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**The Novel *O Guarani*:
A Cultural Multimedia Product**

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The Novel *O Guarani*: A Cultural Multimedia Product

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Abstract

José de Alencar published, between January and April 1857, the serial novel *O Guarani* in the pages of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*. This text introduced a project of national literature to the readers. Afterwards, this work was published as a book; it was also subject of an opera; during the twentieth century, it was object of seven film versions, and, finally, it was object of more than one comic book versions. Starting from the original novel's publication, that is to say, the pages of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, we intend to observe the aspects of the related serial novel which were assimilated by the author; and we also aim to analyze how these elements have been adapted or deleted during the process of transposition from newspaper to other media. In order to achieve these objectives, we use, as theoretical support, Marie-Eve Thérienty's studies about the relationship between literature and journalism in the nineteenth century. In addition, we consider the most recent studies in the field of transmediality, such as Alfonso de Toro's works (2013). Our hypothesis is that this transposition of the novel (which was firstly published in a kind of supplement attached to newspaper) to many other medias over two centuries may characterize *O Guarani* as the first potential media product of Brazilian cultural history.

Keywords: José de Alencar; Feuilleton, Newspaper, Literature, Transmediality

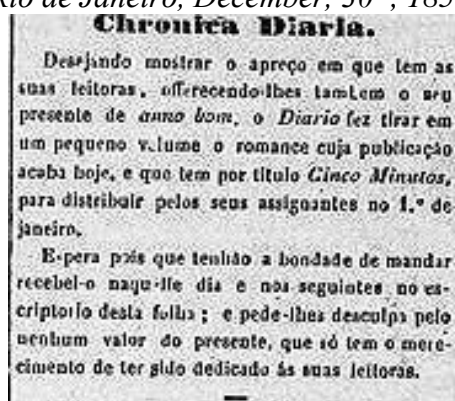
The Journalist and the Writer: The “Cinco Minutos” Case

On November 18th, 1855, José de Alencar finished a chronicle section named *Ao correr da pena*, which was published in a newspaper called *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*. The author also resumed the publication of feuilletons in a new series of nine texts titled *Folhas Soltas*, from February, 18th to December, 18th, 1856. During this period, the young journalist was also involved in a controversy related to the epic book *A Confederação dos Tamoios*, written by Gonçalves de Magalhães, which was elected, by the Emperor D. Pedro II, as the work which described the formation of Brazilian nation in the best way

Still in 1856, Alencar published his first novel, *Cinco Minutos*, as *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* footnotes. At that time, occupying not only the Journal Executive Board but also carrying out the duties of the newspaper proofreader and editor, Alencar demonstrated an unexpected business experience, which promoted an economic interference on intellectual and artistic subjects. Lira Neto explains this episode in the latest biography of the author:

At the first days of 1857, the old and the new subscribers of the “Diário do Rio de Janeiro” were presented with a special gift: a little volume of 60 pages, that gathered the ten chapters of the novel “Cinco minutos”, published, day after day, by the two last weeks of December 1856, at the bottom of the first page of the journal. The feuilleton, publiées, jour après jour, au cours de deux dernières semaines de decembre de l’année, au bas de la première page du journal. Les feuilletons, and the book became public without signature or any other index that would indicate its author.

Figure 1. *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, December, 30th, 1856



Source: National Library (Brazil)

In the image above, the launch of the book that gathered the feuilletons published at the bottom of the newspaper pages was announced. An important fact is that it was a media strategy, which had already been anticipated by the writer, who was also the journal editor. In this complete edition, *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*'s readers found the last chapter of Alencar's feuilleton that was announced as a gift for the public.

Then, the writer of *Cinco minutos* became motivated by the task of looking for subscribers and by the activity of promoting literary texts. Between writing an editorial and developing an article, or between the business administration and the creation of a letter for a political friend, Alencar could see himself covered with chapters of novels, and also assembled, at Rio de Janeiro, with curious and interested readers, who were used to read translations of popular feuilletons written by Alexandre Dumas and Eugène Sue, in newspapers. Therefore, in the journal, these kinds of texts were a success. When Alencar published them as a complete work, consequently, it became almost an event.

Thus, in the pre-history of the journalism in Brazil, Alencar anticipated some editorial strategies, which involved the distribution of gifts for the readers in order to increase the number of subscribers. “The rapidity with which, in general, the old and the new subscribers claimed for their copies of the complete versions, as well as the demand of some newspaper readers who insisted on buying the works which were designated only for free distribution among journal subscribers were the most important change, associated with the excitement related to the first publication”, remembered Alencar (NETO, 2006, p. 158-159).

We denote, then, that the first Alencar’s novel was not created as a pure and simple need of literary expression, but it also was included in a business strategy, which promoted the rise of journal subscribers. Thus, the novel that was born in the newspaper pages changed its support in order to meet the requirements of the audience which was increasing, and which showed a growing desire for news.

In this sense, says Kalifa *et. al.*, in the introduction of *La civilisation du journal*:

However, with the nineteenth century, a new model; that we could call "textual", replaces the old (and ancient) discursive model. The literary work is no more word to hear and understand, even through the written page, but public and to read printed text, broadcast by the new structures of communication such as newspaper or book and integrated into a complex cultural system of consumption where it appears not as a mediating word, but as a media object.(2011, p. 17)¹

According to critical theorists, the feuilleton is an industrial product of literature, because it is influenced by capitalist ideology, that is to say, it is necessary to produce texts in a fast, cheap and large way. It is important to verify that it does not matter that the product suffers a decrease of quality (DUMASY-QUEFFELEC, 1999, p. 12).

This view also shows that there is a need of writing faster than normal, what degenerates the style and damages literature as art. Alain Corbin (1999)

¹Or, avec le XIXe siècle, un nouveau modèle; qu'on pourrait dire "textuel", se substitue au vieux (et même antique) modèle discursif. L'oeuvre littéraire n'est plus parole donnée à entendre, même par l'entremise de la page écrite, mais imprimé public et texte à lire, diffusé par les nouvelles structures de communication que sont le journal ou le livre et intégré à un système complexe de consommations culturelles où il apparaît non plus comme une parole médiatrice, mais comme un objet médiatisé.

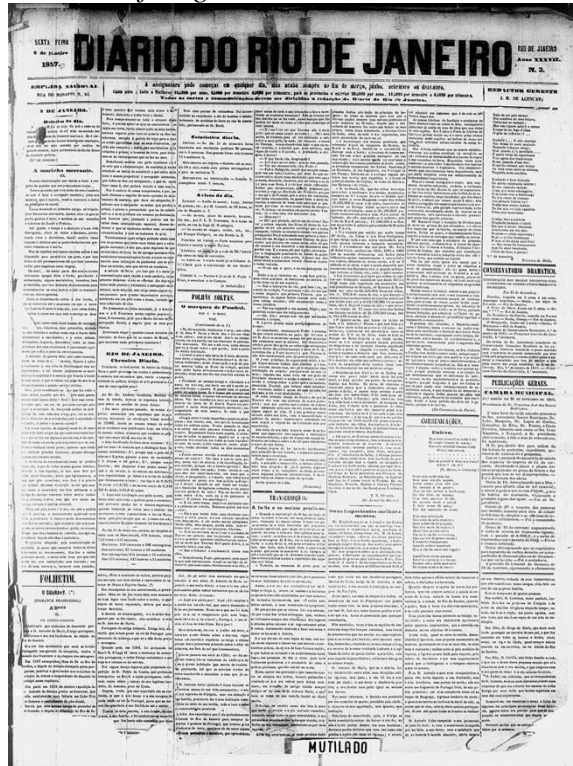
says that the proliferation and the success of the feuilleton are part of a “control of leisure” in the nineteenth century, the Era in which work was consider the most important part of society, creating the need of controlling leisure, avoiding artistic expressions as well as “anarchists” and “rational” distractions. That was known as “workers’ free time domination”, related to the increasing rate of daily production, which, in turn, specially aimed the alienation of enjoyment which used to be considered “inferior”.

It is possible to see, thus, the role of the newspapers in relation to the author who was also a journalist. It is important to consider that Alencar lived in a period marked by the growth of a new social class, which arose during the emerging capitalism with industrial basis. The author or, in this specific case, the novelist might be studied not only through his individuality, but also according to his insertion in a specific economic and social context, which was coordinated by the audience and by the concept of literary creation at the age of mass reproduction.

O Guarani: The Novel That Was Born In Media Regime

The success of *Cinco minutos* publication encouraged Alencar. Then, from January to April 1857, he released his greatest success, *O Guarani*, using the same method he used before in *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*. The novel had 54 chapters, which were written on the bottom of the pages, with great readers’ acceptance.

Figure 2. *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* First Page, January, 2nd, 1857. *O Guarani* - Second Chapter- Bottom of Page



Source: National Library (Brazil)

Figure 3. Detail of Image 2, Bottom of the First Page *O Guarani* - Chapter 2



Source: National Library (Brazil)

Thanks to the significant outcome, Alencar published *O Guarani* in a book, which was printed in four volumes in the same typography of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, with an initial edition of one thousand copies. Despite of this, there was a silence of critical readers about his work, what discouraged the author. This fact, combined with the release of the novel named *Calabar*, written by J. da Silva Mendes, and with the announcement, by *Correio Mercantil*, that *Calabar* was the first national novel, made Alencar publish *A viuvinha* irregularly disposed in *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* pages, what, consequently, reverted the successful career of the author, who only returned to work with his novel *Luciola*, in 1862.

However, the impact of Alencar's greatest work did not stop with the publication of books. At that time, *O Guarani* generated an opera based on the novel with music composed by the Brazilian musician, Carlos Gomes, and with libretto created by the Italian Antonio Scalivini. Its première occurred at Milan Scala, in 1870, and it was rewritten in several different book versions. Through the twentieth century, it was adapted in seven film versions; the first one was released in 1912. *O Guarani* also generated a TV series and many comic books versions, which were published during the twenty-first century.

Therefore, the feuilleton was the textual form which originated other kinds of adaptation for the same literary work, supported by different medias. This fact gives to *O Guarani* a media effect which is comparable to *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo*, by Alexandre Dumas, or to *Les Misérables*, by Victor Hugo. At this point, some relevant questions appear, for instance: in the specific case of *O Guarani*; 1) Have the circumstances of this book publication developed some new features to the narrative? 2) Which of these characteristics remain and which ones have been deleted in the transposition from the newspaper to the book, to the opera's libretto and to any other media, including visual elements, such as images in the film versions and in the comic books versions?

Those and other questions which may occur during this study need to be considered associated with concepts like “matrice médiatique” (media matrix) and “matrice littéraire” (literary matrix), exposed by Marie-Ève Thérénty (2007). In addition, it is important to comprehend journals as products which inaugurated the media age in France and in Brazil, and it is also necessary to point that the novel *O Guarani* was the first product with potential media aspects in the Brazilian cultural history.

In this context, it is possible to adopt the definition of *porosity* between media matrix and literary matrix. Thus, we may consider Alencar's connivance with other literary texts that were published in Brazil at the same time or even his acceptability of other simultaneous textual modalities. These last ones may be described, for example, as the literature using journalistic space and procedures, as well as the newspapers being inspired by a literary processing and interpretation:

The journal served as catalyst for a poetics of everyday life which drew both of the terms of journalism and writing rhythms, its favorites themes (the street, crime) and its protocols of narration.(THÉRENTY, 2007, p. 26)¹

Starting from the views expressed above, this study will follow the discussion about the beginning of the press in Brazil and about how *O Guarani* is part of this process. Furthermore, at this point of the research, another concept that may be used is the idea of *transmediality*, that can be understood as a dialogue among multiple medias, which is exemplified with *O Guarani* work.

The main subject of this research, therefore, is Alencar's serial production under the perspective of author's insertion in a new model of media. Within the emerging of media industry and within the development of the component that initiates this period, that is to say, the newspaper and, strictly, the bottom of the page, it is possible to notice that this part of the page, which used to be destined to public's opinion, received a new purpose: publishing feuilletons; that, in turn, generated other kinds of media, like books, librettos, films, etc.

One of the possible analyzes promoted by our investigation is the comparison between *O Guarani* publication at the bottom of the page of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* and its posterior editions in books. In order to do that, we used the first edition of the book, which was obtained from *Brasiliiana digital* website. Therefore, aiming to observe these elements, we reproduce, below, the microfilm with the first chapter of the work that was published in the journal:

¹Le journal a servi de catalyseur à une poétique du quotidien qui s'inspirait à la fois des modalités et des rythmes d'écriture du journalisme, de ses thèmes de prédilection (la rue, le crime) et de ses protocoles de narration.

Figure 4. Detail of *O Guarani* First Chapter, at the Bottom of Page of *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*

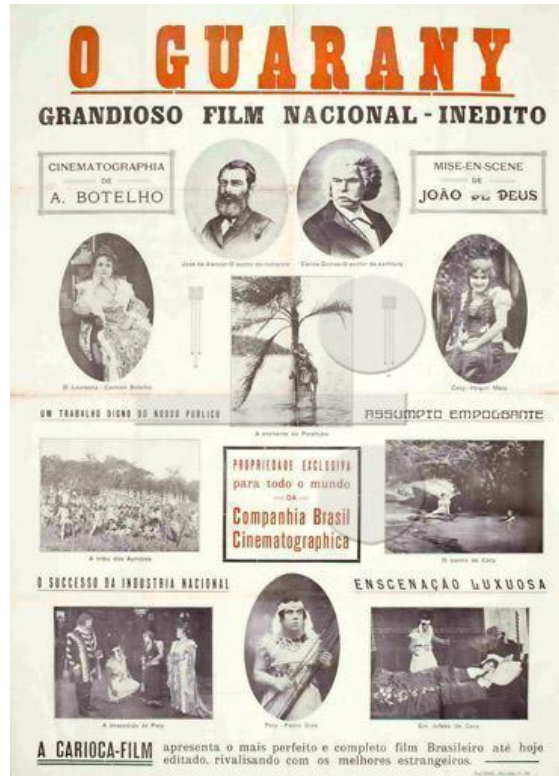


Source: AEL (Archive Edgar Leuenroth)

In this case, Alencar named his writing as a "Brazilian novel", term that was adopted by the first edition of his work in a book, in 1857, but which was abandoned in the posterior editions. This nomination was published in the beginning of the first part, before the "Scenario" description. In the beginning of this chapter, in future editions, the author changed the title for "Adventurers", and he also gave the name "Peri" for the second part. He determined "The Aymorés", for the third part, and "Catastrophe", for the last part, which finished the novel. According to the analyses, it is possible to consider this first edition as the closer version in comparison with the journal publication. The characteristics are maintained in relation to the newspaper's model and, therefore, we may conclude that some feuilleton aspects can be used in other versions of the book, having in mind, however, that the hypertext is, sometimes, different from the hypotext, according Genette (1979).

In the field of cinema, we may find film versions of this story, which establish dialogues with the media of journal, with the book and with the opera characteristics. The first film version for *O Guarani* was performed in 1906, and its copies were all lost. The first existing version was made in 1912. Throughout the twentieth century, Alencar's feuilleton was object of seven film versions. The first two versions were based on the opera; the other ones, starting from the third version, had their own textual bases.

Figure 5. *O Guarani Movie Poster*



Source: Brazillian cinematheque

In the image above, it is possible to observe photos of José de Alencar and of Carlos Gomes (writer and composer of the opera music), in a demonstration of dialogue among newspaper, opera and movie adaptation. That is an intermedia case, a marked relation among several supports.

Del Toro (2013) defines this relation:

Since 2001/2002, we mean first and foremost ‘transmediality’ like a process or a strategy anti-mimetique in the sense of a hybrid and intensive relationship (either homogeneous, highly fricative or tense) between different and automomous media (internet, video, film, different forms of communication, virtual cities and worlds, analog and digital techniques, etc), between various aesthetic (such as Surrealism, Dadaism of, Expressionism, etc.), but also between mixed media (such as literature/internet, theater/ video/ film/ facilities, etc.), different products, cultural preferences, art forms (painting, virtual design), and finally architecture. (p. 69)¹

¹Depuis 2001/2002, nous entendons avant tout par ‘transmedialité’ un ‘ processus ou une stratégie anti-mimétique’ dans le sens d’une relation hybride et intensivement chargée (soit homogène, soit hautement fricative, soit tendue) entre différents médias opérant de façon autonome (internet, vidéo, film, différentes formes de communication, villes et mondes virtuels, techniques analogues et digitales, etc), entre des esthétiques diverses (telles que le Surréalisme, de Dadaïsme, l’Expressionnisme, etc), mais aussi entre des médias mélangés (tels que littérature/internet, théâtre/vidéo/film/installations, etc), des produits différents, des préférences culturelles, des formes artistiques (peinture, conception virtuelle), ou enfin en architecture.

Thus, it is not only a relationship between narrative forms, but also an intense exchange of ideas among medias. This affirmation applies to the case of adaptations in comic books too. It is possible to note, for example, the differences between two adaptations of *O Guarani* into comic books:

Figure 6. *Detail of O Guarani Comic Book Version*



Source: Brazilian cinematheque

In the image above, we can see a scene of *O Guarani*, in which the main character, Peri, captures an animal. In the comic book adaptation, performed in 1950, by André Le Blanc, it is possible to observe that the scene development is based on the text presented by the book. The images are less important for the narration, what gives artificiality to the scene.

Figure 7. *Detail of O Guarani Comic Book Version*



Source: Brazilian Cinematheque

In another version, published in 2009, by Luiz Ge, it is possible to note the same scene, but in this case, the focus is on the visual, suggesting the ideas without using words, capturing all the tension that Alencar had described in his novel. In this example, we may find the same agility proposed by the text published in the newspaper, where Alencar's feuilleton was born. We also observe the dialogue with the power of the "viewed thing" which is intrinsically related to media matrix, and which decrypts media narrative like it does with the text. It is important to notice that in this kind of media the text integrates the support and it is also associated with the original publication vehicle.

Peri's adventure story that occurred in the seventeenth century has the agility and the elasticity of the nineteenth century. There is also the imperative need to adapt the narrative in a predefined space in order to create a hit among newspaper audience, without showing any preceding announcement written on the top of the page.

Finally, *O Guarani* is registered in that case where the text, literary or journalistic one, was not only an end, but it is also part of a system that considers the audience. The journal imposes, therefore, a new way of writing, a new rhythm that Alencar would not hesitate to use. In this sense, Marie-Ève Thérénty (2007, p. 47) says that "Newspaper Innovation is not reduced to a simple question of support. The newspaper also induces a mutation of the writing system."¹

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¹ L'innovation du journal ne se réduit pas à une simple question de support. Le journal induit également une mutation du système d'écriture.