

## THE NEW CONDITION OF RAP: FROM STREET CULTURE TO SÃO PAULO FASHION WEEK

### A NOVA CONDIÇÃO DO RAP: DE CULTURA DE RUA À SÃO PAULO FASHION WEEK

### LA NUEVA CONDICIÓN DEL RAP: DE LA CULTURA CALLEJERA A LA SÃO PAULO FASHION WEEK

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**ABSTRACT:** The article aims to characterize the so-called *new condition of rap* in Brazil, which synthesizes the transformations in the social and symbolic place of rap, from 2010 onwards, beyond a musical genre. To this end, some empirical cases are used: the debut of LAB Fantasma at São Paulo Fashion Week in 2016 and the hamburger shop Rap Burger. Each in its own way demonstrates both the process of social legitimation of this urban youth artistic practice and the meanings and new social relations that guide rap and its agents as this artistic practice moves from its place of enunciation.

**KEYWORDS:** Rap music. New condition. Legitimation. Emicida. Rap burger.

**RESUMO:** O artigo visa caracterizar a chamada nova condição do rap, categoria que sintetiza as transformações do lugar social e simbólico dessa prática artística no Brasil a partir de 2010. Busco explicitar a expansão dessa música para além de gênero musical. Para tanto, alguns casos empíricos são mobilizados: a estreia da LAB Fantasma na São Paulo Fashion Week em 2016 e a hamburgueria gourmet Rap Burger. Cada qual a sua maneira demonstra tanto o processo de legitimação social dessa manifestação artística urbana juvenil quanto os sentidos e as novas relações sociais que orientam o rap e os seus agentes na medida em que ele se desloca do seu lugar de enunciação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Rap. Nova condição. Legitimação. Emicida. Rap burger.

**RESUMEN:** El artículo tiene como objetivo caracterizar la llamada nueva condición del rap en Brasil, categoría que sintetiza las transformaciones del lugar social y simbólico del rap desde 2010. Busco explicar la expansión de esta música más allá del género musical. Para tanto, se algunos ejemplos empíricos son movilizados: el debut de LAB Fantasma en la São Paulo Faschion Week en 2016 y la hamburguesería Rap Burger. Cada uno a su manera demuestra tanto el proceso de legitimación social de esta práctica artística urbana juvenil como los sentidos y las nuevas relaciones sociales que guían el rap y sus agentes a medida que esta práctica artística se aleja de su lugar de enunciaci3n.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Rap. Nueva Condici3n. Legitimaci3n. Emicida. Rap burger.

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## Introduction

*“Então é bom fica ligeiro, viu  
Na pista, pela vitória, pelo triunfo  
Conquista, se é pela glória, uso meu trunfo  
A rua é nóiz, é nóiz, é nóiz”.*  
(Emicida, “Triunfo”, 2009)

The epigraph above refers to the lyrics of “Triunfo”, a song that nationally projected Leandro Roque de Oliveira, better known as Emicida. The good repercussion of the song contributed to the independent production of the rapper’s first mixtape: *“Para quem já mordeu um cachorro por comida até que eu cheguei longe”* (For those who ever bit a dog for food it seems that I got far) (2009), and to the possibility of creating the company Laboratório Fantasma (LAB), together with his brother, Evandro Fioti. Although *Triunfo* captures a series of meanings about the social and symbolic space of rap in current times, the refrain (“A rua é noiz, é noiz, é noiz”) corroborates more with the memory of what was the hegemonic aesthetics of rap and hip-hop culture associated with it – “a street culture” – than, effectively, with the social place that the genre has come to occupy in the country, especially since 2010<sup>2</sup>.

As is well known, hip-hop emerges as an artistic expression and political intervention of young blacks and/or Latino and Caribbean immigrants and is linked to urban cultural practices. The question of territory, of the rappers' place of origin, is essential both to the feeling of belonging of these agents and key to the mobilization and social organization of groups inserted in the world of hip-hop. In this way, he has historically been represented in song lyrics and music videos. According to Tricia Rose:

The rappers' emphasis on possessions and neighborhoods brought the ghetto into the public consciousness, satisfying the deep need of poor black youth to have their territories recognized, accepted and celebrated. These are the street corners and neighborhoods that often serve as the backdrop for street crime on the nightly news. Few local people have the opportunity to speak, and their views are always contained in expert testimonials. In the rap videos, the young residents [...] speak for themselves and for the community. They speak when and how they want on subjects of their choosing. These local territorial scenes are not isolated voices; they are voices from various social margins in dialogue with each other (ROSE, 2021, p. 39, our translation).

In the Brazilian case, the emphasis of rappers on citing their *quebradas* is also notable. In addition, the organization of posses and crews significantly impacted the peripheral neighborhoods of the city of São Paulo. According to Silva (1999, p. 33), “in the posses, the

<sup>2</sup> Other consequences on the aforementioned song and initial questions about the new condition of rap can be verified in Santos (2020a).



great challenge is not to succumb to the problems posed on the periphery. Becoming another survivor implies seeking support from the brothers themselves and denouncing the forms of oppression, tensions and conflicts that mark the daily life of young people in the metropolis”.

But despite this affiliation to the place of origin, as well as the countless interventions that this youth urban culture found to occupy the cities, I propose in this article to demonstrate that in the process of social legitimation of rap, the “street” enters other spaces. Therefore, I hypothesize that currently rap is not only associated with the “street” as a privileged space for creation/production, circulation and reception.

This assumption is inspired by the typology presented by Macedo (2016), which demonstrates the thematic and aesthetic changes associated with hip-hop/rap from the 1980s until the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. For the sociologist, hip hop in Brazil from the 1980s onwards was associated with a “street culture” (1983-1989). The Hip Hop compilation: *Cultura de Rua*, released in 1988 by the label Eldorado, together with the compilation *O Som das Ruas*, released in the same year by Five Star Records, would condense this initial relationship of hip hop aesthetics to a “street culture”. In reference to the first collection mentioned, Macedo states: “the name summarizes the aesthetic perspective that informed hip-hop practitioners in the 1980s in São Paulo [...]” (MACEDO, 2016, p. 25, our translation).

But from the first half of the 1990s, this aesthetic became representative of a “black culture” (1990-1996). Racionais MC's album *Holocausto Urbano* (1992) would exemplify the incorporation of this subject in rap. Furthermore, the introduction of themes dear to the racial problem found reference in the second generation of North American rap, in particular, with Public Enemy. Still, according to Macedo, it is in the second half of the 1980s that rap becomes hegemonic among the four elements and/or languages that characterize hip-hop culture. In the second half of the 1990s, the “idea of peripheral culture” came into force at the expense of a “black culture”. In the 2000s, we witness not only “the social recognition of hip-hop/rap as a peripheral culture”, but “its approach to the public power/State, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements through projects, public notices and political actions” (MACEDO, 2016, p. 24, our translation)<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, from a symbolic point of view, the chorus of *Triunfo* finds strength more as Emicida's reference and/or reverence to the beginnings of national hip hop, than as a

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<sup>3</sup> In another key, according to Tiaraju D'Andrea (2020), the social processes that took place in the peripheries in the last forty years made it possible for the residents themselves to synthesize the meanings of the term. For the author, this occurred in the early 1990s and the hip-hop movement contributed to the beginning of a historical process of claiming the word periphery.



materialization of the hegemonic rap aesthetic that is outlined in the present time; stands as a memory, homage and strategy for the rapper's entry and dialogue with the “tradition” of this Afro-diasporic youth urban culture. If today rap presents a new social and symbolic place given its aesthetic-ideological transformations and also those related to its mode of production, circulation and reception, important changes could already be observed since its timid and conflicting insertion in the cultural industry, especially in the 1990s. The differentiation of rap between “musical genre” and “musical culture” presented by Botelho (2018) contributes to the argument.

In research on rap in the city of São Paulo between 1987 and 1995, in particular through the study of the work of Athalyba Man, the first Brazilian rapper to sign a contract with a multinational, Botelho verifies that hip-hop/rap in the country was constituted “by a group of young people with ethnic traits, social classes and interests in common”, although not without conflicts (BOTELHO, 2018, p. 29, our translation). From this, “a rhythmic morphology” emerges that both led rap to the hegemonic market and made possible conditions, actions and discussions about citizenship and social inclusion to its creators. However, as “culture” began to detach itself from the exchange with its peers and from its place of enunciation, reaching out to a wider audience, it came to be understood in commercial logic only as a musical genre; the references of rap as a culture tend to decline in the frame placed by the phonographic market. For example, the success of Gabriel, o Pensador, who recorded with Sony and had no contact with hip hop culture, summarizes rap restricted to a musical genre.

Therefore, in order to understand the new social and symbolic place of rap, it is important to observe the social implications of the incursion of the musical genre into spaces no longer limited to the so-called “peripheral culture” and/or “street culture”<sup>4</sup>. My hypothesis is that this new social and symbolic place of rap has enabled not only the bifurcation between the terms “musical genre” versus “musical culture”, as Botelho's work demonstrates. I observe a process of legitimation in which rap has been formalized beyond the perspective of “musical genre”, as it gains recognition in established spaces and, above all, not just as music. In order to prove the above hypothesis, I analyze two heuristic examples that demonstrate this trend: the link between rap and fashion – embodied in the LAB brand show at São Paulo

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<sup>4</sup> The so-called “peripheral culture” incorporates “street culture”, however it is an “umbrella” term that includes not only the hip-hop movement, but diverse cultural manifestations and expressions carried out by residents of the periphery. See Macedo (2016); D'Andrea (2020).



Fashion Week in 2016 – and the link between rap and gastronomy, through the analysis from the gourmet burger shop “Rap Burguer”.

Such phenomena, representative of the changes in the social and symbolic place of this musical genre, encompass the so-called *new condition of rap*. Now, an analytical category that synthesizes the ongoing process of legitimizing rap, which is characterized by: 1) the impact of digital technologies – which restructure the production, circulation and reception of musical practice; 2) change in the management of artistic careers; 3) expansion of rap's cultural legitimacy; 4) changing the status of artists; 5) internationalization of Brazilian rap; 6) expansion of the rap/Hip Hop concept beyond a musical genre; 7) female and LGBTQI+ protagonism; 8) diversification of the public (SANTOS, 2020b, p. 21). For the present text, the focus will be on demonstrating the process of cultural legitimation that, roughly speaking, encompasses this entire social process, as well as rap beyond a musical genre.

Analyzing this artistic practice in terms of a *new condition* makes it possible to scrutinize the various implications of the “widening” of this music beyond the “communities”. In addition, the perspective of a *new condition of rap* removes the emphasis on “generation” from the issue in order to analyze the changes that have taken place in the last decade, enabling the understanding of the phenomenon as part of a broader social process. This category is not restricted to rappers who appear in the mainstream from 2010 onwards, but it also allows looking at artists from the 1990s who are still active<sup>5</sup>.

### **Emicida: emblem of the new condition of rap**

In an interview with the *Provocações* program, still at the beginning of his career, Emicida told Antônio Abujamra:

I guess I'm not a guy who agrees with things. I didn't betray rap. I think I fought back and got back to his essence. The rap he started talking about life. During a boom of a type of music that had in the United States, called gangsta rap, this other aspect became more expressive, and they started to kill the songs that didn't talk about crime. Except that outside Brazil this was mixed, and the two managed to coexist. Here for a while they started to hit the same key and the other varieties of rap were becoming less apparent. I just believe that I went back to where this was at the beginning (EMICIDA apud ABUJAMRA, 2011, [s.p.], our translation)<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> For a contrary analysis, in which the generation bases the changes in the rap scene, see. Teperman (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Emicida's interview with the program “Provocações (TV Cultura)” can be consulted at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-v3tSameGE0>. Access: 10 June 2020.



The aforementioned declaration informs that rap music is not restricted to certain social and political conditions. The rapper clearly demarcates his place as an artist and recognizes, from his work, the historicity of the songs and their spatial and social displacements. As a “free music”, the artistic form of rap would not only be a narrative of social problems, rap can speak of love, “of life”. The retaliation, in this sense, formalizes itself in the claim, through its music, of “free” forms of existence, non-essentialized and/or romanticized of what is expected of a black rap artist. Above all, he is an artist. In his words:

[...] I believe that, first of all, music has to be free. Because when you start a rap group, the first question people ask you is “what do you do for your hood? What do you do in your neighborhood?”. But over time, people started [...] to demand this much more from rap groups than from neighborhood associations and politicians responsible for these regions [...]. I have a concern with the social, natural and sincere, but I also don't rub it in people's faces, to make it seem like I'm a more sensitive person to these issues. [...] I have to make my music, if it's important to me I have to have a social insertion, but that shouldn't be the gimmick for my music. My music always has to speak (EMICIDA apud ABUJAMRA, 2011, [s.p.], our translation).

Nor, for the rapper, is the genre restricted to the periphery and its audience. However, Mano Brown in “Fim de semana no Parque” sang for “the entire poor community of the South Zone” of São Paulo. And at the end of the song, Netinho de Paula, from the pagode group Negritude Junior, greeted the neighborhoods of this region: “Hey guys from Parque Ipê, Jardim São Luiz, Jardim Ingá, Parque Arariba, Vaz de Lima, Morro do Piolho, Vale das Virtues and Pirajussara”. In the same vein, Sabotage in “*Rap é Compromisso*” starts the song with “in the south zone, south zone, south zone, south zone” and in the middle of the lyrics he says: “*O rap é compromisso, não é viagem/ Se pá fica esquisito, aqui Sabotage/ Favela do Canão, ali na zona sul/ Sim, Brooklyn*” (Rap is commitment, it's not travel / Maybe it gets weird, here Sabotage/ Favela do Canão, there in the south zone/ Yes, Brooklyn). Here we see the intimate relationship between musical form and territory.

Emicida, in another key, in response to Abujamra's question about the audience and the place of his shows, stated:

At first, we sang for [sic] people from the favela, which is the cradle of rap, where it always starts. There came a point when things started to branch out. Music, it is free; we can never surround the music. So today these people are mixed. I believe that my greatest achievement really is this, taking someone out of one region and putting them in another that on an ordinary day they wouldn't go (EMICIDA apud ABUJAMRA, 2011, [s.p.], our translation).





Such statements reveal the changes in the social place of rap and also its supposed social function when it is inserted in the market of symbolic goods beyond the community. Emicida's speech captures the contemporary experience that has been shaping the rap universe and "points to fundamental changes on a given, naturalized, combination rap+periphery+black+poor that, we know, is a historically constructed fact and not limited to Brazilian reality, although it presents its specificities in our country" (SANTOS, 2020a, p. 148, our translation).

From the mid-2000s, above all, the presence of rappers on open television channels is recurrent and, at the same time, they carry out various activities in places commonly frequented by a portion of the intellectual and university elite, such as the cultural spaces of the Social Service of Commerce (SESC) and bookstores. In addition, I currently perceive a greater possibility of internationalizing the careers of artists, performing in Europe, the USA, and other Latin American countries. Criolo and Emicida, for example, in addition to touring, have released their records in Europe in partnership with Stern Music, a record label that also takes care of part of the tour process for these artists and helps with publicity. (SANTOS, 2020a, p. 148).

The above statement does not disregard that in previous decades rappers like Thaíde and DJ Hum, for example, contributed to the expansion of the genre in the mass media. "By making the hit 'Corpo Fechado' on the radio, the group was able to perform in various parts of the country and appear on TV, thus putting rap on public display for the first time in Brazil" (MACEDO, 2016, p. 30). Regarding spaces for sociability, in the city of São Paulo, the São Bento subway station and later Rossevelt square constituted a stronghold for meetings and exchanges between the various practitioners of hip-hop culture. However, the genre in the 1990s was still very restricted to a specific niche.

So much so that the MTV show *Yo! MTV Raps*, which gave prominence to national rap, contributing to the dissemination of several video clips, had to compete with rock – the flagship of the programming. Also, there were no national rap music videos to show; thus, the programming largely depended on the dissemination of North American clips. In other words, the conditions of production of national rap in the 1990s still did not allow the creation of a market for cultural products of this musical genre that could sustain its diffusion and, equally, create a wider consumer public.

According to Felipe Barcelos, one of the VJs of the *Yo! MTV Raps*:



When I arrived at MTV, there was already a problem because there was no one who could produce the show, since their background was basically Rock. Then I took over the production and presentation. The program was on the air for 9 months and painted the audience issue. The program had ratings peaks of up to 5 points. I disputed the time with Sérgio Malandro's program that aired on Globo at 4 pm. But measuring MTV's ratings is complicated because you don't count the homes that tune in via VCR. But then the biggest problem started: the Brazilian format of the program left a lot to be desired in relation to the American format, because the record companies here don't want to provide Rap clips so as not to lose market share in other genres: when you put a clip on the air, usually the product it's in stores and in the case of Rap clips they didn't have the product in store to offer. So I started having problems with not having new material. National Rap groups didn't have clips. I invited them to talk about their work and albums, but I didn't have a clip to show. And then the direction of the house adopted a policy of jettisoning blacks from the air. There are no more black hosts on MTV. They added this controversy to the low ratings, with the lack of interest in publicizing MTV for the C, D and E classes (low income) (BARCELOS apud BOTELHO, 2018, p. 107, our translation).

Barcelos' statement leads us to reflect that, although rap in the 1990s was not alien to the market, the genre was still very restricted to social markers of race and class, with a specific audience and few technological resources that allowed the expansion of the audience and the production of music videos and even CDs. In short, the technological possibilities for rap in the 1990s did not bring the genre objective conditions for the constitution of a broad consumer public; in addition, racist attributions to artists and consumers were more frequent than today, when discourses on diversity and inclusion have set the tone.

Therefore, if before synonymous with “bad taste”, “violence”, “marginalization”, in addition to being an important sign of social class, rap is now being heard by a greater portion of middle-class university students, in addition to entering already consolidated spaces. But this new audience is associated, although not only, with the inclusion in Brazilian public universities, in the last 15 years, of black people, women and children of the working class. The historical transformations in the rap scene are linked not only with the development of technology, especially with the advent of the internet, but, to a certain extent, with the changes arising from the policies of social inclusion initiated in the administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and, together with that, with the debate on affirmative action policies<sup>7</sup>.

This whole context was crucial for the ferment of a new facet to national rap, whether in its ideological aesthetic senses, or in terms of the diversification of the audience and its social and symbolic space. In this process, rap as a “musical culture” – as defined by Botelho

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<sup>7</sup> Para uma análise sobre o chamado “Lulismo” ver: Singer, André (2012; 2015).





(2018) – is increasingly transformed. Its craftsmen, even coming from hip-hop culture, find new perspectives as they enter the cultural industry. Not only the performance changes, the way of dressing, but there is also an ideological change about the social role of rap today. “Music in black?”. From the brothers with a frown and raised fists, there are brothers with a smile on their face, with tailored suits, often signed by renowned stylists and, above all, they are thirsty to occupy socially consecrated spaces.

This new stance denaturalizes racist stereotypes and demonstrates how the aspects that inform hip-hop culture cannot be essentialized. Culture, in a broad sense, is a social, historical process, permeated by changes and contradictions. Cultural practices and forms, understood as *systems of meanings*, in which “a given social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and studied” (WILLIAMS, 1992, p. 13, our translation), reveal the social relations present in the work.

In this sense, in the opposite direction of the ideological posture of the rappers of the 1990s, informed by the North American gangsta rap, Criolo, Emicida, Rael, Rincon Sapiência, Projota (just to name a few people from São Paulo), do not show an aversion to the system of cultural industry that rappers such as Racionais MC's, Fação Central, Sistema Negro, among other “alternative to the system” rap groups, presented in their time. Nor do they only incorporate the aspect of “protest” rap in their songs. Criolo dialogues strongly with references of the so-called MPB and with other Afro-diasporic sounds such as reggae, afrobeat and samba. The album *Nó na Orelha* (2011), his debut album for the general public, produced by Daniel Ganjaman and Marcelo Cabral, reveals these mixtures of musical genres that accompany the artist's trajectory and, equally, the new social relationships that his songs express. In this new condition of rap, I assess that the rappers of the 1990s, still active, tend to follow the same logic as those who appear later in the scene. Mano Brown's solo album, *Boggie Naipe* (2016), captures this trend. However, it is necessary to consider that the *new condition of rap* does not mean the standardization of languages and musical references. Each artist presents their specificities within this phenomenon of changing the social and symbolic place of rap in contemporary Brazilian society.

The practices and discourses of rappers who achieve public success and become professional are guided – each in their own way – within the logic of “occupying all spaces”. There is no embarrassment in participating in TV Globo programs, to name one of the most powerful broadcasters in the country. On the other hand, in the conduct of Racionais MC's in the 1990s, I identify that the notoriety of the “four most dangerous blacks in Brazil” occurred almost in parallel with the cultural industry; they created a kind of “alternative market niche”,



with the group's aversion to some television channels notable. Its members only accepted to appear on the aforementioned MTV program which, as seen by Barcelos' statement, assumed racist and classist positions – while also acting as an important cultural mediator in the dissemination of emblematic names of national and international rap at the time. Anyway, it was on this program that Racionais released the clip for *Diário de um Detento*, which was later judicially censored<sup>8</sup>. In response to the reason why the group refused to perform on the most popular Brazilian channels, KL Jay stated:

As a member of Racionais, having a vision of the problems of my people, how can I speak to Globo, which contributed to the military regime, and makes sensationalist programs? Or for SBT, which encourages 3 - 4 year olds to dance the bottle dance? (KL JAY apud GUIMARÃES, 1998, p. 186, our translation).

In a different way, the presence of Emicida, Criolo, Rincon Sapiência, Baco Exu do Blues, among others, in Globo's programming network is not uncommon. For Emicida, TV is a legitimate means of circulating his ideas and artistic production. Therefore, in this *new condition of rap*, his trajectory is emblematic of recent trends in the genre, although this process cannot be understood only through his trajectory. According to Mayk do Nascimento:

His entry into the mainstream media certainly guaranteed him access to better conditions for artistic production and to a wider universe of cultural references. However, we have to question the extent to which the MC manages to reconcile his entry into the cultural industry with the social criticism that marked his first works (NASCIMENTO, 2015, p. 13, our translation).

The question posed by the author places hip-hop culture and, in this specific case, the work of Emicida, in the key of rap only as an essentially militant genre. This goes against the grain of Emicida's artistic project, which understands his work, above all, as an artistic practice. In view of this, she could incorporate and express different experiences and social relationships, going beyond the limits historically placed on the black and peripheral artist. Now, no one would question the political commitment of Chico Buarque or Gilberto Gil for claiming that artistic creation needs to be “free”. The new condition of rap makes explicit the tensions posed by rappers who aspire to artistic prestige similar to the artists of the already established Brazilian popular music mainstream. In this sense, the social place of their songs

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<sup>8</sup> For a social analysis of this song, see Garcia (2007).



would not be apprehensible in the dichotomy between militancy and the artistic value of the works.<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> It would be appropriate here to discuss the process of artification of rap, as defined by Roberta Shapiro (2007). For the sociologist, artification is a social process in which “non-art becomes art, opening the possibility for the constitution of new social worlds” (SHAPIRO, 2007, p. 137). However, given the limits of the article, I will make a more detailed analysis of the relationship between the artification process and the process of the new condition of rap in another article.



## Rap beyond a musical genre

If there is any good news, it is that the idea of blackness as abjection is merging with more prestigious definitions of blackness in terms of vitality, health, and superhuman dynamism. However, this does not mean the end of racial thinking (GILROY, 2012, p. 23, our translation).

The specifics of the new social and symbolic space of rap are not restricted to the musical genre nor to the ideological changes of its agents. The new condition of rap is substantiated beyond a musical genre, also materializing in the increased interest of the Brazilian cultural and publishing market for black and peripheral artists, a situation linked not only to the field of rap, but to other black cultural and intellectual productions. This reality is often diagnosed due to the aforementioned context of affirmative action policies, the so-called “new middle class”, and the historical struggles of black movements that, among the specific demands of each group, have in common the fight against anti-black racism and the perspective of suppressing the various inequalities that affect this social group in order for them to enjoy the right to citizenship.

Commercial publishers such as Companhia das Letras published the book that reproduces in literary terms the album by Racionais MC's *Sobrevivendo no Inferno* (2018) and the books by rapper Emicida aimed at children: *Amoras* (2018), *E Foi assim que eu a escuridão ficamos amigas* (2020). These works demonstrate the possibility of greater circulation and visibility of these artists and agents who, until then, worked in cultural collectives and circulated in their communities. A first example, if I am not mistaken, of a literary work by a rapper to a wider audience, is found in the book *Joelho de Porco* (2005) written by MV Bill, activist and producer Celso Athayde and sociologist Luiz Eduardo Soares. The book was published by the publisher Objetiva, now a member of the Companhia das Letras group.

In 2019, Emicida published the *Anthology Inspired by the Universe of Mixtape: Pra quem já Mordeu um Cachorro por Comida, até que cheguei longe*. Although the book was published by a small publisher, LiteraRUA, together with Laboratório Fantasma, the launch of the anthology took place at Livraria Cultura located on Avenida Paulista, a space legitimized as one of the main places for the dissemination of intellectual production in the country. The work was prefaced by ex-president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and has chapters signed by artists already consolidated in the so-called marginal literature, such as Sérgio Vaz, by ex-senator Eduardo Suplicy, by singer, composer and politician Leci Brandão, by sociologist Jessé Souza, by journalist Eliana Brum, as well as by names that are references of



the new crop of poetry that has been carried out in the peripheries like Luz Ribeiro, Mel Duarte, as well as rappers like Renan Inquérito, Rashid, KL Jay etc. In summary, it is a collection of texts inspired by the mixtape by Emicida that brought together several artists, cultural agents, intellectuals and politicians from the contemporary Brazilian scene. The launch, which took place on 19/12/2019, had a diverse audience, mostly young people, who waited in a long line, through passwords distributed in advance to get the autographed book, whose value was 120.00 reais.

Furthermore, in the *new condition of rap*, it is not uncommon to witness “marginal” poets, members of Slams and rappers, on television programs of major networks such as “*Amor e Sexo*”, “*Conversa com Bial*”, “*Programa Encontro*” etc. Emicida is part of the program “*Papo de Segunda*”, aired by the GNT channel – a closed channel, linked to the Globo network group –, together with Fábio Porchat, Chico Bosco and João Vicente. In the 1990s, rappers who attended TV shows were rare, because, if on the one hand, this denoted a certain complicity with the “system”, on the other hand, rap had not conquered a wider market space. Anyway, in the middle of this decade, rappers from Rio de Janeiro like MV Bill, Gabriel, o Pensador and Marcelo D2 performed on programs like “*Domingão do Faustão*”, for example. We can also remember the performance of the São Paulo “romantic” rap group Sampa Crew and the duo Pepê & Neném, who appeared frequently on television networks, in addition to the aforementioned Thaíde and DJ Hum. The case of Sampa Crew is interesting to understand the orientation of the music industry in the actions of the group as well as the impetus of popularization of the artists if the rap music were left aside. As Paula Carvalho demonstrates, JC Sampa, one of the members of the Sampa Crew, told her that:

One of the directors of Sony and the Epic label, Jorge Davidson, told him [JC Sampa], in a meeting, that Sampa Crew couldn't focus on the rap audience and had to look like an "New urban clothing". They conditioned the signing of the next record to a singing course. JC refused, so he left Sony and the group opened an independent label. The singer states that, despite not having followed the most paradigmatic format of rap at the time – gangsta and conscious –, he did not want to stop singing rap, because he does not have the "voice" to sing the songs in a more melodic way (CARVALHO, 2019, p. 56, our translation).

There was also, in the 1990s, a socially and racially demarcated space for both rap artists and fanzinato. If the rappers wanted more airing of their productions and an expansion of the public, they would have to sing not just rap.

Today, these artists – especially those in the mainstream – in addition to continuing to work within the field of rap, despite the changes in the artistic form of the genre, they also



publicly position themselves in the face of controversial and/or political issues. Their wide audience wants to hear what they have to say, their denunciations, their trajectory, their worldviews. A role is strongly outlined, not only restricted to the “rap” niche, but such artists present themselves as opinion makers that surpass their performances in their neighborhoods. The guidelines of representativeness, of anti-racism, of another place for black people gain an expanded space in Brazilian society, even in the context of the rise of the extreme right.

This contributes to the distinction of these rappers, given the high symbolic value and artistic capital they acquire in the field of Brazilian popular music. As I pointed out above, Emicida’s aforementioned statement that his “music is free” and that social problems should not necessarily interfere in his creation, although social issues are present in his artistic production, sheds light on the role of the rap artist and his music, going against the perspective of rap linked only to the narrative of pain and suffering. Criolo’s trajectory, although not only, also synthesizes this new configuration.

Therefore, if as highlighted by Celso Frederico (2013) rap is responsible for the “sentimental education” of peripheral people, today, this “education” goes beyond the spatial and ideological limits of the periphery. Going further, rap songs – understood from the perspective of the diaspora as “black trans-culture” – are placed as “geopolitical and geocultural forms of life that are the result of the interaction between communicative systems and contexts that they not only embody, but also they also modify and transcend” (GILROY, 2012, p. 25, our translation).

An interview with rappers like Mano Brown, Criolo, Emicida, KL Jay generates debate and repercussion not only among the popular classes. Their statements and political positions are not restricted to members and fans of hip hop culture, as what happened with the social role of Racionais MC’s in the lives of thousands of young Brazilians from the urban peripheries of large capitals in the 1990s, the group recorded in “*Capítulo 4, Versículo 3*”: “*Eu sou apenas um rapaz latino-americano/ Apoiado por mais de 50 mil manos*” (I am just a Latin American boy / Supported by more than 50 thousand bros”), today, this support, due to the expanded representation of the rap artist in public life, he reverberates beyond the “bros”.

In this way, changes in the social and symbolic place of rap, linked to the socio-historical context of affirmative action policies, as well as broad reforms in the social experience of the periphery in the last 20 years, contribute to the acquisition of another social status by rap, giving it greater legitimacy and recognition in addition to its impact on historically subordinated groups. In this process, *the new condition of rap engenders a stimulating phenomenon: the organization and representation of rap beyond a musical genre.*





Rap originally linked to hip-hop culture and later as a “musical genre” – given its entry into the phonography unfolded from its social organization within hip-hop culture (BOTELHO, 2018), can now also be thought of not only as music, but as a concept – lifestyle and consumption that go beyond its “origins”. In addition to what has already been said, two examples bring concreteness to this perspective of “rap beyond rhyme” that embodies the *new condition of rap*: 1) rap on the catwalks; 2) rap as gastronomy.

In 2016, Emicida debuted her clothing collection, entitled Yasuke, at the São Paulo Fashion Week (SPFW) fashion show. An event that put on the catwalk models outside the standards of what is considered synonymous with beauty in the fashion world. In an article published by *Exame* magazine, LAB's debut was evaluated as follows: “following the same urban footprint, the LAB brand, by rappers Emicida and Evandro Fióti, debuted yesterday making noise. It was a show. On the catwalk, plus size models, black power hair and a man with vitiligo set the tone of diversity, preached by rappers” (our translation)<sup>10</sup>.

For the creation of the Emicida and Fióti clothes, they had the support of stylist João Pimenta, whose concept was to cross African and Japanese references, inspired by the legend of Yasuke, who was enslaved by the Jesuits in the sec. XVI, taken to Japan and transformed into a black samurai. As Emicida stated: “we made a non-stereotyped mixture of two cultures that I am fascinated by. And there is also the fact that Brazil is the country where there are more blacks outside Africa and more Asians outside Asia. We are therefore resignifying our history.” (EMICIDA apud DINIZ, 2016, [s.p.], our translation).

The performance of the rapper and the models highlighted the clear position that that space, previously occupied by a white and middle-class majority, was being occupied by the “favela”. Several Emicida phrases reiterate this perspective: “*Hoje eu e você juntos somos nós, e nós que ninguém desata*” (Today you and I together are us, and no one can untie), “*ser livre tem preço no mundo onde preto assusta*” (being free has a price in a world where black scares), “*hoje é o dia da favela invadir o FW*” (today is the day for the favela to invade the FW), “*fiz com a passarela o que eles fizeram com a cadeia e com a favela, enchi de preto*” (I did with the catwalk what they did with the jail and with the favela, I filled it with black), “*isso é história*” (this is history). The soundtrack of the parade, the song “*Bendito, louvado seja*”, was created especially for this premiere. The phrases stamped on the clothes such as “I love quebrada” and “*Rua é noiz*” show the intent of affirming the periphery in that space. As stated by Emicida (apud DINIZ, 2016, [s.p.], our translation), the show was a “show that

<sup>10</sup> Article available at: <https://exame.com/estilo-de-vida/desfile-de-emiciddesfile-de-emicida-no-spfw-rompe-com-padroes-da-modas/>. Access: 10 June 2020.



fashion and São Paulo Fashion Week is not only in Alto de Pinheiros, but also in the favela”. In the same vein, Fióti (apud DINIZ, 2016, [s.p.], our translation) declared: “Now, with the LAB parade, we want to bring sophistication to street culture”. The social meaning of the parade was structured, above all, in the rescue of the history of African resistance and in the attempt to assert the culture and struggle of black women and men, whose history was marked by known oppression and consequent lack of opportunities. However, the artist's key does not place emphasis on the pain and subordination of blacks, but on the possibility of narrating and building a story where the potentialities gain strength.

This strategy by Emicida has an innovative political intervention character, as the SPFW catwalk has never been occupied by so many blacks and people outside what is considered a standard of beauty from a Eurocentric point of view. The various references in a little more than 8 minutes of the show – present in the song, in the performance of the models and in the clothes – also contributed to a certain educational character about the diverse African culture; the fifth element of hip-hop, that is, knowledge was present. This set of demonstrations was sure to draw the attention of the newspapers, which, largely based on the rapper's speech, were anchored in the discourse of diversity, representation and recognition. The newspaper O Estado de SP, for example, highlighted: “the rapper raised the flag of diversity” (ALONSO; ROMBINNO, 2016, [s.p.]). On the other hand, the exoticization of the article that said, “some had impressive black power hair” was also notable (ALONSO; ROMBINNO, 2016, [s.p.]).

In the same direction, rap/hiphop as a theme for a hamburger restaurant called “Rap Burger”, corroborates the problem hypothesis. Opened in August 2017, “Rap Burger” is located on Rua Augusta, in the city of São Paulo, and presents Hip-Hop as a concept: from the names of the snacks to the stylization of the menu to the decoration of the space, the client consumes representations of this Afro-diasporic culture. Conceived by the young black businessman Fernando Candido, not linked to hip-hop culture, it was elected in 2019 as the “fourth best hamburger restaurant in greater São Paulo”.

If rap was currently limited to the periphery niche and if its circulation was still restricted to followers of hip-hop culture, would it be viable to invest in a hamburger restaurant whose marketing concept is linked to this culture? In other words, if rap, in the present time, were not detached from its strict belonging to a certain social group, would Fernando Candido's enterprise find materiality? According to him, the prospect of linking rap and hamburger found a horizon in the certainty that rap is one of the most listened to songs in Brazil and in the world and, therefore, there would be possibilities for the concept presented



to attract a certain audience. With an entrepreneurial vision, Candido, graduated in Systems Analysis and Development at FATEC, stated that, after studying a course on entrepreneurship in college, he was always attentive to the market: “I was always attentive to the market to launch new products, I always followed the magazines of business companies, FORBES magazine, everything that involved business I kept following” (CANDIDO, 2019, [s.p.], our translation).

This is how the concept of using the concept of “rap” as marketing came about. Through brief market research and in conversation with friends, he realized that there was an interesting niche in this venture to bet on. In his words:

It has a niche. There are hamburgers that have a place that is left for those who enjoy rock, there are places that are for those who are evangelical, there are places that are themed for those who enjoy cinema [...]. But in that I ended up realizing that there was an absence of things [...] for those who enjoy rap and hip hop culture, there was nothing that would gastronomically move a place that contemplated this and the idea of rap burger was to solve this problem. It was then to unite rap, which is the music that people like a lot, which is one of the fastest growing musical genres in the world, in Brazil too, but that in Brazil there was nothing to contemplate gastronomically, and united with the hamburger, which is something that, like that, is on the rise [...]. That is, it was possible to unite the two things that would work (CANDIDO, 2019, [s.p.], our translation).

The diagnosis brought by Candido expresses both changes in the insertion of blacks in the market of economic and symbolic goods, as well as those linked to the status of rap in contemporary Brazil, which has pleased a university and middle-class audience. Thus, in view of the allusive changes in the genre, it is possible to see through “Rap Burger” a process of materialization of rap as a concept that fosters a commercial perspective displaced from music. But, in addition to the economic point of view, the hamburgueria also motivates representations that mobilize aspects related to the different (non-fixed) identities of blackness. However, the consumer public, like the audience of the fashion show of the LAB brand at SPFW, is not peripheral or, at least, is no longer on the periphery. In a satisfaction survey carried out by Candido and in the observation of his clients, he found that the consumption of rap as food is not directed mainly to the periphery, but to a black and non-black middle class and university students. In an interview with the author, Fernando Candido stated:

[...] we knew that [...] we would not be able to reach the entire target audience that likes rap, right, the black population. [...] we began to outline that our target audience would be [...] a group of people aged between 18 and 30, more or less. It's a university audience, which is in the middle class



between the B and C audiences, more like B. And then our communication was based on that. After we started, it was 1 year old, there was a satisfaction survey, so we had to really understand this here as a place that we were aiming at at the beginning, it was our target audience. Indeed, it was. After that, I even made a campaign to try to reach more people from the periphery, the humbler people and such and, in fact, it didn't work. We know that our target audience is these people who, like, have a good financial condition (CANDIDO, 2019, [s.p.], our translation).

A detailed analysis of both events would deserve specific articles, as they reveal a multitude of meanings for understanding the *new condition of rap*. For the purposes of this article, I only intended to demonstrate how the opportunities for this phenomenon would be impossible without the changes in the social and symbolic place of rap, which give this artistic expression the possibility of constituting itself not only as music. But each in its own way, both examples have something in common: the representations of rap beyond the musical genre and as a concept that supplant the racial hierarchies of black submission within a narrative of defeats, exploitation and violence.

### **Final considerations**

In this article, I tried to demonstrate how rap, when breaking away from the musical genre, opens a myriad of possibilities to understand the layers of meanings, social and political, of an artistic expression that, initially, coming from the periphery, has been legitimized not only as a song, but as a product that is expressed in clothing, accessories, food and literary works no longer restricted to their peers. The relationship between hip-hop culture as a way of life for youth, imprinting particular ways of dressing, the circuits of sociability, exchanges etc. were extensively researched; however, the expansion of the spheres of legitimation of this musical genre made it possible for the representations built in the hip-hop culture about race, ethnicity and class to not be limited only to the peripheries. On the other hand, the consumption of rap beyond a musical genre – in this case as fashion and gastronomy – has opened wide space for scrutiny and public debate on the possible emptying of the political meaning of this culture in the logic of neoliberal capitalism. However, culture is not immovable. Such a process brings to the fore the ambivalences and tensions that an artistic form embodies in late modernity when “sampled” in other commercial, but not just sound, records.

The ongoing phenomenon embodies the possibility of re-existing in different spaces, outlining a lifestyle in the market of symbolic and economic goods beyond music. However,



for rap as a theme to be able to detach itself from phonography, it needed that this form was already consolidated in the cultural industry, circulating in a wide and diversified audience. In view of this, the periphery is stylized as a brand. A commercial brand guided by the logic of neoliberalism, whose impacts are objective and subjective, but also a mark of possibilities for overcoming and utopia of another black becoming not only marked by the narrative of violence and vulnerabilities.

It is in this contradictory social process that the *new condition of rap*, which contributes to the understanding of the social and symbolic status of the genre in the present time, constituting and being constitutive of the emergence of a new black sensibility, that can be expressed.

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