

Spider-Verse: an encompassing chronotope of Spider-Man's discursive productions

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Abstract:

In this article, based on the principles of the dialogic theory of discourse, we defend the thesis that the Spider-verse can be characterized as a chronotope, in which, through the different multisemiotic productions in which the arachnid character is the protagonist, small times dialogue with each other to construct this chronotope, which, in turn, erects ways for the subject to take responsibility enunciatively. Theoretically, we chose the notion of chronotope, defined by Bakhtin (1997, 2018) as the spatio-temporal coercions through which images of man and the world are represented. The analysis shows that the chronotope is an essential factor in shaping the elements of the fictional project, whether as organizational centers for the basic events that occur in the story, or as a value repertoire on which the interlocutor relies to produce meaning and shape values. In the Spider-Verse, the influence of the chronotope on the construction of becoming a superhero is notorious, based on specific temporalities, culminating in a unique symbolic time-space, always enunciated by the uniqueness of the being in a given singular and unrepeatable position.

Key words:

Chronotope; Spider-Verse; Spider-Man; Dialogic Discourse Analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

The notions of Bakhtin and the Circle are based on dialogism. It is through dialogism that the interlocutors “[...] never remain each in their own world; on the contrary, they find themselves in a new, third world in the world of contacts; they address each other, they enter into active dialogical relations” (Bakhtin, 2016, p. 113). Both everyday language practices and more elaborate ones are permeated by dialogic relationships that reflect and refract the values, positions and beliefs of individuals in society. From this axiological game, we mobilize the notion of chronotope, which will support the investigative look invested here.

The Bakhtinian notion breaks with the linear and chronological understanding of time, to give way to the symbolic confluence of time and space, defended as a constitutive aspect of the concrete utterance. In this sense, the chronotope is not presented in Dialogical Discourse Theory (DDT) as a mere backdrop to the enunciative scene, but as a pulse of meaning. There is, therefore, a central role for the chronotope in the configuration of interaction, that is, the relationships between subjects, between discourses, between voices, in short, the sign spectrum engendered is guaranteed by the spatiotemporal framework.

Contrary to the Cartesian method that focuses on understanding time and space separately, Bakhtin and the Circle propose considering the junction of time and space in order to understand the architecture of the world of life and the world of culture, since, in order for the senses to be able to “[...] incorporate themselves into our experience (and, moreover, not into a fictitious single-individual consciousness, but into social experience), they must enter our spatiotemporal universe, that is, they must take on a signic form. Without this we could not come into contact with them” (Bakhtin, 2018, p. 245).

That said, this text aims to analyze the role of the chronotope in Spider-Man's discursive productions. The central thesis is to understand the spider-verse as a chronotope, in which, through the different multisemiotic productions in which the arachnid character is the protagonist, small times dialogue with each other to construct this chronotope, which, in turn, allows ways of constructing visions of man and the world that are enunciatively responsible in the face of the great cultural time.

In order to do this, apart from the introduction and concluding remarks, we have divided this study into three sections. In the next section, we explain our rationale from a DMD perspective. We then give a brief overview of the Spider-Man character in comics and movies. Finally, we analyse the spatio-temporal organization of the Spider-Verse chronotope, based on Bakhtin and the Circle's notion of chronotope.

Our aim is to demonstrate the analytical potential of the chronotope to understand the enunciative choices made in the Spider-Man narrative, revealing the strategies used by comic book

¹ Translated by: Priscila Sandra Ramos de Lima.

culture to effect its responsiveness. It's worth pointing out that "Art and literature are impregnated with chronotopic values of varying degrees and dimensions. Each motif, each element of the fictional work to be highlighted is a value" (Bakhtin, 2018, p. 217).

THE CHRONOTOPE AND ITS REVERBERATIONS IN ADD STUDIES

The notion of chronotope was used by Bakhtin (2018) to analyze literary texts. Despite this, we realize that this concept concerns the production of discourses in the social life of language - both in life and in art. For Bakhtin (2018, p. 11), chronotope refers to the "essential interconnection of the relations of space and time". In his thinking, it is important to "express the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a category of content-form." (Bakhtin, 2018, p. 11). In fact, based on the author, we are not talking about cyclical or chronological time or physical or geographical space; the chronotope is a discursive creation that, as a result of dialogic relations, serves as an enunciative heritage for the production of meaning and as a guarantor of the unrepeatability of the enunciation. So, when we talk about chronotope, we're talking about the space-time discursivized in texts.

In this sense, the utterance presents ideological signs that construct an instant of discourse, showing the time and space of the language event. The chronotope, according to Machado (2010), interferes not only in the choice of signs. It is a language phenomenon, which is why it influences the development of discursive genres and socially circulating ideological constructs - precisely because it is not only a formal category, but also a content category. It is so much a language phenomenon that, for Ribeiro and Freitas (2020, p. 488), "language is permeated with chronotopic energy". Therefore, if language is discourse, then it is valid to say that meaning is only produced when chronotopic relationships are revived.

For Bakhtin (2018, p. 12), "the chronotope [...] also determines the image of man [...]". In this respect, if the images constructed, that is, the discourses produced in the utterances are essentially chronotopic, when we allude to the chronotope, we recover conceptions of man and the world that circulate socially at that enunciative moment, managing to perceive, under the aegis of dialogical relations, the ideological forces that oppose and converge in the enunciation, under the evaluative horizon of those who enunciate.

In this dimension, discursive production, says Bakhtin (2018), not only recovers ideological constructs from a given space-time. In fact, utterances reflect and refract visions of man and the world that run through the chronotope of interaction. Consequently, the producer always tints their utterance, making a valuation, a new discourse, allowing this axiological position to enter the discursive chain of dialogical relations. Obviously, in both big and small time, there are chronotopic coercions that generate the emergence of axiology.

We mean, based on the way Ribeiro and Freitas (2020) interpret Bakhtin's (2018) reflection, that the chronotope is one of the main factors responsible for guaranteeing the unrepeatability and singularity of the utterance. Now, if we consider the sentences in their logical relations, they can repeat their meaning and syntactic functions; the utterance, gestated by dialogic relations, presents a unique and unrepeatable discourse, because it is produced in a chronotope that is also unique and unrepeatable.

For Bakhtin (2011), the dialog seems to end in the enunciation; but, in the chronotope of the great time of culture, it is always inconclusive. The chronotope therefore guarantees, in addition to unrepeatability, the unfinished nature of the utterance, since it is what drives the gears of dialogic relations.

Obviously, all utterances are recognizable in terms of dialogic relations. Were it not for the chronotope, discursive production would be a simple jumble of repetitions. On the contrary, when we realize that the utterance is singular, this is because it, in its space-time, has a unique valuation in relation to the discourses it evokes.

In this context, Machado (2010) points out that the concept of chronotope, as elaborated by Bakhtin (2018), seeks to understand the subject in its historical dimension. The chronotope is an alternative for the perception of man's transportation in the course of his (always) exotopic and alteritarian relationships, that is, man is taken in his relational and, consequently, dialogical boundaries.

It should be remembered that the notion of chronotope also contributes to the understanding that man is a historical being. In this way, as Machado (2010) points out, the chronotope reveals how discursive production inscribes historicity in language and vice versa, making Bakhtinian philosophy coherent with his endeavor to see language in a concrete, historical, social and ideological approach. Therefore, the chronotope aims to reveal how man exercises his axiological inscription in the march of time.

In this respect, if we return to Volóchinov's (2018) theorizing, the chronotope is also a category that expresses the process of class struggle, a phenomenon intrinsic to the big time of culture, but always re-signified in small time. With regard to these two notions, the big time, in Bakhtinian philosophy, refers to the ideologies that make up the entire culture of the class struggle. Small time, in turn, refers to the time of enunciation, that is, the here and now that updates and inscribes the enunciation in the discursive belt.

In conclusion to this discussion, it is understood that

[...] there is always a larger, encompassing chronotope, but there are also smaller chronotopes, which relate to the larger one and to each other. These smaller, specific chronotopes can be organized based on very different value positions. There is, for example, the speaker's chronotope, that of previous utterances, and that of the interlocutors who, with each contact with the utterance, trigger new chronotopes (Marques; Freitas, 2021, p. 96).

Therefore, dialogic relations take place in the clash between different chronotopes that coerce enunciative production. In this sense, language establishes these different spaces and times that build up the visions of the world and of man outlined in the statements.

The chronotope, moreover, is an anthropocentric category. When thinking about the space-time issue, Bakhtin (2018, p. 251) says that “concrete man [is seen] as the radiating center of the values of the universe”. From this perspective, it can be seen that, although there are chronotopic coercions that manage discursive productions, man, as the author, is not crossed by them. On the contrary, the enunciating subject produces evaluations about the space-time values that surround his enunciative existence.

When thinking about the chronotope in this way, Ribeiro and Freitas (2020) and Marques and Freitas (2021) value, in the dialogical study of language, the relationships that subjects establish with each other. The chronotope reveals “the evidence of human creation” (Marques; Freitas, 2021, p. 96), man's action in the world, the way he values his march through time and space and, consequently, the tense relationship between the “real world and the represented world” (Marques; Freitas, 2021, p. 96), that is, between the discourses previously produced and the axiological value inscribed by the subject in his utterance.

Still based on the idea that the chronotope is a concept that puts man at the center of the utterance, Marques and Freitas (2021, 97) state that “the time-space relationship is inexorably linked to perception”. This means that the perception that the subject constructs of himself, of the

other and of the Other (supradestined), of the social place he assumes in a given utterance, in short, of the world he represents, is dependent on the way he perceives, enunciatively, the object of discourse about which he speaks.

In the light of the understanding that the chronotope offers ways of operating axiology and organizing enunciative architectures, we intend to see, in this text, how *aranhaverso* is configured as a chronotope in which arachnid enunciative productions are gestated. Before that, we'll present the plot and the context in which the Spider-Man character was created.

“WITH GREAT POWERS COME GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES”: HOW THE NEIGHBORHOOD (SUPER)HERO WAS BORN

In 1929, the Americans were facing a serious stock market crisis. During this period, adventurous characters such as Tarzan and Buck Rogers appeared in the Sunday editions of American newspapers and, because they were essentially comic, were given the name comics (Lovetro, 2011). Later, these comics, published in strip format, began to be published daily and were essential, along with cinema, for the dissemination of American culture, values and ideals (Carvalho; Ribeiro, 2018).

In 1938, in the first issue of Action Comics, Superman appeared, a superhero created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster and considered by many scholars and comic book readers to be the first superhero², inaugurating the golden age of American comics, a success with audiences and sales and a symbol of American patriotism, from his clothing (in the colors of the American flag) to his slogan: fighting for truth, justice and the American model (Carvalho, 2018).

After this apex, in the mid-1950s, when the country was facing the Cold War, comics went through a dark time of prejudice, stigmatization and censorship, which ended up impacting both their sales and the quality of the narratives. It was in the so-called Silver Age of comics, an attempt by the major publishers to overcome these issues, that a new wave of superheroes emerged, seeking to break away from the model of perfection of the Golden Age superheroes, and move closer to ordinary men who are susceptible to failure and who, as well as super-villains, also face real-world problems. In this new scenario, new enunciative values were imposed on the conception of superheroes, in other words, new chronotopically revived ways of conceiving superheroes were created. Thus, in 1962, the character Spider-Man appeared, created by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko.

The first Spider-Man story, entitled *Amazing Fantasy*, came about as an experiment. Marvel Comics (which at the time was officially called Atlas) was looking for a superhero that young people could identify with³. We can see, as we said at the beginning, that the character emerged from the chronotopic coercions experienced at that time in American culture: there was a need for a hero that the youth audience felt close to and whose challenges could be experienced by an audience without superpowers. For Bakhtin (2018), the chronotope always highlights conceptions of man and the world, in other words, ideological values that are embedded in culture. This is what we see when Spider-Man appears.

In this discursive context, Peter Parker appears as a teenage student, insecure, shy, who was bullied at school and had some disappointments in love. From then on, we see images of man and the world that are consistent with a new superhero whose conflicts are no longer far removed from

² This is a controversial topic, as characters with similar characteristics to the Man of Steel were created years before his release, such as Flash Gordon, conceived by Alex Raymond in 1934, and Mandrake The Phantom, created in 1936 by Lee Falk. However, Superman has been called the first American superhero because he combined all the characteristics of what was expected of a superhero at the time, as well as becoming a kind of model for the characters that would come after him.

³ This search for identification between young people and the Spider-Man character has led to him becoming popularly known as the Neighborhood Hero or Neighborhood Friend, which highlights that anyone, whether a school friend, a neighbor or a distant relative, can be a superhero.

the world of his audience: bullying and love disappointment therefore bring readers closer to the hero because, at that cultural moment, a character whose verisimilitude could be embodied in the world of life to a certain extent was of interest, even to the world of art.

Figure 1 - Cover of Spider-Man's first appearance in the comics



Source: Lee (1962).

This first comic deals with the origin of the character who, being a teenager, makes mistakes common to his age, the result of immaturity and the way he deals with the consequences of his actions. In addition, subsequently, still in the 1960s, the reader is introduced to other characters who are part of the arachnid hero's mythology, such as romantic interests Mary Jane and Gwen Stacy, as well as Flash Thompson, an enemy from school days, and Harry Osborn, Peter Parker's best friend. Also at this time, important supervillains were introduced, such as Green Goblin, Sandman, Electro, Lizard, Mysterio and Dr. Octopus.

The character's conflict arises from the following: during a school trip to a laboratory, Peter is bitten by a radioactive spider, an event which grants him superpowers. Initially, the superhero was capable of climbing walls, as well as having superhuman agility, strength and speed, as well as the spider-sense, a kind of sixth sense that alerted him, through a chilling sensation, that some danger was near.

Because he was an excellent student and had a keen interest in science, Peter was able to hone his powers, creating his own organic web and a uniform that was still quite precarious. As his main problem was financial, the hero decided to take part in some fighting championships against a professional fighter, whom he defeated without much difficulty. He then took on the persona of Spider-Man and became a success through his pictures in newspapers and on TV.

After his first appearance on TV, Peter, witnessing a mugger fleeing, decided not to interfere, believing it wasn't his responsibility. Later, that same mugger would be responsible for killing his Uncle Ben. This tragedy profoundly shaped Peter's relationship with his powers, and the motto with great powers come great responsibilities, said by his uncle and adopted by him ever since, confirms his understanding that his powers should not only be used for his own benefit, but also to protect the innocent and do what is right. In the 1970s, another tragedy marked the life of the superhero: the death of his girlfriend, Gwen Stacy, murdered by his enemy the Green Goblin, who sought to hit the hero at his weakest point.

In the movies, Spider-Man has so far starred in ten films between 2002 and 2023, not counting appearances in other productions. In 2017, with actor Tom Holland, the character had his

first solo adventure in the MCU⁴. Also in the cinema, the 2018 animated film Spider-Man in the Spider-Verse tells, for the first time in the cinematic universe, the origin and trajectory of the character Miles Morales, who gains superpowers after being bitten by a radioactive spider, just like the superhero he becomes a disciple of, Peter Parker. The animation won an Oscar and a Golden Globe, both for best animation. In 2023, this animation was given a sequel, called Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse. The finale of the trilogy, which is to be titled Spider-Man: Beyond the Spider-Verse, is due to be released in 2024⁵.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHRONOTOPE AND SPIDER-MAN: THE SPIDER-VERSE

Here, we are interested in observing how the various publications starring the arachnid character create a chronotope, which we call the spider-verse. As previously mentioned, the concept of chronotope was developed by Bakhtin (2018) and designates the relationship between time and space in concrete statements.

According to Bakhtinian thought, the space-time dimensions are intrinsically connected in the construction of meanings and the understanding of events in a narrative, precisely because the chronotope invokes conceptions of man and the world mobilized by the statements.

Thus, it is possible to state that the concept of chronotope formulated by Bakhtin (2018) is directly linked to comics and their respective cinematographic productions, firstly because comics, as well as literary productions⁶ and other statements from the world of art, have their own spatio-temporal organization, which can present temporal leaps, abrupt changes in the space where the narrative develops, or even different and simultaneous spatio-temporal contexts⁷. This organization helps shape the narrative of comics (Figueira, 2009).

Furthermore, we can relate the chronotope to the various notions present in comics and the films derived from them. Of these notions, we have chosen to explore, through the character Spider-Man, how the Bakhtinian concept relates to the character's chronology (and his reboots⁸), his crossovers⁹ and his multiverse, which we have named here as the spider-verse.

Comic books, especially those featuring superheroes as protagonists, display great narrative complexity. Drawing a parallel between them and the concepts of big time and small time introduced by Bakhtin (2018), we can say that each comic book, i.e. each individual publication, is part of the small time of this narrative complex, which refers to the time of individual daily life, events and immediate experiences; This comic, in turn, is part of a larger narrative, or grand

⁴ The rights to the Spider-Man character are shared between Marvel Studios (a Disney subsidiary) and Sony Pictures. Marvel Studios has permission to include Spider-Man in Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) films, while Sony Pictures holds the rights to produce independent Spider-Man films. This partnership between Marvel Studios and Sony has allowed Spider-Man to be introduced into the MCU and appear both in his solo films and in the major productions Captain America: Civil War, Avengers: Infinity War and Avengers: Endgame.

⁵ Source:

<https://g1.globo.com/pop-arte/cinema/noticia/2023/06/01/homem-aranha-atraves-do-aranhaverso-e-filme-dividido-em-duas-partes-e-tres-diretores.ghtml>. Accessed on: Jun 19, 2023.

⁶ We won't go into the controversial issue of whether or not to consider comics as literature; we follow the thinking of Canudo (1923) who added cinema as the seventh and comics as the ninth art, because this conception does not place it on a level of inferiority to literary productions and recognizes its value as a distinct artistic elaboration. Furthermore, following the dialogic theory mentioned above, what matters is the inscription in a field of ideological creation. From this theoretical point of view, literature and comics are governed by the same system of thought, which the Circle generically calls art.

⁷ The so-called multiverse, as we will develop later.

⁸ Reboot is a computer science term used in comics and cinema to indicate when a work establishes a new beginning for a fictional universe, discarding all previous narratives to create a new one. Let's stress that reboot is not the same as remake: while the latter basically repeats a narrative that has already been told, with or without new elements, the former offers new narrative(s), with no relation to the previous ones.

⁹ As we'll see in more detail below, a crossover in comics is an event in which characters from different fictional universes meet and interact in a joint story.

narrative, situated in the great time of comic book culture, encompassing events and social, political and cultural transformations on a long-term scale and made up of several comics that talk to each other, revealing the different conceptions of man and the world that are unfolding in these space-time successions.

As has been said, it is typical of American comic book culture to create superheroes who fight evil and repair social injustices; in the great comic book cultural period, this characteristic is latent. Spider-Man, in his small time, promotes an axiology: the hero is someone who, while repairing injustices, experiences challenges common to teenagers and has emotional and daily experiences similar to those of any person.

It can be concluded, then, that if, in the great cultural time of comics, narratives are created to repair social injustices, the small time of the spider-verse shows that it is necessary to bring this repair closer to the reader, giving the idea that they too have the capacity to do it. In addition to affection and meeting the demands of the public, this generates an empowerment of the public, which sees itself as more capable of overcoming challenges.

An example of this is the launch, between 1989 and 2000, of monthly comic books with the aim of (re)publishing old stories of the character. In this context, each of these 500 magazines launched during this period, situated in small time and with their own narrative, are part of a larger narrative event, situated in large time, the result of bringing all the comics together, which became known as “Spider's Web” (Pitombo, 2007, p. 15):

Figure 2 - Cover of the first comic book in the “Spider's Web” series, from 1989



Source: The authors.¹⁰

Since this great comic book narrative takes place in different places and at different times in history, it would be necessary to have a way of organizing these events so that readers could find their way around. It is a kind of timeline in which the sequence of events in a narrative is established, which allows readers to understand how the stories connect and form the grand narrative (FIGUEIRA, 2009).

Chronology is especially important in comics whose protagonists are superheroes, because each of them is part of a specific universe, presented through longer narratives, in comics published

¹⁰ Searched in: <https://photobucket.com/>. Accessed on: July 4, 2023.

over decades. In comic book chronology, events are ordered in a timeline that sequences events. It can span decades of publications and include important and diverse events, as we have said; however, just like the chronotope, the chronology of comics is also influenced by the spatial aspect, because comics have a single narrative space, usually divided into panels, in which actions and events take place. Each frame represents a limited space; however, these spaces connect and relate to each other to form a coherent narrative. The arrangement of these frames, the relationship between them and the way time is represented visually play an important role in the narrative.

A character's chronology can change depending on the different versions and stories presented. As the comics and films show, there are several characters called Spider-Man, each situated in a specific chronotope and presenting their own narrative. It is the existence of these multiple universes, where the different versions of a given character live, that we call a multiverse. The multiverse specific to Spider-Man and his many versions, because it is one of the most developed and explored in comics and movies, has been given the name Spider-Verse.

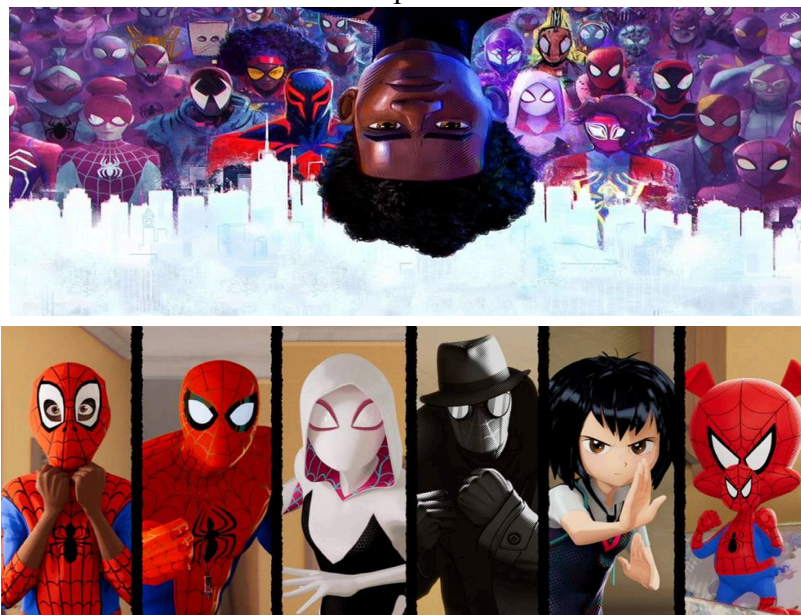
With this, we can see that when we refer to the chronology of the spider-verse, it is elaborated as a chronotope that frames enunciative productions referring to the character Spider-Man. In this way, although the term has the semantic trait of physical temporal successivity, we see that, although the passage of time takes place over the course of different publications, the spider-verse refers to enunciative coercions perceived in the space-time of the character's trajectory. This means that, just like any other chronotope, the spider-verse is a discursive production, therefore in the symbolic realm of language, and not in the sphere of physical time and place, as Bakhtin (2018) envisages for any enunciative production.

Although they have their own narrative, there are events that are repeated in the chronotope of all Spider-Men, called canonical events. They are what identify a character as such - you can't talk about Spider-Man, Spider-Woman or any version of this superhero without there being, for example, the bite of a radioactive spider, which gives them superpowers, as well as situations of mourning: the death of a love interest and/or a close family member, such as girlfriend Gwen Stacy and Uncle Ben, related to the original Spider-Man, Peter Parker.

Chronotopically, it is credible to say that there is an invariant for realizing that a hero is part of the spider-verse. There's nothing uncompromising about this: Volóchinov (2018) says that every manifestation of a sign is riddled with ideology; according to Bakhtin (2016), when elaborating his statement, the subject tints the sign with his axiology, responding to past statements and anticipating future ones. Thus, we realize that the arachnid protagonists differ from superheroes from other multiverses because, instead of being given superpowers, they only begin to manifest them when they are hit by a spider bite - a causality; moreover, in this chronotope, their heroic abilities are used from the moment that structural problems in society begin to harm them. Therefore, the spider-verse, chronotopically, reflects and refracts enunciations, making itself accountable to other chronotopes from the moment it coerces the ways in which its superhero is constructed.

In comics, a break in the canon, however small, can cause catastrophic situations involving all versions of a character, even those who don't share the same chronotope. This is the premise of the 2023 animated film *Spider-Man Through the Spider-Verse*, in which the protagonist Miles Morales, when bitten by a genetically modified spider belonging to another universe/chronotope, which has been accidentally transported from the universe of the original Spider-Man (Peter Parker) to the Ultimate Marvel, which is Miles' universe, triggers a series of problems.

Figure 3 - Various Spider-Men (and Women) belonging to different chronotopes



Source: The authors.¹¹

The pictures show that, although they are American in origin, other countries have also produced stories with a protagonist who is bitten by a radioactive spider. This, in our opinion, is the great characteristic of the enunciative composition of the spider-verse, as we pointed out earlier. Despite this, when we understand how this chronotope is elaborated, we need to understand how this discursive universe tones the world, taking enunciative responsibility for it.

In the upper part of the figure, you can see that most of the arachnid protagonists whose copies circulated in the United States of America (USA) are dressed in red and blue. These colors, as in other American superheroes such as Superman and Captain America, establish the patriotic nature of the character in relation to his country, whose flag bears these colors. It is therefore part of the various protagonist characters in the Spideyverse to wear a costume whose color reveals important social values about the cultural chronotope in which it is circumscribed - in this case, patriotism.

This also happens with the exclusive creation for the Indian market, known as Indian Spider-Man. This character debuted in 2004 and its protagonist is Pavitr Prabhakar, a young orphan who acquires arachnid powers after meeting a mysterious yogi.

¹¹ Searched in: <https://ovicio.com.br/10-aranhas-que-mais-queremos-ver-em-atraves-do-aranhaverso/>. Accessed on: July 4, 2023.

Figure 4 - Pavitr Prabhakar, the Indian Spider-Man

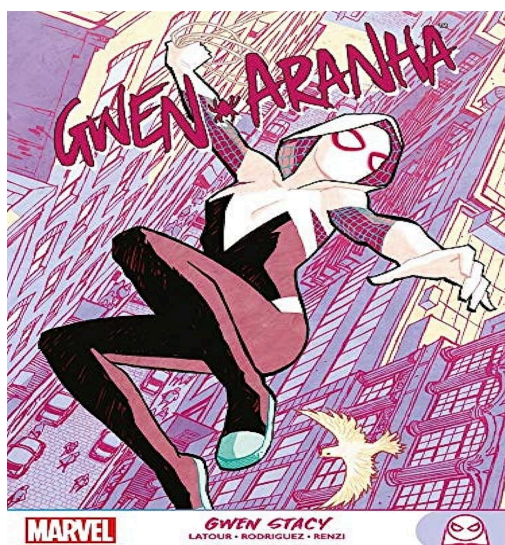


Source: The authors.¹²

As you can see, the Indian Spider-Man's outfit consists of the iconic red and blue suit we all know, along with dhoti (baggy pants) and mojari (traditional Indian footwear). In the movie, the details in Pavitr's outfit are even more striking, with gold bracelets and accessories with cultural significance. We can see that, from the point of view of dialogic relations, the patriotism in the character's clothing, as in the American original, is inscribed in the Indian creation. Therefore, what we can see from this discursive project is that superheroes are a kind of patriotic symbol in the world of art, both to spread the culture of that country internationally and to infect the native population with a feeling of ufanism.

However, the patriotic trait is not the only axiology present in the characters of the Spider-Verse. We can analyze this by looking at the figure below.

Figure 5 – Spider-Woman Gwen Stacy



Source: The authors.¹³

The figure depicts Spider-Gwen, from the EARTH-65 universe, in which the radioactive spider transfers powers to Gwen, who, in the main universe, is Spider-Man's first girlfriend and dies at the hands of the archenemy Green Goblin. Some of her semiotic traits are worth analyzing, such

¹² Searched in:

<https://cinepop.com.br/homem-aranha-atraves-do-aranhaverso-conheca-o-homem-aranha-indiano-em-novo-poster-e-comercial-de-tv-414820/>. Accessed on: July 4, 2023.

¹³ Searched in: <https://www.marvel.com/>. Accessed on: July 4, 2023.

as her clothing. As usual, and in correlation with the other protagonists of the Spideyverse, the character's clothing shows hints of cobwebs. When we look at the colors, we see pink, a color associated with femininity, which is also very popular in the US doll trade. By showing pink on the cover of the superheroine, axiologically, the Spider-Verse promotes the understanding that, in order to save the world, women don't need to lose their feminine traits, since this in no way diminishes their abilities.

Despite this, the tights worn by the character are also striking. The fit of the garment overestimates her body shapes and is extremely low-cut, hypersexualizing her, as happens with other heroines produced in the American discursive chronotope. So, even though women are represented, placing them on an equal footing with men, which shows an important feminist axiological position in the discursive productions of the Spider-verse, it seems that, in the American chronotope, there are still ideological coercions that mean that heroines are symbolically signified in an extremely hypersexualized way.

In this way, we realize that, in the chronotope of the spider-verse, there are semiotically elaborated axiologies that refer to the process of class struggle. The analysis shows that there is always an attempt to manifest, whether in the choice of colors and shades of the clothes worn by the characters or in their journey to becoming superheroes, an ideology of their own: American patriotism - in the case of the shades of the capes; or the attempt to equalize social castes - such as the moment when the protagonists decide to assume their superpowers beyond what is convenient for them; or feminism - in the case of pink and the empowerment of women.

For Volóchinov (2018), language arises with the social division of labor and the development of economic activities, generating differences between classes. Taking advantage of this, Andrade, Andrade and Ribeiro (2021) explain that, in the big time, there will always be the process of class struggle, as it is characteristic and immanent to capitalist culture. So, in the spider-verse, this coercion is actualized in the clash, for example, between American patriotism and the attempt to maintain the sovereignty of other nations; between social injustices and the search for equity; and between feminism and the fight against the oppressive actions of patriarchy.

When we read Volóchinov (2018) in a way that is sensitive to contemporary theoretical conditions, in which ideological disputes are not restricted to classes, we can understand that the very affirmation of the struggle for another's national identity already signals that it is no longer a question restricted to social class. It is moving towards the discourse of diversity. This is what is materially presented in the figures and their descriptions. In this postmodern chronotope of the spider-verse, figure 4 sets up the tension between the national and the international, including the ethnic-racial. Again, it's not a question of class, but of diversity.

The material presented suggests that the nationalist discourse through which the superhero was signified is gradually giving way to a more humanized hero with his dilemmas, until we have the discourse of diversity. This is, for example, the manifestation of racial and social gender issues. This is what emerges from figures 3, 4 and 5, for example. It's not just a question of the character's chronology and its relation to the concept of chronotope, but the historical-material possibility of putting different times into dialog and thus installing a particular chronotope. The great postmodern time opens up a dimension so that, in the spider-verse, the discourse of diversity takes center stage in arachnid statements. The spider-verse, based on this understanding, emerges from the blatant refractions in the adjustments in the great time and which are placed in direct relation by the postmodern chronotope.

Recently, the interaction of these characters belonging to different universes/chronotopes has been called a crossover in comics, an event that only happens thanks to the multiverse theory. Drawing a parallel between Bakhtinian theory and the multiverse of superheroes, a crossover occurs when two or more characters, located in different chronotopes, appear together in the same space-time. This strategy has been recurrent both in comics and now in cinemas, as we have seen in

the latest Marvel films and series, especially after Doctor Strange, at Peter Parker's request, opened up the multiverse¹⁴.

The first crossover between Spider-Man and characters from other chronotopic universes took place in the 1980s. However, it was in the cinemas that the biggest and most eagerly awaited crossover in the Spider-verse took place. The superhero was initially played by actor Tobey Maguire in three films. In 2012, actor Andrew Garfield took on the role in a single film and, in 2017, Tom Holland became Spider-Man in the first solo film in the MCU¹⁵, in an attempt to restart the story of the hero of the neighborhood, but without resorting to the beginning of his story, already widely known to fans. The film presents a generation Z Spider-Man¹⁶, sponsored by Tony Stark, his father figure, at a time when the Avengers were in turmoil¹⁷ due to a disagreement between Iron Man and Captain America.

The multiverse saga¹⁸ in the MCU begins shortly after the end of Avengers: Endgame; the 2019 film, Spider-Man: Far From Home, acts as a prelude to this new phase, which introduces the Marvel Expanded Universe (which happens thanks to the opening of the multiverse). In this production, Peter tries to overcome his grief over Tony Stark's death while confronting the super villain Mysterio. In the end, the antagonist reveals the hero's identity to everyone, and the hero begins to experience major problems as a result.

This is also the prerogative of the next film, Spider-Man: Homecoming, in 2021, which introduces viewers, still at an early stage, to the theory of the multiverse, which would be better developed and explained in the film Doctor Strange 2: Into the Multiverse of Madness the following year and in some of the other subsequent productions. Desperate that everyone has discovered his secret identity, Peter seeks out Doctor Strange to request a spell through which everyone (except Mary Jane and her close friends) would forget Spider-Man's true identity, but the magic not only goes wrong, it also opens a kind of portal through which characters from other chronotopes (other universes and/or franchises) appear in Peter's space-time context. This allowed for a crossover between the three actors who have played Spider-Man in the movies: Tom Holland, who is Spider-Man from the main universe of the MCU and is set on the Earth we know; Tobey Maguire, belonging to EARTH-616, the official chronotope¹⁹ of the Marvel comics, and Andrew Garfield, from EARTH-199999:

¹⁴ In the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), the character Doctor Strange, the MCU's Sorcerer Supreme, is one of the most closely linked to the concept of alternative realities. His connection to magic and the mystical arts gives him the ability to explore dimensions and manipulate the fabric of reality. In the 2021 film Spider-Man: Homecoming, Peter Parker seeks out Dr. Strange and asks for a spell to make everyone forget his identity, but the spell opens the portals of the multiverse and villains from other realities appear in Peter's chronotope.

¹⁵ Marvel Cinematic Universe. The previous films were not produced by Marvel, but by Sony Pictures.

¹⁶ Generation Z is the social group made up of people born after 1995, who grew up with the popularization of the internet and interact with the world by integrating all forms of available technology.

¹⁷ Phase 3 of the Infinity Saga.

¹⁸ Fase 4 do UCM.

¹⁹ We call EARTH-616 the official chronotope of Marvel productions, because all the other Earth planets belong to different chronotopes and are variations of the original, which we learned about when the Multiverse portals opened.

Figure 6 - Reunion of the three versions of Spider-Man in the movie *Spider-Man: Never Go Home*



Source: The authors.²⁰

As we've said, Bakhtin's (2018) concept of chronotope and crossovers have a direct relationship. The crossover, by bringing together characters from different eras of the spider-verse, creates a new space-time context shared by them, enabling them to interact. Thus, as the concept of chronotope recognizes the (co)existence of different spatio-temporal dimensions in a narrative, the crossover allows these dimensions to be explored concurrently, thus creating a richer and more complex narrative, with various developments that would not be possible in isolated narratives - and which, until then, were not.

In this way, we realize that the crossover is a strategy in the world of seventh and ninth art that no longer allows simultaneity between chronotopes, but rather their concomitant interaction, which has repercussions, in the case of the Spider-Verse, in the possibility of creating a new and independent narrative, in which various versions of Spider-Man, some of them even antagonistic, can coexist and act in harmony for the sake of a common good.

Finally, the chronotopic trajectory (or, as it is known, the chronology) of a character in the superhero universe can also go through reboots. This means when the version released is completely new, set in another chronotope and bearing no relation to the previous work(s).

Throughout Spider-Man's chronology, there have been several reboots, the best known being the comic book reboot in 1998, with updates to the character's personal life and costumes; the Ultimate Marvel comic book line, which presented a reboot within a multiverse, with the introduction of the character Miles Morales and, in the cinematic environment, with the insertion of the character played by Tom Holland into the MCU after the agreement between Marvel Studios and Sony Pictures. Thus, we can see that, although multifaceted and materialized throughout historical moments, including in different enunciative supports (from comic books to cinema), we can consider the spider-verse as a chronotopic multiverse that has its own characteristics.

One of the first characterizations is the axiological manifestation of issues specific to the real world, when the spider-verse inaugurates the creation of superheroes who experience problems close to those of ordinary people, who don't have the superpowers to deal with them. But beyond that, the ufanism already manifested in other productions of the genre remains. Over time and with new ideologies irrigating cultural life, the spider-verse is updated, introducing Spider-Woman, for example, giving rise to the feminist debate.

A second characterization is the possibility of the crossover, a chronotopic strategy used by the seventh and ninth arts to create the intersection of chronotopes, allowing the creation of a new narrative reality and the development not only of the spider-verse, but of all the other multiverse possibilities present in comics.

²⁰ Searched in: <https://disneyplusbrasil.com.br>. Accessed on: July 4, 2023.

Finally, the reboot is another important feature of the Spideyverse chronotope, because when it takes place, the narrative chronotope is directly affected. The concept of time and space is redefined, which can lead to significant changes in the characterization of the characters, the relationships established and the dynamics of the fictional universe.

In Spideyverse, the notions of reboot, crossover and multiverse are intertwined, given that several of the versions that make up this multiple arachnid universe come from reboots and/or re-readings of the superhero's original narrative, and these meet and interact in a specific and unique chronotope where all these versions (co)exist.

In this dimension, reboot, crossover and multiverse function as material vectors for the emergence of a postmodern chronotope in which Spider-Man comes to be signified by the discourse of diversity, and no longer by the nationalist discourse in which he was originally created. In this contemporary chronotope, ideological signs such as race/ethnicity, social gender, etc. fragment the superhero metonymically into his superpowers. It is the values that adhere to the superpowers that give life to the character in the spider-verse, and these values are interpellated by the discourse of diversity.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we try to guide the reader's gaze towards the notion of chronotope, mobilizing some contributions from Bakhtin and the Circle, based on the analysis of discursive productions (comics and cinema) involving the superhero Spider-Man. The chronotope refers to the intersection of the time and space variables that outline the flow of events that make up a given narrative. It is an essential factor in shaping the elements of the fictional project, whether as the organizational center of the basic events that occur in the story, or as the evaluative repertoire on which the interlocutor relies to produce meaning, since “any entry into the field of meanings can only take place through the door of chronotopes” (Bakhtin, 2018, p. 236).

It was observed that a character's chronology can be constructed in different ways and visions as a result of socio-historical factors (time of production, cultural issues related to certain regions, etc.) As we have seen, there are several Spider-Man characters, under a certain temporal and spatial framework, with their own narrative, each following the aegis of a specific chronotope. However, there are certain events, called canonical, which are reiterated in the most varied versions produced, precisely in order to guarantee a certain identity for the character and the plot, including from an axiological-existential point of view.

The confluence of these versions in the same chronotope, in other words, the existence of these universes, where the various versions of a given character coexist, has been referred to here as a multiverse. The multiverse, therefore, of Spider-Man and his various versions, which are quite common in comics and movies, has been given the name spider-verse.

In our analysis, we studied how the chronotope of the spider-verse gives Spider-Man his traits and also how the framework triggers axiologies related to social subjects in the process of producing meaning. This finding is in line with Bakhtin when he says that “the chronotope always includes the axiological element. [...] all space-time determinations are inseparable and always tinged with an axiological-emotional hue” (Bakhtin, 2018, p. 217).

It's worth noting that, according to Bakhtin (2018), the same chronotope can have numerous small chronotopes. According to the author (2018, p. 229), chronotopes can “incorporate each other, coexist, intertwine, interchange, confront each other, oppose each other or find themselves in more complex interrelationships”. When we analyze the Spider-Verses, we can say that it presents itself as the dominant, governing chronotope, to which all the other chronotopes are subject and, thus, it

gives traits for the composition of a certain universal Spider-Man, made up of the versions of himself undertaken in the great arachnid time.

In addition, the possibility of intertwining chronotopes, cited by Bakhtin (2018), is what makes crossover possible, a strategy that allows different characters from different lands to experience the same reality, with the aim of promoting corrections that can stabilize their existence in the lands from which they come.

The analysis process also allowed us to think about how the notion of chronotope is productive for research that aims to understand language practices in order to scrutinize possibilities for constructing meaning, establishing relationships between discourse and evaluative assessment in a given time and space. In the Spider-Man stories, the influence of the chronotope on the construction of becoming a superhero is notorious, based on specific temporalities, culminating in a unique symbolic time-space, always enunciated by the uniqueness of the being in a given singular and unrepeatable chronotope.

We believe that, with this, we have taken a first step towards research that interfaces the Bakhtinian notion with the comic book universe. Despite this, it is necessary to move forward on the subject, both by researching Spidey and other narratives, precisely in order to advocate the centrality of the chronotope for a more clinical observation of these enunciative productions.

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