



A Radical Vote: Disputing Meanings from the Positioning of Rita Von Hunty

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we analyze the meanings produced from the flows inaugurated by the positioning of drag queen and YouTuber Rita Von Hunty on the slate formed by the candidates for the Brazilian presidency Luis Inácio Lula da Silva and José Alckmin in the 2022 elections. Considering as reference the methodological approach of case studies, both media and mediatized, we seek to describe and analyze the processuality of the case, paying particular attention to the tensions evident in the space of social circulation of meanings about Rita Von Hunty's digital practices. Guided by mediatization studies, we noticed intense flows marked by contextual political aggravation along a rupture with an imagined expectation around the influencer's. From materials collected in flow, we noticed that the visibility tactics operated by Rita Von Hunty on digital platforms are tensioned and show that even she, the agent of the interactional circuit, is not exempt from being drawn to the center of discussions and being a point of disputes.

RESUMEN

En este artículo, analizamos los significados producidos a partir de los flujos inaugurados por la posición de la drag queen y YouTuber Rita Von Hunty en el escenario formado por los candidatos a la presidencia de Brasil, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva y José Alckmin, en las elecciones de 2022. Tomando como referencia el enfoque metodológico de los estudios de caso, tanto mediáticos como mediatizados, buscamos describir y analizar la procesualidad del caso, prestando especial atención a las tensiones evidentes en el espacio de circulación social de significados sobre las prácticas digitales de Rita Von Hunty. Guiados por estudios de mediatización, observamos flujos intensos marcados por una agravación política contextual a lo largo de una ruptura con una expectativa imaginada en torno al influencer. A partir de los materiales recopilados en el flujo, notamos que las tácticas de visibilidad operadas por Rita Von Hunty en plataformas digitales están tensionadas y muestran que incluso ella, como agente del circuito interactivo, no está exenta de ser llevada al centro de las discusiones y ser objeto de disputas.

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1. INTRODUCTION

On the morning of May 7, 2022, more than 4,000 people were expected at an event center located in the north of São Paulo for the launching event of the slate formed by the Brazilian presidential candidate Luís Inácio Lula da Silva and the vice-presidency candidate José Alckmin. The event, whose purpose was to present the alliance formed by the pre-candidates for the 2022 electoral race, was marked by the presence of a series of political parties and union and social leaders. The formation of the alliance presented at the time had already been criticized by various sectors within Lula's party (PT), as well as in other leftist spaces, due to the rivalry between Lula and Alckmin experienced in other elections when they occupied the place of adversaries, along with Alckmin's affiliation with "center" political leaders and sectors.

The following day, along with a series of other demonstrations on digital networks, the drag queen and Youtuber Rita Von Hunty reported on her Instagram profile, through the story tool,¹ her dissatisfaction with the slate presented. In the publication, she positioned herself with a radical vote² reproaching the alliance formed by candidate Lula and his vice-president Geraldo Alckmin on the election's first round. On Monday, May 9th, news material about the political positioning of the drag queen about presidential candidates took up space in the principal journalistic vehicles of the country. Rita, who the day before, on May 8th, had spoken out on her Instagram profile, perhaps did not imagine such a repercussion; though her profile on this social network is accompanied by more than 900 thousand followers, as well as her popularity in the country is on the rise since 2014, when she created a YouTube channel, which later became popular as a space for a disruptive performance combining theoretical-academic knowledge with drag queen practices on digital platforms.

In the post (Figure 1), the YouTuber wrote that Lula's alliance with Geraldo Alckmin represented a lack of commitment by the presidential candidate to the repeal neoliberal reforms performed in recent years in the country. She said: "These contradictions will demand us A LOT of critical positioning and organizing capacity. The scenario of 'this is what you have for today' cannot be normalized because – besides being reactionary – it makes any radical desire for transformation die." It is important to note that the post ends with a call to support parties considered as extreme left in Brazil, such as PSTU and PCB, which, according to her, "will build more radical candidacies."

The effects of the pivoted story screenshots in circulation were immediate. In a few hours, images propagated and gained adherence on digital networks (ROSA, 2019), as well as responses – in support or criticism – to the drag queen, which made the posture of Rita in

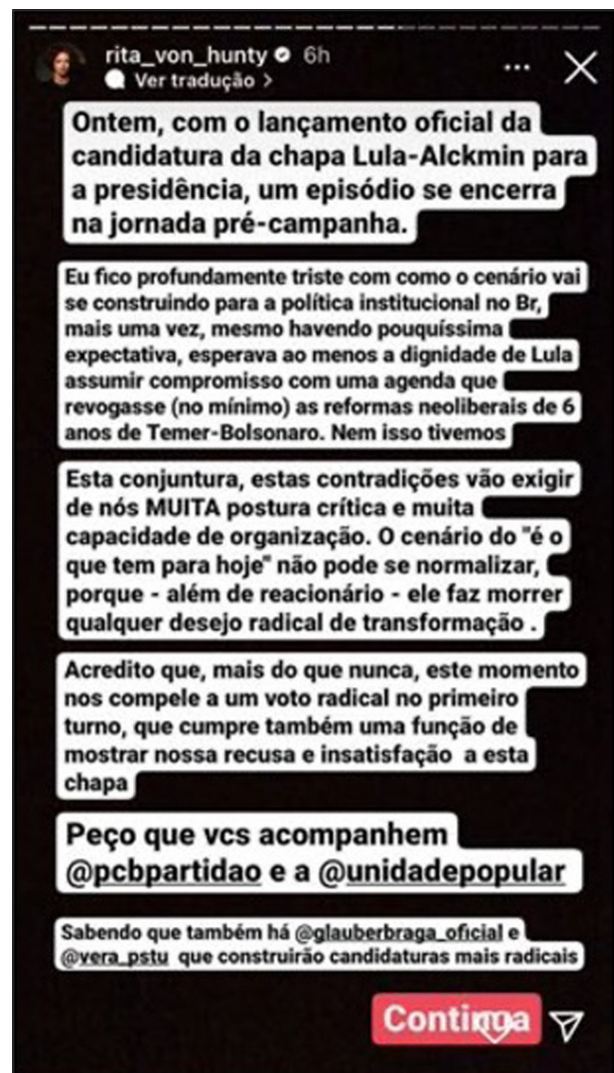


Figure 1 Rita Von Hunty's Post.³

Retrieved from Mathias (2022).

relation to the candidate Lula's ticket one of the most important topics commented on various platforms, such as Twitter. It was also the subject of several journalistic vehicles, which thematized both the positioning and the negative repercussions and hate attacks on the drag queen. Rita's discontentment in relation to the launching of Lula's ticket, allied to vice-president Geraldo Alckmin, gained amplitude in interactional circuits (Braga, 2012) that overflowed spaces read as left-wing, being appropriated by social sectors aligned with right-wing discourses, especially by social actors linked to Lula's main opponent in the elections of the same year, Jair Bolsonaro. In general, on social media, those who called themselves leftists manifested to defend the vote for Lula in the first round, while those guided by a right-wing speech referred to the episode – the attack on Rita – as an "electoral blackmail of Lulism."⁴

The case gained dimension from the wide inscription and circularity on the social media and from the appropriation movements of various social actors on

digital networks. In this sense, we analyze the circulation flows the positioning inaugurated along with the meanings produced on Rita Von Hunty's media practices. From the methodological guidelines of case studies, both media and mediatized (Ford, 1999; Weschenfelder, 2019), we seek to collect marks of operations of meaning, paying attention to the strains arising from the social space of circulation of meaning.

The analysis developed incorporates the scope of ongoing doctoral research in which we assume, as a heuristic hypothesis, the existence of tentative communicational processes of mediatization (Braga, 2015). In this sense, media practices, such as those used by Rita Von Hunty, evince attempts to make products circulate, likewise drag queens themselves circulate in culture. Broadly, this means that we are concerned with observing the logic of the mediatization process crossing social practices of drag queen artists, considering the notions of circulation and counter-agencement as central (ROSA, 2020). This article contributes to mediatization research field as it deepens on the circulation dynamics, which offers a possibility of comprehension about the complexity of this space, where social meanings are elaborated. Circulation is a central approach in Latin American research on mediatization. The text also seeks to contribute to the discussions about the dynamics of mediatized celebrities addressing how strongly their bonds with the audiences are developed through interactional practices.

1.1. MEDIATIZATION: THE MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES OF A COMPLEX PROCESS

As other terms with similar endings, such as globalization, individualization, zombification, and platformization, mediatization is gaining space in literature and is cyclically inscribed either in research or appropriation by common sense. However, in our view, the term mediatization is often inappropriately used as a synonym for what is on the media or a process of putting everything on the media, thus, centered on the hegemonic means of communication. Far from it, mediatization is a complex process characterized by multiple perspectives of approach, whether in Europe or Latin America. This process deals with the dimensions of time and space since it is a long-term process of social transformation, where technological devices become a locus for the production, reception, and, especially, circulation of meanings.

In an attempt to understand the different perspectives on the concept of mediatization, Goran Bölin (2017) considers that mediatization studies can be divided into three approaches: 1) institutionalist; 2) technological, and 3) constructivist. The third approach, the constructivist, articulates elements of the institutional and technological perspectives based on how subjects

interact. "As institutions and technologies, the media are naturally part of these structures, but the constructionist approach is more inclined to emphasize the interplay between media, individual agency, and the formation of structural constraints" (Bolin, 2017, p. 21). In this sense, for the Swedish author, this approach is more interesting since it allows a broader understanding of the dynamics of social change, especially observing the dialectical dualities that involve media itself, subjects, and technology.

Although we agree with the author that this approach is more complex, in our view, there are nuances of approaches within what could be called a constructivist emphasis precisely because of the differences between uses, appropriations, and cultural specificities. For example, in Latin America, ROSA (2020, p. 294), in a tentative outline, identified two other derivatives in Latin American investigations that one could consider within the scope of the constructivist emphasis but which look to other directions, such as the semiosocial in Argentina, and investigations with an empirical-conceptualizing focus and socio-communicational reconfiguration developed in Brazil. Such approaches are not centered on the "power" of the media, but anchored in communication practices. Thus, semiotic studies or those that approach language, gain prominence from studying social and media practices and their ways of saying. Among the authors of this semiosocial approach, notable figures include Oscar Traversa, Gaston Cingolani, José Carlos Fernandes, and Natalia Raimondo Anselmino, affiliated with the [Centro de Investigaciones en Mediatización](#) at the University of Rosario (Argentina) (Gindin et al., 2021), as well as Antônio Fausto Neto and Viviane Borelli in Brazil. Their studies emphasize the role of socio-semiotics and discourses, but always considered in light of technological intersections.

The empirical-conceptualizing approach, on the other hand, emerges from case studies, from issues that evoke both social and media actions, starting from a micro-observation movement toward a deeper and more complex analysis. In this approach, which moves from empirical observation to theoretical reflection, analyzing communicative flows and processes at play, as well as the effects of technology appropriation on social ways of producing media, notable authors include José Luiz Braga, Ana Paula da Rosa, Antônio Fausto Neto, Jairo Ferreira, Aline Roes Dalmolin, Ada Machado, and Fabiana Sgorla. Additionally, there is a large group of emerging researchers, such as Marco Túlio Souza, Márcio Morisson Kaviski, Aline Weschenfelder, Deividson Campos, Maria do Carmo Falchi, João Damásio, Pedro Vasconcelos, Ângelo Neckel, and Bianca Rosa, among many others. These scholars are part of research groups and networks associated with various academic institutions in Brazil, such as UNISINOS, UFSM, UFRGS, UFG, UFMG, and USP.

Goran Bolin (2017) understands mediatization as “the mediatization perspective, with its insistence on analyzing the role of the media in culture and society as a long-term process, is well in line with such as generational perspective.” The author’s view comes close to the Latin American perspective adopted in this text, which finds in Veron (2014) the support to consider mediatization as a long standing, long lasting semio-anthropological process, which accompanies the process of human development, albeit it has been sharpening and intensifying over the last decades from digital media and what their emergence causes in terms of leaps.

The fact that it is a long-term process does not imply it is linear, that is, equal for everyone and at the same time, but it does imply, undeniably, that all societies are exposed to and integrate it, even those that remain more remote since, as Veron (2014) points out, media phenomena are universal and characterize the human species. In this context, for the author (2014, p.16) “the conceptual advantage of the long-term perspective is to remind us that what is happening in late modern societies began, in fact, a long time ago.” That is, current social changes cannot be considered as the result of an amplification of current technologies displaced from the processes that are at the base of these technologies themselves, which implies inventions, uses, appropriations, negotiations, dialogues, and ruptures over time.

According to Gomes (2022), we are no longer facing the phenomenon of the simple use of technological devices for the transmission of messages, nor of them as mediators of the relationship between individuals and reality.

On the contrary, the development of digital media is creating a new ambiance that, in turn, gives rise to a new way of being in the world. The consequence is that instead of seeing the end of mediatization, we are just on the threshold of its full development. (2022, p 170)

When dealing with society in a state of mediatization or immersed in this environment, the author emphasizes the need for other reading keys, whether of the subject or of the world. It is because, in addition to the visible face of technology, social practices are already being conducted in another way: they are born in another cultural mix where digital media and online forms of sociability are not a complement but an integral part of the fabric of everyday life. It is in this sense that when we think about the political relationship between media and drag queens, we do not do it in the sense of what the Youtube platform, for example, imposes as rules and norms of conduct, but in what subjects do inventively, with the platform, even when aware that it has its technical-economic and normative dimension. In this case, there

are interrelationships that do not occur only between subjects but also with the very dimension of the machinic. It is about thinking of the modes of sociability traversed by complex logics, both those of the media and those that Braga (2012) called mediatization logics – specific logics that carry media culture and its technological dimension, but which also result in social practices and experimentation, including where conditions of visibility (ROSA, 2020) are elaborated with and beyond the media.

We also seek to explain that there are multiple academic strands to the concept of mediatization and that such approaches coexist. Thus, in this article, the mediatization perspective that we adopted takes into account the characteristics of empirical studies, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the focus on circulation, considering the dispute of meanings around the political position of a drag queen as the central object.

2. DRAG QUEENS IN THE MEDIA

“The drag queen rhythm – The dance album by the cheerful RuPaul hits the national market” was the headline of one of the principal journalistic vehicles in Brazil, *Jornal do Brasil*, on July 30th 1993. The report, produced by journalist Carlos de Almeida, speaks about the American drag queen RuPaul’s childhood, life, and career. It generally highlighted the success of the recently released album, the ‘Supermodel of the world.’ (Almeida, 1994).

The report indicates the circulation of the English-speaking term (drag queen) in Brazil, identifying practices that until then were known as transformist artists (Nascimento, 2020). This circulation effect signals a period in which the already-named drag queens acquired space in commercial circuits and cultural scenes, mainly in large metropolises, in Brazil and around the world. Even so, the low media visibility of drag queen artists in this period is a mark of a moment that precedes an iconographic turn (Lang et al., 2015) based on the American reality show RuPaul’s Drag Race.

In general, the reality show, which aims to find a “new drag superstar,” works on the basis of common logics of this type of media product: participants, one by one, are eliminated weekly after facing challenges and being judged by RuPaul – American drag queen media reference for the consolidated career – together with a panel of judges. Due to its success, the program became the nucleus of an industry that articulates itself around it, defined above all by market logic (Pereira, 2017; Bragança, 2017; Leite, 2017).

The way Rita Von Hunty entered hegemonic media spaces and incorporated the category of celebrity took place in this context in which the practice of drag artists was impacted directly by the visibility generated by RuPaul’s Drag Race, in addition to the possibilities of

networking with collectives of followers. It means that the movement of drag queens to rise to the status of celebrity (in music, entertainment, fashion, for example) was a specific characteristic of this scenario, directly crossed by the mediatization process – this was where Rita Von Hunty emerged.

Guilherme Terreri de Lima Pereira is a man about whom little is known – with almost no digital trace. News reports state that he holds a degree in performing arts from Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) and Languages from Universidade do Estado de São Paulo (USP). Despite being almost a digital unknown, Guilherme is also a celebrity. Rita Von Hunty, Guilherme's drag persona, has a YouTube channel with more than one million subscribers in addition to presenting television shows, having columns in newspapers and magazines, and being a routine special guest on several television shows.

In interviews, Guilherme has already reported that “the birth” of Rita, his drag persona – as we know her today – took place in mid-2014,⁵ motivated by the Brazilian social and political context. At the time, he felt challenged by a movement that claimed to be apolitical – that is, on a discursive level, it said that it did not adhere to any ideological current, but, in practice, the exemption was already a political stance concerning determined social problems. The Brazilian political context, in this sense, was a catalyst for a change in his drag persona.

Rita's beginnings are during Carnival; since then, she has never stopped. This first montage (the term we use to talk about drag queen) took place during Carnival, and at that carnival party I received an invitation to work on a new party. And from that second to a third, fourth... Then I went to a reality show on the internet that was a Brazilian version of RuPaul's Drag Race. Through this reality show, with very little time in my career I got a platform, an exposure, and I began to notice that my speech and voice reverberated in some people. After the reality show, I started my YouTube channel, which I had started a long time ago as a vegan cooking channel, but some things happened in the realm of politics, right, and I saw a very blatant need to start talking about things that were very dear to me but were very urgent to me. (Hunty, 2019).

Rita's passage through the reality show 'Academia de drags' was emblematic. Although she didn't win, it threw her into the spotlight. Shortly after, in mid-2014, she opened her channel titled 'Spice Drag' on the YouTube video platform, and there she already shared vegan recipe videos.

From vegan recipes, Rita Von Hunty became a Marxist intellectual drag queen who, in her videos, made comments and produced readings on social and political events based on academic literature. This change in performance has visible marks in the materials put into circulation as well as in her interaction dynamics with her followers (both on her YouTube channel and Instagram profile).

With several videos surpassing one million views, Rita was invited to integrate television programs and, in a way, took the same perspective of an intellectual drag queen to other hegemonic media spaces. She also has a column in newspapers and, since 2017, presents, with drag queen Ikaro Kadoshi, 'Drag me as a queen,' a reality show-type program broadcast by channel E!. Rita, a Marxist intellectual drag queen, started teaching courses across the country and is seen as a reference for what she says and also for her professorial ability to synthesize complex topics from an academic reading.

The project of “popular, inclusive, and collaborative education”⁶ she proposes goes through her ability to shape the contents, especially from a performance of intellectuality. In this sense, this teaching space is marked by the appropriation of academic and critical repertoires on social processes. What the authors discuss strengthens what Rita proposes as a reading of certain realities.

Her transit in spaces with media visibility (television programs, newspaper columns etc.) as well as her articulations in the space of her YouTube channel, give her the contours of a celebrity – which is recognized as such by her collective of followers. According to Morin (2009), when associated with a mythological world, celebrities started to occupy a place of projection of ways of being in society. Arriving at this category, in the 20th century, depended mainly on the mass media, which conferred legitimacy to a certain degree (Morin, 2009). In a society in mediatization, the ways in which celebrities are constituted are more related to the spaces of interlocution and, therefore, bonds between the famous and the collective followers (Weschenfelder, 2019) and with what they do when they ascend to the media discursive space.

In this sense, Rita Von Hunty's digital practices are part of a context of mediatization and signal attempts to make products – and, consequently, meanings – circulate, as well as the articulation with those who follow her channel and profiles on digital networks. By creating a YouTube channel and producing materials with discursive (and contextual) specificities, the drag queen indicts the space of digital platforms as a field of action in which drag queen artists operate tactics of visibility through tentative digital practices – going beyond what until recently was only and exclusively their possibility of existence: the spaces of nightclubs.

3. THE CASE IN PROCESS: THE EFFECTS OF RITA VON HUNTY'S POSITIONING

Rita Von Huntly has been articulating a place of legitimacy for the content she produces. She talks about complex issues and refers to academically recognized authors. Also, she affiliates with Marxist and cultural studies perspectives, and, for that reason, she frequently brings critical comments on how the structure of the capitalist system produces differences and subaltern bodies, in addition to methods of exploitation that are unsustainable for the planet.

On her YouTube channel and other spaces she transits, she is also emphatic when criticizing the government of Jair Bolsonaro, a far-right representative, who since 2019, the year he assumed the presidency of the country, has taken positions of attack on social minorities, public health, and social inclusion policies, as well as education. Internationally seen as responsible for dismantling institutions dear to the country's democracy, Bolsonaro was also widely criticized, not only by Rita, for how he acted in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, encouraging agglomerations and being reluctant to buy vaccines. In this sense, the 2022 presidential elections in the country took place in a context of intense dispute, in which a large part of the population saw in Lula, a former president with a broad social appeal, the only way out to take away from Bolsonaro the possibility of a second mandate.

When Rita Von Huntly publicly manifested herself about Lula's ticket, being against it, it was surprising. Her followers expected that, as a left-wing influencer, in

addition to being a fierce critic of Jair Bolsonaro, the vote for Lula would be immediate. The amplitude that the case took seems to be related to a breach of expectation in Rita's attitude towards the collectives of fans who follow her, especially on her YouTube channel.

Less than 24 hours after making the publication in the Instagram story tool, a series of responses regarding Rita's posture erupted. Followers of the channel *Tempo Drag* and Rita's profiles went to social media to express their opinions on the case, materializing a solid response, motivated mainly by the political intensification of the Brazilian context of 2022.

In the comments on [Figure 2](#), we can see some of the ways in which Rita's practices came into strain. The commentary produced was not restricted to her stance on the slate formed by the presidential candidates but directed at the professorial performance she uses on her YouTube channel. When the person says: "I am curious to see Rita out of that professorial air of someone who is always on a doctoral defense quoting at random what she has read," she points to the presence of an abstract didactic air and a ventriloquist way of citing the materials she consults.

The comment illustrated in [Figure 3](#) resembles the format of a letter addressed to Rita. In it, we can identify an expectation of being read by the celebrity, an opening, and a sensible bond of the follower related to the influencer. In this sense, Fausto Neto (2008, p. 7) considers that the emergence of a series of socio-technical processes causes changes in the way interaction logics and, therefore, the bonds are established. Referring to

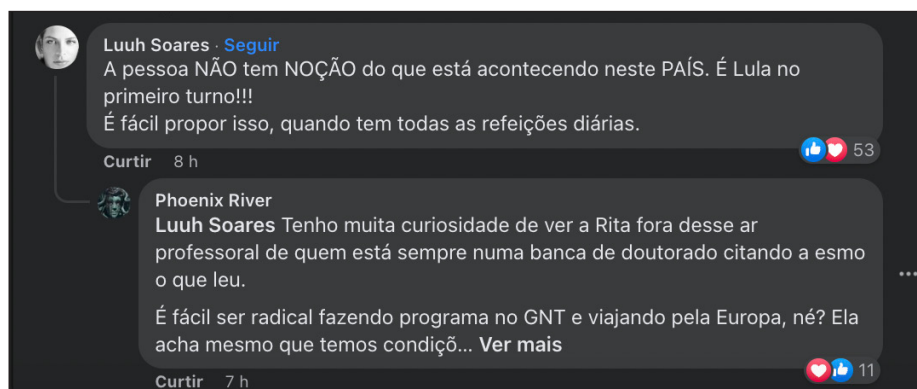


Figure 2 Responses to Rita's positioning.⁷

Retrieved from the authors' collection (2022).

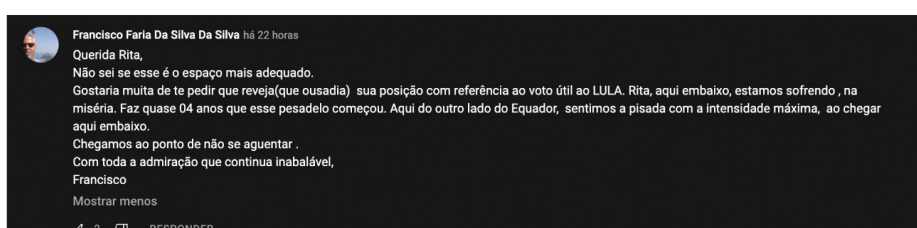


Figure 3 Responses to Rita's positioning.⁸

Retrieved from the authors' collection (2022).

the forms of contact between producers and receivers, the author emphasizes that the internet “giving rise to qualitative changes in the relations between ‘production processes’ and those of media reception (...)”

The case was reported quickly on several journalistic news portals (Figure 4). The statements underlined a rupture between the speech of a leftist intellectual and expected support for Lula’s candidacy, also the repercussion of the stance of disapproval of the vote for Lula that the articles sought to present and narrate the event.

As it circulated, the flows also became spaces for the production of meaning (Fausto Neto, 2018). Several productions by social actors on social media were already looking at the case of “Rita’s cancellation (Figure 5),” generating other materials, appropriating the disputes

involved there, and reinscribing them under new regimes – in this case, that of a supposed observation from a distance, only with the intention of report, very similar to the movements of journalism itself.

The drag performance was also being questioned. Compared to the participant of the American reality RuPaul’s Drag Race, Derrick Barry, whose participation in the program was criticized for her makeup techniques, Rita was labeled as an “ugly drag.” “Not doing a contour,” in the Figure 6, refers to the absence of a makeup technique that creates aesthetic structures on the face from the drawn features, signaling the expertise of social actors regarding the perception of knowledge that is part of the drag artists practices.

Four days after making the post on Instagram, Rita participated in a live broadcast on YouTube on the TV Forum channel. This channel, maintained by Fórum magazine, which proposes to occupy a counter-hegemonic place in Brazilian journalism, was the first to receive the drag queen after the episode. During the live broadcast, mediators read questions from internet users, and, depending on the case, those who participated answered, especially Rita, that is, Guilherme, who participated out of drag.¹²

“Mimy,” a pseudonym for a user subscribed to YouTube, directed the following comment to Rita: “Tell Diva to come down to the ground where we are, the lowly, the hungry, the threatened, decimated, deforested, trafficked, murdered, burned. Lula now!” Guilherme answered:

This is an ad hominem argument, right? By calling me Diva and saying I’m not on the ground, you are not arguing with any of my ideas. You are delegitimizing my ideas by believing that you know who I am. This is not a political debate. Second, when you call the hungry, the threatened, the

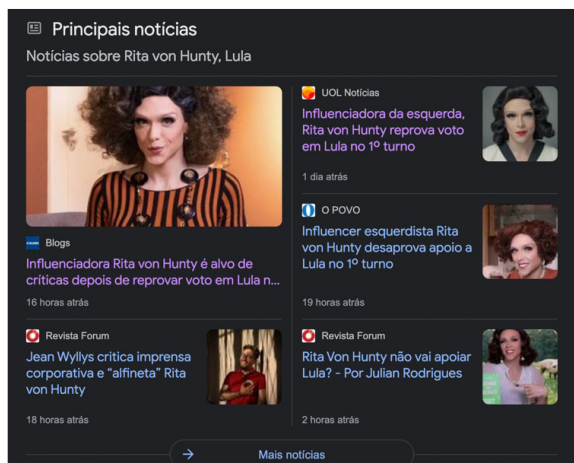


Figure 4 Repercussion in journalism.⁹

Retrieved from the authors’ collection (2022).



Figure 5 Productions by different social actors.¹⁰

Retrieved from the authors’ collection (2022).



Figure 6 Criticizing Rita’s Makeup.¹¹

Retrieved from the authors’ collection (2022).

decimated, the deforested, the poor, and believe that they will vote for Lula just because they are hungry, you are calling the poor a stupid. You're saying 'poor people vote for Lula because they want to eat;' exactly what PSDB has always done. 'The poor vote for Lula because of Bolsa Família,' he is buying votes from the northeast. And then, Mimy, you need to look at your argument, because it's right-wing. When she looks at the poor not as a subject but as an object, we win the person's vote. He is not an individual, a citizen, he is a voter. It's looking at the person only as a potential vote. Third, don't forget, Mimy, that the hungry, the threatened, the decimated, the deforested, trafficked, and murdered will vote for Bolsonaro too. And that, instead of arguing with me, who am not on the ground, maybe you should put your feet on the periphery and understand that the periphery is not mostly with Lula. And it's one of the territories that we're going to have to dispute with the greatest effort. What you're doing is not a political discussion. (Rita Von Hunty, 2022, min. 1:08:50 min).

Guilherme's response to Mimy's comment was not exactly Rita's own response. Even though the drag body was absent, the public still addressed to her. There, the human figure, not the goddess of Olympus, was responsible for justifying the political position, i.e., speaking from a dimension of the citizen-subject who votes. The absence of Rita's body signaled a displacement of meanings, because it was referred to by the audience that participated in the transmission, generating a 'non-place' effect: it was not Rita who spoke; it was Guilherme.

On the 13th, when Rita's first post-cancellation video was aired, a speech of solidarity to the drag queen's stance was materialized in the video comment space. Among the interlocutors of the drag queen, there was a concern that the criticism process would affect the conjuncture of the channel, leading to the abandonment of producing content.

The case leads us to consider a certain relationship between what Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann conceptualized in the 1970s as the Spiral of Silence theory (NOELLE-NEUMANN, 1974) and the connection that some authors have recently proposed between this perspective and what has come to be known as the 'Cancel Culture' (Norris, 2023; Camilloto, Urashima, 2020). While in the 1970s, Neumann informed us about a predisposition to silence opposing opinions when it was noticed that a predominant opinion existed, more recently, a tendency toward silencing occurs due to the possibility of digital lynching (Camilloto, Urashima, 2020).

Evidently, there is a process of strong criticism regarding Rita's opinion, which is opposite to what had been discussed by a large social group. However, we do

not necessarily observe a silencing process, as proposed by the theories of the spiral of silence and the discussions around cancel culture, but rather a profusion of meanings being produced from the case. This perception is based on the scenario described by Fausto Neto (2016), in which the space of social circulation amplifies and complicates the mismatch between the grammars of production and appropriation of meanings, rather than homogenizing them. Thus, in a mediatized society, "circulation makes the possibilities of a unifying notion of meaning production more distant" (Fausto Neto, 2016, p. 54). The analyzed materials exemplify this complexity, as statements diverge in various ways—be it critically, in defense, or even without reference to the drag queen's political stance (such as the example focusing on makeup skills).

4. DISCUSSIONS AND FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rita Von Hunty did not speak about the case again, at least in the space of her channel. The videos that followed did not seem to have been directly affected by the episode since they addressed topics that corresponded to what was expected to be talked about there. The discontentment of the collectives relating to the influencer's stance on Lula's ticket derives from an imagined expectation around the left-wing professorial-intellectual performance. It was expected that the drag queen's positioning would be in line with what circulated in other leftist circuits – aligned with the candidacy. In this sense, the breach of expectation generated noise between Rita and her groups of followers. From love to hate, diverse feelings aroused in circulation – rejection, repudiation, disapproval, condemnation, comprehension.

Clearly there were noises and critique from the offer of meanings about Lula's ticket, which came from the collectives of social actors and generated effects in the contract of interaction between the celebrity and her followers. The circuit starring Rita was not unanimous about her speech and was dynamic in the interactions on the subject. It is a mark of mediatization processes already noted by Fausto Neto (2010), ROSA (2016), and Braga (2012), that understand that culturally practiced communication circuits, with specific interests and practices, no longer have any intermediation of established social fields, leading to communication situations. In this case, by operating in circuits, the social displaced Rita's speech through different flows, and as the situation gained amplitude, the hegemonic media systems themselves, by reporting to it, increased the circulation process with greater force.

In the fierce political context of the 2022 elections, the effects were triggered from “announced positions,” such as Rita’s, and, in circulation, they escaped her control. In flow, different readings were produced about this speech, in addition to operations of social response systems (Braga, 2006), which strained the drag queen’s digital practices. Her drag, professorial, and influencer performance, one that occupied media spaces mainly from how it was articulated on digital platforms, was a point of dispute.

The interactional circuits articulated by Rita, which were constituted mainly of digital spaces, also summoned the perception that a drag queen who talked about politics – which in this specific episode was thematized in various media spaces by an announced position – involved questions of power on digital platforms. Operating tactics of social visibility in these platform spaces show us the effects of a society marked by mediatization processes, in which communication processes and technologies are mobilized for social discourses that until recently, by the logics of the media field (Fausto Neto, 2015), were unable to circulate.

Platform spaces, which function from logics that regulate practices, are also inhabited by preconceived images of what is expected of celebrity postures, even though the discourse of these spaces as fruitful places for freedom of expression is something socially produced and reaffirmed. In the case analyzed, the way in which the other manifested, from a breach of expectation, was reduced to the size of the impact of what one said, of the (positive or negative) influence it was capable of generating when it came into circulation. We noticed that the process that developed from Rita Von Hunty’s positioning was marked by a series of disputes about what was said and the possible effects of delegitimization or dispersion of leftist discourses not only in a political scenario but also in social sectors that, in some way, felt represented and adhered to the performance of the Marxist and intellectual drag queen for understanding that, in addition to questioning her gender identity, there were also activated layers of resistance, education, and subversion of power in the drag queen practices.

NOTES

- 1 A tool in which images disappear after 24 hours of their publication.
- 2 The option of not voting for Lula in the first round, considered the principal possibility of defeating Jair Bolsonaro at the polls, was seen as “radical voting.”
- 3 Translation: Yesterday, with the official launching of the slate Lula-Alckmin to the presidency, an episode in the pre-campaign journey ends.
I am deeply sad with how the scenario is going to construct the institutional politics in Brazil once more; even having very low expectations, I expected at least Lula’s dignity to assume the

compromise with an agenda that would revoke (at least) the neoliberal reforms from six years of Temer-Bolsonaro. We didn’t even have that.

This conjuncture, these contradictions will demand from us A LOT of critical positioning and organizing capacity. The scenery of ‘this is what we have for today’ cannot be normalized, because – besides being reactionary – it makes any desire of radical transformation die.

I believe that, more than never, this moment compels us to a radical vote in the first round, one that also fulfills the function of showing our repulse and dissatisfaction with this slate.

I ask you to accompany @pcbpartidao and @unidadepopular Knowing that @glauberbraga_oficial and @vera_pstu will also construct more radical candidacies

- 4 “A chantagem eleitoral do lulismo”. <https://bitly.com/usFzZZG>
- 5 The 2014 election was marked by the expansion of debates on the digital media environment. At the time, former President Dilma Rousseff (PT) was reelected with just over 51% of the valid votes in one of the most disputed elections in Brazil.
- 6 “INCLUSIVE”. A speech at 7 min 10 s of video. <https://bitly.com/onVwzRkY>
- 7 Comment 1. The person DOES NOT HAVE A CLUE about what is happening in this COUNTRY. Lula in the first round!!!!
It’s easy to make such a proposition when you have all the daily meals.
Comment 2. I’m very curious to see Rita out of her professorial air of someone who is always at a doctoral defense quoting at random what she has read. It is easy to be radical when hosting a program at GNT and traveling to Europe, isn’t it? She really thinks we have conditions...
- 8 Dear Rita,
I don’t know if this is the appropriate space.
I’d like to ask you to rethink (how daring) your positioning toward tactical voting to Lula. Rita, down here, we are suffering in misery. It has been almost four years since this nightmare has begun. Here on the other side of the Ecuador, we feel the trample with full intensity when it comes down here.
We arrived at an unbearable point.
With all the admiration that goes on untouched,
- 9 Influencer Rita von Hunty is aim of criticism after reproaching vote in Lula...
Jean Willis criticizes corporative media and pins Rita von Hunty Left-wing influencer, Rita von Hunty reproaches vote in Lula in the first round.
Leftist influencer Rita von Hunty disapproves support for Lula in the first round.
Will Rita von Hunty not support Lula? - by Julian Rodrigues
- 10 Cancelled
Rita von Hunty Cancelled...
I understand Rita; it is not easy to accept Alckmin down the throat as they are doing, but to remove the devil from the power, anything goes; these are the cards now.
That is how socialist ideas come down. One day, you decide to tell the truth. People are stopping following/canceling because, as spoiled boys, they didn’t have their opinions accepted. Maybe they never understood what socialism really is...
- 11 Rita von Hunty should worry about her horse face.
Seriously, she is an ugly drag. She doesn’t do a contour; she seems a derrick barry on s8.
- 12 A term that defines when you are “in drag” (characterized and/or performing).

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The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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