

Discursive remains: considerations on the testimony about the Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship /

Restos discursivos: considerações acerca do testemunho sobre a Ditadura Civil-Militar Brasileira

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ABSTRACT

Considering the political manifestations over the past years regarding the request for a new military intervention, this article has as its object of investigation testimonies about the Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship and comments about them, which show how the senses about this period are resignified in the present time. Based on this materiality and its movements of sense, the objective of this research is to analyze how these testimonies are set in motion today. For this purpose, some discursive sequences are analyzed based on the assumptions of French Discourse Analysis and some contributions from contemporary political philosophy. In this way, questions about silence, sense and conditions of production were put on the scene and, with them, it was possible to observe that, like the Benjamin narrator, the discourse analyst needs to brush the story in reverse to investigate the remains that are often institutionally disallowed, but which become resistant in the testimony of each subject who gives voice to his/her experience.

KEYWORDS: Discourse Analysis; Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship; Movement of senses

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RESUMO

Tendo em vista as manifestações políticas dos últimos anos a respeito do pedido por uma nova intervenção militar, este artigo tem como objeto de investigação testemunhos sobre a Ditadura Civil-Militar Brasileira e comentários acerca destes, que mostram como os sentidos desse período são (re)significados no presente. A partir dessa materialidade e de seus deslizamentos de sentido, o objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar o modo como esses testemunhos são colocados em movimento hoje. Para tanto, são analisadas algumas sequências discursivas tendo como base os pressupostos da Análise de Discurso francesa e alguns aportes da filosofia política contemporânea. Desse modo, questões referentes ao silêncio, ao sentido e às condições de produção foram colocadas em cena e, com elas, foi possível observar que, assim como o narrador benjaminiano, o analista de discurso precisa escovar a história a contrapelo para investigar os restos discursivos que, muitas vezes, são desautorizados institucionalmente, mas que se fazem resistentes no testemunho de cada sujeito que dá voz à sua experiência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Análise de Discurso; Ditadura Civil-Militar Brasileira; Deslizamento de sentidos.

1 Initial reflections

Notably since 2013, Brazil has been the scene of several manifestations that seek a reform in the national political system. This fact stands out because after some years without major public and organically exposed claims, several Brazilians have taken to the streets to show that they were aware of the political issues that affected them. Among the claims that declared “Impeachment!”, “Down with Dilma!”, “Down with PT!” and “Down with Temer!”, requests for military intervention gained space and became recurrent on the streets and in the media (GOMES, 2018; SENRA, 2018; ALESSI; BENITES, 2020). This movement resumes and resignifies previous speeches, promoting a positioning of citizens in relation to the command of the country.

Among the requests for the taking and management of political power by the military, the statement “Military Intervention Now!”¹ draws attention. It is recurrent in the posters displayed during the demonstrations and even posted on social networks and virtual petitions. This statement brings to mind another one, acclaimed during the popular demonstrations of the mid-1980s, when Brazil was demanding direct elections for president: “Direct Elections Now!”. A question arises about what meanings worked/work between one claim and the other, considering the antagonistic relationship that they establish in the Brazilian political context. At the time of the

¹Just to get an idea, on April 9, 2020, when the expression “Military Intervention Now” was searched on the social network Facebook returned 96 results. Among them are effective groups (the largest with a number of members greater than 64,000 members and more than 100 publications per day) and unsuccessful attempts (groups with 1 member). In addition, on April 19, 2020, Army Day, new public demonstrations were seen in various parts of the country. Under the pretext of celebrating the Armed Forces, the protesters called for military intervention in the country with the closure of the Congress and the Federal Court of Justice. In addition, they expressly requested that Jair Bolsonaro lead the movement. It is not by chance that, at a certain moment during the acts organized in Brasília, Bolsonaro himself took part in the demonstration, climbing into the back of a pickup truck and speaking in support of the complaints of thousands of people who, in the midst of a social distancing period due to the Covid-19 pandemic, gathered in front of the Army headquarters in the federal capital (CNN BRAZIL, 2020).

Brazilian Civil-Military Dictatorship² (BCMD), the people's position was against the government. They wanted to have the right to choose the command of the country. Today, they ask precisely for the loss of a right - and, more than that, a symbolic pillar and a liberal socio-political principle - supposedly out of the question: to live in a democracy, from a political point of view.

Some questions emerge from this scenario: why, today, more than two decades after the reconquest of democracy - after two decades of authoritarianism - many call for the reinstatement of a *manu militari* government, with the consequent extinction of the power of voting and exercising of choice in politics? How did history engender this demand for the military's return to power? What meanings worked between the first period, when the streets called for democracy, and the other, when the opposite is claimed? What discursive resonances about the dictatorship allow a speech asking for its return to establish itself in the current political moment?

It is around these guiding questions that this article was carried out, with the objective of analyzing slips of meaning regarding the BCMD present in debates mobilized on the Internet - an important dimension of the public sphere in contemporary times - based on a testimony given to the Rio Grande do Sul State Truth Commission, creating a direct line between the time when the report occurs and the present day, when the report is enunciated.

To do so, the present research will be based on the theoretical assumptions of the French Discourse Analysis. Discourse Analysis (DA) works the relationship among the subject, language and history and focuses on the construction of meanings that are made in between. This theoretical perspective will be articulated with reflections made by authors in the field of political philosophy in order to weave the proposed analysis from the content of certain discursive sequences (DS³), which materialize the discursive corpus and, within a certain analytical context, conform a unit of meaning.

² Even though there is still a predominant perception that the authoritarian regime and the coup that established it in 1964 were military in nature, civil participation (especially from an important part of the national business elite) has been seen as central to these events. This has been demonstrated at least since research such as that of René Dreifuss in the early 1980s (DREIFUSS, 1981) and has been consolidated in more recent studies. These approaches consider the period as a civil-military dictatorship - a position adopted in this article. Still, the role of the media (or at least an important part of it - some large newspapers and media companies) has received increasing attention for its relevant and peculiar contribution to the coup and the dictatorship. The work done by the National Truth Commission (NTC), which will be analyzed hereinafter, brought new light to the subject (BRASIL, 2014b) and helped to consolidate the view that a civil-military dictatorship did happen in Brazil. Some bibliographical sources on the topic can be found in Motta (2018).

³ Courtine (2009) considers the discursive sequence as the discourse corpus, that is, the discourse analyst's research object, and explains that the discursive materiality is directly related to the subject's conditions.

2 Meanings of/in History

According to Pêcheux (1997), DA assumes the existence of previous speeches that make current speeches possible. This is because the subjects are not the source of their speech and positioning. Thus, according to DA, it is believed that popular manifestations do not occur independently, that is, without discourses prior to them, as it is considered that a political position will be formed from the course of meanings and conditions of the subjects' production.

In the construction of the political and discursive scenario of the debate on memory and truth of the BCMD, one of the factors that stands out is the presence in the presidency of the country, for a relatively long period, of political forces and biographies linked to the resistance to the dictatorship. In the 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014 elections, the majority of the Brazilian electorate elected former persecuted political opponents of the BCMD as presidents. They are Fernando Henrique Cardoso, of the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Vana Rousseff, both members of the Workers Party (PT). Lula was booked, and Dilma was arrested and tortured by the dictatorship. This succession of government by the PT between 2002 and 2014 did not please conservative groups located on the right in the political spectrum, especially when it came to the 2014 election (ARAÚJO et al., 2014; ROSSI; NOVAES; BETIM, 2015) because, with it, the party would reach 16 uninterrupted years in government.

This rise and longevity of the PT in the presidency caused some meanings present during the BCMD to be resumed. During the military period, the army took communist or terrorist guerrillas as an enemy. In the post-dictatorship scenario, these same terrorists who stood against the civil-military dictatorship took over the government for a certain period. As a result, part of the clamor for military intervention comes from self-proclaimed patriots who take on the mission of saving Brazil from the control of the communist phantom (LUCATELLI, 2015). It is interesting to analyze this movement of meanings, because if in the 1980s there were manifestations for “Direct Elections Now!” to rid the country of the military that claimed to be fighting communism, it can be assumed that today, considering the same semantic context with inverted polarity, the demonstrations for “Military Intervention Now!” ask the military to save the country from communism. The two manifestations can be seen in the images below, in 1984 and 2015, respectively:

Scheme 1 – Demonstrations



Source: Elaborated by the authors

It can also be considered that, conciliated to the party motives referring to the presidents persecuted by the BCMD in general and to PT members in particular, there are other meanings that work and propagate this desire for intervention, such as the several years of silence regarding the dictatorship period and the lack of punishment for crimes committed on behalf of the state at the time. About this, it is necessary to address the strong expectation about the work carried out since the installation of the National Truth Commission (NTC), whose bill⁴ was created in 2010, 25 years after the end of the dictatorship, and became law⁵ in 2012, during the presidency of Dilma Rousseff. The NTC was created, effectively, because Brazil was sentenced by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to take several measures regarding the crimes committed during the BCMD in relation to the Araguaia Guerrilla⁶. The sentence decreed that, with regard to guarantees of non-repetition, Brazil would have to install the NTC and this could, among other duties:

⁴ Bill 7376/2010. Available at: [<http://www.camara.gov.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=478193>]. Accessed on: January 20, 2020.

⁵ Law 12.528 / 12. Available at: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2011/lei/l12528.htm]. Accessed on: January 20, 2017.

⁶ "The Araguaia Guerrilla War - Guerrilha do Araguaia - took place in the southeastern regions of the state of Pará, in the north of the former state of Goiás (present-day Tocantins) and also in territories of the state of Maranhão, in the area known as 'Bico do Papagaio'. The confrontations took place between the 1960s, when the first militants of the Communist Party of Brazil arrived in the region, and 1974, when the last members of the group were hunted and slaughtered by the military, who were trained to fight the guerrillas and determined not to take prisoners. Executions, elimination of traces and torture are in the reports collected, as well as in the existing literature on this war". (PEIXOTO, 2011, p. 479).

[...] request any information and document directly from public bodies and entities, promote public hearings, determine the need for forensics and diligences and ask for the assistance of entities to take the testimony of people who are related to the facts and circumstances examined. (CIDH, 2010, p. 106).

In addition to the direct consequences of its work, the NTC gave rise to a wave of commissioners across the country, inspiring the implantation of more than a hundred identical commissions in more specific contexts: state and municipal governments and legislatures, universities, unions and sections of the Order of Lawyers in Brazil. This led the NTC to regulate its activities to better articulate with its counterparts of a more restricted scope and, thus, optimize the efforts made by the various commissions throughout the country (MOTTA, 2018). This systematization, with the sharing of information and activities “- such as public hearings and due diligence in places where serious human rights violations were committed - has given NTC a strong reach, an essential aspect in a country that has a continental dimension like Brazil” (BRASIL, 2014a, p. 23). One of the commissions implemented throughout Brazil was the Rio Grande do Sul State Truth Commission. This commission recorded a remarkable testimony, which will be analyzed later in this work.

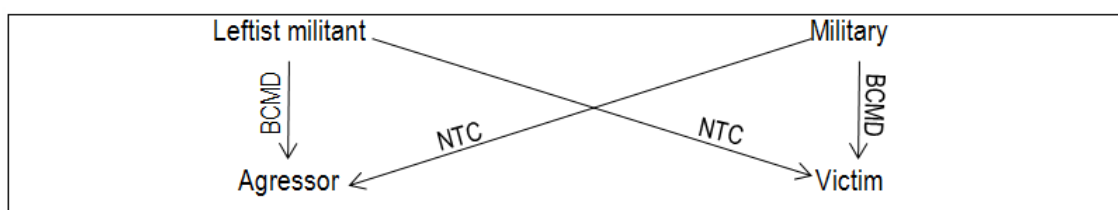
The NTC interviewed civilian and military witnesses of the BCMD, researched documents made available about the military period, visited various places that served as prisons, among other actions in order to produce a complete report on the BCMD.

The Brazilian NTC had “the purpose of investigating serious human rights violations that occurred between September 18, 1946 and October 5, 1988” (BRASIL, [s.d.]). In addition, the objective of the NTC, according to the law that instituted it, was to “effect the right to memory and historical truth and promote national reconciliation” (BRASIL, 2011). Reconciliation because, due to the silence about what happened in the period, the positions taken by Brazilian subjects in relation to the dictatorship became multiple and conflicting, which generated and still generates persistent adversity in the debate on the subject in the political and legal dimensions.

According to Figueiredo (2015, p. 105), “[...] of the countries in the region that experienced dictatorships, the first to create their national truth commission was Bolivia, in 1982. The last before Brazil was Colombia, in 2005”. In this way, and after so long, the testimonies collected today are based on memory and, moreover, they are carried out in a binary form, because at the same time that there is a declaration of those who were victims of the crimes

committed in BCMD, there are also the reports - even if minority - of the military that, repeatedly, do not reveal several facts questioned in the interviews. In addition, because the NTC was installed during the presidency of a former political prisoner, much is questioned about the events registered by the NTC, since leftist militants, who were seen as enemies of BCMD, are now considered victims by the NTC as they have suffered human rights violations. In turn, the military, who during the BCMD were the targets (or potential victims) of *terrorists*, are now seen as executioners who abused power and committed a number of crimes against human rights. Thus, those in favor of military intervention judge the NTC as a revanchism of the leftist militants, in which the roles of victim and aggressor are reversed. From this reflection, we configured the scheme below:

Scheme 2 – Change of roles



Source: Elaborated by the authors, 2020.

According to Figueiredo (2015, p. 106), although the secrecy period for documents filed under the dictatorship had already expired, the files were not released by the military for NTC analysis on the grounds that they did not exist. Despite all efforts, many requests for access to the BCMD archives were refused, and in the final report, the commissioners declared the lack of collaboration by the military:

The gaps in this history of executions, torture and hiding of corpses of political opponents to the military dictatorship could be better clarified today if the Armed Forces had made available to the NTC the archives of CIE, CISA and Cenimar, produced during the dictatorship, and if, likewise, all the required information had been provided [...]. The military authorities chose to maintain the pattern of negative or insufficient response that has been in place for fifty years, thus preventing the circumstances and authors of serious human rights violations that occurred during the military dictatorship to be revealed. (BRASIL, 2014b, p. 28-29).

Thus, much of what could be proven through official documents lacks probative force as it is addressed only through the memory of witnesses - victims and third parties. And memory,

according to Orlandi (1999, p. 59), “[...] is made up of forgetfulness, of silences. Untold meanings, meanings not to be said, silences and silencing”. That is, memory is subjected to failures and the potential of the unspoken, subject to less informed interpretation - to bad faith - to produce mistakes in historical and factual reading. In addition, the NTC is not punitive in nature, and for this reason, despite the informative weight of the report, both the sense of injustice and the false impression that no punishable crime was committed by state agents during BCMD remain.

Currently, due to the various materials on BCMD available on the internet, those who seek to know more about the military period find testimonies of subjects tortured by the dictatorship and subjects who were torturers of the dictatorship. In addition, several debates are created from publications that circulate, mainly, on digital social networks, such as YouTube and Facebook. Thus, in discussions on the BCMD, there are arguments, among others, that state that the BCMD period was not as bad as it is said, because workers lived free while criminals were properly arrested. Other arguments claim that there was simply no dictatorship, torture, or other crimes by the state, because no one has ever been legally accused of it. Those opposed to the dictatorship and, by extension, to military intervention in the current political scenario, declare that because there was no political freedom or freedom of speech, many were arrested, tortured, raped and killed, and that many others remain missing. Thus, in the face of discursive materialities, the subject positions himself according to the gestures of interpretation and conditions of production to which he is subjected and, with that, the meanings and actions are made, as we will see below.

3 Counter-testimony

Reflections on testimony and the role of the narrator became crucial especially after the great wars. This is because, in the face of the trauma and excess experienced, those who were witnesses of the war, directly or indirectly, were silent. Post-war silence is generated mainly by two factors: the poverty of experience observed by Benjamin (2012, p. 123) and the shame of the survivor, which is seen as a “locus classicus of the literature on the fields”, in accordance with Agamben (2008, p. 94). In this research, it is important to think about the relationship between silence, testimony and the denial of testimony, since the history of the military period in Brazil is built, for the most part, through the memory that emerges from the voice of the survivors. This is due to the long silencing in relation to BCMD and the lack of access to official documents.

In his work *What remains of Auschwitz*, Agamben (2008) focuses on the testimony of the unspeakable, starting mainly from the considerations of Walter Benjamin (2012, p. 123) with regard to the poverty of experience. Agamben (2008, p. 27) brings the etymology of testimony to say that the term can refer both to the presentation of a third point of view to guarantee the truth, and to the figure of the survivor. In the first case, Agamben (2008, p. 27) presents the term *testis* - the legal testimony - which has proof value and can even be the main point in the conviction or acquittal of a defendant, for example. In the second case, the term *superstes* - the surviving witness - is presented, which has historical, experiential value and is marked by subjectivity.

In the face of various dictatorships, civil wars and world wars, and, especially, in the face of *Shoah*, the state of exception became a rule in the 20th century according to Benjamin (2012, p. 245). To the witness - *superstes* - there was a lack of words to express the horror witnessed because, according to Benjamin (2012, p. 214), the soldiers returned from the battlefield speechless, *poor in communicable experience* after the war. The *Age of Extremes*, as the 20th century was called by Hobsbawm (2000), sediments the trauma caused by excess, by the extreme of experience, which goes beyond the human condition, which touches the bottom, as described by Agamben (2008, p. 43).

Benjamin, thinking about the reflexes of the great wars, was concerned with the role of the narrator in the first half of the 20th⁷ century and noted the poverty of experience to which history was being subjected, especially when it came to the history of the people, that is, of the oppressed. Benjamin considered that, because they were silenced, the voices of the losers were not heard, a fact that reinforced and reinforces the speech of the winners, thus causing a single voice to be predominant. A famous African proverb, spread by the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe and replicated in the Americas by the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano, asserts: "until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter". According to Benjamin (2012, p. 245), history should be revisited based on the task of "brushing it against the grain", seeking what is not registered and made official by the State. This perspective was directly related to the personal life of this philosopher. Being Jewish and German, Benjamin had to live as a fugitive, migrating through European countries until his death in 1940. According to the author:

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was.' It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment

⁷ The theses *On the Concept of History* were written in 1940 and published posthumously in 1950.

of danger" [...] Danger threatens both the existence of tradition and those who receive it. For both, the danger is the same: to surrender to the ruling classes, as their instrument. (BENJAMIN, 2012, p. 243).

The recollection, cited by Benjamin, should be the object of investigation of the narrator as a testimony, since Benjamin's narrator seeks - like a garbage collector - traces of an erased past. Gagnebin (2006, p. 54), from Benjamin, states that "the narrator and the historian should transmit exactly what the tradition, official or dominant, does not remember". This exercise marks a resistance and a power that must, necessarily, oppose the dominant classes to give voice to the silenced and, in several cases, erased speeches. Giving voice to silence is giving way to what is found in the rubble, it is to bring out what has been rejected. Agamben (2008) and Gagnebin (2006) deal with this rejection through the notion of remains when referring to the *lumpensammler* image, the one that recognizes the rags/shards/vestiges of history, discussed by Benjamin (1994, p. 78). In view of this, the task of the *contemporary* historian/narrator would be precisely to find these remains, these hidden testimonies, to give voice to those who are deprived of their rights. According to Gagnebin:

The narrator would also be the figure of the rag and bone man, the Lumpensammler or the chiffonnier, the scavenger of junk and garbage, this character from the great modern cities who collects the pieces, the remains, the debris, moved by poverty, certainly, but also by the desire to not let anything get lost. (GAGNEBIN, 2006, p. 53-54).

It is considered here that the subject as *superstes* - the surviving witness -, when silenced, sees himself as the rest of the story, placed at the margin of the dominant discourse, pushed to the underground of official memory, in the terms of Pollak (1989). Thus, the subject is not in a state of law, but in a state of exception, which deprives him of existing and being seen. Pelbart (2011, p. 64), when studying Benjamin, states that "[...] the concentration camp is the place where a state of exception has been transformed into a rule, where the exception endures and where the human being, deprived of rights, can be murdered without it being considered a crime". Being murdered here is not only about the annihilation of life. It also represents the annihilation of the voice and the time, because the concentration camp, theorized by Pelbart (2011, p. 64) as a political paradigm, is no longer only in the places where its material remains

existed. The concentration camp has spread throughout the world and is present in every life, in each objectified⁸ subject left silenced, on the margins of discourse.

To give voice to the testimonies of the victims of the BCMD, Refosco and Lara (2014, p. 153) affirm, associating the theories of united political philosophy and psychoanalysis, that the silencing and the lack of sharing of the lived experience are connected to trauma, which becomes alive during the testimonies of the superstes. This is because the trauma is not only due to what happened, like an action that is no longer present. The trauma is alive and is renewed with each transmission of testimony. In this way, the testimony also comes alive because, according to Indursky and Szuchman (2014, p. 57), regarding the victims of the BCMD, “[...] in retelling the story, the testimony takes the risk of changing itself, as the subject can hear his own voice narrating the ineffable”. There is no possibility to command memory and time, as stated by Robin (2016), so even when all the evidence is destroyed and all the common witnesses are missing, the trauma remains, resignifies and intensifies with each memory, with each narration. In other words, even if the victim of the BCMD has no concrete evidence, such as official documents to prove the kidnapping, torture, rape and any physical and psychological violation experienced, the trauma is still alive and current in memory.

4 Discursive remains

It can be said that, in view of the established production conditions, the testimony will be constituted by another subject who starts listening and allows the transmission to take place. For Orlandi (2001, p. 30), the conditions of production occur in the strict sense, in the definition of the situation, that is, *the circumstances of the enunciation* - who speaks, to whom it is spoken, in what environment, etc. -; and in the broad sense, of meso and macro order, which relates to the historical, social, cultural, ideological context, etc. Thus, in the enunciation process, the subject will be susceptible to several factors that make him construct meanings in one way or another. One of these elements, which can be considered crucial, is listening, or rather, the co-announcer who also causes the meanings to be produced.

It is extremely difficult for the witness to give voice to the experiences that were previously silenced, because, in addition to reliving the trauma as an open wound that does not

⁸ According to Daltoé (2016, p. 102).

heal, there is a fear that the testimony will be unauthorized and silenced. When working with BCMD victims, Indursky and Szuchman (2014, p. 53) assert that “[...] many times, the greatest suffering experienced by these people is imposed precisely by others who deny, who do not put themselves as alibis of the subject's truth, disallowing the perceptions and memories raised in the narrative”. Due to the subjectivity of the testimony, several recollections are put in doubt, as if they were not of historical content.⁹

This suffering was already present in the literature on *Shoah*, because Primo Levi (1988, p. 60) reported that he had a recurring dream in which there was a “narration that others do not hear”. That is, in his dream, Levi recounted all the suffering he had gone through at Auschwitz. However, all the people around him were indifferent and left the place not to listen to him. This dream, according to Levi (1988, p. 60), was not just his, but that of many *Shoah* survivors. Gagnebin (2006, p. 55) takes up this dream again to describe the survivors' fear of not being able to share their experience, of having their own voice annihilated. Therefore, the author states:

A witness would also be one who does not leave, who can hear the unbearable narration of the other and who accepts that the words carry on, as in a relay, the history of the other: not because of guilt or compassion, but because only the symbolic transmission, assumed despite and because of the unspeakable suffering, only this reflexive resumption of the past can help us not to repeat it endlessly, but to dare to sketch another history, to invent the present. (GAGNEBIN, 2006, p. 57).

Brazilian political history shows this through several testimonies of subjects tortured by BCMD. As facts are reported only through speech and, in most cases, without any corresponding official documentation, the testimonies are not made official as evidence or as part of history. Thus, what was silenced for years, even if reported in the present, does not occupy an institutional space, since the lack of access to military records and the lack of punishment for those who committed crimes during the dictatorship ratifies the silencing of the victims and gives voice to other meanings. Among the various testimonies collected by the various Truth Commissions implemented in Brazil, we take as an example here that of Nilce Azevedo

⁹ About the difficulties that involve the motivation and engagement of victims of violence to narrate and publicize the trauma experienced, especially in non-ideal conditions in the context of transitional justice (hostile environment in public opinion, little temporal distance from the facts and little spatial distance from the aggressors, formalism and coldness of judicial ritualism; lack of confidence in institutions and restorative procedures, etc.), see Motta (2018, p. 308 on)

Cardoso¹⁰, obtained by the Rio Grande do Sul State Truth Commission¹¹ on March 8, 2013¹². The testimony is available on video on *YouTube* and the following DS transcript was extracted from it:

DS 1. I can't say my name. I spent a while without saying it, because every time I was asked my name, I was slapped. [...] And then the shocks started. I was naked there, and they were putting an electric wire in one place, then in another, then in another, then in another, then in another. [...] Then they decide to put me in Pau de Arara. Two trestles, one simple thing, two trestles and a stick. They hang us up and we stay there ... It's indescribable what happens at that moment, because you are helpless and they do whatever they want with your body. A body is not a body, it is not a person, it is nothing. [...] And then I was speechless, so they decided to burn me inside. This is a painful thing, but I want to record it so that it never happens again, because it is absurd. They burned my entire uterus with shock. But for that, you can imagine, they needed to stick their hands in, rape is nothing at a time like this. We hung there, with all our genitals on display, so they could do whatever they wanted, and they did it because they wanted to. Blood started to flow and they put a basin under me so that the room wouldn't get so dirty. I spent eight days in a coma. [...] (OLIVEIRA, 2013).

Nilce's speech is marked by the silencing instituted by state violence, as she could not even pronounce her own name. This fact confirms what Refosco and Wondracek (2014, p. 170) argue about torture at BCMD, which “aims to annihilate the subject in his desire, destroy his identity, his social and affective ties, that is, everything that constitutes him as a psychic subject”. In addition to the de-subjectivation caused by torture and prison, the collective silencing instituted by forgetfulness policies supported by the rhetoric of the broad, general and unrestricted amnesty granted in 1979 ratifies the subject's annihilation. According to Indursky and Szuchman (2014),

[...] when the community itself prefers to remain silent about what cannot yet be proved, [...] collective silencing imposes itself as a mark of the interdict of the executioner that prohibits the survivor from narrating the aggressions that

¹⁰ Born in the countryside of São Paulo and based in Porto Alegre in 1969, Nilce Cardoso was part of the *Ação Popular Marxista-Leninista (APML)* during the dictatorship. She lived and worked as a militant in clandestinity until her arrest in 1972. She was brutally tortured in a DOPS jail cell in Porto Alegre, the state capital.

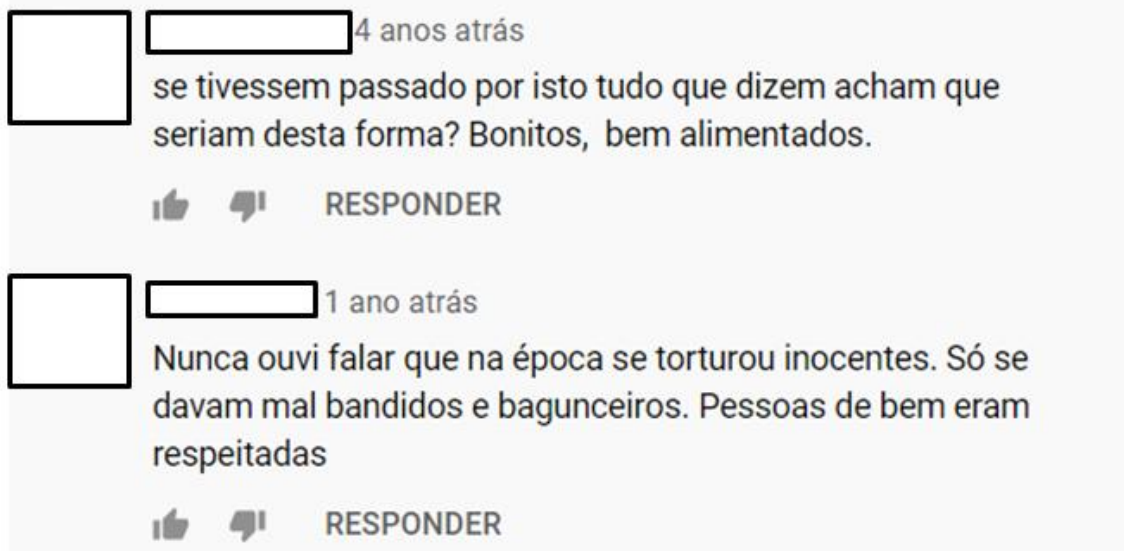
¹¹ The commission was officially created on July 17, 2012 by State Decree No. 49380 “for the purpose of assisting the National Truth Commission, created by Federal Law No. 12,528, of November 18, 2011, to examine and clarify serious violations of human rights practiced in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, without excluding the examination of violations committed in other States of the Federation and abroad, of natural citizens of this State, during the period between January 1, 1961 and October 5, 1988, in order to realize the right to memory and historical truth and assist national efforts in favor of national reconciliation”(RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2012). The commission presented its final report on December 4, 2014.

¹² Nilce Cardoso also gave a testimony to the NTC, but it was decided to analyze the one provided to the Rio Grande do Sul State Commission due to the force and rawness of the report.

have been experienced. From the subjective to the collective, the traumatic is updated in the social bond not as oblivion, but as an index of fear and silencing of the horror that does not concern us. (INDURSKY; SZUCHMAN, 2014, p. 52).

Nilce recalls all her suffering when giving her testimony to the NTC with the intention, as described, to prevent the facts that she experienced from happening again. However, in the testimony comments¹³ section on YouTube, some statements that go against what the victim reported (DS 1), praise the BCMD and deny what Nilce said are found, as shown below:

DS 2 – Comments on Nilce Cardozo's testimony¹⁴



Source: Oliveira, 2013.

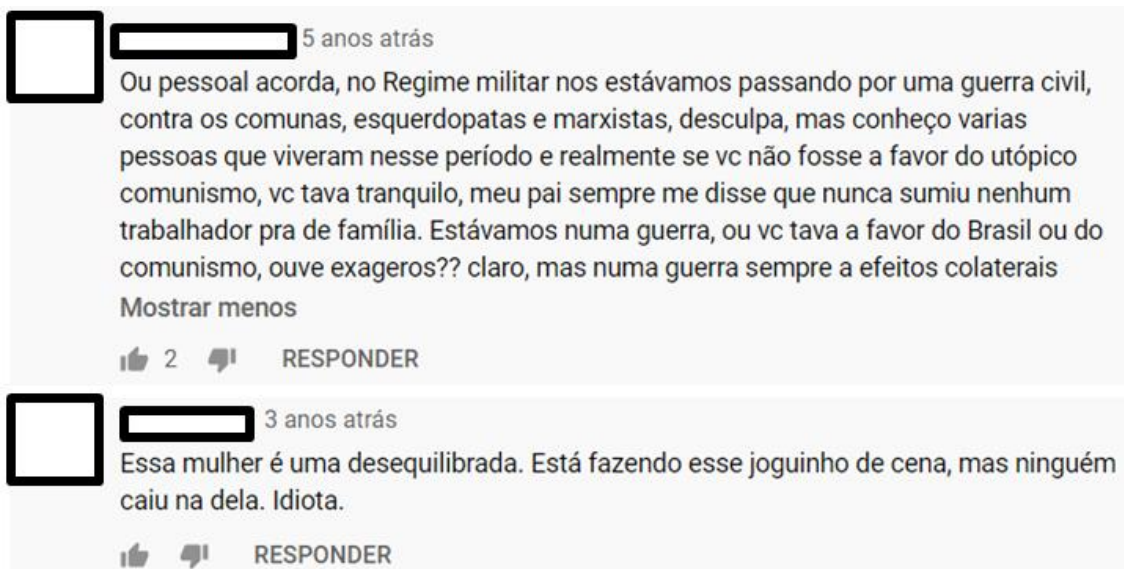
The comments deny Nilce's account (DS 1) and, consequently, cast doubt on all the testimonies of the victims who survived the torture. You can also notice the same reaction in the comments about an interview given by actress Cláudia Alencar (AGORA É TARDE ON YOUTUBE, 2014). The actress participated in the *Agora é Tarde* TV program, hosted by Rafinha Bastos, and talked a little about how she was arrested, tortured and raped during BCMD. In her account, the actress states that, along with other colleagues, she suffered several physical and psychological abuses that will always affect her life. It is interesting to analyze that even in the

¹³ The comments that appear in this work have a date of publication as "a certain time ago". This time refers to the date of access to the website which is shown in the references.

¹⁴ DS 2 – "If they really went through all that they claim, do you think they would look like this? Beautiful, well-fed."; "I never heard about innocents being tortured at that time. Only criminals and wrongdoers got in trouble. Good people were respected."

case of a famous public figure such as Cláudia Alencar, the testimony is invalidated in the same way that occurred with Nilce Cardoso, as shown below:

DS 3 – Comments on the interview with actress Cláudia Alencar – I¹⁵



Source: Agora é tarde no YouTube, 2014.

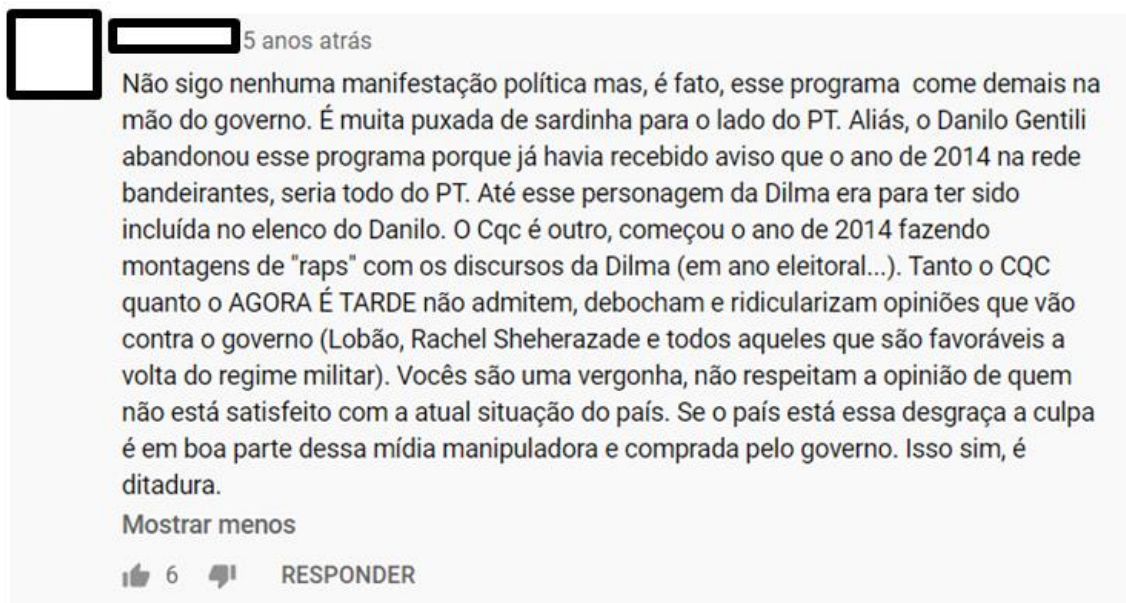
In DS 3, in particular, there is a denial of the legitimacy of the actress's testimony with regard to BCMD. This is because the torture suffered by Alencar was inserted in the context of “a civil war” as a price to be paid by those who, in the official rhetoric of that time - and easily found in the current political debate -, were in favor of communism and against Brazil. These people are appointed in a triple list to reproduce and update the cold war terminology of other times: “communists, psychopathic leftists and Marxists”. When it is said that “hardworking family men” - bastion of moral and citizen purity - did not disappear, BCMD victims are positioned as “criminals and wrongdoers”, as mentioned in DS 2, that is, as people who did not follow the norms established by the authorities. These authorities, according to the logic of the comment, were the true source of political legitimacy, regardless of how they were constituted. In this way, even in the face of the testimony of torture, of the acquisition of traumas that last for a lifetime and without any punishment for the torturer, this violation of rights is seen as a “collateral effect”. This shows

¹⁵ DS 3 – “Wake up, people! During the military regime we were going through a civil war against communists, pscyopathic leftists and marxists. I’m sorry, but I know several people who lived during that time, and if you were not in favor of the utopic communism, you were ok. My father always told me that hardworking family men never went missing. We were at war. You were either in favor of Brazil, or in favor of communism. Were there excesses? Of course, but in a war there will always be collateral effects.”; “This woman is completely unstable. She is playing a part, but no one fell for it. Idiot.”

that, in the state of exception, as stated by Pelbart (2011), anyone can be violated and even murdered in a legitimate way. Furthermore, the subject in the role of victim of the dictatorship, is discredited, is supposedly "playing a part" and is considered "unstable", unable to convey any truth in the report, since "no one fell for it" - in reference to an abstract and undefined audience, but supposedly represented by the author in the second comment (the ones who are stable?). That is, according to the comments, Nilce Azevedo Cardoso, Cláudia Alencar and other survivors who claim to have suffered torture are probably lying, as they are still alive and "beautiful, well-fed", as seen in DS 2 regarding Nilce's testimony.

In another comment (DS 4) related to Cláudia Alencar's interview, there is a link between the opposition to the dictatorship, the political protagonism of the left party at the time of the interview (and the time of the comment) and the place of voices that are favorable to the military's return to power.

DS 4 – Comments on the interview with actress Cláudia Alencar – II¹⁶



Source: Agora é tarde no YouTube, 2014.

¹⁶ DS 4 – "I don't follow any political demonstrations, but it is a fact that the government has this TV show eating out of the palm of its hand. You are clearly benefiting PT. In fact, Danilo Gentili abandoned this show because he had already been warned that in 2014 the Bandeirantes network would be all PT. Even this Dilma character was supposed to be included in Danilo's cast. CQC started the year rapping with Dilma's speeches in an election year. Both CQC and Agora é Tarde ridicule, mock and do not admit opinions that are against the government (Lobão, Raquel Sheherazade and all those who are in favor of the return of the military regime). You are a disgrace! You do not respect the opinion of those who are dissatisfied with the current situation in the country. The blame for the country being a disgrace is in large part of this manipulative and government-funded media. This is what a dictatorship is."

Although claiming to be politically neutral, the author of the comment protests against an alleged editorial favoring of PT by the TV network that airs the program in which Alencar's interview was broadcast, despite having no evidence for the allegations. The fact that the *Agora é Tarde* TV show is no longer presented by Danilo Gentili¹⁷ - known for his lack of political correctness and certain conservatism - is regretted by the author. According to the author, the current version of the program is shielding the government (PT) by disdaining openly right-wing public figures (the journalist Raquel Sheherazade and the singer Lobão were mentioned) and “*all those favorable to the return of the military regime*”. The author lists, under a certain parallelism expressed in a triple list - “highly persuasive rhetorical format” (GILL, 2008, p. 260) -, critics of the center-left government, a government that at that moment was led by an ex-militant against the dictatorship. Those mentioned are also defenders of military intervention, all allegedly disrespected for representing the “*opinion of those who are dissatisfied with the current situation in the country*” - seen as a “disgrace”. Then comes the doubly contradictory conclusion: for being “*manipulative and financed by the government*” (contradiction 1), the media would be silencing different opinions and conveying a single thought (which excludes the demands for military intervention), or said directly: “[...] *This is what a dictatorship is*” - which, in the end, would make the media itself unfeasible (contradiction 2). Against one dictatorship, another.

Among the DSs exposed above there is an evident continuum. It begins with the acts of violence by the State produced during BCMD, goes through decades-long silencing about this violence and the experience of pain caused, gives rise to the creation of a welcoming political environment for the impactful reports of the *superstes*, goes through the relativization not only of the violence itself but also of the suffering it generates and, finally, it gets to the demand for restoration of the institutional scenario that has as a norm and as a method the violence and the silencing of those who suffer it.

According to Padrós (2014, p. 200), due to the silence established regarding BCMD crimes, kidnappings, tortures, murders, disappearances and personal and family traumas “[...] they remain in a kind of limbo, as if they had no meaning, as if the concrete reality did not find a way to express its concreteness”. This is mainly due to the several years of silence and impunity regarding the crimes committed at BCMD. However, through DA, silence takes on another

¹⁷ On Gentili's conduct, especially in his career as a humorist, see Zorzi (2019), Boucinhas (2020) and the documentary *O riso dos outros* (2012).

meaning, because for Orlandi (2007, p. 68, emphasis added), “[...] silence is not the void, or the meaningless; on the contrary, it is the sign of a meaningful instance. This leads us to understand the ‘emptiness’ of language as a *horizon* and not as a *lack*”, because the greater this gap, the greater the possibilities for attributing meanings to these silences. The concrete reality can be interdicted by many, but it continues to have meaning and, in this case, it increases its potency of concreteness.

According to Orlandi (2007, p. 34), “[...] for our historical-social context, a man in silence is a man without meaning”. However, the author explains that “[...] when we do not speak, we are not just mute, we are silent: there is ‘thinking’, introspection, contemplation, etc.”. (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 35, emphasis added). That is, although common sense often attributes a lack of meaning to silence, the man has meaning, since everything gives rise to meaning, including silence. In this way, the silence of a victim or a BCMD military is not meaningless, but it is the signifier that gives rise to other constructions.

According to DA, there is silence even in speech, so, even when enunciating, many meanings are left aside to be able to signify. Given this perspective, to explain silence and its relationship with meaning, Orlandi (2007, p. 24) divides it into two categories: a) the founding silence and b) the policy of silence, which the author characterizes as silencing.

For Orlandi (2007, p. 23), it is the founding silence that guarantees the movement of meanings, because it is about what exists in words, but is not said. It is the unsaid that makes the various constructions of meaning from the place of enunciation of each subject possible, and that is why different meanings are produced, because in addition to the fact that what is said does not have a single meaning, the unsaid is always meaningful.

In addition to the silence that always exists in speech, there is also a controlled silence, which is the State censorship that tries to control the meanings in order to control the actions. Thus, regarding the policy of silence, Orlandi (2007, p. 24) classifies it in two subdivisions: b1) constitutive silence and b2) local silence. Constitutive silence, according to Orlandi (2007, p. 24), takes place when saying, because when we enunciate a word, necessarily, another is silenced. In this way, there is an attempt to control the meanings through enunciation and, for this, the subject silences the meanings that are “undesirable, in a given discursive situation” (ORLANDI, 2007, p. 73). In other words, saying is directly related to silencing, and meaning is constantly realized through this.

Finally, Orlandi (2007, p. 24) explains local silence, stating that this is “the prohibition of saying at a certain juncture”, that is, it is an interdiction of saying. To put it another way, with local silence, what could be said is censored and thus, according to Orlandi (2007, p. 76), “certain words are forbidden to forbid certain meanings”. It can be said that, given this perspective, when the term “dictatorship” is denied and replaced by military “regime”¹⁸ or “revolution”, which occurs in some military schools¹⁹, the torture, the murders, and the various other crimes committed at the time are also denied. Orlandi (2007, p. 74) corroborates when saying that the name “New Republic”, attributed to the period after BCMD, denies the existence of a dictatorship.

According to Orlandi (2007, p. 69), silence permeates words, so there is no way to recognize the story of the winners without giving voice to the story of the losers, as proposed by Benjamin (2012, p. 245). Because of this, even in the face of official records that often deny the atrocities committed and hide the archives, this silence is significant and promotes questioning in the face of discursive interdictions. Indursky and Szuchman (2014, p. 49) say that, in addition to the crimes against humanity committed in Brazil, the silencing of those crimes and the official stories that deny several reports are the very murder of death, because they disregard not only the missing persons and those murdered for political reasons, but also their families, that is, their own society. Thus, being able to listen to what was silenced by the State is the task of the Benjamin narrator/historian, as well as the task of the discourse analyst, who are also witnesses giving voice to the *superstes*.

Final considerations

From the discussion carried out, it is possible to say that, considering the time elapsed between the different manifestations to thematize the dictatorial period, many changes occurred in the Brazilian political scenario, which brought discursive resonances from the military period to the present day. It was also noticeable that there is a desire to silence and disqualify the witnesses who give their testimonies only with their own experiences - even if this occurs as a result of a refusal on the part of the State to provide specific documents.

¹⁸ There are exceptions in some qualifying variations, such as “dictatorial regime”, which in a way rescue the oppressive and anti-democratic aspect of the political period to which it refers.

¹⁹ Available at: [<http://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/educacao/nos-colegios-militares-golpe-de-1964-ensinado-como-revolucao-12038975>]. Access on January 25th, 2020.

Thus, if BCMD's speeches are resonant in the invention of the present, through its voice or its silence, it is our role, as researchers and members of society, to listen to the sliding of meanings that cause political positions to occur and brush them against the grain, as requested by Benjamin (2012, p. 245). Therefore, in this way meaning is also produced, history is made and the world is understood, so as to survive it.

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