Volume 21 Issue 60
Originally issued as G12

Global Journal of human-social science: G
Linguistics & Education
Volume 21 Issue 12 Version 1.0 Year 2021
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

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Keywords: *avengers; archaeology; genealogy; discourse.*

GJHSS-G Classification: *FOR Code: 200399*



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Power/ Truth, Resistance/ Subjugation: The Discursive Theater of "The Avengers"

Maria Emília de Rodat de Aguiar Barreto Barros[1]

Abstract- This article comes from studies carried out during the post-doctoral internship, between March and December 2019, at the Federal University of Pernambuco. During this period, *The Avengers*' filmography was observed, taking as theoretical basis Foucault's researches, Archaeology and Genealogy. In this work, four enunciative sequences taken from the film "The Avengers" (2012), a Marvel Cinematographic Universe component, are presented and analyzed. In this Universe, the stories form a network of overlapping narratives, a discourse field (FOUCAULT, [1969] 1997), from which multiple contrasts are perceived: utopia/dystopia; violence/peace; subjugation/ resistance, promoting truth effects. As an analysis instrument, three questions were elaborated, trying to establish the relationship between the Foucauldian concepts and the research object. They are: which truth effects are produced from this film circulation? How are the heroes and villains' images produced in this filmic materiality? What is the relationship between film media and the 'history of the present'? In response to these questions, it was found that this filmography is crossed by political, mythical, religious, scientific discourses (with the emphasis on the power of weapons technology). And, as these films have achieved high box office numbers, there is a wide discursive circulation. Besides these discourses, the re-updating of superheroes, the dissemination of power and the American way of life were verified. All of this induces this filmography viewers consider this way of life as a model to be followed, promoting the homogenization of the present history.

Keywords: avengers; archaeology; genealogy; discourse.

Introduction

This work comes from post-doctoral internship study plans entitled: "How to read movies today? The Marvel Cinematographic Universe (The Avengers): circulation and re-updating of discourses"[2], a discourse analysis, taking as basis the filmography *The Avengers*[3]. In this article, it was studied the film "The Avengers" (2012, 2:23), the seventh among twenty-three movies[4] already released, in the current chronology of this Universe. This chronology, however, does not refer to the release dates of the films, but to the events exhibited in the multiple narrative constructions, composing a discursive whole, within the scope of the MCU. Such events not only involve space and time relationships, but also the appearance of objects, referring to historical periods prior to the film's airing, demanding from the viewer, in addition to loyalty and attention, knowledge of historical landmarks (both in the United States and in other parts of the world), as watch a single film alone may seem, at least, meaningless.

Thinking about this arrangement of events, it is understood that the channels through which this Universe is propagated (initially, cinematographic media; then other media, such as television (open, closed), streaming Disney+)[5] function as a discursive device (DELEUZE (2015), FOUCAULT (2008), GREGOLIN (2016)). Through this device, a "history of the present" is constructed, in a tension between memory and forgetting, with the consequent maintenance of power relations (FOUCAULT, [1974] 2009). At this point, it is important to explain why the theories about archaeology and genealogy, introduced by Michel Foucault, are used as a tool for a discursive analysis of this object of study. As Foucault ([1978] 2012, p. 252) [6] explains:

> I want to focus my study on what happens to us today, what we are, what our society is. I think that there is, in our society and in what we are, a deep historical dimension, and, within this historical space, the discursive events that took place centuries or years ago are very important. We are inextricably linked to discursive events. In a sense, we are nothing more than what was said, centuries, months, weeks ago...

And, as a philosopher who treated history from the perspective of the event, he constituted a great *mobilizer of memories*, especially those concerning the excluded: the mad, the prisoners. By studying these subjects, their bodies, he concluded that, in addition to

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[1] This work is at the interface with two others: an already published one; the other to be published in a book, with publication scheduled for 2022; both are cited in the references.

[2] This project was developed during the post-doctoral internship, held at the Federal University of Pernambuco, in the Postgraduate Program in Education, under the supervision of Professor Rosangela Tenorio. However, as it is a very extensive object, the research is not yet completely finished.

[3] The Avengers (2012); The Avengers: Age of Ultron (2015); The Avengers: Infinite War (2018); The Avengers: Endgame (2019).

[4] That total includes up to the release, "Spider Man: Away from Home," in 2019.

[5] DVD was not included as a vehicle for the circulation of these films, as it is understood that it is not a channel, but a place of storage or means of transport and access to the films.

[6] This translation into English was made of the work in Portuguese by the researcher.

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discursive practices[7], the processes of subjectivation occurred in *non-discursive practices*, the social practices, casting a look at the relations of power, knowledge, in modern society, named by him as *genealogy*. As for the notion of *power*, reference is made to Foucault ([1978] 2012, p. 247), for whom: "[...] power is neither the source nor the origin of discourse. Power is something that operates through discourse, since discourse itself is an element in a strategic device of power relations".

In examining the filmic materiality in focus, four *enunciative sequences* were selected, aiming to reflect on the possible relations of power, resistance, subjugation and the possible effects of truth, permeated in/by them. In addition to these reflections, with regard to this *corpus* of research, it is also important to clarify that an intertwining of discursive position among the authors (responsible for the cohesion links, according to Foucault (2003)), the producers, and the screenwriters is taken into account. In other words, in the same way that there is an interweaving of plots, characters/ enunciators[8], there is the same as an author position, to the point of an erasure of this function. As well explains Foucault ([1969] 2009, p 279-280.):

> [the author function] it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer, but by a series of specific and complex operations; it does not simply refer to a real individual, it can simultaneously give rise to several egos, to various subject-positions which different classes of individuals may come to occupy.

According to these arguments, this multiplicity of subject/author positions reveals its dispersion, besides so many other multiple dispersions promoted by the films and series created in the plan of this Cinematographic Universe. According to the analysis of four selected *enunciative sequences*, the transmission of political, religious (Judeo-Christian), scientific (with emphasis on the power of weapons technology) discourses are emphasized and, as these films reach high box office numbers, their discursive circulation occurs worldwide. Apart from these discourses, the re-updating[9] (FOUCAULT, ([1969], 2009) of superheroes, the dissemination of power, of the American way of life are verified. Exposure to these discourses can induce viewers of this filmography to consider this way of life as a model to be followed, promoting the possible homogenization of the history of the present, in relation to multiple peoples, to multiple cultures (SAID, 2007).

And, by returning to Norse myths (the transformation of Thor and Loki into characters, between hero and villain), the filmic discourse recalls the image of demigods, from other worlds (Asgard). These images are added to the presence of superheroes, in an action "against" villainy, death, and aiming achieving peace, holding power. By promoting this movement of characters, worlds, meanings, this film sends viewers to discourses circulated not only in official American history, but also in the multiple histories of the present. Because this reference is used, it is understood that the story runs through this entire filmography, placing its audience in situations corresponding to the order of the day.

This memory game, between the past and the present, according to Foucault ([1974] 2009), is consistent with one of the functions of cinema and television: "recoding popular memory". Also according to the French philosopher ([1974] 2009, p. 341), at the time the interview entitled *Anti-retro* took place, the history was under the yoke of a battle, in the sense that there is a great need to "stereotype, to strangle" *popular memory*, aiming for people to interpret the present moment *under the same perspective*, from what he called an *interpretation key of the present*, consisting of what he called the *recoding of popular memory.* In other words, cinema and television make it possible to build memories in people, showing them not what they really were, "but what is necessary for them to remember that they were" (FOUCAULT, [1974] 2009, p. 331). In this case, as already mentioned, these films, in addition to entertainment, the consequent achievement of high levels of box office in the world, consist of a *remembrance* of American/world historical facts, causing a great movement between *memory* and *forgetting*. As Foucault ([1969] 1997) argues, the *remaining statements* are guaranteed, because of its movement in a number of supports and material techniques (book, for example); according to certain types of institutions. In this case, these statements are repeatedly used by the cinematographic media.

It is also recognized that this entanglement of discursive events, in the context of narratives, results from a discursive strategy (FOUCAULT, [1982] 2013) used by its subjects/authors/producers/screenwriters and propagated by the cinematographic media, a communication vehicle, with the purpose of wide dissemination and obtaining box office. In line with Foucault ([1982] 2013, p. 294), among other meanings, one can understand the "power strategy" as being "the set of means operated to make or maintain a device of power".

Still as Foucault ([1982] 2013, p. 294) defends: "We can then decipher in terms of 'strategies' the mechanisms used in *power relations*" (emphasis added

[7] "Discursive practice" [...] it is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function. (FOUCAULT, [1969], 1972, p. 117).

[8] When the character/enunciator relationship is placed, the perspective of the *position* these subjects assume in the film is worked on, that of characters in the narration. It is understood that the subject enunciates from a social place.

[9] "[...] 're-updating': the reinsertion of a discourse in a domain of generalization, application or transformation that is new to it" (FOUCAULT, [1969] 2009, p. 284).

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by the researcher). Similarly, as a *strategic* resource, all this filmography (in relation to the other films) can be identified by the thematic bias, a *discursive field* (FOUCAULT, ([1969] 1997), because the afore mentioned overlapping of plots, characters, objects, spaces, times, throughout its four phases[10]. As for the concept of *discursive field*, Foucault ([1969] 1972, p. 27 -28) [11] explains as follows:

> The analysis of thought is always allegorical in relation to the discourse that it employs. Its question is unfailingly: what was being said in what was said? The analysis of the discursive field is orientated in a quite different way; we must grasp the statement in the exact specificity of its occurrence; determine its conditions of existence, fix at least its limits, establish its correlations with other statements that may be connected with it, and show what other forms of statement it excludes. We do not seek below what is manifest the Half silent murmur of another discourse; we must show why it could not be other than it was, in what respect it is exclusive of any other, how it assumes, in the midst of others and in relation to them, a place that no other could occupy. The question proper to such an analysis might be formulated in this way: what is this specific existence that emerges from what is said and nowhere else?

This *field of discursive events* (the four films of "The Avengers") emerges from the MCU, in which the stories of superheroes, aliens, demigods and other characters[12] are based. They result, then, in publications made by Marvel Entertainment, distributed by Disney and Buena Vista. And, because this object of study is inserted in this Universe, it is important to contemplate it, paying attention to the functioning of discursive strategies, the relationships that link technology to power, all of this initially conveyed by the cinematographic media. Then, in order to carry out the analysis of the *corpus*, proposed in this introduction, according to a theoretical-methodological exposition, an attempt is made to answer three guiding research questions: which truth effects are produced from this film circulation? How are the heroes and villains' images produced in this filmic materiality? What is the relationship between film media and the 'history of the present'?

This work, then, for its intended purpose, publication of partial research results, is divided into two items, in addition to this introduction and final considerations: 1. The film "The Avengers", a contextual and discursive view; 2. The contemplation of the film, brief discourse analysis, according to a theoretical-methodological bias.

I. The Film "The Avengers", a Contextual and Discursive View

First, it is explained that the contextual view that is intended to be built in this item does not refer to the search for origin, nor the cause of a given event/scene. On the contrary, it seeks the space of a dispersion (of discourse, history, time), in the words of Foucault ([1969] 1977), for whom there is a contrast between a global History and a general History. While, with the first, the researcher approaches structuralism, in an analysis of a continuous discourse, of an original subject; with the second, he approaches post-structuralism, in the search for a new temporality, trying to "attempt to define a particular site by the exteriority of its vicinity (FOUCAULT, [1969] 1972, p. 17).

Regarding the investigated *discursive field*, according to an archaeological and genealogical look, as stated in the introduction, the objective is, then, to situate the reader, recovering some information about this filmography, in the sense of seeking to understand *the exteriority of its vicinity*. The film "The Avengers" comes from the Comics Universe. Marvel's first superhero characters were created in the 1939s; the first avenger, Captain America, came from the hands of Joe Simon (Screenwriter and cartoonist of the comic books) and Jack Kirby in 1941, becoming a great sales success. It was not a very favorable socio-political scenario, due to the Second World War, but, at the same time, this character would guarantee the image of an American soldier fighting in defense of his people and freedom, in the sense of materializing the supposed American heroes of that war.

The other characters appear in the 1960s, period of the so-called Cold War, which started after World War II[13]. Despite recognizing the displacement of the channel because these stories are being disseminated, because there is a partial break with the Comics, it is important to pay attention to the historical context of the appearance of these characters, because war speeches are components of its creation. But, just as there is a shift in the channel from which the films are aired (with respect to Comic Books, Print and Cinema), there is a similar shift in history, because the film "The Avengers" (April 2012) hits the cinema screens ten years and seven months after the attack on the Twin Towers. In this sense, there are other historical aspects that

[10] The Marvel Cinematographic Universe currently has four phases, with the launch of the Wanda vision series, on March 6, 2021, on streaming Disney+ (Brazil). This series is connected to films previously released by Marvel Entertainment.

[11] Work translated from French to English by A. M. Sheridan Smith.

[12] All characters are created in the light of socio-political, socio-historical events of their times. It is as if, suddenly, this Universe constituted the mirror of the American society, with its social, economic, political, historical conflicts (FOUCAULT, 1999).

[13] The Cold War took place between the two major political blocs in the world at that time: the United States, the Soviet Union, in a dispute for political, economic, ideological, military hegemony in the world. At the same time, the then President Kennedy was assassinated. In the following year (1964), Lyndon Johnson assumes the presidency of the US government, resolves that the United States should be directly involved in the Vietnam war, which ended in 1974. The Cold War, however, continued until 1989, with the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall.

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approach to the film, but in the same way as the speeches about the Cold War, the one from Vietnam were remembered in the Comics, the events of the Twin Towers are present in the filmography under study. It consists, then, in an installation of American memory reconnecting the past of the Cold War, the Second World War to the said act of Terrorism occurred with the Twin Towers.

It is also understood that the stories that make up the Marvel Cinematographic Universe are not necessarily an extension of the Comics, despite referring to characters from that Universe, there are, as already pointed out, other producers, screenwriters in their productions, implying a constant resignification process. Moreover, in filmic materiality, there are other languages to be observed, because between the verbal and the non-verbal signs, there are moving images, light, sound. All of this implies a succession of selections, choices, an assembly expression, thus determining the manipulation process, giving cinema a language that produces meanings, but not necessarily reproducing the real (BERNARDET, 1985).

The Universes in which these characters/ enunciators live, in turn, configure a broad framework of discursive genres (Comic books, movies, graphic novel, TV series)[14], moving, in effect, a large publishing, cinematographic and television market. The film now analyzed, under the direction of Joss Whedon, produced by Kevin Feige, resulted in very relevant box office indices[15], which led him to winning awards such as the Oscar and the BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts).

As noted, the first film in the saga "The Avengers" brings to the screen several superheroes: Captain America, Black Widow (Natasha Romanoff), Hawkeye (Barton), Iron Man (Tony Stark), Hulk[16] (Banner). The last two, more than superheroes, are scientists. In addition to their presence, as stated, Thor and Loki enter the scene[17], demigods, coming from Norse mythology; that, the thunder god, represents the force of nature. However, like the other characters, Thor figures as a superhero, essentially Earth protector, suggesting an analogy between superheroes and mythological demigods; there is, thus, a change in the discursive position of this character/enunciator (from mythological demigod to superhero).

In this context, while this change of position is observed, the discourse about the myth is verified, in a demonstration of the power of the demigods against the frailty of men, even when they are placed in the position of superheroes, like, for example, in ES_1, Captain America. This speech can be observed during a dialogue between Captain America and Natasha Romanoff about the rescue of Loki by Thor (44:20). In this dialogue, this superheroine puts Loki and Thor on the level of the gods, at the same time she diminishes the Captain's power as a superhero. On the other hand, Captain America counters this position, reaffirming his probable belief in the Judeo-Christian faith, as shown in the dialogue below:

(ES_1: 44:31)[18] Natasha: - I'd sit this one out, Cap.

C. A.: I don't see how I can.

Natasha: These guys come from legend. They're basically gods.

C. A.: There's only one God, ma'am. And I'm pretty sure he doesn't dress like that.

After this dialogue, Captain America jumps out of the Quinjet[19] on the move, meets Thor and Iron Man, in a fight for the dispute over the recovery of the prisoner Loki; manages to appease the fight between Iron Man and Thor, confirming his position as a hero in search of discipline and development of war strategy. This image of an American superhero soldier is built across filmography. In this sense, it is important to look at an analogy elaborated by Foucault ([1975] 1997), when working on genealogy, "a correlative history of the modern soul and a new power to judge [...]", compares the ideal soldier's image in the early 17th century, showing signs of vigor and courage, to the second half of the same century: a manufactured soldier, a machine needed. Temporal differences aside, the sum of the characteristics of the two 17th century soldiers results in a possible construction of Captain America. Characters related to dignity, the commitment to one's own country complement the psychological traits of this character, whose costume represents the American flag itself. The sum of these characterizations can lead the viewer to establish a comparison between this superhero and the country he represents. His name, then, would confirm this representation: Captain America.

Recovering the beginning of the film, Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), director of S.H.I.E.L.D. [20], gathered the above-referenced superheroes to face the villainy of Loki (Thor's adoptive brother) and his alien army, whose objective was to rule humans by subjugating them. Phil Coulson (Clark Gregg) probably contacted Fury to visit the S.H.I.E.L.D. research center, where scientists,

[14] As already stated, these films circulate through multiple channels: cinema, TV (open and closed), Disney+ streaming. Similarly, series can surface on TVs (open, closed), on streaming Disney+. As was mentioned, DVD is considered a place of storage or means of transport and access to the films.

[15] Ticket office in the US in 2012 - $572 300 463.

[16] Sequentially, played by Chris Evans, Scarlett Johansson, Jeremy Renner, Robert Downey Jr. and Mark Ruffalo.

[17] In order of citation, interpreted by Chris Hemsworth, by Tom Hiddleston.

[18] The enunciative sequences were taken from the film available on Disney+ streaming.

[19] Advanced airplane model, used by S.H.I.E.L.D.

[20] *Supreme Headquarters of International Espionage and Law-Enforcement Division*, a creation of Stan Lee.

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including Dr. Erik Selvig (Stellan Skarsgard), had detected the voluntary functioning of the Tesseract[21], an energy source of unknown potential. The operation of this object resulted in the opening of a portal, from which Loki reappeared, after exile, initiated in the film "Thor" (sixth film), establishing a bridge between these two films. After a fight between the guardians of the research center, Loki obtains the Tesseract, an object desired by him and by the Chitauri, an alien army. To do so, using your scepter[22], he controlled the minds of several people from S.H.I.E.L.D., among which were the Hawkeye and the scientist, already mentioned. Because of all this, the Avengers Initiative was triggered, bringing together the superheroes who, in Fury's words, were made up of "remarkable people", concerning courage, strength, knowledge, as opposed to the vulnerability of the human being.

During his exile, Loki allied himself with the Chitauri, aliens whose purpose was to corroborate the conquest of the Universe, together with Thanos, by obtaining one of the objects coveted by this god, the Tesseract, in exchange for which these aliens agreed to allow for Loki to wage war on Earth, in order to rule it. The Avengers, then, endeavored to prevent the realization of Loki and the Chitauri's goal, in an epic war between humans, superheroes, Norse demigods and aliens. All this in the midst of a technological refinement of great proportions, managed, mainly, by Iron Man, on the one hand; on the other, by the Chitauri.

The constant *visibility*[23] of aliens, mythological gods, in turn, brings up the discourse about the existence of life in other worlds, in a reference to the biblical words, according to which "In my Father's house are many mansions [...]" (John 14:2). This remission also promotes the dissemination of ufology[24].

At the end of the film, Iron Man emerged as the great hero of the story, when carrying the missile, launched over New York, to the Chitauri mothership, thus destroying the alien army, at the same time that the Black Widow managed to close the aliens' gateway to Earth. In that period of time, the Iron Man managed to return to Earth, in free fall, amortized by the Hulk, scientist superhero, supposedly immortal. Once the battle is over, the idea of continuity of the stories is presented, as the fates of these characters are shown: Thor rehears the Tesseract and returned to Asgard with Loki as his prisoner; Banner (Hulk) followed with Stark (Iron Man), supposedly to the Stark research facility; Rogers (Captain America) distanced himself on his motorbike; Barton (Hawkeye) and Romanoff (Black Widow) returned to S.H.I.E.L.D.

Despite a brief explanation of the plot, this film was contemplated repeatedly, trying to understand the discourses circulated in this/by this materiality, as its process of construction of meanings, the events around it, were triggered. If, on the one hand, the researcher is interested in the entire relationship between the film investigated and US history, both in the past and in the present; on the other hand, it is important to study how this story relates to the events surrounding the moment the film was released. As a result of these relationships, the possible re-updating of meaning are observed. As Foucault puts it ([1970] 2003), discourses sometimes become so visible that they are not seen. Below, continuing the reflections, an attempt is made to relate theory and analysis of other *enunciative sequences*.

II. The Contemplation of the Film, Brief Discourse Analysis, According to a Theoretical-Methodological Bias

As already mentioned, to think about this film with Foucault, this philosopher's concepts about power, the effects of truth, the processes of subjectivation, resistance/subjugation were mobilized, seeking to carry out an archaeological and genealogical analysis. From this mobilization, we tried to reflect not only on 'who we are today', but also point to the need for 'refusal of what we are' (FOUCAULT, [1982] 2013). As already pointed out, like this philosopher, cinema is understood as an effective means of *recoding popular memory*, however, it is worth reflecting on the appropriation of this means by a type of rationality, on a wide scale of dissemination, as set out above.

Still in line with Foucault ([1973] 2013), in turn, discourse analysis is understood at two levels: at a given level, regular set of linguistic facts; on the other, controversial and strategic. Therefore, he proposes a discourse analysis "[...] as games, strategic games, action and reaction, question and answer, domination and avoidance, as well as fighting" ([1972] 2013, p. 19). In order to make a discursive analysis of a filmic materiality, the Foucauldian concept of *statement* is also considered, materialized *in any form of recording*. According to Foucault ([1969] 1997), with the analysis of the statements, the intention is not to make a total, exhaustive description of the 'language' or 'what was said'. According to this philosopher ([1969]1997, p. 104 - 105), describing this level comprises "[...] the analysis of the relationship between the statement and the spaces of differentiation, in which it itself makes the differences appear". The definition of *statement*, made by Foucault ([1969] 1972, p. 28) is then brought up.

[21] This object provokes the fight between the S.H.I.E.L.D. and the H.I.D.R.A., since the movie "Captain America: The First Avenger" (2011). H.I.D.R.A. is a Nazi organization dedicated to the conquest of the world. It was founded in ancient times, initially as a cult worshiping the Hive, a powerful Inhuman, exiled to the planet Maveth.

[22] The scepter is the weapon used by Loki in The Avengers. Loki received this scepter from Ronan and used it mainly to control the minds of Hawkeye and several other people.

[23] In the second item, we discussed more particularly about this dimension of the device, according to Deleuze (2015).

[24] "Body of knowledge and hypotheses about the so-called UFOs; ovniology" (Portuguese dictionary, HOUAISS ELECTRONIC, 2009).

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> [...] a statement is always an event that neither the language (langue) nor the meaning can quite exhaust. [...], *it opens up to itself a residual existence in the field of a memory, or in the materiality of manuscripts, books, or any other form of recording*; secondly, because, like every event, it is unique, yet subject to repetition, transformation, and reactivation; thirdly, because it is linked not only to the situations that provoke it, and to the consequences occasioned by it, but at the same time, and in accordance with a quite different modality, to the statements that precede and follow it. (researcher's emphasis)

According to this definition, the film "The Avengers" is considered as a *statement* that, in turn, resumes previous statements, within the MCU's own filmography; refers to new statements, which are usually punctuated in post-credit scenes. During the plot, there is also a relationship between past and present *events*, in a constant process of discourse *re-updating*. Also, according to Foucault's definition (([1969]1972), the statement is placed in opposition to other units, such as the phrase, the proposition, the speech acts; it gives possibilities for the existence of these units, because, for him, these units only configure a *statement* through the enunciative function. In this way, he concludes the concept of statement: "[...] (the statement) it is not in itself a unit, but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible units, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space ([1969]1972, p. 87).

Still from the point of view of archaeological research, Foucault ([1978] 2012, p. 251 - 252) explains its meaning: "[...] type of research that is dedicated to extracting discursive events as if they had been registered in a file". According to Castro (2016, p. 43): "The archive is, [...], the system of historical conditions of statements possibilities". As stated, Foucault ([1978] 2012) defends that the discourses, the subjects, are constituted by a deep historical dimension, the result of what was said centuries, years, months, weeks ago. As Foucault ([1969] 1972, p.124) explains:

> Lastly, enunciative analysis assumes that the phenomena of recurrence are taken into account. Every statement involves a field of antecedent elements in relation to which it is situated, but which it is able to reorganize and redistribute according to new relations. [...] places this enunciative past as an acquired truth, as an event that has occurred, as a form that can be modified, as material to be transformed, or as an object that can be spoken about, etc.

With this perspective, Foucault ([1978] 2012) proposes to bring history to the dimension of the event, in search of singularity, rarity, connections, power plays. Given this character of history, the Foucauldian concept of the subject is reiterated (([1969]1972) regarding its decentering character, consecutively, its distancing from the existence of an original subject, an embryonic view of the present. Such perspective results in the establishment of new temporalities, in the search for dispersion, for discontinuity. Similarly, under this analytical bias, Foucault ([1973] 2013) argues that the constitution of the subject occurs within history, asking how man builds his own existence: the subjects, the objects are constructed discursively based on what is said about them. Also, in accordance with Foucault ([1973] 2013, p. 18), "[...] The subject of knowledge itself has a history, a relationship of the subject with the object, or, more clearly, the truth itself has its history". Still in accordance with Foucault "[...] the historical constitution of a subject of knowledge through a discourse taken as a set of strategies that are part of social practices" (FOUCAULT, [1973] 2013, p. 20).

As for the genealogical period, according to Castro (2016), it consists of an investigation that enables the study of non-discursive practices, analyzing power from the point of view of power strategies and tactics[25]; places knowledge, then, in the scope of struggles (CASTRO, 2016, p. 184-185). This period is related to the second axis of discourse analysis, according to Foucault, observing the power of the sovereign to disciplinary power; from punitive society to disciplinary society; the organization of the techniques of disciplinary society in institutions such as prisons, schools, factories. As a result of these investigations, Foucault ([1975] 1997) argues that the body is the target of the discipline. However, it is important to highlight that, for Foucault ([1973] 2013, p. 10), power is not limited to the State, it is found everywhere, it is tentacular: "[...] it is, at the same time, economic, political, judicial and epistemological".

As mentioned, the Foucauldian concept of discourse also overlaps the event: the politicians, to which power is linked and guided. Due to this overlap, Foucault ([1978] 2012, p. 248) defines the event in this way: "[...] it is the fact that someone said something at a given moment. It is not the meaning that I seek to highlight, but the function that can be assigned once this thing has been said at that moment. This is what I call an event" (emphasis added by the researcher). By positioning herself in favor of the concept of "discourse as a series of events", the researcher places herself in the dimension of history, insofar as, as this philosopher ([1978] 2012, p. 231) argues, one seeks to understand "[...] why and how are established relations between discursive events". Discourse, likewise, is considered as "a strategic field, an operator", according to Foucault ([1976] 2011, p. 220 – 221):

> Here, it is a question of showing discourse as a strategic field in which the elements, tactics and weapons do not cease to move from one field to another, to permute among adversaries, to turn against those who use. It is as it is common that the discourse can become at the same time a place and an instrument of confrontation.

[25] [...] Foucault introduces a distinction between tactics and strategies: tactics are the local rationalities of power in particular cases; strategies, on the other hand, are larger, systemic or global patterns of power (LYNCH, 2018, p. 39).

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[...]

Discourse is for the relation of forces not just an inscription surface, but an operator.

Conceiving the discourse as *a strategic field*, Foucault ([1982] 2013) is resumed, according to which there is a concatenation between the power relations and the fight strategy, as those become a confrontation between adversaries. The relationships of adversity, in turn, within society, makes it possible to open spaces for the *use of power mechanisms*: "Instability, therefore, that makes the same processes, the same events, the same transformations possible to be deciphered so much within a history of struggles as well as in the history of relations and power devices" ([1982] 2013, p 294 - 295).

It is in the relationship between mechanisms of power and strategy that the cinematographic media takes place, as it conveys *recurrent* discourses, enabling processes of discursive *updating*, that is, the production of new meanings, despite the *recurrence*. This applies to the filmic materiality under analysis, given the crossing of said and forgotten discourses: those of myth, slavery, war, violence, politics, science, establishing a movement between the past and the present. In the socio-historical, political, economic context of April 27, 2012, the film "The Avengers" was released. It is understood that the story of these characters/enunciators (the superheroes, demigod Thor, in the epic battle against the alien villains and the demigod Loki) is based on the need to recall the dualism between *good* and *evil*, with the consequent victory for *good*, a resurgence of the American ideal of fighting for freedom. This recollection is set mainly between New York's space and ground, where the September 11, 2001 attack took place.

In addition to this setting, an epic battle scenario recalls the attack on the Twin Towers. This time, in 2012, the city is invaded by aliens, the Chitauri, who enter this planet through the opening of a portal, originating from the highest point of the Stark Tower, a monument in the center of New York, where the armors are projected, Tony Stark's (I.M) weapons arsenal. Hence the importance of the existence of great energy potential, driven by the Arc Reactor[26]. This Tower represents not only the high power of US technological armament development, but also the new yorker billionaire himself (an image of economic power), in an approximation with the function of the Twin Towers, a financial center in this city, in the United States.

This film premieres in April 2012, five months after the inauguration of the September 11th Memorial[27], open to the public, on September 11th, 2011, ten years after the attack on the aforementioned Towers. This attack (apart from three others) resulted in the US invasion of Afghanistan territory, starting the War on Terror, in order to overthrow the Taliban, for having sheltered the al-Qaeda terrorists. The United States obtained adhesion from some countries against the said Terror. Regarding this event, Said (2007, position 121 – 127), in addition to reflecting on the horrors caused on both sides of this conflict, analyzes the image constructions of the Orientals, promoted mainly by the mainstream media, as a consequence of this War:

These days US bookstores are crammed with shoddy prints boasting alarmist headlines about Islam and terror, dissected Islam, the Arab menace and the Muslim menace, all written by political polemicists who claim to have knowledge offered to them and to others by experts who supposedly have reached the core of these strange and remote eastern people who have been such a terrible thorn in "our" flesh. All this bellicose wisdom is accompanied by the ubiquitous CNNs and Foxes of this world, along with mirific amounts of evangelical and right-wing radio stations, as well as countless tabloids and even medium-sized newspapers, all recycling the same unverifiable fables and the same vast generalizations with the purpose of shaking "America" against the foreign devil.

As noted, in a process of constant remembrance of this scene of destruction, an epic battle takes place between superheroes and aliens, the Chitauri. The characterization of this enemy army sends viewers to images of hideous creatures, typical of horror stories. These beings are commanded by an energetic force, the mothership, subject to destruction by the missile, taken by the hands of Iron Man, towards the open portal, from the functioning of the Tesseract. These beings are also ruled by a Norse demigod, Loki, representative of the lie, of betrayal. Paying attention to the two events (the "terrorist" attack on the Twin Towers, the "alien" attack on New York), in a gesture of going in search of the function that can be attributed to these characterizations at that moment, an imagery approximation between aliens and Muslims, concerning the axis of villainy, evil, in history (of the country; of superheroes); the strength of superheroes, of good, on the other hand, is capable of destroying the first ones. They constitute the victims' defenders, while they are the ones who take revenge.

(ES_2 06:35 - 07:42): dialogue between Loki and Fury (When Fury tries to keep the Tesseract)

Loki: Please don't. I still need that.

Fury: This doesn't have to get any messier.

Loki: Of course, it does. I've come too far for anything else. I am Loki, of Asgard, and I am burdened with glorious purpose.

[26] In the comics, the "Arc Reactor" is a creation of Tony Stark and physicist Yin Sen. They developed it as an electromagnetic plate to power Iron Man's first armor. And, according to the movie "The Avengers", this energy source is able to neutralize the energy emanating from the Tesseract, a fact that occurred in the scene in which Loki also tries to manipulate Iron Man, but is unsuccessful.

[27] 9/11 Memorial & Museum.

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Selvig: Loki, brother of Thor.
Fury: We have no quarrel with your people.
Loki: An ant has no quarrel with boots.
Fury: Are you planning to step on us?
Loki: I come with glad tidings of a world made free.
Fury: Free from what?
Loki: Freedom. Freedom is life's great lie. Once you accept that, in your heart, (Loki dominates Dr. Selvig with the Scepter) you will know peace.
Fury: Yeah, you say "peace", I kind of think you mean the other thing.

This dialogue marks the passage of Loki, representative of villainy and betrayal, through the portal opened with the energy of the Tesseract. Initially, there is a great attack on the first ideal chosen by the American people: freedom. According to Loki, "Freedom is the great lie of life" and, consequently, intends to dominate the Earth, transforming its inhabitants into ruled beings. The Avengers appear, in this context, as the only ones capable of offering resistance. It is understood, however, that, in this battle, there is not necessarily a dualism *good* versus *evil*, both sides are forces in search of obtaining power, of domination over the other. According to Foucault ([1977] 2012, p. 243), *power is always there*, however, he admits that it does not consist of an indomitable force of domination. And he recognizes the functioning of power in the social body, stating that there are "among the meshes of your network, beaches of elementaries freedoms". And adds:

> [...] there are no power relations without resistance; [...]: resistance to power does not have to come from the outside to be real, but it is not caught in the trap because it is a compatriot of power. It exists all the more as it is there where the power is; it is, therefore, like him, multiple and integrable to global strategies" (p. 243 – 244).

The plot of the "Avengers" transports spectators to the scene of the attack on the Twin Towers, prompting them to glimpse the possibility of an immediate counterattack against the forces considered evil. In this sense, revenge is interpreted as justice, as resistance, after all, as Iron Man well warns, in a dialogue with Loki, if the heroes cannot protect the Earth, they avenge it (01:41:31). This perspective corroborates Foucault's argument ([1977] 2012, p. 243-234), according to which *resistance is a compatriot of power*. There is, then, an erasure of the sense of revenge, as they emerge as protectors, in search of peace, of justice.

(ES_3) Loki: The Chitauri are coming. Nothing will change that. What have I to fear?
Stark: The Avengers. That's what we call ourselves. We're sort of like a team. "Earth's mightiest heroes" – type thing.
Loki: Yes, I have met them.
Stark: It takes us a while to get any traction, I'll give you that one. But let's do a head count, here. Your brother, the demigod, a super Soldier, a living legend who kind of lives up to legend. A man with breathtaking anger-management issues, a couple of master assassins, and you, big fella, you've managed to piss off every single one of them.
Loki: That was the plan.
Stark: Not a great plan. When They come, and They will, they'll come for you.
Loki: I have an army.
Stark: We have Hulk.
Loki: I thought the beast had wandered off.
Stark: You're missing the point. There is no throne. There is no version of this where you come out on top. Maybe your army comes and maybe it's too much for us, but it's all on you. Because if we can't protect the Earth, you can be damn well sure we'll avenge it. [...]

First, we consider the entry revenge, taken from the dictionary "Houaiss Electronic" (2009), in Portuguese: a "[...] harmful act, practiced in one's own name or another, by someone who was actually or presumably offended or injured, in retaliation against the one who is or would be the cause of this damage; retaliation, revenge". In this symbolic clash between revenge and resistance, there is also the argument of "precaution", used by Fury, against the forces coming from other planets. A justification for the exploitation of the Tesseract's energetic potential, with the purpose of building weapons of mass destruction, given the urgency of *protection* mechanisms against enemies from other planets. This argument, in turn, refers the interlocutors to the film Thor, corroborating the connection with the other MCU stories. In this way, there is an erasure of the sense of revenge, as they emerge as the protectors of the Earth, in search of peace and justice. As the sense of *revenge* is replaced by that of *endurance*, it elevates the Avengers to the rank of heroes; the Chitauri, Loki, for that of villains. This movement of meaning also erases the fight for the coveted object, the Tesseract, arising from disputes (H.I.D.R.A. versus S.H.I.E.L.D.) in the times of the World War II.

As for such a mechanism, Foucault ([1975 – 1976] 1997, p. 73) warns: "Under the forgetfulness, the illusions or the lies that make us believe in the needs of nature or the functional requirements of the order, war must be found: it is the cipher of peace". In this direction, Enunciative Sequence 4 (ES_4: 1:06:00 - 1:10:00) is presented, which takes the viewer to the discourse on the need to manufacture weapons of mass destruction, as a way to protect the Earth against possible alien attacks. Furthermore, in this ES, Banner characterizes the Avengers as follows: "[...] we are a chemical mixture that produces chaos. We are a time bomb".

Stark: [...] What is "Phase 2"?
Captain American: Phase 2 is S.H. I. E. L. D. uses the Cube to make weapons [...]
Fury: Rogers, we gathered everything related to the Tesseract. This does not mean that we're making...
Stark: I'm sorry, Nick. What were you lying?

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Captain America: I was wrong, Director. The world hasn't changed a bit.
Banner: Did you know about this? (Banner addresses Natasha).
[...]
Banner: I'd like to know why S.H. I. E. L. D is using the Tesseract to build weapons of mass destruction.
Fury: (pointing to Thor) Because of him.
Thor: Me?
Fury: Last year, Earth had a visitor from another planet who had a grudge match that leveled a small town. We learned that not only are we not alone, but we are hopelessly, hilariously, outgunned.
Thor: My people want nothing but peace with your planet.
Fury: But you're not the only people out there, are you? And you're not the only threat. The world's filling up with people who can't be matched, that can't be controlled.
Captain American: Like you controlled the Cube?
Thor: Your work with the Tesseract is what drew Loki to it, and his allies. It is a signal to all the realms that the Earth is ready for a higher form of war.
Captain American: A higher form?
Fury: (addressing Thor) You forced our hand. We had to come up with something.
Stark: A nuclear deterrent, because that always calms everything right down.
Fury: Remind me again how you made your fortune, Stark.
[...]
Thor: I thought humans were more evolved than this.
Fury: Excuse me, did we come to your planet and blow stuff up?
Thor: You treat your champions with such mistrust.
Natasha: Are you boys really that naive? S.H.I.E.L.D. monitors potential threats.
Banner: Captain America's on threat watch?
Natasha: We all are.
[...]
Thor: (addressing Fury) You speak of control, yet you court chaos.
Banner: That's his *modus operandi* (M.O.), isn't it? I mean, what are we, a team? No, *we're a Chemical mixture that makes chaos. We're a time bomb.*

At this point, it is important to bring up the discussion of Foucault ([1974] 2009), presented in *Anti-retro*, about the creation of the hero by cinema, in fight films. He argues that cinema repeats the strategy used by history itself, at school: "how history came to support the discourse it supports and to recover what happened, except for a procedure that was that of the epic, that is, narrating itself as a story of heroes?". He defends that there are no heroes, because there was no popular struggle, what he calls positive struggles, *resistance* struggles. Hence the need, in the specific case of this filmography, to effectively resume the sense of *avenger*, "a time bomb" ready to explode at mediant any danger, in the words of Hulk. However, this is not always considered by viewers of this Universe's filmography, who are often unaware of what is said, but attentive to actions.

As already discussed, these discourses are initially disseminated by the cinematographic media, in large scales of circulation. As noted above, observing the fundamentals of Deleuze (2015), Foucault (2008), Gregolin (2016), this media is categorized as a device of power. According to Foucault (2008, p. 244), the devices are heterogeneous: "[...] encompass(es) discourses, institutions, architectural organizations, regulatory decisions, laws, measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions". The device incorporates the said and the unsaid, the saying and the doing; it constitutes a network connecting all these elements. These networks are related to power, to the reproduction of knowledge. As Gregolin (2016) teaches, the device is conceived as a strategy, depending on a certain historical moment.

Deleuze (2015), reviewing the concept of device in Foucault's work, argues that a device is characterized by three dimensions: the first refers to the fact that every device has its *visibility curves*. These are mainly related to studies derived from Bentham's Panopticon, primarily to "to see to be seen"[28]. Examining the present object of study under this prism, it is believed that this cinematographic *visibility* can be perceived, firstly, by the number of spectators who have watched the plot, resulting in a generation of high box office rates. In addition to this perspective, attention is drawn to the existence of *visibility curves*, when taking into account the actors/actresses and target audience connection that, despite the physical distance, can be identified if one considers the advent of social networks. It is also important to note the fact that this film is shown repeatedly, both on closed and open televisions, in addition to the *streaming* platforms that make this filmography available; DVDs. As a result, the fields of knowledge mentioned above are equally exposed.

The second dimension refers to *enunciation*: every device presents an aspect of an excessive saying, in the same way that it erases it. This game between saying and not saying of statements produces the *enunciability curves* (DELEUZE, 2015). Regarding this dimension, it is understood that the narrative structure itself, in the *blockbuster*, is responsible for this movement of saying and erasing, as the stories are presented as linear. But, when relating them to the events with which it traces proximity, from a perspective of history, politics, economy, it is also observed the erasure of discussions concerning these fields of knowledge.

Based on these two dimensions (visibility and enunciability), Deleuze (2015) states that devices have their light regimes, those of *sayability*, transforming

[28] "The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the seeing-being seen pair: in the peripheral ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, you can see everything, without ever being seen" (FOUCAULT, [1975] 1997, p. 167).

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something very visible, but, at the same time, hiding other things. This results from the fact that, in every device, what is said and what is shown are controlled by the powers. As a consequence, the third dimension of devices is related to this control: the *lines of force*, capable of controlling *visibility* and *sayability*; they consist of the controlling powers of what can and cannot be said. In this sense, it is understood that, with regard to the *lines of force*, considering the control of discourses disseminated by the media, there is a relationship with the interdiction of discourses. And, as a result of this interdiction, the so-called *lines of flight* occur (FOUCAULT, 2008).

These *lines* correspond to what Deleuze (2015) considers the fourth dimension of a device: the *lines of subjectivation*, as they arise as an effect of the games between saying, showing, and hiding. This subjectivation produced by the devices is in motion. As for the analyzed film, the subjectivation process can be seen in the interactions between those in love with the MCU, in cyberspaces, such as *Instagram*, *Facebook*, *YouTube*, for example. Thinking with the aforementioned authors, it is understood that the cinematographic media consists of a device of power, as it conveys institutionally marked discourses, it constitutes a network capable of interconnecting the elements to which Foucault (2008) refers: discourses, institutions, architectural organizations etc.

Still with regard to the cinematographic media, attention is paid to its power, by promoting the *re-updating* of the discourses. Therefore, the media enables the establishment of new discourses about certain objects; to the same extent, she strives to perpetuate the *same discourses*, pointing to a movement between the *same* and the *other*. Likewise, such discourses enter a new process of production of meanings, as an event, as they are *re-updated* at different times, as movies are shown multiple times. Such gesture causes a great *movement of senses*.

III. Final Considerations

In this work, in the first instance, the object of study was presented at the time when the Universe from which it originates was observed. By situating the filmography of "The Avengers", the entanglement of the stories concerning the other films of that same Cinematographic Universe was revealed. Similarly, attention was paid to the dispersion of the subject, both in the author position (author, producer, screenwriter) and in the character/speaker position. As a result, mainly, of the entanglement of the stories, a strategic resource was identified, by making the viewers of this filmography appropriate the other stories of the MCU, at the risk of not establishing a dialogue with the threads of the plots, guided, essentially, in the relationship with objects, with areas of knowledge, with the importance of the characterization of space and time. Then, a brief characterization of the characters/enunciators was elaborated.

Concerning the theoretical-methodological aspect, the two analysis instruments were explained from the Foucauldian concepts ([1982] 2013): the archaeological and the genealogical research, on which the analyzes were based. In short, archeology is interested in the discursive sphere, it opens up structures for temporal discontinuities, dispersion, imbalances; it is guided by a perspective of pluralization. In this sense, the guiding concepts of the analysis were clarified: the two aspects of the discourse, one linguistic; the other, a strategic field, an operator. Likewise, a statement was defined, made concrete in the form of any record. From this definition, the film was considered an enunciation, analyzing four *enunciative sequences*. In the light of Deleuze, Foucault, Gregolin, the cinematographic media was characterized as a device of power, investigating in the filmic whole, in the historicity of its surroundings, the four dimensions pointed out by Deleuze.

Foucault's second investigative axis, *genealogical* research, in turn, encompasses non-discursive practices. In this research, this philosopher brings power relations, the production of truths to the scope of the analysis. In the same measure, the effect of truth was observed, in the scope of the *resistance* of "The Avengers", erasing the meaning of that title. This erasure occurs, mainly, because they demonstrate intellectual, economic, weapons power, physical strength, all with the function of "protecting" the planet, in a supposed search for universal peace. All this amidst superheroes, Norse gods, the *Avengers Initiative*, reiterating the image of American sovereignty. These *notable Avengers* therefore recall not only the economic, political, and arms power of that nation, but the ingenuity of its heroes. When reflecting on these aspects, the first research question is answered: what effects of truths are produced from the circulation of this film?

Regarding the second question, "how are the images of heroes and villains produced in this filmic materiality?", it is understood that the dualism of *good versus evil* is induced in light of the recollection of the attacks on the Twin Towers and, consequently, on its setting, as the alien attack takes place in the center of the New York city, from the installation of the Tesseract in the Stark Tower, with great energy power to open a portal. This amounts to a surreptitious analogy: the Chitauri and Loki compared to Muslim terrorists; Thor and superheroes, to the firefighters, to the victims of that attack. Said's (2007) arguments were then brought to light, regarding the constructions of images of the Orientals, promoted by the mainstream Western media, by supporters of a reactionary right, by followers of Judeo-Christian religions.

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The answer to the third question (What is the relationship between the cinematographic media and the 'history of the present'?) concerns the fact that the media is characterized as a device of power, at the same time that it provides the constant *visibility* of official history, of the past /from the present, in order to guarantee the reproduction of meanings about these facts, 'models of truth arising from political structures', in the words of Foucault ([1973] 2013, p. 35). Also based on studies by Foucault ([1974] 2009), it was found that "recoding popular memory" is one of the functions of cinema and television. This *recording* concerns the fact that, in certain aspects, these media offer *a key to interpreting the present* to their audience, with a view to a single interpretative perspective of the history of the present. In this way, the cinematographic and television media engender memories, showing them not what these historical facts really were, "but what they need to remember that they were" (FOUCAULT, [1974] 2009, p. 331).

This perspective, guarantor of the tension between memory and forgetting, safeguards the formative discourse of the American nation itself, in the sense of asserting nationalism, the trust of this people, in the case under study, in superheroes. And, in this way, it assures the discourse about American *freedom*, the struggle of its national heroes, in favor of the realization of the *American dream*. By being repeated over and over again, they enable the construction of the image of sovereignty of this people, making the public of this Universe, on a world level, to accept the project of American society as a model to be followed. This acceptance, in turn, can lead to a process of homogenization of the history of the present, in relation to multiple peoples and cultures.

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