ARTICLE

YOUNG PEOPLE, READING MEDIATIZATION AND NARRATIVES OF EXISTENTIAL MEANING: IMPLICATIONS TO SCHOOL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: From data collected through field research, the authors analyze the current mediatization process of culture, and ask why young people are interested in mythical narratives, publicized in books, films and TV series, with its several extensions online. The analysis shows the new reading pattern of young people, the mediatization effects on reading practices today, and the existential link between epic/mythological stories and the condition of contemporary youth. The final observations point to school education: the school offering mediators between texts and young students, the relationship between new communication technologies and pedagogy, and the importance of the art of teaching when interacting with young students in a mediatized context.

Keywords: Reading; Mediatization; Youth; Mythical narratives; School.

JOVENS, MIDIATIZAÇÃO DA LEITURA E NARRATIVAS DE SENTIDO: IMPLICAÇÕES PARA A ESCOLA

RESUMO: Partindo de uma pesquisa de campo, os autores tecem uma análise sobre a midiatização da leitura e a preferência juvenil por narrativas mitológicas, hoje reeditadas em livros, filmes e séries televisivas, com suas extensões *online*. A análise destaca os novos suportes e protocolos de leitura entre os jovens; a diversidade e interação disponibilizadas pela leitura midiatizada; os efeitos da midiatização nos modos de ler dos jovens; e a relação de sentido entre as obras épico-mitológicas e a condição juvenil contemporânea. O artigo se encerra com indicações para a educação

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escolar: a oferta de mediadores entre textos e jovens-alunos da parte da escola, a relação entre novas tecnologias de comunicação e a pedagogia, a importância do *ofício da lição* na relação com os jovens-alunos midiatizados.
Palavras-chave: Leitura; Midiatização; Juventude; Narrativas mitológicas; Escola.

INTRODUCTION

Both writing and reading carry meanings, interpretations of the world and socialization experiences. In the dual perspective of the *text* and *reader*, this has a dynamic operation. From the perspective of the former, we know the look does not go through letters neutrally; instead, it brings "visibilities" about oneself and the others, about daily life and transformation, implicit or explicit in the reader based on his/her historical and cultural background. From the perspective of latter, complexity is not in anyway reduced: printed in ink (in hardcopy formats) or conveyed in pixels (on screens), a text communicates narrative plots in which the lives of several people are interlinked, from up close or remote times and spaces.

By addressing tragedy, imagination and knowledge, some narratives have become a benchmark for the culture and the identity of certain societies, for providing founding events, cosmovisions and senses to human beings found therein. This is the case of many tales and myths, whose historical and cultural matrixes (Greek, Roman, Celtic, German...) are presented with a wide range of characters, scenarios and achievements, full of lessons about the world, the men and the gods (see also CAMPBELL, 2007). With a symbolic and often universalist approach, ancient myths are considered to be "paradigmatic narratives" (ELIADE, 2004, p. 164): they express the humanity that created them through emblems of millenary vitality, capable of transcending generations of recently initiated persons. In fact, narratives of this kind trigger the intelligence and imagination of the public, for which the letter (*littera*) - once pronounced, heard, participated - provides diversified forms of lesson (*lectio*): memory, surprise, nurturance, affinity, contrast, adventure, virtue, inspiration.

From scholars to popular readers, the *letter* and the *lesson* of tales link readers to their storylines, turning them not only into receivers, but also participants, in view of their interpretations, reactions and interactions with the narrative. Actually, in this interactive game, literature becomes committed to oral narration, of a figurative or ritualistic nature, in order to perpetuate. Because a *in littera* record (written text) loses its argument and message if its not known, appreciated and conveyed *in lectione* (declaimed lesson) from generation to generation,

with its continuous versions. It has been like that for centuries, from the clay tablet to the board to the modern multifunctional tablet: without lessons, letters are mute and risk being lost.

Over the decades, each generation has readers and visibilities that correspond to their space/time, placing emphasis on different genres and literary styles. Since the seventies, classic and modern written works, novels and science fiction, documentaries and soap operas have come across one another in the large scenario of editorial production, with TV and big screen versions being more and more frequent. Most recently, after the nineties, this has been expanded with the growing mediatization of writing and reading, which are given new aids and formats, from e-books to online texts.

However, such mediatization is not limited to the technological development of writing and reading aids. As França (2006) and Braga (2007) once warned, *mediatization* is a cultural process of reference to the multiple connections among individuals, institutions and societies; this process is not fixed in the instrumental linearity of emission-medium-reception, but set in motion in the interactions occurred among the most diverse "communication players" (FRANÇA, 2006, p. 76). These players have access to communication spaces provided by "media", making contacts and exchanges, gaining visibility and opening up new routes in sociability. Driven by technological possibilities and by the participation of thousands of users, mediatization goes beyond the instrumental dimension of media, having become today a human and cultural fact that plays its role in subjectivity, in how the world is perceived and in the ways people use to communicate, with opportunities and risks, news and tensions[1] - as perceived among the innumerous young people who are *connected* at our homes, shopping malls and schools.

Thus, a new generation of readers is created, that is used to surfing these new waves of communication, using technologies that are increasingly interlinked: digital books and magazines accessed over the computer and cellphone; movies and TV series on cable channels, most of the times also available on the internet; thematic websites and digital encyclopedias; blogs and social media that gather individuals and different groups sharing the same interests. Motivated by the diverse, instant nature of the interactions available therein, players see and are seen, give their opinion, and react to, consume and prᵒduce content. This is an interactional communication, which is both *intense* (marked by the proximity and assiduity that is seen among interacting players) and *extensive* (marked by the broad accessibility and fluidity of contacts).

This intense and extensive communication, accelerated by new technologies, has redesigned not only the offer of information, but also the notion of time and space, cognition, sociability and also how people perceive themselves and their relationships, locally and globally. As observed by Alain Renaud (1990, p. 14): "the axiology of places and the functions of the cultural practices of memory, knowledge, imaginary and creation have been going through massive reconstruction".

In view of mediatization and its extensive repercussions, this article will address the reading practices of young students, with a particular analysis of six cases of declared preference for epic and mythological narratives (please see data below). The data shown were taken from research on the relationship between young people and mediatization during the communication interactions of three High School classes, focused on how young people understand and grasp this relationship in their school lives. The approach, however, was not only quantitative, but also qualitative, perceiving players in their modern youth condition, marked by an heterogeneity of situations, by the state of being young overlapped with the state of being a student, by social hardships and pursuit of meaning, amid the tension between the present and the future. Field research included face-to-face and online observation, questionnaires, individual interviews and group discussions in two urban schools, being one private and the other public. The young people researched were 15 to 18 years old and were attending the second grade of High School. All of them were familiar with the mediatic culture and used recent technologies to read.[2] From the data gathered, the preference for mythological stories was expressively highlighted, pointing out to the importance of narratives of existential meaning and thus instigating a specific reflection, which is developed herein. For such, we used the structure of myths mapped out by Campbell (2007): myths are basically a lesson narrated in a three-step journey, with departure-initiation-return, to be completed by heroes (most of them young heroes) in a process of individualization and socialization. The pedagogical character of myths has been renewed over time, until it's recent format, with creative mediatic versions, ranging from the big screen to online games.

Given the mediatization of reading and the preference for mythological narratives, we have presented four basic questions: What do young people say they read? What are the effects of mediatization on how youngsters read? Why do they prefer tales and myths? And, for final considerations: What do such practices mean to schools?

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE SAY THEY READ?

The youngsters researched reflect the current transformation scenario, which is highly mediatized, when describing the influence of new communication sensitivities, with their aids, on their reading.[3] Some of these youngsters are quite involved with reading; and others, not that much. But all of them, at some point, confirm to have their reading influenced by media devices.

In the research questionnaire, we present *reading* as a topic related to culture and leisure to cover both the readings proposed by the school and those chosen by students. Youngsters answered 'no' to the question "Is reading one of your cultural and leisure practices?": from private schools, 84.1%; from public schools, 79.9%. The question "Do you have the habit of reading?" also had a negative answer: 83.5% of youngsters in private school said they don't read regularly; followed by 91.3% of youngsters in public school. The results, however; change when the question is put that way: "What have you been reading recently?". Result: 77.2% of youngsters in private school said they are reading some written work; followed by 78.5% of youngsters in public school.[4]

This clear contrast is eliminated when young people broaden their reading options (chosen based on taste and interest) in view of school reading (proposed as assignments). In fact, the relationship of young people with reading has reached new heights in terms of sense and interest, as youngsters add other aspects of this habit. Examples collected: readings responding to professional qualification perspectives: "I read newspapers and magazines because I want to study Social Communication", said youngster Clara; readings related to entertainment; "I don't like reading; but I really enjoy magazines about automobiles because I like cars", said Jorge; readings of favorite authors: "I like reading texts by Guimarães Rosa on the page people created about him on the internet", said Laís; reading of fragments of authors, thinkers and personalities, such as mottos and motivational sentences: youngsters Vítor, Mirtes, Rafael and Conrado mentioned fragments of Guimarães Rosa, Drummond de Andrade, Clarice Lispector, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela. Reading songs that entertain and provoke reflection was also mentioned: "I follow Legião Urbana; their songs talk about the universe of young people, I like to read them and think about the lyrics", said Conrado; readings expressing the perceptions of juvenile identity in relation to their peers, followed by discussions in online groups: Mirtes mentioned

The Lord of the Rings, Rafael mentioned *The fault in our starts*, Lorena mentioned *Harry Potter*; specific readings associated with genre, such as youngster Taís and women's blogs: "I love reading texts written in women's websites, I really do", or related to religion, as evangelical Rafael: "I usually read verses and texts written by my pastor on the church website", and catholic Maria: "I visit the [*Chrism Catechism*] Pastoral webpage everyday and I read my friends' messages".[5]

When questioned about classic readings, in general, and readings assigned by the school, in particular, youngsters said they "don't like reading". In fact, this negative response expressly refers to classic literature proposed in the school curriculum, preserving space for other preferences. This finding was obtained in the research field, when we noted the same young people reading during breaks and at meal time, both in the private and in the public school: after all, what were they reading? In such cases, there is a predominant preference for mythological narratives and fictions with an epic appeal: 73% of the youngster in private school and 54% of youngster in public school said they like reading books such as *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lord of the Rings,* and *Harry Potter* - as shown in the chart:

Readings	Class 2m1 Public School	Class 2m2 Private School	Class 2H Public School
Harry Potter	63%	59%	45%
The Lord of the Rings	52%	55%	35%
The Chronicles of Narnia	48%	43%	28%
The Hunger Games	55%	58%	42%
The Twilight Saga	50%	59%	48%
Brazilian classic literature	32%	35%	21%
Internet Content	98%	95%	88%

Source: field research.

As for Brazilian classic literature, the authors most cited were Machado de Assis, Mário Quintana and Guimarães Rosa. Reading these classic authors is a habit developed at school, with some exceptions from practice and encouragement at home. As for internet content, readings range from readings of interest and/or personal taste (sciences, history, cars, novels, sagas, celebrities, fashion, politics,

economy, religion, blogs, online newspapers and magazines) to readings requested in school assignments (subject research, contents for cultural fairs, etc.).

EFFECTS OF MEDIATIZATION ON HOW YOUNGSTERS READ

Data collected show what Martín-Barbero and Rey (2001, p. 62) had found out: in young people ways of reading, the traditional way (hardcopy materials) is simply replaced with the new way (conveyed on screens); instead, there is "a complex articulation between them", resulting in "reading being reconfigured as a set of different ways in which one can 'browse through' texts". From a production perspective, editorial, TV and cinema projects are preferred, which articulate languages, codes and different narratives. From the reader/viewer perspective, a new sensitivity is manifested in view of the interaction, intensity and new communication settings (see also Borelli, 2008). In this sense, Martín-Barbero (2014, p. 79) argues:

> The position of culture in society changes when communication, as mediated by technology, is no longer simply instrumental, and becomes something that is expressed and compacted, and is converted into structural. Today, technology is not about new apparatuses, but new ways of *perception* and *language*, new sensitivities and writings. (Martín-Barbero, 2014, p. 79, text highlighted on our account).

This helps us understand why mediatization is attractive to young people, because it provides them with new forms of interaction among individuals, information and senses, with variety and instantaneity - rather than technological upgrades. The information accessed and the interpersonal connections made are found in youngsters' cultural perceptions and ways of being, thus shaping their readings and writings.

YOUNG READERS IN MEDIATIZATION

In fact, among the youngsters researched, this new sensitivity was manifested in relation to interactions, information heterogeneity and mediatized cultural practices (relationship, reading, entertainment, learning, etc.). In the specific case of reading, youngsters have been accessing texts available on the internet: articles in blogs, online essays of classic written works, authors' pages, fragments of poems, debates in virtual reading communities, electronic periodicals and articles on thematic websites about fashion, celebrities, dating, healthcare, healthy eating habits, mythology, scientific and technological curiosities. Following interest in thematic websites, youngsters read teen books of

massive circulation, which are little absorbed by schools, but intensively publicized and available in the media (books, TV, cinema and internet).

These indicators clearly show the students researched have a *readers in mediatization* identity: while expressing different reading frequencies, all of them read with the mediation of new technologies, especially online. Some youngsters have moved from the condition of occasional readers of general information and/or topics of interest to the condition of frequent readers of more complex written works. These works include classic authors (Machado de Assis, José de Alencar, Fernando Pessoa, Mário Quintana etc., suggested or not by the school), as well as modern fiction books, especially *Harry Potter, The Lord of the Rings, The Chronicles of Narnia, The Hunger Games*, and *The Twilight Saga.*

In this sense, we reinforce herein the warning by Schwertner and Fischer, who explain the fact youngsters are interacting with or looking for online readings and studies does not mean readings and hardcopy materials have been replaced with the TV and the internet. On the contrary, what happens is that these youngsters have been using new ways of entertainment, leisure and studying, directly connected to multiple forms of communication and reading (see also SCHWERTNER; FISCHER, 2012). We believe such perception should be given more serious consideration in the analyses of reading habits of modern youth. In this context, Setton (2005) points out that sociability of modern students is built from a process of interdependence among hybrid systems of reference (traditional stances of education, knowledge and information disseminated by the media). In this universe of reference, the written culture, as a established cultural practice, has been followed by other practices that have emerged in the lives of these youngsters: this is the case of the media culture. The same author also observes, in a research study conduced with youngsters on their consuming habits, that their written culture was not restricted to letters and schools; instead, it had been massified and distributed in the great media (see also SETTON, 2005).

Dubet also, based on his research studies in Reading Sociology, has confirmed this diversity of records in the experience of young readers, specifically in the case of students. The author mentions three big motivations for youngster to read. The first one is related to reading as a result of cultural and social learning, revealed by the social hierarchy of readers and their tastes: in this case, youngsters who read are those that come from a background where reading is a habit or a duty. The second motivation is related to the social and scholar utility of reading: materials that are useful to the studies and to a certain social

distinction of individuals are chosen for reading. The third one, seen as "text pleasure", is related, in fact, to the process of personal identity in a self relation aimed by the text (see also DUBET, 1994). Particularly in this case, data collected in the field show that the students researched have their own mark: an identity of young readers in mediatization.

Through different reading registers (fiction books, online articles, youth novels, cinematographic stories, lyrics, poems, motivational messages), the students researched have been experiencing multiple interactions with other young readers, at different levels of complexity: from simple posts of catchphrases to group discussions about literary works (novels, poems, fictions). In this dynamics, incremented by the relationship between youngsters and the media, there are interesting cases of virtual communities dedicated to favorite authors and also the collective production of stories and poems, taking the form of challenges and entertainment.

READING LIKES AND DISLIKES

We have also observed a dual relationship between young readers and the editorial and cinematographic market: on one side, these products have become popular among youngsters and their mediatic environments, growing in sales and advertisement; on the other, youngsters make their own choices, new interpretations and productions at their own ways, with elements of their condition and identity, which are combined with the marketing character of such productions. Through text, music and fiction readings, youngsters have expressed their condition and made their sociability dynamic: exchange among peers, affinity groups, shared discussions, face-to-face meetings focused on friendship and entertainment. Social media, especially Facebook, have been used to operationalize these activities, including to invite for and publicize face-to-face meetings. Young students feel a great distance from the reading genre requested by the school. They prefer fiction books like the ones mentioned earlier: *Harry Potter,*[6] *The Twilight Saga,*[7] *The Hunger Games,*[8] *The Lord of the Rings*[9] and *The Chronicles of Narnia.*[10] This is what the researched students have told us:

a) Mirtes: For this young girl studying in a private school, the positive aspect of shared readings in Facebook communities is, above anything else, the possibility that each reader has to access different points of view about the same written work. Another positive aspect is that most of the participants in these spaces are young: they post their critics and comments about the books, make

comparisons between books and movies. Among the books discussed, she mentions *The Lord of the Rings, The Future of the Universe Trilogy.* The young girl believes it is important to read Brazilian literature modern classics and is aware of their historical and literary value; she criticizes some students who don't read the books and copy essays from the internet; however, at the same time, she pointed out that ancient times (settings, characters and especially old vocabulary) impair reading and make people lose interest. Mirtes questioned the purpose of such readings at school, considering there are other good examples of recent Brazilian literature that could be explored. The young girl also complained about the fact that literature exams are only about modern classics, with titles being repeated year after year. Still according to her, literature teachers do not appreciate current fictional literature, which is preferred among the youngsters: "Teachers treat the literature appreciated by young readers as trash; terrible. They never mix their literary choices with what students like to read." To Mirtes, this makes students lose interest: "Students end up getting angry at school reading. Those who are not used to read Machado de Assis will suffer." (Interview, 2012).

b) Pietro: Studies in a private school, quite interested in Ancient or Classic History narratives or narratives that take place around such times. Has books at home and his mother is a reader and encourages a reading habit. Combining fiction and historical settings, Pietro shares his taste for historical-mythological literature and corresponding movies (*The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lord of the Rings,* and *The Hunger Games*) with other youngsters of their recent generation, in addition to epical biographies, such as Ulysses and Napoleon. The young boy likes to follow interviews with authors, broadcasted on TV.

c) Lurdes: This young girl studies in a private school and has also shown interest in fiction books. She said she doesn't read classics like Machado de Assis or modern books by Jorge Amado that much, as requested by the school, because these books have essays, reviews and documentaries readily available on the internet. In this sense, Lurdes said the internet does not make her lose interest in reading, but it adds to the lack of interest already shown in class because classes do not broaden nor diversify reading options. She commented: "I don't understand why the school does not encourage books like *Harry Potter*". The perception that the readings proposed by the school have little application to the present and to future projects makes books not interesting or, at least, distant from the daily lives

of youngsters. According to Lurdes, from the student's point of view, the lack of interest in certain reading leads them to access short and direct contents only to complete the assignment, without worrying about quality. From the school point of view, the young girl said that exams are focused on basic information, summaries and essays, and do not spark students' interest in researching and reflecting about the readings. Nevertheless, Lurdes recognized the value of reading and said the school should find another way, a more pedagogical way, to encourage student reading.

d) Conrado: This young man studies in a public school and says he likes fiction and action, with readings that follow online access. He said he has watched and read *Harry Potter* and books like *Ahmnat: os amores da morte*, scientific-religious fictions with plots, characters and settings that have a high impact on reader's imagination. He also likes the novel *Profecia celestina*, based on a doctrine of universal predestination. The themes of these fictional books design worldviews and narratives of meaning, addressing life, death and destiny, battles between the good and the evil, power and free will, Nordic mythology and/or medieval settings. Questioned about reading at school, Conrado said he makes the effort to read what is assigned to him because reading triggers imagination about what is being written and described. But he doesn't like the reading assignments proposed by the school because some readings are mandatory (students are not allowed to include their readings of interest, as already mentioned by the other youngsters) and they are only asked to make an essay of the text (no discussions about the plot, the settings and worldviews). According to the young man, the teacher has only recently accepted the reading suggestions of students.

e) Lorena:

> [...] I really like reading; I read a lot of novels, crime novels, news books. I loved *The Hunger Games*, for example. The school doesn't see those books as literature. In literature, you have to learn something... And *The Hunger Games*, what will students learn from it, you know? The books youngsters read, I think teachers see them as little important. They assign Machado de Assis books, with a difficult vocabulary; then you are forced to look up the book review on the internet... They will never, never [assign] *The Lord of the Rings*. If the school told us to read *Harry Potter*, I would love it! Wouldn't it be great? Making a seminar at school about *Harry Potter*?! Now, some students don't like reading at all. They really don't appreciate it. We have some students like that here. (Interview, 2012).

The opinions of Lorena, from a private school, confirm some of the aspects shown by other youngsters, including: the readings

assigned by the school are criticized, they involve foreign contexts with difficult plots and vocabulary; the interest in epic and mythical narratives with young characters and a dynamic pace; confession, by some of the students, that they use the internet to look up essays and summaries of the books assigned; the link between reading and the condition of being young, with a special highlight to books offering narratives with a meaning for their daily lives that are full of risks on one side and dreams on the other.

f) Rafael: This young man studies in a public school and says he is "addicted to books"; he is greatly interested in mythology, especially Greek mythology. In this sense, he usually reads texts on the internet, notes and narratives about it, including both History and Literature contents and contents from games and fictions available online (encyclopedias, thematic websites, articles posted). Rafael also likes the books mentioned earlier. He said: "I'm tired of reading Machado de Assis at school. That's all we read". To diversify his reading options he decided that: "Every time a movie or series about Brazilian literature is launched, I take the chance and read the corresponding book". He has been practicing writing and reading mythological stories: "I love myths and I've been practicing these readings on the internet because on the internet I can find several websites and communities that discuss Greek and medieval myths".

TALES AND MYTHS: WHY DO THEY HAVE SUCH PREFERENCE?

The favorite readings of these students confirm the successful nature of the books mentioned by modern youngsters, with their adaptations to the screens and their online extensions. In addition to the fact that accesses and ways of reading have been clearly mediatized, we must also point out some observations on the reasons for such preference.

"SIGNS OF THEMSELVES" IN LIKE EXPRESSIONS

The taste of these youngsters for mythological stories is quite clear from the data collected during the research: reading of the respective books, TV audience, going to the movies, participation in online thematic groups, and posting on social media. Although it is possible to note the effects of marketing, young readers are subjectively and collectively engaged in such narratives, reacting to their plots, identifying themselves with the characters, assimilating and interpreting arguments.

This leads us to believe that such taste indicates the communication of elements of identity and meaning to youngsters, that can be perceived in the similarities and/or connections between the plots and the students' condition of being young. Books, films and TV series target the young audience intentionally, transposing ancient tales and myths to their horizons. Therefore, the narratives are intelligible and interesting to urban and rural youngsters, from different social backgrounds, who have resisted learning the Latin Language, but repeat Harry Potter enchantments in Latin; or who are unfamiliar with the Celtic cosmovision, but eagerly follow the adventures of elves and wizards next to Ann, Martin, Rose and Peter (children who play central roles in *The Chronicles of Narnia*).

This narrative and imaginary arrangement, inspired by ancestral sources, is read by new generations, who are symbolically and subjectively immersed in the drama, finding not only entertainment, but a meaningful message there. When youngsters are involved in these readings, elements of their identity, temporality, relationship and ways of experiencing the world are at stake, and these elements are performed and led by them in their daily lives and represented (with technique and art) by the characters of the narrative. That is why youngsters become individually and collectively involved with these books, which are read with enthusiasm and shared in online or face-to-face meetings with their peers.

As noted by Pasquier (2005), the tastes of youngsters show "signs of themselves" when they express themselves with signs of authenticity and individualization. Reactions of appreciation or rejection, likes or dislikes point out to forms of communication and belonging, of findings and interests, expressed *for* and *with* the other (see also PASQUIER 2005, p. 67-72). When interacting with the saga of their heroes, youngsters show something about their own conditions.

DRAMATIZATION OF THE YOUTH CONDITION

The books most cited have young characters playing central roles who must face a series of challenges, including risks and overcoming of limitations, with fabulous (full of magic and enchanted beings) and at the same time cruel scenes (full of violence and destruction). Thus, these narratives amuse and entertain, but remit to the dark aspects of reality when pointing out the evil, which is always threatening, while cherishing dreams of the future in a fragile present. Also, the magic world and epic heroism break up close temporalities, bringing the past and the future together in the intense present of

daily adventures. Youngsters are at the center of the narrative, facing memories and fears at every episode. Magic helps, but does not take the leading role away from them: Harry Potter is threatened by the Dark Lord and his servants; Bella and Edward (the couple playing the central role in *The Twilight Saga*) go beyond their identities to become love partners, facing risks with their friends; the Pevensie siblings overcome their age differences and also a treason to fight the White Witch, sharing risks and victories with their allies (*The Chronicles of Narnia*); hobbits face adversities to control the evil power of a magic ring and to fight for freedom (*The Lord of the Rings*).

Therefore, the narrative dramatizes several elements of the daily condition of young people: being involved in a plot of emotions and risks; vulnerability despite the joy of living; relationship crises and breaking up with childhood; different temporalities between memories of the past and possibilities for the future; the challenge posed by adversities; telling good from evil; the simultaneous state of being friends with your allies and being alone as a hero; going through different psycho-emotional states and a catharsis of your own fears; daily pursuit of a motivational meaning for your life in order not to perish.

AID AND MEANING TO A JOURNEY OF HARDSHIPS

Recent magic tales are different from the science fiction literature of the seventies and eighties. From the eighties onwards, *mythological* narratives are easily found on books and screens. As very well described by Campbell, both the characters and the enthusiastic readers of these narratives are *young heroes* setting out on a journey of hardships and meaning to their lives. This journey was systematized in three steps by the author: 1) breaking up with childhood, with primary ties and the departure of the hero; 2) hardships of initiation that mature and transform oneself; 3) the return, after learning the lessons, being integrated again to the group/society (see also CAMPBELL, 2007, p. 40-43).

These steps can be perceived in the trajectory of the referred to leading characters: Harry Potter loses his parents, sets out to Hogwarts (School of Witchcraft) and beats Voldemort in a series of battles and challenges; Frodo leaves his quiet village to carry the enchanted ring through a very dangerous path, until he beats Sauron; Bella is turned into a vampire to stay with Edward, leaves her father's house and fights with her loved one until the end; Katniss Everdeen leaves her family and becomes a symbol of resistance and freedom after a sequence of deadly games, from which she returns victorious. Courage and

fear, friendship and treason, ties and disruptions form the plots, in a message that motivates one to cope with his/her own fears, motivates the courage of lovers, the recognition of friendship and the daily battles in view of a risky future. And just like in real life where youngsters have meaningful persons as reference, the leading characters expose their youth condition when interacting with their masters (Dumbledore, Gandalf, Aslam) and friends (Hermione, Sam, Caspian), where they find wisdom and safety, support and understanding.

We can also note some differences between science fiction (fiction) and recent mythical productions (fantasy), each one of its own setting: science fiction from the seventies and the eighties place emphasis on the control and use of technologies for the good of humanity and the planet, with plots containing futuristic appeals, using laser rays and telepathy to overcome the tacit fear of a nuclear war. On the other hand, the reedited mythological narratives of today place emphasis on a hero that matures after facing hardships, with daily dramas, resorting to the experience of a wise person and to the powers of magic to face the evil that threatens the present days. The laser swords and extraterrestrial beings of science fiction are replaced with the magic wands and magic entities of tales. However, the leading role of young heroes continues to be highly valued.

From the perspective of the experience, the daily lives of modern youngsters are more closely related to the former setting (of a mythical inspiration) than to the latter (of a scientific inspiration): after decades of scientific and technological advancement, of atomic and genetic achievements, juvenile subjectivity is under construction, surrounded by new family arrangements, seeking to establish ties, afraid of environmental catastrophes, moving from one quick and simultaneous connection to the other, with time and space getting smaller and smaller in a present time that is so accelerated. From the perspective of young people, time is concentrated into an extended day: the possibilities of choice are diversified, the risks are added and time runs by.

In his research study about the individual and modernity, sociologist Martuccelli (2010) had already noticed "the historical challenges individuals are forced to face, which are produced socially, represented culturally, and distributed unfairly" (ARAÚJO; MARTUCCELLI, 2010, p. 83). Among such challenges, one can name, in the social daily lives of youngsters, family, school and labor hardships, whose present and future possibilities pose risks which are equally present and future. To overcome this journey of hardships, youngsters resort to aids, both material and symbolic aids, such as

signs of belonging, codes of language and narratives of meaning (see also MARTUCCELLI, 2007). If the crisis of traditional values and the reductionisms of instrumental rationality are added to daily hardships, we can more clearly understand the potential aid offered by myths, reedited in a mediatic way: "The primary function of mythology and ritual acts has always been to provide symbols that cause the human spirit to progress, in opposition to that other constant human fantasies that tend to take them back". (CAMPBELL, 2007, p. 21)

In fact, modern scientific rationality is a recent datum is Western history (starting in the 16th century) when compared to mythological collections, whose symbols and narratives have been used by us to understand and populate Earth over the centuries. The functions of aid and meaning that tales have today count on an extensive pre-edition process in our minds, rites and sacred texts, being active not only in Religion, but also in Literature and Arts, in general and above all, in the architecture of our psyche:

> Despite having limited language and reality interpretation, mythologies have shaped human history over the centuries and give access to obscure elements of our psyche that still motivate poetry, arts, human sciences and technology. (MAÇANEIRO, 2011, p. 39)

Childhood and adolescence are particular sensitive to mythologies, which follow our growth and contribute to a *paideia* of existence: good leading us through ties and disruptions, in an initiation to new psychological and cognitive heights, until reaching maturity in adulthood. Then we experience another enchantment, purified by our living experiences, and begin telling tales to the youngsters, having the feeling we are - finally! their authors.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: IMPLICATIONS TO THE SCHOOL

We have pointed out some demands and opportunities that young students propose to the school, from their readings and their mediatized cultural context:

a) New protocols of writing and reading

We have observed mediatization has speeded up decentralization of reading, which today goes beyond and influences its traditional spaces, like schools, libraries, universities and homes, in force from medieval times to first modernity. Along with such territorialization of reading and writing, new ways of text circulation have been created,

with diversity and simultaneity, favored by recent technological aids, such as cable TV and the internet, and their access devices: computers, iPhones, tablets, etc. This is not restricted to the technique, and it affects the relationship between the individual and texts which - although referring to authors and documental sources - have their interpretation less linked to some kind of authority.

Narratives certainly establish significant links between argument and authority, links which are entangled in texts and perceived after a more careful or investigative reading. However, these links of authority are no longer restricted to their traditional spaces, making text interpretation conditioning less likely to occur, which is currently relative to the subjectivity of readers. Readers tend to read with greater emancipation, situated in their own time/space, with textual arguments being assimilated at different levels. This certainly compromises critics and the competences needed in reading, especially in informative, scientific and scholar readings, and this is a call to education to play its role. Nevertheless, we cannot deny the diversity of territories and protocols of reading/writing: juvenile readings take media to schools and take schools to media.

In addition to the new aids, the diversity, quickness and simultaneity of accesses influence vocabulary, cognition, and reading mental and actual time, which are fragmented and crossed by the pathways of mediatic interaction. This promotes analyses that obviously go beyond the lines of this article. Especially because the new protocols affect both information assimilation and the construction of self, in addition to sociability, and this happens as a result of the referred to rapidity and interaction. And even if it causes education to be displaced, we have to accept we are living another chapter in the millenary history of books and reading, which has always been in course. Instead of only criticizing or being disappointed by the previous forms of reading and writing, we reinforce the opinion of Martín-Barbero that it is time schools insert their critics of audiovisual contents and forms "into an educational change project of cultural dimensions" (2014, p. 55). The author says:

> I see it as a project that puts the idea of culture the school works with in our countries in first place so that it can begin to recognize sciences and technologies, both as productivity devices and as ways to transform how we perceive, know and feel. This means incorporating new communication and information technologies as "intellectual technologies" (LÉVY, 1993), i.e. as knowledge strategies, and not as mere instruments of illustration or dissemination. [...] The dimensions, and not only the cultural effects, of communication technologies should be thought over and taken over from the school and at the school. (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2014, p. 55-56)

Additionally, this setting has shown us some opportunities: a new relationship between writing and orality, especially in social media and in screen-contact resources, like What's app; simultaneous and diversified perception of contents, waiting for filters and collection classification; willingness to express oneself more often (despite conceptual and lexical limits) which turns some youngsters into usual authors; confrontation and exchange of opinions, showing different levels of maturity while becoming an empirical attempt to exercise critics; new sensitivities demonstrated, which are less technical and more relational, with young people being attentive to friendship, visibility (see and be seen) and collective participations, several times based on school relations. These data request schools to indicate their position: new educational projects must correspond to the new generation of students.

b) Mediatization of mythologies and cultural displacement

As indicated earlier, we have noted that mythological narratives offer readers a *religious* aid, in the anthropological sense of the word: they contribute to a continuous reinterpretation of personal and community experiences (*relegere*); reconnect individuals with one another, with nature and with transcendence (*religare*).[11] This enables an interpretation of time/space and indicates an existential and moral address to the individual, as described by Campbell: eliminating chaos, choosing good over evil, integrating with oneself, establishing values that are collectively binding, relationship with supernatural forces and future prospection (see also CAMPBELL, 2010, p. 20-22).

Today, we notice this old function of the myth has been redimensioned, both in editorial and commercial terms, by mediatization of narratives, which have been retold in new formats, with new emphases, in books, films and games. Therefore, the productions mentioned affect modern youngsters, who are seen as readers, viewers and interpreters. However, there is one difference as to the circulation and acceptance of narratives: modern youngsters are no longer bound to tradition ancestry that generated the myth, with their endogenous codes and initiators, nor to the guardian authority of narrated lessons (clan, school, religion). Instead, their are connected to mediatic networks, translating and reediting the old narrative according to the language and sensitivity of new generations.

In other words, the ancestral sense is *extradited* from its place of origin - as mentioned by Piglia (1991) - and taken to the territoriality of the media: myth elements are preserved in new technological

containers, with a pace and inscription that are suitable to the communicational sensitivity of young people. Thus, myth lessons are transmitted through media, which confer four characteristics to the old text: instantaneity, rapidity, plurality and interactivity. This is usually operationalized in two fundamental ways: a) selection, crossing and rearrangement of these tales and mythologies, which are turned into literary series, films and games, combining pieces of different traditions - something like sewing with threads and parts of traditional fabrics/texts; b) young people being seen as participants in the narrative, as they are allowed to understand and react to the messages, not only by reading them, but rewriting them using the different resources available: choosing texts, posting their likes and critics, interfering in the plot and producing new texts, in connection with other individuals - which is *interaction* itself.

Conversely, the acceptance of these versions by youngsters is not only a result of well-edited sewing and interactions, it points out to something more subtle: the anthropological position and the sensitivity of modern youngsters who "live amid displaced demarcations and boundaries between reason and imagination, science and art, nature and artifice", experiencing a kind of "cultural hybridization between tradition and modernity, between the cult, the popular, and the massive" (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2014, p. 57).

The books and films address the universe of myths and magic initiations, following the displaced rationality and sensitivity of the youth itself: born amid the Modernity crisis, modern youth has incorporated the lights and shadows of Religions, Sciences and the Market, simultaneously experimenting the ambiguities and opportunities, the limits and possibilities of present times. In fact, youngsters experience displacements and hybridizations, tired of functional analyses and of those who seeking for syntheses which are still being rehearsed. This is the spaces that opens up to mythical rationality, with its narratives, masters and senses. This does not seem to be a new mythologization of the world, nor a simple return of young people to the pre-modern paradigm; instead, it seems to be a cultural change, a move of sensitivity and knowledge that makes them pursue intelligibility of themselves and of the world, which is more receptive to their yearnings in respect to the society and the planet. Thus, magic addresses Ecology, villains address Politics, degrees of initiation address the School, the hardships faced address Sociology: youngsters, with their readings and audiences, are narrating their conditions and perceptions of being in the world.

c) Mediatization of reading and the art of teaching

As observed above, mediatization allows extensive and instantaneous access, interfering in the perception of time and in the programing of youngsters' daily interests. Whether dense or fragmented, of a scientific nature or not, the readings offered in the media are seen as more meaningful and more diversified, and are readily accessible, attracting young students. These readings contrast with the books and the reading pace proposed at school, which are established not only in the curriculum, but also in the ways of reading, which favor group, hegemonic and less interactive readings. However, this will not eliminate the role and the space of school in encouraging reading and writing, with an argumentative, conceptual and grammatical approach to texts. On the contrary, mediatization of reading and writing requires the school to change its role to once again take on the responsibility of the *art of teaching*, with refreshed competence, as indicated in the topics above. Put simply, the dissemination of hardcopy and electronic texts might diversify school reading and suggest new technologies in teaching and pedagogical practices. Nevertheless, the *art of teaching* - the perpetuation of the old art of teaching concepts, meanings and interpretations - uses not only new instrumental resources, but also new expressions of presence, competence and incidence when educators interact with their students. Considering that concepts require metaphors, meanings require examples and interpretations require critics, two things have become clear: a) that the lesson (*lectio*) covers the letter (*littera*) and also goes beyond it, because teaching is moving from matters to individuals, from letters to meanings, from the *ex-scriptura* of codes to the *in-scriptura* of understanding. b) that the lesson needs close, accessible and competent mediators to declaim, instigate and decant texts while ensuring their availability to students. Therefore, to the media offer, the school should respond by offering accessible and meaningful *mediators* to youngsters, recognizing them both as *young people* and *students*, simultaneously. Readers in mediatization in our classrooms are not seeking for technologies, but for the *connections* made possible by such technologies, in a relationship that is, most of the time, mobile and fluid, but also open to the meaningful presence of narrators of meaning that appreciate and encourage them, following them on a journey of encounter and knowledge.

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NOTAS

[1] A new fact in the mediatized context is that the media, in addition to being used as a set of instrumental means with their messages, has been increasingly playing the role of a *producer of social meaning*, as observed by Muniz Sodré: "[...], in fact, it changes the nature of public space, traditionally animated by politics and the written press. Now, traditional and brand new forms of reality representation (virtual, simulative space or writing) interact with one another, expanding the technocultural dimension where new social players are created and where they drift around" (2006, p. 19). Therefore, mediatization would be a social process that changes how human communication, and its issues, is conceived, which get to be combined in the cultural context of techno-interaction, literally *entangling* individuals and institutions.

[2] Doctorate thesis, sponsored by CAPES. Field research lasted one year (2012), and 343 questionnaires were applied, 28 individual interviews were conducted and six groups of discussion were held. The real names of the schools and youngsters used in this paper were withheld to preserve their identities. Ethical guidelines were followed for the research study conducted with the youngsters and schools.

[3] The topic "juvenile reading practice" was especially addressed in the thesis because it features single elements of the relationship between the youngsters researched and this practice, such as: a) critics, ways of coping or new ways of experiencing reading at school; b) new modes, types/forms of reading and its aids: internet, social media, reading groups, book websites, author's pages, etc. And the relationship between reading modes and juvenile identities: choosing readings based on taste, favorite genres, among others.

[4] These data are different for youngsters interviewed during the field part of the study. Among the 14 students in private school, 68% said they read fiction and novel books more often; among the 14 students interviewed in public school, 38% of the students read this kind of books.

[5] Out of the 28 youngsters interviewed, all of them said they had read *Harry Potter*; *The fault in our starts* was read by 17 of them; *The Lord of the Rings* by 21 youngsters. Read biblical texts on the internet, 12 youngsters; texts written by evangelical pastors, 5 youngsters; and texts from women's websites, 4 youngsters. Miscellaneous blogs about cars, science and history, 19 youngsters.

[6] *Harry Potter* is a literary series of fantasy adventures in seven books written by British writer J. K. Rowling. Since the first volume was launched, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, in 1997, it became quite popular and was a best-seller, giving origin to movies and video games, among other things. The seven published books were *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

[7] Four volumes: *Twilight, New Moon, Eclipse, Breaking Dawn.*

[8] Trilogy, with: *The Hunger Games, Catching Fire, Mockingjay.*

[9] *The Lord of the Rings* is a trilogy written by J. R. Tolkien, with the following volumes: *The Lord*

of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring (2001), *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers* (2002), *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003).

[10] *The Chronicles of Narnia* is a series of seven books for children, young adults and adults, written by Clive Stapleton Lewis. He created a world where a witch decrees perpetual winter and where there are more talking animals than people, with battles fought by centaurs, giants and fauns.

[11] "The word religion comes from the Latin word *religio*. Cícero and Áulio Gélio tell us that both the name and the participle *religens* come from the verb *relego (-ere)*, which means joining again, reading again or going through something again, such as a thought, a reading or a word: 'Those who carefully resume and somehow scrupulously gather (*relegerent*) all things referring to the worship of gods; those people are called religious, from the verb *relegere*' [*Sobre a natureza dos deuses* II, 28, 82]" (GARCÍA BAZÁN, 2002, p. 43).

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