

## Time and Narrative in The Pará Amazon: the plebiscite in Pará through the perspective of the “Reader

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## Abstract

The article aims to identify and understand the narrative configuration on the plebiscite in Pará from the "Reader Space", a section of letters published in the newspaper *Diário do Pará*. According to Paul Ricoeur's perspective, narrative configuration is related to the temporal character of human existence. We adopt Ricoeur's theoretical philosophy and its stages of *mimesis* in the pre-comprehension of the narrative and the technique of analysis of communication, proposed by Motta (2013), as configuration of intrigue. Looking at a sample of 16 reader letters, we observed that the developmental point of view, associated with emotional and political frameworks, structured the narratives on the creation of two States: Carajás and Tapajós.

## Keywords

Reader letters; Diário do Pará; Pará Amazon; Narrative communication; Plebiscite in Pará.

## Initial considerations

The novelist Raymond Chandler, when talking about letters in his "Poem for Cissy", says that they will not die from waiting for a stranger to come along and carefully read them, page by page, slowly emerging from the haze of time and change; challenging over the years. As strangers, we set ourselves the goal of identifying and understanding the narrative configuration of the plebiscite in Pará from the "Reader Space" – a section of reader letters published regularly in the *Diário do Pará* until 2016. This newspaper is one of the main political-communication groups in the Amazon: the Amazon Brazil Network (ABN).

Narrative configuration is directly related to the temporal character of human existence. For Paul Ricoeur (2010, p. 93), "time becomes human in that is articulated in a narrative way, and the narrative reaches its plenary significance when it becomes a condition of temporal existence". From this perspective, the narrative carries within itself the mediating function of intrigue, called by the philosopher of concordance-discordance, capable of transforming events or individual incidents into a whole history.

The plebiscite in Pará (December 11, 2011) was held on the decision to create two separate States, Carajás and Tapajós, out of the existing State of Pará. Most of the voters – around 66% according to the Superior Electoral Court (SEC) – voted against the separation. Separatist initiatives in the Amazon go back almost 30 years as a response of the local society to the mesh programmed by the federal government. The reader letters thus become a privileged genre for the analysis of collectively constructed narratives about Pará and about the Amazon.

Ricoeur's hermeneutic circle was adopted as the guiding thread – not in a mechanistic perspective, but to understand human action – constituted by three stages of mimesis. Mimesis I imitates or represents action in order to pre-understand what human action is – its semantics, its symbolic, and its temporality. Mimesis II deals with the configurative dimension that transforms events into history. Mimesis III proposes an intersection between the world of text and the world of the reader.

In order to better understand the structural aspect of mimesis I we look at the characteristics of *Diário do Pará*, one of the major media newspapers in Amazonia, ranked 34<sup>th</sup> in the country in terms of circulation in 2015 according to the National Association of Newspapers (NAN) and is also directly linked to Senator Jader Barbalho of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (BDMP). To understand the symbolic aspect, we see the reader letters as part of a social response system that produces a broad, deferred and diffused social interactivity (Braga, 2006, p.

27) and which puts different narrative statements into perspective constructed through experience. To understand the temporal aspect, we look at the formation of the Carajás and Tapajós territories from the perspective of development in the Amazon. To understand mimesis II we use the narrative communication analysis movements (Motta, 2013). We extracted a sample of 16 letters published in the "Reader Space" in December, 2011, on the plebiscite in Pará. Lastly, mimesis III came from sharing a new experience through language.

### *Diário do Pará: Jader Barbalho's newspaper*

Castro (2012, p. 180) ranks the ABN (responsible for producing the newspaper *Diário do Pará*) as one of the five most important political-communication groups in the Amazon. The others are: the Romulo Maiorana Organizations (RMO), responsible for rival newspaper *O Liberal*, also in the State of Pará; the Amazon Network and the Calderaro Network of Communication, known as *A Crítica* – both in the State of Amazonas; and the Jaime Câmara Organizations (JCO) based in the state of Tocantins.

Founded on August 22, 1982, *Diário do Pará* supported Jader Barbalho's campaign (BDMP) for State governor while rival newspaper *O Liberal* supported the competition. Veloso (2008, p. 82) explains that during the 1960s and 1970s, Jader had led the local opposition to the military regime as student leader, councilor and deputy of the then Brazilian Democratic Movement (BDM). He won the 1982 election as a fearless young politician in the face of dictatorial power, committed to the changes for which Pará so desperately wanted. *O Liberal* had consolidated itself by supporting the governments of situation and consequently did not offer resistance against the military governments.

Since its inception, *Diário do Pará* has been in direct competition with *O Liberal*. It is the "greatest case of journalistic rivalry in the history of Pará" (Pinto, 2007) and is not only a commercial and editorial rivalry: due to their political differences, one seeks to destroy the other. Still, according to Veloso (2008, p. 83), the RMO's response to Jader Barbalho's rise to power is shaped in the growing relationship with the former governor's political opponents. Some of these opponents started to use *O Liberal* to publicly attack Jader Barbalho. The compensation was made through official advertising. The longest lasting alliance between RMO and a Pará political group was from 1994 to 2006, with the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (BSDP) winning the State.

There were 12 years of close relations between the toucans and the Maiorana, which was maintained by intense propaganda from the

PBSD government in newspapers and radios broadcasters. (...) Competence, modernity and integrity were synonymous with how the PBSD ran its journalistic coverage of the RMO. (Veloso, 2008, p. 84)

For Veloso, the search for professionalization over the years has not sidetracked *Diário do Pará* from its main goal of being a campaign newspaper primarily aimed at defending the private interests of Jader Barbalho's family and supporters. Since 2002 an aggressive investment and marketing policy has been employed at *Diário do Pará* to help it gain a foothold in the local and political market "by building a polarized competitive situation [against *O Liberal*] which does not manage content quality, but does create its own local agendas" (Castro, 2012, p.182).

*Diário do Pará* has 29 branches inside Pará operating within Belém and a further 100 of the 144 municipalities in the State. With an average circulation rate of around 28,000 copies, it has become the ABN's main vehicle, "often used to publicize the political actions of its owners and their families, as well as clashes between the ABN group and the Romulo Maiorana Organizations" (Pinto, 2017, p. 130). For Aguiar (2016, p. 168), the ABN is a typical example of a family business "led by an influential politician who sees communication as more of a bargaining medium in local-regional power relations than as an activity-order".

According to Pinto (2013), *Diário do Pará* maintains its affiliation with the Checker Communication Institute (CCI) for the purpose of differentiating itself from *O Liberal*, which has not had a circulation audit performed since it was found to have presented fraudulent numbers to the Institute. However, the ABN's newspaper does not disclose any data determined by the VCI, only information from the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (Bipos) – which measures audience, and not sales.

We can therefore see that the communication groups in Pará, ABN and RMO, maintain journalism through *Diário do Pará* and *O Liberal* as "true economic bastions of their political influence", using them "to blackmail companies and the public power to capitalize" (Castro, 2013, p. 441). Castro believes that Pará newspapers are a model of propaganda because they reach the middle class as well as the local elites. Therefore, they become an instrument of political bargaining based on the fact that they have more autonomy to decide what facts will be covered, as well as the approach of the narratives.

## Reader letters: from social responses to narrative utterance

The reader letters had been a major part of the *Diário do Pará* until August 26, 2016, when the newspaper restructured itself and adhered to a new way of organizing content. Entitled "Reader Space", the letter section was published daily on the top half of page A2. The bottom half of that same page was dedicated to an opinion column. There was an average of four reader letters published per edition, plus a photograph under the title "City Scenes".

There were an address, e-mail and telephone number for contact purposes as well as instructions to write objective messages up to 10 lines long, with or without photos, and were to include with name, full address and telephone. For printing accusations and/or reports, *Diário do Pará* reserved the right to publish full or abridged submissions, as well as to exonerate itself from liability in case of legal issues.

The reader letters are classified as a subgenre of the letter to the editor genre since the editor is the one who receives the letters and is also responsible for editing and publishing them. We understand genres not only as journalistic specialization, but also as a typical form of utterance. Bakhtin (2016, p. 52) defines genres as typical situations of discursive communication, that is, they correspond to some typical contracts of the meanings of words with concrete reality in typical circumstances; it is an utterance, not a language.

For Corrêa (2014, page 136), reader letters are absent from immediate contact between the sender and the receiver and have the ability to articulate facts that do not coincide with their moment of hatching, getting points of view from the other side of the journalistic stream: from the receiver, from the collectivity. Corrêa states that reader participation through letters is passive, abstract and indirect. She characterizes reader letters as "a democratic space where the reader can contribute even though that contribution is quite restricted" (Corrêa, 2014, p. 139). She also considers that what is most important for readers is the manifestation itself, the expression or the outburst expressed in the letter. She believes readers write letters to newspapers for the satisfaction of participating.

In an interactive perspective, Braga (2006, p. 133) explains that reader letters are a space in which the reader and the journalist can compare perspectives about social events where readers speak with the newspaper, in the newspaper, and eventually about the newspaper. Braga states that reader letters are an example of what he calls a social response system – a system of deferred and diffused circulation (among people, groups, and institutions) that impregnates and partially directs culture through meanings initially produced by the media.

Once completed, the more direct "economic" (or commercial) procedural process, the "make it happen" process, the products are

not just “consumed” (in the sense of “used and spent”). On the contrary, propositions “circulate”, they are clearly worked on, manipulated, and reinserted into more diverse social contexts. (...) The system of interactional circulation (...) is not only “choosing and welcoming” according to previous cultural criteria but it also generates dynamic social work: answers. (Braga, 2006, p. 28)

Braga explains that the interactivity of the reader letters is revealed when these readers write to the newspaper and react to some position that has touched them as an individual or as part of a group, either positively or negatively. “There is therefore a purpose for the newspaper to express itself and the public shares that” (BRAGA, 2006, p. 145). The poles in interaction are subject interlocutors subscribed to a situational context. These poles are also subjects in experience that affect and are affected by co-presence and symbolic mediation (França, 2006, p. 84). The researcher reinforces that experience in the world does not come without references, that is, it is based on prior knowledge – what Goffman (2012, p. 34) calls a framework: the elaboration of situations according to the principles of organization that govern social events and subjective involvement in them; the basic elements that can be identified; the organization of experience.

Bakhtin (2016, p. 35) says that alternation between the interlocutor subjects is what characterizes utterance as the unit of discursive communication. He believes that the criterion of conclusiveness of the utterance is the possibility of responding to it, or in more precise and broad terms, of occupying a responsive position in relation to it. The totality of the utterance is determined by the comprehensiveness and interpretation of the discursive intention or the will to produce meaning on the part of the interlocutors.

Every utterance is a link in the chain of discursive communication. It is the active position of the speaker in that or that field of the object and meaning. That is why each utterance is characterized, first and foremost, by certain semantic-object content. (Bakhtin, 2016, p. 46)

He also believes that the interlocutor’s individual discursive experience forms and develops in constant and continuous interaction with the individual utterances of others. It is a slightly creative process of assimilation with varying degrees of otherness, assimilability, imperceptibility and relevance of the words of others. The speakers assimilate, re-elaborate and/or re-emphasize other utterances. This means that every utterance is a response to previous ones: it rejects them, confirms them, completes them, draws upon them, implies them as known, and in a way takes them into account.

We understand, therefore, that the reader letters bear in themselves narrative utterances which relate things to each other in an order and perspective,

in a logical and chronological process (Motta, 2013, p. 89). For the author, the narratives are not constructed naively, but, they are configured as an argumentative attitude; a device of persuasive, seductive and engaging language to obtain certain effects of meaning. In France (2006, p. 61), narratives represent sense-ordering practices; concrete interventions in specific contexts developed by subjects – subjects which are inserted into or are part of a broader process: the communicative processes.

## Plebiscite in Pará: in search of the Amazon's development

According to the divisional proposals, Carajás would be formed by 39 municipalities from the south and southeast of Pará, these municipalities occupy 24% of the State area. Tapajós would be formed of 27 municipalities from the west of Pará<sup>1</sup>, equivalent to 59% of State area. That would leave 78 municipalities for Pará – 17% of the current State area (Braga, 2015, p. 46). The public referendum, known as the plebiscite in Pará, was authorized by legislative acts 136 and 137/2011 and is the first attempt at territorial reshaping since the establishment of the 1988 Constitution. Before that time, the creation or dissolution of new Brazilian states was the prerogative of the Union.

The new territories of Carajás and Tapajós, although not constituted as federal units, represent the division of the Amazon into sub regional units. Becker (1996, p. 97) explains that this division results from the conflict between the technical-political framework of large networks and territories imposed by the State and the sociopolitical network built on the living space of social groups that settled on the Amazon border, also defining its territories.

According to Dutra (1999, p. 115), the demand for political and administrative autonomy for Carajás and Tapajós is often placed on the central power, represented by the government of Pará, for neglecting the municipalities of Pará – mainly the ones farther out from Belém. This negligence refers to the state of poverty and “backwardness” of the underdevelopment which the interior of Pará was subjected to by “‘successive Pará governments’ that did not allow the region to fulfill its destiny, something that most certainly should happen, an encounter with history which is reluctant to materialize” (Dutra, 1999, p. 125).

We can see that development is associated to what Becker (2001, p. 135) calls a border economy, which defines progress in the Amazon as synonymous with

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<sup>1</sup> In Dutra's words (1999, p. 12), “the traditional Lower Amazonas of Pará comprises the zone that goes from Almeirim to the limits with the State of Amazonas, also covering the municipalities existing in the channel of the Tapajós river. The so-called west of Pará extends to include newly created municipalities, under the influence of the Transamazon and Santarém-Cuiabá highways, outside, therefore, of the fluvial axis that directed the historical colonization”.



infinite economic growth and prosperity from the exploitation of natural resources perceived as infinite. One of the main consequences of the border economy is the drastic change of time and space. The relations that took place in the Amazon by river which used to take days and/or months were accounted for in hours.

In the Amazon, different from capital cities, the interior refers to the rural world, although it includes towns and villages. For Paes Loureiro (1995, p. 56), the interior is the place where the tensions in society grow, where human groups are dispersed throughout large spaces and where they are immersed in a vague idea of infinity, more in frozen time than in a contemporary space. Dutra (1999, p. 225) affirms that there is a feeling of inferiority among the elites of the Pará interior in relation to Belém, and overcoming this inferiority goes through the territorial division and, consequently, the recognition of its own autonomy.

Since the Amazon was constituted under the sovereignty of the Portuguese crown, isolated not only from other Brazilian urban centers but also from Latin America, the idea that the Amazonian practices were old, folk and primitive was consolidated. Paes Loureiro (1995, p. 30) explains that the distance in space came to be understood as distance in time: the isolation that covered the Amazon with the mantle of mystery, distance and timelessness, which didn't allow it from exchanging its cultural assets contributed towards its folklore and primitivist vision.

In order to break from the idea of backwardness, the Carajás and Tapajós elites seek to demonstrate that the social problems in the interior can only be solved by establishing a local, regional power; a new central power with characteristics of proximity and belonging (Dutra, 1999, p. 116). Among the main motivations and interests behind the territorial division of Pará is developmentalism which, according to Andrade (2011, p. 25), needs to decentralize public resources and to more consistently stimulate underdeveloped territories that have been neglected by public power. This discourse, in addition to the large territorial dimensions of the States, is used in most projects looking to create new territorial units in the Amazon.

The economic component becomes an important factor in justifying the creation of the states of Carajás and Tapajós. Dutra (1999, p. 226) says that it is not a coincidence that political and business groups from southern Pará encourage the debate for the autonomy of Carajás, which houses the most expressive investments among the so-called large-scale projects<sup>2</sup>, concentrated around the reality and meaning of the Carajás Great Project (CGP)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Becker (1996, p. 63) explains that large-scale projects, also called projects of great impact, are those sponsored and/or financed largely by the State, whose investment is equivalent to or greater than one billion dollars. Moreover, large-scale projects are characterized by the giant scale of construction, the mobilization of capital and labor; by the isolation, since they are implanted, generally, as an enclave – which dissociates them from local forces; by connecting to larger, planetary-scale economic systems of

In fact, the south of Pará has been economically prominent since the mid-nineteenth century; it was a latecomer to the rubber boom. Schmink and Wood (2012, p. 195) explain that natural latex was mined in the area, but it was not until the late nineteenth century that rubber tappers founded villages on the shores of Tocantins and along the Araguaia and Xingu rivers. When the rubber boom came to an end, Brazilian nuts became the main export from the south of Pará. In the beginning of the twentieth century, merchants from Marabá (which applied to be the capital of Carajás) pressured the State government for political autonomy.

Tapajós (its capital city would have been Santarém) got its name from the river with the same name, "the geophysical reference of a space considered culturally distant by groups from a wide strip of territory that the [pro-creation of the state] movement hopes will become autonomous" (Dutra, 1999, p. 151). Since the 1980s, investments in mineral extraction have been consolidated in the port of Trombetas, Oriximiná, where a conglomerate of national and foreign companies called Rio do Norte Mining extracts bauxite (Dutra, 1999, p. 227).

The author lists several reasons for creating the State of Tapajós, which see economic development as a chance for the west of Pará to achieve autonomy. One example is the Tapajós State Economic Feasibility Study, published in 1996, which argues that the territorial separation of the State of Pará is the only way to strengthen the economic potential of Tapajós by promoting coffee production in the industrial sector and overcoming energy shortages and increasing transportation, particularly with the completion of the 163 National Road works known as the Santarém-Cuiabá highway; one of the major highways that runs through the Mid-West of Brazil.

## Analysis of narrative communication

So far, Ricoeur's (2010) theory of time and narrative has helped us to observe the pre-understanding of the world of action. These are general characterizations for identifying – structural, semantic and temporally – the capacity and the need for the action to be narrated. In order to observe the symbolic mediations of action, that is, the agency of facts and the transformation of

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which they are part; and by the presence of spontaneous urban centers alongside the planned ones, which is the expression of skilled and unskilled workforce segmentation.

<sup>3</sup> Proposed by the then Vale do Rio Doce Company (VRDC) – today, Vale A/S – and endorsed by the State, the CGP, or "Carajazão", aimed to build a gigantic export corridor in the North of the Country, due to the exhaustion and the high cost of exploring the iron deposits in Minas Gerais, as well as the need to diversify production (BECKER, 1996, p. 67). Three large-scale projects are part of the CGP: the Carajás Railroad and the Tucuruí Hydroelectric, in Pará, and the Ponta de Madeira Port, in Maranhão (MATTOS, 1996, p. 61).

individual incidents into an entire history, we turn to the analysis of narrative communication since Ricoeur's perspective is situated on the philosophical plane.

The analysis of narrative communication is "a hermeneutic technique, a technique of interpretation of the discourses about a reality constructed of concrete and abstract phenomena" (Motta, 2013, p. 124). By this definition, discourses acquire the instance of narrative when they are observed as argumentative devices that produces meaning, and when structured in the form of reports, obeys the interests of the narrator (individual or institutional) in a direct relationship with the interlocutor/recipient/audience.

Motta (2013) proposes a methodology of critical analysis of the processes of narrative communication to show the plans of the story and the expression. The author proposes a phenomenological analysis of the narrative based on seven movements: 1) understanding of intrigue as a synthesis of the heterogeneous; 2) understanding the logic of the narrative paradigm; 3) emergence of new episodes; 4) revealing dramatic conflict; 5) character: metamorphosis from person to persona; 6) argumentative strategies; and 7) metanarratives. We did not analyze all the movements in all the selected letters, instead we favored those that seemed more evident, that revealed more within the narrative. We were looking to sew together a seemingly fragmented narrative, constructed by several voices, which painted a historical picture that occurred in real life and then given new meaning through the eyes of the newspaper's narrator-readers.

#### **"Against the division of the papa-chibé nation"**

The title of the letter uses a popular expression from the State of Pará which has a regionalist meaning: "papa-chibé". This expression refers to the people of Pará (a mix of American Indian and European ancestry) which has a close relationship with flour, one of the most consumed foods in the State, as well as other derivatives of cassava which are used to make most of the typical dishes of the region.

Along with that colloquial and regional expression, the narrator uses the word *nation* and calls the inhabitants of the State, *papa-chibé nation*. We can see the narrator's emotional attachment to the expression "nation", as well as the hyperbolic meaning present in the attempt to equate a federative unit to the entire nation. To emphasize the importance of the plebiscite and to value the main drama of the narrative, the narrator uses the expression "defining the future of the nation of Pará". By placing the division of the State as a defining mark for the future, we see how it engages the reader in the main drama.

The narrator refers to some people in the narrative of the letter. The first of them consists of himself, who possesses an active stance in the fabric of intrigue, since he positions himself as a Pará person by using the expression “as good Pará person”, making it clear that it is against the division of the State. The other personas are evoked in a close, informal and even affectionate way, like the expression “sons of the land” which the author uses to name the Pará native. Another two personas typified in the Amazonian imaginary, also evoked by the narrator, are the amazed tourist and the welcoming Pará person, portrayed in the term “hospitable people”.

The narrator refers to the plebiscite as a “party of democracy”. Through the figure of language of comparison, he evokes positive meanings around the word party, which refers to an event in which people have fun and socialize. Therefore, even though he is against the division, he indicates that having a public vote to decide the issue is a positive solution.

As a convincing strategy, the narrator alternates between the aesthetic effects of meaning and effects of reality. We can see this alternativity in the excerpt “I would not like to see our State divided *by resentments*”, in which he appeals to the emotion of the reader, and then in the excerpt:

I do not believe that the idea of division is the best solution, after all, if it were, other states that created by law would already be self-sufficient, and much smaller ones like Sergipe, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba and Alagoas would be more well-developed than ours. (Diário do Pará, 2011)

We can also see the appeal to the rationality of the reader through the use of comparison as a resource, demonstrating the failure of other similar initiatives.

**“To separate or not to separate, that is the question!”**

Here the narrator claims to seek an independent position through his statement “I prefer not to manifest a position, although I already have a definite position”. However, in his narrative construction, he gives clear clues to his own positioning in relation to the division of the State, including his geographical location.

By opting to use the verb *cut* in place of the verb *divide* when referring to the possible division of the State of Pará, the narrator resorts to the drama that the expression evokes, since *cut* means to split in several pieces – and whoever does it, in general, does not do it in a peaceful way. As action, there is an allusion to violence; after all, it is hard to imagine cutting something affectionately. The expression, therefore, is intrinsically covered in a negative aura. On the other hand, the verb *divide* has ambivalence: when something is divided, something is lost, but

also shared. However, when he chooses *cut* over *divide*, the narrator is making a clear position, he even explicitly States that he does not intend to position himself.

The narrator ends the narrative by affirming that he is proud of *this land* and that he understands the difficulties of those who live in Santarem and Marabá. Finally, he appeals directly to the readers, asking for them to take time to think when making a decision. It is clear that he does not reside in either of the two cities mentioned. By stating he understands the difficulties of those who live in those regions, he is choosing an empathic approach as a strategy to reaching out to readers who live in one of the two cities and who might be in favor of the division of the state.

The request for calmness comes across almost as a warning or threat, a strategy that seeks to cause an aesthetic effect of meaning and to instill fear in the reader. After all, the lack of calmness when making decisions can lead to negative results. It is this possibility of negatively affecting the future, chosen in the absence of the serenity of the decision, which the narrator uses as a way of instilling fear.

#### **Debate helps to clarify (one)**

In this narrative we see that the narrator places himself in a position of superiority in relation to other plebiscite voters. He does so by taking on the role of counselor, the one who warns and guides towards a path. He also places himself in a position of confrontation, opposed to people of the political class who are responsible for managing the State of Pará and its municipalities, and he directs other readers to do the same: “we shall move forward with vigor, with the passion which ignites us now. On the other hand, we shall write down their ‘little names’ so that we do not fool ourselves in the next elections”. The narrative has an imperative tone to it and produces a point of tension between the people and the political class, which are placed on opposite sides of the conflict.

#### **Debate helps to clarify (two)**

Here we can see content like the previous one where politicians assume the persona of the villain, being portrayed as managers “without sources” and in love with power. The people assume the persona of the hero who suffers the adversities that arise from the actions of politicians. The narrator does not use data or strategies that produce effects of reality; nevertheless, he appeals to the emotion of the reader when acting empathetic to the demands of the State.

#### **For a capital in the center of Pará**

The narrator of this letter also places himself in a position of superiority over the rest of the population by using the expression “the less-enlightened society”. He marks his own position as knowledgeable within the fabric of intrigue, that is, as one who sees the reasons why conflict occurs. The strategy of hero (people) and villain (municipal management) is also used. The narrator explains that is against the division of the State of Pará and uses strategies that appeal to the emotions of readers in order to justify his point of view. He uses terms that evoke empathy but contradicts the position of superiority at the beginning of the narrative by calling other voters *brothers*.

We realize that the narrator is defining people as passive subjects to their own history by saying that “they do not know how to vote, they get caught up in the speeches of the political class”. He thus builds a persona that reinforces a figure present in the Amazonian imaginary of the colonial period which Gondim (2007, p. 60) calls “good savage”. This persona applied mainly to indigenous people who were portrayed as being incapable of conferring rationality and meaning to their own lives (COSTA, 2011).

### **Yes, divide the State!**

This narrative, as the title suggests, is structured in defense of the division of the state of Pará. Utterances that appeal to the emotion of readers are used to create meaningful effects, especially through the metaphor that the capital Belém is a leech of *future* States, which the narrator described as wanting to “get rid of that parasite”. Another convincing strategy is to talk about division as a future certainty. The narrative utterance treats the possible States of Carajás and Tapajós as if they already exist, in this way it does not work with uncertainty, putting the argument beforehand on the winning side.

### **Who will prosper in the division?**

Although short in length, this narrative exposes some central elements within the great narrative woven around the division of Pará. Its main objective is to highlight and reveal the characters in the division. *Farmers, politicians and businessmen* are personified as villains who will take advantage of a possible territorial division and, at the same time, it describes the people as the heroes (but not in a positive meaning); the hero in the tragedy is the one who suffers from the actions of the villains.

### **Managing is the solution**

Like in the previous letter, the narrator uses the government and the political class as antagonists of society. By using the expression *separatists*, even using it as a vocative directly describing the “separatists”, the narrator categorizes and frames a type of character within the narrative, and at the same time defines his position as a non-separatist. He pits the arguments of the separatists against the arguments that aim to produce effects of the real. He does this by alluding to newspaper articles and to actions present in real life, outside of the text. While these strategies are unfolding in the narrative, the narrator uses the expression *separatists* pejoratively several times, emphasizing that they must “search for corruption” before deciding to separate the State.

So, we realize that the letter is directed to a specific audience because it dialogues directly with whomever is in favor of the division of Pará, and not with all the readers. The narrator seeks to convince through the strategy of argumentative opposition.

#### **My vote is for the division of Pará**

This narrative, which favors the division, uses a conciliatory tone in which the narrator, who actually claims to be from Belém, suggests that readers put themselves in the shoes of those who live far from the capital. Although not directly mentioning the state government, the narrator suggests that investments in health and education do not reach the population on the outskirts of the capital Belém so, as in other narratives, it also describes public management as an antagonist towards the interests of society – an argument often used to support territorial division.

#### **Plebiscite: all of Pará in one day of decision (two)**

From the onset, this narrative shows the clear dissatisfaction of the narrator when he begins his construction of utterances with the word *unfortunately*. The narrator criticizes the polarization created between the political fronts that are for and against the division of Pará which he believes did not further the debate on the issue. The argumentative strategy he uses is to criticize and then point out alternatives for the future of the State. We thus perceive a rationalization of the narrative which seeks to produce effects of reality, alternating between rational and emotional arguments in order to convince the reader.

The narrator also uses a comparison when he states the need to equate the development of Pará with that of other States, appealing to the argument of progress and integration. We also noticed a dramatic effect used by the narrator in

his choice of the word *hostage* to explain the situation of Pará in relation to the other States of Brazil.

### **Will regions need to say no and no?**

Published after the plebiscite had already been done, this is perhaps the one letter that most antagonizes the government and the politicians in campaigns against the division of the State. One difference between this narrative and the others is that the narrator uses the names of the political authorities involved and seeks to dialogue with them; he reports directly to these interlocutors, as we can see in the excerpt: "The time has come for politicians responsible for the No campaign (...) to put into practice...".

The narrator also directs his narrative to the population who chose not to vote: "To these voters and those who unfortunately did not vote, here is my proposal..." Therefore, the narrator is addressing at least two different interlocutors. He likewise assumes a tone of dissatisfaction that runs through his entire narrative and which goes through both the level of abstention at the polls and the disregard that he claims for the public management of the State of Pará. The narrator ends with a threatening tone directed towards politicians who, in his eyes, are figures that are omitted in the narrative and who therefore assume the persona of villain. To the people, he attributes the power to overcome the typified person of the villain by alternatives that he suggests in the own narrative.

## **Final considerations**

To think or reflect on the narrative from Ricoeur's theoretical position is not an easy task considering that his reflections are not reduced to mechanistic models of understanding the narrative, but to the action itself. In other words, people are not things and we must think about acting or human action. Reflecting on the stages of mimesis, however, allows us to observe the different aspects of the narratives on the plebiscite in Pará constructed in the reader letters in the newspaper *Diário do Pará*. We perceive that the interlocutors, indeed, use life experience; they make frameworks and then construct the narrative utterance. This is also true for the collectively built cosmivision from meanings put into circulation by the media. It is no coincidence that the debates broadcast on ABN TV between the political parties who are for and against the division of Pará were mentioned in the narratives.

By choosing a framework, and selecting voices and strategies for structuring utterances, readers seek to convince or lead the audience toward the intended



meaning which is never impartial or disinterested. It reflects a place of speech; their own voice and action in the world of life where these actions take place. By analyzing narrative communication, we seek to reach the intended meanings of readers and find the clues left between the lines of the narrative utterances. This course was based on a guide which consisted of an adaptation of the movements indicated by Motta (2013), inspired by Ricoeur's theory of interpretation and understanding of intrigue. By analyzing letters from different readers, we perceive a fragmented narrative that, despite having as common theme, brought up the story of each reader, their own experiences, approaches and strategies.

About the plebiscite in Pará: we observed the articulation of emotional, political and developmental frameworks. The interlocutors justified the need of creating the States of Carajás and Tapajós so that the interior of Pará could also become developed, an area engulfed by the capital, Belém. At no time, however, they did mention the possibility that Belém might not be as developed as one might think. Leaning on the emotional perspective that Pará would be diminished or shredded was a strategy to convince voters to vote against the division. The same emotional aspect was revealed when, after the division was rejected, the narrator promised revenge in the 2012 and 2014 elections by not voting for the candidates who declared to be against the division.

The political framework was perceived when the interlocutors pointed out the names of political actors who would benefit from the creation of Carajás and Tapajós. Hiding Jader Barbalho's name in the reader letters can reveal intent on the part of the edition since the relation between the mass media and the political agents in the Pará Amazon is very thin. Likewise, when the State government (BSDP) was identified as a headman from the interior of Pará, it may have been a strategy by the newspaper to attack its political rival. The public vote, in general, was treated as a complement of legislation and that is why it needed the articulation of political agents.

Regardless, there needs to be further studies on the reader letters in the field of communication given the limited literature on the subject. The *Diário do Pará* stopped publishing the "Reader Space" section in 2016, leaving us with the question: would the Internet be the only possible space for the redirection of meanings constructed from the collective experience? If so, it is scary since cyberspace combines both the democratization of information and intolerance and hatred of opposing positions. In the Amazon, particularly, the internet is not even accessible to a large portion of the population, which makes the scenario even more critical. If it is not possible to combine the same and the different in the same space, even in the space of a newspaper; if it is no longer possible to provide

encounters, confrontations, adjustments; if social voices produce only echoes, instead of dialogues, then Communication loses its reason for existing.

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