Lessa, Rodrigo; Araújo, João; Ortiz, Júnia

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Blood's Fictional Universe

The Bad Things I Have Done with You: Brazilian Audience's Appropriations of *True Blood*'s Fictional Universe

Las cosas malas que te hice: Las apropiaciones del público brasileño del universo ficcional de *True Blood*

Rodrigo Lessa
Federal University of Bahia (UFBA – Brazil)
lessaro@gmail.com

João Araújo
Federal University of Bahia (UFBA – Brazil)
jesilvaraujo@gmail.com

Júnia Ortiz
Federal University of Bahia (UFBA – Brazil)
junia.ortiz@gmail.com

Abstract

In this article, we present results of a survey designed to explore how Brazilian viewers of HBO's True Blood interact with its world-building characteristics. The main goal is to understand in depth the viewers and their relations with the series storyworld. The general assumptions of this article, as well as the basis that generated the questions of our survey, are derivative of participatory culture issues. This means that we use the lens of participatory culture theoretical framework to understand how TV viewers interact with the media they consume. The data were obtained with the application of an online survey between March 21 and March 28, 2014. We were able to reach non-fans, regular viewers (0, 7%, n=2), moderate fans (29, 3%, n=83), and hardcore *True Blood* fans (70%, n=198) as well. Despite the possible sample biases (e.g. people who

consume fan-generated content), we believe we could reach a diversified amount *of True Blood* viewers. In total, we had 283 respondents. Our goal was that the questions of the survey encompassed with special attention the audience's relationship with the fictional world, and, because of that, we decided to take into account certain theoretical issues that academic works on the theme highlight. The issues chosen were authentication, saturation, consistency, and accessibility, which we believe that it was expressed well through the survey's questions. To test the possible relationships among the variables considered in this study, we applied a bivariate analysis through the crossing of all quantitative variables, two by two. We calculated Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to each of such relations, aiming at the verification of tendencies, influences, or coincidences. All the statistical analysis were electronically processes through SPSS - Statistical Package of Social Science.

Keywords: Brazilian Audience; American Television; Fictional Universe; True Blood; Participatory Culture; Fan Culture.

Resumen

En este artículo, presentamos los resultados de una encuesta diseñada para explorar cómo los espectadores brasileños de *True Blood* (HBO) interactúan con sus características de construcción de mundo. El objetivo principal es entender en profundidad los espectadores y sus relaciones con el mundo de la historia de la serie. Las suposiciones generales de este artículo, bien como las bases que han generado las preguntas de la encuesta, son derivados de cuestiones de la cultura participativa. Esto significa que se utilizó las lentes del marco teórico de la cultura participativa para entender cómo los espectadores de la televisión interactúan con los medios que consumen. Los datos han sido obtenidos con la aplicación de una encuesta online entre el 21 de marzo y el 28 de marzo de 2014. Entre los fans de *True Blood*, alcanzamos a los no aficionados, a espectadores regulares (0,7%, n = 2), a los aficionados moderados (29,3%, n = 83), y también a los fans incondicionales (70%, n = 198). A pesar de las posibles tendencias de las muestras (por ejemplo, la gente que consume contenido creado por los fans), creemos que llegamos a alcanzar a una cantidad diversificada de espectadores de *True Blood*. En total, tuvimos 283 encuestados. Nuestro objetivo era que las preguntas de la encuesta abarcaran con especial atención la relación del público con el mundo ficcional y, por lo tanto, decidimos tener en cuenta ciertas cuestiones teóricas que de las más destacadas entre trabajos académicos. Las cuestiones elegidas fueran autenticación, saturación, consistencia y accesibilidad, las cuales creemos haber sido bien expresadas a través de las preguntas de la encuesta. Para probar las posibles relaciones entre las variables consideradas en este estudio, aplicamos un análisis de dos variables a través del cruce de todas las variables cuantitativas, de dos en dos. Calculamos el coeficiente de correlación producto-momento de Pearson para cada una de estas relaciones, buscando la verificación de las tendencias, influencias o

coincidencias. Todos los análisis estadísticos han sido procesados electrónicamente a través del SPSS - Statistical Package of Social Science.

Palabras claves: Público brasileño; Televisión americana; Universo ficcional; *True Blood*; Cultura participativa; Cultura de fans.

Introduction

In this article, we present results of a survey designed to explore how Brazilian viewers of HBO's True Blood interact with its world-building characteristics. The main goal is to understand in depth the viewers and their relations with the series storyworld.

The series premiered in 2008, and its seventh and last season aired in 2014 [1]. Created by Alan Ball, it is based on the novels collection *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, also known as *Sookie Stackhouse Series*, written by American bestselling author Charlaine Harris. *True Blood* plots are mostly located on the fictional town called Bon Temps, in the state of Louisiana (USA), set in a storyworld where vampires, werewolves, fairies, shapeshifters, and other supernatural creatures exist. Upon the invention of a synthetic blood, commercially sold as Tru Blood, vampires made their appearance to the public and began to seek a peaceful coexistence with humans, since vampires no longer need to feed from them – although this is not always the case. In the middle of this, there is *True Blood*'s main character, telepathic waitress Sookie Stackhouse, and her first love, vampire Bill Compton. As the story develops, new characters appear, as well as new supernatural beings (e.g. ghosts, werepanthers, and witches).

The general assumptions of this article, as well as the basis that generated the questions of our survey, are derivative of participatory culture issues. This means that we use the lens of participatory culture theoretical framework to understand how TV viewers interact with the media they consume – in this particular case, a TV series. On this topic, we agree with Jenkins (2007) when he says that fan practices have become so common that to differentiate fans from general media consumers is futile. As the data from our survey shows, only 0,7% (n=2) of the 283 respondents did not declared themselves as True Blood fans. The practices that characterize a fan and a TV viewer who is engaged in some level with participatory culture logics are the same. After all, "Media fans are consumers who also produce, readers who also write, spectators who also participate" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 208).

People around the globe have access to low-cost tech devices that allow them to edit and to distribute multimedia content. They are able to create and share messages through broadband internet connection at a rapid pace and, often, in real time. What was once centered in few institutions, such as newspapers and TV networks, today is diffused between "independent publishers, video-sharing sites, collaboratively sustained

knowledge banks, and fan-generated entertainment" (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013, p. 3). In that context, participatory culture:

"Is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices? A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created)" (Jenkins et al, 2009, p. 3).

In a ubiquitously connected society, collective efforts from the most diversified people emerge in all places. It could be either an artistic project in which everybody contributes to the final work, or a collaborative wiki in which the residents of a small town document their history. Either way, according to Mittell (2013, p. 38), the key aspect to understand the culture of media fans is that "participants have an emotional engagement with a shared cultural form, dedicating their time, money, and creative energies to exploring that relationship." In a similar fashion, Booth (2010) believes that being a fan means to identify yourself with a media text. He continues to argue that "As Sandvoss shows, a media object 'is part of the fan's (sense) of self', as some fans use their identity *as* fans as a way to differentiate themselves from other media audiences" (Booth, 2010, p. 20, original highlights).

Finally, we need to make it clear that the kind of media fan that interests us the most is the one who explores media content diligently. These fans use their technological abilities, their social interaction skills, and their shared knowledge in everyday practices towards media consumption. The fans that engage with media texts produce meanings and extract pleasures form their consumption of cultural industries works (Fiske, 1992; Booth, 2010). Frequently, this effort results in the autonomous production of the most diversified kinds: fan fiction, artwo09irks, image mash-ups, video remixes, blogs, songs, collaborative wikis, discussion forums, and so on. These fans create their own systems of production and distribution, which Fiske (1992) calls a 'shadow cultural economy', i.e., outside of the cultural industries economy.

Before we proceed to our literature review, however, we must explicit that due to the exploratory characteristic of this research and to the lack of similar works, we chose not to work upon preliminary hypotheses. Instead, we preferred to build our survey under the Research Question: How do Brazilian viewers of HBO's True Blood interact with the series' world-building characteristics and its storyworld? This general question allowed us to investigate and explore the phenomenon, and to identify the most relevant data. Furthermore, in order to maintain methodological rigor and to guarantee our findings accuracy, we composed the survey's questions based strictly upon four theoretical key concepts of fictional worlds scholarship (authentication, saturation, consistency, and accessibility), which we develop in the Design and Methods section. First, we will dwell a little on the theoretical framework regarding fictional worlds.

Regarding fictional worlds

In face of a myriad of contemporary phenomena associated with television, among which participatory culture, the complexification of narratives, and the transmediation of contents, several concepts have emerged or been rescued from distinct research traditions, and maybe one of the most central among them is that of fictional universes. Few terms, however, have been as misunderstood as this one, whose full scope is still hardly ever engaged in relation to such phenomena, and whose exploration would, in our appreciation, advance their apprehension.

The concept of fictional world – correlated, but not identical to that of fictional universe – emerges in Christian Philosophy and is later appropriated and developed by Modal Logics. Field in which the notion of possible world is fundamentally used to deal with worlds created out of counterfactual propositions (Eco, 2008), being counterfactual everything that does not exist/did not occur, but *could* exist/have occurred, or *can come to* exist/occur. A counterfactual is frequently introduced in everyday conversations through conditionals. A recurring example is: "What if there were blue swans?"

Therefore, counterfactuals deal not with actual states of affairs, but with non-actual possibilities (Eco, 2008). Thus, when we imagine how our lives would have been if we had made other choices (e.g. if we had married other people or chosen a different profession) we are inaugurating possible worlds via these imaginative acts, as well as when we dream, wish, conjecture, or hypothesize.

Nevertheless, most authors who dedicated themselves to the topic of fictional worlds refuse to think of them as a special class of possible worlds from logics, due to specific features of the worlds projected by works of fiction (Pavel, 1986; Eco, 2008; Doležel, 1988; Wolf, 2013). One of such features is the fact that fictional worlds are necessarily incomplete (Doležel, 1988), full of ontological gaps. There are aspects in them that even the most meticulous author cannot precise. Hence, however dedicated Tolkien might have been, he did not account for Frodo's childhood, neither did Shakespeare specify the exact number of children of Lady Macbeth.

Fictional world scholars also mention, beyond these ontological holes, epistemological gaps, which the spectators fulfill during the fruition of the work. This is why – they argue – if someone pays something in euros in a present day movie, generally, it is possible for the audience to assume the characters are in an EU country. The audience, in fact, is frequently evoked in the studies on fictional worlds, but these studies seldom dwell on real-life fiction consumers, frequently postulating the spectators as a mere theoretical construct.

It is in this fashion that Marie-Laure Ryan (2001), theorizing about immersion, conceives a principle of minimal departure engaged by us in the fulfillment of

epistemological gaps in fictional texts, echoing Iser's theory of reading (1978). She also talks about the recentering of one's conscience in a fictional world (Ryan, 1991), mentioning that the audience dislocates their minds to a world governed by properties and inhabited by individuals other than those that govern/inhabit the actual world, in a process that David Herman (2009) prefers to call accommodation. In fact, to Herman, the storyworlds themselves are nothing more than mental constructs in the audience's minds, where spectators create maps and diagrams with the places that appear in the stories, as well as the narratives' timelines, the relationships among the characters and so on, in a process Wolf (2013, p. 49) calls absorption.

Immmersion, absorption, fulfillment of gaps, fictional recentering: the fact is that the audience, as an ideal construct, has always been present in the scholarship on fictional worlds, but was rarely thought of in an empirical manner [2]. In studying Brazilian's audience of *True Blood*, we intend to give a little contribution to fixing this problem, considering empirical spectators, what we believe to be crucial to understanding how fictional universes from media products structure themselves in actuality. In addition, here, it is capital to once again rescued the distinction between fictional worlds and fictional universes, which we mentioned in passing in the introduction of this topic.

In the field of Logics, a universe is a set of worlds connected through one or more well established criteria (Pavel, 1986). Criteria that Umberto Eco (2008) would call "essential properties". Accordingly, for example, if we established the criterion of "being populated by exactly the same individuals", two worlds would belong in the same universe if their populations were identical. Even if in one of them a set of individuals lived in Rio de Janeiro, whilst in the other they had moved to London – in other words, even if there are variations in their accidental properties; in this case, in the accidental property of their address. These two worlds would not belong in the same universe; however, if in one of them, part of the other's population, had never been born or had already died[3].

Even though, as we mentioned, scholars of fictional worlds do not reduce them to a special case of logical possible worlds. The literary scholar Thomas Pavel (1986), one of the first to approach the issue, appropriates the logical notion of universe to propose fictional universes as structured sets of worlds connected to one or more works of fiction. Consequently, for Pavel, the fictional universe of a book or a TV show contains not only the base world in which the story develops, but: a) their non-actual possible alternative (e.g. a world where Walter White never had cancer in *Breaking Bad*'s universe); and b) the worlds imagined, dreamed of, wished for, and conjectured by the characters, as the one populated with dragons that exists solely in Don Quixote's head in Cervantes' novel.

In Lector in Fabula[4], whose greatest concern falls upon the interpretative paths taken by the (once again, theoretical) audience of a fictional work, Eco (2008) also points to another kind of possible world associated with a work of fiction: those imagined by the audiences in their interpretative walks, created when they bet on how the plot will develop from that point forward. These worlds use to sometimes juxtapose the storyworld (in case of correct conjectures), and sometimes not[5]. Hence, fictional universes are composed by the "base" world where the plot takes place; the alternative versions of that world (as the ones proposed by adaptations or transmedia extensions that are not part of the canon); the worlds created by the characters through their imaginative acts; and the ones created by the audience in their interpretative walks[6].

Furthermore, we shall note that the alternative versions do not necessarily need to be virtual, sheer theoretical possibilities, but they can also be actualized in specific works of fiction, as exemplified above in parenthesis – from the point of view of media studies, we might add, it is much more fruitful to center efforts in alternative versions actualized in concrete works than in the philosophical possibilities of such actualizations. And it is bearing that in mind that we try to encompass in our research, even if secondarily, the relationship Brazilian fan productions (e.g. fan fiction, fan art, fan videos) establish with *True Blood*'s fictional world, and how they develop a portion of the series' fictional universe.

Design and Method

Sampling and Data

The data were obtained with the application of an online survey between March 21 and March 28, 2014. The survey was distributed using the snowball sampling technique, in which we selected a few respondents and asked them to share the survey among their social network after taking it themselves. The selected respondents were individuals who own social media profiles regarding one of the following two topics: *True Blood* fan communities or blogs about TV shows in general. We asked them to share the survey on their Twitter accounts and Facebook pages, and recommended that they use this phrase (some of them changed it minimally): "If you watch *True Blood*, help these researchers from UFBA[7] by taking this survey. Click on the following link." With that approach, we were able to reach non-fans, regular viewers (0,7%, n=2), moderate fans (29,3%, n=83), and hardcore *True Blood* fans (70%, n=198) as well. Despite the possible sample biases (e.g. people who consume fan-generated content), we believe we could reach a diversified amount *of True Blood* viewers. In total, we had 283 respondents.

To test the possible relationships among the variables considered in this study, we applied a bivariate analysis through the crossing of all quantitative variables, two by

two. We calculated Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to each of such relations, aiming at the verification of tendencies, influences, or coincidences. All the statistical analysis were electronically processes through SPSS - Statistical Package of Social Science.

Survey questions and theoretical implications

Our goal was that the questions of the survey encompassed with special attention the audience's relationship with the fictional world, and, because of that, we decided to take into account certain theoretical issues that academic works on the theme highlight. Four of these issues were primarily elected: a) authentication, b) saturation, c) consistency, and d) accessibility. On the following paragraphs, we elaborate on these topics, and on how we tried to incorporate them in the survey.

To Doležel (1988), the genesis of fictional world can be seen as a case of extreme change in the world: the change from non-existence to (fictional) existence. In this sense, the works of fiction are performative. Thus, what is shown on the screen is generally true in the world of a TV series[8].

Authentication is the force that grants truth-value to properties of a fictional world; and, by extension, the force that separates the storyworld from its alternative versions, i.e., from other worlds in the same fictional universe. Authentication raises questions regarding the canon and the possibilities of breaking it. Questions regarding how authentic is a sentence about a storyworld, or, on the contrary, how they can only be granted truth-value in alternative versions of that world.

It is within the limits of authentication that we locate problems regarding disputes between spectatorial agency and what Ryan (2001) calls textual authority. Hence, it was to encompass authentication issues that we included in the survey questions regarding how faithful the spectators think fan productions needed to be to the series' canonic storyworld; and how they reconciled that storyworld with its official alternative versions (e.g. the ones presented in the *Sookie Stackhouse Series* and the one presented in the comic book series).

Saturation, by its turn, is thought of as the function that governs "the distribution of gaps and of indeterminate and determinate facts" (Doležel, 1988, no page). Therefore, whilst fictional worlds are always incomplete, it is the degree of saturation that determine how complete they appear to be in the fruition process. To Wolf (2013, p. 49), saturation is "the pleasurable goal of conceptual immersion; the occupying of the audience's full attention and imagination, often with more detail than can be held in mind all at once".

In assessing saturation, however, instead of asking how saturated the audiences see the series itself, we decided to focus on how thoroughly they seek such effect. How

much they let themselves get absorbed into the storyworld. Thus, we posed a series of questions to understand how they evaluate their level of knowledge about multiple aspects of *True Blood*'s fictional world (mythology, politics, geography, names, places, etc.). These were followed by another series of questions on if they usually consult reference materials about the show's world, and if so, which ones (e.g. maps, genealogies, timelines, collaborative wikis, DVD and Blu-Ray extras, and both official and non-official guides, sites, or social media profiles).

As to *consistency*, the concept addresses the establishment of rules for the world's functioning and the maintenance of such rules by the production instance. In other words, it addresses the degree of plausibility of the storyworld and its ability to avoid internal contradictions (Wolf, 2013). Doležel (1988), though he does not use the term "consisency" itself, retrieves Aristotle's concept of verisimilitude and associates it to what Leibniz calls compossibility. That is, the assurance that the properties of a world, the entities that furnish it, and the predicates of such properties and entities, form a possible set and do not contradict each other (i.e., are co-possible, or consistent with each other). To access how consistent Brazilian *True Blood*'s audiences think the series' storyworld is, we just questioned if they have ever found internal contradictions in the show's narrative, and to which degree that affected their fruition.

Finally, a last topic we chose to evaluate was that of *accessibility*. The concept addresses the access to the fictional world from our own, or even the access from one fictional world to another (Doležel, 2009). Certainly, such access is not literal, and the physical "trip" to fictional worlds, televisual or otherwise, is impossible, but they are accessible to us through the mediation of semiotic channels (Doležel, 1988), such as television shows, movies, or comic books. Ryan (1991) attempts an exhaustive typology of accessibility relations between worlds, but since they are not of great concern for this study, we will not get into them. What interests us regarding accessibility is what the audiences "bring" from *True Blood*'s world to their everyday lives, and what they "take" from their personal lives (and, by extent, from our world) to the materials they produce set in the series' fictional universe, like fan fictions, fan art, or fan videos.

Accordingly, we also asked what logics they use to create such productions: if they develop, narratives that supposedly could have taken place in-between seasons and/or functioned as backstory for the characters, or, on the other hand, alternative versions and crossovers (or both). This question was meant to evaluate if they seek to reconcile their products with the canonic authenticated storyworld of the televisual narrative, and therefore make the worlds they create accessible to the series' fictional world; or if they seek to implode the canon, creating alternative versions or even mixing distinct fictional worlds through crossovers, making the worlds they created irreconcilable (and thus in certain sense inaccessible) to the canonic one. Finally, we also asked to what extent they use *True Blood*'s way of building supernatural creatures

to evaluate/judge the representation of such creatures in other works of fiction, understanding that this allows us to glimpse to what extent they use *True Blood*'s elements to access the worlds of other works of fiction.

The survey's last section was composed with questions regarding demographic/background characteristics, such as: gender, age, region of the country where the respondents are based, education, internet access, familiarity with the English language, number of seasons and episodes seen, how much of a fan each of them consider themselves, what they consume and produce about the series, how many other American series they see etc.

Measurements

To evaluate Brazilian audiences' relationship with *True Blood* and its fictional world, we considered the following variables the most important ones: level of knowledge about the series' fictional world; degree of consultation to materials regarding the storyworld; demand of fidelity from fan-produced materials to the storyworld; degree of involvement on the production of non-official materials about the show; influence of their personal lives in the production of fan materials set in the same fictional universe; frequency of publications about the series in social media profiles.

To evaluate the *level of knowledge about the fictional world*, we used Likert's scale of five points, from 0 ("I strongly disagree") to 4 ("I strongly agree"), through which the respondents could indicate their degree of acquiescence or lack thereof regarding the following declarations: "I remember character's lines"; "I remember the cities that have appeared on the show"; "I know how the vampires', the Fellowship of the Sun's, and other fictional entities from the series' political hierarchies work"; "I remember secondary characters, including the less important ones"; and "I have knowledge regarding the supernatural creatures that have appeared in the series". We then calculated the averaged value of all items for each case, generating, thus, a scale, with the highest scores indicating higher level of knowledge.

The *degree of consultation to reference materials about the show's storyworld* was measured through the indications of the respondents about the consultation of the following items: maps, genealogies, timelines, collaborative wikis, DVD and Blu-Ray extras, books with official or non-official guides, the series' official website, the series' official profiles (in social media websites like Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.), fan sites or fan blogs, fan-maintained profiles and pages in social media websites (like Facebook, Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc.). To each item, the data were codified as one when the answer was positive, and zero when it was not. The index to measure the degree of consultation was based on the sum of the items for each case.

To measure the *respondents' demand of fidelity from fan-created materials to True Blood's fictional world*, we asked that participants indicated (from 0 to 4) their demand of fan-created materials' fidelity to the canon regarding five different aspects: "fidelity to the storyworld in general"; "to Louisiana and Bon Temps as portrayed in the series"; "to the characteristics the show created for its supernatural creatures"; "to the romantic involvements the series creates for its characters"; "to the characters that have already died in the series." We calculated the average value of every item to each case, generating, therefore, a scale, with highest scores indicating higher level of fidelity demand.

The measurements of the *degree of consumption of non-official materials related to True Blood and its storyworld* and of the *degree of production of non-official materials related to True Blood and its fictional world* were done separately. In two different questions, participants indicated if they: a) consume/have ever consumed, and b) produce/have ever produced, the following materials: fan fiction, fan art, fan videos, fan sites or fan blogs, fan-maintained profiles or pages on social media websites, collaborative wikis, and subtitles and translations. In the same fashion of the consultation to reference materials, the data were codified as 1 when the answer was positive, and 0 when it wasn't, and the index was generated from the sum of the items for each case.

To verify the *frequency of publications about True Blood in social media profiles* we asked the participants to indicate the frequency of publication in a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (all the time). Finally, to operationalize *the influence of personal life in the production of materials set in the show's fictional universe (and thus the level of recognition of accessibility relations between the world they inhabit and the worlds they create in the series' universe)*, we created a measurement composed of three affirmatives. Using a scale from 0 to 4, the participants classified their level of agreement with the sentences: "I use facts of my personal life to get ideas for my fan fictions, fan arts, fan videos etc."; "I use facts from other fictional works I know to get ideas for my fan fictions, fan arts, fan videos etc."; "I use topics from newspapers and general knowledge about the society I live in to get ideas for my fan fictions, fan arts, fan videos etc.". Then, we calculated the averaged value for all items to each case, generating, thus, a scale, with higher scores indicating higher degrees of recognition of accessibility.

Results and Discussion

Respondent characteristics

Those who participated in the survey answered queries about their relationship to the series, as well as general questions regarding the characterization of the sample. Among the respondents, 64% (n=181) were women, and 34% (n=97) were men, 2%

(n=5) consider that they do not fit in the men/women binary. 77% (n=217) are among the ages of 18 and 30. As to scholarship, 40% (n=114) are currently attending higher education. Besides, 89% (n=252) attest they have watched all *True Blood* seasons, and 88% (n=249) also watch other shows. Most of them consider themselves as moderate or hardcore fans of *True Blood*, in a total of 99,3% (n=281).

Non-official materials, saturation, consistency, and accessibility

Only 12% (n=33) of the respondents said they produce or have ever produced one or more of the following non-official materials related to *True Blood*: fan fiction (n=11), fan art (n=9), fan videos (n=2), fan sites or blogs (n=12), social media profiles or pages (n=13), collaborative wikis (n=3), subtitles and translations (n=7). Among them, 73% identified as women, and 61% are 18 to 24 years old. They are based in 16 out of 27 different Brazilian federative states (the most significant being Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro), what implies some degree of dispersion along the national territory. As for scholarship, most of them (58%) are currently attending higher education institutions.

As we can observe in Table 1, the level of production of non-official materials related do the series and its fictional universe was closely associated with the level of consumption of the same kind of materials, allowing us to establish a connection not only between production and consumption in the logics of participatory culture, but also between production and consumption of alternative versions of the fictional world, showing that this portion of the audience is interested in building, as well as knowing, portions of the fictional universe that go beyond the storyworld and its canonic alternatives (e.g. the ones from Charlaine Harris' book series and the comic books).

Other variable associated with the level of production of non-official material was the influence of the personal lives of the fans in their productions of this sort, what shows us that these fans also recognize a greater accessibility between the world they inhabit and the series' fictional universe, using their own experiences to produce their materials and create portions of that universe, leaving traces of themselves there. This accessibility is also visible in the reverberation of the fictional universe in the spectators' everyday life, and 43% (n=123) of the fans use in their own daily life characters' slangs and expressions. An even bigger portion of them (51%, n=144) download the show's soundtrack songs – one of the biggest elements in *True Blood*'s construction of the American southern atmosphere –, while 37% (n=105) admitted that they do not consume more products associated to the series (like the Tru Blood beverage sold by HBO, and characters' clothes and accessories) because they do not have access to them. 52% (n=147) said they also consume memes, gifs, and internet images, which usually remix and play with storyworld elements.

The most common logics in fan-produced contents are those of creation of stories that could have happened between seasons, taking care not to contradict the show's chronology (4% of total respondents, 33% of those who produce non-official materials, n=11) an the creation of backstory for the characters (3.5% of total respondents, 30% of those who produce non-official materials, n=10). That demonstrates a certain search for loyalty to the storyworld, as opposed to the more radical breaks of the canon, like the ones operated by alternative versions (2,4% of total respondents, 21% of those who produce non-official materials, n=7) or crossovers stories (0,7% of total respondents, 6% of those who produce non-official materials, n=2). Thus, on one hand we can verify a high recognition of the accessibility between the actual world and fictional universes by fans engaged in producing their own materials. On the other hand, however, we can also notice that the same fans take in high regard the text's authenticating force, only shyly breaking the canon.

It is also noticeable that respondents' self-perceptions as fans have a weaker correlation with the disposition to produce. In this case, we consider the consumption of non-official materials and the recognition of the accessibility between the world they inhabit and the fictional universe to be more influent variables in the decision to produce non-official materials than the self-perception as fans.

Table 1. Level of production of non-official materials related to *True Blood*

		Level of production
Regardless of how much of the show you've seen, how much of a *True Blood* fan do you consider yourself?	**Pearson Correlation**	**,184**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,002**
	N	**283**
Level of consumption	**Pearson Correlation**	**,351**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Influence of personal lives in the production of materials associated with the show and its fictional universe – general index	**Pearson Correlation**	**,534**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**76**
Degree of consultation of reference materials on the show's fictional universe	**Pearson Correlation**	**,252**[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**

	N	283

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conversely, when we think about the variable associated with the consumption of non-official materials instead of the one associated with their production, it is possible to correlate such consumption to the consultation of reference materials (such as maps, genealogies, timelines, fan and official websites) and to the level of knowledge regarding the fictional world that the spectators believe themselves to have (see Table 2)[9]. Therefore, the consumption of non-official materials seem to have a direct correlation with the perceptions of fans about their level of knowledge regarding the storyworld, as well as with the longing for saturation. This might imply that such longing aims not only at the knowledge on the storyworld, but on the fictional universe, more broadly understood.

Curiously enough, the fans who consume non-official materials, the most are also those who take more aspects of their lives into the materials they produce themselves. Leading us to believe that the higher the longing for knowledge on the fictional world, i.e., the higher the longing for saturation, the more permeable the fans view the frontiers between the fictional universe and the world they inhabit. Reinforcing the association Saler (2013) makes between the seek for knowledge on imaginary places – what he calls disenchanted enchantment of modernity – and the fact that so many adults communally inhabit these imaginary places (something that with no doubt presumes that they take their experiences there with them), transforming them into virtual worlds.

Table 2. Level of consumption of non-official materials associated with True Blood

		Level of consumption
Degree of consultation of reference materials on the show's fictional universe	**Pearson Correlation**	**,601****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Level of knowledge on the show's fictional world	**Pearson Correlation**	**,338****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Influence of personal lives in the production of materials associated with the show and its fictional universe – general index	**Pearson Correlation**	**,627****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**

	N	76

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Fan perception, publications, and other variables: to assess if the audience consider themselves as *True Blood* fans, we asked them to classify in a scale from 0 ("I am not a fan") to 4 ("I am a hardcore fan") how much of a *True Blood* aficionado they consider themselves to be. As mentioned earlier, only 0,7% (n=2) claimed not to be fans at all. The majority of them, however, regarded themselves in a different manner, and while some declared themselves as moderate enthusiasts (29%, n=83), most of the survey's respondents consider themselves to be hardcore fans (70%, n=198). With this data, we may infer that the respondents' majority nourish some affection towards the series. By adding in this equation the data available in Table 3, we can assess how much of their engagement is converted into to everyday practices.

Self-perception as a fan was most highly associated with the claim of a high level of knowledge on the fictional world, and not with the degree of contribution to the building of the fictional universe through fan-made materials, for instance. In a smiliar fashion, it is also significant that *True Blood* fans tend to search for further information regarding their object of esteem's fictional world on reference materials such as maps, timelines, guide books, or DVD and Blu-Ray extras. Finally, there was also a significant correlation between respondents' self-perception as fans and frequency of publication on the show in social media websites. Thus, if the self-perception of fans is firstly associated with their longing for saturation, it is secondarily associated with the diffusion of information about the show and its many aspects (including, probably, its universe), and interactions with others centered on such diffusion.

Table 3. How much of a *True Blood* fan do you consider youself?

		Regardless of the number of episodes you've seen, how much of a *True Blood* fan do you consider yourself?
Level of consumption	**Pearson Correlation**	**,359****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Degree of consultation of reference materials on the show's fictional universe	**Pearson Correlation**	**,454****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Level of knowledge on the show's fictional world	**Pearson Correlation**	**,534****

	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	283
How frequently do you publish about *True* Blood in your social media profiles?	**Pearson Correlation**	,436**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
	N	283

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

We also addressed the association between self-perception as fans and demand of faithfulness to the canon from fan-generated materials (i.e., demand of appearance of authenticity to the storyworld from fan productions). In this regard, we found a weak but positive correlation (+.223). That means that the more the respondents perceived themselves as fans, the more they demanded authenticity from fan-created content (Table 4). When the data are divided by gender, we found that women are less demanding of this (+.192) than men (+.284).

If we associate this with the fact that most of those who produce fan materials, follow the logics of backstory and stories that could have happened between the seasons, this suggests a somewhat narrow view of the possibilities of intervention in the fictional universe. It is also noteworthy that those who demanded more faithfulness to the canon are also quicker to use *True Blood* as a reference in the evaluation of how other works of fiction build their supernatural creatures (Table 5), which means that they, in some extent, take the series as a universal canon on the supernatural. However, the relationship of these facts with the demand of internal consistency by the show's storyworld is not as straightforward as it may seem. Though most of the respondents (70%, n=198) noticed some contradictions in the show's narrative, most of them said that this did not affect their fruition of the series.

Table 4. Fan perception and demand of faithfulness.

		Regardless of the number of episodes you have seen, how much of a True Blood fan do you consider yourself?	Opinion on the need of faithfulness from fan-generated content
Regardless of the number of episodes you have seen, how much of a True Blood fan do you consider yourself?	**Pearson Correlation**	1	,223**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	283	283

Opinion on the need of faithfulness from fan-generated content	Pearson Correlation	,223**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	283	283

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 5. Opinion on fidelity and usage of True Blood's supernatural creatures as reference to judge other works of fiction

		Opinion on the need of faithfulness from fan-generated content	To what extent do you use True Blood's way of representing fictional creatures to evaluate/judge the representation of such creatures in other works?
Opinion on the need of faithfulness from fan-generated content	Pearson Correlation	1	,191**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001
	N	283	283
To what extent do you use True Blood's way of representing fictional creatures to evaluate/judge the representation of such creatures in other works?	Pearson Correlation	,191**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001	
	N	283	283

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The frequency of publication on social media is, by its turn, also mostly associated with fan self-perception (see Table 6), and followed by level of knowledge about the fictional world. However, it is also highly associated with the degrees of production and consumption of non-official materials related to *True Blood* and its fictional world. This means that those who engage with non-canonic portions of the universe, both as creators of such portions or consumers of it, are also very active on social media. Respondents who are active on social media websites, then, not only talk about *True Blood*'s fictional world, but they also produce autonomously fan-generated content, such as fan fiction, fan art, fan video, fan sites, and fan blogs. We associate this with a probable inclination to share their own content and those of their peers, creating among themselves networks of support and, to appropriate Fiske's (1992) words, of "shadow cultural consumption".

Table 6. How frequently do you publish about *True* Blood in your social media profiles?

		How frequently do you publish about *True* Blood in your social media personal profiles?
Regardless of the number of episodes you have seen, how much of a *True Blood* fan do you consider yourself?	**Pearson Correlation**	**,436****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Level of knowledge on the show's fictional world	**Pearson Correlation**	**,397****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Level of consumption	**Pearson Correlation**	**,361****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**
Level of production	**Pearson Correlation**	**,312****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	**,000**
	N	**283**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Summary

So far, we believe our findings on Brazilian audience's appropriations of True Blood's fictional universe are promising. It was possible to verify, for instance, that production and consumption in the logics of participatory culture are closely associated, and that the fans who produce the most are also the ones with a greater degree of recognition of the accessibility between the world they inhabit and the fictional universe, admitting that they take aspects of their personal lives into the materials they produce involving the series and its fictional universe.

But, if on one hand the fans recognize such accessibility, on the other hand they assume a more conservative point of view about how much faithful to the storyworld fan-produced materials need to be. This is verifiable both in the logics those who produce their own materials follow the most (backstory and developing of narratives that could have taken place in-between seasons) and in the strong correlation between

self-perception as a fan and a greater demand of faithfulness from fan-generated content to the storyworld.

Curiously, self-perception as fans is also more associated with a search for saturation of the fictional universe (i.e., to know more about it) and with the publication of contents surrounding the show on social media than with the production of materials. The consumption of fan-created materials itself, moreover, is also associated with the habit of consulting materials regarding the series' storyworld, suggesting that fans who read more materials produced by other fans are also more curious about the fictional world as a whole, not only to the portion of it that contains the "base" world.

Ultimately, we acknowledge that these results are still preliminary. We kept the survey open in order to receive more entries and increase our database, so that this research can be updated in a later period. However, we believe that this article represents an important step towards the empirical consideration of how the audiences, so evoked theoretically in works regarding fictional worlds, indeed interact with such storyworlds. In this sense, we believe that the choice to use fictional world related theoretical issues to guide the creation of the survey (authentication, saturation, consistency, and accessibility) was a methodologically promising decision, given how revealing of Brazilian audience's engagement with *True Blood*'s fictional universe the results were.

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Notas

[1] Each season has 10 to 12 episodes, which last an average of 50 minutes each.

[2] A fortunate recent exception is Saler's book (2013) on the literary prehistory of virtual reality, whose author regards fan discussions – from nineteenth century debates on the New Romance to the Internet forums, going through letter sections in pulp magazines – as public spheres of the imagination, in which they discuss several issues involving the fictional worlds.

[3] Conversely, we must point out that the identity of populations is not the absolute criterion for the establishment of a set of worlds as a universe. If the criterion of belonging to a given universe was, for instance, that in such universe humanity was created by deities, this universe would contain many of the worlds described in myths, but none in which we evolved from monkeys or were an alien's experiment.

[4] Part of the book was translated to English in the collection entitled *The Role of the Reader* (ECO, 1979).

[5] Sometimes, however, as in *Alice in Wonderland*'s case, whose ending does not answer if Alice did in fact visit a place called Wonderland or only imagined it all, the worlds projected by the audiences neither juxtapose nor contradict the storyworld. Furthermore, this impossibility to prove or disprove a hypothesis about a fictional world have aesthetical value in itself. After all, it is not by chance that the structuralist Todorov (1975) places the core of the fantastic in this kind of indeterminacy.

[6] Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) proposes an even more complex modal structure for these worlds, but it would not be productive to explicit her detailed typology here.

[7] Well-known acronym in Brazil for "Federal University of Bahia", which is located at Salvador, Brazil.

[8] However, there might be exceptions, as in cases of the camera showing the perspective of an unreliable narrator.

[9] The level of knowledge the audience attests they have about the fictional world is also slightly correlated (+.373) to how much they consult materials such as timelines, genealogies, etc., what implies that the ones who believe they know the most are also the ones who more meticulously seek this kind of knowledge.