

## THE SUBVERSIVE KISS THAT SUBVERTS THE SMALL-SCREEN

Tânia Montoro & Maria Luiza Mendonça

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### ABSTRACT

Fictional televised serials, or soap-operas, a popular genre which has been highly successful in Brazil, has allowed greater autonomy for the national audiovisual industry, given that Brazilian T.V networks produce a significant part of the programming shown on prime-time (between 8:00pm and 10:00pm). Since the 70's, Brazil has been exporting soap-operas to five countries including Latin-American and socialist countries. The persistence of elements of popular culture and the presence of original narrative elements from recognized forms, such as *literature de cordel*, vaudeville, radio plays, and modern novels have ensured the success of the soap opera in everyday Brazilian culture and in that of other countries. This article shows, by way of analyses of the circulation and consumption of audiovisual media, within the perspective of cultural studies, and feminist and gender studies, the media controversy in relation to the representation of gender, especially of sexuality in "female old age". This occurs through the creation of plots and characters who assume their homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality and even, by dislocating content which belonged to the private sphere into the public domain which operates as well in the opposite direction, saturating the public space with themes restricted to the intimate sphere.

### KEYWORDS

Gender studies; television; soap opera; audiovisual representation

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### INTRODUCTION

This article forms part of the research *Audiovisual Narratives and Socio-cultural and Media Processes*, developed in the research stream *Image, Sound, and Writing*, constituted by a research group of professors, and master's and doctoral students of the Post graduate Program in Communication of the University of Brasília — UnB, and of the Federal University of Goiás – UFG, situated in the central west of Brazil.

Grounding its concerns in the strict relationship that establishes itself between visual representation and the construction and configuration of imaginaries, the research has as its central objective the analysis of the imaginary representation of old age and of aging in contemporary audiovisual narratives, problematizing these singularities in the constructions of gender identity(ies). A range of theses, scientific articles, and essays have been produced and are available in the data bank of the National Council of Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

Old age and the processes of aging are universal questions which go beyond the social and cultural conditions of any particular society. However, "female old age" has specific and individual meanings that make difficult any homogenization of this demographic (Beauvoir, 1990; Bosi, 1987; Butler, 2003). The audiovisual is one of the principal disseminators of transformations of social behaviors, counting on the great capacity for

thematic range and the simulation of realities by way of images and sounds in movement (Aumont, 2004; Burch, 2006).

Starting from these premises and taking into account that contemporary fictional serialized narratives have been marked by audiovisual works that interlock intimacy and the everyday, temporalities and subjectivities, experiences of processes of aging becoming visible form in some of the plots of televised series. This has allowed greater intimacy between viewers and characters. “The analysis of these audiovisual narrative products is a privileged opportunity for us to reflect on society as a whole, be it from a global, national, cultural, personal or market perspective” (Caldas & Montoro, 2006, p. 157).

As a system of representation the audiovisual narrative constitutes “an activity that constructs meanings via the materiality of images and sounds” (Montoro, 2009, p. 19). This system of representation helps us to give sense to our experience, assists in the process of the construction of identities, and allows us to transit amidst the complex networks of institutions, roles, and subjectivities.

The images, sparse and fragmented representations of the social totality, end up constructing a coherent whole – the social imaginary – through which we perceive the “worlds” and “lived realities” of others, and through imagination, reconstruct our lives and theirs, in an intelligible manner, within a lived and experienced totality (Montoro, 2006, p. 19).

Examining the construction of identities of gender within the fictional serial narratives of Brazilian television, specifically, the study of Brazilian soap operas, (recipient of awards throughout the world; distributed and sold in more than 40 countries) offers us the possibility of intimately occupying the visual space, in the plots and dramas of stories of leading ladies and villains of a developing nation, multiple, and sensual, that moves between the urban and rural, and that anchors itself in its diversity as its greatest immaterial patrimony.

Soap operas have constituted an important object of study for cultural and communication studies given that they are a field open for the comprehension of how subjectivities are constructed and presented to the viewer. Beyond their artistic value, connected with their dramaturgy, as with the theatre, cinema and other manifestations, the soap opera constitutes a tool for the creation and transmission of beliefs and customs, norms and ways of being and living, an *ethos* therefore.

Molded by the vision of the middle class, beyond being a portrait (not always exact) of society, and strongly influenced by mass culture, the soap opera is responsible for bringing entertainment to the homes of viewers who do not possess other forms of entertainment. For Daniela Jakubaszko (2010, p. 15):

... the process of the acceptance of the soap-opera as an object of scientific study happened in a fairly slow manner, full of hurdles conflicts, and controversies. To brake with the predominant thought that it is a product of little importance, even less in artistic terms, and almost always described as alienated, was the task of many studies dedicated to it. (...) One can say

today, that consensus already exists in the academic sphere regarding the relevance and necessity of undertaking, in the most diverse manners, investigations about the production, circulation, reception, and consumption of soap-operas. It is no longer possible to deny the influence and penetration of this product in the day-to-day life of Brazilians and Latin Americans.

The Brazilian family has gone through singular transformations throughout the last three decades, meaning that, on the juridical and legal plane there does not exist a univocal sense regarding what the family is. Amazonas and Braga (2006 cited Scorsolini-Comin & Santos, 2012) refer to a trans-historicity of the familial bond, a concept that carries the idea of movement and of processes of constant reconstruction of the family, in opposition to a fixed notion of family as something eternal and referent to a single model. Amongst the factors that have contributed to these transformations, we can note the transitions of a cultural, economic, political, and social order that have mobilized contemporary reflections about parentage, different familial arrangements, as well as ruptures and redefinitions of parental roles and of gender.

### 1. A LITTLE BIT OF BRAZILIAN SOAP-OPERA

In the 70's, Brazilian television started to show its programs in colour, with the soap opera, *O bem amado*. In 1971, *Rede Globo* instituted its marketing department and 5 years later, the Brazilian soap opera *Gabriela* based on the book of the Bahian writer Jorge Amado kicked off exportation and the gaining of international prizes. When this production was shown in Portugal, it mobilized the imagination of the Portuguese, who were coming out of the isolation imposed by a totalitarian regime. Just to give an idea, this soap opera was a success in both Latin American countries and those of the socialist block such as Cuba, the Soviet Union, and China.

Despite the controls on the means of communication in Brazil during the military dictatorship, in some cases entirely prohibiting from being publicly shown soap operas already recorded and completed, such as *Roque Santeiro* (1975) or *Despedida de Casado* (1974), it is worth underlining that soap operas traversed a path of liberalization in the way amorous relationships, the role of women, and the changes in familial structure were represented. The temporality of popular electronic media (recorded and viewed daily), meant that it allowed itself to assimilate with some of the unforeseen circumstances that in a certain manner, were components of its structural language. Placed in the day-to-day, the series structures itself starting from a temporal continuity – not a coincidence - between the diegetic and extra diegetic universes embracing viewers and authors.

The viewer accompanies the slow and repetitive unfolding and the sudden leaps without necessarily watching all of the episodes. He or she, children and friends get behind certain plot twists of the story line of specific characters, gossip with their work colleagues, and inform themselves about future episodes in the specialized press. To follow or watch a soap-opera is to incorporate the plot into the day-to-day and in a certain manner, participate in the social dynamic that defines the twists and turns of the narrative.

In this way, the anonymous viewer is incorporated into the dynamic of the making of the soap opera, given that they wind up participating as privileged viewers, militants of social, political, and corporate movements; fans who make their opinions public by way of announcements in the media, notable acts, and in social networks which we take as exemplifying the groundswell that this mode of communication produces.

With a base in viewer focus groups, demographic profiling, and discussion groups, Brazilian T.V networks, particularly *Rede Globo*, researched everyday habits of citizens, consumers, and potential viewers. The accumulated experience across the years generated a detailed knowledge within the field of reception theory, that viewers are active interpreters of what they see, and in the final instance, the holders of the power to create and destroy ties of loyalty with specific segments of the public<sup>1</sup>

To create and maintain a loyal audience, *Rede Globo* created a complex routine of research procedures that generated dialogue. Information garnered from audience members by way of discussion groups generate outcomes in the form of plot twists in the programming and marketing spin offs capable of surprising, captivating, and stimulating results. In the case of soap operas, novelty signifies presenting new scenarios, fashion, soundtracks, technological innovations, and “polemical themes”. We can observe that homosexuality is one of these themes, because in an embryonic fashion since the 80’s, the subject starts to appear in soap opera plots, in a disguised manner, but only as an index or as an oblique approach to the question.

The so called “soap opera at 8 pm” of *Rede Globo* (television programs shown in the whole vast national territory) is a practice of cultural and audiovisual consumption totally incorporated into the everyday habits of Brazilians. From there, the relevance of examining a form such as television is being incorporated into the day-to-day of people, and, as the day-to-day is revealed and incorporated, television becomes an intuition of the identity of characters and systems of representation of normalization. One therefore takes specific programming (a T.V channel) and a singular audiovisual product (contemporary Brazilian soap opera), in its relation with the symbolic universe of the ample questions of cultural and feminist studies of cinema and television.

The analyses of the content and consumption of audiovisual narratives offers a cognitive map that orients a theoretical and methodological horizon; an immersion that permits us to formulate a cartography of meanings and a topography of the representational system, considering the audiovisual as a protagonist of the everyday, and of the contemporary media scene. From this perspective and within the ambit of reception studies of contemporary media products that associated the emergence of subjects, subjectivities, contexts and history, it begins to indicate possibilities for signification.

Conceiving the audiovisual image in the sense proposed by Aumont (1995, p. 24) as that of the image delimited by a square, the space of the television screen (even with the limitation of a support, because the television is a domestic screen, it mobilizes imaginaries, a field that transmits to us the illusion of a whole image), the analysis realized has as

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding reception theory see Hall (2003).

its objective to reflect on some questions that are mobilizing<sup>2</sup> hearts and minds in Brazil and in other countries. We begin with the soap opera *Babilônia*, that has produced meaning through the media, with a debate regarding the establishment of legitimate social meanings. In this manner, we seek to identify the controversies and debates that circulate in the reception of two controversial and singular themes: aging and sexual orientation.

## 2. SEXUALITY AND AGING MOBILIZING THE SOCIAL NETWORKS

Through observation of posts on social networks during the last week of April, especially on Facebook and on specialist sites in posts about actors and “celebrities”, we intended to follow and investigate the polarization of public opinion about the new soap opera shown by *Rede Globo* on prime time (9:00 pm), *Babilônia* by the experienced director and actor Denis Carvalho. What motivated this widespread outpouring of public expression is the presence, in the series’ plot, of an older lesbian couple who, already in the first episode kiss and days later start preparations for their wedding, the official union of a couple of almost 40 years of conjugal life.

It is not the first time that television series have made use of homosexual relationships in their plots. The big novelty however is that it is two older women, successful, elegant and well educated, played by two actresses highly respected on theatre stages and in the cinema, Fernanda Montenegro and Nathália Timberg, both of them more than 80 years old. In previous soap operas these couples were in general much younger and the relationships much more innocent and romantic as relationships during one’s youth generally are<sup>3</sup>.

In this way, the current movement, which extends the traditional means of communication and invades the social networks, continues to be the reason for this perturbation, for reflections about rights, and as such about citizenship. The case considered here is representative of a very broad question, that of the relationship between the production of images and narratives as important elements of a symbolic dispute for hegemony, for the possession of power over authorized, legitimated, and official speech, which will also grant legitimacy, or not, to determined sexual options.

One could believe that female homosexuality, as in the case analyzed here, finds itself marked by the relationships with its time. The relations of domination are relations in which gender and the era occupy a significant position. As Bassin and Gaudart show (2009, p. 2): “the categories of age and sex are not simple variables, but are defined to produce systems of power”.

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<sup>2</sup> Actually, the dissemination of the use of social networks as the means of public mobilization has transformed the Brazilian political scene, placing in conflict sectarians and demonstrations in the public sphere. The movement around the soap opera seems to be a continuation of this historical moment.

<sup>3</sup> One can cite other examples: in 1988 the soap opera *Vale Tudo* by Gilberto Braga featured a lesbian couple Cecília and Laís (the first dies soon after the start); in 2003, *Mulheres Apaixonadas*, by Manuel Carlos featured two young students, Clara and Rafaela, who have a homosexual relationship.

### 3. POWER AND DISCURSIVE PRODUCTION

To try to understand a little more about this phenomenon, we adopted here the perspective that conceives the sphere of symbolic production and circulation as the space in which discursive disputes, which constitute part of the political struggle resultant from cultural and historical processes to fix meaning in a determined society, happen. It is simultaneously, the privileged site for the construction of subjectivities and the recognition and understanding, on the part of individuals, of their real life conditions, their possibilities, expectations and pathway for the concretization of sense in a determined society.

The production of subjectivity, in this understanding is not centered on the individual but is a social process in which independent spaces of definition and circulation of hegemonic, legitimate, and official discourses are also present as well as dissident and emergent ones. This discursive struggle that operates in the sphere of symbolic production makes use of the politics of visibility which are, at the same time politics of invisibility, of strategies adopted by the great institutions productive of meaning, including the means of communication and religions.

This dispute exposes, with greater or lesser obviousness, depending on the socio-historical moment, the cultural conflicts frequently latent in societies, that revolve around new spaces of citizenship, becoming manifest via the reduction of inequality, and through more symmetrical relationships between individuals and groups, which presupposes an advance over a space already conquered by (pre)established ideas.

Discursive strategies make use of choices regarding what and how to show to the public as a way of making arbitrary social relationships seem natural, and of promoting a consensual vision of the world in which the illusion of unity prevails and in which the divisions of society and of the conflicts there existent are dissimulated and hidden. Inserting cultural expressions in the field of symbolic production also implies referring them to specific forms such as the production and reproduction of the learning of social relations, to forms of sociability, to “adequate” ways of establishing affective relationships, as well as to what to expect of individuals in the process of aging.

The politics of visibility is an important element for the composition of the field of social representations in a determined epoch in a given society. These forms of representing individuals and groups, constructed in a particular way and in an arbitrary manner in each time and place, are tied to the material conditions of existence, and the differentiation of these conditions in the interior of the society that allows the emergence of cultural and symbolic contents that reflect different, conflictive conceptions and interests.

The field of cultural and symbolic representations, mainly through its creation of value, will constitute itself as one of the nuclei generative of identity for individuals and groups to the extent that it can aggregate them and, at the same time, differentiate them. These characteristics make it necessary to not dissociate the analysis of the culture of power relations existent in the society, because in the same way that there are legitimated and naturalized discourses, there also are peripheral, emergent, and even marginal discourses.

Beyond this, the field of representation is the site of reference in which individuals or groups identify and perceive themselves as visible, verifying as such their symbolic

existence. By way of the forms as they are represented there, they can define themselves, and see their desires and possibilities publicly expressed. Not without reason, social movements in a determined moment of their struggle demand the alteration of the forms of representation and demand a representation which would be consonant with lived experience, and in this sense, one could cite feminists and the black movement, amongst others.

In relation to the aged population, the psychiatrist and researcher of aging, Gérard Le Gouès (2008), emphasizes that this mental representation of a group by itself obeys a double movement: the capacity of acquiring qualities and the capacity for conserving them. In the first step, this capacity for acquiring qualities refers to the possibility of identifying oneself with models of what one wants to be, if not in reality at least in the ideal world. In relation to aging, the process of identification is difficult, since the models presented are not attractive or are less attractive than those of the young. Where are the happy, older “winners”, creating envy and capable of conquests and being content? For the elderly, one does not deal with living longer, but of “adding more years to a life”. One does not deal therefore with, “preserving a youthful way of life, even more so because it is an illusion, but of permitting the circulation of pleasure”.

In Brazil, the country’s cultural characteristics make it difficult for one to confront aging. Referring to Brazil as a “youthful country” is common, in a culture that valorizes youth and the new as qualities in themselves. In consequence, aging signifies going against the current, especially when one considers the role of media and aesthetics. The relationship between representation and the construction of a positive image of oneself can be more difficult, principally for women, given the use of their body as an element of seduction. To the middle aged man one can attribute values beyond their physical body, such as maturity, charm, power, and financial conquests. From women one expects, to the contrary, “that she remain always beautiful and seductive. And, regarding the feminine, seduction supports itself essentially in appearance and in the strategies of aesthetic valorization” (Lipovetsky, 2000, p. 63).

Even further, in the Brazilian context it is worth noting that, in the greater part of the discourse circulated by the media, as much that destined for the wider public as that specifically for women, those who are above the age of 50 are supposedly under represented. When they are represented, stereotyped images prevail and/or they are represented as individuals who compose a niche of the market to be exploited to sell determined products and services precisely for anti-aging and renewal, that is to say, describe and try to sell an illusion.

In a similar fashion, the centralization of seduction in the body, and not in other qualities such as intellectual and/or subjective conquests, for example, ensures that one makes this impossible given that the body does not deal well with the imperfections that aging does not wait to inflict upon it (Le Gouès, 2008). In this way the sexual experiences that alter with the passage of time are also centered around questions of gender.

Starting from these considerations of a theoretical nature, one departs from the presupposition that the debate caused by the lesbian couple in the soap opera *Babilônia*

owes itself to two main factors: gender and time, allied to the fact of its being the representation of a mature love which does not fear publically showing itself. The observations of the publications in the social networks should provide elements to demonstrate the supposition guiding this study.

#### 4. BABILÔNIA IS HERE!

Though the synopsis of the soap opera had not been released by *Rede Globo*, publications available on the networks sites<sup>4</sup> make it known that the plot revolves around three ambitious women. Between betrayals, murders, corruption, prostitution, amongst other social ills shown to the public, there exists a familial nucleus constituted by two elderly ladies, who have lived in a homoaffective union for forty years. Their grandson treats them like mothers.

In the current stage of development of the soap opera, the two ladies are preparing their homoaffective wedding, only recently made legally possible in Brazil<sup>5</sup>. The mentioned sites also inform that the kiss between the two characters (fig. 1), already shown in the first episode, would not be repeated as with the dispals of physical affection between them. On the other hand, torrid scenes of love and sex between heterosexual couples are presented in the same series without any further ado.



Figure 1: Scene of the lesbian kiss – soap-opera *Babilônia*  
source: [www.purepeople.com.br](http://www.purepeople.com.br)

Owing to this, one can inquire as to the reason for such scandal provoked by a kiss between the actresses Fernanda Montenegro and Nathália Timberg, who play the lesbian characters. There were heated disputes in the social media, between those in favor and those against, in which one can note the use of personal insults and vocabulary of low character. As an example of such publications regarding this debate, we present two versions. The first, is constituted by notable excerpts of denunciation by the Evangelical Parliamentary Front of the National Congress, signed by its president, the federal deputy

<sup>4</sup> Sites such as [www.gshow.com.br](http://www.gshow.com.br) and [www.purepeople.com.br](http://www.purepeople.com.br)

<sup>5</sup> The National Council of Justice felt the need to end this disparity between the states that authorize and those that do not authorize gay marriage, and edited the Resolution nº 175, of the 14th of May of 2013, authorizing once and for all that marriage between people of the same sex, be it through direct accreditation or via the conversion of a stable partnership. At [www.oab-rj.jusbrasil.com.br](http://www.oab-rj.jusbrasil.com.br)



João Campos, from the PSDB-GO, and released on the 17th of March of 2015, (the day following the exhibition of the scene):

The above mentioned soap opera *Babilônia* has the clear intention of affronting Christians in their convictions and principals, wanting to show, in a provocative way (...) the fashion denominated by them (the network) as 'another way to love' (...) The Evangelical Parliamentary Front invites all evangelicals, all Christians as well as people that feel themselves violated by these constant moral rapes imposed by the liberal media to not watch the soap-opera *Babilônia*... we recommend that you do not consume the products of the sponsors that sponsor this soap opera.

The second, published on the personal page on Facebook of the doctor Emmanuelle Lira, and widely shared on the social networks<sup>6</sup> makes clear its point in plain and objective language, positioning herself in the following manner:

Some important clarifications:

1. Gay marriage is voluntary. Nobody in Brazil is obliged to get married to a gay person. If you are not gay, this law has nothing to do with you.
  2. A gay kiss is the same as any other kiss. Being gay is a characteristic of people not of kisses. There is no black kiss or fat kiss. Also, kissing is voluntary as well. Nobody is obliged to kiss someone of the same sex.
  3. The adoption of children by gay couples is when a gay couple adopts a child from an orphanage, not one from your house. If you are not gay and not a child in an orphanage, this law has nothing to do with you.
  4. *Rede Globo* is only one network amongst many. I, for example, only have Sky and in Paraíba, Sky does not have *Globo*. Nobody in Brazil is obliged to watch the soap opera at 9pm. If you watch it, it is because you want to see it. So watch it!
  5. All programs in Brazil have classification indications. No soap opera is advisable for children of 6 to 7 years of age. If you are preoccupied then with your child seeing kissing on the soap opera at 9pm, then *Globo* is not your biggest problem. Go and read the Statute of the Child and Adolescent.
  6. If you are Christian, stop reading Leviticus and Deuteronomy and go and read the Sermon on the Mount and learn what tolerance is.
- Summarizing Pitty: no woman is going back into the kitchen, no black is going back into the work house, and no gay will go back into the closet. Get it into your heads.

It seems that the debate did not end with this post. On the same facebook page the doctor claims that she is being insulted and has received messages: «It is ridiculous

<sup>6</sup> Up until the time of writing this article the publication by the doctor on her page had been shared more than 26, 000 times. Accessed on April 11th, 2015.

calling me Bolivariano<sup>7</sup> and a disgusting lefty (as happened today) or messages saying that I will burn in the fires of hell because I am defending homosexuals (as has been happening for some days now), I don't accept this».

In an interview in the column *Quanto Drama!* of the journalist Patrícia Vilalba, published on the site of the magazine *Veja* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March of this year, the actress Fernanda Montenegro commented with surprise about the extreme reactions of some groups:

The whole situation is very extreme both politically and in terms of behaviour. It is very exaggerated, and things are becoming more extreme in a very desperate fashion. The reaction to the kiss is moral, and the scene is judged according to divine and absolute truth. Everybody has the right to an opinion. The problem is the radicalization of this thought and in what this could turn into. I don't belong to the armies that are being formed about the place. We don't need these armies. It is a witch hunt that they are proposing, on all sides». And following «Sincerely, I don't know what happened in this transformation of behaviour. Until now we haven't done anything and we will not do anything that goes beyond the seemly. Nothing. And they are two characters who still have not fully shown themselves. The hard reality that they had is still to be shown, up until their arrival in this encounter in their shared life. The kiss that is creating this whole fuss is a chaste kiss, loving, without any erotic or didactic provocation. It is a demonstration of affection. Because of this, I say that we don't have the capacity to analyse this moment. I perceive that we have many grave problems. The country is confronting a profound and significant crisis, and there are people disposed to speak out against a gay kiss of two actresses of nearly one hundred years of age made within a relationship officially recognized in the outside world.

The observations of this actress are illuminating in respect of the polarization that exists in Brazilian society at this current time. Though she only mentions the question, great effort is not necessary to see the motivating power of the means of communication and its efficacy in the context of the current protests.

### SOME LAST CONSIDERATIONS

By way of investigations of cinema and television studies, one observes that different types of representations referent to the thematic of the construction of heterodox identities permeates narrative content in programs, series, films, and soap operas, and contributes to a greater proximity between the viewer and the theme, placing on the public agenda questions of gender normally confined to the individual sphere.

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<sup>7</sup> This word has its root in the name of the national and revolutionary hero Simon Bolivar and not in the name of the country Bolivia. In the current political climate in Brazil, with its strong opposition to the reigning workers' party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*) the term Bolivariano pejoratively denotes someone perceived to be of exaggeratedly left leaning tendencies. N.T

With its combination of reportage and fiction, soap operas show the utopia of a public space totally visible and open to generalized interaction. As the most popular genre of televisual programming, it passes wide of the authority of the family, the school, the church, and the State, being able to set the agenda as such of what should or should not become public; where, when, and how, a question in itself becomes polemical. It also represents a vivid world, constructing, according to certain rules that include secrecy and mystery, inequality and distortion, beyond engaging viewers by way of interaction on the internet, favouring as such processes of legitimacy.

In their attempt to be included in the real world of glamour and spectacle, viewers appropriate the repertoire of the soap opera recognized as common to Brazilians, so as to position themselves in publicly recognizable terms, regarding questions which the majority of the time, but not exclusively – affect models of behaviour in the private sphere.

The Brazilian soap opera has provoked ruptures, generating as such dialogue with power structures to which we are indissociably submitted, via the increasingly frequent repetition and resignification of beings and relations commonly considered abject and as such, mobilizing a process of intelligibility for these groups of people on media platforms. Owing to its playful character, and because of general patterns of cultural consumption, the soap opera has been an important vector in the diffusion of illegitimate sexualities, according to the heteronormative discourse. The audiovisual medium is one of the forms of expression that most frequently publicly displays these experiences of subordinated identity, generally folded into the private space. As such it helps in the initiation of a political debate that disturbs the interests of those who promote the regimes of subordination.

The reflections about the events described above, take into consideration at least two phenomena that are not similar, but which complement each other. In the first place it seems evident that Brazilian society has undergone a questioning of the ethical and cultural order, interrogating, as an ethical search for public and personal life practices, old values that are being put in check. At least, this is the official discourse but not a guarantee that it will be carried out. Even though associated to a certain conservatism in habit, this discourse has been popularized and has become «common sense». If on one hand, there is a valorization of the ethical, on the other the transformation into common sense stops reflection and disagreement in the eventual transformations of the political and cultural scene.

In another sense, one can think that the country is also undergoing a great evolution in the institutional field, with legislation that favours categories and minorities, such as, the advance in workers laws for domestic employees and the normalization of homo-affective unions, and a diminishing of the cultural-ideological sphere.

Intolerance and polarization are not located only to the religious sphere; apparently traditional institutions such as the family, which has been rethought and reconstituted, in diverse forms, transforming itself into what one currently calls «conjugal arrangements» seems to threaten the stability of the institution in the traditional and hetero-affective form. These two phenomena permit one to a certain degree to comprehend the

repulsion caused by the representations of affection between two elderly women. To the asymmetries of gender one can add that of age. That is to say, with age one aggravates the inequalities and the prejudices against women.

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Tânia Siqueira Montoro has a doctorate in Audiovisual Communication from the Universidad Autonoma in Barcelona, with a post-doctorate at the Deustch Film Institute, Holland. She is a professor and member of the Post Graduate program at the Faculty of Communication at the Universidade de Brasília.

E-mail: [taniamontoro@unb.br](mailto:taniamontoro@unb.br)

Universidade de Brasília / Universidade Federal de Goiás Campus Universitário Darcy Ribeiro, Brasília - DF, 70910-900 Avenida Esperança, s/n - Setor Itatiaia, Goiânia - GO, 74690-900 Brazil

Maria Luiza Martins de Mendonça has a doctorate in Communication, is a researcher, and associate professor and member of the Post Graduate Program at the Faculty of Communication at the Universidade Federal de Goiás.

E-mail: [mluisamendonca@gmail.com](mailto:mluisamendonca@gmail.com)

Universidade de Brasília / Universidade Federal de Goiás Campus Universitário Darcy Ribeiro, Brasília - DF, 70910-900 Avenida Esperança, s/n - Setor Itatiaia, Goiânia - GO, 74690-900 Brazil