The Media Intertextuality of "Que Tiro Foi Esse": Tracking the Circulation of (Stray) Bullets in and through a Brazilian Internet Meme

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ABSTRACT

In the tumultuous electoral year of 2018, when public security was in the political spotlight in Brazil, and social media took on heightened political prominence, the intersection of popular music and digital culture put urban violence in the country's cultural spotlight via an internet meme about stray bullets, inspired by one of the hit songs of the Carnival period, "Que Tiro Foi Esse" [What Was That Shot] by Jojo Todynho. This article analyses the "Que Tiro Foi Esse" (QTFE) meme, its origins, and its circulation, as well as exploring how a catchphrase originating in popular music, given an association with public security by the participants of an internet meme, was subsequently taken up in grey literature relating to that same socio-political topic by civil society data activists. Whilst "QTFE" was only one in a maelstrom of memes created and shared by Brazilians in 2018, I analyse it as a prominent example of the function of memes as "cultural touchstones" (Milner) in the country. In so doing, I show how it captured and expressed the social, cultural, and political mood of the country in a pivotal and polarised year, as well as signalling the intertwining of digital culture with traditional cultural industries and practices, with politics, and with the field of public security specifically.

Public security—and public security in Rio de Janeiro specifically—was in the political spotlight in Brazil as the tumultuous electoral year of 2018 began.[1] February saw a highly unusual intervention in the security affairs of Rio state by the federal government, under the interim president Michel Temer. Officially a response to rising levels of crime and violence, the measure—which placed an army general in command of Rio's police forces, fire, and prison services until the end of the year—was widely seen as a political manoeuvre to distract from a failure to pass pension reforms (Duque and Smith; Stalcup and Robb Larkins). Shortly after, in March, came the shocking murder of Rio city councillor Marielle Franco and her driver Anderson Pedro Gomes, attracting national and international attention and condemnation. Shot dead in an ambush while driving home from an event debating the potential of Afro-Brazilian women, a social group to which she belonged herself, Franco had a long trajectory of activism on public security issues (Stalcup and Robb Larkins; Sovik; Cavalcanti "'I Am Because We Are'").

Concern about public security would go on to be one of the main drivers of the October 2018 general election (Macaulay "Bancada da Bala"; Hunter and Power; Pinheiro-Machado and Scalco), alongside the ongoing reverberations of the political crisis generated and signalled by the nationwide street protests of 2013, and the Operation Car Wash corruption probe begun in 2014 (Stalcup; Hunter and Power; Nobre). The polarized 2018 poll culminated with the victory, in the second round, of "'law and order' and anticorruption" presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro (Hunter and Power)—a former army captain and long-standing congressman from Rio, notorious for his misogynistic, homophobic, and racist attitudes. Buoyed by his ascension, but reflecting a process predating it, 2018 also saw the election of "an unprecedented number of former security service members to the National Congress and to state legislatures" (Macaulay "Bancada da Bala" 56; see also Macaulay "Presidents, Producers and Politics"). All of these events, and many (many) others, were widely documented, disseminated, and debated in digital culture,[2] an arena itself subject to heightened political prominence and controversy in a year with far-reaching consequences for Brazil, a year that "will not end any time soon" (Magalhães 15).[3]

Thanks to digital culture (in this case intersecting with popular music), public security—or more specifically urban violence—was also in Brazil's cultural spotlight in early 2018. The trigger for this was an internet meme about stray bullets, inspired by one of the hit songs of the Carnival period. In late December 2017, a *funk carioca* singer from Rio known as Jojo Todynho had released the song "Que Tiro Foi Esse" [What Was That Shot].[4] Accompanied by a music video posted on YouTube (FunkHitsVEVO), the song quickly went viral, topping music streaming service Spotify's 'Viral 50' chart for Brazil in the week of 4 January 2018 and reaching eleventh position in its global 'Viral 50' list two weeks later (Spotify "Viral 50—Brazil"; Spotify "Viral 50—Global"). Although Todynho was at pains to stress that the work's title did not refer literally to gunfire, but was rather a slang expression used in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) culture when spotting an attractive person or object, the song and video quickly sparked an equally popular meme which turned on the perceived bullet allusion. It involved people (including celebrities) filming, sharing, and interacting with videos in which one, some, or all of the people shown suddenly threw themselves down as if they had been hit by a bullet, to the sound of a gunshot included in the song's opening verse. They then jumped up again and danced frantically to its musical refrain.[5]

As well as spreading overseas, notably to Portugal, in Brazil the high-profile, and sometimes controversial, meme went on to inspire several advertising campaigns (for fast food chain McDonalds, Havaianas flipflops, and the iFood delivery service) as well as a cover of the fashion

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1   As Arthur Trindade and Renato Sérgio de Lima note, public security is a widely used term in Brazil, but one that is difficult to define in practice because of divergences arising from different political and institutional positions. This means that public security "is less a theoretical concept and more an empirical and organizational field that structures institutions and social relations around how the state administers order and social conflicts" (482; my translation from the Portuguese—all translations in this article are my own unless stated otherwise).

2   Digital culture is understood here as "the practices, initiatives, and artefacts associated with the use of the internet and digital technologies in different social and cultural domains, by both individual and collective actors" (Holmes).

3   For more on the politicization of digital culture and social media in 2018 see Cesarino; Chagas *et al.*; Evangelista and Bruno; Mendonça and Caetano.

4   *Funk carioca*, discussed in more detail further on, is a type of Brazilian urban music, influenced by the Miami bass variant of American funk, which has developed since the 1970s, originally in Rio de Janeiro, and remains closely associated with the city's favelas and suburbs (see Yúdice).

5   Other variants combined the relevant section of Todynho's song with pre-existing footage of people, including celebrities, falling over (Inocêncio *et al.*).

magazine *Elle*. It also prompted myriad media interviews and appearances by Jojo Todynho, showing that in Brazil, as in the USA, "ambivalent commercial appropriation is an essential part of a memetic media ecology in step with broader culture industries" (Milner 202). The song's title additionally became a catchphrase, which was employed in texts on a variety of subjects, from academic to cultural and literary, journalistic to political; in them, as in the advertising, the word 'tiro' [shot] was sometimes substituted for another word, in turn generating new catchphrases.

In this article, I analyse the origins and circulation of "Que Tiro Foi Esse" (henceforth "QTFE"), arguing that it expressed the cultural, social, and political mood of Brazil in 2018, and the particular political and everyday charge attached to public security that year. As well as examining better-known aspects of the meme, I explore how the catchphrase associated with it was taken up by civil society groups and researchers working on public security issues, and used to draw attention to their quantitative data about shootings and stray bullets. My analysis employs two conceptual frameworks, both of which link symbolic and physical movement. The first, from media anthropology, is that of "media intertextuality" (Peterson) and "the social circulation of media discourse" (Spitulnik), which refers to how phrases and fragments from mass media and popular culture are reused and reproduced in a variety of contexts, from everyday discourse to the media itself. I also draw on scholarship on digital culture which has identified intertextuality as a key feature of internet memes (Knobel and Lankshear; Milner; Shifman). Through my study of "QTFE" I demonstrate how in contemporary Brazil, digital culture (and more specifically memetic culture) has not only become a circuit where phrases and fragments from other media and cultural arenas are reused, but has also itself become an important source of the "public words" (Spitulnik) employed in this type of media intertextuality.

Secondly, I draw on anthropological work on armed violence in Rio de Janeiro, with particular attention to discussion of the literal and symbolic circulation of bullets, stray or otherwise (Penglase "Lost Bullets"). Whereas the scholarship I engage with is based on ethnographic interviews and media representations, my own analysis focuses primarily on digital and media content associated with "QTFE", as well as grey literature and interview material.[6] I build on Ben Penglase's discussion of how stray bullets gained heightened cultural and political resonance in Rio, and by extension Brazil, in the mid-1990s, a period characterized by "a forceful 'law and order' attack on crime" ("Lost Bullets" 421) in the aftermath of emblematic and high-profile incidents of urban violence earlier that decade.[7] I contend that the visibility of the same "symbol", or "icon", of urban violence (Penglase "Barbarians on the Beach" 308, 316) in the "QTFE" meme of 2018 again signalled a conjuncture in which public security, and calls for hard-line measures, were at the centre of the local and national political agenda. At the same time, despite some stubborn continuities, I show how "QTFE" offers insights into notable changes in the configuration of Rio's cultural and public security landscapes in the intervening decades, and the intersections between them—shifts in which digital culture has played a central role.

THE NOTORIETY OF JOJO TODYNHO AND "QUE TIRO FOI ESSE": CULTURAL VISIBILITY MEETS CULTURAL CONTROVERSY

Although the original "Que Tiro Foi Esse" song and music video are not the main focus here, it is important to briefly situate their performer-protagonist, given her significance in her own right as well as her strong association with digital culture. Jojo Todynho (born Jordana Menezes, also known professionally as Jojo Maronttinni) is an Afro-Brazilian, plus-size, female *funk* singer. Before the release of "QTFE" she had attracted some attention for her social media posting about body image and self-esteem, leading to her being labelled as the "funkeira sensação da internet" [*funk* internet sensation] when she appeared in *Vogue Brasil* magazine in October 2017 (Disitzer). That same month, she played a drug trafficker's ex-girlfriend in the

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6   Grey literature refers to "multiple document types produced on all levels of government, academics, business, and organization in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing i.e. where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body", see GreyNet International.

7   The events in question were the Candelária and Vigário Geral massacres and the Ipanema beach muggings, or *arrastões* (I discuss the latter further on in this article). In exploring the connection between public security context and preoccupation about stray bullets, Penglase builds on work by Luiz Eduardo Soares and Cesar Caldeira.

final episode of a TV Globo telenovela (soap opera), *A Força do Querer*,[8] with suggestions she had been invited to participate because of her status as a "digital influencer" (Gshow).[9] But it was her brief appearance in a dance sequence in the music video for Rio de Janeiro "pop funk sensation" (Goldschmitt 177) Anitta's controversial hit "Vai Malandra", released in mid-December 2017, that propelled her to greater visibility.[10]

That same month, on 29 December, the video for what was to become Todynho's own hit was released. "QTFE"'s audiovisual clip begins and ends with scenes played by actors (two women and a man, all Afro-Brazilian) in a small office setting. In the opening sequence, all in office wear, they go about their work in silence, with one of the women, who resembles Jojo Todynho in her body type and hairstyle, on her feet getting something out of a filing cupboard. Taking two cups of coffee over to the man's desk, she spots a flyer for a party, and enthusiastically suggests the group should attend. Although initially sceptical, her colleagues are quickly convinced and get up to leave, the man throwing papers into the air dramatically as he says "Bora, vambora… Partiu!" [Come on… Let's go!]. As they exit the office, the opening chords of "QTFE" start to play, and the video cuts to the singer herself, seated on a sofa in a dark and smoky space. She begins to sing, starting with the song's title phrase, "Que tiro foi esse" [What was that shot], which is followed by the sound of a gunshot, as she raises her left index finger to simulate a gun just fired, blowing away imaginary smoke. The lyrics continue: "Que tiro foi esse, que está um arraso/Que tiro foi esse" [What was that shot, it's blown me away/What was that shot]. This opening verse is repeated, accompanied by the same sound effect and gesture, before a musical segment played by brass instruments starts up. This section, which went on to form the basis of the meme, contains the only direct reference to gunfire in the song.

The rest of the video is noteworthy for its foregrounding of gender and sexual diversity, befitting the origins of the title phrase. It shows the office workers getting ready for a night out, all three putting on make-up and jewellery, before they make a dramatic entrance into a bar or club setting, as if on a catwalk. They, and particularly the man who walks in front, draw the attention and admiration of three people standing at the bar, two of whom turn to look at the new arrivals on the encouragement of their companion; one then spits out their drink (presumably "blown […] away"). The rest of the video alternates between scenes of Todynho singing (alone and later accompanied by two bare-chested men), further scenes from the storyline (including one where a character with long blonde hair, wearing a dress and heels, goes into a male bathroom to use a urinal, before turning to reveal a beard and make-up), and dance routines. Towards the end, recalling her earlier appearance in Anitta's clip (as well as her digital prowess), Todynho is shown on the dancefloor among the actors, dancers, and extras, and takes a selfie with them, to cheers. The video closes with a scene in the original office setting. The man arrives last, to smirks from the women, laying a briefcase on his desk. Looking for something inside, he accidentally pulls out a large earring and a make-up brush along with his tie, and pushes them back in, embarrassed.

The success of Jojo Todynho, and "QTFE", can be understood with reference to several social and cultural shifts that have unfolded in Brazil over past decades. Firstly, the widespread popularity of the song and the artist are indicative of the rise of *funk* as one of the country's major contemporary musical genres, dominating Brazilian streaming charts along with *sertanejo* (Brazilian country music), and sometimes blended with it and other musical genres (Goldschmitt). Always more diverse and plural than its singular nomenclature suggests, with multiple variants, Debora Faria has argued that *funk* can be understood as an "important cultural movement" among Brazilian youth (55). Nonetheless, she also identifies an ambivalence or tension between its cultural and commercial success and visibility (in Brazil and abroad) and its recurrent and persistent stigmatization and rejection by some groups in Brazil for lyrics and dance moves considered explicit, as well as a perceived connection to organized crime (Faria 55). Indeed, cultural discourses about *funk* are often themselves influenced by attitudes towards urban violence.

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8   This was reflective of a wider trend towards more engagement with the urban periphery in Brazilian telenovelas, see Rêgo.

9   Todynho has continued to be strongly associated with digital and memetic culture; 2019 saw the emergence of the "JoJo Todynho chocada" meme (see Hardcorito), and the singer's participation, and eventual victory, in TV Record's reality show *A Fazenda* in 2020 significantly boosted her mediatic and memetic visibility.

10   For background on the controversy which followed the release of "Vai Malandra" see, for example, Phillips, Portal Geledés.

A high-profile event in the early 1990s, known as the *arrastões* (a word used in Rio to describe mass muggings of people in a specific location), was central to cementing an association between *funk* and violence, itself an extension of the long-standing and stigmatizing association between favelas, crime, and violence. One Sunday in October 1992, large groups of *funk* fans travelled from the outskirts of Rio to the beaches of Ipanema, an upper middle-class neighbourhood in the city's south zone. There, they were accused of robbing fellow beachgoers and spreading fear as a result of the socially, culturally, and spatially transgressive way that they occupied the beach, as reported in media coverage which can be characterized as hysterical and racist (Leu; Penglase "Barbarians on the Beach"). As a result of the *arrastões*, Penglase suggests, stereotypes regarding the behaviour of *funk* fans (inferred to be residents of favelas/the urban periphery) became part of "a lexicon and a grammar that residents of Rio [...] use to fashion their own narratives about crime and insecurity" ("Barbarians on the Beach" 308). The *arrastões* also established *funk* "at the center of public debates about culture" (Yúdice 128); this continues to the present, despite the many ways in which the genre has successfully established itself outside of Rio's favelas.

Within *funk*, Todynho is one of several female artists who have come to prominence in recent times, provoking heated debate about whether the often sexually explicit lyrics, performances, and declarations of these performers can be understood as feminist (Moreira; Lyra; Dalpiaz; Nidecker). More broadly, *funk* has become an important site for debating and enacting an inclusive and progressive approach to gender and sexual diversity in Brazil, including through "the presence of [...] various different bodily formats" (Gomes Caetano 223) in *funk* music videos. This has not happened in isolation but reflects greater visibility and assertiveness by LGBTQ Brazilians, and feminists, since the early 2000s.[11] Like other recent moves towards greater inclusivity in Brazil, whether educational, social, cultural, political, or economic, this has latterly contributed to a backlash from conservative groups and was another of the factors behind Bolsonaro's rise to power in 2018 (Kalil; Payne and Santos).

The visibility of Jojo Todynho herself, as a black woman achieving cultural and digital celebrity in Brazil, also fits into a wider trend of greater inclusiveness and assertiveness of Afro-Brazilians, and Afro-Brazilian women in particular, in a variety of arenas thanks to policy interventions, educational initiatives, growth in use of digital technologies, and activism. On top of historical patterns of racism, discrimination, inequality, and violence affecting all Afro-Brazilians, the legacy of slavery and its aftereffects and the intersection of gender and racial inequalities have resulted in a particularly stubborn set of stereotypes and tropes shaping the representation of Afro-Brazilian women—those of the 'mãe preta' [black nursemaid], 'doméstica' [maid], and 'mulata' [mulatta] (Gonzalez)—which continue to specify "the place and purpose of black women's bodies" in the country (Perrine 22). Nonetheless, recent work by Alida Perrine has drawn attention to "the many black women using social media, music or other forms of creative expression to proclaim the value of their bodies in highly visible ways" (23) in contemporary Brazil. Her discussion of Preta-Rara, the São Paulo-based black feminist "poet, singer, and educator" (Perrine 39), who like Todynho has a plus-size body, in terms of an "audacious body politics" which vocalizes and embodies an affirmation of "black female bodies that are also large" (Perrine 28) is also helpful in understanding the persona of Jojo Todynho. Perrine's argument (informed by the ideas of Nicole Fleetwood about the 'excess flesh' of black women) that Preta-Rara uses and exhibits her black, female, and plus-size body "in provocative ways that upset audience expectations about her social position" (29) suggests a plausible explanation for why Todynho's visibility and success has sparked discomfort and negative reactions in some quarters. As Todynho herself declared on attending the *Vogue Brasil* Carnival ball in February 2018: "Preta, pobre e gorda, eu sou uma afronta para a sociedade" [Black, poor, and fat, I am an affront to society] (F5).

Echoing the cultural controversies surrounding *funk carioca* in the 1990s, the musical qualities of the song "QTFE" generated lively debates in 2018, this time inflected for digital culture. In early February 2018, with the song and spin-off meme already the focus of public and media interest, a short text falsely attributed to filmmaker and journalist Arnaldo Jabor was shared via social media (Pedroso de Campos). Repeating the song's title phrase at regular intervals, the text was highly critical of the track itself (for example, in this much-quoted line: "Que tiro foi esse?/Que

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11   See Dennison for a discussion of this phenomenon in film culture.

acertou os tímpanos do nosso povo, fazendo-os ouvir lixo achando que é música" [What was that shot?/That assaulted the eardrums of our people, making them listen to rubbish thinking it is music]). In a tangent implying a connection to the fraught political climate of the time, it also railed against the Brazilian people, accusing them of turning a blind eye to corruption, and lamenting the national state of affairs ("Que acertou os olhos de uma nação fazendo-os cegos às mazelas do nosso país" [Which assaulted the eyes of a nation making them blind to the historical problems of our country]). The text, its authorship, its dissemination, and the eventual exposure of its spoof nature, in turn generated media coverage.

The musical polemic surrounding "QTFE" also featured in the 'Culture' section of Rio newspaper *O Globo* in mid-February, in an article entitled "Críticas a 'Que tiro foi esse?' e outras canções levantam a questão: a música brasileira está pior?" ["Criticism of 'What was that shot?' and other songs raise the question: Is Brazilian music getting worse?"] (Lichote). Discussing the supposedly repetitive and sexualized nature of Todynho's *funk* hit via a reflection on Brazilian popular music, it pointed to continuities with other genres and songs rejected on their inception but later incorporated into the canon, and included supportive comments from renowned singers, composers, scholars, and broadcasters. Evidencing the debate's relevance, the same article was later used in the entrance exam ('*vestibular*') for the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), a prestigious public university in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, in November 2019. Candidates were asked to respond to it by writing an imaginary 'Letter to the Editor' (Jornal NH). While some reactions to the song "QTFE" thus repeated entrenched tropes in the cultural reception of *funk*, others signalled its acceptance and recognition as an established cultural reference in Brazil, as well as the cementing of digital culture—central to the song's wide circulation and transposition into a meme—as part of mainstream circuits in the country.

MEMETICALLY PERFORMING STRAY BULLETS IN "QUE TIRO FOI ESSE"

Established tropes in the reception of *funk* also provided the backdrop for a second strand of the controversy surrounding "QTFE". Despite gunfire not being the actual subject of Todynho's track, memetic engagement prioritized the connection between its title phrase and the symbol of stray bullets, as well as appropriating the gunfire sound effects used in its opening section. Due to this association, some coverage of the meme repeated the moral panic expressed about the *arrastões* of the 1990s, and other moments when urban violence—and *funk*—have been in the political and cultural spotlight.[12] However, overall I argue that the 2018 meme provided a space for the expression, and thus visibility, of more complex and nuanced—if ambivalent—responses to urban violence by a wider group of "cultural participants" (Milner). While many of the videos comprising the meme were made by, and featured, "'private' citizens", for ethical reasons my discussion focuses on videos produced and shared by celebrities, accessed through media coverage of the meme, and that media coverage itself. Following Milner, I understand celebrities as "public figures" (227–8) who engage with social media as part of (self-)promotional activity associated with their professional lives, and who have therefore "come to expect [...] visual reproduction as part of their status" (230). Many Brazilian celebrities, such as actors, television presenters, and musicians, maintain an active presence on social media.

The first celebrity video using the track's opening as a soundtrack for a scene portraying the effect of an imaginary bullet was posted on Instagram by singer Anitta on 8 January 2018, less than a fortnight after the song's release (Correio Braziliense; see also Anitta HD). Only six seconds long, it shows the singer walking towards a building with other people behind her, before she suddenly throws herself to the ground; she is then helped back up. The text "hahahahhhahaha" appears on screen, suggesting the scene can be interpreted as a joke. Other celebrities quickly joined in, with presenters, singers, and actors (including the entire cast of a TV Globo telenovela) making their own videos. Two particularly popular examples included one showing a well-known TV Globo actor throwing himself into a swimming pool, followed by his presenter partner (holding one of their children) and friends, and the children of an A-list

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12   These include the period associated with the creation and implementation of the UPP (Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora or Police Pacifying Unit) policy in selected Rio favelas beginning in the late 2000s, which included controversial restrictions on *bailes funk* (*funk* parties) (Machado da Silva and Menezes; Silva; Lippman; Gilsing).

TV Globo presenter couple falling to the floor of a museum, while on holiday abroad. Brazil's specialist television and gossip websites, by now well versed in coverage of the digital activities and outputs of the country's celebrities, reported intensively on their participation in the meme. As with many Brazilian memes, "QTFE" also achieved transnational visibility (Lunardi), with a Portuguese television presenter acting out the performance on air (Daqui), and media coverage of the joke in countries including Portugal, Belgium, Uruguay, Argentina, the Philippines, and South Africa. This coverage often focused on the controversy surrounding the meme, as in the title of this *Reuters* piece: "Brazil's 'What a Shot' Music Video Stirs Debate Amid Violent Crime Wave" (Alper).

By mid-January the memetic performance—which as such "referenc[ed], replicat[ed], and escalat[ed] an embodied behavior for collective appreciation" (Milner 18), here the act of escaping a stray bullet—was both well established, and polemical. While many celebrities joined in enthusiastically, others expressed concerns about the meme's humorous framing of the effects of gunfire, making connections to the wider Brazilian conjuncture. In one set of comments made on social media and widely reported by the media, a Brazilian actor (living abroad at the time), who strongly affirmed her appreciation of *funk*, argued that the meme was out of tune with the prevailing mood of the country, and the widespread anxiety about urban violence (Band). Todynho herself responded to these criticisms, in social media comments similarly reproduced by the media, repeating that the song had nothing to do with violence, drawing attention to how experiences of armed violence in Brazil are shaped by place of residence (and by implication, socioeconomic status),[13] and reaffirming the origins of the title phrase in LGBTQ culture (Extra). Despite this comment and others in which Todynho stressed that 'tiro' was not an index of violence, it was clear that the noun's literal meaning did resonate with many, who felt moved to act out the performance themselves, view it, like it, and/or share it. As a result, as well as the impressive Spotify rankings already mentioned, "QTFE" headed the list of Brazil's five top memes in the Google Trends 'Year in Search' list for 2018, ahead of Jair Bolsonaro and footballer Neymar Junior, as well as appearing in second place in Google's list of the top five music lyrics searched for in 2018 (ahead of Anitta's "Vai Malandra", in fourth place). This dual appearance exemplifies the idea that "many memetic videos [start] off as viral ones" (Shifman 58).

Although the meme resonated far beyond Rio de Janeiro, with reports of Todynho's song being banned at Carnival parties in the north-eastern Brazilian state of Alagoas (Viver/Diario), for instance, its original emergence was a response to the context of that city, where stray bullets and shootings, whether actual or imagined, are part of everyday discourse and experience and thus the urban imaginary. Anthropological research on these phenomena in Rio offers a contextual and conceptual frame for interpreting "QTFE", its origins and its ramifications. As is often the case in media reports of the aftermath of actual stray bullets in Rio, in which photographs of the resulting holes (in walls) or wounds (in bodies) feature as "powerful markers of a singular event" involving death, or a brush with death (Penglase "Lost Bullets" 429; see also Leu), the imaginary bullets in the memetic performances sparked by Todynho's song are "signified by their absence" (Penglase "Lost Bullets" 429). They thus take on "a distinctly paradoxical and phantasmagorical character", similar to that identified by Penglase ("Lost Bullets" 429) in his analysis of everyday talk and media representations. Recalling a common feature of how the favela residents and middle-class *cariocas* (natives of Rio) cited in his work discussed stray bullets, despite the different contexts and experiences informing their discourse, the 2018 meme prioritizes the moment when a bullet comes into view or play, and its effects, rather than where it came from or who shot it, and the broader sociopolitical circumstances of its shooting. At the same time, Penglase posits that the "surreal fetishism" of stray bullets ("Lost Bullets" 432) in Rio signals "an acute awareness of a context in which the circulation of life and death is fantastical" and "can produce a space where critiques of violence and inequality are possible" (414, 415), without necessarily requiring the speaker to take the risk of blaming any individual or group (such as drug traffickers, or the police). This is also arguably a feature shared by "QTFE". For Penglase, stray bullets thus have a "semantic ambiguity" and an "indexical opacity" (432, 433), which allow *cariocas* to manipulate "[d]iscourses about stray bullets [...] for a variety of purposes" (434), including to protest against urban violence in a broad rather than specific way. Sometimes, he notes, stray bullets also offer

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13   See Machado da Silva and Menezes for more on this, as well as Penglase ("Lost Bullets").

the basis for "jokes, as residents turn to humor in an attempt to rescue the spirit of irreverence which is seen as a 'truly Carioca' trait" (432).

Despite the time elapsed, there are connections between the security situation of the period discussed by Penglase,[14] and that of the late 2010s in which the irreverent "QTFE" meme emerged; shootings were a prominent source of social and political concern at both junctures. Indeed, some media coverage in the latter period, or the lead-up to it, established this very temporal link. For example, a 2015 news report on the *UOL* web portal was headed "Bala perdida resurge com força e faz o Rio reviver temor da década de 1990" ["Stray Bullets Rear Their Head Again and Make Rio Relive Fear of the 1990s"] (de Andrade). Showing the heightened awareness of stray bullets in the month when Todynho released "QTFE" and just prior to the decree of the federal intervention, a *BBC Brasil* article from December 2017 stated: "As vítimas aleatórias atingidas por balas perdidas são uma das facetas mais emblemáticas da explosão da violência que o Rio presenciou neste ano" [The random victims hit by stray bullets are one of the most emblematic facets of the explosion of violence that Rio saw this year] (Dias Carneiro "Foi o pior ano"). At the same time, as I address in the next section on how "QTFE" was referenced by public security data activists, and as the *BBC Brasil* article itself signals, there have been shifts over time in how stray bullets are classified and quantified (Dias Carneiro "Foi o pior ano").

A key factor in popular engagement with the stray bullet symbol in the "QTFE" meme was obviously the widespread access to the internet and digital technologies in place by 2018,[15] though this also reflected pre-existing cultural configurations and practices. In the meme, the long-standing surreal fetishism of stray bullets in Rio, and the city's culture of irreverent humour, understood historically as a response to the complexities and contradictions of life there (Murilo de Carvalho; Saliba), met the imaginary and practices of digital culture. These are themselves in dialogue with the historically audiovisual orientation of Brazilian culture (Conde; Rocha; Eakin; Jaguaribe). Several observers have suggested that the centrality of television in particular, and the propensity of its soaps and presenters to inspire popular catchphrases, have contributed to a Brazilian predisposition to memetic culture (see Canofre; Fernandes). An exhibition of political memes organized by the Universidade Federal Fluminense's Museu de Memes project from May to September 2019, in Rio's Museu da República (#MUSEUdeMEMES), similarly signalled precursors in the Brazilian political arena, arguing that historical catchphrases, slogans, jingles, and advertising could be understood as 'political memes' *avant la lettre*.

The memetic performance of "QTFE" can undoubtedly be understood as an example of *zoeira*, a term defined by Gabriela Lunardi as a "particular Brazilian online humor, which jokes about serious everyday topics" (30), in this case urban violence. There is even a *zoeira* about "QTFE" itself, which stresses precisely its embeddedness in Rio. A spoof article published on Brazilian humorous news site *Sensacionalista* told of residents of the city complaining about the meme's cultural appropriation of an authentically *carioca* practice, reinforced through a fabricated quote from an imaginary Culture Secretary: "Tiros em música já estamos acostumados, faz parte de nossa cultura, mas se jogar no chão ao som de tiros é algo totalmente carioca, agora reproduzido pelo Brasil inteiro. Queremos preservar nossa cultura e estamos entrando com uma ação contra pessoas que não são do Rio de Janeiro e estão postando vídeos com o meme" [We're used to the sound of gunfire in music, it's part of our culture, but throwing oneself to the floor to the sound of gunfire is something completely *carioca*, which is now being copied by the whole of Brazil. We want to preserve our culture and we are filing a lawsuit against people who are not from Rio de Janeiro and are posting videos of the meme]. There are multiple and complex layers of humour here, in a text that pokes fun at popular and national (never mind international) adhesion to a meme which itself jests about the local complexities of life in Rio.

Approached through the lens of established discursive practices relating to stray bullets and the digital cultural practice of *zoeira*, the "QTFE" meme can be seen as offering a space for participants to act out an imagined encounter with a stray bullet—and with urban violence—in a playful and joking way, neutralizing the mental and physical harm an actual bullet might cause by ending the sequence in joyful and cathartic dance. Nonetheless, despite its

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14   Penglase undertook fieldwork in Rio in the late 1990s and early 2000s ("Lost Bullets" 424) and discusses events earlier in the 1990s for context; his article also includes consideration of data and media coverage about stray bullets from later in the 2000s.

15   Seventy percent of Brazilians were considered internet users in 2018 (Cetic.br).

playfulness, the meme's popularity revealed the continuing power and relevance of the stray bullet as a symbol of "(in)security" (Penglase "Lost Bullets" 435) in Rio, and by extension Brazil, as well as the continuing mobilization of humour as a means of calling out and protesting the stubborn persistence of urban violence. Echoing the characteristics of the earlier period discussed by Penglase, its emergence and popularity in early 2018 marked a local and national conjuncture in which hard-line approaches to public security were again gaining traction. At the same time, an examination of how the internet meme crossed over into grey literature about public security, where the title of Todynho's song was used as a "memetic phrase" (Milner), reveals how digital culture and civil society data have become central to engagements with urban violence in Rio today, whether in everyday routines or in research and advocacy work.

"QUE TIRO FOI ESSE" AS QUESTION PROMPT FOR PUBLIC SECURITY DATA

In setting out his typology of memetic phrases, videos, images, and performances, Ryan Milner notes that "[o]verlaps, of course, abound" between these categories, citing the example of "Imma let you finish", "a linguistic phrase taken from a video moment [when Kanye West interrupted singer Taylor Swift during her acceptance of Best Female Video prize at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards] and then applied to countless image files" (18). In a broader discussion of the circulation of language across different media and cultural forms, Debra Spitulnik emphasizes continuities rather than novelties, arguing that "recycling media discourse and even the existence of such 'detachables' are part of a much more general process of language use, or social life of language, which intersects (but precedes) the postmodern, pop-culture era, and the advent of mass media as widespread, public communication forms" (182). Similarly, Mark Allen Peterson frames media intertextuality "not as a property of texts but as a social strategy" (136), and advocates ethnographic attention to three key aspects of this everyday practice:

1. *Indexicality*: What significance does the recontextualized text bring with it from its earlier contexts?

2. *Iconicity*: What changes does the intertext undergo as it is being recontextualized?

3. *Social convention*: How is intertextual play organized into practices that seek to accomplish specific ends in particular social fields? (132; emphasis in original)

More recent scholarship has examined circulation and intertextuality specifically in the context of digital culture. Laurie Gries has coined the term 'circulation studies' to designate scholarship on "writing and rhetoric in motion", which focuses on "how bodies, artifacts, words, pictures and other things flow within and across cultures to affect [*sic*] meaningful change" (Gries 7). She contends that engagement with the concept of circulation "has helped cultivate new understandings about how rhetoric unfolds and acquires force" in a digital context (8). In relation to literature and film, Brian T. Edwards has argued that "the unpredictable ways that cultural forms travel in the digital world matter urgently" (6) and advocated that insights can be gained into "the relationship between a text and its public by examining rich moments of uptake" (Edwards 230, footnote 21). In relation to memes specifically, Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear have identified "a rich kind of intertextuality, such as wry cross-references to different everyday and popular culture events, icons or phenomena" as one of the key patterns or characteristics of this type of digital material (209). They highlight the relevance of intertextuality for both the playfulness of memes (in actioning humorous references recognizable by members of a given "affinity space") and for the ability of memes to "comment on or critique some aspect of society", as a result of establishing a "match" to "recognizable events or issues in the wider world" (Knobel and Lankshear 217–18).

"QTFE" incorporates several overlaps, movements, and recontextualizations that echo these observations. As already explored, a phrase taken from the title of this song, indexing urban violence but not actually about urban violence, provided the foundation for memetic performances of urban violence to the tune of the song, captured and shared by video. The memetic phrase was not initially detached from the song; rather, a section incorporating the refrain was detached from the rest of the song to serve as the soundtrack. The literal

interpretation established by the meme's cultural participants remained in place as the title phrase, now without musical accompaniment, was in turn detached and taken up within the discursive context, or social field, of public security by Brazilian civil society 'data activists' to introduce and promote quantitative data on the same subject. Here, rather than the phantasmagorical, fetishized (and absent) bullets of the memetic performances, the bullets were real, quantified, and in one of the examples that follow, made visible on a map.

Data activists are social actors who "create, mobilise, solicit, appropriate, or crunch data in view of supporting alternative narratives of the social reality, questioning the truthfulness of other representations, denouncing injustice and advocating for change" (Milan and van der Velden 67). In Brazil, they have played an increasingly high-profile role in the generation of data about public security, whether through traditional methods such as surveys, or more recently, through those associated with digital culture, such as crowdsourcing and analysis of information from social media. For instance, the 2018 federal intervention in Rio was monitored by the Observatório da Intervenção [Observatory of the Intervention], a civil society initiative led by CESeC, the Centro de Estudos de Segurança e Cidadania [Research Centre on Security and Citizenship] at Rio's Candido Mendes University. It tracked the intervention's implementation and impacts "a partir da documentação e da análise criteriosa sobre fatos e dados" [through documentation and judicious analysis of events and data], including data from social media (Observatório da Intervenção). The secondary or derivative use of the "QTFE" catchphrase by data activists acknowledged the "ideal" of the internet meme, "the concept or idea conveyed" by it (Davison 123)—that *cariocas* are scared of bullets, stray or otherwise, and that this fear is part of the urban imaginary. Turning the memetic catchphrase into a question prompt, and addressing the serious topic behind the *zoeira*, data activists sought to answer its query by providing rigorous information and analysis on armed violence, including the material and psychological effects of bullets, and their relevance in public security policy.

The first instance of the catchphrase selected for discussion comes from the work of Fogo Cruzado [Crossfire], a project set up on the initiative of a journalist specializing in public security. According to *piauí* magazine, the specific inspiration came on a work-related visit to a favela, during which she overheard staff in a restaurant commenting on their informal record-keeping of shootouts in the region. Looking into official data records and sources, she discovered that the Rio authorities did not count shootings in the city in a systematic way. So she began to put together her own database, sourcing information via community leaders, social media groups and profiles (including those maintained by the military police), and the local press. Having secured the support of Amnesty International's Brazil office for the initial development of a mobile application, Fogo Cruzado was launched on 5 July 2016 under the umbrella of Amnesty's "Violence has no place in these games!" campaign, which looked to raise awareness of human rights violations in Rio on the eve of the 2016 Olympics. By 2018 Fogo Cruzado had changed institutional host, with Instituto Update, a think-tank in São Paulo, becoming its fiscal sponsor.

The app proved popular; in its first week, it was downloaded 15,000 times (Oliveira). By the end of 2017, it had been downloaded more than 120,000 times (Fogo Cruzado "Em 2017"), and in a sign of its own embedding in the urban imaginary, had reportedly acquired the nickname "o Waze do pipoco" (Filgueiras). Waze is a collaborative app for monitoring traffic jams, popular in ever-congested Rio, and 'pipoco' is slang for gunshot or gunfire. Such popularity and familiarity reflected the established resonance and fetishism of bullets, and stray bullets specifically, as referenced by Fogo Cruzado's founder in an interview given to *Wired UK* in 2017: "'People who live in Rio are used to shootings […] We talk about them all the time, but we didn't really have an idea about when, where, or how frequently they happen. Now that information is public. I know people who organise their schedules with the app'" (Bernas). By 2018, Fogo Cruzado's data on shootings had become a regular feature of mainstream media reports on violence in Rio. Publishing analyses of its data in weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual reports on its website and posts on social media platforms, it also partnered with other organizations to produce reports and visualizations on specific issues. In particular, it was one of the 'data partners' for the Observatory of the Intervention and its data on shootings featured prominently in a regular section of the initiative's monthly infographic reports.

Fogo Cruzado's "about" page on Facebook sets out its various objectives and components: to (crowd)source and share data on shootings and armed violence through an app and database, visualized through a digital map; to contribute to and shape debates about public security; to enable residents of neighbourhoods most affected by the logic of the war on drugs to contribute information in a concrete and safe way;[16] to bring data on armed violence into dialogue with data on other social issues; to address limitations of existing data by providing a more accurate picture of armed violence. It receives information relating to shootings via its users, a trusted network of contacts, and social media pages and groups, populating its database also with information sourced from the media and police channels. Notifications received via the app are checked and cross-referenced. Only once they have been confirmed are they published on the map, and alerts issued via social media for events picked up within thirty minutes of their occurrence. As the project's data manager explained to me in an interview in June 2019, Fogo Cruzado takes particular care to use simple and neutral language in its alerts and reports, to avoid stigmatizing and revictimizing those affected by armed violence (Couto). From the start, the project has also developed a distinctive and striking visual identity and brand, as another way of indicating its credibility.

In February 2018, the "QTFE" catchphrase made an appearance in promotional messages posted by Fogo Cruzado on Twitter and Facebook; I focus on Twitter here:[17]

> "Que tiro foi esse"? Nosso objetivo é responder isso. Receba alertas em tempo real sobre tiroteios/disparos na região metropolitana do Rio. É tiro? Proteja-se e compartilhe no app para ajudar outras pessoas.

> ["What was that shot"? Our goal is to answer that question. Receive alerts in real time about shootings and gunfire in the metropolitan region of Rio. Gunshot? Protect yourself and share details on the app to help others.]

The external origins of the catchphrase were signalled by its presentation within quotation marks, although no further context was given. This was likely because of space limitations as well as its high visibility at the time, or what Peterson refers to as "indexical signification", arising not only from the content of the phrase itself but also "the other contexts in which the identical text occurs" (131)—in this case the internet meme. The memetic catchphrase, always implicitly a question even in Todynho's song despite the lack of interrogative punctuation, was here explicitly presented as such with the addition of a question mark, outside of the quotation marks. The rest of the tweet promoted the project's mobile app and data as the answer, demonstrating their usefulness for safely navigating a context of regular gunfire, and using the imperative mood to encourage uptake.

Below the text, a short promotional video about the project, lasting just over a minute, was embedded as part of the tweet's content.[18] After a single percussion beat, followed by repeated piano chords in a hip-hop style rhythm, the video begins by showing screenshots of two tweets (with usernames blurred) responding to posts from Fogo Cruzado with comments about the positive impact of the app. One user notes that it is only via the app that they are able to find out about gunfire in their local area, and the other, identifying themselves as a health worker, says they have used the app since its emergence, and consider it very important, "infelizmente" [unfortunately]. Against a black background, coinciding with a percussion beat, the distinctive Fogo Cruzado logo then appears. Combining a white hashtag symbol (#) with an orange bullet attached to it on each side, at top left and bottom right of the horizontal lines in the symbol, it is a montage that succinctly denotes the project's positioning at the intersection of digital culture and public security. As the song's melody starts up, together with more sustained percussion, a blue and black line (which turns out to be a sliver of Guanabara Bay, once fully revealed) appears horizontally through the logo before pivoting vertically as a white circle appears briefly around it, as if to represent a target circle in a gun viewfinder. The screen then opens up to

16   In Rio de Janeiro, the war on drugs has been characterized by "militarized and confrontational strategies" as well as "significant increases in lethal violence and human rights abuses" (Cano and Ribeiro 364, 371).

17   The text published on Facebook was almost identical with a few extra words included, reflecting Twitter's character limit.

18   The video is also available on YouTube, where it is easier to view on a laptop screen (Fogo Cruzado *Fogo Cruzado—2018*); the version on Twitter appears to be scaled for viewing on a smartphone.

show a graphic map of the Rio metropolitan area, into which a representation of a smartphone screen, running the app, rises from the bottom centre. At the same time, four bullets (and their trace lines) visually traverse the screen diagonally behind the smartphone, two from one direction and two from the other, coinciding with three bullet sound effects. The colour scheme of black, white, orange, and turquoise blue, with some limited use of red, is consistent with Fogo Cruzado's visual identity, used on its website, its social media profiles, reports, and infographics.

The video then demonstrates the different functionalities of the app, moving between its sections on the simulated smartphone screen, as well as showing the map view plotting shooting incidents, its different symbols and the information they contain. The four bullet shapes traverse the map again, to the sound of gunfire as before, as the smartphone exits via the bottom of the screen, and the white viewfinder circle reappears before the screen opens out to black, and the logo is shown once more. URLs are provided for the project's website and social media profiles and text in grey confirms that the soundtrack is an instrumental hip-hop piece licensed under Creative Commons.

The video thus does not use Todynho's own song as its soundtrack but, coincidentally or otherwise, echoes several of its features, here displaced into a different genre of urban music. The characteristically "cyclical" (Adams) hip-hop soundtrack, albeit purely instrumental in the Fogo Cruzado video, loosely recalls the labelling of the *funk carioca* "QTFE" as excessively repetitive by critics. "QTFE" itself begins with a few electronic keyboard chords, not dissimilar to those of the Fogo Cruzado audio, before Todynho starts to sing. The main similarity, however, resides in the sound of gunfire employed in both tracks. Only actually heard twice early in Todynho's song (and then repeated infinite times in the memetic videos), the set of shots used in the Fogo Cruzado video appears twice, once at the beginning and once at the end, coinciding with the project logo on both occasions, and thus bookends the demonstration of the app. It is important to stress, though, that the phrase "Que tiro foi esse" appears only in the tweet and Facebook post introducing the video, rather than in the video itself. The video also appears independently of the tweet, and in contexts without any use of the catchphrase, for example in the "about" section of the project's website (Fogo Cruzado "Sobre").

As explained by the video, and its website, Fogo Cruzado collects and makes available data on four types of events involving shooting: shooting leading to fatalities, shooting leading to injuries, shooting without victims, several shootings in the same place. As its FAQ page puts it, "Nós contabilizamos violência armada *como um todo*" [We count armed violence *as a whole*] (Fogo Cruzado "Perguntas frequentes", emphasis added). In 2018, the project's public database therefore did not include data on whether a given shooting or discharge of a weapon was associated with a stray bullet (this search filter became available only in December 2020). As its data manager explained to me in June 2019, the basic database needed to be simple enough to enable users to enter information quickly and easily, and also to recognize that they might well not be right next to the shooting they were reporting, so only able to pinpoint an approximate location (Couto). However, the presence or not of stray bullets was one of several additional data variables collected and collated by the project from the media and the police, which tend to provide more information on shooting events than app users. The project was thus able to discuss stray bullets in its analytical reports—and on the basis of the combined data, true to its tweet, provide an answer to the question "What was that shot?" (or more precisely, "What were those shots?").

Fogo Cruzado's report for 2018, published in January 2019, states that 225 people were hit by a stray bullet in Greater Rio in 2018, of whom 43 died. The majority of the stray bullets were concentrated in the municipality of Rio itself, where there were 29 deaths and 121 injuries as a result of stray bullets (20 of these deaths/injuries took place inside a residence) (Fogo Cruzado "Região Metropolitana"). The graphic for this section of the data gives a definition for victims of stray bullets, taken from the state-run Instituto de Segurança Pública [Institute of Public Security] or ISP: "a pessoa que não tinha nenhuma participação ou influência sobre o evento no qual houve disparo de arma de fogo, sendo, no entanto, atingido por projétil" [the person who did not play any role in or have any influence on the event involving the discharge of a weapon, but who was, however, struck by a bullet]. Data collection on stray bullets in Rio has long been methodologically fraught and disputed, and the figures that do exist largely come from the media and civil society organizations; ISP briefly published reports on this indicator in the past

(from 2007 to 2012), but this is no longer the case (Dias Carneiro "Terror sem medida"). Fogo Cruzado has itself become a prominent source of information on the topic. For example, a news story about stray bullets from October 2020 included the name of the project in its title, "Grande Rio tem 19 mortos e 87 feridos por bala perdida em 2020, diz Fogo Cruzado" [Greater Rio sees 19 deaths and 87 injuries by stray bullet in 2020, says Fogo Cruzado] (Lucchese). Overall, however, shootings involving stray bullets are only a small part of Fogo Cruzado's data. Despite the central place the symbol occupies in the city's imaginary, other types of shooting event dominate the available figures in practice. Returning to 2018, the year of "QTFE", the Fogo Cruzado annual report shows that overall the Rio region saw 9,651 shootings/gun discharges in that period—an average of 26 per day—with a total of 1,480 deaths and 1,363 people injured.

Fogo Cruzado offers a more granular view of armed violence in Rio, including stray bullets, than was easily accessible to the population before and, as its data manager told me in 2019, demonstrates "que é possível produzir informação de qualidade, confiável, a partir da sociedade civil, que não precisa ser só estado" [that it is possible for civil society to produce high-quality, reliable information, that this does not need to come just from the state] (Couto). The idea that urban violence provides *cariocas* with "a 'map' which they can use to interpret their daily lives and organize their social practices" (Penglase "Lost Bullets" 413; see also Cavalcanti "Tiroteios, legibilidade e espaço urbano") has arguably become more concrete, tangible, and accessible as a result of the initiative. By bringing actual bullets into view, it potentially makes them less phantasmagorical, although sadly no less prevalent.

A second instance of the "QTFE" catchphrase within grey literature published by a specialist public security organization also helped to shed light on the incidence of stray bullets, and attitudes towards them. In March 2018, the phrase was used as the title of an article in a report published by the Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública (FBSP) [Brazilian Public Security Forum], a non-governmental, not-for-profit, and non-political organization, composed of actors from a range of sectors ("Homepage"), and Instituto Datafolha, a research institute linked to the Folha de São Paulo media group, with support from CESeC. The *Rio sob intervenção* [Rio Under Intervention] report, intended to provide a rigorous baseline for monitoring and evaluating the federal intervention, presented the results of an opinion poll about public security in the city of Rio de Janeiro with data on three categories of experience of different crimes/violent acts or events: fear of something happening, risk of it happening, and actually having been a victim of it. As with Fogo Cruzado, it was linked to the work of the Observatory of the Intervention.

The results of the FBSP/Datafolha poll relating to stray bullets were striking, and again revealed the disparity between fear and actual experience. Ninety-two percent of those surveyed were afraid of being hit by a stray bullet (themselves or a relative). Forty percent considered there to be a high risk of this happening. Eight percent had actually been the victim of a stray bullet, or had this happen to a relative. Two other questions related directly to armed violence: "Finding oneself in the middle of a shootout between police and criminals" (92% feared this, 39% considered it a high risk, and 30% had experienced it), and "Hearing shooting nearby" (79% feared this, 42% considered it a high risk, and 75% had actually experienced it). The report also broke down the data by variables such as race, age, gender, and place of residence, presenting its analysis not just in the narrative text I now discuss, but also in infographics, a format popular with public security data activists in Rio (including Fogo Cruzado itself). A follow-up study by FBSP/Datafolha in January 2019 did not show any substantive changes in these indicators during the federal intervention.

The article in the *Rio sob intervenção* report headed "Que tiro foi esse?" (Trindade and Cerqueira *Rio sob intervenção*) reflected on the first two poll questions relating to stray bullets and crossfire.[19] Although the authors stated that a series of factors could affect a person's sense of security, and that there was no automatic association between fear and being a victim of crime, they acknowledged that in Rio, "os tiroteios são os eventos que mais impactam no medo da população" [shootings are the events with the greatest impact on the level of fear felt by the population]. Moreover, while being a victim of crime was no more prevalent than in other Brazilian cities, what distinguished Rio was "a frequência com que os tiroteios

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19   The piece was also published on a blog about public security maintained by one of its authors, together with other researchers, on the Brasília newspaper *Correio Braziliense*'s website (Trindade and Cerqueira *Correio Braziliense*).

acontecem e seus reflexos na vida cotidiana" [the frequency with which shootings take place and the impacts they have on everyday life] (Trindade and Cerqueira *Rio sob intervenção* 14). The authors suggested that events involving gunfire often happened in favelas, involved the military police, and were part of efforts to suppress the sale of drugs. They sparked fear, with knock-on effects for the mental health of the population, as well as disruption to schools, shops, restaurants, and cultural venues. The police themselves also suffered a threat to life as well as psychological impacts. Rather than representing a structured policy, shootings in Rio were the result of "rotinas e políticas de confronto levadas a cabo pelos policiais sem que haja uma clara definição dos objetivos, dos meios a serem empregados e dos limites de engajamento" [routines and practices of confrontation carried out by members of the police without any clear definition of the goals, means to be used, and limits of engagement] (15). The piece concluded by advocating policy measures to limit armed confrontation and reduce shootings.

In their article, Trindade and Cerqueira used the memetic catchphrase originating in Todynho's *funk* song to head up a text that was critical about armed violence in Rio, and in which they attempted to answer the question it posed. Like Fogo Cruzado, they added a question mark to the phrase, but also like Fogo Cruzado, they did not offer any contextualization or attribution of its origin, relying again on its "indexical signification" (Peterson). Unlike the discourse about stray bullets studied by Penglase, which was characterized by an "indexical opacity" ("Lost Bullets" 433), they did index those responsible for the bullets, albeit collectively rather than individually. Trindade and Cerqueira placed the responsibility for Rio's frequent gunfire and shootings, with their far-reaching impacts on everyday life, ultimately on policymakers rather than on individual shooters and perpetrators. Rather than the hard-line, and often themselves violent, approaches to public security in the political spotlight during 2018, their text advocated a strategy based on training, equipment, intelligence, and legal safeguards, aimed at reducing the number of shootings. While its approach to shooting data was different to that of Fogo Cruzado, in its focus on the policy implications of lived experience and social attitudes towards violence rather than data for practical everyday use, it similarly appropriated the catchphrase, and the ideal of the original "QTFE" meme, as the frame for its data. Through the social strategy of media intertextuality behind its title, the piece acknowledged the relevance, importance, and urgency of the public sentiment expressed through humour in the memetic performances, before using a research and policy register to home in on the seriousness of armed violence and its wide-reaching resonances.

CONCLUSION: "QTFE" AS TOUCHSTONE AND ENTRY POINT

If the contexts of popular music, internet memes, and data activism referenced in the title of this article might potentially seem very disparate, the discussion presented here has demonstrated the clear and coherent thread connecting them in "QTFE", thanks to the political and everyday charge of public security, the mainstream and yet still contested status of *funk* music, the irreverence of *carioca* humour and Brazilian digital *zoeira*, and the increased visibility and accessibility of quantitative data on armed violence in Rio. Both examples of the uptake of the "QTFE" catchphrase by public security data activists, like the uptake of the title of Todynho's song by the meme's participants, are instances of "intertextual play" (Peterson 132). Indeed, media intertextuality is the thread that connects the different contexts and arenas in or through which "QTFE" originated and circulated. The initial movement of a slang LGBTQ expression into popular music (its metaphorical use of 'tiro' informing the content of Todynho's song and viral music video) was followed by the detaching and repurposing of their opening portion—which included a sound effect and hand gesture mimicking the firing of a gun—within digital culture as the soundtrack for memetic performances of urban violence. There was then a further movement as the catchphrase, given visibility through the internet meme, circulated in a variety of media and textual contexts. In the examples I presented from public security data activism, the reuse of the catchphrase maintained the literal connection between the 'tiro' of the title and gun violence, while swapping the humour for a serious register. But in other engagements, not tackled in the present article, it doubtless took on other meanings and associations. "QTFE", understood here as a process encompassing movements both before and after the emergence of the memetic videos at its heart, thus incorporates multiple levels or stages of intertextuality.

The material explored here also sustains the argument that there was a powerful "match" (Knobel and Lankshear 218) between "QTFE" and the 2018 Brazilian conjuncture, which contributed to its success. In particular, I have posited that the meme illustrates the heightened mobilizing capacity of the issue of urban violence in different arenas at that time, as well as evidencing the persistence of (stray) bullets as a potent symbol in Rio and Brazil. Their "semantic ambiguity" (Penglase "Lost Bullets" 432) is demonstrated through their appearance in "QTFE" variously as LGBTQ idiom, index and indicator of urban violence, and spectral trigger for the digitally mediated expression of a good-humoured, yet discontented, reaction to the status quo. "QTFE"'s resonance was evidenced not just in the intense memetic engagement with the opening section of Jojo Todynho's Carnival hit by both celebrities and private citizens, but also in the reverberation and reuse of the resulting memetic catchphrase in a variety of domains, from the grey literature analysed here to advertising and fashion journalism, t-shirts, mugs, mobile phone cases and artwork offered for sale online, and titles of journalistic texts commenting on the relationship between public security and politics in 2018 (as well as other texts without an explicit link to this theme).

While "QTFE" was only one in a maelstrom of memes created and shared by Brazilians in 2018, I have analysed it here as a prominent example (endorsed by its top Google 'Year in Search' ranking) of the function of memes as "cultural touchstones" (Milner 1) in the country. As such, it provided a "constellation of mediated remix, play, and commentary" (Milner 1), dispersed across multiple and varied texts, which captured and expressed the social, cultural, and political mood of the country in a pivotal and polarized year. It also signalled the intertwining of digital culture with traditional cultural industries and practices, with politics, and with the field of public security specifically. The critical exploration of "QTFE" thus demonstrates and exemplifies the rich contribution that Modern Languages research on digital culture can make to the study of the circulation of language across different media and cultural forms as entry point for an interpretation of the broader social, cultural, and political context in which this takes place.[20]

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20   The first part of this sentence is inspired by, and draws directly on, a comment by one of the anonymous reviewers of this article.

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