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## The neoliberal discourse's appropriations of the struggles for recognition

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## Abstract

The article intends to reflect on the limits of the symbolic struggles for recognition, often disassociated with a wide social transformation project. The progressive field has been criticized today for taking the issue of identity as its main goal. By relying on the affirmation of individual identities, politically aligned actors on a left-wing perspective become hostages of the neoliberal ideology of our time, which easily appropriates their claims. After all, the neoliberal ideology has been able to define even the grammar of their revolt. In order to problematize this gesture, we propose the analysis of images published by the conservative group *Movimento Brasil Livre* (Free Brazil Movement) in social networks, which we consider to be representative of neoliberal thought's tactic.

## Keywords

Recognition; Identity; Representation.

## Introduction: clashes of representativeness

In October 2018, the hitherto small Liberal Social Party won the presidency of the Republic, raising the post a candidate of remarkably LGBTphobic, racist and sexist speeches. Jair Messias Bolsonaro's party also elected the self-titled "woman of a million votes", Joice Hasselmann, once a journalist sued by plagiarism – at least 65<sup>1</sup> of them in a month – the congresswoman with the most significant vote in the history of the country. At the state level, the record was broken by Janaína Paschoal, candidate from São Paulo, who was known for her performance in the *impeachment* process of Dilma Rousseff, of which she was one of the authors. Hélio Barbosa Lopes, Hélio "Negão" (black man), which sometimes borrows the president's surname, was the candidate most voted for Rio de Janeiro. Bolsonaro's PSL success at the polls was celebrated, on social networks, by the *Movimento Brasil Livre* (Free Brazil Movement), MBL, one of the main political organizations of the country's conservative right, which managed to elect its own representatives. Kim Kataguiri, co-founder of the movement, was the fourth federal deputy with the most votes in São Paulo, elected by the Democrats (DEM). The MBL boasted of those results, mainly because they represent a symbolic victory over the left, which – according to authors such as Vladimir Safatle (2015a, 2017) and Nancy Fraser (2006) – has anchored their struggle, to a large extent, in representativeness cultural minority of social minorities.

Figure 1 – Narrative of diversity



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bor1VrDHjr8/>. Access in: 8 jan. 2019

During the electoral process, people and groups identified with progressive thought sought to highlight, in several instances and moments, speeches of structural oppressions in speeches and attitudes of presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro, not acceptable in a context in which agendas linked to anti-racist and anti-sexist struggles had been gaining strength and adherence. The usual designated "identity movements" – of black people, women, LGBTQIA+, among others – sought to denounce the undemocratic character of the candidacy of the former army captain – the demonstration *Ele Não* (Not Him), led by women on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 across the country, perhaps it was the culmination of that clash. However, from the significant victory of PSL candidates, especially women candidates, movements to the right of the political spectrum took for themselves the discourse of diversity, affirming their ability to ensure the representativeness of minority groups.

1 According to the website of Sindicato dos Jornalistas Profissionais do Paraná (Professional Journalists of Paraná – South of Brazil - SindiJor PR). See references.

The article intends to think about the appropriation of those flags by neoliberal representations. With remarkable performance in social networks, but not only in them, representative instances of that thought, such as the *MBL*, guide their discourses to assimilate certain agendas traditionally defended by the left, such as the identity question and the defense of social minorities, swallowing them in their own terms. They seek, therefore, to nullify the binder potential of that fighting engine among their opponents. We assume, however, that the movement incorporating those demands is possible not only by the wit of neoliberals, but by the limitations of the strategies and assumptions adopted in the progressive field, often supported by the restricted defense and appreciation of individual identities.

As it will be highlighted in the course of this work, the criticism of the limits of identity struggles is present in different approaches, on which this text is supported. With this, the effort developed here intends to be another insertion engaged in peering to significant representations of recent discursive clashes between neoliberal and left-wing forces in Brazilian politics.

## Struggles for recognition

Identity struggles have gained momentum in Brazil in recent years. Several authors locate in 2013 a watershed in the expression of social movements hitherto lacking in broad visibility. For Francisco Bosco (2017), the<sup>2</sup> June Days were able to mobilize a new political culture in society, finding on social networks a powerful platform for the explicitness of latent conflicts. Cyberspace, in its view, was fundamental to revitalize and rearticulate minority groups, stimulating the creation and proliferation of virtual niches – of information, imaginary and culture – very conducive to strengthening movements of this nature, including in territories other than virtual ones.

Obviously, those are not recent phenomena. “If today we were taken apparently by surprise, by a torrent of speeches, experiences, intersectional, racial activism, LGBTQIs, binaries, cis and others (...) it was certainly because listening to social and cultural movements was weak. Very weak” (Hollanda, 2018, p. 241). As Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda (2018) reminds us, even before the advent of social networks several movements that defended subaltern identities have shaken hegemonic perspectives in the past. Certainly, contemporary experiences have found new forms of expression, but many of the purposes, dilemmas and obstacles that accompany them have been inherited from previous struggles and remain in force.

Since the 1960's and 1970's, mainly in the countries of the Northern hemisphere, but also in Brazil, there has been the strengthening of feminist and anti-racist struggles, also committed to civil rights claims. It was the years of student movements, flower power, rock 'n' roll, contraceptive pill, resistance to Latin American dictatorships. In this effervescent context, however, the socialist imaginary lost its centrality as an engine of struggles for social emancipation. According to Vladimir Safatle (2015a), the new demands called for the need to “recognize the difference”, that is, to demarcate and praise particularities inherent to certain groups, especially the plundered ones. This stance caused the struggle for recognition to gain centrality in the new scenario. Such a perspective, according to Safatle, has prevailed in identity clashes to this day.

Recognition, a concept originated from Hegelian philosophy, is a notion that prioritizes demarcating and estimating differences of certain groups rather than seeking an egalitarian perspective, the goal of the struggle of classes that prevailed in previous periods. Unlike the generation inspired by the socialist

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2 The June Days were a wave of protests in 2013, initiated in the city of São Paulo by the Free Pass Movement that, at first, disputed the increase in the price of bus tickets in the capital. The demonstrations gained adherence of the population. The agendas multiplied and the movement was federalized even reaching the government of Dilma Rousseff, which suffered severe criticism. The days were marked by strong police repression and the action of several counter-hegemonic communication collectives that sought to denounce the view of the raped protesters, such as Mídia Ninja.

ideal of radical equity and political-economic transformation, this other current turned to a fight against hierarchies that conditioned certain historically vulnerable groups, such as black people, women and gays, to experience social disrespect and deprivation of rights. The struggle for recognition was engaged in affirming the multiple particularities that could challenge universalism imposed by culturally hegemonic groups.

Axel Honneth (2009), current director of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, is one of the leading authors working with the concept. In his free-teaching thesis, Honneth devoted himself to explaining the emergence and constitution of the moral grammar of social conflicts. It shows that society and its bureaucratic and imperative structures oppose the interests of individuals, who will have in the conflicts of social action the mediation necessary to rise against those frameworks. The conflict, according to the author, structures the binding intersubjectivity of social struggles. Those subversions, which refuse nominations and violations of rights, allow the constitution of a collective identity that necessarily involves the recognition of the subjects victimized by those oppressions. The author's interest is mainly due to conflicts arising from experiences of social disrespect that attack collectivities. Understanding can be taken in solidarity with a member of a grouping or even in the defense of an association. In the struggles for recognition, it is sought, then, to affirm feelings and positive values of a collective.

Identity, therefore, is constituted in the conflict brought to disrespect, denial and deprivation of rights. Mediating social action becomes necessary due to negative phenomena that must be overcome in the positive affirmation of recognition. For Honneth (2009), even claims for economic redistribution aimed to ensure conditions for the consolidation of an identity. The author even presents the struggles of the workers' movement as struggles for recognition, affirming its traditions and life forms. Highlights Edward Thompson's *The Formation of the English Working Class*, for example, as a work involving the values of the working class as an affirmative struggle of recognition. With this, the question of worker struggles and their culture, estimated from the origin and taken up as value in the work of the historian, makes the class dimension also incorporated into the list of struggles for recognition.

Nancy Fraser (2007), however, partly disputes the perspective of the German philosopher, pointing out the importance of a specific two-dimensional confrontation of emancipation struggles: recognition and redistribution, considering intersections between clashes against cultural and distributive injustice. The author discusses the contrast between the affirmation of differences, present in identity demands, and their abolition, defended in the field of redistribution, to propose affirmative and transformative "remedies" in both areas, through which the following are the following contrary logic between difference and its erasure. In the sphere of redistribution, not worked by Honneth, the author reinforces the importance of affirmative remedies to correct the effects of inequality linked to the perspective of the State of Social Welfare, and indicates transformative remedies associated with the socialism to reshape the structures causing inequality, although it does not deal with the suppression of private ownership of the means of production, pointed out by Marx as the cause of the fundamental difference between classes. In any case, the author resumes a dimension – redistributive – of the emancipatory struggles neglected in Honnethian analysis.

However, collectives identified with a thought on the left have, in an incisive way, insisting almost exclusively on the centrality of struggles for recognition of difference, in identity terms. For Safatle (2017), although unquestionably just and necessary, the issue of identity was transformed into the only concrete political agenda of the left wing. The author understands that, by overestimating moral and cultural dimensions in class struggles, the theory of recognition, which gives ballast to political action, constitutes the vacuum left by the emptying of the proletariat. The partial integration of the operated in social welfare policies and the gradual abandonment of belief in the universality of those historical subjects made the scene of social clash more complex, marked by a multiplicity of themes and claims that little articulated

with each other. In his argument, he attributes the emergence of those phenomena to issues such as the demotivation of young people with Taylorist work, weakening values such as stability and security in confrontation with ideas of flexibility, malleability and deterritorialization, in addition to strengthening multiculturalism in a new critical wave of weakening socialist regimes.

The battle for the legitimation of an individual identity, for Safatle (2015a), operates as a kind of compensation through the impossibility of a revolutionary struggle against inequality and the lack of a transformative project – mainly in the economic and production - of the left wing. By this reasoning, the exit, then, would be in the struggle for the identity affirmation of differences, leaving intact the existing capitalist order. Thus, the author criticizes the limited character of the concept defended by Honneth, opposing one of his foundations, in which the German philosopher highlights the integration of proletariat to the middle class in incorporating gains from the State of Social Welfare. As those conditions are not guaranteed even in the European context and elsewhere have not even been present, Safatle points out the geographical limits of a theoretical approach in which universality is intended. Among other problems present in the theory of Honnethian recognition, he highlights, in addition to the compensatory aspect in view of the impossibility of a radical struggle against capitalism, the psychologization of social demands, giving the agents of power to possibility of offering merely therapeutic responses to claims and, finally, lead to the loss of the ontological function of the proletariat in class struggle.

## Neoliberalism, ideology and limits of identity

Social struggles were, in short, subordinated and conditioned to clashes by the resignification of culture, a detachment that facilitated, according to Nancy Fraser (2007), the insurgency of neoliberalism, whose objective was to repress, at any cost, the memory of social egalitarianism. After all, the neoliberal perspective can live very well with demands circumscribed to the sphere of culture. Luiz Felipe Miguel (2018) notes that the mechanisms of reproduction of neoliberal domination can accommodate elements that supposedly represent their complete denial.

First, we must highlight that neoliberalism may not be understood only as an economic policy. “It is a normative system that has expanded its influence on the whole world, extending the logic of capital to all social relations and all spheres of life” (Dardot and Laval, 2016, p. 7). For Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2016), it is a rationality that manufactures certain types of social relationships, life forms and subjectivities, apparently inescapable. They understand that “the disciplinary practice of neoliberalism has been imposed as a given in fact, a reality in which nothing can be done but adapt” (Dardot and Laval, 2016, p. 234).

Neoliberalism can be perceived as the ideology, par excellence, of our time. This concept, often used in Marxist traditions, appears sometimes controversially. In this work, one of the interpretations of Marx’s thought is claimed. The concept will not be taken as a reflection of the material order, but as an expression of dominant interests that are organized as ideas in mutual determination with the practices of a time. Michael Löwy (1985) discusses different uses of the concept of ideology, showing that, in Marx, he designates only conceptions linked to the ruling class, unlike another very common use, resulting from a conceptualization proposed by Lenin. The Russian author subtracts the pejorative sense given to the term by Marx to use it as any social doctrine linked to class positions. Our preference for the use attributed to Marx allows us to better observe the affirmation of the interests of a group, defined in a broad process of differentiation, but enrolled and naturalized in culture as if they were universal. Marx understands that the strength of a class is directly linked to its power to present their own interests as representative of every society.

Indeed, every new class that takes the place of another that previously dominated is obliged, to achieve its ends, to present its interest as the common interest of all members of society, i.e. expressed ideally: it is obliged to give to their ideas the form of universality, to present them as the only rational, universally valid (Marx, 2011, p. 48).

In *The German Ideology*, Marx showed that industrial and economic interdependence, for example, were articulated in world organization, hence the need, even, for a solidarity movement of an international proletarian resistance. The different connections of the capitalist world were explained by Marx as products of historical materialism in the broad context of a world history and not local history. For him, the ideas that dominate at a certain time take on a form of universality. The philosophical foundations of his time were criticized for being tied to the idealism of a reality that was intended universal, without considering other realities to be recognized by them.

If we think about the conditions given in the present, we can observe that the clashes against hegemonic representations continue to blind understanding of the new context. In this scenario, the progressive field has become a hostage not only of the economic model of its opponents, but of the ideological structures that produce the intelligibility of the social world. Thus, given the meaningful capabilities of the neoliberal order restricted, essentially, to the affirmation of an individual identity, the left wing may eventually inadvertently surrender to the hegemonic rationality that presents itself strategically as neutral.

When considering those aspects, it is possible to affirm that the core of the transformative limitations of the struggles for identity recognition lies in the fact that they guide much of their political action from a notion of “individual” proper to a predatory rationality. According to Safatle (2016), they are based on a conception of a liberal subject linked to the idea of possession: whether of attributes, predicates, narratives or objects. Each cultural niche must fight for its demands and predicates to be heard and legitimized during several competing voices. There is, then, an increasing singularization of discourses, as Miguel (2018) notes, unable to dialogue with each other and propose concrete alternatives to neoliberal logic. All that remains for the individual is the attributes that guarantee endogenous belonging. “The accumulation of identity specificities makes each one unique and political action is organized not by the axes of social division, which are no longer capable of aggregating groups, but by individual wills.” (Miguel, 2018, p. 182). By promoting collective characteristics, affirming their qualities through differentiation, a land is established in which even those who advocate eliminating differences can feel legitimized.

In the 2013 demonstrations, for example, Safatle (2016) recalls that several actors took the political scene precisely to claim, “what is mine”. “Deep down and again, what we see are just individuals looking for the defense of their properties (...). This was the greatest victory of neoliberalism: to define even the grammar of our revolt” (Safatle, 2016, p. 20). A struggle that builds from an oppressive grammar will soon be doomed to failure: it can be easily disjointed by the forces that control it. That’s what we witnessed in the last election. An expressive number of women, many of them sympathetic to feminist discussions, occupied the streets of Brazil on September 29 to affirm that, as women, raped by Jair Bolsonaro’s sexist discourse, they would never vote for the candidate. They started from the premise that subjects endowed with characteristics and predicates despised by the presidential candidate would certainly reject him. On social networks, there were reverberations: different groups entitled *Women against Bolsonaro* emerged in order to reinforce and guide this wave of indignation. However, in response, other women, who also recognize themselves in this social category, began to declare support for the former captain, seeking to delegitimize the premise of the progressive movement. They intended to sign that women vote, yes, in Jair Messias. With considerable adherence, groups designated by *Women with Bolsonaro* also resonated in the streets, trying to put into check the accusations of sexism that hung over the candidate. If the category “woman” is also behaved and used politically by reactionary discourse, the left wing may lose the substance of its struggle. Conservatism, familiar with categorical identity grammar, takes for himself the

right to claim demands for representativeness, emptied of any emancipatory purpose.

## Representations in symbolic disputes and methodological considerations

The debate on the struggle for recognition has important implications for the field of communication. Nevertheless, the relevance of the debate lies not only in the search for a sharing of meanings around the symbolic disputes that enable the grammar that will drive this conflict. Stuart Hall (2016) shows that in the dynamics of cultural representation there is an active and constitutive perspective of social processes in interaction and constant mutation. For him, the real is also built with the media representations. In this case, they are defined as a creative process, since they refer to people, dilemmas and issues of the world and act on them. The subject is, at the same time, object and creator of representations that involve his relations in society.

As beings between images and between texts, Hall proposes to perceive images and meanings as fundamental objects of contention to circumvent and define political struggles. It highlights that the meaning of things is given by the way in which they are represented, through the words we use or even the stories we build to create those concepts. From those representations, our practices and conducts are regulated and oriented. Throughout this process are involved ways to justify and promote some values to the detriment of others, symbolically and materially affecting ordinary life. The sense of representation proposed here is therefore departing from that who intends to see the world reflected in it as a mirror, or even the one who chooses the primacy of the speaker in establishing the desired sense. We understand in this article that the meaning depends on the policy of several representational systems often conflicting and competing. The struggle for recognition, therefore, takes place, also and with relevance, in the field of media representation.

The agents of the discourse that we take as a reference in this work will focus their representations on the dispute for validation of their values, that is, essentially in their political form. We elected communication disputes of the *Movimento Brasil Livre* (Free Brazil Movement), of national expression, to think about the appropriation of identity discourses, as well as disputes put into circulation. The *MBL*, which emerged in 2014, was at the forefront of several significant events at the national level. He led much of the protests in favor of the *impeachment* of President Dilma Rousseff, concluded in 2016, and has since shown support for politicians linked to the far right, of neoliberal bias. In social networks, important spaces of socialization of individuals and where we focus on the discursive clash between the *MBL* and the left-wing forces, the movement is placed on the front line of political and symbolic action, aiming to significantly influence the formation of public opinion.

Instagram was chosen to observe the confrontation of those symbolic representations, because it is possible to identify the construction of significant identity references of contemporary life, as attests (Carrera, 2012). To encompass the forms of appropriation of identity discourse, we chose to work with the posts of the Free Brazil Movement between November 2018 and January 2019, when the election result was defined and, therefore, consecrating a victory, not definitive, of the conservative forces in the political debate.

Among the set of images published in this period, several approaches could be indicated through mounts, reproductions of *tweets* and short videos, in which *MBL* (Free Brazil Movement) discusses, mainly about: recent events of Brazilian politics; economic agendas, favoring a prospect of austerity, placing corruption as a central problem; criticism stemming from the left wing, especially regarding socialism, communism, Marxism; and identity issues - and here we highlight the recidivism of discussions about women and black people, with direct objections to the feminist and anti-racist movement.

In this article, we highlight images that dialogue with the identity agenda, present in the debate



on recognition. In view of the purpose of this work, we chose to highlight two images of this set, electing the ones that, in our view, were the most representative of the MBL discourse in the scope of the analysis we propose.

## “Bolsonaro’s black man”

Figure 2 –Bolsonaro’s black man



Source: [https://www.instagram.com/p/Bpm47kFFW\\_J/](https://www.instagram.com/p/Bpm47kFFW_J/). Access in: 17 jan.2019

The tweet by singer Marcelo D2 about Hélio Fernando Barbosa Lopes, of the Liberal Social Party (PSL) - the most voted federal deputy in Rio de Janeiro, as mentioned above - was explored in the Instagram profile of the Free Brazil Movement (MBL). The constant presence of the then candidate and black supporter in images made at Bolsonaro’s residence, also figured in the background in the transmission of the president’s first speech after the electoral victory, must have inspired the rapper’s post, made on October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018. Declared critic of Bolsonaro candidacy, the singer, after publication, was found as racist for calling the deputy “Bolsonaro’s black man”.

The tweet, with some answers and mentions of support to the Congressman from Rio de Janeiro, is recovered by the Free Brazil Movement (MBL), which sought to reverse the accusation of racism, now attributed to the rapper and not to the president, due to his position. In various media, the posting and controversy were passed on. The ironic speech about Hélio Bolsonaro, deputy lieutenant of the Army, was received as another controversy involving the artistic world and the president, an important fact since a significant portion of this medium joined the movement Ele Não (Not Him).

The repercussion on social media was so intense that a strong reaction was produced among the former captain’s supporters against the rapper. The hashtag #MarceloD2racista was elevated to Twitter’s Trending Topics (TTs), i.e. the most commented topics of the platform, making it the most reverberated subject on networks (Fernandes, 2018). The tweet was taken as controversial, even though it is in the context in which singer proposes a brief analysis of the submissive role played by Hélio Negão (black man) in the final stretch of the campaign. In the same proportion that the accusations grew, and misogynistic, homophobic and racist statements of the presidential candidate grew, the black candidate’s public appearances at his side intensified as shielding his behavior explicitly discriminatory.

Even recognizing this is a “delicate matter”, as he admits in his text, the justifications given by the singer were not enough to calm the moods of the movement captained by the Free Brazil Movement (MBL) around the elected president. Although the scheduled action of robots to oversize the representations built by the right is considered, the vigor of the proposition of reversing the logic of the attacks was demonstrated by the numbers close to 55,000 tweets flooding the network with the theme.

The great ideological defender who does not accept differences. Outside #MARCELOD2RACISTA trash. Left only respect gays, women and black ones if they are also left! Other than that, they're treated like bugs! Living example was the comment of the #MARCELOD2RACIST TODAY NO TT (Marcelo D2, 2018a, without page).

This type of posts persisted in the repercussion of the discussion on racism, surrounded by the electoral context. By him sought to reverse meanings claimed by left-wing identity movements. From whistleblowers of oppressive relationships, they become accused of fomenting discourses and habits that point in hegemonic practices. The dissemination of the *hashtag* that associates the singer with racism unfolds in several attacks received by right-wing conservative thinking. In them, the left wing is accused of limiting the role of black people, women and LGBTQIA+, making them hostages to an alleged “ideological” propaganda of this camp.

The debate takes place in the omission of other contexts in which Jair Bolsonaro criticizes indigenous and *quilombola* (ex-slaves) communities, not caring about the controversial issues that could shake the defense of the presidential candidate. In a lecture held at the headquarters of hebrews in Rio de Janeiro, the politician exposes his animosity and evidences racism and prejudice against those groups. The speech of the then presidential candidate, made in April 2017, was widely explored in the context of the election by his opponents. At the opportunity, Bolsonaro, under laughter from the audience of almost 300 people who mocked his intervention, said: “I went in a quilombo. The lightest afro descendant there weighed seven robes.<sup>3</sup> I don't think even for procreator it serves anymore. More than R\$ 1 billion per year is spent on them (...)» (Bolsonaro, 2017).

Although prejudiced allusion was evident, what predominates in racial debate with D2, in addition to the concealment of the recent fact, is the questioning of a left wing that finds surprising the fact that President Bolsonaro has a black friend, highlighting this as proof of prejudice, not only of a member, but of a whole collective identified with that position. It is not recognized that there is a shielding strategy that overlaps between modulated images to produce an acceptable representation of the candidate against the evidence of his own interventions. Even victimization is claimed by sectors to the right of the political spectrum. On the rapper's own Twitter profile, an internet user comments: “If you were a right-wing person saying that, the world would be falling... #MarceloD2racista” (Marcelo D2, 2018b).

The languages proper to anti-racist collectives are triggered as delegitimization of their representations in the symbolic war to empty and discredit the opponent's discourse: “The Black Collectives have already been defending Hélio or are silent because the racist is successful?” (Marcelo D2, 2018a). The dispute of representations in this field seeks to ignore even arguments that could be taken as more exempt in the context of this controversy. In a report on the elections, before the second round, the BBC (Carneiro, 2018) highlights the candidacy of Hélio Negão (black man) as an unflinching strategy of Bolsonaro's election campaign to try to undo the association of his image with discrimination protecting it from criticism stemming from its own publicly demonstrated behavior.

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3 Arroba is a measure used to weigh cattle; an arroba equates to 15 kg.

## Lava Jato judge

Figura 3 – Lava Jato judge



Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BqIM44bngnI/>. Access in: 14 jan. 2019

On December 13th post, the MBL intends to denounce contradictions of the feminist movement, bringing to the scene the figure of Gabriela Hardt, federal judge responsible for the trials in the first instance of *Lava Jato* Operation.<sup>4</sup> A recurring character in the publications of the conservative movement, Hardt often emerges as someone representing an ideal of “empowered” woman, who has achieved socially prestigious positions. In another post, for example, the judge appears wearing a T-shirt with the sayings “fight like *this* woman”, emphasizing her uniqueness and distinction as opposed to other women, most often feminists, who summon the place of struggle.

Hardt, an icon of sectors of the right wing, is contrasted, in the image analyzed, with former President Dilma Rousseff of the Workers’ Party, which was also celebrated, at the time of her election, for her female identity. In her first campaign, in the 2010 elections, the possibility of the country electing the first female president was significantly explored. Aware of the appeal of this representativeness, the Workers’ Party chose, during the campaign, to use the term “president” to reinforce the gender dimension present in the candidacy, despite criticism stemming from the bending of the word, given as incorrect. Progressive sectors insisted on the women’s noun to politically cultivate Dilma Rousseff’s woman being.

If the left wing celebrated a woman’s rise to the presidency of the Republic, the right could also celebrate its own achievements in the sphere of representativeness. The parallel between the two women is reiterated, even, when the post presents them as the “first female president” and the “first female judge”. It is, in fact, a misplaced premise. The first female judge was the *gaúcha* (from Rio Grande do Sul – South of Brazil) Thereza Grisólia Tang.<sup>5</sup> Although false, the information is strategically used to match Hardt’s authority with Rousseff’s, in order to embarrass any criticism stemming from the progressive field

4 Judge Hardt substituted Judge Sérgio Moro, nowadays Minister of Justice and Public Security of the Bolsonaro’s government.

5 Natural from São Luiz Gonzaga, in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul, South of Brazil, graduated in law at UFRGS in 1951, was appointed judge in 1954. She died in 2009, when she was 87 years old. See references.

directed at the magistrate.

The *post* resumes the common identity agenda on the left wing to point out hypocrisies in its speech and tension its legitimacy. It seeks to affirm that if the feminist struggle cares about female representativeness, it should recognize it in different instances, including in the opposing field. The *MBL*, therefore, insinuates its own ability to perceive these contradictions and complains, for itself and to the right in general, demands for representativeness pointed out as flaws in the progressive field. Feminism is seen as an endogenous political action concerned only with the rights of its allies, not the common good.

Nevertheless, the *post* appoints Fernanda Lima, model and presenter of the Program *Amor & Sexo* (Love & Sex), *Rede Globo* (Brazilian television network), as representative of the feminist movement they reject. Lima became the target of conservative criticism after a speech that aired on his program on November 6, 2018:

They call the woman who defies the rules crazy and doesn't get conformed. They call the woman crazy full of eroticism, life and horny. They call the woman who resists and doesn't give up. They call the woman who says yes, and the woman who says no. It doesn't matter what we do they call us crazy. If we get the fame, we're going to lie in bed. Let's sabotage the gears of this system of oppression. We're going to sabotage the gears of this homophobic, racist, patriarchal, sexist, misogynistic system. Let's throw the straits at the campfire the straitjackets of submission, tyranny and repression. We're going to free all of us and all of you. Our fight is just beginning. Get ready because this revolution has no turning back. Let's sabotage all this? (Lima, 2018, no paging).

Taken as an affront to the sexist and LGBTphobic speeches of Jair Bolsonaro, the presenter's speech was echoed by several people connected to the left wing, including Manuela D'Ávila, from the Communist Party (*PcdoB*), who was running for vice presidency of the Republic together with Fernando Haddad, of the Workers' Party. As it would be possible to deduce, Fernanda Lima usually addresses, in *Amor & Sexo* (Love & Sex), culturally progressive agendas, such as non-normative sexualities and eroticism. However, this is a more conservative breach of television programming. If in the diversional and entertainment niche, for example, critical aspects of everyday life are allowed, such as positions of progressive sectors and the appreciation of identity demands, in the journalistic sphere *Rede Globo* usually guide its editorial policy according to market interests, recommending agendas favorable to the political and economic elite of the country (Gomes, 2012).

In addition to Fernanda Lima's speech being unrepresentative of the main perspective of the station, the presenter reproduces neoliberal rationality in her speech by dismantling racism and sexism of their political and economic character. The "gears of the oppressive system", according to the presenter, would sustain purely cultural hierarchies. There is no view of dominant structures in a largely intersectional dimension, which involves class inequalities, which cross and are crossed by gender and race. In a way, *Rede Globo* operates the same characteristic appropriation of neoliberal rationality managed by the Free Brazil Movement (*MBL*), addressing progressive agendas in its peripheral programs – often displayed at lower audience times. As Miguel (2018) reminds us, the media incorporation of demands for identity recognition, detached from redistributive issues and inequality, can strengthen the hegemonic making of traditional media itself, which, through those actions, highlights partially inclusive purposes without jeopardizing structures and representation schemes. Although those loopholes are indeed significant, they are far from emancipatory.

Finally, it is interesting to note how the LGBTQIA+ issue, which can also be worked on an identity key, is more indigestible to neoliberal ideology than the issue of women's representativeness. After criticizing the feminist movement, inferring its inability to encompass the collectivity of subjects it should

represent, the Free Brazil Movement (*MBL*) suggests that the movement cares more and erroneously with individuals considered, in conservative rationality, repulsive, neglecting “normal” people. The mention of *drag* singer Pablio Vittar resonates with all bodies considered anomalous, abject, which do not fit into the heteronormative intelligibility system belonging to this domesticating logic. It is noted that bodies whose identities challenge the categorical perspectives of an individual, or that refuse stable identities – such as transgenders, transsexuals and transvestites, for example – remain rejected by the dominant thought, perceived as monstrosities and problems (Butler, 2016). It is assumed that subjects less to the fixation of predicates can outline demands for potentially inappropriate recognition.

## Anti-predicative recognition and indigestible subjects: brief considerations

The ideological discourse of the Free Brazil Movement (*MBL*) – considered, in this work, representative of neoliberal rationality – takes advantage of the limitations of the strategies of struggle of the left wing to empty their senses or replace them. Anchored, to a large extent, in due diligence for the recognition of individual identities, the progressive field proposes a demand appropriate for other political actors, as showed. The neoliberal perspective seems to see the compensatory character of identity struggles, little linked to transformative perspectives. By taking for himself the discourse of representativeness, under the pretext that the left wing fails, even, in fulfilling this political agenda, the right takes over one of the main engines of mobilization of its opponent. Nevertheless, by criticizing the left wing exclusively in this key, conservative thinking reinforces its circumscription, while the progressive field remains hostage by a thematic imprisonment.

Recognizing the importance of recognition struggles, but also questioning them, Safatle (2015b), in a reading by Judith Butler (2015), proposes, as an alternative, a critical genealogy of their legitimization practices, which we find important, for the intent of this work, resume. From this perspective, it is necessary to promote questions about the identities that today’s ideological structures produce, naturalize and harm. The authors argue that those identities are unstructured rather than only revalued.

Thus, Safatle (2015a) advocates a concept of anti-predicative recognition, capable of radicalizing the recognition of otherness. The author suggests that recognition itself can be anchored in an egalitarian perspective in new terms, contrary to perspectives that favor the affirmation of differences. When defending this approach, he refers to the need to give up the possessive subject, thus cultivating an “undetermined power” and a “force of indistinction”. For the author, new forms of solidarity and equality can be created when subjects become support of deconstructive practices capable of promoting the emergence of unstable differences and modifying the structures of social representation systems.

The aim of this proposal is to “relax the coercive mastery of standards on life (...) which is not the same as transcending or abolishing all norms” (Butler, 2018, p. 40). It is a struggle and political practice “that seeks to expand what we refer to when we talk about us” (Butler, 2018, p. 78). The engine of emancipatory struggle ceases to be the search for the definition and valorization of individual identity in the face of disrespect, as Honneth proposes (2017), to be the fight against precariousness generated by the identity perspective itself, whose violent hierarchies need to be addressed and eliminated. Only the abandonment of particularism could enable the emergence of concrete forces of transformation, since “subjects only become political subjects when individual demands are deindividualized and may even appear as general rights expansion” (Safatle, 2015a, p. 103).

In an avid intellectual debate, Butler and Safatle regain the desidentitarian force present in the concept of proletariat, proposed by Marx.

(...) the concept of proletariat is not present in Marxist thought only as the sociological

category of workers who have only their workforce. It is an ontological category that concerns a certain way of existence with great revolutionary force, it is a way that deposes regimes of existence based on property, possessive individualism and identity, with its projective defensive systems (Safatle, 2017, p. 102).

Proletarian internationalism stems from its condition of not having predicates, that is, from those who have nothing to lose, except their shackles, as Marx and Engels (2008) bet in the *Communist Manifesto*. In a possible synthesis, Safatle proposes to rescue, on another level, the struggle of classes as a post-identity experience, anti-presignificating the struggle for recognition. By resuming the affirmation of the universality of the proletariat, the author recovers the conditions that have made this class fundamental in Marxist thought. For Marx, the proletariat, in addition to an exploited class, is composed of non-possessed subjects of identity, therefore historically universal, detached from local bonds. In the various dialogues in which the statute of universality is reflected from the perspective critical to differentiation, we intend, in line with this thought, to highlight that the sense of universality in this differentiation can strengthen dominant and colonizing conceptions, as we have seen in this work. However, the sense of universality in the dedifferentiation, from the conception brought by Marx, can favor emancipatory projects.

The symbolic struggle is constitutive and inseparable from popular struggles and social movements. Facing the challenge of understanding them presupposes, at each time, recognizing the circumstances in which they occur and the limits of understanding that involve them. By reinforcing certain theoretical assessments, we seek to support our vision in dialogue with critical forms about identity struggles and demands for recognition. We walk paths in search of one more, among other synthesis, about those challenges. Several types of sabotage will be promptly triggered against any symbolic expression that acts against the foundations of a form of domination and proposed horizons of emancipation. Critics want a new antithesis, capable of ensuring definitions of purposes that are little or no adaptable to oppressive interests. Emancipatory movements can overcome these challenges by making their references less digestible, subject to reformatting and annihilation of their goals.

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