

Semiotic: Analysis That Supports Hypothesis

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Abstract

Este estudio se propone relatar científicamente como una disertación de maestría, basada en la semiótica peirceana, ha hecho que una importante información sobre uno de los más notables artistas brasileños no muriera con él. «A gente faz o que o coração dita», una disertación defendida en marzo de 2009 en la Escola de Comunicações e Artes de la Universidade de São Paulo, tuvo como principal objetivo comprobar, desde el análisis semiótico, una posible relación de concordancia entre las portadas de los discos de Dorival Caymmi y su contenido musical. El estudio fue realizado con rigor científico, tratando recorrer los niveles de primeridad, segundidad y terceridad, dando a los signos la posibilidad de expresión plena. Además de Peirce, Lucia Santaella es la autora que da una base teórica al trabajo, principalmente al detallar la Teoría General de los Signos. Pedro Barbosa es otro nombre que aparece cuando los estudios abordan la relación semiótica entre signos de diferentes matrices, como la visual y la musical. Fueron sólidos análisis. Eran signos gráficos consistentes, que representaban, indicaban y simbolizaban sus objetos, estos a su vez conduciendo a interpretantes muy próximos, sino coincidentes, a interpretantes potencialmente generados por la relación entre signos musicales y sus objetos. Al final de estos estudios era evidente una estrecha conexión entre la semiosis visual y la semiosis musical, al punto de colocar como hipótesis la participación del propio compositor en la elaboración de las tapas. No obstante todos negasen esta hipótesis; incluidos sus familiares y sus biógrafos; esta fue confirmada por el propio Caymmi. Algunos meses antes de su muerte, el artista concedió una entrevista a este estudio afirmando que había participado en la elaboración de todas las portadas, buscando expresar visualmente el contenido musical de los discos, sorprendiendo así a todos. ¡Es la fuerza representativa de los signos, sugiriendo hipótesis, enseñando caminos, fundamentando estudios!

From the blue sea came the inspiration that originated the study for this article. Caymmi was a name blew from the breeze, thrust by the sea, hurled by the waves. And semiotic was resistant and robust, solid and basic like a stone. It kept itself solid as a main theoretical foundation throughout this study.

And even if for a master degree research an authenticity for the topic were not required, the fear of tackling the work of an acclaimed artist was latent. It was the fear of a common place, the fear of redundancy, the fear of repetition. Thus, it was the semiotic theory that arose, spoke strongly and proposed a hypothesis that, so far, had not been thought in the original project, and that surprisingly revealed original. And about this hypothesis — aroused from the inner part of the analyses and proved in the sequence — this text is about.

1. THE INITIAL PROJECT AND THE FIRST HIPOTHESIS

The study this text briefly refers to had as an initial intent, the examine — based on the semiotic theory — of a possible relation of parity between the record covers of Dorival Caymmi — fundamental Brazilian composer — and their respective musical content. The idea was to delineate this potential parallel and then tackle market and advertising issues about the mentioned packages.

It is time to get rid of the narrow and impoverishing prejudice from one side that the notion of sign is exclusively related to a linguistic sign, that is, only the verbal sign is a sign. It also does not help much to find out that there are other signs beyond and beneath the verbal ones, but continue to see them with the same resources of analysis used to understand the verbal signs. (Santaella 2000:4)

Thus, reinforcing what has been said, this study tried to understand a little more about Caymmi's discography, highlighting the packing graphic material, trying to relate it to the musical content of the records in order to verify the existence or non existence of signal parity.

The first chapter, to summarized re-tell the biography of Dorival Caymmi, was also to contextualize the launching of each record post analyzed. It is what the peircean semiotic recommends in an analysis situation that takes into account the context where a certain system of signs was produced (Perez 2004:149), as circumstances such as personal, familiar, or even market search, could mean an option for an analytical bias.

A full chapter dedicated to semiotic was inevitable in the sequence. The explanation for this long and dense part is the necessity of making clear which theoretical tools were used in the analysis to come. Once pauses for theoretical reflection or explanations during those analytical situations would be inadequate or complicated, a previous chapter — mainly abstract and connected to the ideas of Peirce (1977, 1999) and Santaella (2000, 2002) — seemed to be more suitable and didactically efficient organizational project.

After a third chapter which was about record cover — its history in Brazil (Laus 2005), its market research approach (Ferreira 1993), its existence as package (Calver 2004), its role as co-related art (Andreato 1996), it is the moment of the semiotic analyses.

One by one the selected covers were put under rigorous study, meticulously from the rules elaborated by Peirce and developed by his late followers (Barbosa 2002, Coelho Netto 2001, Perez 2004, Santaella 2002&2000). It was tried to escape from the simple judgment of value or the trivial description with priority to signal details that only an attentive sight and precise can reveal. Thus, each analysis went through a different path. Some of them could be more rigid under the concepts of semiotics following faithfully the traditional analytical way. Others, however, cry out for a freer, less Cartesian observation. The analyses were fully made under the semiotic theory though, and all of them surprised for the communicative potentiality produced.

The analyses of the ten record covers selected started themselves to indicate the answers to the questions that were made as hypothesis in the beginning of the studies. It happened because if the main idea was to verify the possible adequacy between the cover and the musical content of a record, only the careful and detailed study of those covers and musical contents could originate a responsible reply.

And that was what was observed: there is a high level of artistic mixture between what illustrates the covers and what fulfills the records in the greatest majority of the covers studied. It is worth to say that those mixtures can be from the most variable kinds.

In some cases the connection is figurative from the symbolic level and from the Thirdness, with the cover illustrating objectively the musical content of the record. '*Eu vou pra Maracangalha* (1957), *Caymmi e o Mar* (1957) e *Caymmi* (1972) are good examples of this type of relation. On the cover of the first, Lan's caricature — important cartoonist from Uruguay, naturalized Brazilian, well-known for the traces that portrait natural and human beauty of Brazil, and more specifically of Rio de Janeiro — shows the composer from Bahia in the direction of his land of dreams wearing a white 'liforme' (uniform) and so.

Caymmi e o Mar (1957) cover is purely reiteration: the image repeats what the record proposes while the tracks of the record show all the relationship of the composer with the sea. The 1972 record, however, *Caymmi* (1972), reveals an integration cover/music that dilutes a little on the figure being a little less precise in its illustrative capacity. Thus, it perfectly represents in the visual the figures portrayed — not in an less diluted and imprecise way — in the record songs.

In other cases the analyses revealed some surprising connections between the illustration of the cover and the music of the record. It is the case of *Eu não tenho onde morar* (1960), *Ary Caymmi Dorival Barroso* (1958) and *Caymmi e seu violão* (1959). The 1960 cover received a tough analysis and so generated one of the most amazing interpretations. It contains cabalistic elements mixed with a constantly irregular geometry, all in communion with the ideas of Cesar Villela and the music inside the record.

The record that gathers Dorival Caymmi and Ary Barroso — this, an absolutely acclaimed Brazilian music composer was already famous when Caymmi appeared in the artistic scenario — also had a connection between the cover and the really surprising music. Besides the figurative dimension — the photography of one dressed with the stereotype of the other is implacable — an ironic and irreverent look on the cover is only perceived and understood when the songs are carefully listened. It is because Caymmi plays with Ary's songs, injecting his own typical long notes e his altered chords; in the same way Ary flourishes playing the piano the simplicity of Caymmi's songs in his own style.

Caymmi e seu violão (1959) cover mixes the musical content based in a concept, in a characteristic: rusticity. For a record that an ancestral and profound voice mixes itself with a scratching guitar and most of the times somber, an ordinary crude cover with a rough final touch.

On the other hand, some of the other covers can combine with his songs because of the chromatic dimension — iconic and Firstness level. The covers of Caymmi's records from Elenco Records are like that, and again *Eu não tenho onde morar* (1960) and *Eu vou para Maracangalha* (1957). The covers of *Caymmi visita Tom* (1964) and *Vinicius/Caymmi* (1967) are chromatically symbols of Bossa Nova, once they were produced under the graphic standards created by Villela for Elenco Records (Pompeu 2004, Villela 2003). So that the black and white colors — associated to the red details — of those covers create a strong relationship with the musical content they had — especially with what the most of Bossa Nova it had. The 1957 record, *Eu vou para Maracangalha*, has a sunny cover and music as this study revealed. The chromatic standard showed on the cover — mostly with yellowish, reddish and orange colors — is perfectly corresponded by the sonority of the record with energetic rhythms, optimistic orchestration and festive compositions. The pink color links intensively the cover with the musical content of *Eu não tenho onde morar*. This color is a strong sign of femininity and certainly is Caymmi most feminine record: the one who shows the song «Acalanto», a duet with his daughter Nana.

All of that was to show that the semiotic analyses the covers were submitted were absolutely productive. Even because it is not possible to deny «the power that the Peircean classifications give to read signs that are operating in the world, at every single moment and place.» (Santaella 2000).

The first hypothesis was checked: yes, there is a relation between the covers and the musical content of the selected records.

However, another question came up. If, in the majority of the cases, there is a direct relation between cover and record, what allows or determines this relation? New hypotheses arose. If the fact that Caymmi also dealt with brushes and easels could make this hypothesis probably true, three other elements — three people — put themselves in an opposite side.

Elifas Andreato (Pompeu 2004) states that only in the end of the twentieth century a worry from the artist (author of the record) on the covers is perceived. The well known cover designer was categorical when he stated that «in the past» there was no worry.

Egeu Lais (2005), well-known for his studies about record covers follows the same path, and states in his texts that in the 40's, 50's and 60's, no artist had any autonomy over the covers what let the recording companies the elaboration of the graphic material. According to Egeu, only in the mid 70's a generation interested on their own covers appeared.

Stella Caymmi, grand-daughter, biographer of Dorival Caymmi and academician in communication said cautious — in an interview she gave to this study — she did not believe in any interest of her grand-father on his covers. It did not seem (to her) that Caymmi had autonomy on the graphic material of his records. So, she even said: «This independency that the artist has is rather recent. It does not seem to me that he (Caymmi) had a great interest on the covers. I find it very difficult to be.»



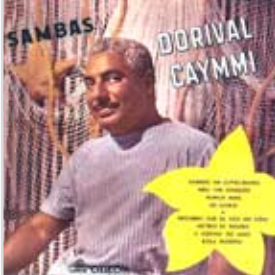



From who it was from, it was almost a denial for the hypothesis.



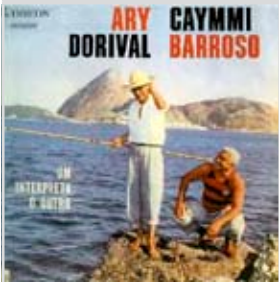
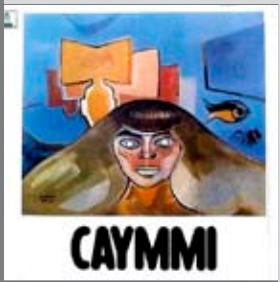
But the analyses were solid enough to show that it could not only be coincidental that all those relations of agreement between the covers and the musical contents of the records.

Another hypothesis turns up: the cover designer when competent and sensitive can elaborate for its cover something that has a relation to the music inside the record.

The cover designer would be here Cesar Villela, already famous for his graphic skills. The same way he made for the records of Elenco Records and hundreds of others, he would be responsible for this strong integration between cover and music in Caymmi's records. The hypothesis moved toward the confirmation until an ordinary comparison among dates condemned it, or made it incomplete. It is that Villela starts to perform regularly as cover designer only from 1959 on, when Caymmi had already launched five records — half of the records here analyzed. And worse than that, in 1972 — the year Caymmi launched the last record here analyzed — Villela was not working anymore, remaining only four covers that could be attributed to him.

Following such considerations, the table below is to make clear and organize the last hypothesis created — the one about the creation of the records.

| RECORD | COVER AUTHOR | RECORD | COVER AUTHOR |
|---|---------------------------|--|---|
|  <p><i>Canções praieiras</i>, 1954</p> | Dorival Caymmi (painting) |  <p><i>Caymmi e seu violão</i>, 1959</p> | Cesar Villela (lay out) e Francisco Pereira (photography) |
|  <p><i>Sambas de Caymmi</i>, 1955</p> | |  <p><i>Eu não tenho onde morar</i>, 1960</p> | Cesar Villela (lay out) e Francisco Pereira (photography) |
|  <p><i>Eu vou pra Maracangalha</i>, 1957</p> | Lan (caricature) |  <p><i>Caymmi visita Tom</i>, 1964</p> | Eddie Moyna or any other designer after Cesar Villela. |

| | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
|  | <p>Otto Stupakoff (photography)</p> |  | <p>Eddie Moyna (lay out); Francisco Pereira e Paulo Lorgus (photography)</p> |
| <p><i>Caymmi e o mar</i>, 1957</p> | | <p><i>Vinicius / Caymmi</i>, 1967</p> | |
|  | <p>Francisco Pereira (photography)</p> |  | <p>Dorival Caymmi (painting)</p> |
| <p><i>Ary Caymmi Dorival Barroso</i>, 1958</p> | | <p><i>Caymmi</i>, 1972</p> | |

For what could be seen on the table, only the second cover of Caymmi, *Sambas de Caymmi*, has no authorship declared or deduced. All the other have the name of the creators or allows us to infer through time or style comparisons.

The cover *Eu vou para Maracangalha* (1957) was designed by Lan. There is no record about from whom the idea of using traces of the artist to illustrate the cover is from. What is known is how genius Lan was, his capacity to print in a drawing the typical Brazilian feelings. Moreover, Lan was Caymmi's friend, what perhaps explains better his ability in creating visually the musical contents of those records.

The photos that illustrate the records *Caymmi e o mar* (1957) and *Ary Caymmi Dorival Barroso* (1958) are respectively Otto Stupakoff and Francisco Pereira: both colleagues and partners of Cesar Villela. Stupakoff came from the United States to work with covers design, but soon went back to his homeland leaving to Villela the task to find a substitute for him. Villela brought Francisco Pereira, who he knew from previous work, to work together. The visual sensitiveness and graphic talent of Villela are vast, unquestionable and from where his admiration for Stupakoff and confidence in Pereira prove the talent of these two photographers.

The analysis of the cover of *Caymmi e o mar* and *Ary Caymmi Dorival Barroso* only confirm that Otto Stupakoff and Francisco Pereira are directly responsible for the evident connection that exist between the visual signs of the covers and the musical content of the records.

Cesar Villela assumes the position of cover design at Odeon — company that used to record and launch Caymmi records — in the 50's, without your book (2003) setting exactly date or year. The fact is that from 1959 his name started to appear on the covers of the record company. Thus, only the covers *Caymmi e seu violão* (1959) and *Eu não tenho onde morar* (1969) received his signature. It could not be different because who knows Villela's work

perceives his evident authorship (only) on the mentioned covers. The preoccupation with the typologies, the care with elements arrangement, the simplification of color composition, all of that are on the cover of those two records. And it is possible to state that the connection between on those two covers and the musical content — and it is unquestionable, especially after the semiotic analyses — is Vallela's talent.

When Caymmi leaves Odeon e goes to the small Elenco Records — with Tom Jobim and Vinicius de Moraes —, he makes four years after the launching of his latest record. It was enough time for Villela to leave Odeon and go to work in the same Elenco, elaborating a visual standard as creative as rigid for his covers. It was time enough for Villela to leave Brazil, letting Elenco covers to other artists who followed — more or less — the visual standard established.

Caymmi visita Tom (1964) was launched just after Villela went to the US and there is no record to say which designer created its cover. What is known — because the semiotic analysis demonstrated — is that the artist was talented, elaborating a creative visual possibility for the record with a rich and unusual content.

Vinicius e Caymmi no Zum Zum (1967) cover brings the signature of Eddie Moyna substituting Villela. Keeping the visual standard of Elenco, without avoiding his personal style, the designer made one of the most creative covers. The relationship of affection between Caymmi and Vinicius — both on stage and in life — as well as the informality that was in the record was translated by Moyna in a very lucrative way.

Canções praieras (1954) and *Caymmi* (1972) — not coincidentally the first and the last record of the ten analyzed — bring Caymmi paintings on their covers, hence the fit between the cover and music is played by the compose-painter himself.

For all that was seen, the idea proved is that a good cover — visually reproducing the musical content of its record — is always produced by a good artist. Be the responsible for a cover a cartoonist, a photographer, a designer or even the author of the record, the quality of this cover and its ability to translate in visual signs the notes and the verses of the songs rely on talent.

2. THE NEW HYPOTHESIS

But something seemed to indicate the presence of Caymmi on the covers analyzed — something that was beyond the inclusion of Caymmi's paintings in two of the ten covers. The semiotic route covered along the study made clear that the case was not enough so that there were many links between the covers and the records. Nor was sufficient the talent and capacity of the artists involved — designers, cartoonists and photographers — to that so profound and surprising union between image and sound. It seemed to be irrefutably the idea of an intervention on the covers by someone who knew intimately the song composer Caymmi in all his magnitude.

Maybe Caymmi himself could do.

That was the hypothesis that emerged during the study — that Caymmi effectively interfered on his covers — and, however remote, it step by step showed itself possible, almost

probable. And an interview with his biographer became very important, once she — also a grand-daughter — would be the mediator between the researcher and the artist.

I do not think it was him. This artist independence is a recent thing. It does not seem possible he has a great interest by his covers. I find it very difficult. It is not my grand-father business. But life surprises.

And it does.

As requested by the author of this study, Stella Caymmi went to her grand-father and asked a few decisive questions. And the answers that came out were striking. Caymmi revealed to his grand-daughter not only a great interest for his covers, as an effective participation in some of them. The striped shirt that the composer appears on the cover of *Sambas de Caymmi* (1955), for example, was his own suggestion. And it is discussed here one of the visual signs (clothes, in this case) more symbolically tied to Caymmi — maybe one of the most famous of them.

Talking to Stella Caymmi, he was straight to the point:

The ideas of the covers were mine and some of them painted by myself. I myself used to ask for permission to the record company to draw a cover of my record. I myself, honestly. By natural instinct I wanted to make the cover combining with the music. In all the covers I participated. I always designed the covers that had a relationship with the music.

3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A few months after finishing and presenting the dissertation that is the base for this article, Caymmi died. He went to lay down on the lap of Yemanjá. He was over 90 years of age, and despite lucid and conscious, physical health lacked. He died and he did not take with him this information — that he actively took part in the creative process of his covers, and therefore a pioneer, a visionary man — under semiotic theory. No merit to the author. In fact it was the analyses — and the analyses only — that showed, indicated and suggested the possible involvement of Caymmi in designing covers for his records. The signs — always them — seemed to scream the creative force and daring artistic posture and conscious of Caymmi.

And if, as Santaella (2009) says, art and poetry are as revenge against the signs, that show us all the time that we are mortals, Caymmi is certainly a poet-artist of the upmost importance. Caymmi is a hero of immortality. That dies, passes, leaves the scene, goes away. But that leaves signs in the form of art that will survive us. Signs that even pointing out to our inevitable end, are surprise (to show that life, short, has grace), encouragement (to make clear that death does not mean to finish) and the inspiration (to teach us happiness and point out paths).

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