The Representation of Immigration in Brazilian Online News Reporting

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ABSTRACT

In this article I discuss the representations of the recent Haitian immigration to Brazil in online news reports in terms of the main claims (and the argumentation patterns that back them) put forward in those mediatised discourses and their impact on the public sphere. In the scope of a critical discourse analysis, this study is informed by a framework that integrates a dialectical view of discourse in social life, by a post-structuralist conception of identity, by conceptualizing a post-humanitarian behaviour and politics, and by a broader logic of argumentation, which is more empirical, epistemological and discourse-historical. The results of the analysis indicate an epistemic and affective shift in Brazilian humanitarian dispositions and attitudes towards solidarity and the increase of an anti-immigration rhetoric against particular groups of vulnerable others marked by stereotypes about race, poverty and cultural differences in public discourses that creates/perpetrates a politics of fear and exclusion.

1 INTRODUCTION

Mobility and integration are important processes that challenge the conceptualization and theorization of boundaries and borders worldwide. Goldin *et al.* (2011: 1) point out that our post modernity is a dynamic age marked by a global integration of people that challenges dominant norms and practices in many societies. As a result, cultural codes adapt, new economies emerge and social institutions struggle to keep up. Nevertheless, even though modern international mobility may have new nuances, the habits of [im]migration and its disruptive effects still affect communities and foreigners encounter opposition from the societies where they try to settle. This process is not different in South America, even in the so-called emerging economies like Brazil.

With the brick of events as the MINUSTAH[2] and the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Brazil committed to offer humanitarian help to that Nation. Since then, Haitian diaspora to Brazil grew exponentially. Surprisingly, Brazil changed its agenda aligning to a global tendency of nations in the West to limit and/or close their borders to immigrants in times of socioeconomic and political uncertainties and disruptions. Such posture contradicts the civic disposition adopted by the country to assist Haitians in need of safety, social security and settlement in humanitarian terms. Consequently, I hypothesize, there has been a distinctive tone in public discourses that sounds pessimistic and goes against the stereotypical projected image of Brazil as a welcoming nation to immigrants. Such discourses are mainly characterised by a rhetorical move that dramatically distinct *us* – as a nation – and *them* – as unwanted foreigners – indicating a growing feeling of xenophobic nationalism and racism identified in discourses and policies over immigration worldwide.

Public discourses and debates on Haitian immigration are highly mediatised in the public sphere therefore raising specific issues on representation, identity, recognition, social cohesion, citizenship, cosmopolitanism, securitisation, human rights, immigration policies, and so forth. In this scenario, special attention should be paid to the role played by new technologies of information in communicative practices in meeting the needs of globalized societies, as well as to the implications of digital media´s profound involvement in social problems (see Couldry and Hepp, 2016).

One of these emerging communicative practices is *online news* which symbolises all the relevant features associated with our era such as decentralisation, interactivity, multimodality,

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[2] MINUSTAH is the United Nations Mission for stabilization of Haiti lead by the Brazilian government since 2004.

transnationality and transculturality (Gruber, 2008), fostering the emergence of new communicative styles and genres, and not to mention a new ethics (see Allan 2006) in the so-called new media. As we are reminded by Chouliaraki (2013: 138-71), online news reports also use a theatrical structure to reproduce imaginaries of solidarity in the world and due to their potential creative and performative nature as a social practice, online news makes available and disseminates an array of representations, perceptions of the social world, and identities which influence the modern heterogeneous socio-discursive practices tremendously.

Even though we are in the age of digital media technologies and other forms of representation could be expected to guarantee a democratic, participatory and inclusive public sphere (Busch and Krzyzanowski 2012), I hypothesise - in line with authors such as Boltanski (1999) and Chouliaraki (2006; 2013) - that online news and its affordances does not bring a new approach to representations of immigration, orto the paradoxical treatment of distance in the so-called spectacle of suffering.

As far as mediatised public discourses about Haitian immigration in the mainstream online media in Brazil and the role news reports plays in the construction of social reality are concerned, I claim that there is a negative representation of immigrants in media discourse that unveils, amongst other things, an epistemic and affective shift in national attitudes and dispositions towards humanitarian solidarity to those foreigners. As Couldry (2012: 30) reminds us, representations are a material site for the exercise of, and struggle over, material and symbolic power, and they are produced through discourses. In the case of media and its discourse as an institution, representations are quite complex and controversial considering the role of media in telling us 'what there is' as factual, and conducting public attention in a particular direction on common sites of social and political knowledge.

Hence, the aim of this article is to discuss the representation of Haitian immigration in online news reports through the main claims of truth and normative rightness towards immigration, and the impact of such representations in the public sphere. Overall, from a socio-discursive and rhetorical perspective, the main questions I seek to answer in this research are: (a) what are the main claims (re)produced in online news about Haitian immigration and how do they affect modes of identification of 'othering', and (b) what are the main argumentation schemes used in such representations backgrounding the main claims?

In an attempt to contribute to such discussion, this article unfolds as follows. First, I discuss the theoretical grounds that guide this study. Second, I explain the methodological aspects adopted to operationalize the analysis. Third, by way of example, I illustrate and discuss the main claims over immigration found in data analysis that characterizes much of the anti-

immigration rhetoric – the (negative) ways media discourse convinces/influences public opinion provoking/creating/disseminating a specific agenda, sentiments (fear, pessimism, anxiety, and so forth) and politics towards Haitian immigration. Lastly, I present some concluding remarks on the matter.

2 DELINEATING THE THEORETICAL GROUNDS OF THE STUDY

The vast, existing literature on immigration issues addresses different dimensions and complexities of the matter from different fields of expertise and research traditions (see, for instance, Messer, *et al.*, 2012, Goldin, *et al.*, 2011, Delanty, *et al.*, 2011, amongst others). As I am broadly investigating the modes of identification or othering in mediatised public discourses and their impact on social and political life, the theorisation of some aspects such as discourse and its relation to representation, the social space/imagined community, the recognition/embodiment of others, and the relationship between social actors in the spectacle of suffering are of the utmost importance to understanding the employment of certain claims of truth and validity in the argumentative project of online news.

2.1 Discourse, representations and argumentation

Discourse is a fundamental symbolic and semiotic resource that constitutes our social world. Hence, the social nature of discourse is its most essential feature, as we use language broadly to interact with others (Bakhtin, 1992), to participate in society as part of our linguistic socialization (Ochs, 1996) and to build our social reality throughout indexical meanings (Ochs, 1996; Duranti, 1997). That is to say that discourse builds social life, as well as beingconstituted by the social structure. This dialectical relationship shows that discourse is an entity open to reinterpretation, continuity, influence and relation to other non-discursive elements (Reisigl and Wodak, 2008: 5) such as social events, social actors, social relations, identities and social institutions. In fact, such articulation is the core of any social practice (Fairclough, 2013: 25). A critical analysis and interpretation of this articulation is crucial to understanding the configuration of our globalized world in terms of its imbalance and idiosyncrasies.

The representation of society in contemporary public and regulatory discourses remains crucial to critical discourse studies due to the role it plays in the understanding of social reality and its complexities. In this vein, Krzyzanowski (2016: 309) calls attention to the fact that there exists a current tendency in public discourses to increase the conceptual nature of discourse, labelling social processes misleadingly as abstract or conceptual elements such as 'politics', 'economy', liberalism', 'social democracy' and so forth, thereby purposefully avoiding

representations of the actual society and social actors. Such movement results in the operationalisation of such concepts for the introduction and legitimation of various forms of regulations. A clear example of such a tendency regards public and regulatory discourses on immigration which, rather than discussing the conditions of migrants in migration-related processes, emphasise the discussion of concepts such as *integration*, *adaption* and the comparison with *our* culture.

In line with a Discourse approach as developed amongst others by Wodak (1999), Fairclough (2003), van Leeuwen (2008), and Busch and Krzyzanowski (2012), I understand representation as the recontextualization of social practices with their discursive and non-discursive elements. As Fairclough (2003: 129) argued, '[i]n representing a social event, one is incorporating it within the context of another social event, recontextualizing it.' (Fairclough, 2003: 139). In the context of the case developed in this paper, the social practices that constitute immigrants' lives are represented in the discursive practice of reporting immigration issues, such as their arrival, settlement, integration, family reunion, work, and so forth (Wodak, 1999: 93; Van Leeuwen, 2008). Hence, representation is a pervasive concept, although problematic, since online media practices such as text-types and new genres seem to reproduce discourses and patterns of arguments, negative stereotyping and coded rhetoric towards immigration.

Another important aspect in the representation of immigration and immigrants in mediatized discourses is the fact that such representations are done on the grounds of the legitimation of certain claims of truth and validity, which unveil values, conceptions and beliefs about the way the social reality is conceived or should be organized. As Toulmin (2003:11) puts it, 'who makes an assertion puts forward a claim – a claim on our attention and to our belief.' Such explicit or implicit claims brought forward in assertions and opinions play a crucial role in the representation of *othering* because they are justificatory. Therefore, they need to be assessed, interpreted and criticized.

Yet, claims put forward in discourses rely on and/or are constitutive elements of argumentation schemes that capture stereotypical patterns of human reasoning. Understanding them is not an easy undertaking due to the variety of things that can be produced or brought to back such claims, besides their cognitive and contextual-conditioning nature. By this token, my focus will rely on the analysis of *the main topoi* (see Toulmin, 2003; Macagno *et al.*, 2010, Reisigl; Wodak, 2001, among others) employed as a reasonable way, albeit not restricted to this or definitive, to comprehend how argumentation schemes might influence social actors to adopt, fix or change certain perceptions, attitudes, behaviour, stances, normative meanings and so forth towards others, in the distinct sociocommunicative practices that they produce and are engaged in. As Reisigl; Wodak (2001) do, I take argumentation from

a socio-rhetorical point of view, conceiving it as a discursive strategy of self- and other presentation. As such, the study of argumentation

> 'will allow to trace and deconstruct the arguments and argumentative schemata deployed by social actors in their reasoning in order to convince readers […] of specific messages, opinions, and so forth in discourses' (Khosravinik *et al.*, 2012: 287).

2.2   Imagined community and otherness

The social space, and consequently, the imagined community, are the *loci* where the encounter between social actors and the development of social events take place. It is also the institutional, interpersonal and symbolic arena where all socio-political and communicative practices are performed. Such a relational place is where individuals become collective subjects and the interaction amongst groups, objects, symbols, transactions, actions, sentiments, acceptance/proximity, displacement/distance and so forth happen.

Nonetheless, before coming into physical reality, this public place is imagined by social actors, fed by myths of sameness, integration and belonging. In the case of Brazil-Haiti bilateral relations, such an imaginary is characterised by the existence of previous geopolitical and symbolic bonds whereby both countries build representations of identities towards otherness. The news extract below, for instance, whose headline reads 'Haitians plan journey to São Paulo seeking the "Brazilian dream"', exemplifies this important aspect.

> *Eg. 1 - They [Haitians] first thought about travelling to Brazil after hearing positive comments about the country made by soldiers in the UN Peace Mission./ Nowadays, Haitians who got into the country crossing the border already arrived in the city of Manaus and are planning to move into São Paulo seeking the "Brazilian dream"./ "The military who are in Haiti have been speaking highly of Brazil. That´s why I decided to come here", said François Fedner, 48, who left Porto Príncipe 8 months ago. "In Haiti there are many problems. We don´t have jobs, health, nor schools."*[3]

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[3]   Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2011/02/879604-haitianos-planejam-viagem-para-sp-em-busca-do-sonho-brasileiro.shtml

The extract shows the presence of the Brazilian army in Haiti as part of the UN Peace Mission and signals the type of interaction between the soldiers and the population. The positive comments about Brazil refers to a sociohistorical moment/period (since 2008) when the country started to occupy a new rank as an emerging economy and revealed its ambition to become a global power, drawing international attention to its new foreign policies (see Reid 2016). This is due to the global economic crisis that hit mainly The United States and Europe (since 2007) and the new infrastructure created in Brazil related to the massive project of hosting the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016 (Cogo and Silva 2016), thereby attracting new migratory movements, particularly North-American, Spanish, Portuguese, Senegalese and Haitian peoples. Thus, this scenario helped to create the 'Brazilian dream' in opposition to the chaotic and dehumanizing poverty in Haiti, for instance. Therefore, the increased Haitian immigration to Brazil cannot be attributed only to the 2010 devastating earthquake in that country as stated by online news.

However, in this imagined community certain groups of immigrants can face rejection and that alleged utopia can turn into a hostile environment. Amin (2012: 10) states that 'in an always difficult habitat for the marked stranger, collective understanding of the imagined community is of critical importance for the power it possesses to define who belongs and the terms of togetherness'. Despite focusing on European public sphere and its approach to immigrants, the author reminds us of what an imagined community can entail, which is relevant.

The imagined community is a powerful entity because it normatively regulates and deliberates our way of being and living, not to mention that it is one of the most emotionally charged relational spaces

> whose materials – from myths and symbols of unity to tools of social integration and public discourses of belonging – profoundly shape personal and collective understanding of the place of the strangers (Amin, 2012: 112).

Thus, the author advocates the value of a politics of active context over the meaning of symbolic togetherness in order to explain the ambiguous nature of the myths of belonging, which for instance might colonize collective consciousness with negative ideas or sentiments towards minorities and unwanted immigrants such as social exclusion, intolerance or aversion. This type of negative collective consciousness is thus marked by a politics of fear and exclusion that scapegoats *them* for causing or contributing to difficult circumstances (see Bauman 2009: 143-83).

The understanding and critique of the context-dependent sociocultural variables (race, ethnicity, social class, gender, and so forth) that constitute specific societies are vital to the conceptualization and explanation of the public imaginary that leads to social dispositions towards immigrants in the way they are seen, acknowledged and recognised. In the case of Brazil, racism and poverty are the most significant ones (see for instance, Holanda, 1995), since they are ingrained in Brazilian postcolonial historical processes of societal formation through categorizations, evaluation, affective response and exclusion that embed institutional and social dispositions as well as communicative practices and discourses. As Amin (2012: 88) suggests, 'coding habits from the past are deeply etched into the institutional and social unconscious, rushing to the fore during times of disruptions to particular settlements'.

Regarding particular settlements and selective immigration, one can argue that dispositions towards certain groups of immigrants can be different due to historical relationships, societal values, and beliefs. This was the case of European immigration to Brazil in the ninetieth century marking the formation of the nation state. Such state formation was permeated by a global socioeconomic order created, amongst other factors, by the expansion of colonialism and capitalism (Seyferth 2011: 48). In the case of significant German immigration to the South of Brazil in that time, the author argues that cultural plurality and new identities were formed based on cultural diversity. Further, the ideology of transnationalism was already present in the relations between Brazilian and German authorities and intellectuals, worried with the future of their compatriots, even before the formation of the colony in Brazil, contributing positively to that specific 'regulated' settlement. That is not the case of Haitians in modern migration to Brazil. Therefore, the causes of migratory movements cannot be generalised, but should rather be analysed and explained differently based-on their particularities as well as socio-political-economic conditions.

In the same vein, Ahmed (2000: 8) argues that the encounter between foreigners and nationals carries traces of broader relationships precisely - historical relationships of power asymmetry and prejudice. As Brazil was marked by the violence of slavery in its colonial past – first of its indigenous population, and then of Africans – the recognition of the weight of embedded racial legacies associated with poverty and class segregation on the back of a certain historical moment and social events needs to be addressed. The political and moral confrontation of these legacies should be an important move in acknowledging the underlying causes of disturbances between locals and immigrants in host societies in the hope of formulating policies to address the problems of settlement, animosity, disaffection and the cultural isolation of so-called strangers, marked and framed by historical relationships of power asymmetry and prejudice, as in the case of Haitians.

2.3 Embodiment and identification

Who is this imagined group of immigrants to whom the Brazilian Government granted humanitarian help and entrance through national borders, and has been facing legal restrictions and unacceptance? Concepts such as *recognition* and *embodiment* seem to be relevant to answer the posed question, since the former is related to acknowledgement, admittance and belonging, and the latter works as a mechanism of naturalization of emotions, behaviour and dispositions.

According to Ahmed (2000: 23), the recognisability of strangers is determined in the social demarcation of spaces of belonging where they are known and acknowledged as threats to both property and person, and such recognitions are embedded in a discourse of survival in the encounters in public life, arenas of social confrontation. In the case of Haitians, political misconduct and flaws in Brazilian foreign policy towards immigration might have aggravated the issue, especially when the responsibilities inherent in becoming a global power and offering humanitarian help were not fully considered or properly addressed. This misconduct is evidenced when, for instance, Brazilian government restricted issuing visas to Haitians based on the allegations of human traffic., In this sense, the recognition of the other as a subject fails and misrecognition takes place, serving to differentiate between the familiar and the strange, concealing their histories. Therefore, the recognition of the other would be central to the constitution of the subject, of the self, and it is where the process of differentiation takes place. However, as Ahmed (2000: 24) points out

> the subject is not, then, simply differentiated from the (its) other, but comes into being by learning how to differentiate between others […]. Recognition involves differentiating between others on the basis of how they 'appear.

Worth mentioning is the role of learning in this process, as the identification/differentiation of the other is not predetermined, but constructed socioculturally, allowing the determination of social spaces and imagined forms of belonging between strangers and neighbours in relationships of proximity and distance.

The encounters with strangers are played out on the body through emotions, and as such, it forms the bodily and social space (Ahmed 2000: 39-40). The body here, specifically the strange body with a certain skin (complexion, traits, and so forth) and ethnicity is metonymically approached as the (social) border between *us* and *them*. Such an approach to embodiment challenges and goes beyond some established psychoanalytical and feminist approaches once it considers the process of embodiment 'through the function of cultural difference and social

antagonism in marking the boundaries of bodies'. That is to say that such bodies 'materialise in a complex set of temporal and spatial relations to other bodies', being recognised as familiar or strangers.

On analysing how real bodies are differentiated by individuals or groups of individuals, Ahmed (2000: 43-5) states that certain aspects such as race are inscribed within particular sociocultural formations, and are made present only through an act of negation. What would be important is to account for the very effect of the surface, say, skin and ethnicity, with what it is charged, and with how bodies come to take certain shapes over others in relation to other bodies in time and space within certain communities.

> The skin [and ethnicity] is not simply invested with meaning as a visual signifier of difference […] [it] is also a border or boundary, supposedly holding or containing the subject within a certain contour, keeping the subject inside, and the other outside.

As a border or frame, charged by emotions and affectivity and functioning as a mechanism of social differentiation, 'the skin [and ethnicity] performs that peculiar destabilising logic, calling into question the exclusion of the other from the subject and risking the subject becoming (or falling into) the other'. In the present case, representations of Haitians socially differentiate them and present their skin and ethnicity not as a bond but a social border that makes difficult dispositions of identification, acceptance and solidarity as evidenced by data analysis.

2.4 Politics of pity and post-humanitarian communication

An important aspect that should be taken into account in the current theorizations of representation of immigration in online news narratives is the treatment of the immigrant as a distant other -a stranger – and their vulnerability/suffering as a staged spectacle. This is so because such narratives demand, or have the power to move, social actors into public action, which is conducted by a set of moral/ethical norms towards a solidarity that is inherent to these discourses (see Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006, 2013). This constitutes one of the tensions and paradoxes of mediation, thereby questionable, in our present public lives.

In order to explain the moral problems posed in the mediated relationship between sufferers and spectators in media and modern means of communication, authors like Arendt (1990), Boltanski (1999); Chouliaraki (2006, 2013), amongst others, consider elements such as pity, imagination and cosmopolitanism as core elements/values that should be taken analytically.

Boltanski (1999: 12-13) hypothesizes that the spectacle of suffering 'is not a technical consequence of modern means of communication, even if the power and expansion of the media have brought misery into the intimacy of fortunate households with unprecedented efficiency'. Furthermore, the moral problems posed to the spectator are not absolutely new because

> they emerged at the same time that pity was introduced into politics. In fact, […] it is inherent in a politics of pity[4] to deal with suffering from the standpoint of distance since it must rely upon the massification of a collection of unfortunates who are not there in person.

The dichotomist distinction between the unfortunate/the fortunate would be the *sine qua non* condition without which a politics of pity could not be developed. However, as the author points out, the distance between who suffers and who witnesses the suffering does not exempt the latter from all the moral obligations over the former, even if such responsibility is derived from a causal responsibility. Hence, the faculty of imagination would be the proper tool to overcome the obstacle created by such distance in the relationship of those actors, as Chouliaraki (2013) emphasises.

In her phronetic approach to the matter, Chouliaraki (2006: 6-11) focuses on the ways that particular news texts present the sufferers as a moral cause to the Western spectators and takes the relationship between sufferer and spectator as paradigmatic by means of which public values are instantiated. As such, the description of news discourse becomes a description of acts of identity (e.g. sufferer/non-sufferer, perpetrator/victim/spectator, victim/benefactor, the fortunate/the unfortunate, national/foreigner, us/them, and so forth). Following the theatrical metaphor of the spectacle, the author believes that communicative practices such as news constitute the stage where sufferers' and spectators' performances take place and both groups

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[4] The politics of pity is characterized by Arendt (1990 *apud* Boltanski, 1999:3-5) mainly for presenting (i) a distinction between sufferers and non-sufferers; (ii) a focus on the spectacle of suffering, that is, on observation of suffering instead of on action towards suffering; and (iii) a distinction from a politics of justice. It also aims to resolve the space-time dimension of mediation in order to establish a sense of proximity to the events and so engage the spectator emotionally and ethically to the sufferer (Boltanski, 1999 *apud* Chouliaraki, 2004:187).

of social actors engage in various relationships of proximity/distance[5] and agency to one another.

By this token, emotions or sentiments such as pity play a constitutive role in this theatrical performance of human suffering and how we approach it, even though media-stage emotions could occupy an unstable position between real and fictional emotion, as Boltanski (1999: 152-3) puts it. According to the author, such instability can be caused by the very distance between sufferer and spectator, as the latter does not share the same conditions or accessibility to the situation of the former. 'It is precisely to the extent that the suffering reported is real that the spectator's emotion must equally have the characteristics of a real emotion for it to be morally acceptable' and it is the orientation towards action or the disposition to act that could overcome such dilemma.

Aligned to this thought, Chouliaraki (2006: 11-2) suggests that the concept of regimes of pity is normatively desirable once 'spectators do not possess 'pure' emotions vis-à-vis the sufferers, but their emotions are, in fact, shaped by the values embedded in news narratives about who the others are and how we should relate to them. In other words, news discourse has the power to construct certain emotions and sentiments towards the other, educating the public into dispositions of care and responsibility, or even develop compassion fatigue and rejection towards certain events and social actors by the way they represent social actors and events such as immigrants and immigration. Moreover, pity would not be a natural sentiment of love and care but a socially constructed disposition, a shaped moral mechanism that leads spectators to feel and act in a certain way.[6]

Arguing against the manichaeistic division between *us* and *them* which reinforces, for instance, national identities to the detriment of cosmopolitan ones, Chouliaraki (2006: 12-3) corroborates the idea that there is a crisis of pity today (see Boltanski, 1999). Such crisis would be 'inextricably linked to the history of the Western public life and, specially, with the narrow repertoire of participatory positions that this public life makes available for the ordinary

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[5] Chouliaraki relies on the Bakhtinian concept of *chronotope* (see Bakhtin, 1981 *apud* Chouliaraki, 2004) to explain/analyse the space-time dimensions of social events. According to the author (2004, p.186), the chronotopic analysis allows us to see 'how space-time articulations mediate *suffering from a distance* and how such articulations negotiate the relationship between a spectator […] and a sufferer'. (Chouliaraki, 2004:186).

[6] Chouliaraki develops her approach to the politics of pity following mainly Arendt (1990); Boltanski (1999), amongst others.

citizen'. She claims that a better way to conduct public actions towards the sufferer, and recognize their humanity as well as the ethical and moral implications of that in our societies would be to turn our analytical attention away from the abstract rationalities of the public sphere, and towards how media shapes the norms of the present by means of staging our relationship to the distant 'other'. Consequently, the author takes aesthetic spectacle, private emotion and public action as the constitutive elements of contemporary sociality.

From this rationale, cosmopolitanism should be taken as the core-value to understanding the tensions and paradoxes of mediation[7] nowadays. According to Chouliaraki (2006: 13),

> cosmopolitanism today cannot be associated with physical proximity, embodied action or virtuous character, [but conceived though] as a generalized sensibility that acts on suffering without controlling the outcomes or experiencing the effects of such action […], a radically undecidable regime of emotion and action.

It means that the symbolic conditions for cosmopolitanism would lie in a break with the current politics of pity in communicative practices such as news. This is a necessary move because, as the author explains,

> pity produces narcissistic emotions about the suffering 'other' that cannot move the spectator beyond the reflex of caring only for those like 'us'. Instead of global care, therefore, pity produces a form of global intimacy (ibid).

Even though recognizing the difficulties for this enterprise due to the fact that 'our private feelings are the measure against which we perceive and evaluate the world and others', the author proposes an analytical emphasis on pity and emotion combined with detached reflection, and conducted through the question of 'why *this* suffering is important and what

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[7] Chouliaraki (2013: 28-9) highlights two main paradoxes of humanitarian communication which should be seen as 'productive tensions that may open up a new imagination of cosmopolitan solidarity'. The first paradox regards to <u>authenticity</u> and it 'is grounded on the claim that, whereas the spectacle of suffering aims at inviting a moral response, its mediated nature weakens the truth of suffering and may undermine rather than intensify moral commitment'. The second one, the paradox of <u>agency,</u> 'is grounded on the claim that, whilst it speaks the language of common humanity, the spectacle of vulnerability simultaneously evokes the language of power, and thus tends to reproduce existing global divides rather that propose bonds of solidarity beyond the West.'

we can do about it' (ibid). In Chouliaraki´s account of post-humanitarian communication[8], she argues that the theatrical performance of stories and images about human suffering across communicative practices and its potential educational moral/ethical force, associated with the concept of imagination – by which we can put ourselves in somebody else's place and feel like them – are essential and must be taken into account in order to understand the represented human suffering and related practices of solidarity in communicative practices, such as online news (Chouliaraki, 2013: 26-7).

As she puts it, 'imagination is seen to rely on the capacity of image and language to represent suffering as a cause of sympathetic identification that may lead to action' (Chouliaraki, 2013: 44). Moreover, the imaginary works performatively through a morality of virtue, that is, 'it draws upon familiar practices of aesthetic performance so as to engage spectators with images and stories about our world, and, thereby to socialize us into those ways of feeling and acting that are legitimate and desirable in a specific culture'. Hence, the understanding of the humanitarian imaginary – defined as 'the dispersed communicative structure that mundanely habituates the West into dispositions of solidarity with distant others' (Chouliaraki, 2013: 138) – underneath solidarity-performed practices in certain situational contexts is essential to the construction of representations of our social public lives, and it could be elucidative of the main claims over immigration in performed social practices such as online news.

3 RATIONALIZING THE MAIN CLAIMS OVER HAITIAN IMMIGRATION

3.1 Data collection and methodology

I draw upon a case study of the recent Haitian immigration to Brazil. The period 2010 to 2012 delimits the historical boundaries of my investigation. This is due to two relevant facts. First, it covers the diasporic movement of Haitians to Brazil after being hit by the earthquake in 2010 and it evidences some of the actions taken by the Brazilian Government towards that country during the period of leadership of MINUSTAH.

My data comprises news collected from the website of the mainstream Brazilian news agency named *Folha online* about the event at http://www1.folha.uol.com.br. The *corpus* will refer to a

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[8] Post-humanitarian communication is defined as 'the rhetorical practices of trans-national actors that engage with universal ethical claims, such as common humanity or global civil society, to mobilize action on human suffering' (Chouliaraki, 2010:2).

configuration of relatively stable communicative and performative practices towards solidarity available in the genre itself where some of the transformations of the Brazilian humanitarian imaginary over these years can be identified, which probably frame the rhetoric towards this group of immigrants.

News as a pervasive political genre in the public sphere recontextualizes arguments which social actors have put forward in the public domain, especially when they are controversial, such as referring, for instance, to the public dispositions to solidarity to immigrants as vulnerable others. Besides this, they are located in the field of formation of public opinion and self- and other-presentation, and accommodate or give evidence of conflicts and tensions of the field. As pointed out by Chouliaraki (2013: 138), with regards to the humanitarian imaginary,

> *news provides one of the most important stages for human vulnerability to appear in the West, however, often resorting to emergency appeals for action. […] the news inevitably struggles with the immanent aesthetic and moral paradoxes of the imaginary.*

One of these paradoxes is inherent in the practice of journalism itself and its moral force of witnessing. As the author puts it, such moralizing force has changed dramatically in journalism as delineated nowadays when producing news and mediating human suffering due to the emergence of new technologies and the changing professional culture of reporting.

In my analysis, I take three dimensions as central to the method used here, which takes a discourse-historical standpoint (see Wodak, 1999; Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; van Leeuwen, 2008;): the content of the data, which is socio-historically situated, the conception of argumentation as a discursive strategy and the linguistic realisation of these contents and strategies into discourses. These dimensions, associated with the context-dependent explanation of Haitian immigration to Brazil, will allow the deconstruction of the way certain topoi and arguments are recontextualised and reformulated (Wodak, 1999: 91; van Leeuwen, 2008). The integration of the historical, socio-political and linguistic perspectives is necessary to explain reasonably the representation of the phenomenon of immigration in media reporting.

To this point, I elucidate some methodological assumptions and procedures adopted in the analysis. Firstly, I am not interested here in the structural analysis of online news but in its strategic use within an argumentative project of persuasion of the audience about a certain

model of linguistic-discursive action with certain perceptions of the world, social relations, identities and imbricating rationalities. Secondly, my focus relies on argumentation strategies as an analytical category employed in mediatised discourses over immigration through the main claims of truth (i.e. the existence, cause, effects and so on of Haitian immigration to Brazil) and normative rightness (i.e. human action towards humanitarian solidarity to those (social, political and economic) vulnerable others, as well as the constitutive argumentation schemes on which those claims are embedded. Thirdly, following Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 36), I understand that only a broader genre analysis (genre chain = intertextuality and interdiscursivity) related to a certain macro topic (such as Haitian immigration) will allow a reasonable perception of the discourse to be analysed since they operate together in the process of meaning-making. Finally, I will focus on the analysis of the verbal language of online news since this semiotic means is prioritised over other semiotic forms such as images in the *corpus* collected.

3.2   Online news: some aesthetic properties

Let us turn now to a brief description of the nature of online news in the platform of *Folha online.* When accessing the news, some similarities with the printed version of the news agency named *Folha de São Paulo* as some distinct features of the digital version are noticed. The main similarities regard the layout, the positioning of readers as consumers, and the production of news by media professionals. The peculiarities in evidence of the digital format are mainly the possibility of expansion of the content through hyperlinks and the dynamics of the genre chains displayed at the digital platform showing its diversity, complexity and multi-functionality.

Regarding the genre chain available in the digital platform, there are genres directly connected somehow to the news allowing the reader to expand their knowledge with the information displayed (see Siapera, 2012: 167-8). The platform, therefore, enables access to headlines, news, interviews, editorials, blogs, readers' comments, and so forth and this process is characterised by the occurrence and recurrence of textual, discursive and semiotic phenomena such as intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and multimodality[9]. On the other hand, there are genres not related to the news, such as advertisements, which belong to other communicative fields and

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[9] For further discussion on these issues, see amongst others: Fairclough, 2003; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001/2005; Clarke, 2005; Marcuschi, 2008.

indicate, in this case, the commercial function of the institution in promoting services to their clients.

3.3   Analytical findings: main claims and argumentation schemes

For reasons of space in this article, I will offer a few brief examples of the media discourse about Haitian immigration to Brazil in order to illustrate the main findings of my study and refer the reader to where on the news agency website the text in its original format can be visualised in full. Free translation of the texts written originally in Brazilian Portuguese are also provided.

The analysis indicates two main contradictory patterns/tendencies of thinking/reasoning/acting and some related issues over time towards Haitians that will support/embed some of the main claims with their argumentative structure (*topoi*) in media discourse. They can be summarised as follows:

(a) Offering humanitarian help to Haitians
- Haiti as a poor/devastated/unstructured nation and Haitians as victims
- National visibility to Brazil in the international scenario: leadership/ militarization/reassurance of security, order and reconstruction of Haiti
- Infrastructure: provision of legal documents, food, accommodation, jobs and education

(b) Managing borders and controlling immigration
- Connection to criminal practices: illegal immigration, exploitation and human trafficking, disturbance of social order, lack of integration
- Haitians as burden and/or some sort of treat to the host communities
- Guettoisation (Haitians live in ghettoes implying that they do not integrate)
- Stereotyping (Haitians are strong and will overcome difficulties / Haitian are different from *us*, etc.)

Such patterns/tendencies in news show the shift from human security to national security in Brazilian foreign policies towards Haitians, thereby causing an important impact on public opinion.

In terms of argumentation, *topoi* or *loci* are highly conventionalised and could be more or less formal – as the *argumentum ad hominen* (= a verbal attack on somebody else's personality or character) or content-related – as the *topos* of humanitarianism (= employed in discourses

where discrimination or recognition of racialised, ethnic, religious, gendered, etc. differences are concerned (see Reisigl; Wodak, 2001)). In the case of the online news investigated here, some *topoi* were employed to justify explicit, implicit or presupposed claims of truth and normative rightness. Those claims legitimise certain viewpoints, ideologies, dispositions and actions towards Haitian immigrants. Hence, the main claims employed in the disseminated narratives and that reaffirm certain imaginaries towards immigration and immigrants are exemplified as follows:

3.3.1   Claim 1: Haitian immigration to Brazil was caused by the 2010 earthquake

Eg. 2 – The earthquake that devastated Haiti and left more than 300.000 people homeless provoked a massive immigration phenomenon that could be comparable to the [Italian and Japanese] exodus [to Brazil] in the beginning of the 20th century.[10]

The allegation made in the causal truth claim above is that that a natural phenomenon (an earthquake) would have forced Haitians to flee their country to Brazil. Such claim is supported by a rather tautological argument (*argumentum realis*) where certain truth is undeniable, that is a natural fact beyond human action. Associated with this is the *argumentum ad consequentiam* that shows the consequences of such a fact (the earthquake left more than 300.000 people homeless and provoked a massive immigration phenomenon). As can be seen, there is no mention in the light of history of other causative agents and practices such as poverty or political instability that could possibly have caused Haitian diasporic movement before the earthquake and international interventions to that nation through specific UN policies via MINUSTAH.

Moreover, the event of immigration itself is intensified and negatively evaluated via adjectives such as 'massive', thereby activating *frames[11]* related to 'invasion' or 'something that is not under control'. The same *frame* is reinforced by the *topos of numbers* (300.000 people), which brings the idea that certain numbers prove a specific action (a massive immigration phenomenon). The idea of such an number of people migrating to Brazil is perceived as something unimaginable, only comparable to another event of the same proportions in the past history of the country (*topos of history*), which was the immigration of Italian and Japanese

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[10]   Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/1033447-vinda-de-haitianos-e-maior-onda-imigratoria-ao-pais-em-cem-anos.shtml

[11] According to Goffman (1974 *apud* Reisigl and Wodak, 2001: 82), *frames* are interactional and organisational principles by which situations are defined and sustained as experiences by participants.

people in the beginning of the 20th century. No further details or explanations are given about the specificities of both migratory movements, which are by no means comparable, given that the causes and circumstances are socio-historically situated.

3.3.2 Claim 2: Brazil's leadership/participation in the peacekeeping mission in Haiti as an instrument of foreign policy

> *Eg 3: "Der Spiegel" said that Brazil that leads the peacekeeping mission in Haiti, "does not think of giving up the control over the island", and according to the will of the Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the project of the reconstruction of Haiti "must remain a Latin American project".[12]*

The implicit truth claim above and its main constitutive *topos* (*topos of control*) is made clear by the overall analysis of the political and historical context that situates and explains the purpose and actions of the Brazilian government on the leadership of the peacekeeping mission in Haiti and consequently, on the humanitarian help offered to that Caribbean country.

The extract exemplifies two important dimensions of such actions in a broader project of diplomatic relations and international humanitarianism. First comes the dimension of power/control when it is desired that Brazil and, by extension, Latin America must lead the project of reconstruction of Haiti. Such a dimension is instantiated by explicit modalizations showing the speakers´/social actors´ commitment/judgment of probabilities regarding truth – epistemic modality (eg. doesn´t think) and obligation/necessity.— deontic modality (eg. must remain). Second, the dimension of instrumental help is elucidated when it is assumed that the role played by the country is going to test Brazilian influence in the continent and it will be shown to deserve a permanent seat in the UN.

3.3.3 Claim 3: Public spending in Haiti is beneficial/advantageous to Brazil

> *Eg. 4: According to an informal report, a good sum of the money spent [by Brazil] in Haiti was used to modernize their [military] equipment. Brazil bought vehicles (R$ 163,3 milhões), explosives and ammunition (R$ 24,3 milhões), guns (R$ 22 milhões), ships and naval equipments (R$ 18,1 milhões). Some of these costs are refunded by the peace mission (…). / The Ministry [of Defense] said to Folha that*

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[12] Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/bbc/ult272u681397.shtml

such costs stimulate Brazilian military industry. 'The acquisition of modern equipment for Brazilian forces allows, besides providing efficiency to the troops service, makes Brazilian military industry grows and projects Brazil internationally'. [13]

The extract above, besides reinforcing Brazilian military power, depicts the scenario of public spending in humanitarian help as beneficial to Brazil, which seems quite contradictory once the benefits to Haiti itself are not explained or emphasised. In this claim, the *topos of advantage/usefulness* is associated with the *topos of finances* to justify the actions. The costs are made explicit in the sums of money spent for military purposes. Here, another tendency towards immigration issues is perceived, that is, the militarization of policies or actions mixed with/related to humanitarian help.

In the discourse analysed, when it comes to accountability regarding the public expending with militarization, actors of authority, such as the Ministry of Defense, claim that such costs are a good and necessary move which will ultimately guarantee efficiency to Brazilian troops, and growth to the Brazilian military industry so as to enhance international image of the country. However, such a view is not unanimous or even agreed as other voices brought to the texts make use of the same *topos* (*topos of finances*) negatively as exemplified by the evaluative utterance of the headline of the same piece of news (Brazil has <u>already</u> spent almost R\$ 2bn in Haiti), implying that the government has spent more money in Haiti ('there') than in home institutions/issues as the National Force ('here'). That is to say they claim that the mission has cost Brazil too much money, causing a loss of revenue, and will continue to do so as long as the mission in Haiti endures. Therefore, one should perform actions to diminish these costs and avoid further losses.

One of the possibilities presented as the most viable solution to avoid more losses of revenue to Brazil would be the gradual retreat of the troops from Haiti. Such view is backed by other actors of authority such as military leaders in the mission as the extract bellow indicates.

Eg. 5: One of the generals who lead the mission in Haiti, and wishes to remain anonymous, said that Brazil 'should yet had left' the Caribbean country. The military reckons that Brazil is not going to retreat its troops 'so soon' for political

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[13] Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/mundo/48044-brasil-ja-gastou-quase-r-2-bi-no-haiti.shtml

reasons: the mission is used as a kind of business card to Brazil internationally, as an example of success. [14]

According to the actor (an unidentified general), military intervention in Haiti would not be needed any longer once the humanitarian purpose of the mission exceeded political benefits for Brazil.

3.3.4   Claim 4: Haitian immigration must be controlled and/or restricted

One of the government policies that directly contradicts the humanitarian disposition to help Haitians is the increasing barriers erected with a short-term view to managing the number of people entering the country (see Goldin, *et al.*, 2011:116-9). Such physical and/or symbolic barriers exist when limitations or restrictions are imposed in the process of immigration, such as not issuing papers (eg. visas, administrative paperwork, etc.) for immigrants. Such limitations or restrictions might be justified and legitimised based on legal grounds using allegations of illegality, criminality, border control and so forth as shown in the following extract:

> *Eg. 6: In February, The Ministry of Justice has suspended the issue of papers for refuge – Haitians were given those papers as soon as they arrived at the Brazilian border – claiming that a route of human trafficking was detected./ Conare (The National Committee for Refugees) reckons that the case of Haitians does not belong to the status of refuge because it is a humanitarian issue. Therefore the case was assigned to Cnig (The National Committee of Immigration)./ Without papers, 180 Haitians were stopped in the city of Tabatinga (in the State of Amazon), at the border with Peru. Another 107 Haitians are irregular immigrants and 33 more are holding a temporary permit in the city of Brasiléia (in the State of Acre), at the border with Bolívia. [15]*

As can be seen, the rationalisation of the barriers to stop Haitian immigration is constructed via various argumentative devices: First, the allegation of human trafficking is pointed out as the direct cause of halted immigration. Here, there is a twist on the attribution of responsibility

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[14] Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/mundo/48044-brasil-ja-gastou-quase-r-2-bi-no-haiti.shtml

[15]   Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/895190-mil-refugiados-haitianos-devem-trabalhar-na-zona-franca-de-manaus.shtmls

or blame (*argumentum in alium)*, a victim-victimiser reversal in which immigrants are indirectly blamed for the adoption of such policy. With the excuse of stopping human trafficking, immigrants were refused legal entrance to the country, resorting to the situation of illegality, lack of protection and care in the host cities. Second, the *topos of definition* or *name interpretation* is employed when stating that 'the case of Haitians does not belong to the status of refuge because it is a humanitarian issue' therefore another institution should be held accountable for it. Such move shows uncertainty or inadequate evaluation of governmental institutions regarding what 'the status of refuge' and 'humanitarian issue' should be or what specific actions either concepts should normatively encompass. In the meantime, the refusal of legal entrance to those vulnerable others victimizes them once again through displacement and exclusion as they are relegated to a place comparable to a legal limbo.

3.3.5   Claim 5: Cultural differences may cause specific problems

As Wodak (2011: 66-7) states, in debates about migration and nationhood, social actors will often employ arguments in their narratives about culture (*topos of culture*), depicting it as an essential, bounded entity whose integrity is threatened by the presence of others supposedly belonging to another/different culture and not being willing to learn or adopt local norms, conventions or the way of living. In this vein, two deictic dimensions and the related linguistic elements and indexical markers acquire salience as the argumentative rationale is built linked to the construction of the oppositions 'us' *versus* 'them' (people belonging to in-groups or out-groups) and 'here' *versus* 'there' (people belonging or not to a certain place).

> *Eg. 7: Haitian immigrants who took risks seeking a better life in Brazil ended up getting closer amongst them and created ghettos in the city of Porto Velho (State of Roraima). The capital of Rondônia is one of the most wanted destinations of Haitians who arrived in Brazil after the 2010 earthquake (…). / The Government of Rondônia offers Portuguese classes to the immigrants, but the dominant language in ghettos is Creole – the language spoken by the vast majority of Haitians. (…). / Even though their customs, the immigrants still try to adapt to the way of living in Brazil. 'I miss Voodoo [religion with African roots similar to Candomblé in Brazil] and ended up living all my music behind. But I like 'Ai se te pego' [song sung by Michel Teló, a*

Brazilian singer], I go to an evangelical church and play football', says Jhony Wills, 26.[16]

In the extract above, the *topos of culture* is employed assuming that because the cultural formation of Haitians is the way it is, specific problems arise in specific situations (Reisigl; Wodak, 2001: 80). The problems arouse are not overtly addressed as problems but they are discursively constructed as (rational) disclaimers (eg. 'Haitians are here but live in ghettos', 'Even though Brazilian Portuguese classes are offered, they insist on speaking Creole', 'They are still trying to adapt but…' and so forth), which contribute to the negative presentation of these group of people.

The cultural aspects emphasized here, which are central conditions for the inclusion of people in another society, are mainly integration to the local community, language, religion and other local customs. First, Haitians are negatively presented, being depicted as the ones who do not integrate to the local community once they get closer, and prefer living in ghettos. Second, despite government help in providing language classes, they insist on speaking their mother tongue, contributing to the creation of a language barrier. Third, Haitians are presented positively in their attempt to adapt to and assimilate local customs (eg. religion, type of music and sports) but it is still a trial, rather than a successful undertaking/achievement. As such, the voice of an immigrant is brought to the text to speak about these processes. However, before the actor 'speaks', the argumentative markers 'even though' and 'still' operates otherwise, denouncing the way those immigrants are evaluated negatively in the representation of the aforementioned processes.

4 CONCLUSION: A critique of the anti-immigration rhetoric in online news

In a technology-driven global society, the spectacle of the other's reality becomes even more visible, mediated and accessible via one single click on the screens of our computers and electronic gadgets. In this scenario, it is relevant to consider analytically all the emerging properties and interactions in online genres and their platforms, especially during processes of othering, in order to interpret and make sense of current social changes.

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[16] Source: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mundo/2012/12/1200492-haitianos-criam-pequena-porto-principe-nas-ruas-de-porto-velho.shtml

Those emerging properties characterize moral, ethnic and aesthetic transformations of the human imaginary which lead and shape certain perceptions, feelings, dispositions and actions towards others due to the educative and performative character of this imaginary (Chouliaraki, 2013: 139). Hence, one of the possible ways to identify and criticize those transformations is via the study of the rationalization of the main claims and their argumentative structure within texts and discourses in sociocommunicative practices such as online news reporting.

As the extracts of the online news analysed indicated, the main claims and arguments used in media discourse show a tension between desirable (eg. solidarity and acceptance) and undesirable values (eg. xenophobic nationalism) in the context of humanitarian help towards vulnerable others. As the latter is salient, there is a consequent prevalence of certain assumptions and claims which favour the strangeness and aversion to the other. Subject to argumentation as a broader process within texts and discourses, the discursive representation of immigration and immigrants in media discourse produce and disseminate a negative and discriminatory rhetoric against Haitian immigrants, which I approach as an anti-immigration rhetoric.

Even though the emergence and spread of digital technologies in the public sphere, whereby new semiotic means interact and new forms of democratic participation would be expected, the representation of otherness – via language use and other semiotic means in the identification processes – seems to be rather problematic, especially when such representation is a product of a certain (immigration) imaginary which constructs the other as a strange, distant, threatening body, and a source of problems to certain communities. The immediate result of such construction is a non identification with the suffering and vulnerable other.

Throughout the present discussion, I tried to consider some of the political and ethical implications of the representation of the process of immigration and immigrants in online news reporting pointing out to key assumptions and claims with their argumentative schemata that drive the sentiments and dispositions towards a certain group of people and their (un) acceptance in host communities, in this case Haitian immigrants in Brazil.

Defining which social actors are welcome or should be expelled from social dynamics is a complex undertaking and it is related to constructions of identity and identity politics. It also reveals who has the discursive and regulatory power to construct, establish, or change such categorization in representations. In the case of immigration, such power lies in the hands of certain elites such as politicians and news makers. The former are the ones who create and implement more restrictive laws and define a border politics to keep certain groups of

immigrants as strangers out of 'our' nation. The latter deny (discursive) access to news production or (re)produce negative representations of the process of immigration and immigrants.

The situation has, however, exacerbated precisely because the actions of politicians, as well as journalists, are accompanied by and justified through an exclusionary, coded rhetoric that depicts/presents 'others' negatively by means of argumentation schemes, certain truth claims and normative rightness in their discourse. Such discourse, and by extension, the discursive practice of online news reporting are mainly characterized by a rhetorical move that dramatically distinguishes *us* – as a nation – and *them* – as unwanted foreigners – indicating a growing feeling of xenophobic nationalism and racism identified in discourses and polices over immigration worldwide. Consequently, the issues related to the process of immigration and immigrants are not overtly discussed in public debate and a politics of fear is reinforced and disseminated through those representations in the Brazilian public sphere. More than ever, interdisciplinary research is needed to address this problem.

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