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To Kill an MC

Brazil's New Music and its Discontents

Ronaldo Lemos

Introduction

On 6 July 2013, the Brazilian 'funk carioca' musician Daniel Pellegrine, known as MC Daleste, was killed on stage while performing in front of 5,000 people in the city of Campinas. Daleste was first shot in the armpit. Not knowing what was going on, he shouted at the audience. A second fatal shot hit him in the abdomen. All was instantly caught on video by his fans, some of whom later posted the killing on YouTube. The police concluded that Daleste was shot from a distance of 40 metres, indicating that he was probably hit by a sharpshooter. Daleste (his name is a contraction of 'from the East', in reference to the 'East Zone', the largest metropolitan area in Sao Paulo) was 20 years old.

Even though virtually unknown by the upper economic classes, Daleste was one of the most popular artists in Brazil. Videos of his music had reached more than 100 million views on YouTube before his death. He was capable of drawing thousands to his concerts, something that not many artists in the country can easily do. Daleste's music was produced and distributed mostly online, through the same informal channels that made other music scenes in Brazil, such as Tecnobrega (Lemos 2008), electronic Forró, Lambadão Cuiabano, Pisadinha and Funk Carioca itself popular (and economically lucrative).¹

¹ This mode of production and distribution based on technology, the internet and other networks such as cellphones is actually a global phenomenon. I like to use the term 'globoperipheral music' to describe them; others like to use the term 'ghettotech'. Since

Daleste's killing raises important questions about the mechanisms of popularization and acceptance of these new, decentralized music scenes. This is music produced in the globally connected peripheries, for the peripheries and everyone else, outside of the traditional legitimated channels of the 'centre'. The emergence of these scenes, the fact that they heavily embrace and adapt to technical innovation, and their economic and symbolic success, all challenge traditional cultural practices and modes of production.

This chapter departs from the killing of MC Daleste to briefly discuss some of the new dimensions of how peripheral music is created and disseminated in Brazil. It shows that technology has reorganized not only the production and dissemination of music (as described in my work on *Tecnobrega*, see Lemos and Castro 2008), but also its forms of marketing and promotion. It describes how many (if not most) music hits in Brazil are now created by means of a chain of appropriation and reappropriation of ideas that challenge the traditional practices of intellectual property. It also describes aspects of the cultural and economic impact of these scenes, and briefly touches upon the reactions to MC Daleste's killing and the inherent prejudice which peripheral music still suffers at the hands of the upper classes.

Before we start, a quick note about terminology. I use the term 'peripheral music' as shorthand for 'globoperipheral music' (Lemos 2008; Domb 2012). As I mentioned in an earlier essay:

As one can observe, the idea of 'periphery' used here does not have much to do with a geographical concept. Nor does it have any relation to the separation between rich and poor, developed and developing, or even North and South. These music scenes ... emerge in any place where there is a computer, creativity and people wanting to dance. The invisibility of these scenes happens only when we decide (consciously or unconsciously) not to pay attention to them. For that reason, thinkers such as Hermano Vianna affirm that the 'centre' is becoming

I disagree with the idea that these scenes are products of 'ghettos', and since they may actually be the most popular music in the world, and also because I dislike ghettos of any kind, I prefer my own term.

more and more ‘the periphery of the periphery’, especially from a symbolic standpoint.

(Lemos and Castro 2008, my translation)

Accordingly, this chapter takes into account precisely the clashes resulting from the reconfiguration of centre and periphery that we have been witnessing over the past 20 years, largely as a result of technological changes which, in turn, have led to a reconfiguration of the public sphere.

How technology reconfigured music promotion, ‘artist development’ and revenue models

In early August 2013, if someone goes on YouTube, types ‘MC Daleste’ into the search bar and selects the filter ‘view counter’, this person will get a very good idea of the MC’s popularity. Counting only the music videos on the first page, the total number of views will reach more than 70 million (sadly, two of the videos show his tragic death). Daleste is not a case of an artist who became popular after his death; he was already a widely popular singer before he died.

Daleste’s music is known as ‘Funk Ostentação’, a variation of ‘Funk Carioca’, the music created in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro in the late 1980s.² Influenced by Miami Bass, but also by all sorts of Brazilian references (such as the drums of the AfroBrazilian religion Candomblé, which led to the beat known as ‘tamborzão’), Funk Carioca has continued to evolve and mutate until today. Furthermore, in the past six years, it has increasingly spread beyond Rio de Janeiro, reaching the peripheries of many other Brazilian cities, including Belo Horizonte, Recife and Sao Paulo.

In Sao Paulo, a city usually identified with the strength of its hip-hop scene, Funk Carioca mutated once again, giving birth to ‘Funk

² Hermano Vianna, the famous Brazilian anthropologist, was the first to study Funk Carioca in the late 1980s. He has made his original work available online (Vianna 2006).

Ostentação'. Even though the rhythm structure and singing style are still close to Funk Carioca, the 'ostentação' variation incorporated the 'bling' aesthetics of hiphop into Funk Carioca. Its lyrics and themes involve money, economic success and, of course, showing off one's wealth.

The main driving force behind Daleste's popularity, as with most other emerging peripheral artists in Brazil, is the internet. His music did not play on the radio, nor did it receive coverage on TV, in newspapers or any other traditional media outlets. The platforms for the dissemination of his music are mostly YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and 4Shared (each playing a different role), and the devices on which they are played and shared 'person to person' are cellphones and, increasingly, tablets.³

YouTube is the main 'home' and display platform for music. It is where a lot of people go to enjoy a track they like. It is also the main medium of discovery. In this sense, YouTube is the source of the links that are then shared on social networks, such as Facebook or Twitter. If you don't have your music uploaded on YouTube, you fail to meet the basic precondition for being shared, so that other people get to know your work. It is important to remember that, like 4Shared, YouTube is also a source for music downloads. Many users go to YouTube using popular websites, browser plug-ins and other tools to 'rip' the songs from the site. It is a much simpler operation than using file-sharing software or even being part of a file-sharing community.⁴ In addition, the catalogue of music available on YouTube is vast and diverse. Most of the peripheral music is simply not available through iTunes, Google Play, Spotify or other official music distribution platforms. As an example, some of MC Daleste's tracks are available on iTunes, but the majority of them are not. They are 'exclusive' YouTube tracks.

³ On the arrival of tablets, besides cellphones, most of them manufactured in China by unknown brands, running Android (or a version thereof), and often costing less than US\$150, in the poor areas of Brazil, see a brief description in Lemos (2013).

⁴ This chapter does not address the legal issues surrounding these operations, either in regard to the law of each specific jurisdiction, or the terms of use of each respective site, but limits itself to the description of how they happen.

But YouTube's role is more complex than this. Alongside Facebook (and to a lesser extent Twitter), it is also the place where most of the A&R takes place. Most artists' promotion and development take place today on YouTube and not through a recording company, an agent or a PR company. Popular YouTube channels and Facebook communities have positioned themselves as important 'broadcasters' of new music.

Interestingly, these channels and communities belong to owners living in poor or marginalized areas, often similar to the socio-economic conditions from where most of the artists also come. These are people who actually make their living from these channels and communities on YouTube and Facebook. The owners of these communities work as entrepreneurs; playing the role of content curators, they select new songs and artists to include in the channel or community. They charge up-and-coming artists money if they want to be included in their selection. There are many examples of such content curators, owners of channels on YouTube who play an important role in the dissemination of new peripheral music, including 'Fonte do Funk SP' or 'Canal Detona Tudo'.

Some owners of popular channels have set up more complex businesses and charge for producing low-cost videos of new artists. The price paid includes also the selection to become part of the channel, in a sort of combo: the owner operates both the production of the video and its dissemination. It is good business; besides being paid by the artists themselves, the owner also benefits from getting a cut of the publicity revenue generated by YouTube, shared with the owner. Examples of YouTube channel owners practising this 'combo' business model include DJ Tom, Klebinho, Villela Videos and P. Drão.

If you want to be updated about what is trending in 'Funk Ostentação' these days, the above links are a great source. The same practices also take place on Facebook. There are many communities, some of them with millions of members, which charge artists for a 'placement' of their songs. Once again, most of them were created by people living in poor areas, who actually make a living by charging musicians (and any other form of business) interested in getting some exposure through

them. Examples of these communities include the comedy-oriented Humor na Web, with more than two million subscribers, or the smaller Ta Serto community, catering to a smaller but niche audience of 37,000.

Of course, artists also have their own pages and communities that frequently also become popular in their own right. For example, before his death, MC Daleste had two profiles on Twitter, one with 60,000 followers (<https://twitter.com/DalesteBR>) and the other with more than 200,000 (<https://twitter.com/DALESTEMF/>). On Facebook, once again, he had two communities, one with more than 350,000 members and the other with more than 250,000 (<http://www.facebook.com/DalesteAutentico>) – these numbers increased almost twofold after his death.

What the above examples demonstrate is that it is not only music production and dissemination, but also the marketing and promotion of music (part of the ‘A&R’ department of record companies) that have been decentralized by the appropriation of technology on the part of the peripheries. Whoever followed the debates about the transformation of the music industry in the 2000s often heard that A&R would always be an activity of record labels, with ‘artist development’ becoming part of their core business. It turns out that, for peripheral music, A&R has become increasingly decentralized. It is now performed by the same peripheries that had previously appropriated the tools for producing and distributing music on their own.

I remember a conversation I had in Sao Paulo in 2007 with Chris Anderson, former editor-in-chief of *Wired* magazine, about the need for artists’ promotion. Anderson was writing his book *Free* and wanted to include a chapter on Tecnobrega based on my study of the music scene. He was interested in the fact that artists in the scene give away their music for free, both by posting it online, and also by giving away their CDs to street vendors (called ‘camelôs’) so that they would freely duplicate and sell them as much as they wanted.⁵ In short, the same

⁵ The excerpt on Tecnobrega was indeed included in the book; see Anderson 2009.

street vendors selling pirated materials would also sell music that was deliberately given to them by Tecnobrega artists.

Anderson asked me whether the *camelôs* had any role in the promotion of the music. I said yes, the *camelôs* also worked as promotional agents, and some of them even as curators, guiding the buyers through the large output of releases, and showing what they thought was the 'hot new' music (this model still exists today). He then asked me what would happen when everything moved online, and *camelôs* also became obsolete. At the time, I had no answer to that question. I mentioned that portions of the promotions were already happening online, by means of the now defunct MSN Messenger. Famous DJs and producers used MSN to broadcast their new releases to their friends, which they would then disseminate to their respective sets of friends.

But now, Anderson's concern has a more comprehensive answer. The same tools and processes that led to the decentralization of music production and dissemination have led also to the decentralization of A&R. An illustration of this is the fact that Daleste himself never released a music video of his own. All of his music videos available on YouTube were posted by his fans, some of them reaching millions of views. The first and only music video that Daleste actually recorded was released after his death (and in two days reached two million views). In short, this creates a new logic for the 'free' model. While in the Tecnobrega scene artists give away their music for free and make money by performing live or selling merchandise (including 'original' CDs) after their performances, a new form of intermediary has emerged. Different from traditional recording companies, they are small entrepreneurs who have mastered the art of online promotion.

Needless to say, the 'free' model remains untouched. Especially with YouTube becoming the biggest '*camelô*' of them all, the one and major centre point for the distribution of peripheral music, the perception on the part of artists is that it just feels 'natural' to upload their music for free onto the website. They can then 'monetize' on it by playing live and selling merchandise after their shows, just as do Tecnobrega artists. But they also understand that YouTube has brought new opportunities for

content monetization through revenue sharing if their music becomes really popular. It is almost as if a small 'reform' of the copyright system has taken place, and something along the lines proposed by William Fisher in his book *Promises to Keep* has materialized.⁶

A similar thought was expressed by Francesco 'Phra' Barbaglia, the Italian DJ and producer behind the well-known project Crookers (which works as a mediator of the aesthetics of peripheral music), in an interview he gave to MTV Iggy:

The more people who know an artist's music, the better it is for the artist. If your music gets really big in terms of audience because of a YouTube audience, it's good for you, because you can now tour that record.

The freedom to upload whatever you want is half good, half bad. When you've been working on an album for a year, and you have this marketing strategy, and then suddenly someone leaks the album, it can really piss you off. Apart from that, sites like YouTube are great for checking out music. I love it. As a label owner, I can honestly say I don't care. I'm putting my guys' music up on YouTube. And you can [earn] some money, too. It's not a lot, but you get it because you have the rights.

(DJ Pangburn 2013)

Hermano Vianna responds to the optimism of Phra in more acidic and sceptical terms:

It is curious thinking – combining the practice of a blind flight – apparently contradictory (or entirely contradictory) oscillating between the defence of freedom [to share] and the copyright restrictions. According to the existing copyright laws in most countries,

⁶ Fisher (2004) proposes the creation of different kinds of 'sharing licenses', in which exclusive copyrights would be suspended in exchange for a system of 'tax' collection – voluntary or compulsory – and its respective distribution to artists, depending on their popularity and other factors. It is possible to say that Google's YouTube does something similar. A vast amount of music is available on the site, uploaded for free. The site then collects the 'tax' through advertising, and distributes a portion of the revenue to content owners. Of course, in Fisher's model the intermediary would keep only a small portion of the revenues, contrary to Google, which keeps the majority.

no one can publish any work by any author without the copyright holder's permission (it is irrelevant whether the media is 'traditional' or 'new'). To be clear: publishing a Crookers song without the authorization of Crookers is illegal. What he said in this interview is that he does not care about the illegality. Indeed: that this type of illegality can be beneficial to his music and to his career. He reminds us: the artist can even make money with the non-authorized publishing of his works. Technology is inventing – by force – its own law, which becomes generalized practice, even against official law. ... When we hear that 'Gangnam style' made more than one million dollars on YouTube, we have to remember: much of that money comes from ads placed on videos that from the perspective of the official laws would be considered pirate. So we live in an ambiguous situation where one company determines a new legality. This is a technologically legal hack, made in a hurry. What kind of external control can we have over the number of views? Do we have to believe in YouTube's numbers? I never like to be in a hurry.

(Vianna 2013a, my translation)

In addition to this important debate between legality and illegality, the fact is that the transformations in the creation, distribution and promotion processes of music are here to stay, and will keep introducing even higher levels of entropy to the traditional copyright system.

An example of this is the large number of peripheral music hits in Brazil that are composed by means of a process entailing the appropriation and reappropriation of ideas, which challenges the premises of the whole system and reconfigures the very idea of 'composition', changing it from an individualistic activity to a collective practice. This is a long and complex discussion. For the purposes of this chapter, it suffices to quote once again Hermano Vianna on how the global hit 'Ai Se eu Te Pego'⁷ was actually composed. It works almost like a

⁷ The song reached number one in the iTunes charts in various countries in 2011 and 2012. In some markets the music was marketed as 'Nossa, Nossa'.

‘prototype’ for the composition process of many other recent popular peripheral songs:

It all seems to have begun in an airplane carrying a group of middle-class girls from Paraíba, a state in Northeastern Brazil, to Disneyland, Florida. To pass the time on the trip, they started to make up songs. Without the slightest intention of becoming composers, they came up with the chorus ‘*assim você me mata, ai se eu te pego, ai, ai*’ (This way you’re gonna kill me, oh if I catch you, oh oh). They liked the song so much that they started to sing it on all the trips they took thereafter, including one they took to Porto Seguro.

It was at a party at Axé Moi that the girls from Paraíba first met Sharon Acioly, who was for many years the high priestess of fun in the complex. She held a variety of roles at Axé Moi, ranging from singer to hype-woman. She wasn’t there to make works of art, rather, she was tasked with keeping the crowds entertained at all times. To do this, she would make up games for the guests. One of these games took Brazil by storm a few years ago: the ‘*dança do quadrado*’ (square dance), which she stole from a group of students from São Paulo and Minas Gerais who were visiting the Porto Seguro complex. When Acioly heard the girls sing the refrain ‘*Ai se eu te pego*’, she quickly took it and began chanting it over a funk carioca beat. ...

While passing through Porto Seguro one day, Antonio Dyggs went to check out the entertainment at Axé Moi. Dyggs was an event producer from Feira de Santana, an interior city which lies on the edge of the Bahian sertão. ‘*Ai se eu te pego*’ stuck in his head and he decided to make a forró version of the funk song. He proceeded to record it with Os Meninos do Seu Zeh, one of the bands that he worked with. ...

Michel Teló first heard his future global hit when it was already part of the repertoire of the bands Cangaia de Jegue and Garota Safada, just to name the more famous ones, and revving up parties throughout the Northeast.

This is the most significant characteristic of Brazil’s music scene today. All the hits are quickly rearranged to fit in whichever Brazilian genre, when they’re not mixing all the genres already (Michel Telo’s

version, for example, contains elements of sertanejo, forró, arrocha, vaneirão, among others).

(Vianna 2012)

As may be seen from this long quotation, the forms of music composition applicable to peripheral music have changed. They have become more decentralized, transcending the ideals of creativity embodied in the copyright system. Rather than one individual composing each song, several do it. Rather than songs composed with a single intention, we have accidents leading to the emergence of a new song. The same pattern repeats itself in other peripheral songs. Another example is 'Minha Mulher Não Deixa Não' ('My Wife Does Not Let Me'), a hit in 2011, which was composed by a multitude of authors, using the same pattern of appropriation and reappropriation. Most of the popular Forró songs, especially in its more electronic incarnations, are basically created by appropriation. In these music scenes, 'trend spotters' circulate through Brazil, even going to parties taking place in smaller rural cities, looking for songs with the potential to be re-created or even re-recorded by the bigger Forró bands.

A similar pattern applies to the Funk Carioca, Funk Ostentação, Tecnobrega and Reggae Maranhense scenes, which often use the same base track, adding variations by a multitude of authors on top of it to create a new song. In addition to this, as soon as the song grows in popularity, the public is not content simply to listen to the song. The public wants to participate, and to re-create the song itself in numerous ways; the public wants to be part of the reappropriation process. For instance, the song 'My Wife Does Not Let Me' was re-created as another version called 'My Wife Does Not Tell Me What to Do', which became almost as popular as the original. All popular peripheral songs are re-recorded by myriad other artists, professional or amateur, and fans. This 'call and response' pattern may to some extent have become globally visible with the success of hits like Gangnam Style and Harlam Shake, which were extensively re-recorded.

However, my point is that these practices had been at the core of the peripheral music creation process for years, and that they represent autonomy and decentralization. Peripheries are responding not only to the 'call' from the culture that is produced and circulated by the centre, but also from cultural scenes from other peripheries. One case is the song 'Alô Tô Num Bar' (2008), an example of Forronejo (a mix between Forró and Sertanejo, the Brazilian version of country music). It was re-recorded in Colombia by the local artists 'El Celular' (The Cellphone) and became the major hit of the carnival of Barranquilla in 2010 (Lemos 2010). Needless to say, both versions produced a multitude of additional versions by other professional and amateur artists, as well as by the public itself. Peripheries are increasingly connected to other peripheries through technology, and have become capable of accelerating the speed with which they influence, and collaborate with, each other, transcending and challenging ideas of authorship, and the usual individualist assumptions behind the copyright system.⁸ This gives rise to other issues, such as the role of copyright-collecting societies regarding this new dominant trend; how to distribute the royalties when songs are recorded by multiple interpreters; how to find out who are the original 'composers'; and what is the weight to be attributed to re-recordings on the part of the public and other professional or amateur artists? These are all open questions, leading to tensions and a crisis of legitimacy on the part of the collecting societies' usual system.⁹ In Brazil this legitimacy crisis has become so critical that a new law was passed in August 2013 completely revamping the whole system. The law creates new criteria for artists' representation, voting rights, and also implements regulations regarding transparency and public accountability.¹⁰

⁸ Of course these challenges have led to a great deal of litigation lawsuits. Both 'Ai Se Eu Te Pego' and 'Minha Mulher Não Deixa Não' have resulted in lawsuits in which the various 'authors' have sued each other. 'Alô Tô Num Bar' also provoked legal disputes. The courts, naturally, find it difficult to deal with these cases, and the final solution, when achieved, will most likely be an imperfect one due to the complexities involved in each case.

⁹ For more information on this, see Lemos (2011).

¹⁰ Disclosure: I was one of the drafters of the law, and served as an expert by invitation of the Brazilian Senate to advise on the drafting process. The full text of the law may be found at: http://www.planalto.gov.br/CCIVIL_03/_Ato2011-2014/2013/Lei/L12853.htm

Whether the tensions emerging from these new cultural practices will be solved through democratic channels, by means of new laws, as has been the case in Brazil, or whether they will be solved by means of private practices, such as YouTube and Google becoming increasingly a copyright royalty collector and distributor, only the future will tell. For now, it suffices to say that these cultural practices that have become dominant in peripheral music scenes function as a spearhead for other social transformations. My point is that, by analysing and understanding them, it is possible to understand future conflicts and reorganizations which will affect all other cultural scenes.

Brazil's new music and its discontents

When a popular artist dies in Brazil, it generally becomes national news. Newspapers write obituaries; the television channels broadcast the funeral; the family is interviewed, and the artist's legacy is remembered and discussed. Public personalities, including government officials and the Minister of Culture, comment on the passing away, and so it goes. If the death had a violent cause, the commotion increases, and public revolt and grief resonate even more loudly in the public sphere.

None of this actually happened following Daleste's death. With a few notable exceptions, his death was covered mostly in the crime pages of the newspapers. It was treated as another usual death in the 'already violent' Funk Carioca (and Funk Ostentação) scene. There was no official statement on the part of public authorities; the Minister of Culture remained silent; and the TV channels reproduced the same 'criminal' angle of the newspapers; that is, when the case actually made it to the TV news.

One of the very few honourable mentions of Daleste's death took place in a column written by Hermano Vianna for *O Globo*, a newspaper in Rio de Janeiro (Vianna 2013b). A single Brazilian

Senator from Sao Paulo, Eduardo Suplicy, followed suit, giving a brief homage to him at the Senate, reading the same verses from Daleste's music that had been quoted by Hermano in his article ('Eduardo Suplicy' 2013).

If in the news the coverage was mostly criminal speculation (the case remains unsolved), it was on the internet that most of the repercussions of Daleste's death were to be felt. Protected by anonymity, the majority of reactions actually cheered the fact that someone had decided to kill him. Many online comments compared his killing to an act of 'cleansing' which should actually be praised.

Many of these heinous reactions are still visible, for instance, in the comments section on Vianna's article in *O Globo*. The piece received more than 200 comments, most of them consisting of hate speech against Daleste, some making hateful or condescending remarks about the article. Some actually went on to say that Daleste 'deserved to die', or actually 'provoked his own death'. One of the reasons for this reaction is that one of Daleste's songs, written in the first-person voice, talks about killing police officers. The song, titled 'Apologia' (Apology – the name given to the crime under the Brazilian Criminal Code of celebrating a criminal act, punishable with six months' detention), goes like this:

To kill the police is our goal
 Tell us who is the power
 Criminal mind and evil heart
 I'm the fruit of wars and rebellions
 I started when I was underage, already with the 157 [stealing]
 Today my addiction is robbery, dangerous profession
 I'm a specialist graduated from the criminal university
 Heavy soviet assault guns
 This is the group of the MK and I am the one who rules
 It's 1 p and 2 c, tell us who is the power.

Daleste is clearly not talking about himself. He is not describing his own childhood; he is using a first-person narrative voice to describe ways of life he has known, but of which he was never part. There is no

record that Daleste ever stole anything when he was a child, nor that he killed a police officer, held any Soviet assault gun or dealt with prison rebellion.

In a video he later recorded (using Twitcam!), Daleste actually talks about the meaning of the song, and about his own critical view of police violence (Pellegrine 2011). He also explains that the song is not intended to promote violence, especially against the police. He apologizes if any such interpretations took place. He praises his family, and emphasizes the fact that he is an artist, saying that the song is a way to stir people's 'conscience'. He says, 'you listen to my song, but you should not do it', and also 'do as I do, not as I say'.

However, Daleste's haters are not capable of differentiating between his own voice and his narrative voice. Some actually argued that he deserved to die for the content of his lyrics as in the comments on Vianna's newspaper piece. Of course, the comments sections in Brazilian newspapers generally harbour extreme views, some of them deeply conservative and reactionary. Nevertheless, they fail to understand that peripheral music, including Funk and global hip-hop tracks, habitually sing about police violence and violence against the police. Even though these are tough and unfortunate topics, they are also a product of violent contexts and ways of living that exist where the music and its authors come from.¹¹

So my point is that something more profound happens with regard to Daleste and most other artists coming from peripheral scenes. They are denied a narrative voice. The fact that these artists often live in tough areas, come from impoverished backgrounds, deal with tough issues that are universally regarded as 'serious' problems, handcuffs them to the situation. Whatever they say is connected to the factuality of their context and background. They become personally accountable for it as individuals, not as artists.

¹¹ Even mainstream artists, such as New Jersey rapper Ice T (currently working as an actor in the popular TV show *Law and Order*), have written about these tough subjects using the first-person voice, for instance in the well-known song 'Cop Killer', released in 1992 by Ice T's former band Body Count.

In other words, the limitations Daleste and so many other peripheral artists face is that they are often not perceived as artists by the 'centre'. Their music is seen as an intrinsic part of the landscape of an impoverished area. They are just another sign of precariousness, in the same category as an unpaved road, an open-air sewage spill, or any other 'facts' that describe life in a poor area. This is one of the issues with peripheral music: the 'centre' sees it as a fact, not as an aesthetic enunciation, as a statement that demands to be recognized as an individual expression or even as a work of art.

A good parallel to this idea is expressed by Lawrence Liang when he draws on an encounter between Victor Hugo and a working-class poet remembered by Rancière:

[W]hen Victor Hugo was shown a poem written by a worker, his embarrassed and patronizing response was, 'In your fine verse there is something more than fine verse. There is a strong soul, a lofty heart, a noble and robust spirit. Carry on. Always be what you are: poet and worker. That is to say, thinker and worker.' This is a classic instance of what Rancière would term an 'exclusion by homage'. Thus, the aspirations and desires of the poor have to be 'something more than fine verse', and the information needs of the poor have to be something more than wanting to watch a film or even dreaming of becoming a filmmaker.

(Liang, Chapter 2, this book)

It is in this patronizing spirit that most peripheral music suffers the stigma of being considered 'bad taste' by the 'centre'. The opinion is usually expressed without any further attempt to consider or actually listen to, or try and understand what is actually being expressed through these songs. Apart from being an indelicate stance,¹² this is also a position that reinforces otherness. As expressed in Liang's quote, a member of the working class cannot fully aspire to be an artist: he

¹² In 2011 I participated in a colloquium to discuss the idea of 'Delicacy' at the Portuguese and Spanish Department of Princeton University, where I addressed some of the issues developed further in this chapter. For those interested, the full conference is at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dfcLstUejc>

or she will always be an artist and a worker. No one will let him or her forget that.

Accordingly, the revolt spurred by Vianna's homage to Daleste indicates the discontent with the increasing visibility of peripheral music. Yet, because of the internet, and technology in general, the popularity of peripheral artists no longer depends on the approval or the support of the centre. Artists do not need traditional media to establish a fan base of millions. Accordingly, the centre loses at the same time the capacity to act as a gatekeeper of success, as well as the ability to work as the final guardian of taste. Even though peripheral music may still be perceived as 'bad taste' by the centre, no one else seems to care. Of course, the centre and traditional media still hold to some extent the power of legitimation. Even the most successful of peripheral artists claim that they feel appreciated when they are invited to play in a popular TV show.

This happened, for instance, in the case of Tecnobrega. The scene remained marginalized for years (and it still is in its home state of Pará). However, around 2010, traditional media started disseminating Tecnobrega not only as the 'hot new thing', but also as an 'original' expression of Brazilian culture. The scene started gaining a great deal of airtime through traditional media, which helped legitimize it and reduce the stigma of 'bad taste'. Artists such as Gaby Amarantos or Gang do Eletro gained national (and international) recognition, with the former appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* following a concert in Central Park, and the latter joining the line-up of the Catalan electronic music festival Sónar in 2012.

Still, the death of Daleste is symbolic of the anxiety concerning the increasing visibility and importance of peripheral music. Daleste was not the only funk MC to be killed in Sao Paulo. In the past three years, four other MCs have been killed as well. Since Funk Carioca is a rather new phenomenon in Sao Paulo, and quickly became one of the most popular music styles in the peripheries of the state, it has been dealing with a great deal of prejudice and also state repression. The tensions between the centre, the state, police and Funk in Sao Paulo are bound

to continue over the next few years. They exemplify the transformation of the public sphere that Brazil has been undergoing in recent years. Once again, paying attention to them can reveal more profound trends, and tensions, that will continue to play a role in all social spheres in the country, from politics to law.

While Daleste's killing is still investigated, and the culprits still remain to be caught and tried, it is worth looking at another of his songs, whose lyrics are also written in first voice, this time called 'Minha História' (My Story):

When I started / I had a lot of difficulties / and my house was out of reality / it is revolting I know / I felt the taste of poison / until 13 I had no bathroom / at home the walls were wood / I remember as if now / when I opened the fridge and there was nothing to eat / the empty stomach / but tomorrow I go to school / and eat there / Saturday and Sunday is difficult / but we can stand / hunger is nothing / in relation to what matters / I never understood why I did not have a normal family / my mother and my father working / and my brother at school / my older sister in college / but life is a fuck / everything upside down was my fate / but I left it all to the hand of god / and today I'm here, going forward / singing my story to those who like funk / thank you for your attention / the rest of this story I will sing again / I am a damn winner / I'm a funk singer, yeah, and I'm proud of that / I bear in my chest the scars of prejudice.

As it turns out, those who are indeed practising 'Apologia' – the act of cheering a crime – were actually the ones who applauded Daleste's killing.

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