

# They grew up so fast: Cartoon Network in connection with *Jorel's Brother* Brazilian cartoon

## *Eles cresceram tão rápido: o Cartoon Network em diálogo com o desenho brasileiro Irmão do Jorel*

■ ARIANE DINIZ HOLZBACH<sup>a</sup>

Universidade Federal Fluminense, Graduation Program in Communication. Niterói – RJ, Brazil

### ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand how the transnational channels interact with national contents considering the consolidation of Cartoon Network Brazil, and is also an analysis of the Brazilian cartoon *Jorel's Brother*, produced in Brazil in partnership with the channel that broadcasts it. The results show this TV cartoon incorporates diverse local characteristics linked to the place where it is produced, while exploring global elements in its narrative, which are internationally recognized. However, the definition of global reinforced by *Jorel's Brother* cartoon is closely related to the US media context, which marks a self-centered and self-referential approach around Cartoon Network.

**Keywords:** Cable TV, television cartoon, Cartoon Network, *Jorel's Brother*

### RESUMO

A proposta deste artigo é entender de que maneira os canais transnacionais dialogam com conteúdos nacionais, tendo em vista, para isso, a consolidação do Cartoon Network Brasil e uma análise do desenho brasileiro *Irmão do Jorel*, produzido por uma produtora brasileira em parceria com o canal que o veicula. Os resultados mostram que o desenho incorpora variadas características locais, vinculadas ao lugar onde é produzido, ao mesmo tempo em que explora em sua narrativa elementos globais, reconhecidos internacionalmente. Todavia, a definição de global enfatizada pelo desenho perpassa especificamente o contexto midiático estadunidense, o que demarca um olhar autocentrado e autorreferente em torno do Cartoon Network.

**Palavras-chave:** TV por assinatura, desenho animado, Cartoon Network, *Irmão do Jorel*

<sup>a</sup> Adjunct Professor of Media Studies at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). PhD in Communication from the UFF with a postdoctoral degree in History from the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8548-0220>. E-mail: [arianeh@id.uff.br](mailto:arianeh@id.uff.br).



## INTRODUCTION

TV CHANNELS FOCUSED on cartoons form a powerful yet under-researched economic and cultural force within pay television. In Brazil, Cartoon Network has been one of the most watched pay-TV channels at least since 2014, outnumbering news, adult entertainment, and sports channels. In 2016, of the twenty most watched pay-TV channels, five had this profile: Discovery Kids, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Disney Channel and Globo. The first two channels mentioned are respectively on the second and third place (“Confira”, 2017)<sup>1</sup>. This reflects a series of phenomena linked to two important foundations of the Brazilian television culture still lacking scientific attention: pay-television and, especially, cartoons broadcasted on television.

<sup>1</sup> Data widely released by websites on television.

For over forty years, cartoons have occupied significant spaces in television in Brazil. In many cases, they helped to design the identity of different programmings, as with Globo between 1980 and 1999 with *Balão Mágico* (1982-1986), *Xou da Xuxa* (1986-1992) and *TV Colosso* (1993-1997), programs that broadcast cartoons for up to five hours daily, from Monday to Saturday. However, almost all of this programming consisted of cartoons purchased from Disney and Hanna-Barbera, to this day powerful references of the American type of audiovisual content. In the late 1990s, these programs disappeared, while many cartoons migrated to pay-TV, which then began to gain ground in Brazil. With reference to a niche-oriented programming, many paid channels dedicated to cartoons, such as those already mentioned, have appeared. Considering that these channels were already established by international media conglomerates – a characteristic of paid TV in Brazil – it was not surprising that a large portion of these channels’ programming was also imported.

In recent years, in particular, the channels focused on cartoons have gained strength along with an essential phenomenon to understand this context: the substantial increase of Brazilian cartoons on television. In open TV channels, there is a significant number of them concentrated in TV Brasil, a broadcaster that historically invests in this content<sup>2</sup>. But it is in pay-TV that this production gains more visibility, often transforming into a transnational content. In this sense, a good part of the cable channels is dedicated to exhibition of the national production: Discovery Kids airs *Peixonauta*, *Meu Amigãozão* and *Show de Luna*. On Cartoon Network, it is possible to watch *Jorel’s Brother*, *Turma da Mônica*, *Sítio do Picapau Amarelo*, *Oswaldo*, *Mônica Toy* and *Tromba Trem*. Globo, the branch of Globosat dedicated to children since 2012 broadcasts *Tronquinho e Pão de Queijo*, *SOS Fada Manu*, and *Osmar – the Heel of the Loaf*. Interestingly, this presence occurs largely on *conventional* television. Netflix, for example, even

<sup>2</sup> TV Brasil airs *Igarapé Mágico*, *Peixonauta*, *Show de Luna*, *Tromba Trem*, *Historietas Assombradas*, *Zica e os Camaleões*, *Júlio e Verne os Irmãos Geniais* and *Animacriança*, among others.

displays (a small number of) cartoons produced for television and has already launched an animated production for adult audiences, but the platform still plans to produce what may be its first Brazilian cartoon intended for children<sup>3</sup>.

Why, after all, is cable television making room for Brazilian cartoons? On the one hand, it is evident the role of the Pay TV Law (Law 12.485), which forced cartoon channels to fill at least 3.5 hours a week of prime time with national content. But some channels spontaneously surpass that number. Cartoon Network has dedicated 15% of its programming to Brazilian cartoons in 2015 (Sabino, 2017) and invests in Brazilian production since 2004, seven years before the Pay TV Law came into force. In addition, some cartoons have been aired for a long time and are being exported to television channels around the world, such as the fish detective Peixonauta from Discovery Kids, on air since 2009 and to this day one of the channel's audience leaders (Gatti & Marietto, 2017). The clever girl who stars *Show de Luna*, also aired on Discovery Kids, came to be more popular on the channel than *Peppa Pig*, a British *blockbuster* among audiences under the age of six in dozens of countries. *Luna* and Peixonauta have already *been* aired in more than ninety countries, including the American channel NBC, reaching universes never imagined by Brazilian animation in previous years.

To understand with greater consistency the rise of Brazilian dcartoons in pay-TV, it should be borne in mind that the culture of cable television is undergoing an intense transformation that runs along two main and complementary routes. On the one hand, the logic that defines the role of cable channels in a global context is aimed at the establishment of transnational channels, which are being formed from a powerful (and sometimes inclement) strategy of inserting content in different geographic spaces to reach more and more markets. This is currently done by defining a *brand* that allows a channel to be globally recognized, although dealing with different languages, cultures and tastes. On the other hand, to be accepted in different markets, these channels need to dialogue not only with the local audience, but with the local audiovisual production, opening space for this production to surface and help *locate* those transnational channels. This production, however, needs to fit into the transnational *brand*, outlining a complex exchange that offers new ways of understanding 1) the role of transnational channels in specific contexts and 2) the local content they convey.

With this scenario in view, the purpose of this article is to understand how the Brazilian cartoons are established in the transnational cable channels and what characteristics ascend from this relation. To do so, we will first discuss the role of transnational channels in perspective with local markets.

<sup>3</sup> *Cupcake and Dino* should be aimed at children up to ten years old and will be a co-production between Brazil and Canada. Information taken from <https://bit.ly/2t0SSI2> link. In November 2018, Netflix released the first cartoon originally produced in Brazil: *Super Drags* is a series divided in five episodes exclusively to the adult audience.



Following, we will analyze specifically the strategies defined by Cartoon Network and the way the Brazilian cartoon *Jorel's Brother* has become a large local showcase of a transnational channel. On air since 2014, Jorel has been the first original production of Cartoon Network made in Latin America and, in Brazil it became the most watched program among children aged four and eleven (Associação Brasil Audiovisual Independente, 2015)<sup>4</sup>. It remains one of the channel's audience leaders in the country and is also exported globally; but always limited to the markets dictated by the matrix of the channel that airs it.

<sup>4</sup> Data for 2014.

The cartoon analysis is methodologically divided into two parts. In the first one, we will map the channels that air *Jorel's Brother* in Brazil and abroad, considering television broadcasters as well as the main *streaming* platforms, especially YouTube and Netflix. The goal is to perceive the characteristics of this airing circuit, thinking about the transnational experience led by Cartoon Network. Next, I will make a brief and non-exhaustive analysis of *Jorel's Brother's* content, especially considering two aspects: 1) the way in which the cartoon episodes explain elements that dialogue with local aspects related to the cartoon's nationality, at the same time in which 2) reinforces global elements, which allow the product to be recognized internationally.

### TRANSNATIONAL CHANNELS: BETWEEN THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL

Conceptually, transnational channels transgress one of the most important characteristics of the original model of open television: its territorial character. Traditionally, open television has evolved out of regulations and a display logic focused on specific territories. Thus, even if technically the television spectrum can reach a larger area, the political-economic logic of television in general takes into account geographic space rather than the potential of reaching the medium. In Brazil, this model is related to an important part of television reflections in general, which considers, for example, the term "*television*" in *Brazil* as a metonymic element of television content and political logics developed in Brazilian territory (eg, Jambeiro, 2001; Ribeiro, Sacramento, & Roxo, 2010; Souza, 2015).

With this, the look around television often has as its starting point the premise that it *speaks* to the whole Brazil and addresses audiences that may vary, but somehow coexist. This happens, for example, in the reflections regarding telenovelas perceived as part of a *national genre*, the developer of a series of elements that constitute a "narrative of the nation" (Lopes, 2003, 2009, 2010a,

2010b). Something analogous happens with other content, such as *talk shows*, whose references that help to delimit it lie in the fact that *in Brazil* it assumes a different logic of *talk shows* from other countries, as pointed by Fernanda Silva (2009, 2010, 2013). The same look falls on studies focused on the consumer television audience, although this usually happens more implicitly. For example, the argument that evokes the idea that certain programs are destined to “popular participation” (Coutinho & Mata, 2010) assumes that this “*popular*” brings together viewers belonging to some place, which, due to this, share characteristics more or less common.

The logic of transnational channels, on the other hand, has in perspective the deterritorialization of the programs they broadcast. They define themselves as television channels of dispersed content, henceforth specialized, whose logic of operation aims at the distribution and global sharing of this content (Chalaby, 2002, 2009). These channels are evidently created somewhere (often still in the United States), but their economic dynamics are established through flexibly constructed business partnership models, depending on the regulations and policies of each place. The programming of these channels, in turn, are constructed from a complex mix of global characteristics linked to the identity of transnational channels, allied to local elements, largely related to the culture of the media developed in each place.

More broadly, the consolidation of transnational channels is directly related to the popularization and economic strength of media conglomerates, a phenomenon intrinsically linked to globalization and that took shape especially from the 1980s. More specifically, transnational channels have consolidated, above all, in the wake of two phenomena. On the one hand, they benefited from the process of privatizing state broadcasters, which occurred in many Western countries (Chris, 2002; Chalaby, 2009), making room for programming in countries that are inexperienced in niche television culture, but which had the entry of transnational content into their territories legalized. On the other hand, they are a result of the extreme valorization of the segmented television production of the United States, that as early as the 1960s had developed technical and economic strategies to transform cable channels into a national reality – a service that would only become popular in other countries over twenty years later. Cable service was consolidated in the 1970s, when channels such as HBO (1975), Nickelodeon (1977) and ESPN (1979) began to spread through the United States through various re-transmission stations, resulting in a powerful and competitive market with open channels. In the 1980s, this service was economically consolidated and, consequently, dozens of new channels were created. In many cases, they offered such specialized programming that



there was no up-close competitor for open channels, as happened to CNN (1980), which reformatted part of the conventions of telejournalism (Zelizer, 1992), MTV (1981), the first channel totally dedicated to music, The Weather Channel (1982), specialized in meteorology, and Discovery Channel (1985), which updated the documentary culture in many degrees (Chris, 2002), among many others.

At the beginning of the 1990s, there was a framework composed of (1) media conglomerates interested in spreading and strengthening their channels, (2) an audience outside the United States increasingly receptive to segmented programming, (3) different countries regulating different ways the entrance of the channels of these conglomerates in their territories. As an expansion strategy, and to be accepted outside their country of origin, the conglomerates have established various subsidiaries of these channels globally, which divide their programming between the content aired and/or produced by the matrix and locally produced content. In addition, in many cases the production directly controlled by the matrix was adapted when it was aired in other territories to fit the legislation and especially in the local spectatoriality (Waisbord, 2004).

In Brazil, cable television presents several specificities, partly stemming from the power of Brazilian media companies in relation to sector regulation. The service began to operate in the early 1990s, when regulation still lacked a multitude of decisions, as Othon Jambeiro (2001) analyzes, among them the degree of autonomy of the domestic market to enter into transactions with foreign investors. The Law of Cable TV (Law 8,977) was only sanctioned on January 6, 1995, when operators “were already operating at full speed, making new subscribers, expanding their channel offers and negotiating agreements with multinationals in the sector” (Jambeiro, 2001, p. 206). Even so, this happened only after the then President Fernando Henrique Cardoso received a call from Roberto Irineu Marinho, the night before the sanction, giving approval for the regulation (Jambeiro, 2001). Marinho owns Globo Group, the 17th largest media conglomerate in the world, which includes Globosat, established in 1991 and the largest television programmer in Latin America. In the same year that the Law of Cable TV came into effect, Globosat has entered into *joint ventures* with the American studios Paramount, Universal, MGM and Fox, and since then has been expanding its international partnerships. Currently Globosat maintains 21 *joint ventures* and twenty channels easily located on its website<sup>5</sup>. In addition to this type of international participation in the Brazilian media spectrum, the regulation of cable TV provides for the participation of foreign companies, which has opened space for international conglomerates to also

<sup>5</sup> The channels can be viewed at: <https://bit.ly/2VBImUM>

operate in autonomous channels. As a result, on pay-TV there are channels available from all of the world's largest media conglomerates, such as Comcast (owner of NBC Universal), The Walt Disney Company and Time Warner. The presence of Brazilian and international media conglomerates transformed Brazil into the eighth pay-TV market on the planet (Associação Brasileira de TV por Assinatura, 2019)<sup>6</sup>, besides being a huge arena for experimentation and consolidation of transnational channels for over twenty years. This is the case of Cartoon Network, as I will analyze next.

<sup>6</sup> Data for 2016.

### THE *BRAND* CARTOON NETWORK

Although it originally premiered on October 1, 1992 in the United States as an isolated channel, there is currently a long lineage of media behind Cartoon Network. It was conceived as a cartoon-focused channel by executive Betty Cohen and is part of the media program of the Turner Broadcasting System, a subsidiary of Time Warner. Cartoon Network's rapid success came especially as it explored the extensive and popular Hanna-Barbera catalog, which had been acquired by Turner months before, and also because it was born to be a transnational experience.

Just six months after its debut in April 1993, Cartoon Network was already available on Brazilian cable TV. By 1994, it was already one of the five most popular pay channels in the United States (Mittell, 2004). Ten years later, Cartoon was present in 145 countries and owned more than 8,500 titles, including Warner Brothers' cartoons (like *Bugs Bunny*) and MGM (*Tom and Jerry*), as well as being licensed to air many *animes* (such as *Dragon Ball Z*). The channel also had already released their original productions, the "Cartoon Cartoons" (Sandler, 2003). In 2000, Boomerang was born, Cartoon's brother channel, thought to be more for the *family*. In 2003 there was Adult Swim, aimed at a more adult audience. Cartoon Network's spreading strategy is similar to that developed by other cable channels that have strengthened alongside the growth of conglomerates, such as Viacom's MTV<sup>7</sup>, and can be divided into two main steps: the development of a global *brand* and the establishment of local elements in dialogue with that brand.

<sup>7</sup> As an isolated channel, MTV has existed since 1981, but over the decades it has created brother channels (VH1, MTV2) to make their content available and since 1987 has spread throughout the world; today MTV is in all inhabited continents including, since 1990, Brazil (Holzbach, 2016).

### CARTOON NETWORK AS GLOBAL BRAND

The Cartoon Network is officially intended for children aged four to eleven (Latin American Multichannel Advertising Council, 2018), but effectively tries to catch the attention of the older ones and parents. In fact, by targeting



their cartoons to a wider audience than children, Cartoon has become one of the most popular cable channels and has mainly reformatted the social role of cartoons on television. In this regard, Mittell (2004) points out that the channel allowed cartoons to extend the range of actions and free themselves from *exile* suffered at the programming of free television, as the United States, which cornered that content to Saturday mornings. Even the existing children's channels – Nickelodeon and Disney Channel – so far treated cartoons as children-only content, meaning a narrow audience profile compared to the one Cartoon Network created. As a consequence, the channel helped broaden and complicate the cartoons' narratives, as for their original production, which began to have more elaborate narrative arcs, dialogues and situations, also directed to adults.

To attract a broad audience and also to differentiate itself from other cable channels, Cartoon Network gradually develops a specific *brand* that consolidates its name globally and at the same time offers pasteurized features that must be followed by all channels linked to the matrix. The definition of a brand is one of the main strategies for transnational channels to be recognizable even if they are in different territories and suffer different interference from the States and the audience of each location (Sandler, 2003). In many cases, the institution of this brand is related to the imagery built around the contents aired by the channel, as the case of HBO, which since the late 1970s has developed the notion of a “quality brand” (Jaramillo, 2002), which permeates all of its original production. In this sense, since its emergence, Cartoon Network has been building a cool, ironic and self-referential image, heavily based on its original programming and production. To do so, it manipulates its contents not only to air them in its programming around the world, but also to consolidate elements linked to its *cool* image. It is quite common, in fact, for the channel to decontextualize cartoons from their stories and reposition them so as to convey messages that enhance it. For example, vignettes and ads use excerpts of various cartoons to convey messages that fit the image of Cartoon, resignifying dialogues and situations. In this sense, it edits different cartoons and brings them together in a way that combines dialogues, creates songs and makes the cartoons dubb what is being sung and even creates situations that would never happen in the original stories.

An ad, for example, that was very popular in Cartoon Network Brazil uses *Tweety and Sylvester*, and *Scooby-Doo's* Velma character, among others, to question the out-of-reality situations that happen in these cartoons. In the ad, Cartoon acts as a narrator and asks Sylvester what would happen if he finally caught Tweety. Sylvester looks at the viewer and replies, funny:



“I’d give him back his wallet”. To Velma, the narrator asks, “Have you ever heard of contact lenses?”, playing with the fact that in the cartoon Velma sometimes loses her flawless pair of glasses (Figure 1). It is therefore a brand positioning strategy aimed primarily at young people and adults, due the high number of inferences and interpretations that this type of joke requires to be understood as such.



FIGURE 1 – Excerpts from Cartoon Network Brazil ads

Source: Cartoon Network

In addition to building its image by manipulating its own programming, Cartoon carries out great marketing campaigns to launch original productions, as well as maintaining advertising strategies around specific productions for a long period after its launch, as it happened to *Powerpuff Girls* (1998). Cartoon sometimes allows product licensing and storytelling in other media, such as in video games, before launching the cartoon on television, as it happened to *Samurai Jack* (2001), in order to value television content through expectations built on other media (Sandler, 2003). In an attempt to broaden its cool image and attract whole families, since 2014 the *Cartoon Network Amazone Water Park operates in Thailand*. There are 150 attractions, including thirty water toys distributed in ten “entertainment zones” (Expedia, 2019). In addition, since 2018 there is “Cartoon Network Wave”, a theme cruise with 800 suites and capacity for 2,000 “Cartoon Networks fans”, according to the official website. The cruise navigates the South Pacific and aims to offer an “immersive” experience with the most famous characters of the channel (Figure 2).

These strategies, in particular, highlight the transnational character of Cartoon Network. The water park and the cruise are aimed at a global audience of consumers who, although certainly have different tastes, habits and cultures, are gathered around common media content. On the other hand, these experiments explain the great class segmentation evoked by this type of product, considering that there are few Cartoon Network fans that can enjoy both attractions.

# A

They grew up so fast



FIGURE 2 – The Cartoon Network Wave

Source: Cartoon Network, 2018

## LOCAL ELEMENTS IN DIALOGUE WITH THE GLOBAL BRAND: CARTOON NETWORK BRAZIL

The definition of the Cartoon Network *brand* joins an even more complex strategy to consolidate the channel around the world: the presence of local elements that territorialize *the* different versions of the channel established in different geographic spaces. This strategy, in fact, is part of the dynamic of television content that targets global markets, as Waisbord (2004) points out in relation to television formats, and must be perceived as a necessity, but also as an element that allows certain degree of diversity between channels, which, even though in different territories, are part of the same brand.

The localization strategies of this type of content usually add to the development of general characteristics, which are part of the transnational channels in a generalized (though not totaling) way, and also of more particular elements, developed from the relation established between the channel and the where it is served. In relation to the first case, Cartoon Network Brazil works exclusively with material translated and dubbed in Portuguese. In the case of cartoons, this element is particularly important because the *owners* of the animations's voices are a fundamental part of their enjoyment. Often, famous artists dubb specific characters, and this element is thoroughly exploited by advertising campaigns. Brazilian professionals like Orlando Drummond, who voiced Scooby-Doo, Popeye, Sylvester and Battle Cat; Garcia Junior voiced He-Man and Woody Woodpecker; Silvio Navas, voice actor for Mumm-Ra

(*Thundercats* villain) and Papa Smurf, among many others, are responsible for “Brazilianizing” a fundamental part of the narratives of imported cartoons.

Still in this category, Cartoon Network Brazil frequently uses the speaker’s ability to narrate ads and commercials, something quite common in children’s channels. It is a voice that gives specific intonations and accents to commercials, transforming them into a more linear resource that brings together different contents in the same voice and identification with the children’s audience. In Brazil, this locution has been made by Carlos Tureta from the start of the channel, making his voice an intrinsic element to the Brazilian version of Cartoon. The texts with which he works can be in English, Portuguese or Spanish and he is responsible for adapting slang and regionalisms with Brazilian speaking (Morisawa, 2001).

Regarding the other general elements responsible for *locating* the channel, the layout of the cartoons in the programming necessarily considers the Brazilian spectatoriality, even limited to strategies that Cartoon needs to take into account from its transnational characteristic. Thus, for example, the Brazilian channel airs in great quantity all the main universal flagships of the channel, such as *Steven Universe* (2013-), *The Amazing World of Gumball* (2011-), *Adventure Time* (2010-2018) and *Regular Show* (2010-). But these share space with popular cartoons specifically in Brazil, such as *Monica’s Gang*, part of the programming since 2004, and *Jorel’s Brother*, on air since 2014. *Jorel* is often repeated a few times a day, at important times for children’s routine, such as breakfast (8:30 am), lunch (11 am) and dinner (6 pm). This cartoon is significant because the characteristics of its narrative explain the particular relationship established between Cartoon Network and Brazil, that is, between elements related to the cartoon’s place of speech – Brazil – but in perspective with the global market established by the channel that airs it.

### **DIALOGUES BETWEEN LOCAL AND GLOBAL: THE CASE OF *JOREL’S BROTHER***

*Jorel’s brother* emerged from a contest held by Cartoon Network Brazil in 2009 that aimed to co-produce and then air a Brazilian cartoon. The story and the traces are from the capixaba Juliano Enrico, who, besides being a comic artist, worked for some years as MTV Brazil’s VJ. In 2010, Cartoon Network Brazil approved the idea and paid Enrico US\$ 20,000 to make a two-minute promotional video to convince the US matrix to allow the coproduction. The cartoon, thus, was born with the need for approval

# A

## They grew up so fast

<sup>8</sup> Producer of Carioca animation whose production includes projects of projection like *Tromba Trem* and *Historietas assombradas (para crianças malcriadas)*.

<sup>9</sup> Address: <https://bit.ly/2G1SVtU>

<sup>10</sup> The analysis is a non-exhaustive attempt to account for elements important for understanding, specifically, the dialogue built between the cartoon and the transnational channel that airs it. It should be emphasized, therefore, that *Jorel's Brother's* narrative develops more complex elements than the present analysis allows to observe and would demand, therefore, a study apart.

of the foreign look. The first episode debuted in 2014 and since then, there have been three seasons with 66 episodes, made in partnership with the production company Copa Studio<sup>8</sup> and it has gained increasingly space in the television programming. However, because it is a content commanded by Cartoon, it is not available on any other Brazilian television channel, only on Netflix, which has two of the three seasons. Apart from Brazil, Cartoon Network has aired the cartoon in its Latin American branch since 2015, with the title *Hermano de Jorel*. On YouTube, the investment in the cartoon is quite low. It is possible to find episodes without much order in varied channels and fragments of the cartoon in short videos made available by the official channel of Cartoon Network Brazil<sup>9</sup>. Thus, while initially *Jorel's Brother* is thought of as a global experience, his content is aired in a surprisingly restricted way, which indicates the conservatism with which it is treated by the American matrix.

The cartoon<sup>10</sup> tells the adventures of an unnamed protagonist, who is always referenced in relation to Jorel, his older brother, handsome, with silky hair, symbolizing what apparently the protagonist will never be (Figure 3). He is the youngest of an eccentric family composed of a couple, their three children and two grandmothers living in a messy house and crammed with references to an imagery linked to the 1980s. Jorel's brother is a child around the age of seven who faces school-age dilemmas, childhood fears, early crushes, and various household-related issues.



FIGURE 3 – Jorel on the right and, on the left, the protagonist, Jorel's brother

Source: Cartoon Network

Much of the characterization of the characters and space happen through references to 1) aspects of Brazilian culture and 2) more universalized elements, recognizable in territories beyond what is defined as Brazil. These references, it should be emphasized, depart from elements consolidated by media, which makes *Jorel's Brother's* cartoon a tool for understanding media characteristics as well.

### MEDIATICALLY DEFINED BRAZILIAN ELEMENTS

Among the elements of the cartoon that communicate with aspects of the Brazilian culture reinforced by media, the characteristics of some characters stand out. In most cases, however, these elements only touch upon the narratives, so that if they are not fully understood they do little to interfere in the general understanding of stories, although they enrich the interpretation of those who recognize the references. Moreover, in most cases these references are constructed in dialogue with more universalized elements, potentially recognizable by international audiences.

This is the case of Jorel's brother's mother, Mrs. Danuza, and his idol Steve Magal. The character Danuza makes nominal reference to is Danuza Leão, actress, journalist and author of controversial texts published in famous newspapers. She is a present figure in the Brazilian media since she participated *in the film Entranced Earth* (1967), by Glauber Rocha, one of the most remembered references of the national cinema. This element offers an interesting comic element linked to Brazilian spectatoriality, considering that the husband, Mr. Edson, is passionate about *art and* cinema. On the other hand, the character Danuza, in the narrative, is a *fitness* dance teacher, highly concerned with exercise and eating, who wears swimsuits and yoga pants, ready to exercise, just like some 1980s celebrities such as Olivia Newton John and Jane Fonda (Figure 4).



FIGURE 4 – Mrs. Danuza feeding Jorel's brother

Source: Cartoon Network

Jorel's brother's idol, on the other hand, is a comic mixture of American and Brazilian elements. Nominally and physically, Steve Magal is the junction of Brazilian Sidney Magal, famous singer of Latin music, with the American Steven

# A

## They grew up so fast

Seagal, actor of action films and black belt in several martial arts. However, in the stories Steve Magal has the references built around the American media emphasized above all. He is a television character, protagonist of action films such as Steven Seagal, with a calm and sullen way of speaking and acting, in the mold of heroes of several Hollywood films (Figure 5). To save the world, he often climbs hills, drives water, land and air vehicles and appears to have supernatural strength, resembling varied heroes.

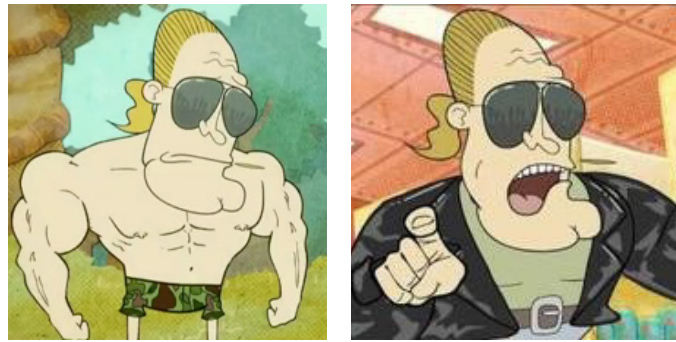


FIGURE 5 – Steve Magal, Jorel's brother's idol in different episodes

Source: Cartoon Network

### Foreign elements established by the media

What allows Jorel's *Brother* to create prior identification with the international audience are mainly the characteristics developed in the stories. In this sense, most episodes involve children's problems, but the way the stories evolve creates interlocution with situations rooted in the media imaginary established by the US audiovisual media. Most episodes present references to films, series, characters and objects of famous works, which usually creates comic links with the challenges faced by the protagonist. Several episode titles make reference to *the* American cinema and television:

- *De volta para o Futuro do Passado* (reference to the film *Back to the Future*)
- *Clube de Luta Livre* (reference to the film *Fight Club*)
- *Uma Odisseia no Espaço Recreativo* (reference to *2001: A Space Odyssey*)
- *Profissão: Palhaço* (reference to the television series *MacGyver*)
- *Meu Segundo Amor* (reference to the film *My Girl*)
- *A Fantástica Fábrica de Refrigerantes* (reference to the film *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*)

- *Embalos de Sábado à Tarde* (reference to *Saturday Night Fever*)
- *A História Sem Começo, Meio e Fim* (reference to the film *Never Ending Story*)
- *Os Caçadores da Figurinha Perdida* (reference to *Raiders of the Lost Ark*)

In addition to the titles, many of these episodes deepen references to the American media throughout the stories. *De Volta para o Futuro do Passado*, for example, builds many references to *Back to the Future* (1985). As in the film, in the cartoon the protagonist Jorel's brother travels to the past in a time machine and ends up helping his father to approach his mother and to create the courage to declare his love for her. The episode *Em Busca de Liberdade*, on the other hand, dialogues with the film *Thelma and Louise* (1991). In the cartoon, the two grandmas of the protagonist, Gigi and Juju, decide to travel by car and take Jorel's brother with them. During the trip – with the family's Volkswagen Beetle, similar to Herbie, a Disney movie character dating back to the 1960s and 1980s – the grandmothers wear scarves around their necks, go through challenging situations at a gas station and wonder about life, just like the protagonists of the film. In the cartoon these elements acquire comic aspects and new meanings. The scarves on their neck, for example, gain importance because Granny Gigi claims that this ornament “is the secret to happiness” (Figure 6).



FIGURE 6 – Granny Gigi driving a Beetle similar to Herbie, on the left. The car appears in many episodes. On the right, the grandmas and Jorel's brother inside the vehicle, with scarves on their necks

Source: Cartoon Network

Finally, there is a series of references to products and situations of American media culture that are not always the central theme, but they give expressive elements to the stories. Scenes from thriller movies, characters resembling rock band members and elements of video games such as Super Mario Bros. appear in almost every episode. There are also references to media cultures beyond that of the United States, as it is the case of the frequent presence of elements



## They grew up so fast

that resemble anime, but these occur in a smaller quantity, although they also reinforce the international potential given to this cartoon.

### FINAL REMARKS

The universe of cartoons is undergoing a major transformation in the Brazilian media scene. The increasingly effervescent presence of Brazilian cartoon/s on television makes explicit the maturation of the sector, but also reflects a large number of phenomena that go beyond the limits of the animation market. In this sense, although the Brazilian regulations promote part of the national production of cartoons, especially through the Law of Pay TV, the law *per se* would be incapable of making the cartoons systematically occupy the different television programmings. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account, in particular: 1) the strong presence of international media conglomerates working mainly in pay-television; 2) the need for these conglomerates to adapt their content to local legislation and spectatoriality through their different channels, and 3) the characteristics of the Brazilian open television, which for various reasons left gaps in relation to children's shows in its programming.

This article focuses on the first two perspectives to highlight the fundamental role of transnational channels in the consolidation of Brazilian cartoons. With a concentrated look on Cartoon Network Brazil, it was possible to understand that, as a consolidation strategy, this channel has been gradually developing elements for the maintenance of a global brand, capable of being recognized internationally, but maintaining specific traits to adapt to the different places in which it operates. Instead of being perceived as an element of pasteurization of global contents, it seems more productive to consider this as a complex phenomenon, fruit of an increasingly connected and dialogical media world that considers markets from their specificities, without disregarding the economic and political aspects that suit it.

The irreverent, ironic and self-referential identity of the Cartoon Network, in its turn, is greatly strengthened by the cartoon *Jorel's Brother*, one of its main Brazilian (and Latin American) showcases. This cartoon mixes local and international elements constructed in a mediatic way, but to do so it treats the Brazilian audience differently from other audiences. On the one hand, the cartoon reinforces, through the characterization of characters, elements that are particularly recognizable by the Brazilian audience. On the other hand, it inserts more universalized elements within the narratives, potentially recognizable beyond the place where it is developed. In most cases, these elements integrate the media culture spread from what is hegemonically produced in the United



States, although they gain different comic contours and also new meanings. With that, *Jorel's brother* can be understood as a reflection of the very condition that the cartoon occupies on Cartoon Network: it is defined as a product produced in a specific location, with characteristics linked to this place, and in strong dialogue with international elements, prepared with a view to diverse audiences. However, this is not any audience, but the one that Cartoon Network understands as international, eventually revealing a rather self-centered look. The transnational, for Cartoon Network, maintains close links with recognizable content in and by the US media. But by introducing new meanings to foreign elements and evoking other characteristics linked to its location, the cartoon *Jorel's brother* constructs a complex ambiguous framework that problematizes this hegemonic center, at the same time.

## REFERENCES

- Associação Brasil Audiovisual Independente. (2015, March 9). Irmão Jorel é o desenho mais visto do Cartoon em 2014. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/t99AZw>
- Associação Brasileira de TV por Assinatura (2019). *Sector Data*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2UNil7U>
- Chalaby, J. (2002). Transnational television in Europe: The role of Pan-Europeans Channels. *European Journal of Communication*, 17(2), 183-203. doi: 10.1177 / 0267323102017002692
- Chalaby, J. (2009). *Transnational television in Europe: Reconfiguring global communication networks*. London, UK: IB Tauris.
- Chris, C. (2002). All documentary, all the time? Discovery Communications Inc. and trends in cable television. *Television & New Media*, 3(7), 7-28.
- Confira o ranking dos 20 canais mais vistos na tv paga em 2016. (2017, January 5). *O universo da TV*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/8FS81a>
- Coutinho, I. & Mata, J. (2010). Uma programação para chamar de sua: Televisão, narrativa e participação popular. *Contemporânea*, 8(2), 1-19. doi: 10.9771/1809-9386contemporanea.v8i2.4788
- Expedia. (2019). *Parque Aquático Cartoon Network Amazone na Tailândia*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2y1VLyp>
- Gatti Junior, W. & Marietto, M. L. (2017). Como pode um peixe vivo viver fora do Brasil? O caso *Peixonauta*. *Revista Ibero-Americana de Estratégia*, 16(4), 110-116. doi: 10.5585/riae.v16i4.2512
- Holzbach, A. (2016). *A invenção do videoclipe: A história por trás da consolidação de um gênero audiovisual*. Curitiba, PR: Appris.



- Jambeiro, O. (2001). *A TV no Brasil do século XXI*. Salvador, BA: Edufba.
- Jaramillo, D. (2002). The Family Racket: AOL Time Warner, HBO, The Sopranos, and the Construction of a Quality Brand. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 26(1), 59-75. doi: 10.1177/0196859902026001005
- Latin American Multichannel Advertising Council. (2018). *As métricas da TV por assinatura*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/Ahd63h>
- Lopes, M. I. V. (2003). Telenovela brasileira: Uma narrativa sobre a nação. *Comunicação & Educação*, 1(26), 17-34. doi: 10.11606/issn.2316-9125.v0i26p17-34
- Lopes, M. I. V. (2009). Telenovela como recurso comunicativo. *Matrizes*, 3(1), 21-47. doi: 10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v3i1p21-47
- Lopes, M. I. V. (2010a). Ficção televisiva e identidade cultural da nação. *Revista Alceu*, 10(20), 5-15. Retrieved from [http://revistaalceu.com.puc-rio.br/media/Alceu20\\_Lopes.pdf](http://revistaalceu.com.puc-rio.br/media/Alceu20_Lopes.pdf)
- Lopes, M. I. V. (2010b). A telenovela como narrativa da nação: Para uma experiência metodológica em comunidade virtual. *Signo Y Pensamiento*, 2(57), 130-141. Retrieved from <http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/signo/v29n57/v29n57a09.pdf>
- Mittell, J. (2004). *Genre and television: From cops to cartoons in American culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Morisawa, M. (2001). Carlos Tureta: A voz do Cartoon Network. *Isto é Gente*, 105. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/8cNh9p>
- Ribeiro, A. P. G., Sacramento, I., & Roxo, M. (Eds.). (2010). *História da TV no Brasil: Do início aos dias de hoje*. São Paulo, SP: Contexto.
- Sabino, R. (2017, July 17). Desenhos animados brasileiros fazem sucesso na televisão. *Correio Braziliense*. Retrieved from <https://goo.gl/9iZ5zC>
- Sandler, K. (2003). Synergy nirvana: Brand equity, television animation, and Cartoon Network. In C. Stabile & M. Harrison, *Prime Time Animation: Television animation and American culture* (pp. 89-109). London, UK: Routledge.
- Silva, F. M. (2009). Talk Show: Um gênero televisivo entre o jornalismo e o entretenimento. *E-Compós*, 12(1), 1-16. doi: 10.30962/ec.v12i1.289
- Silva, F. M. (2010). Apontamentos para uma história cultural dos talk shows brasileiros. *Em Questão*, 16(2), 119-133. Retrieved from <https://seer.ufrgs.br/EmQuestao/article/view/16027/10444>
- Silva, F. M. (2013). Marcos históricos do talk show no Brasil: Uma análise dos programas *Globo Gente* e *Jô Soares Onze e Meia*. *Galáxia*, 25, 123-134. Retrieved from <https://revistas.pucsp.br/galaxia/article/view/10279/11390>

Souza, J. C. A. (2015). *Gêneros e formatos na televisão brasileira*. São Paulo, SP: Summus.

Waisbord, S. (2004). McTV: Understanding the global popularity of television formats. *Television & New Media*, 5(4), 359-383. doi: 10.1177/1527476404268922

Zelizer, B. (1992). CNN, the Gulf War, and journalistic practice. *Journal of Communication*, 42(1), 66-81. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00769.x

---

Article received on June 11, 2018 and approved on March 22, 2019.