

*Contrabando – Um Filme Costeiro: comprehensions over the  
(dis)course of the Uruguay River /*  
*Contrabando – um filme costeiro: compreensões em torno do  
(dis)curso do Rio Uruguai*

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**ABSTRACT**

*The objective of this paper is to analyze meanings over the Uruguay River in the script of the film *Contrabando - Um Filme Costeiro* (2022) [*Contraband – A Coastal Film*], produced in interior towns of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS), directed by filmmaker João Pedro Gottardo. This feature film problematizes the lives of riverside dwellers, focusing on the trajectories of *chibeiros* — people who trade goods from Argentina that will later be sold in Brazil while avoiding import controls and tax collection — as well as their families. The *chibeiros*, as they are popularly known, cross the river in small boats to look for products in the neighboring country. In the film, the river plays a fundamental role in the construction of the narrative. In order to understand ideological views about the river, the words as ideological signs will be taken as a unit of study. To this end, the theoretical-methodological perspective formulated by the Bakhtin Circle is correlated with the approach to metaphors of Lakoff and Johnson (2009). The final considerations point to personification as an evaluative position that, anchored in ambivalence, indicates the river as a figure that knows the power of life and death: on the one hand being able to give life, welcoming it, and narrating it in its mysteries, and on the other hand of taking life away, devouring it through its destructive power. This is a way of introducing meaning and structure to this element of nature, which is so present as a part of the everyday lives of the *chibeiros* and their families.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Uruguay River; Chibo; Word; Ideology.*

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## RESUMO

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar sentidos em torno do Rio Uruguai construídos no roteiro do filme *Contrabando - um filme costeiro* (2022), produzido em municípios do interior do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul (RS), sob direção do cineasta João Pedro Gottardo. Ao problematizar a vida de ribeirinhos, esse longa metragem aborda trajetórias de chibeiros e suas famílias que comercializam mercadorias da Argentina para serem vendidas no Brasil, sem passar pelo controle de importação e recolhimento de tributos. Os chibeiros, como são popularmente conhecidos, travessam o rio em pequenas embarcações para buscarem produtos no país vizinho. No filme, o rio assume um lugar fundamental na construção da narrativa. Assim, neste trabalho buscamos compreender visões ideológicas acerca do rio no longa-metragem, tomando como unidade de estudo a palavra enquanto signo. Para tanto, mobilizamos a perspectiva teórico-metodológica formulada pelo Círculo de Bakhtin e a correlacionamos com a abordagem de Lakoff e Johnson (2009) sobre metáforas. As considerações finais apontam para a personificação como uma posição avaliativa que, ancorada na ambivalência, aponta para o rio enquanto uma figura que conhece o poder da vida e da morte, sendo capaz, de um lado, em dar a vida, acolhê-la e narrá-la em seus mistérios; e, de outro, de tirá-la, devorá-la por meio de sua força destrutiva. Trata-se de um modo de dar sentido e estruturar esse elemento da natureza, tão presente e cotidiano na vida dos chibeiros e suas famílias.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Rio Uruguai; Chibo; Palavra; Ideologia.

## 1 Introduction

A small and simple wooden boat burns on the waters  
as it goes down the river, following the current. The red of the  
fire contrasts with the vast blue horizon.  
(*CONTRABANDO*, 2022, p. 01)

In the form of waves, rivers, tears, rain and so many others, the waters are part of the reality of women, men and children who attribute the most diverse and different meanings to these waters, based on their experiences in the world and with the world. As an invitation to problematize meanings woven around this element of nature, it is important to notice the presence of the waters of the river described in the passage above, from the first scene of the script of *Contrabando – Um Filme Costeiro* [Contraband – A Coastal Film] (2022). In this scene, the river, with all its breadth, is the vast terrain that leads human life with its inherent precariousness, represented by a “small and simple wooden boat that burns” on its waters. This river is the zone that sustains a certain human experience that concerns a man’s crossing over its waters, in the “clandestine” work of transporting goods imported from another country.

This passage is part of a film that deals with an issue that, although silenced in our society, is rather common and known among the riverside population of the Uruguay River living in the border between Brazil and Argentina. The film’s theme is the story of “*chibeiros*,” a name popularly given to people who act “illegally”, from the State’s point of view, and earn a living by buying and selling goods while avoiding import control and consequently tax collection. Within this theme, the film focuses on the story of Daniel and Santiago, two *chibeiros* who import products from Argentina

to sell in Brazil. The river is the path for these *chibeiros* to carry out their activities and, as such, it structures and sustains the characters' experiences in the world and with the world.

In view of this, the present study seeks to understand how this element of the landscape – the river – is constructed in the discourse of the film script. Taking the script of the film as a material for discourse analysis, it is relevant to analyze meanings around the waters of the Uruguay River, a significant South American water course that delimits part of the borders between Brazil and Argentina and has, in the said material, certain shades of emotion and volition that express ideological views about their waters.

From the point of view of the theoretical-methodological orientations of the Bakhtin Circle, the word as an ideological sign is taken as a unit of the discourse analyses performed here. As Geraldi (2012) very well observes, a Bakhtinian study necessarily presupposes having an empirical object for understanding. In this work, this object consists of the script, whose words will be the basis for the analysis. For that purpose, to better understand the meanings, the forms of utterance were observed, which relate to lexical selection, compositionality, word placement and so many other stylistic-compositional elements.

Based on Bakhtinian studies, it is understood that the forms of enunciation are inseparable from life. The forms of enunciation penetrate life, and, in turn, life penetrates the forms of language in any and every enunciation: "After all, language enters life through concrete utterances (which manifest language) and life enters language through concrete utterances as well" (BAKHTIN, 2016, p. 16).

Thus, the language is not seen here as a ready product, immovable, fixed in grammatical rules and exceptions, but as a materiality that, imbricated in life, is constituted by values, axiological points of view, which relate to a certain way of approaching life. Studying language is seeking to understand life. Because the film script is a text, a concrete statement, it necessarily concerns views on life. And our research area focuses on no other area to understand life, except through texts created by subjects. If a text is studied, then it is because our object of study is the social man. After all, for the researcher who bases his (hetero)scientific work in texts:

The real object is the social man (inserted in society), who speaks and expresses himself by other means. Can one find for him and for his life (his work, his struggle, etc.) any other focus beyond the texts of signs created or yet to be created by him? Can one observe him, and study him, as a phenomenon of nature, as a thing? The physical action of man must be

interpreted as attitude but one cannot interpret the attitude outside his eventual (created by us) semiotic expression (motives, goals, stimuli, degrees of assimilation) (BAKHTIN, 2016, p. 87).

The researcher is then responsible for offering his counterwords to the words they read, in a process of comprehension that is both active and dialogical. This position implies, according to Geraldi (2016, p. 33), a resistance by the researcher, who rejects their submission to the words of another and “takes distance to give space to the counterwords necessary for comprehension and analysis.”

In order to better present how the script of the film *Contrabando* was read here, this work is organized in three sections: a) An approach to elements of the production of the film in order to bring socio-historical elements that constitute the materiality of analysis; b) The theoretical support for the comprehension of the word as an ideological sign, in the Bakhtinian perspective; c) And then, based on the discussions made, an analysis of the words. The metaphor became, in our comprehension of the script, a central stylistic-compositional element for the construction of meanings over the Uruguay River.

## 2 The Film and its Exhibition: A Brief Contextualization

*Contrabando – Um Filme Costeiro* was carried out through the program *Criação e Formação – Diversidade das Culturas* [Creation and Formation – Diversity of Cultures] by the Marcopolo Foundation with resources from Law No. 14,017/20. The film was directed by João Pedro Gottardo, graduated in Cinema from the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA), who also participated in the script creation, along with Omar Villela Gomes and Gabriel Ramos. The feature film is a production of the Emerson Gottardo group, an initiative with strong presence in general music and arts, mainly in the Fronteira Noroeste and Missões regions of the state of Rio Grande do Sul<sup>1</sup>.

Although only recently completed in July 2023, the film had displayed pre-premieres for free in a series of municipalities that, in different ways, include the Uruguay River as a memory

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<sup>1</sup> Those regions are part of the divisions established by the Regional Development Councils (COREDEs), officially created by Law 10,283 of October 17, 1994.

linked to the activities of *chibeiros* and their families. One of these towns is Porto Xavier, a border town that received an estimated spectator audience of 1000 people in 2021.

Not only with the general public, but the film also sought to establish a connection with other segments of society. In this context, it is important to draw attention to the dialogue that they held, in 2022, with members of the academic community of the Languages Program of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Campus Cerro Largo (RS), a municipality located about 60 km from the border between Brazil and Argentina. As part of the activities of the Academic Week, the film *Contrabando - Um Filme Costeiro* had two exhibitions, each followed by debates. It was precisely on this occasion that the researchers of this study were able to watch the film and establish a conversation with its director.

Based on the advertising of this feature film in the community and in the academic environment, it is important to highlight, first of all, the contribution of cinema to historical-cultural formation, especially when it comes to regions that, far from the large urban centers, lack access to diverse cultural expressions, as is the case of the Missões and Fronteira Noroeste regions of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. With the screening of *Contrabando*, many people moved from their homes and came together to construct meanings based on the film's materialities of the sign. In this case, this is a space that allows the production of meanings about one of the manifestations of popular, counter-hegemonic and silenced culture that constitutes identities of riverside dwellers – the practice of *chibo*. Screening the film in this context can be considered transgressive and revolutionary. In addition, the film is displayed in more popular places, such as public squares and common-use areas, such as event halls not specifically designed for cinema.

Along with this importance to the general public, it is worth mentioning a second point related to the film exhibition, which is the conversations between film producers and the academic environment, as previously mentioned. As Tomaim observes (2011, p. 57), cinema, since its creation in 1895, has been increasingly “conquering minds and hearts” worldwide, although it has taken a long time to become a frequent presence in the academic environment, which represent the “university banks” of scientific research. By delimiting his work in the Cinema Studies carried out in Rio Grande do Sul, the researcher recalls in his article an essay published in the newspaper *Jornal Correio do Povo*, on December 03, 1972, by screenwriter and director Anibal Damasceno Ferreira, questioning precisely the lack of connection between the makers of cinema in the state and the intellectuals:

The teacher defended that, however incipient and burlesque the gaúcho cinematography of the time was, marked by a rural and traditionalist character, it was necessary to admit that some films by Teixeira were box-office successes. However, according to Ferreira, the gaúcho intellectuals themselves preferred to oppose these films violently in the Porto Alegre press (TOMAIM, 2011, p. 69).

Although it is possible to observe, especially from the 2000s, an increase in the number of research studies about the cinema of Rio Grande do Sul in several areas of knowledge, the author emphasizes the need for further expansion of these studies, since, in his view, “the researchers have not yet discovered the cinema of the state of Rio Grande do Sul” (2011, p. 67).

This work presents a reading of the film script, with language studies supporting its comprehensions. In order to better situate the central theoretical perspective for the development of this work, the word is approached as ideological, considering the Bakhtinian studies.

### 3 The Word as an Ideological Sign

In order to analyze the dimensions of the film *Contrabando*, so as to explore the construction of meanings around the waters of the Uruguay River, the words that compose the script of this film are taken as a unit of study. Thus, starting from the centrality of the word to realize a possible understanding of this materiality, this section describes how the word is understood here.

Based on Bakhtin Circle studies, the word can be understood as an ideological sign capable of pointing to socially established (not necessarily crystallized and stable) ways and manners of understanding reality. The word is the interindividual ground on which the meanings built around life and its most diverse situations are based. The word is not the only way to interpret the world, but it is one of them. According to Bakhtin/Volochinov (2017, p. 99), “the word is the most accurate and sensitive medium of social communication” that reflects and refracts the existence, and consequently a materiality capable of recording even the most transient, incipient, ephemeral, and delicate phases of social life.

If the word can be a place to understand aspects of life, this is due to its quality of being, always and necessarily, an ideological sign. As Bakhtin/Volochinov (2017) observes, every ideological sign, as the word is, is made up of two inseparable parts. One part is its material dimension, of being a concrete part of reality. In this case, it is a physical body, an object, the

product of consumption that is a phenomenon of nature and, as part of life, has a material and concrete dimension. The point is that, when such materialities start referring to social values and worldviews, they become ideological signs. This is the second dimension of the ideological signs – they refer to something else apart from themselves, and start referring to social values:

Any ideological product is not only a part of natural and social reality – whether it is a physical body, an instrument of production or a product of consumption – but also, unlike such phenomena, it reflects and refracts another reality that is beyond its limits. Everything that is ideological has a meaning: It represents and replaces something found outside it, that is, it is a sign [...]. It can be said that a physical body equals itself: It means nothing, and it entirely coincides with its unique and natural reality. In this case, we cannot talk about ideology (BAKHTIN/ VOLÓCHINOV, 2017, p. 92).

In human experience with the world, a wide range of objects, products, and phenomena of nature. One example is the existence of the rivers, a part of the reality that is especially interesting for this study. They occupy a place in space, are part of reality, and have a materialness. The point is that it becomes an ideological sign when it means something beyond this concreteness, without ceasing to be concrete, that is, when it comes to meaning something else, – such as danger, greatness, wisdom, among many other meanings – it becomes an ideological sign. In view of research-language, in which the researchers of this study are inserted, this world, the “world of signs,” is especially relevant here. Thus, as Bakhtin/ Volochinov (2017, p. 93) observes, “In addition to the phenomena of nature, technological objects and consumer products, a particular world arises – the world of signs.

In the script being analyzed in this work, words are the object. Like every ideological sign, words are part of material reality, because they have their concreteness. In addition, they mean something that transcends this concreteness. For instance, they can be sensitive indicators of how the waters of the Uruguay River are socially valued in the film *Contrabando*. As such, words are ideological products that have an ideological dimension and a material dimension.

And, as Faraco points out (2009, p.47), the sense of ideology, in the context of Bakhtinian thought, does not mean “masking of the real”, but an axiological position, an evaluative position:

Here, it is important to remember that, for the Circle, the meaning of the utterances always has an evaluative dimension, always expresses a social stand of valuation. Therefore, in the Circle’s conception, any utterance is always ideological – there are no non-ideological utterances for them. It is ideological in the two following senses: all statements take place in the sphere

of one of the ideologies (i.e., within one of the areas of human intellectual activity) and always express an evaluative position (i.e., there is no neutral utterance; the rhetoric of neutrality itself is also an axiological position) (FARACO, 2009, p. 47).

From reading the script, two great forces were noticed two great forces that set up a structure for the meanings over the Uruguay River. On the one hand, the river is a powerful and wild entity that provides dangerous, deep, transformative experiences; and on the other hand, the river is a very ancient and wise figure, endowed with a certain intelligence that surpasses and escapes human reason to a great extent. These two great views of the river are intrinsically intertwined to weave possible (and not unique) social values linked to the practice of *chibo*.

Before the analysis, it is important to clarify that this work sought to account for the verbal expression as a delimitation of the study. This necessity was also in place for other researchers, such as Brait (2016), as he approached the lyrics of a song to then approach the text, recognizing the plurality of the elements of a sign (such as prosodic elements), based on the theoretical-methodological orientations of the Bakhtin Circle.

#### 4 Metaphors in the Construction of the Meanings

In the field of words, understood here as ideological signs, they are organized and combined in the script in recurring metaphorical processes when they refer to the experience of the characters with the river. In order to develop a detailed understanding of the script focusing on the stylistic-compositional elements centered on the word, a relation is established, through the practice of discourse analysis, between and the studies of the Bakhtin Circle and the perspective of Lakoff and Johnson (2009) on metaphors. The next section presents a point of view in which the river is something more superior and wilder, and the section thereafter shows the ancestry of these waters, which, in dealing with men, reveals their wisdom.

##### 4.1 *The River as Wild Force*

In view of the utterances that make up the script, the conception of the river circulates as a powerful, wild, and ruthless entity in several parts of the material. In the relationship with women and men, the river reveals itself as a being that follows its course ruthlessly, with its own forces, of



which human beings have no control. It is a free entity that, although having no desire to be cruel, has its own laws, which derive from its very nature. The passage below is analyzed to better explore this dimension of the river, constructed discursively in the script. It is a part of scene 11 of the script, when Helena leaves a commercial establishment called “*bolicho*” in the text, meets with Father Geraldo, and gives him a package of candles:

Passage 1:

1 FATHER GERALDO: Now, Helena, your mother would be proud to see you  
2 so graceful. Thank you for your kindness, okay?  
3 With a kind of timid and sad smile, Helena reacts like her mind is wandering.  
4 HELENA: Not at all, Father. I'm pleased. Well, you know that I miss my mother  
5 so much.  
6 FATHER GERALDO: I can imagine, my child. Your mother was a warrior,  
7 she did *chibo* among the men, she faced the river and gendarmerie guards  
8 to put bread on the table.  
9 She passed away so young. Such a sin, my daughter, a sin! (GOTTARDO,  
J. P. et al., 2022, p. 06-07).

As one of the initial parts of the film, Father Geraldo appears in the script for the first time in this scene. He is one of the fundamental figures for the construction of the script. In the segment above, talking to Helena, he presents himself as a presence that testifies to the history of the family of Helena, the beloved partner of Daniel, one of the main characters. In the conversation, Father Geraldo and Helena comment on Helena's deceased mother, who had fought the river as a *chibeira*.

Although the passage has a number of valuable elements for linguistic analysis, it is interesting, for the purposes of this paper, to focus on approaching the river as a unit of discussion. To do so, the following segment is taken as the central object of study: “Your mother was a warrior, she did *chibo* among the men, she faced the river and gendarmerie guards to put bread on the table” (lines 6, 7 and 8). In this sentence, a main clause designs Helena's mother as a “warrior” as a central content. Thus, in an affirmative, brief, and concise clause, the Father leaves no doubt about the glorious past of that mother, and builds for her daughter an almost epic narrative of a hero (“Your mother was a warrior”). And why would this woman be a “warrior,” from the point of view of the parish priest? The following two clauses function as appositions and thus explain the reasons why her mother was a warrior. In particular, it signals the subordinated nominal and appositive clauses, built in semantic and syntactic parallelism: “Your mother was a warrior, she did

*chibo* among the men, she faced the river and gendarmerie guards to put bread on the table” (GOTTARDO, J. P. *et al.*, 2022, p. 06-07).

In view of this statement, it is worth mentioning its content. It is a woman who acts in a universe dominated mostly by men. Being in the *chibo* makes her a warrior. Due to *chibo*, this woman performs a function traditionally occupied by men in the *chibo*. From this place, she deals with the river and the police. All this is a means of subsistence (“putting food on the table”). In this case, the *chibo* seems to be a great war.

It is important to highlight, based on the meaning of metaphor considered here, that *chibo* is not actually a type of war. The earlier is not a subspecies of the latter. *Chibo* and war are different realities because the actions performed by each of them are different. The point is how the *chibo* is defined and experienced. It is partially structured as a war in this part of the script. This causes the passage under analysis to be considered a metaphor. It is this ability to understand something (the *chibo*) from the point of view of something else (the war) that determines the presence of the metaphor as an element that organizes experiences. In the words of Lakoff and Johnson (2009, p. 41): “the essence of a metaphor is to understand and experience something in terms of another.”<sup>2</sup>

Describing the *chibo* in warlike terms reveals how one thinks and acts in *chibo*. Therefore, the metaphor is not understood as a linguistic construction that is disconnected from life. Nor does this study resort to metaphors to either approach language as something poetic or to discuss whether or not there is a rhetorical strategy for building the plot of the film *Contrabando*. Based on the relation established between the perspectives of Lakoff & Johnson's (2009) and those of Bakhtin/Volochinov's (2017), metaphors are seen here as only possible in the language because they are inseparable from life. Culturally and historically established, they are significant material and concrete forms relative to an ideological field that sets up a structure for the consciousness and social life of the subjects.

In this sense, it is important to consider that, in our society, knowledge of the world includes the understanding that, in a war, many are the actions in which warriors engage or are involved. In the *chibo*, a war is many times fought in the waters, in the course of a river. This is especially found in the statement presented earlier, where the expression “faced” (originally, the Portuguese verb

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<sup>2</sup> “La esencia de la metáfora es entender y experimentar un tipo de cosa em términos de otra” (LAKOFF e JOHNSON (2009, p. 41).

“*encarava*”) – as in “faced the river and gendarmerie guards” – is used to refer to the actions of that warrior woman. That is another warlike word that makes up the warlike aspects of *chibo* and systematically contributes to building the metaphor that *chibo* is a war.

In this struggle, the human being and the river can be understood as adversaries. In the script, the point of view about this relationship is the human being who looks at the river, and defies it. It is worth noting that, in the needs of the *chibeira* to complete her crossing and reach the other side, the river is conceived as an entity that is seen, therefore, as a subject, as her opponent. In this way, the idea of confrontation encompasses, through the act of seeing, a certain position of the subject in relation to the river. The subject is in front of, looking at, with her face toward the river and, thus, can look at it fixedly.

The relationship between the lexicon “*encarar*” (in English, “to face”) and a person’s face is present in the etymology of the word, keeping certain similarities to the present day based on this origin. Cunha (2010), in his *Portuguese Language Ethical Dictionary*, notes that the word “*cara*” (face) interfered in the formation of the term “*encarar*”. The term “*cara*” occurred first in Latin in the 13th century, deriving from the Greek “*kára*”, subsequently forming verbs that mean confrontation, says the scholar (2010, p. 125).

From these etymological questions, it is relevant to draw attention to the physical dimension of the term in that it presupposes a certain disposition of the (physical) body. The act of “*encarar*” (to face) implies a physical body that is in a certain spatial position in the world. To look, to face something, you need to be in front of something. Not on the back, for example. Instead, in front of, facing, looking toward something. It can be said that being in the *chibo* is the same as facing the river (not on its side, not on its back, not oblique), and this position of standing before something (the river) is considered, in our culture, as something good, positive, worthy. To have courage is to face the opponent.

That said, it can be considered that such meanings around the lexicon “*encarar*” within the script seem to contain, not only the structural metaphor linked to war, but also a metaphor that, while still tied to the warlike universe, is also a spatialization metaphor. According to Lakoff and Johnson (2009), orientational metaphors (also called spatialization) offer a spatial dimension to a concept, as in the following examples: Being happy is being up, and sad is down; the past is to the back, and the future is forward, among others. These concepts (e.g., happy and sad, past and future) are organized into a series of statements that indicate, within the scope of certain cultures,

a way of constructing meanings from perceptions of the human body itself. In the words of the authors, “These spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have a body with certain characteristics and thus function as our physical environment”<sup>3</sup> (LAKOFF and JOHNSON, 2009, p. 50).

Facing something, facing a certain circumstance, does not necessarily mean absence of fear. Possibly not, since the dimension of imminent danger composes the scene of standing before a river, especially because it is the Uruguay River, with its deep waters and, sometimes, turbulent, and voluminous waters. Its laws are not predictable, and its strength is wild. Like existence, the river has its dimension of life and its dimension of death. In order to reach a riverbank, there is a risk. One must face it.

Its strength is such that, in the statement of section 1, the additive conjunction “and” links the river to gendarmerie, in a relation of equivalence (“faced the river and gendarmerie guards to put bread on the table”). These would be two opponents to be overcome with each activity. “Gendarmeria,” in Portuguese, is the control that acts in defense of Argentine territorial borders, i.e., they are military guards that protect the border against contraband. After facing the river and its wild nature in the form of currents, floods, and other dangers of the waters, the *chibeiros* would still have to pass by the military force to bring sustenance to their families.

In the following passage (passage 2), fear is explicitly present, settling the *chibo* on a terrain that goes from uncertain to frightening.

Passage 2:

1 FATHER GERALDO [...]: I see you and your brother running your *bolicho* with  
2 diligence. Pride of the neighborhood. I saw you all grow up, running around  
3 loose, making mischiefs while the late Tereza went up and down the river,  
4 taming the waters and her fear. She brought everything... potato chips,  
galleta,  
5 fresh salami and good wines from that side! (GOTTARDO, J. P. *et al.*, 2022,  
p.08).

The above passage occurs during the scene in which Father Geraldo and Helena continue the conversation about the late Tereza, who had not been named until then. In the context of story, Tereza raised her children with the support of the *chibo* and *bolicho*, as she sold goods brought from Argentina. After her death, the children followed her activities.

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<sup>3</sup> Esas orientaciones espaciales surgen del hecho de que tenemos cuerpos de un tipo determinado y funcionan en nuestro medio físico” (LAKOFF e JOHNSON, 2009, p. 50).

It is important to focus again on the adjunct “and” in the search for expansion of comprehensions over the context of *chibo*. For that purpose, this paper resorts to Deleuze’s (2010) reading on the employment of the word “and” in Godard’s work. From the analysis of the work of Jean-Luc Godard, a renowned filmmaker, screenwriter and film critic, the philosopher draws attention to the possibilities of meaning presented by “and” in certain narratives, as a connective that connects different terms. For Deleuze (2010), the way Godard lives, thinks and uses “and” reveals a totally new way of employing it and making it operate in the narrative.

The “and” is neither one nor the other, it is always between the two, is the border, there is always a border, a line of escape or flow, but which is not seen because it is the least imperceptible. And yet, it is on this line of escape that things happen, the becomings are created, the revolutions are sketched (DELEUZE, 2010, p. 62-63).

While recognizing the specificities of the narratives, it is indispensable to mention that, based on this power of the connection word indicated by Deleuze about Godard’s work, the sense of border can also be attributed to the utterances analyzed as the focus of this work. As being living on the border, to which the connective “and” applies very well, the *chibeira* Tereza does not live on the river “or” in the gendarmerie (“she faced the river and gendarmerie guards to put bread on the table”); instead, she lives between these two realities of the *chibo*. Similarly, she did not live only in the waters or only in fear – she lived between the waters and fear. As a being on the border, living “between” is part of what constitutes her.

The river, with its indomitable face, is also not reduced to this significance. In the narrative of the script, other forces refer to the river, as it was noticed here. The next item contains a discussion about how the river is covered with an emotional-volitive shade that understands it as a very old and welcoming entity. Its waters are deep, wild, ancient, and welcoming. They are part of the mysteries of the life of the earth, which revealed themselves to humans, but not entirely.

#### *4.2 The River as an Ancient Entity*

In its deep, dark, and indomitable waters, the Uruguay River can be understood, based on the script of the film *Contrabando*, as an ancient and wise entity that, from this place, has something to say. Much more sentient than human beings, this river not only knows much of the world, but it

can also narrate it. In its greatness, the river witnessed the lives of men who were in its waters and can tell what happened as if it were a great and vast library of humanity. For the river to tell these stories, the subjects must listen to it.

The film's narrative begins exactly around the river as an ancient, ancestral force that narrates the world. In order to better present this place of the river in the narrative, it is important to contextualize a character that brings in his voice the greatness of a river that knows a lot. In Scene 2 of the script, a grandfather and a grandson, on his back, interact next to the Uruguay River. The grandfather is sitting in deep stillness while watching the river. His grandson, close to his grandfather, is unhappy and frustrated that he is not able to fish. Then, in a relationship of engagement and search for one another, "the boy goes to the grandfather, who quickly realizes the approach and takes the hook with a prompt attitude. The grandfather skillfully sets the bait, returning the hook to the young boy" (GOTTARDO *et al.*, 2022, p. 01). After that, the grandson asks the grandfather to tell him a story, and thus the narrative develops from that, as if a memory being revealed. On the shores of the Uruguay River, Daniel tells him of his life in the *chibo*, stating at one of these moments, that he "was a contrabandist" (GOTTARDO *et al.*, 2022, p. 02). He tells his grandson his ventures and misfortunes, recognizing the ancestry of the River. He is an elder who recognizes the wisdom of an even longer-lived entity:

Passage 03:

1 A river that sings and enchants, tells  
2 very ancient stories; the souls that  
3 he houses emerge to the throat; The  
4 life, which gets bigger, and light of love and  
5 of affection; dreams, not secret...  
6 For they speak of my sin; They flood  
7 my retinas, and today I tell you, my  
8 grandson (GOTTARDO, J. P. *et al.*, 2022, p. 01).

The grandfather tells his story to his grandson, but takes a place of those who are aware of a force greater than his own. In the segment "A river that sings and enchants, tells very ancient stories," it is important to note that the waters assume an active position that is able to perform actions, such as singing and telling. This can be observed, at the linguistic level, by the use of active voice and not passive voice in the statement (water does not suffer or receive action, but performs the action). It is worth mentioning that the actions carried out by the water are somehow linked to the words because the act of singing and telling something requires the use of language.

If the waters are able to tell very ancient stories, this is due to their ancestry. This vision, present in the script statement, aligns with historical-cultural perspectives that consider the waters as knowledgeable and able to reveal truths. In *their Dictionary of Symbols*, Chevalier and Gheerbrant (2012) point out that water, in many cultures, was and is considered the symbol of very secret and unknown realities. The waters are “a means and a place of revelation” and poets can access it through sortilege, as the scholars say (2012, p. 21).

Daniel, the character who was with his grandson at the beginning of the film, progressively assumes, in many moments, his role as a poet. The reference to Scene 49 makes this position clear. Toward the end of the script, this scene shows Daniel sitting by the banks of the Uruguay River, holding an acoustic guitar, and singing the song *Alma do Rio [Soul of the River]*, while memories from experiences with Santiago, his childhood friend, cross in his mind. He remembers a crossing that he made with his friend, their last one. Santiago, next to Daniel, had died during one of the river crossings, after being hit by gunshot from gendarmerie guards while he was standing inside the *chalana* boat in the middle of the Uruguay River. The clear memory of the fact comes to him. The moment his friend fell into the water. The song he sings is a tribute to the friend who left without saying goodbye to him. Let's look at part of this song:

I did not compose the melody accurately, and  
for sure... They are notes of the wind in  
the agenda of the current. I did not write the  
poetry with genius metaphors... My  
verse is a flower that grows among the  
water hyacinth gardens.  
The length of the fishing line goes far beyond

of this hand; each capsized chalana, Each  
coastman without bread. My song has  
paths that cut through floods and droughts...  
My boat goes on alone singing the  
soul of the river.

My song has truths that are not  
ever silent; if time is a river without  
mercy, I go sailing without a wharf! If the  
waters have freedom, my chest dreams  
too much in the arms of a nostalgia that  
dove into Uruguay!

[...]

Do not seek between the lines in the singing of  
a fisherman; the rhymes are crystal clear  
Just like a kiss of love. Ghosts

and contrabands, the goodbye of someone who  
left, and dreaming coastman,  
Singing the soul of the river! (GOTTARDO, J. P. et al., 2022, p.26-27).

After drawing attention to the relationship between poet and river, the discussion around the characteristics of the river arises again, leading to an understanding of this river as part of a metaphor system, as seen below. Even though, as discussed above, the river has its active dimension (of uttering and singing – therefore performing actions), the river also has a passive dimension in its characteristics. The utterance “The souls that it shelters today emerge to the throat” contains the fact that its waters are the receptacle of many souls, of many lives that have perished there. Thus, the waters receive something and, therefore, do not accomplish something. However, such dimensions are not understood here as contradictory and without any relationship between them. This ambivalence of the waters, as they are simultaneously active and passive, can be associated to the male (yang) and female (yin) poles of the yin-yang respectively, so that their completeness and greatness are made by uniting these parts.

This dichotomous universe of waters can refer to the need to live between the two aspects of existence, in a balanced way, experiencing these aspects in the same thing, in the same reality (represented here by the waters). It is the search for the balance between movement and stillness, expression and silencing, the exterior and the interior.

When conducting an interdisciplinary methodology for children between 05 and 10 years old, Ricarte (2013) explored poetic issues related to water and its symbols. By analyzing artistic practices performed by children, the author observed the tendency to build their works based on oppositions, in a universe of polarities. In view of this, the Fine Arts researcher discussed the relationship between yin and yang, remembering that these two basic principles come to a large extent from the basic philosophy of Taoism. Some of the references of Yin and Yang concern the female and the male:

Yin is feminine energy, linked to softness, sensitivity, intuition, reception. It is the dark, deep, and mysterious side. Yang is the masculine energy. It relates to strength, impetus, and logical and rational thinking. It is associated with expansion movements. While yin is the mother, yang is the father, ruler, and warrior. Yin is water and yang is fire (RICARTE, 2013, p. 25).

From all this, it can be considered that the river, with its Yin and Yang dimension, gives and receives something. In this context, it is also possible to affirm that the river gains human



characteristics, of a person, insofar as, on the one hand, it offers something very particular of the human universe – the word and the singing, and, on the other hand, is capable of being a receptacle, of being a womb of many souls. Because such human characteristics are applied to something that is not human, it can be affirmed that personification in the script of *Contrabando* is a terrain built upon the uncertainty of life – the greatness of this force in the lives of women and men – especially those of the *chibo*.

Based on Lakoff and Johnson (2009), the perspective used in this work is that personification is one type of metaphor. For these authors, personification, being a metaphor, assumes that a certain thing qualifies and defines itself in terms of another and, within that, a certain thing is consequently understood as a person. Therefore, something that is not human is considered human. By recognizing that the examples of personification receive distinct shades because they are determined by the characteristics of the chosen objects, the authors affirm that this type of metaphor (one type of ontological metaphors) very specifically addresses how to think, and how to deal with and how to respond to a certain reality or object, based on our own human experience in the world.

Seeing the river as a very expressive and ancient person who keeps the secrets of life (from singing, narrative) and death (of receiving souls, of people who are no longer alive) can be a way of explaining the presence and actions of the waters in human life. This presence is progressively shaped as a body that expresses itself externally and, in addition, keeps something within itself, internally. Hence the possibility of existing in two dimensions, outward and inward, and, from this point, sharing existence with human beings, as if the river were one of them, but wiser and more extensive.

## Conclusions

A river that knows how to welcome people with its nourishing waters, which knows the mysteries of humanity, and manages to narrate them does not represent a submissive river that only offers life and positive experiences. He also knows death, possesses malevolent powers, is hungry, and is able to swallow subjects who risk crossing their waters. Therefore, it causes fear. Based on the script of the film *Contrabando*, these values traditionally considered positive and

negative are not understood as separated from each other. They are interconnected to constitute the ambivalence of this figure, which is so present in the daily lives of *chibeiros*.

As noted by Chevalier and Gheerbrant (2012, p. 16), water, as well as other expressions, can be perceived in two “strictly opposite [perspectives], although in no way irreducible, and this ambivalence lies on two levels”, so that it is “the source of life and the source of death, creative and destructive”. Perhaps this ambivalence of the river approaches the very ambivalence of the human being, which houses, in itself, several and different forces. In this case, the personification of the river happens to some extent because it seems similar to human beings from a certain axiological point of view, as they know and can use their light and their shadow, their female pole and their male pole, your power to give life and also to take it away, in their social relationships.

Metaphorical constructions, which include personification according to the theoretical perspective adopted here, are not understood as a strategy to construct meanings, and escape the weight of reality by doing this. How to deal with a river that, as a source of sustenance, hears human cries, welcomes the voices that share the pain and delights of life, but also generates destruction and death? With Calvino (1990), it can be considered that words, by composing the metaphors of everyday life, are not an escape from reality onto a dream or irrationality. Employing metaphorical processes to construct meanings might mean that subjects need to change the point of observation; and that they need, in Calvino’s words (1990, p. 19) “to consider the world from another perspective, another logic, other means of knowledge and control” which transcend, with a certain lightness, a weight of life that people sometimes witness so often.

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