


A REPRESENTAÇÃO DA MULHER NA CULTURA DIGITAL: UMA ANÁLISE SEMIÓTICA DOS EPISÓDIOS NOSEDIVE E JOAN IS AWFUL DE BLACK MIRROR**THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN DIGITAL CULTURE: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE EPISODES NOSEDIVE AND JOAN IS AWFUL OF BLACK MIRROR****LA REPRESENTACIÓN DE LAS MUJERES EN LA CULTURA DIGITAL: UN ANÁLISIS SEMIÓTICO DE LOS EPISODIOS NOSEDIVE Y JOAN IS AWFUL DE BLACK MIRROR**

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RESUMO

Este artigo propõe uma análise semiótica da representação da mulher em ambientes tecnomidiáticos, a partir dos episódios Nosedive (2016) e Joan Is Awful (2023), da série Black Mirror. A pesquisa fundamenta-se na teoria dos signos de Charles Sanders Peirce e dialoga com os estudos feministas e da cultura midiática, com o objetivo de examinar como signos visuais, narrativos e performativos participam das construções discursivas do feminino sob condições de vigilância algorítmica, hiperexposição e automatização da imagem. Em Nosedive, analisa-se a performance social de uma protagonista condicionada por um sistema de reputação digital, cujos signos visuais e comportamentais revelam uma lógica de controle normativo disfarçada por uma estética de bem-estar compulsório e afetividade performada. Essa positividade obrigatória, articulada a sistemas de ranqueamento e validação pública, opera como instrumento de docilização subjetiva e mascaramento das estruturas coercitivas sob a aparência de escolha individual. Já em Joan Is Awful, observa-se a captura das vivências por algoritmos narrativos, que convertem a identidade da personagem em objeto de simulação e consumo, retirando seu controle em relação à própria imagem, em prol do entretenimento. A articulação entre a semiótica peirceana e a crítica feminista permite interpretar como a cultura digital reconfigura as representações de mulheres por meio de processos sógnicos ambíguos, regulados por convenções sociais e dispositivos técnicos. A comparação entre os episódios evidencia transformações nos modos de construção audiovisual de identidades femininas e aponta estratégias narrativas as quais sugerem rupturas possíveis frente à domesticação tecnológica da imagem da mulher.

Palavras-chave: Representação da mulher. Semiótica peirceana. Cultura digital. Black Mirror. Estudos feministas.

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes a semiotic analysis of the representation of women in technomedia environments, based on the episodes Nosedive (2016) and Joan Is Awful (2023) from the Black Mirror series. The research is based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of signs and engages with feminist and media culture studies, with the aim of examining how visual, narrative and performative signs participate in the discursive constructions of the feminine under conditions of algorithmic surveillance, hyperexposure and automation of the image. In Nosedive, the social performance of a protagonist conditioned by a digital reputation system is analyzed, whose visual and behavioral signs reveal a logic of normative control disguised by an aesthetic of compulsory well-being and performed affectivity. This mandatory positivity, articulated with ranking and public validation systems, operates as an instrument of subjective docility and masking of coercive structures under the appearance of individual choice. In Joan Is Awful, we can see the capture of experiences by narrative algorithms, which convert the character's identity into an object of simulation and consumption, removing her control over her own image, in favor of entertainment. The articulation between Peircean semiotics and feminist criticism allows us to interpret how digital culture reconfigures the representations of women through ambiguous sign processes, regulated by social conventions and technical devices. The comparison between the episodes highlights transformations in the modes of audiovisual construction of female identities and points to narrative strategies that suggest possible ruptures in the face of the technological domestication of the image of women.

Keywords: Representation of women. Peircean semiotics. Digital culture. Black Mirror. Feminist studies.

RESUMEN

Este artículo propone un análisis semiótico de la representación de las mujeres en entornos tecnomediáticos, a partir de los episodios Nosedive (2016) y Joan Is Awful (2023) de la serie Black Mirror. La investigación se fundamenta en la teoría de los signos de Charles Sanders Peirce y se vincula con los estudios feministas y de la cultura mediática, con el objetivo de examinar cómo los signos visuales, narrativos y performativos participan en las construcciones discursivas de lo femenino en condiciones de vigilancia algorítmica, hiperexposición y automatización de la imagen. En Nosedive, se analiza la actuación social de una protagonista condicionada por un sistema de reputación digital, cuyos signos visuales y comportamentales revelan una lógica de control normativo disfrazada por una estética de bienestar obligatorio y afectividad performativa. Esta positividad obligatoria, articulada con sistemas de clasificación y validación pública, opera como un instrumento de docilidad subjetiva y enmascaramiento de estructuras coercitivas bajo la apariencia de una elección individual. En Joan Is Awful, observamos la captura de experiencias por parte de algoritmos narrativos, que convierten la identidad del personaje en un objeto de simulación y consumo, quitándole el control sobre su propia imagen, en favor del entretenimiento. La articulación entre la semiótica peirceana y la crítica feminista nos permite interpretar cómo la cultura digital reconfigura las representaciones de las mujeres mediante procesos sígnicos ambiguos, regulados por convenciones sociales y dispositivos técnicos. La comparación entre los episodios destaca las transformaciones en los modos de construcción audiovisual de las identidades femeninas y señala estrategias narrativas que sugieren posibles rupturas ante la domesticación tecnológica de la imagen de las mujeres.

Palabras clave: Representación de las mujeres. Semiótica peirceana. Cultura digital. Black Mirror. Estudios feministas.

INTRODUCTION

The series *Black Mirror* (Brooker, 2011–2025), by adopting the anthological format, offers a critical overview of digital technologies and their sociocultural implications, functioning as a fictional laboratory of contemporary tensions between subjectivity, control, and mediation. Through speculative fiction, the series dramatizes plausible futures that, although seemingly distant, reflect power structures already present in everyday life, especially those related to algorithmic surveillance, the cult of the image, artificial intelligence, and the spectacularization of intimacy.

This article proposes a semiotic analysis of the representation of women in two paradigmatic episodes: *Nosedive* (season 3, 2016) and *Joan Is Awful* (season 6, 2023). Both offer scathing critiques of the ways in which media technologies participate in the production and symbolic control of the feminine, albeit under different approaches. While *Nosedive* explores a society obsessed with digital reputations and compulsory social validation, revealing the effects of gamification of affective relationships and gender performativity on social networks, *Joan Is Awful* updates this debate by thematizing the dissolution of subjective authorship in the midst of algorithmic automation and media simulation of everyday life, presenting a protagonist whose experiences are appropriated and re-enacted without consent by an intelligence artificial.

Both episodes construct regimes of visibility that directly affect female bodies, behaviors, and narratives, revealing the mechanisms by which technomedia updates historical devices of domination. Based on Charles Sanders' theory of signs, Peirce, especially the triad of icon, index, and symbol (Peirce, 2000), in dialogue with feminist criticism (Butler, 2018, 2003; McRobbie, 2020, 2009; Banet-Weiser, 2018) and the studies of visual culture (Barthes, 1991; Santaella, 2003, 2001, 2000; Sibilia, 2012, 2008), investigates how audiovisual language mobilizes signs to represent, control or tension the construction of women's identity in cyberculture.

We start from the hypothesis that *Black Mirror*, by constructing narratives of the feminine through signic processes marked by ambivalence, makes explicit the imbrication between digital technologies and sociocultural norms of gender. By comparing *Nosedive* and *Joan Is Awful*, we seek to highlight not only the thematic coherence of the series, but also the historical and technological displacements that mark the way audiovisual participates in the (re)configuration of female identities in the contemporary technocultural context.

By recognizing that the analyzed episodes dramatize socio-technical tensions linked to surveillance, performativity and aestheticization of women's representations in digital

environments, it becomes necessary to situate this study in the broader context of the research already carried out on Black Mirror and its implications of meaning. Several works have explored the critical potential of the series as a mirror of contemporary anxieties around technology, data culture, and new forms of subjectivation.

In order to theoretically support this analysis, it is essential to examine the main studies that have focused on the Black Mirror series and its technocultural representations. Next, recent academic contributions that directly address the series, or the episodes in focus, are mapped, discussing the articulation between media, gender, subjectivity and technology. This critical panorama provides the conceptual bases necessary to understand the complexity of the audiovisual signs mobilized by the series and the ways in which it projects and problematizes the symbolic constructions of the feminine in the digital age.

STATE OF THE ART

The Black Mirror series has been the subject of analysis on several academic fronts, especially in the field of media studies, digital culture, semiotics and gender theories. Its dystopian and speculative approach to contemporary technologies allows a critical reading of the processes of subjectivation mediated by algorithmic devices, becoming a privileged corpus for understanding the relations between identity, surveillance, and performativity in technoculture.

Researchers have particularly explored the way in which the series represents the transformations of female identity in the face of the demands of visibility, emotional control and the commodification of intimacy. Angela Cirucci (2020), in her book chapter Digitally natural: gender norms in Black Mirror, analyzes Nosedive and concludes that the episode naturalizes gender norms through the repetition of performances regulated by digital platforms. Her approach, based on Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, highlights the way in which subjects, especially women, internalize algorithmic codes of conduct under the guise of a supposed freedom of the individual.

In the same vein, the article published in the journal Camera Obscura, Wages for face-work: Black Mirror's Nosedive and digital labour (Greer, 2012), analyzes the episode as a critique of the emotional labor required by social networks. The author articulates elements of Marxist feminism to demonstrate that the performance of positive affects and impeccable appearance, as performed by the protagonist Lacie, constitutes a form of exploited and precarious work, crossed by neoliberal logics of constant self-improvement.

In the field of gender and technology studies, the article Through the Black Mirror: discourses on gender and technology in popular culture (Modugno; Krijnen, 2020),

published in the Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies, approaches the series as a reflection and critique of the tensions between female agency and technological mediation systems. The authors analyze representations of female characters in extreme situations, sometimes as victims of control devices, sometimes as figures of symbolic resistance.

Also in this scope, the article Gender, society and technology in Black Mirror (Moody, 2018) proposes an intersectional reading of the series' narratives, and reveals the forms of interaction between gender, class, and dimensions of racialization in fictional representations of the digital age. The analysis emphasizes that women are not only the target of surveillance, but also constitute bodies that are often instrumentalized for technological and narrative purposes, reiterating patterns of femininity regulated by media gazes.

With regard to aesthetics and semiotic mechanisms, the study Semiotic representations of neoliberal dystopia in Black Mirror (E; Tan, 2023) identifies in the series the construction of a dystopian imaginary anchored in narrative and imagery codes which support the critique of the society of control. The authors highlight the forms of construction of meaning triggered by audiovisual signs, which allows us to understand the cultural and subjective implications of female representation in the series.

Another relevant study is The rose-colored world of Black Mirror's Nosedive: color and gendered expectations of social credit systems (Mendel, 2023), which analyzes the episode's chromatic palette as an important element to sustain a gender model regulated by media and technological conventions. This analysis contributes to understanding how visual aesthetics, far from being neutral, is implicated in the normalization of gender affects and performances.

Finally, the work The cyborg re-manifested: Black Mirror, cyberfeminism and genre hybridity (Martin; McIntyre, 2019) proposes a reading of the episodes of the series from the perspective of cyberfeminism, returning to Donna Haraway to understand female figures in hybrid contexts of control and resistance. The character Joan, from the episode Joan Is Awful, in its digitized and spectacularized version, represents a metaphor for the contemporary cyborg, that is, a body between interfaces, whose symbolic power resides both in vulnerability and in the possibility of breaking with dominant codes.

Together, these studies support a critical and semiotic reading of Black Mirror, a work capable of unveiling, through fiction, the mechanisms of subjectivation of contemporaneity. Such theoretical contributions are relevant to the analysis of the Nosedive and Joan Is

Awful episodes proposed here, as they offer a consistent basis to investigate the representations of women in the audiovisual in contexts mediated by digital technologies.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics understands all thought as a signic process structured in the triadic relationship between representation, object and interpretant. This categorization distinguishes signs according to their quality (firstness), their factual relationship (secondness) and their generality or convention (thirdness), unfolding into the categories of icon, index and symbol (Peirce, 2000). In the audiovisual field, this typology allows us to interpret how moving images construct meanings that go beyond mere image representation.

Peirce's theory, by highlighting the centrality of the interpretant in the process of signification, offers a cohesive analytical tool to unveil the multiple layers of meaning present in audiovisual narratives. The icon-index-symbol triad allows us to analyze different levels of semiotic construction: icons, through visual similarity with dominant aesthetic patterns of digital culture and celebrity; the indexes, in the form of bodily or technological signs which denounce states of exhaustion and alienation; and symbols, represented by conventional elements such as contracts, punctuations, and tacit rules that regulate the behavior of the characters. By articulating these three modes of signification, Peirce's approach enables a critical reading of the signic mechanisms that sustain the logic of control and performativity in the analyzed plots.

Barthes (2009) contributes to this scope by examining imagery systems through the distinction between denotation and connotation. For the author, the articulation of the connotation as naturalized common sense constitutes an ideological process, insofar as it masks cultural codes, presenting them as evident truths. This operation is fundamental to understand how media products, such as *Black Mirror*, construct narratives that convey social representations under the appearance of neutrality. The rhetoric of the image organizes the spectator's gaze according to cultural and affective codes that guide and modulate interpretations, activating meanings that are historically situated, but presented as natural.

Added to the semiotic reference are the contributions of feminist criticism. McRobbie (2009) develops the concept of post-feminism as a discursive regime that appears to empower while re-actualizing traditional values of female subordination, especially through cultural media. Butler (2003) proposes a reading of gender identity in the sense of performativity, constructed through repeated acts, regulated by social norms.

In the episode *Nosedive*, performativity manifests itself in the obligation to represent a self adjusted to social expectations, through behaviors and appearances carefully calibrated to obtain public approval. This logic sustains what Butler (2003) defines as gender performativity: the repetition of normative social acts that construct identity. In the context of the narrative, this translates into a compulsory staging of positivity, in which smiling, pleasing and demonstrating constant enthusiasm are social demands mediated by digital platforms. It is a performance sustained less by spontaneity and more by vigilance and the need for continuous validation in the networks. In *Joan Is Awful*, in turn, feminist criticism evidences the emptying of subjective agency: the protagonist is converted into an audiovisual product, embodied by a celebrity and manipulated by artificial intelligences. Salma Hayek's performance as Joan's avatar underlines the simulacrum and aestheticization of identity, aligning itself with Baudrillard's (1991) critique, according to which we live in an era in which representations replace experience.

Peirce's semiotics, articulated with feminist criticism and media studies, allows us to investigate how signs construct (and destroy) female subjectivities in the audiovisual. The episodes analyzed reveal symbolic devices that not only reproduce discourses of power, but also hide under the guise of individual choice, technological innovation, or entertainment.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach was adopted, based on the semiotic analysis of audiovisual products. The corpus was composed of two episodes of the *Black Mirror* series: *Nosedive* (2016) and *Joan Is Awful* (2023), both selected for their centrality in the problematization of women's representations in contexts mediated by digital technologies.

The methodological procedure articulated Peirce's theory with contemporary feminist criticism, in order to interpret the signs that structure the representations of women in digital culture. Peircean semiotics understands the sign as a triadic phenomenon, constituted by the relationship between the representamen (that which represents something), the object (that which is represented) and the interpretant (the effect produced in the interpreter's mind). This conception emphasizes that meaning is not fixed in the sign itself, but emerges in the continuous process of interpretation and reinterpretation.

For analytical purposes, the research adopted Peirce's classical typology, which distinguishes signs in terms of their relationship with the object: icons, which represent by formal or qualitative similarity; indexes, which maintain a relationship of contiguity and causality with the object; and symbols, whose meaning depends on social conventions and



interpretative habits (Peirce, 2000). This classification allowed us to systematically examine the modes of construction of meanings in the episodes *Nosedive* and *Joan Is Awful*, through visual, sound and narrative elements, inserted in systems of symbolic regulation, affective control and gender performativity.

In dialogue with the semiotic base, a critical feminist framework was mobilized, based on the contributions of authors such as Butler (2018, 2003), McRobbie (2009, 2020) and Banet-Weiser (2018). This theoretical strand made it possible to understand the way in which contemporary media technologies re-actualize gender inequalities under the guise of innovation and autonomy, reinforcing aesthetics of intimacy and regimes of visibility that model the female body as an object of control and consumption. The articulation between semiotics and feminist critique thus allowed not only to identify the nature of the signs mobilized, but also to interpret the effects of meaning that they produce in the representation of women in digital contexts mediated by algorithms and platforms.

Each episode was segmented into key sequences, with attention to the presence and interaction of visual, sound, and narrative signs. The identified elements were classified according to Peirce's typology, with emphasis on the triad icon, index and symbol, in order to elucidate the signic mechanisms which construct representations, control performances or suggest resistance.

In *Nosedive*, the analysis focused on pastel and symmetrical aesthetics, which acts as a set of icons of digital positivity; in the physical symptoms of the character in the face of reputational decline, interpreted as indices of emotional and social collapse; and in the scoring system, understood as a normative symbol that associates docility with the promise of success. In *Joan Is Awful*, the duplication of the character by an actress of wide media projection was observed, whose staging builds a distorted icon of her identity. The symptoms of alienation and constant monitoring were also analyzed, which function as indices of expropriation of the lived experience. The role of the data assignment contract and narrative algorithms as symbols, in the Peircean sense, was highlighted, as they operate based on stabilized conventions that sustain a regime of algorithmic domination.

Finally, metanarrative recursion was considered as a methodological element: the self-reflexivity of the episodes opened space for a critical reading related to the audiovisual device itself and its ethical implications. Semiotic analysis, by intertwining with cultural and feminist studies, sought to elucidate the symbolic mechanisms of subjectivation and surveillance that operate under the cloak of fiction and entertainment.

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE NOSEDIVE EPISODE



THE AESTHETICS OF CONTROL: ICONS OF PERFECTION AND PROGRAMMED FEMININITY

The episode Nosedive presents a universe in which personal reputation is measured by digital scores, and this logic manifests itself through a coded visual aesthetic: pastel palette, symmetrical framing, stylized scenarios. These elements function as icons, in the Peircean sense, of a society harmonized under the appearance of lightness, but which hides a structure of continuous surveillance. Barthes (2009) helps us to perceive how this naturalized appearance constitutes an ideological connotation, that is, compulsory positivity as a social value.

The protagonist, Lacie, embodies a mediatically acceptable femininity: white, thin, educated, always smiling. Its image is constructed as an ideal of domesticated empowerment, in the terms of Banet-Weiser (2018), in which apparent freedom is an update of docility. Visual aesthetics, therefore, not only represents, but performs a regime of control through visually pleasing signs.

INDEXICALITY AND PERFORMANCE BREAKDOWN

As Lacie loses points in her reputation system, her body becomes an inscription surface of performative bankruptcy: the smudged makeup, the uncoordinated gestures, the distressed gaze, and the scruffy costumes are indices of emotional exhaustion and social marginalization. These signs of bodily deterioration refer to Peircean secondness: a point of friction which destabilizes the interpretative continuity sustained by the system.

Butler (2003) states that gender is constructed in a performative way, through the repetition of regulated acts. Lacie is forced to constantly repeat an ideal version of herself, until the performance becomes unsustainable. Lacie's crisis highlights the overlap between gender performativity and digital performance, both of which are based on disciplined repetition under constant surveillance.

SOCIAL CONVENTIONS AND NORMATIVE PERFORMATIVITY

The scoring system acts in the symbolic sphere, a tacit contract between the subjects of the narrative, associating friendly behavior with social legitimacy. Nosedive society lives under a "moral simulacrum" (Baudrillard, 1991), in which numbers do not reflect virtues, but adherence to the rules of pleasantness and affective consumption.

Angela McRobbie (2009) points out that postfeminism reconfigures subordination as a choice, converting oppressive patterns into strategies for personal success. This logic is



visible in the way women are impelled to perform agreeableness as market value. Docility thus becomes a reputational capital.

SUSAN AS A CATALYST FOR A NEW DYNAMIC INTERPRETANT

The character Susan breaks with the dominant logic. With her direct speech, simple clothes and refusal of reputational play, she activates a dynamic interpretant (Peirce, 2000): a new effect of meaning that challenges the established chain of signs. Her gesture reopens semiosis and destabilizes the current symbolic norm.

For Santaella (2000), the emergence of divergent interpretants is the basis of critical resignification. Susan inaugurates this possibility by embodying a subjectivity that does not submit to the logic of digital validation. Lacie, by following this path, breaks with normalized performativity and inserts herself in a new circuit of signification.

SEMIOSIS IN JOAN IS AWFUL: SIMULATION, ALGORITHMS, AND THE ERASURE OF SELF-REPRESENTATION

ICONICITY AND DISTORTION OF THE FEMININE

In *Joan Is Awful*, the protagonist is duplicated by a celebrity who plays her in a series without her consent. The image of Salma Hayek, playing Joan, has the function of a hypervisible icon of glamorized femininity. This representation corresponds to the "second-degree simulacrum" described by Baudrillard (1991): the image that simulates another image, eclipsing the original experience.

The aesthetics of the idealized character erase the complexity of the real woman, transforming her identity into an artifact shaped by algorithms and audience expectations. Iconicity, in this context, does not seek to represent, but to consume and aestheticize subjectivity.

CAPTURE RATES AND SYMPTOMS OF LOSS OF CONTROL

Joan's daily life becomes a database. Every gesture, conversation, and emotion is captured as an index by automated systems, feeding a real-time simulation. Physical symptoms, such as anxiety, paralysis, and anger, become indices of a body under a capture regime, as described by Zuboff (2019).

Joan not only loses control over her image: she is emptied of agency. The index, which previously connected experience and representation, becomes a symptom of alienation. Peircean secondness appears here as trauma, the clash between lived experience and its artificial duplication.

CONTRACTS, ALGORITHMS AND DOMAIN CONVENTIONS

The digital contract signed by Joan is a symbol of an asymmetrical pact, based on habits of uncritical acceptance of the platforms. In the Peircean model, it is a symbol that regulates social behaviors by convention. McRobbie (2020) points out that these devices are anchored in regimes of resilience and consented self-exploration.

The algorithm, in this case, assumes the role of interpretant in semiosis, decides what should be narrated, how and for what purpose. It is about the automation of the symbolic. Joan's depiction is no longer a reflection of her will, but an artifact driven by engagement metrics.

JOAN AS A SIGN OF RESISTANCE AND INTERPRETATIVE RECURSION

The narrative turn occurs when Joan refuses her automated representation. By invading the company's headquarters and confronting its artificial version, it interrupts the predefined semiotic flow. His action establishes a final interpretant: a new critical position in the face of the symbolic system.

Butler (2018) proposes that performative political action occurs when the body resists the norm and inaugurates new meanings. Joan becomes a sign of dissent, articulating a metanarrative related to the ethics of representation. As in Nosedive, the final gesture breaks the simulacrum and re-inscribes the character as a subject of meaning.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The episodes Nosedive and Joan Is Awful, from the Black Mirror series, reveal, under different narrative and aesthetic strategies, the growing capture of female identity by technomedia regimes of symbolic control. By putting on stage protagonists whose existences are shaped, performed and eventually broken by devices of visibility and automation of experience, both episodes function as critical parables of contemporary digital culture.

The semiotic analysis based on Charles Sanders Peirce's theory allowed us to identify the signic processes that sustain these narratives: the visually idealized icons, the indices of physical and affective collapse, and the symbols that institutionalize control under the appearance of neutrality. This tripartition evidenced the strength of the audiovisual in the mobilization of signs to represent female identities in an aesthetic, disciplinary, and technically codified way. Peirce's semiotics proved to be an important tool of analysis by

showing that meaning is not in isolated signs, but in the interpretative chain that they mobilize, and that it can be destabilized by dissident acts.

Contemporary feminist critique, especially in the contributions of Judith Butler, Angela McRobbie and Sarah Banet-Weiser, has deepened the understanding of how gender performativity is intertwined with regimes of digital visibility. In *Nosedive*, the protagonist Lacie embodies a compulsorily affable femininity, built by internalized norms and mediated by reputational metrics. The pastel aesthetic of the episode disguises a system of emotional surveillance, in which smiling is an obligation and performative failure is socially punished. In *Joan Is Awful*, female subjectivity is emptied: transformed into an image, converted into data, reorganized as content. Joan's performance is a non-performance, as her identity is appropriated and represented by a glamorous avatar shaped by artificial intelligence.

In this sense, Jean Baudrillard's thought becomes central: both protagonists are dragged into a world in which signs no longer represent a reality, but replace it. Social life in *Nosedive* and identity in *Joan Is Awful* are no longer linked to experience, but to its simulation. It is a radical shift from self-representation to algorithmic representation, a process that Zuboff (2019) identifies as central to surveillance capitalism.

However, the critical power of the narratives does not lie only in the denunciation of these mechanisms. Both Lacie and Joan operate significant ruptures in the sign systems that imprison them. These ruptures are possible because new interpretants, dynamic and final, emerge in the processes of reading experiences. In both characters, the gesture of resistance breaks the normative flow of interpretation: Lacie breaks the logic of compulsory pleasantness; Joan confronts the algorithmic authority of her own image. Their actions, although individual, have a collective potential: they reintroduce dissent into the field of representations.

Thus, the *Black Mirror* narratives analyzed in this article not only reiterate the ways in which digital culture imprisons female identity in domesticating semiotic systems, but also stage the possibility of its reconfiguration. The female characters become metonyms of a broader interpretative struggle: the dispute for meaning in a world where signs are increasingly automated, aestheticized and detached from lived experience.

The articulation between Peirce's semiotics and the contributions of feminist and media criticism made it possible to understand how audiovisual signs operate at the same time as instruments of domination and potential fields of subversion. Semiosis, understood as a continuous and open process, offers the theoretical key to identify both the control devices and the moments of symbolic inflection. In a scenario marked by the



aestheticization of intimacy, the spectacularization of everyday life, and the algorithmic simulation of subjectivity, to think about signs is also to think about the politics of representations and the possible paths for their critical reappropriation.



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