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Inhaltsverzeichnis

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Digital Semiotics, Conscription and Performative Vulnerabilisation: Visualising the Rise of the Military Order of Discourse and its Online Resonances

Abstract: This paper captures interactions that show how the Brazilian Army has been using a Twitter account. The Army's account interpellates civilian internet users' profiles located in the pre-conscription process and, as an effect, this dynamic contributes to constructing the Army's on-line institutional identity. By capturing a military perspective of »order of discourse«, I observe the development of Wittgensteinian »language-games« (reinterpreted from an epistemological perspective of Digital Semiotics) as the Brazilian Army's Twitter profile replies to posts that mention the short form for its institutional name (i.e. exército) as a metadatum/›word‹. In ›answering‹ those users (without their request), the Army's profile makes visible an emergent notion that I recognise as »self-performative potential«: a metadiscursive resource that produced digital vulnerabilisation, whilst projecting ideas of (self-)validation, order and disciplination directed towards civilians – even when the space where interactions occurred was virtual and public. On the news website Buzzfeed, these military practices have been projected as ›natural‹ procedures, and this kind of orientation generated different perceptions on Facebook. This scenario leads me to transdisciplinarily and critically reflect on the relation between Discourse, digital technology, ethics, media practices, language, vulnerability, power operations, democracy and freedom of expression in contemporaneity.

Keywords: The Brazilian Civil Framework of the Internet, online institutional identity, Metadata, digital literacy and vulnerabilisation, (Social) media, Democracy, Freedom of expression, Semiotic violence

Zusammenfassung: Der Artikel zeigt, wie die brasilianische Armee ihren Twitter-Account nutzt, um die Profile ziviler Internetnutzer, die sich kurz vor der Einberufung zum Militärdienst befinden, zu ›interpellieren‹ und mit dieser Dynamik zur Konstruktion einer institutionellen Online-Identität der Armee beizutragen. Ausgehend von einer Rekonstruktion der militärischen Perspektive einer »Ordnung des Diskurses« arbeite ich in den Reaktionen des Twitter Profils der brasilianischen Armee auf Beiträge, die die Kurzform ihres institutionellen Namens (exército) enthalten, die Entwicklung von Wittgenstein'schen »Sprachspielen« heraus, die in der erkenntnistheoretischen Perspektive der digitalen Semiotik neuinterpretiert werden. Ausgehend von dieser Perspektive, diskutiert der Artikel ›exército‹ als Wort und Metadatum. Durch die ungebetenen ›Antworten‹ auf andere Nutzer lenkt das Armee-Profil den Blick auf ein aufkommendes Konzept, das ich als »selbstperformatives Potenzial« fasse: eine metadiskursive Ressource, die eine digitale Vulnerabilität bei den interpellierten Nutzern erzeugt, während sie zugleich Ideen von (Selbst-)Validierung, Ordnung und Disziplinierung nach außen projiziert, die auf Zivilisten abzielen – und dies, obwohl der Raum, in dem die Interaktionen stattfanden, virtuell und öffentlich war. Auf der Nachrichtenseite Buzzfeed wurden diese militärischen Online-Praktiken als ›natürliche‹ Verfahren eingeordnet, während sie auf Facebook unterschiedliche Wahrnehmungen hervorbrachten. Dieses Szenario führt mich dazu, transdisziplinär und

kritisch über die Beziehung zwischen Diskurs, digitaler Technologie, Ethik, Medienpraktiken, Sprache, Vulnerabilität, den Einsatz von Macht, Demokratie und Meinungsfreiheit in der Gegenwart nachzudenken.

Schlagwörter: Marco Civil da Internet, institutionelle Online-Identität, Metadaten, digitale Kompetenz und Vulnerabilität, (Soziale) Medien, Demokratie, Meinungsfreiheit, Semiotische Gewalt

1 Introduction

In this paper, I address the construction of interactions around the Brazilian Army's profile on Twitter, where this institutional account digitally interpellates civilian internet users located in the pre-conscription process. In Brazil, conscription is mandatory to every male since 1908 (Beattie 1996, p. 455). This obligation is a ›heritage‹ from nationalist practices implemented during World War I (Farell/Teriff 2002, p. 32). As these authors point out (ibid.), in many parts of the world, the extinction of such an obligation came after World War II, and this, consequently, had an impact on the escalation of individualism in the so-called Western world. But, in Brazil, this military ›heritage‹ persists. The conscription phase may be stressful for some individuals – especially when they do not identify with the military career. Because of that, the obligatory nature of conscription may be viewed from different perspectives.

Resorting to the »transgressive« and transdisciplinary conceptions proposed by Applied Linguistics (Pennycook 2007), this paper discusses the role of language and takes it as central to the formulation of the abovementioned perspectives (Moita Lopes 2006, p. 14). Regarding this role, I shall focus on the following aspects: (i) the problematics of freedom of expression (as it is [so far] a Brazilian Constitutional Right); and (ii) this kind of freedom and how it can be conceived with the emergence of on-line procedures that derive military interpellations. Moreover, I engage with the concept of »language-games« (Wittgenstein 1986), redirecting its theorisation to the domain of Digital Semiotics. Through the latter, I seek to: (i) explicitly explore the multisemiotic manifestation of signs; and (ii) discuss and generate intelligibility about the language-game (or the process of multisemiotic circulation) involving the word/sign exército as it emerges on Twitter. In the ›game‹ this paper discusses, I contend that *exército* should not only be viewed as a fragment of a text or ›sign‹, but also as a (meta)datum.

Next, I address issues related to the corpus and to my methodological decisions, in order to qualitatively explore relevant on-line resonances that point to examples of interactions. These help us to visualise how the »self-performative« on-line constitution of the military Twitter account may become digitally productive and disputed. As observes Piero Leirner, an anthropologist who has been studying the Brazilian Army for 23 years (Marin 2020), there has been an intensification of the Army's engagement with the domain of social media as part of their institutional activities.

In the case at hand, I capture and try to understand part of this indirect process of institutional constitution on Twitter and its projected juridical interrelationship with the Brazilian Civil Framework of the Internet (see: Public Knowledge n. d.). In this direction, I focus on the

»performative« (or productive) dynamics that I perceive when on-line interactions emerge involving civilian internet users and an intersection of institutional »orders of discourse« (Foucault 1981). Such orders become visible through the performances of Buzzfeed (as a participant of the media segment) and the Brazilian Army. By making visible this intersection, I critically discuss how this kind of configuration can play a part in (re)producing interpellative interactions as discursive-semiotic deeds that derive »performative vulnerabilisation« (Wittgenstein 1986, §346; Foucault 1981, p. 67). Hence, we will see: (i) how those performances make visible vulnerabilisation and on-line resonances across media spaces like Twitter and Buzzfeed; and (ii) the different perceptions that emerge on Facebook, where civilian internet users (re) interpret such performances and the effects that those produce.

In the final section, I present a few (in)conclusive remarks and suggest further inter-/ transdisciplinary reflexions.

2 Theoretical Constructs: Reading (Meta)data and Texts through Language-games and Digital Semiotics

I invite the reader to reflect on how compositional principles contribute to generating (digital) literacy repertoires. The latter reflect the emergence of *reading practices* (i.e. ways of reading) and *strategies of replying/stating positioning* in contemporaneity. These repertoires may be directed towards on-line posts as *text-semiosis* (Souza Júnior, 2016, p. 106), and, alternatively, towards participants that (re)create a digital message. The abovementioned practices and strategies point to the emergence of *semiotic work*, which, drawing on Kress (2015), I associate with Digital Semiotics.

I conceive this variety of Semiotics as an epistemological perspective that can deal with elements[1] such as *the digital, (meta)data* and, finally, *the monitorable.* Presently, these elements suggest and demand further epistemological perspectives to explore and discuss *the semiotic* as a complex domain. To support this view that relates text-semiosis to *processes of transtextualisation*, I evoke the transdisciplinary theoretical constructs that are named »transgressive« (Pennycook 2007, pp. 40–44).

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1   Once we become aware of such elements, it is relevant to highlight the digital activities of *(de-)constructing, sustaining* or *transforming* and how they relate to the repertoires of reading practices and strategies described earlier. The repertoires of practices and strategies enable us to tackle with *the semiotic-compositional-organisational* and *the meaning-in-use-discursive layers,* which on-line posts assemble in a complex process. Here, I conceive the latter as *digital transtextualisation.* Twitter's *trending topics* and their hashtagged interactional dynamics can be viewed as vivid elements, which translate and help us to understand how that complex process can be constituted. Digital transtextualisation develops through the liquid dynamics of *not-only-on-my-screen-but-also-on-somebody-else's.* Hence, text-semiosis contributes to the emergence of transpatially produced-distributed artefacts. In transtextual digital practices, appropriation and recontextualisation happen at once and may be (literally) automatically generated with the help of algorithms. Resignification is not exclusively produced by ›human agency‹ (Latour 2005). As on-line ›transtexts‹ travel ›by themselves‹, they may capture the attention of humans and algorithms. In transtextual on-line practices, texts need not to wait for ›human agency‹ (e.g. copy and paste through the use of keyboards) to travel farther paths.

A central transgressive principle that helps me to understand these complex processes is presented by Alastair Pennycook. As this researcher explains, »transmodality« can be conceived as »a way of thinking about language use as located within multiple modes of semiotic diffusion« (ibid., p. 44). Considering the constitution of text-semiosis as messages that circulate in on-line environments and how these spaces allow us to interact, whilst generating, distributing, or monitoring digital practices and textual manifestations, I observe, firstly, that transmodality is the principle responsible for the constitution alluded to.

In this respect, it is necessary to stress that, in contemporaneity, internet users may post a public on-line message, addressing their voluntarily established network of contacts and, in spite of the specificity of the intended group of addressees/interactants, other participants (not included in the target group referred to, but members of the same social media platform) may generate interactions as ›self-constituted interlocutors‹. This process of self-constitution becomes possible, in part, because the digital message that has been produced turned into a digital-textual artefact. Text-semiosis appears, then, as a widely open ›territory‹. This notion of ›text‹ can be traced/attacked/responded through different and combined modes or multisemiotic points of entry (e.g. digital-verbal or digital-visual-verbal).

Developed in tandem and co-operating with transmodality, the following principle is equally important in my discussion: Ludwig Wittgenstein's »language-games«. As he argues, these games and part of their constitution can be understood as follows:

> »[…] the processes of […] repeating words after someone might also be called language-games. Think of much of the use of words in games like ring-a-ring-a-roses. I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the ›language-game‹.« (Wittgenstein 1986, §7)

Whilst proposing a reinterpretation of the concept of language-games, seeking to expand its theoretical potential, I am challenged to explore that same potential here in terms of how this concept can point to further theoretical connexions. My proposal can be relevant, thus, to understand the importance of this Wittgensteinian »repetition« as one of the ›games‹ under discussion and its *performative*[2] orientation. This ›game‹ and its ori-

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2   The concept of »performative« and its underlying idea that we do things with language have both been associated with John Austin (1962). In this paper, I understand that the same idea or theoretical perspective, which conceives »words as deeds« (or language as action), was already present in Wittgenstein (1986, §346). So, based on that Wittgensteinian perspective, my theorisation suggests that »performative« can be understood as ›productive‹. More exactly, *performative* here implies that language can be productive. Language, then, can be conceived as an interactional construct. Its productivity becomes visible through discourse, when our »deeds« point to traces of our communicated actions or to what we (sometimes indirectly) create/produce through such deeds. This idea of productivity will be of particular importance to understand digital repetition/circulation as a process that may become performative/productive and, in a situated way, creative. Hence, this ›creativity‹ emerges according to contextual configurations, as these can regulate what and how such performative processes produce/create.

entation connect with contemporary multisemiotic processes of production, distribution and (re-)creation of posts as text-semiosis.

This proposal seeks to make visible how emergent types of (on-line) relations are being produced and how these and their effects may (re)shape the social sphere. In this regard, it is necessary to understand ›the digital‹ not as a primary compositional element like other semiotic modes (e.g. verbal or visual), because ›the digital‹ may not always be readily translatable as part of the elements that constitute texts, like the modes I have mentioned. I understand ›the digital‹ as a type of semiotic dimension, which becomes multisemiotic in nature when it can ›nest‹ semiotic modes or layers. In this way, ›the digital‹ allows for semiotic associations or dissociations that produce multisemiotic messages or text-semiosis, making these ›readable‹ in a broader sense.

Text-semiosis renders repeated on-line messages as traceable constructs that (so far) can be read, firstly, at the technical-informational level of binary language. It is possible to understand that technical binary information activates a double-compositional dimension. If we resort to transmodality, we can have access to that dimension and understand the information it generates as text-semiosis, since the latter can be converted into digital posts that materialise through different semiotic layers. As we move through the stages of trying to have access and trying to understand ›information products‹ or text-semiosis as digital posts, we not only activate repertoires that make visible reading practices or ›ways of reading‹, but also operate a transition between such repertoires. As a result of that transition, text-semiosis can, eventually, be addressed and read differently, that is to say, our repertoire can see it as a ›product‹ of (re-)articulation of sign/meaning and compositional organisation along with their effects that emerge as these ›products‹ circulate.

As it stands, contemporary text-semiosis can be conceived as a *multisemiotic compound* or *ensemble,* whose compositional and meaning potentialities may transgress and transform the technical-informational level of (meta)data. The more a participant is aware of the transgressive potentialities of text-semiosis as internet posts, the more digital manifestations of this notion of text may be seen as unfinished artefacts, susceptible to (digital/on-line) interpellation and/or intervention. The use of Photoshop (cf.: Adobe n. d.), Deepface (cf.: Lexalytics n. d.; O'Neill 2019) or even the envisioning of human bodies as biodigital and (re)designable resources (cf.: Roberts 2018) can quickly illustrate how complex practices of ›textual intervention‹ operate and (evolve ?) these days.

These more sophisticated uses and the practices they derive co-exist in cyberspace with other simpler manifestations like, for instance, the ones based on the use of Microsoft Paint[3] or the memetic practices that, in this very fashion, generate videos/images/hashtagged expressions. At this point, I think it is necessary to present a more tangible example that can give visibility to such types of manifestation. The example is not exactly part of the discussion on conscription that the paper aims to develop, but it helps me to

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3   This was the procedure done, for example, to erase the digital data/signs in Brazilian Portuguese and insert them translated into English in all Figures. I am responsible for the translations in each Figure. The exception is Figure 7, whose translation was available at theintercept.com. (accessed on: 16.1.2022). In addition, I am grateful to David Adler, who has revised the German version of the abstract.

Figure 1: Textual intervention, a digital face mask as a military attribute and resonances across media spaces.

RIO DE JANEIRO

(A)

Guys, did you see how nicely the Brazilian Army is using [Microsoft] Paint ? I'm putting the link here, in order to prevent you from thinking that was my dog that did this.

Gente do céu, vocês viram o uso bacana que o exército brasileiro está fazendo no paint? Tô colando o link aqui para vocês não acharem que foi meu cachorro que fez isso.

defesa.tv.br/centro-de-aval...

♡ 3.9K   ⟲ Reply   🔗 Copy link

Read 344 replies

(B)

Source: G1 Rio (2021).

show how a kind of ›textual intervention‹ involving the use of Microsoft Paint became visible after one of the Brazilian Army's training sessions in conjunction with the Navy took place, in the context of the Covid-19[4] pandemic, in 2021.

At that particular time, anti-Covid vaccines were not available to locals as they are presently. Because of this shortage, sanitary authorities (e.g. the World Health Organisation) recommended, for instance, that people avoided gatherings; and, when in indoor spaces, people should wear face masks to protect themselves and others from the deadly infection. As Figure 1(A) exemplifies, photos of those training sessions have been made available on-line by an official military TV channel (i.e. *defesa.tv.br*):

The digital circulation of images like those shown in Figure 1 (A) made visible a language-game that repeated and redirected the photos from the website *defesa.tv.br* to Twitter. The photos went viral and, then, reached one of the most accessed traditional media websites in Brazil: *g1*. Images like Figure 1(B) catalysed a discussion across these different media spaces because, as the hyperlink from *g1* reports: »the military are depicted with face masks that have been digitally drawn in the space of the Army's official website[5]«.

Considering that the trajectories of these manifestations of multisemiotic reshaping have been journalistically verified by *g1*, we can see how such types of textual intervention contributed to turning the Brazilian Army into an on-line target of criticism/mockery. As we can see now, the types of textual intervention developed in cyberspace, depending upon the case at hand, may involve digital activities based on strategic superimposition/suppression of discursive-semiotic layers and, in turn, struggle for meaning production. This kind of struggle may involve dynamics that confront previous concatenations of signs, compositional organisation and communicative purposes or effects in current or subsequent on-line spaces, through which textual manifestations circulate through digital repetition.

When a participant's literacy level is compatible to approach text-semiosis and its multisemiotic configurations, these participants tend to explore further texts that circulate. In addition, these multisemiotic textual productions may require from their reader a more comprehensive (usually specialised, not broadly shared/taught in everyday life) repertoire of reading practices. Such a repertoire constitutes a literacy domain from which a participant can keep on playing the ›game‹, by trespassing and returning to a specific digital literacy strategy.

The more a participant (human or ›bot‹[6]) demonstrates to master the two dimensions of the repertoires described above, the more an on-line textual production and its (re-)creator become vulnerable. In this way, these participants can even have access to additional information in the domain of binary language and metadata. Depending on the kind of ›information‹ (i.e. a metadatum or a sign?) a participant wants/needs to deal

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4   The Coronavirus Disease 19 (Covid-19) is a complex and deadly infection, which resulted from the spread of the coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2). The World Health Organisation labelled the coronavirus outbreak a »pandemic« on 11 March 2020. Cf.: BBC News 2020.
5   In the original: »militares aparecem com máscaras desenhadas digitalmente em site do exército«
6   For more on ›(ro)bots‹, see: Botometer n.d.

with, a specific way of reading (i.e. a reading practice) and a strategy of replying/stating positioning (e.g. criticism) may be mobilised. In this regard, it is relevant to consider in the discussion I propose, for example, how the Cambridge Dictionary[7] defines metadata: »information **that is given to** describe **or** help **you use other** information«.

The perceived configuration of criticism projected through Figure 1(A) renders the sign ›[digital] face mask‹ as a complex semiotic-discursive construct, which, in the context under discussion, can no longer be viewed as an ›ordinary sign‹, whose meaning would be ›transparent‹. If this sense of ›ordinariness‹ is reexamined in the context under discussion, the use of the sign ›[digital] face mask‹ allows us to reinterpret the latter and, eventually, view it as a meta(datum).

In turn, in this configuration, where textual manifestations emerge closely connected with the dimension of metadata, we may witness the emergence of digital processes of immediate textual ›break apart‹ (i.e. processes that generate appropriation) and/or textual ›breakthrough‹ (i.e. processes that derive textual re-design/transformation). Here, what we need to have in mind is that text-semiosis can always provide both types of ›information‹. In this regard, from the perspective of Digital Semiotics, the circulation of texts like Figure 1(B) points to at least two relevant discursive-semiotic implications.

Firstly, it is necessary to highlight how the domain of »the semiotic« makes (in)visible a productive multisemiotic language-game. The latter involves military bodies without face masks in the context of the pandemic, pointing to how these digitalised maskless bodies can be performatively understood as signs, whose notion is expanded here. This expansion takes into account the notion of ensemble, borrowed from Kress and reinterpreted through the lenses of Digital Semiotics. In this study, that notion gives visibility to multisemiotic complexity and hybridity. It also allows me to critically reinterpret specific epistemological domains and their long-held certainties.

Reinterpreting these certainties is crucial. This brings to the fore, for example, a debate that gravitates around the understanding of signs and their relation with the meaning-making process. In my critical reinterpretation, I am led to understand signs from the perspective of Social Semiotics rather than from that of Semiology, because: »in social semiotics the sign is not the pre-existing conjunction of a signifier and a signified, a ready-made sign to be recognized, chosen and used as it is, in the way that signs are usually thought to be ›available for use‹ in ›semiology‹« (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006, p. 8). In addition, if we take into consideration the definition of metadata that we have seen previously and also that »the sign is not the pre-existing conjunction of a signifier and a signified, a ready-made sign to be recognized«, we can understand that the meaning-making process is developed through a performative dynamics, and the latter challenges epistemological conceptions that would conceive signs as *the* exclusive meaning-making catalyst.

For this, Digital Semiotics critically reintepretes logocentric epistemological conceptions related to how language shapes the meaning-making process and communication, as we have seen in relation to maskless faces, military bodies and digital face masks,

7   Cf.: Cambridge Dictionary n.d.

which have been (re-)interpreted as (multi)semiotic constructs or complex signs. As it stands, communication should no longer be viewed as a process through which signs would simply ›transmit‹ meaning. If this is taken into account, communication can be viewed not only as a less logocentric process but also as a less anthropocentric one, which becomes more and more productive when it develops through digital repetition and circulation. Besides multisemiotic complexity, important elements derive from this process, such as digital productivity and discursive effects. These become visible as text-semiosis circulates, suggesting diverse (digital and social) assemblages of resignification, along with new processes of meaning design.

A second implication, which prevents us from dissociating the »discursive« from the »semiotic«, involves the multisemiotic language-game that in Figure 1 at once exposes military bodies and, discursively, projects a sense of positioning. From a discursive point of view (Foucault 1981), it is necessary to highlight the relevant dimension of the *(un)said* and how it is manifested through the meaning-making process. That dimension, in the context of Figure 1, would reflect a discursive relationship between *implicit and explicit* (or even one between *presence and absence)*, since these bring into relationship military bodies, maskless faces, [digital] face masks and the disputes that gravitate around what should(not) be said/communicated in that context. In turn, from the perspective of discourse, which takes into consideration multsemiotic complexity, digital productivity and the dimension of the (un)said, it becomes necessary to examine such disputes, their related meaning-making process, traces and effects, as these derive both from the presence of digital masks or the absence of actual face masks. In this examination, it is important to observe that:

> »We must not resolve discourse into a play of pre-existing significations; imagine that the world turns towards us a legible face which we would have only to decipher; (…) there is no prediscursive providence which diposes the world in our favour.« (Foucault 1981, p. 67)

As it stands, both semiotic and discursive perspectives that have been co-articulated so far prevent us from addressing a sign not only as a pre-existing element to be recognised, chosen and used, but also as a component that generates a language-game whose resonances would point to pre-existing significations. That co-articulation would allow us, then, to reinterpret maskless faces and [digital] face masks as metaphorical (meta)labels/metadata in Figure 1. When these reinterpreted signs emerge as (meta)labels/metadata, they allow us to (re-)examine (multi)semiotic information and position ourselves in relation to the depicted bodies and their related military institutions, which have been framed as if they did not have to follow the recommendation of wearing face masks – a relation between *presence and absence* in the context of the pandemic. In this context, faces covered by masks can render face masks as a powerful sign and, by extension, a metadatum. They project ideas, for example, of both self-care and collective responsibility in relation to the bodies/faces that they cover. The absence of face masks can be equally read as a metadatum in relation to the face that is exposed, but the meanings that this (meta)label/metadatum performatively projects in the context of the pandemic are, as

many would argue, not positive.

When we take into consideration these discussed semiotic-discursive implications that are connected with the domain of the (un)said; or the relations of presence/absence and the repertoire of multisemiotic reshaping practices that have become visible through the ensemble [digital] face mask, the episode reported through Figure 1 leads me to highlight at this point the relation between digital technology and ethical reflexivity. The latter emerges as a crucial component of a repertoire of practices that allows us to deal with and (re-)interpret contexts which are influenced by digital technology.

When such parallel exemplifications (as shown through Figure 1) leave the scene and the central discussion that this paper aims to develop is brought to the spotlight again, it is worth noting that, in tweets where the conscription process is discussed, *exército* may become a multisemiotic ensemble – both verbal (i.e. a sign) and digital (i.e. a metadatum). When *exército* (or any other ›sign‹) is used on Twitter, it develops further functions and may turn into a multi-functional resource. If metadata may allow us to access not only what signs describe, but also lead us to have acces to additional information when a message is posted; from a less anthropocentric standpoint that is guided by Digital Semiotics, it would not be absurd to understand that one, as an on-line participant or a profile holder, can be ›captured‹ and become a metadatum in relation to the tweet that they have posted – and the opposite also applies here. This interreletation may never cease. As Latour (2005, p. 153) reminds us »information is transformation« in this scenario. That is why reinterpreting *exército* as a metadatum matters.

Once text-semiosis becomes a public digital post and a tweet turns into a *transtext* (cf. fn. 1) that is digitally repeated and circulated, Twitter can make visible a language-game that amplifies the potential of signs in a message. As metadata, these not only give information about what has been written, but also about who wrote what. Both types of information become crucial to understand the dynamics and performances this papers seeks to explore and discuss. Especially when social media users are unaware, specific interactional effects can be derived from the potential alluded to, if a message that uses *exército* attracts the attention of the military Twitter profile. In this way, *exército* should be viewed not simply as an element that is part of a tweet, as if it were simply being used to describe or ›represent‹ the name of a military institution in a digital post. Here, *exército* can performatively generate not only messages as transtexts, but also digital targets and textual vulnerabilisation (if Digital Semiotics is taken into account).

In this section, I have presented relevant theoretical constructs and made visible interrelated implications that will allow me to discuss the discursive-semiotic dimension of on-line posts. In sections 4 and 5, I will introduce a few additional theoretical constructs that are more closely associated with the dimension of Discourse. In the case at hand, I contend that the theoretical validity of such constructs needs to be ratified whilst the discussion is developed. These decisions can contribute, I think, to qualitatively exploring and making visible the specific configurations of each media space, including participants, performances, dynamics and their related discursive-semiotic resonances, since the latter emerge and interrelate such spaces throughout the discussion. In the next section, I will address issues that are related to my corpus and methodological decisions.

3 Corpus and Methodological Decisions

In order to develop this methodological proposal, which focuses on tracing and discussing events, its on-line resonances and how these can be understood across media spaces, the corpus of this study had to be divided into two segments. This segmentation was necessary because, from a qualitative viewpoint, each segment of the corpus connects with a specific concern of this study.

The first segment comprises posts in which the sign *exército*, its effects and related online resonances emerge as central elements of concern. Here, as Figure 2 shows, I have included one of the stories that Buzzfeed published on-line and tweets from two sources: i) the official profile of the Brazilian Army; ii) profiles of civilian internet users. These tweets were not protected (or private) and have been incorporated[8] into the publication referred to as both manifestations of journalistic sourcing and newsworthy items. An additional group of texts that I have included in this segment is indicated by posts from Facebook users (see Figures 3, 4 and 5). This group of posts became visible because of an affordance that can connect Facebook users to Buzzfeed's comment section. For this, those Facebook comments, as transtexts (cf. Section 2), became visible simultaneously in these two media spaces. Then, that affordance allowed me to trace interconnexions that pointed to on-line resonances between Buzzfeed, Twitter and Facebook. The texts located in this segment of the corpus circulated between 2015 and 2017.

It is important to mention that Buzzfeed produced a contextualisation of the episodes and of the news item itself by adding other postings, which I did not include in this study. I took this decision based on a »genealogical perspective« (Foucault 1981, pp. 70–71), which, succinctly, takes into account Discourse, its formation, discontinuities and modulations as it circulates. Guided by that perspective, I understand that, firstly, when Buzzfeed adds such postings, it makes visible discursive modulations and discontinuities. These are in no way neutral and seemed to offer purported ›positive‹ examples of textual interventions that, nevertheless, still made visible unsolicited ›answers‹ or a less explicit dynamics of interpellation that had been developed by the military Twitter profile. Secondly, as these modulations and discontinuities have been perceived, I was led to corroborate the decision of not addressing such posts, because Buzzfeed itself has produced a headline that contributed to reporting the episodes under discussion from a perspective that explicitly highlighted interpellative dynamics, exposure and textual vulnerabilisation (cf. Fig. 1 B and D). As an effect, that same perspective seems to have resonated as a framing orientation, influencing Facebook users (cf. Fig. 3, 4 and 5) and how they commented on the reported event. The majority of them gave visibility to aspects that (again) related to interpellation, exposure and textual vulnerabilisation. For this, I took the decision of excluding from the corpus the postings that projected the ›positive‹ examples of interpellation. From a genealogical point of view, I felt that I ought not to redirect

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8   This kind of incorporation and the peculiar way through which this publication turns into a news item can be understood as an effect of what Tandoc and Jenkins (2015) recognise as the Buzzfeedication of journalism.

the explicit focus of attention or the trajectory that had been forged in the first place by the interactants/participants involved in the event. I was led to focus (once more) on the discussion of what actually resonated through these media spaces and their participants: interpellative dynamics, exposure and textual vulnerabilisation.

Additionally, since textual intervention, interpellation and vulnerabilisation may become a process that can be (re)ignited in a pervasive way nowadays, I took the decision of anonymising sensitive (meta)data, such as: i) the exact dates and time of the Facebook posts (which I screenshotted when I first accessed Buzzfeed's website); and ii) the exact dates and time of the tweets. The decision of screenshotting the Facebook comments proved to be a right one, since, for unknown reasons, Buzzfeed's comment section (in relation to the event under discussion) is no longer available to me, when I access their website.

The second segment of the corpus comprises posts in which the relationship between military discourse and the civil sphere is present. Such posts address parallel (but interrelated) events. The latter become important to propose reflexions on aspects, trajectories and on-line resonances that derived from the central discursive-semiotic discussion that the paper develops. For this, I have included posts and excerpts whose on-line resonances point to: (i) journalistic websites such as *Veja* (cf. Figure 5)*;* (ii) a tweet from a former Brazilian Army's Chief published on *The Intercept* (cf. Figure 7). Texts of this segment circulated between 2017 and 2018.

Whilst taking into account these two segments of the corpus, based on the genealogical and critical perspectives (Foucault [1970] 1981, p. 73), I qualitatively explore the productivity of digital repetition, and then, discuss examples of performative on-line dynamics in multiple ways, that is to say: by taking into account what these include/exclude (e.g. different, actions, procedures, reactions, perspectives and how they circulate).

In turn, I develop a transdisciplinary discussion that seeks to explore: (i) the multisemiotic performances or ›games‹ involving exército in on-line posts as text-semiosis; (ii) how *exército* can be mobilised and understood as a metadatum/sign across media spaces; and (iii) the issue of power, its connexion with such performances and how these point not only to discursive-semiotic implications (cf. Section 2), but also make visible historical, cultural, technological, juridical, political meanings and domains. The latter may become visible through the development of such ›games‹, as these give visibility to the notion of »language as action/deeds«, related dynamics, procedures, and traces, which point to an emergent order of discourse, as we will see in the next sections.

4 Discussing Interpellations and the (Self-) Performative Potential on Twitter: the Rise of the Military Order of Discourse

When we take into consideration the association between transmodality and language-games as concepts and their discursive-semiotic potentialities, which may generate performative vulnerabilisation, we can see more clearly how the Brazilian Army's profile achieves the status of self-constituted ›interlocutor‹ on Twitter. The aforementioned set of potentialities is also key for us to understand how interpellative interactional

practices can generate vulnerabilisation, since the latter ›haunts‹ on-line textual manifestations nowadays.

To some extent, textual vulnerability may, gradually, emulate (or lead to) ›textual violence‹ and sanctions, which can affect bodies and reputations (of text re-/creators or ›authors‹). Texts, then, incorporate ›life‹ that animates on-line profiles/avatars, developing (more fluidly) the potential for rendering participants co-positioned in Discourse and, at times, reconfiguring, or destabilising ›identities‹/statuses and/or practices/activities. This ever-present possibility of generating reconfiguration, vulnerability and destabilisation is part of the very constitution of Discourse, because »(…)we must conceive discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case we impose on them« (Foucault 1981, p. 67).

In the next Figure, we can see how the military Twitter profile has operated a ›game‹, apparently guided by a ›digital prerogative‹ of establishing interactional regimes that generated *power operations*. In this paper, such operations involve interpellation and control as a sort of knowledge. The latter orients power exercise; and through it performative vulnerabilisation may become visible on-line:

By taking into consideration Figure 2 and posts (B) and (D), I observe how the Army's profile discursively positions itself as an institution in cyberspace, being oriented by a set of digital and military practices. The operation of this set of practices makes visible discursive-semiotic traces; and these point to the rise of a »military order of discourse« on Twitter. This order emerges in response to posts (A) and (C), which would render too open or ›random‹ versions about the military institution. According to Foucault, an order of discourse can be conceived when we observe that:

> »[…] in every society the *production of discourse* is at once *controlled*, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to *ward off its powers and dangers*, *to gain mastery over its chance events*, *to evade* its ponderous, formidable *materiality*.« (Foucault 1981, p. 52; italics mine)

In this regard, through the statement in (B), and especially in (D), we can see how the Army's account develops practices that, discursively, can be understood as ›interpellative interactions‹. This kind of interpellation emerges performatively, when internet users' posts reinterpret the Brazilian Army as an institution that can be cursed (cf. A); or, as one of the posts suggests, as a site that is not even efficient to identify pranks (cf. C). These ›aleatory‹ versions (considering the Army's perspective) can be communicated through text-semiosis as tweets. Those versions may be understood as »chance events« that the military account manager has »to gain mastery over«, so that the Brazilian Army continues to be viewed as an institution that (locally) is associated with notions of efficiency and authority. Such notions can be viewed as elements that would constitute the Brazilian Army as an institution and sustain its traditional (or offline) institutional version.

When I observe two traces that arise through examples B and D, this sustained version and the interpellative practices that relate to it contribute to making visible a domain that ›authorises‹ a process of self-constitution. More specifically, that process points to how the Army emerges as institution of self-constituted ›authority‹ in on-line Discourse.

Figure 2: *Buzzfeed's* contextualisation showing internet users (A and C) being interpellated by the Brazilian Army's Twitter account (B and D).

The first of such traces: a hyper-praised »*Discourse of digitalisation*«. Its principles and developing powers operate under the rubric of (how to) ›control‹, being distributed in an unequal way across societies oriented towards digital practices. The second trace: the existence of specialised institutional domains, which produce and perfect their digital literacy practices.

From a *genealogical perspective* (cf. Section 3), the first of these two traces can be identified when we take into account Discourse of digitalisation and the digital procedures it sets off as contemporary elements of power-knowledge or control. The relation between militarism and digital technology may initially sound as a ›threat‹, but many of the technological inventions that are commercialised amongst several societies across the world have been first devised for military or war purposes. The internet is one of such technologies. As it stands, a sense of trajectory becomes visible along with ever-growing historical relationships between digital technology and (trans)national armies all over the globe. Discourse of digitalisation invests (in several ways) this military institution with ›authority‹, and, concurrently, it »reinforces« or »renews« (Foucault 1981, p. 54) its own powers through the so-called hegemonic status it helps the Army to sustain as a State institution.

The next trace appears associated with the digital operationalisation of institutional procedures or digital literacy practices of intervention – cf. Figure 2 (B) and (D). Such practices are located in the dimension of discontinuity, of the ›unsaid‹ – inherited from war times (or war procedures) and their related domains of application (Harris 2014, p. xxi-xxii). Associated with the emergent notion of self-performative potential, in Figure 2 (B) and (D) the military account exerts power through complex verbal-digital dynamics. Then, language performatively creates an on-line institutional configuration or an order of discourse, and the notion referred to contributes to presenting the Army as a self-constructed and self-validated ›digital military oracle‹ (i.e. an on-line participant that interacts in a pervasive way and can produce authorised commentaries about the process of conscription).

Co-existing with the Army's offline Constitutional attributions of military authority (regarding the Brazilian panorama), the oracle, whilst producing its commentaries, seems to conceive as self-validated its ›on-line authority‹ in Discourse to digitally interpellate and direct ›surprise posts‹ towards social media users. Whilst approaching civilians that appear in Figure 2 (A) and (C), the performance of the military on-line profile in Figure 2 (B) and (D) suggests that ›unilateral interactions‹ have been promoted, as the Army's account explored text-semiosis and addressed the compositional/traceable dimension of discursive practices (i.e. the on-line comments/tweets).

Now, we can see more clearly how the Army's Twitter profile develops the notion of self-performative potential. This institution seems to presume (self-performatively or by means of self-proclamation) that ›answering‹ questions of civilians by generating interpellative interactions would not constitute a dynamics of textual vulnerabilisation. This type of vulnerabilisation derives from a multisemiotic performance, and the latter points to a language-game. This game involves, on one hand, the mobilisation of *exército* as a verbal or compositional term in the tweets of civilians as text-semiosis and, on the other, the possibility that the military account has of reinterpreting such a monitorable digital item as a metadatum.

To understand better how the language-game of ›unilateral interactions‹ may be forged on Twitter, we have to consider that users can establish voluntary and instant interactions with other participants, by mentioning the interlocutor's profile name in the message that will be generated (e.g. Hi, *@exercitoofical*! Can you reply to me?). It is also possible to make our message visible to any profile holder that is not part of our list of contacts (especially when it involves institutions/artists/celebrities) – we can hashtag those (e.g. *#exército*). In the tweets captured by Buzzfeed, none of these two forms of volitional invitation to interaction can be perceived. As Buzzfeed states in Figure 2 (A), the civilian internet user was »casually complaining about life on Twitter […]«. This ›casual‹ style of communication adopted by that social media user projects an interactional scenario where neither institutional intervention in the domain of the civilian profile had been requested, nor was that expected by its user.

In turn, the institutional process of enunciation, which makes the military Twitter profile visible before its civilian ›interlocutors‹, generates an on-line self-validated configuration of ›disciplinary authority‹ that would be oriented by Discourse of digitalisation in tandem with the notion of »truth-value« (Foucault 1981, p. 54). This notion points to a dispute of versions. More specifically, the dispute points to how the Army (as an institution), its website (as an institutional attribute) and the process of conscription (as a military activity itself) should ideally be viewed in the case at hand. The issue of truth-value contributes to throwing light on a process that seeks to sustain self-performative textual productions and the on-line ›protection‹ these practices may direct to particular compositional elements – in this paper, the dimension of signs, institutional identity and their related meanings in which *exército* is involved.

When the process of digital circulation and the enunciations it generates are taken into account, the military institution seems to expect that those performances and productions develop textual trajectories oriented by minimal (or ideally ›null‹) meaning ›deformation‹ on Twitter. If this institutional perspective is considered, *exército,* as a ›disciplined sign‹, would only ›represent‹ or be restricted to name the military institution the on-line posts that materialise as text-semiosis. In Figure 2 (A) and (B), the emergent associations of the sign *exército* with cursing or pranks and, as an effect, criticism, show, on one hand, how the sign is being subjected to processes of *textual break apart* (i.e. *exército* as a sign is appropriated by civilian users in their tweets) and *textual breakthrough* (i.e. the meaning of *exército* as an institution is being performatively reshaped). On the other, as a dispute emerges, the military account becomes visible before its civilian interlocutors and it seems to interfere with such processes, by ›warning‹ that the latter would not be ›authorised‹ by the oracle on Twitter. When the oracle identifies on-line posts that project such kinds of association, *exército* becomes a monitorable item or a metadatum in relation to each tweet and profile holder. So, that item digitally expands its function and, discursively, it facilitates digital interpellation, ›unilateral interactions‹ and performative vulnerabilisation on Twitter.

In this regard, Discourse of digitalisation acts through digital literacy practices, projecting a discursive arena and a dispute. That dispute becomes visible every time the Army's account produces ›authoritative‹ on-line posts/enunciations that reinforce its insti-

tutional-offline version about the process of conscription. Metadiscursively or, in short, regarding what words/signs performatively produce and project about their own use and their users' practices, the notion of self-performative potential highlights the language of ›order‹ and »disciplination« (Foucault 1995). Performatively, the latter can make the civilians in Figure 2 (A) and (B) conform to a set of ›on-line military rules‹. Such ›rules‹ allow us to identify traces of an emergent military order of discourse. They are communicated through interpellative interactions, which are influenced by the metadiscursive resources alluded to. This configuration of communication is oriented towards processes of transmission, reification and self-validation of a perspective. Here, the institutional positioning of self-validation has an impact not only on the process of conscription, but also on the »transdimensional«[9] corroboration of notions of ›authority‹, ›order‹ and *disciplination*, which are projected as attributes of the Brazilian Army as an institution.

By refining the way I look at the Wittgensteinian relation between language, repetition, action, and on-line performances, I understand, then, that language has a *perfomative/ creative potential* (cf. fn. 2). It is necessary to stress that even dynamics of violation, vulnerabilisation and semiotic/textual violence may be derived from that particular potential. In Section 5, I will discuss additional aspects of the relation between language, digital repetition, on-line performances and discursive-semiotic action, focussing on how digital literacy performances and their performative potential become visible through digital posts that circulated in two additional media spaces.

5   Discussing Inter-institutional Operations, Vulnerabilisation and their Resonances across Buzzfeed, Facebook and (once again) Twitter

In this section, I discuss how Buzzfeed has emerged as a participant of the media segment, generating semiotic work or a journalistic performance that made visible an inter-institutional intersection of power-knowledge. Here, that news website is understood as being discursively associated to the institutional domain of journalistic practices. The idea of inter-institutional stabilisation collaborates to sustaining the military practices of the oracle. That idea is communicated when the Twitter episode is reported by Buzzfeed (cf. Figure 2). So, the domain of journalistic practices steps in. That domain seems to nest and empower the emergent military order of discourse. In doing so, Buzzfeed overlooks Chapter I, Art.III, subsection I of the Brazilian Civil Framework of the Internet (cf. Section 2), which, as a federal legislation, has the following principle: »[the] guarantee of freedom of speech, communication and expression of thought, in accordance to the Brazilian Federal Constitution«.

When I observe the relation between communication, delimitation, transmission and stabilisation, a dimension of power-knowledge emerges as a constitutive component of orders of discourse. In association with discursive-semiotic strategies, that dimension con-

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9   The term captures the notion of *trans*it between the offline and on-line dimensions (Souza Júnior 2021, p. 2).

tributes to controlling or delimiting the circulation of what would be seen as ›aleatory‹, ›deviant‹ or ›untrue‹ on-line versions about the offline performance of the Army in the process of conscription. Buzzfeed and its performance of delimitation would contribute to the constitution of the Brazilian Army as an institution of transdimensional authority.

In tracing what has been overlooked in the reported episodes, it is relevant to address how Buzzfeed mobilises »telling off« in Figure 2 (A). The item under discussion discursively constructs a configuration in which internet users are presented as infantilised participants. A cultural implication here is that »telling off«, in Brazilian Portuguese, can be translated as *puxando…orelhas*. Literally, it means »pulling or twisting one's ears« – a physical punishment that has developed a sociohistorical trajectory in Brazil, being associated with a belief. According to those who sustain such a belief, that kind of punishment would contribute to ›*disciplining*‹ children's bad behaviour[10]. Instead of taking advantage of the episode for being a bit more informative (and, above all, more pedagogical) about those young citizens' constitutional duties and rights in relation to the on-line configuration that emerged involving the Army's account, Buzzfeed has projected an atmosphere of infantilisation, and this contributed to making visible a positioning of naturalisation along with a process of dislocation.

Whilst allowing us to frame as ›undisciplined‹ those Twitter users, the process referred to also makes it very much harder for the vulnerabilised participants to vindicate their so-called ontological condition (i.e. a way of existing) as civilian citizens who have duties as well as their right to freedom of expression in the space of their own on-line profiles. A pathway is opened and, then, a power operation is derived from an intersection of orders of discourse. This intersection works in tandem with the journalistic performance of infantilisation and dislocation, helping the Army's profile to move from its self-projected stage of digital military oracle (cf. Section 4) to a subsequent stage of inter-institutional co-construction. That new stage emerges, then, thanks to a network of digital practices. These make visible a language-game. The latter repeats/recontextualises text-semiosis as digital posts through the news item (cf. Figure 2), projecting: i) the semiotic work that has been developed by the Army's Twitter account and the institutional domain of journalistic practices; and ii) a ›*mix*‹ of orders of discourse. This mixture makes visible an intertwining of literacy repertoires that can be regarded as »inter-institutional practices of power-knowledge«. Such practices emerge oriented by the Discourse of digitalisation.

We are going to see that the abovementioned inter-institutional performances and their Wittgensteinian »deeds« kept circulating and producing on-line resonances. Such performances have reached Facebook through a process that digitally recontextualised text-semiosis as tweets. That process can, on one hand, amplify the performative potential of (inter-)institutional performances, by ritualising and/or naturalising them as validated norms. On the other, it can contribute to exposing those performances to a larger number of on-line viewers. The repetition and validation of such vulnerabilising performances may resonate through other media spaces. An example of this validation can be seen in the next Figure:

10   For a more comprehensive discussion on this issue regarding the Brazilian context, see Silva et al. (2018).

Figure 3: Institutional on-line practices, vulnerabilisation and their legitimisation by a Facebook user.
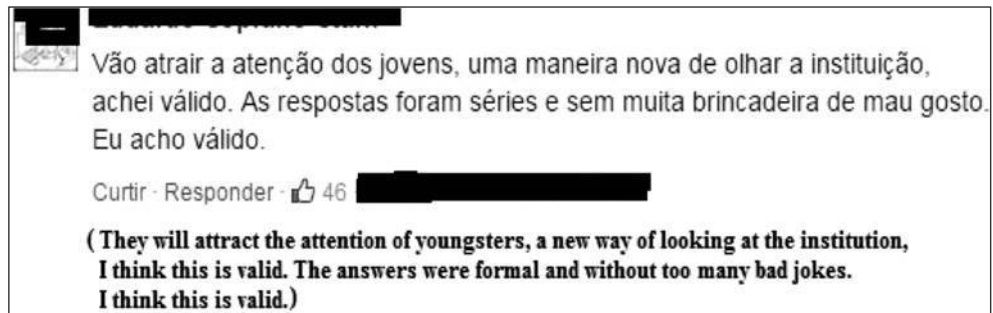
Source: Evangelista (2017).

Figure 3 shows us that inter-institutional practices and on-line vulnerabilisation vulnerabilisation may become ›authorised‹ across non-institutional media spaces. Initially, those practices contribute to generating and sustaining a process of reification. The latter makes visible interpretative effects that show how internet users understand and legitimise a point of view as ›conventional‹ or ›ritualistically authorised‹. In Figure 3, this strategy of stating a positioning of validation, »I think this is valid«, seems to be informed by: (i) a digital repertoire; and (ii) a repertoire of reading practices.
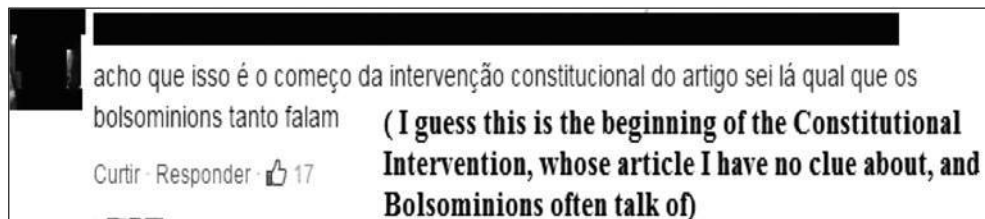
These two components, firstly, echo the Army's offline domain of practices, which tends to validate intervention and interpellation. Secondly, they sustain that domain as their point of orientation. In turn, guided by that kind of orientation, that strategy of validation and its related repertoire collaborate to ›protecting‹ the Army's institutional reputation. Such a dynamics contributes to making visible that the offline domain referred to and its emergent military order of discourse can still communicate the Army's idea(l) of being a trusted authority in open/public media spaces whilst the conscription process is under discussion.

As noted in Section 2, when a participant is aware of the transgressive potentialities of text-semiosis as internet posts, digital manifestations of this notion of text may be seen as unfinished artefacts, generating not only dynamics that interpellate/intervene and/or are validated, but also possibilities and opportunities for communicational interferences and performances of resistance, which may destabilise and contest a previous panorama of validation. Such dynamics may emerge whilst on-line participants perform through language, leaving behind their ›digital traces‹. The latter, in this context, point to digital posts such as tweets and news items that repeat/cite such traces. In addition, these make visible the dimension of concatenation of signs/metadata (like *exército*) as components of the tweets, which make vulnerabilisation and performative violence exposed.

Through that dimension, performative violence and vulnerabilisation as Wittgensteinian »deeds«, gain visibility, giving room to the interferences referred to. Those interferences may emerge when, at times, text-semiosis and the language-game they communicate become exposed (and ›vulnerable‹) to other interlocutor's reinterpretations. Via dynamics of reinterpretation, social media users can make visible alternative perceptions

and positionings, when these seem to affect the inter-institutional naturalisation of performances and practices that had been vulnerabilising the Other, as shown as in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Institutional on-line practices, vulnerabilisation and a Facebook user's dynamics of reinterpretation.

acho que isso é o começo da intervenção constitucional do artigo sei lá qual que os bolsominions tanto falam

Curtir · Responder · 👍 17

(I guess this is the beginning of the Constitutional Intervention, whose article I have no clue about, and Bolsominions often talk of)

Source: Evangelista (2017).

In Figure 4, a different Facebook user produces complex literacy moves that, at once, express reorientation and a positioning of delegitimisation. The latter seems to contest previous positionings that projected not only the self-validation and naturalisation of dynamics of digital vulnerabilisation and performative violence, but also the legitimisation of such positionings and dynamics. In this way, the digital military practices and their related on-line performances on Twitter have been reinterpreted and described as a sign of democracy endangerment: »I guess it is the beginning of the Constitutional Intervention[11], whose article I have no clue about, and *Bolsominions*[12] often talk of«. The emergence of this alternative pattern of orientation, developed through the positioning stated in Figure 4, also corroborates what Wittgenstein keeps on teaching us: »The language-game of reporting can be given such a turn that *a report* is not meant to *inform the hearer* [sic] *about* its subject matter but about *the person making the report*« (Wittgenstein 1986, p. 190; italics mine).

If we take *buzzfeedication* (cf. fn. 8) into consideration and reexamine how Buzzfeed has made that »report«, regarding the episode and its related militarised performances, we can see that this Facebook user (i.e. »the hear«/interlocutor) develops complex digital literacy ›moves‹ in response and seems to reframe the report made by the discursive field of journalism. The same Facebook user also brings into the spotlight a dimension that deals specifically with the possibility of »intervention«. That possibility emerges linked to the on-line performances of the Army, since »intervention« is one of the Armed Forces' Constitutional duties. But, depending upon how this is demanded and/or implemented, »intervention« may affect or ›vulnerabilise‹ the military's reputation. In Figure 4, it is

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11 At that time, circulated versions projected a belief that this intervention would be allegedly supported by Article 34 of the Brazilian Constitution (see: Brazil Constitution n.d.)

12 »Bolsominions« is a plural noun (common amongst Brazilian social media users) to indicate and express opposition to the supporters of the current president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro's supporters are often compared to the characters of the cartoon »Minions«.

possible to visualise how the social media user seemed to grasp and scrutinise the rise of this unusual institutional configuration or order of discourse.

Moreover, if we take into account such ›moves‹ and the alternative pattern of orientation indentified in Figure 4, the notion of *self-performative* and its associated potential for giving rise and sustaining orders or configurations that can communicate the military discourse through never-ending chains of ›authoritative‹ messages across media spaces would be rendered as a communicational »fallacy«[13] (Austin 1962, p. 3, 100). The latter and its relation with the notion of *self-performative* have become visible through resonances that pointed to a much more complex set of repertoires and practices, as Figure 5 will show:

Figure 5: Interpellative dynamics, Facebook users, intercultural explorations and amplifications.
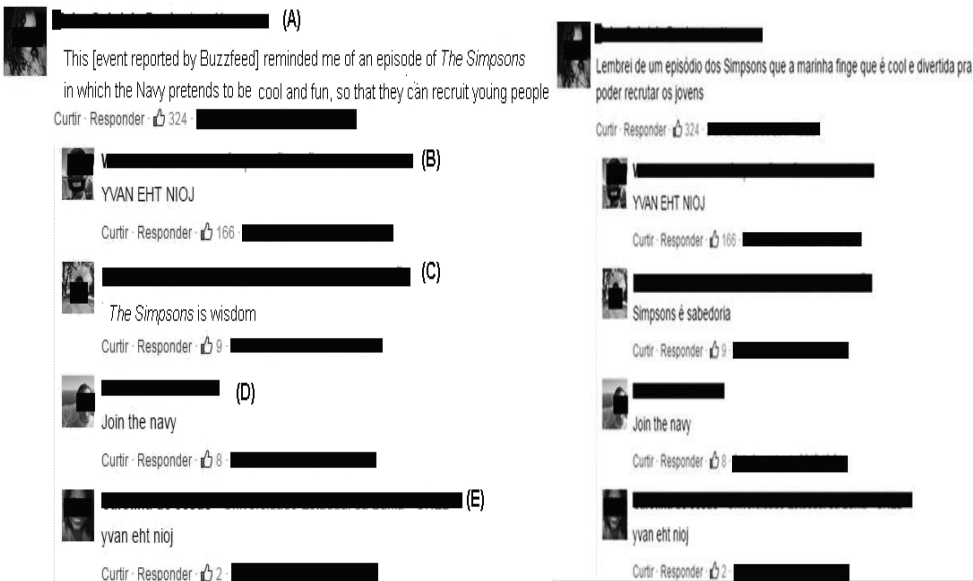
Source: Evangelista (2017).

Through such practices, we can see that Facebook users reframe the interventions and self-performative interpellations, which have been developed by the Army's Twitter profile in Figure 1 (B) and (D). In Figure 5 (A), one of the participants seems to amplify his/her repertoire of reading practices and strategies of stating reply/positioning, since they make visible intercultural interconnexions, which point to at least two relevant implications.

13 As remarked by Austin (1962), the issue of fallacy or the notions of ›true‹ and ›false‹ lose their traditional philosophical relevance, since we take into account the concept of »performative« and focus on what language is actually doing (e.g. violence and/or vulnerabilisation), rather than trying to discuss what certain messages ›represent‹. For instance, on-line fake news and their alleged post-truth potential are examples of digital transtextual manifestations that point to this kind of debate in contemporaneity. For additional insights on the spreadable dynamics of fake news, see HOAXY (n.d.).

Firstly, from a discursive-semiotic standpoint, they develop a language-game that connects with the dimension of the *(un)said*, once the use of instead of Brazilian Portuguese becomes visible in Figure 5 (D). The way English is used (i.e. back to front) in Figure 5 (C) and 5(E) can be viewed as another example of the amplification of such a repertoire. This use of English reminds us of taking into account logocentrism and its limitations to understand contemporary communication as a complex process, which becomes productive through the language-game of digital repetition and circulation (cf. Section 2). These postings seem to indicate a strategy of replying/stating a positioning. Through such a strategy the posts and their message would become less traceable (i.e. more difficult to process locally and/or find on-line).

From the perspective of Digital Semiotics, those participants seem to have learnt that the signs/words which are part of their postings can turn those who create such texts into targets (cf. Section 2). In contexts where language education adopts a structuralist model as central and logocentrism is valued, back-to-front messages tend to be viewed as one of the primary traces of illiteracy. Conversely, in the context under discussion, posting back-to-front messages as text semiosis could be viewed as a digital literacy strategy of resistance that would allow one to: i) challenge traceability; ii) resist the production of signs/metadata through digital repetition; and, as an effect, iii) prevent on-line vulnerabilisation in digital environments.

Secondly, the domain of intercultural explorations gains visibility more explicitly when the Facebook user in Figure 5(A) seems to project a proposal of reinterpretation that links the dynamics of communication and interpellation of the Army's Twitter profile to that of the U.S. Navy, as suggested in relation to the latter in one of the episodes of the TV show *The Simpsons* (i.e. »[…]the Navy pretends to be cool and fun, so that they can recruit young people«). The suggestion that the TV show has presented to (re)interpret those dynamics in its particular context seems to resonate from the statement of the Facebook user in 5(A). There, it becomes clear how the notion of self-performative potential and its assumption of self-validation through communication connects with the idea of communicational fallacy, when that Facebook user states that, in both episodes, the military »pretend to be cool and fun«.

As we can see, these discursive-semiotic implications, which relate to on-line performances of reinterpretation, emerge because military discourse may be operated and communicated through the notion of self-performative potential. Through that notion, the interlocutor's role that seemed to be conceptualised by the Army's profile would be one that refracted or reflected exclusively what the military account self-validated. At times, performances and dynamics of refraction may not fully develop their performative potential. When refraction is not developed in such cases, it may make visible vulnerabilisation and silence.

This ›silence‹ was one of the actual on-line resonances or parallel effects perceived in the case at hand. According to the local news website *Veja*[14]: »After the repercussion of his tweet [cf. Figure 2 (A)],[...] the civilian internet user discontinued his Twitter

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14 In the original: »Com a repercussão da postagem [...] abandonou sua conta no microblog, não sem antes trocar sua foto de perfil por uma do [...] Jair Bolsonaro [...]«. Cf.: Veja 2017.

account, not before replacing his own profile picture with another one that showed Jair Bolsonaro[15] [...]«. Figure 6, below, shows how that replacement has been configured:

Figure 6: Civilian internet user's Twitter profile displaying a new picture, after the repercussion of the event.

Source: Veja 2017.

In Figure 6, on one hand, the use of the new photo may be seen at once as a way of improvising a ›shield‹, as well as a sign that suggests a dynamics of an imagined affiliation (in advance) to the military field, since it would contribute to reducing the aforementioned sense of dislocation as well as a sense of vulnerabilisation. On the other, in Figures 4 and 5, the dynamics of reinterpretation (which reframes the inter-institutional vulnerabilising language-game ›played‹ through on-line repetition) emerges as a performance of discursive-semiotic resistance. That dynamic highlights how digital circulation may become a performative/productive process (cf. Section 2).

Ultimately, through this process, ›information‹, metadata, signs, text-semiosis (as online posts) and discursive-semiotic practices become visible. These do not produce stable (i.e. ›noiseless‹) processes of circulation. The productivity of such processes involves digital repetition and circulation. They may not only give rise to, sustain, and expose »transdimensional orders of discourse«, but also affect the operationalisation of the latter – making such orders fall (back)/retreat as configurations of power-knowledge and power exercise in contemporary times.

6 Final Thoughts and Envisaged Follow-up Discussions

In this section, I avoid using the term ›conclusion‹. I see this rhetorical move as part of the constitution of a researcher's ethos who is engaged with the Foucauldian critical

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15 At the time, Bolsonaro was a PSC party's federal representative for Rio de Janeiro in the Lower House of the National Congress and, according to *Veja*, one of the supporters of the Army's agenda there.

perspective. As the title of this manuscript clearly indicates, I understand that I have only captured traces, fractions or moments of an event that was/is seemingly on the rise (or in the making). So, this may be viewed as a central limitation of the present study, if theoretical and methodological truth regimes that diverge from mine are considered. As I acknowledge and respect this diversity, it is more important, I think, to recapitulate here the key points that have been discussed throughout the paper and, then, present further reflexions as well as follow-up discussions that may be seen as (in)directly related to the event mentioned above.

As shown throughout the discussion, I have mobilised the transgressive perspectives of Applied Linguistics and resorted to a qualitative approach to generate intelligibility about how the Brazilian Army and its institutional on-line identity have been indirectly and performatively (de)constructed across media spaces. In a transdisciplinary way, I have problematised and discussed examples of complex on-line performances related to interpellative interactions, which have been captured locally. The emergence of such interactions can be described as a relevant social event because of its dynamics, configurations and resonances, which interconnected discursive domains, media spaces and their practices as well as historical, cultural, technological, juridical and political meanings.

Taking these into account, from the so-called micro level perspective, I have focussed on (multi)semiotic and (meta)discursive aspects related to the verbal/digital mobilisation of the sign *exército*. This sign and its related uses have become visible through interpellative interactions and dynamics that got linked to the Army's ›answers‹ on Twitter. In this regard, I have resorted to the concept of language-games (or the game between semiotic layers) and considered (digital) *repetition* as a less anthropocentric and less logocentric principle to problematise: (i) where answers have been given; (ii) how these have been produced; and most importantly (iii) how they may or may not be understood, whilst operating in the domain of open digital spaces (i.e. social media platforms). Through this problematisation, I have discussed how productive multisemiotic performances as *deeds*/actions produced and circulated different perspectives about the Brazilian Army and the process of conscription.

Once these perspectives have become restricted to a particular episode which related to that process, their productivity or the on-line resonances they have made visible should be understood in situated way (cf. Section 2). Thus, such perspectives should neither be taken as generalisable, nor as representative of what the Brazilian Army stands for as a State institution, given the complexity of the latter and the necessity of having access to a more comprehensive set of environments and data to understand the Brazilian Army's contemporary institutional constitution and orientation. In this regard, it becomes relevant to pose the following question: will this scenario, in which the Brazilian Army and its institutional authority are virtually exposed and put to the test, become a local tendency? This is one of the questions/reflexions that this paper invites us to take into consideration. Despite this scenario (that seems to challenge the Brazilian Army as an institution), from a sociohistorical and genealogical point of view, the episode under dis-

cussion and its resonances may remain vivid on the horizon, paving the way for further local explorations and intercultural[16] reflexions.

Additionally, if we connect the discussion that has been developed in this paper, for instance, with the perspective of Leirner (cf. Introduction), it becomes possible to produce relevant inter/transdisciplinary interconnexions. These may lead us to reexamine the domain of local explorations. Through the latter, for example, the traces of the episode related to conscription, which took place between 2015 and 2017, could be reinterpreted. This reinterpretation would help us to understand a bit more about a parallel episode, which Leirner commented on. This parallel episode would take place in 2018, as Figure 7 shows:

Figure 7 points to a decisive moment of the 2018 presidential race in Brazil, which, for many, benefited Bolsonaro as a candidate, whilst preventing the front-runner at the time, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, from taking part in this disputed election. This much more complex/macro event and its traces point to the operation of an inter-institutional order of discourse, as reported by *The Intercept*:

> »The anchor of Brazil's most widely watched television news program, on the Rede Globo network, read Villas Bôas's tweet on air in his signature authoritative baritone. It was the last news item of the broadcast, and the journalists offered it without any commentary, criticism, or mention of the potential repercussions of the commander's words. It was as though the voice of God had urged the 11 Supreme Court justices to ›do the right thing‹ by sending Lula to prison.« (Demori 2018)

If we take into account the interpellative dynamics shown in Figure 1, it is possible to see that their traces can be connected to Figure 7 and to the excerpt quoted above. This (inter)connexion gives visibility to inter-institutional orders of discourse, as discussed in Section 4. In 2018, this event and its associated inter-institutional emergent order brought into relationship military discourse, the Brazilian Army, Twitter as a media space through which practices of interpellation have resonated, being these nested and echoed through the field of journalism (here, indicated by the participant *Rede Globo*).

The emergence of the events indicated by Figures 1 and 7 seems to project similarities, as suggested above. For this, an additional and relevant reflexion here would be the following: do these similarities allow us to recognise the rise, expansion and fall (or the different moments) of the same order of discourse? As this parallel issue brings to the fore the notion of order of discourse, it makes visible a bridge that connects the micro traces of the process of conscription with a domain that projects the specific macro resonances of such a process.

From the so-called macro level perspective, we have seen traces of on-line performances and dynamics that connected the Brazilian Army and the process of conscription to traces of orders of discourse. These orders have emerged and generated an active

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16 In this regard, a potential pathway would be the study of on-line resonances that would have emerged after Germany's Navy Chief made comments that have been framed as controversial about the Ukraine-Russia crisis but, after a while, he used Twitter to apologise (see: Deutsche Welle 2022).

Figure 7: Brazilian Army's Chief using his Twitter profile in a parallel episode and its macro resonances.

General Villas Boas ✔
@Gen_VillasBoas

Em resposta a @Gen_VillasBoas

I assure the nation that the Brazilian Army shares the desire of all citizens of good standing to repudiate impunity and respect the Constitution, social peace, and democracy, while remaining attentive to its institutional missions.

8:39 PM · 3 de abr 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

General Villas Boas ✔
@Gen_VillasBoas

Em resposta a @Gen_VillasBoas

Asseguro à Nação que o Exército Brasileiro julga compartilhar o anseio de todos os cidadãos de bem de repúdio à impunidade e de respeito à Constituição, à paz social e à Democracia, bem como se mantém atento às suas missões institucionais.

8:39 PM · 3 de abr 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

Source: Demori (2018).

configuration, which dovetailed with the emergence of Discourse of digitalisation. That configuration contributed to making visible how power exercise can now criss-cross the social sphere in the form of digital control. In this regard, it should be noted that, as an effect of the process of circulation, perspectives and positionings that projected self-validation, naturalisation and (de)legitimatisation of dynamics of digital vulnerabilisation and performative violence have been (re)formulated across media spaces. These perspectives, dynamics and positionings have become visible like elements that relevantly co-existed and acted over the social world. Such elements may contribute to sustaining or haunting (and, eventually, vulnerabilising) individual freedoms and/or the ›identity‹ of institutions, as an effect of the very performative constitution of the so-called democracies and their accompanying democratic ›crossroads‹ of co-existences derived from democracy's ›elasticity‹.

These co-existences may be seen as linked to the ongoing transformations that currently have an impact on the social world, giving room to complex transdimensional dynamics, since that world is becoming more and more digital. Whilst describing traces and forms of digital control that may be associated with the issues of knowledge, positionings and power exercise, I have sought to give visibility to repertoires of (digital) literacy practices and part of their operative role in discursively (re)shaping on-line inter-institutional configurations. Based on the insights derived from Digital Semiotics, it became possible to explore how such repertoires and practices emerged. Those insights have led me to (re)consider: (i) (multi)semiotic work as a form of power-knowledge; (ii) the hybridity of digital space and its literacy/media practices; and (iii) how meaning and positionings can be (re)shaped in on-line interactional dynamics.

In doing so, this paper has aimed to contribute to the inter-/transdisciplinary study of digital texts, multisemiotic dynamics and discursive practices, by capturing and seeking to illustrate how those kinds of text, dynamics and practices circulate. Such dynamics and practices may catalyse novel, complex and subtle forms of power exercise that connect with the dimension of the (un)said and point to how power exercise seems to be distributed in contemporaneity. Digitalisation (at once as a process and a Discourse) generates

or facilitates this emergent panorama of ›distribution‹, marked by lack of clear-cut definition on where to look (beforehand) for ›power‹ (Latour 2005; Venn 2007, p. 121). Hence, power is not confined to the domain of institutions. Examples of such subtleties would be the digital production and circulation of the so-called fake news that may target and/or influence (cf.: Magenta/Gragnani/Souza 2018) particular groups of citizens and specific (trans)national elections. That kind of production and what circulates through it can contribute to generating ›uprisings‹ or undermining countries' sovereignty.

In a panorama like this, it becomes urgent that, steadfastly, collectives of so-called ordinary people develop (self-)awareness of text-semiosis properties to understand its potentialities. This development may emerge based on relational decisions, whilst repertoires of reading practices and strategies of replying/stating positioning are put at play. In this regard, despite the wide and pervasive potential for ›mirroring‹ the offline world into the on-line dimension that the Discourse of digitalisation may offer, such a Discourse presents porousness. In this porous configuration, it is possible that nuanced scenarios of inequities (i.e. configurations marked by lack of [social] justice or fairness) as well as dynamics of resistance emerge.

Drawing on the discussion presented in Latour (2002), it is possible to say that the alluded porousness or ›side effects‹ (cf.: Helbing et al. 2017) seem(s) to be invisibilised by institutions and/or corporations. Both may develop associated responsibility for making digitalisation a viable process and a sustained Discourse, once they argue (most of the time, echoing the institutional or corporate optics) that digitalisation is teleologically oriented towards ›optimising‹ people's lives or deriving *a priori* territorial ›protection‹ and security.

The awareness referred to (if developed) may contribute to generating forms of reinterpretation and (re)action as elements of contemporary power-knowledge and resistance exerted through semiotic work. In this way is possible that these panoramas catalyse transdimensional epistemic disputes revolving more specifically around (the lack of) (inter-)institutional transparency. On one hand, the current (geo)political controversies involving the implementation of (so far) 5G technology and its communicational affordances may illustrate this point and set novel research agendas. On the other, these agendas may be complemented, by focussing on dynamics such as the ones that become visible through the semiotic work of the *Sleeping Giants* (n.d.)*,* whose on-line performances and practices generate campaigns that expose the relationship between digital traces, metadata, big data, algorithms, financial profit and scenarios marked by inequities. Their performances contribute to exemplifying how this awareness is already being collectively constructed through repertoires of reading practices and strategies of replying/stating positionings. Such performances and repertoires can be viewed as central elements of concern in studies which may choose to resort to Digital Semiotics and validate it as a theoretical construct.

As an effect of discursive and social practices that develop in tandem with such repertoires, (digital) transparency may emerge as one of people's most pursued political values in the so-called sovereign and/or democratic societies of these days, once (civilian) citizens seek to reinterpret and expose potential acts of collective violation and/or vulnera-

bilisation. In this way, on-line collectives may expand (via reinterpretation) the selective, ›intelligent‹ or restrictive repertoires through which institutional or corporate ethics and practices seem to operate, pointing to how such repertoires can affect the social world in transdimensional ways.

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