

# (DIS)ENCOUNTERS AND (RE)ARRANGEMENTS:

## what would Michel Pêcheux say about a theory of subject for literary journalism?

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**ABSTRACT** – The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the concept of subject used in the theoretical approach on literary journalism (LJ), understanding that a discursive practice that is defined from subjectivity must promote a dialogue with discussions about the historicity, the unconscious and the ideology. It is based on the concerns expressed by different authors in the sense that LJ places itself in a position of differentiation and alternative in relation to traditional proposals of journalistic production. By inserting itself in this other space of meaning production, we mobilize Michel Pêcheux's theory of language to explain the founding subjectivity between the act of writing and reading a text presenting the LJ characteristics. From the reflection on what could be analyzed in a press text containing characteristics considered as literary, some of the questions that a discursive approach is capable of indicating for Journalism are presented, as well as what would be the aesthetics of literature in the Pêcheux's approach. We concluded on the need for an ideological analysis of LJ that is added and it proposes advances to the reflection of the formal aspects of language and content traditionally carried out in the area.

**Key words:** Literary Journalism. Subject. Discourse. Aesthetics. Pêcheux.

### **(DES)ENCONTROS E (RE)ARRANJOS: o que Michel Pêcheux diria sobre uma teoria do sujeito no jornalismo literário?**

**RESUMO** – O objetivo deste trabalho é refletir sobre o conceito de sujeito empregado na abordagem teórica sobre o jornalismo literário (JL), entendendo que uma prática discursiva que se define a partir da subjetividade deve promover um diálogo com discussões acerca da historicidade, o inconsciente e a ideologia. Parte-se de inquietações apresentadas por diferentes autores no sentido de que o JL se coloca numa posição de diferenciação e de alternativa em relação às propostas tradicionais de produção jornalística. Ao inserir-se nesse outro espaço de produção de sentidos, mobilizamos a teoria da linguagem de

Michel Pêcheux para explicar a subjetividade fundadora entre o ato de escrever e ler um texto que apresente as características do JL. A partir da reflexão sobre o que poderia ser analisado num texto da imprensa que contém características tidas como literárias, são apresentados alguns dos questionamentos que uma abordagem discursiva é capaz de indicar para o jornalismo, bem como o que seria a estética da literatura na abordagem pecheutiana. Concluímos sobre a necessidade de uma análise ideológica do JL que seja acrescentada e proponha avanços à reflexão dos aspectos formais de linguagem e conteúdo, tradicionalmente realizada na área.

**Palavras chave:** Jornalismo literário. Sujeito. Discurso. Estética. Pêcheux.

### **(DES)ENCUENTROS Y (RE)ARRANJOS: ¿Qué diría Michel Pêcheux sobre una teoría del sujeto para el periodismo literario?**

**RESUMEN** – El objetivo de este trabajo es reflexionar sobre el concepto de sujeto empleado en el abordaje teórico sobre el periodismo literario, entendiendo que una práctica discursiva que se define a partir de la subjetividad debe promover un diálogo con discusiones acerca de la historicidad, el inconsciente y la ideología. Se parte de inquietudes presentadas por diferentes autores en el sentido de que el periodismo literario se sitúa en una posición de diferenciación y de alternativa en relación a las propuestas tradicionales de producción periodística. Al insertarse en ese otro espacio de producción de sentidos, movilizamos la teoría del lenguaje de Michel Pêcheux para explicar la subjetividad fundadora entre el acto de escribir y leer un texto que presente las características del periodismo literario. A partir de la reflexión sobre lo que podría ser analizado en un texto de la prensa que contiene características tenidas como literarias, se presentan algunos de los cuestionamientos que un abordaje discursivo es capaz de indicar para el periodismo, así como lo que sería la estética de la literatura en el abordaje de Pêcheux. Concluimos sobre la necesidad de un análisis ideológico del periodismo literario que se añada y proponga avances a la reflexión de los aspectos formales de lenguaje y contenido, tradicionalmente realizada en el área.

**Palabras clave:** Periodismo literario. Asunto. Discurso. Estética. Pêcheux.

## **1. Introductory concerns**

A concern derived from readings and analyses carried out in an academic course inside and outside the field of journalism, mobilizes this article: could literary journalism (hereinafter referred to as “LJ”), in all its aesthetic-discursive complexity, be explained by only one theory? The question is pertinent before the perception that, when appropriating aesthetic forms of writing and narrative conduction, the matters of subjectivity and meaning are directly addressed.

The hypothesis of imprecision of an attempt to understand LJ only by the fields historically associated with it such as communication and journalism is mainly due to gaps indicated by scholars themselves, from classics such as Wolfe (2005), to more contemporary, such as Pena (2006), Bulhões (2007), Lima (2009) and

Martinez (2017). In general, theories try to explain LJ from the denial of the positivist postulates that guided the emergence of journalism in the 20th century and, consequently, founded the theories that tried to understand the press. However, a certain failure in this endeavor is summarized by Medina:

Who would say that the contemporary minds and hearts would have, in the 21st century, such a dramatic experience of transcendent uncertainties, indecision, and anxieties. After all, nineteenth-century positivist science promised a rationality that would accurately assess and solve with clarity of principles the problems of humanity (Medina, 2008, p. 46).

The problem, coupled with the current stage of communications, with growing disbelief in traditional media and the emergence of notions such as post-truth, shows that in contemporary times there is no room for totalizing theoretical discourses. A path is then opened for reflections that (dis)encounter, (re)arrange, and connect. "Having not properly developed studies in the field of discourse sciences (from linguistics to semiotics, going through philosophy and history), [the journalist] communicates indistinctly with information producers or media owners the traditional concept of objectivity" (Medina, 2006, p. 120).

Some steps towards an own theory to explain the LJ, which expanded the traditional epistemological perspectives, were given by Lima (2009), who proposed that the question be treated with a trans-disciplinary view, associating quite different fields such as communication, art, psychology and quantum physics. "We need all this and to recognize that science has spent a great deal of time in knowing the objective world, but little in the subjective world" (Lima, 2009, p. 440). Going in a direction that completes that of Lima, while putting in dialogue a different theoretical framework, our objective is to reflect on a theoretical proposal to characterize the subject-journalist, recognizing an inexorable relationship between subjectivity, ideology and historical materiality. The perspective we adopt is the theory of language developed in France from the late 1960s by philosopher Michel Pêcheux (1938-1983), with some intersections with Michel Foucault (1926-1984).

We also understand that a discursive approach can contribute to journalist training, since it understands language beyond a game between the literal and the figurative, placing meaning in a historical-material perspective. In addition, this perspective opens up for a

discussion about the effects of interpretation that inevitably occur in every act of observation and representation of the world.

## 2. (Im)pertinent questions

In order to approach the main question in this paper and the proposition that we make here, we took as object an article from the online version of *piauí* magazine, a publication that is considered a current example of the LJ practice in Brazil. The text entitled “*Me deixe fora desse balaio*” (“Leave me out of this mess”) was produced by reporter Yasmin Santos and published on May 22, 2018. Below is the first paragraph of the report:

Muniky Moura's alarm clock rings a few times until she gets out of bed. On her feet, she gets ready for work in less than 20 minutes. At 6:30 am, she is already at the bus stop, one block away from her home - in the district of Parque Paulista, in the city of Duque de Caxias, Baixada Fluminense [Rio de Janeiro Lowland Region] - waiting for her transportation. From there to place where she works as an administrative assistant at Vale's headquarters in Botafogo, in the south side of Rio, are 48 kilometers. Moura takes the first bus in the morning and arrives at her destination, in most cases, four hours later. It is sixteen hours away from home, every day. Between commuting, working and taking care of her 5-year-old daughter, she has concerns bigger than politics. When she is provoked to think about the October elections, she has one certainty: she will not vote for former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, from PT (Workers Party), neither for federal deputy Jair Messias Bolsonaro, from PSL (Social Liberal Party). At age 33, Moura personifies the 'neither nor' voter - who decides his or her vote at the last minute, stays out of the radar of voter-wide polls, and usually defines the direction of an election. When added to her male counterpart, it reaches 43% of the electorate, as shown by a study commissioned by *piauí* magazine to Ibope. Neither Lula nor Bolsonaro, the two biggest names in these elections so far, have so many voters. They are the most coveted by the center candidates, for escaping radicalism. As these voters will only decide at the last moment, voters like Muniky Moura are the biggest challenge for research institutes (Santos, 2018, para. 1).

When analyzing this excerpt, we enter into the first question: how to define what LJ is, without forgetting that, as Castro (2010) recalls, all attempts to define it were fruitless. This lack of unanimity for a definition and even for a nomenclature, since terminologies such as “narrative journalism”, “reality literature” and “new journalism<sup>1</sup>” coexist is a demonstration of a first place in between in which the discursive practice we call LJ is placed.

Such difficulty indicates the lack of identification with what is most traditional in the journalistic narrative the inverted pyramid and the proposal of objectivity but at the same time, a perception,

to the most attentive readers or experts in these practices. These are some indications of a displacement in these texts: details about the difficulty that the character has to wake up, for example, could be considered unnecessary for the most usual journalistic narrative. Kramer (1995) already showed this (in)definiteness by referring to LJ saying that “you-know-it-when-you-see-it.”

There is also a divergence in relation to the origin of the term “literary journalism”, although, among the authors that focus the most on its historical constitution, only Lima (2010) made some dated mention. For the author, the term would have arisen around the 1930s in the United States. This historicization cannot generate the imprecise perception that the emergence of LJ as a practice would be notable at that moment, since the relation between journalistic and literary discourses is sometimes more porous and sometimes impersonal. This, from the beginnings of a narrative gesture practiced by the human being or in the genesis of what would later be delimited as “journalism” or as “literature.” It is also necessary to remember that confusions that refer to the “literary” nickname as a thematic or editorial feature are common, as is the case of “political journalism” or “cultural journalism”, in which the adjective refers to a specialization or segmentation.

From the point of view of conceptualizations, besides the terminology and the very definition of what LJ is, we mention the fact that, in general, the Brazilian currents characterize it sometimes as a practice, which enables the relation between forms (literary) and content (journalistic), or sometimes as an alternative to or transgression of the established practices of traditional journalism. Our proposal is to withdraw LJ from this place and move it to another one, which is also an inter-space, without the dichotomies historically associated with it.

A long discussion about the very concept of literature employed in the area could happen here. In general, the conception used in papers on LJ is related to the aesthetic treatment of the language, very close to the formal characteristics defined by Proença Filho (2007) or, *roughly*, by the stylistic field, including complexity, multi-signification, predominance of connotation, freedom in creation, emphasis on significant and variability. By this look, content and journalistic goals in LJ do not take form, which would be a difference from fiction literature. On the other hand, the journalistic content meets the instances of public interest, of universality, of novelty

and of relevance, contemplated in the newsworthy idea (Wolf, 1999; Castro, 2010; Ormaneze, 2013).

From the point of view of content, the *piauí* magazine report considers the news values: it is a material produced from statistical data, taken from a survey. Five months before what would be one of the most polarized elections in Brazil in recent times, 43% of the electorate therefore, with a great power of decision had not yet decided. This is due voters did not identify with any of the two main candidates who, each on a different pole, were ahead in the dispute.

By stylistic bias, aesthetic effects are produced by the use of language and by four characteristics that, according to Wolfe (2005), define LJ as a form. They are: 1) the construction scene by scene; 2) the use of dialogues; 3) the status life symbols; and 4) the multiples points of view of the narrative, whereby the narrator does not have to be just an observer. The story can be told “through the eyes of a particular character, giving the reader the feeling of being inside the character’s mind, experiencing the emotional reality of the scene as the character experienced it” (Wolfe, 2005, p. 54).

In the case of the *piauí* magazine report, the first and third characteristics can be observed. The narrative was constructed as if the reader could follow a day in the character’s life, beginning when the character awakes and ending when she returns home. This narration includes moments of chronology breaking, used to tell facts about the character’s past, such as her voting options in the 2010 and 2014 elections and the contextualization of other facts, such as a military intervention underway in Rio de Janeiro to combat violence.

Wolfe defines the status life symbols as the description of the “pattern of behavior and possessions by which a person expresses his position in the world or what he thinks his standard is or what he would like it to be” (Wolfe, 2005, p. 55). In the case of status life symbols, there are mentions that the character uses three public transport vehicles to return home after work (“**on her third transportation home**, one road was closed and the bus changed its course,” our emphases), the characteristics of the room (“painted lilac”) and the interest in reading “*The little prince*, outloud”. There is also a mention of her “fear” that Brazil would be governed by an extreme right-wing president.

In the case of dialogues, there is only a quotation about the character’s speeches. No scene is rebuilt so that there is interaction with other people through speech. In relation to the point of view of

the narrative, one can notice the presence of a narrator immersed in the reality of the character, but, nonetheless, he is an omniscient observer, which is common in journalistic texts.

In an approach that seeks to bring together attributes that touch both journalistic and literary aspects, Lima (2009) indicates ten characteristics in LJ productions: humanization, comprehension, storytelling, thematic universalization, immersion, authorial voice, creativity/style, symbolism, accuracy/precision and ethical responsibility. This scheme is more simplified in the basic definitions of the configuration of the extinct Brazilian Academy of Literary Journalism (ABJL, acronym in Portuguese) of which Lima was one of the founders that indicated seven pillars for LJ: humanization, immersion, authorial voice, style, accuracy of data and information, digression, and use of symbols and metaphors. Considering this script for analysis, we could say that in the case of the *piauí* magazine report, the concern was to humanize the data of a survey and, therefore, it focused on Munyk's character story to conduct the narrative. From the point of view of language (style, symbols and metaphors), we could have as focus for analysis the series of oppositions (antithesis) explored throughout the text, as exemplified in: "While she is disillusioned with the PT Politician, she nourishes disgust for the reformed military" or "Muniky Moura does not blame **the misinformation**. Instead, she believes that the Brazilians are **very well informed**". The presence of several antithetical pairs serves to reinforce the disbelief of the character who, even between two such different options, puts herself in the position of choosing neither, which is expressed by the metaphor in the expression "neither nor" as it is called. The polarizing effect is so evident that none of the other presidential candidates (who, at that time, had already declared to participate in the election) was mentioned.

In his effort to characterize the LJ, Pena (2006) considers particularities less focused on language and more on approach, defining what he calls the "seven-pointed star": to leverage journalistic resources, exceed the limits of everyday events, provide a broad vision, exercise citizenship, break the lead chains, avoid primary setters, and pursuit the continuity of the text. Returning to Munyk's story, we could highlight, in an analysis based on the concept of Pena (2006), the issues related to citizenship embedded in the discussion on politics. We could also highlight the fact that the character is not a common source in the press, being an alternative, therefore, to the primary setters, that is,

people who, by convenience or by the discourse of authority, are often the protagonists of journalistic narratives.

These approaches centered on form and content also constitute as memory in the sense of what it is said before, constituting the current saying (Pêcheux, 2009) about what has already been said about LJ. All these conceptions also have in common the centrality of the subject-journalist, who would be required to “qualify”, “master techniques”, and “develop creative forms” for his approaches, placing the reporter as the absolute origin of saying. This, without considering the subject as interpellated by the story, subjugated and crossed by diverse discursive and ideological formations that take from him the complete control over what he says and what he thinks.

The evidence of a centrality in the subject that dominates his journalistic and aesthetic making is present in the theoretical texts mentioned, by the presence, for example, of verbs in the infinitive, which serve as “tasks” or “stages” to be fulfilled by a reporter: “potentialize, overcome, exercise”, etc. In short, the view of the subject at stake in these definitions is close to the idea of the journalist as a “gatekeeper”, despite the displacements planned therein.

### **3. In search of proposals/answers**

It is hard to differentiate what is a proposal and what is an answer in post-modernity, considering the co-existence of theories and the need for a trans-disciplinary approach to explain practices, phenomena and science itself. A discussion on the subject then becomes necessary, given its centrality in the various reflections and, particularly here, in the question of trying to answer to who would be the “journalist-literary-subject”.

Aesthetic practices, in general, are approached in journalism, from the centrality in the individual, which would be the origin of all saying and would dominate the resources used. In addressing the question of subjectivity, the theories that try to explain and understand the LJ put it as an opposition to objectivity or as a natural process to the human being who, through inseparability, would appear in what he writes.

The question of objectivity and subjectivity is at the same time central and disturbing to theories of journalism since



the definitions made in the United States by psychologist David Manning White in what is known as the Gatekeeper Theory. White, a sociologist and communicator, with origins in functionalism and influenced by behavioral psychology, studied the flow of news within newspapers, in order to locate filters for what became news. The editor, represented by the gatekeeper, became responsible for selecting news and, consequently, for the narrative resources used. The very word “resource” materializes this conscious subject: in a plethora of possibilities, one would select those to be used.

Weaknesses from White’s perspective were indicated in the sequence, including by other theories, such as Newsmaking, which opened the discussion to ideological and marketing elements in this news selection process (Wolf, 1999). Despite this, even though the 1960s and 1970s were representative of the emergence of questioning on the idea of a subject coinciding with himself, the discussion about the subject-journalist passed on, except for studies that began to develop in other areas, in general, as a criticism on the way in which journalism analyzed itself. However, few of these reflections, among them the ones proposed by psychoanalysis, touched the discussions in the academic circles of communication, which, in turn, in this period of history, sought to be configured as a science or autonomous field of study.

Thus, the theories of journalism are based on a deterministic psychological myth to define what the subject-journalist would be. The criticism to this myth lies at the heart of the discussions started by philosopher Michel Pêcheux in the late 1960s when a new theory for language emerged. The 1969 edition of the “Automatic Discourse Analysis” (*Analyse Automatique du Discours*), presents the principles of a vision that he would develop from that moment, together with a group of French intellectuals from diverse origins, such as linguistics, history and sociology. In some moments, but not without maintaining clarity in points of divergence, these authors would bring some discussions also proposed by Michel Foucault, to whom they approached, mainly, because of the concept of “discursive formation”, about which we will discuss below.

Pêcheux, who had been a student of Louis Althusser (1918-1990), worked in a laboratory of social psychology, in order to confront the human sciences, particularly history, psychoanalysis and linguistics. At this intersection, the philosopher asks:

In the space of this psychological myth, history is nothing more than the result of a series of situations of interactions, real

or symbolic. The language is nothing more than a (reduced) portion of these symbolic interactions, and the unconscious is nothing more than the non-consciousness that negatively affects this or that sector of a subject's activity, in function of the biological and/or social determinations mentioned above (Pêcheux, 1998, p. 51).

From this quote, several criticisms can be made on the classic form as journalism is conceived. The "series of situations of interactions" finds equivalence in the objective idea of facts that would become, by conscious and defined criteria, in news. In the same way, language is taken and the writing manuals reinforce this conception as a set of signs with stabilized meanings, to which the journalist must know how to choose the best ones to make phrases. Even in LJ approaches and analyzes, it is common to have language as something to be mastered - grammatically and stylistically - and for which techniques would be sufficient to ensure creativity and aesthetic treatment. In short, the meaning to be produced by language is taken as already given, transparent, resulting from conscious actions of the journalist, as a ritual without flaws, without drifts, without leaks. In addition, we must remember on this question that

The view of a subject coinciding with himself, and determined with all the mastery of his saying and his practices, is conducive to the status of journalism, because it allows the conception of a professional who can master what he writes, says, and publishes. This facilitates - and is the only way to conceive and replicate - the idea of objectivity and neutrality (Ormaneze, 2016, p. 7).

On the other hand, this view of subject is incoherent with the characteristics indicated for LJ. The fields of style, subjectivity, aesthetics and worldview, interpreting it, are in another order, outside the positivist objectivity-subjectivity binomial. The importance of a theory of the subject for LJ opens up the possibility of a new place to think about journalism when spinal features, such as impartiality and objectivity, are amputated from it, since not only the techniques, but also the theories that still carry a positive-functionalist memory, tend to crystallize reductions and dichotomies.

#### **4. What would Pêcheux say about this?**

A look at the *piauí* magazine report about the youngsters' lack of interest in politics, led by the story of Muniky, from Pêcheux's view

of subject and language, would pose different questions to analysis, transposing the discussion about form and content. It is therefore opportune questions such as what imaginary of young people and politics the reporter brings in his text, what his place of speech is, in what way the literary resources used are also ideological and in what way the knowledge and the memory on “journalism, youth, politics and literature” among other possible topics, are materialized. On the other hand, Pêcheux’s vision also leads to questions about the reader of such text and the places in which it stands, producing the imaginary to identify with such formulations. Thus, Pêcheux’s theory, when applied to this discussion, broadens the approach to LJ, since it is also concerned with what is not on the surface of the language and journalistic techniques, but in historical processes. Facing an excerpt such as “between commuting, working and caring for her 5-year-old daughter, she has concerns bigger than politics”, we might ask whether “bigger concerns” is a judgment, which would sound like irony, or if it is a realization that, for a mother, the biggest concerns should be at home.

Pêcheux’s discursive approach is based on non-literality, that is, language is determined by historical materiality, is not a neutral system of signs that conveys, from intentionality, certain content. The set of sayings about the past and the memory about being a mother, being poor and doing politics that produce the meanings about Muniky. Here, it is possible to approach Foucault’s theory, for whom “a statement belongs to a discursive formation, as a phrase belongs to a text, and a proposition to a deductive whole” (Foucault, 1997, p. 135). The discursive formation, in its turn, is perceptible from a series of regularities: “Whenever one can describe a similar dispersion system between a number of statements and if one can define a regularity (order, correlations, positions, functioning, and transformations) between objects, types of enunciation, concepts, thematic choices, there will be a discursive formation” (Foucault, 1997, p. 43). In other words, discursive formation concerns what can and should be said under certain conditions of discourse production. An analysis that tries to detail all the complexity of the LJ must take into account these processes, which are in the field of constitution of the discourse and help explain what is read and what meanings circulate about people and facts.

Pêcheux conceives the subject as someone who is not free to deliberately choose what to say and what effects to produce, for

the saying is always determined by the inter-discourse, that is, a set of everything that has already been said about something and which sustains, with dominance of some sayings and meanings, all the current saying. The difficulty of conceiving the meanings as not originating in the one who writes lies in the fact that, through history, they are appropriated as natural, constituting themselves as ideological processes. The interpellation of the individual into the subject of discourse is by identification with the discursive formation and, therefore, there is no discourse without a subject, neither a subject without ideology. Even when acting consciously, the subject can only enunciate what he can formulate in the discursive formation in which he is inscribed.

The concept of ideology employed by Pêcheux, in turn, breaks the Marxist notion, as, for the French philosopher, the ideological is not simply the expression of the dominant bourgeois ideology, but *local* and *means* to achieve such domination. The reading proposed is a look at the opacity of the text, understanding what the subject always says in relation to other sayings and to history:

A materialist theory of discursive processes cannot be constructed to be content to reproduce, as one of its theoretical objects, the ideological 'subject' as 'always-already given': in fact, for imperative reasons to the intricacy of the different elements we have just stated, this theory cannot dispense a (non-subjectivist) theory of subjectivity if it is to begin to fulfill its pretensions. Thus, the theoretical domain of our work is definitively determined by three interconnected regions, which we will respectively call subjectivity, discursiveness and discontinuity of sciences/ideologies. (...) Let us be clear: what idealism makes impossible to understand is, first and foremost, the political practice and, equally, the practice of knowledge production (and, on the other hand, pedagogical practice), that is, precisely the different forms under which 'blind necessity' (Engels) becomes a necessity thought and modeled as necessity (Pêcheux, 2009, pp. 121-122, emphases in the original).

At this point lies the main disagreement of this conception with that from positive-functionalist proposals that try to understand journalism by the opposition between objectivity and subjectivity or polarizing the discussion between traditional journalism and LJ. In Pêcheux's perspective, meaning is only possible because "the concrete materiality of the ideological instance exists in the form of ideological formations, which, at the same time, have a regional character and hold class positions" (Pêcheux, 2009, p. 146). Therefore, this is only feasible from the linguistic materiality, which appears in the discursive formations, that is, in what each subject constructs as text

and as another subject reads it. What is at stake in the production of a report and in the aesthetic elements used is more than a turning of stories and a stylistic concern. There is a need for subjectivation and identification, a search for self-recognition, whether from the one who writes the text in relation to the character, or from the reader in relation to the character or the writer.

A Pêcheux's approach to the journalistic text concerns about knowing what has been forgotten, that is, what has not been said in any way. In view of the text of *piauí* magazine, one might ask, for example, what historical-ideological determinations did the reporter point out to the character's difficulty in awakening rather than her preoccupation about how to dress up (in the 20 minutes she has for it), without this being among her "bigger concerns". It could also be argued that the text focuses on the polarization between the first two names of the presidential race, characterizing the character as "neither (one) nor (the other)", without, however, presenting the possibilities available as alternatives for Luís Inácio Lula da Silva and Jair Bolsonaro. There is also the memory of journalism, which has consolidated itself in working with conflicts, with polarizations, with both sides. Even in LJ's alternate space, this memory has its effects.

In addition, a discursive reading could also address the presence of a polarity between men and women in the text, expressed in terms as "male pair" or in a demonstration of maternal concerns as early as the first attempts to humanize the character. The status life symbols, quoted not only in the first paragraph of the report, but also at other times, can be understood by the relation established with the already-said or the forgotten about certain social classes or age groups. It is the "things-to-know" about being a woman, poor and young, given by the relationships of the text with the outside of the language. As a woman, her character is associated with symbols that were constituted in a memory about gender, such as maternal care. This text ends up by placing the "neither nor" voter in the place of a mother, to read "*The little prince*" to her daughter and, for her, giving up the political discussion: "Mariah [*the daughter*] falls asleep in the middle of a paragraph. Such as the little prince [*The little prince, by Saint-Exupéry*], worried about protecting the rose with whom he divides his world, the mother is afraid, and now wants to take care of her flower. **She leaves politics for later**" (Santos, 2018, para. 23). The "bigger concerns" are, at the same time, decisive and determined

by what is said about the character.

The forgetfulness we discussed above is expressed in two ways, according to Pêcheux (2009). The first one is about ideology: the subject has the illusion of being in himself the origin of what he says, when there is a resumption of preexisting, historically determined meanings that constitute a place of speech. The second type is about enunciation, that is, it reminds us of the fact that there would always be other ways of saying, although this is not a conscious perception. "This produces the illusion that what we say can only be said that way, which is a fallacy, since the way of saying is not dissociated from the story" (Ormaneze, 2016, p. 9). On the other hand, it is as if, in the observation for the news report or in the writing of the text, only what has been observed as status life symbols, for example, could be it, as already-given. The meanings in these observations and these choices, however, are of the ideological type. There is a tension here in the fullness of the presence of the subject-journalist, who operates as a witness of what he observed and that would bring the private to public by writing the report.

The notion of subject in Pêcheux can thus be understood as a kind of criticism of what is present in such theories as Gatekeeper or Newsmaking. They are marked by the "double face of the same central error, which consists, on the one hand, of considering ideologies as ideas and not as material forces and, on the other hand, of conceiving that they have their origin in the subjects, when in fact they constitute individuals in subject" (Pêcheux, 2009, p. 120). The idea of subjectivity, in the perspective we adopt here, is inextricably linked to a place of speech and a historical construction. For LJ, this poses some theoretical advances, such as the very questioning of its characteristics and the idea of humanization.

Humanization and literary resources cannot be seen as transparent, as already-given, to which everyone would have access with the same configuration. The definition of how one subject will be portrayed by another in a journalistic text goes through ideological constructions, subject to the movement of history. What humanizing is today will not be for a certain subject-journalist in other conditions or in other places of speech. This perspective broadens the complex character of LJ practice: subjects of language and language in all senses.

Every discourse is the potential index of agitation in the socio-historical affiliations of identification, since it constitutes at the same time an effect of these affiliations and a work (more or less conscious, deliberate, constructed or not, but in any case crossed by the unconscious determinations) of displacement in its space (Pêcheux, 2012, p. 56)

Being an author or being a reader are positions of the subject, in relation to history and language, becoming a focus of coherence for the statements, in the contact of the text with other meanings. A good question to ask LJ in papers that explore this conception of subject is what makes possible the representation of a certain character in a text and in what way the idea of humanization is responsible for it.

### **5. Wood, wind and iron on the language: an aesthetic in Michel Pêcheux**

The definitions on the subject still leave the question of what the aesthetic in Michel Pêcheux would be and how he would relate to the idea of literature. Unlike most authors, Pêcheux and Gadet (2004) put the “poetic language” at an equal level to all language expressions, without a predominance relation. This explains why, regardless of formal or stylistic characteristics, material relations with history and ideology determine language. Pêcheux’s non-subjection of language does not take place outside the ideological or identification of discursive formation, although this is also the space of repression:

Signifiers appear in this way not as the pieces of an eternal symbolic play that would determine them, but as that which was ‘ever-already’ detached from a meaning. There is no naturalness of the signifier; what falls, as verbal signifier, in the domain of the unconscious, is ‘always-already’ disconnected from a discursive formation that gives it its meaning, which is lost in the *non-sense* of the signifier (Pêcheux, 2009, p. 176)

In this way, the question of metaphor is expanded beyond the stylistic game: it is in part linked to the signifier and partly to the sign in its historical-ideological totality. This takes into account the nature of the language in LJ.

At stake is both the possibility of using one word or another in terms of relations of similitude (synonymy), and the possibility that, in this process of contextual substitution of one word for another, a term that is quite distant from the first, but which keeps, with this first term, a memory of meaning (Mariani, 2007, p. 12).

“Neither nor”, for example, is a signifier that produces effects different from what we would have if the character were called “the undecided” or simply “undecided.”

Thus, it would only be possible to think of a Pêcheux’s aesthetic if we consider that poetry is not in the language, but in the subject who formulates it and who meets this formulation through reading, that is, it is necessary to consider the discursive place of the subject. Only when he is interpellated by ideology and joining a certain discursive formation does he will make a certain use of the language, establishing the rift that links what is considered as journalistic and what is considered as literary. As a language effect, LJ is in the space of movement between what Pêcheux and Gadet (2004) call “iron language”, “wood language” and “wind language”.

As a gradation, in relation to the ideological, the “wood language” refers to a closed, doctrinal, prescriptive and normative system, as in grammar, law, science, journalism in the manuals, and religion. The “wind language” is marked by what is volatile, by the fluid, by the fleetingness in the instantaneity of the meanings, as in the artistically worked language. The “iron language”, on the other hand, is characteristic of one-way totalitarianism. The question, to which Pêcheux warns, however, is that these different expressions cannot be dissociated from the discussion of power and ideology, since they can be masked, tangled and articulated. Thus, the analysis of the *piauí* magazine text would only be fruitful if one took into account the place of speech of the magazine, the political relations established therein and the meanings from that enunciation in relation to others. Writing under the name *piauí* produces effects different from those in case the reporter was in another publication.

The wood/wind/iron distinction does not present itself as an exclusive trichotomy, but rather as points on a scale where movements occur at all times. The artistic language submits to



the same ideological functions as any other expression. If “words are weapons, poisons or tranquillizers” (Klaus cited by Pêcheux, 2009, p. 289), the importance of a non-formalist reading of the LJ texts is so that “aesthetic constructions” or the field of merely “well written” do not hide the processes of power that allowed them to emerge.

## **6. Considerations about (dis)encounter and (re)arrangement**

The discussions indicated in this text are (dis)encounters of theories, which allow some (re)arrangements in the way of thinking, analyzing and producing LJ. Our proposal is that there is an expansion of the idea of subject contained in communication and journalism studies, so that the analysis of these influences is not restricted to an idea of subjectivity considered as individuality, originating in the very individual, but considering the interpellations, ideological character and historicity, including journalistic practices themselves.

Let us return to the figure of the gatekeeper, seen from the perspective of the always possible flaw: the “gatekeeper” is the one who decides who/what enters, but also the one who fulfills orders to decide on such an entrance. What are these orders? We would say that they are also the fruit of an interpellation, a story, a memory.

In this sense, the reading of Michel Pêcheux and other authors who join him can contribute to the formation of LJ theories and to the formation of new professionals in the area, especially in times of press crisis and questioning of journalistic production. Writing as always autobiographical is put into question, materializing meanings of a subject-author to a subject-interlocutor. Thus, the identification that allows the idea of humanization becomes another evidence of subjects who write and read in the same discursive formation, producing meanings from memory.

LJ has always posed itself, even as a central feature in some of its most important moments, as in the period of *New Journalism*, as the different, as the one that has other perspectives and another look at reality. In this sense, the need for reflection started here on the subject-journalist is more relevant, since, to be different, it is up to LJ to explain itself through proposals that can address its complexity and its political dimension.

TRANSLATED BY: Pablo Raul Fernandez de Bernoche

## NOTES

- 1 I argue that this nomenclature cannot designate any practice of LJ. For me, the term I prefer to keep in English, *New Journalism*, designates only one moment in the history of the relationship between journalism and literature. Such term appeared in the United States between the 1960s and 1970s, in the aesthetic-ideological context of the counterculture and as a reaction to the novel of existentialist fiction, high in the literary circles of that period. Tom Wolfe was the prominent author of that period, both as a journalist and as a scholar of the subject. In a text published in the book “Radical Chic and New Journalism”, he said that he is not clear about how the expression and rejection arose when he said that “any movement, group, party, program, philosophy or theory that has ‘new’ in the name is calling confusion” (Wolfe, 2005, p. 40). Wolfe even discards the possibility of understanding the *New Journalism* as a “movement,” treating it as “a kind of artistic excitement in journalism” (Wolfe, 2005, p. 41).
- 2 For Pêcheux, the conditions of production are not just the emergency circumstances of a discourse. They are also the imaginary produced and projected on a particular issue, in a direct relationship with memory.

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