

PERRONE, Charles A. *Letras e letras da MPB*. Translated by José Luiz Paulo Machado. Rio de Janeiro: Elo, 1988. 178p.

Charles Perrone's *Letras e letras da MPB*, based on the author's PHD dissertation entitled *Lyric and lyrics: the poetry of song in Brazil* (University of Texas at Austin, 1985), is an estimable addition to the study of musical lyricism in Brazil. The English version, adapted, expanded, and published later in 1989 by the University of Texas Press as *Masters of contemporary Brazilian song: MPB 1965-1985*, would offer the first book-length study of MPB in English. Perrone's work provides a fresh North American perspective to the evaluation of the literary merits of MPB, which has long been the concern primarily of Brazilian cultural analysts and literary critics.

Perrone's initial intention is to synthesize the existing scholarly literature on popular music. However, it is clear that this literature, while remarkably insightful and influential (Augusto de Campos, Affonso Romano de Sant'Anna, Anazildo Vasconcelos da Silva are but three authors that figure prominently), has left several yawning chasms of relevant resources and interpretation. These chasms, clarified in the opening pages, lead Perrone to approach MPB as a "generational phenomenon", analysing individual repertoires and compositions through the 70's, when most others have concluded that the poetic experimentation and expansion within MPB lost much of its creative impetus and production by the early seventies. Furthermore, many of the critical commentaries had not adequately treated the "musical questions", those structural

elements necessary to an evaluation of song lyrics as *performed* literature. Finally, there had as yet been no organization of either a specific bibliography or an extensive discography.

The result is a multilateral account of MPB: as poetic discourse, as performed literature, as a generational phenomenon, and as the result of historic provenience. Preliminary chapters not only lay foundations for negotiating the complexity of "musical-poetic interrelations", but also refer this complexity to the important figures in Brazilian cultural history who influenced the emergence of popular song and its development as an art form. A compendious account of MPB's evolvement from the lyrics of Bossa Nova, the ensuing "socio-political connotations" to emerge during the military regime of the 60's, and the "golden age" of the music festivals in the late 60's provide the final layers before embarking on discussions of the two principal artist-writer-composer-musicians to emerge during the 60's: Chico Buarque and Caetano Veloso. These analyses, comprising nearly half of the text, draw from the works of each, elaborating the socio-cultural, as well as the linguistic and literary progressions and transformations. Chico's "verbal engineering" and Caetano's "eclectic creativity" are unraveled as song after song is examined according to Perrone's vision of generational significance. From synthesis of existing literature to poetic juxtaposition and musical parody, Perrone leaves no stone unturned.

Other artists discussed include Milton Nascimento, Aldir Blanc, João Bosco, Gilberto Gil, Tom Zé, Zé Ramalho, Marcos Vinicius, Belchior, Jorge Mautner, and Walter Franco. These are short, informative essays bearing a stamp of broad knowledge narrowed to those examples that best convey the importance of each of these poet-musicians. Mautner's "hybrid ideology of fiction", Zé Ramalho's "popular poetic visions", and Vinicius's integration of neo-concrete poetry, reflect only a fragment of the many definitive, and oftentimes eclectic, interpretations.

There is a fear that perhaps Perrone has tried to incorporate too much. The above might suggest overcrowding – of songs, of names, of information. Indeed, one of the most recognizable uses for this relatively short work is as a reference. There is, as promised, an extensive bibliography listing close to 300 references. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, it is additionally helpful to have these references organized under

such headings as general works of history, methodology and theory as well as criticism, interviews and periodicals. Also as promised is a comprehensive discography listing 181 albums, complete with title, catalogue number and year. In addition, generous footnotes, often with interpretive insights and explanations, conclude each chapter. While the work lacks an index, each chapter is divided into anywhere from three to seven subtitles, allowing for a great deal of information to be neatly enclosed. Surprisingly, given the enormity of the task he set out to accomplish, and the complex nature of MPB as a literary phenomenon, there might be only one true explanation to quell the fear: Perrone knows his subject and took great care in piacing it appropriately.

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