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# Radio versus television in Brazil: the in-between media genesis and development of Brazilian soap operas

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## Abstract

This article offers a perspective on the history of *radionovelas*, which were the radio soap operas produced after the 1940s in Brazil. It analyses the emergence of the genre in the country and how it had influence over the subsequent production of *telenovelas*, starting with a brief description on the beginning of *radionovelas* in Brazil, under clear influence of the radio production existing in other Latin American countries. Two main trends in Brazilian radio drama are to be identified. The first of them shows great commercial success, which is associated to the melodrama tradition, besides being known for presenting overacting. It also includes the protagonism of higher class representatives and excludes social conflicts. The second trend in Brazilian radio drama production is less popular and more realistic, presenting national issues, protagonists coming from the working classes, a more naturalistic way of acting, and it is usually committed to social criticism. Even though such second tendency was less influential in radio drama, it became incredibly relevant for the development of the *telenovelas*, nowadays the most important television genre in Brazil. Finally, *telenovelas*, on their turn, were the main reference for the language renewal of the Brazilian *radionovelas* produced between the 1970s and 1980s.

## Keywords

radio drama; *radionovelas*, Brazilian radio history, soap opera

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## Introduction

This paper presents the history of *radionovelas* – radio soap operas produced in Brazil – as well as some of its main characteristics. Such production peaked between the 1940s and the 1950s, period considered to be the Golden Age of Brazilian Radio. The main goal of the article is to point out the elements of *radionovelas* that passed on to the *telenovelas*, the main television genre produced in the country after the 1960s. The opposite process is also to be addressed, as the *telenovelas* later influenced radio dramas produced during the 1980s.

At first, a brief description of the beginning of *radionovelas* production in Brazil is presented. The development of such tradition is shown through the work of José Castellar, whose radio pieces present many of the founding characteristics of *radionovelas* tradition in the country. The influence of the Cuban radio was in the narratives placed on exotic locations or in the past, and the absence of social criticism in the plot. Castellar's production is analysed through scripts available in the archive organised by the authors of the present article.

A second trend in Brazilian radio drama is presented, following the work of Dias Gomes, amongst other authors. It is predominantly realistic, including social criticism, political engagement, elements of the popular culture (specially folk and popular music), productions located in Brazil, including characters more identified with the economic and social reality of the listeners. Such trend had a very significant role in the development of Brazilian *telenovelas*, which shared very similar characteristics with traditional *radionovelas* in its early times.

Lastly, the 1980s *radionovelas* production in Brazil is more closely observed. Some researchers, as Lia Calabre, state that “by the 1970s the genre had vanished, besides isolated intents of reactivating it” (Calabre, 2007, p. 82). Nevertheless, there is an exception to this scenario: the radio production project perpetrated by SSC&B-Lintas, a housing agency of the Gessy Lever industries (currently Univeler). Throughout the 1980s thousands of hours of radio dramas were produced in São Paulo and broadcasted by hundreds of radio stations in the inner country, especially in its North and Northeast areas. SSC&B-Lintas represented an important moment for the renewal of *radionovela* language and that process was strongly influenced by the *telenovelas*.

## The beginning of *radionovela* in Brazil

The beginning of *radionovela* production in Brazil is associated with simultaneous initiatives of the Brazilian branch of the North-American

company Colgate-Palmolive and of Oduvaldo Vianna (1892-1972), theater and cinema author and director.

In the early 1940s, the nomination of Richard Penn as General Manager of the company in Brazil marks the interest of Colgate Palmolive in *radionovelas*. He came to Brazil transferred from the Cuban branch of the same company. According to José Castellar, who had worked with him for many years, “Mr. Penn was excited with *radionovelas* production and released *Em Busca da Felicidade (In the Search of Happiness)*” (Castellar, 1978, July 21st). It was “first broadcasted by Rádio Nacional (National Radio) in June 5th 1941 and was an adaptation by Gilberto Martins of Leandro Blanco’s Cuban original” (Borelli & Mira, 1996, p. 34). *In the Search of Happiness* was the first *radionovela* to be produced and broadcasted in Brazil. Colgate-Palmolive then became one of the greatest sponsors of Brazilian radio especially promoting Cuban and Brazilian authors. National Radio, on its turn, as part of the administrative structure of the Brazilian Government, was the most powerful radio station in the country, reaching the entire national territory.

The first contact of Oduvaldo Vianna with *radionovelas* was in 1939, when he moved to Buenos Aires (Argentina) for professional reasons. According to Deocélia Vianna, he was “invited by the Brazilian Institute of Coffee to produce a show for El Mundo Radio advertising our coffee, including Brazilian songs and a 10 minutes radio drama based on the national folklore” (Vianna, 1984, p. 66). During the following year, in Oduvaldo Vianna’s own words,

Carmen Valdez, from El Mundo Radio, asked me to write a *radionovela* for the radio staff, which included herself as leading actress. I confessed not knowing the genre very well. She then took me to the radio station. After watching a chapter that was to be aired I finally got to know what *radionovela* was about. There, in El Mundo Radio, I started. (...) My popularity from then on would come from *radionovela*. (Vianna, 1984, p. 68)

When Oduvaldo Vianna returns to Brazil, in December 1940, he decides to release *radionovelas* in the country. During the following year he becomes the manager for São Paulo Radio and releases *A Predestinada (The Predestinate)*, his own work, the first *radionovela* by a Brazilian author to be broadcasted in the country (Ortiz, 1991, p. 25)<sup>1</sup>.

*Radionovela* quickly becomes the most successful radio genre in Brazil. The commercial radio station São Paulo Radio would focus on them, broadcasting *radionovelas* in the main spots of the programming. National Radio, based in Rio de Janeiro, was responsible for the most successful radio productions, many of which were adaptations from Cuban originals, always counting on the sponsorship of Colgate-Palmolive. That was the case, for

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<sup>1</sup> That *radionovela* was released just a few months after *In the Search of Happiness (Em busca da Felicidade)*.

example, of *El Derecho de Nacer* (*The Right to be Born/O Direito de Nascer*). It was most certainly the greatest hit in the history of Brazilian *radionovelas*. It was adapted from the Cuban writer Felix Caignet's original and released in Brazil in 1951. It had 314 chapters and remained being broadcasted for almost three years (Calabre, 2007, p. 83)<sup>2</sup>. Odulvaldo Vianna would later become the most relevant *radionovela* author in National Radio, writing 75 pieces (Calabre, 2007, p. 74).

José Castellar (1923-1994) was an important *radionovela* writer in São Paulo. His work reveals some of the characteristics of the genre. The archive of his productions was organised by the authors of the present paper and is kept in the School of the Communication and Arts of the Universidade de São Paulo. Castellar wrote dozens of *radionovelas* during the Brazilian radio Golden Age, and he started his career around 1944, in Rio de Janeiro, as an editor for Standard publicity agency. This agency had been established in 1933 and it was responsible for the Colgate-Palmolive account, so that Castellar's first job in Standard was exactly to write *radionovela*.

Still in the 1940s Castellar is transferred to São Paulo by Colgate-Palmolive, "amongst other things, with the job of adapting *radionovelas* written by Leandro Blanco" (Castellar, 1978, July 21st). He would then fix residence in the city where he developed his entire work for radio and television media. Amongst the 102 radio pieces available in the mentioned archive, there is a prevalence of fictional works, especially *radionovelas* and radio plays. Between 1944 and 1951, most of his work was broadcasted by São Paulo Radio, specialised in *radionovelas*. There was also a preference for adapting foreign works, but located in a different time and space, as found in some productions of the period.

The *radionovela* *O Castelo Encantado* (*The Enchanted Castle*, Radio Difusora, 1945), for example, was based on the novel *Dragonwyck* (1944), by Anya Seton. *O Sheik* (*The Sheik*, São Paulo Radio, 1950), on its turn, was based on the homonymous work of E. M. Hull (*The Sheik*, 1919). In 1950, Castellar brings *A Flecha da Vingança* (*The Arrow of Revenge*) for São Paulo Radio. It was a story set in late 15th century war of the roses (England). The story was an open adaptation of the novel *The Black Arrow* (1888), by Robert Louis Stevenson. In 1951, he also brings to Tamoio Radio *O Coração que Eu Roubei* (*The Heart I Have Stolen*), a *radionovela* in 18 episodes. It was set in the 19<sup>th</sup> monarchic Brazilian history. The story presents Ernesto, a São Paulo high society young man which is imprisoned believably for a crime he did not commit. He then tells his fellow prisoners about the misadventures he had been through, all for the love of one woman. In the end, the protagonist is finally freed and is still able to recover his fortune and marry his beloved one.

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<sup>2</sup> *El Derecho de Nacer* was presented as a *radionovela* and/or *telenovela* in different countries of Latin America as Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia and Brazil (Ortiz, 1991, p. 27).

In all cases, the stories were set in time periods and places distant from the listeners' reality. That was one of the narrative effects of the great amount of adaptations of renowned novels. In addition, the plot did not address issues of its time. In the mentioned works, as much as in other of his works, Castellar frequently uses the appeal to traditional elements of melodrama: mystery, suspense, adventure, and romance, the overwhelming of feelings, the fight between good and evil. The productions were clearly focused on the female audience.

By analysing the script of 34 National Radio *radionovelas* broadcasted between 1944 and 1946, the researcher Lia Calabre identifies some of the basic elements of such productions. She starts by separating the scripts in six different categories: romance, mystery, adventure, comedy, suspense and drama. The two last categories were the most frequent: 13 out of 34 scripts. Although Lia Calabre had identified that most *radionovelas* were set in an urban scenario and in the present time, she also points out that they were almost invariably led by representatives of higher classes of society. "It was a world restricted to the high and middle classes. Amongst the 64 male protagonists, only three were middle class employees and one of them was working class" (Calabre, 2006, p. 189). For the same reason "the sore spots of the city were absent of *radionovelas*. (...) The city to those characters is the one of mansions, conformable households, urbanised neighborhoods where cars and private drivers go by" (Calabre, 2006, p. 189).

In relation to the performance in *radionovelas*, José Castellar highlighted an exaggerated interpretation, a paused and rather unnatural way of speaking along with preference for the use of a standard language, avoiding swear words and popular expressions. The author also identifies the use of an omniscient narrator in virtually all of the productions (Castellar, 1978, July 21<sup>st</sup>).

It is very reasonable to assume that *radionovelas* produced during the Brazilian Radio Golden Age privileged a conservative view on society and its values. That is especially clear if the beginning of such age is understood to be under the Brazilian New State Dictatorship, imposed to the country by Getúlio Vargas Administration between 1937 and 1945 with strong fascist influence. Miriam Goldefeder, studying the influence of National Radio, emphasises the role its programming had as a "strategy for social contention", that included *radionovelas*. It represented the "convergence of conservative moral values typical from middle strata of society" (Goldefeder, 1980, p. 84).

Such predominant trends are recognisable on *radionovelas* production, namely the conservative view on society and the protagonism of the wealthier classes. Although it was less influential in the radio programming of the time, it is also possible to identify the presence of a different kind of radio drama in the same period, with another aesthetical, political and ideological perspective. Its production was associated with the work of artists engaged with the leftist thinking, especially intellectuals enrolled in the Brazilian

Communist Party (PCB), which had been founded in 1922. The researcher Marcos Napolitano identifies some of the elements in the radio production of the intellectuals related to the PCB. It is also possible to include the Radio media on such list:

The choice for the nationalism, the understanding of the people as a revolutionary protoconsciousness, the mediation role of the artist-intellectual and realism as the principle of communication with the audience (present in figurative art, the defence of the song as a melodic convention able to convey a poetic message and the dramatic realism in the movies and the theatre). (Napolitano, 2013, p. 101)

An example of that is the work of Alfredo de Freitas Dias Gomes (1922-1999), which wrote for the Radio between the years 1944 and 1964<sup>3</sup>. He joined the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in 1945 and presented an artistic production strongly defined by his political engagement. That fact determined his dismissal from several radio stations (Dias Gomes, 1998).

In a previous work, one specific radio production of such Brazilian author (Vicente, 2013) was analysed. It is *A História de Zé Caolho* (*The Story of One-Eyed Joe*), a 22 minutes long radio play broadcasted in 1952 by Bandeirantes Radio of São Paulo, in the context of the radio series *Sonho e Fantasia* (*Dream and Fantasy*). It is one of the rare exemplars of a remaining recorded radio drama from the 1950s<sup>4</sup>.

Dias Gomes gives us the story of Zé Zeferino, a plantation worker from the northeast state of Ceará (Brazil) going to São Paulo city in hope of finding a job and a better life for himself. As he fails this attempt, he gets influenced by beggar Pernetá (One-legged) and becomes Zé Caolho (One-eyed Joe), a beggar pretending to have been born blind. He then receives a money package from a beautiful and mysterious lady, becomes rich and runs for the presidency of the Republic promising to fight poverty in the country. By the end, the audience finds out the whole thing was nothing but a dream.

In that case, not only did the production took place in the contemporary Brazilian city of São Paulo, but it was also starred by beggars, not by the “liberal professionals and entrepreneurs” mentioned by Calabre. Besides the strong intention of social criticism and the realistic perspective<sup>5</sup>, it also includes some aesthetic innovations, as the use of popular songs as a form of epic comment to the action, the attribution of voice to lifeless objects (under clear influence of Brecht), more natural interpretations, and a very restricted use of the omniscient narrator (Vicente, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> Dias Gomes is better known for his work to theater and television.

<sup>4</sup> The recording of *The History of Blind Joe* (*A História de Zé Caolho*) is available on YouTube: <http://youtu.be/JvJ4F5zGhus> (Part 1); <http://youtu.be/Ry4JKrFqxWw> (Part 2).

<sup>5</sup> The speech that opens the radio play is of the narrator saying: “Would it be a crime to ask? Would it be a crime to offer a hand to public charity? Are those hands to be dignified by labour? No, the crime is not to ask, but to give alms. The crime is of those who drop crumbs in the hands of miserable ones instead of fighting to end the social rotteness they are in” (Dias Gomes, 1952).

Besides Dias Gomes' work, there are some other relevant authors who worked during the 1950s on more realistic and more politically engaged pieces. One of the most prominent examples is the radio series *História das Malocas* (*History of the Malocas*), by Osvaldo Molles (1913-1967). He has a large and diverse radio production, and also wrote for theatre and cinema. The radio series mentioned is considered to be the most relevant of them and it was broadcasted between 1954 and 1966 by Record Radio of São Paulo. The protagonists were the inhabitants of the *malocas*, precarious homes usually illegally built in public or occupied grounds of the city. The dialogues of the series repeated the grammar incorrectness and the colloquial expressions of these inhabitants of peripheral areas of São Paulo city.

Although it was intended as a comic series, *História das Malocas* brought to a middle class audience some of the issues faced by an "invisible" part of the population: hunger, unemployment, police persecution and even racial discrimination. One example of that is the complaint of the black character Zé Conversa (Talkative Joe) saying that white people do not want him walking on an important commercial street in downtown São Paulo. "The street is free! I am black, I am a Brazilian and I can walk through the Right Street whenever I want. Nobody is going to punch me!" (Mugnaini, 2002, p. 54).

Another piece worth mentioning is the *Ópera em 1040 Quilociclos* (*Opera in 1040 Kilocycles*), which was developed by Túlio de Lemos in 1952, for Tupi Radio of São Paulo. It brought the theme of renowned operas as adapted to social and political context of the city. Guerrini (2013) has developed an important study on Túlio de Lemos' work. He points out that the adaptation of Carlos Gomes' *Lo Schiavo* was made transporting the plot from Rio de Janeiro's 1801 village to a São Paulo's 1952 farm. Instead of the love story between the female indigenous slave and the son of the Count, owner of the farm, it presents the love story between a rural worker and the farmer's son. In the original plot, the female hero is forced by the Count to marry an indigenous man who then commits suicide, and leaves the path open to the love between her and the son of the Count. In the version of Túlio de Lemos the female hero marries the farm worker, and does not leave him to be with her boss' son. She denies her relatively privileged past as a servant in the owners' house and prefers to leave with her husband in the search for an independent life, thus rejecting the young man in love (Guerrini, 2013, p. 134).

It seems reasonable that during the 1950s there has been the emergence of radio dramas in Brazil aside from the tradition of *radionovelas*, and assuming a social and political criticism. In that sense, radio media was closer to movements developed in other areas of the country's cultural production: cinema (*New Cinema*), popular music (*Tropicalism*, Protest songs), literature and theatre (Arena Theatre and Oficina Theatre).

That trend did not really have a great exposure in Brazilian radio programming, as it was overall restricted to the work of a few radio authors



from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. They were usually connected to the Brazilian Communist Party, which was the case of all pieces exemplified in this article. The Brazilian Military *coup d'État* in 1964 ends the longest democratic period known in the country until then (1945-1964). It also ends with the referred initiatives and even ends the radio careers of authors like Dias Gomes, which got fired from National Radio (Dias Gomes, 1999). Besides that, the advance of television, which was brought to Brazil in 1950, leads to a quick and continuous reduction in the number of produced radio dramas.

This second trend in Brazilian radio can be considered to be independent in face of a radio production strongly influenced by the presence of publicity agencies and the appeal of traditional melodrama. This trend applies the aesthetics of realism, bringing national issues and social criticism. Therefore, it was important to the development of Brazilian *telenovelas*, as it is perceptible further along.

### **Telenovela in Brazil**

In this brief article, it is not possible to offer a more detailed report on the beginning of the *telenovelas* in Brazil. Nevertheless, it is possible to point out that many of the characteristics of the traditional Brazilian *radionovelas* were also present in the early times of our *telenovela* production. According to the Brazilian researcher Mariane Murakami, the first productions of the genre, broadcasted after 1951, were known for a “script in the model developed by the Cuban author Gloria Magadan – great drama with flawless formula recovering elements of the melodrama” (Murakami, 2015, p. 11). Magadan was an outstanding figure in the beginning of Brazilian *telenovela*. Between 1965 and 1969, she had worked at Globo Television Network, the most important television company in the country.

Gloria Magadan, whose name was actually María Magdalena Iturrioz y Placencia, was born in Havana in the 1920s. Her first *radionovela* was written in the mid-1940s and it was entitled *Cuando se Quiere un Enemigo* (*When you Care for an Enemy*). She was hired after a short while by Colgate-Palmolive advertising department. In 1961 she exiled herself in Miami and started to manage the entire programming of the company to Latin America and Canada. She then moved to Brazil in 1964 and began working at Globo Network in 1965, right after the Network was founded. At Globo she

(...) accumulated the functions of writer, producer and *novela* supervisor. She tried to suit the language of the *feuilleton* to Brazil, although her work did not directly portray the country's reality. She was then known as the “queen of *telenovela*”, imposing a melodramatic style, privileging plot of cape and spade, romantically fantasised and most commonly set in an faraway scenario. (...)



Besides her prestige by the end of the 1960s at the front of the Globo Network *novela* department, there was an urge in Brazilian television for narratives telling national stories with more realistic traces. (...)

The urban daily life and Brazilian modernisation were on the scene, best represented by the telenovela *Beto Rockefeller* (1968), written by Bráulio Pedroso and broadcasted by Tupi TV. Within Globo Network, the styles of Janete Clair and Dias Gomes was ever more worshiped. (Memória Globo, n.d. a)

By the 1970s, Janete Clair would become the most important name in the television network, having written *telenovelas* such as *Vestido de Noiva* (*Bride's Dress*, 1969), *Irmãos Coragem* (*Brothers Courage*, 1970), *Selva de Pedra* (*Concrete Jungle*, 1972), *Pecado Capital* (*Capital Sin*, 1975). Dias Gomes was Janete Clair's husband and he also would become a recognised telenovela writer at Globo Network. His most renowned works were *Bandeira 2* (*Flag 2*, 1971), *O Bem Amado* (*The Well-loved*, 1973), *Saramandaia* (1976), *Roque Santeiro* (1985) e *Mandala* (1988), amongst others. The work of both brought popular songs, the presence of working class characters with strong emphasis on the regional perspective, as much as on urban peripheries. They also brought the realistic perspective and social issues, within the possible limits imposed by the military dictatorship set in the country after 1964.

During the 1970s Brazil was to face a process of depoliticisation of the arts, which was a result of the intensification of the military dictatorship with the so called AI-5 (Institutional Act 5), in December 1968. It was also a result of the development of the cultural industry which would reduce the artist's creative freedom to "very restricted boundaries" (Ortiz, 1994, p. 147). Some of the distinctive elements related to the beginning of Brazilian *telenovelas* were also brought by a process of politicisation of the radio media aesthetic, as described in the article.

On the other hand, it is possible to describe the opposite process, when the telenovela influences the renewal of *radionovela* language. During the 80s there was a period of revival of such genre in the country.

## The revival of *radionovela* in Brazil during the 1980s

The Brazilian company Gessy Industrial and the Anglo-Dutch Lever Brothers were known for their soaps, Gessy and Lever (later Lux), and they were competitors during the Brazilian radio Golden Age. In 1960, the Gessy Industries were bought by the Lever Brothers, starting a new company that was named Gessy Lever Industries. Lintas (Lever International Advertising Services), a *house agency* of Lever, was settled in the country in 1931 in order to take care of advertising many different products of the company. The name SSC&B-Lintas resulted from the fusion of Lintas with the North-American

advertising agency Sullivan, Stauffer, Colwell and Bayles, which took place in 1967 (Funding Universe, *n.d.*).

Television was brought to Brazil in 1950, as mentioned before, and Gessy Lever focused its advertising investments in the new media. In 1964, one of its initiatives was to sponsor the television version of *O Direito de Nascer* (*The Right to be Born*). The telenovela was released with great success in December that same year (Unilever, 2001, p. 29).

Besides being focused in the television production, Gessy Lever did not stop producing *radionovelas*, recording it and distributing the tapes to radio broadcasting stations throughout the country. That practice started in 1950 when tape recorders arrived in Brazil. Instead of paying for radio commercials' broadcasting the company inserted them in *radionovelas* and made them available for free to the radio stations. Valvênio Martins worked in the radio sector of Lintas in 1986. According to him, *radionovelas* were usually versions of scripts written in the 1950s. When possible, even the same actors from the original performances were called. The new pieces were then "performed in the classic way of *radionovelas*" (V. Martins, personal communication, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009).

Geraldo Leite was a media planner for SSC&B-Lintas and he explains that radio media remained efficient as a way to reach the audiences in the country's inner cities and less privileged regions, as North, Northeast and Central West (G. Leite, personal communication, September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014), even though it was not the main advertising strategy of the company for the greater urban centers. Dozens of hours of *radionovelas* and radio plays recordings were produced by SSC&B-Lintas and they were made available to the authors of the present article by the Center of History of Unilever Brazil<sup>6</sup>. Their archive includes one production from the 70s that contradicts Valvênio's perception: the radio adaptation of *Irmãos Coragem* (*Brothers Courage*), the telenovela by Janete Clair mentioned before. It was broadcasted by Globo Network between June 8<sup>th</sup> 1970 and June 12<sup>th</sup> 1971 (Memória Globo, *n.d.* b). If so, it is not the case of an old script.

*Brothers Courage radionovela* is described in its presentation as being "a radio adaptation made by Urbano Lôes from the most renowned of Janete Clair's *novelas*" (Clair & Lôes, 1970). The broadcasting of both *radionovela* and telenovela was probably simultaneous, with just a few days or weeks of delay between them. *Brothers Courage* tells the story of three brothers that fight against the arbitrariness of a local landlord in a fictitious city. The visual language and the thematic were very close to those of western movies. The influence of Sergio Leone's movies was quite evident, especially in the *novelas'* sound tracks.

*Radionovela* is closer then to the sound pattern of television pieces than of old *radionovela* tradition. This can be first noticed in the performances,

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<sup>6</sup> The name Unilever was adopted by the company in 2001 (Unilever, 2001, p. 145).

as the voices are closer to the colloquial use of the language and the natural take of television actors. They are far from the slow speech and exaggerated interpretations found in traditional *radionovelas*. As the story is placed in the countryside, different accents are presented along with local expressions and grammar incorrectness. That is exactly what was happening at the homonymous telenovela. Another important aspect of the production is the absence of an omniscient narrator, which was most frequently included in traditional *radionovelas*. *Brothers Courage* leaves the listeners to understand the narrative solely from the concurrence of dialogues, from the music and sound effects.

The sound track is very present in *radionovela* and it makes use of a great variety of songs as much as the telenovela. In the given example, there are especially jazz themes, Brazilian instrumental music and movie themes (mostly from the movies of Sérgio Leone). That is a very different circumstance from what is found in traditional *radionovelas*. The instrumental accompaniment was more cohesive since it was executed by an orchestra. The sound track of *radionovela*, on its turn, recurs solely to instrumental music, while the *telenovela* made use of a variety of songs. Songs must have been avoided as background music in *radionovelas* not to interfere with the comprehension of the dialogues.

It is only after 1981 that SSC&B-Lintas, under the direction of advertising man Castro Negrão, unleashes a project for the renovation and broadening of radio dramas' production. It would make use of original playwrights and hire a consistent team of actors, technicians and musicians. This project would become the most important one of the genre to be taken on the country after the 1960s. Television would also be a great reference to radio language renewal:

(...) the *feuilleton* weeping formula, with characters always being caught up in destiny was not engaging audiences and making them turn on the radio as it had done in the 1950s. Television was the great responsible for that change in behaviour. It changed the genre although the structure of the *feuilleton* remained invincible. (Filiage, 1985, p. 43)

The SSC&B-Lintas revealed in this testimonial, as much as in other reports, what was intended with the new radio dramas like "a union between the more classical elements of *radionovela* – those inherited from the *feuilleton* (the suspension from one chapter to the other, the lyric inspiration, etc.) and current conversational language" (Costa, 1983, p. 14). The characters in those productions "were under the same drama and same difficulties than the audience" (Gonçalves, 1983, p. 23).

For that reason, "they would count on actors who had never done radio, instead of the old radio and voice actors" (Filiage, 1985, p. 42). An analysis of the narrative themes presented in *radionovelas* and radio plays shows a slightly different picture in relation to the *telenovelas*. In the first place, the

inner country is more representative in them than the big cities. That is comprehensible, since it was most for that specific public that the radio productions were directed. In the second place, *radionovelas* would avoid polemic issues. They were in most cases the adaptation of Brazilian literature classics, horror stories, inspirational stories, or even works directed to a young audience.

In the so mentioned project, Carlos Alberto Soffredini (1939-2001) had the most consistent productions and he was also clearly the most important of the authors hired by the SSC&B-Lintas. He was a writer, theater director, founder of Mambembe Theater Group, and he was also able to develop a wide research on popular theater. That experience brought him to *radionovela* and his main productions for SSC&B-Lintas were *Anita, Heroína por Amor (Anita, Hero for Love, 1983)*, with 78 episodes, and *Sal da Terra (Salt of the Earth, 1987)*, with 30 episodes.

The stories took place in the past, both recovering the trajectory of characters from lower classes present in the country's history. That is the case of Anita Garibaldi (1821-1849), the Farroupilha Revolution's woman hero (1835-1845), and of Antonio Conselheiro (1830-1897), the central character in the event known as Canudos War, which represented an opposition to the government between 1896 and 1897. Both *radionovelas* show great concern with the narratives' historic accuracy, as well with the use of songs, language and accent of each country's region (The South of Brazil, in the case of *Anita*, and the Northeast in the case of *Salt of the Earth*). *Salt of the Earth* also brings religious chants that were voiced by the Conselheiro's followers. Soffredini himself spent three months in the area where the conflict had happened researching archives and interviewing local people in order to write the story.

The sound track was very carefully cared by the producers, counting on Paulo Tatit and Helio Ziskind, musicians related to the popular Brazilian music of the time known by the quality of their work. They were the composers

of a number of instrumental tracks and also of original songs used as opening themes in many radio series and *radionovelas*. Both of the mentioned musicians would develop successful careers producing music to young audiences and for television series.

Another aspect to be highlighted regarding the project's production is its aesthetics. The producers tried to set apart from traditional *radionovelas* also refusing to make use of the conventional omniscient narrator. Some of the authors that would come along in the project, such as Zeca Ibanez, Raul

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Reis and Enéas Carlos Pereira, did not even make use of it at all. That was the case of the *radionovela Férias, Caminhões e Confusões (Holydays, Trucks and Tricks*, Enéas Carlos Pereira, 1986), the radio play *De Volta ao Lar (Back Home*, Zeca Ibanez, 1990), and the radio series *Histórias do Sertão (Stories from the Sertão*, Raul Reis, 1986).

The *Salt of the Earth* (Carlos Alberto Soffredini, 1987) demands the attention to a great number of historical data and it assumes didacticism as a way to communicate with its audience. The omniscient narrator could not be avoided in this case, but it is presented in a less traditional way. A character talks directly to the listener and narrates the facts and versions of Antonio Conselheiro's saga including elements he had read and heard from different sources. It is not exactly the case of an omniscient narrator, but of a regular person that brings doubts and offers us different versions to the same facts without taking a position in relation to them.

SSC&B-Lintas' productions were an important moment for the renewal of radio drama language in Brazil. It can be confirmed not only for the reasons mentioned in the article, but also for the use of technological resources such as multitrack recording and editing, ambient sound effects recording, and synthesised music (V. Martins, personal communication, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009), even though the project was closed in 1991 in a context of a great economic crisis faced by the country during the period. The "advance of television in the Brazilian market" (Blecher, 1991, p. 3.6) was pinpointed as the main reason for the end of the project and that was also means the end of the last great moment of Brazilian radio drama, which virtually disappeared from the programming of commercial radio stations afterwards.

## Conclusion

The article intended to bring some aspects of Brazilian *radionovelas'* production stressing the relationship between those productions and the *telenovelas*, which would later on become the most important television genre in the country. The over interpretations, the protagonism of higher social classes and the preference for exotic locations seen in the traditional *radionovelas* did not prevail in the *telenovelas*. Otherwise, the later brings the preference for reporting on national contemporary issues, the adoption of more a natural interpretation, and a more realistic approach, which were already on the radio, especially in the works of authors with more political engagement, such as Dias Gomes.

The revival of *radionovela* productions in the country – with the project developed by the SSC&B Lintas during the 70s and the 80s – shows that the renewal of such production depended on many characteristics of *telenovelas*, including the reduction in the use of the omniscient narrator, the development

of plots focused on national or regional elements, and the valorisation of a more diversified sound track (including popular songs).

It would be impossible to offer a more detailed version of this history and of radio drama's characteristics in Brazil. Regardless of that, the elements presented in this paper will hopefully help on developing a greater interest for the study on the subject, as well as for the need of organizing and analysing archives with scripts and recordings while they still exist. Radio production, in its digital age, demands such effort of evaluation and insertion in the debate on radio genres. It reinforces the multiple potential of the social and cultural relevant usage of this new old media.

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