

# Praxis of Television Analysis in Four Theoretical-Methodological Axes

## *Práxis da Análise Televisiva em Quatro Eixos Teórico-Metodológicos*

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### ABSTRACT

Review of the book *Análise da Ficção Televisiva: Metodologias e Práticas* [Analysis of television fiction: methodologies and practices], organized by Simone Rocha and Rogério Ferraraz. It's the result of a fruitful dialogue among research groups from Brazilian and Chilean universities. Motivated by methodological, cultural, and contextual challenges of television fiction studies, the nine chapters propose analytical arrangements oriented on four theoretical-methodological axes: *televisuality analysis*; *interrelational analysis*; *stylistic and narrative analysis*; and *integral analysis*. It is a relevant contribution to the methodological discussion of television research, especially for those interested in analytical procedures.

**Keywords:** TV Studies, TV Fiction, methodology, television analysis

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### RESUMO

Resenha do livro *Análise da Ficção Televisiva: Metodologias e Práticas*, organizado pelos professores Simone Rocha e Rogério Ferraraz. A publicação é fruto do diálogo entre grupos de pesquisa de três universidades brasileiras e uma chilena. Motivados pelos desafios metodológicos, culturais e contextuais dos estudos da ficção televisiva, os nove capítulos do volume propõem arranjos analíticos que se orientam em torno de quatro eixos teórico-metodológicos: *análise da televisualidade*; *análise inter-relacional*; *análise estilística e narrativa*; e *análise integral*. Trata-se de relevante contribuição à discussão metodológica da pesquisa em televisão, sobretudo para interessado(a)s em procedimentos analíticos.

**Palavras-chave:** Estudos de televisão, ficção televisiva, metodologia, análise televisiva

Rocha, S. M., & Ferraraz, R. (Coords). (2019). *Análise da ficção televisiva: Metodologias e práticas*. Insular.

IN THE FIELD of television studies, the question of the method has gained relevance from the relative abandonment of excessively generalist approaches and the adoption of perspectives which are more precise and aware of the stylistic, narrative, contextual, and cultural specificities of television programs. After all, how to analyze an object as complex and plural as television? By understanding it as a *cultural form* (Williams, 2016), it is understood that, to analyze it in its right measure, considering it not only as technology, but also as sociability, language, habit, format, gender, discourse, style, interaction, reception, and consumption would be necessary. Connected with the Latin American perspectives, focused on the study of media and mediations (Martín-Barbero, 2009), *Análise da Ficção Televisiva: Metodologias e Práticas* [Analysis of Television Fiction: Methodologies and Practices], a book organized by Simone Maria Rocha and Rogério Ferraraz, is part of the methodological debate of television studies, with nine chapters dedicated to the analysis of television fiction, situating it in the conjunction of technology with context and culture.

The book is the result of dialogues initiated in 2014 between the Research Group Communication and Culture in Televisualities, linked to the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), and the Research Group Innovations and Ruptures in Brazilian Television Fiction, from the Universidade Anhembi Morumbi (UAM). From the partnership, the groups organized, in 2014 and 2015, the First and Second Intergroup Research Day, focused on the theme of *audiovisual analysis and cultural aspects in television production*. In the following years, the debate was expanded, housing the participation of other researchers in seminars. Thus, the I PesqTV – Seminar of Methodology of Analysis of Televisual Products took place in 2016, at UFMG, and had the participation of members of the Research Group Communication, Art and Media Literacy, of the Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF). In 2018, the II PesqTV – New Potentialities and New Sensibilities of Contemporary Television was held, also at UFMG, which included researchers from the Center for Advanced Studies on Television at the Universidad de Chile (UC).

The meetings promoted since 2014 and the constant scientific exchange between researchers have provided the sharing of ideas and contributed to consolidate television studies in Latin America. Although they articulate different theories, methods, and objects, the four groups unite in the interest in developing methodologies of television analysis capable of achieving their specificities and complexities as a cultural medium and form. This is a significant effort since

television is one of the most impactful communication experiences of the 20th century, which continues to play a relevant role in Latin American culture at the beginning of the 21st century, extending its domains to the digital sphere (Jost, 2019) and following as a “culturally, political, social, economic, and aesthetically relevant” (Rocha & Ferraraz, 2019, p. 23) phenomenon. Thus, the nine chapters gathered in the volume are organized in four parts, and each explores a theoretical-methodological proposal developed within the research groups, bringing together a varied set of strategies for the analysis of television fiction.

The first part is dedicated to *televisuality analysis* and presents studies developed in the Research Group Communication and Culture in Televisualities (UFMG). In the chapter “Análise da Televisualidade e Proposições Sobre o Regime Estético Televisivo” [Analysis of Televisuality and Propositions on the Aesthetic Regime of Television], Simone Maria Rocha approaches the concept of visuality, by William Mitchell, to the analysis of the television style, by Jeremy Butler. From this conjunction, the author proposes the concept of televisuality to reflect on the visual experience provided by television in its aesthetic and political dimensions. Starting from observing the stylistic innovations in Brazilian telenovelas, the researcher questions the extent to which such innovations reformulate the aesthetic regime of television and contribute to the political functioning of the acts of seeing. In this sense, the author analyzes a sequence of the telenovela *A Força do Querer* (Kelly & Cavaco, 2017), in which the theme of transsexuality is explored, discussing the aesthetic and political mechanisms used in the scene that expresses the conflict experienced by Ivana, a character who re-identifies herself as Ivan. Thus, the study is inscribed in the perspectives of Jesús Martín-Barbero and Walter Benjamin on aesthetic experience, linking it to the social and political dimensions of sensitive experience and, thus, enriching the debate about the aesthetic regime of television. Therefore, the chapter deepens Butler’s model by investigating the aesthetic dimension (scarcely explored by the author), strengthening it as a daily life experience and understanding transsexuality by the bias of its televisuality and, therefore, its political and social visibility.

In the second chapter, “‘Eu Sou Chique, Benhê!’ – A Televisualidade da mestiçagem em Márcia, de *Chocolate com Pimenta*” [‘I’m Chic, Dear!’ – The Televisuality of Miscegenation in Márcia, from *Chocolate com Pimenta*], Olivia E. A. Resende continues the analysis of televisuality by investigating the way in which the character Márcia invites the public to experience what *being a caipira* is like. The researcher goes from the studies of visualities, Mitchell, and televisualities, of Rocha, to access the cultural matrices of the urban and rural that are revealed in the regimes of seeing and showing triggered by the

character of *Chocolate com Pimenta* (Augusto, 2003-2004). For this, it uses the concept of *picture*, proposed by Mitchell, articulating it to the stylistic analysis formulated by Butler to understand how sensitive experiences about the urban and rural views are shared. This analytical path leads the author to conclude that the character Márcia creates a *metaimage* of identities in constitutively miscegenated societies (Martín-Barbero, 2009), such as Latin America. Thus, the *rurbanity* of the character reveals contradictions that involve the web of hybrid cultures (García Canclini, 2015), demonstrating how Brazilian television can express, with its televisuality, the complexity of cultural experiences.

Closing the segment dedicated to the analysis of televisuality, Marcos Vinicius Meigre e Silva signs the third chapter, “Imagens que Perturbam, Imagens que Confundem: Fissuras na Representação Visual da Mediunidade em Telenovelas” [Images That Disturb, Images That Confuse: Cracks in the Visual Representation of Mediumship in Telenovelas], in which he discusses stylistic and cultural processes in spiritualism telenovelas by Rede Globo. With a corpus consisting of three telenovelas – *A Viagem* (Granato, 1994); *Alma Gêmea* (Augusto, 2005-2006); and *Além do Tempo* (Kelly, 2015-2016) – the author seeks to understand the stylistic aspects of the televisual representation of mediumship and how such aspects could reveal sociocultural transformations about spirituality. By selecting narrative events linked to the mediunic manifestation, the researcher examines its stylistic resources and notices a certain development of spiritualist visuality in the Brazilian telenovela. Thus, using Mitchell’s *pictures* he observes a first movement marked by didacticism, necessary for unveiling the spiritualist theme, passing through an obscure representation of spirituality and, finally, reaching a more naturalistic approach to a theme that is now treated more openly in the sociocultural plane. Thus, the study reaffirms the scientific merits of the alliance between visual and stylistic studies for enriching televisual analysis.

In the second part of the book, we enter the field of *interrelational analysis* developed by the Research Group Communication, Art and Media Literacy (UFJF). The group has been dedicated to studying the relations between production and consumption of media content in the culture of convergence, seeking to understand the extent to which this interaction stimulates the so-called media literacy. From this scope, Gabriela Borges and Daiana Sigiliano (2019a) present two studies focused on interrelational analysis involving *twittertainment*, *social TV*, quality in television, and media literacy. In the fourth chapter, “A Ficção Seriada Brasileira no Século XXI: Inter-Relações entre a Qualidade e a Literacia Midiática” [Brazilian Serial Fiction in the 21st Century: Inter-Relations between Quality and Media Literacy], the researchers go back to the debate on the issue of quality in television and propose updating it by studying television fiction in

the environment of media convergence. Based on this review, they list quality indicators that guide the analyses by a semiotic approach that relates aspects of the expression and content plan. Thus, the study underscores the audacious analysis of fifty works (miniseries, episodic series, and series with transmedia action) produced from 2000 to 2016 by open and by subscription Brazilian channels, identifying indicators such as intertextuality, scarcity of flashy arrows, narrative special effects, storytelling resources and transmedia literacy. With interrelational analysis, the study aims to achieve “an understanding of the role of the public, and therefore of their media literacy, in the interaction with the work” (p. 117). Thus, the chapter presents an important contribution by bringing renewed discussions on the issue of quality in television in the context of the culture of convergence, relating it to the studies of media literacy.

In “Literacia Midiática e os Fãs de Telenovela: Uma Análise do *Twittertainment* na *Social TV* Brasileira” [Media Literacy and Telenovela Fans: An Analysis of *Twittertainment* in Brazilian *Social TV*], fifth chapter of the volume, Borges and Sigiliano (2019b) continue the discussions, this time highlighting the practices of *twittertainment* in *social TV* in Brazilian telenovelas. Starting from the studies of media literacy, the article considers interrelational analysis as “the dialogue between production and engagement processes” to “reflect on the contents produced by interagent viewers in *twittertainment*” (p. 121). The term is understood by the authors as a critical and creative appropriation of media content by fans by using Twitter, articulating the concept to media and transmedia literacy. Thus, Borges and Sigiliano analyze characteristics of two practices derived from *twittertainment*: *twitter literacy* and *remix literacy*. Such practices materialize the interaction of viewers with the fictional universe of telenovelas, standing out as fruitful objects for research situated at the intersection of media literacy with television studies in the context of convergence.

The third part of the book comprises two chapters focused on *stylistic* and *narrative analysis*. Fruits of investigations developed in the Research Group Innovations and Ruptures in Brazilian Television Fiction (UAM), the studies analyze formal and narrative aspects in television dramaturgy. From this scope, the group members adopt different theoretical-methodological perspectives united, however, by the objective of identifying the presence or not of transformations in television fiction. Thus, in the sixth chapter, “O Retorno a um Mundo Estranho e Maravilhoso: *Twin Peaks: The Return* e o Inquietante Freudiano” [The Return to a Strange and Wonderful World: *Twin Peaks: The Return* and the Freudian Unsettling], Rogério Ferraraz and Maria Ignês Charlemagne sat on the celebrated series *Twin Peaks* (Frost & Lynch, 1990-1991; Frost et al., 2017), which, in the 1990s, broke away from stylistic and narrative standards

and introduced on open TV the unusual mixture of soap opera with the strange universe of David Lynch. Thus, the Freudian concept of *unsettling* is mobilized, and based on it the authors seek to understand the return of *Twin Peaks*, in 2017, twenty-five years after the end of the second season. Thus, the study compared these two moments of the series, seeking to identify the presence or not of recurrences of what they call Lynchian style.

Already in “Narrativa e Estilo na Ficção Televisiva Brasileira Infantojuvenil: Poéticas da Migração na Telenovela *As Aventuras de Poliana* (SBT)” [Narrative and Style in Brazilian Children’s Television Fiction: Poetics of Migration in the Telenovela *As Aventuras de Poliana* (SBT)], the seventh chapter of the volume, the researcher João Paulo Hergesel (2019) focuses the telenovela for children and teenagers, according to him, a television product scarcely adopted by Brazilian open television, but which has relevance and significant audience in SBT. Thus, the researcher analyzes the narrative and style of *As Aventuras de Poliana* (Boury, 2018-2020), highlighting scenes that address the reports of the co-protagonist João about the adventures of his migratory journey from the *sertão* of Ceará to the capital of São Paulo. To perform the analysis, Hergesel used the telepoetics proposed by Jeremy Butler, articulated to the audiovisual composition studies of David Bordwell and the linguistic strategies defined by Charles Bally. When investigating thematic, narrative, and stylistic elements of the selected scenes, the author classifies the telenovela as a *puerile dramedy* with poetic nuances of great “communicative power that goes beyond the conventional, even in the case of a mostly stereotypical sequence” (p. 199). Thus, the chapter, by highlighting the children’s telenovela, contributes to investigate this segment scarcely visited by open TV and television studies.

Finally, two chapters make up the fourth part of the book, dedicated to *integral analysis*, a methodology adopted by researchers from the Center for Advanced Studies on Television (UC). Integral analysis consists in investigating the relations established between the production, the text, the reception, and the context of a television work. Thus, in the eighth chapter, “El Estudio de las Historias de la Ficción Televisiva Chilena: Aproximación Metodológica para un Análisis Integral” [The study of Chilean television fiction stories: methodological approach for full analysis], Javier Mateos-Pérez and Gloria Ochoa Sotomayor undertake the analysis of three Chilean series: *Los 80* (Gesswein & Pereira, 2008-2014), *Los Archivos del Cardenal* (Gandara et al., 2011-2014) and *El Reemplazante* (Goldschmied & González, 2012-2014). They are works that address, through fiction, the last fifty years of the country – from the military civil dictatorship established in 1973 to the present day. In addition, they are series positively evaluated by critics, industry, and the public, reaching large

audiences and, therefore, considered important in constituting the Chilean collective imaginary. With an integral approach, the study examines the socio-political, economic, and television contexts that allowed the series to be made. Then, their audiovisual and narrative proposals are analyzed. Finally, we investigate the reception of these works, especially by the youth audience, since it is a generation that has not experienced the facts related to the Chilean dictatorship represented in the fictions. Thus, such programs are understood as phenomena resulting from the conjunction of contexts, content, narrative, and audiovisual materiality and meanings of reception. The main findings of the research point to the relevant role of television in the growing memorialistic movement that has gained force in Chile, especially regarding to historical events scarcely studied in formal education. Also, as results, the study presents pertinent methodological reflections, such as the need to create a method capable of addressing television series in a complete way, as a massive audiovisual product, as well as its nature and television specificity.

Following the theme of historical memories in television fiction, Lorena Antezana Barrios presents the ninth chapter, “Docudramas Televisivos como Vehículos de Memorias Generacionales” [Television Docudramas as Vehicles of Generational Memories]. In this study, the author adopts the integral method to understand how television docudramas that address the period of the Chilean military civil dictatorship are interpreted by different generations of viewers. Thus, Barrios highlights the series *Ecos del Desierto* (Zúñiga & García, 2013) and *No* (Larraín, 2014), characterizing them as docudramas – since they are inspired by events and the lives of real characters – and questions which aspects of these works act in constructing collective memories of different generations. The study then investigates the production, content, and audiences of these television fictions. Based on information collected in interviews and focus groups, the author concludes that the generation that experienced the coup d’état grants a documentary value to the series, seeking to validate memories and relate representation to events sometimes experienced by them. The second generation, composed of viewers who grew up during the dictatorship, establish a more affective relationship, attributing melodramatic and situational value to the works. Finally, the third generation, which had no experience during the dictatorship period, attributes a historical and emotional value to the series, creating an emotional link and establishing critical balances of historical and political events. The relevance of these last two chapters is emphasized in reflecting on television fiction in memorialistic processes that place past and present in relation.

After examining the nine chapters briefly presented in this review, in conclusion, we recognize the contribution of the book by presenting more precise

methodologies that enable consistent results to reach the capacity of television to dialogue with the culture and society in which it is inserted. *Análise da Ficção Televisiva: Metodologias e Práticas* [Analysis of Television Fiction: Methodologies and Practices] presents to the reader a well-founded set of methodological strategies aimed at analyzing television, especially television fiction, adding to other no less important works, such as *Análise do Programa Televisivo* [Analysis of the Television Program] (2018), by Arlindo Machado and Marta Lucía Vélez. Proposing four methodological perspectives of relevance for contemporary television studies, the volume offers an overview of possible analytical paths of television fiction, however, without the intention of exhausting or ending the issue of the method in the television study. Despite not being its objective, when presenting different processes of analysis, the book provides a reflection on the plurality of possible approaches, demonstrating the power not only of theoretical-methodological proposals, but also of their alignments to the questions posed to this notably complex object that is the television. ■

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Article received on August 12 and approved on December 29, 2021.