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The indigenous presence in the Brazilian *telenovela*: power, interdiction and visibility

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Abstract

In this article, we analyze the appearance of indigenous characters in Brazilian *telenovelas* and the discourses that are broadcasted about the indigenous identities. In order to investigate which of those productions brought indigenous characters, we carried out a survey in the 665 *telenovelas* aired from 1963 to 2016, on the main Brazilian television broadcasters, and in only 28 of those we found indigenous characters. We took as the main theoretical reference the formulation of conditions on historical possibilities of the discourses and we found two major events imbricated with the production of *telenovelas* and the indigenous presence: the demarcation, in 1978, of the Xingu Indigenous Park and the commemoration of the 500 years of the colonization of Brazil. We have observed that the main indigenous characters of those plots are heterogeneous and are associated with different political positions.

Keywords: *Telenovelas*. Brazilian Television. Military Dictatorship. Discourse. Historical possibilities.

Indigenous societies, media and discourses

In enunciations broadcasted by the media in Brazil, the 896,9 thousand indigenous people, the 305 indigenous ethnic groups and 274 native languages are often taken as a generalization. It is as if there was only one language and one society, Tupi. Even today, the singularities of those societies are silenced, since the generic definition “Indian” is present in the most diverse media productions. The reasons that have built this history, marked by deep discontinuities, are quite complex and, to answer them, it is necessary to go beyond the simplistic and pacified statement “they thought to have arrived in the Indies”.

The word “Indian” was attributed to the native people of America for the first time by Christopher Columbus, who strongly claimed in his records to have arrived in the Indies (NEVES, 2009). The enunciations of those documents established the first process of mediation between the two continents. From those enunciations, the first processes of reception in Europe regarding the indigenous people were instituted. And if on one hand, they justified the violence of colonization, on the other, they started the first discussions on the rights of the native populations of America.

The powerful colonial interests and their new modalities, indigenous resistance and the transformations resulting from that struggle between powers are the discourses that are currently circulating about indigenous societies in everyday conversations, printed newspapers, TV shows and the Internet. We cannot disregard the fact that, even today, the indigenous people are protected by Brazilian laws and that they suffer from a stereotype of innocent or savage people, incapable of governing themselves. For Foucault (2012, p.296 – Our translation), governmentality is the “the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target”.

In the field of Communication, there is still little research on indigenous societies. In relation to media products, it is paramount to observe the historical moments in which indigenous societies gain prominence. On the newscasts of the State of Pará, Sena (2014, p.39 – Our translation) observes that there is a pattern of noticeability for those people: “usually, only conflicts over land and health problems draw audience attention”.

The construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant and its implications regarding the impacts it will bring to indigenous lands is also a recurring topic in the media. In April, the month when the “Indian Day”¹ and the “Discovery of Brazil”² are celebrated, the indigenous people always get the spotlights. They are remembered as the first people who inhabited our country until the invasion of the European navigators. These events are configured as conditions of historical possibilities for different discourses on indigenous people to appear in media products.

In relation to *telenovelas*, object of our study, few were the productions in which indigenous characters stood out. In order to understand how the indigenous presence in Brazilian *telenovelas* took place, we conducted a survey, from February 2014 to February 2017, of the *telenovelas* that were broadcasted over 53 years on Brazilian television. This survey was carried out from the systematization of the data present at the “Teledramaturgia” website, owned by researcher Nilson Xavier; at the “Memória Globo” website, owned by Rede Globo, and in the work “*Teledramaturgia: agente estratégico na construção da TV aberta brasileira*” (“Teledramaturgy: a strategic agent in the construction of Brazilian public television”, in free translation) (MALCHER, 2010).

1 Celebrated in Brazil on April 19.

2 Celebrated on April 22, date when the fleet led by Pedro Álvares Cabral reached the Brazilian territory.

After crossing the data present in those three research sources, we reached the following numbers: from 1963 to 2016, 665 *telenovelas* were aired on the main Brazilian broadcasters. Then we read the synopses of the productions and found that, of that number, only 28 included indigenous characters in their plots.

In this article, we present significant results of this survey and analyze two different historical moments closely related to the production of *telenovelas* in which indigenous characters gained prominence: the demarcation of the Xingu Indigenous Park in 1978 and the commemoration, in the year 2000, of the 500 years of the Europeans arrival in Brazil. We understand, from Foucault (2008), that the conditions of historical possibilities allowed, in certain moments, the irruption of discourses on the indigenous societies in those televised serial fictions.

The historical paths of discourses

In “*The Order of Discourse*” and “*The Archeology of Knowledge*”, Foucault (1999, 2008) formulates much of his archaeological method of discourse analysis. In those works, he aims to explain how the movements of appearance and silence of discourses, in a certain society, are intertwined with occurrences and historical transformations. That means that one cannot just talk about anything, anywhere.

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (FOUCAULT, 1999, p.9 – Our translation).

An object of discourse does not preexist in itself, but it is linked to a complex bundle of relationships that allows it to appear. “These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p.50 – Our translation). Thus, to grasp an object of discourse is to understand that it is not neutral, but related to a set of rules that allows or not its appearance.

We understand *telenovela* as one of the main matrixes of Brazilian culture. Traversed by historical movements, serial television fictions cannot speak of anything anywhere. The irruption of discourses about indigenous societies in these productions and the identity construction of the indigenous characters, therefore, are tied to the power relations that surround them. It is therefore necessary that we consider the moment when those productions appear, “paying attention to the historical conditions that could legitimize that speech, in that place” (MILANEZ, 2006, p.26 – Our translation).

Conceived as a node in a web of memories, *telenovelas* have a historical density. Our objective is to understand the conditions external to the plots (FOUCAULT, 2008) that

allowed the irruption of certain concepts about indigenous societies. “We must show why it could not be other than it was, in what respect it is exclusive of any other, how it assumes, in the midst of others and in relation to them, a place that no other could occupy” (FOUCAULT, 2008, p.31 – Our translation).

In view of the significant number of *telenovelas* that have been produced and broadcasted throughout the history of television in Brazil, there is just a tiny number of productions in which indigenous societies could be seen. Aiming to investigate the presence of indigenous characters in those television serial fictions from 1963 to 2016, as already mentioned, we found 28 *telenovelas* in which indigenous characters appear. Considering this information, we ask: what conjunctures of power allowed the appearance of those characters and the irruption of the discourses they materialized? We seek to understand, therefore:

The conditions necessary for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions required if one is to ‘say anything’ about it, and if several people are to say different things about it, the conditions necessary if it is to exist in relation to other objects, if it is to establish with them relations of resemblance, proximity, distance, difference, transformation — as we can see, these conditions are many and imposing. Which means that one cannot speak of anything at any time (FOUCAULT, 2008, p.50 – Our translation).

We understand that Brazilian *telenovelas*, to a great extent, translate the struggles for power in our country and may or may not represent a place for updating the colonial discourse or even of resistance to it. Therefore, “we are interested in knowing what makes a choice possible rather than the other, to determine why it was possible to use one set of relations instead of another” (MILANEZ, 2006, p. 26 – Our translation).

All eyes on the screen: methodological procedures

As part of the actions proposed in the research project “*A Invenção do índio na mídia: discursos e identidades*”³ (“The invention of the Indians in the media: discourses and identities”, in free translation), in the period from February 2014 to February 2017, we conducted the survey and the reading of the synopses of Brazilian *telenovelas* aired on Tupi, Excelsior, Manchete, Bandeirantes, Cultura, Record, Brazilian Television System (SBT) and Globo television stations. We adopted as criterion to define the initial year of our research the periodicity of those productions, which in 1963 began to be daily broadcasted.

In the bibliographic research, our main reference was Malcher (2010), which presents a consistent research on the role of teledramaturgy in the history of public television in

3 Project approved in the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq)/2013 Universal Statute, advised by professor Ivânia dos Santos Neves. Its main objective was to analyse the indigenous presence in different media languages.

Brazil. In its final part, there is a report on the teledramaturgical shows aired, from 1950 to 2005, on the main Brazilian broadcasters.

The Internet is also an important place for researches on *telenovelas*, and many chapters of those productions are available on websites such as YouTube and Vimeo. We also found several websites and blogs with information on *telenovelas* broadcasted in Brazil. Among them, we chose as a research source the site “Teledramaturgia”⁴, owned by the researcher Nilson Xavier. Created in 2000, the website provides the most complete database available on the Internet about the *telenovelas* broadcasted in Brazil since 1963.

Nilson Xavier is a Brazilian teledramaturgical researcher and author of the book “*Almanaque da Telenovela Brasileira*” (“The Brazilian Telenovelas Guide”, in free translation) (XAVIER, 2007), the result of more than 20 years of research. In the database available at the website, there is information on synopsis, cast, backstage, soundtrack and photos of *telenovelas* aired, from 1963 to 2016, on Tupi, Excelsior, Manchete, Bandeirantes, Cultura, Record, SBT and Rede Globo.

Regarding the *telenovelas* broadcasted by TV Globo, following the strategies of self-promotion of its products on the Internet, Rede Globo itself aims to spread the information. In 2008, they created the “Memória Globo”⁵ website, with the purpose of gathering the history of more than 50 years of existence of the company. Information on *telenovelas*, miniseries, newscasts, journalistic and sports coverage, comedy shows, talk shows, among others, are available at their website.

As for our object, the *telenovelas*, a database is available at “Memória Globo” website that contains an archive of *telenovelas* broadcasted by Rede Globo, from 1965, the year of its first production, until 2016. There we have access to synopses, photos, videos, gallery of characters, information about costumes, characterization, scenography, curiosities, soundtrack, remarkable scenes and technical specifications.

Our main objective, however, was not only to produce statistics on the indigenous presence in *telenovelas*, but to understand how the historical movements in Brazil interfered in those processes. From the theoretical-analytical perspective we have adopted, we know that, depending on the circumstances, certain discourses can be pronounced, but in others they must be prohibited. As Foucault (1999, p.9 – Our translation) explains:

In a society such as our own we all know the rules of exclusion. The most obvious and familiar of these concerns is what is prohibited. We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything. We have three types of prohibition, covering objects, ritual with its surrounding circumstances, the privileged or exclusive right to speak of

4 Available at: <http://www.teledramaturgia.com.br/>. Accessed on: 16 mar. 2017.

5 Available at: <http://memoriaglobo.globo.com/>. Accessed on: 16 mar. 2017.

a particular subject; these prohibitions interrelate, reinforce and complement each other, forming a complex web, continually subject to modification.

Considering our object, the research and the analysis started from the following questions: why, in certain periods, *telenovelas* in which the indigenous characters obtained prominence were produced and why, for many years, no television plot has given them any prominence?

Between arrows and cameras: indigenous characters in Brazilian *telenovelas*

The tables presented below bring together the *telenovelas* broadcasted on the main Brazilian television stations. We adopted the criterion of organizing them by broadcasters and, in relation to Rede Globo, by the volume of *telenovelas* with indigenous characters, we detail the shows considering the decades in which they were aired.

On TV Tupi, from 1964 to 1980, 116 *telenovelas* were broadcasted and only two had indigenous characters.

Table 1 – TV Tupi *telenovelas*

“O Mestiço” Author: Cláudio Petráglia	Year: 1965 Broadcasted from March to May 15 Time: 7 pm
“Aritana” Author: Ivani Ribeiro	Year: 1978/1979 Broadcasted from November 13 1978 to April 30 1979 Time: 8 pm and 9 pm

Source: Produced by the authors based on Malcher (2010) and the “Teledramaturgia” (2014) website.

TV Excelsior broadcasted from 1963 to 1970, 57 *telenovelas* and again two productions had indigenous characters.

Table 2 – TV Excelsior *telenovelas*

“O Tempo e o Vento” Author: Teixeira Filho	Year: 1967/1968 Broadcasted from July 1967 to March 1968 Time: 9:30 pm
“A Muralha” Author: Ivani Ribeiro, based on the homonymous novel by Dinah Silveira de Queiroz	Year: 1968/1969 Broadcasted from July 1968 to March 1969 Time: 9:30 pm

Source: Produced by the authors based on Malcher (2010) and the “Teledramaturgia” (2014) website

On TV Manchete, between 1985 and 1998, 19 *telenovelas* were broadcasted and only one had indigenous characters in its plot. “Amazônia”, by Denise Bandeira and Jorge Duran, was broadcasted from December 10, 1991 to June 29, 1992, at 9 pm.

Record TV broadcasted 76 *telenovelas*, from 1964 to 2016. Despite the vast number of productions, covering five decades, only in the 2000s two *telenovelas* had indigenous characters.

Table 3 – Record TV *telenovelas*

“A Escrava Isaura” Authors: Thiago Santiago and Anamaria Nunes, adaptation of the homonymous novel	Year: 2004/2005 Broadcasted from October 18, 2004 to April 30, 2005 Time: 7 pm and 7:30 pm
“Bicho do Mato” Autores: Cristianne Fridman e Bosco Brasil	Year: 2006/2007 Broadcasted from July 18, 2006 to March 20, 2007 Time: 7 pm and 8 pm

Source: Produced by the authors based on Malcher (2010) and the “Teledramaturgia” (2014) website

Rede Globo is the largest producer of Brazilian *telenovelas*. Audience leader, it is the only station that has maintained, since 1965, the uninterrupted broadcasting of *telenovelas*. Malcher (2010, p.174 – Our translation) explains that:

Rede Globo became the investing broadcaster in the Brazilian teledramaturgy production, becoming, over the decades analyzed, the largest producer of national television fiction. In a constant quest for improvement of their fictional works, Globo largely surpassed all the other broadcasters in the country. The competence of this broadcaster as producer of teledramaturgical works is indisputable.

In our survey, from 1965 to 2016, Rede Globo broadcasted 297 *telenovelas* and, from that number, only 21 *telenovelas* had indigenous characters in their plots. There are also several miniseries with indigenous characters that were broadcasted on that station, but here we specifically analyzed *telenovelas*.

Table 4 – Rede Globo *Telenovelas*

Decades – 1960/1970	
“A Rainha Louca” Author: Glória Magadan	Year: 1967 Broadcasted from February 20 to December 16 Time: 9:30 pm

Decades – 1960/1970	
“Irmãos Coragem” Author: Janete Clair	Year: 1970/1971 Broadcasted from June 8, 1970 to July 12, 1971 Time: 8 pm
“Bicho do Mato” Authors: Chico de Assis e Renato Correia de Castro	Year: 1972 Broadcasted from May 8 to November 17 Time: 18h
Decade – 1980	
“Sétimo Sentido” Author: Janete Clair	Year: 1982 Broadcasted from March 29 to October 9 Time: 8 pm
“Hipertensão” Author: Ivani Ribeiro	Year: 1986/1987 Broadcasted from October 6, 1986 to April 18, 1987 Time: 7 pm
“O Outro” Author: Aguinaldo Silva	Year: 1987 Broadcasted from March 23 to November 10 Time: 8:30 pm
“Vida Nova” Author: Benedito Ruy Barbosa	Year: 1988/1989 Broadcasted from November 21, 1988 to May 6, 1989 Time: 5:50 pm
Decade – 1990	
“Quatro por Quatro” Author: Carlos Lombardi	Year: 1994/1995 Broadcasted from October 24, 1994 to July 22, 1995 Time: 6:50 pm
“Irmãos Coragem – 2 nd Version” Authors: Dias Gomes e Marcílio Moraes	Year: 1995 Broadcasted from January 2 to July 1 Time: 6 pm
“O Rei do Gado” Author: Benedito Ruy Barbosa	Year: 1996/1997 Broadcasted from June 17, 1996 to February 14, 1997 Time: 8:30 pm
Decades - 2000/2010	
“Uga Uga” Author: Carlos Lombardi	Year: 2000/2001 Broadcasted from May 8, 2000 to January 19, 2001 Time: 7 pm
“A Padroeira” Author: Walcyr Carrasco	Year: 2001/2002 Broadcasted June 18, 2001 to February 23, 2002 Time: 6 pm
“A Lua Me Disse” Author: Aguinaldo Silva	Year: 2005 Broadcasted from April 18 to October 1 Time: 7 pm

Decades - 2000/2010	
“Alma Gêmea” Author: Walcyr Carrasco	Year: 2005/2006 Broadcasted from June 20, 2005 to March 11, 2006 Time: 6 pm
“Bang Bang” Authors: Mário Prata e Carlos Lombardi	Year: 2005/2006 Broadcasted from October 3, 2005 to April 21, 2006 Time: 7 pm
“Desejo Proibido” Author: Walther Negrão	Year: 2007/2008 Broadcasted from November 5, 2007 to May 2, 2008 Time: 6 pm
“Beleza Pura” Author: Andrea Maltarolli	Year: 2008 Broadcasted from February 18 to September 12 Time: 19h
“Araguaia” Author: Walther Negrão	Year: 2010/2011 Broadcasted from September 27, 2010 to April 8, 2011 Time: 6 pm
“Fina Estampa” Author: Aguinaldo Silva	Year: 2011/2012 Broadcasted from August 22, 2011 to March 23, 2012 Time: 9 pm
“Além do Horizonte” Authors: Carlos Gregório e Marcos Bernstein.	Year: 2013/2014 Broadcasted from November 4, 2013 to May 3, 2014 Time: 7 pm
“Velho Chico” Author: Benedito Ruy Barbosa	Year: 2016 Broadcasted from March 14 to October 1 Time: 9 pm

Source: Produced by the authors based on “Memória Globo” website

In the survey carried out on Brazilian *telenovelas* presented by three other TV stations, we found the following data: On Cultura, from 1965 to 1971, seven *telenovelas* were broadcasted, on Bandeirantes, from 1967 to 2008, 37 *telenovelas* were aired and on the SBT, from 1982 to 2016, 56 *telenovelas* were broadcasted. Despite the high number of productions, none of those had indigenous characters.

From the results of our researches, 28 *telenovelas* had indigenous characters, but only in “Aritana” (1978) indigenous causes were the central plot. After “Aritana” aired, only in the years 2000, indigenous characters were again protagonists of *telenovelas*. In “Uga Uga” (2000), “Alma Gêmea” (2005) and “Araguaia” (2011), aired on Rede Globo, the stories of the indigenous characters were the main plots. The miniseries “A Muralha” (2000) and “A Invenção do Brasil” (2000), both presented by Rede Globo, also brought indigenous characters into prominent roles.

We understand, based on Foucault (2008) that the appearance of those different television productions, and the prominent roles assigned to the indigenous characters, is

largely intertwined with two historical moments in which the discussions on indigenous subjects gained evidence in Brazilian society: the ratification of the Xingu Indigenous Park in the 1970s, and the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the “arrival” of Europeans in Brazil, in 2000.

Why Aritana and not another? The Dictatorship, the Xingu Park and the daily-life impressions

In the 1970s, in Brazil, the arbitrarinesses to which indigenous societies were exposed and the international denunciations about the risk of extinction of some of them forced the Brazilian government to act towards the demarcation of indigenous lands (LARAIA; DAMATTA, 1978). That situation, with all its complexity, undoubtedly favored the creation of a television fiction.

As has been recurrently repeated in the Brazilian history, since the beginning of colonization, the indigenous populations living in the Amazon represented an obstacle to the “progress of the region” and were heavily affected. Among other objectives regarding the mineral and agroindustrial exploration of the region, to integrate the Amazon to the other regions of the country meant one of the main goals of the military government. That project devastated large territories in the Amazon, especially in the state of Pará, in order to construct immense highways, among them the BR-230, known as the “Transamazonian”. According to Corrêa (2013, p.32 – Our translation): “those highways and the whole web of senses that have been established along with them have changed the way of economic and cultural life in this region. With the roads also came the conflicts with the people who lived in the forest”.

In addition to the massive projects that cut through the Amazon forest and did consider the problems that would be caused to the people living in the region, another event, in 1974, also produced serious accusations in the international scenario of human rights violations in Brazil: the Araguaia Guerrilla War. The armed conflict against the Brazilian army took place near the Araguaia River, between the states of Pará, Maranhão and Tocantins, and involved the Suruí-Aikewára people, who lived in the region (NEVES; CORRÊA, 2012).

In the midst of that troubled period of the country’s history, a political action was taken in favor of the human rights of the Amazonian indigenous people: the demarcation of the Xingu Indigenous Park, in 1978. Discussions about the creation of the Park predate the military government. In 1952, during the Eurico Gaspar Dutra government, there were already a whole series of studies performed on the Xingu Park, but its creation only happened in 1961, during the government of Jânio Quadros, and the demarcation of its current perimeter happened in 1978, the year when General Emílio Médici was leaving the presidency of Brazil. The Xingu Indigenous Park, located in the northeast region of the state of Mato Grosso, in southern Amazon, was the first indigenous land ratified by the Federal Government.

In the late 1970s, criticism by national and international human rights organizations intensified and the dictatorship was already beginning to demonstrate a less violent behavior. This convergence of interests of the Brazilian government and the organizations that fought for the human rights of indigenous societies was very favorable for the production of “Aritana”, the only Brazilian *telenovela* ever produced that brought as main plot the discussion of an indigenous issue. To write that *telenovela*, Ivani Ribeiro, the author, was advised by the Villas-Bôas brothers, the main responsible people for the Xingu Park project, and by Professor Olympio Serra, administrator of the Xingu Park at the time.

In that *telenovela*, Aritana (Carlos Alberto Riccelli), the main protagonist, son of an Indian woman and a white man, lived in Xingu Indigenous Park and was on the verge of being expelled from his land. His uncle, the wealthy farmer Nhonhô Correia (Jayme Barcellos), claimed to be the owner of part of the land in which the people of Aritana lived and intended to negotiate it with businessmen from the United States. Faced with that problem, Aritana leaves his village and goes to the city in a quest to obtain definitive ownership of the land for his people.

At the end of the *telenovela*, Aritana emerges victorious because he is able to convince his uncle that the land belongs to the indigenous society. In chapter 125, when Aritana receives the news that he will have full possession of the land in which he lives, there is a scene that evidences quite a lot of the debate the author wanted to emphasize at that moment, on the importance of the land for the indigenous people. In this scene, Aritana explains why he did not sell his share of the land to his uncle:

Aritana: “I did not sell. I don’t sell”.

Nhonhô Correia: “I know you don’t sell. However, your denial, your stubbornness in not selling, made me curious”.

Aritana: “Stubbornness? Not stubbornness. Every *camará*, every people needs land”.

[...]

Aritana: “I don’t want profit, I want land. Indians don’t need money. Indians don’t sell, don’t buy, don’t like money. All that Indians want is this, just land to stay in”.

In the midst of the discussions about the demarcation of the Xingu Indigenous Park, that *telenovela* contributed to the Brazilian viewer, distant from the challenges faced by indigenous societies, to interact, albeit fictionally, with that reality. As Motter (1998, p.91 – Our translation) points out in her analysis of *telenovelas* that brought discussions of controversial social themes to their plots:

Those issues, discussed throughout the six months of the character’s life (in real time), imply an incorporation of the problem, through the fictional way, to

the real daily-life of the viewer for the same period, and even if that does not produce any changes, it at least induces the viewer to reflect on them. It is not a matter of merely pointing out and denouncing problems, but of showing how they are present and how they affect people's lives.

During the time when "Aritana" was being broadcasted, the contact with the story of an indigenous leader who goes to the city to fight for his land, most likely guided the daily conversations of Brazilian society, which was divided on indigenous rights. The ingenuity and determination of the character produced identification or even disgust for the protagonist. The creation of that *telenovela* was part of the strategies of the indigenous rights defenders and had the direct participation of the Villas Boas brothers. The brothers and Ivani Ribeiro wanted a positive reaction from the Brazilian population regarding the demarcation of the Xingu Indigenous Park.

500 years of colonization: dramas and comedies on Rede Globo

The second historical moment in which indigenous characters have gained prominent roles in television fiction is largely intertwined with the "celebrations" of the 500 years of colonization. Again, a convergence of interests favored the production of *telenovelas* and miniseries in which indigenous characters featured in the main plots.

"Uga Uga", aired in 2000, at 7 pm, featured the Indian called Tatuapu, played by Claudio Heinrich, a blue-eyed, blond actor. The actor's choice translates into the Euro-American beauty standard, which is highly regarded by public opinion. The plot mainly explored the comedy genre, so Tatuapu, like the other characters in the *telenovela*, was built to be funny, laughable. The narrative, therefore, was not committed to bring conflicts involving indigenous people.

"Uga Uga" told the story of Tatuapu, a white Western man who was raised by an indigenous society in the Amazon rainforest. Only as an adult he finds his grandfather and then moves to live with him in the city of Rio de Janeiro. To play Tatuapu, the actor spent a week living with indigenous people that inhabit the Xingu Park. We cannot, however, establish further similarities between the protagonist of "Uga Uga" and the political position of Aritana, but only the fact that they were two white actors playing indigenous characters.

Tatuapu spoke a fictitious indigenous language and, upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro, tried to learn Portuguese. In several scenes, other characters would try to teach him simple words, but he would repeat them with difficulty. He would also constantly appear jumping on furniture, like a wild animal. When he lived in the Amazon forest, he would always walk with a spear in his hands. Those scenes and the very title of the *telenovela*, "Uga Uga", refer us to *Uga Buga*, an onomatopoeia that evokes in our memories the sound emitted by the Neanderthal man.

In some moments of the plot, other indigenous characters appear and there are some scenes that happen in the village in which Tatuapu was created. The central plot is related to the inheritance of his grandfather, of whom he is the sole heir. A nephew interested in the fortune keeps trying to eliminate or even disregard Tatuapu as a rational person. In the end, everything is settled in favor of Tatuapu and good overcomes evil.

In the plot, Tatuapu is not in fact Indian, and the issue is not the indigenous lands and it does not establish a direct relation with the commemorations of the 500 years of colonization. The *telenovela* does not intend to make a documentary about the invasion of the Portuguese, nor is it interested in showing the peculiarities of the daily life of the indigenous people. In any case, we cannot dissociate their production from the historical occurrences of that period. Why a comedy involving indigenous people in that period, after so much silence about them?

In the same field of “Uga Uga”, another teledramaturgical production broadcasted in 2000 had indigenous characters in prominent papers, the miniseries “A Muralha”. Set in the XVII century, after 100 years of the arrival of Pedro Álvares Cabral in Brazil, this miniseries told the story of the *bandeirantes*, their quests for lands and riches and their plans to capture the natives, which they sold as slaves.

The arrival of the Europeans to Brazil was also the theme of the microseries “A Invenção do Brasil” (2000). The plot told the story of the young Portuguese painter Diogo Álvares Corrêa (Selton Mello) who, in 1500, travels with the European navigators in search of the path to the Indies. During the voyage, the caravel is shipwrecked and only the painter arrives on the Brazilian coast, being received by Tupinambás natives. A love triangle between Diogo and the indigenous Paraguaçu (Camila Pitanga) and Moema (Deborah Secco) was the main subject of the plot.

In the year 2000, the country celebrated the 500th anniversary of the “arrival” of the Europeans to Brazil. This remarkable date had repercussions on different mediatic materials, among them, on Brazilian teledramaturgy. This historic moment was quite favorable to the appearance of the *telenovela* “Uga Uga”, the miniseries “A Muralha” and the microseries “A Invenção do Brasil”. Not without reason, indigenous characters gained prominence in these productions, after all, how to approach the “discovery” without the presence of the indigenous societies that already inhabited the country? The intense mobilization of the media in this period with its complex processes of contradictions was once again committed to telling the story of the contact between the natives and the Europeans.

Final considerations

Based on our survey on the indigenous presence in Brazilian *telenovelas*, we concluded that this presence is absolutely small when compared to the large number of *telenovelas* that were broadcasted over more than five decades. We understand that historical movements contributed to the fact that, at certain moments, the enunciations about indigenous societies

gained prominence in those serial television fictions. As Foucault explains (2008, p.51 – Our translation),

These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioral patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization [...] They do not define its internal constitution, but enable it to appear, to juxtapose itself with other objects, to situate itself in relation to them, to define its difference, its irreducibility, and even perhaps its heterogeneity, in short, to be placed in a field of exteriority.

In the 1970s, discussions about indigenous rights in Brazil gained prominence abroad and the movements about the demarcations of indigenous lands had to be faced by the Federal Government. The ratification of the Xingu Indigenous Park was present in the media, and the debate on land for indigenous societies was also the main plot of a telenovela. In the year 2000, the commemoration of the 500 years of the arrival of the Europeans to Brazil allowed different teledramaturgical productions to include indigenous characters in prominent roles.

Nowadays, the discourse about indigenous lands hindering the country's progress continues to be reedited and refuted in the media productions. After several years without indigenous character as protagonists of *telenovelas*, only in 2010 an indigenous character appeared in a telenovela, aired at 6 pm, on TV Globo.

In this period, on the Internet, there were international campaigns denouncing the aggression against indigenous people and the Amazon forest due to the construction of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant. Then, “Araguaia” was screened, with an Indian villain, who possessed evil powers, bound to harm a rich and kindly Western family. Returning to the Foucaultian question, we may ask: why did this character arise and not another? We can see that those *telenovelas* answer to different power relations and are involved in different positions regarding the rights of indigenous people. These television productions are constituted with their conditions of historical possibilities and, in relation to the indigenous presence, it could not be different.

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