

# Expansions and reconfigurations

## *Expansões e reconfigurações*

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### ABSTRACT

The spirit of the language and the Portuguese presence in television serial fiction are recovered in the book *Ficção seriada televisiva no espaço lusófono*, edited by Isabel Ferin Cunha, Fernanda Castilho and Ana Paula Guedes. Structurally, the book articulates the concept of identity proposed by Hall in 2003, with contexts, themes and case studies of our cultural epoch, being a reading recommended for all scholars of the subject.

**Keywords:** Television serial fiction, narratology, transmedia, identity

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### RESUMO

O espírito da língua e a presença portuguesa na ficção seriada televisiva são recuperados no livro *Ficção seriada televisiva no espaço lusófono*, organizado por Isabel Ferin Cunha, Fernanda Castilho e Ana Paula Guedes. Estruturalmente, a obra articula o conceito de identidade proposto por Hall em 2003, por meio de contextos, temas e estudos de caso de nossa época cultural, sendo leitura recomendada para todos os estudiosos do tema.

**Palavras-chave:** Ficção seriada televisiva, narratologia, transmídia, identidade

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC issues integrate the questions and appreciations among the demands that permeate the studies on television fiction. The questioning of an eminently epistemological nature – especially with regard to new patterns of both television production and reception – emerged and grew exponentially in the last decade because of the media and narrative expansion. First known as new media or digital media, today, *new media* are integrated into *previous* media symbiotically and they are practically inseparable. It is noteworthy that until recently, concepts such as new media and cyberculture were still distinguished as distinct fields of research. Manovich (2005), for example, while aware that such concepts should be reviewed periodically, defined new media as cultural phenomena related essentially to computing, and cyberculture as social phenomena connected to the Internet and new forms of network communication. Now, the field of communication deals historically with conceptual immaturity, which has been used by some biased views, but today there is a comparison of different fields of breakdowns of theoretical certainties. For Sodr  (2002), all fields started to enter without *media bios*, that is, in this way of life in which social and cultural practices are shown as a communicational thinking that surrounds, circulates and encompasses us. In this sense, Saad Corr a (2015) emphasizes that there is a diversity of theoretical and methodological possibilities that run parallel to the difficulties of situating digital studies even in the field of communication itself.

It is a fact that television fiction has long stopped from being analogic and began to stir in this environment. The study of these narratives transits from theoretical and conceptual reflections such as: is it really *television* fiction? (If it is not only on television and can be accessed via cell phones, computers and many other devices, existing or being created, how should it be named?) For uncertainties related to more methodical points, such as: audience analysis in multiple platforms, creation of methodologies for the study of the reception of transmissions, accompaniment of television fiction concomitantly displayed on open TV, pay TV, Video on Demand (VoD) and social networks, among others. We have, therefore, expansions of television fiction by various digital and online media and platforms, which have required remarkable reconfigurations both in terms of production and reception, even of the works conceived, exhibited and enjoyed in the analog and off-line, traditional mode. It is amid this complex environment, reticular and in constant process of transformation and recreation that television fiction is inserted as object of scientific study.

In Brazil, CETVN, Telenovela Studies Center<sup>1</sup>, in the School of Communications and Arts of the University of S o Paulo, was a pioneer in these types of research and, since 1992, has its scientific production recognized

<sup>1</sup> CETVN. Retrieved from: <http://www.cetvn.net.br/> on Oct. 31st, 2017.

nationally and internationally. As for Ibero-America, Obitel<sup>2</sup> (Ibero-American Observatory of Television Fiction) has been acting for more than twelve years monitoring, analyzing and publishing results about television fiction in the geopolitical space. Precisely from the latter came some of the research from the book *Ficção seriada televisiva no espaço lusófono* (Fiction TV series in the Lusophone space), object of this review.

In the first part of the book, “Frames and concepts,” the Lusophone space is delimited as an autonomous dynamic, originated primarily in historical and geographical movements. For Hall (2005), the conformation of space and time is intrinsically related to the cultural epochs in which narrative representations arise, because that is where identities appear. In this sense, Isabel Ferin Cunha emphasizes that the Lusophone space would be a mental state imbued with the Portuguese language and presence, which, according to Lopes (2003), could be considered an *imagined community*. The book deals, more specifically, even if not exclusively, with serial television fiction in Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde<sup>3</sup>. Ferin is one of the organizers of the book and, in defining this space, she assumes some discontinuities of Portuguese-speaking cosmopolitanism, which creates shared spaces and, more than that, a common postcolonial thought in terms of history, language and culture.

Centered on this historical perspective, the first article, therefore, begins to compare the media systems of these countries with their historical, structural and political contexts. We have, therefore, the emergence and consolidation of media systems in these spaces, with relevance of the role of the State, the church and the market to envisage a possibility of circulation of capital and media products.

In the second article, Ana Teresa Peixinho dwells on the new narrative dynamics of production and reception of television fiction, arising with web 2.0, and no longer dependent on predetermined grids and schedules. The author sees in this movement a universal, transcultural and timeless tendency of the narratives that even went on to operate in areas of society that, until recently, did not give in to narrativization, such as journalism and politics, for example. The article concludes that the media narratives began to regulate our relationship with the world, articulating facts, beliefs, behaviors and, dangerously, undoing boundaries between fiction and reality.

Fernanda Castilho, also the organizer of the book, focus her article on a “place of the fans,” locus in which new relations between text and reader are inaugurated. To do so, she delves deeper into the concepts of *textual poachers*, proposed by Jenkins (1992) and *braconniers*, by De Certeau (1990), in order to advance the theoretical discussion of this fundamental field of social action. In terms of television fiction, he observes new forms of cultural appropriation of TV

<sup>2</sup> OBITEL. Retrieved from: <<http://www.obitel.net>> on Oct. 31st, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Ferin regained the empire of Portugal that expanded over five continents in five centuries and would include: “Portugal and the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and the Azores (Europe); Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe (Africa); Daman, Diu, Goa (Asia, India), Macao (Asia); Brazil (America); Timor-Leste (Oceania)” (2017: 16).

programs and, consequently, of virtual fan communities, especially considering their social-emotional dimensions and possibilities of bonding, as well as the creation of paratexts and symbolic practices of immersion in the narrative, i.e., active modes of consumption of cultural products; all in strong tension with the control that producers and media companies seek to exert.

The article by Rodrigo Lessa closes the first part of the book and deals with conceptual notions related to transmedia storytelling, bringing a glimpse of the insertion of the concept in the academic environment in parallel to examples and case studies, especially Globo TV. From these subsidies, it discusses seriality, fictional extensions, new forms of content presentation, reconfigurations of the audience experience, and marketing strategies.

The second part, “Transits in the Lusophone Space,” begins with an article by Catarina Burnay that problematizes the centers of production of avant-garde television fiction and its routines, partnerships and co-productions as dynamic elements of formation and growth of transnational audiences. It observes that, distancing itself from the hegemony of the United States, other producing and exporting markets reach audiences less through central and more through mobile media. New production strategies go hand in hand with the preferences of local and international audiences, especially because of narratives of universal content, colored with local colors. In this sense, the author studies closely some partnerships and co-productions between Portugal-Brazil-Angola, seeking to demonstrate with examples this shared geolinguistic market.

Next, Maria Carmen Jacob de Souza and Kyldes Batista Vicente choose to observe the author-writer of Brazilian television fiction and, in this specific case, to portray the case of Maria Adelaide Amaral, a Portuguese-born writer based in Brazil, and her adaptation of *Os Maias* [The Maias] (2001), from the Portuguese author Eça de Queirós, for the homonymous Brazilian miniseries. They thus observe the modes of a diasporic experience (Hall apud Sovik, 2003) in relation to the imaginary and cultural identity that seeks to recover and revitalize dialogues in the lusophone symbolic space.

Ana Paula Guedes, the third organizer of the book, ends this part by discussing the circulation of serial television fiction from a case study on the first Angolan production shown in Brazil, *Windeck: todos os tons de Angola* [Windeck: all shades of Angola] (2012), broadcasted by TV Brasil, from 2014 to 2015. Angolans watch Brazilian telenovelas since 1979, which brought an important paradox to this transit: despite the title, which refers to the culture and identity of that country, and which would interest Brazilians to know and appreciate, Windeck shows a strong influence of the Brazilian aesthetics, regarding both aesthetic and narrative terms.

The final part of the book, “Quality and Multiple Platforms,” brings three more articles. The first, by Gabriela Borges and Daiana Sigiliano, is anchored in British and American studies on television quality, especially on serial television fiction, to dialogue with Brazilian and Portuguese productions. From there, the authors analyze some cross-platform content transits of both countries, and stop in the fictions *Beat Girl* (2013), produced by beActive<sup>4</sup> and *Latitudes* (2014).

<sup>4</sup> beActive Entertainment is a Portuguese video producer.

In the following article, Clarice Greco seeks to deepen concepts regarding quality assessments and, for this, she anchors her thinking to specialized criticism and popular criticism; the first validated by the authority – of publications in newspapers, television columns and even awards – and the second one expressed especially by viewers and giving account of more subjective criteria – such as individual and collective taste. Her article invites to a discussion about the field of television fiction criticism in Brazil.

The last article of the book, signed by Yvana Fechine and Gésa Cavalcanti, problematizes the issue of Social TV, beginning with the conceptual imprecision surrounding the term, which would be a set of interactional practices, especially conversations, about television content in digital social networks. The article discusses the phenomenon of transmediation to finally face an analysis of the development of Social TV from case studies of transmediation strategies of *Malhação – Casa Cheia* (2013-2014) and *Malhação – Sonhos* (2014-2015).

As a whole, this book is suitable for research on the subject in different countries, because it focuses on our Portuguese-speaking identity – from Portuguese territorial expansions to the narrative expansions in the bosom of transmediation. Identity is thought and analyzed in order to fill an important space within the studies of television serial fiction.

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