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Papers

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La actualidad turística del caso de la gripe española en la ciudad de Rio de Janeiro (Sept. de 1918 - Mar. de 1919)

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Keywords:

History of Tourism.
Epidemics.
Spanish flu.
Covid-19.

Abstract

This study investigates the epidemic outbreak of the Spanish flu that hit the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1918, aiming to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between tourism and epidemics – and, consequently, the Covid-19 pandemic itself. For this, the study uses the historical method of investigation, based on primary sources and documentary research. The main historical source used is the periodicals from Rio de Janeiro, explored through scrutiny in the collection of the National Digital Library. In addition, secondary sources were used, such as chronicles, novels, and memories. As a result of the investigation, it appears that the epidemic outbreak of the Spanish flu affected, in multiple aspects, the tourist activity in the city of Rio de Janeiro, among which we highlight the development of mass tourism.

Palavras-chave:

História do Turismo.
Epidemias.
Gripe Espanhola.
Covid-19

Resumo

Este trabalho investiga o surto epidêmico da gripe espanhola que assolou a cidade do Rio de Janeiro em 1918, com o objetivo de que esse caso histórico possa contribuir na compreensão da relação entre turismo e epidemias – e, por consequência, da própria pandemia da Covid-19. Para isso, a pesquisa se vale do método histórico de investigação, com base em fontes primárias e revisão bibliográfica. A principal fonte histórica utilizada são os jornais cariocas de época, explorados por meio de escrutínio no acervo da Biblioteca Nacional Digital. Além dessa fonte, foram utilizados, secundariamente, crônicas, romances e memórias. Como resultado da investigação, infere-se que o surto epidêmico da gripe espanhola impactou, sob múltiplos aspectos, a atividade turística na cidade do Rio de Janeiro, dentre os quais se destaca o seu papel no desenvolvimento do turismo de massas.

Palabras clave:

Historia del Turismo.
Epidemia.
Gripe Española.
Covid-19.

Resumen

Este trabajo investiga el brote epidémico de la gripe española que afectó a la ciudad de Rio de Janeiro en 1918, con el objetivo de que este caso histórico pueda ayudar a comprender la relación entre el turismo y las epidemias y, en consecuencia, la pandemia de la Covid-19. Para esto, la investigación utiliza el método histórico de investigación, basado en fuentes

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primarias y revisión bibliográfica. La principal fuente histórica utilizada son las publicaciones periódicas de Rio de Janeiro, exploradas a través del escrutinio en la colección de la Biblioteca Nacional Digital. Además de esta fuente, las crónicas, novelas y recuerdos se utilizaron de forma secundaria. Como resultado de la investigación, parece que el brote epidémico de la gripe española impactó, en múltiples aspectos, la actividad turística en la ciudad de Rio de Janeiro, entre los cuales se destaca el desarrollo del turismo massivo.

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1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS IN THE LIGHT OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

> "There is, even, in an official English guide, of universal use among navigators, an eloquent advice to pilots who have lost their way and find themselves without compasses, on a dark night, in the South Atlantic: if they see a flash in the sky, follow it, it is the city of Rio de Janeiro" (*O Paiz*, September 26, 1926)

At the dawn of the pandemic, a sea cruise docked in a port in Japan, without clearance to travel or disembark the passengers it was a premonitory image of the future of tourism with the upcoming global spread of Covid-19. And for a good reason: today, on average, adding tourists and crew, and depending on their size, these vessels can carry from 2,000 to 8,000 people. Given this magnitude, therefore, how can we underestimate the risk of rapid spread, both onboard and in the destination, of a disease about which little was known?

In fact, in mid-February 2020, images of Diamond Princess passengers, forced to quarantine by the Japanese port authorities in the city of Yokohama, was disturbing. Television networks around the world showed footage filmed from long distance cameras of passengers, alone or in pairs, and at pre-defined times, strolling the cruise decks, for the so-called sunbathing – just as if they were in prison.

Thus, in the eyes of the most pessimistic, the expenditure and financial costs to keep the Diamond Princess docked in the port was an allegory of what would become the economic effects of Covid-19 on the tourism industry – although there were also those who saw in the scene of an anchored ocean cruise ship, this epitome of mass tourism, the emergence, in the post-pandemic world, of a new paradigm of leisure travel. The argument is that, in the aftermath of the global health crisis, people will start to value more intimate, short-distance, and experimental trips, without travel intermediaries. In this context, travels will be directed to communities closer to the travelers' places of origin, or even in their own homes – in a curious revival of the work *Voyage around my room*, by Xavier de Maistre, in which the protagonist of this eighteenth-century novel takes on the challenge of traveling the world from small objects, from reminiscences and remnants, which, however, furnish his room.

From the above, it is obvious that, in these pandemic times, forecasts, whether utopian or dystopian, are always tempting. It turns out, however, that the Diamond Princess case also directs our gaze to the past. Historiography, the written press, academic articles, chronicles, novels, and memoirs allow us to state, with a certain degree of certainty, that the so-called modern epidemics are not only contemporary to the birth of the tourist phenomenon, as their dissemination depended, in many cases, on a model of travel and leisure that, from the end of the nineteenth century, was determined by scientific-technological development and organized according to the methods and principles of industrial production.

Specifically, this means that, since then, epidemic outbreaks are closely related to the transformation of travel into a business managed by modern principles, and no longer by traditional logics, and of capitalist accumulation – i.e., transformed into a tourist product. This is the case, for example, of tours organized by Thomas Cook for English workers, known for combining railway travel, and a system of accredited hotels and accommodation in destination places – or, even, travel aboard ocean liners, whose engineers boasted they were able to weather any storm, and through which European and American tourists advocated what would

become the leitmotiv of travel packages offered by tourist agencies and operators, namely: the exoticism of peripheral countries.

These echoes of the past become even stronger when one observes that tourism was the source of some notified cases of Covid-19 around the world, as happened in Brazil. This case was widely reported in the press in April 2020, in which a housekeeper, living on the outskirts of the city of Rio de Janeiro, had been infected at her workplace, in the upper middle class neighborhood of Leblon, by her employer who had just returned from a sightseeing tour of Italy – a country that, at that time, became the new epicenter of Covid-19, after its start in the Chinese city of Wuhan, in December 2019.

So, as important as investigating the impacts of Covid-19 on the future of tourism, whether economic or behavioral – a task to which the economy, business management, sociology, or cultural studies are called to participate – it is opportune, in this interdisciplinary effort to understand a pandemic and whose iconography seems to reverberate in the near past, to subject the object to the scrutiny of historical investigation. One wonders: what is the impact that the epidemic outbreaks of yore had, in its multiple dimensions, on tourism?

In this case, it is worth remembering what is considered so far, the worst epidemic outbreak of the twentieth century: the Spanish flu. More precisely, the situation faced in 1918 by the city of Rio de Janeiro – then the federal capital of Brazil and where tourism development in the country began.

To that end, we conducted documentary research and scrutiny of primary historical sources. The documents analyzed were mainly historiographical works focusing on the interface between tourism studies and history, and medical sciences and history, on the theme of tourism in Brazil and regarding the case of the Spanish flu in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Such research technique was carried out, predominantly, through searches in digital databases of scientific articles and academic theses and dissertations.

Regarding the primary sources, the main sources used were the periodicals of Rio de Janeiro. These newspapers were retrieved from the Periodicals Archive of the Brazilian National Digital Library: https://bndigital.bn.gov.br/. The periodicals surveyed were: *O Paiz*, *Correio da Manhã*, *A Noite*, and *Gazeta de Notícias*. The searches in this digital collection were carried out taking as reference the period from 1910 to 1929, the location of Rio de Janeiro and using the following keywords in Portuguese: “grippe hespanhola” [Spanish flu]; “carnaval de 1919” [1919 Carnival]; “Villegiatura” [villeggiatura]; “turistas estrangeiros” [foreign tourists]. To maintain the originality of the sources, we decided to keep the spelling of the words used at the time. The photographs that illustrate this investigation, were also extracted from Periodicals Archive of the Brazilian National Digital Library (newspapers *Careta* and *A Noite*).

In addition to documentary research and contemporary periodicals, we used as secondary sources chronicles, novels, and memories, found in electronic magazines and newspapers, and in literary and biographical texts.

2 LA DANSARINA: THE CASE OF AN EPIDEMIC AT THE DAWN OF TOURISM IN BRAZIL

At first glance, there would be no reason to use as framework for this study the case of the Spanish flu that hit the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1918. The SS Demerara, owned by the Royal Mail, sailed the route Liverpool-Buenos Aires and was mainly a cargo vessel, although it could carry first-class passengers on leisure travel. Usually, it left the English city of Liverpool, called at the port of Lisbon, and then sailed to African ports, until reaching the Brazilian coast, where it called at the ports of the cities of Recife, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Santos, to finally, end the trip in the La Plata Basin, in the port cities of Montevideo and Buenos Aires. This ocean liner was not, therefore, typically a cruise, but a mixed-use vessel, which, as it was customary at the time, carryied cargo and passengers – such as businessmen, immigrants, travelers, but also coffee, gold, sugar, etc.

However, the SS Demerara docking in the port of the city of Rio de Janeiro, on September 16, 1918, according to contemporary newspapers, was the source of disease the outbreak, as well as in three months after that episode, there was a series of convergences that linked the Spanish flu to tourism and leisure.

The first of these convergences concerns the urban transformation the city of Rio de Janeiro was undergoing at the time. More specifically, the arrival of the SS Demerara occurred when major modernization and beautification projects were taking shape, changing the physiognomy of the city, driven, among other objectives, by sanitary and public health concerns, and to fight epidemic diseases. This is the case of the so-called Reforma Passos, carried out between the years 1903 and 1906, as well as the urban interventions of the Carlos Sampaio administration, from 1920 to 1922, and the Agache Plan, carried out at the end of the 1920s. Such undertakings replaced the landscape of the old colonial city of Portuguese origin, by wide avenues, buildings, boulevards, parks, theater, in order to give the capital of the country a cosmopolitan, European image – which, in the end, had earned it the title of "Wonderful City "(Machado, 2005).

Then, the stigma of unhealthiness that affected the image of the city of Rio de Janeiro since the time of the viceroys, was gradually disappearing, rendering the city's port – also modernized to perform functions not only linked to agrarian-export activities, but, equally, to the urban world – suitable for receiving imported luxury items, international travelers, foreign ideas and fashions (Challoub, 2015).

Bearing witness to this, is the arrival in 1907 of the cruise ship Byron on a trip organized by the company Cook and Son – created a few decades earlier by the precursor of modern tourist trips; and the 1908 National Exhibition to commemorate the centenary of the opening of Brazilian ports to the world's commerce, with an estimated attendance of one million visitors over three months – in what was considered a milestone for the development of the hospitality in Brazil (Belchior & Poyares, 1987; Lessa, 2005; Enders, 2008; Molina, 2016).

It is no coincidence that, in a featured article in *O Paiz* on September 26, 1926, entitled "Como fazer turismo no Brasil, os ensinamentos da história e da experiência" ["How to tour Brazil, lessons of history and experience"], the newspaper recalled the role of figures who had "made this industry possible", like President Rodrigues Alves who had built "modern Rio with Lauro Miller, Passos and Frontin, and sanitized the city and the country with Oswaldo Cruz (...)", and thus "tourism have started, and, in relative terms, with magnificent success ".

Rio de Janeiro had, thus, become the main tourist destination and leisure center in the country, which perhaps explains why the effects of the epidemic outbreak of La Dansarina – as the flu was commonly called – were more intensely felt in the daily life of the city. The estimated population of the country's capital was nearly one million inhabitants, of which 600,000 were infected with the Spanish flu and 15,000 would die (Goulart, 2005). In the book *Chão de Ferro*, Pedro Narra, based on his memories, offers us a vision of what these numbers represented:

> It was terrifying how fast it [the virus] went from invasion to apogee, in a few hours, causing suffocation, diarrhea, excruciating pain, lethargy, coma, uremia, syncope and death in a few hours or a few days. It terrified the rate of infection and the number of people being affected. None of our calamities can't hold a candle to the reigning disease: the terrible was no longer the number of casualties – but there was no one who made coffins, who took them to the cemetery, who dug graves and buried the dead. The amazing thing was no longer the number of patients, but the fact that they were almost all sick and unable to help, treat, transport or sell food, provide prescriptions, perform, in short, the basics of collective life (Nava, 2001, p. 208).

In such a situation, the public recommendation of social isolation, already used in those times, affected the cultural industry. Although it was in the early stages of its development, the Spanish flu, certainly for a few months, halted the industry momentum. So much so that bars, restaurants, theaters, and hotels were closed, leaving the city of Rio de Janeiro empty and silent. This is what the *Correio da Manhã* reported on October 20, 1918 in *A vida na cidade* [Life in the city]:

> Instead of bustling, the city yesterday was even more depressing than in previous days. The streets were deserted, trades closed, the hectic and joyful life has just vanished, absolutely non-existent (...) Hotels and restaurants equally shut down their businesses. A gloomy atmosphere of sadness covers everything. Discouragement hit even the strongest of people.

Figure 1 – Photograph of Avenida Rio Branco in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The photograph was taken at 4 pm on Saturday, October 26, 1918

Source: Newspaper *Careta*, October 26, 1918. Periodicals archive, National Digital Library. Retrieved from: http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=083712&pasta=ano%20191&pesq=%22quasi%20deserta%22&pagfis=20661

Certainly, silence, and, above all, fear prevails when one is threatened by a virus against which the fight is still uncertain – or even deluded. But if, on the one hand, the imminence of death disheartens us; on the other hand, these are the moments when human inventiveness seems to be most evident. Hence why a curious fact that correlates the Spanish flu with tourism has to do with the way society in general and, above all, public authorities dealt with the outbreak, notably in its initial stages, sometimes denying the disease, and sometimes ridiculing it.

Carlos Seidl, then head of the General Directorate of Public Health, for whom the flu was "just a simple" influenza, was dismissed, accused by the public opinion of obtuseness, at a time when everyone already seemed to recognize that, instead of being just another merchant ship, the SS Demerara was actually a vessel that brought death. It is not a coincidence that the *Bloco dos Tagarelas* [a carnival block] had prepared a special song for the next year's carnival, as reported in the newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias* of March 3, 1919: "o Seidl esqueceu o povo, a hygiene não se moveu porque o mal era benigno, o Torres chegou no fim botando logo sciencia" [Seidl forgot the people, the hygiene did not move because the evil was benign, Torres came in the end prattling science].

This is also why, in the absence of official information on prophylactic and therapeutic therapies, except for what the government speculated was efficient, such as quinine salt, or convenient, such as lavender incense, Rio de Janeiro's public health became a fertile ground for improvisation – perhaps quackery. Thus, against La Dansarina, homemade solutions were recommended, such as cinnamon essences and onion juice, the use of homeopathy, such as *thermotol* and *antipampyrus*, or pills, injections and tonics, which, according to their inventors, among doctors and apothecaries, promised to revert the disease in a few days[1].

There are those who say that the "caipirinha", the Brazilian icon of beach, sea, and sun tourism, was an ingenuity stemming from the lack of guidance from the bodies responsible for public health. According to the Brazilian Institute of Cachaça, the drink would have been the evolution of a panacea that consisted of mixing brandy, which popular belief said was capable of "killing" germs, to which honey and lemon were added (Carvalho, 2020). In fact, with regard to the mention of this tropical product, it is worth noting that the medical opinion of the time believed that the disease, when transmuted to Brazilian territory, would suffer from the hot climate, capable of alleviating the virulence observed in Anglo-Saxon countries (Brito, 1997).

[1] This information was retrieved from reports and announcements made in the newspaper *Correio da Manhã* on October 18, 19, 21, 24, 30, 1918; November 5, 1918; and December 5, 1918.

It is assumed, therefore, that, also for climatic reasons, the elite of Rio, intending to escape the epidemic, resorted to ancient forms of travel to the interior of the state – the so-called villeggiatura. Since the Portuguese crown's arrival in the city, the places in Rio de Janeiro mountain region of Rio de Janeiro had become an escape route from the epidemics that plagued the country's capital year after year, in line with the health policy of the viceroyalty, based on pre-modern medical principles, such as the Galenic and miasmatic traditions, which recommended the curative action of nature (Schwarcz, 1998; Goulart, 2005).

The Baron of Torres Homem, then a member of the Imperial Academy of Medicine, referring to this practice during the epidemic outbreak of yellow fever between the years 1873 and 1876, observed: "many wealthy foreigners, not acclimated, withdrew to the high places, such as Tijuca, Petrópolis, Teresópolis, and Nova Friburgo, in order to stay out of the reach of the 'issue' that causes the epidemic disease" (Franco, 1969, p. 46). Something similar, in turn, can be found in the observations of an old travel guide from the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute. According to Henri Raffard, "hundreds of wealthy people [who] fled the plagued sites and sought shelter in the beautiful climate of Petrópolis (...) people who may never have come to Petrópolis got to know the site and liked it" (Ambrozio, 2008, p. 245). Furthermore, in a travel guide published in 1910, entitled *Petrópolis Cidade do Brasil: a Rainha das Serras* [Petrópolis City of Brazil: The Queen of the Mountains], the city of Petrópolis was described as the "healing city" (Daibert, 2010).

In the case of the Spanish flu, the scrutiny of historical sources reveals very little about the association of the epidemic with the villeggiatura tradition. However, it was known that the disease cause the lungs to fill with liquid, thus, it was common to assume that the dry and cool climate of the mountainous regions was good for treatment – or, better, according to a living witness, Mrs. Diva da Costa, 106 years old, who experienced the consequences of the epidemic outbreak in Petrópolis: "people valued the terraces, with morning sun exposure; where the sun shines best, the disease does not enter" (Sobreira, 2020).

Anyway, since the nineteenth century vacationing was associated with Rio de Janeiro mountain region leading to the formation of a social imaginary which was used by the tourism industry. It is from that time, for example, that the city of Petrópolis was ideologically converted into an oasis of peace amid the unrestrained growth of the metropolis of Rio de Janeiro (Mesquita, 2012). One of the results of this symbolic operation, as is well known, will be the transformation of the region into one of the main areas of mass tourism in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

3 AND "THE WORLD IS NOT ENDED": THE ROLE OF CARNIVAL OF 1919 IN THE HEDONISTIC CULTURE OF THE CITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO

An article published in *O Paiz* on September 26, 1926, highlighted the need to take "the great tourist attraction of our tourism industry" to new heights. As a suggestion, the idea was to reach the level of its competitors abroad, such as the carnival in the cities of New Orleans, in the United States, Nice, in France, Seville, in Spain, or Venice, in Italy – where, success depended on going further "with symbolic ceremonies". And, for that, the article suggested, among other expedients, a "systematic protection to the referred clubs that support the best traditions of our biggest popular celebration"; that financial assistance be provided for the purpose of improving them artistically; that the celebration start a week or two before usual and, thus, ensuring the time of attractions for tourists; to establish "the election of the Carnival Queen and her coronation by the mayor of the city..."; and, finally, "let the ultra-conservatives not be scandalized by this suggestion".

Taking such propositions and admonitions in retrospect, it can be said, with some certainty, that the 1919 carnival celebration is located, precisely, at the historic turning point that would mark the transformation of Rio carnival into a tourist product. In a few years, more and more, ocean liners would start to anchor in Guanabara Bay, bringing in foreign visitors, especially Argentines, North Americans and Europeans, towards the end of the international tourism season in the country – these were, mainly, industrialists, aristocratic families, renowned artists, in short, well-heeled tourists, attracted to Brazil by signs of exoticism, popularized, for example, by Hollywood movies and iconic figures such as Carmen Miranda, in what was conventionally called "Belle époque of Brazilian tourism" (Paixão, 2005; Guimarães, 2012).

A particular event of this interlude is the transformation of samba into a commodity. It was during this time that the samba prevailed over the other carnival rhythms that have animated the revelry since the nineteenth

century, such as polkas, square dances, waltzes, habaneras, boleros, schottisches, and mazurkas (Soihet, 1998). Also: it is in this period that samba ceases to be a *terreiro* dance, daily pursued by the police, to become a product of the cultural industry – as proved by the song *Pelo Telefone*, one of the first recorded and broadcasted sambas, whose music score was recorded, in a pioneer work at the time, by the samba player Ernesto Joaquim Maria dos Santos, "Donga", at the National Library of Rio de Janeiro on November 27, 1916[2].

In *A morte da Porta Estandarte [The Death of the Standard-Bearer]*, the Minas Gerais writer Aníbal Machado (1978) takes stock of these transformations. In addition to the drama itself, in which a black and a mulatto are the main characters, the story reveals a fundamental change in Rio's carnival visitors. In the story, the figure of the outsider is no longer a naturalist or a European habitué, but a foreign tourist – in this case, English tourists. Furthermore, by representing the show in an eccentric way, wherein tourists are placed at a distance, the short-story foreshadows what will become an advertising slogan for Brazil's tourism, especially in institutional promotion.

In this context, when the death phase of the epidemic was over, after three months, the best example to analyze the effects of the Spanish flu on the development of tourism in the city of Rio de Janeiro was, one should note, the carnival celebrations of 1919.

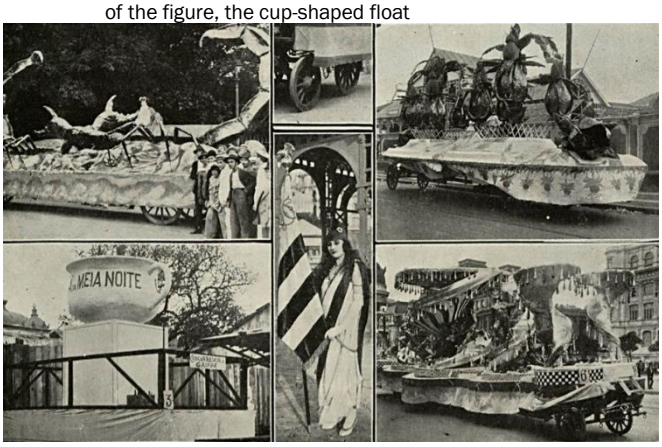
It is worth looking at some news accounts of those days. Take, for example, the carnival of 1919, when the newspaper *A Noite*, on Carnival Friday, February 28, published the headline "Na vespera do sabbado gordo" ["On Fat Saturday's eve"]: "Wild enthusiasm infects everyone and everything feels like carnival!". On Sunday, March 2, 1919, the *Correio da Manhã* announced triumphantly the first day of the carnival calendar: "the carnival is rising bringing to the sad world the joyful fog of a dream, endless sweet pleasures". On Monday, March 3, 1919, *O Paiz*, based on Saturday and Sunday's events, wrote: "No. The Carnival is not dead, on the contrary, it took its glorious vengeance on the restrictions that the war imposed on it last year, and did all of us the excellent service of blurring the macabre visit of the Spanish [flu]". On Tuesday, March 4, 1919, the *Gazeta de Notícias* printed the headline "Carnival was an apotheosis" and drew attention to a singularity of that year "in all neighborhoods, in the suburbs, the celebrations were particularly lavish and it seems that the trend now is to have carnival in every neighborhood... ". And on Ash Wednesday, the *A Noite* of March 5, 1919 announced the end of the revelry: "Carnival is over, thank God! Here is an exclamation that fits everyone today"; while the *Correio da Manhã* of March 6, 1919 concluded the week in this way: "in short, the 1919 carnival, against all odds because of the year of misfortune that preceded it, reached new heights of fun, luxury, joy and good taste".

In addition to the news reports, the carnival songs, with their own subversions, show how the 1919 carnival dramatized death, by transforming mourning into joy, and the tragic, into joke. This is the case of the carnival society *Club dos Democráticos*, which, during its inauguration, according to the *Correio da Manhã* of March 4, 1919, exhibited a float in the shape of a tea cup – alluding to the tea that was piously served at the Santa Casa da Misericórdia [charitable organization] to those hopelessly ill from the flu – in order to be accompanied, on their way, by the song *O Chá da Meia Noite [The Midnight Tea]*:

> Do you remember, gentlemen, of that infamous tea? That was last year, in a month of great horrors... The *Santa Casa de Miseria e Corda* put a lot of people at the edge of the grave... "The midnight tea". It was a shortcut to death for the poor bastard, of those unlucky people. Ruthless flogging of the underprivileged... The tea marked the sad times and Zé Povinho [the Average Joe], even burning red hot, burned by the bad fever, excommunicated Santa Casa once and for all!

[2] DONGA. Pelo telephone. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Instituto de Artes Graphicas, [19--?]. 4 p. Source: Periodicals archive, National Digital Library. Retrieved from: http://objdigital.bn.br/acervo_digital/div_musica/mas566964.pdf

Figure 2 – Parade of *Club dos Democráticos* of March 4, 1919. Note at the bottom left of the figure, the cup-shaped float



Source: Newspaper *Careta*, March 8, 1919. Periodicals archive, National Digital Library. Retrieved from: http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=083712&pasta=ano%20191&pesq=%22club%20dos%20democráticos%22&pagfis=21185

It is in the memory of those who witnessed the revelry, however, that the most impressive portrait of what followed the end of the epidemic is found. More precisely, from those who studied Rio de Janeiro at the time, choosing the city as an ideal setting for flânerie – in the manner of those social types who are spokespersons for the modern experience and its implications in daily life (Borde, 2016). In *A Menina sem Estrela*, in his memories, Nelson Rodrigues wrote:

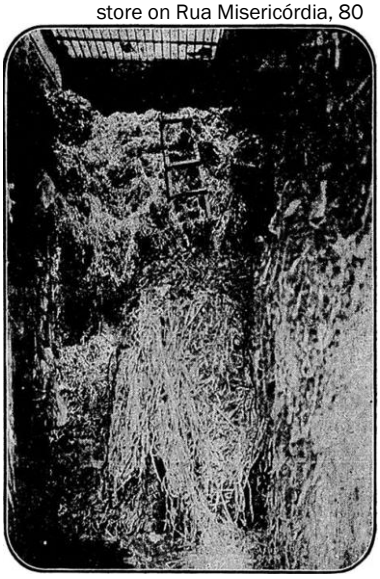
> I'm here gathering my memories. That Carnival was also, and above all, a revenge of the poorly dressed, poorly mourned and, finally, poorly buried. Now, a deceased person who did not have his good suit, his good shirt, his good tie – is more cruel and more resentful than an outraged Nero. And Zé de S. Januário is telling me that he buried men wearing briefs, and other naked. Death was avenged, I repeat, at Carnival ... And everything exploded on Carnival Saturday. You see, until Friday, this was the Machado de Assis' Rio; and the next morning, it became the Benjamim Costallat's Rio, or, even, Theo Filho's (Rodrigues, 1993, p. 58).

And more recently, in a chronicle alluding to Nelson Rodrigues' childhood, entitled *Carnaval no Escuro*, Ruy Castro noted:

> The war and the Spanish flu warned an entire population of the reality of death. With that, those who did not die felt the duty to celebrate life, playing Carnival like never before. The city came out in force for the parades and confetti battles. Pierrots and skeletons, besides jumping all over, invaded the houses and dragged the reluctant to the party. For the first time, samba surpassed other rhythms on the street (Castro, 2017, online).

In addition, quantitative data help illustrate the scale of the 1919 carnival. It is estimated that 40 tons of confetti and streamers were collected from the streets after the party – in order to give an idea of this quantity, it must be said that, at the 2020 carnival, on the eve of the Covid-19 epidemic outbreak, when at least three million people participated in the festivities, the city of Rio de Janeiro collected a total of 74 tons of garbage (Câmara, 2020). Those figures were provided by *A Noite* on March 5, 1919. With the title "Serpentines, serpentines" ["Streamers, streamers"], the newspaper reported the satisfaction of the main rag traders in the city with sales during the carnival that year. For example, Casa Leão had sold 20 tons of paper; the store of Srs. Amaral & C., 5 tons; the Rua Lavrador store, 1,300 tons, and the Srs. Magdalena & Filho store, 3,400 tons. These sales allowed "an approximate calculation of 40,000 kg, which sold at 100 reis per kilo, gives the considerable figure of 4:000$000".

Figure 3 – Streamers crammed to the ceiling of the store on Rua Misericórdia, 80



Source: Newspaper *A Noite*, March 5, 1919. Periodicals archive, National Digital Library. Retrieved from: http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=348970_01&pesq=%22serpentinas,%20serpentinas%22&pagfis=14541

It is also possible to identify a concern on the part of carnival societies to make those celebrations the maximum that could be obtained through luxury and ostentation. According to news published on *Correio da Manhã* on February 8, 1919, the carnival of that year would be "extremely bright", especially with regard to the "Mardi Gras" parade. By way of illustration, the *Fenianos* carnival club, "as is public and notorious, has prepared a massive parade, which no one has yet seen... the claim is well deserved: the Fenians will soon reach the figure of 200:000$000". The *Club dos Democráticos* complained that it did not have that extra revenue that year, something around 30:000$000, that lived up to the expectations created, because the police put up a relentless fight against gambling – this offensive, it must be remembered, will have its outcome in 1946, with the enactment by the Gaspar Dutra government of decree-law 9.215, which prohibited the practice and operation of gambling activities throughout the Brazilian territory and, consequently, overturning the entire economy representative of that phase of tourism in Brazil, based on luxury hotels, resorts and spas, casinos, etc. (Paixão, 2005).

Certainly, there are other landmarks of the history of Rio and national tourism that could already be glimpsed at the 1919 party – among which, one can quote Carmen Miranda's song "E o mundo não se acabou" [And the world isn't over], in a recording made for the 1938 carnival; or even something more anecdotal, such as the origin of the Cordão do Bola Preta [a carnival block], this attraction of the current carnival in the city (Câmara, 2020) – but there is one that, although it is reached only through indirect and speculative ways, should not be overlooked. This is the possible role that the 1919 Carnival played in favor of a more hedonistic culture and, therefore, freer and brighter by the standards of the time.

The fact is, during those days, the Cariocas as if in a Dionysian ritual purged the death that swept through the city. The current opinion that this could be the last carnival of a lifetime was the catalyst for this this uncontrolled revelry. In fact, according once again to the memories of the author of *Toda a Nudez Será Castigada [All Nudity Shall Be Punished]*, it can be said that the behavior of Brazilian men and women until the beginning of 1919 was medieval, feudal – however:

> Carnival began, and suddenly, overnight, uses, customs and modesty became old, obsolete, spectral. People had the same face, the same nose shape, the same hat, the same walking stick (at that time, beating up someone was acceptable for honor's sake). But something had changed. Yes, our entire intimate structure had been touched, altered and, I would even say, replaced (Rodrigues, 1993, p. 58).

Such an assertion is justified. After all, it was the first time that Nelson Rodrigues, still a six-year-old child, had seen a woman's navel – while, as if they wanted to perpetuate the scene in his head, pornographic marchinhas [genre of Brazilian carnival music], until then unthinkable for the existing morality, were intoned: "na minha casa não racha lenha, na minha racha, na minha racha, na minha casa não falta água, na minha abunda" [3] (Rodrigues, 1993, p. 58).

It is thus inferred, why, according to reports issued by law enforcements authorities, there was a surge of complaints about defloration, which under the penal code was a crime against custom and not against the person. A total of 4,315 thousand cases of deflorations occurred during the 1919 carnival – it is estimated that, according to the Catete Police Station, two thousand cases occurred only in the vicinity of the locations near Santo Amaro Street, in the Glória neighborhood, one of the main partying strongholds (Castro, 1992; Cony, 1996). For comparison purposes, between the 1920s and 1940s, the city of Rio de Janeiro boasted an average of 500 deflorations per year (Caufield, 2000). This is why the generation conceived in those days are known as "the children of the flu".

Episodic or not, the truth is that these new behavioral patterns were not exclusive of the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro. In São Paulo, there was a similar euphoria among the inhabitants of the "Hallucinated city", which had been faced with a moment deeply marked by war, flu, and frost (Santos, 2006; Sevcenko, 1992). Also, how can we forget the "crazy" 1920s that marked American society, so well immortalized in the writings of F. Scott Fitzgerald? This was the era of jazz, when it was said that the United States had transformed itself into a hedonistic society – which had caused so much disgust to minds attached to the values of Puritanism in the mythology of American society, such as that of Thorstein Veblen.

It is true, too, that all this seems to have been in vain. After all, in exactly two decades, humanity would enter one of the most disastrous periods in its history. In any case, as is typical of those times, just like a ship adrift, we tend to always look at the horizon in search of a safe haven – as current times well illustrate.

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Apparently, there is a methodological advantage in historiographic efforts that take the epidemics of the past as a privileged point of observation for other phenomena and dimensions of social life. As if they were objects of a natural science, the social, historical, political, and economic implications of epidemic outbreaks appear to obey a certain pattern of social response – even in different contexts and circumstances and, it should be noted, with the due singularities that the studies of society presuppose. This would provide historical research with the ability to better scrutinize the past based on the reverberations of the present.

For example, it is interesting to note that – as in the case today with the Covid-19 pandemic – one of the first sectors of the economy of Rio de Janeiro to be halted due to the Spanish flu outbreak was the cultural industry. The descriptions found in contemporary newspapers, chronicles, and memories revealed that the modern urban life on which both leisure and tourism depended was halted. In the examination of these sources, it is easy to assume, even by the amplified tone of the accounts and expressions used, that the economic impacts imposed on the sector were of great importance.

On the other hand, contrary to the quantitative and statistical nature with which these impacts are currently measured, in the researched sources, this assessment is, predominantly, of a qualitative nature – in most cases, in the form of chronicles. The early stage of development of the cultural industry in Brazil, notably in its capital, may explain this fact.

This does not allow, however, that one was faced with the continuity of pre-modern social phenomena – such as the aristocratic journeys of the so-called Grand Tour. On the contrary, the outbreak of the Spanish flu in Rio de Janeiro is in a transition zone where travel, despite being limited to the more affluent social groups, is becoming managed according to industrial methods and principles, in the manner of mass tourism – the fetishist experience suggested by the newspapers of the time for the Rio carnival helps to substantiate this assertion.

[3] In the lyrics there is a play on words with implicit sexual meaning (Translator's note).

It is also true that the epidemic outbreak seems to have stimulated past social forms of travel, as is the case of villeggiatura in the mountainous region of the state. However, the very difficulty in finding in the newspapers of the time reports and articles mentioning the villeggiatura in the context of the epidemic outbreak may be an indication that this was a dwindling social practice. In fact, even though it remained for a few more decades in the press vocabulary, it is likely that the use of the word villeggiatura had more to do with the sanitary imaginary that leveraged the development of mass tourism in the region than with this traditional form of travel.

In fact, more than a turning point, the epidemic seems to have boosted the development of tourism. This is the case of the de-traditionalization of the 1919 carnival in Rio. Proof of this is the strong concern with the artistic beautification of the performers and, mainly, the fact that it was precisely at that carnival that the samba become hegemonic over other rhythms that also marked the festivities. It should be emphasized that this is not a triviality. Together with and following this hegemony, the samba school parades became official, the samba musicians became professional, that is, the one who earns a fee for the radio broadcast, there was the conversion of amateur broadcasters into phonographic companies and, of course, the transformation of the samba (until then confined to a universe in which *quadras* [square-compounds] were *terreiros* [yards] and the lyrics, blessed) in a musical commodity, frequently launched and promoted by cultural industries during carnival.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that such an enhancing effect is expected in the post Covid-19 era. The expectation is that the epidemic outbreak will accelerate the overcoming of a model of tourist travel that, at least since the 1990s, has been challenged both by academic – who consider it as a massified cultural and socially practice – and, by alternative forms of tourism. This is something of a paradox, since this model is essentially the same model that the Spanish flu helped to promote. Hence, a hypothesis arises from this investigation: would the time span covered by these two epidemic outbreaks represent the beginning and the end of a certain historical cycle of tourism in Brazil?

It is too early to foresee what the future of tourism will be – whether at the national or global level. But if, on the one hand, it is premature to glimpse, although it is already suggested, the hegemony of more intimate, personalized experiences where tourists are engaged with places they visit; on the other hand, it is worth remembering that, due to the epidemic outbreak of the Spanish flu, there were glimpses of behavioral changes that marked the society of Rio at the time. Hence, in this context of social life, in light of history, there are not many reasons to think that the Covid-19 case will not bring anything new.

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