

“What’s Going On’ is Soul Music’s ‘Sgt. Pepper’s”: Autonomy, Canon and Value in a Greatest Music Albums List

“What’s Going On é o Sgt. Pepper’s da soul music”: autonomia, cânone e valor numa lista de maiores álbuns da música

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Abstract: *Investigates the strangeness of the presence of a soul music album “What’s Going On” by Marvin Gaye – in a “500 Greatest Albums of All Time” list by Rolling Stone magazine, whose massive presence is by albums that derives from a rock lineage. We argue that rock, reenacting evaluative traditions of high culture products (such as creative autonomy) became canon in pop music value. It can be seen within a cultural journalism that mediators (critics) are articulators of senses, that perpetuate values anchored by race, gender and idiosyncrasies - symptoms than Simon Frith (1996) calls “rock critic”.*

Keywords: *pop music; value; critics; performance; canon.*

Resumo: *Investiga-se o estranhamento da presença de um álbum de soul music – What’s Going On, de Marvin Gaye – na lista dos 500 maiores álbuns de todos os tempos da revista Rolling Stone, formada principalmente por discos derivados da linhagem do rock. A partir dessa constatação, argumenta-se que o rock, reencenando tradições valorativas de produtos da alta cultura (como autonomia*

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criativa), tornou-se cânone nas perspectivas de valor da música pop. Percebe-se, dentro de uma linhagem de jornalismo cultural, que os mediadores (críticos) funcionam como articuladores de sentidos que perpetuam valores ancorados em dinâmicas de raça, gênero e idiosincrasias – sintomas do que Simon Frith (1996) chama de “crítica rockista”.

Palavras-chave: *música pop; valor; crítica; performance; cânone.*

This text seeks to discuss the constitution of value on pop music (SHUKER, 1999) from the recognition of a fight between two genres that work as landmarks for interests and affection: rock and pop. To circumscribe the debate, we took as object the list of “500 best albums of all time – International” published by the magazine *Rolling Stone Brasil*⁴ in 2014.⁵ The idea is to make an even bigger clipping of this list, highlighting the 10 albums from the top of the list. From that list, we recognize indications to a debate about canonic aspects on pop music, although we admit the limit of this cut, overall due to the extensive link to an anglophile perspective of journalism from *Rolling Stone* magazine. However, facing the transnational board of pop culture (SOARES, 2014) and the English language as a label for artists, songs and albums, it seems timely to perceive how this perspective of value present in *Rolling Stone* crosses other cultures, other albums and also other practices of journalistic, academic and market labeling.

It is assumed that rock is built as canon for pop music from the value brackets that operate under the protection of autonomation of the creation within the productive system. We highlight how value manifestations on pop music bring textual and discursive marks that refer to rock. This premise may seem “fixed”, excessively oppositional and binary; however, we take this opposition as line of fugue. In order to understand how rock was constituted as canon on pop music, we need to identify punctual manifestations, “interpretative knots” that takes us to a third way: agents that are crystalized as holders of hegemonic places in the music culture. Lawrence Grossberg (2010, p. 161) believes that “the only way of correlating different concrete values is putting them in front of a third term (mediator or articulator), comparing them or translating them”. In this case, to reflect on the rock vs pop fight and about rock as canon for pop music means to debate on the musical critique, the places

4 Henceforth called RSB

5 The list is a result of two rounds of polls: the first one, in 2003, gathered a jury of 271 people, among artists, producers, executives of the phonographic industry and journalists; the second one, in 2009, with other 100 judges, listed albums released from 2000 onwards. Therefore, a total of 371 people occupying places of prominence in the cultural mediation of music composed the list.

of discourse, the rock cultural journalism and the role of music fans-critics. It is in this sense that we get to Rolling Stone magazine and their list.

Lists are a part of a practice in pop culture and also in cultural journalism. One of the most emblematic books about affections and value highlights of cultural and musical pop products is *High Fidelity*, by Nick Hornby (2013). In this fictional piece, the tastes and choices from the lead character obey affective premises existing through lists. This order is a place where election and hierarchization are linked to personal and consensual tastes. Lists are also a part of the journalistic practice in magazines, cultural supplements and websites such as BuzzFeed and Youpix.

Lists seem fundamental to think about “who” is electing them – therefore, race, gender, social class, tastes, idiosyncrasies – and also horizons of expectations, values and distinctions. If, in Hornby’s novel, the list was an apparatus of exposure and ordering of affection, in cultural journalism, it operates under the protection of a supposed “objectivity” – even though we know of all the tradition that refutes any objectivating layer in journalism. The practice of a list in cultural journalism is centered on a game between the extremely personal and the supposedly objective, linking characteristics and criteria of noticeability from journalism, (notoriety, hierarchy, seriousness) into a cultural form filled with the tradition of an intimate journal and narratives about personal taste. It is in this ambiguous place they are in that we will try to argue about the role of rock as canon on the critique of pop music. The idea is to map the tension and dissidence, identifying possible points of fugue.

Within the choice of the 10 albums listed by RSB as the best albums in music history, only one didn’t belong to a lineage derived from rock: *What’s Going On*,⁶ by Marvin Gaye, which transits between soul music and black music. The complete list presents: 1) Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band – The Beatles; 2) *Pet Sounds* – The Beach Boys; 3) *Revolver* – The Beatles; 4) *Highway 61 Revisited* – Bob Dylan; 5)

6 Henceforth, WGO.

Rubber Soul – The Beatles; 6) What’s Going On – Marvin Gaye; 7) Exile on Main St. – The Rolling Stones; 8) London Calling – The Clash; 9) Blonde on Blonde – Bob Dylan; 10) The Beatles – The Beatles. It seems timely to recognize the strangeness which WGO causes on this list when we perceive a predominance of rock in the sub-genre classic, folk and punk.

We will see WGO in detail, seeking to understand which elements from the album, highlighted by the critique, make a soul album occupy a place in the Olympus of rock. We raise the hypothesis that the treatment given to it obeys evaluative patterns coming from rock or what Shusterman (1992) highlights as the classic distinction between the “autonomy” of “high art” versus the “function” of “low art”. In the conceptual design, Shusterman makes a critical reading of “Talkin’ All That Jazz”, by the band Stetasonic. To him, a strategy of rock critique was always to treat the album as “art” – reinforcing values linked to automation, artistic reasons and shape in opposition to an idea of a low culture, which operates under the protection of the “function” of an expression, therefore, a commercial, hedonistic purpose. The value would not be in its shape, but in its use. A similar argument is given by Simon Frith (1996), when talking about different perspectives of fruition: “audiences of a high culture product assume that the value of an object is within this object; while audiences of low culture products postulate that the value of an object is in what this object can do for them” (FRITH, 1996, p. 18).

Both Shusterman and Frith outlined a historically built problem to propose another way: the exam of aesthetic qualities that are immanent in products that problematize the notion of autonomy of creation. In Shusterman’s argument, there is an indication that the contribution of philosophy on the aesthetics of mediatic products would be in proposing other keys for understanding and evaluating these products that are not originally from the high culture. This argument is close to Sianne NGai’s (2012), which indicates the necessity of creating categories for judging phenomena that do not obey norms and patterns of the so-called

high culture, in an approximation of the aesthetic to a sociology of taste as a conceptual apparatus to understand phenomena in the pop music.

If we take common sense discourses, the term pop is constantly used as a synonym for a low aesthetic value. “Jay-Z’s last album was too pop”, “Anitta is funk pop”. These speeches locate the term pop as a position: at times, evoking a species of excessive approximation from the music industry and raising issues such as the loss of autonomy in the creation or an indiscriminated access to “fashionable” sounds; at other times, suggesting a “contamination” of music genres by a certain “shadow” of pop. Pop sounds like a ghost that “haunts” other music genres. Taking RSB’s list into account, and especially the soul album WGO, we perceive value manifestations about the record from four instances: the autonomy of the Motown label, the denial of pop, rock as canon and the musician’s performance.

First level of value: autonomy in the label

“Gaye was determined to destroy the pop formula from Motown and approach urgent social issues” is part of the text that justifies WGO as the sixth most important album of the history of international pop music. The text takes a stand against what it seems to be a formula in Motown.

It is up to us, therefore, to think about the contradictions around the label located in Detroit, USA, pointed by Frédéric Martel (2012) as the epicenter of what was constituted as the genesis of pop music. With producers that “fit” black artists into white audiences, Motown launched seminal performers such as Jackson 5, The Supremes, Marvin Gaye, and others. Built to be “the mediator” that “filters” sounds and images of “domesticated” black people for white audiences, but with a huge financial return, Motown was considered a role model of aesthetics and business in pop, capable of working as a type of factory of music stars.

In the moment which WGO is praised for running away from Motown’s “formula”, we see this maxim as a possible postulation within the value standards of pop music. Taking a stand against the rules of the label, the industry or the music market is constituted as a privileged

place. We talk about autonomy of creation within the productive systems in the music business. There is a presupposition of framing a music genre (soul music) into the gears of the music industry: on paper, Marvin Gaye should make an album “within the mold” of what Motown would propose; however, he “breaks” the “mold” and creates an album without the interference of the label, which evidences his autonomy of creation. Autonomy gets textures of “rupture” in a discourse that evokes a subversive coverage.

In the constitution of the games of value about pop music, it is natural that labels are responsible for processes of fitting a mold for propagation in mediatic environments. It became usual to have a discourse of constitution of value by escaping impositions of standard. If we remember the debut album from Secos & Molhados, with all the subversive, experimental character it had, released in 1973 by a major label (at the time) Continental, or the album *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, from 1972, with an androgynous and glam David Bowie, under the indorsement of RCA, we perceive that the processes of creation within the systems of the music industry were always complex from the point of view of creative autonomation. Following this mindset, it becomes cliché an artist claiming autonomy in his/her creation processes. There is a constant negotiation in the field of artistic creation of institutions in the music market. To allow experimental sounds that run away from imposed norms and standards is also a postulation of constitution of value.

This same rhetoric around the autonomy of artistic creation within a productive system is common in rock critique, being present in the text of the *Rolling Stone* magazine. When talking about the album *Pet Sounds*, from The Beach Boys, second place in the list, we see the following text: “The luxurious sound of *Pet Sounds* waved goodbye to the innocent world of “sunny fun” from the Beach Boys. Unfortunately, Capitol Records hated the album and didn’t even want to release it. Which made Brian Wilson crawl even further into his private world”. The record label became “the villain” of the artistic creation. The

narrative of the text is circumscribed on a certain romantic tradition of authorship in that it positions Brian Wilson as “secluded in his private world” in opposition to Capitol Records, which would not have “understood the geniality” of the author. The text in the magazine tells the perspective of negotiation, pressure and autonomy of Brian Wilson with the Capitol Records: “In the last meeting to talk about ‘Pet Sounds’, I showed up with a cassette player with eight pre-taped answers, in loop, such as ‘no comment’, ‘can you repeat that?’, ‘no’ and ‘yes’. Refusing to say a word”.

As evidenced in the text of *Pet Sounds*, there are references to tense aspects between Marvin Gaye and the artistic direction of Motown in WGO’s artistic choices. “Berry Gordy, founder of the label, didn’t like it. He said ‘What’s Going On’ was the worst song he had ever listened. Gaye answered that he would never record anything for Motown again if “What’s Going On” wouldn’t be released as a single. After being rejected by the quality control committee of the label, the music was unwillingly released”.

Second level of value: Denial from pop

“When ‘What’s Going On’ became a hit and the next album followed this path, there was a sequence of many songs with social conscience released by Motown”. The social conscience present in the song seem to distance it from any frivolity that would be usual from Motown’s “pop formula” and comes closer to a tradition of rock albums that deal with social critique. Gaye appear to be an artist that inaugurates a lineage within a productive system: “I was very affected by the letters my brother sent me from Vietnam. I realized I had to let the fantasies behind if I wanted to create songs that would touch people’s souls”. There are evidences, in Gaye’s discourse appropriated by the critique, that translate the idea of denial of the superficiality of pop: “let the fantasies behind”, focus on social issues.

The denial of pop by their supposedly frivolous and market-driven aspects appears on what Simon Frith calls “rock criticism” in relation to

pop; however, it doesn't complexify the term "pop music". We propose here to assume all ambiguity that the term is submitted to - especially in the linguistic uses of the common sense. Pop music is a big label that nominates, classifies and shares music artists and their many materialities and performances in transnational spaces of consumption; but it is also a specific type of music, with sounds, performances and spatialities that are comprised in a global sense of what pop means. In summary, we are treating pop music as:

1. A mediatic genre (JANOTTI JR., 2006). A classificatory form that takes into consideration senses and sensibilities that circulate in mediatic environments; Their forms of apparition, input and output of media; products that get labeled by being produced in the industrial systems of culture (record labels, studios, TV channels) that integrate even different music genres; or hegemonic aesthetic matrixes shared in the logics of consumption from culture industries as recognizable to what is called pop music. A mediatic genre, a classificatory form that brings more restricted dimensions of music genres and widens the notion of textualities in music. Taking daily uses, the term pop music gathers numberless musical genres (rock, electronic, hip-hop, rap, reggaetón, funk, *brega*, etc.) provided that they are generated and supported in the productive and symbolic systems of the music industry.
2. A music genre (BRACKETT, 1995; NEGUS, 1996). If we think about the productive systems, in the logic of circulation and consumption, in the sharing experiences of pop music enthusiasts, the idea that exists a pop sound (however imprecise it might sound) and image linked to this generic perspective; forms of addressing the music market around pop and also the recognition and the notion of belonging that what we can call community of a music genre, then, we can perceive pop music also as a music genre in a more strict sense.

The classificatory aspects of pop are necessary as we realize how the term is used as a big "negative" of actions that, in the constitution of

value games in critique, end up by putting in evidence practices that would be in the field of rock. The idea is to recognize that, in a broader spectrum, where pop is a mediatic genre, there is a clash that was constituted as central for the edification of canon: the friction between rock and pop. We postulate that rock occupied the place of hegemonic music genre on pop music from the discourse of cultural mediators that engendered a place of rock always “in relation to” pop.

From this perspective, we drafted conceptual drafts that helps us think how the constitution of canon on pop came about within the restraints linked to the high culture and that was rock that best suited such evaluative repercussions. Within the parameters of a “rock criticism” (FRITH, 1996) issues arise linked to a standard of taste that evoke gender politics (straight men occupying places of highlight in the musical critique), race (white) and class (middle-class), composing a board of election of songs and albums that obey both a evaluative pattern linked to high culture and a logic that surpasses the exclusion of cultural expressions that are not within the horizon of consumption and fruition of these critics-fans of rock.

Third level of value: rock as canon

In a certain point of the critique that elects WGO as sixth best album in music history, we are hit with the sentence: “What’s Going On’ is the ‘Sgt. Peppers’ of soul music”. The comparison with Beatles’ emblematic album, elected in the same list as the first place, appear without any justification, almost as a tautology. It is up to us to question such sentences and think how the canons of music are built.

The discussion of value always brings to light the issue of critique and the premise: who elects the canon?⁷ If we want to develop the logic that rock is crystalized as canon for pop music, it is important to understand canon within a tradition of judgement that is circumscribed into

7 “In greek, canon was a rule, a model, a norm represented by a work to be imitated. At church, the canon was the list of books considered inspiring and worthy of authority” (COMPAGNON, 2010, p. 222).

the field of aesthetics. As Antoine Compagnon (2010, p. 222) says, “the theme of value, beside the issue of subjectivity of judgement, comprise the issue of the canon, or classics, and the formation of this canon, the authority, the contestation and the revision”.

It is important to highlight that the dimension of authority of the formation of canon is given by who elects it. In this case, it is inevitable to reflect about the role of criticism in the construction of canon and the discursive logics⁸. And also recognizing that the process of constructing a canon is given necessarily in dissent: every canon is contested, debated, reviewed. In this sense, Harold Bloom (2013) says that the canon embraces (dis)taste. Artists, books, movements from canon are not necessarily bringing pleasure, beauty, consensus. Canon needs to reflect a time, cross it, retell it. According to Bloom, there is a potency in the distrust around the canon: the more something seems loathsome, ‘unreliable’, the more we can create ideas about it.

We postulate the formation of the canon as a process, an agency that is socially built from consensual rules. We can think of canon from what Compagnon calls a rhetoric of institutionalization, reinforcing with the term “rhetoric” what is said about something, the forms of having a discourse about a phenomenon and the ways in which he is institutionalized. Processes of canonization, according to the author, go through institutional occasions: how something becomes hegemonic and which institutions are responsible for that place.

Compagnon deals with processes of canonization both of artists (in this case, writers) and works. The term “rhetoric of institutionalization” would be close to the notion of “instance of consecration” proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (1996), which evidences institutions, subjects and practices that circumscribe phenomena, arranging them within a

8 We are here to remind what Genette called “aesthetic illusion” or relativism of the observer: the position of the critic and the attempt of fixating values, either by highlighting a somewhat scientific objectivity (from immanent readings) or by pointing the (supposedly excessive) subjectivity of criticism as a “smaller” place of observation. We know that, even facing all the tradition of immanent approaches in human sciences (structural, formal), there were always the role of the media of extrapolating subjective dispositions, the place of the critic as supported in very personal choices and the disposition for political readings of these positionings.

determined field of production. The emphasis of Compagnon, let's say, is with texts and speeches. Bourdieu seem to be preoccupied with positions and roles of subjects and institutions.

The canon is not fixed, but it is also not random, and, overall, does not constantly move. It is a relatively stable classification, there are inputs and outputs, but they are not as numerous, nor completely unpredictable (COMPAGNON, 2010, p. 249).

The conceptual triangulation about canonization processes finds repercussions in Simon Frith's writings about value that, when he circumscribes the debate on institutionalization of music, uses textures from Bourdieu's sociology and reviews the legacy of the School of Frankfurt to, with culturological accent, talk about cultural value as notably political, involving race, gender, social class, among other factors circumscribed to certain cultures. When rescuing the tradition of North American Cultural Studies, Frith highlights the economic gaze around the evaluative construction. It is about, for example, the value of the market of musical products, of the appeal within some logics of mainstream and criticizes the existentialism that sees autonomy as far from the logics of capital.

To Desler (2013), the canonic artist is someone who operates under: a) the transcendence of fashion and sociocultural changes (testing of time); b) Historic importance (influence in contemporary and future artists); c) immanent artistic value, rating works as masterpieces and attesting geniality and immortality (DESLER, 2013, p. 387). The author works with the concept of three canonic types: the academic, the critic and the mainstream. The academic would comprise processes of canonization that involve academic institutions, universities, aesthetic researches, among others. The critic (the term here sounds extremely ambiguous and inaccurate) refers to these canonic logics deriving from approval within the norms of journalism and specialized critics. The author brings the idea of mainstream canon, which points to an approval around the logics of market, exposure and visibility. We perceive how

the processes of canonization embedded in the cultural journalism are intimately linked to academic presuppositions, that would be a form of opinion from the verification of specialists in the field (musicologists, historians, sociologists, etc.) In front of criteria of grandeur that take into account a certain “inherent value”: sociocultural impact, performative value, politic/artistic importance, taking into consideration their historic context. We highlight, then, the performance value as one of the criteria of evaluating an album.

Fourth level of value: the musician’s performance

“Working under a mist of marijuana smoke, Gaye took many intuitive decisions, such as letting tapes roll while friends were gathering or even taping rehearsal exercises of the sax player Eli Fontaine. [...] That was how the melancholic line that opens “What’s Going On” came to be.

The myth around the musician’s performance, his virtuosity and the capability of reproduction of a certain sound live are in the realm of judgement of value in music. In the text about WGO, we highlight a studio performance: the creation, the uses of random sounds. In the debate about recognition of value, it is important to think about how the idea of the isolated “genius romantic creator”, denying their productive systems, still persists and works as an important gear of highlight and edification of an authorial notion. To talk about performance means to debate a judgement of value that is given within the field of music genres, involving musicians, critics and fans of a certain genre. A “good” or “bad” performance is directly related to a horizon of expectations of this genre.

The performance is inserted within the scope of symbolic disputes between music genres, overall among fans, which leads us to bring the idea of taste performance, conceptual proposal defended by Antoine Hennion (2005). The definition is part of a proposal he calls “theory of

attachment”,⁹ in which he indicates four components that are in constant redefinition and reconfiguration and, at the same time, make taste be a reflective activity.

To understand the performance of taste, it is important to take into consideration these four points: 1) the fans; 2) the devices of liking, such as time, space, tools, rules, rituals, etc.; 3) the body and its experimentations; 4) the objects of our affection and the feedback they give us. To understand such aspects helps us understand the importance of the performance of taste in the symbolic disputes between music genres, overall what refers to different communities of fans/critics (we don’t believe in any way that there might have a separation or a total distance of these roles). These disputes also involve mediatic devices and conditions that are susceptible to certain tastes and that build imaginaries regarding genres.

If we take as presupposition that a large part of the musical critics are also rock fans, as Frith suggests, we notice an impasse in the recognition of values that are not linked to rock music. In addition to that, there is the tradition of music criticism and journalism - overall in their coverage of genres of pop culture such as rock, pop, rap - from Anglo-Saxon countries to encourage or appropriate disputes between musical genres as market element of sale to legitimate some artists over others, as the classic cases of Beatles vs Rolling Stones or Oasis vs Blur, for example.

In the social genesis of rock and the studies about subcultures, the classic dispute between mods vs rockers took the streets of numerous cities in the United Kingdom and exploded in a weekend of fights in Brighton in May, 18th, 1964,¹⁰ being intensely documented by the media at the time. An interesting data is the fact that this fight between different subcultures, called

9 Hennion proposes to replace the term taste for the term attachment, once this word would refer more intensely to material issues, of affection and fans, since the term taste would address the social-symbolic theories of Bourdieu.

10 One of the news reports about this clash is available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/may/18/newsid_2511000/2511245.stm. Accessed in: Dec. 2017.

gangs by the media, is portrayed in the musical *Quadrophenia* (1979) by the British band The Who.¹¹

The disputes are addressed by the critics through the choice of a narrative construction of a confrontation between artists. In the Brazilian context of the so-called Radio Era, we had the clash of fans of the singers Emilinha Borba and Marlene, popular divas of this historic moment. We can even think about the journalism “creating” disputes, as, for example, jazz vs classic music, rock vs electronic, rock vs pop. In many confrontations among music genres, it is perceived the idea of cooptation versus resistance, in which we can see the echoes of the conceptual discussion about underground and mainstream, thoroughly worked by authors such as Frith (1996).

According to Hennion (2005), the performance of taste highlighted in these disputes shows, in a way, that Bourdieu’s ideas on taste and cultural habits continue to resonate, once it reveals a series of pre-conceived dynamics related to ethnicity, sexuality, social class, moralities, etc. More recently, with hate speech and the visibility of haters and anti-fans that participate in social media websites, intellectuals have resumed the discussions on music genres and its disputes (AMARAL and MONTEIRO, 2013, among others) If we think about the fights between Brazilian funk and rock, for example, on Facebook, it is possible to recognize a group of discussions on social class, sexuality, etc. on the classification and legitimation of a musical genre over another. Pre-conceived notions that are not detached from the fans themselves, as classifiers, and the dynamics on social dispute. Therefore, it seems common to some rock fans – as commenters in environments on Facebook - to have an attitude of a supposed “superiority of cultural taste” over other genres.

11 Issues related to morality, sexuality and conduct and even social class are arguments used by the press to legitimate or not a certain group of artists and music genres. In the case of genres coming from subcultures, Thornton (1996) says that the process of “cooptation” by the media is given when a subculture stops figuring the police news (riots and fights, drugs, etc.) and migrates to the fashion editorial and varieties part of the news. With social-historic changes and the popularization of the internet, it is also important to rethink about what cooptation are we talking about, but it would be another discussion.

It is interesting to observe that the narrative of legitimation of certain characteristics of music genres appears on speeches of fans is close to a discourse of critics in the construction of canon of genres. We perceive that the disputes among music genres are built from affection (love and hate) and a performance of taste facing objects, devices and rules that rate music from your experiences and attachments. Among these objects, the album is one of the most important elements in the process of constituting canon.

The value of a classic album

From the four levels of value highlighted throughout this text, evoked in the critics present in the RSB list, we think about the fights that make an album that does not belong on rock to occupy a place of recognition in the aforementioned list. From arguments contained in the critic of the list itself that justify WGO as the sixth best album in music history, we can think about some criteria that guide the game of values on pop music: 1) The process of autonomy of the artist within the environment of record labels; 2) the denial of preestablished formulas by the music industry, notably those linked to pop as a music genre; 3) the indication of canonic procedures coming from processes of high culture, reenacted in music by rock; 4) the performance from the musician, from fans and critics as dispositions and places of speech that operationalize taste and affection in generic dispute. Such issues converge to the indication of a classic work, which, in the case of pop, seem to be very close to the ideals of a rock album. Lists would be, in a way, less malleable because they would work in a horizon of choices guided by the idea that classic works should occupy these “noble places”.

If we think about processes of canonization and canon as instances, subjects, works, but overall, as institutionalization, it would be wise to elect the classic work as the one capable of, according to Gadamer (1995) “save the canon of the anarchy”. The classic work would be the anchor of canon, a species of safe place to which attentions converge with the end goal of recognizing patterns, norms and contextual

desires that position a canonic work. In literature, classics would be “universal, timeless works that constitute a common good of humanity” (CALVINO, 2013, p. 21), brought by processes that involve reason and authority, therefore, encounters between historic and normative aspects. The historic distance, in Gadamer’s opinion, is essential in order to recognize a classic.

What is classic is subtracted to the fluctuations of time and the variations in taste. When we classify a work as “classic”, it is due to the conscience of its permanence, its imperishable significance, regardless of any circumstance of time – in a species of timeless presence, contemporary to all present (GADAMER, 1996, p. 309).

If we go back to the etymology of the word “classic”, we would be facing a notion that goes back to Classical Antiquity, evoking a past and an ideal of perfection, from where authors would constitute as norm within a tradition or a genre and works would be appreciated within clearly rational parameters. “The classic designates the preservation throughout the ruins of time” says Gadamer (1996, p. 316).

Bringing the debate over the field of music, Roy Shuker (1999) reflects about the classic evoking issues linked to genre (classic music in opposition to popular music) and to meanings within musical genres of popular music (rock classics, hip-hop, among others). One of the most interesting issues evoked by the author is the somewhat elitist premise that the term “classic” evokes. According to him, it is more usual and recognizable that the term would be used to nominate works of hegemonic and non-peripheral music genres. The term “classic” gains strength, according to Shuker, in the moment the music album emerges as a product to be positioned within the market competitions of the industry. It is in this perspective, also from marketing, that the author reminds us how opportune is the nomination of an album as “classic”: its relaunch, the many versions of records, the celebratory dates, among other ephemeris and discursive brands.

Márcia Tosta Dias (2008) historicizes the moment in which the album becomes central to the industry and the concept of work starts

to figure, in pop, with more strength within the capitalist concept: “in the 50’s, the objective bases for standardizing production in the world music industry are launched, that cannot be understood without the global movement of capitalistic development” (DIAS, 2008, p. 41). The three-minute song becomes the world standard and, along with the internationalization of the product, comes the internalization of circulation and production, which intensifies with the installation of branches of labels in different countries. In this context of massive consumption of music, the necessity of differentiating products and forms of appreciation also arises.

This debate has the premise of the discussion around the choice of “best albums” through lists under the horizon of recognition of canonic music genres that orient values of products (music albums especially), under the protection of the idea of being a “classic” of pop music. The cut about the 10 albums considered as the most important in the pop music history by the Rolling Stone Brasil magazine and the strangeness about the only album listed that does not belong to a rock lineage - *What’s Going On*, by Marvin Gaye - seem to indicate an aesthetic predominance of rock values in pop music and also the existence of canonic categories of value in the music that are translated into a certain exhaustion and an excessive fixation around the ideal of classic work on pop. It is also interesting to think about the Lineage of soul music as an evaluative instance of pop capable of stressing rock values in a horizon of fugue of current standards. Discussing categories, sensibilities, possibilities of fruition of other aesthetic patterns, therefore, directs us to the understanding of the constitutional tensions of the contemporary culture.

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