



Reflections on the melodramatic cultural matrix in anime

*Reflexões sobre a matriz
cultural melodramática
em animês*



Thátilla Sousa Santos¹

Lara Lima Satler²

¹ PhD student and Master in Communication at the Postgraduate Programme in Communication (PPGCOM) of the Federal University of Goiás (UFG). CAPES scholarship holder. E-mail: thatillasantos@gmail.com

² Research Productivity Fellow, CNPq. Professor in the Postgraduate Programmes in Communication and Cultural Performances (PPGCOM/PPGPC), Federal University of Goiás (UFG). E-mail: lara_lima_satler@ufg.br

Abstract: The article shows a theoretical research on Cultural and Reception Studies to approach the circulation of meanings between production and reception, which incites questions about identities, hybridity, globalization, resignification, interaction, mediations, and cultural matrices, and associate it with the research themes. The exercise indicated that using melodramatic narrative strategies in works such as anime helps the dramatic construction and raises reflections on its transnational capacity in a way that melodrama can be understood as a transcultural matrix, since it crosses cultures, softens borders, and contributes to the access and the popularity of Japanese cultural products.

Keywords: Cultural Studies; Reception Studies; cultural matrices; melodrama; anime.

Resumo: O artigo expõe uma pesquisa teórica sobre os Estudos Culturais e de Recepção a fim de abordar a circulação de sentidos entre produção e recepção, que incita questões sobre identidades, hibridismo, globalização, resignificação, interação, mediações e matrizes culturais, e associá-la aos temas de pesquisa. O exercício apontou que o uso de estratégias narrativas melodramáticas em obras como os animês auxilia a construção dramática e suscita reflexões sobre sua capacidade transnacional, de tal forma que o melodrama pode ser compreendido como uma matriz transcultural, pois atravessa culturas, suaviza fronteiras e contribui para o acesso e a popularidade de produtos culturais japoneses.

Palavras-chave: Estudos Culturais; Estudos de Recepção; matrizes culturais; melodrama; animês.

Introduction

This article offers a concise overview of the theoretical perspective of British and Latin American Cultural Studies, aiming to establish connections between these perspectives and the use of melodrama in audiovisual works – specifically in Japanese animations (anime). This articulation was conceived to reflect on how the melodramatic cultural matrices present in various anime can contribute to their accessibility across different parts of the world. To achieve this, the fundamental principles of these theories are highlighted in order to contextualizing them within studies on melodrama and Japanese animations, stressing the links between identity, hybridity, re-signification, circulation of meanings, mediation, cultural matrix, among other terms that are important to the research.

Melodrama as a genre³ progressed in France at a time of internal disputes and social concern, when plays served as an escape from the problems experienced. By depicting situations of the moment, everyday life, and highlighting feelings, the narratives acquired great popularity, being reinvented and adapted according to social changes, but maintaining their basic premise of gaining attention based on themes close to people’s hearts. Based on the concept that melodramatic narrative strategies are communicability strategies (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2018), in which product and reception produce meanings, melodrama can be seen as part of a circulation of meanings, in which both sides – production and reception – influence each other.

Anime are audiovisual works associated with Japanese pop culture that became world famous after their distribution in the West. Nowadays, they are available in media ranging from digital to physical, can present different realities and circumstances and invent or portray different scenarios, from the most everyday and simple to utopian worlds. Influenced by the world’s concerns and new technologies, which contribute to the creative and distribution process, anime are constantly changing. As well as entertaining, “they also move and provoke viewers on other levels as well, stimulating audiences to work through certain contemporary issues” (NAPIER, 2005, p. 4).

The first section of the article addresses the basic conceptions of British and Latin American Cultural Studies, emphasizing links with communication through a bibliographical survey (STUMPF, 2005) of the research carried out mainly by

³ For more on the characteristics of melodrama, see Santos and Satler (2023).

Brazilian researchers. However, the aim is not to address all the characteristics or produce a “state of the art” of the scholar line, but to conduct theoretical research in order to “discuss aspects of a theory or concept developed by an author. The readings revolve around interpretations of this idea – it is therefore not a question of mapping [...], but of proposing new ways of understanding the theory” (MARTINO, 2018, p. 96, our translation). The second section discusses the main notions exposed in the previous arguments about melodrama and Japanese animation in order to establish relationships between the subjects.

Finally, a briefly analyse the construction of meaning on digital networks (HENN; PILZ; MACHADO, 2018) is carried out, more specifically on Twitter, to understand how Brazilians who watch Japanese animations interact with the works through a melodramatic lens. The approach is proposed as an analytical tool for interpreting conversations on social media, with a micro perspective on specific and localized phenomena, such as the posts of people who follow an anime. These exercises are based on questions such as: how Brazilian viewers make sense of Japanese animation? Does this appropriation dialogue with the melodramatic lens? If so, when does it happen? How is it done? The aim is to understand the possibility of anime carrying melodramatic cultural matrices in their narratives that can be appropriated by Brazilians.

British and Latin American Cultural Studies

The trajectory of British Cultural Studies is widely known in the field of Communication, as are the major names linked to the school, such as Stuart Hall, Edward Thompson, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart. According to Martino (2014), these researchers chose underexplored objects in the academic sphere at the time of their emergence, covered aspects ranging from popular culture to mass culture and were concerned with the consolidation of TV as the cultural force of the moment. The notion of communication began to be observed in different ways, understanding consumption through a critical and no longer passive lens. British Cultural Studies looked at the relationship between culture and society, the use of culture by individuals, issues of gender and ethnicity, identity, globalization, subcultures, hegemony and the relationship between media and politics.

Temer and Nery (2009) add that its aim was to reflect on the transformations in culture caused by the relationship between society, social changes, cultural activities and institutions. For scholars associated with this line of research, every social action is a cultural action, as it is made up of a “set of symbols, values, myths

and images that concern both practical life and the collective imagination, inserted into the whole of culture, civilization and history, interacting to define a new form of culture in contemporary society” (TEMER; NERY, 2009, p. 106-107, our translation). In addition, the school of Cultural Studies favors individual attitudes, the roles adopted by the subjects and the influence of social structures on the understanding and choice of content. Individuals change the meanings of the messages disseminated by the media, as they insert both their subjectivities and those of the different social groups when accessing content, in a dynamic that is beyond the control of the broadcasters. In this context, an interaction can be seen between what is broadcast by the media and the formation of identities. This results from an understanding of communication processes based on their effects on the public and from highlighting the importance of the media in the construction of identity.

In addition to debating identities, research such as that by Rocha *et al.* (2010) brings together British Cultural Studies and Communication to understand how culture is portrayed in media such as cinema, considering the public not as simple consumers, but as producers of new social values and cultural languages. In this effort, “an interrelationship between communication and culture is configured, based on a conception according to which cultural processes are processes of meaning production inserted in specific social contexts” (ROCHA *et al.*, 2010, p. 3, our translation). Communication thus becomes a process of exchange between the receiver and the work, in which their possible constructions of meaning are investigated.

In the cultural analysis of any film proposed by Rocha *et al.* (2010), the modes of address are highlighted in an attempt to understand the relationships established between an audiovisual product and the audience’s experience, since it is understood that the production is not only made to respond to the interests of a dominant ideology, but also to engage with the audience through cultural issues assigned as mediators. The choices of addressing modes indicate particularities of the work that wish to build a relationship with, in other words, that “needs to establish a meeting point – constituted by culture – with the spectators, as a way of creating a specific relationship of communication” (ROCHA *et al.*, 2010, p. 7, our translation), in which the central place for the construction of meanings in films are the receptors.

Martino (2014) emphasises that after the development of research, British Cultural Studies leaned towards the study of reception, where communication actually takes place. In addition to the British school, researchers from Latin America have analyzed and expanded Reception Studies. In Brazil, this current is gaining more and more ground in academic research in Communication, and its history and

main researchers are equally familiar in the field. Inspired by British Cultural Studies, Reception Studies investigate what people do with the media, as they consider that there is a negotiation of meaning in the way the receiver interacts with the medium (GROHMANN, 2009). However, despite having an active role in the construction and reconstruction of identities, receivers are not totally free, but rather “socially active” (GROHMANN, 2009), as social and cultural circumstances influence the production of meaning. Lopes (2014) cites Jesús Martín-Barbero – and the concept of mediation – and Néstor García Canclini – with the processes of cultural hybridization – as contributors to the expansion of multifaceted theories of reception.

Martín-Barbero’s proposal understands communication as a complex process of social production of meaning in which the individual accesses the media with a view laden with references and reconstructs the message based on mediations. Communication is also seen as a question of culture, in which it is necessary to review the entire mediation process from the reception, recognition and appropriation of uses (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2018). Mediation thus becomes a space between culture, communication and politics, which configures and reconfigures production and consumption logics, industrial formats and cultural matrices (LOPES, 2014). It requires “thinking at the same time about the space of production, as well as the time of consumption, both articulated by everyday life (uses/consumption/practices) and by the specificity of the technological and discursive devices of the media involved” (LOPES, 2018, p. 17, our translation). Communication occurs in the interaction, which is constructed in a complex, multidirectional and multidimensional way, based on multiple mediations (GROHMANN, 2009) and enables the “interface of all senses, therefore, it is an *inter-mediation*, which is a concept for thinking about the hybridization of languages and media” (LOPES, 2014, p. 72, our translation).

With regard to cultural hybridity, Canclini (2008) discusses the new possibilities for relating to the media, the social sphere, culture, products and other articulations created through identification. Globalization, speed and ease of access to information have contributed to the formation of new relationships and changes in individuals’ behaviour. The contact with other cultures, their particularities and products have contributed to the emergence of identities that are formed in relation to new coexistences and influences, and are not just based on the local. However, in an interview with Escosteguy and Ribas, Canclini (2022) updates this conception when thinking about the current Latin American context, trying to understand the complexity resulting from globalization processes on the continent and its cultural heterogeneity. For the author, hybridization would no longer be

the central topic; he would rather name this process as “interculturality”, since the scenario has changed, digital networks have been incorporated and the use of the word itself has expanded.

Hybridity continues to be a characteristic of contemporary societies and an irreversible process, but the notion of interculturality is more open and neutral, as it “allows us to talk about intercultural conflicts or intercultural policies, intercultural universities. The term is used in many territories, many zones, for example, the real and the virtual and the combinations between them” (CANCLINI, 2022, p. 128, our translation). In Canclini’s view (2022), the notion of hybridization must include gender issues, avoid binarisms, consider the transnational nature of capital and the transnational corporate reorganization of production, circulation and consumption, the phenomena of globalization, deglobalization and de-Westernization of the world. Furthermore, the richest point of observation, according to the author, would be to contemplate the complexity of interactions that take advantage of, for example, “the repertoire of images and compositional resources of cultured or popular music from other nations” (CANCLINI, 2022, p. 131, our translation) to rework and combine them to provide playful, practical and commercial games.

Anime, melodrama and cultural matrices

In order to articulate the aforementioned theories with the research topic, this section is dedicated to reflecting on anime and melodrama from the perspective of British and Latin American Cultural Studies. To do this, it begins from the understanding that melodrama and anime are cultural products that aim to reach people and be consumed on a large scale.

Along with fashion, manga (comic books), music and soap operas, anime is part of Japanese pop culture, which carries values, meanings and ideals that correspond to its production context. These works reflect on social conditions by exploring “not only the most contemporary and transient of trends but also the deeper levels of history, religion, philosophy, and politics” (NAPIER, 2005, p. 32) in a creative and challenging way, capable of encouraging knowledge and questions about culture and social norms. Sato (2007) considers Japanese pop culture to be “a less imposed influence than the highly schematised and aggressively commercialised American pop culture, and therefore more ‘acceptable’, even though it reflects a reality and cultural references that are extremely particular and different from Western culture” (SATO, 2007, p. 23-24, our translation), which may indicate an increase in its demand.

According to Sato (2007), Japanese pop culture productions were created with aspects of their culture and spread around the world through new technologies and the government's own openness in proposing greater communication with other countries. The term *soft power* used by Nye Jr. (1990) stands out here, defined as a country's ability to indirectly influence the behaviour of others through culture, political values and foreign policy. By exporting cultural products in order to gain international power, the country seeks to encourage the world to have a new vision of its territory through its image and culture. Japan has used this resource to promote, among others, *Cool Japan* (ASO, 2009). The project was designed to recover the country from natural disasters and past wars, put aside its conservative, traditional and closed image, express a more "youthful" appearance of the country through pop music, architecture, fashion, audiovisuals, gastronomy and others, and become friendlier towards other countries.

It is clear that anime, like other cultural media products, is part of a commercial system that aims to have people consume their works and, consequently, their culture. For Canclini (2008), contemporary productions have brought communication between cultures closer together by interweaving the traditional and the modern, mobilizing them transnationally. In other words, they have their own cultural characteristics, a specific context, but they aspire for greater exposure and sales. The aesthetic, narrative, visual and sound choices contribute to their accessibility and popularization, breaking down geographical, linguistic and cultural barriers. In this way, using melodramatic characteristics that work with moral themes and are common transnationally – even with sociocultural specificities – for example, becomes a resource for achieving greater success. In addition to this, a scenario that could help anime to be famous, even though they carry a Japanese cultural framework, would be the de-Westernization mentioned by Canclini (2022), in which the modern Western project does not have the same centrality as in previous years, as there is an increase in demand for Eastern products.

By interpreting melodrama as a narrative strategy used by anime to reach the West, we are putting its reformulation into perspective, moving away from the understanding of genre that gained strength in the 18th century in France. To this end, we prefer to emphasise it based on its melodramatic characteristics, rather than as a closed genre, which allows it to be combined with other narratives, such as Japanese animations. Authors such as Brooks (1995) and Elsaesser (1991) use the term "melodramatic imagination" to address the fluidity of melodrama, its ability to be present in different spaces, its articulation to reach the feelings of spectators and cause identification and reflection.

The predominant melodramatic strategy is to present everyday life, what is known and easily understood, so that the viewer can identify with it. But not in the sense of feeling the same as the character, but to take that circumstance into their own daily lives, re-signifying it to reflect on their lives and society:

This is what constitutes the real movement of the plot: the journey from *ignorance* to *recognition* of identity, “that moment when morality imposes itself”.⁴ [...] It could then be hypothesized that the enormous and thick entanglement of familiar relationships,⁵ which as an infrastructure make up the plot of the melodrama, would be the way in which the opacity and complexity of the new social relationships are understood and expressed from within the popular. Anachronism thus becomes a metaphor, a way of symbolizing the social. (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 166, our translation)

This process is close to what Singer (2001) emphasizes as another main element of melodrama, the activation of pathos. Based on an Aristotelian conception, the author exemplifies the use of pathos as a pity-inducing exercise, which reveals an experience of physical sensation triggered by noticing moral injustices happening to undeserving people, and identification, which is usually associated with self-pity. In this way, by identifying with the character and feeling sorry for him, they are feeling sorry for themselves, because “spectators superimpose their own life (melo)dramas onto the ones being represented in the narrative. Melodrama is so moving because it hits home” (SINGER, 2001, p. 45). Even though the productions are intended for many spectators, making it a collective experience, the reaction, identification and reflection are individual experiences, as they trigger each person’s repertoire and experience.

In addition to identification, the fact that experiences are incorporated into the understanding of what is seen provides exchanges between work and audience, which again addresses the point of reception with which British and Latin American Cultural Studies are concerned. Martín-Barbero (1997) emphasizes the circuit quality of melodrama, which acts as a mediation between production and reception, in which the product is designed to cause certain reactions in people. The audience does not receive it passively, but puts their own impressions and baggage on what has been seen, re-signifying the messages. The receiver can also influence the producer,

⁴ The sentence in inverted commas belongs to the text *Une esthétique de l'étonnement: le mélodrame*, written by Peter Brooks in 1974.

⁵ These “familiar relationships” indicate that which has been experienced, seen, heard or known before.

because based on their understanding, feedback (on social media and forums, for example) and validation, a space is opened for new works to use and repeat what has worked or to re-evaluate and stipulate changes. For the author, melodrama is dialogical, which is why he characterizes it as a strategy of communicability between production and reception. In melodrama, there is also an exchange between narrative and life, “between what the actor does and what happens to the spectator, a sign of identity of another experience [...] that remains open to the reactions, desires and motivations of the audience” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 308, our translation).

When referring to the persistence of melodrama, Martín-Barbero (1997) considers it important not only to think about the conditions of its emergence and its ability to adapt, but also to propose a question of cultural matrices, in which the mediation between the popular and the masses⁶ is evident. In terms of narratives, this mediation “goes through the pamphlet, and through shows to the music hall and the cinema. From cinema to radio theatre, a history of the ways of narrating and staging mass culture is largely a history of melodrama” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 166, our translation). Based on Martín-Barbero’s vision and Raymond Williams’ concept of selective tradition, Pereira (2016, p. 25, our translation) describes the melodramatic cultural matrix as:

[...] dynamic cultural aspects that originate in the past but are preserved in the present. Matrices or traditions as something constructed according to principles of selection, which works as a powerful mechanism of incorporation, articulating processes of identification and cultural definition and which acts not as a historically inert segment.

In other words, considering a cultural matrix is to infer that nothing arises from scratch, as it is inspired, articulated, adapted and modified by concerns that are already present in society, culture and the imagination. “What activates this memory is not within the order of content, nor even within codes, it is of the order of *cultural matrices*. [...] Because to say *matrix* is not to evoke the archaic, but to make explicit what is present today, the *residual*” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 311-312, our translation). The productions, whether audiovisual or textual, that reflect these matrices interweave the territorial with the discursive, memory and the place of anchorage, the current and the past. In Martín-Barbero’s (2018) interpretation,

⁶ For the author, the mass is born from the popular, it is a form of sociability that consists of thinking of the popular from “new conditions of existence and struggle, a new way of functioning hegemonically” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 310, our translation).

melodrama as a cultural matrix began in the theatre and was transformed into drama, soap operas and cinema, becoming a place of complex intersections and “innovations, of anachronisms and modernities, of communicative asymmetries that involve, on the part of the producers, sophisticated ‘anticipation strategies’ [...] and, on the part of the spectators, the activation of new and *old* reading skills” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2018, p. 16-17, our translation).

Still according to the author, the melodramatic aesthetic does not make a rationalist separation between subjects considered serious and common themes, it treats political facts as dramatic and breaks away from objectivity by preferring to evoke people’s subjectivity. As a result, melodrama continues to appeal to audiences because it openly expresses ways of living and feeling.

As in the market places, in melodrama everything is mixed up, social structures with those of feeling, much of what we are [...] and what we dream of being, the theft of identity, nostalgia and anger. Whether in the form of a tango or a telenovela, Mexican cinema or a police report, melodrama in these lands exploits a deep vein in our collective imagination, and there is no access to historical memory or possible projection of the future that doesn’t pass through the imaginary. Which vein is this? The one in which the cultural matrix that feeds popular recognition in mass culture becomes visible (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997, p. 304, our translation)

Presenting itself as a cultural matrix in cinematographic or literary narratives gives melodrama the ability to express traditions, memories, universalities, cultural traits, portraits of the past that were apparently lost, activating collective mechanisms of appropriation and identification, because it blends and adapts in the course of history, incorporating elements and displacing others (PEREIRA, 2016). Based on Raymond Williams, Pereira (2016) portrays the cultural space as an articulator of meanings and disputes, and not as a mere reflection of material bases, in which the melodramatic approach to everyday life helps to understand the aforementioned elements and their role in culture. Therefore, looking at melodrama through a communicational perspective of reception involves reflecting on how people appropriate its characteristics and incorporate the narratives into their lives, what uses they make of it and whether this reflects on the construction of identities, sociability and aspects of private life. The cultural matrix of melodrama qualifies as an articulator and a strategic object for studying communicative practices (SILVA, 2012), as there is a narrative structure that is repeated, but also updated and produces new meanings in

the lives of a given audience. In other words, even though it retains its fundamental characteristics, melodrama can be re-appropriated as it is used. In this sense, we can see that the melodramatic narrative structure favours interactions, exchanges and negotiations with individuals.

When it comes to the current research, it is understood that the way in which anime uses melodramatic narrative and communication strategies combined with transnational elements in their production expands the reach of viewers from different parts of the world. This is because even though they have specific Japanese cultural aspects, they find a way to communicate internationally, since their understanding is articulated according to melodramatic attributes common to various locations and the very inferences and re-appropriations made by viewers. Thus, “in this process, there is no mere reproduction of imposed standards and ideologies, but rather differentiated listening with pluralized production of meanings, without, however, meaning that the receiver is completely autonomous to everything directed at them by the media” (PEREIRA, 2016, p. 27-28, our translation). This means that there is a circulation of meanings.

Twitter search: *slice of life* and melodrama

This section presents what has been said with the slice-of-life genre, among a range of other possibilities. In general, the Japanese animations categorised in this group have more intimate narrative elements and approaches, following the life of a character, their family, daily life, individual and social problems, in which moral and ethical issues are also addressed. They cover a wide variety of themes, but Brenner (2007) highlights those of bullying, suicide, sports and competitions, school stories, family life and what she calls “teen melodrama”, as the most frequent. The author also observes that the stories are situated in a specific setting (such as school, which Brenner considers to be the most dominant force in young people’s lives), group or trend, which becomes the core of the dramas.

The titles that Brenner (2007) identifies as melodramas portray the confrontation of conflicts, both internal and external, involving “good” young people being drawn into delinquent gangs, violence, family or friend rivalries, sexual or physical abuse, eating disorders, rape, bullying, prejudice, teenage pregnancy and racial tension (BRENNER, 2007). These stories “aim to reflect life in fiction and provide a way for teens to talk about problems, peer pressure,

and expectations” (BRENNER, 2007, p. 126). They are exaggerated narratives that seem to go deep inside the characters to, in a way, educate and comfort those watching.

With this in mind, it was observed posts (or tweets) on Twitter (now called X) that could demonstrate the associations discussed in the text based on the slice-of-life genre, trying to understand how Brazilians use the melodrama key when constructing meanings about different anime. The choice of just one genre was due to the limited scope of this article, but others could also be included in the research. Twitter was selected because it emphasizes reception and is a social media where people interact and comment on various subjects. The search was carried out using the advanced search available on the platform itself, where the results were narrowed down using the following filters: Portuguese language, period from January 1, 2023, to September 1, 2023, with the presence of the term “*slice of life*” and/or “melodrama”, “anime”, “melodramatic” and the acronym “SOL”. In all, 97 results were obtained, which were read in their entirety. Finally, two that contributed to the discussion were selected.

In Figure 1, the tweet mentions the anime *Sakura Card Captors* with a nostalgic tone, in which, even though it is a fantastic narrative involving powers and magic, the viewer found a good and comforting feeling in following the protagonist’s daily life, associating the elements with the innocence and purity of children. There was also an interaction from a second person who agreed with the view expressed in the first post. Despite not mentioning the term “melodrama”, the messages show how following the work meant refuge and comfort for these viewers. This demonstrates an emotional engagement between them and the narrative, especially evidenced by the interactions “It’s very good and comforting to watch” and “It’s been my refuge every Sunday evening”.

Figure 2 shows a sequence of tweets from a user recommending the anime *Onimai* to other people and defending his choice through elements that permeate what has been presented here as a melodramatic matrix. The account describes the narrative and argues that the silly, exaggerated, and comical scenes make viewers relax and enjoy the transformation of a grown man into a teenage girl, but also carry deeper messages about life, encouraging them to think about what they would do if they could go back and be young again – would the choices remain the same? The melodramatic lens used by the viewer when commenting on the anime is evident when he says “you start to wonder what it would be like to be younger again, to live in the same school again”, demonstrating the identification between the audience and the anime through moral conflicts.



Figure 1: Sakura's innocence
Source: Print from X.

The examples provide clues on how users appropriate and re-signify the works based on issues that are not limited to cultural differences, but that permeate the stages of life: childhood, adolescence and adulthood, something experienced in both Japan and the West. The transfer of the narratives to reality demonstrates the uses that viewers have made of anime, which may have been through the key of melodrama, such as thinking of the adventures full of magical powers of the character Sakura (Figure 1) through a bias of normality, as the trajectory of an innocent child discovering the world and herself; or assigning values, asking deep and individual questions that go beyond the fictional universe and change according to the different scenarios of those who watch it (Figure 2).

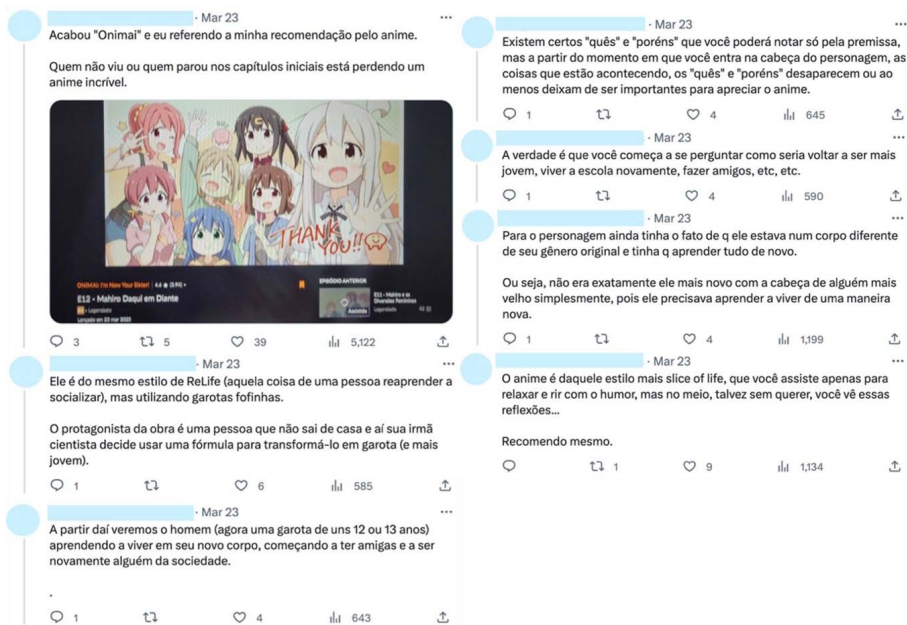


Figure 2: New beginnings in Onimai

Source: Print from X.

The mediation of melodrama functions as a space for interweaving (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2018) what is specific to the viewers and the narrative created in Japan. The melodramatic elements go back to the cultural matrices of Brazilian telenovelas, which trigger common senses of experience (BROOKS, 1995) and stimulate the production of meaning. The focus on everyday life helps identification, emotional connection, understanding of the elements (PEREIRA, 2016) and the production of meanings based on basic human values that are common to many people. And wouldn't this be a way of thinking about the symbolic circulation of anime? In other words, if the way in which these situations are approached is in line with melodrama's intention to be a way of seeing the world (BROOKS, 1995), aren't Japanese animations mobilizing it in order to be transnational and reach international audiences?

Final considerations

The aim of the article was to consider some of the main themes dealt with by British and Latin American Cultural Studies in order to relate them to ongoing research, which focuses on observing the melodramatic narrative strategy in Japanese

animations from the point of view of Brazilian viewers. In other words, to understand how they perceive the melodramatic characteristics in what they watch, appropriate them and apply them to their daily lives. For this reason, the emphasis of this article has been on the relationship between melodrama and anime. Rather than providing final answers, the idea was to start a potentially prolific discussion for thinking about other theoretical intersections between communication processes that involve these objects of study.

To this end, British Cultural Studies is concerned with culture, based on a social definition, the clarification of implicit and explicit meanings and values in a particular experience, the negotiation of meanings, the subject's capacity for agency, the formation of identities, reception and the changes brought about by globalization. At the same time, Latin American Cultural Studies is interested in similar points and uses interdisciplinarity in its studies, but emphasizes the Latin American context, with a focus on the popular. Among the concepts, the ones that stand out are the notion of the active receiver, who grasps the parts of the information that interest them and re-signifies them; mediations; cultural matrices; and the circulation of meanings imbricated in productions.

Anime are a cultural media products that convey the contexts of their production, but belong to a system of consumption that is increasingly being seen and disseminated around the world. Therefore, even though they carry issues specific to their country of origin, the works employ strategies that aim to increase their popularity and are supported by government programmes such as *Cool Japan*. To this end, the narratives have characteristics that encourage identification, especially with the characters' trajectories and everyday events, which are independent of a study of local culture in order to be understood and shared. Looking at these works rather than others is in line with the still-incipient process of de-Westernization highlighted by Canclini (2022). It is clear that Western productions, and especially American ones, continue to occupy a prominent position in world consumption, but Japanese animations have secured their place and continue to grow.

The melodramatic narrative strategy appears in different productions and adjusts according to current needs. From a cultural matrix perspective (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 1997), melodrama becomes a site of culture, memory, creation and identity formation. However, it is argued that its characteristics facilitate understanding not only for people native to the country of production, but also for others. In other words, it can be seen that a Japanese work that uses melodramatic narrative strategies, for example, dealing with everyday life, private and public life,

presents moral discussions and aims to reach people's emotions so that they reflect on what has been seen, and manages to be accessible to recipients from other countries, who do not have the same culture, do not speak the same language and do not have the same habits, but share the experience and re-signify the messages, as demonstrated in the examples taken from Twitter. Based on this, and advancing the Barberian proposition from anime, wouldn't it be interesting to think of melodrama as an intercultural matrix? Or even a transcultural⁷ one, joining the sense of transnational mentioned in the text, in which cultures cross?

If melodrama presents aspects of the past (which may or may not be repeated in the present), cultural and local issues, looking at it from a global perspective, working independently of the countries of origin and access, it would no longer be a solely cultural matrix exclusive to one place, but one that proposes elements that are repeated and accessible to more than one culture, which has common and sharable situations, despite the differences. In other words, although the conditions presented are specific to a place, they are not isolated from the world; rather, they are shared and re-signified in other environments. So, wouldn't referring to melodrama as an intercultural or transcultural matrix rather than a cultural one be more appropriate for demonstrating the complexities of globalization and cultural heterogeneity (which is in line with Canclini's new proposal [2022] to change the concept of hybridity and think of these relationships from the point of view of intercultural mix)? Focusing only on the "cultural" seems to refer to a localized notion, as if the works only repeat and trigger demands from the place of production, but mentioning "transcultural" highlights conflicts, universalities, transnationalities, circulation and consumption, interactions and occurrences that cross the senses, combinations of the real and virtual, territories, repertoires and cultures.

The choice to associate melodramatic narrative strategies with anime is based on what was mentioned earlier, since melodrama helps to address moral, everyday and sentimental themes, in other words, human themes that are common to people from different parts of the world. And wouldn't adding the cross-cultural melodramatic point of view to this notion highlight one of the aims of anime? In other

⁷ The choice of the term transcultural instead of intercultural is based on the etymology of the prefixes in Portuguese (ARAÚJO, 2022), where "inter" refers to an intermediate position, in between, and "trans" refers to something that goes beyond, through. As an example, the word "transnational" refers to productions that go beyond national boundaries, carrying characteristics common to several countries in order to become accessible. In the same way, thinking of a transcultural matrix refers to the idea that melodrama matrices transcend cultures and are re-signified by different viewers, i.e. they convey situations common to different places, but also have their own characteristics that will be consumed and possibly re-signified in other daily lives.

words, do these productions have the purpose of being transnational, consumed in different parts of the world, regardless of different cultures, languages, beliefs and ideals, and, to this end, do they present situations that are common, easily recognized, that weaken these barriers? Could this movement, among other reasons, be a factor in international viewers' appreciation of Japanese animation? These are initial concerns that will be explored in greater depth later, but which arose after reflecting on the theories and crossings discussed – the relationships between culture, communication, globalization, identities and the re-signification of meanings.

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