

Poetry and the Popularization of Science About and Under Quarantine. Poetic Quarantine of the Brazilian Academy of Cordel Literature / *Poesia e divulgação científica sobre e sob quarentena. A quarentena poética da Academia Brasileira de Literatura de Cordel*

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzed the poetic production of a cultural event that took place during the covid-19 pandemic in Brazil in 2020. In this article, we present the data from the analysis of the campaign of the Brazilian Academy of *Cordel* Literature called “Poetic Quarantine” that started in April 2020 due to the implemented social isolation measures. Using methodological tools from Patrick Charaudeau’s semiolinguistic theory, we investigate how scientific themes and representations of science emerge in the small works of *cordel* of the research *corpus*. In our results, we noticed the diversity of authors in this campaign and identified in their speech will the strategies and discursive organizations mobilized by them. We concluded that these representations appear alongside manifestations that describe the subjective experiences of the authors of the works of *cordel*, interspersed with conflicting views, which reflect and refract the controversial nature of science.

KEYWORDS: Popularization of science; Poetry; *Cordel*; Pandemic; Covid-19

RESUMO

Este trabalho analisou a produção poética de um evento cultural virtual ocorrido durante a pandemia de covid-19 no Brasil em 2020. Neste artigo, apresentamos os dados da análise da campanha da Academia Brasileira de Literatura de Cordel chamada “Quarentena Poética da ABLC”, iniciada em abril de 2020, por ocasião da implementação das medidas de isolamento social. Através de ferramentas metodológicas da teoria semiolinguística de Patrick Charaudeau, investigamos como temas científicos e representações da ciência surgem nos pequenos cordéis do corpo de pesquisa. Em nossos resultados, percebemos a diversidade de autores nesta campanha e identificamos em seus projetos de fala as estratégias e organizações discursivas por eles mobilizadas. Concluímos que estas representações surgem ao lado de manifestações que relatam as experiências subjetivas dos cordelistas, entremeadas de visões conflitantes que refletem e refratam a natureza polêmica da ciência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Divulgação científica; Poesia; Cordel; Pandemia; Covid-19

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Windows and Graves

The covid-19 pandemic, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, is a historic moment for mankind, the worst health crisis worldwide in the last hundred years. In the words of Dina Czeresnia (2020), this pandemic is already part of cultural, Brazilian and world history.

“Pandemic themes” invaded and took over the news and social networks in an overwhelming way, involving scientific, political, economic, ideological, and controversial subjects. We quickly learned to use new words in the most trivial dialogues, new meanings were built for old words and concepts. In a word: the covid-19 pandemic has entered our language as well as our lives.

A sharp cut. Two windows in a building in Portugal, in the city of Porto, two women in quarantine, two neighbors who communicate with each other through cards with poems pasted on their windows: *I have not yet seen the future / Summer that shall only come next year / at the flowery balcony that does not smell like the Spring,* “*Cuddles will blow / the pain far away / the touching, the kisses / the so missed affection / overflows open hearts / tomorrow, it is almost tomorrow*” (Ribeiro; Neiva, 2020).¹

How far has the pandemic penetrated our relationships and the use of our language?

In social isolation, it was through the windows of our houses that we saw a new world pass by, streets still almost empty of people. In 2020, the windows that brought the news of this world were those of the internet pages, of the social networks. The casual conversation at the window of our houses, or even at the corners of our streets, has been carried out virtually, the familiar faces appear in lighted windows, the conversation is almost instantaneous; it makes us understand, or at least tries to do so, that everything else is going well, that in the security of social detachment, life goes on, despite so many deaths. Here we are fine, but afraid. We do smile, we do cry, we come together, taking

¹ In Portuguese: “Ainda não aprendi o futuro / verão que só chega no próximo ano / na florida varanda que não cheira a primavera,” “Os abraços soprarão / a dor para longe / o toque, os beijos / o afecto tão em falta / inundam corações abertos / amanhã, é quase amanhã.” Poem’s history at <https://www.publico.pt/2020/05/03/p3/reportagem/porto-duas-estranhas-escrevem-poema-janela-tornamse-vizinhas-1914291>. Access on May 23, 2020.

care of ourselves. Some have no choice but to write until this is over. It will pass, yes, it will.

In this pandemic scenario, we were able to monitor and capture in real time the concrete paths of science and the roles it represents at these times. Quite the opposite of moving forward and progressively, towards a positively bigger, better and more complete state of knowledge, science happens in time and space, it has history, it is born in the midst of disputes of various orders. Its voices and actors are always in a deep relationship of alignment or criticism to the dominant and conflicting ideologies, fomenting scientific polemics.² A race mobilized the national and international scientific community to understand and fight the pandemic, with a large focus on investigations, which was expressed in a flood of scientific publications in recent months.

But neither the number of scientific productions, typically large in periods of epidemics and pandemics (Kagan; Moran-Gilad; Fire, 2020) or the massive presence of scientific themes popularized in everyday and/or mediatized dialogues was able to sustain an effective consensus on the virus. Despite a vigorous activity, science did not provide answers to the speed of contagion and transmission, the only unanimous information that scientists, research institutions and government agencies had to indicate to the population was social isolation (detachment, quarantine, lockdown). Nevertheless, these pandemic control measures are nothing new, having been known for a long time in our history in combating other pandemics (Huremovic, 2019), both in their sanitary and scientific justifications, as well as in their social impacts.

In this perspective, the scientific knowledge produced in this period did not “crystallize” before the public eye in technological innovations in the fight against the pandemic. Effective vaccines and treatments that bring the expectation of a cure do not spontaneously appear as commodities in pharmacies or on the needle of the health professional. Science advances, but the perception of time contracts, the effects and positive results are not “discovered,” the number of deaths and infected ones increase, and the population is doubly removed from the scientific process: population does not

² We follow the pragmatic taxonomy of Marcelo Dascal (1994) that identifies scientific controversy as a discursive genre belonging to controversial speeches and that subdivides it into discussion, dispute and controversy. Thus, with scientific controversies, we will be referring to the set of production of conflicting discourses present in the history and contemporaneity of science.

take part in this busy pandemic scientific program nor do they receive “notifications” about day-to-day results. Isolation does not cure. Other things should be used as remedy ...

There are some aggravating factors in the pandemic condition of the population in relation to their representation of science. In times of the emergence of negationism, controversies are scientific *and* anti-scientific. That is, the controversy is not only in the scientific construction of concepts, consensus, theories, and technologies, but also against the very construction of scientific knowledge. Thus, the dispute turns into a diatribe against science. Coarse scientific (and anti-scientific) discussions, which, although constitutive of the process and nature of science (Magalhães, 2018), can significantly impact the public view of science, disorient public policy decision-making and also the social behavior of the population.

Thus, it should not be strange that scientific themes should be part of everyday conversations, of interactions at a distance during isolation. The pandemic has invaded the most common dialogues; its themes, its new words rose from the primary discourse genres, propagated and disturbed the more elaborate genre styles. We need to talk about the pandemic!

This conjunctural force of the pandemic is materialized in the social fabric in almost all human activities. And this is where our study is formulated. To the question asked above “how far did the pandemic penetrate our relationships and the use of our language?” We take a poetic approach and reformulate it with a more objective question: *how do scientific themes and representations of science appear in poems produced during the quarantine and about the pandemic of covid-19?* This question is based on an assertive premise: different themes may appear in poems and other literary languages, as it is language that feeds them, forming an “unquestionable partnership” (Citelli, 2011).

Cut. In time: “Just one thousand say daily papers to you / but João is not mentioned by them / one thousand may be very little / for the number thousand is faceless / it does not even transpire emotion / but João was a friend / was beloved / was a brother.”³

³ In Portuguese: “Só mil te diz o jornal / mas ali não te diz do João. / mil pode ser muito pouco / pois mil não tem rosto, / nem mesmo tem emoção / mas João era amigo, / era amado, era irmão.”

1 “The Poet and His Carols”⁴: The Question Lies in Poetry

It is necessary to present the origin and motivation of this work. First, this study was produced in a university discipline named Introduction to Scientific Popularization, in the first semester of 2020, offered by the Casa de Oswaldo Cruz / Fiocruz and by the Oswaldo Cruz / Fiocruz Institute. In it, the students and the teachers met – person-to-person - only once before social isolation measures were implemented. All classes took place in a virtual and synchronous environment. Even though it was an emergency novelty, the meetings enabled fruitful exchanges among everybody involved by means of debates and readings on various themes, methodologies and concepts of Scientific Popularization and its history as a practical and theoretical field.

Mid-April, on the 13th, we read a friend’s poem on a social network (Michelutti, 2020).⁵ In it, pessimism, deaths, numbers, which started to skyrocket. The images of the graves and mass graves, of the “statistics of deaths” [*mortestatísticas*], reverberated introspectively. This poem met with others read in the previous weeks during the first quarantine weeks. Echoing voices, reflecting and refracting common images and representations amid different reports and experiences of their authors, talking about many things, in addition to the pandemic.

It seemed to us, then, an opportunity to launch an attack on this idea: what could an analysis of these representations reveal? We raised a first hypothesis: certain utterances would appear in the poems, since the poets would try to communicate their understanding of the pandemic itself, of the quarantine, of the disease, of the virus, of the process of discovery / manufacture of vaccines and treatments... and of scientific themes, especially the controversial ones. Therefore, following this line of thought, the poems could be objectified as a potential scientific popularization material, for practical purposes or theoretical studies.

⁴ “O poeta e suas loas.” Excerpt from Everardo Sena’s (ABLC, 2020).

⁵ It is the poem by Leonardo Michelutti to whom the passage quoted in the previous section belongs.

2 Popularization of Science and Poetry

We asked our research question about the poetic production produced during the occasion of the Poetic Quarantine of the Brazilian Academy of Cordel Literature [*Quarentena Poética da Academia Brasileira de Literatura de Cordel*] (ABLCL), which started in April 2020.⁶ This event was completely carried out remotely through social networks.

2.1 Cordel Literature and the “New Cordel” Movement

Our entry point was the *cordel*, a most well-known terrain in terms of the relationship between scientific popularization and poetry. *Cordel* literature is a traditional poetry of the Northeastern states of the country. It is an ancient tradition, whose origins date back to the Portuguese troubadour of the late Middle Ages, and which arrived in Brazil in the 19th century, gaining here new characteristics (Assis; Tenorio, Callegaro, 2012) as a typical structure and language (Almeida; Massarani; Moreira, 2016).

An expression of which communicative conception lies in the printed and oral word, *cordel* literature played a fundamental role in the literacy of the Northeastern population, being read, sung or recited in public spaces, addressing an infinity of themes, from fantasy to news and science. In the words of *cordelista*⁷ Tião Simpatia, *cordel* was the “newspaper of the backwoods” [*Jornal do sertão*] (Simpatia, 2020).

The times of the *cordel*, one might think, have passed. They are printed materials, with low circulation, published in restricted cultural spaces, addressing themes that would not transcend regional limits... However, in a movement of cultural resistance, as pointed out by Farias and Alves (2009), the *cordel* literature persists, bringing to the scene new themes and new readers, including the search of a space on the internet, through blogs and social networks for its popularization. Thematic conceptions and the choice of certain contents have given *cordel* literature new possibilities for use and research, such as in science teaching and scientific popularization. Some authors have called this movement,

⁶ Until the submission of this paper, the Poetic Quarantine had still been occurring, although no new releases had been made since the moment of gathering data for this research.

⁷ *Cordelista* is the name by which the authors of the *Cordel* literature are called, being the plural form *Cordelistas*.

of rescue and representativeness of the *cordel*, “The New Cordel” [*O Novo Cordel*] (Farias; Alves, 2009; Monteiro, 2012).

Lima (2013) reminds us that within the *New Cordel* movement, a subgenre entitled “Scientific Cordel” [*Cordel Científico*] can be identified, of which themes are scientific issues, the life and work of scientists, representations of science, technology, health-related issues, ethical issues involving science, socio-environmental themes, among others (Moreira; Massarani; Almeida, 2005).

3 The Body of the Research: ABLC Poetic Quarantine

The Brazilian Academy of *Cordel* Literature (ABLC) launched a campaign in April 2020, called “Poetic Quarantine of the ABLC” [*Quarentena Poética da ABLC*] with the objective of

[...] making quarantine days less difficult. This initiative has as its main objective to talk about the quarantine of millions of Brazilians in the form of poetry, which turns the routine more interesting and in this way we will help to publicize the work of several Brazilian *cordelistas* and poets! (ABLC, 2020).⁸

This campaign, entirely carried out in a digital environment, designed to “popularize verses related to the current global problem, Covid-19 or coronavirus”⁹ received contributions from various cities in different states of the country, from people of various ages and was disseminated in all Academy of *Cordel* social media channels.

We analyzed all the productions available at ABLC addresses in the context of the Poetic Quarantine, a total of 59 poems, in their great majority small pieces of+ *cordel*. The data presented to date¹⁰ were searched on the ABLC sites, once a week throughout the period. Most works of *cordel* have no date, but we know they were published during the analyzed period (we had no commitment to exact dates). In the call for this campaign,

⁸ In Portuguese: “tornar os dias de quarentena menos difíceis. Essa iniciativa tem como objetivo principal, falar sobre a quarentena dos milhões de brasileiros em forma de poesia, o que torna a rotina mais interessante e desta forma ajudaremos a divulgar o trabalho de diversos cordelistas e poetas brasileiros!”

⁹ In Portuguese: “divulgar versos relacionados ao atual problema global, Covid-19 ou coronavírus.”

¹⁰ October, 31, 2020. The campaign was launched on April, 11, 2020.

ABLC itself announced that the sending and publication of poems could be done at any time through their main page and social media.

An important feature of these works of *cordel* is their size and structure. They are mostly short, configuring more as units of a greater *cordel* (Silva, 2007), such as the sextile, the “*setilha*”¹¹ and the tenth.

To outline the methodology, we start from the approach used by Almeida, Massarani and Moreira (2016) for *cordel* analysis, based on Patrick Charaudeau’s semiolinguistic theory (Charaudeau, 1992; Charaudeau, 2008; Souza, 2016; Almeida; Massarani; Moreira, 2016). We intend to analyze the speech will of the *cordelistas*, using the tools of their theory, which evidences the strategies and devices of the speech mobilized by them.

In addition, we extracted authorial information that could influence the results or the discussion of the data. Therefore, on the ABLC main page, we started by collecting the names of the authors, apparent age, gender, city / region, profession.

Then, to highlight the themes and subthemes, we chose to build a word cloud guided by exclusion criteria (Prais; Rosa, 2017). This methodological choice emerged as substantially feasible and consistent with our objectives because the works of *cordel* are small. For this reason, the presence of certain words and expressions could indicate by themselves the theme and / or a subtheme of each *cordel*. The exclusion criteria sought to remove from the word cloud “radar” the terms without any meaning attribution immediately linked to the context of the quarantine and the pandemic.

Charaudeau’s (2008) semiolinguistic theory provided instruments for the analysis of the *cordelistas*’ speech will that are facing a well-defined theme and an excess of seeing: the covid-19 pandemic. The works of *cordel* that make up our focus of research were written about - and under – the quarantine and social isolation. The tools of this theory make it possible to analyze the discourse and its modes of organization, identifying the themes and subthemes present and the different methods of addressing them.

The *cordelistas*’ discursive strategies will be analyzed based on “legitimacy (being able to say), credibility (knowing how to say) and capturing (convincing by reason or emotion)” and “enunciative organization of their speeches (allocutive, elocutive and

¹¹ A verse with seven poetic syllables.

delocutive)” (Almeida; Massarani; Moreira, 2016, p.7).¹² As for the mode of discursive organization, we analyzed the descriptive devices, such as naming, location and qualification, and narratives, such as the marking of the subjects and their roles in relation to the theme.

4 Results

4.1 Copyright Data

The virtual exhibition of these productions had photos and information from almost all authors. Therefore, it was possible to make this authorial analysis.

Out of a total of 59 works of *cordel*, 3 authors contributed with two pieces of works of *cordel* each, thus resulting in 56 different *cordelistas*. We made a gender cut and noticed that 15 were women and 41 men; ages are not reported by everyone, however, with the photos available, it was possible to notice the greater presence of older people, over the age of 50. Nevertheless, a number of authors appeared to be young adults under the age of 30 and some in the juvenile age group, with an author of just 10 years old being one of those who had two pieces of works of *cordel* published. We realized that this majority, made up of older people, can demonstrate the traditionality of *cordel* literature; on the other hand, the presence of young people among the authors demonstrates the “new readers and new authors” that Monteiro (2012) defends as a characteristic of the “New *Cordel*” movement.

When we analyze the cities and regions, we perceived a greater representativeness of the Northeastern states of the country, with 25 authors, of all nine states, followed by the Southeastern states, with 21 authors, and of the Northern states, with 3 authors. Although the majority of authors are of Northeastern origin, which may mark the cultural strength of the *cordel* for this population, we observed that the state with the largest number of *cordelistas* is Rio de Janeiro, with 16 authors. We suggest the possibility that such expressiveness is due to the fact that ABLC has its headquarters in the city of Rio

¹² ALMEIDA, C.; MASSARANI, L.; MOREIRA, I. Representations of Science and Technology in Cordel Literature. *Bakhtiniana*, São Paulo, 11 (3): 6-28, Sept./Dec. 2016. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/j/bak/a/smgG7VksTtn7x3QDXcbKWbb/?lang=en>. Accessed in 16 Sept. 2021.

The *cordel*, in its own language and style, is permeated by religious themes (Sobrinho, 2013). It may therefore seem inappropriate to present the expression of faith as a theme or subtheme. Nevertheless, the small works of *cordel* of the ABLC Poetic Quarantine, as we said, do not have many subthemes linked to the main themes. The *cordel* by Antonio de Gusmão is an example in which expressions of faith dominate the thematic plan of the author, even though there is mention of the virus and the disease:

I wish my dear Lord / That you would send us plenty of lights / To these poor sons of yours / Avoid that such great number of crosses / Move away from earth / Because there are crooks / A good theme for a cordel / Has this corona proven to be / Send away this disease / Save any of those brothers / That even though they may not have faith / Need to earn their bread / Command Saint Ezequiel / Unknowingly he may clone / A good theme for a cordel / Has this corona proven to be (ABLC, 2020).¹³

4.3 Discursive Strategies

The marks of the search for the legitimacy of speech will follow recommendations for the prevention of contagion and transmission, with or without reference to science. *Cordelistas* report their own lives, bring their impressions and experiences to the pandemic. Their speeches become legitimate because they reflect not only the lives of others, but also those of themselves during the quarantine, which has been lived by all. So, that is what we see in the *cordel* by Silva Filho' (no date): *Such a dirty and a mortal virus / provoked this pandemic / Which has as prophylaxis / Deep isolation / We see all around the world / The poor and the rich perishing / Death overruling / Causing calamity / What a sad reality / may come to us* (ABLC, 2020).¹⁴

The credibility discourse emerges with demonstrations of knowledge of the problem (origins and different names attributed to the virus), however, with some conceptual errors and permeated by expressions of faith, as we can see in the *cordel* by Nascimento (no date): *It started in China / through the globe spread out / In Europe*

¹³ In Portuguese: “Eu queria meu bom Deus / Que mandasse muitas luzes / Pra esses pobres filhos teus / Evitar que tantas cruces / Se mudem pro beleléu / Pois tem gente safadona / Um bom tema pra cordel / Foi esse tal de corona / Mande embora essa doença / Salve qualquer desse irmão / Que mesmo não tendo crença / Precisa ganhar o pão / Mande que São Ezequiel / Que não sabendo ele clona / Um bom tema pra cordel / Foi esse tal de corona.”

¹⁴ In Portuguese: “Um vírus mortal e imundo / Provocou essa pandemia / Que tem a profilaxia / Do isolamento profundo / É visto por todo o mundo / Pobre e rico perecer / A morte prevalecer / Causando calamidade / Que triste realidade / Pode nos acontecer.”

arrived / Without warning it contaminates / Many lives it takes / In Italy it settled / Many people it killed there / Continents it invaded / We are now impotent / In our Country it arrived (ABLC, 2020).¹⁵

Like Almeida, Massarani and Moreira (2016), we are not concerned with correcting conceptual or grammatical errors in the works of *cordel*. Thus, we perceived in this line of Massilon Silva (no date) a poetic license structured in an error to explain the origin of the virus: *From where the Corona came, no one knows / Whether from China, or Afghanistan. / From Italy, France or Gabon, / But it came frightening humankind* (ABLC, 2020).¹⁶

Reason and emotion sometimes divide, sometimes dominate the printed capturing by the *cordelista*. The capturing appeals to reason when health recommendations and scientific data are transmitted and to emotion when psychological issues of isolation are shared. As it can be seen in the *cordel* by Bortolotti's (no date): *The only existing way / to defeat the virus / is to practice social isolation / Everyone in their homes / I pray to the Lord for those / Who have no home but the sky [...] All this existing fear / Television announces / While inside the homes / There is fear and melancholy* (ABLC, 2020).¹⁷ The scientific and health recommendations are written with verbs in the infinitive, as if repeating a protocol by means of a delocutive act; then, the *cordelista* himself starts to express anxieties, showing empathy for the homeless population on the streets.

4.4 Enunciative Organization

In this step, we analyze and present the results of the organization of the *cordelistas'* speech will, to whom they are addressed, who the subjects of their speech will are, what the descriptive elements triggered are.

The enunciative organization (Charaudeau's locutive acts) can be, as we said, elocutive (the author verbalizes his thoughts), allocutive (the author implies an

¹⁵ In Portuguese: "Ele começou na China / Para o mundo se espalhou / Na Europa ele chegou / Sem avisar contamina / Muitas vidas elimina / Na Itália se instalou / Muita gente lá matou / Invadiu os continentes / Hoje estamos impotentes / No nosso País chegou."

¹⁶ In Portuguese: "De onde veio o Corona, ninguém sabe / Se da China, do Afeganistão, / Da Itália, de França ou do Gabão, / Mas chegou assustando a humanidade."

¹⁷ In Portuguese: "A única forma existente / Para o vírus derrotar / É praticar o isolamento / Cada um dentro do seu lar / Eu rezo a Deus pelas pessoas / Que tem como teto o luar [...] Todo pânico que existe / A televisão anuncia / Enquanto dentro de casa / Há medo e melancolia."

interlocutor, a “you (s)” or a “you”) and delocutive (the author has a generic interlocutor in mind).

Our analysis found that the most informative works of *cordel*, which present a logical and orderly scientific conception, explicit or not, have a delocutive organization. It is spoken “with the voice of science,” as shown by Cacá Lopes (no date):

It was necessary such a virus / to slow down / Life here on Earth / and spread fear / The corona kills more than / A nuclear war. / All the world stopped / With the invisible’s arrival / Showing to human being / An incredible teaching / Fortune is nothing / Before the awful evil (ABLC, 2020)¹⁸

or in the *cordel* by Cris Sousa (no date), who decided [...] *to talk a little / About a virus which is fatal, / In Europe it spread out / Changing our present world / Subsequently it transformed / All personal hygiene [...]*.¹⁹

On the other hand, the allocutive act is predominant in the works of *cordel* in which the author seeks to convince the reader of his opinion about the preventive measures. It is an important enunciative instrument for transmitting scientific information together with the author’s view on them. Tião Simpatia, a well-known *cordelista* from Ceará State and who also participated in this campaign, writes:

Because of this Covid / that the whole world razes / I won’t go to your home / Not even if you invite me / Time we share / With our friends on line / Doing a “tiny whinny live” / Science grounds me / I won’t go to your home / For you do not to come to mine! (ABLC, 2020).²⁰

With this type of organization, the *cordelista* can be both empathetic and critical, transmitting scientific recommendations, but with the intention of convincing his interlocutor.

¹⁸ In Portuguese: “Foi necessário um vírus / Para desacelerar / A vida aqui na terra / E o medo propagar / O corona mata mais / Do que guerra nuclear. / O mundo todo parou / Com a chegada do invisível / Mostrando ao ser humano / Um ensinamento incrível / Que riqueza não é nada / Perante o mal horrível.”

¹⁹ In Portuguese: “[...] falar um pouco / De um vírus que é fatal, / Na Europa se espalhou / Mudando o mundo atual / E em seguida transformou / Toda higiene pessoal [...].”

²⁰ In Portuguese: “Por causa dessa Covid / Que ao mundo inteiro arrasa / Eu não vou em sua casa / Nem que você me convide / O tempo a gente divide / Com os amigos na linha / Fazendo uma livezinha / a ciência me embasa / Eu não vou em sua casa / Pra você não vir na minha!”

Another example of this case is the *cordel* by Vicente Campos (April 12, 2020), in which the author criticizes social isolation:

To be an entrepreneur / At the country of robbery / one has to take the bull by the horns / Each day, every week / Try to open a company / And say, but be sincere / If that's not what happens. / But, to shut it down / It takes very little time / Only about 15 days / Such a humiliation / Just one perfect virus / Governor and mayor / Holding a pen (ABLC, 2020).²¹

Thus, Campos's work shows that *cordel* was not exclusively employed to defend the difficult sanitary and scientific measures to fight the virus...

And, finally, we observe that the elocutive act is more present in the works of *cordel* in which the personal impressions about the isolation measures and the progress of the disease are represented. Here, we do not see the voices of science, nor the interventions in favor of pandemic measures, but rather fear, doubt, anguish, alongside with hope, the moral appreciation of solidarity, love and respect for others. Thus, we see in the *cordel* by Cícero do Maranhão (no date) an example: the verbalization of the author's thoughts, his visions and disappointments.

[...] I'm already feeling anguished / But I may not relent / I have something to say / Even without seeing improvement / I'm not the owner of the truth / Neither do I want to intrude- But what I see in the media -Only works for rich people to see- Who doesn't watch television / Will never get protection / Neither will understand anything (ABLC, 2020).²²

4.5 Descriptive Elements

The act of naming as a descriptive element, closely linked to the discourses of legitimacy and credibility, has been applied to the virus, prevention measures and countries. The virus is cited in different ways: "corona," "corona virus," "coronavirus,"

²¹ In Portuguese: "Pra ser empreendedor / No país da roubalheira / Tem que matar um leão / Por dia, a semana inteira / Tente abrir uma empresa / E diga, por gentileza / Se não é dessa maneira. / Agora, para fechar / Não demora muito não / Leva só uns 15 dias / É muita humilhação / Basta o vírus perfeito / Governador e prefeito / Com a caneta na mão."

²² In Portuguese: "[...] Já tá me dando agonia / Mas não devo esmorecer / Algo preciso dizer / Mesmo sem ver melhoria / Não sou dono da verdade / Nem quero me intrometer / Mas o que vejo na mídia / Só serve pro rico ver / Quem não tem televisão / Jamais terá proteção / Nem nada irá entender [...]."

“the covid,” “corona 19,” among others. In the same way, the qualifications are abundant and “surround” the virus and the disease of all kinds of adjectives, notably the derogatory ones; the descriptions of locations show an interesting cut: from China to the street where one lives, from the nation to home, the authors locate their speeches in time and in the pandemic space: in the here and now, recognizing the global spread of the disease and, at the same time, transposing it to everyday life. A unique example among the analyzed works of *cordel* is by Antonio Mota da Silva (no date) who, using ballads, finds the quarantine in his routine (or that of a character) in a humorous way: *I was in quarantine / In fear, my legs trembled / It was early Sunday / The novena had been prayed / Zé de Madalena arrived / On the horse Bacurau / And he shouted: “Hey, guys! / I heard on the Torona radio / That today one so called Corona / Falls off from the pedestal!”* [...] (ABLC, 2020).²³

Regarding *cordel* actors, their qualifications and roles in the context of the pandemic, we find: a) the role of science, scientists and health professionals in combating the pandemic; b) the role of art and artists, especially the *cordelistas* themselves in spreading preventive measures, in defending isolation and in making poetic expression a “remedy”; and c) the role of civil society.

Science, scientists and health professionals are appointed to strengthen the credibility of the speech, as is the example of the *cordel* by Tião Simpatia mentioned above: “*science bases me,*” or as is the example of *cordel* by Teles (no date), who advocates in favor of a chloroquine-based medication: *Fortunately, as it seems, / There’s a light at least / An antidote that is / Captivating and seducing; / Chloroquine based / Of one’s eyes, it is the apple; / The virus it abducts* (ABLC, 2020).²⁴

In other words, seeking to reference themselves in a science that “bases” and that gives “a light: an antidote,” *cordelistas* bring their views of the contributions of science to fight the pandemic. In addition, this last example shows that the *cordelista* reflects and refracts a moment in the scientific process in this pandemic: the chloroquine-based drug,

²³ In Portuguese: “Eu estava em quarentena / Tremendo as pernas de medo / Era domingo bem cedo / Tinha rezado a novena / Chegou Zé de Madalena / No cavalo Bacurau / E gritou: “Ei, pessoal! / Passou na rádio Torona / Que hoje um tal de Corona / Despenca do pedestal!” [...]”

²⁴ In Portuguese: “Felizmente, ao que parece, / Surgiu enfim uma luz: / Um antídoto que está / Cativando e que seduz; / À base de cloroquina, / É dos olhos, a menina; / O vírus ela abduz.”

even when its ineffectiveness was fully proven, has been on the rise since the beginning of the pandemic, among scientific and anti-scientific controversies.

Another *cordel*, by Wilamy Carneiro (no date), looks at the difficulties and dilemmas of the work of researchers: *Such a small virus / Challenges the researchers / Remaining in one's body / Causing doctors to have insomnia*. (ABLC, 2020)²⁵ But, at the same time, it praises the efforts of scientists, who “stop sleeping to find answers to the scientific challenge.”

The intentionality of the *cordel* - that is, the explicit defense of the use of *cordel* and the manifested importance of poetry in this pandemic period - is a hallmark of its typical language (Almeida; Massarani; Moreira, 2016). In this way, we noticed that many *cordelistas* positively describe the pandemic theme as a good opportunity to write and express their views. Thus, as we have seen above, Antonio de Gusmão says that: [...] *A good theme for a cordel - has this corona proven to be*²⁶ or the already mentioned Everardo Sena: *This so called corona 19 / Brings the people closer / The poet with his carols / brings people to tears*.²⁷

The role of civil society is represented almost exclusively in relation to complying with measures of social isolation and prevention. In these works of *cordel*, civil society is the “me, you, everyone” and *cordelistas* strive to transmit the importance and urgency of these measures and also moral values. This is what we see in the *cordel* by Suyane Arrais Melo: *Let's talk about affection, / and solidarity / think collectively, / Act humanely / Forge a chain / of affection and kindness* (ABLC, 2020)²⁸ or, as Cristine Nobre Leite puts it (April 14, 2020): *We are one and all / Distinct in our ways / Equals in diversity* (ABLC, 2020).²⁹

²⁵ In Portuguese: “Um vírus tão pequeno / Desafia os pesquisadores / Se alojando em seu corpo / Dando insônia aos doutores.”

²⁶ In Portuguese: “Um bom tema de cordel / Foi essa tal de corona.”

²⁷ In Portuguese: “O tal corona 19 / Aproxima as pessoas / Poeta com suas loas / Ao povo ele comove [...].”

²⁸ In Portuguese: “Vamos falar de afeto, / e solidariedade / pensar como coletivo, / Agir com humanidade / Construir uma corrente / De carinho e bondade!”

²⁹ In Portuguese: “Somos um e somos todos / Distintos em nossos modos / Iguais na diversidade.”

5 Discussions

Art does not necessarily represent objectively reality, but it is capable of synthesizing it with great poignancy; it can anticipate science by opening up a field of knowledge and knowledge that allows concrete problems to be solved, such as, for example, strengthening the use of writing to deal with the loneliness of social isolation. Studying these works of *cordel* is like looking at snapshots of a moving landscape, of a film or scene that is still unfolding; our analysis here looks at the recent past with an eye to the future. The pandemic is still in progress.

A reading of a “pandemic poem” in a social network in the first weeks in isolation triggered reflections in us and was the motivation to try to understand how the poetry produced and disseminated during the pandemic - and in this case, the *cordel* - reflects and refracts the times we live in, as well as the most frequent themes, specifically, scientific themes. Searching for how they appear and are part of the *cordelistas*’ speech will be a way to have a look at the impacts of the pandemic on society and to obtain information about the public view of science.

Looking at our body of research, we perceive a high degree of diversity among the authors: 56 authors, from 12 states of the federation of different ages and professions and bringing different positions in the face of the pandemic, above all, in view of the quarantine imposed as a way of combating the advancement of the disease.

The thematic restriction around the coronavirus quarantine, however, allowed other subthemes to emerge. The virus, with its diffuse naming by *cordelistas*, not only reflects a new term emerging in dialogues and speeches, but also refracts its strangenesses. What is the name of the disease and what is the name of the virus? An example is “corona 19,” where the author mixes the pathogen with the disease.

The speeches that opted for legitimacy strategies were based on a material and objective condition: all *cordelistas* lived the advancement of the pandemic and were faced with social and individual issues resulting from the isolation measures and the new hygiene protocols. Therefore, we believe that all *cordelistas* are immersed in a unique and totalizing conjuncture, in which the discursive reliance on legitimacy appears not only as an individual act for each poet, but also as a resource for rest of the poetic production and its authors. In favor or not of isolation measures, supporters or critics of science, when

asked to talk about their quarantined lives, everyone talks without quoting each other, answers without asking each other; each *cordel*, like a testimony and a listening, legitimizes the others' works of *cordel*.

We understand that *cordelistas* who sought credibility did so when they intended to communicate information that, among some misconceptions, was what science knew and publicly presented about the disease: the name of the virus and the disease, the origin of the pandemic, how contagion occurs and its transmission, isolation measures and hygiene habits. This credibility comes both from an author who projects himself in the dialogue with interlocutors (allocutive act) to try to convince them and from another author who intends to communicate science in an organized and didactic way (delocutive act), sometimes naming and organizing information, sometimes purely using rhetorical strategies.

In almost all the works of *cordel*, we could detect an alternation of capturing strategies. Emotion occupies the space of reason when there are no more arguments. God is asked to discover vaccines; the control of the pandemic is attacked or defended through social restraint and soon expresses the psychological impacts of this measure on the self.

When we evaluate the works of *cordel* from the point of view of their conceptual contents, we agree with Josenildo Lima (2013) that prescribes that the use of the *cordel* in educational contexts be preceded by a critical and reflective reading. However, we believe that in the small works of *cordel* of our body of research we can be witnessing the temporal and non-linear transformation of several scientific statements, the scientific concepts that are being popularized “full steam,” from “outside to inside,” from language to life, from a social and sanitary context reflecting on each and everyone's lives. From the globe to my home.

By following this path, we believe it is possible to perceive in the works of *cordel* some fragments of the evolution of the pandemic in the country. In fact, as we said in the research methodology, we collected these works of *cordel* by accessing the ABLC sites weekly. Analyzing the descriptive perspectives of location, we could see in some works of *cordel* records of the steps of the pandemic: its origin in Asia, its expansion in Europe and arrival in Brazil; and the increase in the number of deaths, the controversies surrounding the prophylactics and tested drugs; ideological polemics in science were emerging in the smallest works of *cordel* as the dynamics of the theme unfolded. In the

works of *cordel*, it makes it certainly necessary to assess the existence of this parallel between the representation of science and the temporality of the pandemic more systematically. In fact, it was not configured as an assumption in our research project; we only realized this possibility during the collection of the research body and initial analysis. On the other hand, this perception did not abandon us during the maturing stage of these discussions, and we believe it is important to place it here.

What also emerged in our study, and which was not previously viewed in our assumptions is the great mention of psychological helplessness, incomprehension, and discouragement in the face of the future. As we said above, next to the recommendation of science, the *cordelistas* sometimes also spoke about themselves and their families. The “stay at home motto” mixed the educational intentionality of the thematic of the *cordel* with the space for sensitivity and subjective expression.

Final Considerations

In the words of *cordelista* Rodrigo Silva Cristalino (ABLC, 2020): *The virus is transient, but life is not at all.*³⁰ Actually, life is not transient, and it is still not simple to understand what we have been through. Poetic Quarantine of the ABLC Poetic Quarantine was called to “make quarantine days less difficult” (ABLC, 2020) with a theme about the coronavirus and covid-19, whose motto comes from the president of the Academy, *cordelista* Gonçalo da Silva, on April 11, 2020: *GOOD MORNING DEAR EARTHLINGS / SUDDENLY COMES TO THE FOREFRONT / THE TALK ABOUT A MORTAL VIRUS / CALLED CORONA. / WHOSE DEVASTATING ACTION, REALLY STRIKES US* (ABLC, 2020).³¹

It is impressive that these small poems, small works of *cordel*, can, under appropriate analysis, reveal or show representations of various aspects that we have experienced during the pandemic of covid-19, in particular the visions and representations of science. In this paper we studied a set of small works of *cordel* starting from a look at the references related to the popularization of science and we could observe, therefore,

³⁰ In Portuguese: “O vírus é passageiro / Mas a vida não é não.”

³¹ Upper case in the Portuguese original: “BOM DIA CAROS TERRÁQUEOS, /DE REPENTE VEM À TONA, /FALAR DE UM VÍRUS MORTAL / DENOMINADO CORONA. / CUJA AÇÃO DEVASTADORA, REALMENTE IMPRESSIONA!”

that there is a lot of science in these poems. Talking about the pandemic, talking about oneself, *making quarantine seem less difficult*. What social role did poetry play in the months of social isolation, in which the majority of the population was cut off from everything and almost everyone, even cut off from the paths and preambles of science? Is it possible to extend our research question to another body of research, that is, to other forms of poetic expression?

Finally, we want to leave here an aspect not exposed above, which is the exploratory character that this research acquired; in search of scientific themes, with a focus on scientific popularization, the small works of *cordel* proved to be more expressive than we thought.

We realize that the representations of science in the speech will of *cordelistas* express a historical and social process in progress, in which science takes on a protagonist and antagonistic role: while it intensifies the search for the solution of the problem, it moves at a slow pace. Everyone wants cures and treatments, but the invisible virus “impresses”; publicly communicated combat measures have isolated people from each other, but in our country, these measures have been the subject of intense controversy. Medical treatments were constantly under dispute, confusing and disorienting public policy decision making.

We argue that poetry in times of pandemic - what we call “pandemic poetry” - is approached as a space and time for meetings of voices and visions of authors and quarantined authors about science, articulating their knowledge on the subject with subjective expressions. We hope, therefore, that this pandemic poetry, in its varied language, may in fact have made the days less difficult so far and, also, be further studied in the future as a material for scientific popularization.

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