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About kids, hips, nightmares and homework: african diaspora, black pride and racial oppression in Emicida album

Abstract

This article examines the album About kids, hips, nightmares and homework, released by Emicida in 2015. Through analyses, we sought to point out the ways in which the so-called new condition of rap (Santos, 2022) is formalized in the constituent elements of the album as a whole, as well as within its tracks. We recognized that the experience of the African diaspora constitutes the core of the album. More specifically, we observed that the album brings a balance between compositions that denounce the oppression suffered by the black population and, on the opposite pole, tracks that approach blackness from a celebratory and uplifting perspective. In turn, such themes correspond, on the one hand, to the use of sounds that are more aggressive and, on the other, to greater delicacy and lightness of sound, both in the singing and in the musical base. We also found different ways of singing, some very close to orality itself and others with greater musical formalization. In summary, we discussed that the diversity of themes and sounds present on the album is compatible with the expansion of rap's audience, something constitutive of its contemporary condition, and that this lies both its strength and the limit of its criticism.

Keywords: brazilian rap; Emicida; popular song; African diaspora.

Sobre crianças, quadris, pesadelos e lições de casa: diáspora africana, orgulho negro e opressão racial em disco de Emicida

Resumo

O presente artigo examina o disco Sobre crianças, quadris, pesadelos e lições de casa, lançado por Emicida em 2015. As análises procuraram apontar as maneiras pelas quais a chamada nova condição do rap (Santos, 2022) se formaliza nos elementos constitutivos do álbum como um todo, bem como no interior de suas faixas. Foi possível reconhecer que a experiência da diáspora africana se constitui como o cerne do disco. De modo mais específico, observou-se que o álbum traz um equilíbrio entre composições que denunciam as opressões sofridas pela população negra e, no polo oposto, por faixas que abordam a negritude a partir de uma perspectiva celebrativa e enaltecedora. Por sua vez, tais temas encontram correspondências entre, de um lado, o emprego de sonoridades mais agressivas e, de outro, maior delicadeza e leveza sonora, tanto no canto quanto na base musical. Foram constatadas ainda diferentes maneiras de cantar, algumas muito próximas à própria oralidade e outras com maior formalização musical. Em síntese, discutiu-se que a diversidade de temas e de sonoridades presentes no disco mostra-se compatível com a ampliação do público do rap, algo constitutivo de sua condição contemporânea, e que nisso reside tanto sua força quanto o limite de sua crítica.

Palavras-chave: rap brasileiro; Emicida; canção popular; diáspora africana.

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1 From the opening track to the album

Acoustic piano timbre with an Ab7M chord in the mid-acute region, with a regular rhythmic division marking, above all, the pulse and thus defining a slow tempo, around 76 bpm, in quaternary time signature. This chord persists for two measures, followed by a Cm7, which serves as a harmonic resting point—thus assuming the function of the Tonic—while maintaining a similar rhythmic division and also lasting for two measures. The Ab7M chord returns for two more measures, now accompanied by an electronic drum kit with some reverb. The kit features a dry-sounding kick drum in the mid-low frequency range, a snare reminiscent of a woodblock with a high pitch and quick decay, and a synthesized hi-hat sound. Concurrent with the drum entrance, various background sound effects are subtly incorporated into the mix, typically with extended durations. Subsequently, the piano transitions to an Fm7 chord in a lower, more central register of the instrument, before moving to a Cm7 chord in the following measure, maintaining the same tonal range. Thus far, a delicate and airy atmosphere is achieved through the pacing and tonal qualities. This is how the track "Mãe" begins, the opening song of the album *Sobre crianças, quadris, pesadelos e lições de casa*' released in 2015 by rapper Emicida.

Following this eight-bar instrumental introduction, Emicida's vocals commence. The fundamental musical structure largely retains its previously established characteristics. However, the electronic drum kit, while maintaining the same rhythmic pattern, introduces a more pronounced bass drum with enhanced low-frequency presence and a snare drum that more closely resembles acoustic drums in timbre and mid-range frequencies. These sonic elements soften the initial delicacy while expanding the mid and low-range frequencies of the sound spectrum.

Nevertheless, Emicida's vocal delivery remains notably mellow, at times even taking on a breathy² quality. Emicida stabilizes his rhythmic delivery through various pulse subdivision techniques, continuing the intonation tradition of rap that shaped his artistic development. Furthermore, from the very outset³, the artist showcases one of his

¹ From now on, the album will be referred to in abbreviated form as Sobre crianças.

²The analysis of vocal interpretations in the songs discussed here is based on the phonation modes described in Matheus Corusse's thesis (2021, pp. 39-41).

³ The verses of this first stanza are: "Um sorriso no rosto, um aperto no peito / Imposto, imperfeito, tipo encosto, estreito / Banzo, vi tanto por aí / Pranto, de canto chorando, fazendo os outro rir".

signature techniques: a masterful manipulation of sound. This is evident in the abundance of rhymes, both at line endings and internally (such as "peito," "imperfeito," and "estreito"; "imposto" and "encosto"), as well as in alliterations ("so<u>rr</u>iso no <u>r</u>osto") and assonances(b<u>anzo</u>, t<u>an</u>to, pr<u>an</u>to, c<u>an</u>to and chor<u>an</u>do) (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015).

However, regarding the melodic dimension, Emicida's singing style diverges somewhat from rap tradition. According to researcher Marcelo Segreto, rap typically does not "stabilize frequency at pitches that coincide with musical notes," meaning that "pitch in rap [is] generally that of the speaking voice" (Segreto, 2015, p. 28). This is because, at the beginning of the vocal section of "Mãe," Emicida maintains his singing within more defined frequency ranges, creating the impression of singing musical notes, even though it may be difficult to identify them precisely.

However, this vocal style is not sustained throughout the entire track. On the contrary, there are moments when Emicida intensifies the vocal delivery by departing⁴ from more defined pitch ranges, allowing the melodic contours to closely mirror his vocal inflections. In essence, this describes Emicida adopting a more mainstream rap vocal style. This is particularly evident in the song's second verse, "Não esqueci da senhora limpando o chão desses boy cuzão" (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015). Finally, there are instances when the rapper softens their intonation, thereby accentuating the musical aspect of their delivery. This allows for a more complete stabilization of pitch into distinct musical notes, enabling listeners to discern each individual note being intoned. Tal maneira de cantar pode ser ouvida principalmente nos refrãos ("Nossas mãos ainda encaixam certo" [...]) (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015), que contam não apenas com o canto de Emicida, mas também da cantora Anna Tréa. Finally, at the end of the recording, after 4 min. 3-second mark, the emotional intensity peaks, not through Emicida's voice, but through Dona

⁴ The considerations set out here and below are based on the notions of intonative force and musical form as developed by musician and linguist Luiz Tatit (2016). According to the author, the first is linked to "oral language and its expressive modulations known as intonations" (Tatit, 2016, p. 45) and the second is related to "a more 'artistic' instance" in which the voice "can operate on an equal footing with other instruments" (Tatit, 2016, p. 46). The author views both as polar extremes in songwriting discourse, which, if pushed to their limits, could potentially negate each other and destabilize the very essence of songcraft. According to the author, "the exclusive focus on either musical form or intonational force foreshadows a certain paralysis in the regular functioning of song language, prompting composers to intuitively mitigate either the 'excess of music' or the 'excess of speech' in hopes of restoring the persuasive efficacy of their works" (Tatit, 2016, p. 47). This analysis explores how vocal intonation and musical structure manifest in the diverse singing styles featured in the track "Mãe".

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Jacira's - the rapper's mother - as she recites the closing lines. In this instance, there is no rhythmic stabilization, resulting in both pitch and rhythm mirroring those of spoken speech.

The song's lyrics are constructed around a lyrical persona addressing their mother. Consequently, numerous passages evoke tender imagery that emphasize the mother-child bond, such as ("Nossas mãos ainda encaixam certo", "Em tudo eu via a voz de minha mãe / Em tudo eu via nóis", "Até meu jeito é o dela", "Esses dias achei, na minha caligrafia, / A tua letra e as lágrima molha a caneta") (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015). This perspective is complemented by the final excerpt in which, in the first person, the mother herself gives an equally affectionate account of the birth of her third child⁵ ("Buscava o amor nas coisas desejadas / Então pensei que amaria muito mais / Alguém que saiu de dentro de mim e mais nada / Me sentia como a terra, sagrada") (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015). At the same time, there are other passages that, in the opposite direction, point to the various difficulties that crossed that mother's life ["Profundo ver o peso do mundo nas costas de uma mulher"; "[...] moça, de onde 'cê tirava força?"] (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015), which further valorize the celebrated character.

It's worth noting that the lyrics of the song themselves contain some markers of blackness, which can be found in the passage "Quando disser que vi Deus / Ele era uma mulher preta" (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015) and in the mention of the slave quarters in the passage "Luta diária, fio da navalha, marcas? Várias / Senzalas, cesárias, cicatrizes" (Emicida – Mãe [...], 2015). Thus, the song's internal structure clearly indicates that the mother depicted in the lyrics is a Black woman, and furthermore, that the historical context serving as a reference point for its composition is rooted in the experiences of Black women within the African diaspora.

The choice to begin an examination of the album *Sobre crianças* with the song "Mãe" is justified not only because it is the opening track, but because it condenses characteristics that mark the album as a whole. The African diaspora experience (Hall,

⁵ Based on the information presented, particularly the use of first-person narration and the performance by Emicida and his mother Dona Jacira, it is clear that the song "Mãe" is deeply rooted in the rapper's personal journey and experiences. To clarify, Dona Jacira's recitation concludes by revealing that this "third child" was named *Leandro*, which is Emicida's given name. However, this somewhat autobiographical aspect will not be explored in the commentary surrounding this song, as its significance extends beyond the individual sphere.

2003) permeates all tracks, manifesting through diverse perspectives in both lyrics and soundscapes⁶. Furthermore, the song "Mãe" and the album can be analyzed through the intersection of four primary themes. The first aspect involves the aforementioned spectrum between the dominance of musical form on one end and the prevalence of intonational force in voices on the other.

In this regard, it is evident that in two tracks – "Amoras" and "Trabalhadores do Brasil" – there is a more intense use of intonational force, to the extent that the voices do not stabilize rhythmically or in musical notes, but rather manifest through orality, similar to what occurred at the end of "Mãe," as previously discussed. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are at least three tracks that feature vocals consistently anchored to specific musical notes throughout. These include "Baiana," "Passarinho," and "Sodade," which are sequentially placed in the central portion of the album, occupying the sixth through eighth positions. The remaining examples fall between these extremes, exhibiting varying degrees of musical structure and intonational force. Typically, they consist of one section where the vocals are rhythmically organized but follow speech inflections, and another section where the vocals adhere to musical notes.

The second axis involves a fluctuation between, on one hand, greater sonic delicacy and lightness and, on the other, the use of more aggressive sounds, both in the vocals and the musical foundation. Thus, tracks such as como "Mãe", "Amoras", "Mufete", "Baiana", "Passarinhos" and "Madagascar" employ lighter sonorities, generally based on acoustic instruments or digital instruments with cleaner timbres and gentle attacks; moreover, these songs feature equally smooth vocal deliveries, without indicating tension. In contrast, the tracks "8" and "Boa esperança" are primarily built on digital instruments with greater intensity and more abrupt attacks, accompanied by more tense vocal deliveries. The remaining tracks oscillate between these two poles, which will

⁶ Recently, historian Mariana Mostranges' monograph (2023) examined potential connections between Brazil and Africa as portrayed in the album *Sobre crianças*. In her study, the author analyzed critical reviews of the album, examined each track, and supported her analysis with insights from interviews with Emicida. In light of this, it was concluded that the album represented "a complex object of inestimable value for (re)enchanting and thus redefining [Black] knowledge, values, experiences, and cultures that official history has long attempted to erase" (Mostranges, 2023, p. 99). While the analyses presented here share some similarities with those of Mostranges, they do not aim to interpret the album through the lens of Brazil-Africa connections. Instead, they explore how the album expresses the African diaspora experience.

be discussed further.

A third axis is characterized, at one end, by songs that denounce the oppression experienced by the Black population and, at the opposite pole, by compositions that approach Blackness from a celebratory and exalting perspective. In this context, songs such as "Boa Esperança," "Mandume," and "8" articulate dissatisfaction and resistance against various forms of violence that permeate the experiences of the Black population. "Mufete" and "Salve Black (freestyle)" showcase lyrics and sounds that celebrate various aspects of Black identity and culture.

Finally, the fourth axis alternates between album tracks focused on more individualized situations and those developed from a more collective perspective. The first group includes the songs "Mãe", "Amoras", "Baiana" and "Chapa"; the second group includes the tracks "Mufete", "Boa esperança", "Trabalhadores do Brasil" and "Salve Black ("free style")". As in other instances, this distinction does not preclude certain tracks from evolving from an individual focus to address more collective themes, and vice versa.

It is worth noting that these themes shape the album as a whole, and the same occurs within each individual track. Throughout these processes, there are observable periods of intensification towards certain polarities of the previously described axes, and consequently, attenuation of others. To gain a deeper understanding of this dimension, it is essential to examine each of these categories individually. However, before delving into these considerations, it's crucial to contextualize the album within Emicida's career, which will aid in understanding its significance both in the artist's specific trajectory and in the broader landscape of Brazilian rap.

2 Emicida and the album Sobre crianças

According to Emicida's official website, ⁷, Sobre crianças, released in 2015, is listed as the rapper's seventh album⁸, with his first album having been released in 2009. Before

⁷ Available at: <u>https://emicida.com.br/escute?lang=ptbr.</u> Accessed at: 06 Jan. 2024.

⁸ Emicida's previous albums, according to this discography, are: Pra quem já mordeu um cachorro por comida, até que eu cheguei longe... (2009), Sua mina ouve meu rep tamém (2010), Emicídio (2010),

his first album, the rapper had already produced his first song, "Contraditório vagabundo", in 2005, and the single "Triunfo", in 2009. Another pivotal experience in Emicida's rise and establishment within the rap scene was his participation in freestyle battles, notably the Santa Cruz Battle held at the Santa Cruz metro station in São Paulo, where he claimed his first victory in 2006⁹.

It is worth noting that Emicida's influence in the public sphere extended beyond his work as a rapper, encompassing various other dimensions. One of his most notable endeavors is his entrepreneurial activity, which gained significant traction in 2009 when the artist and his brother, Evandro Fióti, established the production company Laboratório Fantasma. It was through this company that Emicida initially produced and released his own records, but later expanded to work with other artists and even diversify into other market segments, such as clothing and accessories.

This engagement in diverse domains beyond music production was interpreted by sociologist Daniela Vieira dos Santos as indicative of "rap's evolution into a multifaceted cultural phenomenon transcending its origins as a musical genre" (Santos, 2022, p. 14). The author recognizes a path in which rap appears initially linked to hip-hop culture, then comes to be thought of as a "musical genre" more closely linked to the mechanisms of record production and culminates, more recently, in being "thought of not only as music, but also as a concept - a lifestyle and consumption that goes beyond its 'origins'" (Santos, 2022, p. 14).

Santos argues that this transcendence of rap beyond its status as a musical genre exemplifies what he terms the "new condition of rap," with Emicida serving as a prime exemplar of this phenomenon (Santos, 2022, p. 5). The sociologist conceptualizes this category to articulate the evolving sociocultural positioning of rap, encompassing:

1) the impact of digital technologies - which restructure the production, circulation and reception of musical practice; 2) a change in the management of artistic careers; 3) an increase in the cultural legitimacy

Doozicabraba e a Revolução Silenciosa (2011), Criolo & Emicida ao vivo (2013) and O glorioso retorno de quem nunca esteve aqui (2013). Among these, the album Sua mina [...] is classified as an EP on Spotify, likely due to its short length of six tracks and total runtime of 16 minutes and 26 seconds.

⁹ For more information on freestyle battles and, in particular, the Santa Cruz Battles, see Teperman (2015).

of rap; 4) a change in the status of artists; 5) the internationalization of Brazilian rap; 6) a broadening of the concept of rap/Hip Hop beyond a musical genre; 7) female and LGBTQI+ protagonism; 8) diversification of the public (Santos, 2022, p. 5).

Based on these reflections, the album *Sobre crianças* can be viewed as another of Emicida's works that fits within this new era of rap. Therefore, this article aims to explore the manifestations of this condition within the album¹⁰. Therefore, this study draws theoretical inspiration and support from the insights of literary critic Antonio Candido (2011) regarding the examination of the relationships between a literary work and its socio-historical context. The author argues that the work's integrity necessitates an analysis that "dialectically integrates text and context" (Candido, 2011, p. 13). More specifically, Candido invites us to see how the external element "plays a certain role in the constitution of the structure, thus becoming *internal*" (2011, p. 14). This study aims to explore how Santos' concept of rap's new condition is not merely an external factor surrounding Emicida's album, but rather an integral element that shapes its internal structure and content.

As previously noted, Sobre crianças was released in 2015, marking the artist's 10th anniversary in the music industry¹¹. To celebrate this milestone, Emicida embarked on a journey to Angola and Cape Verde, African nations that, like Brazil, share a history of Portuguese colonialism and retain Portuguese as their official language, among other lasting impacts of this historical process. In addition to these factors, the selection of these destinations was influenced by their concurrent celebration of 40 years of independence that same year (Sobre [...], [20--]). According to the rapper, the album came about with the aim of expressing how Brazil and the African continent as a whole were intrinsically linked, despite the geographical distance (Sobre [...], 2015). To achieve this, the songs incorporated sounds and themes associated with African and Afro-

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¹⁰ By taking the album as the unit of analysis, the article comes close to other studies that have also focused on this same subject, such as those by José Adriano Fenerick and Carlos Eduardo Marchioni on the albums *Sgt. Peppers* (Fenerick; Marchioni, 2008) and *Álbum branco* (Fenerick; Marchioni, 2015), by the Beatles, and Walter Garcia (2016) on the album *Encarnado* by Juçara Marçal.

¹¹ Emicida's artistic career likely began with the release of the aforementioned "Contraditório vagabundo" in 2005.

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Brazilian cultures, and featured significant contributions from Angolan and Cape Verdean musicians and artist groups during the recording process.

The album comprises 14 tracks with a total runtime of 52 minutes. Of these, Emicida does not sign the authorship and does not take part in the performance of two: "Sodade," attributed to Nenzalina Correia and Semedo Garcia, performed by Neusa Semedo, leader of the Terreiro dos Órgãos batucadeiras group from Cape Verde; and "Trabalhadores do Brasil," composed and performed by Marcelino Freire. Of the remaining 12 tracks, six ("Amoras", "Mufete", "Passarinhos", "Chapa", "Madagascar" and "Salve Black") are credited to Emicida and Xuxa Levy, who also signs two other compositions ("8" and "Casa") with other co-writers, and was also the record's producer, along with Emicida and Evandro Fióti.

When examining the album's track sequence, it can be divided into four distinct sections. The initial segment encompasses the opening section, previously discussed, along with the subsequent two sections. The second segment showcases a lighter tone, both musically and lyrically, encompassing the subsequent four tracks. Subsequently, five tracks form the third section, where the album reaches its peak in terms of social critique and retaliation. Finally, the last two tracks form a fourth section, where the celebration of Black identity resurfaces. The following sections will discuss these ranges within the context of these blocks.

3 From the exaltation of motherhood to "solo não dócil"

As previously noted, the track "Mãe" opens the album. Through it, an atmosphere of tenderness and lightness emerges, characterized by a strong lyrical element¹². As previously noted, this atmosphere is occasionally punctuated by heightened tension in Emicida's vocal delivery, typically corresponding to lyrics that allude to the various challenges faced by the song's protagonist. Nevertheless, the album opens with a

¹² The lyrical nature of the song "Mãe" is supported by Anatol Rosenfeld's characterization of the lyric genre. According to the author, in this genre, "a central voice articulates an emotional state and conveys it through prayer-like expressions. It is essentially the expression of emotions and psychic dispositions, often also of conceptions, reflections and visions as they are intensely lived and experienced" (Rosenfeld, 2000, p. 22). In the case of the song discussed here, its lyricism primarily stems from expressing the previously mentioned harmony between the song's narrator and their mother.

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light and gentle tone, hinting at a celebratory nature—specifically of Black women though expressed with serenity rather than euphoria. In addition, following Mostranges' arguments (2023, p. 65), the strip manages to capture "the relevance of motherhood in matriarchal societies and also in those whose ancestry is part of the social organization".

The next track on the album, titled "8", creates a stark contrast with the opening song. For approximately the first 25 seconds, the piece lacks a defined tempo and rhythmic pattern, consisting solely of sonic elements that evoke both synthesized timbres and naturalistic sounds reminiscent of birdsong. However, after these initial seconds, Emicida's voice can be heard singing with considerable strength and intensity, in a rhythmically stable chant, but without fixing the pitches to specific musical notes. Simultaneously, an electronic drum beat emerges, setting the tempo at approximately 85 bpm—slightly faster than "Mãe"—in 4/4 time. The bass drum and snare exhibit a tight, punchy sound characterized by sharp attack, quick decay, and prominent mid-low frequencies.

The lyrics of "8" present various formulations linked to the sufferings and difficulties of the black population, as can be seen in the passages "O fardo é foda, não é conto de fada", "A tristeza deforma os faces daqui" and "Nóis nunca entendeu essa história manca / Sangue índio, suor preto e as igreja branca" (Emicida - 8 [...], 2015). The song features a chorus with a musical foundation highlighting elongated vocalizations of the vowel [ô] in a slightly higher register, complemented by electronic sounds, particularly scratch effects. This base is overlaid with collaged fragments from other songs. At the end, there is a guitar solo over which Emicida declaims a message aimed at the "quebrada", inviting people to seek information ("Vamo' buscar se informar, mano") and unite ("Unido a gente fica em pé") (Emicida - 8 [...], 2015).

While the album's opening tracks lean towards a celebratory tone, the latter half takes on a more critical stance, addressing societal oppression. This characteristic is carried over into the next song, titled "Casa". Emicida's verses maintain a consistent vocal tension, with a steady rhythm and frequencies matching speech inflections. With this way of singing, the rapper sings several verses that point to the difficulties and dangers of

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being in the world¹³, as can be seen in "Lá fora é selva, a só entre luz e trevas / Nós, presos nessas fases de guerra, medo e monstros", "Nunca foi fácil, solo não dócil; esperança, fóssil" and "Jacaré que dorme vira bolsa" (Emicida - Casa [...], 2015). In contrast, the song's choruses are sung by children's voices in a high register, with soft delivery and well-defined melodic contours in terms of musical notes, and their verses express a relationship of conjunction between the song's narrator and the world: "O céu é meu pai / A terra, mamãe / E o mundo inteiro é tipo a minha casa" (Emicida – Casa [...], 2015).

The interplay between tense and softened vocal deliveries in "Casa" is mirrored in its musical foundation. As Emicida performs, deep and intense bass sounds punctuate the rhythm, marking each beat of the measure. At times, however, the children's voices themselves break into vocalise, lending a lighter touch to the track. Additionally, the distinctive sound of the berimbau, enhanced by electronic processing, intensifies the rhythmic activity and evokes the Afro-Brazilian practice of capoeira, where this instrument plays a central role.

4 "Riso contente"

Following two tracks focused on denouncing forms of oppression against the Black population, with their correspondingly more aggressive sounds, the album continues with a set of four tracks that bring a lighter tone and, for the most part, a celebratory character. The fourth track, "Amoras", is notably short at only 56 seconds in length. Its accompaniment is primarily built around the kalimba, an instrument featuring small metal tines that, when plucked, produce high-pitched sounds in various tunings depending on the size of each tine. Emicida delivers spoken word poetry over the musical backdrop, using a soft, breathy vocal style in a high register. Thus, there is a delicate interplay between the musical foundation and the vocals. The text of "Amoras" features a song-writer who recounts a situation in which he told his daughter that the darkest

¹³ Although the central theme of "Casa" revolves around life's challenges, it's noteworthy that its lyrics incorporate numerous natural elements and imagery (jungle, soil, alligator, sky, earth). In this context, while these terms typically serve a metaphorical function symbolizing life's dangers, the song may evoke interpretations linking it to ecological concerns.

blackberries ("as pretinhas") were the sweetest and his favorite, and that, in response, the child expressed her pride in being black: "Papai, que bom, porque eu sou pretinha também". The lyrics also highlight the names of Martin Luther King, Zumbi and Malcom X, important protagonists in the struggles of the Afro-descendant population, indicating that they would also be ("cairia em pranto", "diria que nada foi em vão" and "would tell someone") (Emicida - Amoras [...], 2015) by the fact that "a doçura das frutinhas sabor acalanto" would have awakened this awareness in a child.

Black pride resurfaces in the next track, the album's fifth, "Mufete" (Emicida – Mufete [...], 2015). Its chorus exalts various peripheral regions of the city of Luanda, Angola's capital ("Rangel, Viana, Golfo, Cazenga pois / Marçal, Sambizanga, Calemba Dois") (Emicida - Mufete [...], 2015). In addition, the lyrics are full of exaltations of the black population (" Nobreza mora em nóis, não num trono / Logo somos reis e rainhas, somos") (Emicida - Mufete [...], 2015) and their cultural production cultural ("Djavan me disse uma vez / Que a terra cantaria ao tocar meus pés / Tanta alegria faz brilhar minha tês" and "Aí, 'cá na cintura das minas de Cabo Verde / E nos olhares do povo em Luanda / Nem em sonho eu ia saber que / Cada lugar que eu pisasse daria um samba") (Emicida - Mufete [...], 2015). Furthermore, according to Angolan drummer Joel Inga, who recorded the song, the rhythmic pattern employed closely resembles kizomba, a danceable musical genre originating from Angola, which enhances the festive atmosphere conveyed in its lyrics (Emicida – Documentary [...], 2017).

A particular verse stands out: "Ligue a pele preta a um riso contente" (Emicida – Mufete [...], 2015), which points to the need to create new imaginaries surrounding the Black population, moving away from the perspective of suffering and recognizing that there are also joys in the experiences resulting from the African diaspora. The verse is therefore close to the reflections of the thinker, theorist and activist bell hooks (2019), who considers that

[...] a critical task for Black intellectuals has been to challenge hegemonic paradigms of perception, thought, and existence that hinder our ability to envision ourselves from alternative perspectives, to imagine, describe, and reinvent ourselves in emancipatory ways (hooks, 2019, p. 32-33).

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The next track, "Baiana" (Emicida – Baiana [...], 2015), continues the album's theme of celebrating Black identity. However, in this context, the meaning appears more individualized and less collective compared to "Mufete" upon initial assessment. In this song, the songwriter expresses his fascination with a black woman ("cor nagô") born in the state of Bahia, who would have fascinated him by kissing him "no canto da boca" (Emicida – Baiana [...], 2015). However, even though the statement is directed at a specific woman, no first name is mentioned, but she is referred to only as *baiana* ("Baiana, 'cê me bagunçou") (Emicida - Baiana [...], 2015). Through this lens, the song becomes a tribute to all Black women of Bahia and a homage to the Brazilian popular music tradition that celebrates Bahian women and the state of Bahia¹⁴. It's worth noting that the song features a collaboration with fellow Bahian artist Caetano Veloso, one of Brazil's most acclaimed popular musicians, who joins Emicida in singing the choruses. This participation signifies the growing cultural legitimacy of rap, reflecting its evolving status, as noted by Santos (2022).

The song "Passarinhos" (Emicida – Passarinhos [...], 2015) concludes this set of lighter tracks on the album. Its musical accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern reminiscent of reggae, a genre associated with the African diaspora, particularly in Jamaica¹⁵, which encourages listeners to move their bodies to the beat. The instruments chosen to integrate this musical base also contribute to the smoothness of this track: the rhythmic conduction is initially carried out by the ukulele, a chordophone with less sound power and a medium-high frequency, and is complemented by acoustic drums, played with less intense attacks, as well as electric guitar and double bass, also with light sounds and contributing to the rhythmic subdivision. The song features a well-defined melodic line with stable musical notes. Vanessa da Mata contributes vocals, at times harmonizing with Emicida's lead and at other points providing countermelodies.

¹⁴ To illustrate, among the many songs that exalt Bahia and the baianas are "O que é que a baiana tem?" (Dorival Caymmi), "Você já foi à Bahia?" (Dorival Caymmi), "Na baixa do sapateiro" (Ary Barroso), "No tabuleiro da baiana" (Ary Barroso), "Falsa baiana" (Geraldo Pereira) and "Bahia com H" (Denis Brean).

¹⁵ For further insights and reflections on reggae from an African diaspora perspective, see Hinkel and Maheirie (2022).

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However, the lyrics present a stark contrast to the musical simplicity. This is because he works by establishing parallels between human life and the flights of birds ("E, no meio disso tudo / 'Tamo tipo passarinhos / Soltos a voar dispostos") (Emicida -Passarinhos [...], 2015), and ends up highlighting problems and difficulties, as can be seen in the passages "Despencados de voos cansativos / Complicados e pensativos / Machucados após tantos crivos" (Emicida – Passarinhos [...], 2015), "Vê só o que sobrou de nós e o que já era" (Emicida – Passarinhos [...], 2015), "Em colapso, o planeta gira / Tanta mentira aumenta a ira de quem sofre mudo / A página vira, o são delira, então a gente pira" (Emicida – Passarinhos [...], 2015) and "Cidades são aldeias mortas" (Emicida – Passarinhos [...], 2015). On the other hand, the chorus of the song softens this diagnosis by pointing to the hope of finding a safe place ("achar um ninho"), even if it's in emotional relationships ("Nem que seja no peito um do outro") (Emicida - Passarinhos [...], 2015). Thus, despite the lyrics largely alluding to adversity, an atmosphere of optimism ultimately prevails, both through the repetition of the chorus and the musical characteristics. In any case, the content of its lyrics appears to serve as a transition to the subsequent themes presented in the album.

5 Melancholy and revenge

Next, beginning the third thematic section, another shorter track plays -"Sodade"¹⁶, the album's eighth song, lasting 1 minute and 10 seconds. It's noteworthy that Emicida is absent from this track, both as a writer and performer. The song is performed by Neusa Semedo, who leads a group of batucadeiras in Cape Verde. This is the only track that is not sung in Portuguese, being sung, according to Luis Gustavo Coutinho, a member of the Música Pavê portal team, in Cape Verdean Creole (Pavezeiros, 2015). Its accompaniment features a simple electronic pulse at approximately 70 bpm, reminiscent of a caxixi or similar shaker instrument. Building upon this foundation, Neusa Semedo crafts her vocal style, employing a ternary subdivision of the rhythm while incorporating numerous sustained notes, particularly at the beginnings and ends of

¹⁶ EMICIDA – SODADE (Pseudo Vídeo). [S. l.]: Laboratório Fantasma, 2015. 1 vídeo (2 min.). Published by the Emicida channel. Available at: <u>https://youtu.be/xqlJlKEoCBI?si=aNYoImeoPZ2IxzK1.</u> Accessed at: July 25, 2024.

phrases. The melodic line exhibits a somewhat angular character, beginning in a higher register and concluding in the lower range. These features - minimal rhythmic movement, sustained notes, and a melody leaning towards lower registers - imbue the song with a melancholic quality¹⁷, as hinted at by its title¹⁸.

The subsequent track, "Chapa," the ninth on the album, maintains the somber tone established in "Sodade." The song opens with a woman speaking in a northeastern Brazilian accent, stating she's searching for her two sons in São Paulo, setting the stage for the central theme that unfolds as the singing begins. The accent in this voice reflects the migration of people from the Northeast to the Southeast, who often struggle to secure formal employment and thus resort to informal means of subsistence¹⁹. This aspect is linked to the term "chapa," which titles the song and is used by the speaker to address their interlocutor, typically referring to informal workers such as coffee pickers and truck loaders/unloaders.

At the beginning of the sung part, the I-song talks to a neighbor who was missing, but whom he had just found ("Chapa, pode pá, tô feliz de te trombar") (Emicida – Chapa [...], 2015). In this dialogue, the enunciator emphasizes all the sadness resulting from the disappearance of his interlocutor, especially on the part of his mother mãe ("Sua mãe chora / Não dá pra esquecer / Que a dor vem sem boi, sentiu", "Ela tá presa na de que ainda vai te ver") (Emicida – Chapa [...], 2015) and his partner ("Chapa, sua mina sorriu, mas era sonho / E quando viu, acordou deprê") (Emicida – Chapa [...], 2015). The lyrics also contain hints suggesting that the disappearance of the "buddy" was due to a depressive state ("Se encana ao crer / Que ninguém lá te ame") (Emicida – Chapa [...], 2015). The sonic elements reinforce the melancholic atmosphere through a low-register melodic line, sparse rhythmic accompaniment, and the use of a minor key. The I-song also makes a request for the neighbor to return retorne ("Jura pra mim que foi / E que agora

¹⁷ This characteristic was also noted by Mostranges (2023, p. 18), who highlighted "the melancholy in the melody and vocals" at one point, and later observed "the wistfulness in the singer's voice and the surrounding sounds" (Mostranges, 2023, p. 65).

¹⁸ It's worth noting that "Sodade" is also the title of a song by Cape Verdean singer Cesária Évora, which shares a melancholic quality, albeit with distinct musical characteristics compared to Neusa Semedo's version recorded on Emicida's album.

¹⁹ According to the study by Oliveira and Jannuzzi (2005, p. 142), "the difficulty of finding work in the previous place of residence, whether due to the high competitiveness of the formal market or the instability of the informal sector of the labor market" has been an impacting factor for return migrations to the Northeast.

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tudo vai se resolver", "Até breve, eu quero ver sua família feliz no rolê") (Emicida – Chapa [...], 2015).

Examining this request, the song's chorus disrupts the melancholic atmosphere and projects the character's anticipation of return: "Mal posso esperar o dia de ver / Você voltando pra gente / Sua voz avisar, o portão bater / Acende um riso contente / Vai ser tão bom" (Emicida – Chapa [...], 2015). In line with the shift in lyrical tone, the musical elements also accentuate this sense of hope: the rhythmic pattern of the accompaniment transitions to a samba groove, while the vocals ascend to a higher register and adopt a more syncopated style. Nevertheless, the minor key persists, suggesting that despite expectations, the reality remains unchanged, as the character has not yet returned (and may not have overcome their depressive state).

With the track "Boa esperança", the album reaches its peak of aggression, both sonically and in its denouncing nature. Her lyrics powerfully convey the enduring impacts of slavery on Black communities today. The lyrics draw parallels between modern police vehicles and historical slave ships, as well as between favelas and slave quarters, highlighting continuities in systemic oppression ("E os camburão, o que são? / Negreiros a retraficar / Favela ainda é senzala, Jão") (Emicida – Boa [...], 2015). Simultaneously, several parts of the song indicate a retaliatory stance. This already appears in the final verse of the chorus, when he says that the favela is a "Bomba relógio prestes a estourar", and is developed in the stanzas, in verses such as "Violência se adapta, um dia ela volta p'ocêis", "Nóis quer ser dono do circo / Cansamos da vida de palhaço" e "'Cês diz que nosso pau é grande / Espera até ver nosso ódio" (Emicida – Boa [...], 2015). This final verse can be interpreted as a rebuttal to the hypersexualization of Black bodies.

The bitterness evident in the lyrics is equally reflected in the song's sonic landscape. The electronic drum returns to dry tones with sharp attacks and quick decay, similar to those heard in tracks "8" and "Casa," creating a beat that marks all four beats of the measure. Furthermore, the timekeeping, typically performed by the hi-hat, features a more metallic and strident timbre in this instance. The accompaniment features an electronic bass timbre, rich in low harmonics, typically accentuating the downbeat. The vocals are shared between Emicida, who performs the verses, and rapper J. Ghetto, who delivers the choruses. These have a more defined melodic line, with

stabilized singing on musical notes, but J. Ghetto's delivery carries a certain tension that aligns with the lyrics. Emicida employs a highly intense vocal delivery, maintaining rhythmic stability while matching spoken speech patterns, resulting in a particularly aggressive sound.

The album continues with another brief track. "Trabalhadores do Brasil" is the eleventh track on the album, with a runtime of 1 minute and 22 seconds. Similar to "Sodade," this track does not feature Emicida. Instead, it consists of a poem by Marcelino Freire²⁰, recited by the poet himself without any instrumental accompaniment. Initially, Freire's intonation exhibits pronounced inflections, alternating between higher and lower registers, which lends a somewhat caricatured quality to his delivery and suggests a touch of humor. The text lists various low-wage occupations typically associated with economically disadvantaged individuals, including sugarcane cutting, continuous meat vending, security work, and septic tank cleaning.

However, what stands out is that in the poem, the subjects performing these actions are Orishas, such as Oloroquê, Obatalá, Olorum, and Ossonhê, as well as iconic Black figures like Zumbi and "Queen Quelé" Clementina de Jesus. Thus, it symbolizes the ancestral heritage and, in a sense, the divine essence inherent in every Black woman and man. Additionally, the text periodically employs the rhetorical question "Are you listening?" to engage the audience, delivered with notable emphasis. As the track concludes, this phrase is reiterated with escalating intensity and frequency, ultimately challenging the white listener: "Seu branco safado: / Ninguém aqui é escravo de ninguém" (Emicida – Trabalhadores [...], 2015). The provocative tone established early in the track is maintained throughout, ultimately reinforcing rather than contradicting the rebuttal heard in "Boa esperança".

This block concludes with "Mandume," the twelfth track on the album, which was produced collaboratively, featuring contributions from Drik Barbosa, Amiri, Rico Dalasam, Muzzike, and Raphão Alaafin. The song structure features a chorus primarily performed by Emicida, with verses contributed by guest artists and Emicida himself, concluding with a final chorus sung by all participants. This makes it the longest song on

²⁰ The poem was published in the book Contos negreiros, released by Record in 2005. A review of the book can be found in Valenciano (2007).

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the album at 8 minutes and 15 seconds. Its refrain points to another legacy of the slavery period, which is the mechanisms for maintaining social differences through, above all, docility and forgetting the various forms of oppression opressão ("Eles querem que alguém que vem de onde nós vem / Seja mais humilde, baixe a cabeça / Nunca revide, finja que esqueceu a coisa toda") (Emicida – Mandume [...], 2015),and these themes are explored in different ways in the stanzas. It's worth noting the inclusion of a female artist (Drik Barbosa) and an openly gay male performer (Rico Dalasam). This track in the album highlights female empowerment and LGBTQIAPN+ representation, reflecting a new dimension in rap music.

6 Returning to the celebration

The album concludes with two songs celebrating Black identity, following five tracks of tension and confrontation. The first of these is "Madagascar," a lyrical love song set against the backdrop of Madagascar's nights. Thus, the lyrics alternate between praising the beloved and celebrating the local landscape, as evident in the chorus:

Quantas estrelas vi, ali, em seu olhar Coisas com as quais posso me acostumar facin' Posso me acostumar facin' Céu azul, vejo em mar Pássaros, pássaros, pássaros a cantar São coisas com as quais posso me acostumar facin' Posso me acostumar facin' (Emicida – Madagascar [...], 2015)

Musically, the chorus is accompanied by a Fender Rhodes piano and acoustic guitar, creating a loose, unstructured rhythmic foundation. In the chorus, Jonas Paulo and Fattú Djakité deliver a delicate vocal performance, their soft, breathy voices intertwining in a harmonious arrangement with layered vocal textures. Subsequently, the verses feature a more defined rhythmic pattern driven by electronic drums. Emicida delivers the vocals, alternating between melodic singing and a more spoken-word style of delivery. The electronic drum presence enhances the chorus repetition, adding dynamism without compromising its lyricism.

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The album concludes with the track "Salve Black (freestyle)" (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015) The track has a very pronounced percussive character, with a clave similar to that of the rumba, which brings it closer to Afrolatin rhythms. The lyrics of its chorus begin with a possible reference to the African diaspora itself ("A vida levou cada um de nós pr'um canto, tormento") (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015), which would have promoted a disarticulation of communities and the isolation of black people ("Espalha como estrelas sós, folhas ao vento") (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015), but concludes by emphasizing the importance of collectivity: "Minha família, meu povo / Parceria cem por cento" (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015). This characteristic is amplified through the performance itself, as the chorus is sung in unison by Emicida, Djose, Alejandra Luciani, Ênio Cesar, Manno G, Lakers, and Pá, musically symbolizing the power of collective action.

Some of the verses reiterate the importance of unity ("Segura, negão / Cumprimenta o seu irmão, que tá do seu lado / 'Cês tão tudo aliado") (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015), celebrate black culture ("O rap nacional nos fortalece") and highlight some black personalities such as Ella Fitzgerald. Additionally, in his verse, Emicida expresses gratitude to Cape Verde and Angola, where the album was produced, as well as to longstanding members of his team ("Vinícius, Djose, Zala, Fióti / Comigo desde o início") (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015). Mirroring the finale of a live performance, the closing verses bid a celebratory farewell to the listener. "Aê negrão, aqui é periferia / Muito abraço a todos / Axé!" (Emicida – Salve [...], 2015).

7 Final considerations

Upon analyzing each track of *Sobre crianças*, it becomes apparent, as previously suggested, that the album articulates a diverse range of experiences connected to the African diaspora. This character is in line with the album's title, as it addresses *children*, especially in "Amoras" (Emicida – Amoras [...], 2015); *hips*, as in the verse "Aí, cá na Cintura das Minas de Cabo Verde" from "Mufete" (Emicida – Mufete [...], 2015), in addition to the entire dance aspect present in many tracks); *nightmares*, expressed in the various forms of oppression and violence reported in the songs; and *homework*, possibly related to processes of awareness as heard in "Vamo' buscar se informar, mano" in the

song "8" (Emicida – 8 [...], 2015) and in "Gente só é feliz / Quem realmente sabe que a África não é um país / Esquece o que o livro diz, ele mente" in the track "Mufete" (Emicida – Mufete [...], 2015).

In this context, it is pertinent to connect the observations made thus far with Santos' analysis of the 2016 São Paulo Fashion Week (SPFW) show by Laboratório Fantasma, a company founded by Emicida and his brother Evandro Fióti. This event, one of the world's premier fashion showcases, has historically been associated with economic and cultural elites. The sociologist characterized this event as a "groundbreaking political intervention, as the São Paulo Fashion Week runway had never before showcased such a diverse array of Black models and individuals who challenge Eurocentric beauty standards" (Santos, 2022, p. 15). However, at the same time, the author pondered:

The social significance of the parade was primarily structured around reclaiming African resistance history and affirming the culture and struggle of Black individuals, whose narrative has been characterized by well-documented oppression and resultant lack of opportunities. However, the artist's approach emphasizes the potential for narrating and constructing a history that empowers Black individuals, rather than focusing on their pain and subjugation (Santos, 2022, p. 15).

Similar to Santos' observation, the album *Sobre crianças* also focuses on reclaiming African resistance history. However, in the subject matter under discussion, it is more challenging to determine whether there was an emphasis on the suffering and subjugation of Black individuals. These themes are certainly present, particularly in what was referred to here as the album's third section, comprising tracks like "Sodade," "Chapa," "Boa esperança," "Trabalhadores do Brasil," and "Mandume," as well as tracks "8" and "Casa" from the first section. Collectively, these tracks span nearly 26 minutes, accounting for half of the album's total runtime—a substantial portion. What meaning can be derived from an album that balances social critique with celebratory songs?

A more comprehensive analysis of the record may shed light on this issue. Upon reexamining the tracks through the lens of their central themes, the album reveals:

- the piece opens with a celebratory yet understated tone in "Mãe";

- takes on a tone of denunciation of oppression in "8" and "Casa";

- returns to celebration and lightness in tracks like "Amoras," "Mufete," "Baiana,"
 and "Passarinhos"
- It reaches the peak of lament, denunciation and revenge in "Sodade", "Chapa",
 "Boa esperança", "Trabalhadores do Brasil" and "Mandume";
- the album concludes with a return to celebration in "Madagascar" and "Salve Black (Freestyle)".

The disc thus presents a narrative arc that begins and ends with a celebratory and festive perspective. The final track highlights the album's production process through Emicida's acknowledgments to the production team and countries visited, as well as a farewell message in the closing verses. Thus, the album itself reveals its nature as a commercial product, which may be crucial for understanding its meanings: the diversity of perspectives presented in *Sobre crianças*, its balance between exaltation and criticism, as well as its celebratory opening and closing, point to a product aiming to establish itself within rap's new status, which, as Santos (2022, p. 16) noted, "has been appealing to a university-educated and middle-class audience." It is therefore unsurprising that some studies, such as that of sociologist Vanessa Vilas Boas Gatti (2015), recognize a connection between Emicida's work and the so-called "New Brazilian Popular Music" movement. Similarly, the balance between celebratory and combative perspectives found in the album *Sobre crianças* is often present in records associated with samba and various genres of Brazilian popular music (MPB).

Sobre crianças also relates to another ongoing debate within rap music concerning its social role²¹. Santos revisits this topic, drawing primarily on the insights of sociologist Márcio Macedo and historian Guilherme Machado Botelho. The lead author identifies the evolution of hip-hop in Brazil, transitioning from a "street culture" prevalent from 1983 to 1989, to a "black culture" between 1990 and 1996, before aligning with the concept of a "peripheral culture" in the latter half of the 1990s. These observations

²¹ This theme is also explored in historian Roberto Camargos' article "The Formation of a Value System and Its Dissemination and Defense - The Case of Brazilian Rap (1988-2015)," which is part of the special issue "Popular Music, Music Industry, and Politics in 21st Century Brazil" published in this edition of PerCursos journal.

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highlight the diverse societal roles hip hop has come to embody. Botelho, however, distinguishes between rap as a "musical culture" and as a "musical genre". In the first instance, rap would be associated with groups sharing ethnic characteristics, social class, and common interests (Botelho, 2018, *apud* Santos, 2022, p. 4); whereas the second would be conceived purely as a musical genre within a commercial framework (Santos, 2022, p. 4).

However, as Santos (2022) argues, Emicida's case suggests that rap transcends its status as a musical genre, evolving into a broader concept or lifestyle. Let's follow the author's words:

Rap originally linked to hip-hop culture and then as a "musical genre" - given its entry into phonography detached from its social organization within hip-hop culture (Botelho, 2018), can now also be thought of not only as music, but as a concept - a lifestyle and consumption that goes beyond its "origins" (Santos, 2022, p. 14).

This aspect is manifested in the album *Sobre crianças*, particularly through its diverse sonic influences. In addition, Santos examines an interview with Emicida and sees how, there, he demarcated "his place as an artist", defending rap as "free music" and that, therefore, it should not be "just a narrative of social problems", but that it could "speak of love, 'of life" (Santos, 2022, p. 6). This rap transcends the conventional poetic and musical traditions of the genre. Is it still considered rap, though? This undoubtedly remains a contentious issue, yet it highlights the evolving roles that rap is adopting.

In short, borrowing some of the verses heard on the album, when the time bomb was about to explode ("Boa esperança"), the album moves on to themes that the listening public, from different walks of life, can easily get used to ("Madagascar"). Perhaps therein lies both the strength and limitation of *Sobre crianças*: on one hand, the album has the capacity to reach a vastly expanded and diverse audience; on the other, the comfort of continually returning to celebration may diminish a potential act of retaliation, leading to a certain stagnation. Adelcio Camilo Machado, Raul Ayrton Franco

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