast with their older rival, the nationalist musical movement dubbed *Música Popular Brasileira* (MPB). The MPB ideology looked exclusively within Brazil’s borders for its “traditional” musical style and esthetics. As Dunn notes, MPB artists like their Verdeamarilist forebears “promoted the politics of cultural authenticity and rejected the international rock movement” that the Tropicalists engaged in (“*Tropicália*” 73). Where the MPB movement used nativist and essentialist rhetoric in an effort to exert a Brazilian national subjectivity, the *Tropicália* movement worked within a framework that both accepted pop culture contingently and deployed essentialist authenticity only where strategically practicable. Through these tactics, the Tropicalists

forged a Brazilian subjectivity that reflected the multiplicity of their Latin American reality and rejected the politics of separatism.

At the outset of the Tropicália movement its most experimental member, the conservatory-trained composer and guitarist Tom Zé gave powerful poetic voice to Oswald's anti-nativist ideological lineage. A former participant in the MPB movement, Zé's conflicting attitudes about the political economy of "tradition" finally led him to help found the Tropicália movement with Veloso, Gil, Costa, and *Os Mutantes*. On his 1968 song "Quero Samba Meu Bem" [I Want to Samba My Dear] Zé proclaimed: "I want to samba too, but I don't want to wallow in the pits of embalmed tradition" (on *Tom Zé* 1968). Here Zé directs his critique at the staunch nativist/essentialist stance of MPB and the official status conferred upon this "traditional" music by Brazil's military regime.^{iv} On his 1972 song "Sr. Cidadão" [Mr. Citizen] Zé foregrounds the symbiotic relationship through which nativism and militarism prop each other up singing: "How many kilos of fear [does it take] to fashion a tradition? Mr. Citizen, I want to know" (on *Se O Caso É Chorar*). Typical of the Tropicalist attitude toward conventional nationalist ideologies, Zé's music echoed the progressive nationalism of Oswald's dynamic, hypercritical, and always aggressive Cannibalism.

In her *Methodology of the Oppressed* Chela Sandoval describes the type of tactical multiplicity of identity that the Tropicalists used not as "double" or "*duplo*," as Du Bois and Ortiz, but rather as "differential" consciousness. As Sandoval asserts, differential consciousness arises out of a historical need to navigate a vastly inequitable world by continually questioning the order of things—and the very meaning of that order. She writes:

Differential social movement finds its expression through the methodology of the oppressed. The technologies of semiotic reading, deconstruction of signs, meta-ideologizing, differential movement, and moral commitment to equality are its vectors, its expressions of influence. These vectors meet in the differential mode of consciousness, which carries them through to the level of the “real” where they can impress and guide dominant powers. So too differential oppositional consciousness is itself a force that rhizomatically and parasitically inhabits each of these vectors, linking them in movement, while the pull of each vector creates the ongoing tension and re-formation of the liberal, revolutionary, supremacist, or separatist ideological forces that inscribe social reality.... Each technology of the methodology of the oppressed creates new conjunctural possibilities, produced by ongoing and transforming regimes of exclusion and inclusion (181).

As the automotive and mathematically derived term implies, differential consciousness is thus a recalibration and recalculation of one’s identity at each point along one’s trajectory that, in turn, redirects power and reinscribes reality. While the meaning of “truth” must be reconsidered at each point along the trajectory, oppositionality and equality provide compass points to orient such seemingly floating subjectivity. Her methodology is, in short, a morally grounded post-structuralism. “Differential consciousness” thus provides a fitting theoretical lens through which to analyze the Latin American hyper-political artistry of Oswald, the Tropicalists, and the contemporary work of Tom Zé. Indeed, Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* is a

framework built through the articulation—in the Hallian sense—of postmodernism and postcoloniality.^v

From Modern to Postmodern, Colonial to Postcolonial

It is within this context of postmodern/postcolonial cultural discourse that I hope to position Zé's concept album *Fabrication Defect* and its attendant "Esthetics of Plagiarism." In the following sections, I will argue that with the album Zé is redeploying the ideas of Oswald's "Cannibalist Manifesto" in a manner that is both postmodern and postcolonial. While much scholarly attention has been paid to the cannibalist legacy of the Tropicália movement Zé has recently denied direct influence from Oswald's "Cannibalist Manifesto." Yet Zé's tropicalist past and "plagiarist" present indicate an ideological indebtedness to the vastly influential modernist project of Andrade. While we might easily take Zé at his word that he "never read Oswald de Andrade," a critical inquiry into the similarities between Zé's plagiarism and Oswald's cannibalism should prove illuminating (Dunn *Brutality Garden* 200).

My postmodern/postcolonial theoretical apparatus takes its lead both from Zé's theoretical lexicon and from the analogous relationship between the "dangerous others" that both Oswald and Zé employ as fonts of oppositional power. Where Oswald looks to the colonial period's trope of the "primitive cannibal," Zé draws upon the power of the equally overwritten "subaltern wilder," the violent urban thief of the postcolonial period. A notable alteration is evident in Zé's rhetorical strategy. His esthetic tension is no longer located between the city and the jungle but between the city and its peripheries—the *favelas* or suburban slums of Rio, Brasília, Bahía, and São Paulo. A related shift in

Zé's formulation is a move from the primitivist fetishization of the modernists, Oswald included, to the electronic media fixations of self-fashioned postmodernists such as Zé. It is this update for which Zé installs the android figure.

In short, I argue that the shifts from cannibalism to plagiarism and primitives to androids represent a fundamental shift from the modern to the postmodern—from the colonial to the postcolonial. The method of strategic appropriation and reformulation first deployed by Oswald, reiterated in the Tropicália movement, and currently audible in Zé's work constitutes a remarkable historical continuity of Brazilian opposition to First World hegemony. The responses to the social realities that Oswald and Zé are engaged with, however, reveal notable differences within this history. It is my contention that the qualities of Zé's cultural critique tell us something about the changing needs of late twentieth-century oppositional movements—notably the increased importance of information technology to such efforts. Where Oswald's modernism and primitivist rhetoric gestured to the *material* embodiment of opposition (the proto-human cannibal figure) Zé's self-consciously postmodern and post-structural critiques take place in the realm of the disembodied *ideal* (the post-human android figure).

Essential to Zé's project is an understanding that the “post” in the postmodern/postcolonial dyad is a hopeful gesture and *not* an indication that Zé believes that the machinations of modernism and colonialism have disappeared (see McClintock). This hope is represented by the “defect” of human agency that permeates Zé's album. In the following sections, I will read Zé's *Fabrication Defect* within the contexts of Brazilian cultural discourse and the discourses of “post-ness.” The first and second sections will situate Zé's manifesto within a theoretical framework, focusing on the

concepts of the “Fabrication Defect” and the “Esthetics of Plagiarism” respectively. The third section will then discuss the lyrical and musical content of selected songs from the album to analyze their protest strategies. Ultimately, through a discussion of *Fabrication Defect*, I hope to foreground the discourses of postmodern and postcolonial theory with which Zé’s creative, elegant, and often bitingly satirical socio-political critique are in dialogue.

Agency in a Third World of “Defective” Androids

Zé’s *Fabrication Defect* is a collection of 14 songs, each numbered as a successive “defect” inherent in the overwritten and exploited masses of the Third World. In the liner notes, Zé explains this first premise of his project and the underlying concept for the album:

The Third World has a huge and rapidly increasing population. These people have been converted into a kind of “android,” almost always analphabetic. It has happened here in Brazil—in the slums of Rio, São Paulo and the Northeast of Brazil, and in the Third World in general. But these androids reveal some inborn “defects”: they think, dance and dream—things that are very dangerous to the First-World bosses. Let me explain: in the eyes of the First World, we in the Third World who think these things, and who explore our reality on the planet, are like “androids” who are essentially defective.

As the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak argues in her article “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Western political, economic, and cultural processes of “othering” have produced

a reified image of the Third World as a mass of voiceless individuals who need to be spoken for. Zé's South American picture of these processes is remarkably similar to Spivak's South Asian perspective with one notable exception: in the "fabrication" of its others, Western capitalists have failed in their attempt to create true automatons. Their androids have turned out to be defective—they *can* speak. The defect that Zé speaks of is the much-debated "agency."

In his description of human agency as a defect, Zé sees a process that resonates with Homi Bhabha's poststructural description of the "ambivalent space" between desire and fulfillment. Also South Asian, Bhabha describes this space as "a mutation" in much the same way that Zé introduces his concept of the "Fabrication Defect" (*Location of Culture* 111). The two metaphors result from similarly fluid models of acculturation and are premised on the indeterminacy of human action—the ruptures, frayed edges, and anomalous outcomes of incomplete and dynamic hegemony. Indeed, Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" mirrors the Cannibalist and later Tropicalist position of cultural appropriation—a topic that I will discuss in detail in the following section.

The Ghanaian-British philosopher Kwame Appiah further explicates this miracle of agency in spite of oppression and overwriting in chapter seven of his *In My Father's House*, "The Postcolonial and The Postmodern." He writes:

Despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite unimaginable poverty; despite wars, malnutrition, disease, and political instability, African cultural productivity grows apace: popular literatures, oral narrative and poetry, dance, drama, music, and visual art all thrive.

The contemporary cultural production of many African societies—and the

many traditions whose evidences so vigorously remain—is an antidote to the dark vision of the postcolonial novelist (157).

Though Appiah is here addressing the African novel, this “cultural productivity” is very much what Zé sees when he speaks of the “defects” of thinking, dancing, and dreaming. In addition, both Appiah and Zé are commenting on a discourse of postmodernism that Fredric Jameson has dubbed the “death of the subject” (“Postmodernism and Consumer Society” 114). In this formulation the subject position, and therefore agency, is revealed to be a myth of the European Enlightenment project. This is the “dark vision” Appiah describes in the above excerpt. In many ways, both Appiah and Zé are reacting against this tide of opinion flowing from Jameson’s reading of postmodernism by giving voice to the material effects of people’s actions in the world—the “real” world where people’s ideas enter the geography and reflexively shape their environments—in a word, Marx’s concept of *praxis*.^{vi}

Similar to the work of Bhaba and Appiah, Latin American theorizations of postcoloniality and postmodernity have also tended to challenge Jameson’s vision while at the same time challenging the very terminology of “post-ness” so popular in Asian and African discourses. Employing a Third World feminist approach, Sandoval’s *Methodology* is in fact built upon an opposition to Jameson’s postmodern vision—it’s first chapter speaking directly to his totalizing theories. In doing so, Sandoval also answers Spivak’s evocative question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in the affirmative. But for the anthropologist Néstor García Canclini, the so-called “post”modern condition in Latin America is not the result of modernism’s downfall, but rather a continuous navigation of pre-modern and modernizing terrains. As he half-jokingly remarks in

Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity: “if it were not so awkward, we would have to say something like post-intra-modern” (268). For García Canclini Jameson is among “those who continue to adhere to the modernist project” whose visions of postmodernity do not account for the dynamic and incomplete modernizations of Latin American countries (8).

Regarding colonialism, Sandoval is similarly uncomfortable with the terminology, noting the “utopian” implications of the prefix “post” (185). The eschewal of the term “postcolonialism” in much Latin American scholarship can be viewed as a function of hemispheric political differences. Where colonial occupation in Africa and Asia lasted well into the 20th century, the majority of South and Central American colonies won independence in the 19th century. The post-revolutionary period in Latin America did not qualify as complete independence, however, as European political domination was quickly replaced by Monroe Doctrine paternalism and US commercial domination (García Canclini *Consumers and Citizens* 15-34). As such, when employing the term “postcolonial” Latin American scholars are quick to note the legacy of colonialism that continues to this day—a legacy in which it is not uncommon for the First and Third Worlds to coexist within the borders of the same nation-state. As with García Canclini’s “post-intra-modern,” Sandoval thus tends to prefer the term “neocolonialism.” As we will see, Zé’s project on *Fabrication Defect* does indeed engage the discourses of “post-ness” but keeps the meanings of his “posts” attuned to the incomplete “neo” and “intra” realities of Latin American life.

Both Sandoval and Ortiz have also commented on the usefulness of African American conceptualizations of postmodernity in Latin American studies. As with the

unfinished and unequal project of modernity that García Canlini describes, theorists such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Houston Baker define a post-structural condition that arose from the collision and cohabitation of First and Third Worlds in the Americas. Gates's term "signifyin(g)" has been particularly influential in describing the practices of appropriation and reformulation that African Americans have developed as strategies of mental resistance to oppression in an inequitable society. Notably, many North and South American theories locate the genesis of postmodernism in subaltern and working-class colonial communities long before Jameson's late capitalist stage 1980s. Just as Ortiz echoes Du Bois's "double consciousness" in his conceptualization of a Latin American "*sentido duplo*" his view of resistance in an inequitable society also echoes Gates's "signifyin(g)."

As a mode of living within and without modernity, Ortiz sees processes of relocalization that can use the "deterritorialized" artifacts of Western modernity—those multinational mass-produced consumer goods—to refashion tools of opposition (*Globalization and Culture* 105-145). Rather than becoming beholden to capitalist interests by using such commodities, Ortiz echoes Zé's post-structuralist belief in arguing that such goods can be re-inscribed and redeployed to politically equitable ends. Where Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart famously argued that Disney comics were complicit in Latin American domination by North American capitalists in their *How to Read Donald Duck*, Ortiz countered that Donald is in fact not a tool of oppression that colonizes the native mind. Such icons of what Ortiz calls "international-popular culture" are not static symbols but are instead re-localized in each instance of viewing, listening, or use. Essentially, each popular icon is owned by the person engaged with it insofar as it

is re-imagined and re-signified by that person. The argument continues: if Donald is in my comic book or on my TV, then he is mine (Ortiz “Madonna and Donald Duck”). This is the postmodern and post-structural agency that Zé has in mind.

In his discussion “The Postcolonial and The Postmodern” Appiah recognizes the dangers of the overwriting processes that Spivak speaks of when he notes that postcolonial intellectuals “are always at risk of becoming Otherness-machines”—further commodifying difference and misrepresenting the masses (157). Notably, Appiah’s critique of this type of mechanization also echoes the model that Zé deploys in his critical formulation of Third-World “android” workers. While Zé and the authors discussed above disagree with Jameson about the issue of agency, the discourses of postmodernism that foreground electronic information and automation resonate deeply with Zé. Jameson suspects that the technologies of the Western “society of the media” and its attendant “globalization” have created a new, but no less sinister, hegemonic structure that subsumes and commodifies difference—a sort of “Benetton Effect” (“Postmodernism and Consumer Society” 113).^{vii} Zé, however, finds that these same technologies, though designed to oppress and exploit, hold countless oppositional possibilities.

It is this belief in the ruptures within electronic media hegemony that prompted Zé to commission the art on the disc itself that makes the CD look like yet another cracked—that is to say *defective*—electronic medium of the First-World [see Figure 1].



Fig. 1 – CD art on Tom Zé’s *Fabrication Defect* –
a “defective,” cracked CD.

As we will see, from his metaphorical use of the android figure to his quasi-ironic glorification of sampling technology and electronic media, Zé has a distinctive and positive view of the subversive potentialities inherent in the overdeveloped West’s electronic technologies.

The “Esthetics of Plagiarism” and The Practice of Cultural “Arrastão”

The second primary concept behind Tom Zé’s *Fabrication Defect* is described as the “Esthetics of Plagiarism.” Zé writes:

The esthetic of the fabrication defect will re-utilize the sonorous civilized

trash (everyday symphony), be they conventional or unconventional instruments (for example: toys, cars, whistles, saws, hertz orchestra, street noises, etc.) – all of this put into a rhythmic dance music format, with choruses, and within the parameters of popular music. It will recycle an alphabet of emotions contained in songs and musical symbols of the First World. . . . They will be put to use in small “cells” of “plagiarized” material. This deliberate practice unleashes an esthetic of plagiarism, an esthetic of *arrastão** that ambushes the universe of the well-known and traditional music. We are at the end, thus, of the composers’ era, inaugurating the plagi-combinator era.

Zé includes a footnote defining the concept of *arrastão*:

**Arrastão* – A dragnet technique used in urban robbery. A small group fan out and then run furiously through a crowd, taking people’s money, jewelry, bags, sometimes even clothes. Translator’s note: A type of “wilding” with a purpose, i.e. robbery.

The esthetic of plagiarism, then, is premised on a violently oppositional idea that both steals from the West and recycles its trash—both sonic and physical.

It is in this esthetics of plagiarism that Zé’s project most resembles Oswald’s cannibalistic artistic project. Zé instructs would be “plagi-combinators” to rob the so-called “intellectual property” of the First World media conglomerates like a thief running through the city streets. In doing so the plagi-combinator calls upon a rich “alphabet of emotions,” which is to say, an easily referenced shorthand for a wealth of meanings that people world-wide can access—what Stuart Hall calls “the infinite plurality of codes”

(“On Postmodernism” 48). This tactic of cultural *arrastão* appropriates the cultural identities of the First World through a violent wresting of control of cultural products from the hands of the enemy. In this way the “cells” of plagiarized material are appropriated into the body of the Third World and can be used to combat its oppressors—in Zé’s view the creative “defect” thus becomes an asset for the subaltern plagiarizer. As Robert Stam writes in his “Tropical Detritus: Terra em Transe, Tropicália, and the Aesthetics of Garbage,” this tactical move of turning a defect into an asset is the premise of jujitsu—here we have a sort of subaltern cultural jujitsu (85).

Just as Oswald sought to create a “poetry for export” through his resale of cannibalized products back to the West, Zé’s recent projects, including *Fabrication Defect* and the preceding album, *The Hips of Tradition*, have targeted Euro-American markets. With the help of the iconoclastic American artist David Byrne, Zé has produced scathing criticisms of First World oppression and exploitation through the seemingly hypocritical medium of popular music CDs. Though Byrne’s independent Luaka Bop record label is essentially in partnership with Zé in producing the album, the multinational Warner Bros. Records, Inc. distributes the commercial “product,” the CD. In light of Zé’s blatant opposition to such corporate interests the question of hypocrisy demands resolution. Can one maintain oppositionality while lining the pockets of the purported oppressor? Is the medium—the *commodity*—the only message?

As Louise Meintjes suggests in her critique of Paul Simon’s similar international collaboration with Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the economic and political inequities between the two parties render this music incapable of opposition to capitalist hegemony (66). Indeed, in this view the infamous “collaboration” is actually a paternalistic gesture

and may be complicit, as per Jameson and Erlmann's "Benetton Effect" formulations, in the subjugation of the very people that it is presumed to aid. Focusing on the primary metaphor of Frantz Fanon's 1951 landmark work *Black Skin, White Masks* in constructing her argument, however, Sandoval puts forth another compelling answer to this conundrum. As she notes, Fanon's argument suggests that the mask does irreparable harm to the native implicated in colonial domination—the so-called "comprador." Sandoval, however, reminds us of another valence of masks that enables the "tactical deception of the impostor who controls" (83).

Similarly, it is through the updated version of Oswald's cannibalism and the Tropicalists' "cultural jujitsu" that Zé fashions his ingenious response. Zé may not be a mechanized subaltern wage laborer himself, but by donning the mask of this *mestizo* android he fashions a strategic essentialism that may be reconfigured and redeployed at any moment. Although he seems to monolithize subaltern wage laborers, by casting them in the wild fiction of the android figure he keeps his argument fluid and dynamic. In brief, the argument is not a matter of pure essence or pure positionality but rather engaged in the reflexive processes of praxis—an argument that Gilroy refers to as an irreducibly hybrid "anti-anti-essentialism" in his *The Black Atlantic* (99-101). If it seems that Zé wants to have it both ways, it is because that is exactly what he thinks it will take to undermine the Manichean processes that reproduce inequality.

The over-consumption and greed of the First World represented by what Zé calls the "sonorous civilized trash" of popular cultural products is a reminder that the multinationals like Warner Bros. will disseminate anything as long as it makes them money. As indicated through the rhetorical strategies on *Fabrication Defect*, it is Zé's

belief that if this waste can be plagiarized and re-sold—that is, cannibalized and regurgitated—to the First World, the Third World can gain a tactical advantage. By reaching First World audiences with deformed reflections of their own exploitative culture, Zé believes the Third World “androids” can begin to wrest control from the First World. Through the powerful fabrication defect of artistic expression the subaltern can regain their voices and thereby reassert their humanity.

Each piece on the album, in addition to being labeled a “Defect,” also has a designation as an “*Arrastão* of” a certain historical figure or figures—from the Western composers Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov to Saint Augustine, Alfred Nobel, Gustave Flaubert, “the Provençal Troubadours and their echoes,” and “the anonymous musicians who play in the São Paulo night.” The “great men” of the West—and the anonymous musicians of “the Rest”—once appropriated, are critically redeployed to battle Euro-American hegemony on the album. The songs, which I discuss in the following section, draw upon both musically and lyrically plagiarized cells, often deconstructing their original formulations through catachrestic word play or ironic intertextual juxtaposition. The discursive play that Zé is engaging in on *Fabrication Defect* reflects the Tropicalist predilection for absurdity and the movement’s foundation in the linguistically rich satirical critique of Oswald’s “Cannibalist Manifesto.” The catachrestic strategy of Oswald’s “Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question” is reborn in Zé’s phonetic translation of Jimi Hendrix into the Brazilian equivalent “Jimmy, Renda-Se” [Jimmy, Give Up] (Zé on *Tom Zé* 1970).^{viii}

In his “Tropical Detritus,” Stam also describes the foundations of Tropicália’s interest in trash as prototypically postmodern (83-93). In fact, Stam notes that the term

“postmodernism” may have been coined not by a Northern European but by a Spanish American, Federico de Onís, in the 1930s.^{ix} Therefore, the postmodern makeup of the Tropicalist movement—“their constitutive hybridity, their palimpsestic temporality, their redemption of detritus, and their ‘aesthetic of mistakes’” (Stam 85)—is not an appropriation at all, for the idea of postmodernism developed alongside postcoloniality in the Americas.^x While Stam’s claim for a Latin American genesis of postmodernity *per se* would be difficult to establish with any certainty, it does seem clear that the postcolonial condition is tightly interwoven with the instabilities and ruptures of postmodernity.

Another discourse of postmodernity that continually surfaces in Zé’s *Fabrication Defect* is the concept of “pastiche” and the related question of authorial privilege. Zé’s concept of the “plagi-combinator” is essentially an oppositionalized *bricoleur* or pastiche artist. Whereas Jameson describes pastiche as “blank parody,” Zé deploys the esthetics of piecemeal recombination as active commentary. Jameson writes:

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody’s ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without the still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic (“Postmodernism and Consumer Society” 114).

Jameson’s conclusions are descriptive of the kind of alienation that mass consumer society and its cultural commodification has come to cause in the First World. Zé, however, sees this alienation and uncertainty as a by-product and symptom of Western modernity—that what Jameson considers a global disease is in fact limited to First World

cosmopolitans. Zé's cultural critique posits that perhaps it is not that history is dead, but that *Western* history is dead—not that citizens of the world can no longer find meaning, but that citizens of the “Global Village,” in the sense of overdeveloped media society, have lost their subject positions. As Zé writes in the notes to *Fabrication Defect*: “We are at the end of the composer's era, inaugurating the plagi-combinator era.” That is to say, the *Western modernist* model of authorship is dead.

Similar to Sandoval's challenging of Fanon, Bhabha asserts in *The Location of Culture* that the appropriative tactics of hybridity and mimicry decenter and ultimately undermine the authority of the West. In this eschatological reading of postmodernity, the postcolonial world is both an end-time environment and a rebirth of the world from the empty shell, the rotting corpse of the West. In addition, Bhabha's refiguration of culture as “enunciative” rather than “epistemological” reasserts agency in the subaltern and mirrors Zé's vision of the agent's creative defect (178). As Bhabha's enunciative take on culture implies culture is an active process tantamount to a constant reimagining of our selves, our identities.

As Zé's garbage esthetics collide with his plagiarist/cannibalist esthetics, it seems that we might describe this redeployment of the “Cannibalist Manifesto” as a scavenging and carrion eating posture akin to the hyena's feeding practices. Where Oswald's Cannibalism sought to devour the colonial processes that continued in spite of Brazil's independence since 1822, Zé's rhetorical strategies devour the *postcolonial*, that is to say the *dead*, the decaying remains of the colonial legacy. As we turn to take a closer look at individual songs from the album, the hyena metaphor seems especially apropos of Zé's “Esthetics of Plagiarism,” replete with the laughter that accompanies his satire.

Four “Defects”

Perhaps the most aggressively oppositional song on *Fabrication Defect*, “Defect 3: Politicar” tells First World intellectuals, economists, and moralists where and how they can “shove it.” In doing so, Zé introduces the listener to these three main enemies of the oppressed in his project’s discursive framework. Over a driving guitar and bass funk groove Zé’s backup singers declare:

Daughter of Practice/Daughter of Tactic/Daughter of Machinery/

This shameless cave/of the entrails/is always accommodating/

In a sinister, then playful, and later mock-nostalgic tone Zé sings:

Shove your grandiosity/in the corner bank/

shove it up your verb/you son of a letter/

Shove your usury/in the multinational/

Shove it up your Virgin/you son of cross/

Shove your morals/rules and regulations/

Offices and neck-ties/your solemn sessions/

Gather everything around/spread the Vaseline/

Shove, push, cram it into/your tank of gasoline^{xi}

Zé’s critique of multinational corporations on one side and academics and religion on the other echoes the two-fold “forest and school” formulation of Oswald’s critique of material and ideological exploitation. Indeed, Zé has issued a powerfully fiery poetic dismissal to the three Western institutions most commonly indicted in postcolonial discourses: the corporation, the school, and the church. In addition, Zé’s scatological

insinuations on “Defect 3: Politicar” (e.g. “cave,” “entrails,” “shove it”) carry the conceptual residue, so to speak, of the Cannibalist’s inevitable biological functions. The violently sexual language carries an oppositional message—a jeremiad of sorts—that dovetails the biological and mechanical symbolism in the song’s final rhyme: “spread the Vaseline/Shove, push, cram it into/your tank of gasoline.”

With “Defect 3: *Politicar*” Zé establishes the symbolic language of his android laborer trope and sets the tone for the album with the ironic juxtaposition of a violent tirade against the oppressor over an upbeat African American style funk groove replete with jazzy flute licks. In addition, Zé assigns to this song the quizzical designation: “*arrastão* of Rimsky Korsakov and of the anonymous musicians who play in the São Paulo night.” While there seems to be no direct quotation from Rimsky’s oeuvre in “*Politicar*,” a later song entitled “Defect 9: *Juventude Javali*” [Young Havalina/Pig] described as an *arrastão* of Tchaikovsky actually employs a melody from the composer’s D Minor Violin Concerto [See Figure 2].

Vin - ho das per-nas a - ber - tas _____ Mol - ha o al - tar das o -
 [Wine of open legs] [Soaks the offerings on the altar]

fer - tas Gii - tos, es - per - ma(e) al - ge - ma
 [Screams, sperm and hand-cuffs]

Fú - ria de pura al - fa - ze - ma de pura al - fa - ze - ma _____
 [Fury of pure lavender]

Fig. 2 – Tchaikovsky meets Zé on “*Juventude Javali*” –

Transcription of Zé’s lyrics and melody adapted from the D Minor Violin Concerto.

Unlike Defect 9’s brutally ironic juxtaposition of a disturbing quasi-religious sadist scene against a lyrical Tchaikovksy melody, it seems that Zé constructs Defect 3’s *arrastão* to highlight the inequity of authorial voice between the singular “great composer” Rimsky-Korsakov, and the anonymous voices of the masses of street minstrels. In bringing the two modes of musical production together, Zé empowers the voiceless and destabilizes the *authority* of the great orchestrator, Rimsky.

The more subtle indictment of intellectuals on the album might seem curious given Zé’s apparent engagement in the intellectualized discourses of postmodernity and postcoloniality. Indeed, carefully worded position statements and ubiquitous footnotes appear throughout Zé’s liner notes. Within the context of the album, however, the references to language in the above lyrics (“shove it up your verb/you son of a letter”) are

Zé's shorthand for the academics, the history writers who have been largely complicit in the fabrication of the underclass since the colonial period.

Zé's suspicion of the history writers and theoreticians, even those who speak in the jargon-laden prose of leftist scholarship, is confirmed on "Defect 6: Esteticar (Backbone Song)" as he sings: "Oh, lick me, inter-semiotic translation." While Zé is clearly suspicious of the logocentric theorizing of Western scholarship, it seems that his catachrestic word play does share an (anti)intellectual position akin to Derrida's deconstruction (*Margins* 213). Following Derrida's: "I love words too much because I have no language of my own," the anti-logic of *Fabrication Defect* delves into a "poemusical" manifesto rife with word play directed at nothing less than the destabilization of Western hegemony (quoted in Young 421).^{xii} Zé's iconoclastic treatment of the "great men" of European history throughout the album serves to unseat the logic and continuity of "the West." In a sense, then, Zé's "digestion" of the forms and figures of the Western canon ultimately yields fractured artifacts and deformed heroes—products which facilitate myriad open-ended alternative anti-histories.

On "Defect 6: Esteticar" Zé speaks in the first person as the subaltern android, the antagonist of his oppositional project on *Fabrication Defect*. On the track, Zé engages in the sort of anti-logical jujitsu described above, turning his defect into an asset. Zé sings:

You think I'm a foolish country *caboclo*/A type of empty-headed little monkey/

Your typical rickety hillbilly/A mere number zero, a nobody/

Pathetic poor sluggish slow-wit/Automaton silly nincompoop ninny

...

Hold onto your seats milord,/The mulatto *Baião*/(He's blacktie-ing himself)/

Tuxedo-izes himself in/the esthetic of/The *arrastão*

Ca esteti ca estetu/Ca esteti ca estetu/Ca esteti ca estetu/Ca esteti do plágio-iê

You think I'm a mad android laborer/A mere mongoloid mongrel mameluke

A tattered member of the skin and bones tribe/One of the poorest ragged,

shabby mob.

As the esthetic principles of *arrastão* describe, the urban thief runs “furiously through a crowd, taking people’s money, jewelry, bags, *sometimes even clothes*.” As Zé’s alter ego, the mulatto android, “tuxedo-izes” himself in this scene he is engaging in a ritual appropriation of the symbolic upper-class power of his oppressor—again, a postmodern vision of Oswald’s ritual cannibalization.

Although not in the original Portuguese, Alex Ladd’s translations in the liner notes capture much of the word play and alliteration. In addition, he offers us a translation and thorough context of *caboclo* in a footnote as: “Inlander: A copper-colored person (Brazilian Indian mixed with a white person).” In the context of economic exploitation, he introduces the strategy of racial oppression symbolized by the “mulatto... mongoloid mongrel mameluke.” Notably, Zé’s use of the term “mameluke,” shorthand for the historically yellow or brown warrior slaves of Islamic regions, conjures up both the commonplace “miscegenation” in Brazilian society and the oppositional potential that Zé finds among the racially mixed “skin and bones tribe.” As Ladd describes in another footnote, the word play on *estetica* is a “play on ‘esthetics of plagiarism’ in Portuguese.” The alternation between “esteti” and “estetu” phonetically translates roughly as “this is yours” and “this is you.” Zé seems to be saying that this esthetic of plagiarism is not only

for the oppressed masses but is indeed, *of* them. He is thus imploring the deployment of such plagiarism.

That Zé utilizes the simple rural musical style of *baião* to deliver his message underscores the “slow-wit,” “hillbilly” stereotype of his oppressed worker while again contrasting with the urban and futuristic android figure. On the song, a quaint, lilting rhythm is supported by accordion and *bochexaxado* or Brazilian mouth harp—among the simplest of instruments and symbol of the “hillbilly” music of American Appalachia. It is quite likely that Zé intends to use this musical marker to capitalize on stereotypes of the rural south and activate a subaltern analogy between the poor of both (or all) countries. Thus, “Defect 6” the “Backbone Song” outlines the album’s protest strategy through song as Zé dons the nonsensical, seemingly powerless character of the mulatto android, engages in the violent *arrastão* strategy described in the liner notes, and then steps outside of character to challenge the oppressed to activate the oppositional potential of their defect.

On “Defect 11: Tangolomango” Zé indicts the “native” rich complicit in the oppression of their compatriots. Echoing Ortiz’s work on globalization, here Zé reminds us of the historical reality of First and Third Worlds coexisting within the same national boundaries. On the song, described as an *arrastão* of latin music, Zé uses the symbol of the exotic but “classy” tango to represent those who have swallowed the lies of Western capitalism and now live in gated communities in the midst of subaltern gloom. With typically searing irony Zé sings:

The rich arrive at the dance/Arm in arm/The devil stuffs his belly/Arm in arm
Envy and greed/arm in arm/All reverence to the dollar,/skirt hiked up

...

That's the Tangolomango

Nowadays the rich man, poor thing/Is imprisoned, totally surrounded

All fenced in

Doormen, guards and alarms

Lord, find him a haven/Where he won't be corralled

A cozy little place/Where he'll live in peace

The passage is clearly intended to portray the ironic circumstances of the “golden handcuffs” that will generate little sympathy from the poor. Zé, however, adds a Faustian layer to the satire as we see the rich native arrive at the dance “arm in arm” with the foreign devil. While the musical style of the piece is not a tango, the prototypically fiery Argentine/Latin American dance music is often associated with the Faust story as in Igor Stravinsky's *l'Histoire du Soldat* [A Soldier's Tale]—a piece with which the conservatory trained Zé is no doubt familiar.

Zé further localizes the Faustian bargain by adding a second designation for the piece: an *arrastão* “of the *reductio ad absurdum* of Father Antonio Vieira's sermon to Saint Benedict.” The reference is to the infamous “Judas of Brazil,” a Jesuit engaged in numerous colonial political and economic dealings in seventeenth century Brazil. Oswald mentions Vieira by name in the “Cannibalist Manifesto,” writing:

Down with Father Vieira. Author of our first loan, to make a commission.

The illiterate king had told him: put that on paper, but without a lot of lip.

The loan was made. Brazilian sugar was signed away. Vieira left the money in Portugal and brought us the lip (Oswald, trans. Bary 39).

Zé is using the example of Vieira on “Tangolomango” to highlight the brazen hypocrisy of this prototypical Brazilian sell-out and his church.

In his reference to the *reductio ad absurdum* of Vieira’s sermon, Zé is also indicting the logical and refined rhetoric that Vieira employed to sell his lies to the Brazilian people. With his distinctly Derridian flair for textual deformation, Zé criticizes Vieira’s logocentrism in the concluding lines of the song, proclaiming:

But the verbá, verbey/The verbiology of this politishitology . . .

And the cardio-philoso-circusassology/Is the tangolomango

It seems that Oswald shared Zé’s distaste for Vieira’s rhetorical strategies as Leslie Bary describes in her annotated translation of the “Cannibalist Manifesto:”

A noted orator and writer, Vieira is associated with formal, elegant rhetoric—a language directly opposed to the poetic idiom Oswald is forging for Brazil. Nunes writes that Vieira ‘is for Oswald the strongest of all emblems of Brazilian intellectual culture’” (45).^{xiii}

Whether or not Zé ever read Oswald, the two seem to have arrived at remarkably similar positions on a variety of points: the distaste for intellectual culture, the appropriation and deformation of the oppressor’s culture, the eschewal of protective nativism and belief in cultural exportation, and the overarching belief in subaltern agency. Zé’s Plagiarist project clearly owes an (anti)intellectual debt to Oswald’s Cannibalist project.

The deformed language of “Tangolomango” appears on the album cover in a blurb issuing from the neck of Zé’s guitar (see Fig. 3).

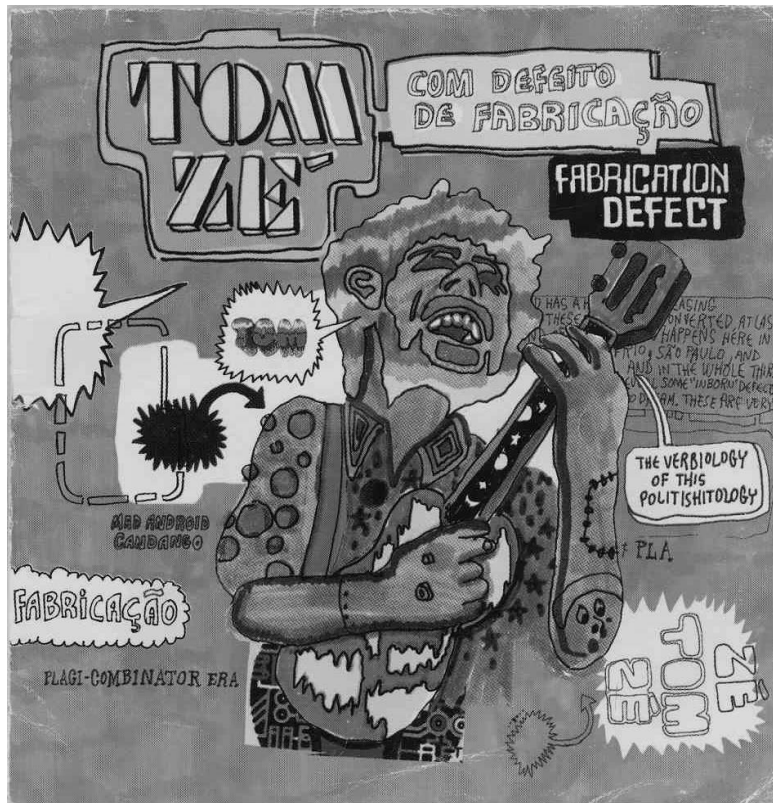


Fig. 3 – Cover art on Tom Zé’s *Fabrication Defect* –

The “mad android” Tom Zé.^{xiv}

In addition, we can see an excerpt from the “Fabrication Defect” position statement from the inside of the liner notes (right side: “. . . some ‘inborn’ defects . . .”) and other terminologies from the album’s lexicon: “plagi-combinator era” and “mad android.” Zé is here depicted by artist Chris Capuozzo as the android with bolts on his right forearm, stitches in his left forearm, and circuitry around his midriff.

Before concluding, I would like to point to one last “Defect” that captures the anti-intellectual power, the vivid and brutal elegance, of Zé’s poemusical project on *Fabrication Defect*. On “Defect 13: *Burrice*” [Stupidity] Zé indicts the officially sanctioned Brazilian “celebration” of national diversity. Tongue in cheek, he describes the national project thus:

See how beautiful

In several colors/See how beautiful/In various flavors:/Stupidity is the subject

See how beautiful

Refined and polyglot,/You find it on the Left/You find it on the Right

But the real consecration/Came with the advent/of Television

It's taught in schools/Universities and most of all

In the academies of/Laurels and letters/It is present

On "*Burrice*" Zé gets to the heart of the matter of "agency." The stupidity he sees is a nation (and a world) that recognizes its need to work for social equity that can do no better than engage in a hypocritical national campaign to celebrate diversity, without adequately addressing the needs of the poorest people on Earth.

In the stirring conclusion of the piece, Zé sings:

Ladies and gentlemen

If on this solemn/Occasion I do not propose/A commemorative holiday

To celebrate the/Sacrosanct glory of the/National stupidity, it's because

Every day, thank God, from Oiapoque/To Chúi, from the Pampas to the rubber

Tree jungles, it is already celebrated,/Most gloriously celebrated

As Ortiz commented in a 2004 Forum Barcelona talk: "There is no doubt that cultural diversity is a fact. The problem is not being different, the problem is being subordinate" (Ortiz "Madonna and Donald Duck"). In both his and Zé's view there are simply two versions of "multiculturalism," the kind that is implicated in political and economic domination and the kind that is not. As Zé so eloquently states, for all our postmodern/postcolonial intellectual theorizing and ethical hand-wringing—Sandoval,

Appiah, Spivak, Bhaba, Ortiz, García Canclini, Hall, Jameson, and mine included—it is not for us to confirm or deny the humanity of any person. As he argues, such inane claims celebrating human agency fuel the sadly ineffective PR machine that multiculturalism has largely been reduced to.

As Walter Johnson wrote in a recent piece for the *Journal of Social History* entitled “On Agency,” the job of scholars is to: “re-immense ourselves in the nightmare of History rather than resting easy while dreaming that it is dawn and we have awakened” (121). That is, Johnson fears that in scholarly debates about the inherently Western liberal notion of agency “we [academics] are using our work to make ourselves feel better and more righteous rather than to make the world better or more righteous” (121). As Zé argues, the defect of *humanity* will continue to express itself despite the insidious overwriting of our own logocentric hegemony and regardless of all attempts to understand, explain, represent, or celebrate it. For Zé, the “Fabrication Defect” will ultimately undermine the fabricator.

Conclusion: *Postmodern Platos*

In 1999, only a year after the release of *Fabrication Defect*, Zé released his follow-up project *Postmodern Platos* [Postmodern Dishes]. On the album, Zé presents “plagiarized” versions of his own songs from *Fabrication Defect* that are covered, sampled, and otherwise reconfigured by other musicians including Amon Tobin, The High Llamas, and John McEntire of Tortoise in a manner consistent with Zé’s esthetics of *arrastão*. Although one might conclude that Zé’s project lacks the violent oppositionality of the urban *arrastão* thief, his gesture towards an exchange of ideas

unmediated by international copyright law nonetheless subverts the multinational corporations that stand to benefit most from the current economy.

As indicated by the ongoing intellectual property and file sharing debates, the recording industry is acutely aware of the tenuous control it has over its products. Designed as a packaged product for individual sale, the CD and the binary code on which it operates, is proving to be rife with “defects”—it is too easily shared, its content too difficult to control. As just one recent rupture in the multinational music industry’s hegemony, the example of DJ Dangermouse’s worldwide free dissemination of the plagiaristic *Grey Album* provides a prime example of artistic creation surmounting the commodified media system via its own technologies.^{xv} Perhaps then, Zé’s project on *Postmodern Platos* and the musical mash-ups of countless others around the world will prove potentially catastrophic for the powerful and the “fair use” laws designed to stabilize the inequity between the haves and the have-nots. Clearly Zé sees his ongoing project as a redefinition of authorship and destabilization of norms. Indeed, Zé’s 2000 follow-up album *Jogos de Armar* [Lying Games] is a similar project that encourages the remixing of material through its inclusion of a second “auxiliary CD” containing audio samples used on the main album’s final song versions. As he wrote in the position statement defining his “Esthetics of Plagiarism”: “We are at the end, thus, of the composers’ era, inaugurating the plagi-combinator era.”

With the album title *Postmodern Platos*, Zé once again (unwittingly?) gestures to Oswald’s Cannibalism. By regarding the reconstituted songs as “Platos” [Dishes], Zé throws into high relief the digestive and regurgitative qualities of his plagiaristic endeavors. In light of Zé’s creatively technophilic project, its engagement with Latin

American theorizations of colonial modernity, and the plagi-combinator's pronouncement that the era of Western high artistic subjectivity has ended, it seems appropriate to speak of *Fabrication Defect* as a kind of postmodern/postcolonial "Cannibalist Manifesto." Zé refashions and redeploys the Cannibalist ideas in a manner consistent with the needs of a world vastly changed since Oswald's modernist neocolonial epoch. While the political economy of contemporary society differs greatly from that of the past, the essential components persist: oppression, subordination, exploitation, and poverty. Articulating a wide array of postmodern and postcolonial discourses into an ideologically unified "manifesto," Zé's project on *Fabrication Defect* works with new tools to undermine, deflate, and reconfigure the current socio-political hegemony such that these ingrained cycles that reproduce subalternity might no longer function.

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Endnotes

ⁱ Bary writes: “the *MA (Manifesto Antropófago)* has retained more immediate scholarly and even popular interest as a *cultural*, as well as purely literary manifesto.”

ⁱⁱ For further discussion of the cannibalist lineage in Brazilian music and Tropicália see Harvey, Moehn, Galinsky, and Perrone “Pau-Brasil, Antropofagia, Tropicalismo.”

ⁱⁱⁱ Similarly, Bary writes of Oswald: “The *MA (Manifesto Antropófago)* challenges the dualities civilization/barbarism, modern/primitive, and original derivative, which had informed the construction of Brazilian culture since the days of the colonies.”

^{iv} For a discussion of the “antinomies” of musical nativism, see Tejumola Olaniyan, “The Cosmopolitan Nativist: Fela Anikulapo-Kuti and the Antinomies of Postcolonial Modernity.”

Another conservatory-trained musician turned political activist, the late Fela Kuti exemplifies the

oppositional potential of musical nativism. Special thanks to Teju for inspiring this article and help with an earlier draft.

^v See Stuart Hall, “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall,” 52. Hall speaks of “articulation” as: “the connection that *can* make a unity of two different [discursive] elements.”

^{vi} In Chris Jenks’s *Culture: Key Ideas* the author writes: “the practice of getting acquainted with reality reflexively involves the action of shaping, formulating and changing reality. This is Marx’s notion of ‘praxis’ and is instructive in understanding a Marxist approach to culture.”

^{vii} See Stuart Hall, “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities.” Hall describes this new hegemony as: “a way in which the dominant particular localizes and naturalizes itself and associates with a variety of other minorities,” 67. For a description of this view as applied to music see Veit Erlmann’s “The Aesthetics of the Global Imagination: Reflections on World Music in the 1990s” and Timothy Taylor’s *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*.

^{viii} See also Dunn, *Brutality Garden*, 196-197 for a discussion of such “consciously ‘mispronounced’ names.”

^{ix} A noted scholar of Spanish literature, Federico de Onís founded the Ph.D. program in Latin American literature while a Professor at Columbia University.

^x Similarly, a recent article by Luis Madureira argues that Oswald’s cannibalism anticipated postmodernism.

^{xi} All translations from the original Portuguese reproduced here are from the liner notes by Alex Ladd. I have tried to maintain the general shape of the stanzas expressed in the notes.

^{xii} Quoted in Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. See Young Ch. 28 for a concise discussion of Derrida, catechresis, deconstruction, logocentrism, and post-structuralist thought.

^{xiii} Bary is citing Benedito Nunes’s discussion in his French translation of the manifesto.

^{xiv} The album art on *Fabrication Defect* is by Chris Capuozzo at Funny Garbage.

^{xv} Joanna Demers's work has examined the legal issues involved with Dangermouse's remixing of the Beatles' *White Album* and Jay-Z's *Black Album*.