

## Mulheres sem rosto: o corpo feminino e a violência em cartazes de filmes

### Faceless women: the female body and violence in movie posters

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**Resumo:** *Este estudo versa acerca das interpretações do corpo feminino em cartazes de filmes cujas tramas alicerçam-se na violência sexual contra mulheres: 120 Dias de Sodoma (1975), A Vingança de Jennifer (1978) e Irreversível (2002). Objetiva-se identificar as construções heteronormativas nos cartazes e os vínculos entre violência e desejo. A base teórica designa-se pela abordagem de Yuri Lotman (1978, 1996, 1998) para a Semiótica da Cultura, Stuart Hall (2016) na intersecção com os Estudos Culturais, Douglas Kellner (2001) referindo-se à influência midiática na construção dos sujeitos, e Judith Butler (2001, 2010), Michelle Perrot (2005, 2007) e E. Ann Kaplan (1995) para a heteronormatividade e o corpo feminino representado no cinema. Nos resultados da análise, apontou-se que os cartazes enunciam diretrizes que conectam o corpo feminino, ainda que imerso na violência, ao desejo e à sensualidade.*

**Palavras-chave:** *cinema; corpo feminino; gênero; semiosfera; heteronormatividade.*

**Abstract:** *This study deals with the interpretations of the female body in movie posters whose plots are based on sexual violence against women: “Saló” (1975), “I Spit on Your Grave” (1978) and “Irreversible” (2002). The objective is to identify heteronormative constructions in the posters and the links between violence and desire. The theoretical basis is designated by the approach of Yuri Lotman (1978,*

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1996, 1998) for the *Semiotics of Culture*, Stuart Hall (2016) at the intersection with *Cultural Studies*, Douglas Kellner (2001) referring to the media influence in the construction of subjects, and Judith Butler (2001, 2010), Michelle Perrot (2005, 2007) and Ann E. Kaplan (1995) for heteronormativity and the female body represented in cinema. In the results of the analysis, it was pointed out that the posters enunciate guidelines that connect the female body, even if immersed in violence, desire and sensuality.

**Keywords:** *Movietheater; Feminine body; Gender; Semiosphere; Heteronormativity.*

## Introduction

The body, transcending its flesh and biological functionality, is composed of a set of cultural inscriptions. Focusing specifically on the feminine, there is a framework originating from different discourses that builds particular ways of interpreting the body. From this framework, thinking about institutionalized norms, characteristics understood as feminine are perpetuated in a process in which the body, conduct and gender would be irresistibly connected. Thus, attributes such as sensuality, naivety, delicacy, beauty and subjection would be understood in stabilized perspectives, gradually built into a system of encoding and decoding.

Considering that such characteristics include the cultural framework, since they were built by the collective, we make it clear that, for the present article, the investigation focused on media manifestations, recognizing the media and its possibilities of intervening in social dynamics, focusing on film productions and their publicity posters. In the composition of the corpus, we chose films that were similar in terms of their plots – all centered on sexual violence against women – whose posters exposed the female body through heteronormative perspectives. Three movies and their respective posters were chosen: *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* (1975, Italy), *I Spit on your Grave* (1978, USA) and *Irreversible* (2002, France).

Based on these initial observations, a semiotic analysis of the heteronormativity of the female bodies in the posters was chosen as a proposal for the research, aligning them with the sexual violence exposed in the films. With regard to the objectives, the intent is to present the relationships between the social-historical context and the productions, connecting them to the intertextuality in the material that composes the *corpus*, as well as bringing a contemporary look and the specificities that guide the article's approach, identifying the centripetal movements in the images and considering heteronormativity as an element that brings them closer to the central area of the semiosphere.

For this purpose, the theoretical framework designates the studies by Yuri Lotman (1996, 1998) about the Semiotics of Culture, relating

the understandings of semiosphere, translation processes, intertextuality and the centripetal and centrifugal movements. In this, an interweaving with Cultural Studies was carried out, from Stuart Hall (2016), focusing on the crossings of gender relations, in order to investigate the feminine and the interpretations of the body in cinema. At the intersection with Cultural Studies, Douglas Kellner (2001) approaches the media influence, while Judith Butler (2001, 2010) and Michelle Perrot (2005, 2007) inquire about gender expectations and body constructions aligned with heteronormativity. Finally, E. Ann Kaplan (1995) reflects on the exposure of the female body on movie screens.

It is hoped that the study may contribute to highlight the links between gender relations and the placement of the female body in cinema, as ways of emphasizing the different texts inscribed in the bodies and their relationships with violence and heteronormativity. It is important to note, however, that regardless of the conclusions reached, the questions associated with violence and heteronormativity, in their relevance and multiple approaches and manifestations, do not end here.

### **Constructed bodies, violated bodies**

On the big screens, the spectator is faced with plural characters, and also the bodies and meanings attributed to these subjects are plural. It is stated that every body seen in the images is connected to a building process based on a system of beliefs and values, given that the body tells stories (PERROT, 2007). In the collectivity, there are frameworks of codes, or the semiosphere, which build the filters used by the subjects in order to look at and interpret what surrounds them (LOTMAN, 1996). The filters are linked to conditioning, since the system of values establishes guidelines that mold such interpretations.

It is revealed that this system is not stable and there are moments of fragmentation in the constant interaction between individuals, which causes the semiosphere to be demarcated by contrast and tensions. Therefore, it is claimed that the posters analyzed are understood as texts, considering that Lotman (1978, 1996, 1998) works with a broad

understanding of the notion of “text” by treating it as cultural. Thus, both films and posters, being cultural texts, highlight ambiguities and institutionalized values; being artistic, they present tendencies, conflicts, contradictions and tensions (LOTMAN, 1996). They are composed of multiple layers and multiple voices, and enunciate elements connected to the context in which they were produced. Therefore, they are more than messages transmitted to a recipient, since they produce effects on those who come across them. According to Lotman (1996, p. 55)<sup>3</sup>, “[...] when moving to another cultural context, they behave as an informant transferred to a new communicative situation: they update aspects which were previously hidden in their coding system”.

Texts are crossed by different perspectives. In relation to Cultural Studies, it is pointed out that cultural manifestations build interpretations, relationships and identities, and that the new meanings structured by the subjects are articulated to the diversity of the representation of things. For Hall (2016, p. 21), “[...] the words we use in order to refer to them, the stories we narrate about them, the images we create of them, the emotions that we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, in short, the values that we embed in them”. In this system, the texts fulfill the function of collective cultural memory (LOTMAN, 1996) and the three posters, as artistic texts, bring in their images the complexity and the conflicts arising from the moment in which they were produced.

Considering the contextualization of the views towards the feminine throughout the 1970’s, when *The 120 Days of Sodom* and *I Spit on your Grave* were released, there is a conjuncture of cultural effervescence in the West. Social ruptures since the 1960’s indicated changes in conceptions that were previously seen as permanent and collective (LOURO, 2001), in addition to the beginning of the gender studies carried out by women who, according to Perrot (2007), elected women as the object of studies and placed them as a visible subject. A dichotomous

3 Translated from Spanish: “[...] *al trasladarse a otro contexto cultural, se comportan como un informante trasladado a una nueva situación comunicativa: actualizan aspectos antes ocultos de su sistema codificante.*”

interpretation perpetuated among the claims of the strands of feminism was also consolidated, allocating men and women on opposite sides and connecting “gender” exclusively to women (SCOTT, 1995). It is important to note that, in such a context, these resources were seen as necessary due to the search for the legitimacy of gender studies and the expansion of the unification around the feminist movement. This is a moment marked by the explosion, when immutability was replaced by unpredictability (LOTMAN, 1998), and values and beliefs, previously dogmatic, were questioned.

Distinguishing the 21st century in the western panorama, when Irreversible was released, it is declared that the ruptures have enabled new configurations for the feminine gender. According to Marlise Matos (2008), themes were inserted in a significant way, in the academic and social spheres, with debates around the roles of gender, of the relations of power, sexualities and identities, in an articulation between the questioning of one-dimensional interpretations and binarisms, in order to expand the potential of the feminine analysis. However, alongside the achievements are tensions and contradictions, because, in the words of Ana Paula Antunes Martins (2015, p. 238), “[...] The history of the subject of feminism moves from construction to deconstruction and, nowadays, to reconstruction, characterized by instability”. In other words, the institutionalized codes were not eliminated and coexist in contradiction with the codes built by the ruptures. In this conflict, the heterogeneity of the semiosphere is characterized.

Through this brief contextual explanation, it is claimed that the interpretations of the feminine are linked to different factors, and that the movie posters are products of texts that precede them. The formats of the exposure of women in the images are not limited to the gaze of a particular subject or group, they are intertwined with a set of meanings that legitimize points of view and underline spaces, both for men and women. That said, the posters are intertextual because they correspond to a plurality of texts that exist in social dynamics, and they become models because they reconstruct an image of reality (LOTMAN, 1978).

In the female body, there is a complex system of values and beliefs, from which the codes that will provide the bases for decoding are established. Therefore, the meaning is not in the body itself or in the posters, but in the subjects who establish these meanings, reproducing them, legitimizing them and naturalizing them (HALL, 2016). And there are multiple tools to promote both the reproduction and the ruptures, the media being an essential example. The means of communication have an ambivalent role in the representation of the feminine, subverting normative ideas or validating them. It is worth noting that media productions have plural positions within the semiosphere, sometimes turning towards the periphery, sometimes approaching the center.

According to Lotman (1978, 1996, 1998), the semiosphere involves centripetal and centrifugal movements. Respectively, there are the movements that approach the center of the semiosphere, in which the production has conservative aspects, and the movements that move away from the center and towards the edges of the semiotic space, that is, the periphery. In the analysis, the ambiguity between these movements was verified, given that “[...] the media culture sometimes legitimizes the forces of domination and induces the public to extract pleasure from adhering to ideological positions, on other occasions it is not able to do so and other times it even leads to pleasure through the contestation of dominant ideologies and institutions” (KELLNER, 2001, p. 150).

Between positions and contestations, one notices that female and male bodies are produced and regulated in order to be understood by the collective in different ways. In this context, the ways of experiencing and interpreting desires related to the body and sexual practices also integrate regulatory movements (LOURO, 2001), making “sex” not only the norm, but a regulatory force that circumscribes and differentiates the controlled bodies (BUTLER, 2001). Such force is evident in practices that promote the constant reiteration of norms, here turning specifically to the heteronormative. The way subjects attribute meanings to the bodies is linked to the set of attributes that establish the places to be occupied by men and women, setting interpretations and operating the

freezing of the gender (BUTLER, 2010). From this perspective, the performance of a constant surveillance is distinguished, as the woman, in her body and actions, regardless of her particularities, would raise suspicions and motivate the desire for confinement, with the aim of combating these suspicions (PERROT, 2005). In the demarcation, a dichotomous relationship is structured in which the female body ends up being subjected to the masculine: the female body would have the role of being appreciated and consumed by the heteronormative desire, because women would be, primarily, “[...] an image. A face, a body, dressed or undressed. Women are made of appearances. “[...] Women’s first commandment: beauty” (PERROT, 2007, p. 49-50).

In this case, the woman, seen in the heteronormative as an entity – something one-dimensional and standardized, would be a seductive body that is the target of looks. In this objectification there is the restriction of women to the physical, which forges the filters and provides the legitimation of images. The conceptions of gender and their implications for understanding the body become “[...] one of the norms by which the ‘somebody’ simply becomes viable, it is what qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (BUTLER, 2001, p. 155). In such a process of becoming viable, it is important to note the influence of the media: not only cinema, but all the manifestations that constitute communication systems interfere in the subject’s understanding and in the way he deciphers the others and the world around him. The media culture, in fact, is a space for implosion and ruptures of the identities (KELLNER, 2001).

In placing the woman as a body whose existence serves desire, one can see the mechanism that intends to eliminate a threat: female seduction, which would be a tool to manipulate males. In Kaplan’s (1995) perspective, it is through domination and the act of “fetishizing” that the camera guides the look and, therefore, exercises the construction of meanings, highlighting the woman who is continually relegated to the role of victim, in addition to the frequent hostility to female sexuality, which should be subjugated and restricted to masculine desire.



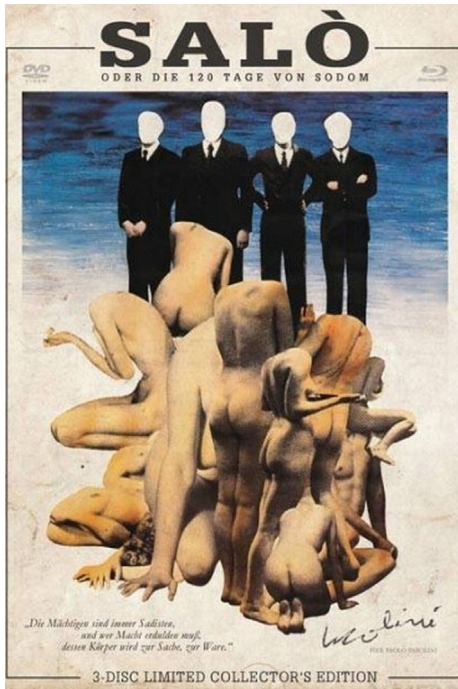
Therefore, the relationships between the body, desire and violence are pointed out. The notion of the feminine that permeates heteronormativity is demarcated by the contemplation of beauty and the desire for the physical, in which the homogeneous female body is repeated and naturalized. The existence of deconstructions and ruptures is reinforced, however “[...] if we scratch the surface, the known model is there” (KAPLAN, 1995, p. 17). The female body must present itself, above all, beautiful and seductive, in order to meet the expectations built by the collective. Even if it is assaulted, wounded or killed, it must remain not as the body of a subject, but as a body without its own identity.

### **The faceless women**

The first movie, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, was adapted from a text by The Marquis de Sade<sup>4</sup> and tells the story of four men in the context of Italy under a fascist regime, who meet in a mansion named School of Libertinage. They choose a group of teenagers, of boys and girls, and hire three prostitutes, whose job is to tell the most sordid stories. These stories guide the movie, dividing it into three parts: The Circle of Manias, The Circle of Shit and The Circle of Blood. The role of the teenagers, or students, is to submit to the fetiches of the four men, reproducing the violence enunciated by the prostitutes.

During the film, the youngsters experience the most diverse humiliations, from ingesting the men’s feces to rape sessions. However, it is important to note that the sexual violation scenes were usually protagonized by girls, which is reflected in the movie poster; even though the movie seeks to explore the sadism in submission of both boys and girls, it is the female body that prevails in the publicity image.

4 Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) was a French aristocrat and writer, best known for his pornographic works.

Figure 1 – Poster of *The 120 Days of Sodom*

Source: Pinterest (2019).

The second movie is called *I Spit on your Grave*. The protagonist is a writer, Jennifer Hills, who decides to rent a house in the countryside in order to get inspired for her new book. On the way, she is harassed by a group of men, which she repels. Enraged, they discover the rented house and invade the place, raping Jennifer in long and explicit scenes. Left for dead, the young woman recovers and devises a revenge plan, and then kills all her attackers. In the poster, as can be seen, Jennifer's body is shown from behind, with torn clothes and some wounds on her skin. She still carries a knife, signaling her intentions of vengeance.

Figure 2 – Poster of *I Spit on your Grave*

Source: Pinterest (2019).

The third movie, *Irreversible*, was released in 2002. In the case of this film, it is worth mentioning some clarifications provided by director Gaspar Noé<sup>5</sup>, in which he defends the nine-minute rape scene in the movie. According to him, the intention was to show the cruelty and rawness of that violence, without allowing the audience the chance to hide from the pain<sup>6</sup>.

In *Irreversible* there are also differences in the ways in which the plot is conducted. The movie begins with the credits, which are shown in reverse order, and it is in this same order that the plot is developed – first,

5 Argentine filmmaker. Known for being provocative, his films usually deal with themes understood as controversial, such as explicit violence and sex.

6 More information can be found in the article entitled "Irreversible' director defends long rape scene". Available at: [https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/cultura/021022\\_pollardcb.shtml](https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/cultura/021022_pollardcb.shtml). Accessed on: 06/11/2019.

the final scenes are shown, then the climax and, only later, the origins of the story and the characters are presented. The spectator comes across two friends who are seeking revenge because the girlfriend of one of them has been raped; the woman, who was in a subway tunnel, was brutally attacked and raped. In the poster, this woman is walking around the place where the rape occurs; she is pictured from behind and her face is not shown.

Figure 3 – Poster of *Irreversible*



Source: Pinterest (2019).

One can see that the posters are composed of different images that refer to similar meanings, promoting an approximation between them. The three images present the female body in evidence, exposing it from the back and, notably, without showing the face. In the case of *The 120 Days of Sodom*, the outline of the heads can be seen in the figures that

allude to the four fascist aggressors, but the shapes that represent the victims are just bodies, one on top of the other in a homogeneous mass.

According to Lotman (1998), human beings have the need to be individualized. Usually, this would be achieved through first names, but here, the issue of the face is highlighted. In the context of the posters, the features would be the evidence of individuality – the way of expressing the singularity of the characters and presenting them as subjects to the audience. By placing them as faceless bodies, a process of deconstruction takes place; they stop being people, inhabiting a hostile zone shared by those who are not understood as subjects by the collective (BUTLER, 2001). Also, the silencing of their existences is observed, linked to the perception that “in many societies, women’s invisibility and silence are part of the order of things” (PERROT, 2007, p. 17).

Hiding the characters’ faces puts them in specific places, influencing the possibilities of interpretation by the audience. In the construction of meaning, people go through moments of creation of a provisional meaning, which is guided by different clues (MERCADER, 2001), such as the movie title, the reviews and the publicity – as in the poster. In the image that de-characterizes the character, the audience may have difficulties in creating bonds of empathy with the woman, which would result in an emotional distance both with the character and with the violence she suffered.

In Lotman’s (1998) perspective, there are texts that, through approximations between content and audience, transform what is distant into something close and intimate. Taking cinema as an example: in the development of a plot, characters are presented and provoke effects in the audience. Thus, the one that was the “other” becomes the “own” when the spectator appropriates the fictional subjects by making them familiar. In the analysis of the posters, it is clear that the dynamics of distancing and approximation is unbalanced, since the characters remain as the “other”.

In the words of Butler (2010, p. 20), “if someone ‘is’ a woman, this certainly is not all that this someone is [...]”. However, in the coding and

decoding based on gender guidelines, the view that the word “woman” represents all the individuals identified with the feminine is reproduced, confining them to homogeneity. This is what occurs in Figure 1, from *The 120 Days of Sodom*: in the plot, there is no individualization of the characters who are raped, because they are exposed as bodies subject to the aggressors’ desires. They have no names, past, ambition or will, and such indifference appears on the poster, in which the undefined bodies merge and, above them, overlapping with more evident contours, the four fascists declare their dominance over their victims.

In Figures 2 and 3, the abused character appears in evidence because, in their respective movies, the protagonists have names and personalities. However, for the poster, the so-called individuality is lost in face of the exposure of the body. In *I Spit on your Grave*, Figure 2, the torn clothes and discreet bruises do not correspond to the images in the film in which the young woman is undressed and attacked with extreme violence, provoking scabs, dirt and purplish bruises spread across the skin. All these elements were attenuated in the image, linking to the reasoning that, when showing to the audience, it would be appropriated for the character to look more sensual than hurt. Whereas in *Irreversible*, Figure 3, the woman walks alone down the corridor where she is raped – the picture is taken with her back to the camera, which can be associated with vulnerability and impossibility of defense or reaction to what is about to happen. Furthermore, we can see the reflection of a woman approached as an offering, a body to be consumed by the eyes, given that her own body would not belong to her (PERROT, 2005).

Such traits enunciated on the posters link to a complex structure of attributions of meaning. According to Hall (2016), the subject, in its particularity, builds its meanings but is subordinated to the limits of a culture and a certain context. He/she can become the carrier of constructed meanings, but cannot orbit outside the limits of the framework of codes that demarcate his/her existence in the social body. Thus, both the posters and the movies as well as the interpretations structured in the analysis, are articulated with previous texts. In this, a

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set of texts that cross the images can be identified, since they do not have the mere function of transmitting information about the film and are submerged in a dialogical relationship (LOTMAN, 1978, 1996, 1998) whose ideological and cultural traits are investigated.

In the investigation of these traits, it is understood that “[...] the matter of the bodies will be inseparable from the regulatory norms that rule their materialization and the significance of those material effects” (BUTLER, 2001, p . 155), and it should be clarified that regulatory norms are manifested not only in the projection of the feminine, but also in the masculine. In all three plots the aggressors are mostly men, every one of them limited to a bestial characterization in which elements such as sexual desire, and even the own violence perpetrated, are naturalized as if they were part of a supposed masculine essence. Men and women end up homogenised, and in the fixation of contents and attributes for characters would lie the premeditated definition of spaces to be occupied, in an action of stereotyping that aligns representations, relations of power and difference (HALL, 2016). In the standardization of gender exposure and in the sexual desire considered inherent and uncontrollable, occurs, therefore, a simplification of plurality, moving away from the fluidity that permeates the individuals (LOURO, 2001).

However, in considering that the text is subject to collective memory (LOTMAN, 1996), it is stated that heteronormativity is only one of the facets to be addressed. The movies and their posters are coded, and in order to decode them one needs to rely on information given in the text. In this production of meanings, which transits between the individual and the collective, there is a complex internal game that can be noticed, for example, by the relationship between the posters and the socio-historical contexts in which they are inserted. As previously exposed, the decade of 1970 was marked by the expansion of movements by several groups inserted in the outskirts of social dynamics. In contemporaneity, it is noticed that the struggle is still expanding, but, at the same time, the reiteration of dictates has not been nullified by transformations. Different

readings coexist, clashing against each other, contradicting themselves and provoking tensions in social practices.

The productions and products associated with them represent the pluralities and ambivalences that permeate the contexts: Kaplan (1995) argues that movies express conflicts between the normative expectations and the subversions that would oppose stabilizations. For this reason, *I Spit on your Grave* addresses the character's process of revenge after the rapes: the woman remains tied to hegemonic desires, but, in order to respond to the changes in course in the context of the film's production, she could not be confined to fragility and suffering, turning vengeance into a tool of alleged visibility for the deconstruction of the normative feminine – although, in the poster, the only evidence of revenge is the knife. This is a sign of ambivalence, which ends up becoming another factor of approximation between the movies and their images.

It is understood that heteronormativity is an element that approaches the center of the semiosphere in a centripetal movement. The center is marked by conservative aspects, linked to the reiteration of the guidelines already established. However, there are resources in the three movies that move away from conservatism, and the body exposure is an example: in scenes where breasts, genitals and buttocks are shown on the screen, the hesitations and censorship of the body are broken; and, in the recording of the sexual act, there is an absence of modesty and the camera does not turn away. In this context, *The 120 Days of Sodom* provoked ruptures in the treatment of fetishes by bringing eschatology, sadomasochism and sex; *I Spit on your Grave* exposed nudity, sex and graphic violence; *Irreversible* broke with the criteria of filmic structure since it was edited with the narrative in a reverse time sequence.

It is pointed out that, for Lotman (1998), the explosions or ruptures take place through the dialogic relationship with the mechanisms that promote destabilization, so ruptures and guidelines are not disconnected from each other. In this relationship, it is clear that the similar points of apparent subversion between the movies – sex and nudity – are associated with a third element: violence. In the words of Perrot (2007, p. 64),



“women’s must be protected, closed and possessed”, and in the posters, considering the narratives to which they refer, the act of possessing is based on violence and domination. It is a combination of factors that results in a destructive chain, and makes the supposed deconstruction of the body’s erotization, which would bring a centrifugal movement towards the peripheral region of the semiosphere, be understood as a normative repetition by exerting a centripetal displacement and turning towards the conservative side.

Furthermore, sex, nudity and violence have the feminine as a linking point, which highlights the need to question the possible transgressions provided by the movies. After all, the apparent breach of traditional values occurs through the payment of a price, which is printed on the posters: the fixation of the female body in subjugation, removing from the violated characters the possibility of individualization through the concealment of their faces, results in a mitigation of violence that uses the normative sensuality of the physical.

In these images, the mitigation factor is still manifested by the relation of the content of the movie transposed to the poster. In the image of *I Spit on your Grave*, the female revenge is minimized in order to highlight sensuality and indicate sexual violence in a sanitized version, which contradicts the content of the film, that deals with brutal and explicit violence. In a similar case, the poster of *The 120 Days of Sodom* goes through a cleansing process in order not to show the humiliations, eschatologies and rapes of the plot, limiting itself to the exposure of the homogeneous mass of bodies. And *Irreversible*, as a hint to its narrative differential, has the title of the movie written in reverse, but does not bring any major clues about the plot. Finally, it is claimed that in an individual examination, the posters could be isolated and disconnected images, but, when interlaced, images and plots become more important than themselves and acquire “[...] characteristics of a model of culture [...]” (LÓTMAN, 1996, p. 55).<sup>7</sup>

7 Translated from Spanish: “[...] rasgos de un modelo de la cultura [...].”

Combining images and movies, sexual violence against women becomes an essential element, which is seen and consumed by an audience that, on the other hand, is immersed in a set of guidelines that permeate social life. In this view, the spectacularization of suffering is pointed out, because the production of the film appropriates the traumatic experiences of countless women and transports them to the screen. And, furthermore, objectification, combined with spectacularization is perpetuated in the posters; without faces and in sanitized versions, the violated body is delivered as sensual, since the physical forms are revealed in the posters in positions of submission, vulnerability and desire.

Such interpretations, even if they were not intentional on the part of the people involved in the production of the materials, designate disturbances in the process of interpretation, which make it possible to question certain codes and their possible translations.

In the identified codes, in the construction and deconstruction of dictates that allocate the feminine in certain positions, it is noticed that the corpus promoted the reiteration of a culture that places women not as a subject, but as something that, like movies and posters, must be consumed. Faceless and homogenized, the characters are marked by heteronormative inscriptions, becoming representations in which there are no raped women, but bodies exposed in shop windows to attract the consumer.

## **Final considerations**

In the present article we sought to investigate the disturbances in cultural texts from three movie posters, combining the images with their respective plots, characters and contexts of production, bringing the heteronormativity focused on the feminine and reflecting on how the guidelines, existing and reiterated by the social body, were manifested in the publicity posters. For this purpose, the following productions were chosen: *The 120 Days of Sodom*, *I Spit on your Grave* and *Irreversible*, in which the construction of female characters was examined considering

the relationships between the contexts and meanings that permeate the material, in addition to the movements of center and periphery that bring to light the ambiguity in the analysis, and the exposure of the female body associated with submission, desire and violence.

In the dynamics of the semiosphere, highlighting the socio-historical context of the 1970's and contemporaneity, the existence of ambivalence in the views of the feminine was perceived. After all, coexisting with the transformations, especially evidenced by social movements and the development of gender studies, guidelines remain that understand women as a one-dimensional entity, placing them in demarcated places, deconstructing them as a subject and homogenizing them. In this context, the intertextuality that crosses the posters and movies was pointed out, since they are connected to world models and previous texts that make them means of legitimation or subversion of the guidelines. In the game of meanings, centrifugal movements were observed, considering that the posters show nudity as a break from conservatism in the view of the body, in addition to plots that transgress conventional formats of film narrative and expose sexual intercourse and nudity. Interlaced with this, the centripetal movements were identified, which ended up standing out in the analysis and contributing in the production of the study. It should be noted, however, that the intention was not to demonize posters or movies, but to reflect on discussions that permeate social dynamics.

Despite the transgression of certain norms, the rupture in the movies was achieved in the destructive relationship between sex, nudity, desire and violence. The scenes shown in the posters, of the woman alone and vulnerable, promote the link between the female body and submission to masculine desires, establishing the idea that desire would be natural and instinctive, and therefore unstoppable. In this dichotomous relationship, women would be the sensual and consumable beings; men, a puppet of their own desires, inclined to bestiality in order to appease their sexual desires.

Finally, with posters that avoid exposing the characters' faces, there is an action of homogeneity, given that the characters are not individualized.

In addition to making it difficult to establish bonds of empathy between the audience and the character, these women are summarized in their bodies, as if they were not subjects. Thus, it is concluded that the posters, articulated to the violent themes of their respective films, provide the reiteration and legitimization of heteronormative guidelines.

In the structuring of arguments, it was verified that in the frequent viewing of images, such as the ones investigated in the movies that deal with violence against women in long and explicit scenes without having the problematization of this violence, or even in the media manifestations that limit women to the role of victim, of a body to be admired or rejected, a process takes place that results in the collectivity's familiarity with these representations. After seeing, hearing and feeling so many times, one begins to understand the images as inevitable, as part of the human condition. However, not even the frequency of the images is capable of completely inhibiting the questioning; in the discussion about normativity, it is possible to move towards deconstructions, thus moving away from the center and reaching what exists on the edges.

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Date of submission: 09/09/2020

Date of acceptance: 14/12/2021