FANDOM AND MEDIA COMPETENCE: ANALYSIS OF AESTHETIC READING IN *YOUNG HEARTS* FANFIC

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ABSTRACT

When creating fanfics, fans develop strategies for writing and communication related to multimodal and multimedia content, as well as new textual forms of network conversation (Jenkins 2012, Scolari 2018). The textual and intertextual reading by the avid audience establishes a clear dialogue with Eco's (2002) concept of semiotic/aesthetic reader, in which stories explore various interpretative layers and go beyond the paratext. Based on this theoretical approach, this paper intends to analyze the dimensions of media competence, proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), that are in operation in the creation of Oitavo B, a piece of fanfiction published on the platform *Spirit Fanfic e Histórias*. The story reframes the narrative arc of characters Lica and Samantha, from *Young Hearts*. Using their critical comprehension, fans creatively expand and give new meaning to the plot through multimodal and intertextual elements. Their reflections go beyond the canonical limits of the fictional universe and establish distinct correlations in dialogue with other audiovisual productions, literary works, social issues, true events, among others. It is concluded that the fanfic in question not only reinforces and expands the young adult telenovela, but also establishes new interpretative layers.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The development of fan studies is marked by three waves, which are based on objects, conceptual and theoretical references and methodological orientation (Duffett 2013, Gray *et al* 2017). However, beyond epistemological reflections, the discussions in this field are also guided by the constant refutation of fans' stigmatization. According to Sandvoss *et al* (2017), research conducted by Fiske (1992), Jenkins (1992), Bacon-Smith (1992), Hills (2007), Sandvoss (2005), Booth (2010) and Duffett (2013) integrate an important process of redefining fandom's public identity. In this context, the studies distanced themselves from the pathologization that characterizes an avid audience as immature, alienated and, especially, uncritical.

As stated by Jenkins (1992) and Duffett (2013), the negative and stereotypical approach to fans permeates various scopes, from the epistemological roots of the term to the way in which the subculture used to be represented in mass media. The word 'fan' is short for 'fanatic', from the Latin, *fanaticus*. Its first implications were related to excessive enthusiasm, devotion, possession, insanity and false beliefs in religion and politics. According to Jenkins (1992), even though the term was incorporated by media in the late 20th century and made popular by sports media, the pejorative connotations continued to be echoed.

The pathologization of fan culture is present in various areas, such as television, film and literature. The alleged difficulty of the avid audience in separating fiction from reality, for example, also integrated other stereotypes, particularly in journalism and movies. According to Jenkins (1992: 32-3), "news items characterized fans as psychopaths whose frustration in fantasized intimacy with stars or unsatisfied desires of achieving stardom took violent or misanthrope paths". In other words, the stigmatized conception of fans based its argument in the image of an out of touch, emotionally unstable individual. The myth of the "unstable" fan, according to Jenkins (1992) and Duffett (2013), was used as a premise for feature films, such as, for example, 1981's 'The Fan'. In the movie, a frustrated 'fan', upset at not having his affections retributed, kidnaps his idol and threatens her with rape and death.

In the comedy genre, the pathologization of fandom was usually approached through a lonely character, always separated from the action, such as in 'Ali Baba Goes to Town' (1937) and 'Stoogemania' (1986). Another stereotype propagated by media was focused on female figures (Duffett 2013).

Unlike the psychotic fan and the comical fan, usually associated with men, the eroticized fan was explored through groupies. The myth of the orgasmic fan objectified the woman, who was not only always available for movie, television, and music stars, but also provided an erotic spectacle for the male audience.

Unlike the conceptual, theoretical and methodological frameworks proposed in the three waves discussed by Sandvoss *et al* (2017) and Duffett (2013), many pieces of academic research conducted from the 1970s to the 1990s referred to fans as "the other", establishing a distinction, albeit veiled, between the analysis of serious and critical work and alienated and uncritical fandom practices (Jenkins 1992). The approach led to misleading analysis, which not contemplated the complexity of fan culture practices, and corroborated with stereotypes propagated by the media. Currently, fan culture studies explore the critical, productive, and creative engagement of avid audiences (Sandvoss *et al* 2017, Grandío and Bonaut 2012, Prego-Nieto 2020, Guerrero-Pico *et al* 2017; Herrero-Diz *et al* 2017). Multidisciplinary analysis usually approaches questions related to communication, creativity, knowledge, and organizational and civic power (Bennett 2014, Jenkins 2019, Davis 2016, Guerrero-Pico and Lugo, 2018).

Discussed by Jenkins *et al* (2013), Hirsjärvi (2013), Scolari (2018), Pereira et al (2019) and Pereira and Moura (2019) the field of media literacy studies explores perspectives related to fans' critical understanding and creative production. According to Hirsjärvi (2013), fan practices encourage the development of new learning possibilities. The author points out that, when analyzing the activities of a fandom, we can observe multiple competences in actions, such as content creation, activism, information systematization and curation, the resignification of plots, image editing, and so on.

Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015) argues that media competence involves the mastery of individuals' knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards media messages. Media competence is formed from an active and dialogical approach, considering the participation of the interlocutors in the selection, interpretation, critical analysis, and transmission of messages that stimulate and sustain their creative production. The authors propose a methodology to approach media competence that encompasses six dimensions (language, ideology and values, aesthetics, technology, processes of interaction and processes of production and dissemination). Each of them is related to the way the audience receives, interacts with, and produces media content. Based on this theoretical framework, this

paper intends to analyze these dimensions in the production of *Oitavo B*, a fanfic published on the platform *Spirit Fanfics e Histórias*[1] to discuss the development of media competence. The story reframes the paratext of the narrative arc featuring Lica and Samantha, characters of the young adult Brazilian *telenovela Young Hearts* (*Malhação — Viva a Diferença*), which aired in 2017 and 2018 on Rede Globo.

2. SEMIOTIC/AESTHETIC READING: FANS' INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES

According to Eco (2002), post-modern works are composed of a double coding. The term refers to hybrid texts that imbricate popular and stylistic connotations at once. The concept was coined by the architect Charles Jencks in 1977 to denote a combination of architecture techniques allowing the work to be understood in two simultaneous levels, i.e., "[...] addressing other architects and a minority who understands specific architectural meanings, but also the wide public or the locals, who are interested in other things, such as the convenience of the building" (Jencks 1977: 14-5).

However, Eco (2002) states that Jencks's (1977) double coding goes beyond the architectural realm and can be observed in music, literature, advertising spots, and other fields. Broadening the term, the author proposes the concept of intertextual irony, explaining it through the example of his own novel *Il nome della rosa* (1980). In one of the book's intertitles, he makes a reference to Italian writer and poet Manzoni. However, the allusion does not impair the comprehension of the sentence, that is, readers who do not realize the intertextuality can understand the sentence's general sense, while those who note the reference will have a more dynamic experience with the text. As Eco claims (2002),

> [...] those who understand the allusion establish a privileged relationship to the text (or the narrator voice), and those who don't will carry on regardless — and be faced with two paths: either understand on their own that the manuscript in question can only be a literary artifice [...] or, as many have done, write me to ask if that fascinating manuscript really exists (Eco 2002: 204).

Eco (2002) highlights the fact that works can have external references, but not necessarily present intertextual irony. As an example, he uses T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), where the author inserted footnotes to explain each allusion, detailing interpretative layers for all readers. Although double coding and intertextual irony transmit multiple simultaneous meanings, what makes them different is the way in which the meaning is produced. Eco argues (2002) that

> [...] in architectural double coding, the visitor might not notice that a colonnade topped by a tympanum is referencing Greek tradition, but will equally enjoy the harmony and ordinated multiplicity of the construction. On the other hand, [in intertextual irony], the reader that can't notice by "naturally" is only aware of reading a manuscript, but loses the reference and affectionate irony (Eco 2002: 205).

In this context, intertextual irony "[...] selects and privileges intertextually-aware readers, although it doesn't exclude those who are less aware" (Eco 2002: 205).

Based on discussions around double coding and intertextual irony, Eco (2002: 208-17) proposes two levels of reading. First-level readers only want to know how the story will end. According to the author, semantic readers are interested, for example, on whether *Moby Dick's* (1851) Ahab will capture the Whale, on whether Pinochio, from *Le adventure di Pinocchio. Storia di un burattino* (1881) would be transformed into a flesh and bone boy. That is, their focus is directed to the development of a plot's narrative arcs. Second-level readers "[...] ask themselves what type of reader that story asks them to be, and want to figure out how the model author instructs them step by step" (Eco 2002: 208). In short, semantic readers want to know what will happen in the story, while semiotic/aesthetic readers are interested in knowing how what happens was narrated.

It is important to mention that there are no readers exclusively at the second level, that is, to be a semiotic/aesthetic reader it is necessary to be, even if initially, a semantic reader. According to Eco (2002: 208), "To know how a story ends, it's usually enough to read it once. To transform oneself into a second level reader, one needs to read it many times, and some stories must be read forever". Therefore, second level readers are those who are aware of the nuances of text, of narrative details, are interested in language and can identify intertextual irony.

The levels of reading proposed by Eco (2002) systematize the strategies to understand fans' interpretation and enable us to reflect on the critical comprehension and creative output of this subcultural community relating it to the field of media competence. According to Jenkins (1992: 70), fannish reading is "[...] a process, a movement that goes from the initial reception of a television broadcast to a gradual elaboration of episodes and its reframing in alternative terms" (Jenkins:1992). By reading textually, the avid audience establishes a close relationship with the fictional universe, recognizing each detail in the metatext. The second mode of reading is intertextual, going beyond the plot, in which fans can identify multiple intertextual networks between the paratext and the external elements, creating interpretative ties.

One of the guiding points of fans' interpretation strategies is rereading. According to Barthes (1992), rereading a text deeply changes readers experience with a narrative. As stated by the author, "[...] rereading removes the text from its internal chronology ('this happens before or after that') and recaptures a mythic time (with no before or after)" (Barthes 1992: 19). When watching a piece of content again the fans' interest becomes another, such as, for example, the thematic meanings, the between lines or the social context of the author (Jenkins 1992). "The reread book isn't a work we find in the first reading; it's 'the same yet new'" (Jenkins 1992: 82). Thus, fans would be the semiotic/aesthetic readers proposed by Eco (2002), as they critically understand the fictional universe and its interpretative ties.

This process of semiotic/aesthetic reading encourages the reframing of content, in which the avid audience explores new perspectives and languages related to the story. According to Jenkins (1992: 89), by understanding a story both textually and intertextually, a fandom is able to "[...] recognize noise in the text, its narrative lapses, its excessive details, its loose ends and contradictions — and find gaps to elaborate on its world and speculate on its characters". It is from these interpretation strategies that the practices of fan culture are established, such as on crack videos, fictional character profiles on social media, fanfic, etc.

However, it is important to note that, as Hills (2015: 149) points out "fandom is performed differently and can mean different things in different microcontexts, at different moments of social interaction and even on different platforms". Thus, fan practices must be analyzed considering their multiplicity and idiosyncrasy. In other words, the critical understanding and creative output of this subcultural community, even starting from a single fictional universe, can present significant variations in the strategies of interpretation in different contexts.

3. FANFICTION: FROM PARATEXT TO RESIGNIFICATION

Fanfics include "[...] any prose narrative with stories and characters extracted from media" (Jenkins 2008: 380). This popular fan culture practice can be inspired both in fictional universes and in real people. As suggested by Jamison (2013: 31), "[...] we now understand fanfiction basically as writing that continues, interrupts, reimagines or simply alludes to stories and characters written by other people". The creation, publication and sharing of fanfic gained new possibilities in the context of media convergence. According to Jamison (2013) and Booth (2015) digital culture has expanded the modes of engagement that were already recurrent in fandoms. The fanfic materializes fandom's sense of collectivity through the exchange that takes place between authors and readers, from the development of the story to its publication. As suggested by Jenkins (1992: 90), "Fans reception can't exist and doesn't exist in isolation; instead, it's always wrought from other fans' opinions and motivated, at least partly, by the desire to engage in further interaction with a broader social and cultural community". In the context of convergence culture, this collective process becomes more plural, instantaneous, and accessible. In addition to the creative and collaborative potential of social media and legal and illegal content-sharing sites, platforms designed specifically for the publication of fanfics present an operational architecture with several features that encourage critical reflection by fans.

In Brazil, the websites *Nyah! Fanfiction*[2] and *Spirit Fanfics e Histórias*[3] collect around one million pieces of fanfics on various themes. In addition to publishing stories, fans can read other fics, post comments and create reading lists. It is also possible to access online lessons in grammar and narrative construction. According to Thomas (2007); Tirocchi (2018), Bourdaa and Lozano (2016), Stanfill (2018), Lamerichs (2018), Edwards (2018) and Aragon and Davis (2019) digital platforms in which fanfictions are published and read encourage the development of media competence. The authors state that, when sharing their creations, fans develop writing and com-

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2   Available at: https://bit.ly/2ZTsUZ5. (last accessed 18-07-21)

3   Available at: https://bit.ly/2BcDFvj. (last accessed 18-07-21)

munication strategies related to multimodal and multimedia content, and new textual forms of network conversation.

In addition to stimulate critical understanding of digital media and the convergence environment, fanfic comes from a deep understanding of the fan about fictional universes (Jenkins, 2012, Hills 2017, Martins 2020, Guerrero-Pico 2015, Herbig and Herrmann 2016). As we discussed earlier, as being semiotic/aesthetic readers, fans can identify contradictions, potentials, holes and other aspects of fictional universe through their interpretation strategies. When reimagining fictional universes, fans also reflect on implicit social and cultural meanings featured in media content, such as stereotypes, diversity-related issues, representation etc. According to Jamison (2013), the stories encourage the avid audience to experiment new literary styles and writing techniques. In this context, the creative production of fanfics comes from this critical interpretation. All the narrative unfolding of the story, however broad, must indicate that the plot could have happened plausibly in the paratext.

In the scope of Brazilian serialized television fiction, the production of fanfics based on *telenovelas* includes both adults and teenagers' audiences. This practice of fan culture was substantially enhanced by the availability — legal and illegal — of online episodes that allowed programs to be re-watched (Jacob *et al* 2015). According to Jacob *et al.* (2015), in general, fiction created by *telenovela* fans explores paratext interludes, rewriting the scenes, alternative endings, reintroduction of characters and changes in the setting. The authors also state that fans tend to write stories focused on couples, expanding and reframing nodal points in the narrative arc, such as the couple's first kiss, marriage proposal, and so on.

Currently in its 27th season, Brazilian *telenovela Young Hearts* was created in 1995 by Andréa Maltarolli and Emanuel Jacobina, directed by Roberto Talma. Broadcast by Rede Globo from Monday through Friday, in the 5:30PM to 6PM time slot, it is the network's longest-running television serial fiction show for young audiences. According to Memória Globo (2020 Online), *Young Hearts* gave rise to a new concept in the network's productions: "[...] a TV show that had some similarities to American soap operas, without a set end date and with more flexibility to changes in plot and character profiles." The show is organized in seasons, usually containing around 180 episodes, which spend one year on air. Seasons are independent from one another, presenting distinct characters and narrative arcs, sharing only the setting and themes that are relevant to young people.

Initially, the show was set in a gym, hence its original title ("malhação" is Portuguese for "workout"). In 1999, in its 6th season, the main set moved to a high school. The school, although featuring different characteristics each season, made it easier to insert adult casts, usually composed of teachers, school clerks and parents. One of the *telenovela*'s core tenets are the themes addressed during the seasons, encompassing family and social issues that are pertinent to young adult audiences. In its first years on air, those issues, such as first sexual experiences, relationships with parents and friends, and insecurities about the future and the workplace were treated with a generalist approach, without major discussions. Beginning in the 2000s, themes such as racism, bullying, and teen pregnancy were included in the show with a denser approach, presenting various perspectives and encouraging the dialogue between parents and children. However, it is worth noting that, since it is composed of independent seasons, developed by different creative teams, the way in which those issues are discussed varies according to the fictional universe proposed by each author.

In addition to social responsibility, *Young Hearts* is also a space for the network's engagement strategy experiments. Since 2009, the network has created character blogs, websites focused on specific casts, podcasts, web series and videogames. The show mobilizes countless fans in specialized websites and social media — for example, terms connected to the fictional universe occupy Twitter's trending topics weekly and fanfiction about the *telenovela* are among those most popular in specialized platforms.

Created by Cao Hamburger, the Emmy International Kids award-winning 25th season of *Young Hearts* broke audience records and promoted the discussion of themes previously inexistent in the attraction. For the first time the telenovela was starring five women. Teenage girls Keyla, Benê, Tina, Lica and Ellen, all from different origins and with different personalities, get stuck in the same subway car during a blackout. Keyla goes into labor and the girls are brought together in solidarity to help in the child's birth.

One of the most popular narrative arcs among the audience involved the characters of Lica and Samantha, who form the ship[4] known by the portmanteau Limantha. Throughout the episodes, interacting viewers[5] created fanarts, fictional

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4   Ship, short for *relationship*, is the name given to a couple the audience wants to see get together (Jamison, 2013)

5   "Interacting viewer" as a term is used in this paper to refer to an audience that interacts with (shares, retweets, creates content, answers to polls etc.) the fictional universe of television shows (Borges and Sigiliano, 2019).

profiles, on crack videos, memes and, especially, fanfics. *Spirit Fanfics e Histórias, Nyah! Fanfiction* and *WattPad* platforms published 381[6] stories during telenovela exhibition period, generating around 973 thousand views[7]. Fanfics created by fans deepened into the narrative arcs of Lica and Samantha and explored developments that were not present in the fictional universe.

4. ANALYZING THE DIMENSIONS OF MEDIA COMPETENCE

The analysis of media competence dimensions (Ferrés and Piscitelli 2015) of fanfics about Limantha's narrative arc was carried out in the following phases. Firstly, we carried out a survey of the most popular fanfiction platforms in Brazil (*Spirit Fanfics e Histórias, Nyah! Fanfiction* and *WattPad*). Considering the specificities of the operational architecture of each site, we filtered the fanfics through the categorization of the platforms and later through the search engine of the sites, inserting the keywords related to the context of the *telenovela*. Based on these filters, we select the most accessed fanfic and/or with the highest metric (favorites, reading lists, etc.). In other words, profiles with a high impact factor (views and interaction) were chosen on the platforms with the greatest national repercussion and the selection of the corpus was based on the number of accesses of the stories.

The research carried out at the *Audiovisual Quality Observatory* (*Observatório da Qualidade no Audiovisual*) selected 12 fanfics to analyse[8] fans media competence through the methodology proposed by Ferres and Piscitelli (2015). In this paper we will present an analysis of Oitavo B, a piece of fanfiction created from *telenovela Young Hearts* published on the platform *Spirit Fanfics e Histórias. Oitavo B* was created by user UmaOtaku-chan, it is composed of 40 chapters with an average of 15 thousand words each. According to the website metrics, the plot was published during *telenovela* exhibition on January 31st 2018 and is featured in the reading lists of 220 users. The chapters were seen 85,553 times, generating an average of 874 comments.

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6   118 (*Spirit Fanfics e Histórias*), 24 (*Nyah! Fanfiction*) and 239 (*WattPad*), adding up to a total 381 stories.

7   Numbers referring to June 27th 2019.

8   *Nossa Trilha Sonora, Amor e Pastel #Limantha, Dê Um Rolê, For You, Wonderwall, Old Habits, Paris, I Found a Girl, Two worlds, two girls, Trovoa, Química e Perfect.* Available at: https://bit.ly/3olU3Qc (last accessed 18-07-21)

Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015: 8-14) defined the concept of media competence considering six dimensions: language, ideology and values, aesthetics, technology, processes of production and dissemination and processes of interaction. These dimensions are discussed both from the scope of analysis that refers to the reception and interaction with messages, and the scope of expression, related to the creative production of messages. In this paper, we will further explore these dimensions to analyze *Oitavo B*.

The language dimension (Ferrés and Piscitelli 2015: 9) refers to the capacity to interpret, assess, analyze, express, and modify existing content. The scope of analysis is related to the ability to understand the way in which messages are constructed in different media, generating different meanings, as well as the capacity to establish correlations between texts, codes, and media. The scope of expression refers to subject's ability to express himself using different representation systems and styles depending on the communicative situation, the content conveyed and the interlocutor, in addition to the ability to modify existing products, giving them new meanings.

According to the *Oitavo B* (2018) synopsis available on the website, the fanfic starts from the following premise: Tropes are tropes for a good reason: because everyone loves them. Samantha hates love stories and has never quite believed in what "love" is all about. When the most popular girl in class sees the "new" student, she realizes that maybe, just maybe, love might exist (Online). The plot is guided through the relationship between Lica and Samantha and explores the main events in the couple's life, such as how they met, the first kiss, fights etc. The unfolding of the story is presented to the reader through Lica's viewpoint, as the character tells her daughters her love story with Samantha. However, other perspectives and points of view are explored throughout the chapters. *Oitavo B* features various elements that bring teen readers closer to the story, such as pop culture references (including movies, TV shows, etc.), reproductions of WhatsApp text messages and song lyrics.

The process of expanding the paratext through this practice of fan culture already presents a clear dialogue with the dimension of language. In other words, the narrative arcs of *Oitavo B* were based on the critical interpretation of the user UmaOtaku-chan, identifying potentials, contradictions, and holes. In this context, even expanding and reframing the *Young Hearts* plot, the development of the fanfic is based on the fan's refined knowledge about the fictional universe of the *telenovela*.

The ability to modify existing content, highlighted by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), can be observed in different parts of *Oitavo B*. Throughout its 40 chapters, the fan reproduces dialogues entirely taken from the show, however they are explored in different narrative contexts on television. As an example, we have the conversation between Lica and Samantha in which the girls flirt while studying for a physics exam. Although UmaOtaku-chan does not change the lines of characters, the fan inserts the sequence in different situations, with alterations including the setting, the unfolding of the conversation and the consequences of the plot. Therefore, the reader has access to a kind of alternative version of the dialogue shown on television. *Oitavo B* also presents new perspectives on the narrative arcs, as most of the story is told from Lica's point of view. Thus, it is possible to understand the girl's feelings and intentions. In some chapters, events are also reported by other characters in the plot. As, for instance, when Samantha talks about her parents' death and Clara's accident.

In addition to reframing the fictional universe of *Young Hearts*, the plot is permeated by intertextual elements. The chapters are composed of interpretive layers that go beyond Lica and Samantha's narrative arc. When reading the fic, we can observe frequent quotes taken from Brazilian memes, such as 'às vezes o indivíduo está louco na droga'(sometimes an individual is high off their mind), 'já se hidratou hoje?' (have you hydrated today?), 'quer o mundo? eu te dou!' (do you want the world? it's yours!), and 'Deus me livre, mas quem me dera' (God forbid, but yes, please). The references broaden the scenes meaning and bring the themes closer to teenage readers.

The fanfic's developments are mostly interspersed with experts of music from artists such as Camila Cabello, blink-182, Nomy, Demi Lovato, EDEN, and Imagine Dragons, used as a narrative resource. During the scenes, characters quote songs to express their feelings, fears, and insecurities. *Oitavo B*'s intertextual elements also include literary works, US television shows, and pop culture. For example, Lica compares Samantha to Capitu, a character from the classic Brazilian novel *Dom Casmurro* (Machado de Assis). There are also parallels between situations lived by the girls and the characters of *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-, ABC) and *Glee* (2009-2015, Fox), in excerpts such as "It's not my fault your pulling a Meredith Grey's mom, darling', and "Seriously, I feel like I'm in Glee and Samantha is pre-pregnancy, first season Quinn Fabray". The Limantha fandom is also constantly referred to by UmaOtaku-chan, who mentions private jokes and mocks other ships of the show.

According to Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015: 13-4), the dimension of ideology and values involves the ability of interacting viewers to critically reflect the way media representations structure our perception of reality; the ability to detect, contrast, seek and assess the intentions and interests contained in content; the capacity to critically analyze productions, identifying stereotypes; as well as managing their own emotions, identifying the potential mechanism for manipulation on screen. In the scope of expression, it is related to the ability to use new media to commit as a citizen, in addition to creating and modifying products to question values or stereotypes present in media productions.

This dimension proposed by the authors is more widely present in the choice of Lica and Samantha as the protagonists of the fanfic *Oitavo B*. The adolescents were, in 25 years of exhibition, the first bisexual couple of *Young Hearts*. Therefore, when opting to ship Limantha among all the season's characters and couples, the fan remarks, even if indirectly, her predisposition to reflect, question and modify the values and stereotypes of the *telenovela*. In other words, throughout 40 chapters, user UmaOtaku-chan not only reframes the paratext, but also expands and reinforces issues related to sexuality and representation of adolescence.

One of the central points explored in *Oitavo B* is the romance of Lica and Samantha and the erotism that surrounds this relationship. In this context, each caress is described in detail, and sex is highlighted in almost every chapter. However, although the theme is recurrent in this practice of fan culture, in the case of this fanfic, the expansion of this narrative arc is also related to the way in which the dating of the characters was approached on television.

When exploring Limantha's sexuality, the user UmaOtaku-chan brings up issues that could not be dealt with in *Young Hearts* time slot and which were criticized by the fandom. One of the main complaint of interacting viewers was that the couple did not exchange caresses while kissing. On Twitter, fans said that while straight characters were shown in passionate embraces, Lica and Samantha only shared chaste pecks. In *Oitavo B* romantic scenes are eroticized, systematically describing every touch, gesture and feeling. While sex was implied in the *telenovela*, characters had an active sex life in the fanfic. The topic was explored not only between Lica and Samantha, but with the affairs of the teenagers.

Issues related to the sexual orientations of the characters were also expanded by the fan. Throughout the chapters of the plot, Lica reflects on stereotypes and prejudice she faces for being bisexual, while in the paratext neither she

nor Samantha come out as such. In this context, the fan uses fanfiction as a tool, considering the limitation of original content, the debate it promotes and the awareness of issues that are still taboos. *Oitavo B* also deepens the dramatic burden of dramas experienced by the characters, such as family relationships, bullying, self-mutilation, suicide, and drug use. By having the lyrical self in the first person, the reports on these issues become more personal and closer to the public. In the comments section of the fanfic chapters, we can observe several readers saying that they identified themselves with the narrative arcs and the story helped them to overcome similar problems.

Despite all the dramatic load involved in some fanfic events, the fan is aware of her responsibility when publishing a story that deals with such dense themes. In several chapters UmaOtaku-chan justifies, in the Author's Notes and Final Notes sections, the complexity of the subjects addressed. The fan recommends that if the reader is not comfortable with the unfolding of the plot, he must not read the chapter.

The dimension of aesthetics, as proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), is related to the understanding of the importance of technical elements as forms of expression in the composition of a media production. The scope of analysis involves the sensibility to recognize the aesthetic quality of contents and the ability to identify basic aesthetic categories, such as formal and thematic innovation, originality, and style. The scope of expression relates to the capacity to produce creative messages, as well as to appropriate and transform artistic productions, aiming to enhance creativity, experimentation, and aesthetic sensibility.

In the fanfic synopsis, the fan mentions love story clichés, and the issue is brought up again in some chapters. UmaOtaku-chan states, in the Author's Notes, that she recognizes that certain narrative resources used in the story are predictable, but that clichés are part of the fictional universe proposed by her. In this sense, the fan not only manages to identify the element, but also inserts it in the story to fulfill her goal.

Another important point in *Oitavo B* is related to some reflections about fanfic itself. In the Author's Notes of certain chapters, UmaOtaku-chan makes a curatorship of stories about Limantha, encouraging readers to discover other productions and expand their repertoire. Metalanguage is also part of *Oitavo B.* For instance, in chapter 8, 'Casa', and chapter 25, 'Epilogue', Lica warns Samantha that reading fanfiction is a path of no return, and, later, that life is not like fanfiction. This resource used by the fan gains more relevance within the

fictional universe of the plot, as in chapter 15 that presents a narrative arc where Tina (another character of the telenovela) writes fanfiction.

Throughout the 40 chapters of *Oitavo B* it is possible to observe the critical understanding of narrative structure by the fan. The chronological changes and the alternation of viewpoints are marked by visual resources such as bold and italics. The way UmaOtaku-chan uses the operational architecture of *Spirit* is directly related to the dimension of aesthetics. In the comments section, the fan establishes a close dialogue with readers. In addition to thanking the positive repercussion of the story, the author suggests songs to listen to while reading the chapters, comments on *Young Hearts'* events (while the show was on the air), asks for suggestions for the color of the covers and details some of the chapters to be published. Author's Notes and End Notes are used in a similar way, to share other fics, discuss the *telenovela*, and explain to readers the narrative structure of the fanfic and its main developments, which in the fan's perspective might generate possible doubts to the reader. In these sections, UmaOtaku-chan also talks about her creative process. The fan details her creative blocks, the way she organizes herself to develop the chapters and to elaborate the narrative arcs, etc. By discussing and sharing her creative process, UmaOtaku-chan reflects on the writing and creation of *Oitavo B*.

In this analysis of *Oitavo B*, the dimensions of technology, processes of production and dissemination and processes of interaction are interrelated. Regarding the definitions proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), in the dimension of technology, the scope of the analysis is related to the ability to handle and transit through hypermedia, transmedia and multimodal environments. The scope of expression is related to the ability to adapt technological tools to communicative objectives in the elaboration of texts, images, and sounds. In the dimension of processes of interaction, the scope of the analysis is related to the ability to assess the cognitive effects of emotions, that is, to perceive how ideas and values are associated with characters, actions and situations generating positive and/or negative emotions. The scope of expression is related to the ability to act collaboratively and to interact with diverse people and collectives in digital environments. In the dimension of production and diffusion processes, the scope of the analysis relates to the basic knowledge about the production systems and the diffusion mechanisms. The scope of expression refers to the knowledge of the stages of production processes; the ability to develop multimodal products in a collaborative manner; select, appropriate, and

transform messages producing new meanings; share and disseminate information through social networks; manage the concept of authorship, individual or collective and also create collaborative networks, feed them back and have a committed attitude towards them.

Technology permeates the relation established by interacting viewers with television and internet. In the case of *Spirit Fanfics e Histórias,* interacting fans need to understand how platform works in order to interact with it. Thus, we realize that fans master the potentiality of networks current language to the point of being able to create intertextual content based on their understanding and the way they build the representations of reality.

Regarding processes of interaction, which are intrinsic to digital platforms, conversation migrated from television to internet and interaction happens in the comment session of *Spirit Fanfics e Histórias*, based on fans experience and cultural repertoire. However, fans select and self-evaluate media consumption itself, noticing how ideas and values are associated with characters and plots to promote specific emotions. The processes of production and dissemination refer to the ability to select, appropriate and formulate messages that create new meanings, sharing and disseminating them; creating collaborative networks, as it happens in the profiles with two specific sections: 'Fórum' and 'Cantinho do Autor'.

The fictional universe of the fanfiction was expanded through other platforms, such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Spotify. The accounts were managed by the fan and had the function of deepening the narrative arc of Lica and Samantha. On WhatsApp, UmaOtaku-chan created a group to share updates on *Oitavo B* and information about the actresses Manoela Aliperti (Lica) and Giovanna Grigio (Samantha). The story was also explored on Twitter. Using her personal account, the fan created polls requesting the participation of the public on issues such as, for example, which songs should be cited by the characters and which day was better for the publication of the chapters. The fanfic readers used the microblogging platform to create fictional accounts for *Oitavo B*'s characters. For example, Lica's unicorn mentor, Pedro Santiago, who shows up in her hallucinations, was personified on Twitter as @unipedrosantiag. Readers interacted with the profile and commented on the events of the fanfic. Finally, music plays a fundamental role in the fictional universe of *Oitavo B*. Throughout the chapters the fan indicates songs to be listened to when reading her fanfic and uses the lyrics to explain the feelings of Lica and Samantha. In chapter 15 UmaOtaku-chan created a playlist on the streaming service

Spotify, with all the songs mentioned in the story. Therefore, the writing of the fanfic Oitavo B allows the fan UmaOtaku-chan to explore various skills and develop the six dimensions studied in this research, highlighting the potential of studying fan practices for the promotion of media competence.

5. **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

By expanding, deepening, and resignifying Limantha's narrative arc in *Young Hearts*, the fan highlights not only her critical understanding of the plot, but also her creative production. That is, through interpretation strategies, the fan establishes a close relationship to the paratext, knowing every nuance and detail of the attraction. Through the second level reading, UmaOtaku-chan, a semiotic/aesthetic reader, explores new perspectives on the story, always maintaining verisimilitude.

An important aspect in the construction of *Oitavo B*'s narrative is intertextuality. Elements which are external to the fictional universe of the *telenovela* are constantly explored by the writer. In this sense, intertextual irony, as proposed by Eco (2002), provides readers with a dynamic experience with the text, in which events, dialogue and developments are composed of several interpretative layers.

From the analysis of the media competence dimensions, we can reflect on the active role of fans in the construction of fictional universes that go beyond the paratext. In other words, when expanding the plot in the fanfiction, the fan reimagines the events of Lica and Samantha based on the direct and indirect collaboration of the fandom. In this way, the approach to the story encompasses collective projections and interpretations. We can observe that the development of skills related to the dimensions of media competence are constantly improving in the practice of writing fanfics. In this case study, the language dimension is explored through expansion and reframing of the narrative, adding new elements in the story. The dimension of ideology and values reinforces the understanding about modes of representation and the treatment of issues related to the sexual orientation of the protagonists, allowing the fan to express her point of view. The aesthetic dimension developed aesthetic sensitivity, creativity, and experimentation. The skills presented in the dimensions of technology, processes of production and dissemination and processes of interaction are related to the way the fan uses the available technology; dialogues with her readers on social networks and in the dissemination of the repertoire she built on the fictional universe.

Finally, it is essential to highlight the idiosyncrasies of each group of fans, that is, each practice of fan will operate distinctly in relation to the media competence dimensions. However, studies in the multidisciplinary field of media competence point out to the development of new learning possibilities related to contemporary serialized fiction and fan culture.

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