

The Culture Industry in Brazil: From the “Classic” Model to the Digital Media

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Abstract

The "classic" model of the culture industry, according to Adorno's and Horkheimer's typification in the Dialectic of Enlightenment, arised in the first decades of the 20th Century, based on the appropriation, by the then rising monopoly capitalism, of technologies of reproducing sounds and images like movies and gramophone with the possibility of broadcasting them, as in the case of radio and TV. According to this model, Brazil was one of the first countries to have an indigenous culture industry, since radio broadcasting began there in the twenties and the thirties appeared the earliest motion pictures produced in the country. In addition, television broadcasting in Brazil began to work as early as 1950 and has had an enormous development since then. However, as it is broadly known, around 1990 the culture industry went through a strong process of modification due to the overcoming of analogical technology and prevailing of digital media, on the one hand, and as a consequence of the so-called globalization, on the other. Also the Brazilian culture industry underwent this situation, and the analysis of that process is a topic of this article as well.

Key-words: Broadcasting in Brazil, Brazilian Cinema, Internet as a Culture Industry Medium.

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The Concept of Culture Industry²

One of the main goals of this paper is to show that, even being a peripheral capitalist country and having had an unequal industrial development throughout its history, Brazil has had since the 1930s a system of mass media whose ideological and economic aims were the same as those of its counterparts in the most industrialized countries. An essential presupposition is that, provided that some peculiarities be taken into account, the Brazilian model of mass culture analysis can be accomplished through the same categories Horkheimer and Adorno developed in their approach to the North American mainstream culture industry.

Both German thinkers proposed its concept at the beginning of the 1940s to describe the industrial and commercial complex of production and distribution of cultural goods, existing firstly in Europe and then in the USA since the first decade of the 20th Century, and involving at that time recently invented devices, such as cinema and the radio broadcasting. However, it is important to remember that neither of these early technological developments nor the ones that emerged later, such as television, VCRs, and digital media, can be seen as the culture industry itself. On the contrary, this notion presupposes the appropriation of the technical means by monopoly capitalism, whose beginnings coincide precisely with the first successful experiences of capturing images in movement and displaying them on a large flat surface, and of registering sounds mechanically, with the possibility of broadcasting them through radio waves.

Along with the opportunity of good business through these then recently invented media, their appropriation by monopolist capitalism required the establishment of behavioral patterns in mass society, in which the increased productivity associated with the concentration of people was constantly under the threat of the political organization of workers, endeavoring to resist the aggressions of the economic system.

Regarding this peculiarity of the culture industry's concept, it is clear that one of the most important contributions of Horkheimer and Adorno was to show that it did not mean simply "mass culture." Differently, from the beginning, it was a "system," i.e., a well-articulated ensemble of media whose primary purpose would be to influence the

² The first three sections of this paper were retaken and reworked from my chapter "Culture Industry in Brazil" (Duarte, 2010, p. 93-111). The fourth section and the conclusion were originally written for this publication.

behavior of the masses, according to interests of the economic system, not only to manage the demand for commodities but also to introduce a degree of predictability in their social and political postures.

Even after the early leading media of the culture industry like cinema and radio were no longer its most important vehicles, sharing space with other devices such as television and VCRs, its character of a system was preserved since its functions of manipulating public opinion remained relevant to the economic power in the subsequent period of contemporary history.

At the beginning of the 20th Century, the rise of the labor movement against capitalist exploitation, which prompted increasing empowerment of the communist and socialist parties in many European countries, culminating in the Russian Revolution, determined the need to enhance tools of massive ideological manipulation. During World War II, all media in the culture industry played a vital role in stimulating and sustaining the morale of both sides' populations (especially the troops), as clearly shown in North American and German war movies. Later, during the Cold War, when the USA and the Soviet Union struggled for political and economic hegemony over all regions of the world, it is noticeable the increasing of the culture industry's relevance, particularly from the viewpoint of the dominant classes.

Considering that each period of contemporary history mentioned above has its peculiarities, a question arises about the applicability of the concept of the culture industry to significantly different situations, such as the beginning of monopolist capitalism in the early 20th Century and its globalized version almost one hundred years later. This question becomes more relevant if one remembers that a concept is always historical for the Critical Theory of Society, which grounded Adorno's and Horkheimer's investigations on mass culture. Therefore, this paper aims to show as well that the features of the "classic" model of culture industry not only remained applicable to our current state of things but that their applicability has even increased in the present globalized phase of monopolist capitalism.

Since it is challenging to summarize the main features of the "classic" model of the culture industry, as defined by Adorno and Horkheimer, I will select five main characteristics in order to investigate to what extent it is possible to speak of the existence of culture industry in Brazil since the beginning of the 20th Century. These characteristics

are: 1) retroactive manipulation, 2) expropriation of schematism, 3) consummation of a "style," 4) corruption of the tragic, and 5) fetishism of cultural goods.

The first one, "retroactive manipulation," has to do with the culture industry's strategy of offering to its public what it supposedly desired, while, as a matter of fact, the latent needs of the most significant layers of the population are identified by specialized agencies and the product ultimately offered to the audience already includes a kind of interpretation favorable to the interests of the capitalist system, not to the people who seemingly demanded it. According to Adorno and Horkheimer,

(...) it is claimed that standards are based in the first place on consumer's needs, and for that reason were accepted with so little resistance. The result is the circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger. No mention is made of the fact that the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 121).

The second criterium, "expropriation of schematism," appears in the initial pages of the chapter dedicated to mass culture in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and it is the very heart of the critical theory of culture industry. It refers to the obscure Kantian doctrine of schematism, according to which the cognitive material coming from the sensibility (intuitions) and the one coming from the intellect (the pure concepts of understanding or categories) have nothing in common to each other. Since the former is partly constituted of empirical material and the latter contains nothing empirical, it would be indispensable the existence of a kind of mediation between the two heterogeneous elements which forms our knowledge concerning things external to the cognizing subject³. In Kant's words:

...there must be some third thing, which is homogeneous on the one hand with the category, and on the other hand with the appearance, and which thus makes the application of the former to the latter possible. This mediating representation must be pure, that is, void of all empirical content, and yet at the same time, while it must in one respect be intellectual, it must in another be sensible. Such a representation is the transcendental schema (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B 181).

It is remarkable in the original Kantian conception of schematism, that its functioning requires the activity of a strong (gnosiological) subjectivity, which has as its

³ Explanations about the expropriation of schematism can be found in: Duarte, 2005, p. 74-95. See also Duarte, 2008, *passim*.

anthropological (and even moral) counterpart the subject of the enlightenment. This subject can render an account of herself concerning her moral positions and the intellectually mediated perceptions that would ground them. The "expropriation of schematism" referred to by Horkheimer and Adorno means that this powerful subjective element which is, according to the "classic" Kantian conception, required to perform knowledge and to sustain a personal position, is replaced by an activity not quite proper, but imposed by the agencies of the culture industry, as a kind of key to decode its messages. In the words of Horkheimer and Adorno:

Kant's formalism still expected a contribution from the individual, who was thought to relate the varied experiences of the senses to fundamental concepts; but industry robs the individual of his function. Its prime service to the customer is to do his schematizing for him. Kant said that there was a secret mechanism in the soul which prepared direct intuitions in such a way that they could be fitted into the system of pure reason. But today that secret has been deciphered. (...) There is nothing left for the consumer to classify. Producers have done it for him (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 124-5).

The third trait of Adorno's and Horkheimer's critique, "consummation of style," is a kind of objective counterpart to the expropriation of schematism and refers to the role of the stylistic demands throughout the history of arts. They establish that, at least in what concerns the most significant artists and artworks, there has always been a dialectic interaction between the personal requirements of the artistic creation itself and the social expectations related to the form of the aesthetic object, so that there is an opening for individual expression despite a potential formal rigidity in the artistic constructs. Horkheimer and Adorno further note that something entirely different happens in the realm of commercial culture: that is, what in the liberal era was only social expectations that the cleverest artists could circumvent, has become in the age of the culture industry such strong a coercion in the creation of the aesthetic object, that there is no longer the possibility of personal manifestation. One of the most outstanding consequences of this process is the almost complete standardization of culture. As explained by Horkheimer and Adorno:

The art historians and guardians of culture who complain of the extinction in the West of a basic style determining power are wrong. The stereotyped appropriation of everything even the inchoate, for the purposes of mechanical reproduction surpasses the rigor and general currency of any "real style", in the

sense in which cultural cognoscenti celebrate the organic pre-capitalist past (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 127).

The fourth trait of the mass culture critique, the "corruption of the tragic", is the most fully developed in that chapter and consists of a comparison between the role the tragic situation played in the arts, particularly in its origins in Ancient Greece and at the beginning of the contemporary age. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, the main characteristic of ancient tragedy is the position of its protagonists against the forces that could annihilate them: although there was not in that time the modern concept of the subject — more related to individuality than to collectivity —, it occurred in this conception of the tragic a notion of the possibility of interaction between particularity and universality. Even considering that this conception was subject to significant transformations according to the historical period in which it emerged, the authors of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* consider that the destruction of the tragic occurs only in the realm of the culture industry. Their explanation for this situation lies in the fact that, despite the exacerbated individualism of the ideology of nowadays, it is possible to see in it a decline of subjectivity in a substantial sense. This subjectivity seminally inhered in the ancient tragedies and would also be indispensable to a modern notion of the tragic. As Horkheimer and Adorno put it:

To the consumer who – culturally – has seen better days it offers a substitute for long-discarded profundities. It [the tragedy] provides the regular movie-goer with the scraps of culture he must have for prestige. It comforts all with the thought that a tough, genuine human fate is still possible, and that it must at all costs be represented uncompromisingly. Life in all the aspects which ideology today sets out to duplicate shows up all the more gloriously, powerfully and magnificently, the more it is redolent of necessary suffering. It begins to resemble fate. Tragedy is reduced to the threat to destroy anyone who does not cooperate, whereas its paradoxical significance once lay in a hopeless resistance to mythic destiny (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 151-2).

Thus, what was traditionally known as a "tragic situation" is downgraded to the formula of "getting into trouble and out again," (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 152) meaning a prosaic affair in which the hero is involved, which flows from a situation of tension into a happy ending. Furthermore, the downgrading of tragedy to the menace of the outsiders' destruction summarizes very well the corruption mentioned above. At the same time, the idea of acquiring prestige through the consumption of some cultural products, which appears in the passage above, refers to the fifth characteristic of the

critical approach of the culture industry, namely, the "fetishism of cultural goods". This concept is closely related to a Marxian concept according to which commodities, in general, are things that hide social relations inside them. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer investigate if there is something particular in the fetishism of cultural commodities, concluding that, compared to its counterpart in Marx's critique of the political economy, the main difference is that its exchange value almost totally absorbs the use-value of a commodity. This absorption means that it is immediately more important for the consumer to go – or to be seen as going – to the theater, in order to appear to be well informed, in short, "buy the product" (and be seen in the act of buying it), than to "use" it somehow. In short, to have any experience of the thing as an aesthetic object, as problematic as it always can be.

It is interesting to note that, so as the "expropriation of schematism" depended on a topic of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the fetishism of cultural commodities refers to a passage of the *Critique of Judgment* in which Kant defines the purposefulness of the object of taste judgment as merely formal, meaning that no purpose can be unequivocally apprehended due to its harmonious whole. This feature of the object of taste judgment is the objective counterpart of the disinterested pleasure it gives to its observer. Although Adorno and Horkheimer consider the absence of immediately given purposes of genuine aesthetic objects and the lack of interest in its typical correlate judgment as something positive — against the predominance of universal capitalist utilitarianism — what they call fetishism of cultural commodities means the result of the distortion for ideological ends of the mentioned "purposefulness without a purpose" of Kantian aesthetics. It happens because the appearance of purposelessness allows an annihilation of its potential — and frequently problematic — use-value for the sake of its always tangible exchange value:

The principle of idealistic aesthetics – purposefulness without a purpose – reverses the scheme of things to which bourgeois art conforms socially: purposelessness for the purposes declared by the market. At last, in the demand for entertainment and relaxation, purpose has absorbed the realm of purposelessness. But as the insistence that art should be disposable in terms of money becomes absolute, a shift in the internal structure of cultural commodities begins to show itself (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 158).

Having briefly described some essential traits of Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of mass culture, I can now proceed to an analysis of the peculiarities of the culture industry

in Brazil, beginning with reflections on the existence of such a thing in a peripheral country at the beginning of the 20th Century.

The First Phase of the Culture Industry in Brazil: Radio and Cinema

As stated above, the industrialization of culture began in the USA in the first decades of the 20th Century, although in European countries, there had been previous experiences of commodifying cultural goods. However, since such experiences outside the United States took place only in the key countries of western capitalism, which could have been the role of a peripheral country like Brazil that had its economy based mainly on the export of agricultural products like cotton or coffee? It was precisely this kind of export that grounded the industrialization process from the beginning of the 20th Century, which resulted in the growth of the cities, creating a strong demand for products of mass culture — as it had occurred before in Europe and the United States. Not only did the Brazilian masses consume in the 1920s the films produced in Hollywood, but since the 1930s, a system of commercial radio had emerged, reaching the most populated parts of the country. At the same time, the film industry kept itself alive, copying the Hollywood model first in Rio de Janeiro and later in São Paulo. In the 1940s, actress Carmen Miranda, who had begun her career in the Brazilian film industry some years before, went to Hollywood, and after a five years' contract with 20th Century Fox, became world-famous through films like *Down Argentine Ways* (1940), *That Night in Rio* (1941), *Weekend in Havana* (1941), *The Gang's all Here* (1943) and *Four Jills in a Jeep* (1945).

Even if one does not consider the experimental movies of Cinema Novo, which have never been blockbusters despite their international recognition by the experts, there have always been films produced in Brazil — by Brazilian directors featuring Brazilian actresses and actors — which were successful abroad. Examples of this international success in the last decades include Walter Salles' *"Central Station"* (1998), Fernando Meireles' *"City of God"* (2003), Karim Aïnouz' *"Praia do futuro"* (2014), and Kleber Mendonça Filho's/Juliano Dornelles' *"Bacurau"* (2019), among others.

Furthermore, it is also remarkable that the era of television began very early in Brazil. The first broadcastings occurred in the 1950s and the 1960s in São Paulo, and long-distance transmissions using satellites made it possible to establish countrywide

networks such as Globo, Bandeirantes, SBT, and Manchete. The first three networks mentioned above are still active, with Globo being in terms of international influence the most outstanding since it has exported its soap operas worldwide, not to mention the availability on the Internet nowadays of most of its content through its own platform "Globoplay."

As for the question of the applicability of the critical categories devised by Horkheimer and Adorno in the 1940s, one could also ask about the explanatory power of such theoretical concepts to a social, economic and cultural context so significantly different from its European and North American counterparts. Considering this issue, I will now focus on some of the essential characteristics of the mass culture in Brazil to address whether Horkheimer and Adorno's critical model applies to that particular reality.

Since Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis deals specifically with radio and cinema — the predominant vehicles of mass communication of the North American culture industry in the 1940s — I begin with a short discussion of the conditions from which both media emerged in Brazil, stressing their relationship to the most politically and economically powerful sectors in society.

The beginning of the radio sends us back to 1922, when among the Centenary celebrations of Brazil's independence from Portugal, with the technical support of Westinghouse International Company and Western Electric Company, the first radio broadcasting in the country took place, with commemorative speeches and concerts from and to different points in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Regular broadcasting began in 1923 with the foundation of the Radio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro (Radio Society of Rio de Janeiro) and the Radio Club of Pernambuco (in the Brazilian Northeast), which were not yet commercial broadcasters but were maintained by members' contributions and whose purpose was the diffusion of cultural contents to a very elitized public which could also afford the — in that time — very high prices of a radio receiver (cf. Casé, 1995, p.29).

The "democratization" of radio coincided with its becoming a commercial venture, which only happened in 1930 with the foundation of Radio Philips, created by the Dutch electro-concern of the same name, to increase the selling of its receivers. From 1932 to 1937, sixty-three radio stations appeared in Brazil, in almost all of its states (cf. Martins, 1999, p. 58). Nevertheless, the very spirit of commercial radio began to be established in Brazil in 1932 by a producer named Ademar Casé, who was himself a short-wave radio

listener (mainly of North American and British stations) and aimed to bring to his country broadcasting practices that were already current in the industrialized countries. His show, named "Programa Casé", had a large audience and was responsible for the introduction of commercial usages such as jingles, and the featuring of guests who had a regular performance time in the shows. Among these guests was Noel Rosa, who wrote short songs to advertise commodities and commented on social and political issues. Later, Noel Rosa would become one of Brazil's most famous songwriters of all time.

In September of 1936, a private group founded the Radio Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, which became the most influential means of communication in Brazil until the rise of television in the early 1950s. In the following year, Getúlio Vargas, who was since the so-called Revolution of 1930, the chief of a provisional government, established through a putsch-like shift to the right, a dictatorship (cf. Levine, 1998, specially p. 50 et seq). This regime, known in Brazilian history as the "Estado Novo," aimed at a conservative modernization of the country, including the development of modern media such as radio and cinema (cf. Jambreiro, 2004, passim). The nationalization of Radio Nacional in 1941 gave birth to a potent communication medium with a countrywide broadcasting capacity and facilities that were not inferior to the world's best broadcasters. For almost a decade, having hired the best producers, musicians (for a while, Radio Nacional had four orchestras), actresses/actors, directors, writers, etc., this station drew the whole nation's attention. Still in 1941, the first Brazilian radio soap opera, entitled "Em busca da felicidade" ("In Search of Happiness"), was produced in the studios of Rádio Nacional, beginning a history that continues in current times with the Brazilian television "soaps." The latter has won audiences all over the world after the 1960s.

It is remarkable that the beginning of the film industry in Brazil, following a similar pattern of commercial radio, also coincided with the 1930 "Revolution." (cf. Levine, 1998, p. 18 et seq) Although throughout the whole of the 1920s decade there had been nationwide (cf. Gomes, 2008, passim) many experiences of producing fictional and documentary silent films in a semi-amateur way, it was only in 1929 that the first Brazilian feature film, *Barro humano* ("Human Clay"), produced by Ademar Gonzaga, was launched in Rio de Janeiro. Encouraged by its relative success, Gonzaga started in 1930 the construction of Cinédia — Brazil's first industrial film studio with state-of-the-art equipment imported from the USA. This studio produced in the same year its first sound-feature film,

entitled *Lábios sem beijos* ("Kissless Lips"). Cinédia, after overcoming some challenging phases, was for long one of the few Brazilian film-producing companies comparable to Hollywood's big studios such as Warner, Universal, MGM, Columbia, Twentieth Century Fox and Paramount. Cinédia produced over sixty feature films in almost eighty years of operation, considering co-productions with other Brazilian studios and simple studio and equipment rentals. These included the first movies featuring Carmen Miranda, *Alô, Alô, Brasil!* (1935) and *Alô, Alô, Carnaval* (1936), in addition to some hundreds of weekly news short films. It is also remarkable that Orson Welles' unfinished "It's all True" (1942) had all its studio parts filmed in Cinédia's facilities (cf. Gonzaga, 1987, *passim*).

Having provided some basic information concerning the rise of radio and cinema in Brazil, I would like to test the applicability of the concepts mentioned above of Horkheimer and Adorno's critique to ascertain the existence of the culture industry in Brazil. Before this nevertheless — and focusing on the concept of the culture industry as a "system" — it would be interesting to consider a particular trait in the Brazilian model which includes not only an evident dominance of radio over cinema but also a synergy between both media in Brazil's cultural (in a broader sense) scene in the thirties and 1940s.

As seen above, Vargas' dictatorship invested directly in radio broadcasting, apparently because through this medium, the ideological effects were more immediate and had a much more comprehensive range since the content produced in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil's Federal Capital at that time) reached through short waves the whole of the Brazilian territory. Although the DIP (Brazilian department of censorship and propaganda) inspected in the 1930s and 1940s both dominant media in Brazil's mass culture, the direct government investments were drawn almost only to *Rádio Nacional*. The Brazilian film industry, almost entirely private, fought against many obstacles, ranging from the difficulty to show its productions, since the theaters nationwide had suffered an intense pressure by the distributors of North American films, to the lack of film negative for shooting, in particular during World War II.

That historical context engendered a peculiarity in the Brazilian culture industry: in contrast with its North American counterpart, in which movies were by far the most relevant medium, in Brazil, a reverse situation took place, since radio reached many more people in all states of the country than movies. Consequently, the survival of the Brazilian

film industry depended on a strategy of its producers, according to which artists launched in radio were hired to act in films in order to achieve the attention of a larger audience.

This public interest in Brazilian movies occurred, indeed, mainly because a very devoted and large radio audience in the whole of Brazil had been limited for many years — in a time before the television era — only to imagine how its idols "really" looked. The production with the subsequent nationwide distribution of sound-feature films (beginning with the previously mentioned Cinédia's "Kissless Lips") made it possible that the exclusively acoustic information of radio was supplemented with corresponding images (which, coming from sound-feature films, also had their own sonority).

For this reason, the "system" characteristic of the Brazilian culture industry's first phase is perhaps more concrete and tangible than it used to be elsewhere, which enables us to test the five criteria above considering both radio and cinema together and also concerning each one separately, despite the alluded predominance of radio.

As for the retroactive manipulation, it is evident that the production of cultural commodities satisfied the real demands of a progressively more urban population, on the one hand and already massified on the other. The manipulative character of these products was due mainly to the censorship of the Press and Propaganda Department (DIP) of the Vargas' dictatorship so that They could not display political manifestations other than the ones approved by the central government. In addition to this political aspect, in many cases, it is possible to find solutions quite moralists to the typical conflicts of the urban life in the big industrial cities like — consummated or menaced — adulteries.

In what concerns the expropriation of schematism to the Brazilian case, it is evident that it was crucial for Vargas' conservative modernization project that discourses, songs, and even soccer games, disseminated by Rádio Nacional taught the masses how to perceive things in general. This procedure worked as a kind of filter through which reality should be seen, and considering the nationalistic background of the Estado Novo, this method of perceiving reality was closely linked to the idea of the privilege of having been born in Brazil: ordinary people (the large majority) could be poor, underfed and illiterate, but they were nonetheless "blessed by God" for being Brazilian. Not only some characters of popular comedy shows such as Rádio Nacional's PRK 30 (the most heard comedy show of Rádio Nacional in the 1930s and 1940s), but also almost all heroines and heroes in feature films and radio soap operas displayed the trait of having limitations linked

to their personal condition, that is, poor or ignorant, or coming from a tiny town, or subject to discrimination for their ethnic origins, or all of them together. However, these characters overcome all obstacles by using a "typically Brazilian" way of solving their problems. All this strengthens the aforementioned specific mode of the expropriation of schematism operationalized by the culture industry in Brazil.

As in Horkheimer and Adorno's model, the expropriation of schematism is also in the first phase of Brazilian mass culture closely related to the culture industry's third criterion, i.e., the consummation of style. Therefore, it is possible that style is the objective counterpart of expropriated schematism, understood as an intervention on the subject's faculty of perception. As a matter of fact, style – in consonance with the peculiarity of being Brazilian – means, in this case, also an artistic construction that expresses itself mainly in popular music (for example, samba and other Afro-Brazilian rhythms).

On this topic, it is helpful to take into account the fact that Ademar Gonzaga — the pioneer mentioned above of the Brazilian film industry and the founder of Cinédia — intended to make movies that would be Brazilian in their content, and North American in form (cf. Garcia, 2004, p. 69), meaning high technical standards and very professional ways of production. Because of this North American "inspiration", it is possible to recognize in many Brazilian films of the 1930s and 1940s an exact imitation of Hollywood technical procedures, while it could be surmised from their content an obvious intention to reflect immediately the peculiarities of the Brazilian way of life. This emulation is such vital a feature of those productions that some typical formal elements arise as well, coming mainly from the language of radio (as stated above, the leading mass medium in Brazil during the first phase of its culture industry) and from the vaudevilles ("teatros de revista"). The most remarkable trait of this genre is that many feature films of this period were conceived as a radio show, in which comedic sketches or relatively independent scenes alternate with musical numbers, relegating the film's general plot to the background.

Concerning the fourth culture industry criterion, the corruption of the tragic, it could be said that there is not an important difference between North American and Brazilian cultural commodities. They have the same formula, described by Horkheimer and Adorno for Hollywood films, of "getting into trouble and out again," which is applied ad nauseam to feature films and radio soap operas. What distinguishes the Brazilian style, in this case, is that the "trouble" from which the hero or heroine should be set free is tightly linked to the

peculiarities mentioned above of the Brazilianness' model imposed by the correlated workings of the expropriation of schematism and consummation of style.

The last culture industry's criterion, the fetishism of cultural goods, appears clearly in the formation of a wider public, which similarly to the North American model, to a large extent did not have an opportunity to cultivate itself with culture in a superlative sense at the same time they had already lost the bonds to a popular culture *stricto sensu*, i.e., related with the rural origins of most city-inhabitants of that time (cf. Greenberg, 1988, 5 et seq). From this point of view, the Brazilian case resembles more the North American one than the European process of culture industry's consolidation, whose first audience was partly impregnated by a more "sublimated" concept of culture, still originated in the realm of the idea of erudition which characterized the European culture in the liberal era. A further peculiarity of the Brazilian model is that the strong influence of North American culture industry created something like two levels of fetishism: a background one, generated mainly by Hollywood productions, and another perhaps less critical level, generated by Brazilian films and radio shows.

The Second Phase of the Culture Industry in Brazil: The Television

The beginning of the 1950s testifies to the fall of radio and the rise of television as Brazilian mass culture's leading medium. One of the reasons for this shift is probably the fact that unlike the previous situation, in which radio and cinema, while complementary, formed a timely and spacely dissociated system and therefore somewhat "schizophrenic," in television, the audience could see immediately what they heard, which meant an incredible economy of means.

On September 10th, 1950, the first television transmission in Brazil took place in São Paulo, at the studios of TV Tupi, which belonged to Assis Chateaubriand's *Diários Associados*. This communications group owned many newspaper and radio stations scattered over the whole country. In the following years, other channels began to operate: TV Tupi and TV Rio, in Rio de Janeiro; TV Record and TV Paulista, in São Paulo, and TV Itacolomi in Belo Horizonte – the latter, as TV Tupi from Rio, belonging to the Chateaubriand group. In 1956 this same group opened nine new stations in important

Brazilian cities such as Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza, Campina Grande, São Luís, Belém and Goiânia, becoming the country's leading television group.

In the 1950s there was no legislation in Brazil associated with television broadcasting, which would define the responsibilities of public and private sectors and force the broadcasters themselves to pay for building and maintaining their transmitting towers and other essential equipment. Following pressures from the TV station owners, the Brazilian Telecommunications Code (CBT) was promulgated in 1962, inspired by the strong liberal North American FCC (Federal Communications Commission) rules. According to this code, it would be the state's responsibility to provide the whole material infrastructure for telecommunications, presupposing competition among the several TV stations, and therefore lacking regulatory mechanisms in order prevent the formation of cartels . Indeed in the 1950s, many television channels competed against each other until — following a right-wing coup through which military forces got to rule Brazil over two decades — Globo TV began to operate in 1965.

This TV station, founded in Rio by the Marinho family, owners of newspapers and radio stations, had in a few years spread branches to São Paulo, Recife, Belo Horizonte, and Brasília. After also associating with independent stations in many states, Globo was the first Brazilian channel to broadcast in network form simultaneously all over the country. The Globo network took advantage of the telecommunications infrastructure provided by the military government, which was then highly interested in ideological justification for its reactionary project, based on a technological modernization process that the United States supported in their anti-communist campaigns at the peak of the Cold War. As a matter of fact, Globo TV was from the beginning more greatly identified with the military government than the other TV stations, even those owned by the previously mentioned Chateaubriand group, whose communications empire by then had started to decay. The following passage confirms the supremacy of Globo over all its competitors in Brazil:

In 1987 the estimated annual income of Globo TV was about 500 million dollars and its patrimonial value reached one billion dollars. With 12.000 employees, it was the fourth largest private network in the world, just behind the North American CBS, NBC and ABC. It absorbed two thirds of the advertising values designated to television and had an audience of 80 million people in 98% of national territory (Barbosa & Ribeiro, 2005, p. 218).

Globo TV, which in its first years had Time-Life Group as a shareholder, brought to Brazilian television many technological and methodological innovations, basing its program-grid mainly on journalism and soap operas (telenovelas). Globo's newscasts, besides pioneering network broadcasting all over the country, introduced portable cameras and mobile transmission units, which enabled a much more dynamic approach to the events to be covered, according to the ideological and market-driven needs of that moment (cf. Barbosa & Ribeiro, 2005, p. 205-22)

As for the soap operas, Globo TV managed to receive and adapt to the language of television the tradition of producing this genre that came from the beginning of radio back in the thirties, which already existed in the first years of Brazilian television at the early fifties. Globo's innovation was again the introduction of highly professional and market-oriented methods, which resulted in proper industrial production of content on the one hand and consequently in a considerable increase of advertising income on the other. Furthermore, Globo's soap operas were the first to explore widely the technique of merchandising (i.e., advertising integrated into the plot), which meant an additional source of profit not yet fully exploited by the competitors.

From the viewpoint of content, although some soap operas with historical themes, such as "Escrava Isaura", were worldwide successful, Globo managed to bring to the small screen stories concerning Brazilian modern urban life (more adequate to the use of merchandising), displaying, without any deeper discussion, issues such as homoerotics, social and racial prejudice, etc. According to Silvia Borelli, this very trait is associated with the popular roots of soap operas in general, and the visible improvements in its productive processes ensured to the Brazilian telenovela an acceptance not only in Brazil but also abroad (cf. Borelli, 2005, p. 200; see also Ortiz, 1991, *passim*). Borelli also observes that Globo helped to consolidate in Brazil the concept of a prime time (horário nobre), consisting of a relatively long newscast ("Jornal Nacional") placed between two soap operas (the first one around seven o'clock and the second round nine o'clock) (cf. Borelli, 2005, 188). There could be very interesting reflections on this arrangement, since the alleged report about facts in the newscast stood for a bond with reality, while the soaps before and after the newscast meant an incursion into fiction. However, with some exceptions, it would be possible to perceive a tendency of both shows' content to approach one another. While the soap operas managed to tackle realistic themes and

discussions, the newscast adopted narrative strategies that brought it nearer to a dramaturgic piece according to the ideological project to which Globo TV belongs.

It is interesting to test the five criteria mentioned above of the culture industry about the features pointed out, as applied to the television system, which became the dominant medium in the Brazilian mass culture over the last seventy years. Concerning the first criterion, the retroactive manipulation, it is fair to say that the primary demand that already existed in the time of the radio-cinema binomial has enormously increased as Brazil went through periods of visible industrial growth, which again occasioned an unequivocal expansion of the consumption's market. However, it would be simplistic to try to reduce the retroactive manipulation to only one standard procedure. Nevertheless, it would not be wrong to present the strategy, consolidated by Globo TV in the seventies, of portraying on the small screen the modern life's experience, especially in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, also present in other the big Brazilian cities, in the realm of which personal and family conflicts had as a background social and even political issues. This strategy appears to be effective in seemingly giving the audience what it supposedly wants to have, displaying the solutions of the conflicts according to a prevailing ideology.

As for the expropriation of schematism, television seems to be in general much more suitable than the previously prevalent system, composed of two leading media (radio and movies), for, as Horkheimer and Adorno predicted in the early 1940s, television "aims at a synthesis of radio and film." (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 124) Furthermore, there is not in the television system that relative lack of realism characteristic of the radio and the cinema of the first time, which enables complete exploitation of this ideological strategy. The main aspects of the expropriation of schematism can be clearly perceived through an analysis of the two main products of Brazilian television (especially by Globo TV): journalism and soap operas.

As for the more general aspect of expropriation of schematism, the surreptitiously imposed point of view reinforces the suggestion mentioned above for ordinary viewers that there is some compensatory peculiarity in being a Brazilian. At the same time, this viewpoint introduces a new element, namely, the possibility of these viewers' self-perception as partakers of a modern and progressive society. The visible pendular move of showing — both in newscasts or in soap operas — archaic and future-oriented aspects in Brazil seems to confirm this hypothesis.

Regarding this particular aspect of the expropriation of schematism, it is undeniable that the technical quality of colorful images and stereophonic sounds associated with the naturalistic atmosphere produced by the very conception of these cultural commodities suggest a kind of emulation to the external reality itself.

As for the third criterion of the culture industry, the consummation of style, it is clear that the association mentioned above of aspects concerning the privilege of being a Brazilian with the viewpoint of economic and social modernity, produced in Brazil through the powerful technical capacity of the television system, a very typically naturalistic audiovisual language. This feature also resulted in the phenomenon that many of the people acting in soap operas are not – until their hiring by the television station – professional actors or actresses, but young people whose appearance fits in with the ideological and commercial aims of show business, what can be confirmed by the fact that many people acting in the soaps are former models.

The "corruption of the tragic" – the fourth criterion of the culture industry is also very evident in Brazilian television productions. As mentioned above, one of its pillars is the soap opera, whose main characteristic is a strong but superficial intensity of feelings, which Horkheimer and Adorno saw as the culture industry revealing "the truth about catharsis" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1996, p. 144). The same formula identified by the authors as "getting into trouble and out again" applies broadly to Brazilian soap operas, with the peculiarity that "out again" can be very much postponed: the length of a soap opera is 150 to 200 episodes. An alternative instance of the "corruption of the tragic" occurs — taking into account the relationship mentioned above between TV journalism and dramaturgy in Brazil — in the newscasts themselves, since, whenever it is possible, the formula alluded above of "getting into trouble and out again" is applied to "real-life stories."

In what concerns the "fetishism of cultural goods," it is evident that, in the same terms defined above of the relationship between radio and cinema in Brazil, the bipod newscast/soap-opera on television has created a particular realm whose partaking has acquired such a fanatic adherence that it is no longer possible to distinguish "exchange value" from "use-value." This fact means that Horkheimer and Adorno's definition of the fetishism of the cultural commodity as an absorption of the latter by the former simultaneously applies and does not apply, since the identity of exchange and use-value

can also be thought of as a result of complete absorption. The cultural fetishism feature can be anyway clearly perceived in the fact that those who ignore the most-watched soap opera of the moment run the risk of being considered either arrogant or simply weird.

The Third phase of the Culture Industry in Brazil: the digitalization of the media

In the new state of things, characterized by the digitalization of the media and the dominance of global companies, it would be interesting to remind the previously mentioned five criteria to critically understand the situation of mass culture nowadays, beginning with the "retroactive manipulation".

The Internet is so structured that responses concerning the demands of the audience can be immediately taken and processed by the producers (using, for instance, search engines) so that they can adapt very quickly the offer of commodities — cultural as well as conventional ones — to the desires of the masses. This procedure assures the maintenance of the profits also in contexts of economic crisis, when the demand is much more selective and restricted, not to mention the other main goal of the culture industry, which is to provide conformity from the masses to the situation of the — now globalized — monopoly capitalism. This feature of the contemporary culture industry could be designated by the word "capillarity," which means a kind of reinforcement of the "retroactive manipulation."

Another trait of the contemporary culture industry, deeply linked to its technological infrastructure, is the extraordinary realism of the digital media, which strengthens the second criterium previously applied to the "classical" culture industry: the expropriation of schematism. A digital video recording or broadcasting with high definition sound and image creates much more perfectly than the media of the first and second phases of the culture industry the illusion of being in front of realities so that the possibility of attachment to an oriented — conservative — "interpretation" to the performance itself seems to be much bigger than before.

As for the objective counterpart of the expropriation of schematism, the consummation of style, the same pattern established for its previous version occurs in the contemporary culture industry. Its producers do not have any freedom of creation while making cultural commodities. Since, according to the retroactive manipulation, everything

must be calculated to obtain the required effect of inducing consumers to buy a specific commodity and act on behalf of maintaining the late capitalist system alive, perceiving it as if it were a free personal choice.

Concerning the fourth criterium, the corruption of the tragic, one could say that the feeling of impotence of the individuals, caused by the omnipotent monopolized and globalized capitalist system, which hosts the digitalized culture industry, is even stronger than at the beginning of its "classic" model in the first half of the 20th Century. This fact strengthens the personal minority of ordinary people and weakens their capabilities of having a kind of resilience that could help them become subjects of their lives and destinies. The establishing of the tragic condition in the sense it occurred in Ancient Greece presupposed the existence of a robust personality — the tragic hero — willing to challenge forces that could annihilate them for the sake of something supposed to be a greater good, eventually paying for it with their own life. The previously mentioned impotence, deepened in the globalized phase of monopoly capitalism, is an insurmountable obstacle to the constitution of an authentic tragic situation. Nevertheless, since a parody of the tragic seems to be a kind of second nature of the culture industry, this feature goes on taking part in its procedures, even in an even faster way than before for the reasons just adduced.

As for the fifth and last criterium, the "fetishism of cultural commodities", the mentioned capillarity of the digital media, and also their very celebrated interactivity does not occur on behalf of a better-qualified communication among people but serve to reinforce the mystification of some stars and starlets both coming directly from the mass media or from the more conventional part of the "upper" art which partake in the culture industry.

It must also be taken into account that the higher flexibility in the production of cultural goods allowed by the digitalization of the media not only furnished a more decentralized and democratic basis to the activity of the artists, in a sense above mentioned but also puts that kind of fetishism peculiar to the classical culture industry in a new level. It happens in the measure that the economy of scale in the production of cultural commodities became dispensable, turning the supposedly more "exclusive" goods accessible to a more considerable number of customers and thus strengthening the absorption of the use-value by the exchange value of the good.

Another interesting feature of the digitalized culture industry concerning the fetishism of cultural goods is that the fascination awakened by its technological devices produces a new kind of alienation. It is because the content of the cultural commodities is very frequently indistinguishable from their material medium. It can be observed not only in the widespread kind of movie that seems to have its value only in the number of special effects it displays but also in the close link between software — understood as the content itself of the cultural commodity — and the hardware that materially supports it, among other instances.

Having remembered these general features of the digitalized mass culture in general, it is relevant to this investigation delving into the impact of its new technologies on the Brazilian culture industry, which corresponds to the passage — also occurred in the rest of the world — from the analogical systems of broadcasting and storage of audiovisual content to the digital media.

Moreover, since these tools depend on computer-network systems, it is opportune to remember the process that brought us to the present state of things. To be sure, since the eighties — when the first version of the Internet was open only to scientific and military usage — some Brazilian universities already had access to networks of US-American research and educational institutions. Nevertheless, worldwide Internet's use, as we know now, was to take place just at the beginning of the decade of 1990s, when in 1992 an amendment in the US-constitution, introduced by representative Rick Boucher, allowed for the first time civil and commercial usage of the World Wide Web (cf. Segaller, 1998, p. 293 et seq). In addition to the introduction of user-friendly tools like e-mails applications and browsers, this fact occasioned an unprecedented growth of the Internet worldwide, reaching a hundred million users in a short time.

Such as the binomial radio-cinema in the thirties, and the television in the fifties, the Internet arrived in Brazil in the nineties. However, it was then restricted to a minority of the population with enough acquiring power to pay for the expensive fees of the providers. To be sure, these circumstances have changed enormously in Brazil since the nineties so that, if the number of Internet-ready devices can be an index of access to the Web, the figures are pretty impressive. Despite the persistent social exclusion in Brazil, which hinders digital inclusion to a considerable portion of its 210 million inhabitants, according to the Fundação Getúlio Vargas, the country reached by 2021 the amount of 200 million

personal computers in addition to 242 million smartphones operating countrywide. It means that there are now 0,95 computers and 1,15 smartphones per inhabitant, and realistic projections point to the possibility of there being, by 2023, 1,1 computers for each Brazilian (cf. Meireles, 2021). Furthermore, according to the Brazilian managing committee of the Internet, 152 million users already access the Internet, corresponding to 81% of the over ten years old Brazilians and making the country one of the most relevant collective users of this technology in the world (cf. Comitê de Gestão da Internet no Brasil, 2021). In addition, the average daily use of the Internet in 2018 (9 hours and 14 minutes) puts Brazil among the countries with the most prolonged daily access to the Web.

Nevertheless, some details about these numbers must be taken into account to understand the situation appropriately. The most significant amount of Internet users in Brazil are not the ones who can access all the Web resources through broadband, which is still too expensive for the majority of Brazilians. The most common case of Internet users in the country is the cheaper 3G (or at best 4G) access through simpler smartphones, which are very popular in Brazil. The consequences of this fact are going to be clearer below.

Shifting to other aspects of the digitalized media in Brazil, it is relevant to assign that — still analogical — cable TV became popular among middle-class consumers parallel to the first period of Internet usage in the nineties. Moreover, digital over-the-air TV (OTA TV) started to function in 2007 and nowadays is spread countrywide. As for home entertainment devices, it is relevant to consider the usage of VCRs, whose suitable tapes were available in hundreds of thousands of video hire shops during the eighties and nineties, which gradually shifted their offer to DVDs (and BDs) from the beginning of the decade of 2000 on. Needless to say, that since almost ten years, physical storage media usage has been substituted — to people who can afford it — by accounts in video streaming platforms like Netflix and Prime Video or even the Brazilian GloboPlay, which along with Brazilian and foreign series and feature films also streams worldwide shows daily broadcasted by Globo TV.

Concerning the reception of its products by the audience, the five criteria established to analyze the culture industry critically — also in its digitalized version, as seen above — still apply unbounded. Since the digitalized culture industry established itself in the already highly globalized world, it is also very much alike worldwide. In the

case of Brazil, however, there are some peculiarities, from which two are worth mentioning. The first one is the fact that factors like the fall in the price of audiovisual production and easiness of its worldwide distribution through streaming platforms were determinants in breaking up the privilege Globo TV had until the nineties in shooting and exporting soap operas all over the world. As a matter of fact, this kind of product nowadays is immensely undervalued in face of the much more desirable series — many coming from countries without any previous tradition of producing audiovisual commodities — available on streaming platforms.

The other peculiarity concerns the fact mentioned above that most Internet access of many million Brazilians is low-quality, smartphone-based, 3G or 4G connection, which does not allow full usage of the multimedia resources of the Web. To be sure, semi-illiterate and elders use the Internet capabilities of the smartphone almost only as a cheaper communication means, such as instant messages applications — mainly WhatsApp in the Brazilian case — do. Therefore this kind of Internet usage hides the fact that what seems to be an outstanding popularization of the Web in Brazil is a vast digital exclusion or at least a very incomplete inclusion.

Taking into account the previously discussed tasks of the culture industry, no matter what is its technological basis, related both to the valuing of the invested capital and predicting the behavior of the masses, the mentioned incomplete digital inclusion occasions a serious situation of ideological manipulation, which was responsible, in Brazil, for the voting of a fascist candidate in 2018's presidential election. One could say that, as well as in the first phase of the culture industry in Brazil the binomial radio-cinema and in the second one the television were responsible not only for entertainment but also for a though socio-political and ethical manipulation of the masses, in its third — digitalized — phase, another synergic pair, composed by television/instant-message-app, threatened (and threatens) badly the democracy in this country.

In 2018's presidential election, the four largest — countrywide spread — TV networks worked together, more or less openly, for the voting of a fascist candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, since his opponent, Fernando Haddad, is (a moderate) leftwing politician who was undesirable for the economic and political system. At the same time, far-right entrepreneurs financed a deviating usage of WhatsApp — the most popular instant-message app in Brazil —, according to which infamous fake news about

Bolsonaros contender, also using photos and videos, were massively triggered. This procedure confused the poorest users of this precarious Web resource, who thought they were receiving messages of friends and relatives containing severe charges against Haddad, while in fact, it was the action of bots, illegally paid by unscrupulous businesspeople, who were frightened by the concrete possibility of election of Lula's candidate. These WhatsApp messages "confirmed" in a seemingly personalized way the distorted content reported on the TV news shows, which consolidated a majority of Bolsonaro voters and unfortunately guaranteed his election.

Concluding remarks

The more general thesis of this paper, the applicability of Adorno and Horkheimer's theoretical frame on the culture industry to a peripheral country, is confirmed by the fact that shortly after this kind of enterprise was established in the central capitalist countries, it became present in Brazil, despite its regional inequalities and socio-economic issues.

Another point confirmed by the previous discussion is that, as well as culture industry in the center of capitalism underwent major transformations throughout the whole Twentieth Century and the beginning of the Twenty-First, so it also occurred in Brazil despite the peculiarities of the mass culture's model that consolidated itself in the country. The periodization of its account in three specific phases, which correspond to the very development of the culture industry elsewhere, helps to understand both the similarities and the differences between the Brazilian mass culture and its foreign counterparts.

A last remark is that, compared with the sections about the first and second phases of the culture industry, the third one is visibly shorter. The reason for this shortage is that the facts about the digitalization of media change almost every day and we are still so immersed in its experience that it is not easy to analyze it from a due distance. Therefore the option was, presupposing the applicability of the five criteria taken to the first and second phases, to mention a process that attests for the two main purposes of the culture industry: both to obtain profit by selling its products and imposing patterns of behavior that shall guarantee the permanence of capitalist system in the future. The fact that the more significant majority of Brazilian entrepreneurs not only worked for the

election of a far-right presidential candidate but also massively financed his campaign both in the traditional and in the digitalized mass media can be seen as a confirmation of that.

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