

Anachronism of literary criticism in newspaper: the transition from romanticism matrix to ‘rodapé’ criticism

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-5844202013>

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Abstract

Literary criticism is a topic rarely explored in the Communication field, although it occupied a prominent role in the journalistic culture in a period in which literature also enjoyed great prestige in society. This article aims to analyze literary criticism in conjunction with the journalistic activity in Brazil, in three moments: what we call the “romanticism matrix”; the consolidation at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries; the invention of what was known as “*Footer* criticism” in the first half of last century. In methodological terms, the concept of discourse networks, by Kittler, helps to understand the origins of criticism in Romanticism and on how newspapers value certain types of textual articulation in different periods. The aim is to shed light on a process that has not yet been studied, especially the cleavage observed between criticism and report, which in the digital media environment undergoes new reconfigurations.

Key words: literary criticism. *footer* criticism. José Veríssimo. Romanticism. Journalism History.

Introduction

Literary criticism in newspapers consists of a research object barely explored in researches conducted in the field of Communication. It is a theme more common in the field of Linguistics and/or Literature, however, these studies do not usually observe the conjunctions related to specific demands of the newspapers that initially published the texts. In the 19th century, a period when Literature enjoyed great prestige in society, literary criticism published in newspapers consequently played a prominent role in the journalistic culture. This prominence has lingered through the 20th century, although reconfigured, as we will discuss further in this text.

The fact that this theme has not aroused significant interest yet in the Communication field can be partly explained by the emphasis on researches on the activity of news report and on the figure of the reporter. A certainly justified and necessary emphasis regarding the consolidation of communicational researches, with the development of their own methodologies, seeking to supply demands (including pedagogical ones) that other areas (such as History) could not meet.

In this movement, however, other figures that composed the universe of newspapers were (inevitably) left behind. The author of the main article of the first page (*artigo de fundo*), for example, which aimed to support and tie all the other newspaper texts, was eventually moved to the back of the newspaper. However, we currently are in a new moment of historical researches about the press that suggest the reintegration of these figures to the journalistic scope, without prejudice to the reporter.

Certainly, the transformations provided by digital technologies help to understand this proposal, as the news report has been shifted from the place to which it has been circumscribed at least since the middle of the last century. New questions about varied linguistic experiences are necessarily beginning to be formulated not only about contemporaneity, but about the history of Journalism. The opinion¹ was left aside at the time when the field was involved, at least since the middle of the last century, with the construction of assumptions related to the idea of objectivity². Now, the opinion is a topic that is strongly returning to the journalistic scene. Therefore, raising new awareness to the way in which the literary criticism activity has historically been placed in the newspapers, whose articulation also differs from the report, can provide subsidies for the expansion of the debate on the constitutive languages of journalism, in addition to the report, and in conjunction with it.

This article will take the participation in the press of the critic José Veríssimo (1857-1916) as a starting point. With Sílvio Romero and Araripe Jr., Veríssimo forms the triad that, in literary studies, is considered the founder of the tradition of Brazilian literary criticism in the 20th century. Among these critics, Veríssimo had greater presence in the Republican press, thus he is prominent for our purpose. The period of his performance, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, in the so-called *Tropical Belle Époque*, will be the axis of articulation from which a kind of anachronism of literary criticism in newspapers is evidenced, as well as the passage from what we call "Romanticism matrix" to the "footer criticism" (*crítica de rodapé*), at the bottom of the page, which will be consolidated in the country's press around the 1930s.

Our first question is: what is a Romanticism matrix? This study will be organized in three periods: in the center, the axis of articulation, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century; as a basis, previously, the period that forms the Romanticism matrix; and finally,

1 A study by Marques de Melo (1994) is one of the few to consider the opinion as a genre of Brazilian journalism. The matter of journalistic genres in Brazil, generally taking Marques de Melo's proposition as a starting point, has been resumed in recent years, partly due to the reconfigurations proposed by the new forms of information circulation in virtual environments.

2 The matter of objectivity built as a generational project of journalists in the 1950s, which was supported by a textual construction based on the report, is widely analyzed by Ribeiro (2007), also including aspects related to industrial professionalization and the constitution of the first Journalism courses. Barbosa (1996, 2007, 2010) conducts extensive research on how the journalistic field begins to be structured at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. His pioneering and breathtaking work on the history of communicational processes related to journalism encompasses aspects of practice and its origin. Sodr  (1999), in his classical study, also provides indispensable subsidies on the history of Journalism and of the Brazilian press until the middle of the last century. In his case (marked by the analysis of the relations of production from a Marxist view), as well as in Barbosa (influenced by authors such as Darnton, Chartier, Ricoeur), the processes are analyzed in their guiding principles. Here, the objective is more specific, when we seek to perform the analysis of the conjunctions of literary criticism in the journalistic area. Although it is not an ignored theme, literary criticism is not usually the object of attention in researches of the area as a specific theme for study within the journalistic and communicational field.

the period of the footer criticism, which had been established in Brazil from the 1920s to the 30s.

Romanticism matrix

As the name implies, the idea of “Romanticism matrix” relates to the period of Romanticism, in its origin, at the turn of the 18th to the 19th century. We can say there is practically a consensus in the studies of the theme that indicates the birth of literary criticism, in its modern format, with the Romanticism. In some ways, literary criticism would be a byproduct of Romanticism. Friedrich Kittler (1990), a media theoretician who seeks to understand the conditions that led to the emergence of literary criticism in the German context, relates this language modality to the greater scope of what he calls “hermeneutic criticism”. The way Kittler (1990) approaches the issue, from the reality of his country, is particularly important here, because Romanticism has strong roots in German³ and influenced the diffusion of the movement in Europe and even around the world. Let us say there is a matrix in the German territory - to use the expression already highlighted in the title.

By reconstituting the circuits of what he calls “hermeneutic criticism”, in the period in which mass literacy instruction occurs for the first time, in the 19th century, Kittler (1990) also points to the finitude of this criticism. At the time of the formation of nation states, German literature is read in schools and poetry replaces the Bible. The poet’s words, such as those of Goethe, an artist central in that discourse network, acquire themselves sacredness. Punctuating the discourse network, there is the Woman’s function equated with the Nature’s. She is the mother, teacher of the first letters, although writing and publishing are denied to them - the publishing circuit of the men of letters, according to Kittler, was homosexual⁴. But the Woman is the poet’s *raison d’être*, the one he writes to. Thus Discourse Networks 1800 is originated: through the mouth of the mother who lullabies immemorial songs to her child.

Gradually, the system of universities develops, primarily aiming to form a cadre for the new state bureaucracies. The tradition of the essay – and of hermeneutics – is born in German education since elementary school. The formal education of girls is also reinforced: they need to be prepared to be mothers and also to alphabetize their children. Education (*Bildung*) becomes a keyword. The editorial market is characterized, for the first time, by the excess: there is a reading “mania”, especially among young women, which is considered to be healthy if balanced. This excess becomes an important characteristic. In the face of

3 The German preponderance is notorious. The German Romanticism was pioneer and imposed even before the movement in France. Candido makes a humorous reference to this German base for the Brazilian case. In 1836, a group of Brazilians gathered in Paris, under the command of Gonçalves de Magalhães, launched the *Revista Niterói, Revista Brasileira de Ciências, Letras e Artes*, which, despite lasting only two issues, became a starting point for the Romanticism and the literary nationalism. “The move had been made, merging in a mediocre, but fecund way, for our use, the Schlegel-Staël-Humboldt-Chateaubriand-Denis complex” (Free translation) (CANDIDO, 2006, p. 331).

4 Gumbrecht (2013) notes that Kittler incorporates a pragmatic consideration of the sexual difference in his approach to History.

it, mechanisms of selection by criticism, anthologies and education are developed, with the formation of sets of works considered canonical. The consolidation of copyrights also stands out for the organization of editorial mechanisms.

Empirical documents are fundamental for the reconstitution of discourse networks. The archive with which Kittler (1990) works comprehends the very literature (from inside), especially *Faust*, by Goethe; a wide variety of epistolary material, especially by writers; literacy instruction booklets; administrative orders; educational programs; philosophical works, among others. The poet is the other face of the coin in which the civil servant appears – one needs the other, and the discourse network is constituted with both.

Romanticism, in this context, becomes a *technology of the letter*⁵. Kittler (1990) does not analyze it as if it were an ideology that provides a notion of artistic autonomy, the original voice of the genius, the singular expression of creative imagination beyond reality, the encounter with totality. He does not deny ideology, but he wants to be situated at a previous stage. The elements that he seeks - from a materiality of communication perspective, a concept that Gumbrecht and his group (GUMBRECHT; PFEIFFER, 1994) developed in the second half of the 1980s from Kittler's (1990) ideas⁶ - compose what he calls "discourse network" (from the German *Aufschreimesysteme*). Through this concept, he wants to observe the way in which the possibility of communication is organized at a given time and historical context. The objective, in the first stage of his work, is to present the conditions that enabled the formation of the Discourse Network 1800, when Romanticism and German idealism emerge, a period he then compares to the Discourse network 1900, from the turn of the 19th to the 20th century.

As a *technology of the letter*, Romanticism uses several technological resources, such as literary criticism. In this regard, as we have already pointed out, there is practically a consensus: literary criticism is born and develops with the Romanticism, with variations, certainly. José Veríssimo, in his *História da literatura brasileira* (History of Brazilian literature), gave emphasis to this original moment:

Criticism as an independent branch of literature, the study of works with a wider criterion than the rules of classical rhetoric, and already following psychological inquiries, mesological and historical references and others, seeking to understand them and explain their formation and essence, this criticism derived immediately from that, thus preserving some of its most antipathic features, was born in the Romanticism (free translation) (VERÍSSIMO, 1998 [1916], p. 384)⁷.

5 The vision with which Kittler proposes his media concept finds a parallel in Walter Benjamin. "The only critic or theoretician I know who views the historical significance of the media in a similarly radical way is Walter Benjamin" (WELLBERY, 1990, p. XXXI apud KITTLER, 1990).

6 The classic book by Kittler, *Aufschreimesysteme*, is from 1985 and was translated in the U.S. into English in 1990 with the title *Discourse Networks*, a work that we take as a basis. The book is unpublished in Portuguese.

7 In Portuguese: A crítica como um ramo independente da literatura, o estudo das obras com um critério mais largo que as regras da retórica clássica, e já acompanhando de indagações psicológicas e referências mesológicas, históricas e outras, buscando compreender-

A new form of “textual articulation” is put into motion with literary criticism. Prendergast (2007, p. 8) points out that the French critic Sainte-Beuve (1804-1864) did not come to use the term hermeneutics, but was, “although just slightly”, aware of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s work, considered as the father of hermeneutics in German Romanticism. In Sainte-Beuve, the interpretation began with a “conversation” (*la causerie*) that demands the exercise of the critic’s listening – in 1859, he began to write his influential weekly column of literary criticism titled *Les causeries du Lundi* (The conversations of Monday) in the French newspaper *Le Constitutionnel*. Listening to the other would be a movement of empathy, aiming to abolish not the difference, but the distance, in the search for a “neutral criticism” to consider the point of view and the stylistic universe of a given author. Sainte-Beuve, who integrated the Romanticism circle around Victor Hugo, was “the main professional critic of France” in his time, a prototype of the public intellectual, an authority that created values and influenced readers “through the *medium* of literary journalism” (PRENDERGAST, 2007, p. 17). His intellectual authority would be derived – from the perspective of the propositions raised by Kittler (1990) – from the valorization of hermeneutic criticism enabled by the Discourse network 1800.

Sainte-Beuve, because of the great power that he concentrated, became a reference of the activity of professional literary criticism in the press. This would be valid even for Veríssimo, although he had been influenced by many other critics, with experiences diverse from those of Romanticism, and Machado de Assis was his main literary interlocutor. In Brazil, where the influence of French culture was decisive, Sainte-Beuve was a well-known figure (even before the phase in *Le constitutionnel*) when he used to write for the influential *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, widely read in the country. The criticism he exercised would have a “Romanticism matrix”, which is defined, therefore, by a form of textual articulation based on the hermeneutics that the Romanticism movement demanded.

Critique vs. report

It is necessary to go to the newspaper archive to understand how came to be the participation of José Veríssimo as a literary critic in Rio de Janeiro’s press came to be (exercise that, although simple, rarely is done; in general, studies of Veríssimo’s criticism are based especially on the compilations of his texts organized by himself⁸). Born in Óbidos, in the Brazilian state of Pará, the critic was already an intellectual personality in Belém when

lhes e explicar-lhes a formação e essência, essa crítica derivada aliás imediatamente daquela, pelo que lhe conservou alguma das feições mais antipáticas, nasceu com o Romantismo (VERÍSSIMO, 1998 [1916], p. 384).

8 In life, Veríssimo published his press texts in two series called *Estudos brasileiros* (Brazilian studies); six series of *Estudos de literatura brasileira* (Studies of Brazilian literature); and three titled *Homem e coisas estrangeiras* (*Man and Foreign Things*), although this is only a portion of his participation in newspapers). João Alexandre Barbosa, author of the main study about him, highlights (only once in his book) that the editorial lines of the newspapers in which the critic acted are important for the comprehension of the texts. The content of this criticism, he affirms, “simultaneously reveals both the line of the periodical in which they were edited and the kind of audience they sought to reach” (1974, p. 68) (Free translation). However, Barbosa does not manage to develop this analysis, being detained in the ideas presented without connecting them to the newspaper editorial lines, or to their respective audiences.

he moved to Rio in 1891, just under two years after the Republic was proclaimed. In 1890, he had published *The National Education*, when he was director of public education in the first republican government of Pará, under the command of Lauro Sodré. The book was his passport into the prestigious intellectual circles in the capital.

In Rio, his first job was in the brand new *Jornal do Brasil*, created on April 9, 1891 by Rodolfo Dantas and had Joaquim Nabuco as editor-in-chief⁹. In a short time, on account of a reputable team and innovations that it sought to implement, from the use of the telegraph to new forms of distribution with wagons (SODRÉ, 1999), the newspaper became successful. The participation of the critic began on July 12, 1891, and its debut was with a series of articles precisely regarding educational issues. Although in his home state he had already written for the press about several topics, and notably about literature, in the capital he was not yet recognized as a literary critic (but this would not take too long to happen).

On September 20, 1891, a Sunday, Veríssimo published his first literary critique in the newspaper section for the “feuilleton”, in the footer of the front page (where usually the journalist Constâncio Alves signed his humorous weekly political chronicle). In the column titled *Folhetim Literário*, the text dealt (with little sympathy) with a historical study by Pereira da Silva about the Portuguese poet Filinto Elísio. On the following Sunday, September 27, came his second column of this type, about the naturalist J. Barbosa Rodrigues, whom the critic deemed as “the last Indianist”. But *Folhetim Literário* was not published again – a sign that they were struggling to find the best way for the literary criticism.

Finally, on October 5, certainly following the example of Sainte-Beuve with his *Causeries du Lundi*, *Folhetim* received the subtitle “On Mondays”, on that day addressing “Naturalism in the Brazilian literature”, signed by Veríssimo. This would become the format adopted from then on for his literary criticism, always on the front page and sometimes continuing in the same spot on page two. The tone seemed also more fit to the publication than the initial columns. Somehow (or because of how), the critic of French Romanticism was still influential in Brazil in the last decade of the 19th century.

Jornal do Brasil apparently enjoyed the result, so much that on the 14th of October it published on the front page a great thanks sent by Alfredo E. Taunay praising the critique of Monday October 12th about *La retraite de Laguna*, his novel inspired by the Paraguayan War. Taunay, who belonged to Nabuco’s social circle, explained in the article why he did not write the book in Portuguese, weaving a series of reservations to the Brazilian editorial market.

The highlight of the criticism activity of Veríssimo in *Jornal do Brasil* was the text he wrote, on January 6, 1892 (earlier that year he would cease to collaborate with the newspaper), about *Quincas Borba*, by Machado de Assis¹⁰, who, in his opinion, was the

9 Nabuco was initially hired as a foreign correspondent (another initiative that *Jornal do Brasil* successfully used, having correspondents in different countries - on this regard, see Sodré, 1999). When the newspaper was launched, Nabuco was living in London, but he returned to Brazil in June (as it can be read in the very newspaper issue) and joined the staff of his friend Rodolfo Dantas.

10 With this article, he announced his independence regarding the critical program of Silvio Romero (author of the monumental *História da literatura brasileira (History of Brazilian Literature)*, published in 1888, highlighting that the “nationalistic” criterion could

greatest Brazilian writer of all time (and he predicted it even for the future¹¹). The two had already distanced from the Romanticism projects, but the possibility of an influential criticism, in the way of Sainte-Beuve, remained an ideal. On January 8, 1900, Machado wrote to the critic (the correspondence between them is extensive) a single-line letter: “My dear Veríssimo, Sainte-Beuve qui pleure un autre Sainte-Beuve (Arsène Houssaye)” (free translation) (2011)¹². Would that be a joke? In any case, it indicates the permanence of the French critic among them.

In his column on the front page of *Gazeta de Notícias*, Machado even came to compare Veríssimo to Sainte-Beuve. On the occasion of the reissue in 1899 by Laemmert of *Cenas da vida amazônica* (Scenes of the Amazonian life), collection of novels that the critic had launched in 1886, when he lived in Pará, Machado wrote the critique *Um livro* (A book), in which he highlighted: “The author, who occupies an eminent place in the Brazilian criticism, also had a day for the novella, such as Sainte-Beuve, who wrote *Volupté*, before reaching the summit of French Criticism” (06.11.1899). In 1909, it was the turn of Sílvio Romero to relate the French critic to the Brazilian one in the destroyer libel (as his very style) *Zéverissimas ineptas da crítica*. Romero called the *Paraense* critic “Sainte-Beuve Manatee” and even compared the working conditions among them:

Sainte-Beuve and Ed [Mond] Scherer each wrote their article of criticism weekly; but they did not collaborate, at the same time, with four or five newspapers, nor they went out to teach open book lessons at the Teachers’ College, nor would they go to any railway [Garnier]. They were robust, had fortune and secretaries who helped them (free translation) (ROMERO, 1909, p. 52)¹³.

If Veríssimo can be considered a tropical Sainte-Beuve, judging by the comparisons, he would be, however, dislocated in time: an anachronistic Sainte-Beuve. Ten years after his arrival in the capital, in 1901, when he was writing the literary criticism in *Correio de Manhã*, he already missed the early years of *Jornal do Brasil*. On the occasion of the early death of Rodolfo Dantas, he wrote an article from which one can deduce that he was at a crossroads of journalistic styles. Although he highlighted that the initial conception

not be decisive for the analysis of literary works, because if so Machado’s literature would be virtually null. The text was important to sediment Veríssimo’s connection with the writer.

11 In a letter to Mário de Alencar that is part of the collection of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL), he affirmed, when they worked to preserve the memory of the writer, shortly after his death: “And as I believe that Machado de Assis will be in the 21st century a much greater name than he is today, all this will be precious and posterity will be granted to him, my dear Mário, for your goodness sake towards him” (free translation)(Dec. 20, 1908).

12 Free translation: “Sainte-Beuve crying another Sainte-Beuve”. Irene Moutinho, who worked with the collection of Machado’s letters published by the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL), under the coordination of Sérgio Paulo Rouanet, writes in a note that Houssaye (1815-1896), French writer and critic, was editor of the prestigious Parisian magazine *L’Artiste*. But there was no reference to that phrase in Houssaye. According to Moutinho, it may have been invented by Machado (2011, p. 448).

13 From Portuguese: Sainte-Beuve e Ed[mond] Scherer escreviam cada um seu artigo de crítica por semana; mas não colaboravam, ao mesmo tempo, em quatro ou cinco jornais, nem saíam para dar lições de livro aberto na Escola Normal, nem iam a agulheiro [a Garnier] algum. Eram robustos, tinham fortuna e secretários que os ajudavam (ROMERO, 1909, p. 52).

of *Jornal do Brasil* may not be “the most consistent with the time and the country” and recognizing himself as “suspicious” to talk about it, he stressed that it was “the most dignified, the highest, the most generous”:

[...] He [Dantas] understood the newspaper as nothing but a disinterested organ of doctrine, an exhibitor not only of facts, but of principles, ideas, theoretical suggestions and practices that clarified, guided, directed opinions and wills.

The newspaper in the American way was deeply unsympathetic to him; the journalistic scandal, in any form, was hateful to him, and to follow the mass, he would never have a newspaper. He wanted it more, well done, well written, respectable by its staff and by the procedure of the newspaper itself (free translation) (VERÍSSIMO, 1901)¹⁴.

In other words, it can be said that the type of criticism defended by Veríssimo, and for which he was recognized, already had difficulty to assert itself in the journalistic scene. In the very *Correio*, he faced dilemmas, although he continued to write on the front page, in the section that the newspaper called “Noble Column” (at the top left). It was not about the footer or the feuilleton, but the part reserved for the main article (usually one or two columns at the left side of top of the page), which took turns with other writers, including the newspaper owner, Edmundo Bittencourt. The oppositionist newspaper created in 1901 continued to be based on the importance of the writers (Veríssimo’s participation was sometimes praised), but the publication sought a more popular language to establish itself among the new urban medium class. The critic’s independence, in a certain way, clashed with these goals.

In an article in *Correio*, written by poet Antonio Salles as ordered by Bittencourt¹⁵, he presented the critic as “this writer, *who is not a journalist* and, by his character and literary education, never writes carelessly” (01.06.1903; my highlight). He said that the writers counted only on Veríssimo for the appreciation of their books, because the two other

14 From Portuguese: “[...] ele [Dantas] não compreendia o jornal senão como órgão desinteressado de doutrina, um expositor não só de fatos, mas de princípios, de ideias, de sugestões teóricas e práticas que esclarecessem, guiassem, dirigissem as opiniões e vontades./ O jornal à americana era-lhe profundamente antipático; o escândalo jornalístico, sob qualquer forma, lhe era odioso, e para seguir a massa, ele não faria jamais um jornal. Queria-o mais, bem feito, bem escrito, respeitável pelo elenco da sua redação e pelo procedimento do próprio jornal (VERÍSSIMO, 1901).

15 The research carried out by me found at Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa a letter from Edmundo Bittencourt in which he ordered Salles to comment on a collection of articles that had been released by Veríssimo. The two were close and in the letter the owner invites the poet to join him in a weekend in the mountains. After the article was published, extremely harsh in relation to Veríssimo, Bittencourt sends Salles another letter, in which he congratulates him on the text, saying he agrees with everything he had said. The article has an editorialized tone, in which the use of the first-person plural (a vague “we”), exposes the discomfort of the newspaper in relation to Veríssimo’s independence. Salles says that Veríssimo was very demanding for a meager literature such as the Brazilian. He would be like the traveler who, accustomed to seeing beautiful monuments in large civilized cities, was disappointed by the landscape of a small provincial town, a metaphor for Brazilian literature. Bittencourt says in his letter: “I really enjoyed your article: Veríssimo is actually that, and how great he is for our environment!” (Aug. 01, 1903). He was even accused of being a non-patriot. Machado de Assis (another “great” in the environment) shows solidarity with Veríssimo in the episode, with great delicacy. The discovery of this article and the letters, not yet cited in the critical fortune on Veríssimo, reveals the reason for the critic’s departure from *Correio da Manhã* at the beginning of 1903, something that Broca (1956) tries to explain, pointing out other reasons that he does not prove.

important critics, Sílvio Romero and Araripe Jr., were not often published in the newspapers. However, he strongly criticized what he considered to be a lack of flexibility of Veríssimo in his analyses. A few weeks later, the critic left the newspaper (although years later he came back in a sporadic way, using a pseudonym). Despite his comings and goings in newspapers – as in the important *Jornal do Commercio*, with which he collaborated from 1899 to 1901 (before *Correio*) and in other following occasions –, Veríssimo was part of the first generation of critics in the country that managed to have a more or less continuous trajectory in the press, a point stressed by Souza (2015).

In the early years of the Republic, the newspapers began to present a new level of industrialization, which benefited the activity of critics as Veríssimo, who did not accept writing for dilettantism and struggled for the professionalism of his activity (he was the father of a large family and for him it was a necessity to increase his wage with earnings from the press).

The literary criticism, of course, already existed in Brazil before that time. In Romanticism it played a fundamental role. Machado himself was a literary critic and even wrote a kind of program for the practice, titled *O ideal do crítico* (1865) (The critic's ideal). However, the Machado writer overlaps the critic. The critics who came before the Republican period were not fit to carry out extensive works and with fully developed programmatic lines, as analyzed by Souza (2015).

The contradiction of this situation, however, is that at the moment when the critique found conditions to be established as a continuous activity in Brazilian newspapers, the press no longer offered favorable conditions to accommodate the form of textual articulation that the critique proposed. In this way, literary criticism will be established in the country from a first relation of anachronism. It was an anachronism between the kind of textual articulation critics tried to impose, formed in the Romanticism logic, and the reality of the press and journalism in the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. This is even more important if we notice that the literary criticism established in that period form the basis of its tradition in the country, even for scholars many years later during the 20th century.

Retaking Kittler's (1990) terms, it can be said that, at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, the Brazilian newspapers were trying to cope with an order distant from that one of the "discourse network 1800", in which the Romanticism occupied a central role. In 1800, the criticism could be considered a kind of *technology of the letter*: it had a specific role in communication circuits of that period. But time have changed: in the "discourse network 1900", literary criticism, with its hermeneutic weight, had ceased to be demanded in the same way. To explain this change, Kittler (1990) highlights the impact of technologies such as the gramophone, the film, the typewriter and the telegraph had to create new demands of textual articulation.

Literature starts to lose its central role (there are other means that allow new experiences of meaning, such as image and sound). But it is not exactly innovation that immediately establishes change; with the telegraph, there is a new paradigm regarding the

textual articulation. Instead of interpretation of the hermeneutics, in which the critic seeks the *depth* of meaning, the textual *surface* began to occupy a central role in the discourse network. The invention of the typewriter, in the end of the 19th century, enables a new relation with writing, which acquires a certain body distancing with the use of this device, initially invented for the blind (which indicates automatism). Artistic experiences, from Symbolism to Expressionism, follow that same direction, by pointing out the materiality of language itself (in its language games), without seeking the depth of interpretation through hermeneutics, which is left aside (although this was not a totalizing rule and hermeneutics remained in historical studies and/or increasingly restricted to specialized fields of knowledge).

Veríssimo was feeling that literary criticism in the press was losing importance. He criticized the newspapers for what they were becoming but, in his last relevant collaboration in the press, for *Imparcial*, from 1912 onwards, he became more of a political chronicler than a critic. He couldn't find the same place to impose his literary criticism as in the previous years. In order to continue relevant in the public debate, he leaned more towards the political debate (without abandoning literature that formed his identity). Julia Lopes de Almeida summarizes the change in journalism in an article for the very *Imparcial*, when she stated that the newspapers passed "from ideas to the masses", which were to flatter ("Os jornais de hoje", *O Imparcial*, 01.17.1913, p. 2). Undoubtedly, the critic preferred the ideas, as he made clear in the text about *Jornal do Brasil*, in 1891. His fight against the new journalism was expressed in personal struggles. In 1906, for example, in the first João do Rio's attempt to enter the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL), he asked his friend Oliveira Lima, "immortal" as him, not to vote for the journalist, "a simple reporter without culture" (05.23.1906)¹⁶. Rio was a very successful news reporter. Veríssimo was one of the founders of ABL (institution created during the informal meetings between writers promoted in the newsroom of *Revista Brasileira*, which was edited by Veríssimo from 1895 to 1899). The critic considered João do Rio a arriviste, a *cabotin*, an expression he also used in his 1906 letter to diminish the journalist.

In 1907, in *O momento literário*, João do Rio, in turn, did not spare the critic. Would it be some sort of rematch? The work can be read as an attempt to compare the news report to the critique. It makes sense: in a society in which literature occupied a central role in the cultural context, literary criticism was an instance of great prestige in the newspapers (possibly the most prestigious). Thus, to assert itself, the news report needed to bury the critique and occupy this prominent spot. This is what João do Rio seeks to do in the survey in which he listened to writers about their work and relationship with journalism. Instead

¹⁶ The letter is part of an unprecedented correspondence series that covers about 20 years of friendship between Veríssimo and diplomat Oliveira Lima. The collection comprises 180 letters (about a thousand unpublished handwritten pages), fully transcribed by me for the research whose result we partially present here. The archive is preserved in the Oliveira Lima Library, at the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C., and integrates one of the largest private collections of works and documents of Brazilian culture. This larger research project counted on Capes' scholarship in Brazil, through PPGCOM (Post-Graduate Program in Communication) of UFRJ, and abroad (in an exchange period) on FAPERJ's scholarship; it would not have been possible to develop this work without the support of these governmental agencies. Of course, without the support of Princeton University, institution that received me in the USA, this research (in the way it is presented) would be impossible.

of the critique, he offered a new formula to understand the writers: the interview. Veríssimo was invited to participate, but is said to have refused, as well as Machado de Assis and some others cited. The journalist presents reasonable excuses from everyone, except Veríssimo, who would have said that the interview was a way to make money at the expense of others. In the attack on criticism, it was also necessary to attack the main critic in activity at the time in the press, and Veríssimo is ridiculed in the text. But he was not the only one: Sainte-Beuve himself is presented as an outdated and senile figure.

To the question about whether journalism would be “a good or bad factor for literary art”¹⁷, its main purpose when consulting around thirty writers, one might add whether journalism would, *instead of criticism*, be a good or bad factor... In the first lines of the presentation, in Before section, João do Rio says:

The public wants a new curiosity. The southern crowds are more or less angry. The curiosity, the appetite for knowledge, for being informed, for being knowledgeable are the first symptoms of agitation and neurosis. The audience has an unhealthy, almost excessive, curiosity. One does not want to read the works, but prefers to inquire about the authors' lives. Do we need to know? We soon return to the origins, we eviscerate idols, we live with them. Curiosity is today an eagerness... *Now, journalism is the father of this neurosis, because it transformed the critique and made the report. One and the other merged: there is now the terrible experimental report. The times of the erudite variations on books are gone, and the aesthetic theories that subordinated author's works to their own laws are already falling in the silence of libraries, and the authors completely forgotten. Sainte-Beuve is only known by the new generations because he wrote some verses and his mistress was Mme. Vitor Hugo. Perhaps he is only remembered because this lady forgot the giant to love the zoilus. Who speaks to you today, seriously, about Schlegel, Hegel, or even about poor Hennequin? The current criticism is the information and the report* (RIO, 1907 – Free translation, my highlights)¹⁸.

At the end, he attacks his target again. In the After section, in which he concludes the results of the survey by replaying an alleged dialogue with an imaginary friend, he goes

¹⁷ For a study on the update of this question a century later, see Costa (2005).

¹⁸ From Portuguese: “O público quer uma nova curiosidade. As multidões meridionais são mais ou menos nervosas. A curiosidade, o apetite de saber, de estar informado, de ser conhecedor são os primeiros sintomas da agitação e da nevrose. Há da parte do público uma curiosidade malsã, quase excessiva. Não se quer conhecer as obras, prefere-se indagar a vida dos autores. Precisamos saber? Remontamos logo às origens, desventramos os ídolos, vivemos com eles. A curiosidade é hoje uma ânsia... *Ora, o jornalismo é o pai dessa nevrose, porque transformou a crítica e fez a reportagem. Uma e outra fundiram-se: há neste momento a terrível reportagem experimental. Foram-se os tempos das variações eruditas sobre livros alheios e já vão caindo no silêncio das bibliotecas as teorias estéticas que às suas leis subordinavam obras alheias, esquecendo completamente os autores. Sainte-Beuve só é conhecido das gerações novas porque escreveu alguns versos e foi amante de Mme. Vitor Hugo. Talvez apenas dele se recordem por ter essa senhora esquecido o gigante para amar o zoilo. Quem vos fala hoje, a sério, de Schlegel, de Hegel, ou mesmo do pobre Hennequin? A crítica atual é a informação e a reportagem* (RIO, 1907 –My highlights)”.

straight to the point: “My friend, I think the critique is absolutely finished”. The reflections of Sainte-Beuve (another reference to the French critic), the scientific or metaphysical essays to explain the composition of Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*, among other examples that he quotes, “disappeared altogether”.

João do Rio is categorical: “Today, let us be frank, literature is a profession that lacks the claim and has as its *only critic* the Frenchified Success” (my highlights). The success of a work would be the result of “a force”, which would not be “blind”, as stated by João do Rio, in a metaphor that refers to the idea of Justice and, therefore, to those who judge, who, as the critics, should be “blind” in order to be just. This “force” would also not be “inexplicable” and would be based on “easy-to-determine laws”, which can be taken as counterposing to criticism, not always easy. New laws, on the contrary, would be easy because they are born of “lucrative notoriety” and “market value” – and “the sale is a force”. João do Rio thus exposes dilemmas that were already being experienced by Veríssimo.

Therefore, the crisis of literary criticism in the press should not be situated only after the middle of the 20th century in Brazil, as it is more common to point out. Since the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, the newspapers have begun to express discomfort and even lack of space for the type of textual articulation that the critique (formed in the Romanticism) proposed. What would come next was already an unfolding of this founding moment, the first to propitiate - although anachronically - the exercise of professional literary criticism more continuously in the press.

‘Rodapé’

The expression “footer critique” (*crítica de rodapé*) became, throughout the 20th century in Brazil, almost synonymous with literary criticism in the press, to the point that the studies often refer to “Veríssimo’s footers”, such as “his footer” on *Os Sertões*, by Euclides da Cunha¹⁹. On December 3, 1902, Veríssimo published the first text for the press about the book, occupying half of the front page of *Correio da Manhã*. It was one of his greatest critiques on the newspaper, with a magnificent tone, even if he had reservations regarding the scientific emphasis and language, with affected terms that were no longer used already in that time. Still, he recognized the work’s value, its “angry and vibrant” quality, and pointed to the social and political importance of the document that denounced the 1897 Canudos massacre. With his critique, he made the book *an immediate best-seller* for the standards of that time; Euclides, discredited when he published the long book, was raised to the literary scene with triumph. But the relationship of Veríssimo with the work had not begun at that time, for he had also presented the author to the editors of Laemmert (in letter, Euclides

19 Nascimento and Facioli (2003) e Botelho (2004) say that the critic Veríssimo wrote about *Os Sertões* was published in the “rodapé” of *Correio da Manhã*, which was not the case.

says he is debtor of the critic since he signed the contract)²⁰. The book became, after its publishing, the main title of the traditional editorial company.

In birthday editions, *Correio* would salute Veríssimo's critique as one of the highlights of its history. In the 1940s, Álvaro Lins became "the titular" (the main critic) of the *rodapé* column of *Correio da Manhã*. He was considered the most prominent in the country and the great poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade said he was the "Emperor of literary criticism" in his time²¹. Lins stated on numerous occasions and writings that he took José Veríssimo as a model. Among the two there were also biographic coincidences: they were both professors at Colégio Pedro II, had provincial origins (Veríssimo came from Pará, and Lins from Pernambuco province), and integrated ABL (with which they had a misunderstanding) and, finally, wrote for the same newspaper. These are similarities cited by Bolle (p. 57-58, 1979) that "should be seen not only as coincidence, but as voluntary submission to a consciously chosen model". It is in the beginning of the 20th century critic that Lins "self-projects and feels like – and wants to be – heir" (BOLLE, p. 57-58, 1979).

Thus, what would mean, in the 1940s, to take as a model a kind of criticism that already in its time, almost half a century earlier, was already beginning to be anachronic in relation to the newspapers' demands of its time?

The *rodapé* criticism was a current practice in Brazilian journalism in the first half of the last century (peaking in the 1940s). It differed greatly from the criticism of the previous period (Veríssimo's).

Lins' column was published periodically in the footer of the second page of the newspaper, detached from the supplements in which intellectuals and critics collaborated. It was still, therefore, part of the main part of the newspaper (but, especially in the 1920s and 30s, the *rodapés* were also published on the front page and could still be found on different newspaper pages). We can consider them as a metamorphosis of the *feuilleton* (published in the same space of the newspapers).

Identified mainly as the publication of *seriate* novels, the *feuilleton*, as in *Jornal do Brasil*, also welcomed *crônicas*, notes of good humor and even criticism. In the 20th century, metamorphosed into footer, it becomes a specialized criticism – a specialization that was defined in relation to other specializations in the newspaper (although its detractors – the university critics who began to be established in the middle of the last century, when universities expanded - attacked the authors calling them generalists and bachelors).

Authors such as Barbosa (2007) and Meyer (1996) explain part of this change by observing that popular news from a sensationalist scope began to offer more spectacular narratives than the novels-serial themselves, which ceased to resonate in the public. But why is the serial, after the novel, going to become captive of criticism? The space previously devoted to the novel becomes dominated by the novel critique: there is a game of musical

20 More information in Galvão and Galotti (1997).

21 Drummond wrote that in a text published by *Jornal do Brasil* (Jun. 6, 1970), when Lins died.

chairs. Circumscribed and delimited, criticism could no longer “open its wings” as it happened in 1902 in the text about *Os Sertões*.

It can be said that this kind of “fence” was a subterfuge of survival, an adaptation to the industrial demands of newspapers, which sought new forms of division of work, based on the news report. It would be, in a certain way, a more instrumentalized criticism. Antonio Candido, when explaining how he became a footer critic in 1943 in *Folha da Manhã*, in São Paulo, shows himself much more adapted to the rhythm of the news report than in the time of Veríssimo. When he started, he had no criticism experience or training in literature.

My training was in what? It was the thing that the journalist, who is just thrown there and one says: ‘You have to write about the scandal in the Senate.’ And you have to write! I took the job of writing about the books of the week. Five pages typed with double space, 30 lines and 70 characters including spaces (RODRIGUES, 2011, p. 240 – Free translation)²².

They were professionals, therefore, more circumscribed within the newspaper space than the critics of the previous phase, although they still had great prestige. In a certain way, although adapted to the industrial rhythm and having a form of textual articulation different from that of the Romanticism matrix criticism (starting with the delimitation of space), it was a criticism still inspired in the previous period (as evidenced in Álvaro Lins, a reference among the critics of his time). In this process, one can say there is a kind of accumulation of layers of anachronism (a certain misfit) of the criticism activity in relation to journalism. These layers would be based also on a memorable sphere of criticism, triggered by its writers as force of a tradition that they claimed in order to affirm their activity and relevance in their daily activities.

Very brief final considerations

In the *rodapé* critique, something of the feuilleton and of the form of textual articulation predominant in the newspapers in the 19th century still survived. A sign of this is that the footer would not survive the 1950s, a period of intense modernization of journalism in Brazil, when the news report is deepened as a mark of identity, as a generational project (RIBEIRO, 2007). This process is reflected on the industrial development of journalistic markets in Brazil. Professionals journalists seek to banish what they call “bad literature” (*literatices*) in newspapers. Thus, the criticism that still had roots in the Romanticism matrix seemed to fade.

22 From Portuguese: “A minha formação o que foi? Era a coisa que o jornalista, o foca, que é jogado e fala: ‘Você tem que escrever sobre o escândalo no Senado’. E tem que escrever! Eu aceitei a tarefa de escrever sobre os livros da semana. Cinco laudas datilografadas com dois espaços, 30 linhas e 70 toques” (RODRIGUES, 2011, p. 240).

In the middle of the 20th century the cleavage pointed at the beginning of the century by João do Rio, between critique and news report, becomes stronger. There are distinct forms of textual articulation that clash and in this moment the news report seems to come out, in newsrooms, as the winner.

It occurs in relation to the criticism a process that one can call “the process of mythical construction”, a procedure that is frequently repeated in the universe of journalism, as observed by Barbosa (2007, p. 80), “establishing a moment of glories and virtues, in opposition to a present where all the previously existing values were lost”. By virtue of the transformations in the press, the critique changed its form, but the understanding that we had about it did not vary at the same speed. It thus opened the way for a growing distance between its comprehension, idealized on memory, and the real conditions offered for its expression. Two layers of professional practice, therefore, began to overlap: one memorable, and another, possible. The effect was often a nostalgic feeling.

The process of reinvention and metamorphosis of languages within journalism is, however, incessant. Would have the critique survived in some covered way, in some journalistic practices, such as that one called cultural journalism, that by proposing to carry out news reports of artistic creations, ends up in a certain way reediting instances of criticism? (Would the criticism be acting under new clothing or as the prisoner, who, to not draw the attention to himself, pretends to be dead?) The configurations experienced in digital environments will certainly add new chapters to this debate.

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Received on: 07.03.2017

Accepted on: 09.24.2019

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