



# Symbolic representations in dispute: The hate speech in Brazilian political advertising

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**Abstract**—This study aims to examine the authoritarian discourse embodied in political advertisements, focusing on the dissemination of hatred and attacks on opponents. We aim to understand the use of advertising as a resource that provides a space for the clash of imaginary formations and the effects of meaning that these clashes promote. This research is anchored in the theoretical proposal of materialist discourse analysis, focusing on the notions of imaginary formation (Pêcheux, 2014a and 2014b); (Orlandi, 2015) and authoritarian discourse (Orlandi, 2011), in addition to the concepts of culture industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985), imaginary superindustry (Bucci, 2021) and excited society (Türcke, 2010). The adopted methodology is qualitative and part of an interpretive and reflective process in which the corpus of analysis consists of discourses that circulate on social media through advertisements that construct controlled symbolic representations. The analyses reveal that a dispute scenario that undermines mediations has arisen in Brazil, establishing a process of the interdiction of the other in the constitution of subjectivities and resulting in symbolic violence of the order of the imaginary.

**Keywords**— Authoritative speech, Effects of meaning, Imaginary formation, Subjectivity, Symbolic violence.



## I. INTRODUCTION

This study examines a theme that has arisen from clippings of ongoing research. Within the scope of this article, we stop understanding the materialization of authoritarian discourse and the imaginary formations that emerge from social practices and that act in the social representation as attributed to the self and the other, instituting him as an enemy. Thus, our research interest is to analyse how the image of the other is discursively constituted in political advertising and the discourses it evokes.

This study is part of the research in the field of materialist discourse analysis of the French slope, a theoretical proposal that seeks to cross the opacity of language, evidencing the functioning of the discursive process. In other words, the meanings that emanate from a given discourse may shift and be resignified over time or even based on the different sociohistorical-ideological situations

in which they may circulate. Using this theory, we seek to understand the meanings produced by the sociohistorically ideologically challenged subject.

Hate speech, the object of this study, establishes the clash of imaginary formations - representations of the self and the other - that establishes a true ideological war in the media. However, the subject uses artifices to try to erase the contradictions that integrate him or her. In this place of dispute, instability and fear allow certain meanings to circulate and enable the predominance of the subject's passionate state. As a starting point for the proposed reflections, we assume that the strategy used to compose propaganda perpetuates the hate speech in which, through authoritarian speech, one seeks to control the symbolic representation of the other.

## II. SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS IN DISCOURSE

Within the scope of discursive studies, the sociohistorically ideologically questioned subject needs to be examined in the position that he or she occupies to say something. In addition, to say something, the subject is free and submissive at the same time: he or she can say anything as long as he or she submits him- or herself - to the language to know it, hence subjection (Orlandi, 2015). The subjection belongs to the unconscious and produces different meanings according to the different subjective positions established in the instance of enunciation. The subject's appropriation of language is social, historical and ideological. Interpellated by a given ideology, the subject has the impression of the transparency of the discourse, creating the illusion of being the origin of what he or she says, but he or she forgets that the opacity of language and the way in which something that is said are marked by ideology.

This is, moreover, the characteristic effect of ideology – to impose (without seeming to do so, since it is a matter of “evidence”) the evidence as evidence, which we cannot fail to *recognize* and in the face of which, inevitably and naturally, we exclaim (in aloud, or in the “silence of conscience”): “it is evident! That is exactly it! It is true” (Althusser, 1985, p. 95).

The discursive processes do not have their origin in the subject but take place in the subject since the subject, as a being of discourse, is ideological by nature. This contradiction is specific to the subject and to what is called subjection because “the subject is constituted by the 'forgetfulness' of what determines it” (Pêcheux, 2014b, p. 150). Ideological subjection means that “each one is *led*, without realizing it, and with the impression of exercising their free will, to *occupy their place* in one or the other of the two social classes antagonistic to the mode of production” (Pêcheux), 2014a, p. 162).

Discourse does not necessarily involve the transmission of information between A and B but includes the effects of meanings promoted from certain places in the structure of a social formation. These places are represented in the discursive processes in which they are brought into play. Thus, in every discursive process, there are imaginary formations that establish the place that A and B each attribute to themselves and to the other, building the image they make of the place they occupy and the place of the other.

According to Orlandi (2015), the forms of speech functioning are inscribed in imaginary formations. These involve the game of images that are constructed of the self

and the other in a given interaction situation and evoke a given discursive instance. Thus, what functions in the discourse are not the physical subjects A and B and the place they occupy in society, “but their images that result from projections” (Orlandi, 2015, p. 38). Such projections allow them to move from situation (place) to position. The latter interests us because the position that the subject assumes to say signifies in the discourse and is related to the sociohistorical context in which he or she is situated and to the memory evoked through the saying.

Discursive memory is related to the interdiscursive, that is, to what is said before, the already-said. From this discursive memory, over which one has no control, the senses are constructed and establish the illusion that the subject of discourse is the origin of what is said. For Pêcheux (1999, p. 56), memory “is necessarily a mobile space of divisions, disjunctions, displacements and retakes, conflicts, regularization... A space of unfoldings, replicas, polemics and counterdiscourses”. This memory acts in the construction of meaning and constitutes the saying from certain conditions of production.

The production conditions lead to the construction of a discourse, considering the material (the language), the institutional and the imaginary mechanism that cross it. This mechanism produces images of the subjects, as well as the object of discourse, within a sociohistorical context. According to Pêcheux (2014a, p.76),

A speech is always pronounced based on given *production conditions*: for example, the deputy belongs to a political party that participates in the government or to an opposition party; is the spokesperson for such or such a group that represents such or such an interest, or is 'isolated', etc. It is therefore, for better or for worse, situated within the *relationship of forces* existing between the antagonistic elements of a given political field. What he says, what he announces, promises or denounces does not have the same status according to the place he occupies; the same statement can be a fearsome weapon or a ridiculous comedy depending on the position of the speaker and what he represents in relation to what he says. A speech can be a direct political act or an empty gesture to 'give back', which is another form of political action. (Italics by the author)

The images that are put in relation to discursive production do not refer to something given or “divine” but are based on and constructed from the way in which social relations are inscribed in history and governed by relations of power. Thus, the image we have of a president, for

example, is inscribed in the confrontation between the symbolic and the political, in which discourses and institutions are linked by processes. When analysing a given discourse, we seek to explain the way in which the meanings are constructed, and for this, it is necessary to “cross the imaginary that conditions the subjects in their discursivities” (Orlandi, 2015, p. 40).

One of the ways in which the image of the other can be built is through propaganda, which, according to Pêcheux (2015, p. 73-74), “is, at least since Napoleon, a strategic business, an indispensable element in the continuation of military operations against the external enemy” and “is done with images and words, feelings, ideas and gestures”. Conceived in this way, propaganda becomes a kind of tool among those who want to propagate their ideals and points of view.

Through the construction of the image of the other, the subject is also constructed simultaneously. If the image of the subject that comes to him- or herself occurs in the constitution of the other, it is necessary to analyse how the senses are constructed when the subject chooses to construct a negative image of the other and how this, simultaneously, will constitute the image of him- or herself. This is in addition to understanding how to construct the other, which becomes a way of materializing the authoritarian discourse.

Orlandi (2011, p. 155) defines authoritarian discourse as a type of discourse in which “the relationship with the reference is exclusively determined by the speaker: the truth is imposed”. In the relationship between paraphrase and polysemy, that is, the same and the different, authoritarian discourse is characterized by production that tends to paraphrase. Thus, it is intended to maintain a single meaning that is maintained in the repetition of the same, albeit in different ways.

Between paraphrase and polysemy, certain discourses circulate in different ways, as if they conveyed new ideas, but tend to repeat concepts that are the same as those that have already been said. In this way, we can think about the advertisements that circulate in the media and that seek to cause sensations in the subject. To this end, it is necessary to turn to other studies, and based on the hypothesis initially raised, we opted for critical theory and its ramifications to understand the relationship between media, symbolic representation and production of certain discourses, a path that we will follow in the present study.

### III. CULTURE INDUSTRY

Critical theory, one of the theories of the Frankfurt School, seeks to evaluate the social behaviour of mass society.

Capitalism, through technological advancement, particularly the mass media, induces frivolous consumption and entertainment in the population (Silva, 2017). The term culture industry was chosen to explain the alienation of consumer society and culture as the purpose of making a profit. According to Silva (2017), for Frankfurtians, the concept of culture differs from that assigned by anthropologists. The meaning adopted by them follows the German tradition of *Kultur*, encompassing the arts, philosophy, literature and music. Thus, the culture industry extends the relationship between culture, which is associated with the spiritual dimension, and civilization, which refers to the material world.

Before the concept of the culture industry is discussed, it is necessary to note that Adorno and Horkheimer (1985) understand the notion of “enlightenment” as totalitarian. This type of regime consists of an “excess of rationalization” in which society becomes a prisoner of technical reason. Art is seen through the prism of profit making and ideological manipulation. Therefore, it is no longer interpreted as a synonym for freedom but a tool of social control.

What men want to learn from nature is how to use it to completely dominate it and men. Nothing else matters. Without the slightest regard for itself, the Enlightenment with its cauterization eliminated the last remnant of its own self-consciousness. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 18).

With the advent of industrialization in the 20th century, culture began to be reproduced en masse. Art no longer needs to present itself as such, because it is nothing more than a business and “[...] they use it as an ideology to legitimize the garbage they purposely produce”. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 100). The concept of the culture industry shows how there is a direct relationship among cultural control, the media and political power. The media creates “ideal” values and models that cannot be achieved, and happiness is contemplated within this standard. The attempt to fill this void encourages the creation of a consumer society and the maintenance of the *status quo* in which “the consumer becomes the ideology of the entertainment industry, from whose institutions it cannot escape. [...] Everything has value only insofar as it can be exchanged, not insofar as it is something in itself” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 131).

According to the authors, the spectator addressed by the culture industry does not need to have his or her own thought, and the product created by it prescribes every reaction through signs. What matters is having fun and complying with what is imposed. However, having fun becomes synonymous with not thinking, and the suffering

that the industry itself seeks to repeat without ceasing is internalized by the subject, who enters a vicious cycle of seeking an escape, not from reality, "but from the idea of resistance that this reality it still allows to subsist" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 119).

Therefore, in this new sociohistorical context, thought is no longer reflective of itself, "and today machinery mutilates men even when it feeds them" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 42). People have become mere generic beings, isolated by the collectivity governed by force and are incapable of hearing the immediate with their own ears, of touching the untouched with their own hands.

From this perspective, the subject becomes an individual who, produced in mass, exists as standardized products forged in series by the culture industry. This manufactures subjectivities that return to repetition and to the same, establishing a "false identity of the universal and the particular" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985). Following the logic of the factory, the culture industry is characterized by mechanicity, instrumentalization and technique and, for that, it makes use of the dilution of the singularity in the universal, being able to penetrate and reach the subjects and, "for the consumer, there is nothing more to classify that has not been anticipated in the schematism of production" (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1985, p. 103).

The culture industry, as a tool created by power relations, reproduces the ideology of the ruling class, and its function is related to the maintenance of the capitalist order and the powers that be. There is an alliance between the media and political power in which the scenario is one of perpetuating the ideology of attachment to order, which allows us to perceive how the figure of a hero saviour of the homeland is constructed as a necessity to restore the order that the system itself, capitalism, (re)produces as instability.

Enlightenment, constituted as the technical reason that tries to dominate nature through knowledge, seeks to erase the myths that, in some way, give meaning to the things of the world. However, the mythical that one wants to annul in nature begins to shine in the media, where, through techniques, politicians, merchandise, etc., they gain an aura of religiosity and become images of idolatry.

Thinking about the culture industry today not only involves what is considered high art, such as cinema, literature and music but also the very way in which the media create and circulate advertising. In the 1940s, Adorno and Horkheimer already envisioned advertising as a form of communication and interaction in society that crosses social relations, which is to say that it materializes as a social presence.

According to Christoph Türcke (2010, p. 24), "more than ever, advertising pursues a single banal goal: to make goods speak an irresistible 'buy me'". The commodity is currently defined as something more than a palpable object and is based mainly on the value that is constructed from the social perspective. In a media conjuncture that constantly seeks to show itself more and more, "propaganda of oneself becomes an imperative of self-preservation" (Türcke, 2010, p. 37).

Advertising creates the need, the desire that something needs to be filled, and this something is guided by the values built and disseminated by the culture industry, standardizing behaviours and generating identification from a will to truth that establishes and maintains the social coercion and relationships of dominant power.

In a conjuncture where identification over reason prevails, "sensations are on the point of becoming the orientation marks and pulse beats of social life as a whole" (Türcke, 2010, p. 14). According to the author, "only what causes a sensation is perceived", but who will realize this is the propaganda that today "penetrates directly and legally into a part of the public sphere, to which access was officially prohibited" (Türcke, 2010, p. 23).

Thus, other areas, such as the news, to convey and enforce its discourse, resort to infotainment, without which it would probably not receive so much importance. That is, factual information needs an appearance that makes it prevail over the others, and advertising is the place that will best meet the needs of causing a sensation.

The public sphere absorbed and put into circulation new products, materialized in discourses. If something was practically monopolized by political and economic discourses, it now counts for fiction: cinema, TV, digital media. In this space, factual reports from journalism or the government have lost prominence. According to Empoli (2019, p. 24), "in practice, for the supporters of the populists, the truth of the facts, taken one by one, does not count. What is true is the message as a whole, which corresponds to your feelings and sensations".

Now, a sensation needs to be caused to garner attention, and politics also becomes an aesthetic experience, with sensitive experiences in which emotions and rational discourses vie for their place. Along the same lines of thought, Bucci (2021, p. 67) will say that today "without disguises, sensations, feelings and emotions take over the public sphere, which is entangled by other languages, as if it were, in short, a plot of fiction, and being represented as such in the multiple media".

A thorough understanding of this concepts exists in the superindustry of the imaginary because, according to Bucci (2021, p. 70), it "*manufactures* value in the



Imaginary and, ultimately, *industrializes* the entire order of the Imaginary". Entertainment serves the industry and has an impulsive and instinctive aesthetic. The communication of *the live image instance* begins to provide "the moral parameters for mass judgments", and entertainment fulfils its function: "it provides the identifications that lead to hatred or idolatry and manufactures the aesthetic *standards* of the 'sharing of the sensible'" (Bucci, 2021, p. 71).

Just as merchandise is advertised, promising values and pleasures and only being chosen when it stands out, something similar happens with political figures. Being "there", being present becomes the way to arouse sensation, supporting representations, values and ideas, and generating identifications.

On the other hand, "where one emits, one also receives" and, if the proposition "to be is to be perceived" becomes the orientation of social relations, the statement that "to be is to perceive" is also valid, i.e., "those who do not have sensations is not" (Türcke, 2010, p. 65). In a society where the media is massive, where presence no longer needs a physical body to anchor itself, i.e., it is diffused, this also affects the subject's ability to perceive. From audiovisual shocks, the stimuli gush out in a torrent of excitement.

This will lead the subject to increasingly search for stimuli that fill their emptiness and give the sensation of existence that, *in the instance of the live image*, will fall on the image, which circulates in surreal quantity and speed. The search for imagery stimulus is stimulated by a feeling of something being missing, of not being, which leads to an addiction and a compulsion to the image.

The senses are dulled by the large amount of audiovisual stimuli, which creates more need for other even stronger stimuli, becoming a vicious cycle. The way in which the media equipment is technically manipulated will produce an increasing sensation of the need for new stimuli, and perception is lost in the whirlwind of audiovisual shocks. Now, in the contemporary condition of society in which there is an acceleration of capitalism, the image becomes an addictive commodity and produces the illusion of meaning that fills the void of the subject who sees him- or herself as one, complete and conscious.

According to Bucci (2021), the act of looking has become an act of language, and the image, like language, is not transparent. From the 20th century onwards, there was a certain regression on what an image is, and it became a commodity, with transparency being a manufactured "illusion". In this media space, images are transparent to be able to signify. The gaze began to play an active role "in the fabrication of image meanings. The eyes of the 'beholders' exert a constitutive force for fixing the meaning of each figure" (Bucci, 2021, p. 240).

In the society of capital, image not only refers to aesthetic configurations, such as works of art, paintings, sculptures, etc., but also gains a new meaning and reputation. We are talking about positive image, negative image and the expression "in the eyes of", which, according to Bucci (2021), is equivalent to saying, "in the judgment of". In the age of imagery, the gaze defines the criterion of truth and imprints "all the moralism we are capable of upon the image", with the image transformed into a vehicle for both material and ethical existence about something, becoming both a process and a product.

The image attracts attention and condenses meanings into a representation that tries to erase the contradictions and historicity that allowed it to reach a certain meaning. Thus, "images are the opposite of rational argumentation. There would be a potential in them to derail the mediations that enable dialogued understanding between people" (Bucci, 2021, p. 238).

In verbal language, the argumentation established by reason may (or may not) occur from the discursive strategies that the subject mobilizes to construct meanings – something similar occurs with images. These, by their very nature, tend to arouse feelings and cause emotions, and the manipulation of their elements can generate hate speech in an attempt to control the representation of the other. We will analyse these attempts at control over the other next.

#### IV. THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE CLASH OF IMAGINARY FORMATIONS

The year was 2022, the year of the presidential elections, which corresponds to the 4th year of the government of Jair Bolsonaro. The period 2019-2022 was predominantly marked by the authoritarian discourse of the former president that attacked minorities<sup>1</sup>, by negationist discourse<sup>2</sup> and fake news<sup>3</sup> as a way to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, and by the construction of an other that threatened the government and democracy.

The constructed vision of the other is a kind of propaganda of oneself. In political discourse, there is an exaltation of the image of the self and a negative construction of the image of the other. Self-propaganda generally generates an anti-propaganda of the other, especially when the other is a

<sup>1</sup><https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2022/07/15/bolsonaro-defende-falas-transfobicas-minorias-tem-que-se-adequar.htm>

<sup>2</sup><https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2019/03/nao-houve-ditadura-teve-uns-probleminhas-diz-bolsonaro-sobre-regime-militar-no-pais.shtml>

<sup>3</sup><https://noticias.uol.com.br/confere/ultimas-noticias/2021/10/20/fake-news-cpi-da-covid-presidente-jair-bolsonaro-filhos.htm>

political opponent. In the struggle, it seeks to raise the representations of the masses. In this sense, the post below, taken from Bolsonaro's Twitter, conveys his ideas about the opposition and tries to build upon values that are considered bad from the perspective of the former president and his supporters.



Fig.1: Twitter post

Through this post, Bolsonaro defends the point of view that the opposition, until then, was not Christian (**now the Our Father prays**) and that the PT, which assumed the red flag as a symbol of struggle, has changed its approach ([now] **uses flags of Brazil at its events**). In both the 2018 and 2022 elections, the former president and his supporters shared posts with the words “My flag will never be red”/“The Brazilian flag will never be red”/“My flag is green and yellow”, paraphrases that resume the already-said that was built by combining the PT with communism.

Still in his words, Bolsonaro says that [for them, the PT members] “all that’s left is to stop advocating abortion, drugs, gender ideology, extrication, media/internet control, cell phone thieves, funding of dictatorships and cabulous dialogs.” Through these sayings, we seek to establish a game of imaginary formation in dispute in an attempt to construct the other as the different, the one who holds values and ideals that differ from their own. Building an anti-propaganda of the other is a way of controlling and legitimizing a positive advertisement of oneself.

The representation of the self seeks to exalt the virtues of the speaker in opposition to the negative representation associated with the political opponent. It is a discursive game in which the other is presented as a threat to an existing social order from the point of view of the speaker. This order is inscribed in social practices that seek the precepts of Christianity. The opponent, in the speech disseminated by Bolsonaro, is not a defender of the homeland and the family; he does not fear God; in contrast, he defends the liberation of drugs and abortion.

The former president’s speech was not only propagated on social media and in official government advertisements but also gained materiality outside the digital space. Several billboards conveyed support for Bolsonaro and, in 2022,

took on a dimension that inflamed social divisions in the religious, family, media, among other spheres of society. The same values that were constructed and put into circulation previously supported figures that had the title “You decide”, as reproduced in the Fig. below:



Fig.2: Billboard on building<sup>4</sup>

Explicitly, there are two opposing positions in which one retakes ideals conveyed by the Bolsonaro administration’s motto “God, homeland, family” and the other, the opposition, which is highlighted as totally against what a “good citizen” defends.

What has already been said that the previous government propagated is recovered here and is intended to place the subject at a crossroads where he or she has two paths to choose: either support democracy (represented by green and yellow) or support dictatorship (represented by red). At the end of the Fig., we can still observe the date of September 7th and the use of the imperative in the prayer “**Participate in the bicentennial celebrations!**”

An event that until then was considered to be for everyone is thus appropriated by a partisan who maintains the authoritarian discourse and says that 1964, the year in which the military regime was established in Brazil, was a good moment.<sup>5</sup> However, this statement is guided not by facts or proven events but by what pleases and meets its values. The opposition, on the other hand, represents the evil that can no longer rise to power and therefore needs to be contained.

The largest opposition to the Bolsonaro government in the 2022 elections was the PT, but the figure displayed on the billboard is not the star (symbol of the Workers’ Party) but the hammer and sickle, which are known as symbols of

<sup>4</sup><https://www.redebrasilatual.com.br/politica/advogados-denunciam-tse-outdoors-mentiras-contralula/>

<sup>5</sup><https://noticias.uol.com.br/politica/ultimas-noticias/2022/09/07/desfile-7-de-setembro-bolsonaro-brasilia.htm>

communism and, in Brazil, represent the Pcdob (Partido Comunista do Brasil – a party that assumes a centre-left ideological position, leaning to the left). The way in which the sayings are opposed and the use of background colours, also the result of a sociohistorical and ideological construction, constitute a unity of meaning that seeks to reinforce a propaganda of the self (life, freedom, order and progress) and an anti-propaganda of the other (abortion, censorship, drug trafficking). In this case, there is a lack of knowledge of the symbols used by the country's political parties and of the ideology they propagate.

The Fig., in the way it is shaped and the way it is propagated, condenses and tries to erase contradictions that escape reflective thought. This is how, for example, in the same column that presents words of Christian **life** and **values**, there is also the saying **armed people**. This is possible, in the position that supporters of the former president take to say, because of the symbolic representation that they build for themselves of what it is to be a good citizen and what it is to be a Christian.

We understand that the utterances shown on the billboard are polysemic and that they will signify from the place that the subject occupies to say. Thus, what we understand as authoritarian discourse is the attempt to impose a single truth that seeks to establish a single meaning for each utterance, as well as to control the symbolic representation of the other. By intending to impose a truth, authoritarian discourse favours the perpetuation of hate speech through the symbolic deconstruction of the other.

Importantly, the memory brought in this discourse, whether by the construction that opposes good and evil and by the slogan “God, homeland, family” or by combating the idea that communism hovers over Brazilian society, recovers the meanings spread by the “Action Brazilian Integralist” (AIB) of the 1930s. This movement, which was led by Plínio Salgado and based on Christian moralism with fascist traits, has as its initial mark the Doctrinal Manifesto of 1932. At that time, Brazil was going through a period of instability, and politicians, such as Salgado, exploited the insecurity in the political and social scenario to defend the idea of a hierarchy that would maintain peace and order. Interestingly, the production conditions of the discourses that were disseminated at the time and that legitimized certain attitudes are similar to those in the Brazil of 2022.

The stimulus needs to be felt repeatedly, making society increasingly excited by this superindustry of the imaginary that knew how to manufacture the subject's desires and then deliver the product that will provide them with a feeling of completeness. This completeness permeates the

deconstruction of the other through the fabrication of new representations for him or her.

The passionate state makes the subject accept certain truths as unique, and hate has a very strong appeal. This state is usually reactive or paralyzing but not reflexive. The image has an aura that transcends what is shown and, by intending to impose a single and true meaning on the other, a control of symbolic representations is utilized, undermining the mediation necessary for a dialogue based on otherness and essential to a democratic State.

Propaganda is a tool used by those who want to convince the other of an idea, such as a candidate for whom to vote. Just as the former president's supporters made billboards that sought to build a representation of the opposition as something bad, those who disagreed with the past administration also produced propaganda against Bolsonaro, as we can see in the Fig. below.



Fig.3: Billboard against the former president<sup>6</sup>

The billboard features the Fig. of the former president in black and white with an **X** on his face. The background is black and bears the words **Bolsonaro, and his government is genocidal**. As a strategic resource, the words *Seu Governo é* are written in a smaller font, so, when viewed from a certain distance, the billboard may appear to read only **Bolsonaro genocidal**. The adjective came to be used, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the ineffectiveness of the government at the time in proposing appropriate measures. In contrast, Bolsonaro's administration denied the pandemic, spread several pieces of fake news about the virus, and delayed the purchase of vaccines, in addition to the former president's own speech that said: “I am not a gravedigger”, “you will become an alligator” (referring to the people who defended the vaccine), “it's just a little flu” and “Brazil cannot stop”.

However, the Fig. also reads **Almost 300 thousand deaths from COVID-19 and Life, bread, vaccine and**

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.blogmauriliojunior.com.br/2021/03/31/outdoors-contra-bolsonaro-e-moro-se-espalham-na-paraiba/>



**education!** The first utterance provides the context of production of this saying, that is, the pandemic that Brazil was undergoing and specifically seeks to blame the Bolsonaro government for the high number of lives lost, which could have been avoided. To understand the second statement, it is necessary to remember that it is related to the demonstrations that occurred in the national territory through acts that claimed priority agendas (life, hunger, health and education) and defended the “Fora Bolsonaro”. The acts originated from the student movement, spreading to several cities and states of the country and gaining social networks.

The billboard shown in Fig. 3 evokes a discursive memory, that is, it establishes an interdiscursive relationship with what has already been said and is based on facts: the number of deaths, as well as the actions that were (or were not) taken that were known to all. However, it resumes demonstrations that occurred in various corners of the country, which fought for the basic – and neglected – rights of the population. In contrast, the propaganda broadcast by supporters of the former president is supported by speeches that refer to memories of authoritarian traits.

In this discursive game, the social representation of the other is deconstructed, giving way to a positive construction of the self. The other represents danger, someone who is against morals and good customs, and someone who should be feared and, therefore, is portrayed in a negative way. Words that disqualify him or her are attributed to him or her, and by disqualifying him or her, a positive representation of the candidate he or she supports is built.

By promoting the need and desire to fill a void and by establishing the standardization of behaviours and generating the identification of the subject with the object of saying, advertising establishes values built by the culture industry. Advertising constructs truths and reproduces values that meet the interests of those who profit from the political struggle waged in the country and the established social division.

## V. CONCLUSION

In this study, we sought to follow a path that highlights the functioning of the discursive process and how it is constituted based on certain production conditions. In discourse studies, thinking about the subject as a position leads us to reflect on the concept of imaginary formation and on how representations of the self and the other are put into play in the struggle for power. In this space, we observe that through discursive strategies, the subject constructs a controlled representation of the other by

intending to impose a truth and maintain a single meaning, characteristic of authoritarian discourse.

In the current scenario, we perceive the predominance of imagery productions and that when used to build a controlled and negative image of the other and a positive image of the self, advertising materializes the authoritarian discourse and erases the contradictions that integrate it. When synthesizing representations, the memory that constitutes the discursive process is lost, providing a fruitful terrain for the production and circulation of hate speech.

The culture industry, which is understood as a tool that arises from power relations, and advertising, as a product of this medium, leads us to reflect that the manipulation of techniques allows the production of discourses and symbolic representations full of mysticity, with passionate identification prevailing instead of rationality. With inflamed drives and feelings, the subject excited by images will find meaning in the industrially manufactured imaginary. Instead of reason, the sensational gains space and hatred establishes itself as the maintenance of power relations.

In this discursive instance, the attempt to control the other undermines the possibility of constructing joint actions and respecting otherness. The hatred that materializes is nonetheless milder or less violent than other forms of barbarism.

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