

Transparency and spectacle in *O Olho da rua*, by Eliane Brum / *Transparência e espetáculo em O Olho da rua de, Eliane Brum*


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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the book *O Olho da Rua (The Eye of the Street)*, written in 2007 by Eliane Brum, based on a discussion about the chronicle-reports “Casa dos Velhos” and “Um país chamado Brasilândia”. Composed of texts made from reports carried out over a decade, the book written by the Brazilian writer born in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, moves between a chronicle, a report and an essay, exploring the experiences of real characters in several Brazilian regions. The author, together with photographers, recorded the dilemmas, pains, and discoveries of individuals linked to a specific space, while also reflecting over her own personal journey. The analysis proposed here seeks to engage in a dialog with theorists such as Antonio Candido, Walter Benjamin, Byung-Chul Han and Paula Sibilia, highlighting the convergence points between Brum's chronicle-report and the concepts of the “society of transparency” and the “spectacle of intimacy” by Han and Sibilia, respectively. The analysis focuses on the pressure due to constant exposure and the negative effects of the standardization of individual experiences. Brum's chronicle-reports highlight the importance of rethinking the limits of privacy and the ethics of representation in the era of the spectacle culture.

KEYWORDS: Literary criticism; Chronicle-report; Society of transparency; Spectacle of intimacy.

RESUMO

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Este artigo visa analisar a obra O Olho da Rua, (2017) de Eliane Brum, a partir de uma discussão sobre as crônicas-reportagem “Casa dos Velhos” e “Um país chamado Brasilândia”. Composto por textos provenientes de reportagens realizadas ao longo de uma década, o livro da escritora gaúcha transita entre a crônica, a reportagem e o ensaio, explorando as vivências de personagens reais em diversas regiões do Brasil. A autora, acompanhada de fotógrafos, registrou os dilemas, dores e descobertas de indivíduos ligados a um espaço específico, ao mesmo tempo em que também refletiu sobre sua própria jornada pessoal. A análise aqui proposta busca dialogar com teóricos como Antonio Candido, Walter Benjamin, Byung-Chul Han e Paula Sibília, destacando os pontos de convergência entre a crônica-reportagem de Brum e os conceitos de “sociedade da transparência” e de “espetáculo da intimidade”, de Han e Sibília, respectivamente. A análise focaliza a pressão pela exposição constante e os efeitos negativos da padronização das experiências individuais. As crônicas-reportagem de Brum ressaltam a importância de repensar os limites da privacidade e a ética da representação na era da cultura do espetáculo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Crônicas-reportagem; Crítica literária; Sociedade da transparência; Espectáculo da intimidade.

1 Introduction

Eliane Brum began her journalistic career at *Zero Hora* (Zero hour), after winning a university contest. In 1998, she was invited by Marcelo Rech to write a column of chronicles based on real events from everyday life. The column “A vida que ninguém vê” (The Life That Nobody Sees) gained recognition, especially after receiving the Esso Regional Sul de Jornalismo Award in 1999, marking her trajectory as a great chronicler in the national scene. Later, the chronicles were compiled in the book of the same name, awarded the 2007 Jabuti Prize for best reportage book. (Miranda, 2021, p, 16-17).

The book analyzed here, *O Olho da Rua (The Eye of the Street)*, 2007, manifests in a particular way the literary vein of the renowned reporter-chronicler. Her chronicles/reports combine narrative passages in the first and third person, composing a broad collection of journalistic texts produced in various regions of Brazil. In 2017, the second edition of the book was published, containing the ten extensive reports prepared throughout the first decade of the 21st century, plus a reflection by the author on her experience: “For each report there is an honest reflection, guts exposed about what I did and what I lived - as a reporter, as a person.” (Brum, 2017, p. 14).

Eliane Brum, a native of Rio Grande do Sul, describes herself as a reporter in search of the literature of real life, which highlights the artistic and literary aspect of her work and writing as a journalist. Currently based in the city of Altamira, in the State of Pará, Eliane chose this location as a base to explore the diverse scenarios of human authenticity, seeking inspiration to portray the life and essence of the riverside community of Northern Brazil. The author also calls herself a “listener” (escutadeira) as she travels the country to hear/see the voices of the population.

To Look/See means to smell, to touch different textures, to perceive gestures, hesitations, details, to grasp the other expressions of what we are. Half (maybe less) of a report is what is said, the other half is what is perceived. Looking is an act of silence. (Brum, 2006, p. 191).

Her work addresses the dilemmas, pains, and discoveries of the interviewees, while also reflecting on her own personal journey in light of these accounts. Her perspective can be seen as marked by the insightful eye of the chronicler, since, as pointed out by Antonio Candido:

Instead of offering an exalted scenario, in a flurry of adjectives and fiery sentences, it takes the mundane and shows in it a greatness, a beauty or an unsuspected singularity. It [the chronicle] is a friend of truth and poetry in their most direct forms and also in their most fantastic forms. (Candido, 2003, p. 14).

Therefore, Eliane Brum's text brings elements inherent to the essay, reportage, and chronicle, becoming a hybrid of these genres. In this sense, *The Eye of the Street* brings as its subtitle, not by chance, *in search of the literature of real life*, launching the reader into a place where the nuances between literature and reportage become blurred. As Candido characterizes the chronicle, Brum focuses on aspects of everyday life, capturing ordinary moments and transforming them into something extraordinary through her skillful writing. Her gaze is turned towards finding the literary in the ground floor of life, because, for the chronicler: “everything is life, everything is a reason for experience and reflection”. (Candido, 2003, p. 95).

In *Literature and Society*, Antonio Candido presents considerations about the relationship between the newspaper and the chronicle and states that “Everyone knows [...] the decisive influence of the newspaper on literature, creating new genres, such as the so-called chronicle” (Candido, 2006, p. 43), in this sense we observe that, inserted in the journalistic environment, Brum's work develops within the context of the chronicle, since the author does not limit herself to reporting facts, but also reflects on her own experiences and perceptions and is concerned with the literary aspect of reality. As we delve into the pages of her texts, we recognize the intimate and reflective atmosphere where the nuances of everyday life come to life through a carefully crafted language that reveals the real and what is worthy of being reported in a newspaper.

Therefore, considering that “the chronicle is a friend of truth and poetry and that it seeks to reveal the greatness, beauty and singularity in the seemingly insignificant details of everyday life”

(Candido, 2003, p. 14), it is noted that Brum - by exploring in her texts the dilemmas and discoveries of the interviewees and reflecting on her own personal journey - contributes to the literary dimension of her own writing: "I wanted to make a book to be read by anyone who likes stories so real that they seem invented" (Brum, 2017, p. 14).

Thus, in *The Eye of the Street*, considered here in its second edition, texts such as: "A floresta das parteiras" (The Forest of the Midwives), "A guerra do começo do mundo" (The War of the Beginning of the World), "A casa dos velhos" (The Old People's Home), "O homem estatística" (The Statistic Man), "O povo do meio" (The Middle People), "Expectativa de Vida: 20 Anos" (Life Expectancy: 20 Years) and "Um país chamado Brasilândia" (A Country Called Brasilândia) stand out.

The beginning of "The Forest of the Midwives" reveals Eliane's literary vein: "They were born from the humid womb of the Amazon, from the extreme north of Brazil, from the state still detached from the news called Amapá" (Brum, 2017, p. 19). "The War of the Beginning of the World" is followed by the essay "The Delight and Pain of Being a Reporter", a report whose beginning immediately transports us to the universe of the chronicle and confession: "It happened the way things don't usually happen. I was overwhelmed, on a closing night, feeling those chills that usually afflict reporters in withdrawal from travel" (Brum, 2017, p. 62). In "The Old People's Home", the author has a meticulous work with writing, revealing the feelings of the elderly with whom she lived during the preparation of the report. The opening of the text takes us to the universe of stories "so real that they seem invented", because we immediately feel in front of the beginning of a fiction, at the very moment when the characters are introduced. Such work with language drives the text, especially when we remember that what we have before us is the account of real stories. Here lies the strength of the chronicle as a participatory element of the report: "Suddenly they arrived there, in front of the iron gate of the old people's home. A lifetime squeezed into a carry-on bag" (Brum, 2017, p. 77). In this chronicle-report, the author apologizes for the "betrayal and cowardice" (Brum, 2017, p. 113) of having turned people's lives into a spectacle.

"The Statistic Man" addresses the condition of invisibility experienced by the individual in the face of the social structure insofar as he is reduced to a mere figure devoid of identity and intrinsic meaning. The account opens with the strength of the "ground floor" for which the chronicle has a sharp eye: "Hustene Alves became poor when he discovered that he could no longer buy

even stuffed cookies, condensed milk, soda [...]. Between him and the promises of television commercials, an abyss had been installed” (Brum, 2017, p. 117).

Next, we find “The Middle People”, in which the author discusses the dichotomy between material poverty and poverty of aspirations, exploring the complex interactions between these two aspects of the phenomenon of socioeconomic deprivation. “The Middle People” is a chronicle-report about other invisible people, individuals living in remote regions, inserted in the forest bosom that welcomes them, and who are often devoid of resources and capabilities to safeguard the environment from invasions perpetrated by land grabbers or even by state intervention itself. Lacking documentation and access to formal education, these inhabitants subsist in an improvised way, using adaptive strategies to face the adversities of everyday life.

Mothers facing the distressing prospect of the premature death of their children, forced to buy coffins on credit due to the awareness that their offspring will hardly surpass the twenty-year mark, are the subject of “Life Expectancy: 20 Years”, which, due to its relevance and impact, is followed by three subsequent essays: “The Survivor”, “Mothers Living with a Generation Doomed to Death” and “Testimonials”. At the same time, “Heart of Gold” stands out, showing gold miners whose trajectories unfold in incessant journeys in search of tiny amounts of gold. Men who, leaving behind their past lives, embark on a tireless search for wealth in the legendary Serra Pelada, a place that, despite having been glorified in cinematographic representations, reveals itself, in reality, as a scenario of desolation and despair: “we are used to little, we conform” (Brum, 2017, p. 217). These men live on the brink of death in the face of the violence that constantly plagues them: “I was surrounded by about 12 men armed with revolvers, rifles and shotguns, I had no chance, they forced me to show the rich gully” (Brum, 2017, p. 217). Other chronicles follow, such as: “A Country Called Brasilândia”, “The Enemy is Me” and “Life to the End”. Certain chronicle-reports in the work exemplify how literary narrative can be intertwined with critical theories, offering a deep and multifaceted look at Brazilian social reality. Thus, the engagement with the theoretical thought of Walter Benjamin, Antonio Candido, Fransesco Careri, and Byung-Chul Han manifests itself at different points throughout the reading. Although it is not intended to carry out an exhaustive critical analysis of the chronicles present in the work here, it is sought to identify, in certain passages, aspects of the narrated reality that can dialogue with the various theoretical perspectives chosen.

2 Eliane Brum's writing: between narrating and reporting

Antonio Candido, in *A Vida ao Rés-do-Chão (Life at Ground Level)*, 2003, argues that the chronicle does not fit among the major genres of literature since the chronicler does not achieve the same greatness given to novelists, playwrights, and poets. However, according to Candido, being minor is precisely the virtue of the genre. When analyzing the chronicles of Eliane Brum, one observes an intimate connection with the “rés-do-chão” (“ground level”), precisely because their content is rooted in everyday experience, an aspect that aligns with Candido's view when he states “Thank God - it would be appropriate to say, because being so, it [the chronicle] stays close to us” (Candido, 2003, p. 89).

This characteristic of being minor and being close to us is what, in the case of Eliane Brum's chronicles, brings depth and connection with the reader. The approach through the lens of reportage mixed with the literary not only allows the reader to dive into the text in an uncomplicated way, but also opens doors for reflection, since the chronicle-reports are based on real experiences. Skillfully written, Eliane Brum's chronicles do not provide a space for daydreams or escapism, as they portray genuine problems and dramas, lived by real people. Thus, it is interesting to think of the chronicle itself as a text that, “because it is so close to everyday life, acts as a break from the monumental and the emphasis” (Candido, 2003, p. 89). Here, Candido highlights the close and tangible nature of the genre.

The reality portrayed in Brum's chronicles is palpable, as it unfolds in the multiple Brazils that coexist within a scenario of injustices, hunger, and neglect, while at the same time presenting inspiring portraits of the struggle for life and survival, of successes and failures. It is this identification with the vivid and authentic narratives that attracts the reader, for it approaches a shared daily life: “We are not just listening to words, we are listening to all the complexity of this moment. I think that's what makes the difference. Our job is to really listen” (Brum, 2011, p. 310-311).

In this sense, the depth of Eliane Brum's chronicles is even more significant when we consider Davi Arrigucci Jr.'s reflections on the genre in *Fragmentos sobre a Crônica (Fragments on the Chronicle)*, 2001. According to the critic, the chronicle transcends the mere recounting of the everyday to become a form of expression that captures the essence of the human experience

in all its nuances and contradictions. By exploring the Brazilian diversity, Brum not only documents lived realities but also sheds light on aspects of the human condition. In Brum's chronicles, injustice, hunger, and social neglect intertwine with stories of hope, resistance, and overcoming, forming a complex and multifaceted panorama of Brazilian society. This exemplifies Arrigucci Jr.'s view of the chronicle as a space for reflection and interpretation of everyday life, where individual stories intertwine with broader social issues.

The work *The Eye of the Street*, composed of enduring chronicle-reports, did not initially aim for this longevity; initially written exclusively for publication in *Época* magazine, they were ready to be replaced by new reports the next day. However, upon being published in book form, these chronicles acquire a new dimension, assuming an expanded responsibility, as they are constantly in circulation and attracting an audience that seeks not only information but also a more refined and comprehensive form of literature. This process, as observed by Antonio Candido in *Life at Ground Level* highlights the importance of the chronicle as a significant literary genre, capable of providing a unique perspective on reality and captivating readers with its capacity for entertainment and reflection.

Thus, Eliane Brum's chronicle-reports fit into what Arrigucci Jr. (2001) observes to be the best aspect of the genre: transcending its initial form to become a literary expression rooted in human experience and the complexity of contemporary society. In the chronicle-report titled "The Forest of the Midwives", the protagonists are women who call themselves "child-catchers", conceiving this activity as waiting for the moment of birth, as articulated by themselves: "To catch a child is to wait for the time to be born" (Brum, 2017, p. 21). This chronicle-report portrays the singularities of the distant Brazil, of the vast waters of the North and the abundant rivers, as well as the resilient women who inhabit these regions. The text presents in detail stories of individuals who have internalized their mission through the transmission of knowledge over several maternal generations, from mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, perpetuating this tradition by teaching their daughters, granddaughters, and future generations.

Perched in boats or feeling their way along paths with their feet, there are the indigenous Dorica, the mixed-race Jovelina, and the quilombola Rossilda. They are guides on a journey through mysteries carried from generation to generation in words that are inscribed in the world without being written. They cross paths with Tereza and the indigenous midwives of the Oiapoque. All of

them united by the web of births documented by the marks on the palms of their hands. (Brum, 2017, p. 20)

In the chronicle, the learning process and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge are predominantly based on orality, given that there is no record in books, notebooks, or recordings. These are traditions that are perpetuated in a context where medical resources are distant. Thus, the dissemination of these traditions occurs through oral narratives, told along the rivers by women who are integrated with nature. The profession in question is exclusively feminine, with the midwife seen as a figure whose mission transcends the sphere of modernity and technology. According to the chronicler's perspective, the woman is summoned to “populate the world” in the night hours: “a midwife has no choice, she is called in the dead of night to populate the world” (Brum, 2017, p. 20). Thus, as expressed by Walter Benjamin in *Experience and Poverty* (1987, p. 114), it reflects the view that happiness lies not in the accumulation of wealth, but rather in the fulfillment of work and in one's own experience. Therefore, these midwives carry out their mission with satisfaction, traveling through the regions of northern Brazil and perpetuating this essential practice for the community.

In light of the above, it is pertinent to reflect on contemporaneity marked by the overwhelming presence of technology, which fills everyday life with digital books, state-of-the-art computers, and mobile devices with advanced transmission capabilities, so that a significant change is observed in the transmission of knowledge and experiences. As addressed by Walter Benjamin in *Experience and Poverty*, the impoverishment in the transmission of experiences points to a loss in the ability to communicate and transmit teachings through traditional narratives: “[...] a new form of misery has emerged with this monstrous development of technology, superimposed on man” (Benjamin, 1994, p.115).

In this context, “The Forest of the Midwives” emerges as an expression of resistance to this process of impoverishment of experience in a society that does not know how to wait.

The voice of Dorica, the oldest midwife in the forest, echoes in every woman when she declares: “It's time that makes the man, not the man that makes time. Birth is a mystery. And a child, we never tear out. We only receive” (Brum, 2017, p. 32).

The portrayed midwives persist in sharing their stories, explaining their craft, and passing on their knowledge to younger generations using oral language as a means of communication. This practice aligns with the scenario described by Benjamin, highlighting the uniqueness of these communities that preserve their traditions even in the face of technological advances and social changes.

However, it is crucial to recognize that these traditions are under constant threat. Upon being reached by modernity, these communities run the risk of having their customs, memories, and traditional experiences replaced or even destroyed: “The wheel falls apart and the midwives take the boat to sail the rivers of the Brazilian border. They go to answer a call that only they hear” (Brum, 2017, p. 32). This process of man being superimposed by technology, as discussed by Benjamin (1994), represents a challenge for the preservation of these traditions and for the continuity of the transmission of knowledge fundamental to the cultural identity of these communities. The theorist reflects on the loss of experience as something linked to the growing human inability to narrate, a process that unfolded gradually as society evolved and underwent transformations. Benjamin further suggests that this death of narrative capacity occurs as communicable experiences become extinct over time. In this sense, contemporary culture has come to be perceived as ephemeral and influenced by the accelerated pace of capitalism with its mercantilist logic, in which nothing seems to be fixed. This perspective highlights a great dilemma: for a genuine experience to occur, a certain degree of permanence is necessary, a time dedicated to its enjoyment, experience, and discovery. Benjamin (1994) associates this aspect with the idea of a *glass culture*, in which nothing is fixed. Furthermore, the author suggests that glass, due to its coldness and sobriety, aligns with the way current culture is organized: there is no space for the construction of meaningful and lasting experiences. However, born from the context of ephemerality, paradoxically, it is a chronicle that reminds us of the strength of oral traditions. Thus, it is Brum's modern written narration (on the ephemeral pages of newspapers and, later, consolidated in a book) that, in its own way, safeguards an ancient experience of oral narration.

3 Transparency, narration, and spectacle.

“House of the Old” is the result of a report conducted in 2001, in which the author, through interviews and direct interaction, explores the daily lives of elderly people living in a care institution that she chooses to call an asylum. Over a week of immersion in this environment, Brum gathers information about the experiences, emotions, and aspirations of just over a dozen elderly people. The text highlights their reality, many of whom were forced to leave their homes without even being able to say goodbye, inserted into “a society that only values youth” (Brum, 2017, p. 78). The narrative also addresses the anguish of the situation in which children, promising to return soon, never come back to get their parents, leaving them in constant waiting at the institution's gate, in a kind of expulsion from the world. As expressed by one of the residents, “If the world is not dangerous for everyone, for the elderly it becomes a minefield” (Brum, 2017, p. 83), the phrase reveals the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by this segment of the population.

The house is divided between the south zone and the north zone, that is, those who pay and those who do not pay. Among so many characters, what emerges is loneliness. Despite being surrounded by other residents and caregivers, the feeling of loneliness persists, highlighting the emotional disconnect that can arise even in the midst of a crowd. Silence, in this context, becomes not only the absence of noise but also a metaphor for the lack of connection and meaningful communication, further deepening the feeling of emotional isolation: “I know the life of this whole house, so I believe I am alone in the middle of the crowd. And I listen to the silence” (Brum, 2017, p. 86). It is a dense and detailed text about lives that are oblivious to the events outside. The report reveals the sadness of couples who, after 60 years of living together, find themselves separated in different pavilions. Old age, according to the chronicle, is “where finally hypocrisy has become unnecessary”, where pretense is disposable.

In the text, we have the residents of the institution inserted into a distinct reality, therefore oblivious to the noises and agitations of society, until, suddenly, they are portrayed by Brum in the report that publicly exposes their privacy to readers of various age groups. Regarding this case, the author herself, years later, would express remorse, even writing an essay in which she apologizes for the invasive approach.

Observing the exposure brought about by the dissemination of the stories in the newspaper, it is possible to draw a parallel with the reflections of Paula Sibilia in *O Show do Eu: A Intimidade como Espetáculo* (*The Show of the Self: Intimacy as Spectacle*), 2008, first edition,

where the transformation of intimacy over time is discussed. The author argues that, in past eras, intimacy could be lived without being exposed to the curiosities of others, while, nowadays, private life can be easily turned into a spectacle. In the chronicle “The House of the Old”, Brum publicly exposes the feelings, thoughts, dilemmas, illusions, and disillusion of elderly people who, in turn, would prefer to keep their intimacy protected, as she herself reports in her apology:

I took their voices to the outside world, but I exposed them. I treated them as fictional characters, not as real people. They heard themselves talking about erotic dreams, nighttime desires, confinement. And they had to live with that, running into each other the next day in the hallways of the house [...] embarrassed (Brum, 2017, p. 112).

In this case, the hybrid nature of the chronicle genre (between reality and fiction, between newspaper and book) - highlighted by the author herself - and its connection to a mass media outlet end up revealing the problem of the spectacle of intimacy. Everyday life, simple and devoid of glamour (so dear to chroniclers), here becomes the center of attention, and this has a profound impact on the lives of those who do not seek self-exposure. What was once considered private and reserved for the personal sphere is now publicly disseminated, without the consent or desire of the people involved. This phenomenon highlights the growing invasion of the boundaries of individual privacy by the public sphere, resulting in a violation of the autonomy and dignity of the portrayed individuals. The transformation of intimacy into a spectacle exposes individuals to an unfair and unnecessary vulnerability, undermining the authenticity and integrity of their personal experiences:

A Besides constituting a basic requirement for developing the self, the private environment was also the setting where intimacy took place. And it was precisely in these spaces where, at the height of bourgeois culture, narratives of the self were engendered. [...] but something seems to be changing in this terrain as well: the curiosity aroused by the everyday lives of people considered ordinary has increased greatly in recent years, making these personal accounts increasingly valued in certain areas of knowledge, which delve into them in search of precious treasures of meaning. (Sibilia, 2016, p. 86-87)

Paula Sibilia's quote points to a significant shift in the landscape of intimacy, given the growing appreciation of personal narratives in certain areas of knowledge, such as in the case of the chronicle-reports present in *The Eye of the Street*. The context that gives rise to the controversy surrounding “*The House of the Old*” suggests that, although the private environment has

traditionally been a refuge for intimate and personal expression, currently, the growing curiosity about the daily lives of others is leading to the public exposure of narratives that would previously be considered private. This transformation brings to light ethical and moral questions about the limits of privacy and the ethics of representation in the era of the growing culture of the spectacle. In this dialogue with *Sibilia*, it can be observed that the spectacle of the elderly's private lives is not voluntary nor provoked by themselves, but is an appropriation of their stories, for which the author herself apologizes years later.

When this chronicle-report stands out as one of Brum's most awarded works, it highlights the public's interest in private stories and personal testimonials. This recognition is notable even considering that the work was published during the 2000s, a period before the popularization of social media, when most reading was still done in printed newspapers and magazines. This suggests that even in a time when communication channels were more limited and the dissemination of information was slower, public engagement with intimate and personal narratives was already considerable. Despite the controversy, the award for the chronicle-report underscores the author's ability to capture the essence of human experiences and present them in a captivating and engaging manner.

On the other hand, the disappointment of the elderly people upon seeing their intimacy exposed shows a reaction to the contemporary culture of constant exposure, in which vulnerability is often seen as a weakness by those who experience it and, at the same time, can be used as currency by those who appropriate their narratives.

According to Byung-Chul Han (2017), in his work *The Transparency Society* (2012, first edition), contemporary society is characterized by an incessant search for positivity, where the exhibition of a perfect and problem-free image is valued. This view is reinforced with the context addressed in "The House of the Old", in which the elderly express discomfort with the publicity of their moments of sadness, preferring that their lives continue without the exposure of their vulnerabilities and difficulties.

Han's analysis of the transparency society highlights the social pressure to maintain a positive and optimistic appearance, especially on social media platforms and in the contemporary culture of constant exposure. This creates a scenario where people feel compelled to hide their weaknesses and display only an idealized version of themselves to the outside world. Han argues

that, unlike the disciplinary societies described by Foucault, where power was exercised through surveillance and repression, in today's society transparency predominates, which manifests itself mainly through social networks and the culture of public exposure. According to the author, in this transparent society, everyone is called to expose themselves, share, and actively participate, creating an illusion of permanent happiness and success:

Things become transparent when they eliminate all and any negativity from themselves, when they become shallow and flat, when they fit without any resistance into the shallow course of capital, communication, and information. Actions become transparent when they become operational, when they are subordinated to a process that can be calculated, governed, and controlled (...) (Han, 2017, p. 09-10).

Han warns of the negative effects of this regime of transparency, arguing that it generates constant pressure for performance and self-affirmative display, leading to exhaustion and loneliness. When we look at the central content of today's exhibitions, which is an exaggeratedly positive perspective on intimate life, we can understand why the account of vulnerabilities in "The House of the Old" attracted so much attention from the reading public. And it is interesting to note that, if the elderly knew about the exposure, they would probably make optimistic accounts of themselves, safeguarding the vulnerable and sad part of their experiences. Han further emphasizes that only positive accounts of oneself are inserted in a context of an incessant search for visibility and social validation, which can lead to the superficiality of human relationships and the loss of individuality. The author also discusses the danger of manipulation and control exercised through transparency, especially when considering the massive collection of personal data by large technology companies:

Ritual is an action based on externalized forms of expression, which have a de-individualizing, depersonalizing, and de-psychologizing effect. Those who participate in it are expressive, without, however, putting themselves in the spotlight or having to undress. But the society of intimacy is a psychologized, de-ritualized society; a society of confession, exposure, and a pornographic lack of distance (Han, 2017, p. 83).

The elderly individuals in Brum's chronicle-report seem to be situated in a place that is experiencing the transition from a society where individuality is confined to the private sphere to

one where individuality must be exposed, albeit in a disguised manner. Thus, they did not suspect that their intimate accounts would be subject to exposure, unaware of the current interest in their experiences. However, at the same time, they feel that if they had been aware of the exposure, they would have masked their pain, just as Han's so-called society of intimacy does when exposing their private lives on social media.

The chronicle-report “A Country Called Brasilândia” also fits into the context highlighted by Han. In this text, we access the details of the lives of some people who live in a place with more than 250 thousand inhabitants in the northern zone of São Paulo. The place is shrouded in violence, which, from time to time, turns its residents into “pop stars,” given that several films and series use its impoverished streets as locations. All collective life in Brasilândia takes place on the street, a manifestation where the public space includes the interior of the houses with the doors always open: “it's not rude to walk in without knocking” (Brum, 2017, p. 247). In Brasilândia, people always show the good side of life, problems don't interest anyone, and there's an effort to escape from the part of reality fueled by years of narratives about the miseries: “Where does the favela begin? And the person would point to a hundred meters ahead. I would walk there and ask the resident in front of the house. Is this the favela? It never was. The favela was - always - a hundred meters ahead” (Brum, 2017, p. 260).

The quote brings to light a reflection on the dynamics of representation of marginalized spaces, specifically in the context of communities. The chronicle-report reveals the inherent complexity in defining and geographically delimiting these places, evidencing the fluidity and lack of precise boundaries that often challenge attempts at conventional mapping. By highlighting the difficulty in identifying the beginning or the limits of the favelas, the author unveils a reality in which the very notion of a favela transcends cartographic definitions, encompassing socioeconomic, cultural, and historical aspects. This geographical ambiguity reflects not only an absence of clear physical boundaries, but also a multiplicity of meanings and experiences associated with these urban spaces. Furthermore, the quote suggests an underlying concern with the representation of communities in the public sphere, highlighting the perceived need by residents to preserve a positive image of their neighborhoods; no one lives in the favela, the favela is always “further over there.” Also, the emphasis of the population on spreading “good news” while the journalist is in the

location underscores the resistance of marginalized communities to oppose the stigmatization and narrative of criminalization and precariousness that has long prevailed.

Thus, Brum's text instigates a broader reflection on the complexities of urban geography and the daily struggles of marginalized communities for recognition, dignity, and fair representation amidst a social and media context often permeated by stereotypes and prejudices. However, the more recent media portrayal revealing only a positive side of the community has made this facet become the obligatory face shown by local residents to visitors. According to Han, "there is a homogenization of behaviors due to the need for transparency, as things are stripped of their singularity" (Han, 2017, p. 12).

The need for transparency, as the author highlights, leads to the loss of the uniqueness of things, resulting in a standardization of experiences and behaviors. This analysis by Han can be connected to the context described in the community, where the chronicler-reporter observes this homogeneous behavior of seeking apparent happiness, reflected in parties, weddings, and in a social organization that tends to postpone or omit bad news. In this sense, the residents of the community feel compelled to adopt a narrative of positivity and optimism, even in the face of the difficulties and challenges they face in their daily lives. And this positioning is established both as a counterpart to the reports made by a media that is only interested in the violent daily life of these locations and as an attempt to perpetuate the most recent media narratives.

This dynamic of conformity to an expectation of happiness and prosperity, despite the adversities, highlights how the pressure for transparency and the standardization of behaviors can influence social interactions and shape individual experiences. The pursuit of an idealized and homogeneous image, to the detriment of authentic expression and emotional diversity, reflects the complexity of contemporary social dynamics and the challenges faced by communities amidst a culture of constant exposure. What is observed in this reading (according to Brum's perspective) is that there is a search for an ideal reality, in the face of the chaos in which they live daily: "Each person's life only makes sense if it is shared with the neighbor's" and "This is an explicit rule of coexistence in the periphery: what each one does to earn a living is a private matter. Everything else is a public matter" (Brum, 2017, p. 250).

Paula Sibilia, also in *The Show of the Self: Intimacy as a Spectacle*, argues that, in today's society, intimacy has become a form of entertainment, a spectacle in which individuals constantly

present themselves to the public through social media, blogs, vlogs, and other digital platforms. The author discusses how this excessive exposure of private life can lead to the spectacularization of the self, where the search for attention and social validation often overrides the authenticity and genuineness of human experiences. Sibilía also examines the psychological and social consequences of this phenomenon, highlighting issues such as the loss of privacy, the superficiality of interpersonal relationships, and the pressure for constant performance.

Visibility and uninterrupted connection constitute two fundamental vectors for the ways of being and existing in the world that are most in tune with the rhythms, pleasures, and demands of the present, guiding the ways we relate to ourselves, to others, and to the world. [...] both the walls and the modesty that used to protect intimacy in a good part of these spaces - once considered personal - suffered the infiltration of the ubiquitous networks, which would soon allow the circulation of a growing flow of virtual presences and real gazes. (Sibilía, 2016, p. 21-23)

Sibilía further emphasizes that, in a context marked by the pressure for visibility and the construction of an idealized public image, intimacy has become a commodity to be displayed and consumed: “Everywhere, then, users, readers and viewers are called upon to participate, share, give their opinions and show themselves in a way considered 'proactive'” (Sibilía, 2016, p. 24). According to the author, the culture of constant exposure affects not only interpersonal relationships but also the perception of oneself and the construction of personal identity since autobiographical narratives have become a form of self-affirmation and the search for a coherent and meaningful identity in an increasingly fragmented and volatile world. Thus, the concept of the spectacle of intimacy can be applied to the social dynamics present in “A Country Called Brasilândia”. As mentioned earlier, the place became popular after being part of a Globo TV series. Before, “the village was seen as ugly, dirty and evil,” but after the exposure “it became pop” (Brum, 2017, p. 245), so that “some favelas also became a tourist attraction, but this postcard for foreigners to see, falsely tamed, is misleading” (Brum, 2017, p. 246).

In this sense, “A Country Called Brasilândia” can be related to the concepts discussed by Han (2014) and Sibilía (2016) about the search for transparency and the transformation of intimacy into a spectacle in contemporary society insofar as the chronicle-report describes the life of a marginalized community in which the residents seek to create one-sided narratives about themselves. From Han's analysis, we can observe how the community of Brasilândia, as presented

by Brum's writing, deals with the social pressure for constant exposure and conformity with a narrative of positivity. According to Brum's perspective, the residents, even amidst difficulties and adversities, are encouraged to maintain an idealized image of their lives, often hiding the difficulties faced in their daily lives. However, they are separated from the rest of São Paulo:

Living in Brasilândia as a foreigner, this is the vertigo that assails me with its optical illusion. I am so close, right there. And already in the first hours I feel, like everyone else, separated. It is a real feeling of exile that is expressed in the way they refer to an inaccessible city, but which at least on the official maps is the same. (Brum, 2017, p. 246)

However, the search for “real-life literature” and the mastery of “listening” allow Eliane Brum to capture moments of delicacy and sincerity, as she reports: “On the eve of her daughter's wedding, Célia cries. Her husband lost his job, became a drunkard, 'almost a beggar.' She is a manicurist, sells lingerie, creams, and natural remedies. 'I'm a jack-of-all-trades,' she clarifies. She can't send her husband away. Because she loves him” (Brum, 2017, p. 255). Although the residents try to create a utopian universe for themselves, Eliane captures the paradox of everyday life; amidst wedding celebrations, two realities meet: “It was with solemnity that Luiz and Adriana invited me to replace her as godmother. I accepted immediately, quite happy even. But then a sequence of doubts (and silly thoughts) crossed my mind: my partner, the godfather, was the manager of the drug den.” (Brum, 2017, 262).

In this regard, the dialogue with Sibilía's concept is reinforced, as there is an attempt to make it seem that life proceeds perfectly when, in truth, violence passes through the door daily, and this direct contact with the “drug den manager” guarantees dangerous connections that, at the same time, allow for survival in Brasilândia. Thus, Sibilía's idea about the spectacle of intimacy appears in the social dynamics presented in the chronicle, given that the residents are constantly involved in a culture of sharing and exposure. This can generate tension between the need to preserve one's own intimacy and the social pressure to actively participate in the spectacle of one's own experiences. In this scenario where people try to control what the journalist perceives, it is the chronicler's mastery of looking at the “ground level” that allows for a narrative that encompasses

the dualities inherent to life in any space of society, therefore, also present in Brasilândia, so often reduced to one-sided and static accounts.¹

The residents strive to show the most beautiful reality. When the chronicler-reporter speaks in the first person, she asks: “What was I? Someone who was learning what Dona Eugenia and Tuca have always known: that for those who live, it is not simple to determine their place in the world” (Brum, 2017, p. 263). To some extent, determining this place means creating narratives about oneself, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality. Determining one's place in the world, in the present described by Sibilía and Han, is closely related to the idea of performance, so observing becomes essential in the process of capturing something closer to the essence of these people, something that underlies the performance.

When a person speaks, they also speak with their body, they speak with their gaze, they speak with their gestures, they speak with a lot of things. Reality is complex. And when they stop speaking, they haven't stopped saying. They continue saying with their silence. They continue saying when they hesitate. They continue saying when they stutter. They continue saying when they can't speak. (Brum, 2017, p. 310-311)

Brum walked through many types of places in Brazil, unveiling stories she collected and wrote. She reminds us of Francesco Careri's walk, when she reflects that “walking, even if it is not the physical construction of a space, implies a transformation of the place and its meanings” (Careri, 2013, p. 51). It is an experience, an urban exploration. The practice of walking adopted by Brum is configured as an experience of exploration, allowing a deep immersion in the spaces she travels through. It reflects an experience of not only traveling physical distances, but also interacting with the environment, reinterpreting its meanings and transforming its nature. Each step taken, each interaction, contributes to the evolution and symbolic construction of the places visited. In Brasilândia, for example, the environments are meticulously investigated within their urban context, marked by the predominant presence of concrete structures.

¹ In this case, it is possible to state that Brasilândia is a victim of a certain "orientalism," in the sense of Edward Said, given that media reports about the place reinforce stereotypes, prejudices, and power hierarchies, perpetuating an exotic, homogenizing, and often negative view of local culture and lives. Such reports reflect political and economic domination and propagate the false idea of a cultural superiority of an urban elite over the so-called periphery.

And concrete here is both a concept, like the construction material used in this gray and almost treeless architecture [...] cultural incursions into the periphery are increasingly frequent. Some favelas have also become tourist attractions, but this postcard for foreigners to see, falsely tamed, is misleading. What happens in the periphery is so distant from the Brazil of the center that it seems like another geography, and the middle class continues to fear those who live there as if it were a horde of barbarians ready to descend the hill. In this sense, Brasilândia is as far from São Paulo as the Amazon. (Brum, 2017, p. 246)

When addressing the reality of Brasilândia, the chronicle-report highlights a peculiar experience in one of the neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city of São Paulo, a scenario often neglected and made invisible, except for occasions when it is portrayed on social media, where its representation is distorted and, more recently, romanticized: “The idea is to live a few days in this enclave of 250 thousand inhabitants in the northern zone of São Paulo, promoted to a movie setting” (Brum, 2017, p. 245). In this context, the people and the streets are often idealized and praised as part of a narrative that seeks to validate the importance of the inhabitants in the eyes of the bourgeois class and the State. However, this representation contrasts with the reality of neglect that permeates that social stratum. From the media that only highlighted the precarious part of Brasilândia, we move on to the media that adopts a posture of conformity by hiding the daily adversities and privileging only the positive aspects of local life. In a way, residents begin to feel compelled to reinforce this more recent image.

In *The Transparency Society*, Byung-Chul Han addresses the prevalence of positivity in contemporary culture. In Brum's chronicle, this is revealed through the experience of a pleasant week. During this period, no apparent incidents occur, and moments of happiness are highlighted, including the author acting as a wedding godmother for a couple, alongside a drug lord in the region. The seemingly optimistic representation contrasts with another underlying reality of deep difficulties and inequalities in the community, which Brum subtly reveals: “The village already emerged as a land of exile. More than sixty years ago, something happened at the intersection of Ipiranga and Avenida São João. Its residents were expelled from the center so that the anthological corner of the song 'Sampa,' by Caetano Veloso, could become wider” (Brum, 1997, p. 247), or also in: “The crisis of the role of man that confronts the West assumes its own features in the periphery. Every morning the streets of the village fill with fathers of families bent by unemployment, drinking in bars and on corners” (Brum, 2017, p. 248). This aspect acts as a critique of stereotypical narratives. The

subtlest layer of the chronicle draws attention to a complex reality, where violence, poverty, joy, and abundance coexist: “Eugênia repeats many times that in her house there is no lack of food, and right at breakfast, she piles slices of cheese and ham on my plate. It is crucial for her to show that, despite being poor, her house has plenty on the table” (Brum, 2017, p. 248).

Eliane Brum's text reveals the multifaceted portrait of a society that television has been committed to portraying with a unilateral image, initially one of violence, and more recently, one of joy and irreverence, as Sibilía states:

Both online and offline, a characteristic of the globalized society of the 21st century is that the capacity for creation tends to be captured by the tentacles of the market, which stoke these vital forces like never before and, at the same time, never cease to transform them into commodities. Thus, in a sense, their power of invention is deactivated, as creativity has become the luxury fuel of contemporary capitalism: its “protoplasm,” as the Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik would say. (Sibilía, 2016, p. 17).

In this way, Brum criticizes both sides, both the glamorization promoted by the media that converts communities into “luxury fuel” through series and films: “Cultural incursions into the periphery are increasingly frequent. Some favelas have also become tourist attractions, but this postcard for foreigners to see, falsely tamed, is misleading,” as well as the same media that feeds on local violence: “This report shows what has always been there, hidden by violence. Because this is also the tragedy of the favela: the corpses are exposed, what is hidden is the delicacy” (Brum, 2017, p. 246). Finally, in her writing, Brum goes after the delicacy, the “life at ground level,” bringing the best of Brazilian chronicles by making us aware of the everyday and sparing us from fixed, biased, and univocal portraits, even if the portrayed themselves seek to perpetuate them.

Final remarks

In summary, the analysis of the work *O Olho da Rua* (*The eye of the Street*), by Eliane Brum, reveals a multifaceted narrative, composed of chronicle-reportages and original essays that encompass diverse contexts of Brazil, from large metropolises to more remote regions. The work stands out for the quality of the text, which offers the reader a vivid representation of the complex layers that form reality, establishing the author as a top-notch chronicler. Among the explored

themes are: the mission of women in the oral transmission of knowledge, the paradox of the seemingly beautiful life and the adverse reality, as well as the spectacularization of private life. In “The House of the Elderly”, one of the most striking aspects is the reflection on intimacy and the exposure of private life in the era of the society of the spectacle. By narrating the stories of the elderly, Brum exposes their vulnerabilities and fragilities, generating a debate about the limits of journalistic ethics and the rights to individual privacy. The author questions the role of the journalist in portraying the reality of people in vulnerable situations, weighing the social responsibility of denouncing the ills of society against the respect for the intimacy of individuals.

By considering “A Country Called Brasilândia” alongside the reflections of authors such as Han and Sibilia, it is possible to glimpse a complex web of relationships between the narratives of everyday life, transparency in contemporary society, and the challenges faced by marginalized communities. Brasilândia emerges as a microcosm where various facets of human existence intertwine, from the search for a positive image on social media to the struggle for survival amidst the neglect of the State and society. Han and Sibilia warn us about the dangers of superficiality and excessive exposure in the age of transparency, while Antonio Candido and Walter Benjamin invite us to delve into the depths of human experiences, recognizing in them the essence of life and resistance. Thus, by critically analyzing these works together, we are confronted with the urgency of rethinking our conceptions of transparency, intimacy, and solidarity, and of seeking new ways of understanding our social reality with literature as support. The chronicle reveals itself as a tool of resistance to homogenizing discourses that elaborate false ideas about people and their lives. Even when the subject themselves are immersed in the society of the spectacle and seek to create a perfect image of themselves, the chronicler, with their gaze on the “ground level” (*rés-do-chão*) brings us back to ordinary life, reminding us of the matter we are all made of: complex, paradoxical, human.

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