

RAP, HIP-HOP AND FUNK: THE "EROPTICA" OF THE YOUTH ART INVADES THE SCENE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BRAZIL¹

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Abstract: Some *rappers'* irreverence and criticality and the happy erotic body swinging as proposed by *funk*, suggest a new scenario for Brazil's metropolis, where the youth art plurality comes up as a way to face the trace left by deep social fractures. The concepts of the "Dionysian vision of the world", "extreme aesthetics" and "reevaluation of values", as defended by Nietzsche, and "eroticism", as conceived by Bataille, guided the method of "rupture of field", as defined by Herrmann. This one, essential to reconsider the notions of authority and tradition in the contemporary society, throughout the trends shown, particularly by *rap* and *funk*. Only ethnography of the regard which captures their irreverent erotic dimension - the "eroptica", according to Canevacci - seems to be able to identify in them an affirmative and critical aesthetics, as Nietzsche would say, able to produce a true reversal of values in our society.

Keywords: Youth cultures. School culture. Eroptica. Social critical aesthetics.

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1. Introduction

Our researches in some public schools in São Paulo have demonstrated the importance of the listening and the attentive look at the cultural and ethnic diversity of students. This diversity must be considered in every project that aims to renew the public educational system, particularly in Brazil. The forms of aesthetic expression in Brazil presents a strong echo of Afro-Americans and Afro-Brazilian-Indians diaspora, a dimension less explored by researchers of the Youth Cultures, but remembered a lot by rappers of the hip-hop and funk movements, and showed up in the poetic and musical expressions of students. The apprehension of the historic and cultural size of youth cultures of protesting among this population allowed us to keep track of, intransigently, the critical potencial contained in the marginal, fragmentary, accessory pieces of this culture which has been not denied, but neglected by the educational culture.

The gap between past and future, considered central by Hannah Arendt (1954, 1992) to understand the decline of the authority, as well as the loss of reference in the tradition (Greek-Roman) of Western Civilization – is present in school, promoting a real mismatch between the expectations of teachers and students. This mismatch regarding to the meaning of school seems to lose space in comparison with other media to educate young people nowadays. We are referring here to an “education” of another order, fostered by the advance in the digital and electronic field of the cultural industry today. It is from this education that rappers promoted, according to Christian Béthune (2003), a researcher of jazz and rap, a kind of “historical telescoping”² of poor people untold stories – Afro-Brazilian-Indians – making resurgence of the pains of exclusion in the circles of talking song (“*ring shout*”) of some of these youth cultures. This exclusion, extended to a forgotten past, is referred not only to the Afro-American diaspora, but also to the countless migratory movements from North and Northeast towards the Southwest that was present in this country. On the other hand, through the musical dissonance produced by a sophisticated electronic apparatus, rappers promote effects of aesthetic estrangement, expressing the “excluded conscience of the

- 2 This term was employed by Béthune (2003) to refer to the practices of rhythmic decomposition in rap, through which a wide variety of musical styles are mixed and promote a kind of melodic rearrangement, using computer resources. It makes possible gather and discern distant objects and experiences in historical time. Here we resort to the same word, emphasizing the recomposition of the fragmentary historical experiences through a narrative (the talking song of rap), which although apparently attached to the present, echoes a past of oppression and plundering that our Afro-Indians descendants were submitted to.

society”³. The term in quotes was used by Adorno (1975 apud Habermas, 2002) to discuss the musical *avant-garde* art, identified with the atonal and twelve-tone music and recognized by this important German philosopher as bearer of critical power. We will turn to this term to think about a contemporary music expression – the rap. Using melodic phrases of single tone (therefore closer to the contemporary minimalist music) and straightforward narrative consisting of real “acts of language”⁴, rap promotes a certain strangeness in listening and makes us be in contact, in other way, with an excluded dimension of the social conscience of our society.

In contrast to images of violence and erotism bordering on the grotesque, often associated by the media to the manifestations of hip-hop and funk, we seek to demonstrate how these images, contrary to what is usually conveyed, involve, in fact, a series of aesthetic elements able to produce a kind of “dialectical reversion”⁵ of an ordering and totalizing reason, as it has been imposed by the globalization of culture. Pushing this reason to the limit, aesthetic elements finish to deny the reifying aspects of these images of hip hop and funk. We mean by this, that hip-hop, for example, mimics in their songs violence and crime, reaching almost to succumb to these as the only possible strategy to denounce the injustice and social exclusion the poor young Afro-Americans are submitted to in the metropolitan areas. Whereas, the funk appeals to an outspoken image of sexuality, by baring what is more derogatory about women, just as a way of questioning about Brazilian machismo with its characteristic humor, combined to the aggressive and sensual tone of its dances.

- 3 This is an expression used by T. W. Adorno (1975) about the brevity of melodic phrases created by Schoenberg and Webern, which, according the German philosopher, would not express “formal density and consistency”. In which there is no place for superfluous, neither to the “anguished conscious” of a modern man. It can be inferred from this phrase and from all his reflections on the “new music” (twelve-tone and atonal), how the author draw his critical theory of society from the unique aesthetic experience, and with that emphasizes the priority of the particular over the universal, of the allegorical over the symbolic (cf. Habermas, 2002).
- 4 It is a term used by Béthune (2003) to refer to the mimetic and dramatic character of language employed by rappers. These, raging against injustice with such realism, provided by all sound features for this purpose, promote often an effect in which their songs are confused with a real incitement to violence and crime.
- 5 We are referring to the term used by Gatti (2009) to expose a fundamental feature of the W. Benjamin’s thought (1936, 1980) on the mass art, that points to a sort of “*dialectic of distance and closeness*”. According to this idea, the “thought mimetically moves closer to this object of criticism, assimilating it dangerously to the point of succumbing to their regressive force, as it would be the only strategy available to support a minimum of critical distance able to save its saving powers” (Gatti, 2009, p. 299).

These were the main ideas developed from an extensive field research within the Improvement Program of Public Education⁶, achieved for about three consecutive years in a public school that serves two numerically significant communities in the Southern region of São Paulo city. As a result of an initial survey, where we identified the interests of students and the main problems in classroom, we organized interventions there. In the beginning, these interventions were made twice a month. After a month and a half, we stayed there until the end of the semester, with the collaboration of teachers and tutored students in the preparation and implementation of these interventions.

After this intensive experience of working with students and teachers in the classroom, we identified the critical power of rap for the boys and the female assertion that funk assumed for the girls. This experience made us rethink our values and had a special impact on teachers and researchers, in order to make them rethink their relationship with the students and with knowledge as well. This resulted in different projects of teaching/research, in which we tried not only to integrate the content of disciplines, but also to take into account the character of multicultural and ethnic belonging of the students.

Therefore, this involved an entire work of empirical investigation, that enabled us to apprehend the richness and complexity of a public school with those characteristics (it served an old community, composed by people coming from a region of Pernambuco State where there used to be in the colonial past a policy of forced settlement among backwoodsmen, freedmen and indians ex-slaves), and ended up feeding more than one master's thesis and my own Habilitation thesis, that won the title of *The Weft and Warp between Youth Culture and School Culture: the "eroptica" as a research method and field rupture* (February 2010)⁷.

In this thesis, we focused on a method of research that would be able to catch the erotic and irreverent dimension of some youth cultures

6 Under the title "Youth cultures x School cultures: how to rethink notions of tradition and authority in education?" (Fapesp, 2006/2008), under my coordination. This research had the fellowship of: Tatiana Karinya Rodrigues (technical scholarship, Master at FEUSP), Edson Yukio Nakashima (Master at FEUSP) and Maira Soares Ferreira (Master at FEUSP). The two latter got Master scholarships paid by Fapesp. Luiz Abbondanza, historian and collaborator to research, and about 14 teachers of the surveyed school (located in the Southern of São Paulo) received scholarships for educators and researchers (EPII and EPIII).

7 I quote three Master's thesis discussed from this joint research: *The metamorphosis of young leaders who want to be teacher: how the analytical listening provides the critical power of the praxis* (FEUSP, 2008), by Tatiana K. Rodrigues; *Tying the tips of the branches: the inclusion of students from ethnic Pankararu in a public school in São Paulo* (FEUSP, 2009), by Edson Y. Nakashima; *Rhymes at school, verses in history – a study about young people's poetical creation and ethnic-social affirmation at a public school in São Paulo* (FEUSP, 2010), by Maira Soares Ferreira.

cultivated by the students – emphasizing the rap and the funk aesthetic – that seemed to suggest a new scenario to the metropolis of the country, in which the plurality of youth art emerged as a way of confronting the marks left by deep social fractures. A look at what the school could not remain oblivious if the school wanted to propose a meaningful education for the youth of those communities.

In this sense we consider that only an ethnography of the look which catches the erotic – the “eroptica”; according to Canevacci (2005b) – and irreverent dimensions of these manifestations could identify on them an affirmative and critical aesthetics, as Nietzsche would say, able to produce a true reversal of values in our society and, in our case, inside the school.

Supported on ideas like these and some key concepts such as “Dionysian worldview”; “extreme aesthetic” and “transvaluation of values”, espoused by Nietzsche, and the “eroptica”, as Bataille conceived, we outlined the ruptures – conceptual and of the field – defined by the psychoanalyst Fábio Herrmann, involved in the reconstruction of the notions of authority and tradition in the contemporary society, from the trends indicated in particular by the rap and the funk. A process of thought that presumed on the one hand an epistemologic framework that broke with the totalizing conceptions of the critical theory of society, constituting an effort to approach the aesthetic theory espoused by Adorno and the extreme aesthetic of Nietzsche and Bataille; and on the other hand, a sharp and attentive look to the myriad of meanings and perspectives opened in the readings of the aesthetic expressions of the students surveyed in a public school slotted between two urban slums and luxury condominiums located in one of the richest neighborhoods of São Paulo.

It should be stressed that the building of the method did not consider the object apart, and involved an experience of immanent theorization that should go beyond the thing itself (cf. Goldmann & Adorno, 1975); as it was an intervention on the field, involving the subjectivity of students and teachers-researchers, the idea of *field rupture* (Herrmann, 2001), that was supported by the contemporary psychoanalytic theory, was essential for us to cause the emergence of the “prototheory”⁸ of the subjects surveyed.

I will attempt to discuss at first the weaving process of our theoretical and methodological approach, in order to explain how this

8 Prototheory was the term used by Herrmann (2001) to designate the tailor-made theory for each patient, theory which, in the case of this research, should be adapted to the requirements of the object. It seemed to us essential, listening carefully to the demands of teenagers presented in their aesthetic productions of protest. From this production we constructed fundamental theoretical formulations to rethink the notion of teacher’s authority.

view of contemporary youth cultures tendencies were delineated during the research.

2. The eroptica of the youth cultures: a possible rupture in the school culture?

Massimo Canevacci, in his paper "*Eroptica: throbbing ethnography for an odd looking*" (2005b) proposes a sort of ethnography of the look, that could be opened to the "multi sensory feeling", in which are articulated the aesthetic and anthropological dimensions. He proposes what he calls "eroptica", a kind of hybrid concept between the eye and the eroticism. Here the author borrows some ideas developed by Bataille in two of his works – *The Tears of Eros* (1995) and *Story of the Eye* (2003) –, particularly about the Bataille's art of making a sort of transdisciplinary reading of the real – moving between psychoanalysis, surrealism, anthropology and literature – giving rise to what Canevacci calls "participative eye" (with which the researcher looks actively and, in the same time, allows to be seen). The concept of "eroptica" and the "participative eye" were both fundamental to rethink the way of doing research as well in the readings of the youth cultures, so rich in polyphonic and polychromatic manifestations.

Under this point of view, we propose to consider the manifestations of youth cultures as a sort of "prototheory", through which it is possible to produce a field rupture in the plain of culture, in order to analyze the tensions inherent of school culture. It is important to remember that the school culture – imbued with a certain ideological activism, in the double face of the real (identity and reality) – has produced only the increase of its gap from the youth culture.

But let us explain how it was possible to conceive a prototheory in the size of the object from a method we tried to build in line with that one.

On the construction of the method in consonance with the object

Looking at the contemporary trends of culture that are increasingly fluids, and how these ones are mixed with our past, whose inheritance keeps the retrograde traces that accompanied it since the beginning of the advance of the modernization project in Brazil, and to the specificity of that surveyed school, we try to highlight a methodology to analyze the questionnaires (applied to four classes of the seventh grade and to three classes of the eighth grade), not in accordance with a quantitative approach, but using a qualitative approach inspired in the psychoanalytic method.

Initially, the analysis of these questionnaires was inspired in the work developed in the educational and psychological area by Milnitsky-Sapiro (2006), who proposes a method of discourse analysis considered by the team closer to the way how we intended to approach our object: in that case, the speech of teenagers about the school and their extracurricular experiences (familiar, cultural), while respecting their own conceptions. Moreover, she proposes interesting forms to research on the field, useful to follow the intermingling each people's paths with one another, through the social context cutting, as we believe that has been done in school, conducting groups of reflection and individual interviews with teachers, interventions in classroom with the presence of some teachers of the team, and finally applying a questionnaire to the students. The author seeks to base her methodology of analysis on the theory of social representations, supported by Jovchelovitch, who, in her paper "*Living the life with the others: intersubjectivity, public space and social representations*" (2000), espouses a fundamental idea to our research, involving the apprehension of the relationship between individual and society, away from any psychologizing or sociology understanding. According to us, this conception is close to the ideas that was supported by Theodor W. Adorno on the beautiful essay *Sociology and Psychology* (1967; 1968), in which he argues the need for dialectizing the intrapsychic psychoanalytical categories, in a way to understand how these categories communicate themselves with sociocultural categories, without reducing one to another but preserving the tension between the two domains. The object is taken by Adorno as a *groove*, the point where the dialectical becomes materialist. In a discussion with Lucien Goldmann, regarding the relations between sociology and literature, Adorno sustains a very clear understanding of what is a dialectical thinker: in a rigorous sense, we can not even talk about a method, because "*by the simple reason that the method must be a function of the object, not the inverse*" (Goldmann et Adorno, 1975, p.33).

Without intend to carry out strictly a materialist conceptual approach in our research, but inspired by this dialectical way to understand the relation between theory, method and object, we seek to approach an object, that had been shown to us as a quite complex reality – the relationships between school agents and students of a public school and how the last ones, moved by some trends of the youth cultures, could promote a "reversal of values" valid in the school culture, up the point to force a review of the conceptions of authority and transmittion – through philosophical concepts that could offer new designs to the object on its effective reality.

These was the guiding ideas for our investigation work, given by a theoretical and methodological approach in order to respect the specific

aspects and the complexity of our object, and thinking particularly about the analysis of the questionnaires, we considered the methodological proposal of Milnitsky-Sapiro quite interesting and convergent with the Adorno idea of giving the primacy to the object, although the scarce time we had did not allow us to be entirely guided by his proposals. Basically, Milnitsky-Sapiro defends that it should be done a kind of an ethnographic description in order to respect the language of the community surveyed without basing on thematic categories *a priori*, but instead seeking to catch them in the speech of the surveyed subjects. Thus, it is important to pay attention to the “cultural variations, of understanding the meaning of the language of the own group, seeking to comprehend the meaning in the context” (Milnitsky-Sapiro, 2006, p.5). An ethnographic register would be done from the reports of the field diaries, which furthermore always accompanied us, and also from the testimonies of individuals whose realities were being researched.

Our readings of the questionnaires and the choice of categories, from which we gathered and interpreted the answers, were done in a very rich and prolific way: we read aloud the answers given by each student for all the team of teachers; then we took notes based on the experiences of the teachers in the classroom and from that we created the categories and subcategories of analysis, obviously informed by the readings performed. In this way, we were reporting our field experience and we were choosing titles for the items referred to the field report which could express the strongest images remained of the readings and comments, for example: “*From the Bruegel painting to the order imposed by the traffic*”, to express the conflict between the joy of living experienced in the community and the violence of the traffic; “*The conducting classes in face of so dissonant voices*”, about the challenges to think the classes in face of a diversity of interests of the students; “*Surviving in Hell... is it possible?*”, referring to the subject of Racionais MC’s CD which report the limit situations that can lead a poor boy to the crime (“*They address me as if I was nothing / I was only sixteen / Intelligence and personality... mouldy / Humiliation in the school / The street attracted me more than the school*”); “*We are humble, but united!*”, common expression among the students to talk about their uniting force, despite the poverty and prejudices that achieve them. And other phrases through which we tried to express the distrust of students for what were offered by the school. “*School is a hobby or... a waste of time?*”, “*The school is not more than before... Discipline is required, but betray a colleague no!*”, “*School is care and education... but also difficulties to teach and learn*”, “*Escape to forward... towards a better future*”. Finally, phrases and images that could express the ethnic uprooting, as “*They are friends of my father... my father is Pankararu... what about me, who am I?*”, or even a musical phrase reliving the past in the present,

promoting a true “historical telescoping” of the African diaspora, as does this lyric of the rap “*Castle of Wood*”, by Demis Preto: “*I am Prince of the ghetto, Only who is, walks up and down slope, My castle is made of wood*” (cf. Reports of Research FAPESP, 2007, 2008).

From the post-modern ethnographic method to the psychoanalytic method of field rupture: elective affinities

We believed, as it was suggested before, that youth “extreme cultures” (Canevacci, 2005a) could constitute a “field of possibilities” to rethink not only the youth forms of protest but also the own process of (de)construction of the adolescent identities in the contemporary world. In addition, we sustained that the ethnography of the look – turned to the erotic multi-sensory manifestations of the adolescents – would allow the emergence of real prototheories, that would be able to constitute times for the field rupture, from which would be possible to build elements for a contemporary criticism of the reason reigning in the school universe.

From this experience of intervention in the public school system – where the experiences of researcher-teachers, students, parents, and university researchers (psychologists, psychoanalysts, graduate students in Letters and History colleges) were intertwined – we sought to deduce a research method able to articulate the “eroptica” of Canevacci, an ethnography that combines the look and the erotic dimension as supported by Bataille, and the psychoanalytic method, both through this fluid reading of the entire field material, as suggested by Milnitsky-Sapiro, and that the “rupture field” as espoused by Herrmann, essential in the period of our interventions with students and teachers. The idea of a rupture field was conceived by Herrmann (2001) as something immanent to the interpretive act and associated to the transitory situation of irrepresentability, as a condition for the emergence of new representations, which would embody the prototheory of the subject. A conception of psychoanalytic method far from the symbolic interpretation on which Freudian psychoanalysis relies involves a sort of translation of the unconscious repressed material.

Our intention was to demonstrate, in the same time that we worked with the field of “*relative unconscious*”⁹ – resulting from the interweaving

9 The notion of *relative unconscious* refers less to a state and more to, as supported by Herrmann, the “power of the psychoanalytic method of making arises (for field rupture) the logical order [unconsciousness] to constitute representations-ideas, emotions, conscious images” (Herrmann, 2001, p. 121).

of subjectivities of teachers, students and researchers – how might arise “prototheories” about the relations of meaning that can be gathered from practices and speeches produced in the scope of classroom during the interventions. It might happen through “*analytical acts*”, took in the place of interpretive sentences, from which we intended to promote changes in the quality of communication between teachers and students.

The idea sustained was that the reason reigning in the school culture – supported by teachers, coordinators and school principal for the elementary and middle school (respected their different shades) –, could be broken and renewed from the inside, by touching what is most critical and by applying transformation in the youth cultures. These, carriers of the dissent and marginalized voices, are conceived by the authors above as potentially critical.

On the construction of an odd looking towards the claims of young students

Our work of research in the referred school has brought us closer to some youth forms of cultural manifestations – as hip hop and funk – through which these students seemed achieve a true “creative turning” in their lives, in despite of the precarious circumstances in which they lived. And more than that, getting thus leaving their “ghettos” and being listened by various social groups until then oblivious to the reality of excluded population in the metropolis.

We came across, on one hand, the irreverence and criticality of some young rappers as can be seen in a piece of lyric written by students – *Reality, not fantasy*:

The lack of job and understanding
takes the chit for a life of thief
The lack of job and understanding
kills the dreams of a person and throw (them)
into the coffin.
(Cesário, Diógenes, Gabriel, 2008)

On the other hand, we came across the irreverence with the erotic sway body translates: “*Hip hop, I sway... black, I dance... rap, I sing.*”

We also found, in the testimony of a girl, a phrase pointing towards a dream school, in which the body, the music and the knowledge go together: “*I suggest that it [the school] has musicians and singers who teach us the real Brazilian music.*”

We have not mentioned yet the true *frenzy* that accompanies the dance at the funk beat, in which the female eroticism plays a central role.

Their lyrics and movements of the hips suggest and even remember the sensuality of the Afro-Americans dances, both at *Jazz* and *Blues* rhythms and at Brazilian samba. Even the irreverent energy of the rap lyrics evokes the challenges of the *emboladas* and *repentes* from Brazilian Northeast. In fact, we have found clear references in the book *Poets of Repente* (2008) to the closeness between the northeastern forms of *repente* and the forms of rap improvisation, highlighted the differences regarding the rhythm bases, the way as each one rimes and organizes the stanzas.

Messages and images like these suggest us the various forms found by them to recreate themselves and overcome their pain of exclusion passed through a fine musical aesthetic, inscribed many times in the threshold of the Law, often putting into question the cynical moral in force. Through a work of recreation of the popular culture, they pointed to a kind of "critical inversion of values", asking like proposed by Friedrich Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886, 2001) and *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887, 2005b), the "principles from which the values are found" (Deleuze, 1962, pp. 5-6). An outcry that deserves attention not only from the educators but from the entire society.

In the case of our research in such a school, it seemed to us that young people were claiming or even recreating the popular culture – that is at once rooted in the backwoods origins of the rustic man from Brazilian Northeast and mixed with the Afro-Brazilian culture. However, faced in metropolitan areas with the harsh portrait of the suburban poor man, they were compelled to express their anguish and desires of satisfaction through raps and dances endowed with keen critical power. Many of them do it bringing out, with their drums, lyrics, music and dances, what one day Nietzsche called, in *Dionysian Worldview* (1928, 2005a), a "core of the vital force of humanity". These elements are precisely those expurgated from the Western ratio a long time ago and, consequently, from the school reason for ordering.

The *raps* (from the *hip hop* movement) and the *funk*, although inserted in the phenomena of globalization of culture, tend to deny their reifying aspects when they assume a political attitude to protest (paradoxically, through an affirmative aesthetic) against all kinds of prejudice and social exclusion. In this sense, our approach to *hip hop* as well as to *funk* aesthetic, as musical expressions of the youth protest, seeks to highlight what is more genuine in these productions (in order to give life to young people belonging to work classes in the process of aesthetization of themselves) and what escapes from the schematism¹⁰

10 The term was used by Adorno and Horkheimer in the chapter about the cultural industry, of the book *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* (1985). The philosopher Rodrigo Duarte resume this term in his paper *Schematism and semi-formation* (1978) to refer to how the culture industry has appropriated of a human

imposed by the cultural industry. This process can awake, as Nietzsche would say (1872, 2004), an “aesthetic education” of another order.

In this sense, revisiting the Nietzsche’s thought, considered the watershed to distinguish the modern and the postmodern thought, seemed essential to us: particularly his critical ideas about the education institutions and the culture to be transmitted to new generations; the “strong affections” and desire commitments elicited by Dionysian philosophy will play a key role in his “metaphysic of the artist” as well on the genealogy of morals, and from it he would propose a “transvaluation of values” forced in modernity. We pointed out here the affirmative character of his philosophy, which have been inspired in the Greek man tragic conception. From this conception Nietzsche intended to build a new genealogy of values, in other words, the value of the values, opening the human experience to a plurality of senses. The affirmative aspect, according to Deleuze (1962), would be present either in the “Dionysian worldview” held by Nietzsche, or in the “extreme aesthetic” idea emphasized by Heidegger (2007), and both were essential for a conceptual interpretation tuned to the historical movement of our object, that was the youth cultures surveyed, namely the *hip hop* and *funk*. Heidegger (2007), in his lectures on Nietzsche, espoused that the author, since the *Twilight of the Idols* (1888, 2006) moves less towards a metaphysic of the artist (cf. Machado, 2002) and more towards an “extreme aesthetic”, from which became evident to us the critical and affirmative potentiality of the ethnic-youth aesthetic of the *hip hop* and the *funk* in the school.

Thinking about the detachment of public school from the multiplicity of the youth cultural expressions, we became attentive, from the observations of Bataille (1995), who is an important interpreter of Nietzsche, that the Philosophy should take back the power of transgression of the eroticism. Besides that, we began to pay attention to Nietzsche himself, when he defends that we should get closer to the most vivid expression of the Philosophy that would be present in the Dionysian art. But in what would this Dionysian art consist? The combination of different forms of artistic expression of the mankind, as it would be observed in Ancient times, when associated with song was the gesture of the dance, combined with the power of harmony, dynamics and rhythm, reaching a sentimental ecstasy in the lyric and evoking images as in the epic, covering thus the set of all forms of symbolic expression. As we see,

faculty for organizing the immediate data of consciousness, according to the categories of understanding, replacing this faculty with the “schematism”. The schematism guides the production and, this way, guides also the choices of individuals.

it is an idea very close to the forms of Afro-American aesthetic expression, that are not somehow taken up by all the artistic expressions of hip hop, in which are present, as we said above, the dance, the music and other forms of plastic expression of art.

3. The rap and hip hop: presence of a Dionysian conception of world in youth art of Afro-American origin?

Béthune (2003), French philosopher, scholar and lover of jazz, in his book *Le rap – une esthétique hors de la loi* (2003), held a study on the historical roots of rap, referring to the Afro-American music (particularly *Jazz* and *Blues*), which at that time were inspired by the difficult trajectory of black population in America, from slavery through the Civil War until the Great Depression of the 30's, among other moments that marked the life of this part of the American population, whose regret was felt in their music. A past that, according to the author, did not disappear but is present in the *rap* music style pioneered by the American *hip hop*. On the other hand, he argues that this style of music and dancing resumes the dimension of unconscious art, sprung from the people, as will say Nietzsche on the subject of the great tragedians works, Aeschylus and Sophocles, in his essay¹¹ *Dionysian Worldview* (Nietzsche, 1928, 2005a).

We hold further that, in fact, the innovation of hip hop is not apart from the own tradition of the music of Afro-American origin. This is one of the greatest contributions of *hip hop*: when it retakes a full art, that combines the bodily expression of art, the song marked by the spontaneity of improvisation and oral tradition, the dance and the music, which in turn roots in the history of Afro-American descendants. With its song of protest, *hip hop* has just spread around the world, particularly among poor young residents of large cities and combining with new cultural fields carried by the excluded people from each country and region of the world.

In Brazil, the *hip hop* arrived in the early 80's within the *break* (dance), paradoxically brought by the social agents belonged to the richest social classes. But was Nelson Triunfo, after entering in contact with the *break* in the Brazilian middle-class clubs in São Paulo, who took the *break* and *hip hop* back to their place of origin: the street (cf. Contier, 2005).

Subsequently, the *break* conquered the streets and layers of the socially excluded people of São Paulo city, through the formation of dan-

11 This essay was published as a book in Brazil.

ce groups, met at first at the Ramos Square, in front of the Public Municipal Theater, and second nearby the galleries of record stores on 24th May Street at the corner with the Dom José de Barros.

The beginners of this movement were Nelson Triunfo, Thaide & DJ Hum, MC/DJ Jack, Os Metralhas, Racionais MC's, Os Jabaquara *Breakers*, Os Gêmeos, among others. Many music groups emerged in the late 80's. In 1988 it launched the first phonographic record of Brazilian *rap*, through the collection "*Hip hop Cultura de Rua*" by the record company Eldorado. This record had the participation of Thaide & DJ Hum, MC/DJ Jack, Código 13, among other groups.

Therefore, we saw the *hip hop*, with his song of protest, ended up spreading throughout the world, particularly among the young people residents of big cities, combining with the new cultural fields carried by the excluded people from each country and region of the world.

We can not fail to mention that its proposal of political criticism is present not only in the lyrics of its songs, but through a new type of innovative aesthetics and criticism. The *rap* in particular is made with an alternation between a circularity of rhythm and cuts, the *break beat*, introduced with the aim of promoting shifts in the musical balance. The technique of *sampling*, that consists of selecting different musical arrangements to introduce them in the same musical composition, was an irreverent and transgressive form of dealing with an absolute lack of financial resources to make music, which brings *rap* and *hip hop* to a long tradition of Afro-American music, as Béthune (2003) rightly pointed out. But the innovative thing is the use of the most sophisticated electronic technology for the reproduction of musical art – not as *techno* music, that makes disappear the human traits – to perform the mixing of different musical styles and to make with this alternance, as well with a rhythm poetic marked by ruptures, a way of humanizing the machine (that dominates the humans in the work and marginalizes them in the cultural field).

According to Béthune (2003), the art conjugated of *rap* involves a very sophisticated aesthetic: it is a playful way of making art through a sort of "historical telescoping" (which means a way of gathering and to discern distant objects), of "symbolic displacement" and "grinding sound", opposed to the tradition of Western culture, which leans to value contemplative art instead of the "game in action" (as valued in the African culture). Besides this playful way of dealing with the musical rhythms, the rap invents words, in a game of come and go, composing a new relation between orality and written fields, revealing itself as a true "language in act," with all its expressiveness, almost theatrical in a natural polyphonic and multi-sensorial that accompanies it. To report abuses of the police, for example, or prejudice, sometimes, rappers turns to these "acts of

language” raging against injustices with such realism, provided by all the sound features for this purpose, that their songs are often mistaken for a real incitement to violence and crime. According to Béthune, “the rapper do not talk *about* the reality, he talks *on* the reality, and, putting himself in the core of the action, he transforms strongly its fisiognomy” (Béthune, 2003, p. 59).

3.1. Rappers – the new chroniclers of modernity

Contier (2005) considers rappers as the new chroniclers of Brazilian society, marked by the strange combination of archaic and modern, in which the civilizing role of the bourgeois revolution was never extended to the whole of society and is still very away from doing it:

“Rap is characterized by the re-invention of everyday life through the orality of common people... Rappers narrate with their own voices and looks the everyday of the contemporary cities transforming themselves into stimulating chroniclers and critics of modernity. They portray the periphery of São Paulo at a time of intensive globalization and formation of a society markedly massified” (Contier, 2005, p.5).

Let us analyze closely, illuminated by those ideas, how the lyric of the song *Reality, not phantasy!*, presented at the beginning, could be interpreted as a form of mourning for a childhood that can barely be dreamed under the overwhelming reality that “kills the dreams of the person”. Also, how the spaces offered in the school and in the community for their re-creating through rap and hip hop eventually allowed the emergence of an “aesthetic in the threshold of Law”, able to offer a psychic and cultural support especially for poor boys of metropolitan areas.

If we examine the rap of boys, *Reality, not phantasy!*, we will have a typical example of re-invention of language: “*It is inadmissible some gangstas of the ghetto doing a 157¹², that is a stickup.*” It is produced, as a result, a real re-invention of the mother tongue, introducing on that a kind of foreign language, which results in an interesting way to re-appropriate of that, especially for those who are excluded from the cultivated language and are usually considered unable to engage into the poetic art.

Fluctuations of meaning or even ambiguity between the experienced socially and the poetic art as such, generated a series of legal and police interferences against rap groups of hip hop movement, which requires, according to the author, more than never, an aesthetic

12 The number designates an article of the Brazilian Penal Code.

approach to such manifestations, whose meanings can be understood if we look at the particular dialectic established between the new and the traditional in their creations: "according to the manner how they integrate, transgressing, the traditional basis from where they come" (Béthune, 2003, pp.15-16).

This can be thought for the musical aesthetic, both the rap, that brings with it some of the Afro-American culture – it means, challenges and regrets in form of songs present in *Jazz, Blues* up to *Soul* and *Funk* – and the *Repente* and *Cantorias* practiced in Northeastern Brazil, that tell stories of suffering people from backwoods. An aesthetic that is also able to combine universal and particular inside its social criticism, as it is evident in another stretch of rap composed by the boys: "To win in life you need to be aggressive, we are a group of elements". And then the chorus refers to a broader social question: "The lack of job and understanding / takes the chit for a life of thief / The lack of job and understanding / kills the dreams of a person and throw (them) / into the coffin." But transgression is present also in the stretch pointed to the threshold of crime and transgression, at the same time it requires a watchful eye of society, as well as the right of passage for the young poor people of metropolis: "The law of killing is the power that opens the door / This is the law of Devil, who doesn't have respect do / With a gun in the belt you see who can do more." And this appeal is not just for comprehension but it has to be seen with humanity: "We are nigga by law and we still have hope."

It is exactly the situation of this population since the past colonial times, those rappers, with their aggressive and denouncing aesthetic, and funklers, in a happiest and most ironic way, have been reported in their songs.

Let us put parenthesis, introducing a time of field work in classroom with students, to present an idea of the meaning of this "language in act" adopted by rap, that was somehow adopted by us in our interventions with these kids, in order to allow us to get into their experiences, listen to them and make them listen to us.

Against the gun of traffickers and police... it remains the weapon of music

This phrase emerged in one of our heated discussions around the issue of violence in the neighborhood, in a classroom with students from 7th grade, just before the arrival of TV Record reporting team, who came to school interested in videotaping rap groups.

After starting the debate, many boys highlighted the issue of injustice to poor people, including committed by the "Law", but mainly by

the police. They called again the policemen by “*cozinha*” and “*gambé*” (expressions used also by the *Racionais*). As some students begun to simulate the gesture of firing a gun, I tried to get into the mood of acting a real situation asking to them: “*Who is hurting whom? Who wants to kill whom? Hey... but is there a solution?*” Anyway, I tried to make them reflect on how they could defend themselves, either from the violence of the police, either from the traffickers, by other means, without necessarily resorting to firearms. They answered yes, there were other ways. At this moment, someone whispered to me that policemen used to get into the slum running with guns behind the traffickers and those, also armed, to defend themselves, used to go through the streets in the middle of a group of children... And all of that was too dangerous. I told them that a situation of violence as one they daily face is neither fair nor legal, that this also means a power abuse, but the *Racionais* seemed to use another type of weapon to denounce this situation. To answer my question which was this weapon, a kid replied: – “*Music!*”¹³

However, at this moment became evident how difficult it was for these teenagers to really join the speech of *Racionais*, since the violence they experience every day is so absurdly disproportionate. This represents a true attempt to achieve citizenship and childhood, which makes it difficult for them to answer only within a critical discourse of denunciation. Hence the likely appeal of the more engaged rappers, considered by some authors (Contier, 2005) as the “new chroniclers of metropolis”, to true “acts of languages”.

This and other experiences in classroom referred to the “core of the scene” – personally, historically and politically, in the same way rappers do in their songs – making us to think about an important contribution of the hip hop to public education, as noticed by a Northamerican teacher, Marc Lamont Hill (2009). He resorts to rap as a fundamental part of his strategies for teaching literature. The author accentuates how young people require a personal commitment of the teacher, *in reality*, for joining effectively to this proposal of work. This was what we felt at that moment of the intervention: given the lack of commitment of the whole society with true universalization of social, cultural and political rights, it was necessary “see it to believe” if the adults present there were really willing to take them seriously. This commitment would be extended beyond the scope of the classroom.

13 Here again, we present a way of interpreting, through the drama, which we call “analytical act” to differentiate it from the “interpretative sentence”.

4. What about the funk from Rio de Janeiro – a mass product or a new type of an irreverent aesthetic?

Our interest in funk was driven by our research in the same public school in São Paulo where we met the rappers mentioned above. After a series of works done in class, in which we stimulated students to express their ideas about school and their lives, their dreams and difficulties to achieve them, we found a lot of interest around the Afro-Brazilian music and dance, among them, hip-hop and funk.

At the end of the year, we scheduled a presentation of some groups of music and dance. As there was an expectation for a funk party then, despite our insistence, the students did not bring their parents, almost willfully. Only later we could understand their reasons. They were students of the last grade of elementary school and many of them seemed disappointed/disenchanted of the arbitrary and neglected direction given to their formation by the principal of that school. For this and other reasons, what was really important at that moment was the pleasure and the “total liberation”. The presentation of their farewell texts was even nostalgic, but when they presented their *raps*, quite contesting, and later the girls performed two numbers of funk, the atmosphere became uncontrollable, prevailing an excitement of clear sexual tone.

Although many teachers had become frightened at what they considered “a sensuality/sexuality without limits”, bordering on “disrespect to the school environment”, what we witnessed, in fact, was the students outcrying to be listened e seen. Why not? They were also accompanied by the adults in their youth expressions.

A documentary movie about the funk *carioca*¹⁴, *I’m ugly, but I’m fashion*, directed by Denise Garcia (2007), gave us all, teachers and researchers, new keys to read this provocative and irreverent sensuality of schoolgirls. The funk singers emphasized in their witness the importance of sexy funk, at first, to stop the violence as proof of manhood – that threatened the continuity of the funk parties in the slums of Rio de Janeiro – encouraging, instead, the sensual/sexual love between the genres. Secondly, the sexy funk was presented in a way for women to impose themselves on men, both from the view of women’s sexual liberation and for the women rights of independence. This is particularly important for the women from the popular classes, as part of a kind of “popular feminist movement”. Just as the young funk singers, mostly black, gave their witness about the importance of “sexy funk” for women’s

14 The word means someone or something that comes from Rio de Janeiro city.

liberation, we saw in the presentations of funk at the school, and in other times that we were invited to dance with the schoolgirls, their way of appropriating their sensual bodies to delight with the effects of seduction produced in the boys. Of course, once again we were invited to experience "in reality" that liberation, not just in a discursive level, but with our bodies crossed by their sensual rhythms.

Later, reading the Micael Herschmann book *Funk and hip hop invade the scene* (2005), we had the opportunity to know the funk carioca and its ups and downs. As its title suggests, the book refers to the way as such youth cultures reinscribe poor and black young people in the public space of big cities, where they are usually excluded.

The author's position is, unlike what is usually said about the funk carioca, the happier and more eroticized character of the funk does not mean it is alienated and apolitical. He accentuates the importance of the release of DJ Marlboro's album in 1989, *Funk Brasil n.1*, responsible for the nationalization of the music and the launch of poor and marginalized young people in the media scene. Through this event, these people reached popularity, bringing this reality even to the middle-class audience.

5. From the irreverent aesthetic to the elaboration of a mourning made possible through music of protest and erotic dance

First, about the meaning of the creative turn of these teenagers, who knew in their lives to cope with a situation of such weakness of the social tissue. In what does this consist exactly?

Being able to convert a situation of exclusion in a denouncing weapon? Or a motor to build a new type of aesthetic? As said by Canevacci (2005b), we must be able to look at these manifestations of young people, who use their bodies and minds to penetrate in which is most alienated and blow it up from the inside. Here is the new aesthetic, which in the case of a poor young man goes through an aesthetic "*hors de la loi*", as Béthune (2003) upheld. It seems to point to a new ethic and a consequent need to "refund" the set of values of our society.

According to the authors of *Cabeça de Porco* (2005), "what in the hip hop culture is called *attitude* is perhaps a synthesis of aesthetics and ethics, combined in a very own way to build a person" (Bill, MV and Thaide, C., 2005, p. 206). The authors want to say that their songs require recognition and generosity of the other's gaze, or rather, of the society as whole for this young people who have been excluded from the condition of citizenship. Hence the importance of the proposal of Marc Lamont Hill (2009), from Columbia University. His proposal involves a critical pedagogy in secondary education, using the rap as a way to establish what he

considered to be a “political identity”: through *storytelling* (of himself and of the community) shared in group and whose motto was given by passages extracted from rap lyrics. This process promoted the emergence of what he called *wounded healers*, achieved by the social and historical wounds legacy of the Afro descendant diaspora and of the social and cultural apartheid not completely overcome in the American society. We remember this apartheid is obviously deeper in a country like ours, where social inequality is one of the most serious in the world.

Furthermore, we considered that funk, in a more ironic and happier way, often sardonic, imposed the need for a new look at the poor and black women of metropolis. Especially because these women are suffering not only the social exclusion and the violence of traffic and of the police, but also the Brazilian machismo, which constitutes another kind of violence that can not be neglected. Its sensual/sexual aesthetic calls into question the values used to regulate the patriarchal, enslaver and familist tradition presented in an oppressive way, above all in the relationship between genres into the Brazilian low-income classes.

6. For conclusion:

Our research began driven by the concerns brought by Hannah Arendt (1992) about the direction of education since the transmission of the culture was threatened by the disruption between the present and the ballast of the past. The Greek-Roman tradition either ceased to be reference or anchoring democratic institutions in Western Civilization. All these factors contributed to bring down the public authority, reaching the pre-political institutions, as family and school, while representing a serious threat to the conservation of cultural heritage. With that, the “foundations of the world” were putting at risk, and consequently the conditions for their preservation.

This gap between past and present, in the school surveyed, was translated by an absolute mismatch between school culture and what we called youth cultures. This mismatch seemed menaced by the remaining of the minor teacher’s authority, that seriously compromising the chances for the teaching transmission. Renouncing to its autonomy, the school culture were at the mercy of the political-pedagogical “news” imposed by the State, and more and more far from the real interests and needs of poor young people, residents in the communities adjacent to the poles of wealth concentration in São Paulo. On the other hand, we find teenagers eager to recreate and to impose themselves to the adult world and to the excluding city where they lived. And so they did through music and dance, demanding the right to aestheticize themselves, such as Nietzsche suggested to be the real task of education. The teachers, in

turn, after three years of research and reflection about their practices of transmission and intimate contact with youth cultures cultivated by the students, began to demand greater autonomy to decide on the contents of their classes and teaching methods.

In a school where chaos reigned, as well as the lack of welcome for the aspirations of the students and of their parents, thus, our interventions gave life through the artistic and musical expressions of the students. In the same time, the muffled looking of the teachers turned to their own work reality happened, and the reality of students from that community nestled within one of the richest and more luxurious neighborhoods of the capital was put in evidence.

The multi-sensory expressions of the adolescents, which were demonstrated in a so chaotic and noisy way, gained attention for themselves when they began to replace the very soliloquy in which many of them were sunk with the rap messengers of protest for poor young people from the metropolis. The girls, with their irreverent sensuality, required an all-seeing eye – and a right to have a space for “being a woman” – able to see themselves as the opposite of what was said by the funk songs lyrics, that seemed to degrade the image of women. The idea of a “dialectical reversal” was essential to us to understand how these young people apprehend what was conveyed by the media, transforming it into its opposite. According the interpretation of Luciano Gatti (2009) on the ideas of Walter Benjamin (1936, 1980), the idea of “dialectical reversal” helps us to interpret the critical power of culture in the age of mechanical reproduction. This sense of criticism can be inferred, as we have seen, from the lyrics by some rappers, as the Racionais MC’s. The musicians of this group, as a good example, practically just go by the regression induced by the media to turn it into its opposite. In this way, they promote a mass education to young people from the peripheries of cities and thus assuming the political character of the movement.

Therefore, the young students, with their aesthetic “critic-destructive” and “positive-affirmative”¹⁵ – or even “extreme”, in the Heideggerian version – hit the heart of the school, that did not longer listen to them anymore. By school we mean the bureaucracy, the principal and the teachers as well (most of them were thinking only of retirement and removal). The teachers, by their time, had the opportunity to reframe their experiences when they felt supported, intellectually, emotionally and politically, assuming then their authority in other moulds.

15 Actually, we were inspired by two strands of analysis which says that, according to Giacóia (2005), Nietzsche would have destroyed the pillars of Western metaphysics.

It became evident to us all – university researchers and teacher-researchers – the relevance of using a method that opens, according to the reading made by Massimo Canevacci (2005b) on Bataille, the participant eye of Eros. This eye, which looks and allows to be seen, is thereby invaded by the experience of the unknown and, in intimate contact with this unknown, makes it possible to re found the authority.

But why the approach of authors who, although keeping some “elective affinities”, have unmatched epistemic guidelines?

The theoretical discussion occasioned by all of these issues raised by the field research was very rewarding, as well as the reading of Nietzsche and Bataille, which prompted us to roam around different theoretical interpretations and confrontations, seeking like this to take seriously Nietzsche’s perspectivism. We also believe that including this open reading to new interpretations can subsidize a project of “radical” changes to be implemented in the public school system, if we do not want to lose the opportunity to educate the new generations.

Le rap, le hip-hop et le funk: l’«éroptique» de l’art des jeunes envahit la scène desécoles publiques dans les métropoles du Brésil

Résumé: L’irrévérence et le ton critique de certains rappers et le gai balancement du corps érotique proposé par le funk suggèrent la perspective d’un nouveau scénario pour les métropoles du Brésil, où la pluralité de l’art des jeunes surgit comme moyen de faire face aux marques laissées par de profondes fractures sociales. Les concepts de «vision dionysiaque du monde», d’«esthétique extrême» et d’un «par-delà les valeurs reçues» de Nietzsche, ainsi que l’«érotisme» selon Bataille, ont servi de guide à la méthode de «rupture de champ» conçue par Herrmann, essentielle pour que soient repensées les notions d’autorité et de tradition dans la société contemporaine à partir des idées véhiculées par le rap et par le funk. Seule une ethnographie du regard qui capte la dimension érotique – «l’éroptique», selon Canevacci – et irrévérente de ces manifestations, peut reconnaître en elles une esthétique, capable, comme le dirait Nietzsche, d’opérer un véritable renversement des valeurs dans notre société et, dans le cas, à l’intérieur même de l’école.

Mots-clés: Cultures des jeunes. Culture de l’école. Éroptique. Esthétique critique et sociale.

O rap, o hip-hop e o funk: a “eróptica” da arte juvenil invade a cena das escolas públicas nas metrópoles brasileiras

Resumo: A irreverência e a criticidade de alguns rappers e o gingar alegre do corpo erótico proposto pelo funk sugerem um novo cenário para as metrópoles do país, em que a pluralidade da arte juvenil surge como forma de enfrentamento das marcas deixadas por fraturas sociais profundas. Os conceitos de “visão dionisíaca de mundo”, “estética extrema” e “transvaloração dos valores”, de Nietzsche, e o “erotismo”, segundo Bataille, nortearam o método de ruptura de campo, concebido por Herrmann. Este, essencial para se repensar as noções de autoridade e tradição na sociedade contemporânea a partir das ideias veiculadas pelo rap e pelo funk. Consideramos que somente uma etnografia do olhar que apanhe a dimensão erótica e irreverente – a “eróptica”, segundo Canevacci – destas manifestações poderia nelas identificar uma estética afirmativa e crítica, como diria Nietzsche, capaz de produzir uma verdadeira reversão dos valores em nossa sociedade e, no caso, no interior da própria escola.

Palavras-chave: Culturas juvenis. Cultura escolar. Eróptica. Estética crítico-social.

El rap, el hip-hop y el funk: la “eróptica” del arte juvenil invade la escena de las metrópolis brasileñas

Resumen: La irreverencia y el pensamiento crítico de algunos “rappers” y el “gingar” alegre del cuerpo erótico propuesto por el funk, ambos cultivados en la periferia de las grandes ciudades brasileñas, sugiere un nuevo escenario para las metrópolis Del país, donde la pluralidad del arte joven aparece como forma de confrontación de las marcas producidas por “fracturas sociales profundas”. Los conceptos de “visión dionisíaca del mundo”, “estética extrema” y “transvaloración de los valores”, de Nietzsche, y el “erotismo”, según Bataille, nortearon el método de ruptura de campo, concebido por Herrmann. Éste, esencial para repensarse las nociones de autoridad y tradición en la sociedad contemporánea a partir de las ideas vehiculadas por el rap y por el funk. Solamente una etnografía de la mirada que capture la dimensión erótica e irreverente – la “eróptica”, como sugiere Canevacci – de estas manifestaciones podría identificar en ellas una estética afirmativa y crítica, como diría Nietzsche, capaz de producir una verdadera reversión de los valores en nuestra sociedad y, en nuestro caso, en el interior de la propia escuela.

Palabras clave: Culturas juveniles. Cultura escolar. Eróptica. Estética crítico-social.

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