

# About a scene from *Fim de Semana no Parque* by Racionais MC's

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## On this side of the bridge

**A**VIGNETTE opens *Raio X Brasil*, an album released in 1993 by Brazilian rap group Racionais MC's (formed by Mano Brown, Edy Rock, Ice Blue, and Kl Jay). The cadence of the narrator's speech, heard in the background, is suggested here by the following lines:

1993, fudidamente voltando, Racionais,  
usando e abusando da nossa liberdade de expressão,  
um dos poucos direitos que o jovem negro ainda tem nesse país.  
Você está entrando  
no mundo da informação, autoconhecimento, denúncia e diversão.  
Esse é o raio-x do Brasil.  
Seja bem-vindo.

Then we hear a dedication without any music background: "A toda a comunidade pobre da zona sul". The song *Fim de Semana no Parque* (Mano Brown) begins and the speech turns into a rap, which is a form of music and, in some cases, such as that of Racionais, one of the elements of Hip Hop (Racional MC's, s. d.).<sup>1</sup>

Right from the beginning we realize that, among other purposes, the album is meant to criticize Brazilian society from the standpoint of a "black youngster". And we also understand to which portion of São Paulo *Fim de Semana no Parque* will portray only what happens *on this side of the bridge*, with "this side" being the so-called *periferias* [outskirts] in the South Zone of São Paulo. In fact, the standpoint of *Fim de Semana no Parque* builds on the experiences of the "poor community", hence the dedication.

As already explained by Racionais in more than one interview, the aspects below were the foundations of their work until 2006, when their latest album *1000 trutas 1000 tretas* was released: a) singing about "a glimpse into the *periferia* and *favela* [slums], into our day-to-day lives and of many of those we know", so that the songs reflect "the lives of many people and the way of thinking of Racionais" (Santos, 1997); b) rhyming about "things that happen in the

favelas, on the streets” (Kalili, 1998, p.19); c) reaching out to people “who are suffering” (Neves, 2006, p.264).

Obviously, some members have changed over the group’s career and, as a result, so did its viewpoints, at least “because not all blacks think alike” (Brito, 2006). Some traits, however, have remained unchanged so far: a) the rap of Racionais MC’s “is not related to violence”: “it experiences violence, it was born into” violence (Júlio Maria, 2006). The speech of Mano Brown in *Negro Drama*, written by himself and Edy Rock (Racionais, 2002), is exemplary: “Eu não li, eu não assisti:/ Eu vivo o negro drama, eu sou o negro drama, eu sou fruto do negro drama”; b) the rap of Racionais MC’s is a “discourse against elite” (Brito, 2006). Edy Rock’s and KL Jay’s song *Beco sem Saída* (Racionais, 1990) provides an example:

As ruas refletem a face oculta  
De um poema falso que sobrevive às nossas custas  
A burguesia, conhecida como classe nobre,  
Tem nojo e odeia a todos nós, negros pobres,  
Por outro lado, adoram a nossa pobreza,  
Pois é dela que é feita a sua maldita riqueza;

c) the rap of Racionais MC’s is impelled by a philosophy of life: “Impose yourself, you don’t depend on them, many of us have been crushed” (Brito, 2006); the group’s overall work is proof of this attitude, but special mention should be made of *Racistas otários* by Mano Brown and Ice Blue (Racionais, 1990):

Os sociólogos preferem ser imparciais  
E dizem ser financeiro o nosso dilema  
Mas se analisarmos bem mais, você descobre  
Que negro e branco pobre se parecem mas não são iguais  
(...)  
Os poderosos são covardes desleais  
Espancam negros nas ruas por motivos banais  
E nossos ancestrais, por igualdade lutaram,  
Se rebelaram, morreram – E hoje, o que fazemos?  
(...)  
No meu país o preconceito é eficaz  
Te cumprimentam na frente, te dão um tiro por trás.

In short, there are two important aspects to consider about the experiences of the “poor community” portrayed in *Fim de semana no Parque*. The first one is that *this side of the bridge* refers to areas specifically defined by the geography and history of São Paulo. In the so-called *periferias*, a number of neighborhoods remain at the same time separated from and connected to the expanded downtown area of São Paulo by bridges over the Pinheiros and Tietê Rivers. In these areas, the social experience is often significantly different from the set of

rules and practices observed in *elite* areas. As the group sings in the 2002 album *Nada como um dia após o outro* in the chorus of *Da ponte pra cá* (Mano Brown): “Não adianta querer, tem que ser, tem que pá/ O mundo é diferente da ponte pra cá/ Não adianta querer ser, tem que ter pra trocar/ O mundo é diferente da ponte pra cá”. This is basically the result of different forms of violence suffered in the area, ranging from the violence perpetrated by vigilantes and police officers to the indifference and satisfaction of those on *the other side*. As we can hear in *Pânico na Zona Sul* (Mano Brown) from the 1990 album *Holocausto Urbano*:

Então, quando o dia escurece,  
Só quem é de lá sabe o que acontece  
Ao que me parece, prevalece a ignorância e nós  
Estamos sós, ninguém quer ouvir a nossa voz  
(...)  
Pois simplesmente é conveniente  
Por que ajudariam se nos julgam delinquentes?  
(...)  
O sensacionalismo, pra eles, é o máximo  
Acabar com delinquentes, eles acham ótimo  
Desde que nenhum parente ou então, é lógico,  
Seus próprios filhos sejam os próximos.

And there is also the violence committed by local *manos*, “sem dó e sem dor, foda-se a sua cor”, as sung in *Capítulo 4, Versículo 3* (Mano Brown) from the 1997 album *Sobrevivendo no inferno*. As a result, “De Guaianases ao extremo sul de Santo Amaro/ Ser um ‘Preto Tipo A’ custa caro”.

But that’s not all. Further analyzing what we just observed, the second aspect is that, in the rap of Racionais, *this side of the bridge* refers to areas defined by economic, social and racial relationships seen throughout São Paulo, not only in part of it. And these relationships are linked to the Brazilian economy, society, culture, politics as a whole – even though that whole is perceived, felt, evaluated, judged by everyday events in geographically well-defined areas whose existing values are often different from the *good standards of contemporary civilization*, as if they were a “side effect” of these standards (*Capítulo 4, versículo 3*).

For this reason, Racionais MC’s songs do not offer peace to those who, *comfortably installed in an uncomfortable situation*, peek at the other side of the bridge with the – conscious or unconscious – desire to enjoy the spectacle of violence among the poor, i.e., to peek at the violence that happens outside the – real or imaginary – walls of the *particular city* where they live, work and shop. Maybe that is why a luxury magazine produced in São Paulo listed, in its December 2010 and January 2011 issues, *Os Saltimbancos* (musical play) and *Racionais* as products that appeal to the “boutique communist” stereotype. By “purposely” trivializing what it calls “life forms” (sic), it turns out that the magazine gives us an important clue: in the bank accounts of a portion of the São

Paulo *elite*, the exchange value of Racionais MC's is closer to that of a musical play translated and adapted by Chico Buarque than that of songs, books, films and TV series that deliver the *fantastic show of death* or sell *the police management of life*.<sup>2</sup>

### **Olha o meu povo nas favelas e vai perceber**

In this article, I will discuss a scene from *Fim de semana no Parque*. My intention is to analyze how the word *parque* [park] takes a concrete form in the voice of Mano Brown, a voice that embodies the narrator, and to interpret the relationships between *the two sides of the bridge* addressed in the passage. Based on this analysis, I will try and suggest some developments that will help better understand the work of Racionais MC's. This is an interesting moment because the group's work is at a turning point. Statements made by Mano Brown at the end of 2009 indicate changes, but it is clear that they cannot be assessed until the next album is released (Caramante, 2009, p.82, 83, 88):

It seems as if Racionais have a primer to stick to and we were not the ones who wrote it – the public opinion did. We're hostages of our own words, but I can't be held hostage by anything, not even by rap. We've got to break free. That old Mano Brown has turned into an addicted system, a way too obvious statue. Just ask that question and he'll have that answer. I was mapped and tracked.

I'll no longer depict anywhere to anyone, much less to the rich. I'll no longer map out my hood for these people. I'll not talk about the problems that happen there to anyone.

When slavery was about to be abolished, there were many children of whites with blacks abandoned on the streets who were neither one nor the other, who ended up as thieves. The first class of abandoned people was that of children of whites with blacks, the boss's rejected son or daughter. These were the first bums, who were neither good for one nor for the other, neither as a slave nor as a lord. It's just a small theory of mine, not a rule.

I was poor and crazy, I couldn't think of a playboy as a human being. But now I can, though it doesn't mean I like playboys. I know they probably have children, a mother and all, but this is not to say I want to be part of their family. If there's any kind of radicalism, I'm living it more today.

The first time it appears in *Fim de semana no Parque*, the adverbial (of place) refers to a “jardim público arborizado para lazer e ornamentação”, a *dictionary-style definition* found in *Houaiss*. The character sings that he is “a uma hora da sua quebrada”, moving around the city to “aproveitar o sol/ Encontrar os camaradas pr' um basquetebol”. Along the way, he says:

Daqui eu vejo uma caranga do ano  
Toda equipada e o tiozinho guiando

Com seus filhos ao lado, estão indo ao parque  
 Eufóricos, brinquedos eletrônicos  
 Automaticamente eu imagino  
 A molecada lá da área como é que tá  
 Provavelmente correndo pra lá e pra cá  
 Jogando bola, descalços nas ruas de terra  
 É!, brincam do jeito que dá  
 Gritando palavrão, é o jeito deles  
 Eles não têm videogame, às vezes nem televisão  
 Mas todos eles têm dom, um São Cosme e São Damião  
 A única proteção (proteção, proteção, proteção...)

Mano Brown has said that a rapper must have “the gift of rhyme” (Kalili, 1998, p.17), and we should bear in mind that a rhyme is both a mnemonic device (besides being a popular song, rap sometimes is also an oral literature) and a rhythmic backing (the term *rap* originated as an abbreviation for *rhythm and poetry*). However, while the first two verses of this passage blatantly rhyme with each other (“ano” and “guiando”, an approximate rhyme; they are sung words), the following verse deserves special mention. Did the sound and rhythm become weaker in it?

On the contrary, because there is an internal rhyme: “filhos” and “indo”, an assonant rhyme. The same happens in the next verse, structured in a new assonant, internal rhyme: “eufóricos” and “eletrônicos”. And all the stressed syllables in these four words coincide with the electronic drum beat and fall either on the beginning of the second beat of the bar (“filhos” and “eufóricos”) or on the beginning of the fourth beat (“indo” and “eletrônicos”), i.e., the cadence of lines is characterized by an accentuation at the beginning of the two theoretically weaker beats in quadruple time, a musical technique not unfamiliar to those who know melody syncopation techniques in Brazil or the United States.

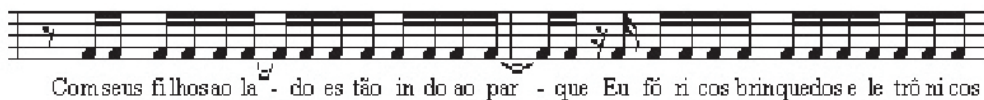


Figure 1 – Rhythmic transcription of two verses of *Fim de semana no Parque*, sung by Mano Brown at 1:57.

Then, “Automaticamente eu imagino” has two purposes in the song. The sound of “imagino” follows the assonant rhyme of “filhos” and “indo” – and its stressed syllable falls on the beginning of the fourth beat. However, perhaps even more significant in the narrative is the use of “automaticamente”: against the euphoria of electronic toys and the fully-equipped car, the rapper sings about his automatic thought, remembering and imaging the weekend in his community. And so, a little further ahead in the verse “Jogando bola, descalços nas ruas

de terra”, we can see a good example of a major thrust of Racionais MC’s rap songs; not the only thrust of the group’s work, but rather one of them.

This verse speaks of an experience *on this side of the bridge* based on literalness, on everyday language, without any transposition of meaning. But the story is structured into the sound and rhythm arrangement of words. Proof of that is the echo between “terra” and “É!”, an interjection that opens the next verse: the symmetry between the stressed vowels emphasizes the rhythmic accents of the narrator’s singing, which now falls off the electronic drum beats at some points – another device that is not strange to those familiar with forms of syncopation used in popular songs in Brazil, the United States or Cuba. It should also be noticed that the open vowel “é” had already been stressed in the previous verse, “A molecada lá da área como é que tá”, when it fell on the beginning of the fourth beat.

A mo le ca da lá da á rea co mo é que tá      Pro vavel mente correndo pra lá e pra cá

Jo gan do bo la des calços nas ru as de te rra      É! brin cam do jei to quedá

Figure 2 – Rhythmic transcription of four verses of *Fim de semana no Parque*, sung by Mano Brown at 2:05.

Next, there is also a sound reiteration at the junction of the verses “Gri-tando palavra, é o jeito *deles/ Eles* não têm videogame, às vezes nem televisão”. And the stressed part of “*deles*” – which is very important to define the verse measure – is once again sung off the electronic drum beats.

Gri tan do pa lavrão é o jei to de les      E les não têm vi deo ga meãs ve zes nem te le vi são

Figure 3 – Rhythmic transcription of two other verses of *Fim de semana no Parque*, sung by Mano Brown at 2:16.

The way the singer plays with the similarities or identities in the sound of words, the rhythm play between the singing and the accompanying beat, all this arrangement presupposes and shows the singer-songwriter’s intellectual work and musical sensibility. On the listener’s part, without much risk of error, it can be said that the awareness of senses is awakened before the awareness of reasoning, that is, before the actual understanding of the issue addressed by the song. In this regard, rap is no different than any other form of music: it seduces and captivates for its sound in the first place, although it is precisely the lyrics that

show us “what is more important in terms of content” (Hegel, 2002, p.326). In passing, considering that “placing the main interest (on the lyrics) is a non-musical approach” (ibidem, p.288), it is worth thinking of the role played today by the more or less widespread contempt or indifference toward the semantics of sung words; amid nursery rhymes for adults, verses on adolescent sexual exploitation and hits, the rap of Racionais MC’s has always been distinct: it has never underestimated intelligence and its work involving rhythm and poetry has never ceased to be interesting – “information, self-knowledge, complaint and fun”.

The literal narration of experiences in the “poor community”, the sound and rhythmic arrangement of words – this thrust is sustained by the combination of facts and the establishment of relationships between *the two sides of the bridge*. First, we have a parallel situation: *on the other side of the bridge*, where children have video games, cars and public parks, and *on this side of the bridge*, where children play ball in bare feet on dirt streets. As noted so far, the adjective “public”, linked to the notion of “park”, is only a reality for those on one of the two sides; not for those in the “poor” or “less favored communities”, to use a euphemism that is elegantly used *on the other side*. In fact, these communities are left with “dirt (public) streets”, which reinforces the disparity. Let us analyze what happens next in the scene, when this parallel situation turns into a confrontation.

No último Natal, Papai Noel escondeu um brinquedo  
Prateado, brilhava no meio do mato  
Um menininho de 10 anos achou o presente  
Era de ferro, com 12 balas no pente  
E o fim de ano foi melhor pra muita gente  
Eles também gostariam de ter bicicletas  
De ver seu pai fazendo cooper, tipo atleta  
Gostam de ir ao parque e se divertir  
E que alguém os ensinasse a dirigir  
Mas eles só querem paz, e mesmo assim é um sonho  
Fim de semana no Parque Santo Antônio  
(Santo Antônio, Santo Antônio, Santo Antônio...)

The first version of this passage has an internal, assonant rhyme in “Noel” and “escondeu”. The sound effect that stands out the most, however, is the recurrent use of *u*. In the following verse, there is a new internal, but approximate rhyme between the first and last words: “prateado” and “mato”. As noted, the other verses have a consonant, external rhyme. All of these approaches, plus the rhythm of verses on the accompanying beats, continue to make listeners feel how *things that happen on the streets* are arranged in the song and most likely also make them think about the confrontation that is narrated.

There is an often-repeated opinion, both in the media and informal websites, that Racionais’ rap songs are apologists for crime.<sup>3</sup> As *each case is a case*, I

will restrict myself to this passage of *Fim de semana no Parque*, where crime is associated with, among other factors, poverty, perhaps extreme poverty, economic inequalities, the business calendar, and also with pure chance. Alluding to a type of crime committed by “um menininho de 10 anos” [a 10-year-old little boy], the rapper notes, without any irony in his voice, that “o fim de ano foi melhor pra muita gente” [the holiday season was better for many people].<sup>4</sup> Five verses synthesize his memory, and this concision is sufficient to mark the affection imposed by the diminutive, both in the song and in everyday language, and the lack of commitment to the immediately injured party, who can be assumed to live *on the other side of the bridge*.

Shortly before, a reference had been made to the euphoria surrounding toys and next-generation cars. It is a kind of euphoria that the “poor community”, playing its part, can only experience as a class of *abstract and free money-subjects* – and *without money*.<sup>5</sup> In this scenario that is anything but simple, the main role of the *menininho* in the song is to give an example of revenge, a terrible revenge.

If we think beyond the inner satisfaction of “muita gente” [many people], it is clear that there is nothing substantially progressive in the immediate acquisition of goods through violence, even when we wonder whether or not the *menininho* materialized an ideal that, after all, was promised to him by the “rádio, jornal, revista e outdoor” (Capítulo 4, versículo 3). And the *Robin Hood* role is not progressive either, as it mixes innocence – children, Santa Claus, toy, gift – with violence and crime.

The rapper’s role, on the other hand, is progressive: from the viewpoint of those who live *on this side of the bridge*, he portrays situations that warn that things must change. “If they don’t, there’ll be revenge” (Garcia, 2007, p.205; 2006, p.62). Inevitably, this parallel situation, marked by a brutal inequality between the two sides, with *the other side* situated above and *this side* situated below, will result in more or less violent confrontations. From this perspective, the rapper’s attitude is in itself a response to the Brazilian tradition of “cordial patronage” and “authoritarian paternalism” (Kehl, 2010; 2000, p.217). With his work, the rapper does not bend his head or speak only when allowed, and his thoughts are centered on freedom and engagement. If there is any crime in his attitude, then it is probably because, using a joke by José Antônio Pasta Junior (s. d., p.11), “in Brazil, the simple idea of autonomous judgment is a crime worse than murder”.<sup>6</sup>

No doubt, the rapper takes the side of those who often inspire a “deep, visceral and quite understandable feeling of anger and aversion, of disregard and contempt, if not hate” toward “honest people” (Joanides, 2003, p.107). In fact, it might be difficult for these people to accept that “the narrator speaks using a different logic, a logic shared by those who understand the reasons for crime but do not support it” (Kehl, 2002, p.32).



It has been seen that the rapper understands the *menininho* attitude. But it has also been noted that he knows some of the dreams of the “molecada lá da área” [kids out there in the hood]: the children dream of having a bicycle and a fellow father, capable of being a role model; or perhaps less than that and just as unattainable: they dream of living in peace. Likewise, the narrator had sung “Estou a uma hora da minha quebrada/ Logo mais, quero ver todos em paz” [I’m one hour away from my hood/ I wanna see everyone in peace, soon] at the beginning of his report.

In the passage below, the word *parque* refers concretely to two different places, presumably distant from each other in the city: the Santo Antônio Park neighborhood and a public park. Children “like to go to the park”, they like to “have fun” there. They like it, as the verb indicates, they do not dream of it. However, the scene I chose to analyze ends in the Santo Antônio Park neighborhood. With the aim of better understanding what this end entails, we need to move a little ahead and analyze two later scenes and the chorus.

It is probably needless to say, but it bears repeating: in the public space of a park, there are people who live *on both sides of the bridge*. Symptomatically, we hear about a closed club a little further ahead in *Fim de semana no Parque*. And the narrator, in Edy Rock’s voice, draws our attention:

Tem corrida de kart, dá pra ver  
É igualzinho o que eu vi ontem na tevê  
Olha só aquele clube que da hora  
Olha o pretinho vendo tudo do lado de fora  
Nem se lembra do dinheiro que tem que levar  
Do seu pai bem louco gritando dentro do bar  
Nem se lembra de ontem, de hoje, o futuro  
Ele apenas sonha através do muro  
(Whistle of a vignette of Programa Silvio Santos –  
a famous Brazilian Sunday TV show)

The shift from a public park to a private club in the Racionais song shows from another angle a feeling of the middle and upper classes that had already been mentioned in a poem by Francisco Alvim (2000, p.85): “PARQUE// É bom/ mas é muito misturado”. [PARK// It’s good/ But it’s very mixed].<sup>7</sup> From *this side of the bridge*, the club looks just like the one shown on the television. It is true that everyone can know what a kart racing is from what they saw “ontem na tevê” [yesterday on the TV]; it is prosaic. However, when we couple the rapper’s memory with the vignette of the Sunday TV show, things reach another level. The little black kid sees and dreams of the future, *from the outside*, just as he was watching television. He is enchanted and paralyzed watching other people having fun. Here, it does not matter the extent to which he looks at the club’s image as a reality, dream, fantasy, deception, perversity, etc. He learns what is there to desire and the images ease all his suffering, making the time freeze. Unlike that *menininho* de 10 anos, this black kid remains paralyzed and “nem se lembra do dinheiro que

tem que levar” [doesn’t even remember the money he must bring home]. But the narrative is interrupted without clarifying a key point: what would the boy have done after waking up from his dream? The decision not to finish the scene, within the specific context of this rap song, is a form of criticism.

It has been said that urban leisure, just like the faces of heroes on the screen and of people on the streets, is “portrayed as an unrealistic magazine cover image” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p.146). This type of experience criticized by Racionais, perceptively observing the links between the cultural industry and the city’s entertainment spaces, is often celebrated *on the other side*. Let us stick with an example of the mainstream media (Tófoli, 2006):

Instead of mannequins, two armchairs from the 1960s, a coffee table and old fashion magazines. In the last 40 days, anyone who walked by the store Jackie Usava on Lorena avenue in Jardins (São Paulo west zone) felt surprised at the showcase.

Turned into a living room, it always features different models: the customers themselves. [...]

“I usually come with a friend and we keep watching people passing by on the street. We even grade the clothes”, she says. On Saturdays, she stops by the scenario/room to drink champagne and eat a piece of cake. “Other stores should copy this idea. [...]”

Rap’s response to this whole picture will be twofold. Again in Mano Brown’s voice, the narrator will protest against the situation in the outskirts, as he talks about what he sees when he gets to his neighborhood. It can be noted then that, while “fica difícil brincar” [it’s hard to play], it is easy to get involved with drugs, guns and alcoholic beverages (MC Empada, 2007). In practice, legal and illegal goods are mixed together, just like the weekends of poor kids blend with the profitable trade of grown-ups.<sup>8</sup> One of the great successes of *Fim de semana no Parque* is to bring the gap between the ordinary lives of these kids and the international transactions of those adults, a gap that theoretically exists, astoundingly closer:

Aqui não vejo nenhum clube poliesportivo  
Pra molecada frequentar, nenhum incentivo  
O investimento no lazer é muito escasso  
O centro comunitário é um fracasso  
Mas aí, se quiser se destruir está no lugar certo  
Tem bebida e cocaína sempre por perto  
A cada esquina, 100, 200 metros  
Nem sempre é bom ser esperto  
Schmidt, Taurus, Rossi, Dreher ou Campari  
Pronúncia agradável, estrago inevitável  
Nomes estrangeiros que estão no nosso meio pra matar  
M – E – R – D – A

The other direction of the rapper's response is only apparently a paradox because of its protests. It is about appreciating the joy of a weekend in different parks. Thus, starting from a public *parque* where income and skin color differences are concretely present, the narrator will enthusiastically talk about the *Parques* that are neighborhoods *on this side of the bridge*. Fighting for dignity, the rap song mentions the names of several places: Parque Santo Antônio, Parque Regina, Parque Ipê, Jardim São Luiz, Jardim Ingá, Parque Arari, Vaz de Lima, Morro do Piolho, Vale das Virtudes, Pirajussara. This is not the last time the group takes this approach.

And in the chorus of *Fim de semana no Parque*, Racionais MC's works alongside Jorge Ben (who was later called Jorge Ben Jor, as is known). It would not be the last time the group would establish this relationship either.

(sampled voice of Jorge Ben) Vamos passear no parque, uou!

(sampled voice of Jorge Ben) Deixa o menino brincar

(Mano Brown) Fim de semana no Parque

(sampled voice of Jorge Ben) Vamos passear no parque, uou!

(sampled voice of Jorge Ben) Vou rezar pra esse domingo não chover

The power of the chorus does not lie in the creatively sampled phrases and in the swing of the rhythm. This creativity and swing are undoubtedly important, but the power also lies in the occupation of a public space as described by black artist Jorge Ben Jor, who has always been widely recognized in the hegemonic music industry and had a fundamental presence in the dancing parties organized and attended by black people in São Paulo since the 1970s. Therefore, the chorus symbolically transforms what prejudice and segregation have disseminated about black people, particularly poor blacks.<sup>9</sup> It transforms humiliation into pride *on this side of the bridge*, in the *parques* and in the *Parques*.

## Notes

1 This article is part of a broader study on the work of Racionais MC's. My intention is to further analyze some key points shown in two previous texts (“Ouvindo Racionais MC's” and “Diário de um detento: uma interpretação”), but the analysis can be read autonomously. For a better understanding of the perspective adopted in the article, see Maria Rita Kehl (2000, p.231-2): “May the self-esteem and dignity of those in the outskirts not be dependent on acceptance by the white elite. But this is not to say that they can't establish relationships and other forms of communication, including with groups that are more or less marginal to this elite. In this case, the identification, which initially involves the skin color, expands to include other senses: exclusion, outrage, repudiation of violence and injustice. It also involves the identification with the style – the songs, dance, rhythm and poetry, besides the ‘attitude’ defended by the rappers– and the effects of aesthetic creation on the social field. We are not ‘all’ poor blacks from the outskirts, but we are much more than they thought when they began to talk”.

2 The first highlighted expression in the paragraph is adapted from Erich Kästner (apud

Benjamin, 1991, p.197). The other two highlighted expressions are based on Arbex Junior (2011). As for the magazine I refer to, it is called *Legião*.

- 3 In principle, no subject should be exemplified by texts found on websites that, say, are written in a quite careless way about the possible consequences of expressing opinions in public space. However, one of these voluntary statements serves to warn us of a certain childish and terrible ideology which Racionais songs have always been against. In expressing his view on an interview by Mano Brown (Júlio Maria, 2006), a man wrote the following text (unchanged text): “I HATE RAP. // I HATE MANO BROWN // I HATE THESE THUG-LIFE NIGGAS. // These guys are screwing up Brazil and should not exist at all. Rap is not music, it’s just a bunch of thugs saying that they’re thieves, bandits and that the place where they live is shit. There are no instruments, there’s nothing. // Long live the// TOBIAS DE AGUIAR OSTENSIVE PATROLLING// JIU JITSU And that’s it”.
- 4 By observing that Mano Brown’s speech is not ironic, we are faced with one of the limits not only of this article, but also of this type of analysis. I am referring to what Hegel (2002, p.340) called the “effective artistic production” of singing, something clearly impossible to show here – although it should be mentioned.
- 5 For my purposes, I adapt a statement by Robert Kurz (1999, p.180) in another context, but which has already been used by Roberto Schwarz (1999, p.171) in an analysis of the current Brazilian society, based on the novel *Cidade de Deus* (“City of God”) by Paulo Lins.
- 6 It is necessary to quote José Antônio Pasta Junior’s observation in more details (s. d., p.11) so that, by indicating the joke’s context, I can show that that historical issue addressed by Racionais MC’s is as contemporary as it is traditional in Brazil, and much wider than suggested by the analyzed passage of *Fim de semana no Parque*: “The ‘old’ Raul Pompeia [...] used to talk about the unique ‘master’s fetishism’ in our midst. Somehow, we tend to work here in a kind of interrupted master-servant dialectic, without a tipping point, i.e., the one in which the master’s position is occupied. This moment, which would be to overcome by preserving, is replaced with its own duplication, with the master’s narcissistic replication. In this game of imprisoning and regressive mirrors, any expression of autonomy is a sign of betrayal, apostasy and other heinous crimes. It threatens the narcissism of the replicators, who become furious and go about looking for scapegoats. In Brazil, the simple idea of autonomous judgment is a crime worse than murder. You can ask Dom Casmurro”.
- 7 To better evaluate the point of view of the poem by Francisco Alvim on *Fim de semana no Parque*, see Roberto Schwarz (2002, p.6): “Here is an informed opinion ‘sui generis’ favorable to public improvements, albeit hostile to popular participation. It is nothing less than a key variant of national progressivism, which is still closely linked to colonial origins nowadays. It should be stated unequivocally that a rich-only park would not admit an indistinct mass of poor people, be they black or white, except on the condition of workers, such as babysitters, guards, caretakers, and dog walkers. The old model, before Brazil was pseudo-integrated by the media, makes you smile. Nevertheless, the anti-people feeling has not disappeared and continues, with the necessary adjustments, to support social fracture”. As highlighted, it should be noticed that so far Racionais MC’s songs have disagreed with the critical perspective that fails to distinguish between poor blacks and whites.
- 8 Even running the risk of extrapolating the limits of this article, it is worth mentioning

that in 1997, four years after *Raio X Brasil*, the Faculdade de Saúde Pública [Public Health School] of the USP [University of São Paulo] presented a research with 390 relatives of children admitted to the then FEBEM [State Foundation for the Well-Being of Minors]. The research coordinator, Rubens Adorno, said: “The data show that family structure is not the main factor leading children to live on the streets, but rather the lack of public spaces for leisure, culture and education, which should fill the idle time of these young people” (Lozano, 1997).

9 During a concert on April 25, 2004, recorded for the DVD *1000 trutas 1000 tretas*, Mano Brown “thanked everyone for being present and spoke of the importance of [Jorge] Ben Jor, criticizing the elite public that considered him an alienated (according to his words) in the 1960s and stressing his importance in establishing a racial policy in Brazil. Ben did not comment on it” (Sanches, 2004). More freely, I further draw on a statement made by Mano Brown about James Brown on Rede Cultura’s TV program *Ensaio* in 2003 and also on a testimony by Celma Regina de Andrade in 1987: “They always seek to bring black singers to the Chic Show dancing party. Before and during the show, they always say something. Tim Maia, for example, always told the people who went to the dance that we should be who we are and not care about what others say. Many young women, even younger than me, suffer prejudice and can’t stop thinking about it. I think just like Tim Maia. I think we should not care about these things” (Andrade, 1988, p.254). About the sampled phrases of Jorge Ben, see MC Empada (2007). It should be stressed that this article does not address other topics, as it is primarily about a scene from *Fim de semana no Parque*. For example, the relationships between rap and samba in the outskirts, as materialized in the participation of Netinho, who was then a member of Brazilian samba band Negritude Junior. Right from the beginning, the differences between Netinho’s musical career and that of the members of Racionais MC’s were the subject of many discussions (Santos, 1997). Another example: the contrast between, on the one hand, the aggressiveness (and envy) with which the narrator sings as he looks at the club, “Olha, olha quanta gente/ Tem sorveteria, cinema, piscina quente/ Olha quanto boy, olha quanta mina/ Afoga essa vaca dentro da piscina”; and, on the other hand, the energy (and pain) with which the narrator sings about his neighborhood, as portrayed by the subversion of a radio slogan and by the observation of the female figure of an *tiazinha* juxtaposed to the figure of a police officer who does not bring any kind of security: “A número, número 1 em baixa renda da cidade/ Comunidade zona sul é dignidade/ Tem um corpo no escadão, a tiazinha desce o morro/ Polícia, a morte, polícia, socorro”.

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*ABSTRACT*– This article analyzes some musical and poetic techniques of the rap *Fim de semana no Parque* (1993) and means to study some critical aspects mentioned by Racionais MC's about the life in São Paulo city and in Brazil.

*KEYWORDS*: Racionais MC's, Brazilian rap, Brazilian popular music, Brazilian contemporary society.

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