Collective Subjectivity of Literary Characters as Exemplified by Jorge Amado's Marginalized Figures

Subjetividade coletiva de personagens literárias exemplificada com figuras marginalizadas de Jorge Amado

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Abstract: The potential of the use of the concept of collective subjectivity, in literary analyses, has been partially discerned by Mario Vargas Llosa, Gérard Klein, and a group of scholars inspired by Klein's observations (Bellagamba; Picholle; Tron, 2012). Since none of them have proposed any systematic framework, the paper theorizes the concept, proposes an analysis methodology, and presents the results of a model analysis of the collective subjectivity of Jorge Amado's marginalized characters and its relation to the hegemonic discourses of Amado's storyworlds and of Brazil in the 1930s, respectively. The article also presents an evaluation of the concept's usefulness for narrative scholars. As analyzing a fictional collective subjectivity requires a custom-made framework, it has been elaborated on the basis of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (2001) Discourse Theory, Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (both alarmingly absent in literary studies), the psycho-sociological framework for real-world collective subjectivity analysis (Fabris; Puccini; Cambiaso, 2019), and narratological findings related to Possible Worlds Theory and fictional minds (Palmer, 2004). The study confirms that the use of the concept as an analytical tool can shed new light on our understanding of numerous narrative art works, especially regarding such issues as focalization, perspective, ideology, narrative empathy, unreliable narration, and consciousness representation. Moreover, the framework enables us to: 1) describe precisely the particularities of the ideological profile of a fictional collectivity and the narrator's/implied author's attitude towards them; 2) relate this profile to the context systematically (both to the storyworld and real-world context).

Keywords: fictional minds; hegemony and ideology in fiction; narrative perspective; unreliable narration; Laclau & Mouffe's Discourse Theory; discursive struggles.

Resumo: O potencial de uso do conceito da subjetividade coletiva em análises literárias foi parcialmente identificado por Mario Vargas Llosa, Gérard Klein e um grupo de pesquisadores inspirado pelas observações de Klein (Bellagamba; Picholle; Tron, 2012).

Visto que nenhum deles propôs um framework sistemático, o artigo teoriza o conceito, propõe uma metodologia de análise e apresenta os resultados de uma análise exemplar da subjetividade coletiva dos personagens marginalizados de Jorge Amado e da sua relação com os discursos hegemônicos dos mundos das ficções amadianas e do Brasil dos anos 1930, respectivamente. O trabalho apresenta também uma avaliação da utilidade do conceito para narratologistas. Dado que analisar subjetividade coletiva requer um framework customizado, o mesmo foi elaborado com base na Teoria do Discurso de Ernesto Laclau e Chantal Mouffe (2001), metodologia Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (ambas alarmantemente ausentes nos Estudos Literários), framework psicossociológico para análise de subjetividades coletivas do mundo real (Fabris; Puccini; Cambiaso, 2019) e conhecimentos narratológicos relacionados com a teoria dos mundos possíveis e mentes ficcionais (Palmer, 2004). O estudo confirma que o uso do conceito como uma ferramenta analítica pode lançar nova luz sobre a nossa compreensão de numerosas narrativas, especialmente em relação a tais questões como focalização, perspectiva, ideologia, empatia narrativa, narração não confiável e representação de consciência. Além disso, o framework permite: 1) descrever precisamente as particularidades do perfil ideológico de uma coletividade ficcional e a atitude do narrador/autor implícito para com elas; 2) relacionar esse perfil ao contexto sistematicamente (tanto ao contexto real, quanto ao do mundo da história).

Palavras-chave: mentes ficcionais; hegemonia e ideologia em ficção; perspectiva narrativa; narração não confiável; Teoria do Discurso de Laclau e Mouffe; lutas discursivas.

1 Introduction

The concept of collective subjectivity appears in two of Mario Vargas Llosa's essays (1997, p. 63; 2000, p. 35). He employs it as a key to the analysis of the narrator's point of view (in terms of the level of reality) in Alejo Carpentier's marvelous-realist *The Kingdom of This World*. In the scene of François Macandal's execution (Carpentier, 1989, p. 36-38) the narrator relates, unquestioningly, the revolutionary leader's transformation into a mosquito, which lets him liberate himself, although he was actually executed. Vargas Llosa explains (2000, p. 35-36) that the narrator adopts, at this moment, the perspective of the Haitian slaves, Vodou practitioners, whose collective subjectivity is characterized by their belief in Macandal's magical powers:

> What did the whites know of Negro matters? In his cycle of metamorphoses, Macandal had often entered the mysterious world of the insects […]. He had been fly, centipede, moth, ant, tarantula, ladybug, even a glow-worm with phosphorescent green lights. […] The

> bonds fell off and the body of the Negro rose in the air, flying overhead, until it plunged into the black waves of the sea of slaves. A single cry filled the square: "Macandal saved!" (Carpentier, 1989, p. 36-37).

Since Vargas Llosa's analyses, although very valuable, are neither academic nor exhaustive, I decided to find out whether the use of the notion of collective subjectivity, in the analysis of other literary texts, sheds new light on their understanding, and to evaluate the concept's universality and usefulness for scholars of narrative. To this end, I have theorized it, elaborated a suitable analysis methodology, and conducted a model analysis.

Interestingly, the potential of the use, in literary studies, of the concept of collective subjectivity (CS), has already been noticed by the French essayist and science fiction writer Gérard Klein (2011) and, subsequently, by a group of scholars (Bellagamba; Picholle; Tron, 2012) inspired by Klein's essay "Trames & Moirés: à la recherche d'autres sujets, les subjectivités collectives". However, Klein stated that he had not defined a fully operative concept and that he had only indicated to the researchers the direction in which to look (Bellagamba; Picholle; Tron, 2012, p. 15). Although the scholars in question presented some very useful observations, they did not define a fully operative concept either. Moreover, both Klein and his successors focused only on the social, extrafictional level (on the CS of the writer's social group). They did not reflect on the literary characters' CS and its importance on the storyworld level. Finally, they did not elaborate any methodology for analyzing collective subjectivity, on any level.

Since analyzing a fictional collective subjectivity requires interdisciplinary, custom-made theoretical and methodological frameworks, I have elaborated them on the basis of the principles of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's Discourse Theory (2001), the methodology of Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (Carpentier, De Cleen, 2007; Carpentier, 2018; Jørgensen, Phillips, 2002, p. 24-59), the psycho-sociological framework for real-world collective subjectivity analysis proposed by Fernando Fabris, Silvia Puccini and Mario Cambiaso (2019), and by drawing on narratological findings, especially those related to Possible Worlds Theory (Doležel, 1998) and to fictional minds (Palmer, 2004; 2010).

The corpus of the model analysis, in turn, comprises all the novels written by Jorge Amado between 1930 and 1945 (such a choice is justified by the particularly interesting discursive struggles that took place during this watershed period of Brazilian history, called the Getúlio Vargas Era).

In this article, I will present the results of my study and, thus, answer the following research questions: what is the collective subjectivity of literary characters? How should one analyze it? In what ways can it affect the novel's narrative elements or, in particular cases, the social reality in which the text produces its effects? Does it have a considerable potential to increase our understanding of the process of the discursive legitimation of the "other" through literature (or other narrative arts)? In what did the construction of the marginalized characters' CS, in the work of Jorge Amado, consist? What was its role in the discursive struggles between the hegemonic discourse of the Getúlio Vargas Era and the discourse articulated by Amado's work? Furthermore, by way of conclusion, I will assess how the use of the concept can be profitable for narrative scholars.

2 What is the collective subjectivity of literary characters? How should one analyze it?

Since the object of my research is the CS of literary characters, it is crucial to define the notion of character first. At this point arises the need to make use of Alan Palmer's (2004, 2010) theoretical framework. Palmer drew on one of Uri Margolin's (1989) definitions, according to which a fictional character is a "non-actual being who exists in a possible world and who can be ascribed physical, social, and mental properties" (Palmer, 2004, p. 38). Such a definition relies on Possible Worlds Theory, which has been introduced into narratology by Lubomír Doležel (1998), Thomas Pavel (1986), and Marie-Laure Ryan (1991). As Doležel states, from "the viewpoint of the reader, the fictional text can be characterized as a set of instructions according to which the fictional world is to be recovered and reassembled" (1988, p. 489). Hence, storyworlds are possible worlds that are constructed by language, and the characters, in turn, are non-actual individuals who "inhabit" them. Such an approach is relevant, for my theoretical framework, especially because of the possibility of ascribing mental properties to fictional characters (also through the externalist approach to the mind), which results in an illusion of fictional minds (Palmer, 2004).

Now, according to Fernando Fabris' psycho-sociological findings regarding real-world collective subjectivities – which draw mainly on the work of José Maurício Domingues (1995) and Enrique Pichon-Rivière (1975) –, the concept accounts for the common denominators of the subjective

structure of the members of a particular social group. CS encompasses the common denominator of their way of thinking, feeling, and acting, and is determined by socio-historical processes, everyday life, identification with social ideals, collective memory and projects, beliefs, positive or negative social experiences, and the group's acceptance or repudiation of public figures, among others (Fabris, 2012, p. 32-33).

The concept does not stand for any abstract totality. A CS does not denote an "Us." As Fabris explains:

> The existence of the common denominators that let us define it, does not presuppose any reduction of the infinite variety of the individual or group subjectivities that constitute it […]. The collective subjectivity is an open system, a dynamic totality which is relative to other dynamic totalities and implies not equilibrium, but equilibrations and reequilibrations (Fabris, 2012, p. 34, translation mine)[1]

Regarding fictional CS, in some stories, we can observe that the common denominators of the characters' ways of thinking, feeling, and acting play a particularly important role, as we have seen in the example from Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*. The excerpt shows how the Haitian slaves' collective subjectivity affects the level of reality on which the narrator situates himself to narrate, which makes him an unreliable narrator (Booth, 1961), considering the plane of reality on which the story takes place. In some of Jorge Amado's novels, in turn, the characters' CS can affect the style and language, determine the ideological overtone, the course of the story in a decisive moment, or – in particular cases – even the whole plot, as we will see further on.

At this point, it is also relevant to outline the main differences between a fictional CS and a fictional social mind. Palmer's concept refers to a group-based thinking, feeling, and acting – his idea of a "collective mind" has been convincingly criticized by Patrick Colm Hogan (2011) and Manfred Jahn (2011). CS, in turn, does not presuppose any "collective mind." Once again, it solely encompasses the *common denominator* of the

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[1] From the original: *"La existencia de denominadores comunes que permiten definirla, no supone una reducción de la variedad infinita de subjetividades individuales o grupales que la conforman […]. La subjetividad colectiva es un sistema abierto, una totalidad dinámica relativa a otras totalidades dinámicas e implica no tanto equilibrio como equilibraciones y reequilibraciones."*

way of thinking, feeling, and acting of the members of a collectivity. In addition, analyzing a CS does not imply *knowing* what a character thinks – Palmer's approach has also been criticized by Manfred Jahn (2011) and Emma Kafalenos (2011), precisely for this reason. These differences, in my view, make the CS less disputable. Moreover, they also shift the analytical focus to different issues related to the storyworlds we study.

The most important issue is the ideological one. Thanks to the Discourse-Theoretical methodology, the results of a CS analysis enable us to describe very precisely the particularities of the ideological profile of a collectivity, and to answer in detail such questions as: "what different understandings of reality are at stake, where are they in antagonistic opposition to one another?" and to show "[…] [H]ow each discourse constitutes knowledge and reality, identities and social relations" (Jørgensen; Phillips, 2002, p. 51). The object of such analysis can be the discursive struggles within a storyworld and, in particular cases (especially those of social novels), the struggles between the discourse articulated by a fictional work and other discourses from the social reality in which the text produces its effects. For Palmer, who admits the importance of the issues of ideology in the context of fictional minds, they are "well beyond the scope of [his] book" (2010, p. 48).

As Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2001) explain, discursive struggles occur between antagonistic discourses that try to dominate (hegemonize) a discursive field. This domination is achieved by consolidating a web of meanings (a discourse) through imposing specific meanings on specific signifiers (the meaning of the "Brazilianness" signifier, for example, depends on a specific discourse and is subject to a constant negotiation, due to the fact that it is impossible to avoid the permanent struggle for domination in a discursive field: as in the case of the struggle between the hegemonic discourse of the Getúlio Vargas Era and the discourse of the socially engaged writers of Amado's generation). Furthermore, since the meaning of the signifiers is also determined by their relationship with other signs, a change of one meaning implies a change in the meanings of various other signifiers. For example, "Brazil" meant something different for the dictator Getúlio Vargas and for the outlaws called *cangaceiros* and, as a result, we can observe parallel divergences in their understanding of such concepts as nation, national culture, patriotism, etc. This allows us to consider the "Brazil" signifier as a "nodal point" (Laclau; Mouffe, 2001, p. xi, 113) of the previously mentioned web of meanings, because

it is a point of reference, a center that determines the meaning of other signifiers by organizing around itself a system of interdependent meanings.

However, it must be remembered that the discourse consolidation process is very intangible. When a discourse achieves hegemony, its practices rise to the level of common sense. Their political and contingent provenance is forgotten; they become natural and self-evident to the society. Such discourses constitute, in Laclau's terms, a "new objectivity" (1990, p. 34, 35, 61). Phillips and Jørgensen (2002, p. 36) provide a very illustrative example:

> we are so used to the understanding and treatment of children as a group with distinctive characteristics that we treat the discourse about children as natural. But just a few hundred years ago, children were, to a much greater degree, seen and treated as "small adults"

(since our view of children has been constituted through struggles over meaning that were forgotten a long time ago, we may term this view and the discourse that grounds it as "objective"). Hence, to fully understand the collective subjectivity of fictional characters, I propose to analyze it in opposition to objectivity understood in this way.

Such an approach creates the need to also analyze the hegemonic discourse itself. It is noteworthy that, for the reader, the hegemonic discourse of a storyworld may be – especially in the case of social novels – a clear reflection of the one in the real world (according to Marie-Laure Ryan (1991) and her principle of minimal departure, while reading a text and reconstructing a storyworld from it, we assume that the storyworld is like our own until the text tells us otherwise). This is why the object of the analysis can be the discursive struggles within a storyworld or, in some cases, the struggles between the discourse articulated by a fictional work and the hegemonic discourse of the social reality in which the text produces its effects. As we will see in the next section, Amado's work, for example, did have a considerable impact on social reality both in Brazil and in Portuguese-speaking African countries, thanks, among other things, to the fictional CS he constructed.

Such analysis can be conducted with the use of the methodology of Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA) – with an emphasis on Martin Nonhoff's hegemony analysis (2019) – which I will explain later in this section, and present in practice in the model analysis section.

First, however, we have to understand how to analyze the narratives, with the focus being on the elements listed in Fabris' definition of collective

subjectivity. This is possible thanks to the concept of psychosocial emergents (Fabris, 2012, p. 36-38), which are "traces" of subjectivities. Those "traces" are events which – due to their emergence in the context of everyday life – allow us to capture and understand subjectivities. These psychosocial emergents are meaningful marks that are relevant from a cultural point of view, and have the function of revealing CS.

The psychosociologists who analyze collective subjectivities need to collect or produce their data first. To this end, they conduct interviews, surveys, creative research workshops, etc. Then, they consider this sample as a sequence of thematic emergents, which were expressed by various "spokespersons", attempt to interpret them, and ascribe a meaning to them.

In my research, I have adapted the concept of psychosocial emergents to the needs of narratology and have found them, analogically, within Amado's novels. I understand them as events of a general type (the so called "event I"[2]); which fulfill the criteria of the above-mentioned definition of psychosocial emergents, and thus also reveal the meaning of their respective signifiers in the characters' understanding (in the characters' web of meanings). One emergent can reveal the meaning of more than one signifier.

In a narratological analysis, there is no need to collect or produce the data, because the sample has already been "gathered" – by the narrative's author (since we do not intend to analyze a factual collective subjectivity, but a fictional creation, we can treat the narratives as sequences of emergents, and the characters as the "spokespersons"). After such adaptation, in the narratological context, I prefer to refer to the psychosocial emergents as "subjectivemes."

A subjectiveme can, for example, be the fact that: 1) in Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World*, the Haitian slaves believed that Macandal transformed himself into a mosquito during his execution (Carpentier, 1989); 2) in Amado's *Sea of Death*, the "sea people" believed they saw the goddess Yemanjá (Amado, 1984b); 3) in *Captains of the Sands,* the Candomblé practitioners believed that it was the goddess Omolu who unleashed the epidemic, as a revenge against the rich (Amado, 1988); 4) a homeless, delinquent orphan considered the famous bandit Lampião as a hero when he was informed that Lampião had murdered many soldiers and plundered a town hall (Amado, 1988); 5) in *Jubiabá*, the favela residents preferred to consult a Candomblé healer rather than a doctor (Amado, 1935/1984a); 6) in

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[2] See Hühn, 2013.

Tent of Miracles, a poor researcher, marginalized in the academic environment because of his race and interests, studied the Brazilian cultural richness in poor districts, the temples of Afro-Brazilian religions, popular fairs and brothels (Amado, 1971). It is important to note here that a collective subjectivity does not necessarily have to be characterized by magical thinking or irrationality (as in the first three examples). "Subjective" does not mean "untrue." It can simply be different from the hegemonic "objectivity" or from any other subjectivity, as in examples 5) and 6), in which we can see, for instance, that the "folk culture" signifier has a different meaning from the one that is ascribed to it by the racist, Eurocentric, and elitist hegemonic discourse of the Getúlio Vargas Era in Brazil. Moreover, such an understanding of the signifier in question conditions the characters' actions. Subjectivemes of this kind tell us a great deal about the characters' subjectivity. The "miracle" of seeing the goddess, for example, is "possible" because of the beliefs, the cultural capital, the subjectivity, of those who experience it.

Since the subjectivemes we localize can be numerous and diverse, it is necessary to organize them by categories and subcategories, which will be determined by the most relevant nodal points (signifiers that determine the meaning of other signifiers by organizing around themselves a system of interdependent meanings; in the case of the corpus I am considering, for example, those would be: Afro-Brazilian culture, Brazilianness, communism, and the State, among others).[3] For this purpose, I recommend creating a spreadsheet database (apart from facilitating work with the data, it also gives us valuable possibilities of visualizing it).[4]

Afterward, it is necessary to analyze the data for the purpose of revealing the meaning of the subjectivemes and elaborating generalizations, with the care and prudence that are required by all kinds of research. In some

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[3] To identify the most relevant nodal points, it is also profitable to consider Teun Van Dijk's (2011) guiding questions related to the schematic categories of the structure of ideologies: identity (Who are we? Who belong to us? Where do we come from?); activities (What do we usually do? What is our task?); goals (What do we want to obtain?); norms and values (What is good/bad, permitted/prohibited for us?); group relations (Who are our allies and opponents?); resources (What is the basis of our power, or our lack of power?).

[4] I have created my spreadsheet database by exporting my e-book reader clippings to an .xlsx file, which contained a list of the excerpts I had highlighted, with such additional data as their respective novel title, author, page, and my notes. Then, I have added columns that were to be filled by myself, *e.g.* "nodal point," "lower-level signifier," or "meaning."

cases, the distance between the data and the interpretation will be minimal or none. In others, the generalization will be a product of interpretative work.

This distance will depend considerably on the way the subjectivemes are represented. It will be relatively short, when the characters' speech or thought are represented directly, through quotation (*direct speech* and *direct thought* modes), or indirectly, when the narrator paraphrases the characters' speech or thought (*indirect speech* and *thought report*). The distance between the data and the interpretation can get more significant, though, in the case of characterization[5] through *free indirect discourse* (which refers to speech, thought, and perception)[6] and through characters' actions, because the meaning of events represented in these ways depends to a remarkable degree on the reader's interpretation (which does not mean that there are infinite possibilities of defining it).

Furthermore, our generalizations are more well-grounded, when they are based rather on subjectivemes, which reveal the subjectivity of a collectivity (*e.g.* when the narrator focalizes a group, as in the excerpt from *The Kingdom of This World*). However, on many occasions, we will have to elaborate them on the basis of those, which reveal the subjectivity of many "spokespersons" individually. We can consider a character as a spokesperson, a representative of a collectivity, only if their subjective structure (in Fabris' terms) – or web of meanings (in DTA terms) – shares a considerably wide common denominator with other characters and, thus, is a part of a collective subjectivity. For the best results, we should combine the two approaches, whenever possible.

Fabris, Puccini, and Cambiaso (2019) also elaborated several examples of analyses, which have oriented my project, and a long list of guiding questions (both general, focused on the macro-scale, and specific, focused on the micro-scale). The most important ones are the following: 1) What are the most relevant subjectivemes and what do they mean?; 2) What are the features of the collective subjectivity in question?; 3) With which features of the social, historical, political, economic, cultural, and daily life process do the features of the collective subjectivity correlate?

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[5] For a wider explanation about the characterization, see Jannidis (2013).
[6] For a wider explanation about the modes of direct speech, direct thought, indirect speech, thought report and free indirect discourse, see Mchale (2009).

To answer the third question, *i.e.* to interpret the data in relation to the context, to compare different webs of meanings, and – if that is the case – understand where are they in antagonistic opposition to one another, I propose making use of Discourse-Theoretical Analysis (DTA).

While the application of Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory is common in political studies and occasional in media studies, "it is virtually nonexistent in the realm of literary and art studies" (Carpentier; Spinoy, 2008, p. 18). After Carpentier and Spinoy convincingly explained the importance and appropriateness of filling this research gap (p. 1-21) – which were confirmed in the following chapters of their book by the results of four literary analyses[7] – the situation hardly changed: so far, I have found only two articles which attempted to fractionally fill the gap. Their authors confirm the persistence of this situation (Mehrmotlagh; Beyad, 2018a, p. 140; 2018b, p. 4). Thus, such undertakings would be a part of an interdisciplinary research stream, which applies DTA in its analyses of culture and media (Carpentier; De Cleen; Van Brussel, 2019), but still somewhat neglects the narrative arts, despite its awareness of their importance. In my view, using a real-world oriented framework for the analysis of a fictional world is very relevant, since we assume, in accordance with Possible Worlds Theory, that it has analogous properties.

Carpentier and De Cleen rearticulated Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory (DT) as an analytical framework mainly by using its concepts as sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969), *i.e.* concepts which suggest what to look for and where to look, which provide starting points for building an analysis. The DTA "conceptual toolbox" consists of the following sensitizing concepts: discourse, discursive field, articulation, nodal point, floating signifier, subject position, dynamics of fixity and unfixity, chain/logic of equivalence (or difference), conflict, antagonism, agonism, hegemony, myth, social imaginary, and contingency, among others.

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[7] The four examples of DTA application in literary studies include: 1) an analysis of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and its agonistic relation with the authoritarian order of its time (Sim, 2008); 2) a study of the counter-hegemonic potential of Franz Kafka's and Thomas Mann's literature (Bru, 2008); 3) an analysis of Nazi efforts to incorporate Flemish literature into their hegemonic project (Spinoy, 2008); 4) a reflection on how literary history could be rewritten from the perspective of DTA (Van Linthout, 2008). As we can observe, all of them have focused only on the extrafictional level, and not on the discursive struggles within a storyworld.

The most important sensitizing concept is the one of discourse, which in DT is understood differently than in other approaches. The specificity of DTA can be explained by using, as a starting point, Teun Van Dijk's (1997, p. 3) definition of discourse as "talk and text in context," and distinguishing between micro and macro-approaches toward both text and context. DTA is macro-textual and macro-contextual, which means that it uses a broad definition of text, greatly in congruence with Barthes (1973), perceiving texts as materializations of meanings or ideologies, and a broad definition of context; thus, it pays less attention to more localized settings (in contrast to Conversation Analysis, for example). DTA is mainly concerned with the "circulation, reproduction, and contestation of discourses-as-structures-of-meaning, not with language-in-use per se" (Carpentier; De Cleen; Van Brussel, 2019, p. 9-10). Furthermore, DT "rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices" (Laclau; Mouffe, 2001, p. 107), and uses a concept of discourse, which "includes within itself the linguistic and the non-linguistic [to] emphasize the fact that every social configuration is *meaningful*" (Laclau, 1990, p. 100; emphasis original). Thus, for example, the fact that in Amado's *Tent of Miracles* the police plundered the temples of Afro-Brazilian religions repeatedly (and with impunity) reflects, to a certain degree, the meaning of the "Afro-Brazilian religions" signifier that is ascribed to it within Amado's storyworld by the hegemonic discourse (however, it is important to remember that it is unacceptable to formulate generalizations, regarding the meaning of signifiers, by taking into consideration only individual, isolated facts, and not a wider context). Lastly, the discourse is a temporary closure: it fixes meaning in a particular way, but it can never be ultimately fixed. Hence the hegemony can never be total and "there is always room for struggles over what the structure should look like, what discourses should prevail, and how meaning should be ascribed to the individual signs" (Jørgensen; Phillips, 2002, p. 40).

Another important sensitizing concept is that of the logic of equivalence. This logic unites a number of different identities in a single discourse, but without eliminating their differences completely. Those different identities are "linked, made equivalent and opposed to another negative identity" (Carpentier; Spinoy, 2008, p. 10). Laclau explains it with the following example: "if I say that – from the point of view of the interests of the working class – liberals, conservatives, and radicals are all the same, I have transformed three elements that were different into substitutes within a chain of

equivalence" (1988, p. 256). Therefore, the concepts of the logic of equivalence and the chain of equivalence can turn out to be crucial for the analysis of the above-mentioned "common denominators." The logic of difference, in turn, means the opposite, *i.e.* weakening the common ground, dispersing the unity into more specific identities, by emphasizing the differences.

Due to space limitations, it is impossible to describe here the whole DTA framework exhaustively. Since I have already outlined its most important aspects, I will instead limit myself to recommending Jørgensen and Phillips' study (2002, p. 24-59) – which is one of the most accessible presentations of the main DTA premises – and to presenting it, in practice, in the next section.

First, however, I would like to address one last methodological question: it is also relevant to analyze whether a CS or its representatives are legitimized or delegitimized by the narrator(s) (or by the implied author, in particular cases). The outcome, which may significantly affect the ideological overtone of the narrative, is determined mainly by the following factors:

1. the narrator's explicit disapprovals or approvals (in accordance with their value system, for example);
2. the narrator's identification with the collectivity (which may imply adopting its perspective);
3. the degree of exposure (the attention given to the CS, also in comparison with other subjectivities);
4. the proportion of the events which legitimize the CS, or its representatives, to those that delegitimize them (the implied author's presence and their ideologically biased selectivity may be particularly perceptible in this aspect);
5. the storyworld's social reality and the collectivity's situation within it;
6. negative or positive representation of other subjectivities;
7. ascription of structural roles (*e.g.* hero, helper, villain) to the CS representatives and their potential antagonists.

3 Model analysis

Although the corpus of my study comprises all eight of the novels written by Jorge Amado between 1930 and 1945, due to limitations of space, I will focus here mostly on the results of my analysis of the most representative

one, *Sea of Death* (1936/1984b). The objects of my study are both the discursive struggles between the discourse articulated by the novel and the Vargas Era hegemonic discourse, and the struggles within Amado's storyworld, which – for an "ideal reader" – are actually a reflection of those in the real world: this is a result both of the documentary character typical of the social novel and the fact that, while reading a text and reconstructing a storyworld from it, readers assume that the storyworld is like their own until the text tells them otherwise, as the principle of minimal departure (Ryan, 1991) assumes. To begin, we need to capture the hegemonic discourse of the Getúlio Vargas Era. For this purpose, it will be necessary to analyze the historical context[8] from the perspective of Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) Discourse Theory.

In Brazil, the 1930s began with a revolution, a *coup d'état*, and a very intense ideological polarization (Candido, 1984). In the young republic, one of the principal axes of this polarization was constituted by the differences in the understanding of the national identity (hereafter, "Brazilianness"). The hegemonic vision of Brazilianness, on the other hand, was decisive in determining who the victims of social marginalization would be.

Until the 1930s, the hegemonic discourse mainly defended conservative norms and values. It justified the current, oppressive order, which, practically, had not changed (from the perspective of the marginalized people) for centuries (Pesavento, 1996). In colonial times, both indigenous and black people were considered inferior and were exploited by the white elites (Paleczny, 2004, p. 12-51). Brazil's declaration of independence (1822), the proclamation of the republic in place of the monarchy (1889), and even the abolition of slavery (1888), did not bring any significant improvement for them (Malinowski, 2013, p. 24-45). In the first three decades of the republic, the government did not make any serious efforts to mitigate the inequalities between the elites and the lower classes, because the latter were not considered a legitimate part of the Brazilian nation (Malinowski, 2013, p. 47-120) by the symbolic elites – *i.e.* by the "groups and organizations that directly or indirectly control public discourse" and "who have privileged access to the influential public discourses in politics, the media, education and business corporations" (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 70, 76).

8 Although I cite mostly Brazilian and Polish sources, it is also possible to find literature on this topic in English, *e.g.*: Williams (2001), Van Dijk (2020), Dávila (2003); Smith, Vinhosa (2013).

The situation changed to a certain degree in the 1930s, after Getúlio Vargas took power. Vargas diagnosed in Brazil a lack of national interest and national identity, a dispersion of internal forces that was generating instability. His purpose was to unify the Brazilians around elements of identity that would reinforce their patriotism and the government's position. Hence, he included black people and other members of the lower classes in his new nation-building project – partially inspired by Gilberto Freyre's groundbreaking *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933). He was trying to create his image as the "Father of the Poor" by implementing, for example, unprecedented worker empowerment programs. However, in most cases, his new labor laws were neither respected by the employers nor enforced by the State. Vargas' dictatorship was still very oppressive towards the marginalized, although in a less explicit way (Malinowski, 2013, p. 121-180). Nonetheless, it is not relevant to describe here all the nuances of his very multifaceted political activity, since, paradoxically, the hegemonic discourse of the Vargas Era, cannot be identified with the Vargas regime's discourse.

The Vargas Era begins in 1930. Yet, Vargas implemented the most significant and groundbreaking changes only after 1937, after his self-coup that established the so-called Estado Novo, an 8-year-long dictatorship. By then, Jorge Amado had already published six novels: *The Country of Carnival* (1931), *Cacau* (1933), *Sweat* (1934), *Jubiabá* (1935), *Sea of Death* (1936), *Captains of the Sands* (1937). The hegemonic discourse which Amado's novels were contesting was not the Vargas government's discourse. The reason for this, is the fact that this hegemonic discourse was not a result of seven years of discursive practices. Vargas' regime did not construct a new common sense, a "new objectivity," in such a short time. Its discourse did have many characteristics in common with the hegemonic one (precisely because of the fact that it was embedded in the hegemonic common sense), but it was only one of the actors struggling for hegemony in the Brazilian discursive field of that period. Though certainly the strongest, it was still only one of these actors.

The hegemonic discourse of the Vargas Era should instead be identified with a discourse whose origins date back to the colonial period, with what Mariusz Malinowski names "the brigantine cultural heritage" (2011, p. 134-160). The Brigantine Dynasty ruled in Brazil from 1640 till 1889. According to Malinowski, for the Brazilian lower classes, the first

decades of the republic were a complete continuation of colonial times, because the symbolic elites fully adopted the brigantine *raison d'état*. They treated the people instrumentally and subordinated the national interest to the Brazilian aristocracy and to the conservative politicians. Racial theories, which proposed that Western European culture was the acme of human sociocultural evolution, were widely accepted and contributed to the popularization of the "whitening" ideology, which was supposed to be a solution for the "Negro problem," motivated by the elites' inferiority complex. The objective of the official historiography of the period was to consolidate the domination of the oppressors, to neutralize the aspirations of the oppressed, and to reject their culture, since they were considered the ones to blame for Brazil's backwardness (Williams, 2001, p. 106).

Due to the remarkably complex character of the hegemonic discourse in question, it is not possible to describe here all its aspects in detail. According to the results of my research, however, it was, among many other things: racist, Eurocentric, conservative, elitist, anti-communist, authoritarian, paternalistic, exclusive, moralistic, Luso-Catholic heritage exalting, and this was translated into the meanings that were ascribed to such nodal points as Afro-Brazilian culture, Brazilianness, miscegenation, slavery, communism, morality, social justice, and many others. Although Malinowski (2011) presents some examples of 19th and 20th-century thinkers whose thought could not be identified completely with the brigantine cultural heritage (*e.g.*, Euclides da Cunha), he emphasizes clearly that they were only individual exceptions, that their texts were highly controversial, were considered radical at that time, and that "Brazil suffered the brigantine waking nightmare throughout the whole 20th century" (2011, p. 160, translation mine). An example of a mainstream thinker, whose ideas were coincident with the *zeitgeist*, was the conservative and openly racist intellectual Oliveira Viana. Even the progressive thinkers were, in many cases, considerably coincident with the hegemonic discourse (after all, although they managed to challenge it, their ideas were being conceived within that particular social imaginary, which, according to Laclau (1990, p. 64), is a cognitive horizon, a "limit which structures a field of intelligibility"). Gilberto Freyre, for example – who was considered by many the first intellectual who questioned (in 1933) the marginalization of the Afro-Brazilian culture and proposed including it as an essential part of the Brazilian identity – proposed, at the same time, an

extremely romanticized vision of the colonial past, in which black people lived in nearly perfect harmony with the Portuguese colonizers. Interestingly, even the Brazilian communists denied, internationally, the existence of racism in Brazil until 1934 (Santana, 2019, p. 10). This complexity of the hegemonic discourse is reflected very well in the case of the oppression of the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé: although the Vargas' Constitution of 1937 warranted religious liberty, the police, under the pressure of the press (which in turn was under the pressure of the elites), brutally persecuted the Candomblé practitioners because of their "primitive traditions," which were incompatible with "Brazilian civilization" (Lühning, 1996, p. 204).

Nevertheless, as we have observed before, hegemony can never be total. A strong counter-hegemonic discourse, of "many Brazils" which complement each other, of a diverse Brazil, was articulated in the 1930s by the writers of the *romance nordestino* (a social novel from the Nordeste region). It was a discourse, whose advocates intended to articulate a different web of meanings, to give the marginalized people a voice in the discussion about the definition of Brazilianness, and to give them representation in the discursive struggles in question, by trying to display a literary equivalent of their collective subjectivity.

One of the most important exponents of the *romance nordestino* (next to Graciliano Ramos, Rachel de Queiroz and José Lins do Rego) was Jorge Amado. His work was an answer to the previously described hegemonic discourse. He brought to light the social problems of the Brazilian Northeast, which, in Amado's novels, concentrated and symbolically represented the social problems of the whole country (Bueno, 2001, p. 28-45). For the privileged part of Brazilian society, the reality described by Amado was often unfamiliar. It often experienced a cultural shock, caused by an unprecedented encounter with the perspective of the "other" (Bueno, 2001, p. 315, 345, 432). Amado was also the first novelist to implement, in Brazilian literature, the ideas of *négritude*, which, as Charchalis (p. 85) states, proposed

> presenting [the black] as a cultural subject, with a set of cultural and anthropological characteristics, which meant considering the black as a rightful participant of the culture and a rightful protagonist in a literary work […]; relieving the black of the hallmarks of an object or of an exotic element of the landscape of a literary work […] by treating the black equally with the white. (Charchalis, 2019, p. 85, translation mine)

Furthermore, according to Eduardo de Assis Duarte (1996, p. 108), Balduíno, the principal character of Amado's *Jubiabá* (1935/1984a), was the first black hero of Brazilian literature.

Apart from promoting the richness of Afro-Brazilian culture, Amado also promotes the culture of the Brazilian lower classes in general. Moreover, he legitimizes in his literature the "bastard elements" (Bueno, 2001, p. 345) of Brazilian culture, by presenting, in a very empathetic way, the problematic reality of such characters as sex workers, beggars, homeless orphans, drought refugees, alcoholics, criminals, rural laborers, vagrant adventurers, *malandros*, etc. The documentary dimension of texts by Amado – and other *romance nordestino* writers – offered readers an unconventional and innovative vision of their homeland, as a country that is rich in cultural diversity and is governed by violent institutions which neglect and even oppress their own people.[9] In addition, by focalizing the marginalized, Amado's narrators also introduced into Brazilian literature their sociolects, with many characteristic regionalisms and colloquialisms.

Now let us take a closer look at the literary construction of the marginalized characters' collective subjectivity in practice. In *Sea of Death* (1936/1984b), I have analyzed 168 events, of which 95 can be classified as subjectivemes, and 102, as the narrator's or implied author's legitimations of the marginalized characters' CS (one event can be both a subjectiveme and a legitimizing event; it can also refer to more than one signifier). The main nodal points I have identified are the following: Afro-Brazilian culture, the State, the elite, and morality. Each of them is a center that determines the meaning of lower-level signifiers. "Afro-Brazilian culture," for example, determines the meaning of the "Afro-Brazilian religions" signifier, which in turn determines the meaning of "Yemanjá" (a sea goddess) and so on. Similarly, the lower-level signifiers also determine, to a certain degree, the meaning of the nodal point, although with less impact.

"Afro-Brazilian culture" is interrelated mostly with such signifiers as: Africa, Afro-Brazilian religions, Orisha, Yemanjá, Afro-Brazilian music, capoeira, Nago language, Afro-Brazilian historical figures, the black, folk culture, etc. The meaning that is ascribed to those signifiers is always

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[9]   It is noteworthy that, since such activity was considered by the authorities as communist and subversive, Jorge Amado was imprisoned between 1936 and 1937, and his novels were publicly burned (Silva, 2009, p. 262).

positive (which is in contrast with the meaning that is ascribed to them by the hegemonic discourse). In the marginalized characters' understanding, the components of the Afro-Brazilian culture are a valuable heritage, the Nago language connotes prestige, black people are not inferior to white people, such historical figures as Besouro and Zumbi dos Palmares, who were portrayed as villains or ignored by the official historiography, are heroes or even spiritual patrons (since they were the ones who protected the marginalized from the State and the elites).

"The State" is interrelated mostly with such signifiers as: government, judicial system, and police. The meaning that is ascribed to those signifiers is always negative. In the marginalized characters' understanding, government, instead of caring for them, oppresses them. It is an enemy, which only serves the elite. Moreover, the judicial system and the police have the same purposes. They are corrupt and do not work properly (like other state institutions, such as education or the health system).

The "elite," which, in the hegemonic discourse, is understood as the only legitimate beneficiary of the national interest, is perceived as: morally corrupt, hypocritical, greedy, inhumane, unjust, and untouchable by the justice system. Together with the State, it is, for the marginalized, a negative reference, a "common enemy," whose presence reinforces the working of the logic of equivalence and the stimulation of the common denominator.

Another important nodal point is that of "morality." In the hegemonic discourse, morality is understood in a "Victorian" way, since it denotes a set of values that includes strong sexual repression, low crime tolerance, and a strict code of social conduct, among others. Moreover, it also unofficially allows double standards. The subjectivemes I identified reveal that the marginalized understand "morality" differently. For them, it encompasses such values as solidarity, loyalty, and bravery. It is much less conservative; it does not repress sexuality, or condemn every crime independently of its root causes.

Due to space limitations, it will not be possible to analyze each signifier in depth, with adequate examples, but I would like to single out a very peculiar one. For the marginalized characters, "Yemanjá" means much more than an abstract goddess. According to the meanings that were revealed through 55 subjectivemes, she: is real, present in their daily life, occasionally visible and audible, is the ruler of waters, has agency, personality, preferences, habits, a past, a specific physical aspect and place of residence, can affect people's lives,

can take control of a human body and of a storm. Such an understanding clearly did not converge with the hegemonic objectivity. Moreover, the relevance of some of these interpretations has been confirmed even by characters' willingness to ritually sacrifice their – or their children's – lives, in order to be able to join Yemanjá in the underwater afterlife or to mitigate her fury.

One of Amado's particularly interesting means of attracting readers' attention to the perspective of the marginalized was that of conferring a marvelous aspect on his literary universe (while keeping its realist, documentary character at the same time). Similarly to what Vargas Llosa observed in *The Kingdom of This World*, the marvelousness consisted in a narration that adopted the perspective of a community that believes in miracles. In *Sea of Death* (1936/1984b) – in which the narrator interprets reality through the perspective of Orisha believers – the "sea people" see the blond hair of Yemanjá on the surface of the water, where the others see only rays of moonlight. Furthermore, at the end of the novel, we can find an example of a "real" miracle: the "sea people," although they were actually seeing Lívia (a human protagonist), believed collectively that they were seeing the goddess Yemanjá. The "miracle" is "possible" because of the subjectivity of those who perceive it. The narrator does not question the "miracle." He conveys (or focalizes) the perspective of the "sea people." Thus the theme, style, and level of reality on which the narrator situates himself to narrate the novel, and the plane of reality on which the story takes place, are so harmonized that the reader can have a sensation of deep immersion in the narrated reality.

One of the most representative examples of such balancing between fantasy and realism is Amado's *Ogum's Compadre* (1964/1978). In my view, the CS of the Candomblé practitioners is the most important component of the novel and constitutes a *sine qua non* for its very existence. Only the collectivity's *genuine* belief in Orishas makes the *whole* plot possible. Massu, the main character, interprets an event as a message from the Orisha Ogum. After his conviction is confirmed by a prestigious Candomblé priestess, the whole community believes him and acts accordingly. The story, in which the Orisha spirits interact with the humans, becomes so incredible, that it starts to seem fantastic. But everything is a matter of subjectivity and astute focalization. Occasionally, the narrator also focalizes those who do not believe in Ogum, and, thus, shows that it is all possible, although

unreasonable from their perspective. The same people who are possessed by spirits, for the Candomblé practitioners, seem drunk for the others. Only in this way is it possible to explain how Massu manages to baptize his son in a Catholic church, with the Orisha Ogum as the godfather (according to the Candomblé practitioners' conviction), which is the climax of the story.

Interestingly, in Amado's *Tent of Miracles*, there is an excerpt in which Pedro Archanjo – a protagonist with whose approach Amado identified himself, in an interview for "A Fondo" (Soler Serrano, 30min 10s-34min 30s) – explains, to a certain degree, the project of negotiating the meaning of unjustly delegitimized signifiers, through the strategy of "marvelous" collective subjectivity construction:

> My materialism does not limit me […]. [W]hat today is a mystery that poor folk have to fight for – meetings of Negroes and mestizos, forbidden music, illegal dances, Candomblé, samba, and capoeira – why, all that will be the treasured joy of the Brazilian people […]. I know for a fact that nothing supernatural exists, that it is a result of emotion, not reason, and is almost always born of fear. Still and all, when my godson Tadeu told me he wanted to marry a rich white girl, I thought, unconsciously and without meaning to, of the shells cast by the mãe-de-santo on his graduation day. All that is in my blood, Professor […]. If I proclaimed my own truth to the four winds and said all this is nothing but a game, I'd be siding with the police […]. (Amado, 1971, p. 314-315).

Amado's discourse was articulated in the form of a widely-read (Bueno, 2001, p. 266) literature which – by constructing the marginalized characters' collective subjectivity – introduced a different web of meanings into the Brazilian discursive field, thereby negotiating the meaning of unjustly delegitimized signifiers, undoing the genesis amnesia (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 19) of social inequalities, revealing the contingent nature of the hegemonic "objectivity," and trying to arouse in readers positive emotions, empathy and solidarity towards the "other" that was excluded from the meaning of the "Brazilianness" signifier. This "other," which was composed of many different identities, formed, in Amado's work, a chain of equivalence that included many of the previously mentioned "bastard elements" (Bueno, 2001, p. 345) of Brazilian culture.

Although the history of the reception of Amado's novels provides a large number of facts that argue solidly for recognizing the impact of the strategy of collective subjectivity construction on social reality[10] – especially in the context of Van Dijk's findings about speakers' (including writers') potential to affect the future actions of their audience (1996, p. 88-89) – an estimation of its actual scale of impact exceeds the scope of this research. However, it is noteworthy that Amado's novels had a significant role (precisely because of the above-mentioned reasons) in the cultural and political emancipation of marginalized people not only in Brazil, but also in the Portuguese-speaking African countries, where they were the main inspiration for many important socially engaged writers, freedom fighters, and politicians (Charchalis, 2019, p. 58-61). Moreover, the web of meanings of the hegemonic discourse in present-day Brazil is much more similar to Amado's, than to the hegemonic discourse of the past (obviously not only thanks to Amado).

4 Conclusions

The results of my study confirm that the use of the concept of collective subjectivity can shed new light on our understanding of numerous literary works (especially those with a collective protagonist). It is also very relevant in the context of the most recent literature, which – inspired by the new humanist ideas – more and more often discursively legitimizes all sorts of incarnations of the "other": *e.g.*, literary works in which the "other" is non-human (as in *Warriors*, by Erin Hunter, which tells the story of a collectivity of feral cats, who have their own rules, beliefs, values, notions of good and bad, etc., which contrast with human, anthropocentric ones). An analysis of non-human collective subjectivities in such works can shed new light on the issues raised by posthuman studies. Although an analysis of non-literary works exceeds the scope of my research, other narrative art works, such as cinematographic ones, also seem a relevant object of study.[11]

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[10] See: Silva 2018; Silva 2006; Goldstein 2019.
[11] In the Vikings series, for example, it may be interesting to analyze the Vikings' collective subjectivity in terms of the narration's level of reality and its role in the discursive struggles between the "pagans" and the representatives of the Christian world.

Moreover, since DTA has a process-oriented focus, which prevents one from reducing the tensions and contradictions surfacing in the image of the "other" to incidental inconsistencies (Van Linthout, p. 344-351), my approach can contribute to a wider understanding not only of the result, but also of the complex process of the discursive legitimation (or delegitimation) of the "other" through narrative. The emphasis is on *how* the narratives mean, rather than on *what* they mean.

The concept of CS is clearly related to such narratological issues as perspective, viewpoint, focalization, voice, speech categories, ideology, narrative empathy, collective narrative agents, unreliable narration, consciousness representation, and characterization. In my view, thanks to the systematic framework I have proposed, it has a significant potential of contributing to the broadening of our understanding of at least some of these issues, apart from directing our attention to other interesting questions, such as the particularities of the genre of magical realism, the narration of which is "often characterised as 'childlike' or 'naïve'" due to the fact that the magical events "are narrated in great realistic detail but without the narrator registering surprise or commenting on their strangeness."[12] My approach can enable us to explain, in detail, why some narrations are not "childlike" or "naïve," but culturally conditioned, for example. In light of this, a text such as Amado's *Sea of Death* (published thirteen years before *The Kingdom of This World*), which has not been considered as an example of magical realism, could turn out to be one of the pioneers of the genre.

To conclude, the main advantage of using the concept of collective subjectivity as an analytic tool is the fact that it enables us to: 1) describe precisely the particularities of the ideological profile of a fictional collectivity (in the form of a web of meanings) and the narrator's/implied author's attitude towards it; 2) systematically relate this profile to the context (both the storyworld and real-world context); 3) describe precisely the particularities of certain complex cases of unreliable narration.

Lastly, I am aware that there are still many important questions to be answered. Hence, I aim to provide a more detailed elaboration on the issues presented here in a book fully dedicated to this subject. What exceeds the scope of my study, however – and constitutes a promising topic for further

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[12] See: FARIS, Wendy. Magical Realism. *In*: HERMAN, David; JAHN, Manfred; RYAN, Marie-Laure. Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.

investigation – is empirical research on a fictional collective subjectivity's impact on real-world readers, in terms of empathy and self-reflection.[13]

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[13] Particularly relevant in this context are such papers as: Gerrig (1993), Keen (2007), and Koopman; Hakemulder (2015).

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