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## WHAT DOES THE TYPEWRITER TELL US? Notes on writing of a modern Brazil

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## ABSTRACT

The article discusses the history of the media written by Friedrich Kittler, seeking to expand the theoretical-methodological perspectives for the research of historicity in the communicational processes. Based on Brazilian empirical cases (epistolary material, newspaper articles, advertisements), the typewriter is used as a written communication medium that participated in a relevant way in the modernization of the country at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. At the time of the appearance of the first technical media, according to Kittler, the invention of an ambiguous apparatus, perceived as both tool and technology, provided a new relationship with writing and a change in the "discursive network", simultaneously with the impact of optical and sound inventions, especially the film and the gramophone. When considering the historically situated technical conditions for the discursive articulation, we will seek to explore dilemmas proper to the history of the media in regions that are generally classified as peripheral, such as Brazil.

### Keywords

Typewriter, history of the media, Friedrich Kittler

## Introduction

The article is based on inquiries that have emerged from approximations between media history and literature. In this sense, we will present some of the concepts and methods suggested by Friedrich Kittler (1990, 1999, 2016) that have proven useful tools in these investigations, seeking to address what has already been termed “post-hermeneutic criticism” (Wellbery, 1990). Our attention turns to the period of transformation that occurred at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, when, as our historiography establishes, with the end of slavery and the political reorganization from the Second Reign to the Republic, a process of modernization was inaugurated in Brazil. It is therefore a matter of observing this historical moment of undeniable relevance through the lenses of the history of the media, with the aim of contributing to the expansion of the range of theoretical and methodological resources that can increase the research around the historicity in communicational processes.

In making an original appropriation of different authors that can be classified as poststructuralists – especially Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan –, Kittler develops a descriptive methodology for the history of the media by assuming that the processing, registration and transmission of information depend on specific devices, especially with the emergence of “technical media” at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

In this historical moment when the technical media operate the separation between the acoustic, the optical and the written, it seems quite instigating for us to observe the bundle of complex discursive networks that crystallize in the typewriter. Certainly, in spite of the globalizing forces that depend precisely on the media, there are significant differences between the uses and the dissemination of writing in Brazil and in Europe, for while writing and reading were already widespread in Europe in the eighteenth century, in the second half of the nineteenth century both communicational skills were still severely restricted here. However, it is noteworthy that the difference of more than three centuries between the emergence of the printing press in Europe and its arrival in Brazil in the early nineteenth century practically vanishes with the synchrony of the adoption of the typewriter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

It is important to emphasize that the article proposes a modification in the understanding of the technical apparatus that, as inscribed in a historical moment, should not disregard its cultural specificities. However, we insist that modifying the point of observation may bring new perspectives to understand relations between the means of communication and the history of culture.

The choice of the historical moment addressed by the article is justified by the profound media transformations that occurred at that time. Above all, we will analyze, from some empirical examples, aspects that refer to the introduction of the typewriter in Brazilian daily life at the turn of the century. We will not emphasize figurations of the machine or of writing in literary discourse, but we will seek its perception and appropriation in daily life, especially in the vision of those who would be directly affected by its existence, such as bureaucrats and professional writers. In addition, we will highlight two frustrated attempts to invent typewriters in the country. We believe that the typewriter not only modifies the writer’s and writing self-image, but this new tool has an implication in the dilemmas faced by intellectuals and literates, especially in relation to the country projects drawn from their writing.

Like Kittler, by emphasizing the typewriter, we seek to understand broad transformations by comparing the hand that writes and the hand that types. Observing the typewriter simultaneously as a writing technique and tool allows us to analyze it historically as media support. The way in which the media historian “dwells on” the particularities and uses of this apparatus is a sample of his methodology: by observing it thoroughly, overlaps are uncovered that do not allow an isolated analysis of writing, since diverse relations emerge with other experiences and devices, such as those that record sounds and images.

## History of the media

Kittler's historiographical gesture insists on observing the means of communication to search how "the first technological medium" was recorded in "old paper of books" in the form of an "aesthetics of terror" when writers projected in their texts "a ghostly image of our present as future" (1999, p. XL). In this way, in describing the development of techniques capable of processing sounds, images and texts – gramophone, film, typewriter – and the ways in which these techniques, their expectations and uses were announced, it becomes possible to envisage a "past future". Describing changes in the ways of processing, recording and transmitting information inextricably implies texts, sounds and images, leading to a genealogical investigation of the "prehistory" of technical media that goes back, for example, to the camera obscura and the lanterna magica.

Kittler devoted himself at great length to describing the complexity of "discursive networks" entangled in literary communication, especially in the nineteenth century, when Romanticism reached its apex. The book was then the main medium by allowing, through the processing and recording of written information, access to sophisticated optical and acoustic illusions, especially for extremely proficient readers. When recording sounds, filming sequences and typing letters became options in other media devices, that is, after the appearance of the first technical media at the turn of the twentieth century, writing (and literary imagination) was confronted with the fact that some of its expressive qualities have become obsolete as compared to such devices as gramophone and film.

In approaching the history of literature, the media historian does not intend to acknowledge determination, but to reflect on the conditions of possibility for a discursive articulation to happen, that is, as in a certain historical moment, the available media imply expressive and artistic forms. Thus, a preference for the "descriptive gesture" is explained, because the goal is not to perform a hermeneutic – which seeks to unveil something that hides – but to indicate the conditions for the possibilities of communication. This is what Wellbery (1990), an important interlocutor of Kittler's work, called "post-hermeneutics".

Kittler (2016), in tracing a long genealogy of optical media that goes back to the perspective of the camera obscura used by Renaissance painters, demonstrated how a series of pre-cinematographic devices (magic lanterns, cosmoramas, dioramas) had their illusory effects reproduced in the romantic literature. Faced with the emergence of film, literature questions its ability to produce such representative illusions, moving toward the non-figurative iconoclasm that characterized much of the so-called modern vanguards. Similarly, we believe that to critically analyze the present of writing, no longer stabilized around its main media, the book, it becomes necessary to consider a complex media ecology that cannot be separated from a historical approach.

An analysis that examines both the intersections and dividing lines between writing culture and image technology within a historical context is precisely a methodical preparation for the pressing question of what the status of writing or literature can be today (Kittler, 1999b, p. 27).

The historiographic essay insinuates itself as a tortuous way to "understand contemporary media" because it imposes displacements towards temporal otherness so that it is possible to find deviations of the dominant digital platforms that monopolize the debate today. In order to understand these platforms' potentialities or specific forms of control, we believe it is necessary to observe them from a perspective that cannot fail to consider, historically, the media palimpsest that composes them. In other words, revisiting files that have recorded transformations in the means of processing, storing and transmitting information may indicate ways for us to understand contemporary media from historical processes. To do so, we will take the typewriter as a "platform" in reference to contemporaneity, which may have a certain anachronism, but would be useful to highlight relevant questions related to the naturalization of its daily use.

## Relativizing determinism

Media history, as developed by Kittler, was certainly an inspiration to the concepts of “materialities of communication” and “non-hermeneutic field” propagated by H.U. Gumbrecht (1994, 1998), which goes back, directly or indirectly, to McLuhan and his catchphrase: “The medium is the message”. The controversy that opposes technological determinism and culture seems to be retaken without concessions by the author when he states: “The means determine our situation” (Kittler, 1999). If, in fact, there are authors in the field of media theory who retake Kittler in a more deterministic key, acting locked in the closed time of technological circuits<sup>1</sup>, this statement would have a tautological background because if the means are determinant, what in turn determines them?

Kittler recognizes the influence of McLuhan and Harold Innis as authors who have made an important contribution to give theoretical specificity to the study of communicational media. However, he does not fail to point out inaccuracies in the concept of media used by McLuhan, considering him deeply conservative (in certain passages – the Canadian would confuse the Holy Spirit with the Turing machine (1999b, p. 30) – but maintains a somewhat ambivalent relationship towards his main ideas. According to Gumbrecht (2013), in certain texts, Kittler clearly opposes McLuhan’s catchphrase, from a teleological inspiration, which could not be neglected in his work.

In highlighting technical aspects of the media, Kittler notes that McLuhan, like Freud, assumes the human as the agency of all media. On a counterintuitive path, Kittler develops an inverse suspicion by pointing out that, at a certain level of development, technical innovations would refer to or respond only to each other, in a contingent fashion unrelated to the human being’s collective or individual body. This lack of connection, precisely, would be the reason for the “overwhelming impact” media have on the senses and organs (1999b, p. 30). But Kittler does not dissociate his story of the media from political and social issues – and goes so far as to say, “No history of optical media should hide the fact that entertainment media are always also propaganda machines” (1999b, p. 76). In comments on film, he emphasizes that its appearance should be considered “in the context of fantasies and politics.” Nevertheless, according to him, it is necessary to observe that television “was not once seriously imagined until its factual development” (1999b, p. 22).

To build his history of media, Kittler draws on references in the most diverse fields, such as mathematics, art and film history, literature, and computing. But, above all, the basis on which it moves is that of philosophy, with emphasis on Heidegger and the question of Being; Hegel, with whom, as Gumbrecht (2013) observes, he often seems to position himself as an opponent and in others as a follower; and Nietzsche, who inspires many of his passages, with the genealogical method for history and the question of corporeality, closely related to technique. All this philosophical apparatus is crossed by the intense dialogue with poststructuralist authors, especially Derrida and (arche) writing as a condition of possibility for the concept; Foucault and the discourses as an order for the archeology of knowledge; in addition to a close analogy with the notions of symbolic, imaginary, and real developed by Lacan as a critique of subjectivity as proposed by Freud.

Wellbery (1990) defines three axes as theoretical conceptual assumptions for the history of the media written by Kittler: exteriority, mediality and corporeality. Presupposition of exteriority constitutes an analytical perspective that allows post-hermeneutic criticism, since it intends to analyze the construction of discourses from devices that organize what is recorded and stored, that is, complex structures of power and technology that determine what is recorded in the discourses. In this way, when considering the historical specificity of the machines that process and register knowledge, complex structures are revealed

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<sup>1</sup> An example of such an author is Wolfgang Ernst, author of *Chronopoetics - The Temporal Being and Operativity of Technological Media* (2016).

that articulate power and technology. In turn, broadening the concept of media as something determined by the technological conditions of a historical moment makes it applicable to all forms of cultural exchange, establishing a domain of research guided by the presupposition of mediality. Such assumption defines, for example, the general conditions for a discourse to take shape in a specific epoch, as Gumbrecht (1998) demonstrates in his concept of media literature by historically describing the consolidation of assumptions (such as fictionality) and expectations (as their transgressive character) around the production and reception of literary texts.

Finally, as a third presupposition, corporeality is identified as a “point of reference and focus of concern” (Wellbery, 1990, p. XIV), since it indicates the body as a place where cultural technologies inscribe themselves, that is, the connecting link to and from which our medial means of processing, storage, and transmission run. In this way, the body becomes a deeply historical apparatus, continually shaped and reshaped by the networks to which it is conjoined. According to Rocha, speaking in corporeality rather than agency indicates a “subtle but decisive shift of the centrality of the agency, modernly seen as a source of conscious actions, to the centrality of the body, seen in a post-hermeneutic epoch as metonymy of contingency” (1998, p. 21).

The shift from “agency” to “body” has two major methodological consequences: 1) The question of agency recedes into the background; 2) the body becomes a privileged locus for the analysis of discourse. In this sense, “bonds of solidarity” that orient Kittler’s investigation become visible, contrary to the accusations of technological determinism, as an unmistakable compassion for the pathos of the body in pain is presented: “Post-hermeneutic criticism, however, draws its responsibility precisely from the unassimilable otherness of the singular and mortal body. This is the ethical reason it stops making sense” (Wellbery, 1990, p. XIV). With the typewriter, a new relationship with writing inscribes itself in the body (hands, eyes, posture).

## Typewriter as a platform

The concept of “mediality” is useful for research in communication since it abandons any naivety about the media, or about its supposed neutrality or impartiality. Omnipresent today, “platform” has become the main metaphor in digital media easily engaging billionaire companies: Google, Uber, Airbnb, Amazon, Twitter, Facebook. The latter congregates more than 2 billion people, a population that surpasses that of any nation. Instead of an “identity number”, there are algorithmic codes that define identities in data and metadata.

The belief in platform neutrality contributes to the economic success of companies that battle eagerly for the attention of their users. If we consider “typewriter” as “neutral support”, perhaps little could be said about it. But metaphors are also suggestive of what they do not say – they are not equivalent to the object they want to designate: “The crucial element in this formula is the difference between ‘the thing’ and ‘something else’. What makes the metaphor powerful is the gap between the two poles of the equation” (Johnson apud Gillespie 2017). In this sense, it is important to point out that the platform metaphor conceals in its layers a web of intricate and complex connections, where, for example, innumerable trolls act to harass users in a coordinated way (Gillespie, 2017), such as hate groups, not only in digital networks but also in public spaces of great repercussion.

However, the idea of platform also refers to something that rises, a starting point for a move, an action, a movement. “Figuratively, a platform is flat, open, sturdy. In its connotations, a platform offers the opportunity to act, connect, or speak in ways that are powerful and effective: catching the train, drilling for oil, proclaiming one’s beliefs” (Gillespie/LLEPSIE, 2017). In this case, it is a matter of enabling writing by a machine (the platform). And what is writing other than acting, connecting, speaking powerfully and effectively?

The concept of “mediality” allows us to understand how the media provide unprogrammed uses and senses, pointing to the historical limits and privileges of hermeneutics as a form of interpretation and appropriation. In the same vein, it seems necessary to question the use of technical reason for the development of a universalistic discourse and without history, derided by Kittler by formulating the term the-so-called-Man. There is no novelty in pointing out the relation between technique and cultural values, but “mediality” (even more so than the other two concepts of hermeneutic criticism) implies new ways of observing the history of the media and can enhance the research of communicational means.

Therefore, understanding the shift from the manuscript to the typewriter has an impact equivalent to a “tectonic shift” (Hayles, 2012, p.57) that defines the transition of discursive networks in the nineteenth century. By observing literature mediality, that is, analyzing the available techniques for its discursive articulation, its supposed universality dissolves itself, repositioning the importance of the everyday writing device from which a new perspective of literary communication observation is constituted:

[to separate] (...) “Romantic poetry” (produced under the monopoly of print and universal alphabetization) from modern ‘literature’ (where writing enters into competition with the technical media of phonograph and film). From this perspective, the typewriter (...) can be seen to initiate a fundamental mutation in the mode of existence of language. (Wellberry, 1990, p. XIV)

Following Heidegger’s comments, Wellberry (1990, p. XXX) states that the typewriter distances the language from the hand, which would distinguish, according to Aristotle, “man.” Without sharing this nostalgia, Kittler makes such an intuition historically concrete, for typewriting means releasing writing from the control of the eye and consciousness; spacing is instituted as the precondition of differentiation; a reservoir of signifiers is stored that challenge the page. Such modifications, therefore, alter the status of discourse and reposition bodies that write and read literature, scientific texts or faits divers.

If there are numerous studies that deal with the impact of the telegraph, few turn their investigations to the emergence of the typewriter. In Kittler’s hypothesis (1990) – who carries out his research from a variety of empirical material – the impact would not have been small. The symbolists, with the automatic writing games, would be among the first to perceive what it meant to abandon the pen to typewrite, modifying then the way the writing hand relates to the body and consciousness. Today, one sees the paroxysm of this automatism: autonomous machines process information and “write”.

“Typing” implied a certain distance in the use of letters, the first machines being designed to allow expression of blind people. Kittler investigates the relationship between the initial designs and their actual uses, describing, for example, how Nietzsche appropriates the apparatus, primarily to solve his own vision problems. However, the philosopher moves from enthusiasm for the machine to the reflection of its influence on his own philosophy.

Another aspect of the gradual and massive adoption of the typewriter in everyday life was the large number of women typists entering the labor market, such as secretaries, opening up a large field of work for women. In this somewhat unexpected association for a historian who begins his narrative from a technical apparatus, the articulation between exteriority, mediality and corporeality is demonstrated. In describing the typewriter historically, this apparatus positioned outside the discourse itself is presented as a pivot capable of articulating a discrepancy between the absence of literature women authors before the twentieth century. Like a ricochet effect, socioeconomic aspects in the forms of use and appropriation of the typewriter are amplified to the understanding of the importance of the media to the history of culture, approaching glowing contemporary issues that articulate body, gender, and discourse.

## Inventing and writing in Brazil

Kittler centers his analysis on the German scenario, but his propositions on the typewriter inspired us to investigate how the device settled in Brazil. Press historian Juarez Bahia points out when newspapers began to adopt it: "In 1912, typewriters enter the newsrooms, which began to replace duck-billed pens. Scissors and razor would survive for a long time, next to the glue" (2009, p. 138). However, already in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, numerous advertisements about the new typewriters competed for space with the most modern gramophones available in exquisite shops of the commerce in Rio de Janeiro.

In fact, since the old Empire it was possible to read news about these devices in the newspapers<sup>2</sup>. For example, in the front page of the September 10, 1877 issue of the *Jornal do Commercio*, we can read a piece of news on the visit of Pedro II to Europe when, among many other tasks, the Emperor acquired "dous exemplares do curioso diplographo ou machina de escrever para os cégos, inventada pelo Sr. Recordon" ("two copies of the curious diplograph or writing machine for the blind, invented by Mr. Recordon"). The name (ironically, by reference to the idea of "recording") did not indicate a joke with the possibility of filing made possible by the machine, but Ernest Recordon, an Italian from Genoa who had invented one of its versions. Before that, the same *Jornal do Commercio* reported the attempts of the inventor Jesuíno Antonio Ferreira de Almeida, who made different claims to the Empire to adopt the typewriter he created. On September 20th, 1867, ten years before the mentioned trip of Pedro II, Jesuíno defended the adoption of his invention:

An employee armed with a typewriter will do the service of five amanuenses at the same time (...). An economy of hundreds of contos annually in this branch of the public service can be made in the Empire (Almeida, J. de, *Jornal do Commercio*, 20.09.1867).

The inventor seemed to have achieved what he intended, for a decree of October 2nd, 1867 "granted bachelor Jesuíno Antonio Ferreira de Almeida the privilege to use a typewriter of his invention for ten years in the Empire"<sup>3</sup>. The information is not of little importance: Jesuíno de Almeida invented a typewriter in Brazil and had its patent registered<sup>4</sup>. On July 12th, 1884, in almost epic tones, he recalls the history of his efforts to have his machine adopted by lecturing to professors and students of the Law School of São Paulo, where he graduated<sup>5</sup>:

For more than 20 years I have been working in the sense of vulgarizing among men of letters a system of writing, of my invention, which I believe will be a powerful

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<sup>2</sup> Outstanding Brazilian cases were initially researched for the thesis *A crítica literária em circuitos jornalísticos: José Veríssimo na imprensa da 'belle époque' carioca*, by Rachel Bertol, presented in the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture of UFRJ (2016). The study of cases is deepened here in this article. It is an example of using Kittler's ideas for the history of the media and the press in Brazil, although the author is more referred in studies on the impact of new media in contemporary times. An example can be found in Muller, Felinto (2008).

<sup>3</sup> Available at the following address of the federal administration database: <http://www.lexml.gov.br/urn/urn:lex:br:federal:decreto:1867-10-02;3971>. Retrieved February 20th 2018. The text says: "Grant to the Bachelor Jesuíno Antonio Ferreira de Almeida the privilege to use in the Empire a typewriter of his invention for ten years. Attending to what the Bachelor Jesuíno Antonio Ferreira de Almeida required of me, and having heard the opinion of Counselor Prosecutor of the Crown, Sovereignty and National Treasury, I shall grant him the privilege to use, in the Empire for ten years, a typewriter of his invention./ Manoel Pinto de Souza Dantas, of My Council, Minister and Secretary of State for Agriculture, Commerce and Public Works, has understood it so and has it executed. Palace of Rio de Janeiro on October 2, 1867, forty-sixth of Independence and the Empire. With the rubric of Your Majesty the Emperor. / Manoel Pinto de Souza Dantas."

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved February 20th 2018, from: <http://legis.senado.leg.br/legislacao/DetalhaSigen.action?id=402914>.

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved February 20th 2018, from: [http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=364568\\_07&PagFis=10769&Pesq=machina%20write](http://memoria.bn.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=364568_07&PagFis=10769&Pesq=machina%20write).



instrument to aid intellectual work.

I think my system of writing is so superior in speed to the usual alphabetic or calligraphic writing that having to compare it with another, I think I can form the following parallel: – the new writing, is similar in rapidity to the bullet thrown from the cannon to spaces by the irresistible force of explosives; – the alphabetic writing is similar to the tortoise that wanted to follow the bullet in its course.

No idea can thrive without being studied, discussed, combated (Almeida, J. de, *Jornal do Commercio*, 1884, p.3).

The analogy between typewriting and cannonball, which points to kinetic velocity and force, evokes Kittler's parallels between history, media, and war, which always functioned as a propeller for the development of media technology. In this sense, painters like Dürer and Leonardo da Vinci made important contributions to the camera obscura and to the construction of fortresses and the defense of cities against these new guns (Virilio apud Kittler, 1999b, p. 58). Such a perspective allows us to superimpose the camera obscura with the "the profound aim of shooting, in order to bring down the enemy when he is finally and accurately within one's sights" (Kittler, 1999b, p. 58), with firearms and pictorial art as part of the same "revolution of seeing" led by perspective. Likewise, in the way of a pre-Futurism, the Brazilian inventor advocates the typewriter from its "explosive" impact, claiming its discussion as combat. His voice, however, seems to echo in the tropical void.

We do not have information on technical details of Jesuíno's machine. In his text of 1884, he states that in the time he spent in the San Francisco convent in Sao Paulo, he worked hard in his workshop:

There, after insane, almost impossible work to construct a rudimentary, very poor workshop, working with meager, imperfect instruments, inadequate to the end I had in view, I was able to organize a typewriter, to make it work even before being granted the privilege requested, urged from the necessity of giving a formal denial to those who, invested with public authority to make me grant or deny the privilege, declared me a utopist (Almeida, J. de, *J. DE COMMERCIO*, 1884, p.3).

The inventor situated the typewriter in the set of humanity's great inventions, as we can read in his request to the imperial administration to adopt his invention. He said:

[The inventor] will not analyze the various systems employed with more or less proficiency, by different peoples and at different times of humanity to represent by means of permanent signs the elusive sounds of spoken language. He will not descend to the history of the more or less improper attempts made by philologists at different times in order to establish invariable rules in relation to spoken and written language Almeida, J. de., *J. do Commercio*. 1884, p. 3).

Typewriting, according to his view, could reposition the forms of language; it would be an advance as compared to handwriting and shorthand, "the two writing systems employed to represent thought," he wrote. None of them, however, fulfilled their purpose "in a wholly satisfactory manner." Handwriting provided the writing of "everything one wants, and reading easily what one writes." However, it would have the defect of being "slow, boring and powerless to follow the flights of thought". But shorthand, being fast, was able to follow these flights, although its way of writing was "equivocal, obscure and often indecipherable".

The reason for this is the following: – in order to give shorthand all its rapidity, it was necessary to write only the consonants of the words and take away the vowels; so, for example, if we want to write the verb ask by shorthand, we will only write - s - k; but joining these consonants without definite vowels may also mean task, mask, soak, cask, and many others.

Hence a vast field for misunderstandings of all sorts, for each word can be confused with 30, 40, 50, 100, and sometimes more, of different, even opposing meanings. In this chaos what governs the deciphering is the stenographer's memory, which, by

the combination of antecedents and consequents defines the meaning of signs: - but memory sometimes fails and then deciphering is impossible; therefore:  
A stenographer cannot decipher what another wrote, and the one who wrote can only decipher while what he heard is fresh in his memory (Almeida, J de, J. de Commercio, 1884, p. 3)

In this forest of signs and probabilities (which would sound familiar to a software programmer), a system that overcame the difficulties of the two systems at that time “was always the desideratum of men of science, a problem offered to the inquiring spirit of thinkers, from Cicero to our days; studied but not solved by Leibnitz, Rousseau and others.” With typewriting, “reading will be done by the absolute value of the signals and not by ill-assured combinations of antecedents and consequents.” Moreover, the “hesitant compass of memory will no longer be in a sine qua non condition of deciphering”. Jesuíno reiterated to the Emperor: “The signs that compose the new system are traced by the typewriter invented by the supplicant”.

However, the adoption of his machine in the administration of the Empire did not thrive. In spite of a favorable opinion in 1867 after many personal efforts, Jesuíno convinced Tavares Bastos, president of the province of São Paulo, who after seeing the machine in operation sent a favorable recommendation to the Emperor. But according to the text of 1884, he did not obtain the necessary resources for its manufacture. A subsidy of 12 contos came to be approved by a law voted by the provincial assembly of Rio de Janeiro in 1868, but the release of resources was barred by the president of the assembly, on the grounds that “it is not convenient for public coffers to give aid to inventors!”. So his typewriter ran aground in state bureaucracy.

Before Jesuíno, Father Francisco João de Azevedo (1814-1880) probably had also invented a typewriter in Recife. Azevedo effectively built a “wooden machine”, title of the fiction dedicated to him by writer Miguel Sanches Netto (2012). From a documentary research, the author speculates that the machine’s model invented by the priest would have been copied by travelers from the United States where it would have been successfully produced.

Despite the pioneering nature of these inventors, there were only imported typewriters on sale at the end of the 19th century in Rio de Janeiro stores, as well as many advertisements about courses to learn how to handle them. On September 27th, 1897, the *Jornal do Commercio* exalted Remington as the “most perfected of 26 models currently in existence”. Two years later, on January 22nd, 1899, in the same *Jornal do Commercio*, a “complete course for those who dedicate themselves to commerce, preparing well and quickly to the needs and struggles of life” was promised in the Commercial School. There we can have a glimpse of the uses and social symbology of the typewriter in those early times. In the first place, it should be noted that this advertisement was directed to amanuenses, that is, clerical workers without much refinement, a “minor” work destined to a mechanical and subordinate writing. Not by chance, the machine will be used mostly by women in the labor market. All this despite the audacious defense of Jesuíno de Almeida, propagating the intellectual gains from the apparatus, a great conquest of Humanity.

## Imagination of writing

We must not underestimate the impact on the imagination that, little by little, the artifact begins to exercise, a certain fascination that can be seen from the very brief mention in *Jornal do Commercio* in 1877 of the “curious” – expression of amazement – Mr. Recordon’s typist. To transmute into a typewriter was then a figure of speech, which indicates the inclusion of technology in the imaginary of writing. In the story *Os olhos de Emma Rosa*, signed by Xavier de Montepin, published on May 25th, 1886 in *Jornal do Commercio* (page 1), one could read:

We have had occasion to present this clerk to our readers, performing the functions of typewriting the interrogations dictated by the judge and the indicted with impeccable

correction.

Now, the correction we have just spoken of imposes on the clerk, a very subaltern character, an absolute mutism.

He must speak only when the examining magistrate addresses him, but his intelligence works, and if he is silent, he does not think less.

S. S. finds odd my procedure as an association's employee, in relation to his position as a member of the fiscal council, and implies that I must become a simple typewriting and counting machine, with correctness and method.

Well, Mr. Barbosa de Castro... (our italics).

Thus, the typewriter aided the routine and minor tasks of bureaucracy and was a promise of efficiency, without questioning – with mutism, accuracy and method. In a letter of July 9, 1899, to his friend and diplomat Oliveira Lima (1867-1928), the critic José Veríssimo (1857-1916), in order to cover his debts and expenses with his numerous families, apologized for the delay in writing to him - "since I became a typewriter as my breadwinning"<sup>6</sup>. In addition to survival, the machine is a reference to the need for time to deal with seemingly frenetic activities: it would be a promise of maximizing productivity.

The metaphor of the machinic metamorphosis – it is a metaphor, since there is no indication that Veríssimo had the custom of using it at the time – pointed to the existence of a field of work for the critic, the editor and the teacher, in short, for the scholar's performance. It is a whole professional circuit that is glimpsed, following the beat of the keys. There is certain irony in Veríssimo's self-identification as a machine in a letter to his illustrious friend, inasmuch as it used to be generally related to bureaucratic work: the critic therefore identifies himself as a literary worker, with no room for romantic dazzling and awe. One must survive.

In becoming a machine, Veríssimo still emphasizes the corporal relation with the apparatus. Originally invented to be used by the blind, it requires a new physical posture for writing; as it replaces the pen, it creates a distance from the text (in the first models, it was not even possible to see the letters that were pressed). The presence of the typewriter in the intimate correspondence evokes the materiality of the performance circuit of the critic's craft. Even if he did not use it, the machine established, as a parameter of possibilities, a new relationship with writing.

"Intimacy with the typewriter is achieved gradually, through the eyes, hands, fingers, gaining trust and returning it with affection" (Tavares, n.d.). That was what Mário de Andrade wrote in a letter to Manuel Bandeira in 1925: "And now you know: fifteen minutes of rest, say, and I'm in front of Manuela typing nonstop. Manuela is the machine's name, because of you. I made it up just now. I did not reflect or anything: it remained Manuela" (apud Tavares, n.d.). But the modernist, though seemingly happy to present a novelty, was late:

In the midst of Modernism our writers groped shyly in the high-tech world of the keyboard, this when Mark Twain had already become the first author in 1883 to submit a "manuscript" to the publisher in the form of a typed text (the book was *Life in the Mississippi*, and Twain did not type the text himself, he paid someone for it) (Tavares, n. d.).

In this comparison, one hears the "mechanical echo"<sup>7</sup> of a late modernity. It was not the future

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<sup>6</sup> Precisely at that time the critic actually worked a lot, certainly indebted, responding to numerous requests, including those of his column *Revista Literaria*, in *Jornal do Commercio*. The letter composes a set of 180 missives sent by Veríssimo to Oliveira Lima between 1896 and 1915, which are part of the diplomat's preserved archives at the Oliveira Lima Library, at the Catholic University of America in Washington. The material is still unpublished.

<sup>7</sup> The expression is from the poem *Máquina-de-escrever*, by Mario de Andrade, published in *Losango Cáqui* (1926), which thus begins: "B D G Z, Remington./ Pra todas as cartas da gente./ Eco mecânico/ De sentimentos rápidos batidos./ Pressa, muita pressa [...]". The poem expresses his fascination with the device.

dreamed of by Father Francisco or by the inventor Jesuíno, who spent their lives dedicated to creating an advanced modernity within their own country. Jesuíno sought to console himself with the images of “utopian” and “visionary”, with which he defined himself, in the face of his defeat. In order to better characterize the typewriter as an important character in the plot written by intellectuals in Brazil, since when “modernizing” becomes a slogan for life in urban centers, it will be necessary to map and multiply examples, a task for other articles and research.

## Final remarks

Caution is needed in the context of a broad framework outlined by Kittler, since it focuses on the European context, where throughout the nineteenth century, in the golden age of the book and literature, “fully literate individuals” were able to process (and read) in the symbolic records of writing the dimensions of the imaginary and the real. In turn, in Brazil the happy few “fully literate” were, and perhaps still are, a minority. In this sense, the concerns of the Brazilian researcher should include particularities of a modernization that may still remain largely partial and peripheral, because if the apparatus provides some exteriority, one must always remember that the forms of perception and self-perception of the periphery are marked by the center, as in travelers’ narratives. However, it seems relevant to think that the resistance encountered for the adoption of the technical apparatus did not prevent them from being imagined even before they were imported. This curious relation between something that one is able to imagine but not to achieve seems an interesting formula to understand the Brazilian culture.

Finding parallel pioneering inventions in other media, such as the invention of “photographie” by Hercule Florence in 1833 and the first voice transmissions performed by Roberto Landell de Moura in 1893, the two attempts at invention of the typewriter in Brazil lead to the dream of a different future. There is a difficult dilemma to be faced in order to investigate the history of the media in Brazil: the contrast between imagined future and lived reality. This is not a new question, for something similar is found in Koselleck’s (2006) well-known comparison between “horizon of expectation” and “space of experience”. However, it is important to reaffirm that the history of the media from the point of view of the South includes an external perspective that dismisses any pioneer invention that is outside of its own space of experience.

In the fiction *Máquina de Madeira* we read: “An inventor belongs to a country that does not yet exist” (Sanchez Neto, 2012, p.27). Forgotten Brazilian inventors belong to a Brazil that was realized only in the imagination, as if they were able to cross a mirror, facing the stubborn reality. The inventor who dares make this passage finds, like Alice, the White Queen’s truth: “The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday – but never jam to-day” (Carroll, 2016). Thus, one only eats jam any other day, and “to-day isn’t any other day, you know”. If the explanation left Alice “dreadfully confused”, the Queen reiterated: “That’s the effect of living backwards”. But there’s “one great advantage in it” according to your majesty: “one’s memory works both ways.” Let it be, therefore, a productive memory.

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