Identities forged in pain and violence: Nordeste's writing

Daniel do Nascimento e Silva
Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

Prepared for delivery at the 2010 Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Toronto, Canada October 6-9, 2010

1. Introduction

When approaching the relation between psychic symptoms and physical motivations, Freud reports the association that his patient Cäcilie makes between a conversation with her husband and a moment in it that she felt as a bitter insult. "Suddenly she put her hand to her cheek, gave a loud cry of pain, and said: 'It was like a slap in the face." (Freud, 1957 [1895], p.178). According to Freud, this was a case of symbolization, and undoubtedly "She felt as though he had really been given a slap in her face… the sensation of a slap in the face came to take on the outward form of a trigeminal neuralgia". The sensation of physical pain that Cäcilie describes, which Freud goes on to name as an act of symbolization, is an overt instance of the violence of words. The offensive terms uttered by her husband were truly felt as a slap in her face, and this explains why the sensation was physically delineated in the form of a facial neuralgia.

The violence in symbolization that Freud raised more than a hundred years ago is still a challenging and complicated concept, and any resemblance with more recent categories such as "symbolic violence" (Bourdieu, 1991) and "communicability of violence" (Briggs, 2007a) should not be seen as mere coincidence. All such theoretical constructs display an existing relation between violence and signification, and if we consider, as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004, p.2) suggest, that violence "like madness, sickness, or death itself" is a human condition, we should not lose sight of the role that this aspect of our very condition plays in the constitution, use, and productivity of language.

In this sense, this article pursues a possible consequence of a core assumption made by the linguistic turn in the human sciences – namely, the idea that language is a form of action (Austin, 1975 [1962]; Wittgenstein, 1953). At stake is the claim that among the shapes that this action might assume, violence is a very salient one. Inasmuch as violence is not only a destructive concept, but also a productive one (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004), I seek to understand how signification itself is rendered possible and shaped by violence. Aiming at depicting the silent but nonetheless painful symbolic violence that haunts language use, I undertake an analysis of the (violent) symbolic forms through which the Northeast of Brazil (*Nordeste*), the country's poorest geographical area, is represented in the Southeastern media, mainly in the wealthiest state of São Paulo. The ways in which subaltern subjectivities are demeaned, derogated, ridiculed, despised in many pieces of Brazilian media reveal ways in which language is used to hurt the other, specifically the other who represents the gender, the race and the space that one does not want to inhabit. A discussion of the central role of the constitution, production, and communicability of violence in language use means ultimately that critical linguistics (Fowler and Kress, 1979; Fairclough, 1992; Rajagopalan, 2003) should bring in, along the lines of recent approaches of the relation between violence and signification (Briggs, 2007a; Butler, 1997; Caldeira, 2000; Das, 2000; Feldman, 2000), the question of violence as one of its avenues of inquiry.

2. Northeast Brazil and the violence of discourse

On August 10, 2006, *Veja*, one of Brazil's most widely read magazines, displayed the face of a black woman holding her voter registration card (Fig. 1). Brazilian citizen Gilmara dos Santos Cerqueira was presented as the prototype of the voter who could

decide the forthcoming presidential elections (*Ela pode decidir as eleições*). Right below the headline, the magazine ran the following caption: "*Nordestina*, 27 years of age, basic education, 450 Brazilian Reais [of income] a month[1], Gilmara Cerqueira typifies the voter who will tip the scales in October"[2].

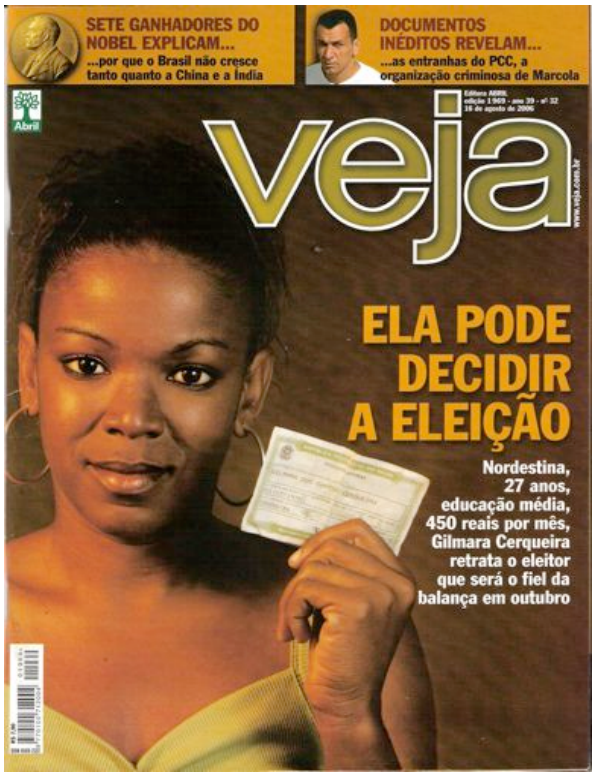

Fig. 1

The report was intended to depict the profile of the voters who, according to *Veja*, were supposed to carry significant electoral weight, tipping the balance in favor of Lula over his rightist opponent, Geraldo Alckmin. These voters were basically women under 44 years old, with high school degree, earning up to two minimum salaries, living in the *Nordeste*.

It is not by chance that Gilmara, a citizen from Bahia, the largest Northeastern state, was chosen as the face of such voters. In the captions, she is classified first as *Nordestina* which references the poorest region in Brazil. Its inhabitants, both in the Southeastern media and in the everyday speech of many Southeasterners, are often referred to as poor people who migrated to the Southeast – basically São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro – as a move to gain better quality of life, but which sometimes ended up leading them to crime or to even poorer conditions[3].

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[1] In Brazil, the income of workers is expressed in terms of payment on a monthly basis. Brazilian state stipulates the minimum wage a registered worker must be paid per month. When this issue of *Veja* was released, the minimum salary amounted to 350 Brazilian Reais (at the time, equivalent to 160 American Dollars).

[2] Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[3] For an insightful source of narratives depicting the *Nordestinos*, see *City of Walls*, by Teresa Caldeira (2000), and the novel *City of God*, by Paulo Lins (2006). Caldeira, in her anthropological analysis of the talk of crime in São Paulo, shows that "bias against *Nordestinos* exists everywhere" (p.31), and when it

I argue here that the linguistic and semiotic strategies of *Veja* work violently, and that such violence – a symbolic one – is exerted mainly through the imagery of Northeast Brazil as the place of poverty, corruption, starvation, and death. A critical reading of such linguistic and semiotic forms that *Veja* deploys to represent a subaltern subject, Gilmara Cerqueira, "the woman who could decide the elections", will help to unwind some complexities of the silent, symbolic violence of language use. I take the representation of Gilmara as a first case for understanding the violence that is hidden in the linguistic construction of racialized, gendered, and regional identities.

Before digging into *Veja*'s article, it is my foremost interest in this section to situate such critical reading against the backdrop of recent elaborations in the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and in other discursive approaches on how racial, gendered, and diasporic identities are discursively constructed. Given the vast scholarship in CDA that concentrates on this issue, it would be impossible to outline it here. Since the identity of the *Nordestinos* in the Brazilian media is portrayed mainly under the sign of the movement to the Southeast, I will scrutinize more specifically how scholars have drawn on understandings of the politics of immigration and xenophobia vis-à-vis the construction of subaltern subjectivities. Authors working within the paradigm of CDA have provided important contributions on how discourses about immigrants are enacted in the media (Teo, 2000; van Dijk, 1991, 1993), in the political field (Reisigl and Wodak, 2000; Wodak, 2002), in educational settings (Blommaert et al., 2006), and on how such discourses travel from the media and the political arena to the domain of law (Blackledge, 2006). Discourses on immigration dwell on the mobility of subjects, and are invested with social evaluations that ideologically construct territorial exclusion (Vigouroux, 2005), racialize subjects (Blackledge, 2006), and posit women within male-dominant narratives (Chavez, 2001). They are ultimately a central trope by which the story of the nation is narrated (Chavez, 2001).

CDA practitioners have pointed out that the racism against immigrants is assuming subtle and indirect forms, since we are living a time when sheer racism is "no longer acceptable" (Blackledge, 2006, p.68). This is an instantiation of the 'new racism' (Barker, 1981), a contemporary form of racism that has replaced some older, more overt forms of discrimination in Western Europe, the United States, and Australia. Focusing on the Australian media coverage of violence among Vietnamese immigrants, Teo (2000, p.8) remarks that the new racists "believe in and uphold the basic values of egalitarianism, and would thus emphatically deny that they are 'racist' (…) Nevertheless, they would speak or act in such a way that distances themselves from the ethnic minority, engaging

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comes to the ways the talk of crime circulates in some neighborhoods, the *Nordestinos* are said to be the poor new migrants (different from the European migrants who came before) who have "infested" the neighborhood with crime. One of her informants, herself a descendant of Italian migrants, essentializes the newcomers in the following terms: "When the population was smaller, there was more tranquility. The *Nordestinos* infested Móoca, made Móoca ugly" (p.27). The very category of the *Nordestinos* in the talk of crime refers to people who are "characterized as ignorant, lazy, dirty, promiscuous, immoral. In a word, they are criminals." (p.31) Paulo Lins, who based *City of God* on anthropological research and media analysis in Rio de Janeiro, presents violent narratives in which *Nordestinos* are both victims and perpetrators of crime in the *favela* Cidade de Deus. Here is an example of a violent remark in which the narrator depicts the fears of Hellraiser: "He was worried that some northerner might snitch on him. Northerners, who all sucked up to their bosses, were also snitches. A worthless bunch. They'd have you believe they shat flowers" (Lins, 2006, p.142).

in discursive strategies that *blame* the victims for their circumstances on their own social, economic and even cultural disadvantage" (emphasis in the original).

Within CDA, language ideologies (Bauman and Briggs, 2003) are seen as a powerful tool for the complicated dissemination of this form of discrimination, also referred to as symbolic racism by Blackledge (2006). Blommaert et al. (2006), looking at Dutch literacy practices of newcomer students in Belgium, found out that the previous sociolinguistic experience of pupils become "ethnic(ized) barriers for success in schools" (p.36). The authors argue that, in the Belgian classrooms, the teachers disqualified writing skills that did not match the standard '*ortho*-graphy'. According to an essencialist 'monoglot' ideology, no matter how complex or structured the sociolinguistic background of the immigrant children was, once it did not follow the norms of standard Dutch, it was misrecognized (Bourdieu, 1991) as 'non-writing' or 'accented' language. By the same token, recent discussions in Britain about language testing for citizenship applications display that members of the British Parliament have embarked on a discourse where speakers of languages other than English are posited as "Other, outside of the mainstream, and outside of the values and practices that contribute to democracy and social cohesion" (Blackledge, 2006, p.77).

Leo Chavez (2001) undertakes an analysis of imagetic and verbal discourses on immigration through four decades (from the 1960s to the 1990s) in popular magazines of the United States. Chavez observes the commonalities and disjunctions in the representation of the world's "first multicultural civilization", as the cover of *The Atlantic Monthly* (August 1998) references the United States vis-à-vis its complex multicultural inflows (see Chavez, 2001, p.210). If at certain times, like the harsh year of 1983 when the jobless rate was of 10.13 percent, the depiction of the immigrants is conflated with the idea of America as a place that historically has conferred success to the disadvantaged, recently the "new" immigrants, especially undocumented Latinos and Asians, have been portrayed as a threat to the nation welfare. Underneath such narrative disjunction lies a racial evaluation. As Chavez remarks, "Today's immigrants, mostly Asians and Latin Americans, threaten the ethnic/racial make up of America, which is envisioned as essentially a British/northwestern European nation" (p.214). Thus the new immigration to the US, no longer characterized by a major white European influx, is ostensibly characterized by anti-immigration discourses as an unwelcome fact.

Otto Santa Ana (2002) envisions the conflation of race and immigration through cognitivist lenses. Basically following George Lakoff's and his collaborators' theory of conceptual metaphor (see, for example, Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), Santa Ana argues that the metaphors of public discourse describing Latinos in the American media are not mere rhetorical devices, but powerful cognitive mappings that shape the conceptualization of the Latin American immigration to the United States, and grant this linguistic construction the appearance of natural categories. Some metaphors that Santa Ana identifies in his analysis of *The Los Angeles Times* during the 1990s are quite perverse, like the IMMIGRANT AS ANIMAL by which "immigrants were seen to be animals to be lured, pitted, or baited", even "attacked, and hunted" (Santa Ana, 2002, p.83-84). According to the inferences licensed by such metaphor, "Latinos were debased by the Anglo-American scale of humanity, which justified inequity and discrimination against them" (ibid, p.273).

The discursive contributions in CDA and elsewhere that I briefly outlined here enrich our understanding of how subaltern subjectivities are enacted on media and public discourses, a representation which ultimately participates in the politics of identities and the politics of the nation. We learn from CDA that patterns of social inequalities are embedded in linguistic forms (Blommaert, 2005), and, except for some specificities such as the focus or context of production, the scholarship in CDA that I presented here (and also Chavez's and Santa Ana's work) agree in that *discrimination* against immigrants – a racist one – is enacted, maintained or opposed in a discursive order. But I would go further and argue that beyond discrimination, what is at stake in the discursive unfolding of anti-immigrant (and anti-*Nordestino*) voices is violence.

As we saw in the previous section, Cäcilie merged the insult she had heard with the sensation of *a slap in the face*. Freud questions how the *sensation* of a slap in the face assumes the *somatic* delineation of a trigeminal neuralgia. He maintains that his patient, by taking expressions like 'stab in the heart' and 'a slap in the face' literally, "is not taking liberties with words, but is simply reviving once more the sensations to which the expression owes its justification" (Freud, 1957 [1895], p.181). According to Freud, the use of an expression like "swallowing something" to reference an insult to which no replica could be made "did in fact originate from the innervatory sensations which arise in the pharynx when we refrain from speaking and prevent ourselves from reacting to the insult" (idem). In other words, verbal offense, racial slurs, coarse words and the like affect the subject in a physical dimension, and I call the performance and aftermath of these utterances 'violence'. The bodily reality of offensive words, therefore *violent* words, is deeply analyzed in Butler's *Excitable speech*. She quotes the words of Charles Lawence Jr., to whom the racial invective "is like receiving a slap in the face. The injury is instantaneous" (Butler, 1997, p.4). The extensive use of the bodily domain of physical injury to express moral harm (e.g., *words wound*, *linguistic injury*, *verbal attack*) displays a close relationship between offense and physical pain. That some words threaten someone's bodily well-being is for Butler (1997, p.5) an important key to understand that the body, in many senses, "is alternately sustained and threatened through some modes of address".

In this sense, we should not lose sight of the physical dimension of linguistic offense. The very definition of racism that Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak give us, for example, relies mostly on the bodily life of the subject that, through the offensive approach of the other, undergoes a process of subjection:

> Racism is based on the hierarchising construction of groups of persons which are characterised as communities of descent and which are attributed specific collective, *naturalised* or *biologised* traits that are considered to be almost invariable. *These traits are primarily related to biological features, appearance*, cultural practices, customs, traditions, language or socially stigmatised ancestors (Reisigl and Wodak, 2000, p.10, emphasis added).

Inasmuch as the racial slur has a somatic dimension, its aftermath can be *physically* violent. Joe Feagin provides us with various cases of anti-Latino violence in the United States:

> Sometimes the anti-Latino hostility is expressed violently. Some Mexican immigrants have been killed near the U.S.-Mexican border, apparently by white vigilantes. In Bloomington, Minnesota, a Latino worker was badly beaten for speaking Spanish at his workplace. In Farmingville, New York, a "quality of life" group has been formed, apparently to help keep Latino immigrants out of the town. The beating of two undocumented immigrant laborers by tattooed white supremacists there in the late 2000 has not yet spurred significant state action against such-immigrant violence (Feagin, 2002, p.xi)

Feagin comments that the white supremacists, besides the overt demonstration of violence, disseminate on their Internet Web pages hate speech against Latin American immigrants. The newcomers are referred to "as a cultural cancer, as a wildfire, or as a gang of illegals that is making America less beautiful, as people with a plan to reconquer the United States" (idem). Interestingly, Feagin categorizes the verbal counterpart of the white supremacist's violence as *verbal attacks*[4]. That episodes of physical violence are accompanied by linguistic violence just adds an important inference here, namely that verbal abuse lies within the broader realm of violence.

The violence I am dealing here – albeit its grounding on our bodily experience – is still a symbolic one. I shall call it 'discursive violence', and claim that it overlaps with the concept of 'symbolic violence' put forth by Bourdieu (1991). According to him, symbolic violence is a subtle form of domination that is exerted with the complicity of the one who is harmed. "All symbolic domination", says Bourdieu (1991, p.50-51), "presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values". It is a type of violence, in Bourdieu's terms, that exceeds the usual dichotomy of consciousness and constraint. The one who is subjected to symbolic violence usually exhibits his or her complicity to the violation in the habitus itself[5].

Bourdieu typifies such disposition with the case of someone who is intimidated. Intimidation, "a symbolic violence which is not aware of what it is (to the extent that it implies no *act of intimidation*) can only be exerted on a person predisposed (in his habitus) to feel it, whereas others will ignore it." (p.51) And I myself typify such violence with the predispositions in the habitus of Gilmara, both on the cover and on the picture exhibited on the report (Fig. 2). Gilmara smiles in both pictures, displaying some sort of compliance to the constitutive and perverse gaze of *Veja*. Maybe not coincidentally, the magazine is entitled *Veja* (Look). The gaze is a central aspect in the formation of individuals and states, argues Taylor (1997) in her depiction of the visual economy of torture and disappearance of bodies during Argentina's dirty war. The author understands the complicated play of looks in the constitution of both the individual and the nation by resorting to the Lacanian gaze. To look, along the lines of Lacan (1981), is to be looked

[4] "[V]erbal attacks on Latinos can be found in all parts of the country. Recently, homeowners in a heavily white Bronx village received letters warning residents that their area was being overrun by Latino immigrants, who were described as 'forces of evil' and 'low-income trash'" (Feagin, 2002, p.xi)

[5] Habitus is a concept that Bourdieu widely uses to refer to the corporeal routines on which subjects ground their social actions. Social actors engage in relatively stable practices, and such stability is expressed in "dispositions to act in certain ways, and schemes of perception that order individual perspectives along socially defined lines" (Hanks, 2005, p.69).

at by the Other. And the "institution of the subject in the visible", to borrow Lacan's phrase, runs the risk of misidentification (p.106). "In our relation to things", says Lacan, "in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it – that is what we call the gaze." (p.73)

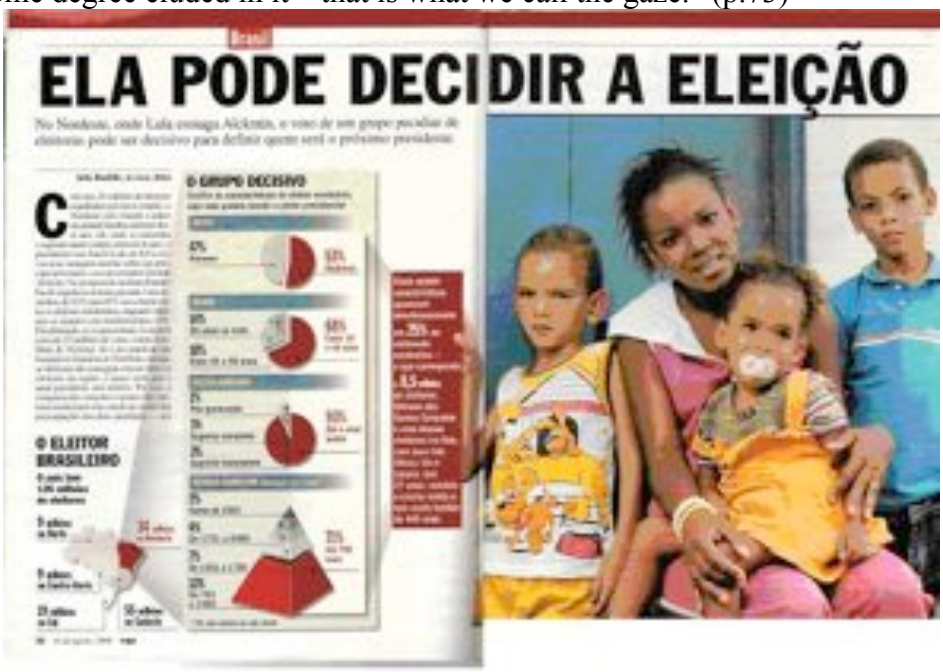
ELA PODE DECIDIR A ELEIÇÃO

Fig. 2

In this sense, we should conceive the scopic regime of *Veja* as that which produces a subject through contingency: Gilmara is portrayed as the epitome of the promising electors of the left wing candidate, but the irony in the text, as we will see in the following lines, does not quite state the same. Gilmara slips in the violent game of representation, although perhaps not in the Lacanian sense that one does not know much about one's own unconscious psychic content. The split between the smile of Gilmara in the pictures and the violent verbal depiction of *Veja*, however, is symptomatic of how the violence of words can work: one consents to the gaze and to the verbal description of the Other, but such an Other can turn them to him or herself. In the uneven distribution of power in language, institutions such as *Veja* can, in a subtle way, place someone in a vulnerable position.

Within such a scopic regime, Gilmara is smiling at the same time that her identity is perversely constituted through the violent visual and verbal depiction of the rightist Brazilian magazine. Her consent is deployed against herself, which is characteristic of the subtle but painful nature of symbolic violence. The report, signed by Julia Dualibi, describes Gilmara as someone who, in spite of being naïve and suffering the constraints of poverty, keeps faith in life and in Lula. "She lives in Irará, a rural city 145 km from Salvador, in a mud-walled shack supported by sticks [*casa de taipa*], with a flat dirt floor and grimy walls. She shares this place with her children, her mother, her brother and her brother's wife." Yet, "the brave woman works hard all day long in a children's daycare center that was formerly a hospital, and earns a minimum salary. She doesn't have enough money to buy her son a R$ 140 pair of eyeglasses, but she is completely satisfied

with her life – and with Lula". And her naivety is reinforced: "She believes that Lula's re-election will make her life better. 'He takes care of the Brazilian people'. Gilmara does not know what *mensalão* is[6]. Geraldo Alckmin? 'I don't know'".

The violence in the speech acts of *Veja* perhaps reaches its vertex when the alleged ignorance of Gilmara is enacted. It is quite ironic to state that someone who does not know either who the rightist candidate is or that there was a recent bribery scandal in the legislature (*mensalão*) is the kind of person who is going to decide the future of Brazilian democracy. Derogatory depictions of the *Nordestinos* as those who lead the nation to the wrong path are neither exclusive to the Southeastern media nor are they a new phenomenon in the use of Portuguese language. Caldeira (2000, p.31) remarks that offensive words "have been used in Brazil since the time of the Conquest to describe the native, the African slave, the worker, and the poor". So it seems that we should look at the violent language of *Veja*, and more generally at the language that hurts, as a form of speech that derives its performative power to wound from repetition. As Derrida (1977) points out, every speech act, and every sign in general, works because it carries in itself the possibility of being repeated. This is the iterability of the sign: the mark can be quoted or cited outside its original context, thus breaking with "every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (Derrida, 1977, p.185). Committed to the deconstruction of the Western metaphysical tradition of presence, Derrida explains that the rupture with the context implies a rupture "with the "present" of the inscription, the presence of the writer, the environment and the horizon of his experience, and above all the intention" (ibid, p.182).

The threat of the discourse that wounds is citational, and acquires its force through the temporal reinforcement of previous violent conditions. As Judith Butler (1997, p.51) put it, "no term or statement can function performatively without the accumulating and dissimulating historicity of force". The force of the violent speech act is always derivative. In this sense, we may find traces of the iterable discursive violence of *Veja* elsewhere, and it is striking to note that, in the realm of fiction, Clarice Lispector (1992[1977]) constructed a character bearing many similarities with Gilmara. Lispector lends her voice to the narrator, a journalist named Rodrigo S. M., and depicts Macabéa as a poor *Nordestina* who migrated from the state of Alagoas to work as a typist in Rio de Janeiro. Macabéa "was hopelessly rachtic at birth, the inheritance of the backwoods – the legacy of misfortune I mentioned earlier. When she was two years old, her parents died of typhoid fever in the backwoods of Alagoas, in that region where the devil is said to have lost his boots". (Lispector, 1992, p.27). Like Gilmara, Macabéa had to share her humble place with other people: in Rio de Janeiro, she was "lodging in a bedsitter with four other girls who worked as shop-assistants at a well-known department store." (ibid, p.29) As the counterpart of Gilmara in fiction, Macabéa "had never lost faith", and was naïve: "Is the sky above or below? The girl from the North-east was wondering. As they lay there, she couldn't decide. Sometimes before falling asleep she felt the pangs of hunger and became quite giddy as she visualized a side of beef. The solution was to chew paper into pulp and swallow it." (ibid, p.31)[7]

[6] Shortly before the time the report was released, the National Congress was claimed to hold the corruptive practice of *mensalão*, a monthly payment for legislators in exchange for votes.

[7] Clarice Lispector, herself the daughter of Ukrainian immigrants who first settled in the *Nordeste*, was not evidently being prejudiced towards the *Nordestinos*. *The hour of the star*, her last novel, enacts the violent

The discursive violence of the Southeastern media is instantiated not only through the iteration of signs of race and gender, but also through representations of religiosity and animalism. A powerful image composing the stereotype of the *Nordestinos* in the media are the trucks packed with pious people on pilgrimages to cities such as Canindé and Juazeiro do Norte, in the state of Ceará, or Bom Jesus da Lapa, in Bahia (Fig. 3). Such trucks are named *paus-de-arara* (parrot's perch), and metonymically the *Nordestinos* are derogatorily referred to as *paus-de-arara*. The economy of signification of Northeast Brazil in the media often resorts to such aspects of pilgrimage. The *paus-de-arara* are, after all, those who wander attempting to appease their constitutive pain. Obviously, such pain would have been overcome by the media's secular discourse, and the reference to them, the religious pilgrims, can assume the jocose and violent character of the following excerpt, published in a column of *Folha de S. Paulo*, Brazil's largest newspaper:

> For a long time, the Carioca has no longer been the one who was born and raised in Rio. In the past, folks who moved into Rio would live in colonies. They were known as "the Gauchada", "the Catarinas", or the various species generically classified as "Paraíbas" or "Paus-de-arara". And in an uncertain moment, I don't know why, there would no longer be ceremony [about claiming Carioca identity]: unless one is a Paulistano split by the seduction of Rio and the patriotic task of critiquing it, one satisfies the category of Carioca just by living in Rio. But the Paulista visitor should never base [his/her ideas about Rio] on such newcomers. (Janio de Freitas, *Folha de S. Paulo*, 10 October 1997).

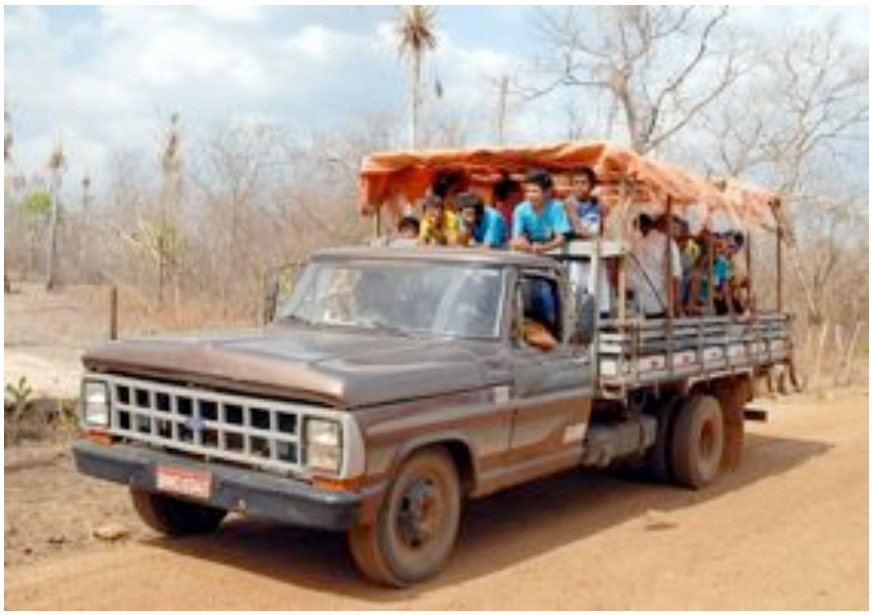

Fig. 3

interaction between Rodrigo S. M., the narrator, and Macabéa, his creation and alter-ego. Gender, power, and regional relations in the novel embody an existentialist critique of the modern subject. Other fiction writers also used the *Nordeste* as the land of poverty and death as a critique of social injustices and inequalities in Brazil. Graciliano Ramos,

In his description of the migrations to Rio de Janeiro, the journalist Janio de Freitas establishes modes of signifying that resort to stereotypes and hierarchies. Not surprisingly, the *Nordestinos* are posited in the lowest level of such hierarchy – as we can note in the use of the terms *Paus-de-arara* and *Paraíbas* which reduce the complex cultural diversity of the nine Northeastern states into two nomenclatures. Both terms are used under the intertextual strategy of borrowing the biological discourse of taxonomy ("the various species generically classified as '*Paraíbas*' or '*Paus-de-arara*'"). The signification of natural entities (animals and plants) is embedded in these rather offensive terms. '*Paraíba*' is originally the name of a Northeastern state, but it is also the name of a plant. In Rio de Janeiro, the use of '*Paraíbas*', referring to the *Nordestinos*, is quite derogatory. We can also trace from the use of *Paus-de-araras* that the *Nordestinos* are either thought as the perches where the parrots stand or as the parrots themselves. The *Nordestinos*, in other words, are the exotic animals or plants demanding a taxonomic encapsulation.

The hierarchical narrative of Janio de Freitas is also playful with the inhabitants of the Southern states of Rio Grande do Sul (the *Gauchada*) and Santa Catarina (the *Catarinas*). But differently from the generalization of the *Nordestinos*, the Southeasterners can still be conceived as pertaining to a specific state. The citizens of the Southeast (specifically, the two economic powers of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo) are the ones who enjoy more delimitated boundaries, and are referred to by the usual names of '*Cariocas'* and '*Paulistas*'. In this hierarchy, I would say that *Cariocas* and *Paulistas* occupy the position of subjects, and the "others" compose the outside delimiting this category. The *Paraíbas* and the *Paus-de-arara*, symbols of the plants and animals pertaining to this constitutive outside, are not yet subjects, but abject beings (Butler, 1993). The abject realm, along Butler's lines, is the territory of the non-human which is required to the very delimitation of the edges of the (human) subject[8].

Since we are dealing with a violence of words that is enacted through iterability, it is worth pointing out that the dreaded and repudiated identification at stake in that narrative of *Folha de S. Paulo* echoes a moment in which Rodrigo S. M. resorts to an animalistic correlation. Here is the excerpt where the narrator of *The hour of the star* describes the encounter of Macabéa with her first boyfriend:

> May, the month of brides, transformed into butterflies floating in white tulle. Her exclamations could have been a premonition of what was about to occur in the late afternoon of that same day. In a downpour of rain, she met (bang) the ***first boy-friend of any kind she had ever known***, her heart beating furiously as if she had swallowed a little bird that continued to flutter inside her. The boy and the girl stared at each other in the rain and ***recognized each other as native Northeasters, creatures of the same species with that unmistakable aura***. She stared at him, drying her wet

[8] The 'abject beings', according to Butler (1993, p.3), are "those who are not yet 'subjects', but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject. The abject designates here precisely those 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the 'unlivable' is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject's domain; it will constitute that site of dreaded identification against which – and by virtue of which – the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life".

> face with her hands. The girl only had to see the youth in order to transform him immediately into her guava preserve with cheese (Lispector, 1992, p.42, bold added).

Quite interestingly, the translator of the book into English, Giovanni Pontiero, when describing the encounter of Macabéa and Olímpico, does not resort to the same intertextual strategy that Lispector does in Portuguese. In other words, he does not use in English the conceptual metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) that correlates the *Nordestinos* with animals. Where in Portuguese the narrator asserts '*a primeira espécie de namorado*' [the first species of boyfriend], the English version reads, 'first boyfriend of any kind'. While the Portuguese text states '*dois nordestinos, bichos da mesma espécie que se farejam*' [native Northeasters, animals of the same species sniffing out each other], Pontiero's translation reads, 'native Northeasters, creatures of the same species with that unmistakable aura'. The erasure of the animalistic view in the target text must not be seen as error or mere euphemism but as symptom of a broader problem. His intertextual shift indicates a shift in the social evaluation (Voloshinov, 1976) As Voloshinov remarks, when assumed social beliefs have entered "the flesh and blood of all representatives of a social group", they usually do not surface in language (ibid, p.101). One does not need to talk about beliefs or natural phenomena that are taken for granted in a social group. However, "whenever some basic value judgment is verbalized (…), we may be certain that it has already become dubious" (idem). Pontiero's refusal of rendering the *Nordestinos* as animals in English, thereby resorting to "softer" words, indicates that the value judgment of Rodrigo S. M. was maybe too aggressive to be carried to another language. Yet it is a translinguistic mark that gestures to the subtle, complicated performance of discursive violence.

3. Communicability of violence: textual level

So far, we have seen that the discourse that wounds acquires its force from the citational and temporal reenactment of previous, violent conditions. But this violence of words, inasmuch as it is a linguistic one, must emerge in language through textual and discursive mechanisms. In this section, I analyze the violent textual forms that subjugate the other. Such textual-discursive analysis, I believe, should shed light on the understanding of the symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 1991) that produces certain subjectivities while positing them in the undesirable place of racial, gender, and regional discrimination, or even in the non-place of abjection.

Albuquerque Jr. (1999), in his account of the discursive invention of the *Nordeste*, argues that overcoming the oppressive discourse that depicts the *Nordestinos* as miserable beings requires the understanding of the "relations of power and knowledge that created such images and cliché utterances, thereby inventing the *Nordeste* and the *Nordestinos* along certain lines" (Albuquerque Jr., 1999, p.21). He goes on to say that "both the discriminator and the discriminated are the product of truth effects, *emerging from a struggle and exhibiting its traces*" (idem, emphasis added). I want to argue here that the traces of such struggle can be textually addressed. These textual vestiges are part of the broader textual and discursive configuration that Charles Briggs calls communicability (Briggs, 2005, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c).

The concept of field of communicability, or communicable cartography, refers to the infectiousness of texts – "the way texts and the ideologies find audiences and locate them socially/politically" (Briggs, 2007c, p.556). Texts, seen in the dialogical interplay between author and publics, project, according to Briggs, modes of understanding the world. Certain viewpoints are mapped as possible, necessary, and natural while others are denied or erased. Briggs locates communicability within the social field (Bourdieu, 1993). "Communicable cartographies", argues Briggs, "create positions that confer different degrees of access, agency, and power, recruit people to occupy them, and invite them to construct practices of self-making in their terms" (Briggs, 2007c, p.556). They are also temporal and spatial projections on how discourse should circulate. Although the communicable cartographies are modes of interpellation (Althusser, 1971), based on "material and institutional inequalities", the response to the communicative maps can counter their harm. As Briggs put it, "[a]s they receive a text, people can accept the communicable cartography it projects, accept it but reject the manner in which it seeks to position them, treat it critically or parodically, or invoke alternative cartographies" (idem).

The discourses circulating in the media during the Brazilian presidential campaign in 2006 (the cover of *Veja* certainly being just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the understandings of how the *Nordestinos* were portrayed in the largest event of democracy in Brazil) display a complicated textual configuration of the communicability of discursive violence. I dedicate the remainder of this section to analyzing the communicable ways in which the media in São Paulo – basically, the conservative newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, the major newspaper *Folha de S. Paulo*, and the alternative website *Midia Independete* – mapped the geographical distribution of voters in Brazil with regard to the acceptance or not of corrupt politicians. Specifically, I seek to delineate the overtly violent communicable cartography of two articles in *O Estado de S. Paulo* aimed at discussing a poll, and to contrast it to a mapping that surfaced as counterargument on the website *Midia Independente*. I depict then a third communicable cartography emerging in *Folha de S. Paulo*, and argue that it is more subtle but no less violent than *O Estado de S. Paulo*'s.

On August, 8, 2006, the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* published two reports, written by Carlos Marchi, which discuss a poll conducted by both the newspaper and Ibope Research Institute (Estado/Ibope). The first one, entitled "Firmness against corruption in politics varies by region and social condition", gives an overview of voter distribution based on the poll, which was meant to assess the acceptance of unethical candidates (that is, whether a voter would vote for a corrupt politician or not). The second one, whose title is "Two Brazils in the ethical judgment of parties," relies on data from the same poll and expands the analysis.

The articles assert that the discussion relies on data from "the last Estado/Ibope poll," but do not present any information regarding methods or sampling. The results, however, suggest that the responses to the poll came from groups located in different regions, comprising different races, ages, and education levels. The communicable cartography in both reports maps the thesis that the more Southern, white, older, and educated the voter is, the less he/she will tolerate corrupt candidates. In the first sentence of the first report, Carlos Marchi writes: "The requirement of ethics in politics today seems to split Brazil in two, and varies by the region where the person lives or by his/her economical condition". That is, the report invites us to believe that there are two different

Brazils (as title tells us): one formed by the "more pragmatic voters" (Northeast and North/Center-West), and the other formed by the "more rigorous voters in terms of ethical behavior" (South and Southeast).

As Briggs (2007b, p.685-686) remarks, ideological constructions of polls "are complicated by the fact that conversations between two individuals are only valuable insofar as they get transformed into statistical representations." The discursive construction of the alleged divide in Brazil is buttressed by the use of statistical data along certain lines, such that the thesis that the *Nordestinos* are tolerant of corruption acquires the appearance of a natural fact. "In the Northeast and North/Center-West, ***only*** 83% of the voters said they would not vote for a possibly corrupt candidate; ***but this percentage rises*** to 87% in the Southeast and to 92% in the South". The purported difference between the two Brazils relies mostly on the use of argumentative operators (Anscombre and Ducrot, 1994) such as the adverb 'only' and the contrastive 'but', which do not merely articulate information, but give "an argumentative orientation to the utterance, [and] lead the interlocutor to some direction or another" (Ducrot, 1980, p.15). Even though there are three different groups, they are textually enacted as a binary: the contrastive 'but' marks an argumentative move from the, so to speak, weak resolve of the North to the strong ethics of the South. 'But' is an argumentative marker whose function is not merely to oppose information between *p* and *q* (*p* but *q*). Rather, its argumentative function works by announcing that the locutor says *p* so that the interlocutor would think *R*, but *q* points to *non-R*. In other words, that which the locutor had stated is turned upside down – the argumentative scale (Ducrot, 1980) is altered.

The percentage points are grammatically intensified by the anteposition of '*apenas*' [only] to qualify the 83% of electors who, according to the poll, would not permit corruption. Even though 4 percentage points are statistically insignificant (they are within the margin of error), they become textually significant, leading the reader, along Ducrot's lines, to a direction, that of construing the subalterns as deviants. And, as the report progresses, the textual markers keep unfolding the thesis at stake:

> The Estado/Ibope poll indicated that, among the electors of the candidate Geraldo Alckmin (PSDB), 93% declared that ***they would never vote for a corrupt candidate***, and ***only 4% admitted voting for such a candidate***; but among the electors of the candidate Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (PT), ***80% would avoid voting*** for a corrupt politician, while ***11% asserted they would be willing to vote for one***.

There is now a shift in the designation of the voters. This time we read the ***electors of Lula*** and the ***electors of Alckmin***. The presupposition is that the voters of Lula would be concentrated mostly in the Northeast, North, and Center-East, whereas Alckmin's ones are located mainly in the South and Southeast (a view that overlaps with that of *Veja*, analyzed in section 2). Once more, the statistical insignificance is overcome by the significance of communicable textual and discursive strategies. Note that, as for Alckmin, 93% of his electors would *never* [*jamais*] vote for a corrupt candidate, but 80 % of Lula's voters *would avoid voting for a corrupt politician*. The expressions "would never vote for" and "would avoid voting for" imply different presuppositions (Ducrot, 1972), the former underscoring the idea that the very thought of voting thusly is a priori avoided, and the latter suggesting that at first one might consider such a vote, but could

be deterred. In other words, according to the violent communicability of *O Estado de S. Paulo*, it has never crossed the mind of Southern and Southeastern citizens to vote for a corrupt politician, whereas the ones from the Northeast, North, and Center-West Brazil might resist, and no longer vote for a corrupt candidate. When focusing on Alckmin's voters, the journalist once more uses the adverb 'only' [*apenas*], thus establishing a significant textual (but, again, not statistical) difference from the 11% of Lula's voters (the "more pragmatic" ones) who would give their vote to a dishonest candidate. The conclusion of the paragraph in question personifies the data, thereby reinforcing the naturalization of truth in the article: "*The data reveal* that his [Lula's] electorate is likely to be more tolerant of corruption in politics" (emphasis added).

Both reports add racism to the prejudice against the *Nordestinos*. Consider the following paragraph:

> The self-declared ***whites have the highest ethical standards***: 88% wouldn't vote for a corrupt candidate; the self-declared ***browns are more tolerant***, and 85% wouldn't vote for someone suspected of corruption; ***but*** the self-declared ***blacks are the least strict with ethics***: ***only*** 82% denied their vote to the corrupt candidates.

The percentage differences are minimal, but the rhetorical treatment dispensed to the three racial groups construct enormous differences. Whites, according to the cartography of the article, "have the highest ethical standards" (88%), browns "are more tolerant" (85%), "but (…) blacks are the least strict with ethics," and "only 82%" of them wouldn't vote for a dishonest candidate. A challenge to such communicability of race would be: 6 percentage points are sufficient to assert that blacks are more tolerant of corruption?

Both articles are a stark evidence of the newspaper's position on minorities. Groups such as blacks, *Nordestinos*, and the less educated are attacked in the vulnerability of their condition. This is the violence in language perpetrating damage in a subtle, harmful manner. The abuse of the data in such a poll legitimates classificatory values against *Nordestinos*, blacks, and the poor. This naturalization is certainly taken for granted by most readers of the newspaper, and iterates a perverse repertoire of prejudices and value judgments according to which the minorities are inferior, intellectually incapable, tolerant, or, to use the words of *O Estado de S. Paulo*, "more pragmatic" and "more tolerant of corruption." This communicable cartography is enacted in the grammar and the lexicon of discourse, reifying biases, and disguising prejudices. In the case of supposedly informative texts such as reports, the utterances surface as constative utterances ("The data reveal that…") which are in fact performatives that masquerade as statements of fact (Austin, 1975 [1962], p.4).[9]

[9] It is interesting to note that Austin (1975[1962], p.4), when making the initial distinction between constatives and performatives (a distinction that collapses by the end of his famous *How to do things with words*), names the new class of utterances he is introducing (i.e., the performatives) as "masqueraders". In the presentation of the problem of the performative, he says: "The type of utterance we are to consider here is not, of course, in general a type of 'nonsense'. Rather, it is one of our second class – the masqueraders" (idem). Austin, committed to an analysis "in constant transformation, often more fruitful in the acknowledgement of its impasses than in its positions" (Derrida, 1977, p.187), adds the following contradiction in relation to the possibility of a performative to masquerade as a constative: "But [the

The violent communicability of *O Estado de S. Paulo* incited a response from the journalist Franklin Martins. He published on the website *Mídia Independente* an article entitled "Electoral prejudice," and critiques the articles of *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Martins says,

> In fact, the [percentage] variation is minimal, lies within the poll's margin of error, and does not indicate anything. What one should deduce from these numbers, if anything, is that, in the assessment of the ethical question, there is a relatively homogenous pattern across the regions of the country – not the contrary.

Franklin Martins claims that the poll, inasmuch as it does not prove differences in the pattern of electors, should have been filed away. Nevertheless, it surfaced as a report. Martins ironically comments that:

> It wouldn't take a long time for us to find out that the poor, the *Nordestinos*, and the blacks are responsible for the corruption in Brazil, that the rich have nothing to do with it, that in São Paulo nobody has ever paid or received a tip, and that the whites have always rejected the very idea of corruption.

Martins refuses the communicable construction of the *Nordestinos* and other subaltern subjectivities as corrupt, which is an example that communicability is also a contestable process (Briggs, 2007c, p.556). Martins, in the excerpt above, uses parodically the same terms that had been used in the articles of *O Estado de S. Paulo* to hurt the *Nordestinos*. As Butler (1997) remarks, the injurious language that constitutes the subject violently draws its force from temporality or iterability, but the disjunction between the moment of the utterance and the past conditions that enabled the uttering of the offensive words enables a critical response. In her own words, "[t]he interval between instances of utterance not only makes the repetition and resignification of the utterance possible, but shows how words might, through time, become disjoined from their power to injure and recontextualized in more affirmative modes" (ibid, p.15).

In order to map the cartography of *Folha de S. Paulo* in relation to the alleged divide in Brazil, I searched for any similar report in the newspaper. I found out that *Folha de S. Paulo* also had drawn the profile of the electors according to their geographical location in Brazil, race, and education. The newspaper affirmed that "the whiter, richer, and more educated the elector is, the more [he/she] tips the side of the right wing candidate" (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 10/8/2006), but the communicability is enacted differently from *O Estado de S. Paulo*. In other words, there is no evidence in *Folha de S. Paulo* of a similar correlation between racial or geographic origin with ethical rigor. However, the lack of such explicit correlation does not mean that *Folha de S. Paulo* enacts a

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performative] does not by any means necessarily masquerade as a statement of fact, descriptive or constative. Yet *it does quite commonly do so*, and that, oddly enough, when it assumes its most explicit form" (idem, my emphasys) In the same paragraph, he goes on to present the performative initially through its capacity to "*disguise* [as a constative]" , such that he would be able to contrast the characteristics of a performative utterance "with those of the statement of fact which it *apes*" (idem, emphasys added).

cartography which is politically in favor of the *Nordestinos*. The editorial published one day after the first turn of the presidential elections insidiously displays the position of the newspaper with respect to the "divide" in Brazil. Here is an excerpt

> The map of last Sunday's voting radicalizes the sensation of a split country. Split in classes of income and education; split in regional terms; split politically. Red (the color of PT) is the ***stain*** that begins at Minas [Gerais], goes up to Amazonas, and right to the *Nordeste*. Blue (the color of the *Tucanos*) is the ***spectrum*** coming from Rio Grande do Sul, passing through São Paulo, and covering the Center-West. Likewise, the voters with less income frankly supported the re-election of the Republic's president; whereas the slices with higher income and education heavily supported the ex-governor of São Paulo (Editorial, *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2 October 2006).

Briggs (2005) draws attention to how maps and statistics can be deployed as powerful devices for reifying social categories, rendering them the appearance of a priori, natural facts. Along Briggs's lines, such resources figure as "descontextualized, disinterested, and abstract" discourse, thus enacting the Enlightenment fetishism for objectivist categories. The communicable cartography of statistics usually effaces "the complex de/recontextualization that shape them and histories of how they were embedded in institutional sites through which they passed" (ibid, p.278). The imagined statistics in *O Estado de S. Paulo* and the imagined map in *Folha de S. Paulo* are entangled in the complex process of naturalizing the *Nordestinos* as those who have been forever deviant, tolerant of corruption – in a nutshell, the bad symbols of democracy.

I want to insist here that the communicability of discursive violence in the Brazilian media is textually enacted. In this sense, it is worth looking at the uses of lexical repetition, metonymy, and metaphor in the editorial above. The editorial repeats the word 'split' [*dividido*] four times so as to reinforce the thesis that there is a rift between those who economically support the democracy and those who are supported. The relation between identity and repetition, as Butler (1990) reminds us, is not a casual one. She argues that the appearance of a bounded and stable identity stems from "the stylized repetition of acts through time" (ibid, p.141). The seeming substance of the identity of the *Nordestinos*, construed along these lines, does not exist outside the temporal repetition of textual and discursive forms. Yet the subtle violence of *Folha de S. Paulo* is intensified with the use of a metonymy that correlates the colors of political parties with the alleged divisions of Brazil which are in turn hierarchically represented by the metaphors of stain and spectrum. Note that the metaphors are quite different – a stain relates to something that is undesired, annoying, and even dirty; the imagery of spectrum highlights aspects such as diversity, continuity, and light.

If we look at how the two utterances that correlate the divide in Brazil with colors were constructed in terms of thematization (Brown and Yule, 1983), we will have a clue that the violent communicable cartography of *Folha de S. Paulo* works differently from *O Estado de S. Paulo*'s one. I argue here that the former is more insidious (but no less violent) than the latter. Both utterances anticipate the predicate (the color), thus

transforming it into the theme or topic – that which is focused on. As Brown and Yule remark, thematization should be seen not merely as a sentential process but mainly as a discursive one. "What the speaker or writer puts first will influence the interpretation of everything that follows. Thus a title will influence the interpretation of the text which follows it. (…) [W]e assume that every sentence forms part of a developing, *cumulative instruction which tells us how to construct a coherent representation*" (ibid, p.133-134, emphasis added). Inasmuch as the color of each division of Brazil is thematized, it influences the perception of the stain and the spectrum, which appear as new information (rheme). The text therefore tells us to see both new items as a continuation of the focus. This is a deceptive textual strategy that interpelates the reader to take the metaphors for granted. Even though the traditional concept of text coherence (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Koch and Travaglia, 1990) does not emphasize the ideological and communicable construction of identities, here we can approximate Brown and Yule remarks on the topical organization of texts by which the text offers "cumulative instruction which tells us how to construct a coherent representation" to Briggs's (2005, p.332) notion that discourse constructs its own emergence, circulation, and reception "in selective and strategic ways." In order words, the pragmatic principle of coherence, dependent as it is on textual forms that instruct the reader to draw certain conclusions and not others, is part of the multilayered process of communicability. Thus the newspaper, at the same time that it invites the readers to "construct a coherent representation" of discourse (Brown and Yule, 1983, p.134), also requests them to interpellate themselves "vis-à-vis categories, subjectivities, and discursive relations seemingly presupposed by communicative processes" (Briggs, 2005, p.333).

4. Communicability of violence: pragmatic level

I have remarked that the discursive violence enacted in the articles and images of the Brazilian media is entangled in a complex use of different textual-discursive devices. I argued in the previous section that the textual dynamics of the surveys, maps, and polls aimed at assessing the distribution of voters during the Brazilian presidential bid in 2002 overtly or insidiously constructed certain modes of interpretation while forbidding others, and also offered possibilities for counternarratives. Such dynamics can be seen as the textual instantiation of the process of ideological representation of the movement of discourse that Briggs calls communicability. In this section, I intend to broaden the analysis of the communicable cartography of discursive violence in the Brazilian media, and I do so by looking at the political and pragmatic landscapes of such communicability.

By saying that I intend to focus on the pragmatic level, I do not mean that such an analysis unfolds separately from the semantic or grammatical inferences we have drawn so far. As many scholars have pointed out, pragmatics is often conceived as the "wastebasket" where bits and pieces of linguistic explication not adequately dealt in syntactico-semantic theories are thrown out (Bar-Hillel, 1971, p. 405), the underlying premise being that pragmatics stands for an appendage of semantics. Tyler (1978) comments that the tradition dating back to Morris (1946) with the tripartite division of linguistic analysis into clear-cut functions (syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic) "fares no better" (p.461). In this hierarchical distribution of layers, the "role of pragmatics is only that of modifying meanings already given in the semantic system – it has no constitutive role" (ibid.). I would rather insist in a holistic approach, as the very concept of communicability envisions. Therefore, I take this pragmatic analysis as one that overlaps

the linguistic with the political (Mey, 1985; Pinto, 2001; Rajagopalan, 2006). As Rajagopalan (2006, p.437) reminds us, "research in pragmatics is inescapably caught up in the politics of language".

I argued before that Gilmara is constituted by the perverse gaze of *Veja*. As violent, the constitutive gaze and verbal depiction cast towards Gilmara preclude her possibilities of standing as a political subject. As we have discussed, the visual and textual-discursive economy of *Veja* misleadingly portray Gilmara as the prototype of the imperfect subjects of the Brazilian democracy. She is not placed within the communicable loop of the citizenships/citizenries(?) that *Veja* advocates for the so-called "Brazilians who work and pay taxes", a phrase that is repeated five times in the two articles following the cover report.

But how is this communicable loop constructed? First we should consider the politics of reading newspapers and magazines vis-à-vis the construction of national identities. As Benedict Anderson (1991) put it, the daily consumption of newspapers is at the core of the creation of an imagined nation. Along Anderson's lines, the consolidation of print-capitalism was tantamount to the emergence of the modern nation in that the latter depended both on the sort of standardization that the "national print-languages" (ibid, p.46) rendered possible to the inevitable diversity of human languages and on the feeling of community that sprang from the *simultaneous* act of reading the *same* newspaper within a certain space. The substantive national fiction is thereby anchored in this simultaneous activity: "the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life" (ibid, p.35). But the commonality of such reading practice is not corollary of egalitarian distribution of citizenships. Modern nations are "normally disjunctive in their realization of citizenship" (Holston, 2008, p.14, 21), and in the Brazilian case the legalized differences among citizens are maintained by an "overwhelming persistence of inequality".

Thus the communicable loop enacted by *Veja* is a map that includes certain kinds of citizens while excluding others. The politics of circulation of such magazine is exemplary in this sense. *Veja* is not targeted to the second-rate members of the Brazilian democracy (Holston, 2008, p. 40), a category to which Gilmara and other *Nordestinos* belong. The magazine offers information on the distribution of its readers throughout Brazil and across social classes, gender, and age. One reads at *Veja*'s website that "the readers of *Veja* are active, prepared, and well positioned in the job market, representing the main consumer group of Brazil"[10]. For the year of 2007, 73% of the readers occupied Brazilian economical classes A and B, that is, slices of the population earning monthly salaries from R$ 2.150 to 6.209 (class B) and more than R$ 6.210 (class A). Gilmara's monthly payment of R$ 450 economically grants her a position in the lowest class E, which corresponds to only 7% of the readers of Veja.

In this sense, Gilmara is excluded from the imagined reading community and from the political realm. By addressing the indexical order (Silverstein, 2003) of *Veja* and other media enterprises in Brazil, we can understand how unequal is the construction of the communicable loop that defines who counts and who doesn't for the Brazilian democracy. As Bauman and Briggs (2003) remark, the very project of modernity was

[10] http://veja.abril.com.br/idade/publiabril/midiakit/veja_perfil_perfildoleitor.shtml (Acessed July 18, 2008)

built upon unequal underpinnings. And such project, since the Enlightment, has not unfolded separately from ideological constructions of language and otherness. Central to the violent indexical order of *Veja* is the enactment of a modernist epistemology that violently excludes Gilmara – a prototypical face of the meanings of race, class, gender, and territoriality repudiated by *Veja*'s narrative.

The dyad of articles written by Julia Dualibi is followed by "Hostages of the welfare state", authored by Alexandre Oltramari, an article that attacks *Bolsa Escola*, a social program created within Lula's first administration (2002-2006) aimed at providing financial support to the poor families that keep their children at school. The violent lexicon of *Veja* depicts the program as follows:

> Serrano do Maranhão stands as the Northeastern municipality with the biggest percentage of citizens assisted by *Bolsa Escola*, **the program that distributes money from the Brazilians who work and pay taxes to 44 million of other Brazilians**.

Here the South/Southeast and the Nort/Northeast divide is enacted by the invocation of, on the one hand, democratic and modern symbols ("Brazilians who work and pay taxes"), and, on the other hand, a dreadful abjection ("other Brazilians"). The ideological construction of *Veja*'s discourse on the *Nordestinos*, along these lines, defines which subjects stand within the communicable loop of the Brazilian democracy by disguising its own pragmatic (hence political) construction. The third article jumps to a new scale (from Gilmara and her family to the "44 million of other Brazilians"), which seems to be a natural discursive move. First the reader is presented with the smiling face of the pretty but naïve Gilmara. After he or she is invited to participate in the almost-idyllic gaze and ironic narrative of the cover report, the magazine gestures to different, starkest evaluations of the material life of the *Nordestinos*, second-class citizens living under the economical changes of Lula government. The articles that follow the cover article resort to a politics of truth that builds on charts presenting the *Nordeste* as the other of Brazil (Fig. 4) and to a chaotic image (Fig. 5) in which the poor citizens of Serrano, Maranhão, are cast in a long line, waiting, as the caption let us know, for the "alms" given by the welfare state.

The violent communicability of *Veja* also relies on the metapragmatic construction of a metaphysics of presence (Derrida, 1974): the two reporters, Julia Dualibi and Alexandre Oltramari, write their articles respectively from the cities of Irará, Bahia, and Serrano, Maranhão, thus indexing the voice of *Veja* to the proximity of the seeming reality the reporters seek to depict. As Bourdieu (1991), Bauman & Briggs (2003), Silverstein (2004), and Blommaert (2005) have remarked, the political and discursive conditions for language use are unevenly distributed in society, and insofar as language use presupposes "a *nonuniformity* of knowledge within a community" (Silverstein, 2004:632), *Veja* gestures to specific representations of the here and now of discourse to configure the opposition between "us" (the superior, modern observers) and "them" (the inferior, premodern people). The following excerpt is representative in this sense:

> Serrano, Maranhão, is a sample of what is going on in thousands of small poor cities. Last week, *Veja* covered 1,200 kilometers and visited five municipalities, between Maranhão and Piauí. Similar conditions were found almost everywhere (…) A remarkable exception is the city of Pedro II, in Piauí, 220 km far from the capital Teresina. **There**, more than providing adequate basic education, the city administration has offered 25 professional courses over the past two years (…). Pedro II has fostered the training of artisans, waiters and jewelers – opening, therefore, an **exit door** to *Bolsa Família* (…). A training course is teaching basic goldsmithing to the students/A training course is teaching students to work with gold jewelry. Osmarina Uchoa da Silva, **35 years of age, two sons and Bolsa Família of 80 Reais** is one of such students. As far as September, when she finishes the course, she will get a job offer that will grant her a monthly income of 500 Reais – which will represent the end of her dependence on the federal government. It's a shame that the example of Pedro II be an exception.

Veja relies on its visit to poor municipalities in the hinterlands of the *Nordeste* so as to depict "what is going on in thousand of small cities". This metaphysical presence is not only the basis for an ideological construction of truth, but also the underpinning of a violent deixis. The visited localities are enacted as the "There" [*Ali*], which marks their distance from the "Here" of the (Southeastern) cities that do not depend on *Bolsa Escola*. The experiential field is also the motivation for the "exit door" through which the city of Pedro II has left the "dependence" on the assistance of the federal government. Nevertheless, Pedro II is just an exception for the modernist epistemology that *Veja* advocates, a communicable construction that posits *Veja* and its imagined reading community in sharp contrast with *Bolsa Escola* and the racial, gendered and regional meanings that I have discussed so far.

Silverstein draws attention to the fact that every linguistic form is an indexical form (Siverstein, 2003:194-195), that is, it refers to the enveloping conditions of its own production, and to the wider macrosocial order that both shapes the linguistic interaction and exerts a sort of gravitational force to the meanings at issue. In his words, "every discourse event manifests, by degrees, authoritative, warranted, or heretofore uncountenanced or even contested entextualizations licensed from centers of value creation" (Silverstein, 2004, p.623). The discourse that jokes with *Bolsa Escola* and therefore with the meanings of race, gender and territoriality in the *Nordeste* should be regarded along these lines. The reference to the *Nordestina* Osmarina Uchoa da Silva ("35 years of age, two sons and *Bolsa Família* of 80 Reais"), a linguistic form that sounds derisive, does not only indexically iterates the former verbal depiction of Gilmara in the captions of the cover (*Nordestina*, 27 years of age, basic education, 450 Reais a month), but also extracts its mockery effect from a broader political-pragmatic order that sets the boundaries of modernity in Brazil. The subjects that lie outside this political realm become object of ridicule. As I mentioned in section 2, the very term "subject" when applied to the representation of the *Nordestinos* in the mainstream media becomes problematic to the extent that they are often pushed to the uninhabitable realm of abjection. Here are two examples from *Veja*:

> They are 6.910 beneficiaries. **It is not clear** how much of Serrano's population this number indicates. The last census, after all, registered 5.000 inhabitants in the city. **One might be sure**, though, that 100% of the village dwellers are part of the program. (Reféns do assistencialismo)
>
> Lula is an opportunist. I mean, in a certain week he authorizes the exploration of wood, in the following week he creates a forest reserve as big as Alagoas, Sergipe, **I have no idea… wherever they come from**. (Diogo Mainardi, "Agora me acusam de antinordestino", *Veja*, 11 March 2007)

The *Nordeste* appears in both excerpts as a blurred and despised category that nevertheless is required to constitute the limits of intelligibility presupposed by the modernist discourse of *Veja*. The communicable abjection and inequality enacted in the pages of *Veja* and the mainstream media participates in the discursive violence that hurts the *Nordestinos*. As we have seen, such subjects are also ridiculed as animals, plants, second-class citizens, naïve people, bad foreigners. They are attacked precisely in their most vulnerable point: their condition. And this verbal and visual attack is entangled in a communicability that renders such ideological and discursive construction the appearance of "a natural fact" or "just a joke". As Diogo Mainardi argues in his violent article: "I admit that I referred to Lula as an opportunist. I admit that, privately, I usually depict him with even more improper terms. I also admit an unforgivable ignorance of the Northeastern geography. What I will never admit is prejudice."

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