

MATRIZes

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DOSSIER:

*New Perspectives on
Communication Theories*

John B. Thompson

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Florence Dravet

Luíza Alvim

INTERVIEW:

Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes

Contents

- 3 EDITORIAL
**Artificial Intelligence, human intelligence
and communication research**

MARIA IGNES CARLOS MAGNO
RICHARD ROMANCINI

DOSSIER

- 11 **The future of books** [AVAILABLE ONLY IN PORTUGUESE]
JOHN B. THOMPSON
- 21 **Adaptation as expanded fiction in contemporary series**
MARCIO SERELLE
- 37 **In media(tization) studies we love metaphors**
CARLOS A. SCOLARI
- 57 **Imagery of abortion and medial communication**
FLORENCE DRAVET
- 77 **Cinema Novo and 20th century avant-garde music**
LUÍZA ALVIM

INTERVIEW

- 103 **Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes and the 30 years
of Center for Telenovela Studies at USP:
a journey narrated by teleficcion**

MARCEL ANTONIO VERRUMO
LOURDES ANA PEREIRA SILVA
RENATA PINHEIRO LOYOLA

AGENDA IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

- 115 **Notes on the role of immersive sound
in contemporary cinema**
RODRIGO CARREIRO
- 141 **Gender inequalities in the scientific subfield
of communication: the glass ceiling in the backyard**
MILENA FREIRE DE OLIVEIRA-CRUZ
LAURA WOTTRICH

- 165 **Theorizing with Grounded Theory:
a methodological pathway for communication research**
FRANCISCO LEITE
- 193 **Logics of the propagation of information and
disinformation in the context of the covid-19 pandemic:
a semiotic approach**
CONRADO MOREIRA MENDES
GEANE CARVALHO ALZAMORA
- 223 **Disputes and impasses in the media representations
of skateboarder Rayssa Leal**
CLAUDIA DA SILVA PEREIRA
- 251 **Memories, metaphores and imagination
in oral life story narratives**
BARBARA HELLER
TERESA CRISTINA DA COSTA NEVES
PRISCILA FERREIRA PERAZZO
ANA PAULA GOULART
- 269 **From statistics to data: orderings of life in cities**
ADRIANA LIMA DE OLIVEIRA
LUCAS DE VASCONCELOS TEIXEIRA
TÂNIA MÁRCIA CEZAR HOFF
- REVIEW 291 **Communication and narrative theories**
LARISSA CONCEIÇÃO DOS SANTOS

Artificial Intelligence, human intelligence and communication research

The digital revolution has had a major impact on media and its many formats. Before the rise of the internet and electronic devices, most information and content were transmitted through traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television. However, with the popularization of the internet and mobile devices, new media formats have emerged, transforming the way people consume information and entertainment.

One of the biggest changes was the transition from physical to digital. Newspapers and magazines now have online versions, which can be accessed through computers, tablets and smartphones. This has allowed these media outlets to reach a larger and more diverse audience, in addition to allowing news and content to be updated in real time. ...

In short, the digital revolution has significantly changed media formats, allowing people to consume information and entertainment in new and different ways. This has changed the way companies and individuals communicate, connect and relate.

THE THREE PARAGRAPHS that introduce this **Editorial** are what the artificial intelligence (AI) program ChatGPT returns when asked to “Discuss about changes in media formats and due to the digital revolution.” These fragments are convenient to begin this issue of **MATRIZes** for two reasons.

First, because they provocatively suggest issues that the academic world and scientific publishing should face in the coming years, among them: can AI be a co-author of scientific articles – something accepted and already practiced by some (Curtis & ChatGPT, 2023), but denied or criticized by others

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(Holden Thorp, 2023; Stokel-Walker, 2023)? Will AI be able to act as a kind of research assistant “in a variety of tasks, including data analysis, literature reviews, and even writing research papers” (Marchandot et al., 2023, para. 2)? Will AI be able to assist scientific editors in proofreading, elaborating better metadata for published works, favoring the dissemination of research (Lund et al. 2023) or even in article evaluations and decisions about what to edit (van Dis et al., 2023)?

Alongside controversial or promising issues related to AI in academic science, publishing, and education, clearly problematic and negative aspects exist, such as the possible harms to scientific transparency (“Tools Such,” 2013), the bias of this activity (van Dis et al., 2023), and the inaccurate way current chatbots reference sources (Chen, 2023). This technology can also be used in misconduct practices, such as plagiarism – a topic of concern for educators, in particular (de Vries, 2023), as this will affect the training of students and new researchers. This may even involve curricular changes, given a need that seems to impose itself for an “AI literacy” (Anders, 2023).

One thus observes that AI will have significant impacts on society in general and, in particular, science. At the moment, the social transformations arising from technologies of this type are only glimpsed. Therefore, they pose a series of research questions, as noted by Quintans-Júnior and colleagues (2023) and van Dis and colleagues (2023): who would be responsible for regulating the use of chatbots in science, how would this be done and with what criteria?; How could this action favor equity in research, avoiding risks of accentuating inequalities, as well as relating to the principles of open science? Questions like these may form new lines of research.

Communication can make relevant contributions to this scientific effort. In fact, AI and human intelligence should not be seen as independent, since the former is a product of the latter, so that a constant affirmation of theory and research in communication gains prominence: the social meaning of cultural products is elaborated from uses and appropriations – in a given context of mediations – not always predictable. Understanding and giving ethical and humanistic direction to the practices and research that involve AI will require reflection and investigation. **MATRIZes**, which has already had the satisfaction of collaborating with discussions of the theme, in an article by Pierre Lévy (2022), hopes to continue to receive and publish studies that deepen the understanding of the subject.

At the same time, AI is not a panacea, because, as noted by Quintans-Júnior and colleagues (2023, para. 2), “its resources are valuable in science, but they cannot replace the researcher’s critical and reflective thinking, or their ability

to interpret results ChatGPT relies on pre-existing content and lacks the analytical capabilities of humans”. From this motto, one can reach conclusions about the first point regarding the observations made by the AI that open this **Editorial**, noting that the text generated, although not incorrect or devoid of meaning, is, to some extent, banal and lacking novelty. At the moment, this seems to be the limit of this type of technology when it comes to intellectual creations that require a more rigorous approach.

Quite the contrary. And so we move on to the second aspect about this quote. The text that opens this issue of the journal, **The Future of Books**, by John B. Thompson, has as a background a questioning similar to what was done to ChatGPT. However, a researcher who uses human intelligence and their theoretical and methodological wit of a mature investigator achieves, of course, better results: new knowledge, innovative knowledge, even counterintuitive pieces of knowledge. Thus, the author’s data and discussions show that, despite the disruptive potential of the digital revolution, the book publishing industry has done remarkably well, including the “old-fashioned” print book sector.

The **Dossier** section of this issue continues with the article **Adaptation as Expanded Fiction in Contemporary Series**, by Marcio Serelle, which discusses how contemporary serial fiction makes adaptations that bear new characteristics, which bring it closer to contemporary sensibilities and conditions of reception. **In Media(tization) Studies we Love Metaphors**, by Carlos A. Scolari, addresses the metaphors and models used in the long history of mass communication studies, discussing the risks and benefits of metaphorical arguments in a type discussion also related to human creativity and innovative reflections.

Addressing a burning social issue, the next text of the section, **Imagery of Abortion and Medial Communication**, by Florence Dravet, chooses to discuss the theme from a different lens, that is, abortion as an aesthetic experience in which a flow of medial communication is interrupted, allowing the author to show how mediality takes place in the female body. Closing the **Dossier** of this issue, the article **Cinema Novo and 20th Century Avant-Garde Music**, by Luíza Alvim, maps and discusses the use of avant-garde music in films by Brazilian filmmakers Glauber Rocha, Walter Lima Júnior and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, pointing out the role of phonographic production of the time for the choice of this type of sound.

Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes and the 30 Years of Center for Telenovela Studies at USP: A Journey Narrated by Teleficcion is the title of the **Interview** conducted by Marcel Antonio Verrumo, Lourdes Ana Pereira Silva and Renata Pinheiro Loyola. In it, the researcher recalls the trajectory of

the creation of the first center for the study of *telenovelas* in Brazil, the CPTV, in 1992, discussing the mishaps and achievements related to the constitution of the collection and research on the subject. She also recalls the intertwining between her personal history, marked by a strong interest in the object, and academic trajectory, as a researcher who has sought to investigate and theorize the subject for decades.

The **Agenda** section opens with the article **Notes on the Role of Immersive Sound in Contemporary Cinema** by Rodrigo Carrero, which conducts a conceptual review of the idea of immersion in cinema, describing and discussing some of the main stylistic tools used by sound designers to build or reinforce the sense of sensory immersion through sound. Next, Milena Freire de Oliveira-Cruz and Laura Wottrich, in the article **Gender Inequalities in the Scientific Subfield of Communication: The Glass Ceiling in the Backyard**, start from a mapping of Graduate Programs in Communication, Research Productivity Grants and scientific entities and journals to address gender inequalities in the scientific subfield of communication in Brazil, suggesting the existence of the *glass ceiling*, which has also been identified in other research areas. In **Theorizing with Grounded Theory: A Methodological Pathway for Communication Research**, Francisco Leite discusses the methodological guidelines of grounded theory, emphasizing the potential it offers for the edification of *communication* research.

In the subsequent texts, Conrado Moreira Mendes and Geane Carvalho Alzamora, in the article **Logics of the Propagation of Information and Disinformation in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Semiotic Approach**, present the results of a research on the dynamics of propagation and construction of meaning of texts in the context of the COVID-19, pandemic, whereas Cláudia da Silva Pereira, in **Disputes and Impasses in the Media Representations of Skateboarder Rayssa Leal**, conducts an interpretive content analysis of journalistic articles about skateboarder Rayssa Leal before, during and after the 2020 Olympics, discussing the process of subjectivation that is established through representations.

Life stories, memories, subjectivities and imagination are aspects discussed in the following work of the section: **Memories, Metaphores and Imagination in Oral Life Story Narratives**, authored by Barbara Heller, Teresa Cristina da Costa Neves, Priscila Ferreira Perazzo and Ana Paula Goulart. In the article, the authors discuss the imaginative character of narratives of life stories, combining theoretical review and case study, considering mental images as media that convey memories. The article **From Statistics to Data: Orderings of Life in Cities**, by Adriana Lima de Oliveira, Lucas de Vasconcelos Teixeira and Tânia Márcia Cesar Holf, addresses issues related to cities, consumption and ways of life, discussing the

transformations of the ordering of consumption from the changes that took place in the shift from the modern city to the postmodern one.

The **Book Review** section that closes this issue of **MATRIZes** is composed of **Communication and Narrative Theories**, by Larissa Conceição dos Santos, in which she presents the book *Diccionario de Teorías Narrativas 2: Narratología, Cine, Videojuegos, Medios*, edited and organized by the Spanish Lorenzo Vilches Manterola, whose entries bring to light not only fundamental concepts of contemporary narrative theories, but also applications and methodologies that suggest dialogue with communication studies.

We conclude this **Editorial** wishing that a human reader appreciates this issue and that they use their specific intelligence, capable of generating new reflections and knowledge. ■

*Maria Ines Carlos Magno
Richard Romancini*

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DOSSIER

News Perspectives on Communication Theories



O futuro dos livros

The future of books

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RESUMO

A revolução digital teve, e continua tendo, um impacto dramático em muitos setores da mídia e indústria criativa, mas qual é seu impacto na nossa mais antiga indústria midiática – o mercado editorial? No início dos anos 2000, muitos observadores ponderaram que o livro impresso seria eclipsado por livros eletrônicos e outras formas de entrega de conteúdo digital, assim como o vinil fora substituído pelo *download* digital e serviços de *streaming*. Thompson, no entanto, mostra que o livro impresso provou ser mais resiliente do que muitos comentaristas assumiram, argumentando que as consequências mais importantes da revolução digital para o mercado editorial devem ser buscadas alhures.

Palavras-chave: Livros, editoração, revolução digital, livro digital, Amazon

ABSTRACT

The digital revolution has had, and continues to have, a dramatic impact on many sectors of the media and creative industries, but what impact has it had on the oldest of our media industries – the book publishing industry? In the early 2000s, many observers thought it likely that the print-on-paper book would be eclipsed by ebooks and other forms of digital content delivery, just as the vinyl LP was displaced by digital downloads and streaming services. However, Thompson shows that the print-on-paper book has proven to be much more resilient than many commentators assumed, and he argues that the most important consequences of the digital revolution for the book publishing industry lay elsewhere.

Keywords: Books, publishing, digital revolution, ebooks, Amazon

^a John B. Thompson é Professor Emérito de Sociologia na University of Cambridge e Membro Emérito do Jesus College. O material para este artigo foi retirado de seu livro *Book Wars: The Digital Revolution in Publishing* (Cambridge: Polity, 2021).

D

O futuro dos livros

NESTA ERA DE *smartphones*, *tablets*, videoconferências e da internet, temos plena consciência de que muitos dos meios de comunicação tradicionais, outrora tidos como certos, têm estado sob crescente pressão de novas formas de comunicação e novos padrões de uso da mídia. Muitos jornais foram forçados a fechar as portas, e aqueles que sobreviveram tiveram que reduzir o tamanho de seu jornal impresso e demitir alguns de seus funcionários, já que a combinação de circulação reduzida e perda de receita publicitária levou a um sangramento do seu valor na indústria. Da mesma forma, a indústria da música foi virada de cabeça para baixo na década de 1990 e início dos anos 2000, quando CDs e discos de vinil foram rapidamente ofuscados por downloads digitais e serviços de *streaming* como o Spotify. À medida que essas mudanças se firmaram, a indústria da música experimentou um colapso dramático de sua receita na primeira década do século XXI, com a queda de mais da metade do faturamento total das vendas de música gravada nos EUA. O disco de vinil fez um retorno modesto nos últimos anos, mas agora representa apenas uma pequena fração do faturamento total da indústria da música.

Não há dúvida de que a revolução digital teve, e continua a ter, um impacto dramático em muitos setores da mídia e das indústrias criativas, mas que impacto ela teve na mais antiga de nossas indústrias de mídia – a indústria editorial de livros? O livro impresso existe há mais de cinco séculos, desde que Johann Gutenberg começou a experimentar com uma prensa de tipos móveis, por volta de 1440. Desde então, os livros passaram a desempenhar um papel fundamental na criação, acumulação e transmissão de conhecimento, especialmente nas ciências humanas e sociais, e enriqueceram nossas vidas sociais, culturais e políticas de inúmeras maneiras. Apesar das muitas mudanças nas formas como os livros são impressos e vendidos desde que o mercado do livro surgiu pela primeira vez na Europa do século XV, o seu formato básico permaneceu praticamente inalterado: persistiu ao longo dos séculos como um objeto físico no qual a tinta é impressa em papel e as páginas são unidas para formar o livro. Mas, seria ainda esse o caso na era digital? Será que o livro impresso sofrerá o mesmo destino dos discos de vinil? Afinal, o conteúdo textual dos livros é tão facilmente digitalizado quanto a música, e o livro físico pode perder espaço para formas mais baratas e eficientes de entregar o conteúdo. E, se isso acontecer, o que significaria para nossa cultura e para nossas práticas de produção e troca de conhecimento?

Como sociólogo que trabalha em organizações de mídia, essas são questões que me interessavam desde o início dos anos 2000, quando comecei a trabalhar nas estruturas em transformação da indústria editorial de livros. No início dos anos 2000, muitas das pessoas que trabalhavam na indústria editorial de livros olhavam ansiosamente para o que estava acontecendo na indústria da

música e questionavam se a mesma coisa aconteceria com elas: seria a música um anúncio do futuro dos livros? Seus medos começaram a se materializar em novembro de 2007, quando a Amazon lançou o Kindle. O Kindle não foi de forma alguma o primeiro dispositivo de leitura digital – havia muitos antes disso. Mas o Kindle estava em um patamar diferente. Não só foi um dispositivo de leitura excepcionalmente bem projetado, com tecnologia de e-ink (em vez de telas retroiluminadas) e conectividade 3G sem fio para que os leitores pudessem baixar ebooks diretamente da loja Kindle da Amazon, como também deu aos leitores acesso a uma gama muito maior de ebooks a preços muito atraentes, incluindo muitos *best-sellers* do *New York Times* e outros novos lançamentos a US \$ 9,99. Em 2008, as vendas de e-books decolaram nos EUA e, para muitos, este parecia ser o momento iPod da indústria editorial de livros. O crescimento nas vendas de e-books nos anos imediatamente após a introdução do Kindle foi mais dramático do que qualquer coisa que a indústria editorial de livros tenha visto em sua longa história de 500 anos. Em 2012, os e-books estavam respondendo por cerca de 25% da receita de muitas editoras comerciais nos EUA, e o crescimento parecia estar em um caminho ascendente. Para muitas pessoas que trabalhavam na indústria editorial na época e para muitos observadores externos, parecia que este era o começo do fim para o antiquado livro impresso em papel.

Mas então algo igualmente dramático aconteceu: o crescimento de repente parou. Ninguém esperava isso: para a maioria dos observadores, essa súbita reversão da sorte foi uma surpresa completa. Em 2013 e 2014, as vendas de e-books nos EUA se estabilizaram e depois começaram a diminuir; em 2018, os e-books representavam cerca de 15% do total de vendas comerciais dos EUA – bem abaixo de onde estavam apenas cinco anos antes. O padrão foi bem semelhante no Reino Unido, embora houvesse um intervalo de tempo de um ano ou dois, e os e-books nunca atingiram os mesmos níveis que atingiram nos EUA. Como explicar essa inversão? Por que os e-books não continuaram a crescer e a se desenvolver da mesma forma que os downloads digitais e os serviços de *streaming* na indústria da música, e por que os livros impressos se mostraram mais resilientes do que muitos pensavam e temiam?

Antes de responder a esta pergunta, temos de ver que o quadro não é tão simples como os números que acabei de fornecer podem sugerir. As porcentagens médias escondem uma grande variação na medida em que diferentes tipos de livros mudaram para formatos digitais. Ao olhar mais de perto, vemos que alguns tipos de livros, especialmente ficção de gêneros, como romance, mistério e ficção científica, na verdade migraram bastante para formatos digitais: para muitas dessas categorias, os e-books estavam respondendo por cerca de 40-50% das vendas até 2014, e essa porcentagem não caiu muito desde então.

D

O futuro dos livros

Mas para outras categorias de livros, incluindo muitos de não ficção, como história e biografias, os e-books representaram uma porcentagem muito menor das vendas gerais. E em algumas categorias, como livros infantis, livros de viagens e livros de receitas, os e-books nunca decolaram.

Existem vários fatores que ajudam a explicar por que a transição de livros impressos para ebooks tem sido muito mais limitada e mais errática do que a transição para formatos digitais na indústria da música. Em primeiro lugar, a indústria da música e o mercado do livro lidam com diferentes tipos de bens simbólicos. Na indústria da música, o álbum sempre foi um produto um tanto artificial. Em geral, era uma coleção de músicas diferentes, agrupadas e vendidas como um único álbum, mas do ponto de vista do ouvinte, nem todas essas músicas eram de igual valor. Para os consumidores, não era uma experiência incomum comprar um álbum por conta de uma ou duas músicas que você realmente gostava para depois descobrir que o resto do álbum estava cheio de outras dez ou doze músicas que não faziam nada por você. Uma das grandes inovações da iTunes Store da Apple é que ela desempacotou o álbum e vendia músicas individuais por US\$ 0,99: agora você não era mais obrigado a adquirir as outras dez ou doze músicas que você nunca quis ouvir. Isso era extremamente atraente para os consumidores, que agora podiam construir suas próprias listas de reprodução sem ter que ouvir uma série de músicas indesejadas. Porém, na indústria editorial de livros, a desagregação nunca teria o mesmo tipo de apelo, simplesmente porque a maioria dos livros não são coleções arbitrárias de capítulos, mas sim textos integrados em que um capítulo segue outro em uma sequência estruturada à medida que a narrativa ou o enredo se desenrola. Não faria sentido comprar um capítulo de um romance de Agatha Christie e descartar o resto.

Talvez, o mais importante é que havia mais desvantagens para os leitores de livros na mudança do impresso para o digital do que para os ouvintes de música, na mudança do analógico para o digital. Ouvir discos de vinil requer um tocador específico e dá ao ouvinte muito pouca flexibilidade; Os discos riscam facilmente, eles não podem ser ouvidos em movimento, e você não pode facilmente pular as faixas que você não quer ouvir. Os CDs dão ao ouvinte alta fidelidade e maior flexibilidade e mobilidade, e os downloads digitais dão ao ouvinte ainda mais flexibilidade e mobilidade, além de permitir que o álbum seja desagregado para que as músicas possam ser compradas à parte ou ouvidas através de um serviço de *streaming* como o Spotify – em suma, a transição para a música digital trouxe muitas vantagens para o ouvinte com pouquíssimas desvantagens. No caso dos livros, no entanto, a situação era muito menos clara. A leitura de textos de formato longo em uma tela, sem dúvida, trouxe algumas vantagens – os livros podem

ser comprados facilmente e baixados rapidamente, o preço é geralmente menor, o tamanho das letras pode ser ajustado para se adequar ao leitor, muitos livros podem ser transportados em um único dispositivo, etc. Mas, também trouxe algumas desvantagens para muitos leitores, sendo a mais significativa delas o fato de que a experiência de ler textos longos em uma tela não é tão boa quanto a experiência de lê-los na página impressa. Essa desvantagem pode ter sido menos pronunciada para os leitores de romance comercial, mas para muitos leitores de romance literário e de não ficção – e especialmente de livros que exigiam muita concentração, livros que eram ilustrados e livros que são usados como obras de referência – havia vantagens claras em ler na página impressa em vez de uma tela: é mais fácil para os olhos, é mais fácil mover-se para frente e para trás no texto ou mergulhar em um determinado lugar por uma determinada razão, e há um certo prazer – tátil e estético – envolvido na leitura de um livro impresso que é bem projetado e bem produzido. É claro que algumas dessas vantagens visíveis podem estar enraizadas no costume e no hábito: indivíduos acostumados a ler livros de uma certa maneira podem achar difícil mudar, e as novas gerações podem estar menos presas aos costumes e práticas daqueles que cresceram com o livro impresso. Mas também é provável que a notável resiliência do livro impresso decorra em parte pelas vantagens e benefícios muito reais que derivam da leitura em livros impressos. O livro impresso é um excelente dispositivo de leitura que permite uma experiência de alta qualidade – melhor, aos olhos de muitos, do que a experiência de ler texto de formato longo em uma tela – e um objeto cultural esteticamente agradável que é valorizado por si só, como algo a ser manuseado, admirado e apreciado. Qualquer que fosse o valor que o disco de vinil tivesse (sem dúvida, também tem um valor estético, com o design da capa se tornando uma forma de arte em si), o saldo de vantagens e desvantagens no caso da música pesou muito a favor da transição para o digital; ao passo que, no caso dos livros, os prós e contras eram muito mais equilibrados e, para alguns tipos de livros, pesavam a favor da impressão.

Há um fator relacionado que é relevante aqui: o que eu chamo de “valor de posse” dos livros. O que quero dizer com isso é que alguns livros são objetos que um indivíduo quer não apenas para ler, mas também para ter, colocar em sua prateleira ou em sua estante, para que possa retornar em um momento posterior no tempo, compartilhar com os outros, talvez presentear, ou até exibir em sua sala de estar ou estudo como um signifiante, um objeto simbólico representativo do gosto e dos valores de seu dono (ou representativo do que os donos gostariam que os outros pensassem que são seus gostos e valores). Como objetos culturais que têm certos traços estéticos valorizados – uma bela capa, um interior bem projetado, uma materialidade sensual – os livros impressos são valorizados tanto

D

O futuro dos livros

por seu conteúdo quanto pela forma material através do qual esse conteúdo é transmitido. Os e-books carecem desses traços estéticos e dos direitos de propriedade que fazem parte do valor de posse do livro impresso. Quando compramos um livro impresso, podemos fazer com ele o que quisermos (ler, exibir, compartilhar, doar, até mesmo revender), enquanto quando compramos um e-book, o licenciamos e as condições de licenciamento normalmente restringem o que podemos fazer com o conteúdo (por exemplo, o número limitado de dispositivos para acessar, não permite compartilhamento, etc.). Assim, possuir um livro como um objeto físico tem benefícios e vantagens reais. A música também tem valor de posse, mas de uma maneira diferente. Os indivíduos têm suas coleções musicais, seja na forma de sua biblioteca do iTunes ou de suas coleções de CDs ou discos de vinil, mas CDs e LPs não são exibidos da mesma maneira que os livros, e música pode ser facilmente compartilhada ou dada como presentes em formatos digitais (por exemplo, como CDs). Além disso, à medida que os serviços de *streaming* de música como Spotify e Apple Music se tornam mais populares, ter o acesso pode, para muitos ouvintes, estar se tornando mais importante do que a posse: possuir música pode valer menos do que ter acesso contínuo sob demanda a ela. O fato de os livros impressos serem objetos culturais que muitas pessoas querem possuir, manter, exibir, compartilhar e dar aos outros – ou seja, eles têm um alto valor de posse – tem, com toda a probabilidade, contribuído para a resiliência do livro impresso.

Esses vários fatores explicam por que os acontecimentos se deram de forma tão diferente na indústria editorial de livros em comparação com a indústria da música, apesar dos medos daqueles na indústria editorial que pensavam que teriam o mesmo destino da indústria da música. Isso deixa claro o porquê de ser tão perigoso e potencialmente enganoso aceitar que o que acontece em um setor da mídia e das indústrias criativas sirva como um guia do que acontecerá em outros. É comum pensar que a mudança tecnológica tem uma certa inevitabilidade sobre ela, e que as novas tecnologias, em virtude de suas características intrínsecas, acabarão prevalecendo, mas isso está longe de ser verdade; a história da tecnologia está repleta de invenções que falharam. A mudança tecnológica sempre fez parte de um contexto social muito mais amplo e complexo, no qual muitos outros fatores estão em jogo, desde os objetivos e interesses dos empresários e organizações até os hábitos e gostos dos consumidores; generalizar de um setor da mídia e das indústrias criativas para outro ignora essa complexidade. Se quisermos entender o impacto das novas tecnologias em uma indústria como a de publicação de livros – e de qualquer indústria, midiática ou não – temos que mergulhar na complexidade dessa indústria e olhar cuidadosamente para as instituições sociais e práticas que são específicas a ela.

Esses fatores também sugerem que a forma como as coisas evoluem na indústria editorial de livros nos próximos anos pode ser bastante diferente da maneira como as coisas têm ido na indústria da música e em outros setores da mídia e indústrias criativas. É claro que prever o futuro é um jogo de azar: o futuro é incognoscível, e simplesmente não sabemos e não temos como saber como as coisas evoluirão nos próximos anos. Mas podemos refletir sobre os padrões dos últimos anos e extrapolar a partir deles, embora mesmo assim devamos reconhecer que essas extrapolações nunca serão mais do que um palpite informado. Com base em padrões recentes, minha opinião é que o futuro da publicação de livros, pelo menos nos próximos anos, não será uma mudança unidirecional do impresso para o digital, mas sim uma economia mista de impresso e digital. O que provavelmente veremos no mundo dos livros é uma *cultura de coexistência entre o impresso e o digital*: os livros na era digital prosperarão em uma cultura híbrida em que a impressão e o digital coexistem lado a lado, em vez de um ofuscar o outro, e as proporções de vendas contabilizadas pelo impresso e pelo digital devem variar de acordo com o tipo de livro. O melhor é considerar o e-book como apenas mais um formato em que o conteúdo dos livros pode ser fixado e entregue aos leitores – não é diferente, a esse respeito, do livro de bolso, que também foi uma inovação radical quando foi introduzido pela primeira vez por Allen Lane, na década de 1930, mesmo que hoje seja tão comum que não pensemos nele como especial ou de qualquer forma incomum. Assim como o livro de bolso, os e-books encontrarão seu lugar na panóplia de formatos disponíveis para editores e outros criadores produzirem livros que o público possa comprar, emprestar ou, de alguma outra maneira, adquirir para ler. Mas, no futuro próximo, é improvável que eles ofusquem o livro impresso, que provavelmente se manterá como o formato preferido de muitos leitores.

Então, será que isso significa que a indústria editorial de livros não foi afetada pela revolução digital que assolou tantos outros setores da mídia e das indústrias criativas? Não, essa não seria uma conclusão correta, mas se quisermos entender como a indústria editorial de livros está sendo transformada pela revolução digital, precisamos procurar em outro lugar. A revolução digital na publicação nunca foi apenas, nem mesmo principalmente, sobre e-books: os e-books atraíram a atenção de jornalistas e outros comentaristas, mas foram apenas um aspecto de uma série muito mais complexa e variada de transformações que vinha interferindo com o mundo editorial – e que continuam a fazê-lo. Dentre essas transformações, três se destacam como particularmente significativas. Primeiro, houve a ascensão da Amazon e a transformação do varejo no mercado de livros. A Amazon é filha da revolução digital – não teria existido sem a digitalização e a internet. Em um período de tempo surpreendentemente

D

O futuro dos livros

curto, a Amazon cresceu de suas origens humildes como uma pequena startup de tecnologia em uma garagem de Seattle para se tornar a organização mais poderosa que o mundo dos livros já conheceu. Hoje, a Amazon é responsável por cerca de 45% de todas as vendas de livros impressos nos EUA e mais de 75% de todas as vendas de e-books, e para muitas editoras, cerca de metade de suas vendas – em alguns casos, até mais – são representadas por um único cliente, a Amazon. Nunca antes, nos 500 anos de história da publicação de livros, houve um varejista com esse tipo de participação de mercado. E com a participação de mercado vem o poder, incluindo o poder de negociar termos favoráveis com fornecedores e de chamar a atenção dos leitores. É difícil extrapolar o que esse desenvolvimento significa: suas consequências são profundas, não apenas para as editoras e para livreiros que se esforçam para competir com a Amazon, mas também para toda a ecologia do mundo editorial, incluindo os meios pelos quais os livros são visíveis para os leitores e são descobertos por eles.

Uma segunda grande mudança foi a explosão da autopublicação. É claro que a autopublicação não é nova: ela pode ser rastreada até as editoras comerciais que surgiram no início e meados do século XX. Mas a nova era de autopublicação que foi inaugurada pela revolução digital é muito diferente das velhas editoras comerciais. A ideia-chave que sustenta essa nova era é a de que os autores que querem autopublicar seu trabalho não devem ter que pagar pelo privilégio, e as organizações que facilitam a autopublicação não devem ganhar dinheiro cobrando taxas aos autores. Pelo contrário, as organizações ou plataformas de autopublicação devem estar lá para ajudar os autores a publicarem seus trabalhos, e essas plataformas pagariam aos autores se e quando seu trabalho for vendido, recebendo uma comissão sobre as vendas para cobrir seus custos. Foi essa ideia simples, mas fundamental, subvertendo a antiga relação entre autor e organização de autopublicação, que sustentou a explosão na autopublicação que ocorreu a partir do início dos anos 2000, começando com organizações pioneiras como Lulu e Smashwords, e continuando com o estabelecimento das plataformas de autopublicação da Amazon, a CreateSpace e Kindle Direct Publishing, além de muitas outras plataformas e serviços. O mundo da autopublicação é agora um mundo enormemente complicado por si só – um universo paralelo que existe ao lado do mundo da publicação tradicional e que cresceu enormemente nos últimos anos. Além do grande volume de autopublicações, o crescimento deste setor alterou as estruturas tradicionais de poder do mundo editorial. Os editores e agentes já estabelecidos, e que há muito atuam como guardiões no mundo editorial – decidindo quais autores e projetos devem ser publicados e em que termos – agora poderiam ser contornados por caminhos inteiramente novos de publicação que foram

abertos pela revolução digital. É claro que publicar um livro é uma coisa, fazer com que as pessoas conheçam e comprem é outra bem diferente, e as editoras tradicionais continuam a ter muito mais influência de marketing e vendas do que a grande maioria dos autores autopublicados. Mas há muitos autores independentes que conseguiram captar quantias significativas de dinheiro com sua escrita, ainda que esses autores comercialmente independentes e bem-sucedidos continuem a representar uma pequena fração do total. Além das recompensas financeiras, o crescimento da autopublicação aumentou muito a gama de opções disponíveis para os escritores, criando um ambiente de publicação mais variado no qual os autores podem ir e voltar entre a publicação tradicional e a autopublicação, dependendo do que desejam alcançar e das opções disponíveis para eles no momento.

A terceira mudança é, em muitos aspectos, a mais fundamental: a revolução digital ampliou o ambiente de informação e comunicação dentro do qual a publicação existia, criando assim a necessidade e a oportunidade para os editores se adaptarem a um mundo novo de rápida mudança de fluxos de informação e comunicação. Durante séculos, as editoras pensaram em si mesmas mais como empresas B2B: elas produziam livros e os vendiam a intermediários da cadeia de fornecimento de livros – varejistas e atacadistas. As editoras não tinham uma relação direta com os leitores e não sabiam muito sobre eles: o trabalho de lidar com os leitores era deixado para os livreiros. Mas esse modelo tradicional do negócio editorial foi radicalmente interrompido pela revolução digital. À medida que a concorrência da Amazon levou a mais e mais fechamentos de livrarias, as editoras perceberam que não podiam mais contar com livrarias físicas para fazer o que os intermediários da cadeia tradicional de fornecimento de livros sempre fizeram: tornar os livros visíveis e disponíveis aos leitores. Eles perceberam que tinham que abandonar o antigo modelo da editora como um negócio focado no livreiro e se tornar mais centrado no leitor: em outras palavras, eles tinham que reorientar seus negócios de tal forma que os leitores não fossem uma reflexão posterior, mas sim o foco central de suas preocupações. E assim como a revolução digital forçou essa mudança sobre os editores, ela também disponibilizou para eles uma variedade de novas ferramentas com as quais eles poderiam construir canais diretos de comunicação com os leitores, e ainda em grande escala. É essa mudança fundamental no auto-entendimento dos editores que provavelmente será uma das consequências mais significativas da revolução digital na publicação, que continuará a se desenrolar nos próximos anos.

Apesar do potencial disruptivo da revolução digital e da turbulência que caracterizou a indústria editorial de livros desde o início do terceiro milênio, a indústria editorial de livros se saiu notavelmente bem – e muito melhor do que

D

O futuro dos livros

muitos outros setores da mídia e das indústrias criativas. o faturamento de livros não entraram em colapso, os livros impressos não desapareceram e até as livrarias físicas começaram a fazer um retorno modesto; contrariamente às previsões de muitos profetas da desgraça, o apocalipse editorial do livro não se concretizou (ou pelo menos ainda não). Os livros, incluindo os antiquados livros impressos, parecem ter um lugar em nossas vidas do qual não serão facilmente desalojados, nem mesmo por uma revolução tecnológica tão radical e de longo alcance quanto a revolução digital. Mas não há motivos para complacência. A revolução digital criou uma organização que agora exerce um poder sem precedentes no campo editorial, enquanto muitas outras organizações sobrevivem com receitas tão pequenas e margens tão finas que uma mera desaceleração na economia, que dirá um grande *lockdown* ou recessão prolongada, poderia empurrá-las para a insolvência. As vendas de e-books podem ter se estabilizado, mas os e-books nunca foram a essência da revolução digital na publicação: eles eram apenas uma manifestação de uma transformação muito mais profunda que estava ocorrendo em nossas sociedades. Graças à revolução digital, as estruturas de informação e comunicação do nosso mundo estão em fluxo. As pessoas estão se comunicando e gastando seu tempo de forma diferente, velhas práticas que funcionavam bem em uma era anterior podem não ser mais tão eficazes neste novo mundo de fluxos digitalizados de informação e comunicação. Em contraste com aqueles que temem que a cultura da tela esteja destruindo nossa capacidade de concentração, suspeito que a leitura de formato longo continuará a desempenhar um papel vital em nossas vidas sociais, políticas e culturais por muitos anos e décadas vindouras: não desistiremos facilmente da rica exploração de mundos imaginários e da análise sustentada de mundos reais que a leitura de formato longo encoraja e torna possível. Mas se os editores continuarão a fazer parte da cadeia de comunicação através da qual a leitura de formato longo ocorre, que tipo de editores eles serão, e que papel eles desempenharão, em última análise, dependerá de quão eficaz e criativos eles serão para se adaptar ao novo ambiente de informação e comunicação que está sendo forjado pela grande revolução tecnológica do nosso tempo. **M**

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Adaptation as expanded fiction in contemporary series^a

A adaptação como ficção expandida na série contemporânea

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I discuss how contemporary serial fiction has led adaptation to another stage, no longer characterized by plot or characters condensation, but by the expansion of the fictional world. Based on the analysis of the series *The haunting of Bly manor*, created by Mike Flanagan from Henry James' work *The turn of the screw*, I aim at understanding how expanded fiction democratizes the fictional population without breaking the intrigue thread, in dialogue with a contemporary sensibility and reception condition.

Keywords: Adaptation, TV series, *The haunting of Bly manor*, created by Mike Flanagan

RESUMO

Neste artigo, discuto como a ficção seriada contemporânea levou a adaptação a outro estágio, não mais marcado pela contração da trama ou da psicologia das personagens, mas pela expansão do universo ficcional. Por meio da análise da série *A maldição da mansão Bly*, criada por Mike Flanagan a partir de *A outra volta do parafuso*, de Henry James, busco compreender como a ficção expandida democratiza a população ficcional sem romper o fio da intriga, em diálogo com uma sensibilidade e condição de recepção contemporâneas.

Palavras-Chave: Adaptação, ficção seriada audiovisual, *A maldição da mansão Bly*, criada por Mike Flanagan

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“Yet even though we have them’, he returned, still with his hands in his pockets and planted there in front of me, ‘they don’t much count, do they?’”

Miles in *The turn of the screw*, by Henry James

IN THE ESSAY *L’adaptation ou le cinéma comme Digeste* [*Adaptation, or the cinema as digest*], originally published in 1948, André Bazin refutes the then current criticism which argues that the transposition of literature to cinema, by reducing the complexity of novels, always results in artistically inferior works. Bazin, known for his advocacy of the mixed cinema, positions himself, in this text, in favor of condensed adaptation, which, according to him, facilitates the access of the broader public to literary art. This can occur by simplifying the psychology of the characters and actions, but also “[...] because the mode of expression itself, as if the aesthetic fat differently emulsified, were better tolerated by the consumer’s mind”. (Bazin, 2000, p. 26).

This is an essay that, read in the light of the contemporary theory of adaptation, has imprecise notions such as essence or spirit of the work of art, and is too attached to the rhetoric of fidelity. However, the essay has the merit of pointing out the elitism of those who propose the hierarchy between literature and cinema based on cultural effort. “As far as I am concerned, the difficulty of audience assimilation is not a priori criterion of cultural value”. (Bazin, 2000, p. 26). The text also has the virtue of, by breaking with the understanding of the work as a necessarily singular artifact, introducing thinking about extended fictional universes, composed of various arts.

I argue that contemporary audiovisual serial fiction, or at least part of it, leads the adaptation to another circumstance, no longer marked by the condensation of the narrative, but by the expansion of it. If, on the one hand, the immediacy of the audiovisual remains as a means of expression as identified by Bazin (1948), on the other hand, the contemporary poetics of the series, marked, as defined by Jason Mittell (2012, 2015), by the articulation between the episodic and seriality, allows the development of the characters, inventing them life stories that densify perspectives and interiorities, and the democratization of protagonism, in which a secondary character—sometimes only mentioned in literary fiction—becomes worthy of a chapter all of his/her own. The field of events and actions is also expanded.

In this article, I will analyze *The haunting of Bly manor* (2020), by the American *showrunner* Mike Flanagan, adaptation of *The turn of the screw*, a novel by Henry James, originally also published serially in 1898. Although I focus on this series, the intention is that the study of the storytelling contributes to the understanding of the poetics of audiovisual serial fiction and its relationship with literature,

also manifested in works such as *The handmaid's tale*, *My brilliant friend*, *Big little lies*, among other adaptations of novels or novellas made in recent years.

I do not intend, in investigating this expanded fiction, to propose another category of value based on the capillarity of characters and actions. I would like to quote here Italo Calvino (1990) who, in his praise of the speed in literature, in the *Six memos for the next millennium*, pondered that he did not intend to deny the virtues of slowness. Of course, conciseness too, as a counterpoint to expansion, has its relevance. Narratives such as those of Raymond Carver and Ernest Hemingway operate by suppression and, by editing, leave the reader the full weight of an unspoken event¹. The literary strategy of keeping the narrative confined to the first person of a character has its specific effects, which can, for example, establish ambiguities in a story whose narrator is implicated in the events he/she tells, undermine the positivity of an objective reality, or even provoke affective adherence.

One critic distinguished, in the use of this feature in *The turn of the screw*, narrated in the first person by the unnamed *au pair*, the trait of modern experimentation:

Perception itself, as we are led to understand thanks to the exclusive emphasis on the housekeeper's point of view, has a persuasive power that ultimately determines the action; and, in demonstrating the truth that one way of seeing can eventually become infectious, *The Turn of the Screw* evokes other disturbing narratives, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (1835) and "The Construction" (1924), an allegory of Kafka. It is a characteristically modern experiment that shows how much the narrative depends on the point of view. (Bromwich, 2011, p. 165).

If the expansion of the plot and the pluripersonal aspect do not constitute unquestionable values, the resources hinder, on what refers to complex audiovisual series, the critical argument of condensation and simplification. The artifice, being an industrial and formulaic form, heir to the 19th century serialization and television narratives of the 20th century, lies in expanding the fictional population without sacrificing the thread of intrigue. I am interested in exploring here the poetics of this expanded and complex form and how it is articulated to a contemporary sensibility and condition of reception.

This article is divided into three parts, in addition to this introduction and the final considerations. In the first segment, I address, in the theory of adaptation, the debate about the pragmatic need to reduce the literary to the filmic transposition and how the narrative prolongation in serial form opens possibilities for extension and complexification of fictional universes. I begin the second part with a paraphrase of *The turn of the screw*, a work that served

¹ See about this the "theory of the iceberg" cited by Ricardo Piglia (2004) in "Theses on the tale". The theory is elaborated from the technique of omission, by Ernest Hemingway, which suppressed the end of the tale leaving the form even more condensed to point to what was not said in story.

the theorization of the fantastic genre. Next, I comment on some of the film adaptations that kept the focus and ambiguity of Henry James' text. In the third part, I analyze narratively the expansion of fiction in the series *The haunting of Bly manor*, with emphasis on two aspects: the democratization of the fictional population, a term that I draw from Jacques Rancière's (2017) analysis of the modern novel; and the relationship between this complex form (Mittell, 2012, 2015) and the current context of reception.

FROM DIGESTED TO EXPANDED FICTION

The reduction of literary works is one of the most recurrent criticisms of the process of audiovisual adaptation, and results of an economically and culturally established condition of production and exhibition. In opposition to the rhetoric of fidelity, Robert Stam (2000) states that even loyalty to the plot, one of the elements considered common between romance and cinema, would be impossible at a detailed level, since, for this, a film version of a work such as *War and peace* would last 30 hours. "Virtually all filmmakers condense the events of the novels being adapted, if only to conform to the norms of conventional theatrical release". (Stam, 2000, p. 57).

The pragmatic need to reduce a literary work in the process of film adaptation, especially in the case of works rich in subplots and characters cores, does not inevitably lead, according to Bazin, to a lack. The condensed form is, rather, according to him, tuned with coeval time. Like radio, which provided culture for everyone in the comfort of home, adaptation "represents a gain of time and a reduction of effort, which is the very mark of our era [...]". (Bazin, 2000, p. 22). For Bazin, the notion that only the work of art that demands intellectual effort and spiritual concentration is culturally valid emanates from a bourgeois and elitist perspective.

Bazin also rejects the dichotomous thinking that reveres literature at the expense of the cinema that adapts it. The exalted defense of the novel in those cases prevents, according to him, a fruitful relationship between the arts. Film adaptation, according to Bazin, can promote literature, disseminate it, and even contribute to introducing a complex novel to an audience unfamiliar with literature and who can then move on to reading the work. For James Naremore (2000), this essay by Bazin brings arguments that support the French critic's well-known claim for an impure cinema and allows us to see the author from another angle, from an anti-elitist thought that could well have contributed to cultural studies in the second half of the 20th century.

Two other points of Bazin's essay deserve attention. The first concerns the relationship between narrative and style. For Bazin, the narrative is not

the style, as it is at the service of it. The style is the body, not the soul, “[...] and it is not impossible for the artistic soul to manifest itself through another incarnation.” (Bazin, 1948, p. 23). Characters developed by the force of the literary — a myth-creating art, according to Bazin — rise from novels to circulate in culture. “Don Quixote and Gargantua dwell in the consciousness of millions of people who have never had any direct or complete contact with the works of Cervantes and Rabelais”. (Bazin, 1948, p. 23).

Umberto Eco (2013) constructs an argument similar to the assumption that some characters acquire a floating condition, because they detach themselves from the scores that originated them and become part of the collective imagination, sometimes migrating from text to text, which includes adaptation to other media. From the perspective of Linda Hutcheon (2013), the adaptation process, as in the case of species, perpetuates the narratives, transforming them and, at the same time, carrying a certain cultural memory.

The second aspect is the dissolution of the notions of author and unity of the work of art. According to Bazin, cultural production was moving towards a reign of adaptation at the end of the first half of the 20th century, in which a narrative would be told at the same time in theater, cinema and literature. Those arts would be the faces of a pyramid and the work, an imaginary spot at the top of this figure, without precedence of one text over the other. Bazin also speculates on the erasure of the boundaries of criticism because the critic of the future should be interdisciplinary, interarts or, to use more recent expression, intermediatic.

We can apprehend, however, from the review made by Hutcheon (2013), that the criticism based on condensation about the adaptations of literary texts for the audiovisual still prevails. The question even opens Hutcheon’s study through one of the epigraphs of the first chapter – excerpt from Louis Begley’s novel *Shipwreck*. In this text, the character of an award-winning novelist considers that the writing of a screenplay based on a great novel is essentially a work of simplification, not only narrative simplification, but also intellectual. The reductions are therefore in the order of the plot and the characters and their psychology. They also imply the sacrifice of words and their connotations, forged in the style of an author and which are replaced by images – signs that embody and determine (people, scenarios, and things) what in literature is left to the imaginative *mise-en-scène* of the reader.

Hutcheon points out that the condensation of a literary plot can, in some cases, make the narrative more potent. She cites Stanley Kubrick’s *Barry Lyndon*, which tied up the fuzzy structure of Thackeray’s picaresque novel by giving it blunt linearity, and the distillations that some *noir* novels have gone through,

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with the elimination of redundancies, which resulted in sharper plots. However, Hutcheon acknowledges that the predominant discussion about simplifying adaptations is in terms of loss in various senses.

As it is usually said about media of a performative nature, cinema, in the privilege of corporeality, would not reach the complexity of the literarily constructed inner life, with loss of the motivations of the characters. “The visible body is our only evidence for the invisible mind” wrote Leo Braudy (2002, p. 184). According to Tom Wolfe (2005), the treatment of the psychology of a character is an unavoidable problem for cinema when it is considered as a reference the way literature develops the point of view, either through the intervention of the narrator or through the inner monologue. “No filmmaker has ever been able to bring the audience into a character’s mind or central nervous system—something that even bad novelists are able to obtain routinely” (Wolfe, 2005, p. 80).²

The prolongation of serial fiction, in general, remediates the need for simplification of the plot and the complex way in which series narrate today can contribute to the construction of thicker characters. The foundation of the complexity of contemporary series lies, according to Jason Mittell (2012, 2015), in the way episodic forms are redefined under the teleologic of serial narrative. The episodic – the plot that closes at the end of each part and returns to balance – is balanced by a cumulative form, by an ongoing narrative, in which each event contributes to the development of the story.

Even if Mittell looks at longer series, with more than one season, it is possible to recognize reflections of this narrative mode in works such as *The haunting of Bly manor*, of only nine episodes – unless we see *Bly* as what it also is: the second season of an anthology, *The haunting*, by Mike Flanagan. For Mittell, this balance between the episodic and serial forms allows, among other resources, to develop, through extended analepses, pasts of the characters that will contribute to the understanding of their psychologies manifested in the present tense of diegesis.

It is well known the analogy that Julio Cortázar (2004, p. 151) makes between the short story and photography, the novel, and the film, “to the extent that a film is in principle ‘an open’, Romanesque work, while a well-made photograph presupposes a just prior limitation [...]”. But the reading time of a novel or even a novel like *The turn of the screw*, with its duration, interruption, and penetration into the life of the reader, does not equate to the screen time of a film, which, in commercial exhibition, usually leads the viewer narratively for about two hours.

The practices of watching a series vary greatly according to the viewer, and are sometimes conditioned by different forms of broadcasting, from the Netflix

² Wolfe cites some features that filmmakers use to achieve something similar to the literary effect from a standpoint: *voice-over*, subjective camera, and *flashes* of memory. According to him, none of them are successful. “For me, what comes closest is the use of Michael Cane’s camera aside in the film *Alfie*; at first they are jokes, as in the film *Tom Jones*, but they end up being quite moving moments, strangely more efficient than the asides of a play” (Wolfe, 2005, p. 80). Still on the issue, see the subchapter on characters, in the work *Stars*, by Richard Dyer (1998). The author, who also considers the aspect the most difficult for the filmic construction of a novelistic character, comments on cinematic devices to express interiority, among them, the *close-up* and the performance of actors/actresses who can signal to the inner life.

paradigm (in which all episodes are delivered at once) (Buonanno, 2019)³ to the experience of the interval between episodes, which in fact characterizes serialization since the literature by slices in the 19th century. The relationship of the spectator with the fictional universe of the series is a more lasting temporal experience than with cinema and in this it can approach the immersion in more extensive literary narrative, which, as in the continuation of Cortázar's metaphor, wins the reader by points. However, the series also has its specificities, such as the seduction of the pilot and the *cliffhangers* has become a communal phenomenon of social conversation.

³ Buonanno refers to the phenomenon of *binge-watching*. While acknowledging that this practice was not inaugurated with Netflix (there are cases of Victorian novels published in a single volume and then sliced) nor is it exclusive to the platform, Buonanno so names it because she considers that this mode of delivery is mainly related to this *streaming* service.

THE HESITATION OF THE FANTASTIC

The turn of the screw was originally published in twelve parts in the American magazine *Collier's Weekly*. Its structure is that of a frame-narrative whose beginning follows the literary convention of the meeting around the fireplace in which ghost stories are told by guests, who seek to surpass, in astonishment, the previous narrative. One of them, Douglas, mentions that he possesses a manuscript unbeatable in monstrosity, entrusted to him by a former housekeeper of his sister.

He claims that a ghost story involving a child, such as the one told in the previous round, has "a special touch," and then announces, "if the child gives the effect another turn of the screw, what do you say to *two* children" (James, 2022, n. p.). The guest has the text of the city brought to a reading session. The narrator of the manuscript is a young teacher who accepts a job offer to take care of two orphans, Miles and Flora (whose parents died in India), in a house in Bly, a fictional English country. The person who hires her is the children's uncle, who lives in London and does not want to be bothered by news of his nephews. We don't know the name of the housekeeper, only that she is the youngest daughter of a parish priest and that she had come to London attracted by the announcement. In Bly, she will live with Mrs. Grose, who until then managed the house, and with "a cook, a housemaid, a dairywoman, an old pony, an old groom, and an old gardener" (James, 2022, n. p.), characters not developed in the account.

The housekeeper begins to have premonitions on the property and, especially after the early arrival of Miles, expelled from the school for unknown reasons, visions of people who, according to descriptions, are identified by Mrs. Grose as Peter Quint, a former servant whose violently death is obscure, and the previous housekeeper, Miss Jessel, also dead for unknown reasons. Convinced that the children act strangely under the influence of ghosts, the increasingly distraught housekeeper sends Flora, along with Mrs. Grose out of Bly and is left alone with

Miles, intent on forcing the boy to admit that he also sees the ghost of Peter Quint and thus exorcize the evil entity from him. Pressed to confess – here the narrator also uses the expression “another turn of the screw” – Miles has a shock and dies in the arms of the housekeeper. This is the final paragraph of the novel:

But he had already jerked straight round, stared, glared again, and seen but the quiet day. With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been that of catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him — it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped. (James, 2022, s. p.).

The text does not reveal whether Miles actually saw the ghost of Peter Quint and whether this final scene was that of an exorcism that culminated in his death or whether the boy died of fear in the face of the governess's aggression and terror. The account remains in the tension between a rational explanation (the ghosts would be projections of the troubled mind of the housekeeper) and the supernatural (which considers real, in diegesis, the malignancy of events). In his theory of the fantastic, Tzvetan Todorov (2007) proposes this ambiguity as a defining element of the genre: “The fantastic is the hesitation experienced by a being who only knows the natural laws, in the face of an apparently supernatural event” (Todorov, 2007, p. 31). Todorov considers *The turn of the screw* a remarkable example of his theory for the fact that the novel maintains ambiguity until the end.

Among the adaptations of the work for the cinema, at least two of them, *The innocents*, directed by Jack Clayton, in 1961, and *Through the shadow*, directed by Walter Lima Jr., in 2015, maintain the dialogue with the hesitation of the novel. Both works suppress, however, the framed narrative of *The turn of the screw* and begin with images of the housekeeper, played by Deborah Kerr, in the American film (the viewer will later know that, chronologically, it is a scene from the end of the narrative), and Virginia Cavendish, in the Brazilian version, as if they marked, in the opening, the perspective of the story to be displayed. The final scene of the two adaptations is also similar.

The phrase “I caught him, yes, I held him — it may be imagined with what a passion” is adapted by a strong hug from the housekeeper followed by a kiss on the mouth of the dead boy. One possible meaning for this outcome is that the hallucination or premonition of the character is crossed by a forbidden desire. Lima Jr.'s film probably pays homage to Clayton's in those images. Scenes earlier,

also in both films, the character of Miles (with the name Antonio, in Lima Jr film) had given a kiss on the mouth of the housekeeper, an inappropriate act for a child, which apparently generates revulsion in the housekeeper and contributes to her suspicion that the boy is possessed.

Lima Jr.'s film is more markedly a process of *indigenization*, an expression that Hutcheon (2013) draws from anthropology to refer to the migratory movement of ideas, theories and, in adaptation, stories. In those cases, the narrative is not only transplanted into another media, but into another sociocultural context with which it dialogues. In the distance crossed, the narratives undergo changes to better adapt to new audiences. In the script by Adriana Falcão, Bly's property becomes a coffee farm in Brazil in the 1930s, with predominant black people labor, a remnant of slavery.

The constant burning of coffee, ordered by Getulio Vargas government, after the crisis of 1929, causes the morning mist to be replaced by smoke in the afternoon and evening, making the farm's scenery constantly ghostly. In it, the preceptor, a young woman fresh out of a convent, believes she sees the foreman Benedict, killed in a fall on horseback, and Isabel, the teacher who preceded her. As said, the line of hesitation ends up predominating in *Through the shadow*, but there are, in the film, scenes that can indicate the presence of ghosts, such as when the girl Elisa also seems to see Bento on the roof or the game of the glass (a kind of Ouija or talking board), in which a spirit speaks through the object that points letters placed in a circle on the table.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE FICTIONAL POPULATION

The haunting of Bly manor breaks with hesitation to take it up again in another circumstance. For this, the plot spread over nine episodes, of 45 to 60 minutes approximately, is fundamental. The backbone of the narrative is the same: housekeeper Danielle Clayton — named after the director of *The innocents* — is hired to educate orphans Miles and Flora Wingrave. In Bly, she is haunted by the ghosts of Quint and Jessel. In the series, which is set in 1980s England, the Wingrave family's surname refers to those who win the grave, in an indication of the curse that hangs over the property: just as in Flanagan's previous series, *The haunting of Hill house*, an adaptation of Shirley Jackson's novel, everyone who dies in the house is imprisoned in it.

Between real phantasmagoria and hallucinated consciousness, the series sticks with both phenomena. The ghosts integrate the objective reality of the narratives: the children and other characters see them, and also the audience. In a recurring feature in Flanagan's thriller, all the characters withdraw,

and the camera continues to frame the environment, when something ghostly moves in it, just for us viewers.

But at the same time, both in the personal story of housekeeper Danielle Clayton and in that of the children's uncle, Henry, ghosts embody trauma, regrets, and guilt. Clayton feels responsible for the death of his childhood friend, Edmund, who in his youth becomes her fiancé. Upon acknowledging herself as homosexual, Clayton breaks up with the groom who abruptly pulls out of the car where they were talking and is run over. Since then, the image of Edmund has appeared to the housekeeper as a reflection in the mirrors. This plot is developed in episode 4, "The way it came", in *flashback* that builds layers of the housekeeper's character, explaining her departure from the United States and entering the interior of England, the disturbed mind and affective difficulties. Only after crossing the ghost of Edmund will Clayton be able to relate to the house's gardener, Jamie Taylor, who also has her story told in the series.

Henry Wingrave's phantasmagoria is himself, his evil double, who visits him every night. The *topos* of the double, developed in episode 6, are taken from another Henry James short story, "*The jolly corner*". In the series, the double is projected on the character's guilt for getting involved with sister-in-law Charlotte, wife of his brother Dominic. Henry feels mainly guilty for the death of the couple, parents of Bly's children, who, after the revelation of the betrayal (it is discovered that the girl Flora is Henry's daughter), travels to India in order to resume the marriage and dies in a plane crash. All the titles of the episodes of the series make references to other works of Henry James and the narrative inserts events and characters from the author's universe weaving them in the narrative thread of *The turn of the screw*. In the balance between episodic and seriality, the teleological conception is placed at the forefront. In the structure, episodes gain autonomy to also develop characters that, in James' novel, are only mentioned or do not exist.

But it is episode 8, "*The romance of certain old clothes*," an adaptation of James' eponymous short story, that more forcefully affirms the part's autonomy. Episode 7, "*The two faces, part 2*," ends with a *cliffhanger*, in which the ghost of the Lady of the Lake attacks housekeeper Clayton and drags her by the neck. Episode 8 begins with the end of the previous part, but does not continue it, opening a parenthesis set back in time to narrate, in black and white, the story of the sisters Viola and Perdita – named so by their father, according to the narrator of James' tale, in honor of Shakespeare's characters (James, 1999).

The viewer will have to wait for episode 9, "*The beast in the jungle*," for the resumption of what was suspended. The adaptation alters various events of the tale, the family composition and reverses the name of the sister characters, but the supernatural horror is preserved: Viola is the sister who marries, has

a daughter, and falls seriously ill. On a deathbed that seems to have no end, she asks her husband, Arthur, to keep her clothes and jewelry in a chest to be opened, as an inheritance, when their daughter is older. Perdita takes care of Viola but is constantly humiliated by her.

When he can no longer bear his sister's suffering, he chokes her with a pillow to death. She marries Arthur soon after and, years later, in a time of financial difficulties, decides to open the chest to sell the dead sister's belongings. Viola is trapped like a ghost to her things and feeling betrayed, kills her sister and wanders around Bly, sometimes murdering those she recognizes as a threat. As said, everyone who dies in that house has their spirit attached to property and, over time, loses their traits, face, and sense of identity.

The account coming from the autonomous tale explains the curse of the house and acts as what Marie-Laure Ryan (2013) calls *folklore*, a component of the narrative world that, through founding stories and legends, points to its origin. The account consolidates the tone of the Gothic novel, in which horror lies as much in a supernatural agony as in the trauma and guilt that cannot be circumvented and determine the ruin of the characters. That is Miss Clayton's fate. Between the ghostly of the Lady of the Lake and the life led in the overlapping of traumas, she succumbs, haunted by the reflection of the mirror and the water (herself?), without knowing whether, in the visions, the supernatural or the psychological operates. The haunted mansion is a gothic *topos* and the recurring reading that is made of it as a metaphor is that of the mind, with its traumas and beliefs.

In *The turn of the screw*, Bromwich (2011) identifies the radical reverberation of the pragmatism of William James, Henry James' brother. For the philosopher, belief can determine in part our experience in the empirical world, a thesis discussed, for example, in *Hill house*, through the character of the writer Steven Crain. "Thus, a ghost can hardly appear in the absence of a faith in ghosts already existing in the mind of the person who sees it" (Bromwich, 2011, p. 180). The haunted house, in the literal and metaphorical sense, is the narrative convention that groups the narratives of the anthology created by Mike Flanagan whose project also includes the adaptation of the short story "*The fall of the house of Usher*", by Edgar Allan Poe.

All the characters in *Bly Manor*, closest to the narrative core, have part of their stories told: assistant Peter Quint, *au pair* Rebecca Jessel and Danielle Clayton, housekeeper Groesen, gardener Jamie, cook Owen, children Flora and Miles and their parents, uncle Henry Wingrave. Through those stories, the viewer understands the psychology and motivation of the fictional population. The narrative resources for this are mainly two: the episodes or part of the *flashback* episodes, cleverly plotted in the central thread, and the dialogues

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Adaptation as expanded fiction in contemporary series

turned monologues, an aspect of a possible Mike Flanagan style. Not infrequently, in the conversation between characters, one of them becomes a narrator and the text, then, becomes preponderant. This *self* that, in the foreground, takes over the screen, like a theatrical actor who goes to the front of a stage for an aside, narrates the life already subjectively qualified.

In Virginia Woolf's well-known essay "The brown stocking" on *To the lighthouse*, Erich Auerbach (2011) describes how this novel implodes objective reality and moves solely through fragments of character perceptions. "What is essential to the process and to the style of Virginia Woolf is that it is not just a matter of *a* subject, whose conscious impressions are produced, but of many subjects, often changing [...]" (Auerbach, 2011, p. 483, emphasis added). Faced with this profusion of perceptions, the reader does not always have in his hands "any determined common thread" (idem, ibidem, p. 491). Jacques Rancière (2017) understands this movement that began with the modern realist novel as the democratization of the fictional population, which establishes the regime he calls "aesthetic". This new narrative, by placing large numbers of characters on an equal footing, erases the elements of distinction of the hero that characterized fiction since the Aristotelian conception. "This population hinders the report. It leaves no room for the selection of significant characters and for the harmonious development of an intrigue" (Rancière, 2017, p.22-23).

We are also facing, in this expanded serial fiction, a democratization of the fictional population, with some differences. In some series, we can say that a democratization of protagonism in fact occurs. Actress Jamie Chung, of Korean descent, said in an interview that it took 10 years for her to take a central role in the audiovisual industry, which occurred in the episode "*Meet in me Daegu*" of the series *Lovecraft country*, an adaptation of Matt Ruff's novel. Chung plays nurse Ji-Ah during the Korean War, when he meets the protagonist of the central narrative, Atticus Freeman (Jonathan Majors), a soldier serving in the U.S. Army. The episode is about the origin of the curse of Ji-Ah, who embodies the fox of nine syrups, being from Eastern mythology. The chapter moves the character from a supporting role to protagonist, breaking with the stereotype of roles intended for Asian actresses (Andrews-Dyer, 2020).

In this sense, the democratization of protagonism is a form of displacement of the types of hero and of broadening the spectrum of representation and representativeness. The form nods to the recognition of subalternized groups in audiovisual fiction, a sociocultural demand, today, placed on entertainment. The question remains whether political and social democracy accompanies the fictional democracy of the series or whether, at least, it will contribute to changing it and on what terms.

But it must be emphasized, even once, that this is an industrial form that values the narrative thread. Unlike the realistic novel and what occurs more sharply in Woolf's works, the contemporary series, committed to entertainment, does not tear apart the external action, but rather maintains and multiplies it, and the way it opens up in life stories to collect them in intrigue is an object of pleasure for the viewer, increasingly attentive to enunciation.

In this diagram, *Bly manor* retrieves what the adaptations of *The turn of the screw* mentioned above left aside: the frame-narrative. The first episode takes place in the United States in 2007, when a group reunites to prepare for a wedding. A woman tells attendees the story about the housekeeper hired for Bly. Voice-over narration is intermittent, returning at key points in the series to introduce and concatenate subplots. The narrative framing also awakens the analytical sense of the viewer, because, at the end of the intrigue of contemporary series, it is expected that the story from outside, at some point, intersects with those inside in a hitherto unforeseen way. In the final episode, it is revealed that gardener Jamie is the narrator, Flora the bride, and other members of Bly also attend the wedding.

If the form studied here democratizes the fictional population without giving up intrigue, which preserves entertainment and dialogues with politics of representation and representation of our time, it also updates, in its own way, the dialectic of writing and reading (Martín-Barbero, 1997). Fan-produced fiction has long developed, on its own, stories for characters from classics, sequels to protagonists, or biographies for secondary individuals. Carlos Alberto Scolari (2009) even considers this creation of fans as a strategy for expanding narrative universes.

Apparently, the industry has incorporated the practice to expand its own products. There has also been a strong change in the way series are watched, either by the emergence of digital communities that scrutinize the works; the aspects of distribution that allow the viewer to see and review the narratives; by a development of TV criticism, which has contributed to trace intertextualities, unravel interwoven temporalities, and organize fictional universes that are presented in scattered histories. In this regard, Mittell assures that:

If most television storytelling for its first few decades was designed to be viewed in any order by a presumably distracted and indiscriminating viewer — a strategy that many programs and viewers challenged but was certainly encouraged by the industry — today's complex narratives are designed for a discerning viewer not only to pay close attention to once but to rewatch in order to notice the depth of references, to marvel at displays of craft and continuities, and to appreciate details that require the liberal use of pause and rewind. (Mittell, 2015, p. 38).

In a text widely cited in the studies of serial fiction, Eco (1989) speculates about the emergence of a viewer in the 20th century who, already aware of the redundancy of the medium, becomes a second-level reader, not naive, interested less in the unfolding of history than in the scheme of repetition and its minimal variations. The viewer of the contemporary series has also become, for Mittell (2015), a second-level reader, but in another condition, as challenged by the “operational aesthetics” of the narratives. According to Mittell, the series, through irony, reflexivity, multiple temporality and spatiality, dense characters, twists, among other resources, demand from the viewer engagement with the form, challenging him to think about the way the gear works and to enjoy intricate narratives.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The contemporary series, characterized by confluences between the episodic and the serial (Mittell, 2012, 2015), enables the expansion of literary universes through the dilated and intricate audiovisual narrative structure, which develops and intertwines events and characters often only mentioned in the novel or novella that served as the source for the adaptation. In this, the series might execute turns in protagonism, deepen the psychology of the characters, create and develop founding stories of the fictional world, temporal games, among other narrative devices. Therefore, the adaptation in the contemporary series confronts the perception, still current, that audiovisual transpositions necessarily reduce novels and novellas, with regard to the plot or the complexity of the characters.

In the case of the series analyzed in this study, *The haunting of Bly manor*, the main strategy adopted for the expansion of the fictional universe was the insertion of other fictions of Henry James in the intrigue of *The turn of the screw*, which remained as the main narrative axis. This allowed the articulated meeting, in the series, of gothic elements and themes dispersed in James’ work and the coherent construction of the expanded universe, which democratizes the fictional population and updates the agenda of the novel. In addition to the protagonists of the book, a set of characters close to the narrative core has its story told in *Bly*, which allows the viewer to understand the psychology and motivation of those fictional beings, including that of the antagonists.

This is a contribution of the articulations between the episodic and the serial to the literary adaptation in the contemporary series. The autonomy of some episodes, placed in teleological structure, provides more extensive biographical narratives that, in addition to brief and punctual flashbacks, give layers to the characters and expand the fictional population. This democratization has, however, as I have shown, differences in relation to the phenomenon in the modern novel, because the

expansion of characters and perspectives in the series does not break the narrative thread. It should be noted that it is an industrial form that, indebted to the serial fictions of previous centuries, values intrigue, and entertainment, even making use of strategies such as the *cliffhanger*. The series does not, therefore, erode the action, but branches it into dispersal and collecting movements that result in narrative effects.

For Mittell (2015), the contemporary viewer of those series engages with the story narrated while being very attentive to storytelling strategies. It was believed that this last mode was a skill and a pleasure reserved for criticism or a so-called cultivated spectator/reader – the *happy few*, in the irony of Umberto Eco (2003). I would not venture, however, to say that this is an inaugural scenario. Spectators, even in the face of the flow of broadcast television, have always been able to fluctuate between levels, although the material conditions today are undoubtedly more conducive to the examination and discussion of the series.

What is most clearly underway is a change of communicative assumption. When television was taken over in the 20th century as a means of mass communication, the pejorative charge that this term (mass) coming from sociology possesses was applied to the public, considered intellectually demeaned, vulgar and in bad taste. As Williams (2016) criticizes, much of television production has followed this logic. The contemporary series, in turn, has consolidated itself in the pulverization of the channels, with smaller but engaged audiences, with a cult form of accompaniment, which was extended to *streaming* (Mittell, 2015). The complexity and inventiveness of expanded fiction are therefore both stimulated by this reception and projecting it, which constitutes another way for industries to interpret audiences. ■

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In media(tization) studies we love metaphors^a

Nos estudos de mídia(tização), adoramos metáforas

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ABSTRACT

The long history of mass communication theories is full of metaphors, from Shannon and Weaver's 'transmission channel' to Noelle-Neumann's 'spiral of silence'. The objective of the chapter is to give an overview of the use of metaphors and models in mediatized communication studies. Special attention is given to the metaphors that support the representations of digital and interactive communication practices; in this context, the chapter deals with the metaphors of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and new platforms and introduces the main metaphors of media change. The chapter concludes with a series of reflections on the risks and benefits of metaphorical reasoning and includes a call for 'metaphorical experimentation'.

Keywords: Media, mediatization, theory, models, metaphors

RESUMO

A longa história das teorias da comunicação de massa é cheia de metáforas: do 'canal de transmissão' de Shannon e Weaver à 'espiral do silêncio' de Noelle-Neumann. O objetivo deste capítulo é fornecer uma visão geral do uso das metáforas e modelos nos estudos de comunicação midiaticizada. É dada especial atenção às metáforas que apoiam as representações de práticas de comunicação digital e interativa; neste contexto, este capítulo lida com as metáforas da internet, a *World Wide Web* e novas plataformas e introduz as principais metáforas da mudança de mídia. O capítulo conclui com uma série de reflexões sobre os riscos e benefícios do raciocínio metafórico, além de incluir uma chamada para a 'experimentação metafórica'.

Palavras-chave: Mídia, midiaticização, teoria, modelos, metáforas

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In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

THE LONG HISTORY of mass communication theories (Rodrigo Alsina, 1995; McQuail & Deuze, 2020) is full of metaphors, from Shannon and Weaver's 'transmission channel' to Noelle-Neumann's 'spiral of silence'. It could be said that behind any theoretical model of communication, there is a metaphor. Collateral disciplines like semiotics are no exception: from Roman Jakobson's initial incorporation of the informational model (his 'functions' of language were inspired by Shannon and Weaver's mathematical model of communication) to Verón's 'network' of social semiosis, or Eco's vision of the text as a 'battlefield' where two 'strategies' confront each other. The discipline that analyzes sense production and interpretation processes has imported or developed powerful metaphors.

The objective of this chapter is to give an overview of the use of metaphors and models in mediatized communication studies, understood as a broad and transdisciplinary field or "intellectual trading zone" (Waisbord, 2019), in which many disciplines – linguistic, semiotics, sociology, psychology, political economy, anthropology, design, engineering, etc. – take part in the theoretical conversations (Scolari, 2009). After an introduction to the use of metaphors in scientific discourses, which includes my personal experience working with these rhetorical devices (Section 1), the chapter looks at the tradition of mass communication models (Section 2). Special attention will be given to the metaphors that support the representations of digital and interactive communication practices. In this context, Section 3 focuses on the metaphors of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and the new platforms. Finally, Section 4 introduces the main metaphors of media change. The chapter concludes with a series of reflections on the use of metaphors in media and mediatized communication studies.

As it is impossible to include all the metaphors applied in a century of research, the chapter will only focus on the most important ones. Although the chapter centers on the metaphors present in scientific discourses, sometimes their use goes beyond the academic circuit (especially in the conversations on new digital media). Both the tone of the chapter and the topics addressed are aimed at a young reader/researcher who is starting out in media and mediatized communication research, and we conclude it with an invitation to the new generation of researchers.

Now, at the end of this introductory section, we pose a question: Why is it so important to analyze the scientific construction and use of metaphors? According to Neil Postman,

our best poets and scientists are those who have created the most vivid and enduring metaphors (in Gozzi, 2001, p. xvi).

If media and mediatized communication researchers want to improve their theoretical models, it is fundamental to know how to create and deal with metaphors.

DOING THINGS WITH METAPHORS¹

If John L. Austin (1962) asked, “What can we do with words?” in his book *How to do things with words*, we could also ask, “What can we do with metaphors?” Once again Neil Postman comes to our aid:

all language is metaphorical, and often in the subtlest ways. In the simplest sentence, sometimes in the simplest word, we do more than merely express ourselves. We construct reality along certain lines. We make the world according to our own imagery (in Gozzi, 2001, p. xv).

Speakers do not only express themselves using metaphors: as any other language construction, they create realities through metaphors. The main objective of this chapter is to reflect on how media and mediatized communication researchers ‘construct (theoretical) realities’ using metaphors. From a linguistic–cognitive perspective, the metaphor has been defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain; for example, when speakers say: ‘life is a journey’. In this context, the metaphor consists of

two conceptual domains, in which one domain is understood in terms of another. A conceptual domain is any coherent organization of experience. Thus, for example, we have coherently organized knowledge about journeys that we rely on in understanding life (Kövecses, 2010, p. 4).

The conceptual domain from which the speaker draws metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called the ‘source’ domain, whereas the conceptual domain that is understood, is the ‘target’ domain. In the case of ‘life is a journey’, the source domain is ‘journey’ and the target domain is ‘life’. Their classic *Metaphors We Live By* Lakoff and Johnson (1980) presented many classic examples of metaphors in everyday conversations. Let us look at one of them: if ‘an argument is war’, different linguistic expressions could be generated under the umbrella of this specific metaphor:

Your claims are *indefensible*.
He *attacked every weak point in my argument*.

¹ This article is part of ongoing research on metaphors of media and mediatization processes. To show that we cannot do less than apply metaphors in our discourses, throughout the text I have indicated the metaphors that I have used with ‘quotation marks’. It is very likely that many of them have gone unnoticed, even by the author.

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In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

His criticisms were *right on target*.
I *demolished* his argument.
I've never *won* an argument with him.
You disagree? Okay, *shoot!*
If you use that *strategy*, he'll *wipe you out*.
He *shot down* all of my arguments.

According to Kövecses

the linguistic expressions (i.e., ways of talking) make explicit, or are manifestations of, the conceptual metaphors (i.e., ways of thinking). To put the same thing differently, it is the metaphorical linguistic expressions that reveal the existence of the conceptual metaphors (Kövecses, 2010, p. 7).

One of the characteristics of these rhetorical 'devices' is that conceptual metaphors "typically employ a more abstract concept as target and a more concrete or physical concept as their source" (Kövecses, 2010, p. 7). If we want to understand an abstract concept (like 'life' or 'argument'), it makes sense to connect it to a more concrete, physical, or tangible concept ('journey' or 'war', respectively). This relationship is not reversible: we do not understand a 'journey as a life' or a 'war as an argument'. This is called the principle of unidirectionality: the metaphorical relation only goes from the concrete to the abstract.

Metaphors never come alone. If we 'buy' a metaphor it comes with a collateral set of expressions. If 'life is a journey', then we must include in the same pack the travelers, the vehicle, the distance covered, the obstacles, the destination, and other components included in the act of traveling from one place to another. This systematic set of correspondences is known as 'mapping'.

As it has been seen throughout the preceding paragraphs, it is almost impossible not to use metaphors. While explaining the fundamental principles of their functioning, I have applied several metaphors, from the metaphor as a 'device' to 'buying' metaphors. We think in metaphors and depend on metaphors to explain the world that surrounds us. In this context, scientific knowledge is not an exception. Let's go back to Lakoff and Johnson (1980). These authors analyzed the 'construction of theories' from a metaphorical perspective. If 'theories are buildings', then it is not so strange to hear expressions like:

Is that the *foundation* for your theory?
The theory needs more *support*.
We need to *construct* a *strong* argument for that.

We need to *buttress* the theory with *solid* arguments.
 The theory will *stand* or *fall* on the *strength* of that argument.
 So far we have *put together* only the *framework* of the theory.

Beyond the use of metaphors when we talk about ‘theory building’, these rhetorical ‘devices’ have been present in scientific discourses since their initial and hesitant beginnings more than twenty–five centuries ago, from classic philosophers (Plato’s ‘cavern’) to contemporary borderlands of science (i.e., ‘black holes’, ‘string’ theory, etc.). According to Gozzi (2001),

when metaphors are used as bridges into the unknown, they gain power from showing us structural similarities, and suggesting paths to follow to discover new insights into the unknown domain (Gozzi, 2001, p. 57).

Researchers continuously create, recover, negotiate, discuss, refine and apply metaphors. This creation and acceptance of metaphors is never a neutral or frictionless process. But once the metaphor is ‘materialized’ in a theoretical model and accepted by the scientific community, it is not questioned for long. As Lizcano puts it,

Those metaphors, those negotiations of meaning, those power pulses that were at the origin of scientific concepts and theories, remain in the most absolute oblivion, lose their condition of ways of speaking and doing, to impose themselves as the only way of saying reality, as a mere discovery of facts that no one has done and that has always been out there, covered (Lizcano, 2006, p. 76).

The disappearance of the metaphorical ‘device’ could be considered as part of the process of ‘blackboxing’ identified by Latour (1999)². The analysis of how scientific objects are constructed, modeled, and put into speech through metaphors is fundamental, not only for understanding the evolution of a single discipline, but also to comprehend the entire logic of scientific discourses.

Interfaces and metaphors

A very personal example could serve to frame the subject at hand better. The discourses around computers are full of metaphors, from the ‘virus’ that infects the digital machines to the ‘windows’ (or the ‘menus’) that are opened and closed with a single click on the ‘mouse’. When, twenty-five years ago, I began to research the universe of interfaces, one of the first things that surprised me

² For Latour **blackboxing** is “the way scientific and technical work is made invisible by its own success. When a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one need focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become” (Latour, 1999, p. 304).

was the wide variety of concepts used in the scientific and professional fields. This proliferation of conceptions led me to collect definitions and metaphors of the interface: the interface as an ‘instrument’, the interface as a ‘conversation’, the interface as a ‘surface’, the interface as a ‘space’, etc. That was the first step of my PhD research on the semiotics of human–computer interaction (Scolari, 2004).

Each metaphor of the interface ‘illuminates’ certain aspects of the human–computer relationship, privileging some of its properties while hiding the others. However, the simple summation of metaphors is not enough to fully illuminate a research object (in this case, the interaction between humans and computers): the different perspectives would never merge into a single and coherent construction. If we think that the interface is an ‘instrument’, we will never be able to consider it as an ‘environment’ of interaction, or a ‘conversation’.

The use of metaphors ‘condemns’ the researcher to an always limited and hypothetical knowledge that is never definitive. Like the lighting designer for a theatrical production who plays with the lights until finding the appropriate angle for each situation, the researcher must ‘move the spotlight’ to ‘shed light on’ the object that is being described or explained in the best possible way. However, saying that each metaphor ‘illuminates’ some properties of the object does not mean that all metaphors are equally clear in their representation: there are metaphors that ‘illuminate’ more, or ‘hide less’, than the others. Paraphrasing Lakoff and Johnson (1980), it could be said that a theory of interfaces and interaction processes, like any other scientific field, must “be aware of its metaphors”, know “what they hide”, and be willing to sacrifice them for more appropriate “alternative metaphors”.

Metaphors: between the new and the old

The introduction of new metaphors into scientific discourses usually runs parallel to the emergence of new theoretical models³. For example, metaphors like ‘the atom is a miniature solar system’ oriented the first years of the research into subatomic particles. In the same line, if we consider that interfaces are ‘conversations’, then one of the researcher’s objectives will be to reconstruct the ‘grammar’ of the exchanges.

In other cases, the metaphor works as a ‘brake’ that ‘stops’ the development of new scientific perspectives. According to Maasen,

from a macroperspective of scientific change, it becomes apparent that once a metaphor is part of a discourse and its mechanics, the capacity of scientists or even scientific communities to control them is limited (Maasen, 1995, p. 30).

³ For a short overview of the relationships between theoretical models and metaphors, see Rivadulla (2006).

However,

scientists should not be afraid of metaphors since the innovative – which always means destabilizing – effect of metaphors is counterbalanced by a number of stabilizing factors (Maasen, 1995, p. 30).

After this short introduction to the world of metaphors and their use in scientific discourse, the time has come to focus on one of the topics of the chapter: the use of metaphors by the media and mediatized communication researchers.

METAPHORS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Metaphors appear every time a new media or technology emerges. The new thing “creates blank, unnamed regions in our linguistic and conceptual maps of experience” (Gozzi, 2001, p. 5) that require a known concept to explain them. When broadcasting emerged in the early 20th century, the first generation of media and mediatized communication researchers looked for a metaphor to understand it. As it is well-known, the first attempts to develop a model of media influence in the 1920s and 1930s were based on a simple and basic conception (media were supposed to have a direct ‘impact’ on audiences) that, later, was caricaturized by scholars in the ‘magic bullet’ and ‘hypodermic needle’ theories.

However, the best and most popular model would arrive at the end of the next decade: the idea that communication was a linear transmission of information from a ‘sender’ to a ‘receiver’ was part of both Lasswell’s (1948) and Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) models. Laswell popularized his five questions (who says what, in which channel, etc.), whereas Shannon and Weaver contributed to this metaphor with a simple and ‘viral’ graphic model of information ‘transmission’. In the following years, media and mediatized communication studies witnessed an explosion of theoretical models with a strong metaphorical imprint, for example Schramm’s ‘tuba’ (1954), Dance’s ‘spiral’ (1970), Noelle–Neumann’s ‘spiral of silence’ (1974), and the Palo Alto School’s model of the ‘orchestra’ as opposite to the ‘telegraph’ model (Winkin, 1981).

In a classic contribution, Pepper (1942) identified four ‘root metaphors’ that underlie the major philosophical systems in Western philosophy: *mechanism*, *organicism*, *contextualism*, and *formism*. Similarly, we could also ask what the ‘deep’ metaphors in media and mediatized communication studies are⁴. Meyrowitz (1993) identified three underlying metaphors:

that virtually all the specific questions and arguments about a particular medium, or media in general, can be linked to one of three underlying metaphors for what

⁴ This chapter deals with models and metaphors of mediatized communication. For an overview of the deep metaphors in general communication studies, see Krippendorff (1993).

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In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

a medium is. Although various terms could be used to convey the general sense of these three metaphorical constructs, I summarize them here as media as ‘conduits’, media as ‘languages’, media as ‘environments’ (Meyrowitz, 1993, p. 57)

Most of the traditional models of mass communication were inspired by the metaphor of the ‘channel’ that ‘transmits’ a content. For Meyrowitz (1993, p. 57) “this metaphor is so common because content is the first thing we react to when we use a medium”. Based on the metaphor of ‘language’, researchers have analyzed the ‘grammar’ of each media, establishing a difference with respect to the previous metaphor:

Rather than viewing the medium as a relatively passive conduit, grammar analysts look at the plasticity of the medium in altering the presentation and meaning of content elements While the conduit metaphor leads one to analyse content that crosses easily from medium to medium and from live interaction to medium and back, the language metaphor tends to focus attention on those variables that function only within a specific medium or within a particular type of media (Meyrowitz, 1993, p. 59).

I consider the third metaphor, media as ‘environments’, as one of the best possible metaphors to understand the transformations of the ‘mediasphere’. If this metaphor is the one that best ‘illuminates’ the research object (media) and its ‘mutations’, then it would be a wise decision to dedicate the next section to it.

Media as ‘environments’

According to this ‘ecological’ conception, each media creates an ‘environment’ that has “characteristics and effects that transcend variations in content and manipulations of production variables” (Meyrowitz, 1993, p. 61). This leads to what Meyrowitz calls “medium analysis”. Beyond the medium’s content or grammar, the environmental model focuses specifically on “advancing our understanding of the ways in which the differences among media make a difference” (61). Within medium analysis, the focus is on “those environmental features of the medium that are largely out of the control of users once the medium is in use” (62). According to Meyrowitz, researchers can study media by setting both the micro, single–situation level, and the macro, societal level. On the micro level, medium analyses “explore the implications of choosing one medium over another in a given situation”; on the macro level, “medium analysis deals with the larger social implications of the widespread use of a medium” (62).

Beyond the specific field of Media Ecology and Meyrowitz's medium theory, an approach rooted in the works of Marshall McLuhan and Neil Postman (Scolari, 2015; Strate, 2017; Cali, 2017), many researchers have applied the 'media as environments' metaphor. For example, there is a strong connection between the European approach to mediatizations and Meyrowitz's medium theory (see Krotz, 2014). If medium theory states that media create 'environments' that affect and model subjects, mediatization researchers advocate that those media affect and model institutions (i.e., Hjarvard, 2014; Verón, 2014; Couldry & Hepp, 2017). The deepening of the dialogue between these two approaches (media ecology/medium theory and mediatization studies) has just begun and there is still a large territory to continue exploring and carrying out interdisciplinary exchanges.

Before ending this quick journey through metaphors of media, it could be useful to remember that Marshall McLuhan proposed considering media as both 'metaphors' and 'translators'. The Canadian scholar introduced this idea in *Understanding Media* (1964):

All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms. The spoken word was the first technology by which man was able to let go of his environment in order to grasp it in a new way. . . . Words are complex systems of metaphors and symbols that translate experience into our uttered or outered systems (McLuhan, 1964, p. 57).

Other members of the Media Ecology school have developed this idea. For example, Ong (1977) and Postman (1985) also considered that media can be internalized and function as 'deep' metaphors for the mind and knowledge:

A message denotes a specific, concrete statement about the world. But the forms of our media, including the symbols through which they permit conversation, do not make such statements. They are rather like metaphors, working by unobtrusive but powerful implication to enforce their special definitions of reality. Whether we are experiencing the world through the lens of speech or the printed word or the television camera, our media-metaphors classify the world for us, sequence it, frame it, enlarge it, reduce it, colour it, argue a case for what the world is like (Postman, 1985, p. 10).

Like any other research field, media and mediatized communication studies have used metaphors as a way of translating very complex processes into simplified theoretical models. At the same time, metaphors have been used to model the research objects and methodologies: if the media is a 'cannon'

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In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

that shoots a ‘bullet’, then researchers will try to measure their ‘impact’; in the same way, if media are a ‘language’, then researchers will try to reconstruct their ‘grammars’. In other words, metaphors have translated a very complex domain (mediatized communication processes) into terms of a simpler domain (a tube, a transmission channel, a grammar). The metaphors were simultaneously solving a current problem (proposing a model for mediatized communication processes) and modeling future research (suggesting questions and methodologies based on the metaphor).

After this overview of the traditional metaphors of mass media and mediatized communication processes, the time has arrived to present the new metaphors of the media that have emerged in the last decades.

NEW METAPHORS FOR A NEW MEDIA

The ‘emergence’ of new digital media and technologies in the last thirty years generated an ‘explosion’ of metaphors. For example, it could be said that the ‘arrival’ of the World Wide ‘Web’ produced an ‘acceleration’ of the ‘mutations’ in the media ‘ecosystem’ and generated an ‘explosion’ of new media (Scolari, 2009, 2013, 2015; Scolari & Rapa, 2019). A recent article by Wyatt (2021) presented a good ‘map’ of this new ‘territory’. According to this researcher from Maastricht University

In the mid–1990s, when the Internet went public and the World Wide Web became available, many different metaphors were in use as people tried to make sense of the possibilities of this amazing new medium, capable of instantly transmitting data and information around the world (Wyatt, 2021, p. 407).

Many researchers have ‘mapped’ the metaphorical ‘territory’ around the ‘emerging’ new media. The spatial metaphor (‘territory’) is not casual: many of the representations of the Internet are rooted in a ‘deep’ spatial metaphor (the ‘Internet as a place’). Stefik (1996) described the early metaphors of the Internet and organized them into four archetypes: library/keeper of knowledge, mail/communicator, markets/trader, and digital worlds/adventurer. Markham (2003), for her part, identified three distinctive and interrelated metaphors: the Internet as a ‘tool’ (‘container’, ‘conduit’, etc.), the Internet as a ‘place’ (‘frontier’, ‘cyberspace’), and the Internet as a ‘way of being’ (‘cyborg’, etc.). As it can be seen, many of the metaphors applied to the mass media (media as a ‘container’, media as a ‘conduit’, etc.) and interfaces (interface as a ‘tool’, interfaces as a ‘place’, etc.) have also been applied to the Internet. Many other researchers have

analyzed the emergence and uses of metaphors in digital society (i.e., Gozzi, 2001, Gómez Cruz, 2007; Markham & Tiidenberg, 2020). The following table presents some of the main metaphors of the Internet and the World Wide ‘Web’ developed in the last three decades (see Table 1). Obviously, as the Web is still developing, this table should be considered as a general overview that is open to new incorporations.

Table 1

The metaphors of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Based on Stefik (1996), Gozzi (2001), Gómez Cruz, (2007), Johnston (2009), Markham and Tiidenberg (2020), Wyatt (2021) and contributions of the author and colleagues.

The Internet and the World Wide Web as a ...	
town hall	
agora	
market	A collaborative/competitive place for political, cultural, social, or economic exchanges.
village square	
(virtual) community	
library	
archive	An open and potentially infinite repository of data, information, and knowledge.
world brain	
frontier	
cyberspace	A libertarian and free space to be explored (or surfed) and conquered by pioneers.
sea	
highway of information	A public space for data traffic that could be regulated by the State.
drug	A media that creates addiction so users must detoxify.
dark (place)	
deep (place)	A secret and clandestine space whose contents are not indexed by standard web search engines.
invisible (place)	
hidden (place)	

Although this is an incomplete map of metaphors of the Internet and the World Wide ‘Web’, it is enough to begin reflecting on their main traits and dynamics. The first issue is the prevalence of spatial metaphors. This is not so strange: when the World Wide ‘Web’ appeared in the early 1990s, the concept of ‘cyberspace’, introduced by William Gibson in his cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* (1984), was already very popular. The metaphor of the ‘place’ is easy to understand and can be modulated in different ways: it can be a human–created space (an ‘agora’, a ‘village’, or a ‘library’) or a natural environment (the web as a ‘sea’). From a chronological perspective, it is evident that in the 1990s and 2000s the metaphors were optimistic (the Internet as a ‘place’ of freedom and open

D

In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

knowledge) whereas, in recent years, an increasingly pessimistic view has dominated the discourses, like the Internet and, more generally, digital technologies understood as a ‘tool’ for domination and control, or the ‘Web’ as a ‘dark’, ‘deep’, and potentially dangerous place.

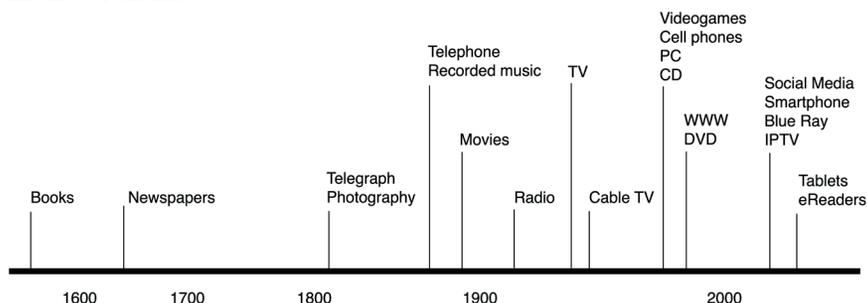
The same path from optimism to pessimism can be found in the metaphors of new social networking sites. When the ‘Web 2.0’ arrived in the early 2000s (O’Reilly, 2005), it adopted many of the positive metaphors of the Internet and the World Wide ‘Web’: the new collaborative web as a ‘place’ for political, cultural, social or economic exchanges. More than a static online ‘library’, the new web promised the realization of Pierre Lévy’s concept of ‘collective intelligence’ (1997). Fifteen years after the appearance of Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005) and Twitter (2006), the situation is quite the opposite: now social networking sites are under suspicion.

Today, social networking sites, now renamed ‘platforms’, are still considered ‘places’, but very dangerous ones. On one hand, these ‘places’ are not open anymore: they are ‘walled gardens’ where users must be registered so that powerful hardware and software ‘machines’, managed by an ‘artificial intelligence’, can obtain information about the users’ activities. In other words, the anarchic and freedom-centered representation of the early World Wide ‘Web’ has radically changed: now these platforms are ‘territories’ under control. In this sense, more than a ‘place’ the new metaphors promote the idea of a ‘tool of control’: concepts like ‘Big Brother’ or ‘digital panopticon’ are more and more present in scientific and popular conversations. This negative view of the platforms as ‘surveillance and control devices’ complements their representation as promoters of ‘digital labor’, ‘digital capitalism’, and ‘data exploitation’. The title of popular books published by researchers like Nick Srnicek (*Platform Capitalism*, 2016) and Shoshana Zuboff (*The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, 2019) are good examples of these negative metaphorical constructions.

BEYOND THE ‘MEDIA AS A PLACE’: THE TIME DIMENSION

The use and abuse of spatial metaphors in media and mediated communication studies has a clear limit: they may illuminate a set of actors and their relationships but, at the same time, *they may cancel out the time dimension*. How can we understand media change? There are different theories and models of media change, and obviously each of them is based on a metaphor. For some scholars, media change adopts the form of a ‘line’ (for example Neuman, 2010), in which the different technologies are represented along a linear sequence (a ‘timeline’).

Figure 1
Timeline of media



Note. Based on Neuman (2010), Grant & Meadows (2018), and others.

Other scholars prefer to talk about sequences of ‘explosive’ and ‘reflective’ periods. Ortoleva (1997) analyzed media change in the last centuries as a succession of innovative moments (when multiple new media emerge) and reflective moments (when the innovation slows down and the diffusion of existing technologies is the main process). Ortoleva identified four ‘explosive’ moments in contemporary media history:

- 1830-40: telegraph, postage stamp, photography, steam printing machines, etc.
- 1875-95: linotype, stereoscope, typewriting, Kodak popular camera, phonograph, gramophone, kinoscope, cinematograph, telephone, radiotelegraph, etc.
- 1920-1935: roto-calc printing, telephotography, photocopy, iconoscope (proto-television), magnetophonon, talking cinema, color cinema, etc.
- 1975-95: videorecorder, digital audio devices, personal computers, teletext, optic fiber networks, etc.

Although the book was published in 1997, Ortoleva did not include the World Wide ‘Web’ in the four explosions. Following his model, a fifth explosion could be identified from 2005 to 2020: smartphones, social media, augmented reality, platforms, etc. According to Ortoleva, during these ‘explosive’ periods not only do technological innovations appear, but institutions and commercial beings are also transformed. In other words, “each time, the entire communications system is redefined in every aspect” (1997, p. 43). Even if Ortoleva did not explicitly use these concepts, his model of media change fits perfectly into the metaphor of the ‘wave’, understood as a succession of technological ‘impacts’ and their expanding ‘effects’.

Another possible metaphor of media change comes from the ecological metaphor (see Section 2.1). In this context, media change could be approached

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In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

as an ‘evolutionary’ process. First of all, it must be said that media ecology has always included a strong interest in the evolution of media. Beyond the classic contributions of scholars such as Innis (1950), researchers like Levinson (1997) and Logan (2004) have developed valuable contributions for understanding the ‘evolution’ of the media ‘ecosystem’. In recent years, many scholars, even outside the tradition of media ecology, have been using the metaphor of media evolution in their theoretical and analytical discourses (i.e., Napoli, 2001; van Dijck, 2013; Manovich, 2013). If media ecology ‘thinks’ space (synchronic plane), then media evolution ‘thinks’ time (diachronic plane). However, although media historians have developed linear or waveform models, media evolution considers media change as a ‘network’ where any media can affect or take components from any other present or past media (Scolari, 2013, 2018, 2020; Scolari & Rapa, 2018).

Mediatization studies, like any other theoretical discourse, have applied different temporal and spatial metaphors. Beyond describing mediatization as a ‘radial’, ‘accumulative’, and ‘non-linear’ process of change, Verón (2014) evidenced periodic ‘accelerations’ of historical time, for example, when in the Upper Paleolithic the production of stone tools passed from twenty basic types to two hundred varieties, or when Gutenberg’s printing machine multiplied the number of books and changed European society profoundly in a couple of centuries. In the case of the Internet, the digital network has altered “the conditions of access to scientific knowledge more than these conditions have changed since the surge of modern scientific institutions during the seventeenth century” (Verón, 2014, p. 168). Other researchers like Hjarvard (2008) have also highlighted the ‘acceleration’ of mediatization processes in late Modernity.

The metaphor of the ‘wave’ is also present in mediatization theories. For Couldry and Hepp (2017), “mediatization comes in waves – mechanization, electrification, digitalization – which each changed the whole media environment fundamentally” (2017, p. 53). But these ‘waves’ should not be confused with the ‘diffusion waves’ of one single dominant medium: they must be understood as a “process of increasing deepening of technology-based interdependence” (2017, p. 53). The concept of ‘deep’ mediatization is now at the center of the international scientific conversations on mediatization processes (Hepp, 2020). It is interesting to note that, at this point, temporal and spatial metaphors converge in a single theoretical ‘construction’ in which the concept of ‘deepening’ has two senses:

First, that over the past 600 years an acceleration of technological innovations in media has taken place; and second that, over the same period, media have become

increasingly relevant to articulating the kind of cultures and societies we live in, because of media's changing role in the conditions of human interdependence (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 53)

With this reference to mediatization studies we come to the end of this journey through the metaphors of media and mediatized communication processes. As already indicated, it is impossible to include all the metaphors developed in the last century in this specific area of scientific discourse production. However, this is enough to initiate a reflection on the production and use of metaphors in media and mediatized communication studies.

RISKS AND BENEFITS OF METAPHORICAL REASONING

A series of conclusions can be 'extracted' from this brief overview of the metaphors of media and mediatized communication processes. More than 'closed' conclusions, the following are simply a series of issues that could 'orient' future research and 'conversations' on the use of metaphors in media and mediatized communication studies.

1. It seems to be impossible to think in media and mediatized communication processes without using metaphors. The list of metaphors used in scientific and non-scientific discourses in the last century is almost endless and, considering the transformations of the research object, we can assume that this list will continue to grow.
2. Like in any other scientific domain, in media and mediatized communication studies, each metaphor 'illuminates' certain aspects of the research objects, privileging some of their properties while 'hiding' the others. As it is very difficult to add and integrate metaphors because they are often incompatible with each other, there is a constant search for new, broader, and more 'illuminating' metaphors.
3. In the case of traditional mass media, the metaphor of the 'conduit' dominated much of the 20th century and is still, unfortunately, in good health in the 21st century. Many journalists, publicists, politicians, and media and communication students (and scholars!) still believe that communication is an 'arrow' that 'impacts' a 'target'. The arrival of new metaphors like the 'orchestra' or the 'environment' attempts to break this linear and simplistic vision of mediatized communication.
4. The 'emergence' of the World Wide 'Web' in the early 1990s 'placed' spatial metaphors at the 'center' of the discourses. Both the critical-apocalyptic and the integrated-optimistic approaches regard the

D

In media(tization) studies we love metaphors

Internet and the World Wide ‘Web’ as a ‘place’ or a ‘space’. It could be said that the metaphors are trans-ideological: the same ‘place’ could be simultaneously considered as an emancipatory or hyper-controlled space.

5. The discourse of media and mediatized communication studies also discusses the transformations of media. Therefore, media change is also part of scientific conversations, especially due to the ‘acceleration’ of media ‘mutations’ in the last decades. Even in this case, different metaphors have been used to represent the transformations of media, from ‘explosion’ and ‘waves’ to ‘movement’ (‘acceleration’).
6. Scholars who analyze the processes of mediatization also work with metaphors, which are spatial (‘deep’ mediatization) or temporal (‘acceleration’ or even ‘waves’ of mediatization).

Metaphors are serious business. All researchers should reflect on the metaphors they apply and use in their scientific discourses:

Not only is it important for critical scholars of the Internet and digital media to analyse the metaphors of other social actors, we also need to be reflexive about our own use of language so that we do not unwittingly reinforce power structures that serve to exclude groups, organisations or regions, by promoting the inevitability of particular sociotechnical configurations, for example (Wyatt, 2021, p. 408).

As it can be seen in the preceding sections, I have made a strong commitment to eco-evolutionary models. I believe it is worth exploring these metaphors in order to understand the ‘mutations’ of the different actors that make up the media ‘ecosystem’. In this context, the eco-evolutionary metaphor offers the possibility to frame both long-term and short-term transformations, both in their micro and macro dimensions (Scolari, 2013, 2018, 2020; Scolari & Rapa, 2019).

It is important to remember that metaphors also ‘shape’ actions and technological developments:

The metaphors we use to frame our experiences . . . matter; in that they can construct both the enabling and limiting features of our technologies. These frames spread through everyday terminologies and visual imageries (Markham & Tiidenberg, 2020, p. 9).

Understanding media and mediated communication processes from an eco-evolutionary metaphor places at the center of attention the consequences of those actions on the rest of the actors, whether individual, institutional, technological, or biological. Finally, it should be remembered that metaphors never rest:

What we called ‘surfing’; we now call ‘sharing’. What was once ‘cyberspace’ and ‘The Net’ are now ‘platforms’. What we once called ‘online’ or ‘networked’ is now ‘IoT’ and ‘smart’. All of these are metaphors, but we might be less likely to notice them as such, because this is how dominant metaphors work (Markham & Tiidenberg, 2020, p. 9).

As Markham and Tiidenberg point out, metaphors are not fixed, they also ‘evolve’, expand their universes of meaning and ‘hybridize’ with other metaphors. Like a ‘virus’, metaphors contaminate not only our discourse but also our thinking. If metaphors make up an ‘ecosystem’ and ‘evolve’, then the eco–evolutionary approach could be considered as a *metaphorical meta–model for analyzing other metaphors, their relationships, and changes*.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to make a call for ‘metaphorical experimentation’. This is an invitation addressed especially to doctoral students: you must not limit yourselves to reproducing theoretical models, but rather you should create new analytical frameworks. The development of new and creative metaphors is part of that process. As Wyatt put it, despite the pitfalls of metaphorical constructions,

it is worth experimenting with our language. Metaphors, science fiction, speculation and imaginaries can reveal new thoughts or feelings to ourselves and to others and may open up new lines of theoretical enquiry, empirical investigation, technological design and political action (Wyatt, 2021, p. 413).

The choice, creation, and testing of metaphors is an unpredictable process that could lead to new theoretical developments and, why not, improve the quality of our mediatised communication processes. ■

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Imagery of abortion and medial communication

Imaginário do aborto e comunicação medial

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ABSTRACT

This article aimed to present abortion as an aesthetic experience in which a medial communication flow is interrupted. To show how mediality occurs in the female body, we searched for possible sources of fear in the almost absence of mythical representation of abortion and resorted to the concept of “nobjects” (blood, sounds, amniotic fluid) to identify a type of relationship between mother and fetus in which both are indistinguishable. We conclude that the body plays a converter role in dealing with the suffering generated by the rupture of the medial flow. Finally, we addressed the need for further exploration on the theme, which constitutes a discursive interdict, although tolerated in most traditional societies.

Keywords: Abortion, communication, media, body, woman

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RESUMO

Este texto visa apresentar o aborto como uma experiência estética em que um fluxo de comunicação medial é interrompido. Para mostrar como a medialidade se dá no corpo feminino, buscamos as possíveis fontes do medo na quase ausência de representação mítica do aborto e recorremos ao conceito de “nobjetos” (sangue, sons, líquido amniótico) para identificar um tipo de relação entre mãe e feto em que ambos não se distinguem. Concluímos sobre o papel de conversor do corpo para se lidar com o sofrimento gerado pela ruptura do fluxo medial. Por fim, abrimos o texto para a necessidade de maior exploração do assunto, que constitui um interdito discursivo, todavia tolerado na maioria das sociedades tradicionais.

Palavras-chave: Aborto, comunicação, mídia, corpo, mulher



D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

But we shall do what we have always done: whatever one casts into us, we take down into our depth – for we are deep, we do not forget – and become bright again. (Nietzsche)

¹ Abortion or miscarriage is the process of voluntary and involuntary termination of pregnancy up to the 20th week or with the fetus weighing up to 500 grams, when the gestational stage is unknown (Rocha & Andalaft Neto, 2003).

² In the Yoruba language, àbíkú means “born-to-die”, or “children are born to die many times” (Verger, 1983).

³ We designated as infra- and suprasensible the levels of reality – to resume an expression developed by the transdisciplinary physicist Basarab Nicolescu (2009) – immediately below (infra) and above (supra) what we are given to experience in our physical reality; they are the psychic perceptions of the invisible, impalpable, inaudible and that, however, through some developed sensitive faculty, become accessible and are perceived, such as premonitions, intuitions, inspirations, clairvoyant phenomena, expansion of consciousness, etc.

⁴ We used the notion of chiasm, employed by Kamper (2016) in the sense of something that is cross-disposed and cannot be read except in two directions, at the same time united and contradictory.

IN THIS ARTICLE we aim to present abortion¹ as a phenomenon of interruption of the medial communicational flow, using the category proposed by Sloterdijk (2016) of mediality. In this reflection, we started from the media-body, a traversed body, a place for the passage of positive and negative forces that affect us. We assume that the media-body (Baitello Jr, 2014; Pross, 1972) is a living, dynamic and fluid body, participating in a cosmic universal order/disorder, but also in a planetary, physic, biological order. We look at the abjection (Kristeva, 1980) that we qualify as energetic-spiritual although it is physically manifested in the women’s body: the abortion of a fetus, the birth of a dead child or of an àbíkú², a child destined to die before its parents. It is death, but it can only happen if preceded by life; therefore, we consider that it is a phenomenon of *life/death in the female body*. Menstrual blood carries with it the stigma not only of the uselessness of waste, but also of potential death within the female body; something that can be morally considered a mistake. However, we sought to detach the phenomenon of premature life/death of a fetus or a child from any moral issue linked to failure, weakness or error, whether moral or physiological. We think in energetic and also communicational terms, attempting to disassociate the notion of negativity and death from the moral notion of evil.

The notion of medial communication, which happens in and among bodies, is situated in the perspective of an observational and analytical exercise of phenomena that we qualify as extended communication (Dravet, 2019; Marcondes & Dravet, 2021) because it passes through the infra and suprasensible levels of reality³. These are levels that the imagination can reach and bring up in speech, gesture, images, and every form of expression that it is possible to use. We are interested in thinking from the experience of the body, what is lived, felt, and perceived with the phenomenon of intrauterine life/death and the birth of a being that dies prematurely. We deal with sensibility between beauty and ugliness, and what causes pleasure and repulsion. We try to understand what happens beyond morality, with the body in chiasm⁴, investigating communication in aesthetic terms.

In this perspective and in search of concepts that can feed a theory of body-media and extended communication, we bring the proposal of Peter

Sloterdijk (2016) who elaborates a “medial analysis” of the “nobjects” of the body: blood, sound and breath. Regarding these “nobjects,” there is a concept he himself found in the works of Thomas Macho⁵, the philosopher wrote:

Nobjects. These are entities given in a spherically enfolding way that, in the mode of non-confrontational presence, glide as beings originating from proximity, in the literal sense of the term, before a self that does not face back, precisely the fetal pre-subject. Its being near (which is not yet a demonstrable being) is transmitted to the child above all by the first gift made to it: the placental blood. (Sloterdijk, 2016, p. 268) (Sloterdijk, 2016, p. 268)

⁵ Austrian philosopher, born in 1952 in Vienna, he holds the chair of Cultural History in the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies at Humboldt University, Berlin.

The “medial analysis” takes place in terms of non-separated and non-separable dyads, in which no subject-object relationship can be established without taking away its intrinsic condition of dyad, dual unity, one duality, which implies “reciprocal dissolubility”. The fetal condition, as a vital experience, although prior to birth, is one that, to be treated in relational and communicational terms, needs what Sloterdijk (2016, p. 269) calls a “regime of radical mediality”, in the fluid realm of corporal “nobjects.”

This article follows a three-step organization: 1) The female body as a place that not only historically, but also atavistically, inspires fear for its relationship to the negative part of the world. By way of contextualization, the telluric images of the cave and the womb, and aquatic images and their connections with the moon in the mythical imagery are resumed here. 2) The event of life/death in the female body in abortion and stillbirth, phenomena that are absent from the mythologies of archaic societies and representations. 3) A communicational perspective of the female relation to life/death in the body, in which this is conceived first as a force of inversion that runs through the female body and second as a force of regeneration.

FEAR AND THE EUPHEMIZATION OF THE NEGATIVE

The imagery of evil has placed woman as the agent of Satan, and we know that Western Judeo-Christian history took this misogyny to its highest degree of accusation and concretization with the witch hunts during the Middle Ages. But that was not all. It is possible to consider, as does Jean Delumeau, regarding the female body, that we are in presence of a “spontaneous fear”, distinct from the historically constructed “reflected fear” discourse.

D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

At the beginning of the Modern Age, in Western Europe, anti-Judaism and witch-hunting coincided. It was not by chance. Like the Jews, women were then identified as a dangerous agent of Satan; and not only by churchmen, but also by lay judges. [„] We need to clarify this complex situation and, furthermore follow, from a new example, the transformation by the ruling culture of a spontaneous fear into a reflected fear. (Delumeau, 1990, p. 310)

It is of our interest the “spontaneous fear” that can have aesthetic characteristics, linked both to the telluric images of the bottom of the earth mystery, and the aquatic images of the also mysterious oceanic universe. A primordial imagery capable of tormenting men by presenting itself not only to their field of vision, but also and above all to their internal vision, inhabiting their dreams, reveries and fantasies; instigating their curiosity, inciting their desire and causing them repulsion. These original images of atavistic power cross times and historical, social and religious processes; they are independent of cultural interpretations, artistic and literary creation, and political discourses, theoretical discussions, and their notions of freedom and equality. The hypothesis of a spontaneous fear implies that, before all these historical and interpretive issues, psychic images already existed and that, amidst the whole cultural process, they remain active.

Gilbert Durand (2002) called the “nocturnal regime of images” the set of psychic images linked to the descent into the universe of the night, the abyss, the cave and the oceanic depths. In his anthropological conception of the way images constitute a structured system in human consciousness (in myths, art, and literature, for example), euphemization and conversion are the two forms of symbolic approach to this nocturnal universe of descent. It becomes evident when reading Durand’s study that the nocturnal imagery presents a destructive and annihilating potential, the potential of the fall, which makes this whole set of images something unbearable for the human mind and psyche. A series of literary, artistic and mythological subterfuges allow us to mitigate the negative effect of images of death, abyss, hellish cycles, infinite, unknown, etc.

⁶The expression “unlearning fear” is originally used by Mircea Eliade in his book *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1958).

It is about “unlearning fear”⁶. This is one of the reasons why the imagination of descent requires more precautions than ascension. It requires armor, or a mentor to accompany it, a whole arsenal of machines and machinations more complex than wings, so simple an appanage for taking off. This is because descent risks becoming confused and turning into a fall at any moment. It must continually reinforce itself, as if to reassure itself, with the symbols of intimacy. (Durand, 2002, p. 200-201)

The black hole associated with the female interior universe and the return to the origins (the vaginal opening and uterine cavity), as it implies a fall into the abyss, is euphemized by the image of the cave which, little by little, is transformed by narrative production and artistic representation into a protective womb where a fetus is maternally generated. The imagery of the woman then becomes that of the archetypal figure of the great mother with her protective bosom, with consoling and comforting virtues and gentleness, etc. But what is at the origin of the cave and the womb-cabinet is, in fact, the great fear of the unknown mystery, of the night, the fall and the abyss.

Along with the conversion of the fall into a slow descent, the association between death and rebirth is also a way of euphemizing conversion. There is death, but always compensated by a birth.

It is impressive that caves are precisely the proper places of the cults of death and rebirth: caves of Demeter, Dionysus, Mithra, Cybele and Atis, catacombs of the first Christians; churches, basilicas, cathedrals are man-made caves, but obscure, naked and resounding like the natural cave; they carry within them, as a uterus in a womb, the subterranean crypt. (Morin, 1997, p. 123)

As in a perception in negative – or through a system of compensation – it is possible to see the imagery of the cave and its relations with the female chthonic deities and the alternation life/death as a universal complex of conversion of the great original fear related to what is feminine, to its deep, empty and annihilating dimension. The jagged vaginas, present images in several archaic myths and that can be understood as representations of the fear of the castrating woman, were gradually replaced by rounded wombs and breasts, by wide hips and by all the symbolism of what is round. The images of the plenilunium and the rounded womb of the pregnant woman stereotyped the maternal archetype. “And in the rounded landscape, everything seems to rest. The round being propagates its roundness and the inside it” (Bachelard, 2003, p. 241). The woman-mother and the earth-mother are one, both venerated and revered in the caves, like Demeter, the great agricultural provider, who also, in her archaic versions, swallows the dead to make them reborn.

The exhibitionist myth of Baubo, the personification of the female sex taken from the Orphic tradition, is situated exactly in the interstice of the death/life relationship attributed to the goddess Demeter. She weeps, lamenting the disappearance of her beloved daughter, Persephone, taken to the realm of Hades. In despair, she refuses to eat and drink. Baubo her servant, trying to console the

goddess, lifted her dress and showed her vulva. The young Iacchus was there, half born from the vulva of the old Baubo, waving his arms, flashing his smile in a comic and grotesque scene that makes the goddess laugh. Comforted, she accepts the drink that Baubo offered her.

The founder of ethnopsychiatry, Georges Devereux, spent 50 years working on the Baubo myth. His perspective was to show, among other things, that the female sex was an object of worship, but was largely disowned by phallogocentric cultures. It was a cult linked to laughter arising from exhibitionist sexual provocations among women. Devereux notes that such provocations are still very well received by mourners like Demeter, and that laughter offers powerful therapeutic solutions. The argument is logical and simple, yet it seems to be part of a way of thinking and acting that the prevailing morality makes us keep silent. Regarding Baubo's power of consolation, Devereux interprets:

It is this precise spectacle, evoking a birth that animates Demeter again, reminding her that, although she has lost Persephone, who descended to the Realm of the Dead, nothing prevents her from giving birth to another child. We know, on the other hand - and this is a capital detail - that precisely during her mourning and her wandering, Demeter, metamorphosed into a mare, became pregnant by Poseidon in the form of a stallion. (Devereux, 2011, p. 50)⁷.

⁷In the original: "C'est ce spectacle précis, évoquant une naissance, qui ragaillardit Déméter, car il lui rappelle que, bien qu'elle ait perdu Perséphone, descendue au Royaume des Morts, rien ne l'empêche de donner naissance à un *autre* enfant. On sait alors - et c'est là un détail capital - que, *précisément* durant son deuil et son errance, Déméter, métamorphosée en jument, fut saillie par Poseidon sous la forme d'un étalon."

If death implies rebirth, female regeneration also implies annihilation. Menstrual blood, a potential of life, is also morbid dejection when it is monthly evacuated, in an abject and useless leftover, dangerous and threatening to the generational order of life expectancy that reigns in the diurnal universe of images: ascending, luminous, positive. Life is celebrated on cards announcing happy births, but death, potentially contained in the menstrual blood that flows out of the female body is rejected, attesting the failure, the non-generation, a kind of small death remembered at each lunar cycle. The female attachment to the moon then corroborates the original fear of the mystery of the night.

It is not only the chthonic image of the cave that torments human beings in their perception of feminine strength and energy. Water also carries with it the frightening imagery of depth, the currents, the darkness and the mysterious silence that leads to the Kingdom of the Dead. Also, and with the same ambivalence, water is the cradle of embryonic life. Life and death are linked in the mysteriously contradictory figure of the woman-mother.

Waters do not evoke death just because they are dormant, and birth just because they are fertile. They bring with them a cosmomorphic beyond that moves the

deepest in man: they speak of the language of origins, which is maybe confusedly recognized. This does not mean that man has kept the memory of his intramarine, intrauterine life in the exact sense of the term. But maybe the reminiscences of those lives are still felt. (Morin, 1997, p. 128-129)

The universe of maternal intimacy is aquatic and there is no human being who has not passed through it to come to the world. In the next section we address the presence of death in the female body, no longer from the point of view of interpretations and the converter and euphemizing subterfuges of the imagination, but from the absence of images of the experience of the negative.

LIFE/DEATH IN THE FEMALE BODY – THE GREAT ABSENTEE OF REPRESENTATION

Although menstrual blood is always the sign of non-generation and implicitly reminds of the potentiality of life (woman at childbearing age) as much as of death (she is not giving birth), the interruption of a pregnancy with an abortion, no matter whether provoked or spontaneous is the most evident experience of the presence of death in the female body. That this is perhaps one of the most absent themes in anthropology, and it is not due to a prejudice of science and anthropologists, but to the lack of mythological evidence and representations in the set of available references on archaic, ancient and modern societies. Apparently, there is no explicit system in the imagery on what is feminine that allows “unlearning the fear” of life/death in the female body

According to Luc Boltanski (2012), Devereux’s study, a study of abortion in primitive societies, published in 1955, constitutes one of the most complete surveys ever done on the theme, based on the Human relations area files, at Yale University, and on research data directly collected by the author. The main observation is that in all studied societies (more than 400 pre-industrial societies) the possibility of removing fetuses from the womb before birth to intentionally destroy them seems to be part of fundamental frameworks of human existence in society. Also according to Boltanski:

In most societies in which information is available, it seems that the means used to perform an abortion are of *common knowledge*, even if some people (who generally act as midwives) are held to be more knowledgeable or more skillful than others. In fact, many of the means employed to induce an abortion are difficult to apply and known to be more or less dangerous. They cause fear, but that does not prevent anyone from resorting to them when the need to abort seems to impose itself. (Boltanski, 2012, p. 210)

D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

Even so, practice is not reflected in myths, rituals, or representations of archaic societies. There is almost no social mechanism to address the theme collectively. We have a very small *corpus* of myths associated with aborted fetuses and stillbirths, or children born to die early. We discussed some of them here. But what seems more important at a first moment is dealing with this absence of representation. It brings us back to the realities of the occult realm, that must remain quiet and silenced, whose revelation appears as uncomfortable and inconvenient, perfectly framing abortion in the universe of the disturbing, presented by Sigmund Freud as the notion of *Unheimlich*:

We are reminded that the term *heimlich* is not univocal, but belongs to two groups of ideas which, not being opposites, are alien to each other: that of what is familiar, cozy, and what is hidden, kept concealed. *Unheimlich* would normally be used as an antonym of the first meaning, but not the second. Sanders told us nothing about a possible genetic relationship between the two meanings. Our attention is attracted, on the other hand, by an observation by Schelling, which brings something entirely new and unexpected to us. *Unheimlich* would be everything that should remain secret, hidden, but appeared [...] Therefore, *heimlich* is a word that develops its meaning in the direction of ambiguity, until it finally coincides with its opposite. *Unheimlich* is in some sense a kind of *heimlich*.” (Freud, 2010, p. 254-256)

Abortion is therefore, like a woman’s vagina and vulva, a familiar and unsettling reality at the same time. Women have abortions, either clandestinely in countries where, starting in the 19th century, abortion became a legal object and was massively forbidden, or discreetly in countries in which the practice is legal although socially reprehended. In both cases, it is not talked about, such experience is not narrated. The same happens when it comes to spontaneous abortion. Clandestine or discreet, the death crossing the female body is something that is kept hidden, remaining only in the most recondite psychic images.

In modernity, abortion as a theme appears in the context of political claims, either for or against the woman’s right to practice it voluntarily. In Brazil, according to Luna (2014), in an article on the representations of abortion through images in Brazilian documentaries, it is in the cases of pro-life discourses that fetuses are represented: “In order to formalize the denunciation of abortion as a practice of evil in absolute terms, pro-life documentaries and slides resort to so-called realistic images of the remains of whole fetuses or shattered embryos” (Luna, 2014, unpaginated).

Although weakly, fetuses have also come to be represented by medicine or the biological sciences in the didactic-pedagogical context:

In fact, apart from the dolls and images intended to instruct doctors and midwives, which multiplied especially from the second half of the 18th century on, the fetus is strangely little present both in visual representation (rarity of religious images, representing Christ in the womb of the Virgin, as a fetus) and poetry, literature, myth and general discourse. (Boltanski, 2012, p. 221)

It is known that in China and Japan, voluntary termination of pregnancy and infanticide have been common practices over centuries. According to research conducted by Jolivet (2004), especially in Japan, until the 19th century and to a lesser extent still in the first half of the 20th century, abortion and infanticide functioned as a demographic control measure by the adult population, amid poverty in rural areas and the threat of overpopulation in the archipelago. However, to ensure the life of the mother, who represented an indispensable labor force for the family, infanticide soon after birth was more common than the termination of pregnancy, as it was considered dangerous. Only the wealthiest women could resort to professionals who performed abortions in a way that was considered safe. On the practice of *Mabiki*, Jolivet wrote:

The term *mabiki* (...) is a euphemism referring to the act of thinning a plant. It was a practice considered an unavoidable evil, intended to ensure the survival of the other members of the family. In the same state of mind, the life of the elders was “shortened”, as witnessed by “the mountains from which old people were thrown” (*ubasuteyama*). (Jolivet, 2004. p. 101)⁸

In this context, the instruction of Buddhist religious in favor of life took place through engravings depicting scenes of abortion and infanticide, displayed in the temples. According to the researcher and her sources, the display of such depictions inside temples had a double effect on society: on the one hand, it frightened women by causing them guilt and repentance (they were depicted as ogres or suffering in hell), on the other hand, it trivialized the theme. According to Boltanski (2012), regarding the little representation of abortion in culture, Japan is one of the rare societies in which there is a mythological being representing dead fetuses and newborns, with a cult and ritual to be fulfilled to avoid its wrath. It is the kappa, described by Jolivet as follows:

⁸In the original: “Le terme *mabiki* (...) est un euphémisme qui renvoie à l’acte d’éclaircir un plant. Il s’agissait d’une pratique considérée comme un mal inévitable, destiné à assurer la survie des autres membres de la maisonnée. Dans le même état d’esprit, on “abrégeait” la vie des plus âgés, comme en témoignent “les monts où on jetait les vieux” (*ubasuteyama*).”

D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

About the size of a child, this mythical being is represented with a slimy body, usually covered with scales and a tortoise shell. Amphibious and vampire-like, it haunts the ponds and rivers, on the prowl for some living being whose blood it seeks to suck. Some representations of kappa *disturbingly evoke* [emphasis added] an unfinished fetal body, mummified or in a relative advanced degree of decomposition. (Jolivet, 2004, p. 118-119)⁹

⁹In the original: “De la taille d’un enfant, cet être mythique est représenté avec un corps visqueux, généralement recouvert d’écailles et d’une carapace de tortue. Amphibie et vampire, il hante les marécages et les rivières à l’affût d’un être vivant dont il cherche à sucer le sang. Certaines représentations de kappa évoquent de façon troublante un corps de foetus inachevé, momifié ou dans un état de décomposition plus ou moins avancé.”

To prevent an aborted child from becoming a “daughter of water” (possible interpretation of the origin of the word *kappa*) and probably also as a way to appease the parents of the returned children before they were even born, they wrote *koema* or letters addressed to the gods or to the spirits of the aborted children themselves. Some temples specialized in rituals for babies and cases of problematic motherhood still display them. Here is an example of the messages these letters might contain, quoted by Jolivet:

Forgive me/ for not being able to give birth to you/Rest in peace....

(With a note from the father below)

I ask for your forgiveness/I hope one day you will have the chance to be reborn/
And watch over our happiness.

(Jolivet, 2004, p. 126)¹⁰.

¹⁰In the original: “(Zôjôji, Tôkiô) (De la part de Jirô e Yurika): Pardonne-moi de ne pas avoir pu te mettre au monde/ Repose en paix... (avec, en bas, un mot du père) Je te demande pardon/ J’espère que tu auras l’occasion de renaître un jour/ Et veille sur notre bonheur.”

The researcher’s article on abortion and infanticide in Japan ends with a reflection on the effectiveness of these rites – which are still currently used – in the psychological treatment of women who abort. Having a way to express something to the child who was not allowed to be born and was not welcomed into the world seems to act not only as a spiritual ritual to keep the kappa away, but also as a therapeutic ritual to diminish the parents’ guilt.

Given the weak mythology of abortion in culture, it is worthwhile to also address the existence of a myth of the stillborn, the *àbíkú*, in Yoruba African culture, especially in Nigeria. Information about this myth and its related rituals came to Brazil through the studies of Pierre Verger (1983).

It is believed that the *àbíkú* form societies in heaven and from time to time they are taken to earth to bring some teaching to their mothers, causing them the pain of loss by dying early and then returning to the region they inhabited in heaven. The *àbíkú* come into the world repeatedly and always through the same mother. The myths narrate that at the moment of descending to earth, these beings promise their companions that they will return and establish the term of their stay with their mother:

When *Aláwaiyé* first brought two hundred and eighty *àbíké* into the world, they had declared, upon passing the barrier of heaven, how long they would stay in the world (VII, 4, 10). One of them would propose to return to heaven as soon after seeing its mother (VII, 10); another would wait until the day its parents decided it should marry (VII, 11); another would return to heaven when its parents conceived a new child (VII, 15); one still would wait no longer than starting to walk (VII, 16). (Verger, 1983, p. 139)¹¹

Verger then tells us of a series of rituals done by the parents of these children, prescribed by the *babalawó*¹², to make them forget their promises of return, forget where they came from and remain on earth. But it is not always that the *àbíké* companions in heaven accept to lose their brothers. It is often that they come down to rescue them

The members of the *àbíké* society, *egbé ará òrum*, come from heaven to reside in the marshy places (II, 28) or in the gullies (II, 46; V, 20), whence they call the children who want to stay in the world. They also go to the foot of the walls (II, 47), there where they go to empty the dirt (II, 48). They stay in the rooms where people wash themselves (*balùwe*) at the back of the houses (III, 63), which are cool places where *owo*, the placenta of the newborns, is buried, placed in an *isàsún* vase, covered with shredded palm leaves, called *mariwó* and *cauris* (cowries). (Verger, 1983, p. 142).

It is almost immediate to notice the similarity between the habitat of the Japanese *kappa* and that of the *àbíké* who live in places of still water such as swamps, ponds and gullies. The slimy body of the *kappa*, its putrefying state, and the dirty habitat of the *àbíké* refer to the condition of the uterine origin of the aborted and stillborn fetus, dark and abject. They also refer to the negative condition of death and interruption of the course of life. These very rare representations show that, in a certain way, and even with all their euphemizing strategies, there are ways to face the problem of the death of the fetus and newborn child, and ward off the negative consequences of such events. The existence of these two images allows us to glimpse ways to “unlearn the fear” of this kind of death experience.

According to Diniz et al. (2017), from the National Abortion Survey 2016 (PNA 2016) study:

Abortion is common in Brazil. The numbers of women who declare having had an abortion in their lifetime are eloquent: roughly speaking, by the age of 40,

¹¹The numbers in parentheses refer to the reference *corpus* of the researcher's texts, the Ifá stories, the Yoruba divination system.

¹²In Yoruba culture, *babalawó* are holders of the secret, those who read the Ifá oracle and know how to advise people on the ritualistic ways to conduct their lives.

almost one in five of Brazilian women have had an abortion; in 2015 there were about half a million abortions. Considering that a large part of abortions are illegal and therefore are done outside full conditions of healthcare, these magnitudes indisputably place abortion as one of the biggest public health problems in Brazil. (Diniz et al., 2017, p. 659).

Currently, the intrauterine death of the fetus is, a reality experienced by millions of Brazilian women. As it constitutes an abjection so difficult to deal with, and amidst the absence of anthropological data that would allow dealing with the psychic images produced from it, we proceeded to inquire what kind of process take place in the most recondite obscurity of the already obscure uterine universe: the death of someone so deeply connected to herself? Would it be possible to establish some relation of familiarity for the phenomenon of uterine life/death to become less disturbing and come out of obscurity, since it directly affects thousands of women and, indirectly, all of humanity? We now propose an attempt to create a theoretical instrumentation capable of understanding the phenomenon of life/death in the female body in terms of medial aesthetic experience of ethical consequences.

VITAL FLOW INTERRUPTION: INVERSION AND REGENERATION

Every flow implies the possibility of its interruption, every interruption of flow implies the possibility of the generation of a new flow. In a *radical medial analysis* of the flows established there, we first try to perceive the kind of relationship woven between mother and embryo/fetus in the first instants of conception and throughout the stay in the womb. The reality is that we do not have a relationship between mother and fetus right away, since the process of implantation and development of the embryo in the mother's body from conception on, takes place in a relationship that we called *nobjetal*, resuming the above notion of *nobject* proposed by Thomas Macho and developed by Sloterdijk.

A *nobjetal* relation is an exclusively medial relation in which it is not possible to distinguish subject and object. There is no possible differentiation between the subject mother (who is fully constituted, externally and internally) and the object that is at that moment projecting itself: the embryo, supposedly a future fetus to be born in the form of a newborn child. There is no possible confrontation, although the co-presence is total and intimate. In the phase before nidation when, around five to fifteen days after fertilization, the embryo moves from the fallopian tubes to attach itself to the uterine wall, the pregnancy is still called chemical pregnancy by scientists. Any failure of the process in this period

is very common and is not considered an abortion. Many times such pregnancy failure is not even noticed by the woman who, in fact, may not have been aware that she was pregnant. From the medial point of view, the less molecular transit between the mother and the fertilized egg, the more discreet and less sensitive becomes the interruption of this transit. What we do not know is what happens during its displacement from the fallopian tubes to the uterus from the embryo's point of view. How does this descent take place, which fail in many cases? What kind of strength does the embryo need to release to overcome this first stage of its development? And what kind of impression does this initial challenge of life leave on its psycho-emotional constitution?

What goes on after implantation is the development of the embryo, which becomes a fetus and continues to establish with its mother an intimate relationship of increasingly intense exchanges that take place through corporal nobjects: placental blood, amniotic fluid, and sound. The fetus itself is considered a nobject since it is not possible for any subject to look and directly confront it. No matter how developed uterine imaging techniques are, they still bring the observing subjects images and sounds of the fetus, but not the fetus itself. It is still neither possible to exchange glances, nor to touch it.

In its nobject condition and in the medial relationship that then takes place between it and its environment (the maternal interior environment), the bond established with the mother is paradoxical: "what the mother has to give to the fetus is nothing more than what the fetus gives to itself through the mother" (Sloterdijk, 2016, p. 280). But if she is not in a position to offer it the elements it needs, or if by some original malformation it is not in a position to give itself what is vital to it through the mother, then the fragile cycle of life breaks down.

During the period of intrauterine life, blood and sound are the driving elements of the first fetal nobjetal relationship. If the medieval imagery – which lasted to some extent until the 19th century as far as fetal development is concerned – massively spread the idea that fetuses survived and developed in utero by drinking their mothers' menstrual blood. It is now known that placental blood is the means of nourishment for the fetus, ensuring the metabolic exchanges between it and the mother during pregnancy. Nutrients, antibodies, and oxygen pass from the mother's bloodstream to the placenta and flow into his body through the umbilical vein. At no time does the mother's blood mix with that of the fetus. Neither is it an exchange in the sense of a dialogue, but a fluidic communion, an immersive sharing. Inside the amniotic fluid, the fetus experiences during intrauterine life the perception of the mother's sound world and especially her voice. Sloterdijk calls this "psychoacoustic initiation" and shows how much this experience of being-in-the-sonosphere seems to determine

D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

the affective relationship that the individual will have with the sound world outside the womb, music heard together being a kind of fundamental germ for the formation of communities and for psychosocial life.

Children already listen remarkably well inside the womb, thanks to early ear development – perhaps from the embryonic stage and certainly during the second half of gestation. Moreover, striking observations attest that this early hearing capacity does not lead the fetus to passively surrender to its mothers' inner sound life, to voices and external noises filtered through water; rather, the fetal ear already develops the ability to actively orient itself in an aggressive and incessant sound environment by means of active and autonomous listening and counter-listening (Sloterdijk, 2016, p. 454).

Mother and child constitute a dyad. The mother nourishes herself and the fetus takes some of those nutrients from her for its own development. There is a dual vitality there that implies the symbiotic devouring of vital energies (internal and external) and the constant nourishment throughout the successive cycles of the development of the life that is constituted. The mother is fertilized and the cycle of conception begins. The embryo overcomes the first cycle with nidation. The mother is pregnant and the embryo becomes a fetus, the second cycle, in which miscarriages become rarer. The fetus wins the third cycle with birth: the mother is lactating and the newborn continues its vital cycle outside the womb in a medial connection, no longer of blood exchange, but of milky, sound and magnetic exchange: the magnetism of gaze and sound being two fundamental vectors for the establishment of the affective post-birth relationship between mother and child.

In terms of physical, biological and psychic energies, generation seems to be a story of anthropophagic vitality. However, in any of these cycles, the vitality can be abruptly interrupted. And the relationship between mother and embryo, mother and fetus, or mother and newborn may be reversed. We will now try to reach the impact of the disconnection caused by the death of the fetus as a form of interruption of flow, contamination of vital energy, and necessary expulsion.

From a social, cultural and moral point of view, there is an obligation for the pregnant and nursing mother to transmit happiness. Such happiness passes through sound conduction, when the welcoming vibrations of the mother's voice repeatedly greet the arriving child and make it participate in a close relationship of the promise of happiness. But when the fetus dies, or when the mother's will does not meet the general expectation, nor her own, what happens to the ongoing medial relationship?

We identify three phases in the process of the interruption of the gestational experience: first, a sudden reversal from the anthropophagic vital image to a morbid and melancholic one. What was once positive turns into negative, the vital flow is interrupted and becomes a biological threat of contamination and infection of the mother's intimate environment. In the medical context, this is verified in the practice of aspiration or curettage, surgical interventions that consist in, immediately after the abortion, removing the dead fetus from inside the uterus, whose fragments are discarded in the hospital garbage, without the mother, then generally under the effect of anesthesia, accompanying this removal. In psychic terms, the inversion affects the mother, and may generate a melancholic feeling, a sense of failure, of loss, or even a dramatic inner experience that may lead her to a depressive state.

Normally, when the dead fetus is not removed by medical operation, a second phase occurs: the biological organism recognizes the presence of death and naturally expels it along with the whole gestational apparatus (the placenta and the surrounding tissues) through strong contractions. The abortive woman who experiences this process then lives for some weeks with the dead fetus inside her body, which can generate anxiety for the expulsion, in the expectation of getting rid of a failed medial relationship and the possibility of contamination.

One can say that during this period the uterus becomes a real sarcophagus that the woman carries within herself. In an ideal situation, she would then respect her state of death and negativity and calmly await the time of expulsion. It would be a matter of facing two successive pains: that of mourning for the loss of the nobject, because whether it was desired or not, whether it was a happy or uncomfortable presence, the feeling of loss and failure in the vital exchange relationship hitherto underway is what most commonly happens; it is mostly a melancholic mourning, a feeling of emptiness that, like all melancholy arising from the loss of a close being, according to Sloterdijk (2016, p. 416), is "the psychic trail of a twilight of the gods in an individual case".

The second pain is the physical expulsion followed by the unsettling experience of feeling and identifying amidst the clotted blood, the tissues that constitute the dead fetus. For the pain of loss and expulsion to be bearable, one would need the wisdom of facing death, not denying it. Such wisdom seems to be taught by the Baubo myth quoted and commented above, as a promise of regeneration. After the loss of an aborted or stillborn child, it will be possible to procreate again. Lamentation and depression are then transformed into therapeutic laughter. For this, it is necessary to pass through the third phase: regeneration, as the myth seems to teach.

The therapeutic effect of regeneration is often limited to the idea of replacement associated with the possibility of generating again. According to Boltanski (2012), many women attribute the pregnancy following an abortion to the coming of the same being, a sign that a successful pregnancy comes to replace the failed one. In any case, to generate again, one must go through a purification process that, in the modern context, tends to be understood in biological terms. The regeneration of the woman's uterine health thus depends on the successful expulsion of the fetus and the entire gestational sac. This will be followed by a long period of bleeding, a moment of cleansing of the uterine environment. Medicine prefers to guarantee this cleaning through an artificially monitored hygienization process: aspiration, curettage, ultrasounds and transvaginal examinations guarantee the woman's physical safety after an abortion or the birth of a dead fetus. The post-abortion period is treated as a period of safeguarding the female reproductive system.

As we have seen, the myth of Baubo weakly survived the supremacy of the luminous and positive imagery of the modern era. In modern philosophy, only Nietzsche makes reference to Baubo in the preface to *Gay Science*: "Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting us see her reasons? Perhaps her name is-to speak Greek-Baubo?" (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 38); the author hints that there is something to apprehend about truth in hidden knowledge, not by lifting the veils of the hidden, but recognizing that rebirth comes from pain and depth.

As we have seen, abortion and early death are not represented and present weak mythology. This is a theme that remains hidden and quietly silenced even among those who practice it. The aborted fetus is neither seen nor spoken about except in the sphere of abjections. We suppose that this may be related to the horror of blood as a noobject capable of deeply connecting every being to its mother. Thinking in terms of ancestry and origin, every human being has been connected to his mother in the uterine envelope, establishing with her a noobject relationship hardly apprehensible to a thought whose tradition is limited to the objective conception of knowledge.

The lack of concepts to deal with this kind of relationship is a sign of the lack of possibility or will to understand the nocturnal and disturbing phenomenon of life/death in the female body. To understand this, one must go back to the history of the horror of maternal blood, the unbearable witness of the reproductive act, the fertile age of the woman and the exclusive intimate relationship she establishes with her child, which can be assessed by the following passage from the defamatory handbook of the world, *De humanae conditionis miseria*, by Lothario of Segni, the one who, in 1198, would become Pope Innocent III:

Observe what food the fetus is nourished on in the womb: certainly menstrual blood, which is interrupted after conception so that the fetus may be nourished on it, and of which it is said to be so disgusting and filthy that ‘in contact with it the fruits do not germinate, the bushes dry up, the plants die, the trees lose their leaves, and the dogs that eat it become rabid’ (Segni apud Sloterdijk, 2016, p. 556).

As dated as such a quote may seem, it is clear that it is accompanied, as we saw in the first part of this text, by a whole imagery of the spontaneous fear of the cavity represented by the woman and its liquid environment. Blood and its viscosity, when associated with loss, form a set of psychic images that are unbearable enough to make the task of “unlearning fear” pointed out by Mircea Eliade unfeasible until it becomes the object of massive deconstruction.

A wisdom of confronting death and abjections can be glimpsed in the Nietzschean proposal of *Gay Science*, from which the incipit of this article is taken: “But we shall do what we have always done: whatever one casts into us, we take down into our depth – for we are deep, we do not forget – *and become bright again*. [emphasis added]” (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 341). That is the proposal of regeneration. To let oneself be affected by death, filth, vile thoughts, and all sorts of abjections is part of the human condition, a deep condition whose origin goes back to the beginning of time and which has always had to go through the successive cycles of life and death. To enter and allow oneself to be contaminated by the abject reality of dark universes is proper of beings who, like oysters, welcome the diversity of the world in all its aspects – positive and negative, superficial and deep – and set out to regenerate them, through a sometimes lengthy but necessary process of purification.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In an attempt to disentangle the issue of abortion and premature death from its moral interpretations, we have tried here to treat the female body as if in a chiasm, a place of mediality in which the relationship established between the mother and her child is constitute in a radical dyad, which will remain for the entire life of the adult subject. This original dyad allows the development of the subject’s experience in relation to the mother, in an indissoluble way, but it can also be abruptly interrupted by the death of the fetus or the newborn child. We realize there seems to be no possibility of confronting the primordial fear of the death of the fetus, which is the ultimate concretization of the fear pertinence. One dies from trying to live. One suffers from trying to give birth

D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

or from not wanting to give birth. However, such death and suffering is not collectively taken care of.

For this reason and to conclude, it is necessary to make an observation about the converser role assumed by the female body in the establishment of a compensatory order, which ratifies the notion of body-media.

The experience of generating is one that, in biology, is feminine. Female bodies pass from the status of uterine content (when they were generated) to that of continent (when they generate), i.e., through a process of role reversal, an inversion of place. Nathan (1988), in his book *Le sperme du diable. Éléments d'ethnopsychothérapie*, brings several cases of trance treatment by body inversion. For instance, cases in which the body of a person agitated by a trance is slathered with the blood of a sacrificed animal whose entrails are then turned over and tied to the body of the patient in crisis. This treatment recalls the need for conversion and corporal inversion, the inner parts exteriorized from a therapeutic perspective. There is then the perception that possession crises – which usually affect more women than men – and hysteria crises can be linked to this traumatic uterine experience.

The converser body, in the case of a hysterical crisis or trance, becomes the media that connects two worlds: the inner world and the outer world; the feminine depth and the masculine exteriority. Two heterogeneous worlds, Nathan would say. In the case of the abortion experience, it is also about connecting two heterogeneous worlds: the world of uterine life and the world of uterine death. Such a conversion can only take place through a complex therapeutic process that, with the end of cults to female divinities, our scientific and disenchanting societies are far from being able to achieve.

It would take an effort of imagery construction so that the aborted being, until now almost totally absent of representation and denied by mythological narratives, but also kept silent by social structures, could begin to appear and come out of its hidden condition.

Some artists, such as Frida Kahlo (1907-1954)¹³, Tracey Emin (1963-)¹⁴ and Paula Rego (1935-)¹⁵, are among the few who dared to produce poetic representations of their painful experiences of miscarriage and premature loss. The production being almost inexistent and belonging to the domain of the disturbing, it would be worthwhile to dwell a little on it, in a perspective of imagery construction in search of “unlearning the fear” of life/death in the female body and, little by little, being able to face it as a traumatic reality lacking adequate therapeutic solutions. ■

¹³ Among other works in which the artist refers to her abortion experiences, in *Frida y el aborto* (1932) the Mexican painter draws herself with a baby in her womb: an umbilical cord ties the already developed fetus to the mother's leg; on the other leg, blood drips and seeps into the earth – “from dust we came, to dust we shall return. Tears decorate the face of the childless mother.

¹⁴ In 2007 the English painter presented 27 watercolors about her experiences with abortion in the series entitled *Abortion Watercolours*

¹⁵ In 1998, when the proposal to legalize abortion in Portugal was defeated in a first referendum, the painter Paula Rego produced a series of ten pastel paintings that bluntly depict women experiencing abortions. An analysis of Paula Rego's work *UNTITLED* can be read in Leitão (2008).

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D

Imagery of abortion and medial communication

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Cinema Novo and 20th century avant-garde music

Cinema Novo e música de vanguarda do século XX

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ABSTRACT

Although 20th century avant-garde music was not prevalent in Cinema Novo's soundtracks, it was still quite present in films by Glauber Rocha, Walter Lima Júnior and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, consisting of pre-existing music by Edgar Varèse, Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, Michel Philippot, Marlos Nobre, Ernst Widmer, Jaceguay Lins, Walter Smetak, Jon Appleton and Al Kooper. After mapping these musical works in the films, I analyze to which extent they were associated to the images either in a more conventional way or with creative propositions. I also consider the role of the phonographic production of the time for the choices of this repertoire and the relationships of those directors with contemporary avant-garde music.

Keywords: Avant-garde music, Cinema Novo, phonographic production, film analysis.

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RESUMO

Embora não tenha sido predominante no Cinema Novo, a música de vanguarda do século XX não deixou de estar presente em filmes de Glauber Rocha, Walter Lima Júnior e Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, englobando obras preexistentes de Edgar Varèse, Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, Michel Philippot, Marlos Nobre, Ernst Widmer, Jaceguay Lins, Walter Smetak, Jon Appleton e Al Kooper. Fazemos um mapeamento dessa produção e analisamos como as músicas desses compositores se associam às imagens, seja de modo mais convencional, seja com proposições criativas. Observamos o papel da produção fonográfica da época para essas escolhas e a relação dos diretores com um repertório em geral contemporâneo aos filmes.

Palavras-chave: Música de vanguarda, Cinema Novo, produção fonográfica, análise fílmica.

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¹ About music in Cinema Novo in general, see the fundamental research of Guerrini Júnior (2009), which highlights, among other characteristics, the omnipresence of pre-existing music by Heitor Villa-Lobos in the soundtracks of Cinema Novo films of the 1960s.

² The object of this article is not the experimental music in general, but music that continues the tradition of the so-called “Western classical music” (“art music”, or “concert music”, this last one being a less hierarchical term, but also less used in the fields of Cinema and Communication). The boundaries of the concept could be argued, but this discussion does not fit the scope of this article. Besides, I prefer the term “avant-garde” to “contemporary” – the one with which Neves (2008) designates the music from the second half of the 20th century - because I also refer to works from the first decades of the 20th century, something that has been identified as “modern music” and I would like to have here only one designation, even if not totally satisfactory.

³ Though the inventive soundtrack made by Brazilian avant-garde composer Guilherme Vaz for the film *Hunger for Love* (*Fome de amor*, Nelson Pereira dos Santos, 1968), the director Nelson Pereira dos Santos was not included in the *corpus*, because he is from a previous generation and had quite different experiences than the ones who began to make feature films in the 1960s. As for Walter Lima Júnior, though considered of a “second generation” of Cinema Novo (Carvalho, 2009), he was included due to the important presence of pre-existing classical repertoire in his films.

THE BRAZILIAN CINEMA NOVO was not particularly characterized by the use of contemporary music in the soundtracks¹. In Brazilian cinema as a whole, contemporary music was better represented by Rogério Duprat’s compositions for Walter Hugo Khouri’s films. On the other hand, what I am designating as “20th century avant-garde music” encompasses music from the avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s to electroacoustic music (which was contemporary to the 1960s-1970s Cinema Novo)², and it is present in films of three Cinema Novo directors: Glauber Rocha, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade and Walter Lima Júnior³. In their cases, the music works are pre-existing to the films, even when contemporary to them.

This article aims to analyze this understudied pre-existing repertoire within the context of music in Cinema Novo. Starting by mapping 75 films by eight directors (Glauber Rocha, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, Paulo César Saraceni, Carlos Diegues, Walter Lima Júnior, David Neves, Leon Hirszman and Ruy Guerra) from 1959 to 1980, I have identified the musical works (having considered a broader definition of Cinema Novo, which includes Glauber Rocha’s last film, because, taking into account the aspect of use of pre-existing music, there is a continuity, as we can see, for instance, in the permanence of Villa-Lobos in Glauber Rocha’s films in the 1970s)⁴, and separated, as objects for a more detailed aesthetic analysis, those which contained excerpts of contemporary avant-garde music.

Of the eight directors of initial mapping, only the three previously quoted employed contemporary pre-existing music in the following films, among which there are fiction, documentary and experimental films: *Terrace* (*O patio*, Glauber Rocha, 1959)⁵, *Antonio das Mortes* (*O dragão da maldade contra o santo guerreiro*, Glauber Rocha, 1969), *At Nightfall* (*Na boca da noite*, Walter Lima Júnior, 1971), *Architecture: the Transformation of Space* (*Arquitetura: transformação do espaço*, Walter Lima Júnior, 1972)⁶, *The Conspirators* (*Os inconfidentes*, Joaquim Pedro de Andrade, 1972), *Conversation with Cascudo* (*Conversa com Cascudo*, Walter Lima Júnior, 1977), *The Lyre of Delight* (*A Lira do delírio*, Walter Lima Júnior, 1978). In *Terrace* there are only avant-garde music works, while in the other films there is quite a variety of musical genres.

As for the composers in the soundtracks of these films, there are important names of the avant-garde of the 1920-1930s, like Edgar Varèse, pioneers and developers of *musique concrète*, like Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry and Michel Philippot, Swiss-Brazilians Ernst Widmer and Walter Smetak, Brazilian Jaceguay Lins, American Jon Appleton, as well alive composers, such as Brazilian Marlos Nobre and American Al Kooper.

According to film analysis methodologies, I consider the relationships of the music excerpts with the images with which they are associated, as well taking the film as a whole into account. I also consider the meanings that the music works may bring from their extra-filmic contexts. Since the parts of the article are divided by each director, they will be unequal in size, being larger those referring to Glauber Rocha and Walter Lima Júnior and much smaller that of Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. To reach the totality of the identification of the music works, it was important to find the Long-Plays discs containing some of the pre-existing music of the films, as well the music identification by Youtube (in the case of the films contained in the platform) or by programs such as Shazam and SoundHound.

To research music works in a large *corpus* of films from a time when characteristically the complete music credits were not provided or, sometimes, composers were not even mentioned, is to treat these films as historical objects. Some findings - for example, the existence of the Funarte records or the great presence in the soundtracks of composers who studied or taught at the Federal University of Bahia, as will be considered in the article - are made possible with the analysis of the empirical material. In addition, the immanent aesthetic analysis of the film excerpts can indicate how these directors and films related themselves to the ordinary use of music in films of the time and their conventions.

AVANT-GARDE CLASSICAL MUSIC AND CINEMA: A SHORT PANEL UNTIL THE 1960S⁷

In the 1920s, when Schoenberg composed his first dodecaphonic music works, cinema had already been part of the culture for more than two decades. The musical accompaniment of the films was done live, but such avant-garde pieces were not included (at least not constantly), as we can see in music collections published at the time, such as *Motion Picture Moods* by Erno Rapée (1924).

With the advent of sound cinema at the end of the 1920s, one could hope that it would be finally possible to adjust the compass between the novelties in music composition and cinema, since the entire sound component would come from the productive axis of cinema, being no longer so dependent on the exhibition pole. At this time, French-American composer Edgar Varèse began to include Martenot waves in his music, and we highlight his work *Ionisation*, from 1929-1931, (a work used by Glauber Rocha in *Terrace*), composed for percussion instruments and including a siren. However, the musical style adopted by the classical narrative cinema of the 1930s to 1960s was the symphonic pattern

⁴ Post-doctoral project developed in the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Música at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, financed with PNPd-CAPEs scholarship.

⁵ Although it is not exactly a film of the Cinema Novo movement, we began our mapping by it. As a matter of fact, Glauber Rocha returns to an electroacoustic repertoire ten years later in *Antonio das Mortes*.

⁶ Even though the medium-length film was produced within the Globo Shell project, Walter Lima Júnior had creative freedom and control over it.

⁷ This panel, due to its extremely small size, contains only composers and movements that relate more directly to what will be treated in the article.

of post-romantic and impressionist characteristics, which was the matrix of many composers of the time, such as Austrians active in Hollywood Max Steiner and Erich Korngold, or Georges Auric in French cinema.

It is true that atonal elements were not alien to these compositions, but their basis was tonal. As Oliveira (2018, p. 194) notes, until the mid-1940s, “there were few soundtracks that made use of atonalities, unusual instrumentation, or any experiments of the musical avant-garde.” The few cases were generally restricted to passages suggestive of suspense or to indicate moments of a character’s “altered consciousness”, as in *Spellbound* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1945) or *The lost weekend* (Billy Wilder, 1945).

In the mainstream cinema of the 1950s, the “use of electronic instruments, electroacoustic music, textures, minimalism, and all sorts of modern experimentation” became characteristics of the “representation of the ‘strange’ element”, fundamental in the science fiction genre (Oliveira, 2018, p. 192). In other words, the musical avant-garde got its way into cinema, but it was still restricted to one genre.

In the field of Music, the late 1940s and early 1950s see the birth of what became known as *musique concrete*. Initially conceived by Pierre Schaeffer within the French Radio-Diffusion Department, it was accomplished with the manipulation of recorded sounds on physical media. Meanwhile, in Cologne, in Germany, the Elektronische Musik (electronic music) group was taking shape, and it was characterized by the search for synthetic sounds on computer.

With the emergence of the “new cinemas” in the 1960s, one might have hoped that the mismatch between music and cinema avant-gardes would finally adjust. However, this was not the rule, although there were noteworthy cases such as, within the French Nouvelle Vague, Jacques Rivette and his partnership with avant-garde composers such as Pierre Arthuys, Ivo Malec, Jean-Claude Eloy, or the work of Pierre Barbaud in films by Alain Resnais, Agnès Varda and Chris Marker (the three considered the “Left Bank” of the Nouvelle Vague)⁸.

In the case of the Brazilian Cinema Novo, avant-garde music was also used, but with works that were pre-existing to the films, as we will see in the following analysis.

GLAUBER ROCHA AND AVANT-GARDE MUSIC

Glauber Rocha’s first cinematographic work, the experimental short film *Terrace*, was filmed in 1957, but the sound editing was only done in early 1959. Before that, the film was exhibited without sound a few times (Cunha, 2019).

⁸ About these partnerships, see McMahon (2014).

The images show a couple on the floor of a terrace, whose tile arrangement resembles a chess or checkers board (with black and white squares), in an open environment in which we can see vegetation and the sea. All these elements point to Glauber's relations with both concretism and neo-concretism, whose conflicts with one another referred mainly to questions of the "purism of the form"⁹. It is something that Glauber's images make explicit.

As Cunha (2019) observes, in 1959, the neoconcrete poets of the *Jornal do Brasil* Sunday Supplement published their Neoconcrete Manifest, but since 1957 there had been a rupture between them and the concretist São Paulo group, which accused the Rio de Janeiro group of being empirical and intuitive. While the São Paulo group valued the rationality and objectivity of art, the Neoconcretes claimed "a reinterpretation of constructive art", going beyond the "purist notion of form", opening themselves to subjectivity and expressiveness of art, to the sensory dimension beyond the "plastic and geometrized" one (Cunha, 2019, p. 105).

Glauber Rocha was familiar with the concretist movement in São Paulo, but ended up getting closer to the Rio de Janeiro neoconcretes, having presented *Terrace* in 1959 at the house of artist Lygia Pape in Rio de Janeiro, where important critics and artists were present, such as Mário Pedrosa, Décio Vieira, Ferreira Gullar, Amílcar de Castro, Hélio Oiticica, and Reynaldo Jardim (Cunha, 2019).

This conflict of pure form *versus* incursions of content, which was at the basis of the conflicts between concretes and neoconcretes, is also present in the film, both in the images and in the music. Regarding the images, Xavier (2016) calls attention to the frame of the picture of the couple at the terrace, with all its geometric dimension, but including also the vegetation and the sea, which, in turn, point to the Brazilian geographical context. In a way, I understand that the sea and the coconut trees evoke the Brazilian "national", while the "chessboard" in the terrace is a more "universal" element.

The music works chosen for the soundtracks are¹⁰: *Ionisation* by Varèse, *Tam-Tam IV* by Pierre Henry (composed in 1951), three movements of the *Symphony for One Man Alone* (*Apostrophe*, *Erotica* and *Scherzo*) by Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry (composed in 1950), and *Étude n.1* by Michel Phillipot (composed in 1951)¹¹. This selection shows a confluence of the musical avant-gardes of 1920s-1930s, represented by Varèse, with those of the 1950s, the *musique concrète* conceived by Pierre Schaeffer in 1948.

Cunha (2019) infers (from her interview with the film actress, Helena Ignez) that these music works were presented to Glauber Rocha and obtained by him

⁹ Glauber also refers to a "purist notion of form" (Rocha, 1985, p. 250).

¹⁰ With the exception of Phillipot's *Étude n.1* (discovered by me, as I researched LPs of the time), the identification of the other music works was made by Labaki (2015), as reported by Cunha (2019). In the film credits, we can see only reference to "sound montage in concrete music", with no identification of the pieces. In an interview with Cunha (2019), Helena Ignez mentioned only the *Symphonie pour un homme seul*.

¹¹ *Tam-Tam IV*, *Symphonie pour un homme seul* and *Étude n.1* are on the LP *2e Panorama de Music Concrète*, released in 1956 by Ducretet-Thomson. I believe that this LP is the source of these music works in the film.

through Hans-Joachim Koellreutter, a German musician who arrived in Brazil in 1937, in Rio de Janeiro, and settled, in the 1950s, in Bahia at the invitation of the dean of Federal University of Bahia, where he taught courses attended by Glauber Rocha and Helena Ignez.

Firstly, based on the repertoire chosen, I argue the presence of a cosmopolitanism¹² in *Terrace* by the choice of European avant-garde music in opposition to nationalism, represented, for instance, by the music of Villa-Lobos, quite present in Glauber's filmography since *Black God, White Devil (Deus e o diabo na terra do sol, 1964)*. It is important to say that, according to an interview by Walter Lima Júnior (Guerrini Júnior, 2009; also in Mattos, 2002), Villa-Lobos was not known to Glauber Rocha at the time and was suggested by Lima Júnior, as he was assistant director of the film.

In the field of Music, "universalism" was advocated by Koellreutter. Arriving in Brazil fleeing from a nationalist regime (Hitler's Nazism), Koellreutter initially founded the group *Música Viva*, which also included nationalist currents (Egg, 2005), until, in 1946, the group released a manifest in which it defended "a universal language" and "the removal of nationalist tendencies" (Guerrini Junior, 2009, p. 59).

Secondly, returning to the opposition form x content, it is interesting to note that after the first concrete music experiments with noises in 1948-1949, Pierre Schaeffer increasingly positioned himself against "*anecdotalisme*", that is, against the anecdotal traces of their original causal context. Schaeffer (1966) favors the process of "reduced listening", which is based on the materiality of sounds, without searching for their causes.

However, despite the manipulations of concrete music, the parts of the *Symphonie pour un homme seul* in *Terrace*, especially *Erotica*, are extremely referential and can be directly related to the images. *Erotica* uses women's vocal sounds linked to female sexual pleasure. Precisely in this excerpt of the film, the gestuality of the female character is emphasized, as it becomes languid and sensual, differently from what it was like until this point of the film, as Cunha (2019) notes.

Also in the excerpts of *Ionisation*, even though there are no references in the images to the sirens we hear in the music, such sounds evoke us their sources, the referents. In fact, for any perceived sound, there is an imaginative work (image-generating) of the listener, as understood in the concept of "sound-image" (Caesar, 2012). Moreover, with the exception of the opening credits (exposed over the chessboard of the terrace), there comes always a shot of tree branches or leaves at the beginning of each excerpt of Varèse (Table 1), in a reinforcement of the referent - though, in this case, it is a referent brought

¹²Here I designate "cosmopolitanism", although "universalism" has been a constantly employed word in the discussion of various currents of the arts (Naves, 2003), as in the one that follows.

by the image, not by the music. In the case of excerpts 2, 3 and 7, the repetition of the same shot (Figure 1), as if it were a refrain-shot (Chion, 2003), gives a musical sense to the film.

Table 1

Music in *Terrace*

Music excerpt	Time (in the 51m)	Music work
1	0' - 32''	<i>Ionisation</i>
2	1' - 1'02''	<i>Ionisation</i>
3	1'22'' - 1'25''	<i>Ionisation</i>
4	1'31'' - 1'36''	<i>Ionisation</i>
5	1'50'' - 2'33''	<i>Apostrofe, Symphonie pour un homme seul</i>
6	3'33'' - 5'08''	<i>Tam-Tam IV</i>
7	6'01'' - 6'15''	<i>Ionisation</i>
8	7'09'' - 8'36''	<i>Erotica, Symphonie pour un homme seul</i>
9	8'41'' - 9'25''	<i>Scherzo, Symphonie pour un homme seul</i>
10	9'28'' - 12'34''	<i>Étude n. 1</i>

Note. Elaborated by the author.

Figure 1

Repeated shot in *Terrace*



Note. Frame from *Terrace*

After excerpt 2 (Varèse’s *Ionisation*), we see the bodies of the man and the woman attracting and repelling each other (sometimes they appear holding hands,

as in 1min05s of the film, sometimes lying apart on the terrace as in 1min40s), in a similar way to the blocks of timbres of different percussive instruments in *Ionisation*. It recalls Varèse's own explanation for his music, i.e., ionisation is the process by which the atom liberates an electron, and this electron is trapped by another atom (Distler, 1997). Varèse's excerpts 2, 3 and 4 are very short, serving as punctuation for the longer parts of the bodies' performances. In excerpt 7, a little longer one, but still related to the images of branches, leaves and the terrace, the siren announces that something different is going to happen, perhaps in a preparation for *Erotica*.

Before *Erotica*, in excerpt 5 (*Apostrophe*), the attraction-repulsion of the bodies becomes more evident and they appear as if "glued" to the floor of the terrace. There are vocalizations in music, with manipulations common to concrete music and, at the end, while the man tries to raise his arm and his head turns towards the sky, we hear the looped sounds of the vocalization of the word *absolument* ("absolutely", a negative in French; it is a semantic anchoring of the music, beyond the pure "reduced listening" advocated later by Schaeffer¹³), "revealing a whole gestural movement of the characters, who seem to want to release their own bodies from something dense, as if there were a certain kind of magnetism that pulls them to the ground." (Cunha, 2019, p.114).

As for *Tam-Tam IV*, it happens as if its percussive and rhythmic sounds were heard by the man, who stands up and covers his ears. Several shots already shown (like the one in Figure 1) follow in accelerated editing, in a similar rhythm to that of the music, as if the man were having a visual and auditory hallucination.

Erotica and *Scherzo* follow each other in the excerpts 8 and 9, with a short silence between them. If in *Erotica* the ecstasy of each of the bodies is solitary, in *Scherzo*, while we hear extremely manipulated voices, we see the hands of the man and the woman slowly coming closer until they reach each other. Then, in a *plongée* shot, we see the couple holding hands, with arms outstretched and lying in the terrace. *Scherzo*, in music theory, is a fast-moving movement, which can have either playful or energetic character. It has a tripartite ABA form, in which B is contrasted with A. In the film, there is a more energetic part, given by the intrusions of the piano - its beginning corresponds to the turning of the camera, with images of the sea and the horizon line - to which the manipulated voices respond, as if they were the B part.

In general in the film, the initial excerpts of music alternates with silences, without evident points of synchronization, in a rather Eisensteinian conception of metrical montage, as Cunha (2019) observed. Philippot's *Étude n.1*¹⁴, on the other hand, is itself made up of moments of quasi silence and resonance of

¹³Schaeffer justified the presence of this intelligible word by saying that this had been "a last offense of youth" (Schaeffer, 1952, as quoted by Fenerich, 2012, p. 268). Besides, the *Symphony* is a co-work with Pierre Henry (himself not so radical about the anecdotal as Schaeffer), and it has a radio play character.

¹⁴Philippot studied dodecaphonic music with René Leibowitz, but his *Study n. 1* is especially associated with concrete music, and the composer was working at that time with Pierre Schaeffer. However, as Philippot observes, unlike what concrete music would be by definition, his studies had "the score (or, if you prefer, the architectural plan) was first written, composed, before the studio work began. So, it was first conceived, then performed" (Philippot, 1994, translated from original French). Philippot taught at several Brazilian universities in the 1970s and married the Brazilian pianist Anna Stella Schic, one of Villa-Lobos' great interpreters.

sounds. In the film, Philippot's music is not interrupted by cuts in the editing, lasting the film final three minutes.

If during the *Scherzo* the couple were holding hands, the gong of *Étude n. 1* announces their separation, then punctuated by a series (the work was actually compared, in the insert of the Ducretet-Thomson LP, to Webern's serial music) of different manipulated percussive sounds, some with rapid attack, others with longer sustain and decay. The man gets up, goes to urinate next to a plant. Finally, he leaves the terrace, being followed, but at some distance, by the woman.

After *Terrace* and starting with *Black God, White Devil* (1964), there is music by Villa-Lobos in almost all of Glauber Rocha's films that followed. In *Black God, White Devil* they are predominant, but after *Entranced Earth* (*Terra em Transe*, Glauber Rocha, 1967), there is a greater variety of musical genres.

In *Antonio das Mortes* (1969), although there is a predominance of Umbanda "pontos"¹⁵, music works by the composer Marlos Nobre (from Brazilian province Pernambuco), especially *Ukrinmakrinkrin*, stand out. Marlos Nobre did not compose them especially for the film, but he worked directly in the editing with Glauber Rocha with his pre-existing music, as we can see in the interview he gave to Irineu Franco Perpétuo. In it, the composer speaks only of *Ukrinmakrinkrin*, although another of his works, *Rythmetron*, is also present in the film:

¹⁵The "pontos" are religious songs in the Umbanda rituals. Siqueira (2014) identified the pontos of Cosme and Damião and Ogum, as well transcribed the texts. It greatly helped me in the appreciation of the film and for this article.

I met Glauber by chance. At the time (around 1966), I was playing to earn money with an ensemble and a singer in a nightclub in Rio de Janeiro. It was a very curious and inappropriate "show" for a nightclub, we even played the music of a young composer from Bahia, totally unknown at the time, Gilberto Gil, and it began like this: "Poets, seresteiros, friends, run...". Imagine, in a night club, poetry by Marcos Konder Reis... There I met Glauber, who called me to make the music for *Antonio das Mortes*. I worked with him directly on the Moviola, in a studio in Rio, it was incredible. Glauber did not plan very much, he had the film in his head, but when he heard my piece *Ukrinmakrinkrin* he went crazy, it was what he wanted. And he put it in the central part of the film, only music and image, in that very strong love scene between the female protagonist, the priest and a killer. (Perpetual, 2019, translated from Portuguese)

Rythmetron is heard at the beginning of the film (at about three and a half minutes), when, after a cut from the previous sequence, in which the country people walked through the city streets singing a Cosme and Damião *ponto* ("Bahia is land of two, it is land of two brothers, Governor of Bahia is Cosme and Saint Damião"), we see the "cangaceiro" Coirana (played by Lourival Pariz),

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Cinema Novo and 20th century avant-garde music

the Black Antão (Mário Gusmão), who belonged to the bandit group, and the teacher (Othon Bastos) in the square of the village, surrounded by the people. The police chief Matos (Hugo Carvana) quickly passes by them. Coirana and Antão are then joined by Santa (Rosa Maria Penna), a representation of Iansã according to Siqueira (2014), as shown in Figure 2.

Figura 2

Coirana in the center. On the left and in the background, Santa and Antão



Nota. Frame from Antonio das Mortes

This moment shows like a theatrical staging, in which are first introduced the main allegorical characters of a supposed play - whose apex will be, later, the fight between Coirana and the “cangaceiro killer”, Antônio das Mortes - to the sound of Marlos Nobre’s music.

The change of music (from the *ponto* of Cosme and Damião to *Rythmetron*) takes place between two shots, and the type of movement within the image is also diverse: the rapid descent of many country people on a hillside to the sound of “Cosme and Damião” and the slow steps of Coirana, Antão and Santa, “putting themselves on stage” in the square (and the slowness is in these characters’ movements, while not in the professor and delegate Matos, who quickly cross the “stage”). On the other hand, Marlos Nobre’s music does not stand out so much from the popular music rhythmically clapped - perhaps because *Rythmetron* contains rhythmic elements from the maracatu, a typical dance and music of Pernambuco’s popular culture¹⁶. In fact, throughout the beginning of the film there is quite a lot of percussive music, either by hand clapping or by percussion

¹⁶Marlos Nobre tells that, as a child, he lived in Recife, in São João street, where all the Carnival societies passed by, and, thus, he had since his childhood “direct contact, alive, vital, with the frevo of the most diverse and traditional frevo societies of Pernambuco, the Caboclinhos, the Maracatus.

It was an important and formidable impression and a musical formation that fed my musical subconscious forever.” (Mariz, 1983, p. 82, quoted by Silva, 2007, p. 9).

instruments in *Rhythmetron* and in the march of the schoolboys parade in the sequence following Coirana's speech in frontal shot.

Rhythmetron is in 3 movements – “The Preparation”, “The Chosen Ones”, and “The Ritual” (what we hear in the film is the first movement, “The Preparation”) - composed in 1968 for 38 percussionists on commission by the Companhia Brasileira de Balé for a performance at Teatro Novo in Rio de Janeiro, with choreography by Arthur Mitchell. Its character of music for dance was taken advantage of by Glauber Rocha in his film.

As for *Ukrinmakrinkrin*, it is heard at a climax point in the film, in the sequence evoked by Marlos Nobre in the interview, when the murdered body of police chief Matos is carried by the teacher and followed by his ex-lover Laura (Odete Lara) in a funeral procession. Siqueira (2014) highlights some kitsch elements, such as the plastic flowers and Laura's flowing purple dress, as well the character of falsity, which is even greater, if we think that it was Laura who killed Matos. Moreover, there is the use of deliberate contrast, reinforced both by the use of music with very distinct characteristics in relation to the rest of the film, and by the use of parallel editing of this described space-time with that of the “sertanejos” singing in honor of the dying Coirana.

They are two funeral rituals for two dead people, and there is even an image of Antonio das Mortes carrying Coirana's body, which promotes a filmic rhyme with the shots already shown of the professor carrying Matos' body. If we take into consideration that *Ukrinmakrinkrin*'s soprano singing is a lament for the extermination of the indigenous community of the Xucurus (as defined by the composer on his Youtube channel¹⁷), written in their language, it may add this element around the theme of death in this part of the film.

Indeed, *Ukrinmakrinkrin* stands out for the soprano voice and the aesthetic of serial technique, which is possibly a source of strangeness to an ordinary viewer¹⁸ (although *Rhythmetron* is from the same compositional phase in Nobre's general work and has also atonality, its rhythmic and percussive element calls the most attention in the short excerpt we heard at the beginning of the film). It is even more so because it is a long sequence - including the alternations with the environment and the music of the “sertanejos” - in which the music is the sound element of prominence.

The soprano singing in the language of the Xucurus reveals Marlos Nobre's desire to include local elements, escaping from a strict universalism, in a “subjective nationalism”, as in the conception of Argentine composer Alberto Ginastera, to whom the piece is dedicated, or even in an “unconscious nationalism”, echoing Mário de Andrade (Silva, 2007), one of the influences of the composer in his formative years¹⁹.

¹⁷Nobre, M. (2010, 23 de maio). MARLOS NOBRE, *Ukrinmakrinkrin*, Amalia Bazan, *Musica Nova Ensemble*, Nobre [Video]. YouTube. <https://bit.ly/436Szf3>

¹⁸*Ukrinmakrinkrin* was composed in 1964 and represented Brazil “modern music” in 1966, at the IV Youth Biennial in Paris (Mariz, 2005).

¹⁹Marlos Nobre took lessons with Koellreutter (Silva, 2007), who, as mentioned previously, was against nationalism, defending dodecaphonism and universalism.

Despite the parallel montage of images, the sound of *Ukrinmakrinkrin* “leaks” into the sertanejos’ space, overlapping with Ogum’ *ponto* sung by them (in the lyrics, we hear “Who killed Ogum”, in an association of Coirana to the orixá). Moreover, there is a carnivalesque aspect, in the Bakhtinian sense, in the sertanejos performance, as joy is not absent in the rhythmic singing accompanied by clapping, although joy is much more evident in the imagetic foreground, in which we see the killers hired by Colonel Horácio to perpetrate the massacre of the sertanejos.

The massacre is warned by the priest to the teacher and Laura, but instead of giving him attention, the teacher bodily wrestles with him and, after the cut made to the sertanejos’ environment, kisses Laura, clinging to her on the ground beside and then over Matos’ body, while the priest tries in vain to get him off Laura. When the alternate shot of the sertanejos’ environment finally shows the beginning of the massacre, the umbanda *ponto* goes silent and we hear only gunshots and *Ukrinmakrinkrin*. The lament of Marlos Nobre’s music continues over the image of Antônio das Mortes next to Coirana’s body in another space. He proceeds, then, with the cangaceiro’s funeral.

The lament of the music continues over the image of the dead bodies of the sertanejos. In the background, Santa and Antão are tied up and harassed by the chief of the killers (Mata-Vaca). However, in a different part of the music, with a more spoken singing, we see Santa walking haughtily, causing Mata-Vaca to be frightened and run away. The synergy between music and image indicates to us that Glauber Rocha worked with this intention in the editing, as he had done in *Black God, White Devil* (Guerrini Júnior, 2009).

The acting throughout this part, especially of Laura and the teacher, is excessive in movement and intensity, something that is also present in the music, which recalls pieces of Schoenberg’s so-called musical Expressionism²⁰, such as his opera *Erwartung*, which, according to Schoenberg (quoted by Simms, 1997, p. 104), dealt with “emotions in a heightened state of intensity”. At the same time, it is a kind of Brechtian performance, applied by Glauber Rocha in his films from *Black God, White Devil* (1964) on.

²⁰Expressionism was a period before the development of dodecaphonic writing, in a free atonalism.

THE RETURN OF MARLOS NOBRE IN THE CONSPIRATORS, BY JOAQUIM PEDRO DE ANDRADE (1972)

The first time that Villa-Lobos’ music was used by directors of the Cinema Novo was in Joaquim Pedro de Andrade’s filmography, i.e. in his short films *O mestre de Apipucos* and *O poeta do Castelo*, both of 1959 (they were originally the two parts of a single film), with a varied musical selection by Zito Batista

and Carlos Sussekind. The classical repertoire is also present, among other musical genres, in other films of the director, as *Garrincha* (1963), and *Brasília, contradições de uma cidade nova* (1967), as well in *Macunaíma* (1969), although in the latter predominates a repertoire of Brazilian and international popular songs, mainly from previous decades and with the musical texture of old recordings.

Therefore, although unexpected because contemporary music was not common in the director's work, the presence of the orchestral work *Mosaico*, by Marlos Nobre, in *The Conspirators* is not entirely surprising, given the diversity of musical genres in this period drama, staged with Brechtian elements and the characteristic varied musical reemployment, as in Joaquim Pedro's other films. *Jogos*, the third part of *Mosaico*, is heard at a crucial moment in the film, when the Minas conspirators, all imprisoned in the courtyard of the Paço Imperial in Rio de Janeiro, blame one of group, the military man Francisco Freire de Andrade, for their whistle-blowing; after that, they all vituperate against their companion Tiradentes, and, then, the priest accuses each one's guilt. The rough-sounding chords of *Jogos* also have a violent trait, as the accusations hurled by the characters, and the sounds of bells and vibraphones remind us of the images of the chains holding the conspirators.

Thus, even maintaining the Brechtian tone of the film, sound and image have, in this sequence, a more combinatory action and not simply contrasting or even redundant, terms commonly used to praise or repudiate the use of music in films and whose simplistic opposition is considered inadequate by Gorbman (1987).

About composer Marlos Nobre, it is relevant to mention that, since 1971 he had been the musical director of MEC's (Ministry of Education and Culture) Radiodifusão Educativa, whose orchestra made several recordings of Brazilian avant-garde music of the time. In 1976, Nobre moved to the Instituto Nacional de Música, an important institution for the existence of these recordings, as I consider in the next item.

WALTER LIMA JR AND THE MUSIC OF HIS TIME

Walter Lima Jr made his directorial debut with the feature film *Plantation Boy* (*Menino de engenho*, 1965), in which, as he had previously advised Glauber as for *Black God, White Devil*, he predominantly used pre-existing works by Villa-Lobos. In *Brasil Year 2000* (1969), he tried to collaborate with Gilberto Gil, who effectively participated in the film with some songs, but Rogério Duprat came in charge of the music. *Brasil Year 2000* ended up becoming a "tropicalist dystopian science fiction", but it was not a success at the time (Mattos, 2002).

D

Cinema Novo and 20th century avant-garde music

Then, contacted by theater director José Vicente de Paula to adapt his play *The Assault*, Lima Júnior transformed it into the film *At Nightfall* (1971).

The film is about a bank clerk (Rubens Corrêa), who steals money from the bank after working hours, but, before that, he talks to the cleaning worker (Ivan de Albuquerque), trying to humiliate him and revealing that he had been following him for some time. In the film - in black and white and mostly shot in the bank agency at night, but with a few daytime shots - most of the music corresponds to incursions by Argentine jazzman Gato Barbieri, a friend of Lima Júnior (which explains, in part, his presence in the film), including the pre-existing piece *In Search Of The Mystery / Michelle* (from 1967). There are also other excerpts from Jon Appleton's electroacoustic pieces *Georganna's Fancy*, *Times Square Times Ten*, and *The Visitation*, all of them from Appleton's 1969 album *Syntonic Menagerie*.

Appleton's synthetic sounds and manipulations, although they contribute to the film's general uneasy atmosphere (following the conventions regarding contemporary music in films), on the other hand, are not always in the somber sequences inside the bank, as there are two excerpts in daytime exterior shots, which sometimes abruptly interrupt the conversation between the protagonists like an insert, with no apparent cause. This is the case, for example, at 28 minutes into the film, when continuous vocal sounds, synthesizer sounds, and a grainy noise similar to a train rolling, all coming from *Times Square Times Ten*, are heard in images of people, mostly women, standing on a sidewalk. Interestingly, the train rolling is heard later, over an image of a passing train.

In fact, in some of his compositions, Appleton included some anecdotal traces (with references to sounds of the world, such as horns, sirens, doors closing, identifiable speeches, excerpts of music) that Schaeffer repudiated. Anyway, in Lima Júnior's film, there is a preference for excerpts that have synthetic sounds and more manipulation. I also highlight the daytime shot of hands holding what looks like a prison window grille, inserted during the characters' conversation (a glimpse of the bank clerk's near future?), to the sound of *Georganna's Fancy*.

Georganna's Fancy is also part of the soundtracks of the documentary *Architecture: the transformation of space*, from the following year. Lima Júnior also used the work *Quasars*, from 1970, by the Swiss-Brazilian Ernst Widmer²¹. Built in blocks, the documentary has a first more historical part, a second one, in which specialist architects, such as Lina Bo Bardi, talk about the crisis in the architect's profession and the ambitions of modern architecture, and a third one, in which the director interviews people from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Brasília and Belém about the architecture of their houses and their cities.

²¹Widmer was born in Switzerland in 1927 and came to Salvador at Koellreutter's invitation to teach at Federal University of Bahia, in 1956. He became a naturalized Brazilian in 1967. Information at: <https://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/pessoal2231/ernst-widmer> Accessed July 1, 2022.

In general, the music accompanies the images, in a search to illustrate them based on conventions or relating directly to some element of the images, such as historical period or location: the baroque composer Albinoni is related to the colonial architecture, Beethoven, to that of the Empire, Ernesto Nazareth to that of the early Republic, Widmer and Appleton to modernist architecture; Luiz Gonzaga’s music connects to Brazilian Northeast, symbolized by the images of hammocks; percussive music with berimbau are heard in the images of Olinda; Villa-Lobos’ *Song of the Pajé* comes at the mention of Jesuit Anchieta and the foundation of São Paulo; the jazzy *Road Song*, in the images of a car driving over viaducts in São Paulo (referring both to the title of the song and the convention of associating jazz with the big city), Tom Jobim’s *Stone Flower*, in the images of Rio de Janeiro; *17 Léguas e meia* (sung by Gilberto Gil), when the images move from Belém to Salvador. The exception is the berimbau sounds of *Bahia*, by Gato Barbieri, in the images of Brasília’s cathedral and in the opening credits.

It is also striking that the contemporary music employed in the film, whether in the more erudite or more popular spectrum, was released quite close to the film (which is from 1972), from 1968 to 1970: *Quasars* (1970), *Bahia* (1971), *Stone Flower* (1970), *Road Song* (1968), *17 Léguas e meia* (1969), and Al Kooper’s *Ouverture* (1968). This shows that Lima Júnior was very much in tune with the music of his time.

Table 2
Music in Architecture: the transformation of space

Time ²²	Music	Image
2'50''-4'47''	<i>Quasars</i> , Widmer	Corridor <i>travelling</i> . Santos Dumont's house in Petrópolis. Brasília. Niemeyer
6'18''-7'45''	<i>Quasars</i> , Widmer, continuation	Niemeyer. Buildings in Brasília.
7'45''-10'14''	<i>Bahia</i> , Gato Barbieri.	Brasília Cathedral
10'31''-12'19''	Percussion	Olinda.
13'19''- 13'53''	Percussion	Images of Brasil's Colonial period. Church doors. View of Olinda.
13'53''-15'54''	<i>Adagio</i> , Albinoni	Images of church and cloister. Arrival of Portuguese royal family to Brazil. Olinda; Recife in the distance.
15'58''- 19'02''	Beethoven, <i>Symphony n. 6</i> (III)	Buildings from the time of Independence and the Second Empire.
19'02''-20'22''	Beethoven, <i>Symphony n.6</i> (V)	Cristal Palace, Petrópolis

²²The film archive I had access to has an explanatory prologue by Amir Labaki. The film starts at 2min36s and the times in the table take this into account.

Continue...

²²The film archive I had access to has an explanatory prologue by Amir Labaki. The film starts at 2min36s and the times in the table take this into account.

Continuation

Time ²²	Music	Image
20'36''-21'53''	Piano music, <i>ragtime style</i> .	Growth of cities in the early 20th century. Architect Warchavchik's projects in Brazil.
21'54''-22'49''	<i>Ameno Resedá</i> , Ernesto Nazareth.	Film by Rossi-Film: visit to Warchavchik's "Modernist House"
23'53''-24'49''	<i>Quasars</i> , Widmer (beginning)	Architect Le Corbusier.
24'50''-26'18''	<i>Idem</i> (excerpt already heard)	Gustavo Capanema Palace
31'30''-31'54''	<i>Vira e Mexe</i> , Luiz Gonzaga.	People on hammocks.
35'56''-37'04''	<i>Georganna's Fancy</i> , Appleton	Cruzada de São Sebastião Building Modern Art Museum in Rio de Janeiro.
41'13''-41'56''	<i>O canto do pajé</i> , Villa-Lobos	Anchieta. São Paulo's foundation.
41'57''-42'20''	<i>Road Song</i> , Wes Montgomery	Viaducts in São Paulo.
46'10''-46'52''	<i>Stone Flower</i> , Tom Jobim	Rio de Janeiro, aerial shots. Street with high buildings.
48'41''-50'23''	<i>Quasars</i> , Widmer. Part of second excerpt.	Rio de Janeiro's waterfront. Brasília
50'46''-54'43''	<i>17 Léguas e meia</i> , sung by Gilberto Gil.	Boot, Belém do Pará. Next, Salvador.
54'51''-57'40''	<i>Ouverture</i> , Al Kooper	Salvador: buildings, streets, waterfront.

Note. Elaborated by the author.

Widmer and Appleton music bring a futuristic aspect to the film, as contemporary music connects to modern architecture while also reproducing the clichés of "strangeness" evoked by Oliveira (2018). The title *Quasars* evokes an element of space that emits electromagnetic energy, something Widmer's orchestral music attempts to simulate²³. In Widmer's, there was already an intention of association with the outer space, something that was not uncommon with other avant-garde music of the time (we can evoke Almeida Prado's *Cartas Celestes*, whose composition also began in the 1970s). Placed in Lima Júnior's film, the music also evokes the association with science fiction films. Although its sonority can remind one of electronic music, it is important to highlight that *Quasars* op. 69 is a work for symphony orchestra.

The first part of *Quasars* begins with a travelling forward and zooming out along an open corridor delimited by stakes (Figure 3), something that reminds us of the relationship between travelling and memory evoked by Deleuze (1990) in the film *Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961), which, in turn, has a sense of strangeness. When we see the bizarre staircase of Santos Dumont's house (designed by him to have one foot on each step) in Petrópolis, Widmer's music has a *crescendo* and resolution of the previous tension of the strings. Dissonant melodic elements and new resolution lead to the image of the buildings in Brasilia, a symbol of modern architecture alluded

²³On the title page of the score, it is written: "Quasars = quasi-star (celestial body - not completely known - of reduced size to high density revolving with high speed around itself)." (Nogueira, 2009).

to by the voice *over*, ending with the plan of the architect Oscar Niemeyer (one of those responsible for the conception of Brasília) drawing.

Figure 3

Images of the corridor in the beginning of Architecture: the transformation of space



Note. Frame of Architecture: the transformation of space

The next excerpt of *Quasars* also comes in a shot of Niemeyer drawing and there follows several travellings showing architectural constructions of Brasília. The music features a motif repeated several times by the strings and in dissonant harmony, interrupted by percussion and resumed. This aspect confers a tense feeling of something endless. Then the music gets suddenly mixed with the berimbau sounds of Gato Barbieri's *Bahia* in the shot of the angel of Brasília cathedral.

At almost 24 minutes into the film, we hear *Quasars* again - now it is the beginning of Widmer's score - over the image of another important figure for Brazilian modern architecture, the Frenchman Le Corbusier. When the image changes to shots of Gustavo Capanema Palace (based on Le Corbusier's original layout, as informed by the narration), we hear the motif repeated several times, as present in the second part of the music.

The same motif with constant tension returns over images of the high buildings on the Rio de Janeiro waterfront and in aerial shots, while the voice

of landscape architect Burle Marx evokes the problem of lack of planning and overpopulation in the city. In opposition to this, the documentary then shows images of the “planned city” of Brasília, but the tension of the music remains, corroborating the general idea, present in the documentary, that this planning was not for the benefit of its inhabitants and for the construction workers interviewed at the beginning of the film.

Appleton’s *Georganna’s Fancy*, on the other hand, with its synthesizer sounds, is over images of the Cruzada São Sebastião, a popular housing complex of modernist architecture in Rio de Janeiro, and, later, over images of the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, while the interviewed warns about the problem of the excessive use of reinforced concrete by modern architecture.

The final music of the film, *Ouverture* by Al Kooper (from the LP *I stand alone*), over images of the streets and the waterfront of Salvador, was composed with collage techniques and manipulation of sound materials, including voices, laughter, sound effects and excerpts from pre-existing recordings. In this way, it avoids a greater adherence to the referent of Salvador city and elements of local culture of Bahia.

In *Conversation with Cascudo* (Walter Lima Júnior, 1977), a 28-minute documentary, the use of music is similar to that of *Architecture...* All pre-existing, there is mostly music of the Armorial Movement²⁴ (*Aralume*, by A. J. Madureira, and *Sem lei nem rei* I and II, by Capiba) to accompany the beginning and the end of the conversation with the Northeast Brazilian folklorist Câmara Cascudo, in which he speaks of his interest in popular culture. Cascudo’s voice is predominant, either as voice over on illustrative images, or as on-screen voice in the interview. When the intellectual mentions the sea, we hear, in lower volume, Dorival Caymmi’s voice in his song *The sea (O mar)*, and there comes images of the sea and rafts in the Brazilian Northeast.

However, there is an element of strangeness, when Cascudo talks about an ox cart – a quite traditional element of Brazilian Northeast – and we hear Jaceguay Lins’ music *Policromia*²⁵. In this case, the relationship image-music does not follow the conventions associated to “Modernism” of the previous film. Lins’ music has similar characteristics to Widmer’s, with masses of dissonant strings, sprinkled with sounds percussion and wind and brass instruments.

Born in Pernambuco, Lins had studied with Widmer in Bahia, what may explain the similarity of the works. *Policromia* is also part of the MEC 70 LP, volume 1, on the same side of the vinyl record of *Quasars*. In volume 2 of the same MEC collection is *Mosaico*, by Marlos Nobre, and the long-play was possibly the source for *The Conspirators* (Figure 4)²⁶.

²⁴Beginning in the 1970s and idealized by Ariano Suassuna, it involved several arts, with the aim of creating an erudite art from popular elements, especially those from the Northeast of Brazil.

²⁵I would like to thank Wellington Bujokas for the access to Lins’ music.

²⁶The relationship of the availability of contemporary music records and the employment of such music in films was studied in the American context by Hubbert (2014).

Figure 4

MEC 70 records, volume 1 side B (left) and volume 2, side A (right)



Note. Images contained in discogs.com

Vetromilla (2012) considers essential the role of the State in the documentation and dissemination of the avant-garde Brazilian music from the 1960s on²⁷, with the Instituto Nacional de Música (INM) and, later, with the Fundação Nacional de Arte (Funarte). The INM was active in the phonographic industry through an agreement with EMI-Odeon label, in cooperation with the MEC’s Radiodifusão Educativa, which resulted in several collections, such as this one. As Vetromilla (2012) notes, without such initiatives, many music genres would never find space for recording and dissemination. Consequently, they would hardly be heard in these Brazilian films of the 1970s.

Returning to the analysis of Jaceguay Lins’ *Policromia* in *Conversation with Cascudo*, we observe that it does not color the sequence alone, as it is mixed with nature sounds, such as those of birds, as well as the sound of the ox cart. Taking into account the importance of the sound of this element in Nelson Pereira dos Santos’s 1963 film *Barren Lives (Vidas Secas)* and the centrality of this film in Brazilian cinema, we can say that the sound of the ox cart makes up almost a specific Brazilian “topic”²⁸ to which the sound of Lins’ music adapts quite well, so that it is sometimes difficult to separate one sound from the other.

In *The Lyre of Delight* (1978), the non-diegetic music of saxophonist Paulo Moura predominate, in addition to diegetic music in the streets during Carnival or in the dance club where the protagonist works. The film also has some non-diegetic pre-existing musical excerpts, such as those by Francis Poulenc and Walter Smetak²⁹. From Smetak, there are only little more than 30 seconds

²⁷In another article, Vetromilla (2011) examines the foundation of the Federal Cultural Council in 1966 and the hope shown by the Brazilian cultural sector that it would confront the Military Dictatorship control. Within this context, Vetromilla (2011, p. 17) considers that the INM was an “institutional mechanism in charge of the consolidation or consecration of the place of Brazilian classical music in the national panorama”. At the same time, Salles (2001) points out several actions of the Military Dictatorship, which were especially deleterious to classical music, such as the end of compulsory music education and of the subsidy to the orchestras.

²⁸The theory of topics was conceived by Leonard Rattner. It identifies “types and styles correlated to extramusical contexts and meanings” (Oliveira, 2018, p. 11). I do not mean that Nelson Pereira dos Santos was the first to use the sound of an ox cart in a Brazilian film, but, as the theory of topics deals with accepted conventions, the importance of this sound in Pereira’s film, which was widely cited in academic works and by filmmakers, was appropriate to highlight it.

²⁹Unlike Widmer, Smetak had already been in Brazil since 1937 and only in 1956 did he go to Bahia at the invitation of Koellreutter (Scarassatti, 2001).

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³⁰*Dansom* is in the LP *Smetak*, produced by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, due to the appreciation of these artists for the composer. It was released in 1975.

of *Dansom*³⁰, when the character played by Cláudio Marzo looks at the sea at sunrise. As *Dansom* has a swing character and the instruments (all invented and built by Smetak) generate sounds similar to reco-reco, cuíca and other percussive instruments, it ends up resembling other musical incursions in the film, similar to what had already happened with Marlos Nobre *Rythmetrom* in *Antonio das Mortes*. *Dansom* stands out in this moment in *The Lyre of Delight* because there is no dialogue and due to the contemplative aspect of the sequence.

The presence of music by Ernst Widmer, Walter Smetak and Jaceguay Lins in these three films by Walter Lima Júnior points to, in addition to the access promoted through MEC records, the fundamental role in Brazilian musical culture of the musical avant-garde nucleus that was built at Federal University of Bahia, first with Hans-Joachim Koellreutter, and, then, continued with Widmer, Smetak³¹ and their students, such as Jaceguay Lins.

³¹These composers were part of what became known as “Composers of Bahia”, for whose formation Koellreutter was essential (Neves, 2008).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although it was not predominant in the Brazilian Cinema Novo, what I consider here as erudite avant-garde music and its use in the films of the 1960s and 1970s by directors of the movement shows relevant historical and aesthetic aspects of both the fields of Music and Cinema and their interdisciplinary junction in the study of music in films.

³²Rodolfo Caesar (personal communication, December 2020) suggests a possible influence of Ligia Pape, as the artist had presented a performance in 1958 with excerpts by Schaeffer and Henry.

Firstly, it reiterates, through Cinema, the importance of the musical avant-garde nucleus that was built at Federal University of Bahia after the arrival of Hans-Joachim Koellreutter. If music works by Schaeffer, Pierre Henry, Michel Phillipot and Edgar Varèse may have become known to Glauber Rocha through Koellreutter’s courses³², the continuity of this nucleus was also fundamental for Brazilian composers such as Jaceguay Lins, whose work *Policromia*, in addition to *Quasars* by Widmer and *Dansom* by Smetak, are present in films of the 1970s by Walter Lima Júnior. In the analysis of the association of these music works to the images of the films, I resume discussions about “universalism”, “nationalism” and “anecdotalism”, common in the musical environments of the time.

I also highlight the role of phonographic production at the time, both international and national. National collections such as the MEC 1970 allowed the diffusion of works by Widmer, Lins and Marlos Nobre - even though the latter’s connexion with Brazilian films took place in *Antonio das Mortes*, in 1969, by other means, considering what the composer told in an interview. In any case, the presence of these music works reveals the curiosity that these

directors, at least Glauber Rocha and Walter Lima Júnior, had for the music of the present of various genres and styles, and not only for Brazilian popular music³³.

As for the aesthetic use of these music works in the films, although in some cases it ends up reiterating conventions of avant-garde music associated with “science fiction”, “futurism” and strangeness (as evident in the use of Widmer and Appleton’s music in the documentary *Architecture: the Transformation of Space*), others go beyond this, such as: the use of *Ukrinmakrinkrin* related to the funeral ritual and alternated (sometimes, superposed) to Ogum’s *ponto* in *Antonio das Mortes*; *Policromia*, with its mixing to the ox cart sounds in *Conversation with Cascudo*; or Appleton’s music works, whose use goes beyond simple strangeness, with emphasis on their sonic materiality in *At Nightfall*. Music and image act in combinatory synergy, as in the use of *Mosaic* in *The Conspirators*, or in the editing of *Terrace*. In other cases, the sounds of avant-garde music are similar to those of popular music, such as *Rythmetron* and *Dansom*, in *Antonio das Mortes* and *The Lyre of Delight*, respectively, conferring a sense of unity to music from such distinct traditions. ■

³³Popular music artists such as Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Maria Bethânia, Gal Costa and Chico Buarque participated as composers or performers in Cinema Novo films. Another point of contact of the Cinema Novo directors with the musical environment of the time is, as already mentioned in the article, the presence of Rogério Duprat. He was a musician who crossed the boundaries of popular and erudite, having been one of the signatories of the *Música Nova Manifesto* - which defended the music present in cinema, radio and TV (Cozella et al, 1979, quoted by Guerrini Júnior, 2009). Due to the dimensions of the article, it is not possible to explore this aspect.

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INTERVIEW



Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes and the 30 years of Center for Telenovela Studies at USP: a journey narrated by teleficcion

Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes e os 30 anos do Centro de Estudos de Telenovela da USP: uma jornada narrada pela teleficção

Interview with

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WHILE DINING, A family talks about what they will watch: they guess who the killer will be, share wishes for the protagonist's happiness, distill feelings of revenge and compassion towards the villain. In a few hours, the streets become deserted. The country watches TV. For decades, the scene described above was a of the moment when the final chapter of a *telenovela* is aired in Brazil, a genre that culturally and historically mobilizes passions, narrates realities near and far from the viewer, constructs imaginaries about what it is to be Brazilian – within the national territory and in the countries where these stories are exported to. In a time when streaming platforms enter the country and changes to the business structure of making television fiction are underway, the menu of content available to the public is vast.

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However, the researcher Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes defends her thesis: “the *telenovela* is the main cultural product of Brazilian television.”

The affirmation is based on a solid career in the field of communication. First an undergraduate in Social Sciences from the University of São Paulo and holding a master’s and PhD in Communication Sciences from the same institution, also having been a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Florence (Italy), Immacolata has dedicated herself to the study of *telenovelas* for decades. Her studies in the area began after her master’s, when she observed the reception of radio by popular classes, and doctoral studies, when she worked on the construction of a theoretical-methodological model for research in the field of Communication. Driven by the desire to understand the reception of media by the masses, it was during the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s that Immacolata approached studies on this type of narrative.

In 1992, already a professor at the School of Communications and Arts (ECA) at the University of São Paulo (USP), she participated in the creation of the Telenovela Research Center (NPTN) – today, the Center of Telenovela Studies (CETVN), at the invitation of Professor José Marques de Melo. At the time, the institution’s director challenged the School’s faculty to create research centers on topics that were academically relevant to them. According to Immacolata, this was a “visionary” attitude that led to the emergence of research centers in Communication at USP. Remembering the first years of the group, Immacolata recalls that she had to face the prejudice of those who did not recognize the *telenovela* as a scientific object of study.

In the face of resistance, she and other researchers remained focused on institutionalizing television fiction studies in Brazil. Immacolata was there as the group supported individual research projects, obtained funding from the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), established partnerships with Grupo Globo and the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (Ibope¹), created a Working Group on Television Fiction at the Brazilian Congress of Communication Sciences (Intercom), joined the Ibero-American Observatory of Television Fiction (OBITEL²), among other achievements. Meanwhile, she also shared her work at hundreds of events, many of which she organized; published dozens of articles and books, some of which became mandatory literature, such as *Vivendo com a telenovela: mediações, recepção, teleficcionalidade* (Living with the *telenovela*: mediations, reception, television fictionality) (Editora Summus, 2002), co-authored with Vera da Rocha Resende and Silvia Helena Simões Borelli; she also supervised the studies of more than 70 students, from undergraduate to post-doctoral studies.

¹ Today, Kantar IBOPE Media.

² International network of researchers from 12 countries that aimed to identify the diagnosis and perspectives of television fiction by annual monitoring and comparative, quantitative, and qualitative analysis of the many formats of the genre.

In 2022, a time of undeniable recognition of fictional television narratives as symbolic builders of the Brazilian nation, Immacolata celebrated the 30 years of CETVN with her team. The group met weekly on Friday afternoons to work on ongoing research, plan new projects, and think about television fiction in Brazil. Over the decades, the group continues to adapt. During the pandemic, face-to-face meetings became remote, allowing the safe participation of researchers from different locations in the country. Regarding the focus of her studies, she also expanded her field, analyzing other narratives besides the *telenovela*, broadcasted both on TV and streaming services: “we research television fiction, wherever it is.”

On a Friday morning, July 8, 2022, Professor Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes spoke with **MATRIZes** via Google Meet, recalling the period of creation of the first *telenovela* research center in Brazil, talking about the trajectory to strengthen studies in the area in the country, and reflecting on the current state of investigations in the field of television fiction.

MATRIZes: In 2022, the Center of Telenovela Studies (CETVN) celebrates 30 years of foundation. After these three decades, what remains and what has changed in this research center?

Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes: Let’s start from the beginning. . . The designation Center of Telenovela Studies is recent and was adopted when I became the coordinator, to fit the terminologies of the School of Communications and Arts. The Center started as NPTN, that is, the Telenovela Research Center. It was created by an initiative of Professor [José] Marques de Melo when he was principal of the School. In 1992, he encouraged the creation of several research centers at USP. He was a visionary, worked in anticipation, he instigated this and other centers on various themes.

The Telenovela Center was a daring one! Still in the 1990s, having a research group on *telenovela* within USP. In this context, the creation of the NPTN took place at the same historical time as my study on the subject and that would be published as *Vivendo com a telenovela* (2002), a project supported by FAPESP and CNPq. It was also related to other Latin American studies on this object. Jesús Martín-Barbero, for example, was an encourager of studies on fictional television narratives, as a historical-cultural product not only of Brazil, but of Latin America as a whole. This was the background for the institutionalization of this research area.

Initially, the Center began doing many actions, such as research development, creation of a working group at Intercom on Serial Fiction. It was a range of relationships that began to establish itself in the scientific field, as Bourdieu would say, where everything converged and interrelated.

At that time, the coordinators were the professors Anamaria Fadul [1992-1997], Maria Aparecida Baccega [1997-2000] and Solange Martins Couceiro de Lima with Maria Lourdes Motter [2000-2005]. This period was the beginning, the first phase, an installation phase, during which a very important work was done.

MATRIZes: When we think about these early years, what are the legacies of these researchers for the Center?

MIVL: Despite the studies, an important work of building the infrastructure of the Center was done. It was necessary to request a room, materials, furniture, computers.

Our institutional relations had also begun. Right at the beginning, we partnered with TV Globo. When researchers, national and from other countries, needed scenes, we would get in touch to assist them.

During this phase, we also gathered an archive that made history, an outstanding collection related to television fiction, organized by Professor Maria Ataíde Malcher and supported by FAPESP. It was a collection with materials from newspapers, theses, dissertations, costumes, scripts. . . At that time, it was important to have that, because we were an open center to welcome and support researchers who needed materials and sources for their studies on television fiction.

Then a very sad event happened. On October 2, 2001, ECA suffered a large fire, which mainly took over the second floor of the central building, exactly where the NPTN room was. I remember Maria Malcher's affection and pride for that collection very well, we all felt it, because it was so expensive. The archive worked wonderfully, all you had to do was ask for something! This fire destroyed the second floor, ruined our entire collection, everything we had done, the original research material for *Vivendo com a telenovela*, the software that we had used. It was all there. That was a tragedy for us all, we could not even look at it. All the rooms were reduced to ashes, where we once saw a poster or photograph. It was a very hard time. We could not look at it without being reduced to tears.

We thus created the *SOS Telenovela* campaign to start rebuilding the collection. We asked: "Do you have a script, photograph or magazines about *telenovelas*? Donate them us!" So, we received wonderful materials. If it happened today, it would be something shared in social medias, but that was how we could do it, by word of mouth, to begin our reconstruction.

MATRIZes: Since the beginning, the Center focused in academic studies on television fiction. What is the importance of these studies in the context of the time?

MIVL: It was surprising! It also caused astonishment within USP itself since it was a novelty. Whenever I started describing the Center, it was as if people

had never looked at *telenovelas* as an object of study. This came along with a prejudice of thinking that studying *telenovelas* was not important. We started a work to conquer spaces.

I remember a FAPESP seminar in England. There were people from Education, Physics, Medicine and they invited me to talk about *telenovelas*. And you will not believe it! After my presentation, the president of FAPESP came close to me and said, “Immacolata, I’m a *noveleiro* (an adjective for *telenovelas* fans!)” [laughs]

The whole country watched *telenovela*. However, there was a lot of prejudice. In Italy, cinema is THE heritage. And do I have to say anything about the United States and Hollywood? There are Hollywood ambassadors all over the world. Each country is proud of its best product. Here it was the opposite, exactly the opposite.

When the country’s largest university accepted this research center, it was a victory. It was a stimulus to researchers from all over Brazil. We started to meet in seminars, in congresses. . . This was a process of proving a quality of research and, at the same time, of gaining a solid reputation and institutionalization of this object. In this process, we started projects such as OBITEL [Ibero-American Observatory of Television Fiction], OBITEL-Brazil [Brazilian Network of Television Fiction Researchers], the Television Working Group of Intercom and, later, Compós [National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication], and many other achievements. We got to places where we could publicize and discuss studies on fictional television storytelling.

In fact, few people know, but for many years CETVN has been working on a project on “Theses and Dissertations on Television Fiction.” We started by recording the first studies in the area, where they were made, at the master and doctoral levels. Today, I think it would be fantastic to survey TCCs [Final Papers], because we realize that our studies also expanded to undergraduate studies, where they had no insertion. If anyone wants to know the first studies of the area, we have this.

And you see, when I reminisce about the time of my first studies, I wanted to study *telenovela* in my master’s and Professor Ruth Cardoso told me that it was not the time. That was in the 1980s. She convinced me to study radio, so, I could then reach *telenovela* as a massive cultural product. My master’s degree was actually about “the radio of the poor”, about the reception of popular radio programs. It was later published under the title *O Rádio dos Pobres. Comunicação de Massa, Ideologia, e Marginalidade Social*. It was a difficult time to study *telenovela* due to the visual part. We had to write down while it aired or gather the scripts to analyze. We could even ask Globo for some scenes, some chapters, but direct observation like we do nowadays was impossible. The videotape, when television materials ceased to be live and began to be pre-recorded,

was a historical milestone for us, a total change of possibilities, it caused a remarkable growth to audiovisual studies.

These are the many results. Everything began to emerge in groups, associations, graduate courses.

MATRIZES: You defined the initial years of the Center, until 2005, as the first phase, of installation. What was the later moment like?

MIVL: When I took over the coordination of NPTN, I started thinking about collective projects. I wanted to experiment. I wanted to keep what was already happening, an open center to researchers, a counter of sorts, a library on television fiction. I thought I could continue like this, but that it was necessary to start building a collective work, to involve and intertwine people in a common research project. This moment marked the birth of the idea of OBITEL.

MATRIZES: By the way, how did the creation of OBITEL take place?

MIVL: The creation of a research observatory for television fiction was already well articulated in my mind. Which is why I went to do a post-doc³ with Milly Buonanno⁴. At the time, Milly had created a slogan about television fiction in Italy: *l'Italia nella fiction, la fiction in Italia* – Italy in television fiction and television fiction in Italy (free translation). In this wordplay, the nation was in television and television was in the nation. From this idea, studying fiction in Italy, it was necessary to observe Berlusconi's channels and public television, RAI. It was necessary to study all the grids and analyze all the products that were aired. This is potent in terms of methodological proposal. Milly had also created Eurofiction, the Observatory of Television Fiction in Europe. At the time, it was a research network composed by five countries: England, Spain, France, and Germany, besides Italy itself.

I could have done my post-doctoral research with Jesús [Martín-Barbero], but I went to Italy to specifically look for a methodology to develop what was in my mind, to create an observatory, which would later become OBITEL. It was all due to the time I spent in that country.

In fact, when I had the first idea about the observatory, it was already to inaugurate it to study television fiction in Brazil. At first, OBITEL was not meant to be an international network. However, the OBITEL project was much more embraced by Latin America and Iberian countries, by researchers from other countries who, by joining OBITEL, began to create their own national observatories. Initially, a group of eight researchers from different countries met for intellectual and fraternal affinities and wrote the letter of foundation of OBITEL, in 2005, at the Pontifical Javeriana University, in Bogotá. Then, it took us about a year to elaborate the first methodological protocol of a network that was international, so it had to account for both the specific realities and what

³ Immacolata developed her postdoctoral studies at the Università degli Studi di Firenze, in Italy, in 2001 and with funding from the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).

⁴ Professor Emeritus of Television Studies at the Università di Roma La Sapienza, Italy.

was common between the countries, as well as, especially, to reduce a universe of theoretical and methodological references to be adopted by each one.

In 2007, the OBITEL project published its first Yearbook⁵, with quantitative, qualitative, and comparative analyses. During a period, OBITEL published the Yearbook in three printed books: one in Portuguese, one in Spanish, and one in English. After a while, the publication also went digital, which is the exclusive format today. On the other hand, OBITEL Brasil, was then created in 2007, in São Paulo, to be the Brazilian branch of OBITEL. In total, 10 existing and recognized research groups, from various regions of the country, met and began to work their own methodology, conducting a thematic, collective, and biennial research.

MATRIZES: The collective studies are, in fact, a hallmark of CETVN. In 2022, despite the OBITEL Yearbook and the biennial book of OBITEL Brasil, CETVN developed a collaborative⁶ project with researchers from the Federal University of Paraíba, mapping the conditions of existence and the challenges of the production of independent Brazilian audiovisual in the Northeast and in the Rio-São Paulo axis. This project, by going into the field and interviewing producers to understand its dynamics, has a connection to the television fiction industry. How can it contribute to the professionalization of the audiovisual market in Brazil?

MIVL: The concern with the training and professionalization of independent producers is there from the beginning. We start from the interviews with producers, but we want the data to return to them and also to reach schools, undergraduate and graduate students. It is something that is already inscribed in the very project. We want the readers of the study to be primarily non-academic.

This was also in OBITEL's founding letter: we did not want a merely academic observatory. Therefore, we should obtain market data collected by monitoring and contemplated in the analysis materials. We wanted professionals to read the Yearbooks and the Yearbooks to be used in the classroom.

We did not imagine that we would be awarded by the FAPESP/FAPESQ Notice. This was a project that came up and added to the two [projects] of OBITEL, all within CETVN. We all have learned a lot. I also have to say that this contact with production, with the process of creation, has greatly influenced my thoughts and reflections. Especially knowing that production studies need to be further developed in Brazil.

MATRIZES: What horizons do you envision for television fiction studies in the country?

MIVL: I will situate my optimism in a macro view, because I am a person who has not only been following the history of the field of Communication in Brazil but has been a part of it since the beginning. My generation, of course!

⁵Scientific publication of OBITEL International in which, from a common methodological protocol, the fictional television production of the previous year in each country of the Network is mapped. Five fictional television dimensions are analyzed: production, exhibition, consumption, commercialization, and thematic proposals.

⁶The project "Creative economy of independent Brazilian audiovisual: the role of creativity and the impact of innovation on the productive scenario of national television series. Evaluation and Proposals," contemplated by an Agreement between FAPESP and the State of Paraíba Research Foundation (FAPESQ).



Maria Immacolata Vassallo Lopes and 30 years of Center for Telenovela Studies at USP

I see that, despite all the problems that have come with public science policies, with governments, there is a lot of power in the field of Communication. There is still a lot to do, there is a lot of room to grow, to diversify studies and research. I defend Brazilian and internationalized studies, in collectives, just as CETVN has been doing.

When I think of the new generations, I believe that we have to closely follow TCCs, to observe what is in the minds of young people, because they are facing the new communicational phenomena, the new study methodologies. We know that they are preferably involved with the help of streaming, we need to understand these new interests and keep up. The professors who teach Theory or Methodology should encourage research on products of fiction, be it *telenovelas* or series, newer or older, to be able to broaden the discussion, because otherwise we end up talking only among ourselves, only in the research groups of the graduate program. I feel hopeful seeing more undergraduate students in research groups of television fiction, and applying to have undergraduate research scholarships in this area, but there is still a lot to achieve. It is good to remember that the Intercom Junior is a mirror of all Work Groups and it is very important to observe what is happening with the Junior Work Group of Serial Fiction.

MATRIZES: To wrap up, where does your love for television fiction and studies on this object come from?

MIVL: To answer that, I have to make an important parenthesis: to say who I am.

I am Immacolata from the Center of *Telenovela* Studies, OBITEL, Intercom, and all that I have mentioned. I am also a professor and researcher of Communication Methodology. Throughout my academic journey, I have brought everything that I considered to be high-quality research to the study of fiction. I like to keep that connection alive. Some may find it strange, but my areas of interest in Lattes are epistemology and *telenovela*. Sometimes I think a lot about who I am, where I came from, and why these choices. The intellectual trajectory is within one's life story, they are our personal marks.

The first point of my story is that my class origin is popular. I was born in the popular class of Italy, the one that emigrated after the war. First, my father traveled alone to Brazil in the 1950s. Once he was established, he called the family. I was in elementary school and was already literate when I was forced to emigrate with my mother and siblings. I lived the whole trajectory of a family of migrants, with its tragedies and dramas, its hopes and struggles. I am the youngest of three siblings, the first to attend university. Since I was doing very

well in my studies and achieved a scholarship, I could study without working. When I got into Social Sciences at USP, it was a great happiness for me and my family. It was a very difficult course to get into, and I thought I would not make it, but I was approved in second place, I felt immense pride for the course and the university that welcomed me.

I have always had very strong memories of the place where I was born, in Laurito, a province of Salerno in the Southern region of Italy, and of the family that I left there. My identification with [Antonio] Gramsci⁷ began there, and it naturally extended to the question of the popular in Communication. That is my root: the popular.

⁷ Italian linguist, writer, and Marxist philosopher.

An immigrant in Brazil, during the 1950s, 1960s, when they were improving their life, they would first purchase a radio, only later a television, because it was expensive. I bear all this with me, the radio, the the *novela*. I was a fan of *radionovela* because we listened to them a lot at home. We would talk to the neighbors about the day's chapter. I was a reader of *novelas* in magazines, the *fotonovelas*. I followed them, I discussed them, I liked them a lot, and so I reached the *radionovela* and the *telenovela*.

Early in my academic career, I thought of studying Silvio Santos' television, which had this whole question of the popular, of him coming from a humble background and building a great communication company, the only one in the country built based on the savings of popular people, the "*baú da felicidade*." However, as I said before, Professor Ruth Cardoso encouraged me to study radio first and then continue with television. And it was really good for me to start with radio because, when I studied it, I remembered the radio of my childhood and what we listened to at home. From that, my awareness of the need to feel passion for the object of study arose.

Regarding studies in television fiction, it was the same. It all started with the love I have for *telenovelas*. And because from here on I recognize it as a *narrative of the nation* and as a *communicative resource*. When people are talking a lot about a *novela*, as with *Pantanal* (remake, Globo, 2022), or as it happened with *Avenida Brasil* (Globo, 2012), *Vale Tudo* (Globo, 1988,) or *Roque Santeiro* (Globo, 1985), these two concepts of mine you are perfectly understandable. When the themes addressed in a *novela* fit with what a society is living in its daily life, we realize the strength of this *communicative resource* and, if well used, can generate public policies for women, minorities, the environment, health, among others. Of course, it is not the *novela* that will solve these problems, but we observe that, during its 70-year history, relevant themes have been narrated, contributing over and over to society. ■



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AGENDA
IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH



Notes on the role of immersive sound in contemporary cinema

Notas sobre o papel do som imersivo no cinema contemporâneo

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this article is to examine the role of sound in the stylistic strategies of contemporary filmmakers who are interested in expanding the multisensory engagement of viewers in feature films through immersive techniques, an emerging trend in the 21st century. This essay starts from a conceptual review of the idea of immersion in cinema, discusses the innate potential of the cinematographic device for immersion, and analyzes scenes from many films from the last 50 years, describing and discussing some of the main stylistic tools used by sound designers to build or enhance sensory immersion through sound.

Keywords: Immersion, sound studies, sound design, multisensory, synesthesia

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RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é examinar o papel do som nas estratégias estilísticas de realizadores contemporâneos, interessados em ampliar o engajamento multissensorial de espectadores através de técnicas imersivas, uma tendência emergente no século XXI. O artigo parte de uma revisão conceitual da ideia de imersão no cinema, discute o potencial inato do dispositivo cinematográfico para a imersão e analisa cenas de filmes dos últimos 50 anos, descrevendo e discutindo algumas das principais ferramentas estilísticas utilizadas por *sound designers* para construir ou reforçar o senso de imersão sensorial através do som.

Palavras-chave: Imersão, estudos do som, *sound design*, multissensorialidade, sinestesia

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¹Guia Folha is a section on the best-selling newspaper in São Paulo which, for over 20 years, offers a cultural guide of the city, featuring restaurants, bars, concerts, theaters, museums, and other leisure options.

IN EARLY 2020, the main cultural guide of São Paulo, named Guia Folha¹, carried out an evaluation of all the exhibition spaces in the city. The trophy for best movie theater was given to three spaces, one located at Multiplex UCI Anália Franco, another at Espaço Itaú Pompeia, and the third at Cinépolis JK Iguatemi (Nadaletto & Sanchez, 2020). These three spaces have state-of-the-art digital technology in image and sound reproduction: an IMAX system with enormous screens occupying an entire wall (635 x 866 inches) and a sound system capable of operating 24 dedicated speakers.

Most sound and image reproduction technologies, both in commercial rooms and in domestic use (home theaters, soundbars, binaural headphones, etc.), have gained prominence for one main reason: they enhance users' sensory experience. Cinephiles have been familiar with terms like IMAX, 4DX, and D-BOX² for a few years. These are acronyms which refer to the multisensory aspects of audiovisual reproduction systems: more intense low bass sounds, accurate spatial sound distribution, bigger image resolution and size, and devices that activate chair movements. All these seek to offer the viewer a synesthetic experience³ through seats that vibrate, speakers that emit sounds coming from the ceiling (both theater-developed technologies now available for installation at home), low bass sounds capable of shaking internal organs and cause people to feel nauseous, giant screens that curve over the audience, and so on.

²IMAX is a projection system that reproduces the image on giant screens. 4DX is a South Korean technology that adds sensory effects to the projection, including moving seats, strobe lights, and simulations of wind, rain, and scents. D-BOX is a company that produces, since 2009, motion control systems in chairs, providing this service for movie theaters, home theaters, and video game consoles.

³The term "synesthesia" comes from the Greek, from the union of the words "sin" (meaning "with") and "aesthesis" ("sensation"). It is an involuntary neurological condition in which many of the five human senses are merged in a single sensory experience.

Multisensory display devices are part of a phenomenon that has prominently affected the audiovisual market since the massive introduction of digital technologies in production, storage, and circulation of feature films in the early 1990s. The *digital revolution* (Cousins, 2013, p. 455) brought changes to all stages of the production chain, from planning and production to film viewing in theaters or home screenings. Within this context, many filmmakers have turned to ways of filming and types of narratives that promote multisensory stimuli. Hollywood filmmakers such as James Cameron, Peter Jackson, and Michael Bay (Cooper, 2017; Pierce, 2010; Schmidlin, 2012) have synthesized this phenomenon through insistent mentions of an ambivalent and controversial term: immersion.

In fact, the exhibition market has invested a lot of money in the aforementioned technologies, as there is currently tough competition between studios, production companies, streaming platforms (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+, etc.), and other forms of audiovisual consumption (DVD, Blu-Ray, Pay TV, video games). All this contributes to the audiovisual culture being in a kind of *turbulence zone* (Gaudreault & Marion, 2016, p. 16), within which the very concept of film (as well as cinema) has become nebulous and multiform.

By stimulating hearing, vision, touch, smell and taste, the multisensory integration achieved in a scene is able to create an immersive experience. Immersive sound, in particular, can give the listener the feeling of being inside the scene. (Roginski & Geluso, 2018, p. 1)

Studies on immersion have increased fast since the 1990s. Google Ngram Viewer Stats (<https://books.google.com/ngrams>) show that the appearance of the term “immersive” has increased tenfold in the last 30 years. Research on immersion has advanced in disciplines such as cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality. In film studies, authors such as Casetti (2015), Elsaesser and Hagener (2018), and Roginski and Geluso (2018) have been studying the development of narrative tools to reinforce immersion in audiovisual media.

It is also important to highlight that, in Brazil, film studies are largely linked to Departments and Scientific Societies in the study area of Communication (Ramos, 2010). Therefore, a significant part of immersion studies (C. Costa et al., 2021; Mesquita & Massarolo, 2014) is developed in the context of postgraduate programs, research groups such as the Study Group on Interactive Media in Image and Sound (GEMInIS), and scientific societies located in the study area of Social Communication, such as the National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (COMPÓS).

In film theory, researchers have been addressing the issue of synesthetic stimuli offered by contemporary audiovisual techniques. Vivian Sobchack (2004, p. 67) even coined a term to name the trend: *kinesthesia*, which rewrites the word “synesthesia” (sensation perceived by many physiological senses at the same time), combining it with the notion of cinema. Robert Stam (2003) highlighted, in what he calls the *cinema of the senses*, that films are, in the last 50 years, closer to video games and theme park attractions than to classic Hollywood narratives because, when seeing them, “the spectator is *inside* the image, instead of being confronted by it” (p. 348). Michel Chion (2011, p. 119) referred to this type of audiovisual show using the term *sensory cinema*. Francesco Casetti (2015), in turn, praised the audience’s participation in the filmic spectacle: “Spectators spring into action, constructing for themselves, with their own hands, the object and the mode of their seeing” (p. 13).

Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener (2018) defend the thesis that the quest to engage the audience through the physiology of the body has always been in the sphere of concern of filmmakers since the end of the 19th century. They claim that the potential to stimulate a certain type of immersion is present in the very ideological basis of the cinematographic device, as described by Jean Louis Baudry (1983). Elsaesser and Hagener point out that the predisposition of cinematographic media to synesthesia has intensified since the introduction of the digital element in the audiovisual chain:



The idea of the body as a sensorial envelope, a perceptive membrane and a material and mental interface in relation to the cinematographic image and audiovisual perception is, therefore, more than a heuristic device and an aesthetic metaphor: it is the ontological, epistemological and phenomenological basis of film theories today. . . . At the limit, film and spectator are like parasite and host, one occupies the other and is, in turn, occupied, to the point where there is only one reality, which develops at the same time as it gets involved, and vice versa. (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2018, p. 21)

Although these researchers had coined different terms and developed arguments anchored in distinctive conceptual perspectives, such as phenomenology, semiology, cognitive sciences, and psychoacoustics, the researchers cited in the previous paragraphs (and many others) all agree on one point: contemporary audiovisual works – not just feature films but also TV and streaming series, video games, musical video clips, short films, and experimental pieces, – offer a privileged place for the human body and for physiological sensations, often obtained through the aforementioned exhibition technologies, and, in other cases, through stylistic techniques that reinforce the sense of physiological immersion within the narrative. This potential has even been pursued by some filmmakers at the expense of narrative coherence and density.

In this sense, little attention has been given to the role of film stylistics in this wave of multisensory and multimodal impact. In particular, the role of film sound in the immersive experience has been scarcely mentioned and studied, although it is crucial for the physiological engagement of the audience, as Agnieszka Roginski and Paul Geluso (2018) attest:

Through sound, vision, touch, smell and taste, multi-sensory integration into a scene can create an immersive experience. Immersive sound can give the listener an experience of *being there* through sound. Compared to vision, sound provides a fully immersive experience and can be perceived from all directions simultaneously. In fact, sound has the ability to anchor a listener to a fixed location while other sensory information changes simultaneously. Filmmakers are well aware of this effect, often using sound to establish a fixed location in a scene while having the visual perspective change frequently. (p. 1)

It should be noted that digital recording, editing, mixing, and reproduction technologies currently provide the necessary tools to produce, with a reasonable degree of verisimilitude, the immersive experience both in movie theaters and home exhibitions. Since the early 1990s, the use of these technologies has helped sound designers, sound editors, and mixers to use sound for the task of positioning audience members within the dramatic space of the film, helping them

to have experiences close to those felt by fictional characters through resources such as the use of off-screen sounds – a space that Michel Chion (2011, p. 119) called *superfield* and, more recently, Mark Kerins (2010, p. 92) renamed *ultrafield*, as we will see later –, the adoption of subjective hearing points and sound hyperrealism (Opolski, 2015, p. 1).

A cinematic moment, which became paradigmatic for the idea of immersion in diegesis through sound, is the scene of the Normandy landings in *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1998). The viewer feels like a recruit under heavy fire from the Nazis, with bullets whizzing around, explosions that sound both near and far, and screams of pain and fear coming from all sides. Sound immersion reinforces and gives multisensory contours to the strategy of filming the entire scene from the point of view (and also hearing) of a soldier who is in the midst of chaos, alternating subjective points of view, close-ups, and extreme close-ups (Figure 1). With the help of a shaking camera, the immersive sound positions the audience inside the diegesis.

This mixing strategy was made possible by the creation of the Dolby Digital reproduction system, available since 1992. The spatial distribution of sound generated (and still generates) physiological reactions in many members of the audience who instinctively lower themselves to avoid being “hit” by gunshots, cover their ears with their hands, experience motion sickness, and so on. An American critic called the film “a dizzying and exhausting assault on the senses” (Berardinelli, 1998).

Figure 1

Frames from *Saving Private Ryan*



Note. Spielberg (1998).



Examples of feature films which explore immersive sound tactics to trigger multisensory responses, emotions, and affects have been accumulating, including *Irréversible* (Noé, 2002), *Gravity* (Cuarón, 2013), *San Andreas* (Peyton, 2015), *Dunkirk* (Nolan, 2017), *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017), and *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski, 2018). I will analyze scenes from these and other titles throughout this essay, whose main objective is to examine the role of sound in the stylistic strategies of contemporary filmmakers who desire to expand the audience's multisensory engagement in feature films, almost always resorting to immersive strategies. I will also seek to explore the relation between sound technologies and stylistics.

The article is structured in two sections, followed by final considerations. In the first one, it will make a conceptual review of the idea of immersion in cinema in order to understand how scholars analyze the effects that immersive devices produce in audiences in addition to explaining how filmmakers understand the term. The section will analyze the innate potential of the cinematographic device (Baudry, 1983) and a possible taxonomy of immersion, as proposed by Dominic Arsenault (2005). The following section will attempt, from the analysis of scenes of films from the last 50 years, to describe and analyze some of the stylistic tools used by sound editors, sound designers, and mixers to build or enhance the sense of sensorial immersion.

IMMERSION IN CINEMA

France, December 28, 1895. The brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière organize an exhibition in Lyon to present the cinematograph, an equipment capable of reproducing moving images. The short film *The Arrival of the Train at the Station* caused panic (Brownlow, 1979; Toepfritz, 1979; Toulet, 1995): people got up from their seats, afraid that the train seen on the screen would invade the auditorium. According to Oliver Grau (2003, p. 180), fear reactions like that are still common in places where films are shown for the first time; the very same short feature was shown in a rural village in Romania in 1931, with a similar panic reaction.

This allows us to conclude that audience members slowly naturalize the immersion effect but it never completely disappears (Grau, 2003), as it is related to audiovisual forms since their genesis (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2018). Oliver Grau (2003) states, in fact, that there is an innate potential in audiovisual media – far beyond cinema, including television, multimedia installations, video games, etc. – for immersion.

The cinema apparatus, as described by Jean-Louis Baudry (1983, p. 183), contains the seed of immersion: a dark room, closed to external sounds and other stimuli, in which the audience must sit in front of a giant screen

and learn that they should remain motionless and in silence for the entire duration of the projection. Baudry (1983) believes that this device works so well for storytelling, especially fiction, because it is able to forcefully capture the audience's attention to the events that occur in the diegesis, preventing its members from being clearly aware of the technical apparatus that allows the operation.

In this sense, it is important to note that the filtering of attention offered by other audiovisual media may fluctuate but the ability to capture it is always there. Home television, for example, offers less potential for immersion due to external stimuli (household noises, phones ringing, neighboring sounds, etc.). Virtual reality games engage attention more energetically, in part because they require the use of headphones that block out some of the external stimuli. The control of attention will be, by virtue of the apparatus, concentrated on the narrative that unfolds on the screen (and through the sounds around it). If the immersive potential is used creatively, the audience's critical awareness of what is happening in the environment is reduced:

Despite being an intellectually stimulating process, immersion, in the present as in the past, is in many cases mentally absorbing in the unfolding of a process, a change, a passage from one mental state to another. It is always characterized by decreasing critical distance from what is shown and increasing emotional involvement with what is happening. (Grau, 2003, p. 30)

After all, what do I really mean when I mention the word "immersion?" Arlindo Machado (2014) states that the term suggests "multiple interpretations and distinct associations and applications, whether in the academic environment or in the common sense of the word" (p. 1). To eliminate possible ambiguities, I use the concept proposed by Janet Murray (2003):

The experience of being transported to an exquisitely simulated place is pleasurable in itself, regardless of fantasy content. We refer to this experience as immersion. "Immersion" is a metaphorical term derived from the physical experience of being submerged in water . . . the sensation of being enveloped by a completely alien reality, as different as water and air, which seizes all our attention, our entire sensory system. (p. 102)

To address the different levels of immersion that a member of the audience can experience, I evoke the taxonomy developed by Dominic Arsenault (2005), according to which there are three levels of immersion in a narrative dimension. In the first level, which the author calls *fictional*, immersion occurs from a purely

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mental relationship with a narrative – a memory, a thought, a dream. Immersion occurs exclusively within the subject's mind.

Systemic immersion occupies the next level, in which the narrative is constructed carefully and drives the subject's cognitive involvement with the immersive instance. To enter it, the subject must enter a fictional reality through a voluntary suspension of perception and the fulfillment of some rules of conduct. Listening to music and reading a book provide experiences of systemic immersion.

Finally, immersion is *sensory* when the subject experiences multiple physiological senses; that is, when it is synesthetic. Playing a video game characterizes this type of experience. Watching a movie, whether on television, on a smartphone or in a movie theater makes it happen too. This type of immersion can have many degrees of intensity, depending on the affective relationship that film and audience establish with each other with the help of audiovisual reproduction and consumption devices.

In fact, the aesthetic model developed since the beginning of the 20th century by Hollywood filmmakers, which Bordwell (1985) calls *classical continuity*, is strongly based on the search for techniques that, by concealing the narrative instance, favor a strong degree of sensory immersion.

Most of the stylistic tools available to contemporary filmmakers were developed to create, enhance or expand narrative immersion with the help of technology and the cinematographic apparatus. The traditional system of continuity (Bordwell, 2006) – which determines the creation of an axis of 180° so the variation of camera angles does not alter the direction of the gaze and the movement of the characters through the cuts – aims at the spatial and time continuity of dramaturgic action. The choice of angles and cut-off points, therefore, reduces the perception of the narrative instance and favors immersion in the plot.

We can take as an example a sequence in *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (Johnson, 2017), in which the characters Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) and Rey (Daisy Ridley), who mastered telepathic abilities, communicate this way for the first time. They are on different planets but the editing minimizes this fact, as the conversation is set up in symmetrical medium shots in which the characters seem to look at each other (Figure 2). The sound reinforces the illusion of spatial and temporal continuity as the film's sound designers remove the sound environments from the two physical locations, making the two characters share the same empty virtual space, which sounds as a kind of vacuum (obtained by applying to the speakers a reverse echo effect along with a large amount of reverb).

This stylistic strategy isolates Kylo and Rey from their respective physical environments and positions them both in a virtual dimension. That strategy makes the viewer immerse themselves, along with them, within that space. The audience shares the intimacy of the duo in a way that no other character does. We are inside the diegesis while remaining oblivious to the stylistic strategies which lead to this sensorial immersion, as our attention is focused on what Kylo and Rey say and do. In this sense, the analyzed scene follows the principle of classic narrative continuity (Bordwell, 1985) while using sound to obtain the audience's sensorial immersion, as described by Lisa Coulthard (2017):

This focus on immersion by filmmakers, producers and technological specialists suggests a shift in ideals for spectatorship that stresses experience over emotional investment. *What is repeatedly invoked is the idea that the spectator should feel as if they are in the space of the action* [emphasis added] — this is prioritized over the spectators' sentimental attachment to characters or events. (p. 54)

Figure 2

Frames from Star Wars: The Last Jedi



Note. Johnson (2017).

The use of neo-romantic music imported from Europe, in the golden age of Hollywood (1927-1945), exemplifies another tool that favors a certain degree of narrative immersion. Claudia Gorbman (1987) states that cinematographic music from the classical period was inserted in films not to be noticed but to enhance the sense of continuity through the maintenance of a stable, continuous background

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sound that did not draw attention to itself. That would help, according to Gorbman, to mask possible visual discontinuities, a procedure that helped to keep the viewer immersed in the narrative.

The genres and narrative functions of music in audiovisual media have changed a lot since that period (Carreiro, 2018, p. 106) but the loops and drones of electronic music help to blur the boundary between music and sound effects (Burwell, 2013; Carreiro, 2019; F. M. Costa et al., 2016; Kassabian, 2003; Opolski, 2013; Sergi, 2006; Smith, 2013) to the point that we cannot identify one from the other, and that technique continues to fulfill its classical role.

An example of the use of music mixed with sound effects to generate an immersive environment can be experimented in *Dunkirk* (Nolan, 2017). In the scene in which a British soldier and three civilians aboard a speedboat sail toward the city and witness the passage of a German plane, which will bomb the Allied rescue ship further on, the rhythmic noise of the speedboat's engine merges with the music and gradually turns into a martial percussion that underlines the growing threatening noise of the enemy plane approaching the ship (Figure 3). The scene is narrated from the point of view of the speedboat and the environment in which the event takes place is as deafening as it is immersive.

Figure 3

Frames from Dunkirk



Note. Nolan (2017).

IMMERSSION AND SOUND

Although it is a consequence of the cognitive and ideological construction by the cinema apparatus, immersion has been more valued in the last three decades. In this period, when consumer devices and audiovisual entertainment modalities multiplied – TV, pay-per-view television, streaming platforms, DVD, Blu-Ray, video games, and social networks such as YouTube –, the economic survival of the classic model of cinematic exhibition has come to depend, in part, on the creation and improvement of immersive technologies.

Thus, as had occurred during the 1950s, when Hollywood studios felt threatened by the competition from television, the production companies concentrated their efforts on developing technologies that proposed greater sensory immersion. The idea was to provide an audiovisual consumption mode more difficult to reproduce at home. For most filmmakers, this translated into immersion, hence the success of the IMAX system and 3D projection, among others. In the field of sound reproduction, multichannel surround reproduction systems⁴ (Dolby Digital, Dolby Atmos, Aura 3D, etc.) were responsible for, from 1992 onward, presenting ways to make the audience dive into diegesis and stimulating their physiological senses.

⁴Surround channels have sounds played on the side and rear walls, ceiling and floor of the screening room, surrounding the audience.

Recognizing these facts, many researchers evoke the same image to describe sensory immersion: films made in the 21st century do not just want to place the audience in front of a window (or maybe a screen) through which they watch the dramatic action unfold, but to place them *inside* the diegetic space, making them have the impression of being together with the characters. Arlindo Machado (2002, p. 11), Robert Stam (2003), Mark Kerins (2010, p. 130), and Lisa Coulthard (2017) all used the very same metaphor: “the spectator is no longer the deluded master of the images, but its inhabitant” (Stam, 2003, p. 348). Frances Dyson (2009) observed the power that sound has to immerse the audiovisual consumer in films for both psychoacoustic and physiological reasons:

sound is the immersive medium par excellence. Three-dimensional, interactive, and synesthetic, perceived in the here and now of an embodied space, sound returns to the listener the very same qualities that media mediates: that feeling of being here now, of experiencing oneself as engulfed, enveloped, absorbed, enmeshed, in short, immersed in an environment. . . . Immersed in sound, the subject loses its self, and, in many ways, loses its sense. Because hearing is not a discrete sense, to hear is also to be touched, both physically and emotionally. We feel low sound vibrate in our stomachs and start to panic, sharp sudden sound makes us flinch involuntarily, a high pitched scream is emotionally wrenching: sound has immediate and obvious

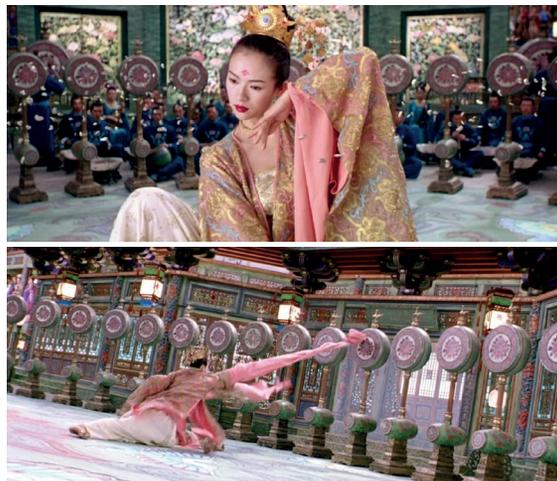
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Notes on the role of immersive sound in contemporary cinema

physical effects. In listening, one is engaged in a synergy with the world and the senses, a hearing/touch that is the essence of what we mean by gut reaction – a response that is simultaneously physiological and psychological, body and mind. (p. 4)

In *The House of Flying Daggers* (Yimou Zang, 2004), a scene exemplifies how the creative use of a multichannel system can place the viewer at the center of the dramatic action, as well as allowing them to perceive sensually the sonic details in the acoustic texture of the film through hyper-realistic techniques. In the scene, a blind dancer (Zhang Ziyi) has her physical skills tested by a police officer (Andy Lau) who forces her to participate in a sound game. He places the girl in the center of a circle formed by drummers and throws beans at the instruments, forcing her to perform an improvised dance to follow the direction of each bean, even as they ricochet. Creating a mixture of dance and fight that has vast sound dynamics – moments of quietude in which we can only hear the dancer's hyperrealistic breathing (Carreiro, 2020) interspersed with explosive percussive choreography and noisy acrobatic movements –, the Chinese director explores every minimal noise, including mixing in the foreground the rustling of the dancer's clothes. In addition, bean grains beating on drums located in different positions along the circle expertly explore the spatiality of the room, using reverberation to highlight the movement of sound on the horizontal axis, which makes the surround speakers work in isolation in order to make the audience feel at the center of the dance floor, next to the girl (Figure 4).

Figure 4
Frames from The House of Flying Daggers



Note. Zang (2004).

Within the taxonomy developed by Arsenault (2005), scenes such as the dancing from *The House of Flying Daggers* provide sensory immersion because they use available technology to stimulate physiological and multimodal aspects of the human stimuli apparatus. The combination of subjective hearing points, hyperrealism, and generous use of surround sound is able to stimulate all human body's senses.

Another example of multisensoriality is the French feature *Irréversible* (Noé, 2002), in which the director inserted a constant hum, at a low frequency of 27 Hz, during the entire first 60 minutes of projection (Wilson, 2015, p. 85). This frequency is so low that the sound is not really heard, but rather felt as a constant vibration. The sound provokes an internal shaking of human organs, causing some people to feel nauseous. In the case of this film, therefore, the director and the creative team used a sound design technique to excite all the spectator's body, working hearing and touch in unusual ways. It is a sensory manipulation operated by creative processes.

This technique, like many others, is developed with the intention of generating physiological responses in the bodies of the audience. Therefore, it is able to produce sensory immersion experiences. There are visual techniques to create the same type of effect: according to Laura Wilson (2015), images of tactile parts of the human body – especially when filmed very closely, in hyperreal close-ups – can generate a self-awareness of the audience for the existence of the bodies that inhabit it, evoking the haptic dimension through sensory memory. The eye gouged out in a famous scene from *Hostel* (Roth, 2005) leads the audience to a feeling of revulsion and nausea, which goes beyond the purely visual experience.

In the case of sound, there is a direct relation between high fidelity multichannel reproduction technologies and multisensory pulse-generating techniques. Digital systems that exploit surround channels, in particular, are capable, as stated by Mark Kerins (2010, p. 133), of creating three-dimensional extensions of two-dimensional images, in which the audience is surrounded by a kind of sound envelope, which Kerins calls *ultrafield* (p. 92). The term updates the concept of *superfield*, developed by Chion (2011, p. 119) in the early 1990s, but now applying it to digital multichannel reproduction systems, such as Dolby Digital (six loudspeakers distributed on a horizontal axis of 360° view that surrounds the listener) and Dolby Atmos (up to 64 sound reproduction channels which surround the audience like a semisphere, in horizontal, vertical, and diagonal axes).

For Kerins (2010), using Chion's term literally would be a reductionist attitude since the French author's concept referred to a four-channel stereo sound reproduction system (Dolby Stereo⁵), with only one of them – the rear channel – providing the sounds of the superfield, corresponding to the diegetic space on the sides and back of the screen. This would be the acoustic space constituted by acousmatic sounds – animals, traffic, murmurs, music, voices of

⁵ Created in 1975, Dolby Stereo consists of a sound mixing and reproduction system in four channels, three front ones (right, center, left) and a surround one (side/rear).

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characters who are not shown on screen, etc. – whose origin in diegesis lies outside visuals. As digital sound reproduction systems have multiple channels distributed throughout the exhibition hall, Kerins preferred to modify the term.

The most popular sound reproduction systems of the last 30 years were released by Dolby. In 1992, the company made Dolby Digital available; 20 years later, it was Dolby Atmos' turn. The first allows the movement of sounds along the horizontal axis; the latter goes a step further and moves sounds in any direction, including vertical and diagonal axes. By being able to position the audiovisual consumer at the center of the diegetic space, from which he can audibly follow any action that takes place around him, Dolby Atmos (as well as competing multichannel systems, such as Aura 3D and DTS-X) works as a sound counterpart of the notion of *scenic box*, a term coined by Céline Tricart (2017, p. 226) to name the three-dimensional space in which 3D diegetic action takes place. From this point on, I will use Tricart's term to designate the three-dimensional diegetic space that is sounded by contemporary sound designers and within which the listener is positioned.

The sound construction of this scenic box begins with the script and goes through the creation of environments in which the narrative takes place in acoustically detailed environments, preferably in which dramatic events include the movement of actors and objects in different directions. Take, for example, the scene from *A Quiet Place* (Krasinski, 2018) in which two children are trapped inside a corn silo while a blind monster climbs the metal walls of the place, trying to locate the boys through the sounds made by the duo who are also trying not to submerge themselves in the sea of corn grains that surrounds them.

Figure 5

Frames from A Quiet Place



Note. Krasinski (2018).

The discreet noises – a creaking metal door, wind, crickets, the rustling of bodies in the cereal – create a stable sonic environment which guarantees the sonic continuity of the scene but the element that really generates tension and, even more importantly, inserts the audience in the middle of the dramatic action, is the scratching of the monster’s claws on the walls; and then his footsteps over the corn mountain. The movement of these sound effects through the room’s speakers, from the descent through the silo to the approach of the children, crystallizes a moment of horror and sensory immersion – and horror, before being a filmic genre, is a human emotion (a mixture of fear and repulsion) that triggers multiple physiological sensations:

In relation to art horror, some of the sensations – or physically felt flurries, or automatic responses, or feelings – are muscle contractions, tension, cringing, trembling, recoil, numbness, freezing, chills (hence, “chills down the spine”), paralysis, shivering, nausea, an apprehension reflex or a physically heightened alertness (a response to danger), perhaps involuntary screaming etc. (Carroll, 1999, p. 41)

Many researchers agree with the immersive potential of using off-screen sounds to enhance audience immersion. Débora Opolski (2015) cites the use of acousmatic sounds as one of the most important techniques that the sound team can use to position the viewer within the diegesis. Opolski also mentions the use of subjective hearing points and the use of hyperrealistic sound textures, techniques already mentioned and present in the scenes of *Saving Private Ryan*, *Dunkirk*, *The House of Flying Daggers*, and *A Quiet Place*.

The concept of hearing point is, for Chion (2011, p. 74), analogous to the notion of point of view from the visual perspective. According to the author, the notion can have two complementary meanings, one being strictly spatial (sound recording seeks to preserve acoustic characteristics – reverberation, timbre, and spatiality – and provides acoustic indices that allow the body hearing systems in the audience to locate the origin of certain events in the geography of the diegesis), and the other, subjective. In the latter case, filmmakers manipulate the sounds to give the audience the same geographical and emotional perspective as a given character. The multichannel technologies used in recording, editing, mixing, and reproduction stages of audiovisual chain works allow the creative use of subjective hearing points.

The opening sequence of *Apocalypse Now* (Coppola, 1979) contains perhaps the best-known use of this technique and constitutes a paradigm for

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film sound design. The scene shows Captain Willard (Martin Sheen) in his hotel room in Saigon (Vietnam). Drunk, he waits for the next mission he is to fulfill while remembering scenes of destruction he has already witnessed in the war to the sound of the song “The End” (The Doors). Sound designer Walter Murch took advantage of the scene to introduce the first six-channel sound system (in 5.1 format, that is, three front channels, two in the rear, and one to reinforce the low bass sounds), though analog and experimental, created for the cinema – only in 1992, as I have already said, a six-channel system was made commercially available.

In the scene, the military helicopters which bomb a beach revolve around the listener while the song gains reverberation and echo and becomes distant like a fading memory. At the end, Willard realizes that the recollection was induced by the noise produced by the blades of a fan (Figure 6). That is, we hear the diegetic space around us the same way the captain hears it: delusional, distant, distorted.

Figure 6

Frames from Apocalypse Now



Note. Coppola (1979).

Another technique used in the production of immersive sensory experiences is the creation of hyperrealistic acoustic textures. These appear in the soundtrack when sound designers amplify sound actions and events that, in real life, would go

unnoticed. In the classic Hollywood golden period (1927-1945), low-pitched sounds, such as the rustle of clothes, the clinking of ice in a glass, or the breathing of a secondary character, were usually left out of the mix because the reproduction systems in commercial rooms had a single sound output channel, which would be occupied with more intelligible sounds.

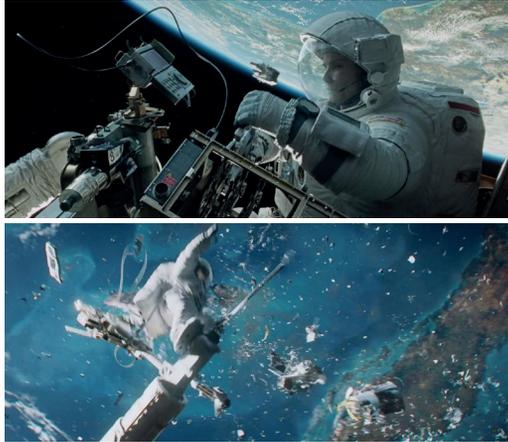
For some researchers (Capeller, 2008; Carreiro, 2019; Costa, 2011), these sounds should be called hyperreal because, in ordinary life, we do not pay attention to them and, therefore, we do not perceive them, although they are there. In the wake of the appreciation of the concept of hyperrealism, which emerged in the visual arts in the second half of the 20th century, to name works that highlighted the richness of detail of certain images (Mello, 2012, p. 367), the term became applied to cinematic sounds.

Hyperrealism, as indicated by Phillippe Dubois (1994, p. 274), has, as its objective, not the exact reproduction but the representation of a state, of an atmosphere. In the case of sound, Ivan Capeller (2008, p. 66) suggests that hyperrealism appears when “the sound record presents itself as if it could possibly be more faithful to reality than reality itself.” Such a technique would be able to expand the sensorial and multimodal potential of the represented sounds, transforming them into multisensory elements.

An example of sonic hyperrealism in contemporary cinema can be found in the soundtrack of *Gravity* (Cuarón, 2013). The film tells the story of two astronauts hit by space debris, during a mission to repair the Hubble telescope, and they must find a way to return to Earth. In pursuit of sonic realism, Alfonso Cuarón and sound designer Glenn Freemantle established that no sound that could not be truly heard in outer space should be included in the soundtrack. That is why they use the astronauts’ subjective hearing points throughout the whole film.

Inside the spacesuit, the only sounds that can be heard, in addition to radio communication with each other and with the Earth, are those produced by the body itself: voice, heartbeat, breathing, noises produced by the contact of parts of the body rustling the suit. For this reason, minimal noise predominates in the soundtrack, along with music, which is responsible for sounding out the events that occur outside the suits and the space station (explosions, clashes of metal parts), using the old *mickeymousing* technique⁶, as in children’s animations of the 1930s. Subjective hearing points, wide use of ultrafield, and hyperrealism are present. The use of long shots filmed in 3D helps to position the audience within the diegesis, as if they were participating in the dramatic action (Figure 7).

⁶ The mickeymousing technique has been used by composers since the 1930s and consists of sounding events shown in the image with musical instruments (Carreiro, 2018).

Figure 7*Frames from Gravity**Note.* Cuarón (2013).

The frequent use of very low-frequency sounds is also multisensory (Kerins, 2010, p. 134). These sounds, often situated below 200 Hz on the sound frequency scale, are reproduced in movie theaters through a special speaker called subwoofer. The aforementioned case of *Irréversible* denotes an example of an extreme use of this technique. It has been so explored in recent years that researcher Jeff Smith (2013, p. 338) cites the use of low bass sounds as one of the most important features of the sound aesthetic of *intensified continuity*, a term created by David Bordwell (2006) to name the repertoire of stylistic practices used by filmmakers to make the audiovisual consumer's experience more visceral and affectively engaged.

Films such as *San Andreas* (Peyton, 2015) present a favorable scenario for the use of this technique, with the creation of an acoustically detailed scenic box (Tricart, 2017). The sequence in which an earthquake destroys the city of San Francisco (USA) is underlined, for three minutes, by a strong rumbling that comes from all sides, envelops the spectator and makes their chest cavity resound, accompanying a multiplicity of breaking glass, cracking concrete, and people screaming sounds. The sound mix heard in surround systems is capable of causing nausea in some members of the audience. It is also important to note that the sound tactic of sensorial immersion is reinforced (or vice versa) by shaking images of destruction, almost always filmed with a shaking camera which frequently loses the horizontal axis, defying the sense of stability of the bodies in the audience (Figure 8). Visual stylistics help position the audience in the diegesis, which enhances the sense of immersion.

Figure 8*Frames from San Andreas*

Note. Peyton (2015).

IMMERSION IN THE PRACTICE OF SOUND DESIGN

As we have already seen, sound immersion is achieved through the combination of three main tools: (1) the extensive use of off-screen sounds, surrounding the audience; (2) the establishment of a hearing point that corresponds to the subjective point of view of a given character; and (3) the prominent use of amplified sounds of everyday life, characterizing sound hyperrealism, which occurs when the sound heard in audiovisual production “provokes a sense of increased presence” (Stam, 2003, p. 239).

It is precisely to pursue these characteristics that engineer Brett Leonard (2018, pp. 347-348) wrote an essay listing technical ways to achieve the goal of amplifying sensory immersion effects. In the sound mixing stage, for example, positioning the music on front speakers, but with a different output angle than voices and sound effects (in feature films mixed with Dolby Atmos, it is already part of the technical convention to place the music above or below the horizontal axis of the camera; never just *above* it).

To increase the sense of immersion in the scenic box (Tricart, 2017), sound effects and foley⁷ can be treated in a similar way to music, but with a more open spatial distribution, with attention to the displacements of sound events – that is, the panning effects. Leonard (2018) emphasizes that the movement of sound through different speakers, in horizontal, diagonal, and vertical axes, constitutes one of the most prominent techniques for providing the listener with the sensation of being physically present in the diegesis.

⁷Foley are the sounds produced in the studio, in sync with the images, that arise from the interaction of bodies with the surrounding environment: footsteps, doors and windows, rustling clothes, etc.

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Almost all the scenes analyzed in this article combine these three sound tools. The music and panning effects in *Gravity*, for example, work exactly the way Leonard (2018) describes it. The attention to the panning movement of more outstanding sound effects exerts an enhanced immersive effect in *Apocalypse Now*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *The House of Flying Daggers*, and *A Quiet Place*, among others. The movement of sound events within the exhibition hall has been one of the most important techniques to ensure an immersion effect with synesthetic impact.

Another feature film that uses the movement of sound events to reinforce the audience's sensory immersion is *Baby Driver* (Wright, 2017). In its very first shot, with a low camera, two cars cross the screen, going in opposite directions (Figure 9). We can hear each one moving, from left to right and vice versa, while a song plays in the background. Suddenly, the protagonist, a young man who drives with headphones, starts singing the very same song, making it diegetic. Many cars, including police vehicles with sirens on, cross the field of vision, in multiple directions, and the movement of each of these cars can be perceived.

Figure 9

Frames from Baby Driver



Note. Wright (2017).

Surround channels, positioned on the sides and rear (i.e., the superfield) are used to position ambient sounds (backgrounds, or BG, in audiovisual industry parlance) which anchor the listener's spatial position in the screening room whether at home

or in a movie theater. The sound mixer can explore diagonal axes to emphasize the movement of helicopters or planes or to simply insert noises from birds, waterfalls, and animals in a forest environment, for example. This is what happens, once again, in the analyzed scenes of *Apocalypse Now*, *San Andreas*, and *Gravity*.

Brett Leonard (2018, p. 348) also highlights the importance of using equalization, reverb, and delay effects⁸ to reinforce the three-dimensional effect of ambient sounds, foley, voices, and sound effects. The author highlights the importance of adding the “real dimension of height” to the sounds (Leonard, 2018, p. 349) in the mixing stage to give greater spatial precision to the sound displacement.

All these techniques are capable of enhancing the multisensory potential of the soundtrack. This set of tools allows the creation of complex, multimodal, and multidimensional sound environments, with sounds that spread across all six sides of the stage box. *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017), whose action takes place in a post-apocalyptic world — in which the rain never stops, flying cars circle in all directions, and a female robotic voice can be heard all the time, even outdoors —, has very detailed sonic environments (Figure 10). We can hear rain falling and engulfing us; the movement of vehicles can be perceived on many diagonal axes; the characters’ footsteps have a wet, hyperreal texture of haptic quality. The surround channels also reproduce discreet reverbs of sounds heard on the front channels.

⁸Equalization is the technique in which the sound mixer accentuates or reduces certain frequency ranges of a sound event. Turning down the volume of the lower frequencies, for example, can give the sound more clarity, while reducing power. Reverberation is the physical persistence of a sound wave, after the emitting source ceases to produce the original sound but it continues to be heard because of the reflections of the sound waves on walls and objects close to the point of emission. Delay is an effect of delaying the reverb of a given sound, measured in milliseconds.

Figure 10

Frames from *Blade Runner 2049*



Note. Villeneuve (2017).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 1990, two years before the first digital multitrack reproducing sound systems (Dolby Digital and DTS) were launched, Michel Chion published the book *Audio-Vision*, where he coined the concept of superfield and claimed that Dolby Stereo gave filmmakers the sound equivalent of an eight-octave grand piano. He claimed that, until then, sound designers had only a “five-octave upright piano” (Chion, 2011, p. 121). What the surround channels presented in superfield, he said, was the possibility of generating “an increase in sensoriality” (Chion, 2011, p. 120).

Since then, the emergence of digital recording, editing, mixing, and reproducing technologies have further expanded multisensory and multimodal creative opportunities; hence the proposal to update Chion’s term to ultrafield, made by Mark Kerins (2010, p. 92). As I try to assume in this article, filmmakers are using the stylistic tools available to invest harder in the concept of immersion. As stated by Lisa Coulthard (2017, p. 54), this investment has been so intense that, in many cases, films have started to focus less on the emotional involvement and more on the synesthetic experiences of the spectators.

Sound, as I seek to establish in this essay, occupies a prominent role in this scenario. Several researchers, such as Frances Dyson (2009), Mark Kerins (2010), Robert Stam (2003), and Lisa Coulthard (2017), have been unanimous in confirming the multisensory, multimodal, and immersive function of the soundtrack. Immersing the audience in diegesis, giving it the opportunity to experience the fictional world as if the spectators were next to the characters, feeling similar sensations, affections, and emotions, seems to be more important than narratively engaging the audience.

In the specific case of sound, all this has been highlighted by filmmakers themselves. In February 2020, Oliver Tarney, leader of the sound team of the war drama *1917* (Mendes, 2019), gave a statement to *Post Perspective Magazine*, saying that “we wanted the audience to *feel* [emphasis added] everything from their perspective [i.e., of the characters]” (Birk, 2020). The use of the verb “feel” underlines the emphasis given by filmmakers to the importance of using stylistic tools in order to activate the audience’s multisensory experience.

Finally, it is essential to observe that the stylistic tools of sound immersion depend on a cohesive integration with the visual conceptions of cinematography of each film. Without the shaking camera that runs along with the soldiers in *1917*; that revolves around the astronauts of *Gravity*;

that assumes the pilot's point of view and "controls" an airplane cockpit in *Dunkirk*; that revolves around the hotel room of the drunken officer in *Apocalypse Now*; that slides in the mud to escape the bombs in *Saving Private Ryan*, perhaps the immersive sound strategies would generate more estrangement than multisensory and multimodal engagement. 

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Gender inequalities in the scientific subfield of communication: the glass ceiling in the backyard^a

Desigualdades de gênero no subcampo científico da comunicação: o teto de vidro no quintal

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the gender inequalities in the constitution of the scientific subfield of communication in Brazil, based on a mapping directed at Communication Graduate Programs, Research Productivity Grants, Institutions, and scientific journals. At first, we present a panorama of feminist epistemologies and the issue of gender in science. Then, the dynamics proper to the (re)production of gender inequalities in the scientific subfield of communication are discussed based on the axes selected. We conclude that female researchers have lower participation on the highest levels of academic careers. This fact suggests the existence of a *ceiling glass*, as identified on other fields of knowledge. **Keywords:** Feminist epistemologies, communication field, gender

RESUMO

Este artigo aborda as desigualdades de gênero no subcampo científico da comunicação no Brasil, a partir de um mapeamento direcionado aos Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, às Bolsas de Produtividade em Pesquisa, às entidades e aos periódicos científicos. Apresentamos inicialmente um panorama das epistemologias feministas e a questão de gênero na ciência. Em seguida, são abordadas as dinâmicas próprias de (re)produção das desigualdades de gênero no subcampo científico da comunicação, a partir dos eixos selecionados. Conclui-se que as pesquisadoras possuem menor participação nos âmbitos mais elevados da carreira acadêmica, o que sugere a existência do *teto de vidro*, também identificada em outros campos do conhecimento.

Palavras-chave: Epistemologias feministas, campo da comunicação, gênero

^a A previous version of this text was presented and discussed in the Comunicação, Gêneros e Sexualidades working group at the XXX Encontro Anual da Compós, in 2021. We thank our peers for their contributions and the dialogue that resulted in the alignments made in this article, which is derived from the project “Ser Mulher e Ser Pesquisadora no Campo da Comunicação: Entre Papéis Sociais e Desigualdades na Esfera do Trabalho e da Produtividade Acadêmica” financed with undergraduate research grants from the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Rio Grande do Sul and the Research Incentive Fund of the Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM).

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THE ACCESS OR obstruction of women to the development of scientific careers is a subject that has mobilized scholars from various areas and latitudes. In a way, the discussion follows the spread of feminist perspectives on science, whose questions lie on themes sensitive to how knowledge is produced, considered, and valued. Among the discussions, mentions of the barriers encountered by women in the scientific career are recurrent and discussed via statistical analyses, qualitative approaches, and bibliographic surveys¹.

¹ Such as Olinto (2011); Moschkovich (2013); Costa and Sardenberg (2002); Souza Surnami (2020); Taborda and Engeroff (2017); Rosser (2004); González Ramos (2018); Tang (1997); and Sinha and Sinha (2011).

The relief attributed to this discussion results from the opacity of the phenomenon. By gathering the data on hand, an observer could conclude that there would not be much to discuss in the current context, in which women, in the face of historical, social, and political processes, acquired greater representativeness in science and in which there are, at the limit, formal impediments to their insertion. An impression that would become sharper if one looked at data originated in the social sciences, in which female researchers are not infrequently the majority (Costa & Feltrin, 2016).

Nevertheless, the restrictions transcribed in inequalities are often not made known by formal mechanisms but subtly. Its configuration has been studied from the idea of vertical segregation: although women will predominate in some areas, the higher the career level (or the more prestigious the spaces), the lower their presence. Even without formal or institutional objections, with access and high training, women are less seen in certain spaces. It is as if an invisible surface, difficult to overcome, prevents them from continuing to advance. A *glass ceiling*², historically configured by elements of social, institutional, and subjective order, simultaneously becomes an apparatus for the maintenance and invisibility of inequalities between men and women in academia.

² Also known as *techo de cristal* or *teto de vidro*.

The discussion on this opaque barrier has been conducted in several areas, whether they are more distant, such as the exact and health sciences, or in their neighborhood – social sciences and humanities. But it seems like this is a debate still far from our backyard. In fact, the articulations between gender and communication took place, over time, from the themes, research objects, and epistemes woven in the encounter or dispersion between these knowledge matrices (Escosteguy, 2019; Tomazetti, 2020). This relation continues to be woven between theoretical practices and experiences, summoning different epistemological perspectives, such as that of decoloniality (Tavares et al., 2021), or by the intensification of articulations between gender, media, and politics from the feminist movements present on the internet (Sarmiento, 2020). Between gaps and advances, the discussion

on gender inequalities constituting the scientific subfield of communication does not seem to have been fruitful. No studies dedicated to this effort were identified, at least if they were systematized in theses, dissertations, and publications in recent journal issues³ (Haag et al., 2020).

In this context, this article is part of ongoing research⁴ discussing the configuration of gender dynamics in this social space in which communicational knowledge is performed. Considering the absence of data to discuss the phenomenon from its own context, we present a mapping⁵ focused on some instances: Graduate Programs (PPGs), Productivity Research Grants, Institutions, and publication in journals.

To better locate the proposed debate, it is worth situating our understanding of this scientific subfield, belonging to the academic field of communication, as “a set of higher-level institutions aimed at the study and teaching of communication and where the theory, research, and university training of communication professions are produced” (Lopes, 2003, p. 278), organized into scientific, educational, and professional subfields. The scientific subfield houses the practices of knowledge production. It is the privileged instance of field production, a locus in which its disputes operate with greater strength and will, therefore, be our object of analysis. The notion of field invites us to think of conflict as constitutive of its structuring, considering that this space is both a field of forces and a field of struggle that seeks to transform it (Bourdieu, 1983). In each specific social field, these disputes are manifested through different power relations, in their historically situated hierarchies and constructions. This is what Londa Schiebinger (2001) characterizes as scientific culture: “Despite claims of value neutrality, sciences have identifiable cultures whose customs and ways of thinking have developed over time” (p. 139), which are marked by gendered practices.

Bearing in mind the polysemy that circumscribes the concept of gender in the field of feminist studies, we place it in our research from the perspective of an analytical category and therefore, relational, crossed by a symbolic production and sociohistorical configurations (Bonetti, 2011). Thus, we start from the definition of Joan Scott (1995), for whom gender is both a “constitutive element of social relations, based on perceived differences between the sexes” and a “primary way of giving meaning to power relations” (p. 86). This approach makes it possible for us to observe how the configurations of activities, logics, hierarchies, and recognitions between the subjects that constitute the scientific subfield of communication are crossed by power relations articulated by gender.

At first, we indicate the broader panorama of the discussions on feminist epistemologies and the issue of gender in science in which this text is situated.

³In another area of the history of sciences, it is important to highlight the rescue of the female presence in the production of communication knowledge in the recent project by Maria Cristina Gobbi, aimed at rescuing the contribution of women to Latin American communication studies, and the recent contribution by Escosteguy (2020).

⁴Project “To be a woman and to be a researcher in the field of communication: between social roles and inequalities in the sphere of work and academic productivity.”

⁵We thank scholars Antônia Haag, Gabriela Habckost, Giovanna Parise, Julia Guima, Julia Perez, Karoline Costa, Laura Raupp, Nathalia Brum, and Thainá Gremes for their work of collecting and describing the data and for constituting themselves as the first interlocutors of the analysis presented herein.



A necessary movement to enter the dynamics of (re)production of gender inequalities in the scientific subfield is discussed below. We further elaborated on this scenario in relation to the scientific subfield of communication from the selected axes.

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE ISSUE OF GENDER IN SCIENCE

In the context of our research, we start from the understanding that scientific production is a social construction (Velho & León, 1998) and, therefore, is culturally and historically situated. The development of science is crossed by interests and tensions which, as a general rule, make a hierarchical logic prevail which sustains dominant ways of seeing/understanding the world as well as valuing what should/deserves to be investigated.

The relation established between science and the notion of truth (which would be achieved by transparent and objective criteria to observe the studied phenomena) is, in fact, a version which presents itself as unique and universal to support the point of view of those holding power. To ensure its validity without manifesting major contradictions, the precepts that historically and socially establish what is meant by science are based on the concept of rationality. Therefore, they oppose subjectivity and multiple experiences and interpretations which could be raised from a scenario or an object of analysis.

The construction of this dichotomy between rationality and subjectivity supported the inequality between men and women in their ways of operating the social structure and, consequently, scientific logic itself. It is in this context, therefore, that the justifications that separate what is “scientific” from “unscientific” – including the “natural,” the “cultural,” and “political” – have been strengthened. The idea of the neutrality and universality of science protects the interest of shaping a broader social order in the expectation of not opening space for dissenting knowledge and voices. Thus, the history of science was conducted from a hegemonic epistemic model located temporally, spatially, and socially, reflecting the interests and values of the group that produced it and benefited from the structure of the colonial, patriarchal, capitalist, and racist domination developed in the eighteenth century: they are mostly white, Western, and bourgeois men (Góes, 2019, p. 2).

Thus, it is understood that legitimate/universal knowledge was built and recognized “by academic and scientific institutions as the knowledge of that area – based on the marginalization of several great Others whose perspectives may, when incorporated, actually change ... the constitution of disciplinary

fields” (Adelman, 2016, p. 94). The understanding of a plurality of these Others, which does not hold the privileges of the dominant group, scales the various crossings that formulate conditions of oppression and inequality, leading to the need for an intersectional perspective to observe the various realities from which women, in the scope of interest of this text, were neglected and excluded from the history of the sciences.

Based on questions raised by feminist thinkers, it was only in the twentieth century that new spaces were occupied in the expectation of destabilizing the masculinist logic of conceiving and legitimizing the universal history of men.

In the links between genders, the search for isonomy and recognition of differences between women and men only achieve meaning and factual importance due to the tireless struggles of feminism in history. As a voice that stitches and dignifies the various social and political voices, feminism emerges as the great echo modifying the ways of being of human behaviors in society, refuting false moral postures, assumed as universal when they only manifest the latent desire for a vile permanence in power. (Santos, 2016, p. 131)

The reflection on the engendering of gender issues in the scientific field, based on the contribution of feminist thinking, allowed the appropriation of experiences that consider the social and historical context of scientific practice, the position of the subject of those who observe, and the relations established with the investigated phenomenon. This epistemological perspective is invested with a challenge to stimulate analyses that value situationality and, therefore, can favor more divergences and multiple looks than consensus (Góes, 2019).

Thus, criticisms of the masculinist model of knowledge production present different possibilities of analysis and action for deconstructing hegemonic science. Objectivity is not simply refuted or placed in opposition to subjectivity. As an establishment of possible (and sometimes necessary) criteria or parameters, objectivity can be seen as a critical process of subjectivity (Góes, 2019, p. 3). In this regard, the views of groups occupying a subordinate position (the “Others”) are considered fundamental: since they are free from the artifices of power, they can reflect more broadly and critically on the processes of domination (Adelman, 2016, p. 94).

It is in this context that gender studies propose to replace the scientific perspective of the *abstract* universal (not open to diversity) with the notion of a *concrete* universal, based on the communication of *situated* individuals. It challenges the single point of view and the single voice and proposes to replace



them with narratives that contemplate multiple voices, built in cooperation but also in contradiction and opposition (Löwy, 2000, pp. 31-32)

If we define science as a subjective and situated activity, the members of the dominated groups who want to achieve a status of subject of knowledge no longer need to choose between two symmetrically fearful possibilities: the disappearance of their otherness and the renunciation of the ideals of universality, rationality, or objectivity of knowledge. A “situated science” can pave the way for another definition of objectivity and universality – a definition that includes passion, criticism, contestation, solidarity, and responsibility. (Löwy, 2000, p. 38)

The inclusion of the feminist perspective in the history of the sciences is, therefore, a claim that extends from the effective participation of women in the field to the movements of resistance to hegemonic knowledge and defense of multiple, engaged, and situated knowledge. These are dynamics maintained in the epistemological sphere and in the problematization of the logics of production and legitimation of scientific knowledge.

Thus, we expect to reflect on what the data says about the field of communication and how they can mirror the experience of female researchers both with regard to the development of their careers and the recognition of their positions. We understand that it is also crucial to think, from analytical parameters that filter and cross the available numbers as the field of communication consolidates and authorizes their trajectories, if it is open to the plurality of voices and knowledge, as the feminist perspective claims when relating gender and science.

GENDER INEQUALITIES IN THE SCIENTIFIC SUBFIELD, NUMBERS, AND DETAILS

Despite the persistent difficulty of women’s access to certain social spaces (labor market, political participation, and leadership positions, to name a few), they are the ones who take the lead in educational indicators. In universities, the participation of women grew in line with their higher entry into courses, identified since the 1970s. In Graduate Studies, female expressiveness remains the majority among PhDs and Masters in the country. Concerning grants (undergraduate research, Master’s, Postdoctoral, among others), women also gain notoriety, even with a narrow margin, with 50.44% (Venturini, 2017).

However, popular wisdom reminds us that the devil is in the details. Or, rather, inequalities. The greater presence of women in university seats

does not necessarily result in equal opportunities. In undergraduate courses, a female concentration persists in certain areas, women show greater expressiveness in courses linked to health, the arts, and the humanities, whereas men mostly occupy the so-called more technical areas (Almeida et al., 2020; Artes, 2017; Barros & Mourão, 2020).

Regarding research grants, there is one strand in which women have a lower incidence: those of Productivity Grants, totaling 36% of those awarded (Venturini, 2017). In these, men predominate at all levels and the disparity increases in higher strata. In 2017, men accounted for 62% of the 30,362 productivity grant holders at the first level of their career (PQ2) and reached 77% of the 4,896 grant holders at the highest levels (PQ1A) (Barros & Silva, 2019). When analyzing the last 10 years, these percentages have no changes or evolution. This indicates a divergent situation regarding the difficulties or possibilities of professional advancement in the scientific career for men and women. In other words, "... women continue to be chronically underrepresented in the scientific career, and their participation declines significantly as one ascends to the higher levels of the academic career" (Velho & Leon, 1998, p. 314).

This last datum reveals the Brazilian context, given that Productivity Grants are linked to researchers working more systematically, that is, who invest their professional trajectories in the scientific subfield. If it reveals inequalities, it can conceal its logic. To do this, one must pay attention to the details.

Why, even if leading educational indicators and holding the majority of university seats, do women not have so much expressiveness in the scientific subfield? A possible answer to this question has been synthesized in the concept of the glass ceiling:

Even highly qualified women are blocked in their professional ascension by discriminatory practices, family-work conflicts that prevent them from producing as much as men, and by traits of behavior acquired during their socialization process, which would be "unfavorable" to professional success, such as lack of aggression, ambition, etc. (Velho & León, 1998, p. 331)

The glass ceiling, from a feminist perspective, locates the chances and opportunities of women's access in structural terms, not only from individual experiences that can sometimes conceal the dimension or persistence of the phenomenon. It is not an objective mechanism but a subtle and often difficult one to perceive. In a relational key, the glass ceiling focuses on the trajectory of female researchers, especially on their perceptions in terms of

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chances, opportunities, and potential. Nora Räthzel (2018) researched why women choose not to apply for higher positions in their academic careers. When comparing the answers given by women in relation to men, she identified that, for them, some reasons are more important, such as the requirements for them to be promoted, the difficulties associated with reconciling their careers with other dimensions of life, and the greater appreciation of factors associated with well-being.

Inseparable from the glass ceiling is the context of academic career development, experienced differently by men and women. Scientists experience tensions of various kinds, from the reconciliation of personal and professional life, the experience of motherhood, and the overload arising from the performance of domestic work, among many other reasons. At the limit, the expectation that women need to be successful in all areas of life “... has effects from both a physical, psychological, and emotional point of view, which deteriorate their personal situation until justifying the resignation of their professional projects”⁶ (González Ramos, 2018, p. 41).

This situation is aggravated by the complicity of scientific logic with neoliberal parameters aimed at increasing competitiveness in research centers. Ultimately, the assumption of *scientific excellence* would justify this pressure, which also historically relates to an androcentric work model of time use. This makes the research space often hostile to life with a certain balance between personal demands, well-being, and rest (Revelles-Benavente, 2018) and focuses on the experiences of female researchers. For scientists linked to centers of excellence, this androcentric logic produces additional, albeit often subtle, difficulties of ascension for women:

Feelings of malaise are ... little expressed but are suggested indirectly when talking about neoliberal logic and the pressure to increase the indicators of scientific production. Scientific discourse justifies all these sacrifices through the passion for research or the desire to solve the problem in which they work (cancer, Alzheimer’s, for example). Any contrary force compensates for the demand and working conditions. All difficulties are tolerated since they consider themselves part of a small group of people who do what they like for the collective good. This results in something paradoxical, as situations are accepted limits justified through this discourse of “doing what I like”⁷. (Revelles-Benavente, 2018, p. 90)

The criteria underlying the constitution of scientific “excellence” would often be incompatible with female researchers’ dynamics and life experiences.

⁶In the original: “tiene efectos tanto desde el punto de vista físico, como psíquico y emocional, que van deteriorando su situación personal hasta justificar la renuncia de sus proyectos profesionales.”

⁷In the original: “Los sentimientos de malestar son poco expresados, pero son sugeridos indirectamente cuando se habla de la lógica neoliberal a la que están sujetos, la incertidumbre e inestabilidad laboral o la presión por incrementar los indicadores de producción científica. El discurso científico justifica todos estos sacrificios a través de la pasión por la investigación o el deseo de resolver el problema em el que trabajan (el cáncer o el Alzheimer, por ejemplo). Toda fuerza contraria compensa la exigencia y las condiciones laborales. Todas las dificultades son toleradas puesto que se considera formando parte de un pequeño grupo de personas minoritarias que hacen lo que les gusta por el bien colectivo. Ello resulta paradójico, pues se aceptan situaciones límites justificadas por medio de ese discurso de ‘hacer lo que me gusta.’”

Not infrequently, within the scope of the duties of the scientific subfield, it is up to them to deal with tasks considered secondary, in which the requirements and parameterizations around excellence focus less intensely. Nonetheless, not even women who support the parameters of excellence have an equal position because “ambition is judged diametrically differently if a man or a woman exercises it. As in the assessment of the skills of men and women (they [men] are brilliant, they [women] are workers)”⁸ (González Ramos, 2018, p. 56).

The observation of the details that underlie the statistics relocates the gender problem in the scientific subfield as a cause and effect of female researchers’ possibilities, experiences, and chances of work (Revelles-Benavente, 2018). In other words, it leads to a discussion about the founding structures of this field, norms, and logics that govern scientific institutions. To proceed with the analysis, it is essential to contextualize the dynamics of the specific social space in which the gender issue takes place, that is, to situate it, in our case, in the scientific subfield of communication.

DETAILS AND INEQUALITIES

The exploration of the relations between gender and science in the scientific subfield of communication started, at first, from a mapping directed to the Graduate Programs in communication, Productivity Research Grants (PQ), the entities that configure the field, and scientific journals. The mapping can be appropriated from two keys, an exploratory one, considering the little information we have about how the scientific subfield of communication in its generic dynamics. Although the data that will be shown below are in public domain, its meeting, from the perspective of gender and science, allows us to compose an initial, eminently partial framework of the gender dynamics established in the field.

A second key to understanding the data is a quantitative approach, organized in the perspective of redistribution, that is, focused on analyzing the equity of access to social goods (Artes, 2017). When quantifying them, clues are obtained about the place occupied by women in this social space. An issue linked to the dynamics by recognition is that these places cannot be dissociated from their meanings and historical, cultural, and social matrices.

PPGs in communication are a central instance of the existence of a scientific subfield. Their development boosted what we know and think about communication today in the process of maturation motivated by numerous discussions and internal disputes about the specificities of the communication object, the disciplinary limits of the area, and about what, in fact, is possible to name *Research in Communication*. These training spaces indicate institutional investments in academic research,

⁸In the original: “La ambición es juzgada de manera diametralmente diferente si es ejercida por un hombre o por una mujer. Como en la evaluación de las competencias de hombres y mujeres (ellos son brillantes, ellas trabajadoras).”



a socially recognized and shared sphere of legitimacy that highlights prestigious scientific qualifications, and which issues are relevant to the area.

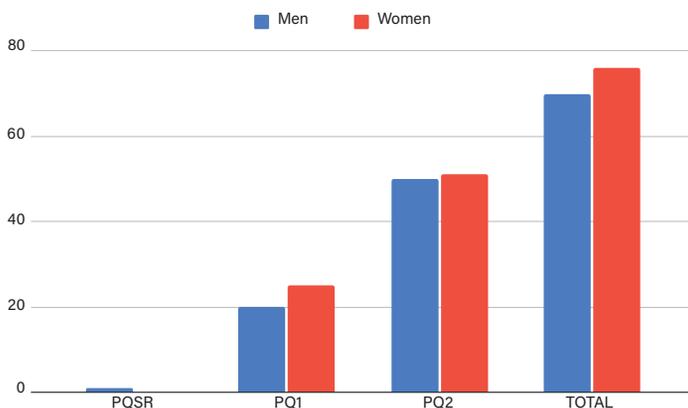
In the 53 national PPGs in Communication listed on Sucupira (sucupira.capes.gov.br), women assume a modest majority, with 50.1%, that is, they are 436 of the 869 professors working in graduate courses in 2019. The scientific subfield of communication distances itself from the national reality, in which men are the majority, occupying 58% of the teaching staff in PPGs, according to data from CAPES in 2017 (Barros & Silva, 2019). However, it is worth remembering that gender inequalities affect professions linked to areas historically considered to be female in a different manner, as opposed to more technical areas.

In 2019, the sum of male students totaled 1740 (42.6%) and women, 2341 (57.4%). Both as professors and as students, women predominate. However, there is a significant decrease in amplitude depending on the position occupied. That is, there are more female students in the Graduate courses in communication but it is not in the same proportion that they become part of the teaching staff. Somehow, the glass ceiling seems to interfere with the distribution of chances and the possibility of women's access to these positions.

When analyzing the data from Productivity Research Grants (PQ), the perception about the existence of this symbolic limit, which is more difficult to transpose for female researchers, stands out. It is known that this grant, offered by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development, linked to the Federal Government, is a central incentive for researchers in the country. The grants are distributed in five levels according to career stage (PQ2, PQ1D, PQ1C, PQ1B, and PQ1A). Beginning researchers are contemplated with the PQ2 grant and can ascend throughout their trajectories, although the distribution of opportunities does not include all prominent researchers in their areas (Barros & Silva, 2019).

Within the area “Arts, Information Science, and Communication,” 147 researchers were identified with grants in the scientific subfield of communication (Figure 1) in 2021, divided into different categories and levels. There are 45 PQ1 and 101 PQ2 Grant Holders, in addition to 1 Senior PQ Grant Holder. Women are the majority among PQ1 grant holders. They are 55% (25 female researchers out of a total of 45) and practically tie at the PQ2 level, with 50.4% (51 female researchers out of a total of 101):

Figure 1
Distribution of PQ researchers by sex, according to grant levels

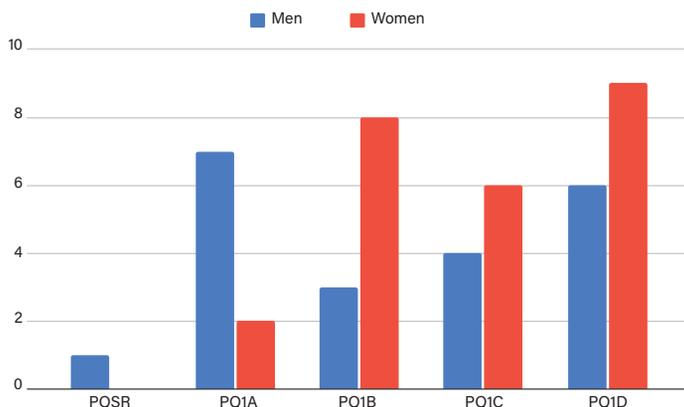


Note. Prepared by the authors.

In a broader perspective, the distribution of grants in communication is in line with the data that show a predominance of women in the PQ grants linked to the Humanities. However, this does not portray the reality of awards in broader terms in the country.

A close look at the distribution of grants at the PQ1A level (Figure 2) reveals that the higher proportion of women does not mean, however, access to its higher levels:

Figure 2
Distribution of PQ researchers by sex, according to the categories at the Senior and PQ1 levels



Note. Prepared by the authors.



Men are more representative in the PQ1A and Senior PQ categories. A framework, again, similar to that existing in the humanities, in which women become a minority at the highest level of grants (Barros & Mourão, 2020). The distribution of these scholarships in the scientific subfield of communication suggests the maintenance of the glass ceiling, observed in other areas of knowledge (Barros & Mourão, 2020; Martin-Palomino, 2018; Velho & Leon, 1998). That is, it alludes to the subtle, informal obstacles that make it difficult for women to ascend in their careers. Their late entry into the research universe is one of the possible explanations for this phenomenon, considering that reaching the highest levels of Productivity Grants requires dedication for decades (Barros & Mourão, 2020). Nonetheless, it is not a self-explanatory condition, as the delay to enter the prestigious circles of scientific production is made of similar matter of the reasons why the glass ceiling is still identified in the scientific field, interwoven in hegemonic logics historically built on the constitution of knowledge, with their epistemes, looks in relation to the subject, and their own modalities of legitimation (Adelman, 2016).

The analysis of gender relations in positions in the Board of Directors of associations in the field of communication is supported by the idea that specific institutional spaces represent the voices that are authorized and legitimized to represent the area and guide and objectify collective interests. The nominations for these positions include the evaluation of recognized attribute pairs, such as leadership posture, competence, and authority. In the realm of science, in general, men historically occupied these spaces.

For Esther Martin-Palomino (2018), besides the dynamics that make it impossible for women to access positions of power, it is essential to consider how much social capital limits female participation in the academic sphere. From this perspective, men indicate and support themselves to remain in the decision-making instances. From this perspective, support networks are key in supporting and promoting self-confidence and more opportunities. Women have limited access to academic careers due to homosociality. It keeps more women from being in decision-making positions. The effect of these networks formed only by men is the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the devaluation of women, who are ignored as part of another group (Martin-Palomino, 2016, p. 139).

Our analysis was directed to two representative entities of general scope, the National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (COMPÓS) and the Brazilian Society for the Interdisciplinary Studies in Communication (INTERCOM) and four specific associations of large areas

of the field: the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Journalism (SBPJor), the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Organizational Communication and Public Relations (ABRAPCORP), the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Advertising (ABP2), and the Brazilian Society for Cinema and Audiovisual Studies (SOCINE)⁹. Data were collected from the official websites of these associations and our focus was to map the members of the board of directors from a temporal perspective.

Currently, the board of directors of COMPÓS (2021-2022 term) is composed of three women (president, vice-president, and treasurer) and two men (general secretary and scientific director). The information on the website about the previous terms does not indicate the names of the treasurers and scientific directors; only the presidents, vice-presidents, and general secretaries' are available. Between 1991 and 2020, of the 16 boards that headed COMPÓS, we found a total of 31 men and 20 women, eight times the female positions reserved for general secretary, a function that is admittedly operational, supportive, and culturally associated with women. To date, only three women have held the highest office in the hierarchy and were presidents of the Association.

Considering that COMPÓS is one of the main representative associations of the scientific subfield of communication (since it brings together the PPGs), the history of the composition of its Board of Directors is a very interesting mirror to think about the consolidation process of leaderships. If women are the majority in the group of researchers accredited to the Graduate Programs in the country, what makes their participation in the board of directors of COMPÓS historically unequal? The scenario refers to a statement by Ana González Ramos (2018), for whom “theoretically, job opportunities of men and women will be identical but the statistical data show a different reality: very few women can ... obtain scientific leadership positions”¹⁰ (p. 44).

The reasons for this obstruction are diverse. They can be both in the dynamics of recognition and in the relations of the scientific field itself, as well as in the maintenance of social roles supported by the patriarchy that demand from women an additional effort to reconcile professional career expectations with dimensions of personal life (Räthzel, 2018).

When analyzing the context of leadership positions at INTERCOM, the data suggest a similar situation. INTERCOM is the oldest national entity in the field of communication (having been founded in 1977) and its first board of directors was inaugurated in 1979. The information available on the website appoints the board of directors' members in 18 terms, with a noticeable variation in positions throughout the period and, therefore,

⁹ Considering the exploratory nature that guided our analytical path, we chose to analyze associations and institutions whose scope comprehensively included different epistemological perspectives and disciplinary interests in the scientific subfield of communication in the country. Organizations linked to historically consolidated disciplinary areas were also considered. However, we recognize that our mapping does not include associations and entities that have representation in the scientific subfield and whose analysis would help us to understand the engendering of gender in specific areas, such as the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Communication and Politics (COMPOLITICA), the Brazilian Association of Researchers in Ciberculture (ABCIBER), and Rede Alcar, which may be addressed in future works.

¹⁰ In the original: “Teóricamente, las oportunidades laborales de hombres y mujeres serían idénticas, pero los datos estadísticos muestran una realidad diferente: muy pocas mujeres consiguen ... obtener posiciones de liderazgo científico.”



¹¹Fiscal councils are not included in the analysis.

also changing the number of participants in each edition. In 42 years of history, 186 positions on the board of directors of the association¹¹ were counted, 98 held by men and 88 by women.

In this period, INTERCOM was led 11 times by a man and seven times by a woman. In the analyzed scenario, it is interesting to note that, among 18 boards, the group was mostly male 12 times. In only two editions, the number of managers was equivalent between men and women; for four terms, the board was predominantly female (1991-1993; 1995-1997; 2002-2005; 2014-2017).

We point out a relevant fact: in the four boards of INTERCOM with a female majority, their president was a woman. We emphasize, therefore, the importance of support networks among women as resources

essential to increase the number of women in positions of relevance and, perhaps, as an element of resistance to patriarchal interests at all levels of society ... would be an instrument of facilitation and according to the positions that presuppose success in professional trajectories¹². (Martín-Palomino, 2018, p. 134)

¹²In the original: "esenciales para aumentar el número de mujeres en posiciones de relevancia y, tal vez, como un elemento de resistencia a los intereses patriarcales presentes en todos los niveles de la sociedad ... un instrumento de facilitación, y de acceso a las posiciones que suponen el éxito en las trayectorias profesionales."

The boards of directors of associations specific to major areas (journalism, advertising, public relations, and cinema) show a slightly more equitable situation concerning the female representation in their staff. Founded in 2003, SBPJor has an executive board composed of five members. During the nine terms registered so far, 29 female advisors and 16 male advisors were part of the group. Despite most women on the staff, a woman held the president's office only four times.

Within the scope of SOCINE, a total of eight boards, elected to manage the entity since 2005, were registered. Although the total number of leaders is close (16 men and 18 women), the highest rank is held predominantly by men. In total, there were five male SOCINE presidents and three female presidents. The Brazilian Association of Researchers in Advertising is the most recent institution, founded in 2010. Since then, the entity has set up four boards (chaired twice by a man and twice by a woman), totaling 44 positions, which were occupied 34 times by men and 10 times by women.

The Brazilian Association of Organizational Communication and Public Relations Researchers is an exception to the other contexts analyzed in this scope. With its boards elected since 2006, the entity has chosen a female president for seven terms and had only one male president. The predominance of women also remains among board members: women occupy almost three times more seats on the board than men throughout its history: 36 female advisors and 13 male ones. The deviation found in ABRAPCORP, compared to other entities, can be

weighed from a specificity in Public Relations: according to research published by the Federal Council of Public Relations in 2009, 80% of the professionals active in the market at the time were women.

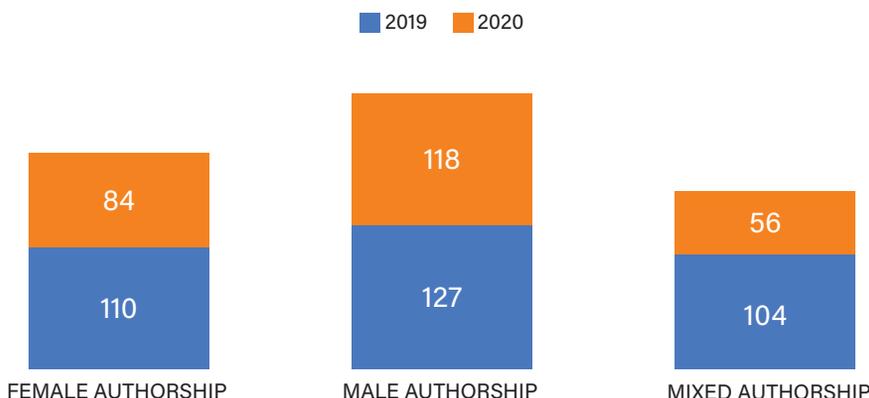
The last indicator catalogued to reflect on gendered relations within the scope of communication was academic production, based on the criteria of valuation of the scientific field itself. In this context, we have the publication of journal articles as one of the main parameters to account for and measure scientific excellence, with Qualis/CAPES as the reference ranking system in Brazil to qualitatively conceptualize the production of researchers.

Thus, we selected seven national journals of stratum A2¹³ which are directly related to the discussions undertaken in the field of communication: *Comunicação, Mídia e Consumo; Chasqui; E-Compós; Famecos; Galáxia; MATRIZes*, and *Intercom*. The data referring to the 2019 and 2020 editions were systematized. At first, the texts were separated between exclusive female authorship (individual or collective); exclusive male authorship (individual or collective), and mixed authorship (a partnership between male and female authors). The data can be seen in the figure below (Figure 3).

¹³The classification refers to the Qualis-CAPES 2013-2016, an indicator which was in effect during the data collection period.

Figure 3

Authorship of A2 journal articles by sex in 2019/2020



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Among the 341 articles published in 2019, 127 had an exclusively male authorship (37.2%), 110 had an exclusively female authorship, (32.3%), and 104 were written by a mixed authorship (30.5%). In 2020, the collection recorded 258 articles. The predominance of articles written by men

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Gender inequalities in the scientific subfield of communication

significantly increased, with 45.7% of the total (118 texts). The articles written by women maintained a similar index to the previous year, 32.5% (84 texts), and the texts written in mixed partnerships decreased, representing 21.8% of the total (56 texts).

Before analyzing the proportionality of authorship according to sex, it is essential to consider that the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020 significantly impacted the personal and professional lives of the entire society, including the academic community. Thus, the reduction of 25% in the number of articles published, compared to the previous year, is justified.

The Increase in the production of articles among men during the pandemic is an example that can reveal gender inequalities in the scientific field. A national survey by the Parent in Science (PiS) movement pointed out that the submission of articles among men remained unchanged or even grew during social isolation. The data are inversely proportional compared to the women's report, which stated that the pandemic greatly impacted meeting deadlines for notices and article submissions. This difference is explained by the practical and emotional demands related to care and family organization assumed by women. Also, according to the PiS report, the discrepancy increases according to the parenting relationship (weighting the presence and age of the children), race, and career time.

Another survey carried out by PiS between 2017 and 2018, which interviewed 2186 Brazilian scientists, points out that this discrepancy in productivity between researching fathers and mothers is historical (Machado et al., 2019). Considering the average number of articles published among the respondent group, taking the birth of children as a starting point, women have substantially reduced their scientific production for at least four years, while there is no difference in publication data between scientists who are fathers. The consequences of this reduction in production among scientific mothers are little (or almost not at all) discussed by the Brazilian academic community, which maintains indistinct evaluation parameters for women after motherhood. This is directly reflected in their unequal access to selection processes (such as scholarships and public contests), which disregard these gender variables through parenthood in the academic career.

The finding of variations in the results considered parameters of excellence in scientific production and raised a reflection on the adoption of criteria that do not distinguish structural inequalities. For González Ramos (2018), "... a fair assessment of the merits and efforts made by women (as well as other people in situations of vulnerability) requires considering the individual and social factors that affect their decisions and the achievement of socially recognized achievements" (p. 46).

What is observed in our mapping, in addition to this variation in the pandemic period, is the trend of greater exclusive male publication in the highest-ranked journals in communication. This result, besides the very parameter that focuses/synthesizes the notion of scientific excellence based on the number of articles and the impact factor, refers to an autonomous and competitive academic ideal. This model, which is based on a neoliberal logic, tends to ignore or reduce the value and need for the care and sustainability of life (Carpintero, 2018, pp. 176-179) as if personal and professional trajectories could be completely different and unmarked by a social, cultural, and historical structure. We want to point out, therefore, that the largest production of articles in qualified journals is not simply a matter of merit/competence but also availability and dedication which, in many cases, when observed through the lenses of gender, encounters barriers that are imposed by the cultural and social dynamics of the private life of each agent.

Continuing our analysis, we dedicated ourselves to observing the articles of mixed authorship (Figure 4) to verify how the main authors of the texts were configured (traditionally allocated as the first name of the list).

Figure 4

Main authorship in mixed articles, A2 journals, in 2019/2020, divided by sex.



Note. Prepared by the authors.

It is noticeable that the writing partnership between men and women decreased by almost 50% between 2019 and 2020, possibly related to the issue of productivity during the pandemic mentioned earlier. However, another aspect stands out from these data: women tend to dedicate themselves more to collective work than men, configuring 83% of the main authors in mixed articles in 2019 and 62% in 2020.



In this scenario, it is interesting to resume the thought of Nora Rätzel (2018) when she analyzed that academia structurally treats the chances and opportunities of female and male researchers differently. Thus “... the actions of women and men have different consequences, and their results are awarded/received differently”¹⁴ (p. 126), especially when they are more dedicated to conducting collective work.

¹⁴In the original: “las acciones de las mujeres y los hombres tienen consecuencias diferentes, y que sus logros son premiados/recibidos de manera diferente.”

Female participation in operational tasks, necessary for the functioning of the logic of academic production, can also be considered from the editorial function of scientific journals. Among the seven A2 journals analyzed, women are the majority occupying these editing positions. In this regard, we believe it is pertinent to point out the possible prestige associated with the role of the editor of a scientific journal. Nevertheless, observing the data in light of the productivist account which measures what has value in academia, we understand it is crucial to emphasize how much this activity, which focuses on the collective and qualitative functioning of the subfield, demands time, is complex, and does not have an¹⁵ estimated recognition equivalent to the publication of texts (mostly by men).

¹⁵This same discussion on the operational activities for maintaining scientific journals has been made in communication, still without the gender bias, to discuss the discredit given to the function of ad hoc reviewer.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With data put on the table, we have the dimension that quantitative surveys point us to important clues to map how gendered relations are constituted in the scientific subfield of communication. When we address our gaze to observe the gender relations that are established in communication, we seek to advance a discussion that has not yet been made and that, at first, may seem defined since the beginning since we do not – apparently – have a question of numerical representativeness to solve. However, we have in mind that

... gender makes a difference to women in science not only because of what they bring with their bodies – and sometimes not even because of what they may bring because of their socialization-, but because of the perception science brings to the community about women as well as about gender – and, in turn, because of what such perceptions bring to the common values of popular scientific disciplines. (Keller, 2006, pp. 29-30)

In the context of PPGs, although women are the majority among students and professors, there is a decrease in female participation among professors. A reduction observed in the distribution of Productivity Research Grants (PQ) as well, especially at higher levels. These data indicate a permanence of the glass

ceiling that hinders female researchers due to historical, structural, and social factors related to the development of the academic career. In rural institutions, there is a significant contribution of women, although often outside the more legitimized presidencies and spaces of power (occupied mainly by men), with a few rare exceptions. However, when they take the lead, especially at INTERCOM, women tend to have more female boards, suggesting the configuration of support networks with one of the estimated resources to occupy these spaces. The configuration of networks by women is also noticeable in the publication of articles. Although men publish more, women captain the works of collective authorship more intensely.

These data are understood in their uniqueness as a portrait of a moment but they must be read in a structural key. If this is not done, we are at risk of individualizing issues and privatizing responsibilities because often “... the role of women is questioned but not the norms that govern scientific institutions or the social norms that keep women in a vulnerable situation”¹⁶ (González Ramos, 2018, p. 43).

Otherwise, although quantitative mapping provides important information, not all answers are available from absolute numbers. It is necessary to cross and weigh them from the notion of situationality. Therefore, “We become cautious with phrases that begin with ‘women are. . . , realizing that the only way to complete such a phrase is to say that women are people, defined by many social variables and that they adapt to the pressures and opportunities they find, and have the resources to do so.” (Keller, 2006, p. 30)

What we intend to introduce with our reflection, at this moment, is the key to a debate that we understand needs to be initiated (and, of course, deepened) collectively. This notion of collectivity implies the institutional and individual positions of the agents operating in this subfield, according to the logics and parameters constructed and validated by the group.

On the one hand, we are aware that the gender inequalities exposed here correspond to a broader cultural, social, and historical context than the academic environment itself – which refers to the certainty that its deconstruction is a complex and continuous work. On the other hand, we have in mind that, as researchers in the area of social and human sciences that are based on feminist epistemology, it is a duty to bring to the focus of our own space of action the idea that specific dynamics that foster gender inequality (which we unveil, analyze, and criticize when looking at the “outside”) must also be deconstructed, and perhaps first, here, “inside.” The panorama we have outlined is presented as a first step. After all,

¹⁶In the original: “se cuestiona el papel de las mujeres pero no las reglas que rigen las instituciones científicas o las normas sociales que mantienen a las mujeres en situación de vulnerabilidad.”



analyzing the issues related to women in scientific activity is a much more complex task than simply counting heads, titles, and publications and calculating proportions. It is essential to locate the analysis in its context and count on the collaboration of the process participants in interpreting the information. There are so many variables interacting here – area of knowledge, country, type of institution, women's age, luck, creation type – that it is difficult to reach any definitive conclusion about the determinants of scientific production by women, except that it is a social construction. (Velho & León, 1998, p. 344)

From this provocation, we will continue our investigation by listening to agents who daily embody the numbers presented in this text: female researchers. Considering that this is a social construction of which we are part, we understand that it is possible and necessary to resignify, between the most structural parameters and the fabric of experiences, ways of conceiving a scientific production more in line with the different realities of those who produce it. ■

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Theorizing with Grounded Theory: a methodological pathway for communication research^a

Teorizar com a Grounded Theory: um caminho metodológico para as pesquisas em comunicação

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ABSTRACT:

The objective of this paper, based on bibliographical research, is to inscribe a reflection on the process of theorizing, following the constructivist grounded theory methodology guidelines. It also proposes to present and discuss the type of theory that can be produced with this qualitative methodological path, highlighting its potential for writing communication research that, through structured and progressive analysis procedures, seeks to generate substantive theoretical explanations about a problem delimited in a specific area, based on data (interviews, documents, media materialities, etc.). Finally, as a practical implication, this paper provides some guidelines on conducting research with grounded theory by elucidating the “troublesome trinity” characteristic of the methodology: theoretical sampling, constant comparison method, and theoretical saturation.

Keywords: Grounded Theory; methodology; theorizing; communication research

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho, direcionado por uma pesquisa bibliográfica, é inscrever uma reflexão sobre o processo de teorizar seguindo as diretrizes da metodologia *grounded theory* construtivista. Este artigo busca também apresentar e discutir o tipo de teoria que pode ser produzido com esse caminho metodológico qualitativo, ressaltando, desse modo, o potencial que ele oferece para a edificação de pesquisas em comunicação que, considerando um problema delimitado em uma área específica, busquem gerar explicações teóricas de processos sociais enraizadas nos dados (entrevistas, documentos, materialidades midiáticas etc.). Como implicação prática, por fim, são fornecidos alguns direcionamentos sobre como conduzir investigações com a *grounded theory* ao elucidar a “tríade problemática”, característica da metodologia, a saber: amostragem teórica, método comparativo constante e saturação teórica.

Palavras-Chave: *Grounded Theory*, metodologia, teorizar, pesquisas em comunicação

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BASED ON BIBLIOGRAPHICAL research, this paper aims to inscribe a reflection that guides the theorizing process following the guidelines of the constructivist grounded theory methodology (GTM) (Charmaz, 2006/2014). It also attempts to discuss the type of theory that can be produced with this methodological path, emphasizing the potential it offers for the construction of research in communication that, considering a problem delimited in a specific area, seeks to generate theoretical explanations of social processes grounded in the data.

Thus, with the knowledge organized in this paper, it is hoped to inspire researchers from the field to learn more about GTM and consider it an available alternative for future investigations.

With its roots in Chicago School sociology, symbolic interactionism, and pragmatism¹ philosophy, the GTM is a set of procedures and techniques that, when systematically operated in qualitative research², allow the construction of a grounded theory (GT) about a specific basic social process³. It is relevant to emphasize that the term grounded theory names both the methodology and the product resulting from its applicability, the theory.

Kathy Charmaz and Linda L. Belgrave, reinforcing these guidelines, point out that “grounded theory is an iterative, comparative, and interactive method that begins with inductive data” (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, pp. 743-744) and moves on to abductive reasoning (Leite, 2015a, Charmaz, 2006/2014). In the same perspective, Ylona C. Tie, Melanie Birks, and Karen Francis emphasize that GT is a structured but flexible methodology. It “is appropriate when little is known about a phenomenon” (Tie et al., 2019, pp. 1-2). Antony Bryant (2021) complements the authors by pointing out that this methodological design can be adapted to open new doors in already explored research areas. Thus, as will be discussed later in this paper, the results of the GT investigation need to provide

a dense and systematic theoretical interpretation of what happens in a certain phenomenon. In this sense, a peculiar (though ambitious) feature of GT is that it is particularly apt for the exploration, not of static phenomena, but of the processes underlying such phenomena and their dynamics, **perceived in their respective contexts**. The GT aims to bring out the social processes and the underlying psychological processes that underlie the phenomena being investigated (Tarozzi, 2011, pp. 22, emphasis added).

John W. Creswell (2007) and Tarozzi (2011), considering the international context by mutual agreement, point to ethnography, *grounded theory*, and phenomenology as the three main methodological approaches traditionally used in

¹ Charmaz elucidates that pragmatism is “an American philosophical tradition that views reality as characterized by indeterminacy and fluidity, and as open to multiple interpretations. Pragmatism assumes that people are active and creative. In pragmatist philosophy, meanings emerge through practical actions to solve problems, and through actions people come to know the world. Pragmatists see facts and values as linked rather than separate and truth as relativistic and provisional” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 344).

² Glaser (2008) argues for and guides the possibility that GTM can also be applied in a quantitative approach.

³ For Charmaz, “a process consists of unfolding temporal sequences in which single events become linked as part of a larger whole. Thus temporal sequences are linked in a process and lead to change. A process may have identifiable markers with clear beginnings and endings and benchmarks in between or may be much more diffuse and less visible but nonetheless evident when comparisons are made over time” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 344). Also, according to this author, what will be defined by “basic” is always an interpretation of the researcher.

qualitative research. However, Creswell (2007) also places narrative research and case study in this framework. In the Brazilian context, in dialogue with these guidelines, Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (2003, pp. 150), specifically observing communication research, points to the case study, the ethnographic research, and the documentary research, among others, as some of the most used qualitative methodological approaches. In this same framework, Luisa Massarani and Mariana Rocha (2018) reinforce the salient use of documentary and case study research in Brazilian media research.

Considering this overview, even extrapolating the central objectives of this paper, it is believed to be opportune for its rational informing and pointing out, albeit briefly, a comparative contrast between some characteristics of these main qualitative methodological approaches. Thus, for this exercise, table 1 is shared, which organizes and weighs up some contrasts between the GTM and the five methodological approaches repeatedly indicated in the works of Creswell (2007), Tarozzi (2011), Lopes (2003) and Massarani and Rocha (2018): the ethnography, the phenomenology, the narrative research, the case study, and the documentary research.

The characteristics considered in table 1 deal with the objectives of the methodological approach and examples of research questions, the type of problem that best fits the methodological *design*, the unit of analysis, the forms of data collection, the strategies of data analysis, and the possible results. However, the rationale of this comparative contrast will not be deepened in this opportunity, considering the objectives of this paper and its limited space. In addition, in a certain way, this task is already competently recorded in the literature, especially in the classic works of Creswell (2007), Tarozzi (2011), Wertz and colleagues (2011), and Morse and Field (1996). Therefore, table 1 in this text should be observed as a reference point to, objectively, throughout the reading, facilitate and exercise the perception about some traits that circumvent the distinctions, possibilities, and limits of doing research with GTM compared to the other qualitative methodologies considered.

Table 1
Contrasting features among the five main qualitative methodological approaches

Methodology (disciplinary background)	Objectives and examples of research questions	Type of problem that best fits the methodological design	Unity of analysis	Forms of data collection (used alone or in combination)	Data analysis strategies	Possible results
 GROUNDED THEORY Sociology (Creswell, 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To generate a theory that interprets the processes underlying a phenomenon (Tarozzi, 2011). - To develop a grounded theory on data from the field (Creswell, 2007). - What's going on here? (Glaser, 1978); What processes...? What factors influence...? (Tarozzi, 2011). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grounding a theory in relevant empirical data that reveal the opinions, feelings, intentions, and actions of participants, as well as the contexts and structures of their lives (Charmaz, 2006/2014). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study a process, action or interaction involving many individuals (Creswell, 2007) and/or documents, etc. (Charmaz, 2006/2014). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth interviews, elicited or extant documents (texts and or images), observation etc. (Charmaz, 2006/2014; Tarozzi, 2011). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze the data through GT codings. (Creswell, 2007). For example: initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. (Charmaz, 2006/2014). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A <i>Grounded Theory</i>, that is, an interpretive theory that can integrate, synthesize, and conceptualize the empirical data. (Tarozzi, 2011). - Generate a theory illustrated in a figure (diagram and or concept maps). (Creswell, 2007). - Theory, models or structures, or conceptual schemas. (Bryant, 2017).
 PHENOMENOLOGY Philosophy, Psychology, and Education (Creswell, 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand the meaning (or essence) that subjects assign to the lived experience (Tarozzi, 2011). - To understand the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2007). - What is it like ...? What does it mean to be/work ... (Tarozzi, 2011). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The necessity of describing the essence of a lived phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study multiple individuals who have shared the experience (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In-depth interviews. (Morse & Field, 1996). - Interviews with individuals, documents, observations and arts. (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze data for meaningful statements, units of meaning, textual and structural description, description of "essence". (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed reflective description of the experience. (Morse & Field, 1996). - Description of the "essence" of the experience. (Creswell, 2007).

Continue...

Continuation

Methodology (disciplinary background)	Objectives and examples of research questions	Type of problem that best fits the methodological design	Unity of analysis	Forms of data collection (used alone or in combination)	Data analysis strategies	Possible results
ETHNOGRAPHY Anthropology and Sociology (Creswell, 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To describe a culture or a group through its symbolic systems (Tarozzi, 2011). - Describing and interpreting a group's cultural sharing (Creswell, 2007). - In what ways does this group ...? How is culture transmitted...? (Tarozzi, 2011). - To explore an individual's life. (Creswell, 2007). - To explore stories about a certain topic to find information to understand a certain phenomenon (Paiva, 2008). - What is happening...? What are people doing? What does it mean to them? What is it like...? (Elliott, 2005). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describe and interpret the culture patterns shared by a group (Creswell, 2007). - The need to tell stories of individual experiences (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study a group that shares the same culture (Creswell, 2007). - Study one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observations, interviews, among other sources (Creswell, 2007), e.g., documents (Morse & Field, 1996). - In-depth interviews and documents (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze the data by describing the sharing of group culture; themes about the group (Creswell, 2007). - Analyze data for stories, "restore" stories, develop themes, often using a chronology (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Thick description" of cultures and groups. (Geertz, 1973). - Description of how the sharing of a group's culture works. (Creswell, 2007). - Development of a narrative about individual's life of an individual. (Creswell, 2007).
NARRATIVE RESEARCH Literature, History, Psychology and Sociology (Creswell, 2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop an in-depth description and analysis of a case or multiple cases. (Creswell, 2007). - To develop a detailed analysis of a person or group, especially, as a model of phenomena (Hancock & Algotzine, 2006). - How...? Why... (does some social phenomenon work)? (Yin, 2018). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide an in-depth understanding of a case (or cases) (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study an event, a program, an activity, one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interviews, observations, documents, artifacts etc. (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Analyze data through case description and case themes, as well as cross-case themes (Creswell, 2007). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a detailed analysis of one or more cases. (Creswell, 2007).
CASE STUDY Sociology, Law, Political Science and Medicine (Creswell, 2007)						

Continue...



Continuation

Methodology (disciplinary background)	Objectives and examples of research questions	Type of problem that best fits the methodological design	Unity of analysis	Forms of data collection (used alone or in combination)	Data analysis strategies	Possible results
<p>DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH</p> <p>Sociology, History etc. (McCulloch, 2004; Mogalakwe, 2009).</p>	<p>- To explore and analyze documents that contain information about the phenomenon you want to study (Bailey 1994) and elucidate (Cellard, 2008).</p> <p>- A research is documentary when this is the qualitative approach to research. But, document analysis can also be adopted as a complementary strategy to other methodologies (Flick, 2004, 2009).</p> <p>- What is the criterion...? How is it used...? (Mogalakwe, 2009).</p>	<p>- Need for apprehension, understanding, and analysis of documents of the most varied types (Sá-Silva et al., 2009).</p>	<p>- Analyze, organize and categorize public, private or personal documents (Mogalakwe, 2009).</p>	<p>- Written and unwritten documents, (Figueiredo, 2007).</p> <p>- Written and iconographic documents, (Lakatos & Marconi, 2003).</p>	<p>- 1) <i>Preliminary document analysis</i>: socio-historical context, the authors, authenticity and reliability, nature (media, legal, etc.), key concepts, and internal logic of the document. (Cellard, 2008).</p> <p>- 2) <i>Document data analysis</i>, e.g.: content analysis (Platt, 1981; Pimentel, 2001), language and discourse studies (McCulloch, 2004) etc.</p>	<p>- A coherent interpretation, considering the theme or the initial questioning. (Sá-Silva et al., 2009).</p> <p>- Useful analytical descriptions; a correct understanding of how people understand or understood the situations of interest; the construction of a systemic model of an area of social life etc. (Platt, 1981).</p>

Source: Adapted from Creswell (2007), Tarozzi (2011), and Morse and Field (1996).

Back to the central reflections of this paper, it is necessary to point out that the GTM is little disseminated and used in research in the communication field in Brazil (Bittencourt, 2017). In this context, as an exception, some rare and punctual research are observed, for example, those produced by Nilda Jacks (2000), Suely Fragoso and colleagues (2011), Francisco Leite (2015a) and Maíra Bittencourt (2017), which inform and guide the field on the opportunities for articulation between GTM and communication studies.

Jacks (2000), for example, presents a brief discussion articulating GTM (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and the family history technique to “collaborate to the debate on qualitative research, the main platform for reception studies” (Jacks, 2000, pp. 10). Fragoso and colleagues (2011), in the book “Métodos de pesquisa para internet” (Internet Research Methods), offer the chapter “Teoria Fundamentada” (Grounded Theory), in which they present and discuss GTM as a research perspective for cyberspace. In this text, the authors also show a short case study on Twitter to illustrate the rationale discussed in the methodology. Leite (2015a), in turn, inscribes a critical reflection on the sensibilities of reasoning and some specific procedures for conducting investigations with constructivist GTM (Charmaz, 2006/2014). The work of Bittencourt (2017), on the other hand, in dialogue with the text by Fragoso, Recuero and Amaral (2011), guides how to use the procedures and techniques of this methodology in research focused on social media.

Thus, aiming to complement and contribute to the efforts of these works, this article, focusing on reaching its objectives, already pointed out, organizes the construction of its rationale having as directions to explain the following questions: What kind of theory does this methodology make it possible to develop? What procedures and techniques must be met and operated for research to be recognized as a constructivist grounded theory? What are the challenges/problems involved in proceeding with this methodology? How has GTM been and can be applied in communication research?

Therefore, to situate and advance the reading of this paper, it is pertinent to strategically rescue some points about the historical, philosophical, and epistemological perspectives of the origin and development of GT. This perspective has been established for more than fifty years, with the American sociologists Barney G. Glaser (1930-2022) and Anselm L. Strauss (1916-1996).

THREE MAIN VERSIONS OF GROUNDED THEORY

In the 1960s, Glaser and Strauss gradually introduced the GTM to the scientific field and society through key publications that denoted the outlines of its methodological percepts, procedures, and techniques. Throughout this



period, they published the book *Awareness of Dying* (Glaser & Strauss, 1965), with the results of seminal research they conducted following the foundations of the methodology. Afterward, according to Bryant (2017), the researchers published the classic book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research* (1967), which provided direct guidance on the details and potential of the methodology for theory building. Glaser and Strauss complemented these two works with another related study, *Time for Dying* (1968). The literature recognizes this trilogy as the main foundational text of the grounded theory methodology.

The construction of this methodology sought to combat the strong positivist line predominant in scientific research in the 1960s. In this period, qualitative research was weakening and losing ground, especially in sociology, to the sophisticated quantitative methods based on positivism, “dominant paradigm of inquiry in routine natural science” (Charmaz, 2009a, p. 18). With the elaboration of *grounded theory*, Glaser and Strauss sought to address two existing criticisms: first, that qualitative research was not appropriate for theory Generation and second, that the methods used did not have scientific credibility. (Leite, 2018, p. 137).

In this course, Charmaz (2006/2014) recalls that Glaser and Strauss proclaimed a revolutionary message, with their methodological proposal, by offering to the scientific field a path of systematic and rigorous qualitative analysis, with its logic and capability of producing underlined theories “with the close connection between theoretical and empirical research and [inscribed] in the narrow space between theory and empirical reality” (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 20). The founders of GTM also “aimed to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theoretical frameworks” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 8).

In this sense, Glaser and Strauss (1967), Glaser (1978), and Strauss (1987) have organized and provided a “constellation of methods” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 14) for the establishment of theoretical practice guided by GTM. According to Charmaz (2006/2014), theorizing implies that researchers work by focusing on simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis (from the beginning to the end of the investigative process); building analytic codes and categories from the data; using the constant comparison method; advancing theory development at each step of data collection and analysis; writing memos to elaborate categories, specify their properties, determine relationships between categories, and identify gaps; sampling directed toward theory building [theoretical sampling]; and conducting literature review after developing an independent analysis. These points will be taken up and explored with more attention later.

However, this last point indicated by Charmaz was considered one of the most controversial in applying the methodology. In the initial vision of its founders, especially that of Glaser, the objective of postponing the bibliographic review would be to avoid researchers from “seeing the world through the lens of extant ideas” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 8). However, after the 1967 publication, Strauss expressed in his subsequent works that there was no consensus with Glaser on this and other questions of methodology. Nowadays, this orientation is seen as a misinterpretation of the initial discussions from the book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Roy Suddaby (2006) discusses this issue – and its variants – as a myth based on false premises. He argues that GTM should not be an excuse for ignoring the literature and prior knowledge a researcher has about the topic of his/her investigation.

As time progressed, in the mid-1990s, Glaser and Strauss moved apart and began to develop and consider different approaches to the methodology they created. Their break, notably, occurred after the publication of the book *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques* (1990) by Anselm Strauss e Juliet M. Corbin (a former student of Strauss). However, Charmaz (2006/2014) points out that before that book many doctoral students who studied with the two already felt divergences between their thoughts on how to develop research processes with GTM.

These divergences probably originated in the distinct biographical and educational paths of both founders of the methodology. At first, these dissimilarities were fundamental for the originality of the methodology’s development but became problematic during the conceptual maturing of the methodological proposal. Glaser graduated from the positivism of Columbia University, while Strauss comes from the pragmatist tradition and the field research of the Chicago School. Glaser was a student of Paul Lazarsfeld, an innovator in quantitative research, and of Robert K. Merton, the proposer of the construction of useful middle-range theories. Glaser’s rigorous quantitative training crosses the foundations of grounded theory. Charmaz highlights that the author’s contributions to the methodology “intended to codify qualitative research methods as Lazarsfeld had codified quantitative research [...]. Codifying qualitative research methods entailed specifying explicit strategies for conducting research and therefore demystified the research process” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 9).

Strauss, on the other hand, had his intellectual capital shaped by the interactionist and pragmatist bases of the Chicago School, having his ideas “inspired by men like Park (1967), Thomas (1966), Dewey (1922), Mead (1934), Hughes (1971) and Blumer (1969)” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 22). In this way, Strauss contributes to grounded theory by bringing “notions of human agency, emergent



processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices, and the open-ended study of action” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 9).

With the separation of Glaser and Strauss, two distinct schools of grounded theory methodology unfolded. Glaser remained attached to the classic and seminal version of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978, 2002a, etc.), where he ratifies it as a discovery methodology, which treats categories as emerging from the collected data. Charmaz points out that Glaser believes in a

direct and, often, narrow empiricism, developed a concept-indicator approach, considered concepts to be variables, and emphasized analyzing a basic social process. Strauss (1987), separately, and together with his co-author in the 1990s, Juliet M. Corbin ... further moved the method toward seeing grounded theory as a method of verification (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 11).

Glaser (1992) critically states that these procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin for grounded theory would force “data and analysis into preconceived categories, ignore emergence, and result in ‘full conceptual description’, not grounded theory” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 11). Glaser, at the time, even called for a public retraction of the approaches in Strauss and Corbin’s book, bearing in mind the misconceptions it would present.

In this context, Charmaz points out that “Despite Glaser’s numerous objections to Strauss and Corbin’s version of grounded theory, their book serves as a powerful statement of the method and has instructed graduate students throughout the world” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8). However, Charmaz and colleagues have recently stated that Strauss and Corbin’s version “minimized grounded theory as an emergent method of discovery and instead recast it as a formulaic procedure” (Charmaz et al., 2018, p. 724).

With their distinctive postulates, Glaser and Strauss formed and inspired a new generation of researchers interested in developing investigations using GTM. Prominent among these researchers was Kathy Charmaz (1939-2020), a former student of Glaser and a former doctoral advisor of Strauss.

By reviewing, aligning, and updating the methodology approaches of her masters, Charmaz built her proposal for grounded theory with assumptions and approaches, according to her, aimed at the 21st century. With strong alignment to the postulates of the Chicago School, for her version, she argues “for building on the pragmatist underpinnings in grounded theory and advancing interpretive analyses that acknowledge these constructions” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 17). Charmaz calls her approach constructivist *grounded theory*⁴ and understands it as

⁴ Glaser also inscribes strong criticism of Charmaz’s proposal for grounded theory. For example, he points out that it is a mistake to call grounded theory constructivist, because “constructivist data, if it exists at all, is a very, very small source of GT research” (Glaser, 2002b). Some of these criticisms are addressed by Charmaz in later publications, in which she ratifies and demonstrates the potential of her perspective (see Charmaz, 2006/2014, etc.).

A contemporary version of grounded theory that adopts methodological strategies such as coding, memo-writing, and theoretical sampling of the original statement of the method but shifts its epistemological foundations and takes into account methodological developments in qualitative inquiry occurring over the past fifty years (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 342).

In this context, according to John W. Creswell (2005), in the contemporary, there are three main schools of methodology⁵: the emergent *grounded theory* (Glaser, 1992, [Glaser & Strauss, 1967]); the systematic *grounded theory* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990/1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and the constructivist *grounded theory* (Charmaz, 2006/2014). Tarozzi (2011), in turn, classifies them as classic *grounded theory* (Glaser); *grounded theory full conceptual description* (Strauss & Corbin); and constructivist *grounded theory* (Charmaz). Tarozzi also attempts to organize a synthesis (see table 2) of the main characteristics of each of these approaches. He compares some key points that signal the structure and theoretical practice of the methodology along the three lines, such as research question; types of data; main category; and types of coding.

With the framing of these three versions, José Luís Guedes dos Santos and colleagues (2018) warn that “one of the main differences between them is the data analysis system [especially in the coding stage], which presents particularities according to each methodological perspective” (Santos et al., 2018, p. 2). These dissimilarities are briefly introduced by Tarozzi (2011), as shown in table 2⁶.

⁵ Critical views of the three schools, their procedures and techniques, and some of the efforts being made by various researchers to develop the methodology can be found in Bryant & Charmaz (2007; 2019), as well as in Morse et al. (2009).

⁶ More thoughtful comparisons between schools are found in Allen (2010), and Santos et al. (2018), among others.

Table 2
Confrontation between the main schools of GTM

	Classic GTM	GTM <i>full conceptual description</i>	Constructivist GTM
	Glaser	Strauss and Corbin	Charmaz
Research questions	It is not a statement that identifies the problem to be studied. It is impossible to define it before entering the field (it starts openly from a research area).	It is a statement that identifies the problem to be studied. It allows you to restrict and manage the area of investigation.	[There may be] but the sensitizing concepts (Blumer), personal and disciplinary interests [are also indicated to start] the research.
Data types	“All is data”.	Indifferent, especially observations.	Semi-structured interviews and textual analysis. Data co-construction.

Continue...



Continuation

	Classic GTM	GTM <i>full conceptual description</i>	Constructivist GTM
<i>Core category</i>	It emerges almost magically and is sensed impromptu at the beginning or end of the research.	Bringing it out requires strong data manipulations. There is no single <i>core category</i> .	There is a prevalent <i>core category</i> .
Codification types	Theoretical substantive.	Open, axial, selective.	Initial, focused, axial ⁷ , theoretical.

Source: Adapted from Tarozzi (2011, p. 56).

⁷ Although Tarozzi (2011) indicates axial coding (proposed by Strauss and Corbin) among the types of coding in Charmaz's approach, this author relativizes its application in research, indicating it as optional. According to Charmaz, researchers who "prefer to work with a preset structure will welcome having a frame. Those who prefer simple, flexible guidelines - and can tolerate ambiguity - do not need to do axial coding. They can follow the leads that they define in their empirical materials. [...] The subsequent categories, subcategories, and links reflect how I made sense of the data" (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 148).

⁸ Bryant warns that the use of the prefix "post" indicates movement "beyond". Critically, he also comprehends this term as "misleading or unhelpful: Post-positivism seems to be applied to positions that are still positivist, so at best the term should be neo-positivism—neo meaning 'new', as opposed to 'post' which implies some sort of distancing" (Bryant, 2017, p. 58).

Charmaz also tries to demarcate the differences between the three lines of methodology, but she classifies them as objectivist *grounded theory* (Glaser), post-positivist *grounded theory*⁸ (Strauss and Corbin), and constructivist *grounded theory* (Charmaz). She is emphatic in clarifying that her version of the methodology adopts the strategies of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) classical *grounded theory* but does not connect with the epistemology of the original version.

Charmaz and colleagues also point out that the constructivist version "adopts a contrasting relativist approach that shifts the method's ontological and epistemological grounds (Charmaz, 2009) to the pragmatist tradition of Anselm Strauss" (Charmaz et al., 2018, p. 730).

Rooted in pragmatism and relativist epistemology, constructivist grounded theory assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered but instead are constructed by researchers as a result of their interactions with their participants and emerging analyses . . . For constructivists, grounded theory is a fundamentally interactive method (Charmaz, Thornberg & Keane, 2018, p. 730).

On the other hand, the classical version of the methodology, or the objectivist *grounded theory*, according to Charmaz, emerges with a strong influence from "positivism and thus assume discovery of data in an external world by a neutral, but expert observer whose conceptualizations arises from view the data. Data are separate facts from the observer and, in the objectivist view, should be observed without preconception" (Charmaz, 2009b, p. 138). Thus, "objectivist grounded theory is a form of positivist qualitative research and thus subscribes to much of the logic of the positivist tradition and to its central tenets concerning empiricism, generalizability, universality, abstraction, and parsimony." (Charmaz, 2014, p. 344).

In the post-positivist view, the literature records that Strauss and Corbin (1990/1998) also shared some objectivist precepts about data in line with

Glaser, even considering some pragmatist expressions. Still in this line, recently, Charmaz and Belgrave ratified that

Post-positivist grounded theorists also treat data as objective but attend to its accuracy and mode of collection. Constructivist grounded theorists view data as co-constructed between researchers and research participants and locate these data within their social, historical, and situational conditions of production (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, p. 744).

It is pertinent to clarify that

Strauss and Corbin's (1990, 1998) early books did not draw explicit links to pragmatism. However, after Strauss's death, Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, 2015) has revised her approach to grounded theory in ways more consistent with the pragmatist tradition (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019, p. 743).

However, it is the constructivist approach that explicitly takes on pragmatism.

Having briefly put these guidelines that articulate, especially, the historical, philosophical, and epistemological approaches of GTM to advance with the reflections of this work, it is worth at this point to reflect on the type of theory that the investigations that adopt this methodology can achieve.

WHAT KIND OF THEORY DOES *GROUNDING THEORY* MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO GENERATE?

Glaser and Strauss, in the classic *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), especially in chapter IV, already clarified the existence of two basic typologies of theories that could be generated from GTM procedures and techniques: substantive theory and formal theory⁹. The possibility of generating these two types of theories is a consensus in all three versions of the methodology.

The substantive theory and the formal theory, according to Glaser e Strauss (1967), should be identified as “middle-range” theories, according to the postulates of Robert K. Merton (1957). For Charmaz, middle-range theories consist of “abstract renderings of specific social phenomena that were grounded in data. Such middle-range theories contrasted with the ‘grand’ theories of ... sociology...” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 9). Bryant reinforces that “the theoretical statements that develop from the use of GTM do not claim the status of grand or overarching theories, but rather are initially offered as substantive ones” (Bryant, 2017, p. 97) and/or formals, as indicated by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

⁹ Bryant warns that “The grounded theory method should, obviously, lead to the development of grounded theories, although these may also be termed models or frameworks or conceptual schemas. This aspect of GTM is sometimes forgotten or obscured by researchers themselves when reporting their findings” (Bryant, 2017, p. 99).



Thus, formal theories are comprehensive, but not general, while substantive theories are concerned with understanding and explaining everyday situations. Glaser and Strauss further clarify:

Since substantive theory is grounded in research on one particular substantive area (work, juvenile delinquency, medical education, mental health), it might be taken to apply only to that specific area. A theory at such a conceptual level, however may have important general implications and relevance, and become almost automatically a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal theory . . . Substantive theory is a strategic link in the formulation and generation of grounded formal theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 79).

Charmaz (2006/2014) also clarifies that formal theories can be understood as “a theoretical rendering of a generic issue or process that cuts across several substantive [specific] areas of study” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 343). Substantive theories, on the other hand, can be understood as “a theoretical interpretation or explanation of a delimited problem in a particular area, such as family relationships, formal organizations, or education [or communication]” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 344).

In addition, Charmaz also presents reflections on the distinction between positivist theory and interpretive theory. According to her, positivist theory seeks “causes, favors deterministic explanations, and emphasizes generality and universality” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 229). Interpretive theory, on the other hand, requires an “imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon. This type of theory assumes emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 231).

Charmaz (2006/2014) also points out that research in grounded theory can be developed with inclinations to the production of both types of theories, but this will depend on the line of the methodology adopted by the researchers for their investigations. For example, according to this author, the way Glaser handles the theory expresses a strong positivist association. In Strauss and Corbin’s version, there are also some positivist angles, but they recognize the interpretive perspectives. In the constructivist version, on the other hand, the interpretive theoretical perspective is basilar and explicit.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) also clarify that researchers must define the type of theory (substantive or formal) that will be generated using GTM. However, they point out that researchers “unquestionably tend to avoid the formulation of grounded formal theory; they stay principally at the substantive level” (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967, p. 92). Among the justifications for this trend, the authors point to the inherently greater challenges and difficulties in working with high-level abstractions and the feeling of low confidence in working with broader research areas and their implications.

Having offered this context about the types of theories that can be discovered or built with grounded theory, considering the postulates of its three versions, in the following section, efforts will be directed to reflect on how this methodology, especially in the constructivist line, has been and can be applied in communication research. Finally, some guidelines are written on how to proceed to build theories using the constructivist grounded theory methodology.

GROUNDING THEORY IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

In Brazil, the studies of Leite (2015b, 2018) and Leite and Batista (2018) are examples of research in the field of communication that applied the constructivist grounded theory methodology. Leite (2015b, 2018), in his *grounded theory*, inscribed a theoretical contribution directed to the understanding of the media consumption experiences of Brazilian women (white and black) when they interact with counterintuitive ads¹⁰ that mediatize the image of black women as protagonists. The research theorizes how these ads do or do not affect these women's perceptions and experiences with everyday racism. Leite and Batista (2018) presented a theoretical interpretation, built with the support of parental agents, about the first experiences of black Brazilian children with racism, also trying to understand, in this context, how media materialities (ads and soap operas), with counterintuitive expressions, would affect or not these experiences in the dynamics of the families' daily lives.

At this point, it is worth noting that the definition by the constructivist line of the methodology explored in this text is due to the specialization of the author, given his experiences and training done during his doctoral studies with researchers who are references in the development of this methodology, such as Kathy Charmaz and Massimiliano Tarozzi¹¹.

The decision of exploring the constructivist grounded theory with more attention is also justified by the strong association that Charmaz's version has with pragmatism and especially with symbolic interactionism. In addition to grounding the bases of her version, both can serve as theoretical references to direct the perspectives of the theory to be built with the applicability of the methodology.

As a topic to be better articulated and explored in future work, it is noted that the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism also integrates the set of communication theories (França & Simões, 2016). This can indicate,

¹⁰ Counterintuitive ads (Leite, 2014, 2018, etc.) can be considered as a proposal of the professional advertising field that strategically uses content about stereotypes directed to socially minority groups in its narratives of "other/new", with the main goal of innovating and promoting its attempts to appeal to marketable consumption, violating intuitive expectations of the receivers about the discourses traditionally conveyed by advertising.

¹¹ Moreover, the latter was his supervisor in 2014, during the Doctoral Sandwich Abroad Program (PDSE) of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), at the University of Trento and the University of Bologna in Italy.



perhaps, a fruitful connection point to instigate the interest of researchers to know more about the methodology in focus, as well as favor their engagement in the construction of dialogues and communication studies using the procedures and techniques of GTM for the production of knowledge.

In this aspect, thinking about using communication theories as a theoretical reference for developing grounded theory research, for example, is useful to recall the idea of the “Theory-Methods Package” proposed by Adele E. Clarke (2005, p. 2). This author inscribes this notion to point out the strong potential of the connection between constructivist grounded theory as a methodology and symbolic interactionism as a theoretical perspective for developing grounded theory investigations. This articulation, according to Clarke, would provide researchers with a strong and adequate set of methodological and theoretical tools for the research construction process. This idea was ratified and promoted by Charmaz (2006/2014).

In this articulation, some communication theories, especially - and not exclusively - mediatization studies¹², in the socio-constructivist line (Hepp, 2014; Krotz, 2001; Braga, 2012, 2015, etc.), could accommodate Adele Clarke’s proposal. This theoretical strand would conveniently fit into this “theory/methods package” because it dialogues with symbolic interactionism and the sociology of knowledge. It also considers the “everyday communication practices... and focuses on the changing communicative construction of culture and society.” (Hepp, 2014, p. 47)¹³.

For example, this theoretical and methodological articulation could be observed as a powerful way to systematically investigate and theorize the dimensions and meanings of “communicative interactions” (direct interaction process between individuals) and “mediated interactions”, which are observed as an interpretative and cooperative network of mutual affections (França, 2007, p. 9). This interpretative and cooperative network would be formed in society integrating, among other objects: the market, communication professionals, and people who receive media materialities (advertisements, newspapers, television and radio programs, films and so on).

In this proposition, it is possible to observe another effort to reaffirm the powerful contribution that the studies of symbolic interactionism can offer to research in communication as theoretical lenses, as well as encourage the expansion of using this reference in research in the field of communication. Thus, it aims to collaborate with the overcoming the gap pointed out by Vera França (2007, 2008), that the investigations of the field, especially the studies of media reception, should perform - what has not been done expressively yet - more carefully readings about the symbolic interactionism perspective.

¹² The debate about mediatization is currently in progress. However, a conceptual direction offered by José Luiz Braga can support the understanding of the term. He orientates that this “term indicates that mediatization can be understood as ‘action’ - between an institutional complex and a process. When we adopt the word ‘mediatization’, we are no longer talking only about the logic of the media/cultural industry, but also about actions that take place in the diffuse social environment (in its various communicational actions) - by triggering” (Braga, 2018, p. 292).

¹³ Unlike the socio-constructivist strand of media studies, Hepp points to the institutional line, which until recently has been interested, according to this author, in the logic produced in the production spaces of mass communication, whose influence is described as “media logic” (Hepp, 2014, p. 47, author’s emphasis).

França also adds that “for some years now the contributions [of] symbolic interactionism have been claimed by communication studies, but the reference to this current is still unsystematic” (França, 2007, p. 1) in the field investigations. Exemplary in this scenario, according to this author, would be the timid and remote reference in Brazilian communication studies to the thought of G. H. Mead (1925, 1934, 2006, etc.), identified as the “founding father” of this tradition.

In this context, it is pertinent to recover and point out that the research of Leite (2015b, 2018) and Leite and Batista (2018), indicated in the introduction of this topic, are also examples of investigations in the field of communication, that try to reflect these ideas and collaborate with the modification of this scenario. These studies, guided by the constructivist grounded theory methodology, productively, exercise the adoption of the “theory/methods package” proposed by Clarke (2005), articulating symbolic interactionism and media studies as a supplement to a basic theoretical reference.

However, it is also appropriate to reinforce that the “theory/methods package” proposed by Clarke (2005) does not aim to inscribe prescription and/or operating restrictions on using other theoretical references relevant to developing rational grounded theory research. This orientation, in short, should be observed only as a suggestion and an idea to denote and emphasize the powerful connection between GTM and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism. In this sense, after that, some Brazilian and foreign research that reflect the three lines of GTM are indicated to illustrate the flexibility of this articulation.

The first example is the work of Carla Severiano de Carvalho (2022). This author, adopting the constructivist grounded theory methodology, built an explanatory theoretical study about the processes of stereotyping countries by international journalism. Specifically, Carvalho offers as a result of her research a theoretical understanding of the discursive representations of Brazil in Spain. The theoretical framework adopted in the research articulates media studies, studies on agenda setting, and critical discourse analysis. The data collection methods adopted were: document analysis of Spanish digital newspapers (ABC.es, ElMundo.es, and ElPaís.com) and interviews with Spanish journalists responsible for publications about Brazil.

As a second example, Ashley R. P. Wellman’s (2018) research is indicated. This American researcher, also using constructivist grounded theory, built a theory that explores the relationship between survivors of homicides of filed cases and the media, specifically, seeking to explain how these people perceive the coverage, the treatment, and the relationship they have or have not established with the media. The theoretical framework of the research articulates victimology studies and studies on media coverage of cases of violence and



crime, among others. The research data were constructed especially through in-depth interviews with survivors of homicide.

Another Brazilian example, however, leaning towards Glaser's line, is the research of Máira Bittencourt (2016). This author developed an investigation guided by the classic grounded theory specifically directed to the quali/quantitative perspective, indicated by Glaser (2008) in *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory*. Bittencourt, from the area of digital communication, developed a theoretical model called "Digital Prince" which, according to her, focuses on illuminating how the categories power, hegemony, and leadership are structured in the contemporary society involved by digital networks. "This understanding can lead us to better comprehend the phenomena of this time, such as the great social demonstrations and the types of relationships that exist in social networks" (Bittencourt, 2016, p. 8). The theoretical framework adopted in this research uses various texts by authors such as Machiavelli, Antonio Gramsci, and Octavio Ianni, to think about the social idea of "prince" and "electronic prince"; Paul Lazarsfeld and José B. Toro, to think about the reception of ideas and social mobilization; and Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, and Manuel Castells, to support the theoretical reflection on the crowd, social networks, the Internet, and mobilization processes. As information to ground its GT, the research data collection was carried out through the analysis of social manifestations, interviews, and observation.

Finally, as an example of research that adopted the GTM of Strauss and Corbin, there is the investigation of Andreas Hepp, Piet Simon, and Monika Sowinska (2018). These authors from the German context developed an explanatory theoretical study on communicative networks and the construction of mediated communities, aiming to understand what deep mediatization means for young people in their daily urban sense of community. In this investigation, the theoretical framework used involves the studies of mediatization, and the data collection focused on observations and in-depth interviews.

With the support of these short reports about communication research, especially the Brazilian ones, that adopted grounded theory and several theoretical references, this text moves on to its last topic, which provides orientation about the main procedures and techniques to sustain the exercise of theorizing with constructivist GTM.

HOW TO THEORIZE AND BUILD A GROUNDED THEORY?

The directions on how to proceed to build a grounded theory in the communication research process have already been discussed in detail in other

opportunities (Leite, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, etc.). However, in this article, briefly, these guidelines are recovered in a special direction to focus the understanding on the characteristics called, by Jane Hood (2007), as *Troublesome Trinity* of the methodology, namely: the theoretical sampling; the constant comparison method; and the focus on theory development via theoretical saturation of categories. According to Hood (2007), these characteristics would also differentiate GTM from other research methodologies. The path to constructivist GTM is not linear.

In this direction, with the definition of the research area, researchers with a position as open as possible to everything observed and felt in the field in all stages of the research can begin the grounded theory investigation. Generally, this beginning is guided by an open and generative research question, even if tentative. Empirical work can also be started from personal and disciplinary interests by defining “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer, 1954) if researchers decide to elaborate their research question later based on the experiences and data achieved in the empirical.

Herbert Blumer clarifies that “sensitizing concepts” provide researcher with a general notion of a “sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” (Blumer, 1954, p. 7). According to Charmaz (2014), these concepts can indicate a point to begin grounded theory research but not to end it. Tarozzi (2011) explains that this concept should be considered the base of ideas on which the research problems are polarized.

With this initial positioning, the next step is the beginning of data collection, or the joint construction of data with the research informants (or documents and source materialities). Charmaz defends “gathering rich – detailed and full – data and placing them in their relevant situational and social contexts” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 18).

This data can be collected using a variety of instruments and sources. The intensive or in-depth interview remains the most common source for building rich and relevant data. However, other sources can be added, such as observation¹⁴, field notes, and texts and documents to be produced or already existing (produced), such as historical texts, government records, diaries, reports, etc. Media materialities can also be data sources, such as journalistic texts, records of communicative interactions in social networks, advertisements, etc. Texts, according to Charmaz (2009a), can also be extracted, that is, researchers can ask informants to produce texts such as essays and reports, among others. However, comparing interviews and texts as sources, Charmaz warns that “interviews pose possibilities for checking a story that a text does not” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 47).

¹⁴ For Tarozzi, the peculiarity of the observation within grounded theory “is that it is focused immediately on the observation of phenomena and, above all, of the process elements defined in the research question, giving less weight to the description of the context” (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 111). Therefore, the proposal of observation is not focused on making detailed descriptions but on the production of conceptualizations of the process under investigation.



As data collection begins, the research question can be revealed in this process by answering the classic question posed by Glaser (1978): *What's going on here?* Charmaz validates that this question is fundamental to all strands of grounded theory to generate “spawns looking at what is happening at either of two levels: - What are the basic social processes? - What are the basic social psychological processes?” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 34).

Consequently, with the first data collected from interviews, for example, it is recommended that *verbatim* transcripts be made. Interviews, if possible, should be captured and audio or audiovisual recorded with the formal consent of the research informants. In this regard, the researcher’s analytical eye for the data should be in operation in the interview situation and the transcription process of these records.

In this route, with the data from the first transcription, we proceed to the coding steps, thus also beginning the activation of the challenges inscribed by the problematic triad of the methodology, indicated earlier. However, before moving on to understand the coding process, it is pertinent to ask: How to understand and operationalize sampling in GTM? There are two ways of sampling in GTM: the initial and the theoretical. In this sense, also considering the existing or extracted texts and documents, this sampling aims to delimit the specificities and characteristics of this *corpus*, this collection of materials and documents, to be considered for data collection and analysis¹⁵. This initial sample is common to many types of qualitative research.

On the other hand, the theoretical sampling is typical of grounded theory research. According to Glaser and Strauss, it can be understood as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). Thus, “the main purpose of theoretical sampling is to elaborate and refine the categories constituting your theory” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 193).

The process of theoretical sampling begins when, after the beginning and progress of data coding, the researchers have already elaborated some relevant but rudimentary categories that need more density/explanatory quality. The finalization of this process is established when “theoretical saturation” or, as Ian Dey (1999) prefers, “theoretical sufficiency” is reached for the category, or rather, for the set of categories that articulate the elaborated grounded theory. The “theoretical saturation” in GTM refers to the point that the data collected, to give density to the categories via theoretical sampling, no longer present new

¹⁵ Table 1, in this paper, presents some references to this documentary analysis procedure.

properties or variations or produce stimuli for theoretical reflections that can strengthen the theory under construction.

In this context, it is worth emphasizing that the literature indicates that it is not pertinent to collect all the data and only then begin the coding and analysis steps. These processes must occur at the same time, always favoring the constant feedback and comparison between data in the search for building rich and relevant information, thus following the iterative and interactive characteristics of the methodology.

As observed in table 2, organized by Tarozzi (2011), the constructivist version of the *grounded theory* postulates three main types of coding¹⁶ for qualitative code-making: initial, focused, and theoretical¹⁷. For Charmaz, coding in GTM “generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 113). Thus, more than

a beginning; it shapes an analytic frame from which you build the analysis. [...] Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you *define* what is happening in the data and begging to grapple with what it means. (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 113, author’s emphasis).

Initial coding is the first step in this process, as it rigorously fixes the data, considering the actions in each segment of these rather than applying pre-existing categories. The main strategies of initial coding, considering the transcribed texts of the interviews and other sources, are “word by word”, “line by line” or “incident by incident”. Throughout this process, intense expressions manifested by the informants can potentially be added to the work in a literal way. Such expressions are called *in vivo* codes. At this stage, it is also necessary to operate the analytic method of constant comparison, which should support and cut across all coding practices and research analysis. According to Charmaz, this method aims to generate

successively more abstract concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with code, code with code, code with category, category with category, and category with concept. In the last stages of analysis, researchers compare their major categories with those in relevant scholarly literatures. Comparisons then constitute each stage of analytic development. Grounded theorists use this method to reveal the properties and range of the emergent categories and to raise the level of abstraction of their developing analyses (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 342).

¹⁶ Coding in GTM can be confused with content analysis, especially by novice researchers. To reduce these misconceptions, the work of Ji Young Cho and Eun-Hee Lee (2014) is recommended as introductory reading.

¹⁷ To collaborate with the management, manipulation, and codification of the data collected, it is recommended, if possible, the use of software (e.g. Nvivo, WebQDA, and Atlas.ti) that supports the researcher in the process of qualitative data analysis, in the construction of diagrams and conceptual maps of the dimensions of the theory. That said, it is pertinent to point out, that throughout the coding process until the integration of grounded theory, it is recommended the production of graphic representations (with diagrams or situational maps) that illustrate the theoretical articulations built.



Returning to the coding guidelines, the second stage of the process is focused coding. In this stage, with the codes already managed in the initial stage, they are more targeted and selective. To this end, the most significant and/or frequent initial codes are used to thoroughly analyze large amounts of data. This coding requires decision-making, as it defines which data have the potential to cohere with others, thus forming a category. These decisions by researchers are guided by their “theoretical sensitivity” (Glaser, 1978), which may be developed over their research experience.

Indeed, the third stage is theoretical coding. It is a sophisticated level of coding that follows the codes selected in the focused coding. It is in this stage that, according to Tarozzi, the construction of the categories reaches fullness, and “theorization proceeds to the identification of the central categories, the key concepts around which the theory will be organized” (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 154). Still in this dynamic, we then proceed to the stage of theoretical classification of these categories to find the core category, that is, the main category that has the potential to “integrate the theory and develop it around its conceptual axes, empirically emerged” (Tarozzi, 2011, p. 154). The GT can have more than one core category.

Finally, at this point, the memos¹⁸ that must be written throughout the research process are undoubtedly essential to support the integration and reporting of the conceptual schemes built and direct the final writing of the theory. The return to the literature that supports the connections and stimulates interpretations and conceptual developments about the theoretical perspectives built can also occur with more density at this stage. This return to the literature should happen aligned with the theoretical framework applied in the research to, thus, enhance the theorization process and the integration of the dimensions of meanings built.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main contribution of this paper was to offer a reflective introduction that guided the process of theorizing following the guidelines of the constructivist GTM. It was also a proposal of the study to discuss the type of theory produced with this methodological path, demonstrating the potential that this methodology offers for developing communication research that seeks to generate theoretical understandings of social processes grounded in the data.

In this effort, a few communication research that applied the methodology in Brazil were indicated as exemplification objects. In a complementary way, some international studies were also pointed out. However, in the exercise of

¹⁸ Memo-writing, according to Charmaz, “is the pivotal intermediate step in grounded theory between data collection and writing drafts of papers. When grounded theorists write memos, they stop and analyze their ideas about their codes and emerging categories in whatever way that occurs to them [...]. Memo-writing is a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts researchers to analyze their data and to develop their codes into categories early in the research process. Writing successive memos keeps researchers involved in the analysis and helps them to increase the level of abstraction of their ideas.” (Charmaz, 2006/2014, p. 343).

this text, it is fundamental to recognize that, although there are still few Brazilian communication works that use the methodology in question, this small set of studies begins to configure and offer the field through the disclosure and acceptance of its results, a frame of reference of useful and significant works that, integrally, applied and developed the rationale and rigor of the methodology. In this way, these investigations also become viable as vigorous sources for “other/new” researchers to get to know and learn, with examples of similar experiences, the making of theorizing with GTM.

Finally, it is expected that the guidelines shared in this text, although introductory and punctual, because of the limits and objectives of this work, will encourage researchers in the field to learn more and venture into future research using the methodological (and theoretical) articulation presented. GTM procedures and techniques pertinently make available an intense and rigorous research path to support the systematic elaboration of middle-range theories (substantive and or formal), which involve the understanding of experiences, events, and meanings socially produced by the interactional dynamics of people entangled by media narratives in everyday life. ■

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Theorizing with Grounded Theory

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Logics of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the covid-19 pandemic: a semiotic approach

Lógicas da propagação da informação e da desinformação no contexto da pandemia de covid-19: abordagem semiótica

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of research that investigated the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts propagated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through exploratory research and subsequent preparation of the *corpus*, the investigation sought to understand the transmedia dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, launched in the *Combate ao Coronavírus* Brazilian TV show (Rede Globo), and understand how the propagation of disinformation was constituted in this context. Based on the analysis of the *corpus* in dialogue with discursive semiotics and sociosemiotics, a model is proposed that theorizes about the logics of propagation of information and disinformation.

Keywords: propagation of information, propagation of disinformation, COVID-19, discursive semiotics, sociosemiotics

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta resultados de pesquisa que investigou as dinâmicas de propagação e a construção de sentido de textos propagados no contexto da pandemia de covid-19. A partir de pesquisa exploratória e posterior configuração do *corpus*, procurou-se compreender a dinâmica transmídia da propagação e a construção de sentido de textos (visuais, verbais e sincréticos) relacionados à hashtag #perguntacorona, lançada no

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V.17 - Nº 1 jan./abr. 2023 São Paulo - Brasil MENDES | ALZAMORA p. 193-222

MATRIZES

193



A

Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

programa de televisão *Combate ao Coronavírus* (Rede Globo), e entender como se constitui a propagação da desinformação nesse contexto. A partir da análise do *corpus* em diálogo com a semiótica discursiva e a sociosemiótica, propõe-se um modelo que teoriza sobre as lógicas de propagação da informação e da desinformação.

Palavras-chave: Propagação da informação, propagação da desinformação, covid-19, semiótica discursiva, sociosemiótica

THIS ARTICLE PRESENTS results of postdoctoral research that studied the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of these texts propagated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which there was a major increase in the dissemination of fake news and similar items. According to Jenkins et al. (2014, p. 26), the terms *propagating*, *propagable* and *propagability* refer to the publics' – technical and cultural – potential of sharing content. In the context of this transmedia and sharing culture, the COVID-19 pandemic was characterized by that which the World Health Organization (WHO) called infodemic, that is, “too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak,” in this case about the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the new coronavirus (Alzamora et al., 2021, p. 18).

Such context is deeply marked by what Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) called informational disorder, related to the large-scale circulation of problematic or dubious information, including *disinformation*, *misinformation*, and *malinformation*. According to the authors, disinformation refers to information fabricated and distributed intentionally to harm or mislead a person, social group or organization, while misinformation is not intended to cause harm. In turn, malinformation is used to harm a person, social group or organization, even if such malinformation is true. Therefore, the semantic universe of informational disorder that characterizes the COVID-19 infodemic is much broader than the notion of fake news as an antithesis inferred from true news.

According to Alzamora (2020), based on Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Wardle and Derakhshan (2017),

[...] the production, distribution and circulation of fake news is not a recent phenomenon [...] nor easy to classify, as it comprises a myriad of informational manifestations [such as] manipulation of informational context, fabrication of connections between events, and production of misleading content (Alzamora, 2020, p. 2).

According to Alzamora (2020), the novelty in relation to the distribution of these news – also understood as informational disorder – is the transmedia

dynamics that extends their reach: “It is a type of news that often employs technological resources in its production, involves a multiplatform distribution strategy, and achieves massive circulation through social and algorithmic action coordinated in a network” (Alzamora, 2020, p. 2). According to the author, the circulation of fake news “is boosted by the social engagement produced around the common belief mediated by the news, even if it is clearly fake” (Alzamora, 2020, p. 2).

Therefore, according to Alzamora et al. (2021, p. 18):

The infodemic indicates the definitive transition from the information society – characterized by the advancement of information technologies in the 20th century, which gave rise to the networked society (Castells, 1999) – to the disinformation society. This is characterized by the rise of fake news as an endemic phenomenon of the information society (Marshall, 2017).

For studying this phenomenon, the chosen empirical evidence consisted of texts propagated on the Twitter network (posts, contents from links, users, and other hashtags) related to the hashtag #perguntacorona (that means, in English, both #askaquestioncorona and #questioncorona). This hashtag was created by the Globo TV network in the *Combate ao Corona Vírus* (*Combat against Coronavirus*) TV show, hosted by journalist Marcio Gomes, after the channel changed its programming schedule, starting to emphasize news on the theme, due to the advance of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. Launched in the show, which aired from March 17 to May 22, 2020, the hashtag was aimed at encouraging Internet users to send questions about the pandemic through online social networks so they could be answered during the show. The hashtag #perguntacorona featured among Twitter’s trending topics (TT) from March 19 to May 1, 2020. The collection was carried out between January 26, 2020, the first occurrence related to the coronavirus on the Brazilian Twitter, and June 21, 2020, one month after the end of the aforementioned TV show.

The dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of these texts were analyzed based on the theoretical-methodological concepts of the discursive semiotics of Algirdas Julien Greimas (Greimas & Courtés, 2008; Fiorin, 2006) and of the socio-semiotics of Eric Landowski. As for the first, we considered the discursive semantics of the generative path of meaning and, as to the second, the interaction and meaning regimes (Landowski, 2014), the propagation regimes (Fechine, 2019) and the discursive interactions (Oliveira, 2013). The question that guided the research was: how was the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts related to the hashtag #perguntacorona effected and, more generally, how was the propagation of disinformation constituted?



Ultimately, the following question arises: how to think semiotically about the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its opposite term, information?

It should be said that approaching the phenomenon of disinformation from the perspective of discursive semiotics is justified, firstly, by the recent proposal of Fechine (2019) for studying the propagation in online social networks, which proved useful to understand the logics of propagation of information and disinformation in this study. Secondly, we highlight the still current relevance of the Greimasian concept of veridiction contract, that is, “a more or less stable balance arising from an implicit agreement between the two actors of the communication structure” (Greimas, 2014, p. 117) for approaching disinformation as a contemporary phenomenon¹.

¹ In this regard, Ribeiro et al. (2022) demonstrate that belief is one of the main supports of disinformation.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The research whose results are presented here was part of a larger project, titled “Dinâmica transmídia de notícias sobre coronavírus” (“Transmedia Dynamics of Coronavirus News”)². In this context, the research data were collected by researchers from the Mídia, Semiótica e Pragmatismo – MediaAção (Media, Semiotics and Pragmatism Research Group), according to the procedures transcribed below.

² This research, in turn, is linked to two research projects, both coordinated by Prof. Dr. Geane Alzamora: “A dinâmica transmídia de notícias falsas sobre ciências: jornalismo e educação” [The transmedia dynamics of fake news about sciences: journalism and education], carried out in the Institute of Advanced Transdisciplinary Studies of UFMG, and “A lógica comunicacional da dinâmica transmídia: produção e circulação de fluxos informacionais em jornalismo e educação” [The communicational logic of the transmedia dynamics: production and circulation of informational flows in journalism and education], with a research scholarship from CNPq (Process 311914/2016)

By means of exploratory research on the theme, through the collection of hahstags that featured in Twitter’s trending topics (TT) from January 26, 2020 (the date of the first occurrence related to the new coronavirus in Brazil, according to our data collection) to June 21, 2020, we elected as an empirical focus of investigation the forms of mediation established on Twitter by the hashtag #perguntacorona, due to its transmedia nature and informative purpose concerning the pandemic. (Alzamora et al., 2021, p. 16).

The automatic collection of #perguntacorona was carried out by adapting scripts from the Twitterscrapper project and extracting data from *tweets* that used it. The collection retrieved about 5,100 *tweets* from March 17 to June 20, 2020. This period includes the initial broadcast of the informative TV show until the end date of the collection, about one month after the TV show stopped being broadcast. [...] We prepared the *corpus* by cross-examining some of these metadata. The main cross-examinations were the following: image urls x url count; links x link count; hashtags within a tweet x hashtag count; mentions of users x mention count (Góis & Alzamora, 2021, p. 28).

Thus, the collected data were divided into four categories: (1) posts (visual, verbal or verbal-visual/syncretic texts); (2) links; (3) other hashtags; (4) users

related to the hashtag #perguntacorona. This empirical material served as the basis for studying the propagation of texts (visual, verbal and syncretic) that circulated through the hashtag #perguntacorona and their relation with disinformation.

Then, the research sought to understand the dynamics of propagation – understood as a transmedia dynamics³ – and the construction of meaning of texts related to such hashtag and understand how the propagation of disinformation is constituted. To this end, the corpus was divided into the ten most shared elements of each category. Thus, we analyzed: the ten most shared posts (visual, verbal or syncretic texts) referring to the hashtag #perguntacorona; the content of the ten shared links referring to the hashtag #perguntacorona; the ten most shared hashtags referring to the hashtag #perguntacorona; the ten main users related to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

³That which involves a media setting, online or offline and that “establishes provisions and configures ways of acting through the network that constitutes it” (Alzamora et al., 2017, p. 69, our translation).

This *corpus* was analyzed based on the theoretical-methodological path presented below. Firstly, we observed themes and figures of the four categories of the *corpus*. Then, the thematic and figurative paths were traced in order to establish isotopies (recurrence of semic traits scattered throughout the discourse that give it a reading plan) of the *corpus*. The survey enabled categorizing the propagation of the contents based on the propagation regimes proposed by Fechine (2019): *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation* and *invention*, presented in the following section. As a result, relations were established between the interaction and meaning regimes with those constructed discursively between enunciator and enunciatee, in order to understand how they constitute interactions with a greater or lesser degree of transitivity, through the hashtag #perguntacorona. This theoretical-methodological path, based on a semiotic approach, investigated the propagation of information and disinformation in the context under analysis.

MEANING, INTERACTION AND PROPAGATION

As indicated, the theoretical framework of this research is supported by the discursive semiotics of Algirdas Julien Greimas (Greimas & Courtés, 2008), the developments of the sociosemiotics of Eric Landowski (2014), and the semiotic approach to propagation proposed by Yvana Fechine (2019). The theoretical elements are presented in the same order in which the corpus of this research is analyzed. Thus, firstly, we present the concepts of theme, figure and isotopy (Greimas & Courtés, 2008; Fiorin, 2006; Fechine, 2019); then, we present the interaction and meaning regimes (Landowski, 2014), the propagation regimes (Fechine, 2019), and, finally, the theoretical model of discursive interactions (Oliveira, 2013).



The presentation of the operative concepts of the research begins by the concepts of theme, figure and isotopy, which refer to the discursive semantics of the generative trajectory of meaning, whose synthesis is presented in the following table:

Table 1
Generative trajectory of meaning

	Syntactic component		Semantic component
Semionarrative structures	Deep level	Fundamental syntax	Fundamental semantics
	Surface level	Narrative syntax	Narrative semantics
Discursive structures	Discursive syntax		Discursive semantics
	Discursivization (actorialization, temporalization, spatialization)		Thematization Figuratization

Note. Adapted from Greimas and Courtés (2008, p. 235).

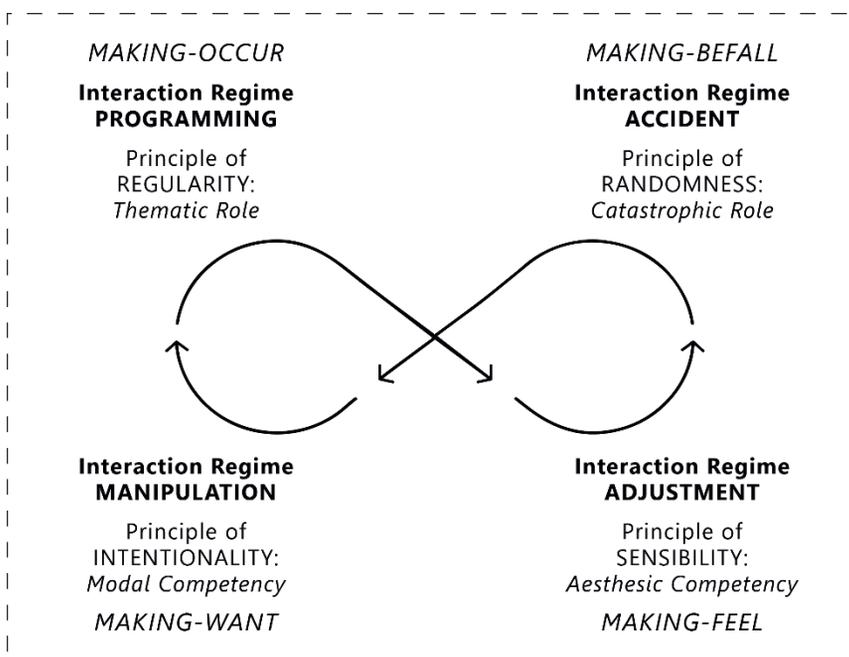
According to Fiorin (2006, p. 90), narrative schemes, when converted to the discursive level, will necessarily be thematized and, when they receive figurative investment, are figurativized. The concept of figure is a semantic element that refers to the natural world, that is, “it is all content of any natural language or any system of representation that has a perceptible correspondent in the natural world” (Fiorin, 2006, p. 91). The theme is a semantic element of an abstract, conceptual nature: “themes are categories that organize, categorize, order the elements of the natural world” (Fiorin, 2006, p. 91).

Themes and figures are disseminated in the discourse so as to form thematic and/or figurative paths. A thematic path links themes that, together, allow the construction of a thematic coherence; similarly, a figurative path groups figures that, in the same way, have the same thematic basis. Thus, a text is given coherence by the reiteration of semic traits (thematic or figurative) so as to result in a reading plan, which, in semiotics, is called isotopy: “the recurrence of semic categories, whether thematic (abstract) or figurative [concrete]” (Greimas & Courtés, 2008, p. 275). Therefore, the isotopy establishes a mode of reading the text as a function of the semantic recurrence disseminated in such text. It is worth saying that, depending on the various thematic and figurative paths of a text, it is common to find pluriisotopic texts, that is, with more than one possibility of reading. According to Fechine (2019, p. 36), memes, for example, have a pluriisotopic character par excellence, because “a meme is only a meme in relation to another meme with which it maintains some isotopic connector, that is, a common connecting element through which the relation between them is established and recognized.”

Next, we present the interaction and meaning regimes and the propagation regimes. In order to explain the production of meaning in and through

interaction, Landowski (2014) conceived a general syntax of interaction, that is, a comprehensive theoretical model capable of explaining the meaning production mechanisms of all forms of interaction. Such general syntax consists of four interaction and meaning regimes: *programming*, *manipulation*, *adjustment*, and *accident*. Such regimes are supported, respectively, on the principles of regularity, intentionality, sensitivity and randomness. Figure 1 below illustrates, in the form of an ellipse, the positions of each interaction and meaning regime.

Figure 1
Interaction and Meaning Regimes



Note. Adapted from Landowski (2014, p. 80).

Based on the interactional syntax of Landowski (2014), Yvana Fachine (2019) proposes a model for studying the propagation in digital social networks. The author is premised on the concept of “propagating,” “propagability,” “propagable media,” as employed by Jenkins et al. (2014), that is:

[...] modes of circulation of media content supported by the filters, procedures, motivations and dispositions of the public to participate in a collaborative production provided by Internet platforms and applications that came to be known as Web 2.0. In this cultural and technological setting, corporate logics and practices of the

A

Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

private market coexist with others that are collective, voluntary and non-profit in the midst of tensions and a very tenuous demarcation of the boundaries between them (Fechine, 2019, p. 23, our translation).

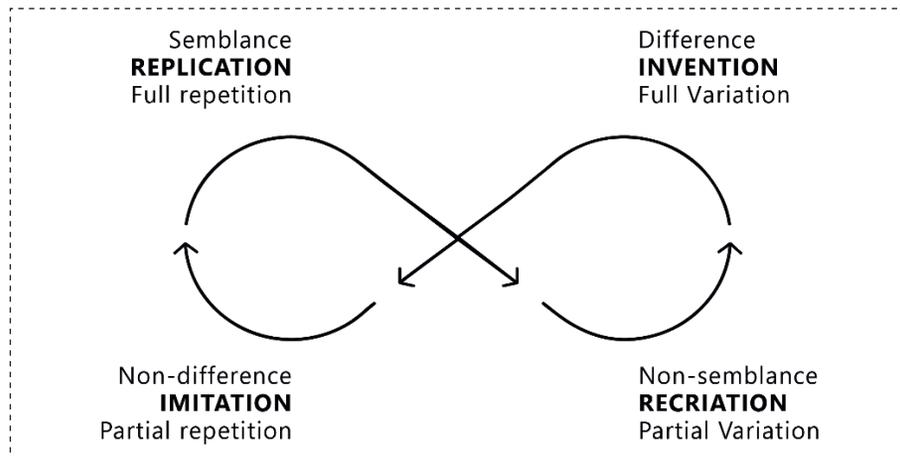
Based on research on the propagation of memes on the digital social network Facebook, Fechine (2019)⁴ proposes an interactional syntax – according to the logic of the semiotic square and of the Landowskian “elliptical square,” which are interdefined through relations of contrariety, contradiction and implication – composed of the following propagation regimes⁵: *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation*, and *invention*⁶. Such regimes are homologous, respectively, to the programming, manipulation, adjustment and accident regimes. In Figure 2 below, these relations are shown in a schematic manner:

⁴It should be said that, although Fechine (2019) has postulated a syntax of propagation considering online social networks, such proposition dialogues with phenomena related to intertextuality and interdiscursivity, whose study and development are prior to the existence of such networks.

⁵Although Fechine (2019, p. 33) designates the terms *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation* and *invention* as “propagation categories,” we prefer to call them “propagation regimes.” This choice is not only terminological, but carries with it implications. That is because, firstly, the propagation regimes are interdefinable and homologous, term by term, to the interaction and meaning regimes. Secondly, a regime, in sociosemiotics, is a kind of *locus* in which interactional processes take place. Thus, within each regime, interactional processes with their own characteristics are developed.

⁶The idea of the terms *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation* and *invention* can be traced back to Ferdinand de Saussure and Gabriel Tarde.

Figure 2
Propagation regimes



Note. Fechine (2019, p. 33).

According to the author, replication is the most primary form of sharing: “it consists in the exercise of disseminating, ‘spreading,’ ‘passing on’ a certain text from the internet [...] without any other agency on the content other than the sharing itself” (Fechine, 2019, p. 40). Such regime implies a form of propagation in which the change in content is considered minimal. Replication is homologous to the interactional regime of programming, which is based on the principle of regularity. Thus, users who share or transmit certain content do so based on predicted and/or predictable behaviors of social networks.

Imitation, in turn, is based on a relation of no difference in relation to the generative form. Fechine (2019, p. 41) argues that “It is the mode of propagation of memes par excellence.” Imitation corresponds to a varied repetition, that is, it corresponds to the modification of a pre-existing text to different extents. From the point of view of content, they are reinterpretations around the same discursive topic or theme addressed by a given text. According to the author, imitation, as it is homologous to the manipulation regime, implies a oriented doing, that is, the recipient of a certain text, by imitating it, is placed as a participant in a hierarchical relation in which the sender occupies a higher level. Thus, in the case of imitation, the theme of the text that generated it is maintained with a degree of modification.

Recreation is a propagation regime that, according to Fechine (2019, p. 49), “involves a thematic or figurative variation of the second degree.” In other words, recreation promotes variations on texts that have already undergone variations. This means that, in the case of recreation, there is greater transformation in relation to the theme of the generating text. According to the author, this propagation regime “depends on a set of allusions, implicit or explicit, to the imitated forms” (Fechine, 2019, p. 49). Thus, recreation requires that netizens have prior knowledge, because the recreated form can only be recognized based on this knowledge. Therefore, just as in adjustment, recreation implies a doing together, that is, a constant game of updating the encyclopedic knowledge of both the one who recreates and of the one who recognizes the recreation and the form that gave rise to it, in a constant intertextual game.

Finally, invention can be “considered both the starting point and the ending point of a cycle of transformations of a given content” (Fechine, 2019, p. 56). The author argues that this propagation regime corresponds to a “creative accident,” which produces something new and becomes part of a new propagation cycle. According to the author, the propagation regime of invention – in which something new is created – is homologous to the interactional regime of accident, characterized by the principle of randomness or unpredictability. This means that such regime – according to the proposal of Fechine (2019) in dialogue with Landowski (2014) – implies invention based on the principle of randomness, that is, the aforementioned “creative accident.” Thus, invention is the starting point of any propagation cycle.

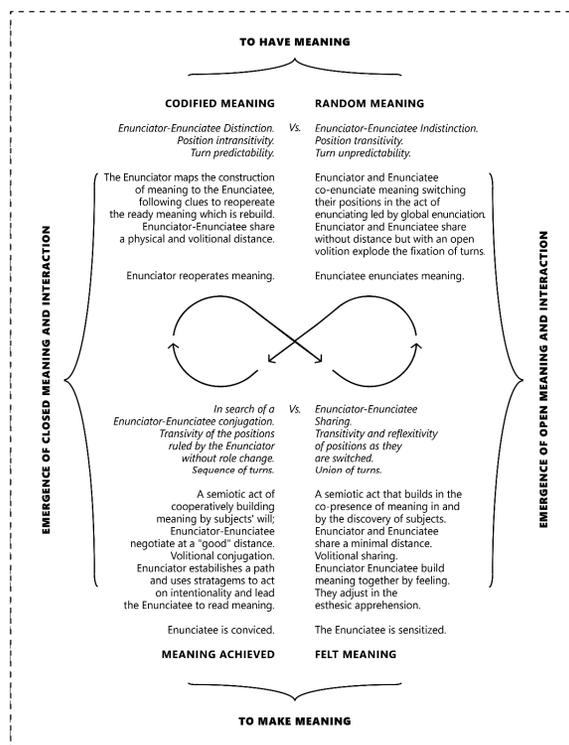
The last section of this theoretical framework concerns the concept of discursive interactions, postulated by Oliveira (2013), based on the Landowskian interactional model, no longer considering the interactions between actors, at the narrative level, but between enunciator and enunciatee, at the discursive level.

A

Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Based on what she calls presence regimes, the author conceives that enunciator and enunciatee can relate through a relation of (a) intransitivity, in which the enunciator leads the enunciatee; and of (b) transitivity, which can be considered at three levels: (1) from a lower transitivity, “fixed through the interest of the subject who commands the interaction (Oliveira, 2013, p. 245), (2) to a transitivity “resulting from the exchange of positions between the two subjects as partners” (Oliveira, 2013, p. 245), or, also, (3) when enunciator and enunciatee occupy “an interchangeable position in which the roles of the enunciative relation are open and can be exchanged as the two process the meaning in their turn.” In Figure 3 below, prepared by Oliveira (2013, p. 246), these relations are presented in detail:

Figure 3
Discursive interactions



Note. Oliveira (2013, p. 244).

Therefore, to the left of the ellipse, interactions between enunciator and enunciatee are more hierarchical, thus constituting more closed interactions,

correlated to the programming and manipulation regimes; to the right of the ellipse, interactions between enunciator and enunciatee are more horizontal, thus constituting more open interactions, correlated to the adjustment and accident regimes.

Hence, the theoretical framework presented in this section – consisting of the concepts of theme, figure and isotopy; interaction and meaning regimes; propagation regimes; and discursive interactions – constitutes a theoretical-methodological framework capable of covering the study of transmedia dynamics of (dis)information, specifically, in the case of this research, about the coronavirus.

ANALYSIS OF THE MOST SHARED POSTS

Based on the methodological framework pointed out, we analyzed seven of the ten most shared posts, which are presented in a table in order of sharing.

Table 2

Posts and their number of shares

Post	Number of shares
1	40
2	40
3	24
4	24
5	24
6*	20
7*	20
8*	20
9	20
10	20

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

*Posts unavailable, links do not open.

The analyses on the theme, figure and isotopy of the posts were grouped, because of the limits of this article, highlighting the recurrences in thematic, figurative and isotopic terms. As mentioned above, the hashtag #perguntacorona was launched by *Combate ao Coronavírus* [*Combat against Coronavirus* TV show], which is defined as follows: “Tv show hosted by Márcio Gomes provides the latest information about the pandemic and tips to protect yourself. On Globo TV, Monday to Friday⁷.” Therefore, we can deduce from the TV show and its hashtag the following themes: combat against coronavirus, information on the pandemic, information on prevention. The isotopies deduced are health communication and provision of services to the community. Ultimately, the health communication (or health literacy) isotopy appears as the main one.

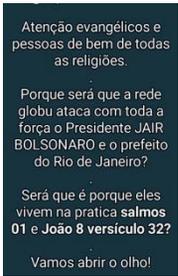
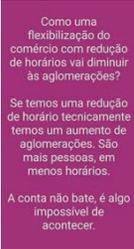
⁷ <https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/ao-vivo/ao-vivo-combate-ao-coronavirus.ghtml>

A

Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

Thus, the relations of identity and difference between the themes and isotopies of the hashtag #perguntacorona and of each of the posts are established through the health communication isotopy, related to the hashtag #perguntacorona. To this end, the themes (thematic paths) and isotopies of each post are presented and then grouped with those that are similar so they can be compared to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Table 3
Recurrences in post contents

Post Number	Post in reduced size	Themes	Isotopies
1	 <p>Atenção evangélicos e pessoas de bem de todas as religiões.</p> <p>Porque será que a rede globu ataca com toda a força o Presidente JAIR BOLSONARO e o prefeito do Rio de Janeiro?</p> <p>Será que é porque eles vivem na pratica salmos 01 e João 8 versiculo 32?</p> <p>Vamos abrir o olho!</p>	Religion, politics/Bolsonarism and truth (euphoric themes) vs. Atheism, media and lie (dysphoric themes), Pro-Bolsonarism.	Political-Religious and science denialism
2	 <p>Vendo cloroquina. Quem não entende não atrapalha meu negócio. 😄</p>	Profit, scam, deceit, complicity, death, crudity.	Deception and science denialism.
3	 <p>Como uma flexibilização do comércio com redução de horários vai diminuir às aglomerações?</p> <p>Se temos uma redução de horário tecnicamente temos um aumento de aglomerações. São mais pessoas, em menos horários.</p> <p>A conta não bate, é algo impossível de acontecer.</p>	Inefficiency of measures such as social distancing and easing of commercial restrictions. Pro-Bolsonarism.	Science denialism.
4		Racial affirmation/black pride and fashionism.	Racial affirmation.

Continue...

Continuation

Post Number	Post in reduced size	Themes	Isotopies
5		Capitalism, sales through digital social networks, beauty.	Commercial.
9		Dishonesty and lack of journalistic impartiality. Pro-Bolsonarism.	Politics, science denialism.
10		Fall/impeachment, science denialism, political ineptitude, demonstrations in favor of the impeachment of Bolsonaro. Anti-Bolsonarism.	Politics.

Note. Prepared by the authors.

Posts 1, 3 and 9 share the fact that the isotopy of science denialism is deduced from them. In addition, posts 1 and 9 share, in addition, the political isotopy, while the isotopy of neoliberalism is deduced from post 3. Therefore, these three posts are semantically close. Post 2, in turn, figurativizes chloroquine in a crude way, so that the isotopy of deception is deduced. However, this deception, this scam, is about deceiving an entire population so they can profit from the ineffective treatment using chloroquine against COVID-19. Therefore, in addition to this humorous trait, the isotopy of science denialism is also observed, since this is a prerequisite for accepting the use of chloroquine to treat COVID-19. Thus, the isotopy of science denialism is traced as identity trait between posts 1, 2, 3, and 9.

The isotopy of health communication is also deduced from post 10, as well as from posts 1 and 9. However, post 10 is anti-Bolsonarism and criticizes Bolsonaro’s science denialism. Therefore, it is pro-science. This makes this post the post that comes closest semantically to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Post 4 – whose isotopy is of racial affirmation – is unrelated to the hashtag #questionacorona, but is mainly opposed to posts 1, 3, and 9, because they are

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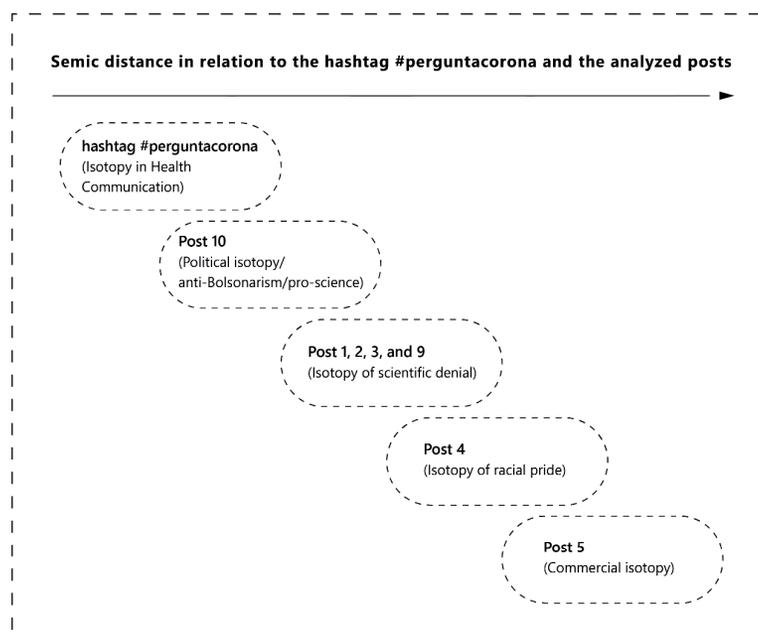
Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

pro-Bolsonarism and because, from an interdiscursive point of view, Bolsonaro is against affirmative action, considering that he appointed, as chairman of the Palmares Foundation, Sergio Camargo, who, in 2020, on Black Awareness Day, after the murder of a black man in a supermarket in Rio Grande do Sul, claimed that there is no structural racism in Brazil and that it is a left-wing discourse (“Presidente da Fundação Palmares”, 2020). Thus, due to the semic trait of racial affirmation, this post is related by contradiction with posts 1, 3, and 9.

Finally, post 5, from which is deduced the isotopy of product advertising, is related to post 3, based on the isotopic identity trait of neoliberalism. With this, it is possible to visually represent the semic distance between the hashtag #perguntacorona and the most shared posts, as shown below in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Semic distance in relation to the hashtag #perguntacorona and the analyzed posts



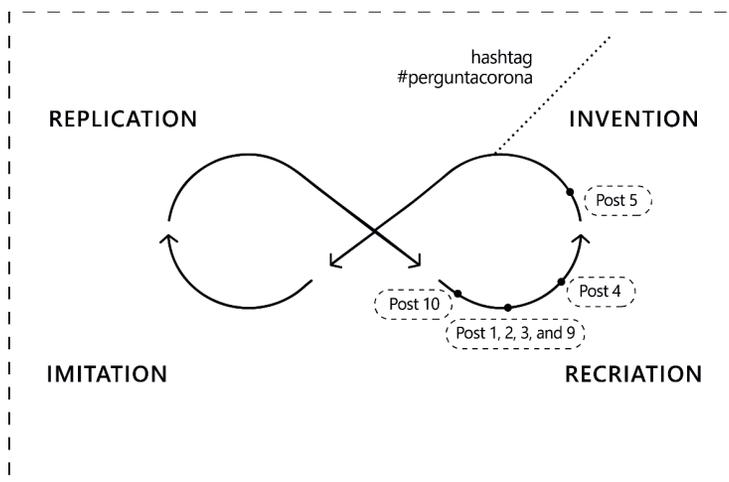
Note. Prepared by the authors.

Based on the model proposed by Fechine (2019), it is assumed that the hashtag #perguntacorona is the generating form in relation to which posts began to circulate that, through the aforementioned hashtag, promoted changes in the meaning proposed by the enunciator, Globo TV Network. Therefore, if the degree of semic change moves from replication to imitation and from

imitation to recreation, as described in the previous analysis section, it is possible to think, in tune with the relations of the elliptical square, a circuit that starts from a “ground zero,” that is, invention, passes through replication, imitation, recreation and closes the cycle in a new invention.

Thus, based on the analyses related to themes, figures and isotopies, we observed a semic distance between the isotopy underlying the hashtag #perguntacorona and the analyzed posts. First, it is worth saying that none of the posts imitates or replicates the generating form, that is, the hashtag #perguntacorona. Post 10 and group of posts 1, 2, 3, and 9 can be considered recreations based on the hashtag #perguntacorona. That is because, as Fecine (2019) shows, in the case of recreation, there is use of several allusions and knowledge shared between the one who produces the generating form, the one who recreates it, and the one who reads it as a recreation, through intertextual or interdiscursive relations. Thus, it is possible to think – based on the theoretical proposal of Fecine (2019) – how the analyzed posts can be arranged in the elliptical square composed of the terms replication, imitation, recreation and invention.

Figure 5
Analyzed posts and propagation regimes



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Accordingly, it is concluded that, in terms of propagation regimes, the analyzed posts tend toward recreation and, to a lesser extent, invention.

Considering, now, the most shared posts from the perspective of discursive interactions (Oliveira, 2013), based on the semic distance previously analyzed,

A

Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

only post 10 would fall under what the author calls discursive interaction regime entitled “meaning to meaning.” That is because the enunciatee, sensitized, produces (or circulates) a text that minimally conveys the pro-science isotopy. In all other posts, the enunciatee rejects the contract proposed by the enunciator, subverting the initial proposal. Thereby, the enunciatee begins to enunciate a dissonant meaning in relation to the enunciator’s proposal. They refuse the role of teleguided (related or programming regime) and of manipulated willingly or unwillingly (referring to the manipulation regime) and subverts the meaning of the first enunciation, starting to enunciate another meaning. Thus, analysis of the posts leads to a deduction of a subversive enunciatee, who shifts, transforms, “deforms” the meaning of the proposal set forth by the enunciator Rede Globo according to their own values and beliefs.

ANALYSIS OF THE MOST SHARED LINKS

Continuing, the analysis of 8 of the 10 most shared links is presented, as was done in relation to the posts. The following table shows the links, with their corresponding number of shares, in descending order.

Table 4

Links and corresponding number of shares

Link	Number of shares	Link transcript
1	66*	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWH47rQkgt4#bbb2o
2	55	http://glo.bo/3dc4VIR
3	43	http://youtu.be/pQB9nlm7wro
4	28*	https://twitter.com/shwpoethic/status/1252832743605415938/video/1
5	26	https://twitter.com/BrunoEnglerDM/status/1248611916630507520
6	20	https://www.tvgazeta.com.br/videos/relacao-entre-disturbios-endocrinos-e-a-covid-19-26-05-20/
7	20	https://twitter.com/em_com/status/1261287719591972864
8	20	https://dizupubli.digital/?indica=229801
9	18	https://youtu.be/awEch-Y6FpU
10	16	https://twitter.com/washingtonpost/status/1261045493171437569

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

*Links unavailable

Thus, considering the analyses of the links, based on the health communication isotopy, related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, we established the relations of identity and difference between the themes and isotopies of the hashtag #perguntacorona and each of the most shared links. To this end, we examined again the themes and isotopies of each link and then grouped them with similar ones so they could be considered in relation to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Table 5
Recurrences in the content of the most shared links

Post	Link Title	Themes	Isotopies
2	<i>Combate do Coronavírus</i> program, aired on 05/22/2020	Questions of viewers	Health communication.
3	Video on the channel #ShopCulturalShow – LobaDoSCSeQuiromante	Death, suicide, incompetence of the Bolsonaro administration to deal with COVID-19.	Of death, politics and health.
5	Tweet by @BrunoEnglerDM	Pro-Bolsonarism, dysphorization of the press and blaming of China as the creator of COVID-19.	Health and politics.
6	<i>Plantão da saúde coronavírus</i> program, aired on 05/26/2020	Relation between heart disease and COVID-19; relation between COVID-19 and endocrine disorders, among others.	Health and health communication.
7	Tweet by the newspaper <i>Estado de Minas</i> : “Estados Unidos alertam sobre doença vinculada à #COVID19 em crianças”	Relation between COVID-19 and disease that affects children.	Health and health communication.
8	Advertisement piece by the digital marketing company Dizu	Innovation, technology, financial gains, digital marketing.	Service advertising.
9	Video on the channel RENATOUSA, uploaded on 03/19/2020, “O OUTRO LADO DO CORONAVÍRUS. Vídeo da Ducati no final”	1st part: inevitability of death; neglect of the elderly; shortage of goods in supermarkets; selfishness; importance of the sense of collectivity; inevitability of contamination by the coronavirus.	Part 1: Society and health.
		Part 2: freedom, motorcycling, technology, speed.	Part 2: Motorcycling.
10	Tweet by the newspaper <i>The Washington Post</i> : “In Brazil, a desperate search for an open bed”	Despair/desperate search, indecision, imminent death (a dying man), lack of beds for treating COVID-19 in hospitals, precariousness of the Brazilian health care system.	Health and politics.

Note. Prepared by the authors.

The links 2 (*Combate do Coronavírus* program, aired on 05/22/2020), 6 (*Plantão da saúde coronavirus* program, aired on 05/26/2020) and 7 (Tweet by the newspaper *Estado de Minas*: “Estados Unidos alertam sobre doença vinculada à #COVID19 em crianças”) are the ones that come closest to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and to the hashtag #perguntacorona, in thematic terms and, more generally, because they convey the health and health communication isotopies. Then comes link 10 (Tweet by the newspaper *The Washington Post*: “In Brazil, a desperate search for an open bed”), which

A

Logicas of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

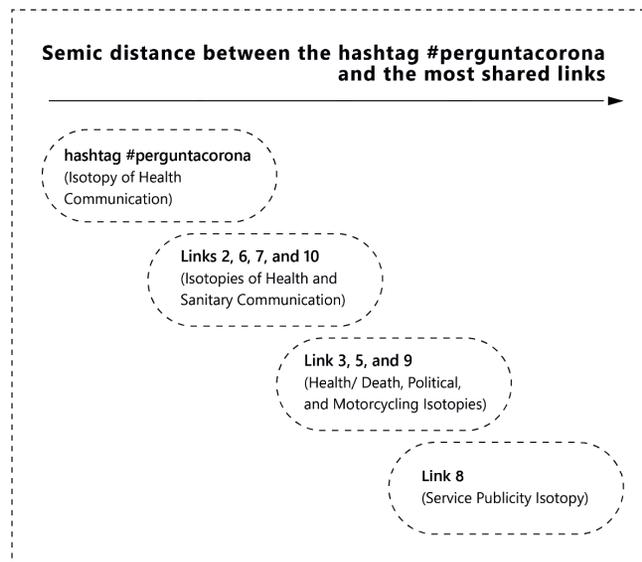
conveys the isotopies of health (addresses the theme of COVID-19) and politics (deals with the situation of calamity in northern Brazil).

In turn, links 3 (Video on the channel #ShopCulturalShow – LobaDoSCSeQuiromante), 5 (Tweet by @BrunoEnglerDM) and 9 (Video on the channel RENATOUSA, uploaded on 03/19/2020, “O OUTRO LADO DO CORONAVÍRUS. Video da Ducati no final”), despite the identity trait, health isotopy, begin to deviate from the enunciator’s proposal because they convey themes such as pro-Bolsonarism (link 5) and death/suicide (link 3). In the case of link 9, in the first part, from the point of view of the identity of meaning, there is the health isotopy. As for otherness, there is the social isotopy. In the second part, there is no apparent identity trait, only otherness, because the motorcycling isotopy is conveyed.

Finally, link 8 (Advertisement piece by the digital marketing company Dizu) conveys the service advertising isotopy and, therefore, is the one that most deviates from the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and from the hashtag #perguntacorona, because there is no semic identity trait related to such proposal. Figure 6 below represents the semic distance between #perguntacorona and the most shared links.

Figure 6

Semic distance between the hashtag #perguntacorona and the most shared links



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Thus, based on the model proposed by Fechine (2019), it is assumed that the hashtag # questioncorona is the generating form in relation to which there

was circulation of links that, through the aforementioned hashtag, promoted changes in the meaning proposed by the enunciator Rede Globo. Therefore, such hashtag falls under the invention regime.

In this case, the second most shared link, that is, “*Combate do Coronavírus* program, aired on 05/22/2020”, falls under the replication regime, since, according to Fechine (2019, p. 40, our translation), replication is the “primary mode of propagation.” Thus, the content of the link is directly related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, since such hashtag was launched in the *Combate do Coronavírus* TV show. Consequently, it can be said that the content of the *link* refers directly to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and to the #perguntacorona, constituting a phenomenon that we are calling enunciative recursivity, that is, the enunciator of the generating form – as if in a house of mirrors – refers to itself. As a result, the degree of transformation of meaning, in the case of the second most shared link, is minimal.

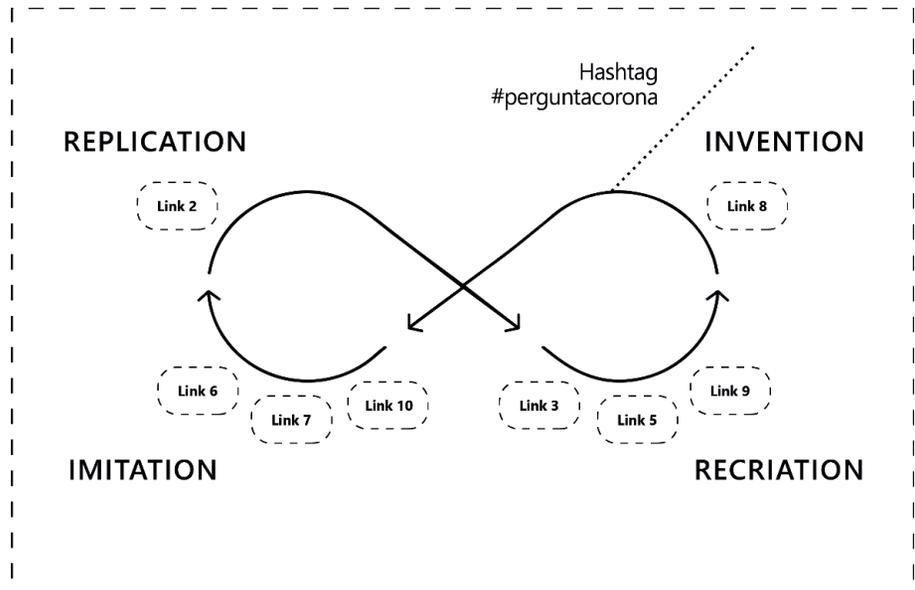
In turn, the imitation regime implies “modification of a pre-existing text to different extents” (Fechine, 2019, p. 41, our translation). In the case of imitation, there is a guided doing of a recipient, who accepted the contract proposed by a sender, which is why imitation is homologous to the replication regime. Thus, the sixth most shared link (*Plantão da saúde coronavirus* program, aired on 05/26/2020); the seventh most shared link (tweet by the newspaper *Estado de Minas*: “Estados Unidos alertam sobre doença vinculada à #COVID19 em crianças”), and the tenth most shared link (Tweet by the newspaper *The Washington Post*: “In Brazil, a desperate search for an open bed”) fall under this regime because they come close thematically and isotopically to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and to #questionacorona.

The recreation regime includes the third most shared link (Video on the channel #ShopCulturalShow – LobaDoSCSeQuiromante), the fifth most shared link (Tweet de @BrunoEnglerDM), and the ninth most shared link (Video on the channel RENATOUSA, uploaded on 05/22/2020, “O OUTRO LADO DO CORONAVÍRUS. Vídeo da Ducati no final”), which means there is “a thematic or figurative change of the second degree” (Fechine, 2019, p. 49, our translation). In other words, despite a semic identity trait, that is, the health isotopy, the contents of these links begin to deviate from the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and from #perguntacorona because they convey, respectively, themes such as pro-Bolsonarism, death/suicide, and motorcycling.

Finally, the eighth most shared link (Advertisement piece by the digital marketing company Dizu) conveys the isotopy of service advertising, which does not present any semic identity trait related to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and the #perguntacorona and, therefore, falls under the invention regime,

so as to establish another propagation chain. Figure 7 below illustrates the distribution of the links according to the propagation regimes under which they fall.

Figure 7
Analyzed links and propagation regimes



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Now we move on to the analysis of the relation between enunciator and enunciatee, based on the model of Oliveira (2013). The analysis of the most shared links found – unlike the analysis of the posts – links that fit all propagation regimes, namely: replication, imitation, recreation and invention. In the case of replication, there was one occurrence; in the case of imitation, three occurrences; in the case of recreation, three occurrences; and, in the case of invention, one occurrence.

Thus, we observed different discursive interactions, both those with lower transitivity and closed emergence of meaning and interaction (second, sixth, seventh and tenth most shared links) and those with higher transitivity and open emergence of meaning and interaction. This means that, according to the analysis of the most shared links, there is a plurality of discursive interactions, including those in which the enunciatee simply reoperates the meaning (second most shared link), those in which the enunciatee is convinced (sixth, seventh and tenth most shared links), and those in which the enunciatee partially rejects the contract (third, fifth and ninth most shared links), and, finally, that in which

the enunciatee rejects the contract and coenunciates another meaning that is completely different from the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and from the #questionacorona (eighth most shared link).

ANALYSIS OF THE HASHTAGS

We now move on to the analytical section about the ten hashtags that most related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, which had 13,547 mentions during the collection period. Table 6 below shows the aforementioned hashtags, in descending order of mentions, with the number of times they were cited.

Table 6

Ten hashtags most related to #perguntacorona

Descending order of mentions	Hashtag	Mentions
1st	#PerguntaCorona	327
2nd	#perguntacoronavirus	283
3rd	#coronavirus	237
4th	#G1	184
5th	#COVID19	181
6th	#combateoCoronavírus	139
7th	#coronavirusbrasil	95
8th	#covid	89
9th	#bbb20	77
10th	#redebbb	75

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

Thus, the hashtags # PerguntaCorona, #perguntacoronavirus, #coronavirus, #COVID19, #combateoCoronavírus, #coronavirusbrasil and #covid, respectively the first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth in descending order of shares, present very similar themes. #PerguntaCorona, written with uppercase initial letter, #perguntacoronavirus and #combateoCoronavírus are variations, either of the writing of the generating form #perguntacorona, or of the TV show that created this hashtag. While #coronavirus, #COVID19, #coronavirusbrasil and #covid are hashtags that thematize the disease and the pandemic. Therefore, seven of the ten hashtags analyzed relate directly to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo / #perguntacorona (1st, 2nd and 6th) or relate to the name of the disease (third, fifth, seventh and eighth). Hence, from the seven hashtags referred to here, the health communication isotopy (as in the case of the TV show that created the generating form #perguntacorona) or the health isotopy can be deduced. The fourth hashtag with more mentions, #G1, refers to the news website *G1*⁸, which, like the *Combat against Coronavirus* TV show, also belongs

⁸<https://g1.globo.com>



⁹<https://g1.globo.com/saude/coronavirus/>

to the Globo TV network and carried out intense coverage of COVID-19 during the pandemic, considering the news items on COVID-19 of this news website⁹. Therefore, the health communication isotopy can also be deduced from the hashtag #G1.

The only hashtags that do not relate directly to the generating form #perguntacorona are the ninth and tenth, namely #bbb20 and #redebbb, which thematize the Globo reality show *Big Brother Brasil*. The entertainment isotopy can be deduced from the two hashtags. A possible reason for the relation between the hashtags #bbb20 and #redebbb and the hashtag #perguntacorona was the period in which the data were collected, which coincides with the airing of the Globo reality show¹⁰.

¹⁰The *Big Brother Brasil* 20 TV show started to be aired around the time the pandemic began and achieved record-breaking ratings and sponsorship. Available at: <https://propmark.com.br/bbb20-tem-edicao-historica-com-recordes-de-audiencia-e-patrocios/>. Accessed: Jan 19, 2021.

Thus, from the perspective of propagation regimes, #PerguntaCorona, #perguntacoronavirus and #combateoCoronavírus fall under the replication regime, since they are minimal variations, whether in spelling or relative to the name of the TV show that created the hashtag. In turn, #coronavirus, #COVID19, #coronavirusbrasil, #covid and #G1 would be categorized into the imitation regime, that is, conceived as no difference. Regarding the ten most analyzed hashtags, we observed none that fit the recreation regime. Finally, the hashtags #bbb20 and #redebbb – as they lack a semic identity with the proposal of #perguntacorona – fall under the invention regime, coming to constitute another propagation chain.

From the point of view of discursive interactions, seven of the ten analyzed hashtags are characterized by lower transitivity and closed emergence of meaning and interaction, and, in #PerguntaCorona, #perguntacoronavirus and #combateoCoronavírus, the enunciatee reoperates the meaning. As for #coronavirus, #COVID19, #coronavirusbrasil, #covid and #G1, the enunciatee is convinced, that is, there is a transitivity of the positions governed by the enunciator of #perguntacorona. Only in the case of the hashtags #bbb20 and #redebbb, the enunciatee rejects the contract of the enunciator and begins to enunciate a meaning that is different from that proposed by the enunciator. Only in this case, there is greater transitivity and open emergence of meaning and interaction.

ANALYSIS OF USERS

In this last analytical section, we examine the ten Twitter profiles that most related to the *hashtag* #perguntacorona. The following table presents the users referred to, in descending order of mentions, and the number of times they were cited.

Table 7

Ten users most related to #perguntacorona

Descending order of mentions	User	Mentions
1st	@RedeGlobo	248
2nd	@perguntacorona	87
3rd	@MarcioGreporter	65
4th	@g1	42
5th	@alcione	32
6th	@jairbolsonaro	22
7th	@MarcioGreporter.	21
8th	@RedeGlobo.	14
9th	@GloboNews	11
10th	@flamengo	10

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

It is observed that the users @RedeGlobo, @perguntacorona, @MarcioGreporter, @g1, @MarcioGreporter., @RedeGlobo., and @GloboNews – respectively the first, second, third, fourth, seventh, eighth and ninth users in descending order of mentions – make direct or indirect reference to the hashtag #perguntacorona, launched in the *Combat Against Coronavirus* TV show, aired by Rede Globo and hosted by journalist Marcio Gomes. Of these users, @perguntacorona does not exist and @MarcioGreporter. and @RedeGlobo. are spelled with a dot (.) at the end, being, therefore, variations of @MarcioGreporter and @RedeGlobo. With the exception of @perguntacorona, which is a variation of #perguntacorona, the others refer either to the journalist who hosted the TV show responsible for the hashtag in question, or to one of the brands of the Globo TV network: Rede Globo, G1 and GloboNews. Therefore, all of them, in some way, thematize the COVID-19 pandemic, thus conveying an isotopy of health communication.

The user @jairbolsonaro, sixth in descending order of mentions, refers to the then president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, a political actor linked to the theme of science denialism.

In turn, the user @alcione, fifth in descending order of mentions, refers to the Brazilian female singer Alcione. In a cross search on Google with @alcione and #perguntacorona, it was observed the announcement of the singer's first solidarity live stream¹¹ on April 20, 2020, which refers to the health and entertainment/culture isotopies. The user @flamengo refers to the Rio de Janeiro soccer team Flamengo. Apparently, @flamengo was a trending topic on Twitter that, for some reason, started to relate to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Thus, considering the propagation regimes, the user @perguntacorona, because of a minimal agency on the meaning, fits into the replication regime. While users @@MarcioGreporter, @MarcioGreporter., @RedeGlobo, @g1,

¹¹ Alcione Marrom (April 16, 2020). *Alcione apresenta: Live Solidária!* Facebook. <https://bit.ly/3Ur0HDj>



@RedeGlobo. and @GloboNews imply a small semic deviation from the proposal of the enunciator #perguntacorona, falling under the imitation regime. In turn, @bolsonaro and @alcione relate to the recreation regime, considering a change of second degree. Finally, the user @flamengo, for lacking, *a priori*, any semantic link with #perguntacorona, fits the invention regime, coming to constitute another propagation chain.

Taking into consideration now the model of discursive interactions, it is understood that the user @perguntacorona reoperates the meaning, such that it constitutes an intransitive interaction, while users @MarcioGreporter, @MarcioGreporter., @RedeGlobo, @g1, @RedeGlobo. and @GloboNews are convinced by the enunciator #perguntacorona, such that they constitute an interaction with low transitivity. In such cases, the emergence of meaning and interaction is closed. While as to users @bolsonaro, @alcione and @flamengo, the emergence of meaning and interaction is open, and there is, therefore, more transitivity between enunciator and enunciatee.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

As previously presented, this research is built around the following question: how are the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts related to the hashtag #perguntacorona effected and, more generally, how is the propagation of disinformation constituted? Ultimately, the following question arises: how to think semiotically about the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its opposite term, information?

The analytical path considered a corpus that comprised the ten most shared posts, the ten most shared links¹², the ten most related hashtags and the ten most related users related to the hashtag #perguntacorona. This hashtag, as said, was launched by the *Combat Against Coronavirus* TV show, broadcast by Rede Globo TV network, soon after the pandemic arrived in Brazil. The methodological path considered four major conceptual blocks that covered: (1) analysis of themes, figures and isotopies; (2) recurrence in the content; (3) interaction and meaning regimes and propagation regimes; (4) relations between enunciator and enunciatee and discursive interactions.

The analysis of a broad *corpus*, composed of texts of different natures – posts, link contents, other hashtags and users – was essential to represent this complex transmedia ecosystem that arose around the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Regarding the most shared posts, there was a greater semic deviation from the proposal of the enunciator of the hashtag #perguntacorona. This can be proven, for example, by four posts with denialist content. The greater the semic deviation

¹²In the case of posts and links, not all were available or opened, as explained in the corresponding sections.

or change in meaning, the closer to the recreation and invention regimes. With regard to the discursive interactions, the enunciatee, in most cases, rejects the contract proposed by the enunciator, that is, it conveys texts from which it is possible to deduce the isotopy of health communication, and starts to coenunciate the meaning, addressing themes such as science denialism, racial affirmation, or commercial advertising. As for the analysis of the posts, the emergence of meaning and interaction was open.

As for the analysis of the most shared links, the results indicate a lower degree of transformation of meaning or semic deviation from the proposal of the enunciator #perguntacorona. Only two of the analyzed links partially rejected the enunciator's proposal and one did so completely. Taking into consideration the propagation regimes, most fall under the imitation regime, which means a closed emergence of meaning and interaction.

As for the analysis of other hashtags and Twitter users most related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, we observed a result very similar to that of the analysis of the most shared links. Based on the analysis of themes, figures and isotopies, most fall under the imitation regime, which means a closed emergence of meaning and interaction.

The plurality of results – which indicates different degrees of transformation of meaning, different propagation regimes that characterize the *corpus*, as well as discursive interactions, ranging from intransitivity to maximal transitivity – points to a type of transmedia ecosystem marked by multiple and multifaceted communicational flows. Therefore, answering the question that guided this study, the dynamics of propagation and construction of meaning of texts (posts, links, other hashtags and users) related to the hashtag #perguntacorona occurred in different ways, thus there was not a singular dynamics, but a plurality of dynamics of meaning: that is, from a lower degree of transformation of meaning in relation to the proposal of the enunciator of the hashtag #perguntacorona, which implies the propagation regimes of replication and imitation and closed emergence of meaning and interaction, to a greater degree of transformation of meaning in relation to the proposal of the enunciator of the hashtag #perguntacorona, which implies the propagation regimes of recreation and invention and open emergence of meaning and interaction. Góis and Alzamora, about the *corpus* of the research that was also the object of analysis of this investigation, state:

[...] the results seem sufficient to support the conclusion that the transmedia dynamics of a hashtag with informational purpose acquires disparate aspects in contexts of social appropriation typical of online social network platforms.



This process, as varied as it is unpredictable, we called the ecosystem of disinformation in transmedia dynamics (Góis & Alzamora, 2021, p. 36).

Therefore, the approach to the *corpus* through discursive semiotics and sociosemiotics corroborates this ecosystem of disinformation in transmedia dynamics. The next item of this article, based on the analyses, proposes a conceptual discussion about the propagation of disinformation to answer the second part of the research problem, that is: how to think semiotically about the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its contrary term, information?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: LOGICS OF THE PROPAGATION OF INFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

For the proposition of the model of propagation of information and disinformation, it is necessary to revisit the concepts of veridiction and veridiction contract. It should be noted that Greimas' semiotics does not deal with ontological truth, but with veridiction, that is, with a truth-saying, which seems true, disconnected from the external referent:

By postulating autonomy, the immanent character of any language and, for the same reason, the impossibility of resorting to an external referent, Saussurian theory forced semiotics to include among its concerns not the problem of truth, but that of truth-saying, of veridiction (Greimas & Courtés, 2008, p. 530).

Thus, a discourse is read as true when a truth-believing is installed between enunciator and enunciatee, that is, in the intersubjective relation based on the belief between both. Thus, truth, falsehood, lie and secrecy "Are only established in the form of a more or less stable balance arising from an implicit agreement between the two actors in the structure of communication. It is this tacit agreement that we choose to designate with the term *veridiction contract*" (Greimas, 2014, p. 117). Therefore, the veridiction contract implies, on one side, a persuasive doing on the part of the sender and, on the other side, an interpretative doing on the part of the recipient. Thus, the sender proposes a contract to the recipient of the communication, and the latter, based on their values, beliefs, knowledge and passions, accepts it or not. In this context, there is the epistemic act that refers to the transformation of one state of belief into another. Such operation occurs through the verification of what is new and unknown in relation to what is old and known:

[The] epistemic act [...], which serves as a prelude to communication, is not a simple affirmation of itself, but a step that is taken, a request for consensus, a proposal for a contract, which the enunciatee will continue with an acceptance or a rejection (Greimas, 2014, p. 135, our translation)

Thus, in order for the enunciatee to believe in the “truth” of the enunciator, it is necessary that they resort to their cognitive universe within which are found the fiduciary variant, linked to *believing*, and the logical variant, linked to *knowing*. Such cognitive universe “is not a simple encyclopedia full of images of the world, but a network of formal semiotic relations among which the epistemic subject selects the equivalences they need to receive the veridictory discourse” (Greimas, 2014, p. 145). Thus, the subject’s cognitive universe is constituted by the modalities *knowing* and *believing*.

Hence, based on the analyses, it is possible to say that the enunciatee rejected, but also accepted the enunciator’s contract based on their cognitive universe. In this case, although the modalities *knowing* and *believing* belong to the same cognitive universe, there is a “stretch,” a polarization, between these modes, so that the enunciatee sometimes choose the fiduciary variant, linked to *believing*, and sometimes choose the logical variant, linked to *knowing*. Therefore, there were cases in which the enunciatee rejected the enunciator’s contract and began to enunciate their own discursive “truth,” based mainly on *believing*, and there were cases in which the enunciatee accepted the contract proposed by the enunciator of #perguntacorona. In this case, especially according to the analysis of the posts, there was a non-acceptance on the part of the enunciatee, who proved inflamed, sensitive, driven by passions, considering the posts related to the themes of denialism and pro-Bolsonarism, themes that allow to recover a pathemized enunciatee. In this sense, according to Barros (2020, p. 28):

When the interpretation is based mainly or only on the beliefs and emotions of the interpreting recipient, lying discourses are understood to be true. In other words, as absurd as they may seem, discourses whose values are in accordance with the beliefs and feelings of the recipient are considered by them to be true. This is the so-called confirmation bias, a tendency of people to believe in information that supports their views and values, and disregard information that says otherwise.

Based on the elements addressed thus far, we can think of a semiotic model for the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its opposite term, that is, information. Such model is aimed at thinking semiotically about the propagation of information and disinformation.

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Logics of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

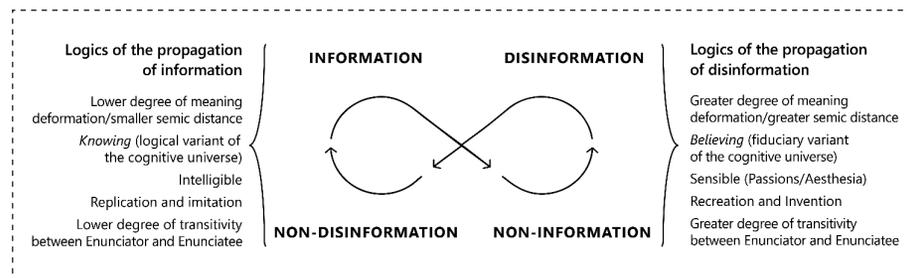
Therefore, it is possible to affirm the following: the propagation of disinformation is related to a semic shift, or to a “deformation” of meaning, carried out by the enunciatee, considering the enunciator’s proposal; the propagation of disinformation is related to the propagation regimes of recreation and invention; the propagation of disinformation implies a greater degree of transitivity between enunciator and enunciatee, in which the enunciatee often rejects the enunciator’s proposal, becoming another enunciator; the enunciatee’s adherence to the discourse of disinformation is supported by the fiduciary variant of the cognitive universe, that is, by *believing* modality; such adherence is supported, according to Barros (2020), by passions, generally malevolent and related to intolerance (hate discourse), or, according to Landowski (2014), it has an aesthetic basis, that is, linked to feeling.

In contrast, the propagation of information is related to a lower degree of semic shift performed by the enunciatee, considering the enunciator’s proposal; the propagation of information is related to the propagation regimes of replication and imitation; the propagation of information implies a lower degree of transitivity between enunciator and enunciatee, in which the enunciatee accepts the enunciator’s proposal; the enunciatee’s adherence to the information discourse is supported by the logical variant of the cognitive universe, that is, *knowing* modality; such adherence is also based on more intelligible than sensitive aspects of the production of meaning.

Thus, founded on the elements addressed thus far, it is possible to propose a model that considers the propagation of both information and disinformation. Arranged in the semiotic square, information and disinformation unfold in the sub-opposite terms no information and no disinformation. The complementary terms form regions that we call, respectively, logics of information and logics of disinformation (Figure 8):

Figure 8

Logics of the propagation of information and disinformation



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Finally, the dialogue carried out here between discursive semiotics and sociosemiotics to analyze the empirical evidence under investigation enabled the recognition of two articulated logics, the logics of information and the logics of disinformation, which have distinct characteristics, although they are prone to mutual feedback, according to the flows of the ellipse (Figure 8). We believe that the study described here can serve as a theoretical-methodological inspiration for other studies interested in the propagation of disinformation. It should be noted that this model considers disinformation and information always *in relation to* an utterance, that is, they are responsive utterances that arise from a generating form, which, in this case, was the hashtag #perguntacorona. Thus, notions of logics of information and disinformation, each with its specificities, seem relevant to understand the propagation of disinformation, which, from a communicational point of view, defines the disinformation society (Alzamora et al., 2021), marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the infodemic. ■

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Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

Disputas e impasses nas representações midiáticas da skatista Rayssa Leal

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to discuss the disputes and impasses imposed on forms of communication that contribute to the consolidation of young people as social actors, in all their complexity, in the media representations of the notion of “youth.” The Interpretive Content Analysis method was applied in journalistic articles about skateboarder Rayssa Leal before, during, and after the Olympics. Serge Moscovici, Rossana Reguillo Cruz, and José Machado Pais, among others, collaborate for theoretical reflection. Comparing articles published in the newspaper *O Globo* and other periodicals, it is concluded that the representations analyzed undergo a process of subjectivation, but aspects that reinforce the idea of youth as a homogenizing concept remain.

Keywords: Youth, media representations, youth cultures, Rayssa Leal, skateboarding

RESUMO

O objetivo é discutir disputas e impasses que se impõem sobre formas comunicacionais que favoreçam a consolidação dos jovens como atores sociais, em toda a sua complexidade, nas representações midiáticas da noção de “juventude”. Aplica-se o método da Análise Interpretativa de Conteúdo em matérias jornalísticas sobre a skatista Rayssa Leal antes, durante e depois das Olimpíadas. Serge Moscovici, Rossana Reguillo Cruz e José Machado Pais, entre outros, colaboram para a reflexão teórica. Comparando-se matérias publicadas no jornal *O Globo* e outros veículos, conclui-se que as representações analisadas passam por um processo de subjetivação, porém permanecem aspectos que reforçam a ideia de juventude como conceito homogeneizante.

Palavras-chave: Juventude, representações midiáticas, culturas juvenis, Rayssa Leal, *skateboarding*

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A

Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

OLLIE, FLIP, POP shove-it, kickflip, boardslide, tailslide, flip backside indy air. These linguistic maneuvers, which invaded the early family mornings during the 2020 Olympics, held in July 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are some of the countless terms that circulate naturally within the skateboarding culture but which proved to be quite challenging for those who just wanted to cheer for Brazil. The specialized sports media made a great effort to bring the lay audience closer to the skateboarders, including didactic resources that showed the urgency of making familiar social representations (Moscovici, 2011) that only circulated in skateparks, bowls, tracks, and magazines. Despite the near impossibility of incorporating the slang and denominations that populate the universe of this sport debuting at the Olympic Games in such a short space of time, Brazilian crowds have embraced skateboarding and do not seem to want to let go, thanks to the athletes who brought “home” three silver medals: Kelvin Hoefler and Rayssa Leal in the “street” category and Pedro Barros in the “park” category. But it was Rayssa, the 13-year-old “fairy,” who captured everyone’s heart and attention, and this article focuses on this relationship built between the skateboarder, Brazilian society, and the media.

This study aims to discuss the relationship between contemporary Brazilian society and youth cultures from the media representations of the skateboarder Rayssa Leal that circulated before, during, and after the 2020 Olympics in journalistic reports. This article especially observes how such representations reiterate the homogenizing notion of “youth,” becoming impasses imposed on communicational forms that would favor the consolidation of young people in all their complexity as social actors. In Rayssa’s case, her media visibility and the subjectivity built from the Olympic experience shed light on some communication issues addressed by this article. The method applied is Interpretive Content Analysis. The corpus includes six journalistic articles published between 2019 and 2021 in the *O Globo* newspaper and other periodicals – *Diário do Nordeste*, *Estado de Minas*, and *Exame*.

On July 26, 2021, the day Rayssa Leal won the silver medal in the Olympic Games, *Claudia* magazine reported on her trajectory in one of the dozens of articles observed in the first phase of the research. Instead of rewriting her journey and already considering the media representations that consecrate the skateboarder as a public figure, I decided to reproduce an excerpt from the magazine, which reveals some of the aspects analyzed throughout this study.

Also known as “*Fadinha*” [“Little Fairy”], Jhulia Rayssa Mendes Leal was born in 2008 in the city of Imperatriz, Maranhão. Her first contact with the sport was at the age of 6, when, influenced by a friend of her father, she started skateboarding. At the age of 7, Rayssa won over Brazil and the world when a video of herself went viral on the Internet. In it, the girl dressed as Tinker Bell, the fairy from the film *Peter Pan*, performed a skateboard maneuver known as heelflip. That was when she got her nickname and gave Brazilians hope that a big sporting name was on the way.

The following years only confirmed what was already known: the girl from Maranhão, who until then had only practiced the sport for fun, had a great chance of becoming an Olympic athlete.

At age 11, already dedicated to major competitions in the sport, Rayssa won a Street League Skateboarding (SLS) tournament and made history by becoming the youngest skateboarder to accomplish the feat. At the competition in Los Angeles, the “little fairy” even topped another great name in Brazilian skateboarding, Pamela Rosa. (Paixão, 2021)

The *Exame* magazine adds:

But, besides going viral in Brazil, the video of Rayssa, the new “little fairy,” was shared by none other than Tony Hawk, one of the greatest legends in the history of skateboarding. At the time, still unknown, Rayssa caught the attention of the veteran, who wrote only, “I don’t know anything about this, but it’s awesome”. (Gavioli, 2021)

INTERPRETIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS: RAYSSA LEAL IN JOURNALISM

Many journalistic articles were published about Rayssa Leal before, during, and after the Olympics. This study draws questions from the observation of part of that content available on the Internet.

Interpretive Content Analysis proposes a methodological path that begins with the construction of the research object, a step that corresponds to the first contact with the set of collected materials, followed by five other steps:

Interpretive Content Analysis (ICA) aims to select, classify, and typify media content, whether advertising, journalistic, or digital (online social media) content, by the following steps [...], which may coincide with each other, that is, overlap, going back and forth implementing actions:



1. Construction of the research object: identification of words, expressions, or images, explicit or not (hence the “interpretive” character of the method) that share the same semantic link.
2. Understanding the context: elaboration of a historical, cultural, and social perspective that comprises the content identified as the research object.
3. Focus within the research object: definition of the corpus under analysis.
4. Identification of expressive elements: search for terms and references that are recurrent and non-recurrent in the whole and grouped parts of the material.
5. Categorization: classification and typification of expressive elements in interpretive analysis categories.
6. Theorization: construction of ideas from the theoretical-conceptual perspective adopted.

Construction of the research object

The search for journalistic articles for this research occurred from February 20 to 22, 2020, in the *O Globo* Digital Archive website and using the Google search tool. The first platform was a facilitator for the research, thanks to remote access and the availability of all editions of the newspaper in an accurate and fast way. Google allowed the analysis by a comparative perspective, including a diversity of other journalistic periodicals, preventing any bias from affecting the results, which could have become conditioned to an editorial line exclusive to *O Globo*.

The filters applied on both search platforms were “Rayssa Leal” and “*fadinha do skate*” [“skate fairy”].¹ From the results obtained, the selection contemplated only articles published in the digital medium in journalistic periodicals that have or had had in the past printed correlates, excluding blog posts and other web pages not linked to the journalistic segment *a priori*. Moreover, the selection disregarded texts that only mentioned the skateboarder without developing any ideas about her (such as rankings, for example, or publicizing her participation in cultural and sports programming). Based on the criteria, the selected set totaled 82 journalistic reports published between March 18, 2018, and February 14, 2022, 64 from the newspaper *O Globo* and 18 from other periodicals. Still, for comparison purposes, the material was classified into three moments, as previously mentioned: before the Olympics, during the Olympics, and after the Olympics. For now,

¹“*Fadinha*” is a diminutive form of *fada* (fairy) and literally translates as “little fairy.”

the first stage of construction of the research object does not consider that classification. When applying the method, the researcher’s interpretation and entire cultural background come into play. It is when the pre-constructed object is deconstructed to become a constructed object (BOURDIEU, 2007). It is the moment of discovery and “falling in love” with the object of research, when all body senses seem focused on hunting and collecting materials that may later become the corpus of analysis.

In practice, the method involves searching for words, expressions, and images articulated by a semantic nexus that results from the interpretation of those observing.

Starting with the newspaper *O Globo*, Rayssa Leal appears associated with notions of “childhood,” “adolescence,” “growth,” “development,” “joy,” “fun,” “relaxation,” “play,” “charisma,” “innocence,” “phenomenon,” “responsibility,” “lightness,” “talent,” “promise,” “prodigy,” “inspiration,” “enchantment,” “heroism,” “overcoming,” “dream,” “fairy tale,” “humor,” “family,” “school,” “celebrity,” “change of life,” among others.

To organize these elements, these words and expressions will be approximated and separated by a given semantic link (Table 1), resulting from the interpretation:

Table 1
Words and expressions arranged according to their semantic nexus – O Globo

Life stage	Attributes	Everyday life	Gifts	Feats
childhood	joy	family	promise	change of life
adolescence	fun	school	inspiration	overcoming
growth	relaxation	change of life	enchantment	dream
development	play	responsibility	phenomenon	fairy tale
prodigy	charisma		heroism	celebrity
	humor		fairy	
	talent			
	innocence			

Note. Elaborated by the author

A

Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

Based on this arrangement, the images of the articles published in *O Globo* reinforce and complement some of these sets of words and expressions (Figure 1).

The photographs that illustrate the newspaper articles show a thin, small body, so childlike that her skateboarder friends can easily carry her. The image of the “fairy” appeared only once although the written texts repeatedly refer to the nickname: the persistence of this figure, the 7-year-old “fairy,” underlines the childhood still present in Rayssa, despite her rejection of it. An element that never goes unnoticed in the frames made by the photographers is the braces on the skateboarder’s teeth, denoting that she is still growing up, which, by contrast, reinforces her potential as an athlete “who looks like an adult.” The last image in the sequence of Figure 1 appears in an article in which Rayssa states, “I’ve grown up, you can call me Rayssa Leal” (*Eu cresci*, 2021), marking the transition from her childhood to adolescence, to distance herself from “fairy,” the nickname that made her famous.

Figure 1

Life stages: childhood, adolescence, prodigy



Note. O Globo Digital Archive

Rayssa’s personality, recognized as cheerful, fun, and relaxed, always enthusiastic with the public, the cameras, and her opponents in tournaments, emerges in the smiling braces in her mouth and her charismatic gestures. The classic photographs of maneuvers that are part of the skateboarding culture, now spread by non-specialized periodicals, such as *O Globo*, combined with other images of the skateboarder, highlight the talent of her still growing body (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Attributes: joy, fun, relaxation, charisma, talent, humor, innocence



Note. O Globo Digital Archive

The achievements, of course, also color the reports that record the championships in which Rayssa participates. In Figure 3, the first photograph stands out, occupying almost a third of a page in *O Globo*, as if trying to demonstrate the gigantic size that the little skateboarder came to occupy in the minds of Brazilians, just like an inspiring and charming heroine.

Figure 3

Gifts: heroism, phenomenon, promise, inspiration



Note. O Globo Digital Archive

A

Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

O Globo mentioned several times the skateboarder’s expectations regarding the changes that would start to happen in her life after she won the silver medal in the Olympics. One of these transformations results in contracts with major brands, inside and outside the sports market, affirming Rayssa’s place as a sought-after celebrity. Of all the articles observed, only one had an image of her in her new “poster girl” role (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Feats: change of life, celebrity – Rayssa Leal in Nike’s advertising campaign



Note. O Globo Digital Archive

By way of comparison, there are other words, expressions, and images that join those presented by *O Globo* so far (Tabela 2).

Table 2

Words and expressions arranged according to their semantic nexus – Other periodicals

Attributes	Potential	Visibility	Vulnerability
assurance	Strength of Northeastern Brazil	digital engagement	protection

Continua...

Continuação

Attributes	Potential	Visibility	Vulnerability
relaxation	made history	social media success	mental health
maturity		visibility	too young
childlike shyness		big audience	
fairy			
vibes			
lightness			
joy			

Note. Elaborated by the author.

The periodicals *Quem, Veja, Exame, Istoé, Vogue, Claudia, Marie Claire, Forum, Lance, Diário do Nordeste, Correio (Bahia), Folha de São Paulo, and Estado de Minas* were selected. A recurrence of words, expressions, and images identified in *O Globo* is noticeable, but other representations appear here.

In contrast to the lightness, joy, and relaxation of the skateboarder, her “assurance and maturity” stand out, despite her “childlike shyness.” The figure of the “fairy” appears much more than in the newspaper *O Globo* and the video that gave rise to the nickname is also frequently shown. Rayssa’s potential as a strength of Northeastern Brazil and someone who is making history enhances these personal attributes, despite her young age. Another aspect that stands out is the media visibility obtained by the athlete. In this context, the number of followers on social media recognizes her enormous digital engagement. At the same time, 13-year-old Rayssa is seen as someone who needs (emotional and legal) “protection” and care for her mental health, since she is exposed to a “large audience.”

The images accompany the meanings identified, which are articulated with the representations of the skateboarder, highlighting other relevant issues.

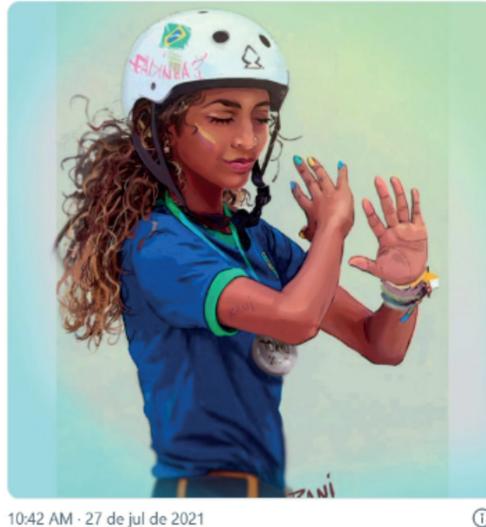
With fair recurrence, articles highlight Rayssa’s identity as a Brazilian from Maranhão. An article in *Estado de Minas* (Rodrigues, 2021) reports the reaction of Twitter followers to a representation of the skateboarder that they considered too whitened, which would have led to illustrations that brought phenotypic traits closer to her skin color and hair texture (Figure 5).

A

Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

Figure 5

Rayssa's Black representativeness becomes controversial and encourages other artistic representations



Note. *Estado de Minas* (Rodrigues, 2021)

Almost all the articles analyzed in this set of periodicals emphasize Rayssa's attributes corresponding to adolescence, configuring, as in *O Globo*, a recurring representation (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Persistent attributes relate Rayssa Leal to the "fairy" image to her "lightness", "relaxation", and "joy".



Note. "Brasileiras para ficar de olho" (2021) / "Rayssa Leal celebra" (2021) / "Rayssa Leal entra para livro dos recordes" (2021)

The *Vogue* magazine, in turn, portrays a young but more mature Rayssa Leal (Figure 7), which can be interpreted by the absence of the skateboarder's trademark in the media: her smile. In a sober pose for a fashion editorial, we can assume that the intention was to hide her braces because, on that occasion, it was not so interesting to show her more childlike side.

Figure 7

In a fashion editorial, Rayssa Leal appears more “mature” and her smile with braces disappears



Note. *Vogue* (Sordi, 2021)

Understanding the context

In this stage of Interpretive Content Analysis, we must consider the historicity of the social representations present in the material collected in the previous step. We will not always work with media content that is current, contemporary, or part of our culture. In these cases, in particular, it is necessary to study the context of the collected texts, images, records [...]. (Author, submitted for publication)

To contextualize the analysis, it is worth starting with a brief historical perspective of skateboarding. Its origin is attributed to Californian surfers in the 1950s, who, finding no waves at sea, adapted a wooden board to wheels with axles and thus began to descend the famous slopes of San Francisco. Leonardo Brandão (2014) states that surfing influenced the composition of the board, the body movements, and the culture of the practitioners. In 1960, the number of skateboarders around the world increased significantly, and there were many of them in Brazil already in the 1970s. Skateboarding established itself as a sport and cities created new spaces for it, such as skate-parks, bowls, and tracks, and modalities expanded. Besides the sporting character, which suffered a severe crisis in the early 1980s, punk and other youth

Estimates indicate that 8.5 million people practice skateboarding in Brazil today.² The world market is worth around US\$ 3 billion, with US\$ 300 million in Brazil. Sports-related companies treat the modality as the second most practiced by men in the country, behind only soccer.³ However, women have entered the world of skateboarding in recent decades, resulting in Rayssa Leal, who had Leticia Bufoni, Pamela Rosa, and, before them, Karen Jonz as examples, among many others.

The articles collected for this research between 2018 and 2022, before, during, and after the 2020 Olympics, held in 2021. That was the debut of skateboarding in the Olympic Games, with three silver medals for Brazilian athletes.

On January 1st, 2019, Jair Messias Bolsonaro assumed the presidency of Brazil, acting, as of the time of the writing of this article, as a right-wing conservative, causing numerous controversies and becoming involved in polemic episodes, creating a political polarization that the country had not seen for decades, since the 1964 coup.

On March 16, 2020, Brazilians went into social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a situation that lasted for two years with ups and downs. Even though vaccines arrived in 2021, controlling the expansion of the disease's lethality, the Olympics took place in Japan a year later than scheduled, steeped in health protocols.

Along with other athletes like Rebeca Andrade, who won a gold medal in Artistic Gymnastics, and the other athletes who brought 19 more, totaling 21 medals for Brazil, it is important to emphasize that Rayssa Leal emerges amidst this context of profound political dissatisfaction and national mourning for the more than 600,000 who died from COVID-19.

The articles analyzed were published not only in sections dedicated to sports, but also in spaces for more general subjects, including fashion. In several of them, Rayssa was the main character, but the articles often linked her to other skateboarders, such as the aforementioned Pamela Rosa, Leticia Bufoni, Sky Brown, among others.

Focus within the research object

The corpus of this research constitutes the result of the interpretation of the entire selection, the organization of words, expressions, and images with a semantic nexus, and the understanding of the context. The third step involves selecting how many and which articles will undergo a deeper analysis

² In 2009, there were 3.8 million skateboarders in Brazil. Information available at: <https://blogs.oglobo.com/ancelmo/post/aumenta-o-numero-de-praticantes-de-skate-no-brasil-aponta-pesquisa.html>. Access on May 20, 2018.

³ Information available at: <http://esporte.uol.com.br/skate/ultimas-noticias/2012/02/10/antes-vagabundos-esportes-radicaais-viram-aposta-segura-no-mercado-esportivo.jhtm>. Access on June 10, 2018.



Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

from now on. The periodicals *Quem, Veja, Exame, Istoé, Vogue, Claudia, Marie Claire, Forum, Lance, Diário do Nordeste, Correio (Bahia), Folha de São Paulo, and Estado de Minas* were used. Moreover, the moment of publication under consideration comprises before, during, and after the last Olympics, held in July 2021.

Therefore, six selected journalistic articles will proceed to the next stage of analysis, two for each moment of publication, one for each set of periodicals. The selected articles are: from before the Olympics, in *O Globo, Brasileira de 11 anos mira pódio em estreia do skate nos Jogos* (Lester Filho, 2019), and in *Diário do Nordeste, Quem é Rayssa Leal, a 'Fadinha do Skate' de 13 anos candidata ao Ouro nas Olimpíadas* (Azevedo, 2021); during the Olympics, in *O Globo, Rayssa busca a realização de seu conto de fadas* (Alexandrino, 2021), and in *Estado de Minas, Rayssa Leal é desenhada com traços brancos por ilustradores* (Rodrigues, 2021); after the Olympics, in *O Globo, Eu cresci, podem me chamar de Rayssa Leal* (Leal, 2021), and in *Exame, Em que o fenômeno de Rayssa Leal pode ajudar a sua empresa?* (Barros, 2021). The choice follows the observation described in step (1), which highlights the media content that deals with the life stage of the teenage skateboarder, her attributes, her gifts as a “fairy,” her humor and Brazilianness, and, finally, her feats, leading to enormous media visibility.

Identification of expressive elements

From the selection of articles, we move on to the identification of expressive elements, which depends on objectivity, since it must align with what the construction of the problem and research goals propose, but also depends, and considerably, on interpretive sensitivity. This step combines the quantitative perspective, usual in CA, since it selects the “expressive elements” repeated many times, with the (predominant) qualitative perspective because what is not recurrent, what appears once or twice, can also advance to the next phase due to its pertinence in the research corpus as a whole.

Before listing the “expressive elements” of the six journalistic articles, it is worth mentioning that there is a trend that marks the three moments referring to the Games when the theme is Rayssa Leal, according to the observation of the 82 articles. Before the event, most of them pointed to the skateboarder’s potential for a good performance in the Olympics, always highlighting her young age, but she appeared among other names that gained more space

and visibility, mainly Pamela Rosa and Leticia Bufoni. In other words, Rayssa was one more in the ranking among many athletes and what the articles presented was her result (except for the articles chosen for analysis). During the event, and especially when she wins the silver medal, the skateboarder begins to gain more space in the articles and, furthermore, another form of representation that focuses more on her subjectivity than, as before, on her performance. After the Olympics, Rayssa appears as someone who changed, grew, and began to generate profits for herself and the brands.

Now, observing the six selected articles, we make a new classification (Table 3) with the “expressive elements” for the analysis.

Table 3
Expressive elements

Before the Olympics	During the Olympics	After the Olympics
ranking	fairy tale	“I’ve grown up”
comparison with other skateboarders	youngest athlete	“I know that [...] ”
overcoming and sacrifice	childhood dream come true	encouragement to other girls
precocious talent	arrived in Tokyo making history	“I’m no longer a child”
skateboarding fairy	a child who just wants to have fun	“I’m about to turn 14”
girl wonder	she does not want to waste the opportunity	her whole life changed
playing skateboarding	only 1.45 m and 35 kg	time limit on social media
premature talent	meteoric career	the family helps, her mother is always around
comparison with prodigy athletes	everything happening so fast	selecting positive messages
amazing trajectory	reconciling study and athlete routines	her TikTok timeline has only little dances
assurance, relaxation and lightness	buying her house	“ <i>dou meus paranauês</i> ” [“I can pull my moves”]
congeniality and maturity	dream	she competes and takes tests at school
youngest representative of Brazil	she does not even look Black in the illustration	excellent grades
inspired by other female skateboarders	Rayssa without her original traits	living a dream

Continua...



Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

Continuação

Before the Olympics	During the Olympics	After the Olympics
victorious career	removal of the athlete's racial identity	she can make history
force of Northeastern Brazil	fitting into a white beauty standard	she wants and continues to have fun
her résumé does not look like that of an adolescent	how the public sees and recognizes her	she likes listening to music
accompanied by someone responsible for her	charisma, enthusiasm, and youth	she continues to have friends by her side
unusual routine	Brazilian phenomenon	she and her friends like going to the shopping mall
studying		not old enough to date
		interviews, fans, campaigns, brands
		followers gained on Instagram
		Marie Claire and Vogue magazine covers
		she misses her family
		childlike shyness
		she reached a large audience
		community and belonging
		Nike increased its sales
		media exploits inspiring stories
		her challenge will be to keep the novelty effect

Note. Elaborated by the author.

Categorization

We now turn to the analysis of the “expressive elements” presented in the previous step. According to the Interpretive Content Analysis method, the analysis is a dense description of each “expressive element”, and it is their description that establishes links, giving rise to “interpretive categories of analysis”.

Our analysis maintains the classification in the three moments. First, we resume the expressive elements of the two articles published before the Olympics, one from *O Globo* and another from *Diário do Nordeste* (Figure 9).

Figure 9
Representations of Rayssa Leal before the Olympics



Note. *O Globo* (Leister Filho, 2019); *Diário do Nordeste* (Azevedo, 2021)

We will group the expressive elements related to the first column of Table 3 into two “interpretive categories of analysis”: (a) “instrumented youthful vitality” and (b) “signified youthful vitality.” The image of “youthful vitality” is used here because it is a recurrent way of representing the notion of youth as a social construction based on her strong body and “natural” energy.

The category “instrumented youthful vitality” brings together the following expressive elements (words and expressions): “ranking,” “comparison with other skateboarders,” “overcoming and sacrifice,” “comparison with prodigy athletes,” “impressive trajectory,” “youngest representative of Brazil,” “victorious career,” “her résumé does not look like that of an adolescent,” “precocious talent,” “premature talent,” “inspired by other female skateboarders.” From the point of view of those who write, and that is the task of “dense description” at this step, “instrumented youthful vitality” emerges from a perspective that seeks to eclipse the vulnerabilities of youth, valuing in young people what, by contrast, belongs to the “adult world.” For instance, the articles refer to “career,” “résumé,” and “prematurity.” When ranking and comparing athletes, they have their subjective aspects removed, becoming just elements in a list, and each one is assigned numerical values, some more positive, some more negative.

In turn, the category “signified youthful vitality” synthesizes this set of expressive elements: “strength of Northeastern Brazil,” “girl wonder,” “assurance,” “relaxation and lightness,” “congeniality and maturity,” “skateboarding fairy,” “playing skateboarding,” “accompanied by someone responsible for her,” “unusual routine,” and “studying.” Paradoxically, the first category seeks to highlight universal values

A

Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

attributed to young people who also have their subjectivity removed. At the same time, their vulnerabilities become positive, which are symbolically part of the life stage in which they are.

Figure 10

Representations of Rayssa Leal during the Olympics



Note. *O Globo* (Alexandrino, 2021); *Estado de Minas* (Rodrigues, 2021)

Moving on to the column in Table 3 that refers to the two newspaper articles selected for the moment “during the Olympics,” from *O Globo* and *Diário do Nordeste* (Figure 10), we arrive at three “interpretive categories of analysis.” Namely, (c) “public rite of passage,” (d) “objective legitimation of ambiguity,” and (e) “collective configuration of identity.”

“Public rite of passage” is to be understood as the grouping of the following elements: “fairy tale,” “childhood dream come true,” “arrives in Tokyo making history,” “she does not want to waste the opportunity,” “meteoric career,” “everything happening so fast,” “buying her house,” “dream,” and “made history in sport.” Rites of passage are part of societies and mark the transition from one status to another – in the case of life stages and, specifically, adolescence, anthropological studies have already showed their importance for delimiting the social roles of individuals within groups. The category “public rite of passage” is a tautology, since rites of passage are always collective and, therefore, public. However, here the emphasis is placed on “public” in the sense of the media audience: it is the exposure and visibility of the transformation processes that children, adolescents,

and young people undergo, most of the time, in an engaged way. In Rayssa's case, the fairy makes her dream of winning the medal come true and this takes her to another place, which is no longer that of a child, but of someone who makes history or even buys their own house. And that is what matters to journalism and advertising. That is what "delights."

The category "objective legitimization of ambiguity" encompasses the expressive elements "youngest athlete," "a child who just wants to have fun," "only 1.45 m and 35 kg," "reconciling study and routine," "charisma," "enthusiasm," and "youth." Looking from the perspective of those who wrote the article, it is understood that it is necessary to reinforce aspects inherent to the athlete's life stage, whether related to her body configuration or her behavior, to make the "public rite of passage" even more "dramatic," so to speak. After all, she is a child of "1.45 m and 35 kg" who "just wants to have fun" but "is making history." About to meet Rayssa on the "other side" of her path, after the rite of the Olympics, which transforms ordinary people into demigods, the public begins to claim her multiple belongings and social roles. The case of the illustrations of the skateboarder with white traits and the public reaction on social media is a good example. Thus, the category "collective configuration of identity" refers to the elements: "Brazilian phenomenon," "she does not even look Black in the illustration," "Rayssa without her original traits," "removal of the athlete's racial identity," "fitting into a white beauty standard," and "how the public sees and recognizes her." Not only her Brazilianness, but also her phenotypic traits are the object of control and, above all, collective elaboration, which happened, in practice, in the response given by the artists who created Black representations of the skateboarder.

Regarding the moment after the Olympic Games (Figure 11), we can propose another three interpretive categories based on two articles published on *O Globo* and *Exame*: (f) "subjective legitimation of ambiguity," (g) "commercialization of youth subjectivities," and (h) "regulated consensual autonomy." All three concern the impact of the media visibility that Rayssa acquired during and after the Olympics.

Figure 11
Representations of Rayssa Leal after the Olympics



Note. *O Globo* (Eu cresci, 2021); *Exame* (Barros, 2021)

In a statement by Rayssa Leal herself, reproduced in *O Globo*, we see ambiguous aspects in relation to her adolescent status: on the one hand, the affirmation that she is no longer a child and her declared awareness of what that means; on the other hand, the reference to practices that show her permanence in an almost childlike status, still. Thus, we propose the category “subjective legitimization of ambiguity,” which includes the following aspects listed in Table 3: “I’ve grown up,” “I know it [...]”, “encouragement to other girls,” “I’m no longer a kid,” “I’m about to turn 14,” “she likes listening to music,” “she continues to have friends by her side,” “she and her friends like going to the shopping mall.” These aspects contrast with the skateboarder’s statement that “she wants and continues to have fun,” “she is not old enough to date,” and her “TikTok timeline has only little dances.”

It is important to emphasize that the athlete’s statement to the newspaper *O Globo* is presented as a first-person text, very informal, referring to her way of expressing herself. However, we must assume that there was a strategy in the construction of the representations that she seeks to fixate about herself. We also perceive ambiguity when the journalist, in the *Exame* article,

attributes “a childlike shyness” to her and, at the same time, discusses her potential as a valuable “brand” in the market, which leads to the next category.

The “commodification of youth subjectivities” brings together these expressive elements: “community and belonging” (which is like a “special sauce” of skateboarding culture, according to the journalist), “Nike increased its sales with Rayssa’s success,” “the media explores inspiring stories,” and “her challenge will be to keep the novelty effect and the accomplished follower count.” All these elements appeared in the *Exame* article, the journalist’s point of view, indicating what Rayssa can “teach companies.” The “commercialization of youth subjectivities” is, so to speak, fueled by the “subjective legitimization of ambiguity,” as the permanence of more childlike or adolescent aspects can be a value for brands that wish to anchor themselves in it.

The last category is “regulated consensual autonomy,” which, since it is consensual, presupposes two actors negotiating: “the young person” on the one hand and “the adult” responsible for them on the other. This category associates terms from Rayssa’s point of view: her achievement “changed her whole life,” “*dou meus paranauês*” [I can pull my moves], “she can make history,” “she is living a dream,” “interviews,” “fans,” “campaigns,” “brands,” “growth in the number of followers on Instagram,” “*Marie Claire* and *Vogue* magazine covers,” and “she reached a large audience.” But, for all this to happen, she had to “continue to take tests at school while competing in the United States,” get “excellent grades,” “miss her family,” and be still subject to control by the imposition of “time limits on social media,” having her “mother always around” and relying on her parents to “select the positive messages” on social media to show her.

Theorization

In brief, the previous stage constructed eight interpretive categories of analysis: “instrumented youthful vitality,” “signified youthful vitality,” “public rite of passage,” “objective legitimization of ambiguity,” “collective configuration of identity,” “subjective legitimization of ambiguity,” “commodification of youth subjectivities,” and “regulated consensual autonomy.” The theorization will be based on these representations, considering the analyzed media content,



and developed in the next section, in which we will finally add to these categories some theoretical reflections that support this study.

REPRESENTATIONS AND DISPUTES IN RAYSSA LEAL'S IMAGE

From the beginning, we must conduct the final discussion based on some theoretical assumptions: social representation and youth.

Serge Moscovici (2011, p. 54) elaborates his social representation theory stating that these representations seek to “make something unfamiliar, or familiarity itself, familiar” (Moscovici, 2011, p. 54). For him, there are “consensual universes” that confer a kind of security and harmony in terms of ideas and knowledge, which become consolidated with the repetition of situations, gestures, and ideas.

On the whole, the dynamics of relationships is a dynamic of familiarization, where objects, individuals and events are perceived and understood in relation to previous encounters or paradigms. As a result, memory prevails over deduction, the past over the present, response over stimuli and images over “reality.” (Moscovici, 2011, p. 55)

Moscovici's theory, for which social representations are prescriptive but not static and, therefore, in permanent transformation, inspires this study, since it motivates the search for its own elaboration process. His contribution is mainly the perspective of a social representation that emerges from a collective construction in different spaces of the everyday world, including the media, cementing the social, reaffirming the power of memory, seeking familiarity, and stimulated by the moment when unfamiliarity rises against the established forms, even if momentarily, to undergo modification, approximation, identification, and, finally, defeat due to the need for a consensual universe. The example of Rayssa Leal in the Olympic Games seeks to follow how the transformation of her representations in the media, before, during, and after the event, unfolded.

The “fairy” figure rose the 7-year-old child to enormous media visibility. Since then, she has gained space in the skateboarding culture, winning over veterans, such as Tony Hawk and Bob Burnquist, and in the media, appearing on television news, becoming the “girl wonder” of the tracks in Imperatriz, her hometown in Maranhão. By the time the International Olympic Committee announced the inclusion of skateboarding in 2016,

Rayssa Leal was one of several skaters who stood out in national and international championships. From that moment on, she became a “promise” and, as her age advanced, a “hope for an Olympic medal”. Until then, however, journalistic articles mentioned her only in the rankings and when covering the main championships with the participation of women, where Pamela Rosa and Leticia Bufoni were the ones in the spotlight. The social representations constituted by an “instrumented youthful vitality” worked together, in which the young prodigies and off-the-charts talents stand out both *for* being young and *despite* being young. At the same time, the aspects that are part of “signified youthful vitality,” which reinforces the universal values that are part of the common sense about youth, are present in all media places but always sediment the idea that there is youth.

Youth, as we know it today in the media, especially in consumer narratives, is an advertising concept (Pereira, 2010) that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, after the Second World War, when the basis of mass media settled on the ground of “youth culture,” a very lucrative market for the emerging “mass culture” (Morin, 2006). Currently, symbolic and representational boundaries are much less marked, with much less immediate signs: “youth,” as a social construction and lifestyle, pervades modern-contemporary cultures, expanding as an ideal for all ages.

As Morin (2006) taught us, mythologies present in mass culture expand and persist in other media platforms even today. One of them concerns the inspiring stories of overcoming and sacrifice. The “public rite of passage” serves this purpose, exploiting in the media girls and boys who become celebrities overnight. There are many examples in sports and various other fields, from Michael Jackson and Nadia Comăneci to Justin Bieber, Macaulay Culkin, and, why not, Rayssa Leal. The representations of the “objective legitimation of ambiguity” also collaborate for that when the media contents emphatically reify the vulnerabilities of youth, whether physical or psychological, as do the representations of the “subjective legitimation of ambiguity” when the media contents give voice to adolescents and young people who, imbued with social representations that make them spokespersons of common sense, confirm



Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

such vulnerabilities, reproducing them in an endless vicious circle. Thus, paradoxically, the power of “youth” as a sign has been silencing young people in the mass media for several decades.

According to José Machado Pais (1990), everyday life is a privileged social space for the configuration of “youth cultures” by leisure, “doing nothing,” and “killing time.” On the one hand, in everyday life, the practices of “leisure culture” place young people within a symbolic unit, the “youth,” limiting their possibilities as social actors. On the other hand, “leisure culture” practices allow youths to elaborate important bonds of sociability, original creative actions, and links to multiple belongings, elaborating plural subjectivities.

Urban cultures, in which skateboarding is inserted, are advantageous for the emergence of such plural subjectivities. That is not the case for Rayssa Leal, whose disputed representations indicate that the homogenizing notion of “youth” as a concept prevails. As prevention, representations often seems configured by “regulated consensual autonomy,” trying to reconcile the strict routines of “celebrity” children and adolescents with the declared family care.

As an example, in contrast, we can refer to skateboarder Pedro Barros, also an Olympic medalist in 2021, in the Games was active in bringing out the inconsistencies of the inclusion of skateboarding in something as mainstream as the Olympics. Moreover, Pedro Barros draws attention to the care that Rayssa Leal and other athletes her age should take regarding their mental health (Gabriel, 2021). In the terms of the present discussion, Pedro Barros refers to the risk of exposure to the “commodification of youth subjectivities,” as we named it here. Rayssa Leal rose to celebrity status, emerging from skateboarding rankings to start appearing in advertising campaigns, fashion editorials, magazine covers, going from being one more to becoming unique. Unlike subjectivities authentically emerging from youth cultures, this manufactured subjectivity is anchored in market narratives since its birth.

Mexican social scientist Rossana Reguillo Cruz also discusses the disputes that occur concerning the idea of “youth” as a social construction and the role of young people in society. The work of the institutions in this process is active and decisive. According to the author, the way in which young people are classified in contemporary times is due to three central conditions: the

system of training and socialization for the labor market, the legal discourse, and the “cultural industry.” Of these three conditions, the first two, which concern work and the legal system, along with the institutional discourses of the school and the government, among others, end up establishing limits and norms that reduce the field of possibilities for young subjects. For Reguillo Cruz (2000, p. 52), cultural industries, on the other hand, end up favoring ethical and aesthetic expressions, opening possibilities for inclusion and diversity, “(...) a field of meanings, goods, and cultural products where the young individual acquires its different specificities and shows their visibility as a socially situated actor with representation schemes that configure different fields of action” (Our translation).⁴

According to Reguillo Cruz, there are “fields of meanings” in which young people invest for their role as “socially situated actors”. In this case, it is their self-expression and not a representation of “youth” – with voice and agency (Reguillo Cruz, 2000, p. 52): “It is, therefore, in a privileged way, in the field of cultural expressions where youths become visible as social actors” (Our translation).⁵ Pedro Barros is, one could say, a “socially situated” young actor, as the analyzed interview shows.

With millions of followers on social media, disputes over media representations of Rayssa Leal lead to a “collective configuration of identity” when discussions related to representation (of race, gender, or sexual orientation, for example) cut across the others. As the analyzed article showed, part of the audience claimed Rayssa’s Blackness while countless others referred to her role in disseminating skateboarding among women.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The application of Interpretive Content Analysis allowed the precious exercise of constructing the research object, guided by the objective initially proposed, namely, to discuss the role of media representations in the relationship between society and youth cultures, focusing on the reiteration of a homogenizing notion of “youth” and the resulting impasses imposed on forms of communication that favor the consolidation of youth people, in all their complexity, as social actors. When the research in journalistic articles began, the expectation was to find a “happy ending”: the “fairy” comes out of the cocoon and becomes an

⁴ In the original: “*Es en el ámbito de los significados, los bienes y los productos culturales donde el sujeto juvenil adquiere sus distintas especificidades y donde despliega su visibilidad como actor situado socialmente con esquemas de representación que configuran campos de acción diferenciados.*”

⁵ In the original: “*Es pues, de manera privilegiada, en el ámbito de las expresiones culturales donde los jóvenes se vuelven visibles como actores sociales.*”



Disputes and impasses in the media representations of skateboarder Rayssa Leal

adolescent with a voice. However, along the way, at least within the observed context, considering all possible limitations, the analysis found a process of subjectivation guided by reductionist representations of youth. Despite the passion we all have for Rayssa Leal in our imagination, in the face of the political and pandemic context in Brazil, at the end of this study, some of the representations of the Olympic medalist reveal an athlete born in the complexity of “youth,” amidst the transgressive skateboarding culture, but sustained by a disciplined and disciplining media discourse that not only serves her sport, but also the reproduction of the universalized concept of “youth.” ■

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Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives^a

Memórias, metáforas e imaginação em narrativas orais de história de vida

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ABSTRACT

We discuss the imaginative character in life story narratives recorded by methods such as Oral History, considered scientific research resources. We propose the following questions: How do we deal with the imagination and metaphors in oral narratives of life stories? How do we regard the demand for “truth” in texts that activate subjectivity? Individual and subjective memories confer scientificity to narratives? We place the problem of truth and its relationship to language and knowledge, with Friedrich Nietzsche and Mikhail Bakhtin. We articulate theoretical review and case report, considering mental images as media that convey memories and, for this reason, a field of studies for Communication and History.

Keywords: Truth, fiction, imagination

RESUMO

Discutimos o caráter imaginativo de narrativas de histórias de vida registradas por métodos como a História Oral, consideradas fontes de pesquisa acadêmica. Propomos as seguintes indagações: Como lidamos com a imaginação e com metáforas nas narrativas orais de histórias de vida? Como atendemos à demanda pela “verdade” em textos que ativam a subjetividade? Memórias individuais e subjetivas conferem cientificidade às

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MATRIZES

251



A

Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

narrativas? Situamos o problema da verdade, suas relações com a linguagem e com o conhecimento a partir de Friedrich Nietzsche e Mikhail Bakhtin. Articulamos revisão teórica e estudo de caso, considerando imagens mentais como mídias veiculadoras de memórias e, por isso mesmo, campo de estudos para a Comunicação e a História.

Palavras-chave: Verdade, linguagem, imaginação

TELLING OUR OWN stories is a common act in our lives. “We tell stories about ourselves daily,” says Paul John Eakin (2019, p. 17) – theorist of autobiographical studies at Indiana University, in the United States –, even if people do not listen to us, “because the process of the self-narrative constantly unfolds in our minds [...]” The act of telling our stories is a constituent part of ourselves. Therefore, we constitute our experiences and relate to our memories, always impregnated with the “fundamental values of culture” (Eakin, 2019, p. 37). We craft our life stories, our identity narratives, and our own personal testimonial “literature”:

Despite our illusions of autonomy and self-determination [...], we do not invent our identities out of thin air. Rather, we shape them from the resources of the culture in which we live, which specify what it means to be a man, a woman, a worker, or a person within the circumstances in which we live our lives. (Eakin, 2019, p. 37)

The broader issue that permeates our reflection in this article concerns the human ability to narrate life stories through oral language and understand that the images we form from memory engender a unique mode of communication. When we tell our life stories or convey our past experiences, describing lived or imagined scenes, are we enunciating truths or narrating fiction? Or both things at the same time?

To face this issue, we turn first to Mikhail Bakhtin (2003, p. 21) and his “first philosophy”. Each individual is unique for this theorist, and his acts are unrepeatable, as he and only he occupies a specific time and place in the world. Therefore, the “I” only exists in the relationship in dialogues with other “I’s” because what one sees is determined (and limited) by the place one occupies and, as different individuals occupy different places, each one sees what the other cannot. Each one needs the vision of the other to complete his own. Being is not enough; the Other is required. Furthermore, it is the necessary and productive complementarity of views and understandings that forms the core of the notion of dialogism.

When I contemplate in the whole a man situated outside and in front of me, our concrete horizons actually experienced do not coincide. Because in whatever situation or proximity that this other that I contemplate may be concerning me, I will always see and know something that he, from his position outside and in front of me, cannot see: the parts of his body that are inaccessible to his gaze [...], the world behind him [...]. When we look at each other, two different worlds are reflected in the pupil of our eyes. (Bakhtin, 2003, p. 21)

This theoretical assumption raises a question for academic research developed from Oral History narratives: if two individuals cannot experience a given reality similarly, is it possible to think about the idea of truth concerning life testimonies? How do individual and collective memories, activated in this dialogic relationship, confer aspects of truth – and thus gain reliability – to the narratives? What value of knowledge can be attributed to the representation of mental images when narrated as life stories?

Starting from the assumption that oral life narratives are media and the act of narrating oneself and for the Other, inherent to the human being, never leaves the imagination, the objective of this study is to raise the debate around the following questions: how do we, Human and Social Sciences (particularly Communication) researchers, deal (or can we deal) with the imaginative dimension intrinsic to oral narratives of life stories? And, still: can we consider the oral narrative of life story a document of memory that contains the imagination? If yes, what is its heuristic value?

We aim to discuss truth and imagination in oral narratives of life stories told by those who lived them, considering how the communication of these experiences articulates individual and collective mental images as metaphors. To reflect on such questions, we propose the following script: 1) enunciate the problem of truth and its relationship with language and imagination; 2) discuss the representation of the “real” from mental images constructed in oral life story narratives; 3) attribute to the oral report of life story the value of testimonial literature, a kind of poetic access to memory records.

In this path, we will analyze – as a way of illustrating the proposed arguments – excerpts from the oral narrative of the life story of *Olívia Rodrigues Cardoso*, collected on December 6, 2004, within the scope of *Memoirs Center of ABC*, of the *Municipal University of São Caetano do Sul*¹. The methodology used in conducting the interview added “the teachings of oral life story and thematic with the communicative character of memory, and the culture and social imaginaries, the perspectives of the constitution of discourses and narratives” (Perazzo, 2015, p. 122-123).

¹ *Memoirs of ABC* started as a research project in 2003. However, in the second year, it became a center of studies at the *Municipal University of São Caetano do Sul* for concentrating research and production in communication that relates themes such as memory, culture, narratives of life stories, subjectivities, imaginaries, media, and new technologies. It gathers researchers who seek theoretical-methodological discussions and technological support to develop their proposals. It has been constituting a collection of life stories of the people of the region, who tell their experiences and recollected experiences in *Oral Narratives of Life Stories*. This method was constituted by researchers from the Center, based on studies of Oral History. The research is based on valuing the subject of the action, recording everyday stories, and constructing identities, which provides a broader understanding of social life and, consequently, of the communication and cultural relations articulated by the subjects. The testimony of *Olívia Rodrigues Cardoso*, collected in 2004, is part of this collection, with this purpose, and aims to record the memories of her experiences in *Vila de Paranapiacaba*, in the ABC region.



IMAGINATION AND TRUTH AS METAPHORS

This thread can begin to be unraveled from *On Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense* by Friedrich Nietzsche (2008), the first thinker to formulate a denunciation against the idea of truth as conceived in the Western tradition, more precisely against the belief in truth as the foundation, original principle, absolute value of our culture. The Nietzschean genealogy reveals the truth as the central value from which we build all the other values to sustain our civilization. Every belief in absolute truth – says Nietzsche – understands and hides its fictional character. We must be aware of language’s figurative and conventional aspects when considering the relationship between truth and imagination.

What we designate as truth – continues the thinker – is born from a need to agree; its purpose is gregarious life and social interaction (Nietzsche, 2008, p. 29). Through our relationship with language, we established the foundations for this coexistence. In our civilizational path, however, we forget that the truth is nothing more than a language game, a metaphor sheltered under its conventions and figurations. The human being built the interpretative paradigm of truth from the gregarious language. Identity and truth are possible only in language, a convention, or an agreement.

What, therefore, we understand by truth stems from a belief in the identity of the non-identical, concealed in language at the expense of forgetting that every word hides multiplicity, condenses meanings, conforms perceptions, and induces senses. Being trustworthy, by this understanding, is nothing more than being in line with the language codes and how science operates, erecting its edifice of concepts, in a continuous effort to impose its laws on the inconstancy and provisionality of life’s own intuitions (Nietzsche, 2008, p. 45). Human beings needed to unite with their fellows to survive due to their natural fragility and in search of protection. Hence their need for sharing, for communion, in word, and for communication.

In the Nietzschean view, although human actions in the world are “incomparably personal, unique, limitlessly individual,” when we make them conscious, they no longer look that way. Since we cannot give up our communal and gregarious nature, even if we are committed to understanding ourselves in the unique way possible, we can only “become aware of the impressions of our senses, [...] fix them and [...] place them outside of us,” promoting “a great, radical corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization.” Our status as “average” – inextricably socially linked – and as “inventors of signs” – either by belief or by imagination – causes a “vulgarized” world, made “shallow, thin, relatively silly, general” and, thus, beneficial to the species (Nietzsche, 2012, p. 223).

Walter Benjamin (2012, p. 124) focuses on the gap between the complexity of human experiences and the limits of their sharing established by language, observing that World War I combatants returned from the trenches poorer – and not richer – into communicable experiences, that is to say, translatable into a given system of signs. He thus alluded to a certain poverty of language to give sense to a dimension of what is experienced in extreme circumstances. Every narrator organizes the language when telling his own story and, through metaphors and other figures, ultimately weaves an imaginary network to sustain his truths, thus making them shareable.

Naming – it is important not to lose sight of this – is always to simplify the complexity, reducing the multiple, obliterating the singularity of the individual intuitive knowledge; representing through language is to make choices, establish hierarchies, and assign value. In the voice of Nietzsche (2008, p. 54-55):

very word immediately becomes a concept to the extent that it should not serve as a reminder of the unique and individualized primordial experience to which it owes its emergence, but, at the same time, it should be consistent with innumerable cases, more or less similar, i.e., never equal when taken strictly, to clearly dissimilar cases, therefore. Every concept arises from the equalization of the non-equal.

Own to everything that lives are – in the Nietzschean view – the continuous interpretive activity, the always unfinished movement of sense, the creative impulse inherent to the imagination. Forgetting this moving multiplicity of the original experience required establishing a statute of the word, an identity world of representation capable of making a collective human project viable. The condition for the existence of language is the forgetting of plurality. Every word must only refer to the universe of signs. Words do not relate to things but to the meaningful universe of the words themselves (Mosé, 2018, p. 67).

The relationship between narrative and truth also takes on complex contours in Mikhail Bakhtin's thought. For the Russian philosopher, statements always reveal, to some extent, the position of those who express them. In other words, they become "incarnated" and gain authorship from concrete subjects, who may or may not be known but are all equally endowed with a creative will. Thus – as explained by Todorov in the presentation of Bakhtin's collection *Aesthetics of Verbal Creation*, published posthumously in 1979 –, for Bakhtin, "we must content ourselves with quoting instead of speaking on our own behalf" (Bakhtin, 2003, p. XXI). As early as 1929, Voloshinov, one of the Bakhtin Circle intellectuals, stated that to disguise uncertainties, modern society resorted to citations in its most varied degrees; "we no longer speak except between quotation marks" (Bakhtin, 2003, p. XIX)².

²Bakhtin (1981) considers that Dostoyevsky was the creator of the polyphonic novel.



Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

Nietzsche and Bakhtin are thinkers who inspire us to reflect on oral narratives of life stories as human experiences and also as media. In this way, we can consider oral narrators as authors who agree with their interlocutors through language to shape and thus express their individual experiences. They compose images, outline voids, resort to metaphors, modulate their speeches according to their linguistic skills, and finally establish comparisons that make their memories communicable. Their authorial voice is balanced in words, pursues the sharing of senses, and gains communicability as it incorporates the dynamics of language.

THE LITERARINESS OF THE TESTIMONY

As a modality of memory and communication, testimony is closely related to imagination. Since Aristotle, memory has been conceived as “a set of mental images of sensual impressions”, belonging “to the same part of the soul as the imagination”. Narratives of this nature take on a literary character and are “hybrid[s] of uniqueness and imagination” (Seligmann-Silva, 2008, p. 72 e 74), which is why they have always found acceptance in the field of arts and psychoanalysis, but have awakened the mistrust of the legal milieu and traditional positivist historiography. However, testimonies have achieved prominence in historiographical studies in recent decades, interested in exploring the literariness of these reports to enter where only the doors of imagination allow us to arrive. The reports of life stories can be considered as literature of the real: that which has “its peculiar ability to intertwine literature and the ‘phenomenal world’” (Seligmann-Silva, 2003, p. 376-377).

Testimonial literature has a long history with inserted autobiographical accounts and testimonies (Dosse, 2016). However, it gained shape throughout the 20th century, a time marked by the experience of catastrophes – world wars, atomic bombs, the Nazi holocaust, and others genocides³. These experiences forced the history of literature to review itself based on its commitment to the ‘real,’ taking the understanding that “this ‘real’ should not be confused with ‘reality’ as it was thought and presupposed by the realist and naturalist novel” (Seligmann-Silva, 2005, p. 85). In improving languages, we can investigate the possibilities of representing the “real” and, advancing in this direction, the imaginative ways of shaping all representation. If we understand language like Nietzsche (2008), we know that every word – scientific, poetic, rhetorical, or testimonial – has metaphor as its matrix, which is behind all truth.

By drawing attention to the imaginative character constitutive of all life story narratives, we are not, therefore, paying attention to a possible epistemological weakness of Oral History⁴, nor relativizing the value of testimonial

³ Concerning the 20th century and the idea of catastrophe, see Rosso (2016). On the idea that catastrophe engenders an “age of testimony,” see Wieviorka (1995).

⁴ Discussions about the role of subjectivity in Oral History and the relationship between memory and truth are already well-established in history. On the subject, see the works of the French Philippe Joutard (2015), the Italian Alessandro Portelli (2006), and the Brazilian Verena Alberti (2004). Studies on communication and media also addressed this issue. See Caprino and Perazzo (2011) and Ribeiro (2015).

accounts. In this sense, we distance ourselves from the critical position assumed by Beatriz Sarlo (2007), which stresses the overvaluation of first-person narratives, characteristic of the subjective shift produced by the culture of memory in the contemporary world. On the contrary, we want to underline “imagination” as a compelling operative concept for understanding the phenomena of memory and history. After all, an experience always comes back in fragments, from which the remembering subject establishes connections, distinctions, patterns, and reconfigurations. According to Keightley and Pickering (2012, p. 7), “This is what gives it its creative potential, but this potential is only realized through the productive tension arising between memory and imagination”.

The correlations between truth and imagination, articulated by the always metaphorical language, as Nietzsche (2008) warns, can be identified from the excerpt of the following testimony, recorded within the scope of *Memoirs of ABC*. This is an episode in the life story of a lady who was born in March 1923 and lived most of her childhood and youth in the village of Paranapiacaba, a place at the top of the mountain range belonging to Santo André, in the ABC Paulista region, currently listed as a railway village. Dona Olívia tells her story and that of her family, who lived there in the first half of the 20th century.

My father came from Portugal when he was 13, with a very strict aunt. When they got off the ship, the aunt told him: “Now you’re on your own, because you’re already a lad, and I can’t support you. I am also coming down here without a job.” My father accompanied an older man who came on the ship, and he felt sorry for my father. He stayed with this gentleman. They went to work on Matarazzo’s farm, harvesting coffee. That’s when the British set up this empire there, and my dad heard about it. He was already 17 years old and heard that the railroad was taking employees, so he went there to enlist. My father started working on the railroad at the age of 17.⁵

⁵ Interview by Olívia Rodrigues Cardoso held on 12/06/2004, aged 81.

Taking its metaphorical potential to express the experience of the arrival of immigrants to Brazil in the first decades of the 20th century, we can infer latent meanings in this narrative voiced in an informal tone. Thus, it is possible, for example, to correlate the adjective “strict” that characterizes the aunt’s personality – accentuated in the harshness of her words, addressed to a relative whose fragility is summarized in his “13 years” – with the relentless circumstances faced by those who disembarked in strange lands without any protection or privileges. A sense of generosity, however, is soon intertwined in the story through the introduction of a character who, combining advanced age and a feeling of piety, inserts the perspective of welcome and protection in the narrated migratory experience, referring it to one of the commonplaces of our culture: hospitality.

A

Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

The account also suggests a significant contrast between foreign entrepreneurship, metaphorized in the Italian family farm and the English railroad “empire,” and the hard and precocious work of the Portuguese immigrant, whose workforce served both the coffee plantation and the operation of the railway line, activities that left indelible marks on the economy, culture, and history of that region.

Always organized chronologically, Dona Olívia’s account goes on to describe scenarios and narrate events in “*realis* mode, i.e., presenting facts as if they had actually occurred” (Labov, 1997 as quoted in Ferreira Netto, 2008, p. 42):

The railroad had everything you sought; nothing was missing. Once, a lad went to cross the line in front of my house, and as there was a lot of fog there because there was a replica of London, there was that fog rising from the ground. It doesn’t come from above but rises from the ground, that fog goes up, and you can’t see from here to there. The lad went to cross the line; he had even stayed up until nine o’clock at night playing cards with my father, who was our distraction because there was no television, no radio, nothing, so they went to our house, my mother would make some coffee, some cakes, and they would play cards. When he left, he was crossing the line, a train came, took him, and cut his leg. I saw my mother; I was this size; I saw my mother pick him up and lift him off the line with his leg dangling. My mother told my father to tear a sheet into strips, and my mother tied him up so he wouldn’t bleed to death. My father ran to the landing and called; the Englishman had already sent a special car and took him to Santos. He lost his leg, but didn’t lose his life. He died of old age.⁶

⁶ Interview by Olívia Rodrigues Cardoso, held on 12/06/2004.

Once again, Dona Olívia uses expressive language resources to build her narrative – starting with the hyperbolic dimension she attributes to the railroad. In her memory expression, the railroad was nothing less than the world, a macrocosm, a totality where “nothing was missing”, and capable of sheltering “everything” that was “looked for” and fit in life. In the context of the narrator’s family life story, her formulation synthesizes the existential conditions of those immigrants and their descendants, their perspectives – or lack thereof. The same railroad used to transport and provide mobility also closes horizons and circumscribes the destinies of those whose lives are tied to it.

The story that follows this first nocturnal image of everyday life in childhood articulates language in such a way as to reproduce a narrative tradition (whose origin is the Homeric epic) in which the description of the environment announces the “climate” in which the plot will unfold. The fog that “raises from the ground” foreshadows a disastrous event (an image embedded

in the imagination by literary composition and cinematographic fiction), which will break through the calm of the night in which the hours of rest allow “the distraction of people” with playing cards, a kind of predecessor of radio and TV in the home recess, in which the kindness of cookies and fresh coffee reiterates the sense of welcome. Outside, in the replica of a London setting, danger lurks who crosses the tracks, thus exposing oneself to the world that language (con)fuses with the railroad.

The drama of the story then takes on the narrative speed of a thriller, thanks to the use of overlapping images: the train, the severed leg, the mother’s vision, and the short stature of the narrator in contrast to the tragic scenario described, the run over carried in his lap, his leg dangling, the torn sheets to stop the blood, her father running to the phone, the hasty request for help, the rescue. The end of the story assumes a resigned tone, suggests a moral, a lesson that has the gift of impregnating the whole sense of that story and that life: the railroad that subtracts something as valuable as a leg – the human member of locomotion, the one that enables us to displacement and the autonomy of transit –, on the other hand, it weaves ties that guarantee the survival of those who live along its length, destined for longevity, thanks to the solidarity that permeates (in) ordinary life. A permanent source of threat and safety, deprivation and fortune, this is the world, the railroad, childhood life in an immigrant family turned into a language in Dona Olívia’s narrative.

Not a few thinkers have pointed out that our existential conditions, the world as we know it, coincide with our expressive horizons. “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”, summarized Ludwig Wittgenstein (1994, p. 111). The reality of things is the meaning we give them and find them in and through language. There is no “outside”; we only exist – we are, and we are in the world – in the relationship we establish with language and with the world through it, as expressed by Martin Heidegger (1997, p. 126):

Man’s being is founded on language, but this actually occurs only in dialogue. Dialogue, however, is not just a way in which language happens. Rather, language is essential only as dialogue. What we normally mean by “language,” namely a stock of words and rules for combining them, is just the outer appearance of language. [...] Dialogue and its unity support our existence.

By this understanding, one cannot conceive of any experience outside the horizon of language and, evidently, of communication. This is also what Bakhtin (1987) states, who attributes an ontological value to dialogism. In this regard, we should also turn to Gianni Vattimo (2019, p. 27): “Experience,

A

Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

every kind of experience, is possible because ‘we are a dialogue’ (Hölderlin) because we inherit a natural language, which constitutes our pre-understanding of the world”. In Fernando Pessoa (1986, p. 358), we find another expressive composition in this sense: “My homeland is the Portuguese language”, since “the word is complete seen and heard” and “the gala Greco-Roman transliteration dresses me in her true royal mantle, for which she is lady and queen”, writes the poet, weaving the indelible links between a pre-understanding of the world, culturally and historically conditioned, and the inheritance we receive, streamline and bequeath through language. If we want, then, to have access to Dona Olívia’s world, particularly the relationships she establishes with her childhood memories, it is with her narrative that we must dialogue.

She [the aunt] had the little girl already grown up, who is now 69 years old, and when she had the boy, my mother was her midwife. My grandmother made me stay outside; it was a magnificent moonlight. The moonlight back in the day looked like silver. You would draw on the ground, and I would draw hopscotch on the ground to jump; it was a game they had, we would draw with chalk, and the moon would lighten, and the stars would appear. There were Three Maries, Southern Cross, which looked like a cross in the sky. Now you don’t see it anymore, not even a star. You only see it when you smack it in the head. But every night, it was that beautiful moonlight. My grandmother made me sit outside so as not to hear my aunt scream because she screamed a lot, suffered a lot to have this child, and my mother was her midwife.

Once again, the narrator uses a recurrent image in our tradition to enhance the senses of her story. Everything takes place in the light of silvery moonlight, which covers the “old days” with an opulent glow, disappearing in the present. On those childhood nights, the sky holds the brightness of the stars, which today can only be experienced as a figurative image of the pain perceived by those who hit their head. In this account, the outside amusingly welcomes those who have not yet lived long enough to approach the pain inherent in life. The suffering of giving birth, intuited by the perception of the intensity of the screams, is kept inside, which contrasts with an “outside,” where the alibi of young age consents to scratching the floor with chalk, jumping hopscotch and surrendering to the (re)cognition of the luminous points that inhabit the sky. Another time whose distance is perceived in the lapse of life that aged the cousin, “a girl [then] already grown up, who is now 69 years old.”

IMAGES OF LIFE, PLOTS OF IMAGINATION

A possible analogy with the dimensions of fiction in the composition of photography (Kossoy, 1999) leads us to reflect on the “plots of reality and imagination” that we build, any one of us, when we tell our life story, because in this act we are, like a photographer, constructing images so that our attentive listener can “see” our past and our history.

There [in Paranapiacaba], the houses had no walls, and the front was open. One day, she [the neighbor] had a pigpen in the woods with about 30 little pigs. I went there; it was close to the river. I went there to catch fish, saw the little pigs, and then came up with [the plan]. She said it was me, she said it unfairly [that I was the one who took her wraps], and now she’s going to speak fairly. I went there and opened the gate, and the little pigs came out. They went deep into the bush and crossed the river to the other side. The woman went crazy and became a beast.

The term *image*, which for Kossoy (1999) is intended for photography, in our case, alludes to the narrative that people build when telling their life stories. In the specific, but not exclusive, performative forms of oral reporting, the mental images communicated through spoken language are equivalent to means of communication. Lucia Santaella and Winfried Nöth (2001, p. 15) also state that “there are no images as visual representations that have not arisen in the minds of those who produced them, just as there are no mental images that do not have some origin in the concrete world of visual objects”.

In this sense, we endorse the idea that the mental images constructed in the oral narrative are constituted as media that fulfill the functions of communication, expression, and even information. “Open front,” “come up,” “go crazy,” and “become a beast” are figures of speech that Olívia uses so that her listener can imagine the context and the state of anger the neighbor got into. With language resources, she builds images. With such mental images, represented through metaphors, she gives senses, expresses, and communicates the lived experience. In this perspective, oral reports can be considered as media of individual and collective memory⁷.

Like Lucia Santaella and Winfried Nöth, Stuart Hall (2016, p. 20) also theorizes about the senses we attribute to individuals, objects, and events since they do not have a single, fixed, and unalterable meaning. For him, the meanings we attribute to words and things depend on how we integrate them into our daily practices, i.e., on how we configure them through culture, which allows us to understand the fundamental role of the symbolic domain:

⁷ Maurice Halbwachs (1990) is one of the leading and first authors who thought about individual memory in its relationship with collective memory in the sense of a set of memories constructed from one or several social groups. His work *On Collective Memory*, published posthumously in 1950, although criticized in different aspects, is cited and recognized even today.



Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

(...) we make sense of things by the way we represent them – the words we use to refer to them, the stories we tell about them, the images we create of them, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, in short, the values we embed in them (Hall, 2016, p. 21).

While Lucia Santaella, Winfried Nöth, and Stuart Hall theorize about the representation of things through images, Ferreira Netto (2008, p. 52) reflects on the process that involves memory and language: “the idea that memory is a cognitive phenomenon dependent on its exteriorization in the form of any of the available languages raises the need for a vehicle for this [...], the language itself is the one that best facilitates its exteriorization.” However, it should be remembered that there is no mental content before a semiotic realization. Memory is not expressed in language; language is the materiality in which memories gain existence and form. In this sense, we understand the dialogic-communicative character of memory and know oral narrative as an enunciative medium that uses its own language.

For Boris Kossoy (1999, p. 14), the character of the representation is inherent to the image, and therefore it “contains in itself realities and fictions”. When we reflect on archives, memories, and historical reconstitution, we find in the life story narrative, as in photography, the same “ideological plots” to which Kossoy refers. Similarly, photographs are stories told through images, like oral narratives of life stories are images said through words. Both are part of the human ways of constructing realities and, in this way, of constituting a world according to an “ambiguous and definitive condition of document/representation”.

Following Kossoy’s thinking (1999, p. 15), we can think about the ambiguity between reality and imagination present in documents that refer to memory, such as photographs and narratives of people’s memories, i.e., oral reports of memory. We can also reflect on the “processes of creation of realities”.

Whoever tells us a story, implicitly or explicitly, tells us: “Look, it’s all true; I was there... I saw it...” Or else: “I witnessed it, I was personally there, nobody told me”. There is revealed the intention of attributing to oneself the condition of the bearer of truth to the witness of the story. In the testimonial account or the life story narrative, narrators must demonstrate “some basic level of respect for the truth of their lives” (Eakin, 2019, p. 35), which, in our approach, means consonance with the predominant language in the world. When the narrative is autobiographical, i.e., reported by an active character in the story, by a protagonist narrator, it is considered valid and, therefore, a report of reality, insofar as it expresses what was experienced in a communicative language and, therefore, that’s right, believable, even if it is something surprising

or frightening. This is what Kossoy calls the “reality creation process”, valid for constructing photographic images and mental images arising from oral reports or testimonies. However, in this process of narrative structure, the narrator uses fictional elements (not necessarily lying), which allows us to understand the life story as an “imaginative reconstruction” (Eakin, 2019, p. 36). In other words, the individual can only remember and narrate his experiences when he triggers the “mnemonic imagination” (Keightley & Pickering, 2012).

For Kossoy (1999, p. 22), historical information sources cannot be considered “faithful mirrors of facts.” They are documents that carry ambiguities, carry meanings that may be explicit or omitted. However

its informative potential can be achieved to the extent that these fragments are contextualized in the historical plot and in its multiple developments (social, political, economic, religious, artistic, cultural, in short) that circumscribed the act of taking in time and space from the registry.

The narrator produces the image that they want their listener to apprehend, constructed by their oral testimony, based on a determined subject, creating a representation that results from their “creation/construction process” from their point of view, i.e., their way of being in the world, and also from the point of view of the relationship they establish with their real or imagined interlocutors. This is done based on their cultural repertoire, worldview, senses of life and social life, filters and ideological position, and interaction contexts. This narrative becomes a document representing this subject’s experiences (Kossoy, 1999, p. 30), whether for photographic images or the mental images constructed in the descriptions of oral reports. Stuart Hall (2016, p. 21-22) calls the “cultural circuit” the process through which different individuals attribute similar senses to varied cultural objects as long as they are integrated into everyday practices and rituals. For him, examples range from the use of “a pile of bricks with mortar” to mean “house” to the ingenuity with which “we weave narratives, plots – and fantasies – around them [...]”.

If we return, then, to Dona Olívia’s narrative, we will understand that the story about the railroad accident is the representation she makes of her childhood memories: a girl who was born and raised in a railway village, whose father worked in the railroad since he was 17 years old. Her mother was a midwife in the village. Indeed, countless accidents occurred in Paranapiacaba, directly or indirectly related to the railroad. Numerous people were cared for by her mother, who, as a midwife, practiced care and assistance to people. However, her story gains the contours that her experience in the world gives her memory of the events, such as the details of

A

Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

the torn sheet tied in strips on the bloodied leg and the fact that the young man died of old age. The accident occurred on a foggy night after a fun game of cards. These metaphorical elements constitute what we can call imagination, which is experienced as “real” in her memory since they express feelings and senses associated with her experience. These elements are composed as images formulated in the narrative structures of the interviewee: the characters (among them, the narrator herself), the plot (or theme), the space (or environment), and, finally, time, as conceived by Paul Ricoeur (2010), as we will see later.

Theorists in the field of literature also reflect on the characteristics of the narrative that give it efficiency, i.e., success with the public. For Afrânio Coutinho (1976, p. 44), suspense is essential since the story “does not cause the effect instantly, but through a progressive revelation of its parts.” By selecting the sequence of facts, revealing or omitting information to hold the interlocutor’s attention, the narrator seeks to reach the climax to end with the sanction, i.e., with the confirmation or validation of the consequences, most often manifested in the last sentence.

Let’s see how this occurs in Dona Olívia’s narrative: the story’s beginning points to her family’s emigration from Portugal to Brazil: “My father came from Portugal when he was 13, with a very strict aunt.” Next, we have information that her father started working on the railroad four years later since it “[...] had everything you sought and nothing was missing”. The suspense begins to be built in the following statement, with a more detailed description of the weather conditions where the train station was located: “Once a lad went to cross the line in front of my house [...] that fog goes up, and you can’t see from here to there.” The climax happens immediately afterward, with the running over of his father’s worker friend. At this point in the narrative, the tension gradually increases: the lad leaves Dona Olívia’s father’s house, crosses the line, and the train “comes” and finally “takes” him and cuts his leg. Such descriptions, although brief, already allow us to imagine the whole environment, the cause, and the consequence of the dramatic accident, which could have been fatal.

The sanction appeases: “He lost his leg but didn’t lose his life. He died of old age.” The narrative continues with other descriptions of the environment as if to announce an episode that has yet to be revealed. Again it is the night that is remembered: “My grandmother made me stay outside; it was a magnificent moonlight. The moonlight back in the day looked like silver. You would draw [the hopscotch on the ground] with chalk, and the moon would lighten, and the stars would appear. There were Three Maries, Southern Cross, which looked like a cross in the sky.” It is not by chance that the night is remembered as a

continuation of the account about the accident that tore the leg off of his father's colleague. However, Dona Olívia's story presents two distinct descriptions of the nights in Paranapiacaba at that time: either it resembles London due to its intense fog, or it is the opposite, thanks to the clear sky and the characteristic constellations of the Southern Hemisphere, visible to the naked eye.

How much time elapsed between these two distinct memories of Dona Olívia? What is the time interval between the narration of her life story narrated in 2004, when she was 81 years old, and her childhood, when she witnessed the events transcribed above? Paul Ricoeur (2010, p. 173) calls "articulation of the experience of time" the existing distinction between "the time it takes to narrate and the time of things narrated." If Dona Olívia told this story in 2004, at 81, about her childhood, we calculate that the time of the narrated things is in the transition from the 1920s to the 1930s if we consider that she could have been around ten years old when she witnessed them.

Taking 70 years of separation between the past and the present, perhaps we can understand the meaning of the "time it takes to narrate" compared to the "time of things narrated." And, then, we ask ourselves how much experience accumulated in this time interval could have covered the narrative expression of this memory of what we call "imagination"? It must be considered that past experience is not stored in a repository waiting to be retrieved. The past is always in process, resulting from countless re-elaborations and reinterpretations produced at different moments in an individual's life. It is like the image of the dead father mentioned by Halbwachs (1990), which constantly changes as the son grows older and brings him closer to the place previously occupied by the father.

"In oral history, there is no 'lie' in the moral sense of the term. Every lie stems from intentions [conscious or not] to be understood" (Almeida et al., 2007, p. 107). In our analysis, we did not use the idea of lying. We prefer to discuss truth as a metaphor and imagination as a narrative expression. Thus, mental images are fictional resources typical of language: narratives are successions of images constructed by the narrator to dialogue with his "imaginative and interested" interlocutor and make himself understood.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The imaginative character in life story narratives, recorded by the Oral History method, does not delegitimize their importance as sources of scientific research. We academics should consider the fabrics that constitute elaborating the past through memory. Its sense lies in the sharing of horizons of meanings

A

Memories, metaphores and imagination in oral life story narratives

and feelings. Storytellers, understood here as authors, establish an exchange of images with their interlocutors since every enunciation is dialogical and always produces senses, even if, instead of words, there are silences.

Memory can be the needle that aligns the images to the narrative while we weave our representations of the time we live, our experiences, our world, and ourselves. The language game, in its dialogical essence (Heidegger, 1997), engenders the metaphorical potential of the meanings with which we researchers will operate. If we want to know or recognize what truth is, we must remember that it rests on an illusion perpetually supported by oblivion. Ultimately, imagination stalks all testimonies and all History; after all, everything we understand by truth is precisely the metaphor that hides the fictional nature of the hierarchy of values (Nietzsche, 2008) established between everyday colloquial speech and the marked word of science.

Based on this understanding, the fact that the scientific environment suspects the value and worth of oral narratives stems from what our tradition legitimized as science and its “superior” form of knowledge. To know, in a sense bequeathed by Western language since Plato, is to make the unknown known, placing what would otherwise remain ignored within preconceived conceptual perimeters. For science, eager to categorize, standardize, and regulate the world, to know is to endow with reason, imprint rationality, and translate into concepts supported by a paradigm that appears disordered in existence. Science acts by “controlling,” so to speak, our understanding of the world with its hierarchical, simplifying, and unifying language.

We understand, however, that to know is to be open to the plurality of existence; it is to launch oneself into the potential of the most different situations of communication and exchange of experiences, valuing the differences, the individualities, and the insolubilities of life. Only in the diversity of perspectives and dialogic interactions – when senses are shared, negotiated, and disputed – can we know and understand the world’s multiple dynamics of functioning and transformation over time.

Our culture’s preponderance of positivist scientific language still disqualifies the performative meaning of orally narrated life stories. However, the knowledge intended by science must also include questioning the authoritarian nature of culture and tradition. Fortunately, in the words of Vattimo (2019, p. 37), “the historical horizons in which the experience of truth is placed are never closed”. This is where possibilities open up for a methodology, also endorsed by Communication studies, such as Oral History, whose value lies in its bet on the creative interpretation of experiences rather than on the accuracy of the description of facts. ■

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From statistics to data: orderings of life in cities^a

Da estatística aos dados: ordenamentos da vida em cidades

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ABSTRACT

We approach the transformations of consumption orderings based on the changes that occurred in the transition from the modern to the postmodern city. We aim to problematize the interrelationships of communication, consumption and city, in the light of the notion of biopolitics, seeking to show how the ways of life emerge in each of the aforementioned socio-historical moments. In order to do so, we analyzed, from the theoretical representations of the *flâneur*, the passerby and the global connected citizen, the ways of life and the constitution of subjects. These reflections allow us to observe the engendering of the logics of capitalism in the orderings of life, especially in the production of subjectivities involved in the transformations of the city.

Keywords: Communication and consumption, city, biopolitics, datafication, constitution of subjectivities

RESUMO

Abordamos as transformações dos ordenamentos do consumo a partir das mudanças ocorridas na passagem da cidade moderna para a pós-moderna. Temos como objetivo problematizar as inter-relações comunicação, consumo e cidade, à luz da noção de biopolítica, buscando evidenciar como emergem os modos de vida em cada um dos referidos momentos sócio-históricos. Para tanto, analisamos, a partir das representações teóricas do *flâneur*, do transeunte e do cidadão conectado global, os modos de vida e a constituição dos sujeitos. Essas reflexões permitem observar o engendramento das lógicas do capitalismo nos ordenamentos da vida, sobretudo na produção de subjetividades implicadas nas transformações da cidade.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação e consumo, cidade, biopolítica, dataficação, constituição de subjetividades

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MATRIZES

269



A

IN THE SHORT story “The Man of the Crowd,” published in 1840, Poe describes how pleasurable and voracious it was to contemplate the crowd seen from a coffee shop, and even more to plunge into the tumultuous sea of human heads. One can only imagine how Poe would write the passage of the chase after the unknown decrepit old man in current times, since the figure no longer goes about (not only) among passers-by, but in the whirlwind of data of the great global connected network. Would it still be pointless to follow him? Would nothing be known of him or of his actions?

This initial restlessness made us scrutinize living in cities. The clues from “The Man of the Crowd” guided us to this work, in which we approach some aspects of living in metropolises from the transformations that occurred in the passage from modernity to postmodernity, considering the articulations between communication, consumption and city. Thus, we problematize these interrelationships in the light of the notion of *biopolitics*, seeking to show how, in each of the socio-historical moments studied, consumption orderings emerge that shape ways of life and the constitution of subjectivities.

In the transition from modernity to postmodernity, the city becomes the stage for the most varied forays, not only of an architectural and urbanistic nature, but also of all sorts of economic, sociocultural and biopolitical interventions. As the epicenter of human aspirations and inspirations, the city is a living organism that harbors different forms of interaction. The constitution of the subjects that inhabit the city takes place in the use of urban space and in the ways of appropriating places, as well as in the interactions provided by communicational processes, discursive and social practices. In this perspective, unraveling the threads that weave the relationships between city and biopolitics in modernity and postmodernity is a task that requires conceiving communication and consumption as inseparable aspects in the analysis/critique of society.

We understand consumption as a broad and complex sociocultural phenomenon, whose orderings occupy a preponderant place in the conformation of life and the modern and postmodern subject. According to Rocha et al. (2016), consumption has organicities and proceduralities, covering the distinct and dialogical poles of production and reception, which order urban life from social and discursive practices. Consumption, in intricate articulation with media communication processes, is characterized as a locus of interrogations about the biopolitics engendered in the development of capitalism since modernity.

In this article, the notion of biopolitics, developed by Foucault and some of the scholars of his thought who update it, is one of the theoretical veins that we mobilize to reflect on the development of cities, the experience of urban life built

from regulations, practices daily life, communication regimes, forms of interaction, inclusion and exclusion, among many other aspects, that produce and shape the subject in each of the socio-historical periods studied here. Thus, both the *flâneur* and the passerby of modernity and the connected individual of postmodernity represent a kind of ideal/type subject that allows us to unveil the orderings of consumption.

Classical biopower, as formulated by Foucault (1985, 2001, 2002, 2008), comprises a double form: (1) an anatomo-politics of the body, that is, a corporal discipline; and (2) a biopolitics of populations (biological quality of populations), linked to the strengthening of the State, medicalization and the normalization of society.

The term “biopolitics” designates the way in which power tends to transform itself, between the late 18th and the early 19th century, in order to govern not only individuals through a certain number of disciplinary procedures, but a set of living beings constituted as a population: biopolitics – through local biopowers – will therefore deal with the management of health, hygiene, food, sexuality, birth, etc., insofar as they have become political concerns. (Revel, 2005, p. 26)

In this way, biopolitics organizes the events of life and promotes ways of living on a massive scale, that is, it consists, from its conception, in the way institutionalized power, through governmental projects aimed at the entire population, defines rationalizing proceduralities, which regulate and order the lives of populations.

The mode of action of the disciplinary government requires a set of techniques that exercise a systematic scrutiny of time, space and the movement of individuals, and operate interstitially in the lives of populations, so that the mass media, the instrumental reason of capitalism and the logics of consumption form a complex set of strategies for the disclosure and dissemination of biopolitics.

As regards the constitution of life in the modern metropolis, the spreading of consumption orderings in society takes place concomitantly with massive production and communication processes, which, as meta-narratives of consumption, propagate the values of capitalism and, accordingly, the biopolitics. From the point of view of the production logics of the consumption system, it is also necessary to consider that media communication disseminates narratives that promote the biopolitical orderings of consumption.

Rabinow and Rose (2006) argue that it would be “misguided simply to project Foucauldian analyses as a future guide for our present context and its possibilities” (p. 38), since contemporary society harbors significant transformations, operated during the second half of the twentieth century, which distinguish it from that society from which the philosopher would have formulated his concept of biopolitics:



Foucault studied the emergence of forms of power in the 18th century, their transformation in the 19th century, and in some – limited – measure an examination of the forms that took shape in the late 19th century. The rationalities, strategies and technologies of biopower changed over the 20th century, as the management of health and collective life became a key objective of governmentalized states, and new configurations of truth, power and subjectivity emerged to support the rationalities of well-being and safety, as well as those of health and hygiene. (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 38)

The authors emphasize the importance of analyzing what biopolitics means today, in a scenario of biotechnologies and of paying attention to “the peculiarities, the small differences, the moments in which changes in truth, authority, spatiality or ethics make a difference today as compared to yesterday” (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 39). Lemke (2018) argues along the same lines: “current biopolitical processes are based on knowledge about the body and about the transformed and expanded biological processes” (p. 165), so that it becomes necessary to problematize the capitalization of contemporary life.

Thus, we mobilize scholars of communication, consumption and cities, as well as of history, geography and philosophy to support the debates based on the proposed articulations. Therefore, we limit our reflections to some aspects of the theoretical representations of the Parisian *flâneur*, the Brazilian passerby and the global connected citizen that reveal the biopolitical dimension of consumption orderings.

THE *FLÂNEUR* AND THE PASSERBY IN THE MODERN CITY

Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades.

The *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them.

– W. Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*

The epigraph of this section shows a form of protest against the rhythm imposed by capital in the full development of modernity. In retrospect, Benjamin identified, in the Paris of the belle époque, the manifestation of a new sense of consumer society, in which the subject is mediated by the merchandise and its material/symbolic consumption is covered by narratives. The author envisioned a city undergoing transformation towards modernity, in which commercial houses were the last refuge of the *flâneur*, who “roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city” (Benjamin, 1991, p. 82). The dramatically changing urban landscape aroused the curiosity of the *flâneur* and the crowds.

However, *flânerie* soon had to change its pace, since the acceleration of the pace of life is one of the characteristic features of modernity. According to Koselleck (2006), even before the drastic increase in the reach of the media, acceleration had already become a way of experiencing time. In his critical reflections, Berman (1986) argues that modernity is characterized by an abundance of possibilities for transforming oneself and the world in the midst of a great absence of values and loss of roots.

Douglas and Isherwood, from an anthropological perspective, also approach this process of engendering a society whose centrality lies in the possibilities of consumption, when they describe that decisions to consume become a vital source of cultural transformations. So,

... people raised in a particular culture see it change during their lives: new words, new ideas and ways. Culture evolves and people play a role in change. Consumption is the very arena in which culture is the object of struggles that give it shape. (Douglas & Isherwood, 2006, pp. 102-103)

When reflecting on modern life, Simmel (2005) points out the individual's struggle not to be just a number, a manual labor. This is what the author defines as the predominance and distancing of the objective culture from the subjective one. In this view, the subject as a cultural being that constitutes the subjective spirit becomes small in the face of what the author calls "a monstrous organization of things and powers," whose scenario is the big city and which

... feeds almost entirely on production for the market, that is, for completely unknown customers, who will never come face to face with the real producers. With this, the interests of both parties gain a ruthless objectivity, their economic selfishness, which they calculate with understanding, is not afraid of any dispersion due to the imponderables of personal relationships. (Simmel, 2005, p. 579)

Human relations in large cities with a monetary economy (Simmel, 2005) are reified, with an objective and impersonal character, in a fetishistic process in which the reference of who produced a certain good is lost. Once inserted in the capitalist system, individuals, particularly salaried workers, are demanded as consumers.

This is derived, among other factors, from the Industrial Revolution, which promoted a reorganization of the productive base, generating "a profound transformation in ways of life and in social relations. ... The 'market' becomes one of the central axes through which activities of the metropolis gravitate" (Rocha et al., 2013, p. 44). The formation of the globalized market (Berman, 1986)

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From statistics to data: orderings of life in cities

makes production and consumption increasingly international and cosmopolitan. In this sprawl of the market to become global, there were, consequently, reverberations on the other side of the Atlantic, felt mainly in large cities.

This time, the main Brazilian urban centers also experienced their *belle époque*: a period not only of economic strength, but also of social changes and cultural innovations. Habits imported from Europe became popular among city dwellers – or not so much. For example, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, one of the main meeting points for the São Paulo residents was Café Guarany, which, in 1900, expanded its facilities to accommodate another European novelty, the restaurant. Opening communicated through posters and advertisement in the *Correio Paulistano* newspaper (Restaurante e Café Guarany, 1900) of a typically European delicacy of the time: turtle fillet soup (Figure 1). This case of importation of customs from a city that was projected as cosmopolitan did not prevent the unusual fact, for São Paulo residents who wandered around the establishment, of coming across the lively and healthy main dish in the coffee shop window days before it was transformed into soup. (Loureiro, 2015).

Figure 1

Correio Paulistano advertisement, edition 13.201, of June 3, 1900



Note. Brazilian Digital Newspaper Library.

The advent of modernity in Brazil can be conceived from the perspective of the city of São Paulo, which spearheaded the production and export of coffee, driving changes – albeit slow – in the modes of agrarian and urban production, expanding the networks of transport and engendering new sociabilities. In order to sell increasingly larger crops and bring in products demanded by the wealthy bourgeoisie of the “coffee metropolis,” as it was known, the slow trotting of the drovers was no longer enough. Thus, a certain technical rationality of modernity arrived in Brazil because of coffee. By the tracks of the São Paulo Railway, the Serra do Mar was crossed. It was man overcoming the

obstacles of nature through technology and science: the machine – the steam engine – was the main innovation of the 19th century (Hobsbawm, 2009), transforming the imagination, communication and cities, as well as promoting the representation of a man-made world. The circulation of people, information and goods, which previously took place at the pace of animal traction, accelerated. For Hobsbawm, before the steam revolution, most people lived and died in the town or village where they were born. And so they had the impression that the world was “incalculably big”.

In this perspective, the advent of modernity in São Paulo – its transformation from a colonial city into a modern/capitalist one – coincided with the intensification of world trade, immigration movements (arrival of foreigners for skilled labor, albeit for the agricultural sector, monocultural), expansion of the railroads, rural exodus of both the population newly released from slavery and part of the immigrants who, deluded by the idea of the promised land that had not been fulfilled in the countryside of the interior of Brazil, without knowledge of the language, resources or conditions to return to the country of origin, tried their luck in the big cities (Sevcenko, 1992).

This time, the transition from a rural and slave society to an industrial and wage-earning one was not smooth in a city that, according to Sevcenko, grew by 5,479% between 1872 and 1934.

The estrangement was imposed and diffused in such a way that it involved the very identity of the city. After all, São Paulo was not a city of blacks, whites or mestizos; neither foreigners nor Brazilians; neither American, nor European, nor Native; it was neither industrial, despite the growing volume of factories, nor an agricultural warehouse, despite the crucial importance of coffee. . . . This city that sprang up suddenly and inexplicably, like a colossal mushroom after rain, was an enigma to its own perplexed inhabitants, trying to understand it the best they could, as they struggled not to be devoured. (Sevcenko, 1992, p. 31)

This dilemma that the city’s inhabitants faced portrays, according to Berman (1986), the dichotomy of modernity, the feeling of living in two worlds. According to Carone (2002), the strangeness was such that the children were scared to see that the foreigners also had five fingers on each of their hands.

Again, we resort to Benjamin’s (1991) reading of Paris, capital of the 19th century, which, with the urban reform led by Georges-Eugène Haussmann, gained large avenues that rationalized and sanitized the space and reduced the strength of barricades and popular uprisings, “meanwhile he estranges the Parisians from their city. They no longer feel at home there, and start to

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become conscious of the inhuman character of the metropolis” (Benjamin, 1991, pp. 41-42). Changing the city’s public roads has profound consequences, whether in Europe or the New World. Sevckenko (1992) reports that, in São Paulo, when the city hall paved Avenida Paulista at the early 20th century, the city’s first uniform and continuous street was created. This was used as a racetrack by the wealthy, who already owned cars. As there were no traffic regulations, pedestrians being run over without punishment were common – a true “hunt for the pedestrian,” for the cornered passerby. According to the author, it was in the 1920s that the automobile boom took place, “blocking the narrow circulation spaces of the central area with its volume and transforming the city into a veritable hell” (Sevckenko, 1992, p. 74).

According to Frehse (2011), the street is not just a component, but a central element of modern cities, the stage for the ways of life of nations, a metonymy of the city, a space for the consolidation of capitalism in Brazil – and also for social exclusions. Whether walking at a frenetic pace, or using road transport and receiving visual information from billboards¹ along the way, the passerby had already incorporated the dynamics of the metropolis – unlike the *flâneur*, who experienced the estrangement in the enjoyment of the city.

“On his peregrinations the man of the crowd lands at a late hour in a department store where there still are many customers. He moves about like someone who knows his way around the place” (Benjamin, 1991, p. 82). As in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Man of the Crowd,” the *flâneur* and the passers-by meet in semi-public spaces of consumption, in which there is some privacy and at the same time the unfolding of urban life can be observed. “Poe’s text makes us understand the true connection between wildness and discipline. His pedestrians act as if they had adapted themselves to the machines and could express themselves only automatically. Their behavior is a reaction to shocks” (Benjamin, 1994, p. 126). It is the view of the human tides at dusk that makes the narrator of the tale lose interest in what was going on in the café and instead contemplate the street scene.

The scenario that is built shows how modernity penetrates the interstices of everyday life and makes disciplinary techniques emerge, which, directed to the population counted through statistics, act in a continuous exercise of training and coordinating bodies, the crowd. In this sense, the development of metropolises, in confluence with the engendering of the consumer society, dissipated the bases of stable identities due to the stimulus to mobility, to the instrumental rationality of production processes, to the technical reproducibility of goods, among other transformations.

¹ Harvey (2009) comments that Raban, contrary to critical and oppositional writings on urban life that speak of the city as an “encyclopedia” or “style emporium” (homogeneous), responds with the idea of the city as “a book of scribbles,” full of colorful items and without any relation to each other and even less to a determining, rational or economic (heterogeneous) scheme.

THE POSTMODERN CITY AND THE EMERGENCY OF THE CONNECTED MAN

Fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or “totalizing” discourses are the hallmarks of postmodernist thought.
 –D. Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*

Smart cities attract smart citizens, and smart citizens attract smart money.
 –E. Morozov & F. Bria, *Rethinking the Smart City – Democratizing Urban Technology*

The rhythm of the streets accelerates in postmodernity. David Harvey (2009), a geographer who focused on the condition of changes in social, cultural and political-economic practices that somehow no longer found support in the concept of modernity, points out that this abyssal change is linked to the emergence of new dominant ways in which we experience time and space. The rise of postmodern cultural forms is related to at least two factors: (1) the emergence of more flexible modes of capital accumulation; and (2) a new cycle of “time-space compression” in the organization of capitalism. However, from the point of view of capitalist accumulation, according to the author, these changes appear more as superficial appearance transformations than as signs of the emergence of some entirely new post-industrial society.

Harvey (2009) emphasizes architecture and the arts, understanding them as the main articulators of this postmodern movement. The process begins with the post-war golden age (1950s), goes through the disenchantment of the world, with the emergence of dictatorships and all forms of worker and mercantile oppression (1960s), until reaching the following decade (1970s), in which we have an indication of change, with movements that stop being anti-modernist and start to be called postmodernist.

Soft City, a book written by Jonathan Raban in 1974, is an exponent of this movement by rejecting “the thesis of a city tightly stratified by occupation and class, depicting instead the spread of individualism and entrepreneurialism², where social distinction was broadly conferred by possessions and appearance” (Harvey, 2009, p. 15).

The city conceived by Raban is too complex a place to be disciplined:

... The city as we imagine it, then, soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, and nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps in

² According to Pinto and Oliveira (2007), Nestlé, with Leite Ninho, was the pioneer advertiser in Brazil of billboards made by the printing process called gigantography (32 sheets, which provides the dimension of a mural) in the 1960s.



statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture. (Harvey, 2009, pp. 9-10)

In contrast to this image of the city of discipline and imagination, we observe the rise of data or “social datafication” (Couldry, 2019), that is, the pressure currently felt to convert all aspects of life into data, from which economic values, in particular, can be extracted.

Postmodernism, in this context, contrasts with the (modernist) idea of the universal – identified with the belief in linear progress, in absolute truths, in the rational planning of ideal social orders and with the standardization of knowledge and production – by privileging the heterogeneity and difference as liberating forces in the redefinition of cultural discourses. Nevertheless, if modernism was perceived as positivist, technocentric and rationalist, it does not seem to us that this narrative has changed in the way data infrastructure has guided the new contemporary social order.

The new productive technologies and the intensification of the processes of rationalization and optimization of work have a direct influence on post-modern ways of thinking, feeling and acting. The volatility that takes shape in postmodernity and makes any long-term planning difficult, which requires adaptation and the ability to move quickly in response to market changes, takes on new contours from the incidence of algorithms, and we are progressively facing “predictive” futures. In other words, if “all that is solid melts into air” (Berman, 1986) – alluding to the theoretical perspective that considers the modern imagination capable of infinite renewal and transformation – what emerges in the contemporary world is the formation of a “fog” (Wisnik, 2018) of data in which the prevalence of digital and genetic information modulate our sensitivity and affect our perception of the world.

However, all this movement imposed by the acceleration of time and the fragmentation of space does not imply a decrease in the significance of the territory. The production of places endowed with values (special qualities) becomes an important asset in the competition between localities, cities, regions and nations. Corporate forms of government can flourish in these spaces, they themselves assuming developmental roles in producing business-friendly climates. In this context, we can better situate the efforts of cities to forge a distinctive image and create an atmosphere of place and tradition that is attractive to capital.

In these urban spaces of the postmodern metropolis, new social dynamics are formed: the subject of statistics that emerges in modernity is reified by the data of postmodernity, constituting a subject of “a time without time” (Crary, 2014), a time without material or identifiable demarcation, a time without sequence or recurrence.

In short, it reflects “a reprimand and a deprecation of the weakness and inadequacy of human time, with its blurred, meandering textures” (Crary, 2014, p. 39).

The nefarious aspect of this “time without time” that Crary, alluding to the total hours of the day in a week, called *24/7*, is in the incompatibility it reveals, in the discrepancy between a human life-world and the idea of a “switched on universe for which no off-switch exists” (Crary, 2014, p. 40) – in contrast to the eight hours of work, eight hours of leisure and eight hours of rest of the Fordist conception. The risk that Harvey pointed out, in the passage from modernity to postmodernity, of our mental maps not corresponding to current reality, can be unveiled with the contemporary *24/7 non-time* that incessantly insinuates itself into all aspects of social and personal life.

As Harvey pointed out to a change of only superficial appearance, Crary speaks of one of the most “numbingly familiar” assumptions in discussions of contemporary technological culture: that “there has been an epochal shift in a relatively short period of time, in which new information and communication technologies have supplanted a broad set of older cultural forms” (Crary, 2014, p. 44). For the author, the conception of technological change as a quasi-autonomous process, driven by a process of autopoiesis or self-organization, allows many aspects of contemporary social reality to be accepted as necessary, unalterable circumstances, as necessary, unalterable circumstances, akin to facts of nature, and conceals the “the most important techniques invented in the last 150 years: the various systems for the management and control of human beings” (Crary, 2014, p. 45). Thus, the form that innovation takes in contemporary capitalism is that of “continual simulation of the new,” while existing relations of power and control remain effectively the same.

If in the 20th century a good part of the organization of consumer society was linked to forms of regulation and social obedience, in the contemporary world the management of economic behavior is identical to the formation and perpetuation of malleable and submissive individuals. This condition of submission is reinforced by the fear of social and economic failure, the fear of being left behind or left out, of being considered old-fashioned or inadequate. The rhythms of consumption reinforced by technology are inseparable from an increasing demand for continuous self-administration by the subject. Although the relations of power and control remain, they acquire other contours from a new rationality (Dardot & Laval, 2016): neoliberalism.

This scenario reveals a regulation strongly guided by competition and, alluding to the ideas elaborated by Foucault, “a strategy without a strategist or without a strategy” (properly speaking):



... First, there are the practices, often disparate, that establish techniques of power (among which disciplinary techniques in the first place) and it is the multiplication and generalization of all these techniques that little by little impose a global direction, without anyone being the instigator of that impulse toward a strategic objective. (Dardot & Laval, 2016, p. 192)

In this new regime, the individual is solely responsible for his destiny; on the other hand, he must constantly show his worth in order to deserve the conditions of his existence. And, taking into account this technological determination, the search for infinite connection as a form of belonging is evident. If in the consumer society there is an economic reason applied to every sphere of private and public action, that is, the cost-benefit analysis to all human behavior; in the information society, technology fulfills this function through algorithms, which makes it possible to eliminate the separation between politics, society and economy and, at the same time, unify them around technology.

This “general pragmatics” (Dardot & Laval, 2016) is indifferent to party origins, it is just about “good governance, good practices and globalization”. Crary (2014) warns us about the fact that the privatization and compartmentalization of our activities in this sphere, that is, governed by data and algorithms, is able to sustain the illusion that we can “outwit the system” and devise a unique or superior relation to these tasks that is either more enterprising or seemingly less compromised. Based on the author’s considerations, it is no longer possible to believe in the statement that contemporary technology is something neutral or just a set of tools that can be used in different ways, including in the service of an emancipatory policy.

However, the *smart* concept emerges as the most prominent to conquer the public imagination in the last decade and the most fertile to address this issue, as it is linked to the idea of emancipation and autonomy. Terms like *smart cities* and *smart citizens* are commonly used to qualify territories and their citizens. The idea of a total interaction between people and machines points to the efficiency of technology as something capable of catalyzing economic development while promoting quality of life in urban centers.

According to Morozov and Bria (2019, p. 20), who have addressed the issue of smart cities, everything indicates that “technological infrastructures configured in a fashion more in line with the dogmas of neoliberalism will make it rather difficult for cities to experiment with non-neoliberal political and economic agendas.” This is in line with the new rationality of the world, discussed by Dardot and Laval (2016) and with a new ordering of the world based on technology, if we consider that the concept of:

... smart refers to any advanced technology deployed in cities with the intent of optimizing the use of resources, producing new resources, changing user behavior, or promising other kinds of gains in terms of, for example, flexibility, security, and sustainability. These gains accrue primarily due to feedback loops inherent in the deployment and use of intelligent devices featuring connectivity, sensors, and/or screens. (Morozov & Bria, 2019, p. 21)

The smart city concept becomes a perfect example of corporate storytelling: “Stripped of all politics and accounts of contestation, these narratives inevitably celebrate the unstoppable march of progress and innovation, greatly accelerated by the ingenuity and inventiveness of the private sector” (Morozov & Bria, 2019, p. 25). When companies such as Uber, formed from the advancement and opportunities offered by new technologies, promote the slogan “We ignite opportunity by setting the world in motion,” they show significance relative to the continuous production movement, without any kind of pause or interruption. The result is the exhaustion of the senses and the consequent emptying of all forms of divergence.

In the neoliberal and smart city, rankings, competitiveness tables and comparative scores are highlighted. The quantification of performance of all types of productive value, including human value, is justified by the benefit of making them more reliable, competitive and manageable.

In this scenario, two processes are evident: on the one hand, the hiring of private agents for attributions until then reserved for public institutions; on the other hand, the injection of private financial capital in the management, maintenance and construction of public infrastructures. “Both exhibit significant, albeit underexplored connections to the smart city agenda, as both require an extensive infrastructure of gathering, analyzing, and acting upon data to succeed and proliferate” (Morozov & Bria, 2019, p. 43).

We have seen how much citizens are co-opted to stay connected, this can also be applied to cities: “The more services they subcontract and the more infrastructure they privatize, the more assistance they require from the likes of companies like Google in running whatever remains of resources and assets under public control” (Morozov & Bria, 2019, p. 67).

In this scenario, the political and economic models on which most cities are based are no longer locally determined and start to serve globally connected demands, from a sophisticated neoliberal capitalist system of the entrepreneurial type and a capital that built through financial speculation. Perhaps we have good reasons to (re)think the rebellious spirit of cities (Harvey, 2014), in apology for the smart city ideal, but it is also necessary to be aware of the limits of this rebelliousness, especially if disconnected from non-urban agents.



In practical terms, technological sovereignty should also mean the ability of cities and citizens to organize their affairs according to principles beyond what philosopher Roberto Unger calls “the dictatorship of no alternatives,” slowly imposed by the proponents of neoliberalism through the backdoor of metrics and quantification. (Morozov & Bria, 2019, p. 84)

Considering the relevance of these evaluation mechanisms and, consequently, the individual and collective organization, there is no way to leave out the nature of these new social relations established by a datafied order and the characteristic role of media institutions in sustaining this order (Couldry, 2000).

In short, datafication processes involve translating the values of a given organization in the social world into analytical measures; after this measurement, the process must be converted back into something that makes sense in terms of the values of that organization. In other words, it is not just data collection, but “decision making based on that data, based almost exclusively on automated calculation processes called algorithms” (Couldry, 2019, p. 420). Data is collected for a reason, and that reason can lead to economic and social discrimination.

The era of *Big Data* has decisive implications in data processing for the social construction of reality. “We can say that social media platforms and the corporations that own them have acquired the power to frame the social world and thereby name what happens in it, in addition to categorizing everything, that is, ordering through their algorithms” (Couldry, 2019, p. 423). In this sense, everyone, not just ordinary users of social platforms, are affected by the data, especially the consequent categorizations generated by these devices, disseminated by networks of employers, universities, political parties and governments, fostering the imagination that data are the reflection of an undeniable reality.

The connected subject lives in a “time without time,” and this reflects his inadequacy, given his confused and irregular movement. Therefore, communication and consumption assume important roles in the management and control of these movements: the rhythms of consumption reinforced by technology are inseparable from an increasing demand for continuous self-management. Statistics have the function of classifying, organizing and defining procedures for the population; in the context of datafication, the algorithms work together with each connected subject, presenting a world and proposing paths to follow, based on the information provided by the subject himself.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We identified transformations in the ordering of social life in the transition from the modern to the postmodern city from the interrelationships of communication and consumption and we arrived at the imperative of data as a key element to reflect on contemporary biopolitics.

The concept, developed by Foucault, can be understood as “the attempt, starting from the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, race...” (Foucault, 1997, p. 89). It is, therefore, a biopolitics related to populations, so that “the disciplinary technologies of power which are directed at the body, in order to form and fragment it” (Lemke, 2018, p. 132). In postmodernity, however, biotechnologies allow a decomposition and recomposition of the body, constituting “a molecular politics that no longer proffers an anatomical view of individuals but rather presents a genetic one which situates the individual in the ‘gene pool’” (Lemke, 2018, p. 132). If, in its genesis, the term biopolitics referred to the specific problems of life and population placed within a government technology, this government, today, is managed by market rules and metrics. From this, we infer a transition from the role of statistics, typical of an administrative process, to the consolidation of data as regulatory principles typical of neoliberal entrepreneurship, based on metrics and performances.

Biopolitics then emerges “as life put to work and, therefore, as a policy activated to organize the conditions and control of social exploitation in the entire dimension of life” (Negri, 2016, p. 93). If in biopolitics the social is subsumed by capital, we can infer that the passage from the disciplinary society (ruled by statistics) to the society of control (ruled by data), production and resistance are organized through ways of life. Both the subject and the State are crossed by the technological and financial pressure of the market that penetrates human relations. But the human stirs, moves, transforms.

In the modernity of the *belle époque* analyzed by Benjamin, we identify the manifestation of a new sensorium characteristic of the consumer society and in the *flâneur*, a form of protest against the rhythm imposed by capital, as well as a reorganization of the productive base and a profound transformation in the means of living, in addition to the social revolutions that arrived both in Europe and in developing countries driven by the Industrial Revolution. The city and urban life became objects of study and reflection. And the street – central element of this modern city, stage of ways of life and metonymy of the city – becomes a



space for the consolidation of capitalism and also for social exclusions. In the street, the *flâneur* and the passerby meet and start walking at a fast pace.

When the factory gives way to computerized society and this is placed under the control of financial capital, a capitalist type of socialization emerges, which operates through (exploratory) processes that have become social (Negri, 2016). If we reject the conception of the city tightly stratified by class occupation, a pervasive individualism emerges instead, in which social marks and distinction are conferred not so much by possessions as by the performance of data. In this new biopolitical regime, the individual is the only one responsible for his destiny, having his own subjectivity questioned by a set of forces previously represented by a sea of people and now by an ocean of data.

If in modernity statistics served as an instrument for the administration and management of the population, in accordance with an accelerated and thriving production and urbanity; in postmodernity data are resources used for the ordering of social life and the constitution of subjectivities in the face of a deindustrialization that runs at a fast pace, a financialized economy that takes shape in unproductive capital (Dowbor, 2017), that is, profit does not come from investment in infrastructure and production, but from speculation and banking investments. In this scenario, culture also becomes a socioeconomic asset. The social, in turn, seems to get lost amid the distinction between (human) connection and (automated) connectivity.

In a world increasingly shaped by automated and discriminatory hidden calculations, “there will surely be an even greater role and need for the imaginative productions of the media industries, as interpreters of the changes that are taking place” (Couldry, 2019, p. 429). Is the power of the media one of the resources to help us imagine something different from a society managed exclusively by the power of data?

If we think of the media in a broader field, that of communication, perhaps this has more relevance. For Cohn (2001), the manifest form of the information society is that of selection, commanded by the disjunction “or,” and its orientation, therefore, is that of selection/exclusion. This contrasts with communication, which is fundamentally a process of addition. And, in this sense, communication operates within the focuses, established by the information, thus being able to translate the signs of consumption in a neoliberal and technological society and give them new meanings. The contemplation of the *flâneur*, the social exclusion evidenced in the streets of modern São Paulo, as well as the activism in social networks in contemporary times, signal possibilities of resistance and other ways of existing, which to a certain extent escape biopolitical orders, whether statistical or dataficated.

Despite the possibilities of resistance, we are affected not only by the change of place, of time or by the connection with the other, but also by the technical apparatus of thought and action: “Contemporary practices of subjectification, that is to say, put into play a being that must be attached to a project of identity... in which life and its contingencies become meaningful to the extent that they can be construed as the product of personal choice” (Rose, 2011, p. 271). Thus, safe spaces of interiority are undone and we are taken by the discontinuity that these choices can suggest and, simultaneously, contest the rigid forms of framing and invent ourselves differently. ■

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TR REVIEW



Communication and narrative theories

A comunicação e as teorias narrativas

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of the book *Diccionario de Teorías Narrativas 2: narratología, cine, videojuegos, medios*, edited and organized by Spanish Lorenzo Vilches Manterola, full Professor Emeritus at the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), launched in 2021, in a physical and ebook format by the publisher Caligrama in Spanish. The book, organized in the form of a dictionary, has approximately 450 entries that bring to light not only fundamental concepts regarding contemporary Narrative Theories but also applications and methodologies that relate to narratology, the media, and communication.

Keywords: Narrative, communication, dictionary, narratology

RESUMO

Trata-se de uma resenha do livro *Diccionario de Teorías Narrativas 2: narratología, cine, videojuegos, medios*, editado e organizado pelo espanhol Lorenzo Vilches Manterola, Professor Catedrático e Emérito da Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), lançado em 2021 em formato impresso e ebook pela editora Caligrama, em língua espanhola. A obra, organizada em forma de dicionário, conta com aproximadamente 450 entradas (verbetes) que trazem à luz não apenas conceitos fundamentais, a respeito das Teorias Narrativas contemporâneas, mas também aplicações e metodologias que colocam em relação a narratologia, a mídia e a Comunicação.

Palavras-chave: Narrativa, comunicação, dicionário, narratologia.

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Vilches Manterola, Lorenzo. (Ed.) (2021) *Diccionario de Teorías Narrativas 2: Narratología, cine, videojuegos, medios*. Caligrama. 883p.

NARRATIVE HAS ALWAYS been present in society, circulating in the most varied forms and formats, as Roland Barthes noted in his remarkable introduction to a dossier dedicated to narratives published in France in 1966, which later became a landmark for scholars of this subject. From this, one can observe the importance of narratives as a form of human expression and communication (Benjamin, 1994), as a manifestation and understanding of reality and the world surrounding us (Bruner, 1991), as a constituent element of communities and maintenance of memory and culture in a continuous transmission of reports and knowledge between different generations, which led some scholars, such as Walter Fisher (1984), to understand narration as a true paradigm of human communication.

Research in the field of communication in Brazil shows a growing interest in themes related to narratives: studies in which the theoretical matrix is based on narrative or narratological theories, investigations in which narratives are the central object of analysis or even those that mobilize methodologies and techniques of narrative analysis.

In this scenario, Lorenzo Vilches Manterola's recent *Diccionario de Teorías Narrativas 2: narratología, cine, videojuegos, medios* (2nd Dictionary of Narrative Theories: narratology, cinema, video games, media), edited and published in 2021, fulfills a primary role by providing a robust and grounded selection of the main concepts in vogue regarding narratology and, at the same time and in an innovative way, the main methodologies and applications of the concepts presented.

As a continuation of the proposal started in 2017, with the publication of the first dictionary focused on narratives, cinema, and transmedia, *Diccionario 2* contains approximately 450 entries by researchers from different countries, including Brazil. The entries are arranged alphabetically and by thematic index into: Approximations, Cinema, Media, Theories, and Video games, facilitating the search and selection by these key terms.

According to Vilches Manterola, the section "approximations" aims to open up space to diverse strands that enable the articulation of the narratives circulating in society with themes related to gender, women, and the individual taken as narrative subjects. The entries thus include approaches about (post)feminism, dance, women and photography, organizational and sports narratives, among others.

The entries in the “cinema” section deal with its theoretical analysis of film characters, semiotic narrative analysis of cinema, cinema and cognitive theory, typology of the film genre, etc. – but also historical aspects –, Westerns, ethnographic cinema in Latin America, *fotonovela*, the “new Japanese wave,” etc. – as well as critical reflections on the studies of neurofilmology and spectator categories.

The thematic index “media” concentrates entries that relate narrative to the most diverse media and, above all, televisual concepts, elements, and objects. Including entries such as “users of narrative media” – aficionados, amateurs, audiences, cinephiles, fans, geeks, etc. –, the evolution of audiovisual narrative media, immersive journalism and transmediality, television and the temporality of digital media, in addition to television series as objects of narrative analysis.

The largest number of entries is concentrated in the “theories” section, which contains fundamental concepts on the study of narratives – events, happenings, quinary schemes, enchainment, achronic structures, story arcs, plot construction, narrative definitions, model reader, narrative rhetoric, intrigue, narrative sequence, etc. – and transdisciplinary approaches that help the understanding of the mobilized terms, theories, and examples – biofiction, cyberpunk, transmedia culture, folktales and magical tales, folklore, history, literature, urban legends, transfictionality, etc.

One of the novelties of *Diccionario 2* was the inclusion of themes related to video games in entries that explore this universe and the particularities of plots, storylines, and narrative temporality from different game examples and genres – Arcade, ARG, RPG, etc. –, character analysis, the characteristic typologies of games to model players, and video game narration.

In Lorenzo Vilches Manterola’s words, the publication of the second dictionary has become fundamental to cover and complement the currently developed narrative approaches. Some contributions derived from the narrative theories in the book can be mentioned, such as anthologies, narrative structures and configurations, the explanation of models and paradigms, audiovisual media, the art of fiction and its digital evolution, skills and knowledge, critical narrative culture and its ideological representation, and innovation and communication.

Thus, the book fulfills a role greater than that of a mere dictionary in the strict sense of the term. The dense 883-page publication offers readers theories, concepts, methodologies, applied examples, and further references to the themes listed at the end of each entry.

Some particularly unique and current entries deserve to be highlighted, such as those related to narratives and games, which address everything from the analysis of the characters and the history and narrative format in such games

to the narrative approach of the new wave of Japanese documentary cinema or even to narrative productions (notably audiovisual ones) with a focus on feminism and post-feminism.

Such perspectives, theories, and applications in the dictionary constitute a reliable and up-to-date source for communication researchers – whether beginners or those already initiated in narrative studies –, who can, by consulting its entries, immerse themselves in the vast field of classical and post-classical narratology (Herman, 1997; Prince, 2008), getting to know and recognizing the studies and scholars who have dedicated themselves to such themes.

Considering the dissemination of this theme between the different areas of Communication – as can be observed by the publications of Santos and D’Almeida (2012), Cogo (2012), Nassar (2016), and Andreoni and Scroferneker (2019), which analyze narratives from the perspective of Public Relations and Organizational Communication; Zozzoli (2012), Brandão (2016), Covaleski (2012), and Carrascoza (2014) in their investigations on the relationship between narratives, brands, and consumption under the scope of Advertising; and the various studies developed by researchers in journalism, as per the survey conducted by Martinez and Iuama (2016), within the scope of the Brazilian Society of Researchers in Journalism – as shown by the expressive publications of the Research Network of Contemporary Media Narratives (RENAMI) (Maia & Martinez, 2018; Maia & Passos, 2020; Soster & Piccinin, 2017; Soster & Piccinin, 2019). The importance of a work that presents theoretical subsidies and narrative perspectives that dialogue with communicational studies is thus remarkable.

Considering such diversity, it should be noted that, although the proposal to summarize narrative theories in dictionaries has already been developed by other authors – such as the seminal work by Gerald Prince (1987) –, such adopt the mere definition of concepts or terms in a strict way, not intending to develop a broad foundation about them. Moreover, such dictionaries (Calatrava, 2004; Herman, Jahn & Ryan, 2005; Prince, 1987; Reis, 2018; Reis & Lopes, 2000) are conceived within the scope of Language and Literature, thus focusing on linguistic and literary studies, from which narratology originated.

Vilches Manterola’s publication thus distinguishes itself by the originality of its narratological approach, in interface with communication studies, as well as by the content and depth with which the concepts are presented but, above all, by its – almost encyclopedic – ambition that enables us to glimpse a panorama of the state of the art of classical narrative theories and of many other contemporary emerging perspectives. ■

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