

**UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PAMPA**

**TOMÁS AVELLO LAHORGUE**

**“ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING ALL OF THE TIME” : ANALYZING NOISES  
CAUSED BY SOCIAL MEDIA THROUGH KENNETH BURKE’S DRAMATISM**

**Bagé  
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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Curso de Línguas Adicionais - Inglês, Espanhol e Suas Respectivas Literaturas da Universidade Federal do Pampa, como requisito parcial para obtenção do Título de Licenciado em Letras.

Orientadora: Kátia Vieira Morais

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Por todos os que buscaram conexões verdadeiras, com maior ou menor sucesso, dedico este trabalho ao meu irmão Augusto. Ainda tocaremos e desafinaremos juntos de novo.

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À Professora Kátia que me deu muitas horas de sabedoria sem pedir nada em troca;

Às professoras que me compreenderam;

Aos meus pais pelo carinho, ajuda e paciência;

Às minhas irmãs que são tudo e mais um pouco;

Ao meu amigo pesquisador e eterno colega Bernardo que olhou, viu e disse que estava bom (e ainda me deu um toque);

Às minhas amigas Cristal e Vanessa, colegas de escola.

“Evil begins when you begin to treat people as things.”

Terry Pratchett – I Shall Wear Midnight.



## RESUMO

Preocupações sobre a interação entre os seres humanos e as Redes Sociais estão se intensificando. Num contexto de isolamento social decorrente das pandemias da COVID-19, vimos a Internet desempenhar um papel expressivo em nossas vidas. Como professor de idiomas, apresento uma análise retórica através da Pentad Dramática de Kenneth Burke. O artefato que analiso gira em torno do tema das Mídias Sociais e como isso afeta nossas vidas. É um vídeo clipe de uma música do comediante Bo Burnham chamada "Welcome to The Internet" (2021). O tema principal desta música é sobre as capacidades do próprio autor em lidar com a realidade e problemas de saúde mental durante a pandemia de COVID-19 de 2020. Esta pesquisa e sua análise têm o objetivo de responder às seguintes perguntas: Por que isso é um problema para jovens adultos? Como isso afeta uma sala de aula? E, especificamente, o que o retórico que eu escolhi tem a oferecer sobre este tema? A fim de responder às perguntas, revejo a literatura para fornecer alguns conceitos fundamentais sobre Mídias Sociais, definições para os Algoritmos e os Mecanismos de ruptura que eles trazem. Em seguida, apresento uma análise na forma de um Ensaio onde oriento o leitor na estruturação da Pentad que fiz e as relações entre seus termos. Ao fazê-lo, o Ensaio lança luz nos problemas que estamos enfrentando agora e identifica o termo dominante, a Cena, enquadrada como plataformas de Mídia Social, e como o momento que vivemos agora está profundamente relacionado com um agente externo cujo propósito é desestabilizar nossa realidade para que possa vender nossos dados e converter-nos, seus usuários, em commodities para os anunciantes, seus verdadeiros clientes pagadores. Torna-se evidente que nossa saúde mental é profundamente afetada e todos os aspectos das relações humanas se deterioram, incluindo as interações estudante-professor e estudante-estudante. Se entendemos que estes problemas derivam do amalgamento, velocidade e quantidade de informações de todo tipo que temos que lidar ao mesmo tempo, podemos perceber que as soluções para estes problemas necessariamente passarão por uma nova regulamentação e o desmembramento de informações de uma forma que possamos suportar, sem negar a realidade destes novos fenômenos.

Palavras-chave: Análise retórica, dramatismo, Kenneth Burke, Bo Burnham, Mídias Sociais

## ABSTRACT

Concerns are growing about the interaction between human beings and the Social Networks. In a context of social isolation deriving from the COVID-19 pandemics, we saw the Internet playing a significant role in our lives. As a Language teacher I present a Rhetorical analysis through Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Pentad. The *artifact* I analyze revolves on the theme of Social Media and how it affects our lives. It is a video clip of a song by the comedian Bo Burnham called "Welcome to The Internet" (2021). The show's main theme is about the author's own abilities to cope with reality and mental health issues during the 2020's COVID-19 pandemic. This research and its analysis have the objectives of answering the following questions: Why is it a problem for young adults? How does it affect a classroom? And, specifically, what does the rhetor I picked have to offer on this theme? In order to answer the questions I review the literature to provide some crucial concepts on Social Media, definitions of Algorithms and the Mechanisms of disruption they present. After that I present the analysis in the form of an Essay where I guide the reader into the framing of the Pentad I did and the ratios between them. While doing so, the Essay sheds light on the problems we are facing now and identifies the dominant term, the Scene, framed as Social Media platforms and how the moment we live now is deeply related with an external agent purpose of disrupting our reality so it can sell our data and turn us, their users, into commodities for advertisers, their real paying customers. In this process it becomes evident that our mental health is deeply affected and every aspect of human relations deteriorates, including student-teacher and student-student interactions. When we understand that these problems derive from the amalgamation, velocity and amount of information of every type that we have to deal with at the same time, we can perceive that solutions to these problems will necessarily pass through new regulation and the untangling of information in a way that we can cope with, without denying the reality of these new phenomena.

Keywords: Rhetorical analysis, dramatism, Kenneth Burke, Bo Burnham, social media

## RESUMEN

Están aumentando las preocupaciones sobre la interacción entre los seres humanos y las redes sociales. En un contexto de aislamiento social derivado de las pandemias COVID-19, hemos visto cómo la Internet ha jugado un papel expresivo en nuestras vidas. Como profesor de lengua, presento un análisis retórico a través de la pentada dramática de Kenneth Burke. El artefacto que analizo gira en torno al tema de los medios sociales y cómo afectan a nuestras vidas. Se trata de un videoclip de una canción del cómico Bo Burnham titulada "Welcome to The Internet" (2021). El tema principal de esta canción trata sobre la propia capacidad del autor para afrontar la realidad y los problemas de salud mental en plena pandemia de COVID-19 en 2020. Esta investigación y sus análisis pretenden responder a las siguientes preguntas: ¿Por qué es un problema para los adolescentes? ¿Cómo afecta esto a una clase? Y concretamente, ¿qué tiene que ofrecer el retórico elegido sobre este tema? Para contestar a las preguntas, reviso la bibliografía para ofrecer algunos conceptos básicos sobre los Medios Sociales, las definiciones de Algoritmos y los Mecanismos de disrupción que conllevan. A continuación presento un análisis en forma de Ensayo en el que guío al lector en la articulación de la Pentada que he realizado y las relaciones entre sus términos. Al hacerlo, el Ensayo desvela los problemas a los que ahora nos enfrentamos e identifica el término dominante, la Escena, enmarcada como Plataformas de Medios Sociales, y cómo el momento que ahora vivimos está profundamente relacionado con un agente externo cuyo propósito es desestabilizar nuestra realidad para poder vender nuestros datos y convertirnos a nosotros, sus usuarios, en mercancías para los anunciantes, sus verdaderos clientes pagadores. Resulta evidente que nuestra salud mental se ve profundamente afectada y todos los aspectos de las relaciones humanas deteriorados, incluidas las interacciones alumno-profesor y alumno-alumno. Comprendiendo que estos problemas provienen de la amalgama, velocidad y cantidad de información de todo tipo que tenemos que manejar al mismo tiempo, podemos ver que las soluciones a estos problemas pasarán necesariamente por una nueva regulación y el desmembramiento de la información de una manera que podamos soportar, sin negar la realidad de estos nuevos fenómenos.

Palabras clave: Análisis retórico, dramatismo, Kenneth Burke, Bo Burnham, redes sociales.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI - Artificial Intelligence

App - Application Software

UX - User Experience

WWW - World Wide Web

## SUMMARY

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Concerns are growing about the interaction between human beings and the Social Networks. Specifically about the unavoidable collateral damage that now has been widely reported (SABATINI; SARRACINO, 2017; SAGIOGLOU; GREITEMEYER, 2014; PRIMACK, 2017); Internet-mediated interactions by Social Media such as Facebook have been already linked to the increase of negative thoughts on teenagers (KROSS *et al*, 2013), specially teenage girls (MCDOOL *et al*, 2016). It has also been recently found that some platforms may act as a flourishing garden for self-radicalized extremist political groups (LANIER, 2018). These are things that, as a teacher, I find very concerning since they also show up in classroom interactions between teacher-students or student-students even in some simple conversation classes whenever the theme of Social Networks is addressed.

Jaron Lanier, a Computer Scientist that researches human-machine interfaces and advocates for healthier and more meaningful interfaces and applications, is also concerned about the technological breakthroughs escaping the teaching-learning practices. In a sense, he claims that schools are not preparing kids to be the agents of their future as Social Media users, but instead schools are allowing them to remain by-products of technological processes. In other words, we should educate our children to properly navigate through these interactive systems to become agents and take technology in their hands. Therefore, it is not only appropriate, but also necessary to address these issues in Teaching Careers. As a reviewer of Lanier's 2010 Manifesto "You are not a Gadget" wrote about his impressions of Lanier's thoughts back then,

If [Lanier] is right about childhood and youth, we better start thinking of education and start integrating the internet and the Cloud in our systematic education efforts not to moralize, not to demonize, not to advocate the Internet but to teach children how to use it to their own advantage along their own motivations, not the teachers. He sure is right when he says: "Our secret weapon is childhood". (COURDELAU, 2018)

Since this theme is too complex to be analyzed by itself, with several different opinions about what should be the approach on technology, what I can offer as an English Teacher is a Rhetorical analysis on an art piece, hereafter named the artifact, that reflects on the theme. This should be the framing from which I will try to answer

my own questions. In doing so, I am able to fit a literary product on the Social Network theme into my writing, analyze it within its context, and apply Kenneth Burke's Dramatistic Rhetorical Analysis on the object of study. Thus, putting both artifact and the technology maladies problem in a scientific scope that is enough to provide me with the tools and methods necessary to deal with such a huge question from a Language Teacher perspective. Sonja Foss says, "Rhetorical Critics are interested in discovering what an artifact teaches about the nature of rhetoric— in other words, critics engage in rhetorical criticism to make a contribution to rhetorical theory" (FOSS, 2009). Although confusing at first sight, it is that introspective nature of rhetorical theory the very same thing that provides elements for new discoveries and contributions.

The rhetorical approach is nothing new, in a sense that it has been used very often in other countries, even though in Brazil, the country in which I am an undergraduate student, other approaches may be more usual. Nevertheless, its elements have been present in Literary analysis since its beginnings and Kenneth Burke was one of its contributors and advocates in the United States. In the last century, mostly in the second half, Literary analysis has flourished from several different perspectives – post-colonialism, feminism, postmodernism, psychological and psychoanalytic, marxist, and so on – and contributed to enlarge our comprehension about the world's sociological questions we face nowadays. For it is within the scope of a Language professor to pick up an artifact and put it through the lenses of these theories, so we can derive interesting new conclusions for an emerging problem that now presents itself stronger than ever, such as the issues around Social Media.

Having already identified such issues – social media negative influence on teenagers, the role of the language teacher as a promoter of agency and critical thinking, and the wide-spread use of rhetorical analysis in English – my final paper is a work of rhetorical analysis through Burke's Dramatism methodology. In this method I select an *artifact* related to the themes already exposed in order to understand the rhetoric's motives beneath the apparent discourse.

The artifact that I analyze in my paper is a video clip of a song by the comedian Bo Burnham called "Welcome to The Internet" (2021). You can consult the lyrics of the song in the appendices. This video clip is an excerpt of a one and a half



hour full-length comedy show on Netflix called “INSIDE” (2021). The show’s main theme is about the author’s own abilities to cope with reality and mental health issues during the 2020’s COVID-19 pandemic. The moment of the song itself has been considered by several reviewers – like Hill and Doyle (2021), in other Youtube channels and Internet platforms – as the climax of the show.

In a context of social isolation, the Internet plays a significant role in our lives; however, Burnham wants us to take a look also at those bad aspects of the internet that we have seemed to be ignoring in advantage of the comfort it provides us with.

The research questions I intend to answer are also what we call Rhetorical Questions in this methodology. I want to find the answers to “What are the rhetor’s perceptions on Internet-Mediated Interactions?”. In order to do so, I may also have to find answers to what problems are structurally entangled with Social Media? Why is it a problem for young adults? At least if I want to conduct the reader throughout the analysis. Answering the main Rhetorical question of the rhetor’s motives is, therefore, the main objective: Identify the rhetor’s perceptions on Internet-Mediated Interactions. As Secondary Objectives, I have to provide awareness about structural problems concerning these new ways of communication, clarify aspects of social media that sometimes are not so tangible for students and teachers, understand how it may affect the Language classroom and what we can do to protect ourselves.

Analyzing an *artifact* that deals with the theme and went viral in the year 2020, with a good reception overall, is very important to understand how teenagers are dealing with those contemporary issues of Social Media. For instance, in her dissertation, Denél Chetty (2020) brings up several concerns. One of them is about the information overload and how it affects youngsters. She writes,

A similar feeling is experienced with regard to data asphyxiation, commonly referred to as information overload. Individuals become emotionless and the overload inhibits their ability to be deeply moved as they are drawn away from empathy (Quinones 2016). In other words, individuals cannot identify with the other. Social media are particularly overloaded with information and do not aid interpretation. (CHETTY, 2020. p.73)

As we can see, it is becoming urgent that teachers start paying attention to internet-mediated interactions. If the overload of information is in fact distancing individuals from each other, an activity planned to be produced in Social Media platforms (for example, a tweet about certain social issue, maybe aiming to empower

students, would go completely against its original objective). Moreover, against a social interactionist approach, throwing away the socializing purpose of schooling. That is, socializing scientific knowledge, improving empathy, in other words, raising conscious human beings.

Next, I introduce the literature review, in which I present more material on recent aspects of conflicts arising from computer mediated interactions online in Social Media and some intricacies of their functional mechanisms. Then, I present the methodology for analysis, which is a Rhetorical Analysis through Burke's Dramatism. After that, I guide the reader through the analysis and its results through an essay. In the last part, Final Considerations, I summarize the work and present the conclusions.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND GENERAL CONCEPTS

In order to better understand the symbols present in the *artifact* we need to take a look first into what has already been studied about Social Media. I will not deal in depth with general knowledge terms like *Digital Influencer* and maybe some advertisement actions done by publicity agencies. I intend to go deeper into the rhetorical mechanisms of Social Media, as we start to consider them as a tool in itself. A tool that has its own purposes set by an AI algorithm – a program that repeatedly measures a set of predefined variables in order to select the best choices to make next – aiming to keep people engaged (they say they dispute for “screen-time”). So, whatever the content a supercomputer may select that may work for them to put publicity in between. Publicity is how they make money. You are not a user. you are the product this tool sells to others. You are the public of an entertainment platform designed just for you, with its pre definitions instantly updated by whatever you just did. Whether you liked, hated or loved some content, whether you briefly paused scrolling over something, every data on your usage behavior is being collected. (Try deleting some Social Media Apps and check how long the battery lasts in comparison to when they were installed, specially for those who barely use such apps, because the apps keep some tools turned on, such as your location, people within your range, et cetera). So, let's define some rather important terms for our present analysis.

### 2.1 On Algorithms

Jaron Lanier wrote a book called *Ten Arguments For Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right Now*. In his first argument he says,

Algorithms gorge on data about you, every second. What kinds of links do you click on? What videos do you watch all the way through? How quickly are you moving from one thing to the next? Where are you when you do these things? Who are you connecting with in person and online? What facial expressions do you make? How does your skin tone change in different situations? What were you doing just before you decided to buy something or not? Whether to vote or not?

All these measurements and many others have been matched up with similar readings about the lives of multitudes of other people through massive spying.

Algorithms correlate what you do with what almost everyone else has done. (LANIER, 2018, Argument One)

We don't see all this pre-programmed structure when we get on the Social Network. Like one does not check for the beams and cornerstones first if they are not engineers, no. Customers and Spectators. That is what we are and how the tool is set to see us. To hide the structure we are immersed in a whole new world of symbols and signs. Some of them are especially tasty: *followers*. Pages with lots of followers charge to produce advertising content. Yes, they say they have to comply with a set of rules and properly label the content, but who is watching for it to see if it is working? We believe it is working because of the nature we attribute to supercomputers. we think they are perfect and, therefore, unfaible. But in fact it was a machine designed in Palo Alto (probably) just to make money for their owners.

Well, this is mainly the whole argument of Lanier's book and he is a Computer Scientist explaining to other people who are not Computer Scientists this tool, the algorithm operating exclusively in this kind of specially entertaining and engaging Social Networks, and how it works.

## 2.2 On Social Media

So let's check what are Jaron Lanier's arguments for deleting your social Media Accounts and, then, we can try to understand better what Social Media are:

- ARGUMENT ONE –YOU ARE LOSING YOUR FREE WILL
- ARGUMENT TWO – QUITTING SOCIAL MEDIA IS THE MOST FINELY TARGETED WAY TO RESIST THE INSANITY OF OUR TIMES
- ARGUMENT THREE – SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING YOU INTO AN ASSHOLE
- ARGUMENT FOUR – SOCIAL MEDIA IS UNDERMINING TRUTH
- ARGUMENT FIVE – SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING WHAT YOU SAY MEANINGLESS
- ARGUMENT SIX – SOCIAL MEDIA IS DESTROYING YOUR CAPACITY FOR EMPATHY
- ARGUMENT SEVEN – SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING YOU UNHAPPY
- ARGUMENT EIGHT – SOCIAL MEDIA DOESN'T WANT YOU TO HAVE ECONOMIC DIGNITY
- ARGUMENT NINE – SOCIAL MEDIA IS MAKING POLITICS IMPOSSIBLE
- ARGUMENT TEN – SOCIAL MEDIA HATES YOUR SOUL

Although the last one may sound a little bit exaggerated, the author titles the first section of wit with a header, "I MET A METAPHYSICAL METAPHOR" (LANIER, 2018), so I think it is self-explanatory. His arguments are very strong, but still it is just

the best linguistic way he found to explain his view over Social Media and how it works. Since it was structured soullessly to serve private interests, it wants to keep you detached from your real persona. But it wants your screen time, your attention, and a little bit of your money from the advertisers. After All, you didn't think you were going to communicate to the whole world for free, did you?

So, now that we understand what the algorithm is and we start to comprehend its nature, let's get back to other important elements within the *artifact*. We have to keep in mind that the *artifact* was produced by a person who is also a social media heavy user. Actually Bo Burnham made a whole comic special about his relation with social media and the 2020 COVID-19 pandemics (INSIDE, Netflix streaming service, 2021) from where the *artifact* is an excerpt. Therefore the whole experience was created to be distributed to and consumed by other users more or like him. This would be the "target persona" if we were talking about publicity. But since it is a piece that effectively communicates between users on both ends of the line with apparently genuine purpose, we need to know what are some symbols and signs in these platforms. What the machine is showing us to make us feel in a social space and still be shaped as the perfect customer for them? These are the things Bo Burnham is talking about and wanting to show us.

Maybe we need to set this specific set of social media aiming for profit whatever the cost from what it used to be:

"In research, [Social Media] SM is generally used as an umbrella term that describes a variety of online platforms, including blogs, business networks, collaborative projects, enterprise social networks (SN), forums, microblogs, photo sharing, products review, social bookmarking, social gaming, SN, video sharing, and virtual worlds." (AICHNER, *et al.*, 2021, p.215)

This is a great definition, because we are used to dealing with this linguistic sign with the meaning of a specific type of Social Media. So it is that we tend to forget about the others, most of them buried in the past of the Internet. A past that starts to appear just very faintly behind the unchronologically best content selected TimeLines. Of course some phenomena were already present in plain old forums, or even MySpace Communities.

In *#SCANDAL: An exploration of social media in light of René Girard's mimetic theory*, Denél Chetty proposes that social media are constructed in such a manner that inhibits meaningful dialogue.

When analyzing Social Media trends and movements, Chetty understands that they foster negative reciprocity. We have some interesting quotes regarding the clockwork mechanism of **Social Media as a Medium**,

As a medium, social media captivate the user's mind. They entice the user yet do not allow her to see how some of the content circulating on these platforms is being sensationalised in a way that most individuals tend to overlook. Social media demonstrate how violence is discharged from the content yet simultaneously shapes the content created. The very platform that individuals turn to in order to gain perspective and comprehend culture, results in the opposite, namely scandal. (CHETTY, 2020, p.27)

From this paragraph we realize that the very nature of social media is what generates violent speech. But what the user perceives is not that. The user is captivated by the reaction button, the scrolling, the ability to now reach an idol and get an instant response. All the reproachable content is packed up in a magical almost nauseating environment of illusion. "This does not allow much for space for meaningful dialogue or interpretation from the audience" (CHETTY, 2020, p.28).

There are other Articles quoted by Chetty, which could help us to better understand the perspective from which we are analyzing the social media in this satirical song, or how the song defines social media by what it unveils from it and attacks as a joke. Such as,

As mentioned already, Reyburn's (2017:54) reflections upon McLuhan's theory reveal that the "traditional" function of media has collapsed; rather than media being an extension of people, people become extensions of media. Thus, a person's desires are dictated by social media—by the very form of these media. The roles of subject and object have reversed invoking the submission of subject to object. (REYBURN, 2017, p.54 *apud* CHETTY, 2020, p.6)

So we can see this dystopian vision of Social Media has already been around for a while, and it seems to be solidifying instead of tweaked up or fixed up. At least the perception that SOMETHING must have had gone wrong. To the point that we are driven by our desires, and our desires are dictated by social media. Therefore, we are driven by what social media puts up. And this is a very uncanny situation.

In her dissertation, Chetty analyzes three social media situations that were strongly publicized by their scandalous natures. In her third case of study, the author came up with this,

The third social media trend reflects upon the presence of exaggerated personas and the sense of companionship and intimacy that is constructed and disseminated on social media, homing in on James Charles, a popular YouTube beauty blogger, who makes use of calculated intimacy to captivate potential followers. This example depicts a kind of 'rhetoric of mimeticism'. In addition, given a scandal perpetuated in Charles's name, it demonstrates how social media are closely related to sacrifice. They consist of methods of ostracization, and its resemblance to more explicit forms of violence and mythology reveals its sacrificial essence. Moreover, it demonstrates the distorted dynamics between idolatry, which is public, and scandal, which is initially more private. It assists in showing how our fixation on social media practices impedes us from understanding our relationship with them. (CHETTY, 2020, p.32)

Another example of 'rhetoric of mimeticism' and idolatry is what happened in 2021 in Big Brother Brasil 21st ed, a Brazilian reality TV show in which the season winner, Juliete, a previously anonymous woman from the northeast Brazilian region that entered the show with a couple of thousand followers ended up with 24 Million followers. Another Brazilian famous artist, the Latina singer Anitta, immediately ordered that Juliet went to her huge mansion to live there for a while even though Anitta herself was in the US at the time leaving her mansion and employees to Juliet's disposal. Later on, they met, posted content together, as if they were *BFFs* (Best Friends Forever). A few months later, Anitta just hit the mark of the 3rd most followed Latina profile on Instagram with 60 Million followers. The question we must ask ourselves in this relationship presented through social media is: Is their relationship genuine or is it just a capitalist interest that is in the nature of social media that brought the two of them together to a point that even themselves may now feel as best friends, since they both have been helping each other to achieve those fantastic numbers? I dare say the latter is more likely.

Social Media platforms seem to be deteriorating the quality of interactions to the point they can detach from reality,

Often on social media, individuals transform from antagonistic observers to confrontational participants who are against the culture in pursuit of a higher moral purpose. What is expressed as morality is really the reliance on strengthening the force implemented by the other (McKenna 2002:7). It is a relation demonstrated in the extremes of self-glorification and self-detestation, which amplify one's desires to overpower others while simultaneously degrading them. These internal incongruities are a result of failed rivalries with models. (CHETTY, 2020, p.39)

and also (highlight mine),

Lanier (2010:61) explains that the word "information" in the technical sense refers to something completely real. However, this essential type of information, which endures independently of culture, is different from the type of information put in computers, the type that apparently desires to be "free". Thus, information is an "alienated experience". However, Lanier (2010:61) likens culturally decodable information to an implicit type of experience. Moreover, information on a hard drive, for instance, does possess information of the type that exists objectively. This information tends to be understandable rather than being fragmented in a network. However, if these fragments possess meaning to the reader, they can be experienced. Thus, experience is the only way to "de-alienate" information. This de-alienation of information begets a "commonality of culture between the storer and the retriever" of the fragments.

Thus, the environment engendered is enchanting in a sense, but this enchantment is managed through "surveillance capitalism" — driven by algorithms. **Therefore, we have become fragmented; social media rob us of an enchanting environment in the tribal world, reducing individuals into a collective of restricted and deprived individuals, or algorithms, functioning in a world of an absolute reality and where there exist a finite number of dimensions.** (CHETTY, 2020, p.40-41)

As we can see, she also resorted to Lanier to try to explain the difference between information or pure data to actual meaningful information. For these authors, the type of information Social Media overflows us with is detached from reality. The information, when mediated by algorithms that aim only to engage their users and amplify screen time so they can profit from targeted advertisement, loses its true value, it is analyzed by the algorithm as pure data and selected as interesting or not for someone by some supercomputer in Silicon Valley, totally distorted from its original meaning, setting and/or purpose. Not only that, but the numbers of followers and likes are even more important than meaningful interactions.

### 2.3 Mechanisms of Disruption

Reading further into her dissertation we find many other concepts that will help us to understand the mechanisms within the algorithms and the capitalist true purpose of those platforms. In fact directly opposed sometimes to what we would



consider a proper dialogical interaction. For instance, about how arguing does not work in Social Media, Chetty (2020, p. 52), proposes,

[Social Media interactions] coerces individuals into believing that if you cannot persuade others to believe in your 'truth,' you must pressure them until they comply. Furthermore, these constructs are amplified on social media and as Reyburn's (2018) suggests: "It prevents self-understanding, the understanding of others, and an understanding of the actual social systems and networks at play.

The author goes on (*Ibid.*),

On social media, the main priority is not epistemic humility or reality seeking, but it is rather to impede the chance of understanding what is true. Thus, on social media reality itself can be scapegoated as there exists a gap between appearance and reality. The content on social media is interpreted as real and is conflated with the truth.

In the quotes above, the author is pretty assertive on her claim that, yes, Social Media distorts our perceptions of reality. Keep in mind that the artifact we are analyzing is a product of this distorted reality media. Also that Burke's Dramatism allows us to analyze the signs and symbols by themselves within the artifact nature; then relate them (or not) to reality to check if it is accurate or just a rhetorical argument of some kind that may be distorted and exaggerated for rhetorical purposes.

Although a little long, I bring this quote (highlighted by author) because I think it explains exactly how Social Media affects its users on a mass scale, producing a repetitive pattern of behavior, or in other words, how it may generate a herd behavior. Chetty (2020, p.70) begins the explanation by talking about the nature of large scale mass communication:

We are living in an era of massive global communication and this exacerbates the mimetic contagion (Girard 2010:26). The speed and the scale of social media networks enable information to move faster in the digital realm. Social media effect individuals across countries and continents, as opposed to only the small social circles that physically surround people in the real world. Expansive technologies such as social networking sites have the ability to heighten and intensify both the best and the worst of humanity. Before this dissertation turns to how social media can generate positive reciprocity, it looks again at Girard's notion of undifferentiation and how it further illuminates ideas of violence, chaos and disorder during the pandemic. Furthermore, it analyses the particular stresses that emerge during a pandemic from living in a technologically-driven society, which McLuhan defines as a global village.

The author goes deeper in the analysis of the nature of Social Media by relating it to the natural aspects of other Media and entertainment sources. Shedding some light on its antagonistic aspect, she shows that entertainment media is very different from real human communication processes,

The filmmaker George Romero describes media as “zombifying” because it renders everything identical, diminishes difference and vanquishes our perception of experience and reality (quoted in Reyburn 2018:48). Social media transmit more uncertainty than one expects and can transform into an aggressive environment with complex interdependent beings that form a mob. On these platforms, mediations are amplified which explains the ambiguities and uneasiness encircling the outbreak. The outbreak reveals that social media are chiefly communicative tools that unveil something of the nature of human beings.

Moreover, social media reveal how feeble human beings become amidst crisis. Rather than aiding the human experience and bolstering human brilliance, social media can amplify human frailty (Reyburn 2018:48). **Thus, contrary to what many believe, social media can cripple individuals rather than empower them. In comprehending media as “extensions” of ourselves, we need to accept that media moulds our understanding of being.** (CHETTY, 2020, p.70-71)

Now it is clear that we have several structural problems in this specific framing of Social Media, the kind that all these authors are talking about, The kind of platform that Jaron Lanier classifies as a “BUMMER” machine (LANIER, 2018). By enlarging the literature review next and analyzing the *artifact*, I think I can find answers to my doubts.

Also, I think I need to talk about my view on Social Media right now, after all these topics have been shown and understood. I don’t think we will ever get rid from this distortion of reality this kind of Media brings. I truly believe that humanity needs to be able to see clearly what this media is, just like we have been teaching about the capacity of traditional media to distort truth and create facts, we must be able to analyze, in the future, this more persuasive and insidious communication system. If we become aware of how Social Media works nowadays and what kind of damage it causes, we could help our students to take those tools on their hands instead of remaining a moldable consumer for the platforms, subjected to its will. *What I defend is that teachers must understand the issues in order to understand this post-reality virtual world in which we are in. We must comprehend Social Media not as a*

*communicating Service, but as an Entertainment service with its content produced by the users themselves and selected by an algorithm.*

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This work is based on the rhetorical analysis according to Kenneth Burke's dramatistic methodology. Burke defines rhetoric as embedded in action. He writes that rhetoric is "[t]he use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents" (BURKE, 1969, p. 41). Also, he claims that the function of rhetoric is to induce cooperation among peoples. He proposes:

For rhetoric as such is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and it is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols. (BURKE, 1969, p. 43)

Burke's proposition of a dramatistic analysis is based on the key term "act". For Burke, action should involve freedom or some kind of choice and some kind of conscious or unconscious purpose as Sonja Foss puts it "we must select or will a choice—we must choose one option over others" (FOSS, 2009, p. 384). Also, motion should be considered when investing in action according to Burke. For him, action cannot exist without motion: "Symbolic activity or action is grounded in the realm of the nonsymbolic" (FOSS, 2009, p. 384). Another important aspect of Burke's dramatism is his view that people communicate (develop and present messages) much like in plays. "Through rhetoric, we size up a situation and name its structures and outstanding ingredients. How we describe a situation indicates how we are perceiving it, the choices we see available to us, and the action we are likely to take in that situation" (*Ibid.*). Considering action as a play-like way to communicate, the general question that a dramatistic analysis proposes should be answered is: In which ways does the act, as a center term, a "god-term," invite related considerations or radiate considerations from the other terms?

Starting from the term action, we should also consider the five pentadic or dramatistic terms, the terministic screen terms: *agency*, *act*, *actor*, *purpose*, and *scene*. In his dramatistic analysis, David A. Ling states that "Burke argues that whenever a man describes a situation he provides answers to five questions: 'What was done (act), When or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose).'" (BURKE, 1962, p. xvii *apud* FOSS, 2004, p. 392).

### 3.1 Terms' Definitions

- **Act:** “The act is the rhetor’s presentation of the major action taken by the protagonist or agent” (FOSS, 2009, p.370).
- **Agent:** “Identification of the agent involves naming the group or individual who is the protagonist or main character of the situation described in the artifact as it is presented by the rhetor” (*Ibid.*).
- **Agency:** “The means the rhetor says are used to perform the act or the instruments being used to accomplish it are labeled the agency” (*Ibid.*).
- **Scene:** “Scene is the ground, location, or situation in which the rhetor says the act takes place” (*Ibid.*).
- **Purpose:** “The purpose of the act is what the rhetor suggests the agent intends to accomplish by performing the act. It is the rhetor’s account of the protagonist’s intentions or reason for an action” (*Ibid.*).

### 3.2 Procedures of Analysis

The procedures for the analysis are proposed by Sonja Foss (2009, p. 369) “(1) selecting an *artifact*; (2) analyzing the *artifact*; (3) formulating a research question; and (4) writing the essay”. Since the *artifact* has already been selected (Bo Burnham’s song “Welcome to The Internet” (2021)), the analysis process is the most important part and it will be shown in the next Chapter together with the Essay.

Still in the analysis process, for each set of terms I must apply the *ratios* between two *terms* at a time in order to discover the *Dominant Term*. Sonja Foss explains how to do it:

Continue to pair terms in ratios to discover if the first term in the ratio affects or requires the second term to be a certain way. For each of the 20 ratios, note “yes,” “no,” or “unclear” as the answer to the question of whether the first term in the ratio determines the nature of the second or strongly influences what it must be like. You might have, for example, at the end of this process, a list that looks like this:

*scene-act: no*  
*scene-agent: no*  
*scene-agency: no*  
*scene-purpose: yes*

*act-scene: no*  
*act-agent: no*  
*act-agency: no*  
*act-purpose: no*

*agent-scene: yes*  
*agent-act: yes*  
*agent-agency: yes*  
*agent-purpose: no*

*agency-scene: no*  
*agency-act: unclear*  
*agency-agent: no*  
*agency-purpose: unclear*

*purpose-scene: yes*  
*purpose-act: no*  
*purpose-agent: no*  
*purpose-agency: no*

(FOSS, 2009, p.375-376).

After doing so, I can check which term received the most number of “yes” answers. That would be the dominant term, the term that allows us to further comprehend the *rhetor’s* will, or *motives*. Following this methodology enables me to write an analysis in the form of an Essay.

## 4 RESEARCH PRESENTATION AND RESULTS ANALYSIS

Since the methodology of analysis deals with Burke's Dramatism, presenting the research is, therefore, the same as to present the five pentadic terms identified in the artifact and, then, applying the ratios between them in order to find the main term. Therefore, the best way to present what was done is to present it in the form of an Essay. In this Essay I will guide the reader through my process, the results obtained, that is, the terms selections and the ratios between them. The Analysis of the results will be part of it, since an overall view is stated right in the beginning of the text, further developed throughout the essay and, finally, deeply looked at in the end.

The next Section is the Essay. However, it is also the result of the sum of all that was stated before, such as the methodology, the objectives, the applying of the literature review on the method of research, the diving into the object of study, and the analyses done on that that took me to the conclusions. Or so I hope.

### 4.1 Essay –

#### **Welcome to the Internet**

Malicious players have stepped in Social Media so they could influence public debate. In doing so, though, they also messed up people's brains. Social Media explores a natural feature in our brain, our brain reward system, attaching us to the screen through dopamine microdosing. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter our body produces when it wants us to feel pleasure. This microdosing gets us hooked up and engaged in actions the platform wants us to. Liking, posting, commenting, or raging. It doesn't matter to them. They just need our screen-time, which is their market-share in the attention market. Several studies have shown this has been having implications in our communication, lifestyle, politics, mental health, and pretty much any social interaction. During the COVID-19's pandemic we dove deeper into these Social Media platforms, increasing our dependence on them. Now we already have enough art works and studies on the theme that allows us to take a closer look into the effects of the Internet mediated interactions on us.

In his Netflix Comedy Special "Inside", Bo Burnham presents us his reflections on the theme. I chose the song "Welcome to the Internet" to analyze in this essay as

a rhetorical artifact. In doing so I hope to put some focus on the issues that are emerging more often than not, on a daily-basis, in our work as teachers. That is, understanding how it affects our students' lives, the topics they bring up to classes and even how they perceive the world around them. The method of rhetorical analysis I will be using is Burke's Dramatism. For that, we have to consider Burnham as the *rhetor*, in order to, later, understand his *motives* through the pentadic analysis, a set of five terms present in a dramatic piece that allows us to understand the underlying motives present in the *artifact*.

The five terms are as follows: (1) Act; (2) Agent, (3); Agency; (4) Scene, and (5) Purpose. Setting these terms is important to see it as a Drama act, how each of the terms behave and shine a light on the motives behind the apparent message. "Welcome to the Internet" is a Musical act, therefore our artifact from now on, about how our relation with mediated discourse has evolved from how we dealt with the Internet prior to the 2000's and how we came up to this messy world of Social Media. The terms will be presented as an analogy to Social Media elements. I fear only that analyzing this artifact will make it less of a comic piece and more of Case Study which can be awfully boring for many people, so I highly recommend you to watch it before going on.

Let's set the first term, the (1) Act, as the Targeted Content Distribution. We can clearly see it in the lyrics when the Rhetor presents, in the chorus, "Anything and Everything All of the Time". This is a common Social Media engagement feature. To put whatever it thinks our Self might want to engage with. Whether it is good or bad to us in the long term. The juxtaposition of apparently random content is presented in the lyrics "Would you like to see the news or any famous women's feet?" showing the clear intent in trapping us into spending time on any Social Media platform, mixing real world issues with anything related to our deepest fetishes. Although in the lyrics this is presented in a comical way that explores a sexual fetish, it can be related to any other thing. I will give you a personal example that I saw in real life. A close family member of mine has a childhood fixation on clocks and, mostly, watches. He loves the ticking and the coo-coos. It is not clear how, since he does not actually buy them, but his instagram feed is full of advertisements of watches nowadays. Gold watches, common watches. Watches that have a transparent back so you can watch



the clockwork movement. That is his fetish, mixed up with political news. This is the targeted Content he receives. This is the (1) Act Social Media is playing for him.

The (2) Agent is what we know as the User Experience (UX). The Oxford Language dictionary says it is “the overall experience of a person using a product such as a website or computer application, especially in terms of how easy or *pleasing* it is to use”. A now archived US government website brings a more technical definition of UX:

User experience (UX) focuses on having a deep understanding of users, what they need, what they value, their abilities, and also their limitations. It also takes into account the business goals and objectives of the group managing the project. UX best practices promote improving the quality of the user’s interaction with and perceptions of your product and any related services.(US Department of Health & Human Services. 2014)

The UX is Embodied in our artifact in the character that greets the User, just as a host/entertainer for the overall experience. The Agent presents itself right in the beginning, “Welcome to the internet/Have a look around/Anything that brain of yours can think of can be found/We've got mountains of content/Some better, some worse/If none of it's of interest to you, you'd be the first”. This character also explain how the Internet evolved from Web as hypertext system into Web as software interface, more like the model we are used now, when everything is mediated through content distribution programs. Later in the song, the agent reveals how UX, therefore itself, has changed over time:

“You know, it wasn't always like this...Not very long ago/Just before your time/Right before the towers fell, circa '99/This was catalogs/Travel blogs/A chat room or two/We set our sights and spent our nights/Waiting/For you, you, insatiable you/Mommy let you use her iPad/You were barely two/And it did all the things/We designed it to do”. (BURNHAM, 2021)

It shows the *Agent*, UX, has evolved in order to bring new users to experience more and more time and processes through software mediated interactions, trying to understand the user’s limitations and coping with them instead of educating the User into this world of programs that could have been too difficult to most users. In fact, we can see the materialization of this world wide experiment showing up now as our family members are living sometimes in a parallel world of fake news and cognitive dissonance created by a virtual environment that engages with them. Our students may also be locked up in those addictive experiences designed for each of them,

which may compromise Teaching Approaches such as social interactionist, generating unnecessary noises when the language class is aimed to create meaning through students' exchanges of personal experiences.

The (3) Agency is the means through which the Agent is able to perpetrate the Dramatic Act. In this sense, I am framing the Agency as “The Algorithm”, programs that identify patterns of behavior and index topics of interests of the User so it can show more content that have more chances of generating engagement.

Although the use of this expression – The Algorithm – may be overexploited and misleading, if we focus on what it really means, that is, any computational activity planned in logical terms step-by-step before translating it into any coding, the *artifact* does present us a history of the ever evolving usage of Algorithms, from simple old-fashioned website displaying in hypertext – as quoted, “Not very long ago/Just before your time/Right before the towers fell, circa '99/This was catalogs/Travel blogs/A chat room or two” – until the moment we are living now. So, right before those lines we have “You know, it wasn't always like this”, in which the “this” refers to everything it was said before. And we also have the question “Could I interest you in everything?”. I think this shows how the mere display of hypertext evolved into computer selected content in Social Media. It is this movement present in the lyrics that allows us to define the *Agency* as *The Algorithm*.

Now we do have a small issue on setting the (4) fourth term that can be easily solved splitting into those two scenarios. Then, we will check if it makes sense doing the ratios in two sets of Pentads. I have already done it (you can check it on the next table on page 36) and it works to show how the change in the Scene plays an important role in our relation with the Internet, but I will guide you through it in the next session. For now, let's acknowledge that there used to be a (4) *Scene*<sub>1</sub>, where the Internet experience was mainly focused on a hypertext system and now there is a (4) *Scene*<sub>2</sub>, where interactions are actively mediated by software interfaces (GARRET). Let us call *Scene*<sub>1</sub> the *Hyperlinked World Wide Web* (Hyperlinked WWW) and *Scene*<sub>2</sub> the *Social Media* for simplification. I think this should be fair enough since the *artifact* is about overall general people's experiences with the Internet, and while previously we mostly revolved around blogs and portals, now most of us spend more time on Social Media. Social Media are platforms that actively choose the content we deal with. They do that through the *Agency* of Algorithms, selecting

content based on our profile, geolocation, and personal interests among several other demographic and personal variants only the developers may know exactly what they are. Since the source code is private intellectual property, we do not participate in what we choose to view or access. Instead, it is the *Act* (Content Distribution) of an external Actor. Our *Agent* (UX) now embodies those principles that it did not used to, in the prior *Scene*.

Last, we must select the (5) *Purpose*. For that I will be using my interpretation of the general idea presented by a famous computer engineer, Jarion Lanier in his book *Ten Arguments For Deleting Your Social Media Accounts Right now*. The 10th argument is “Social Media hates your Soul” and it sums up the nine previous arguments. The general idea is that, since Social Media are products made by companies which profit from User's attention and exploitation of data that can allow them to present us advertisements, we are not the clients, but instead, we are the products these companies sell to advertisers. It is a problem generated by the business model that Big Techs have settled with in order to put their services on-line for free and generally available. Published later, the book *An Ugly Truth*, an investigative piece on Facebook's several privacy scandals confirms that the business model was a problem since the beginning and goes further “As Harvard Business School professor Shoshana Zuboff put it, Facebook's success ‘depends upon one-way-mirror operations engineered for our ignorance and wrapped in a fog of misdirection, euphemism and mendacity’” (FRENKEL; KANG, 2022, p. 61). This insight on the business model and company behavior can be seen similarly in every Social Media that work with the same business model: abuse of data in order to target advertisement. So, back to my interpretation of Lanier's proposition, I dare title the (5) *Purpose* as *The Disruption of User's Self*. What do I mean by that? I mean that these companies want us to be the less aware we can be about our environment, in order to sell our attention to advertisers. Therefore, canceling any sense we may have of collectivity or even reality, or even our own actual needs.

Of course we have seen other external agents abusing this business model. Since they have access to pay for content to be displayed directly in the platforms or even pay for Influencers to produce content for them, we are now seeing a worldwide commercialization of everything. From Lifestyles, to beliefs, to politics. Everything is turned into a commodity, sellable and consumable, by users which have little to none

active purpose in this model. User's that are being massively shaped into senseless customers.

So, now, let's apply the ratios between the pentad terms in both Scenarios and see how they behave. I will present the structure I used and how I defined the existence of influence from one term to another in each case in the next table. The Structure is:

Agent - Act  
Agent - Agency  
Agent - Scene  
Agent - Purpose

Act - Agent  
Act - Agency  
Act - Scene  
Act - Purpose

Agency - Agent  
Agency - Act  
Agency - Scene  
Agency - Purpose

Scene - Agent  
Scene - Act  
Scene - Agency  
Scene - Purpose

Purpose - Agent  
Purpose - Act  
Purpose - Agency  
Purpose - Scene

For the table of ratios (Table 1), since we have two scenes, I put the ratios side by side according to the scene. Let's remember we have already settled the terms accordingly: The (1) *Agent* is now the *User Experience (UX)*, The (2) *Act* is *Content Distribution*, the (3) *Agency* is *Algorithms*; as for (4) *Scene* we have *Scene<sub>1</sub>*, the *Hyperlinked World Wide Web* and the *Scene<sub>2</sub>* the *Social Media* as we know now, finally, the (5) *Purpose* is the *Disrupture of the User's Self*. The table is now:

Table 1 – Ratios between the Pentadic Terms on Bo Burnham’s “Welcome to The Internet”

For Scene <sub>1</sub> (Hyperlinked WWW)	For Scene <sub>2</sub> (Social Media)
UX – Content Distribution: no UX– Algorithms: no UX – Hyperlinked WWW: no UX– Disruption of the User’s Self: no	UX – Content Distribution: yes UX – Algorithms: no UX– Social Media: no UX – Disruption of the User’s Self: yes
Content Distribution - UX: yes	Content Distribution - User Experience: yes
Content Distribution - Algorithms: no Content Distribution - Hyperlinked WWW: no	Content Distribution - Algorithms: no Content Distribution - Social Media: no
Content Distribution - Disruption of the User’s Self: no	Content Distribution - Disruption of the User’s Self: unclear (depends on the User’s awareness. unaware yes)
Algorithms - UX: yes Algorithms - Content Distribution: no Algorithms - Hyperlinked WWW: no Algorithms - Disruption of the User’s Self: no	Algorithms - UX: yes Algorithms - Content Distribution: yes Algorithms - Social Media: unclear Algorithms - Disruption of the User’s Self: unclear/yes
Hyperlinked WWW - UX: unclear - The agent already expected the scene as it was.	Social Media - User Experience: yes
Hyperlinked WWW - Content Distribution: no Hyperlinked WWW - Algorithms: no Hyperlinked WWW - Disruption of the User’s Self: no	Social Media - Content Distribution: yes  Social Media - Algorithms: yes Social Media - Disruption of the User’s Self: yes
Disruption of the User’s Self - UX: Does not apply Disruption of the User’s Self - Content Distribution: Does not apply Disruption of the User’s Self - Algorithms: Does not apply	Disruption of the User’s Self - UX: yes Disruption of the User’s Self - Content Distribution: yes/unclear Disruption of the User’s Self - Algorithms: YES (in the artifact, totally. In general not so much)
Disruption of the User’s Self - Hyperlinked WWW: Does not apply	Disruption of the User’s Self - Social Media: YES

Source: The Author, 2023

As we can see, in the first Scene, that is The Internet as it used to be, that spot where we would go to search for blogs and more or less static content, did not cause any disruption of the real world, it did not have any implication on how the

users perceived the world around themselves. Instead it would just broaden the world of information they could navigate in. In the second setting, however, the way Social Media presents information does affect the way the Users perceive the world around themselves. There is no clear way of searching for information outside their own information bubbles or even outside from the way the algorithm presents such information. Thus, it makes sense that the dominant term appears on the latter Scene.

As for the dominant term, we can see that both (4) *Scene<sub>2</sub>* – Social Media – and (5) *Purpose* – Disrupture of the User’s Self – have an intricate role, since both of the terms check most YESes, on the analysis. Although I allow some space for doubt on the nature of Social Media depending on each Platform we are talking about, we also have a clear yes in the Purpose – Scene ratio when we consider only those platforms that deal with millions of active users and treat them as the product they are selling to the advertisers (the actual paying customers of such platforms). For this is the main purpose that will make the Agent in this Scene to tune their means, or Agency, accordingly.

It also makes sense that we have a completely clear dominant term in *Social Media*, for the artifact itself revolves around the very change in the Scene we saw in later years and how putting everything together caused the disruption of human relations, politics, families, and the user’s own realities. It did affect the whole world by pretending to be, at the same time, a perfect marketplace, workspace, social network, entertainment system and information newscenter, yet abiding by no law at all ever made for each of these. It is no surprise, then, that indexes of anxiety are rising all over the world, antidepressants consumption are increasing and, at the same time, we are throwing away our sleep quality and general health, affecting evermore students, teacher, or pretty much any professional that deals with other human beings on a daily basis. It makes sense that, for the first time in history, we note a decrease in the average IQ of humankind. Because we are letting these platforms deteriorate every aspect of human life so they can increase their profits.

Now, still we have a strong relation between both of these terms. It is the juxtaposition of all this information and the lack of regulation the platforms enjoy by not presenting themselves for any of the previous things themselves (workspace, marketplace, newscenter, et cetera) that allows them to fry our brains every day. This

is what Bo Burnham is trying to show us. And luckily he does that in a comic way, a light manner for looking into the dystopian doomsday scenario we are having to deal with. This amalgamation of everything that is not only preventing humankind to go forward on finding solutions to emergent problems (e.g. climate changes and financial crises), but also driving us backwards.

Now, let's see what we can do as teachers. For I don't think everything is lost. In fact, analyses and academic papers on this theme are popping up everywhere and, over history, teachers and scientists were the ones who drove and brought social changes and new tools for those who needed (and were able to pay for). So, let us put aside the regulatory aspects for a second, since it is clear that governments everywhere are going to deal with it from now on, probably making those companies and platforms abide by laws and regulations that already exist for every thing they pretend to be (again, like marketplaces, newscenters, et. cetera) and abide by new regulations that are coming up soon. Let us just focus on the classroom aspects.

I think we know that natural phenomena can and will affect a classroom, like when a sunny day turns into a gray sky, or when it starts to rain. These natural rattlings make children, teenagers or even adults from every culture stop paying attention to the exposition of themes and contents and make them look outside the window. Children may even get out of their desks and walk to the window, while teenagers and adults may surely comment about it. What do we usually do as teachers with these interferences made by natural phenomena? We may talk about it a bit, allow some time for reflection, and even enjoy the rain if our city has been passing through some drought period. But then we prepare the setting to bring the attention back to the class. Each teacher may have his or her methods or approaches. Denying the occurrence, however, is usually counterproductive.

The virtual world is more and more part of reality, presenting little to no difference from reality sometimes, or better, interfering and making part of our life, jobs, communication and everything. So, I think it is safe to affirm that we must face those rattlings and noises like we face natural phenomena. We must be able to teach that, yes, these noises are happening, yes, such a phenomenon will eventually affect us, but still it is not part of our class, it is not on our objectives and, sometimes, that this or that specific thing must be avoided. It is dangerous to walk in this direction. It is better if we take that other path. To be more specific, to teach our students how to

prevent losing quality sleep, make them think about labor relations inside and outside instant messaging apps (maybe someday a platform will provide some system that just waits the beginning of the working time to deliver the messages, instead of popping them up even if it is set on enterprise mode and it is out of working time). And for sure we must be aware that newscenters are newscenters, that marketplaces are marketplaces, that public debate is public debate, that entertainment is entertainment, that workspace is workspace. And although those things sometimes overlap, this is it. *Sometimes* they overlap. Our brains were just not made to absorb everything about everywhere all of the time at once while we solve personal problems and try to follow with our lives. It is just not possible.



## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is clearer than ever that rapid changes are happening in societies all over the world and a big part of it is driven through Social Media. Not all changes are for the best, though, since the human brain was not made for the amount of information we are dealing with, nor for the velocity and quantity of interactions we have to make. In this work I introduced the theme of Social Media and how it is affecting everyone's lives. As a teacher-to-be, I proved myself capable of making a Rhetorical analysis on an *artifact* that dealt with the emerging questions: Why is it a problem for young adults? How does it affect a classroom? And, specifically, what does the rhetor I picked have to offer on this theme?

The questions I proposed myself were answered through literature review and analytical reflection over such complex themes. The literature review aims to provide other readers and myself with the same concepts, for some researchers may be more or less acquainted with the terminology and nature of computer programs than others, depending on their previous contacts with the matters in analysis.

The Dramatistic approach proved to be a fairly efficient way to make a rhetorical analysis on a complex subject, for it can see the reality through the lenses of drama, defining an act that has an actor with an agency, set in a scene and with a clear purpose. Such is also the nature of our acts for Burke, even more our rhetorical acts – those that cause changes in our surroundings.

Doing so, we note that the rhetor, Bo Burnham, sees the freedom Social Media platforms enjoy from regulators as a dangerous thing for human nature. While comparing his view with some recent scientific research results and news, we see that he is probably not wrong. Therefore, facing the new reality we live in and learning how to cope with it is an urgent matter, because it affects every aspect of our lives, causing rattlings and noises in the classroom. In fact, it causes rattles and noises everywhere.

Going forward on the issue, I note that we, as teachers, have to learn-teach-research how to navigate this world, while searching for tools that empower our students and communities to avoid damage that may be caused by those recent and deep changes in society. We must be aware and be able to increase awareness in our communities about how those changes are taking place

and search for ways to make our students active participants of these changes, actors of changes for better.

This work of analysis and its final considerations may provide a glimpse into the theme of internet-mediated-interactions and Social Media for other teachers and researchers who want to better understand the ways communication technology has been affecting aspects of their lives and jobs in their communities, so they can think about solutions and how to develop new pedagogical materials that may aim to empower their students.

By sharing my thoughts, I hope to motivate other researchers to take these issues into account. Especially when we note that Social Media platforms have put everything together, and we must now separate those things into pieces so that we can properly analyze, deal with or even just enjoy them.

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**ATTACHMENT A – Welcome To the Internet Lyrics by Bo Burnham**

Welcome to the internet/Have a look around/Anything that brain of yours can think of  
can be found/We've got mountains of content/Some better, some worse/If none of it's  
of interest to you, you'd be the first

Welcome to the internet/Come and take a seat/Would you like to see the news or any  
famous women's feet?/There's no need to panic/This isn't a test, haha/Just nod or  
shake your head and we'll do the rest

Welcome to the internet/What would you prefer?/Would you like to fight for civil rights  
or tweet a racial slur?/Be happy/Be horny/Be bursting with rage/We got a million  
different ways to engage

Welcome to the internet/Put your cares aside/Here's a tip for straining pasta/Here's a  
nine-year-old who died/We got movies, and doctors, and fantasy sports/And a bunch  
of colored pencil drawings/Of all the different characters in Harry Potter fucking each  
other/Welcome to the internet

Hold on to your socks/'Cause a random guy just kindly sent you photos of his  
cock/They are grainy and off-putting/He just sent you more/Don't act surprised, you  
know you like it, you whore

See a man beheaded/Get offended, see a shrink/Show us pictures of your  
children/Tell us every thought you think/Start a rumor, buy a broom/Or send a death  
threat to a boomer/Or DM a girl and groom her/Do a Zoom or find a tumor in  
your/Here's a healthy breakfast option/You should kill your mom/Here's why women  
never fuck you/Here's how you can build a bomb/Which Power Ranger are  
you?/Take this quirky quiz/Obama sent the immigrants to vaccinate your kids

Could I interest you in everything?/All of the time?/A little bit of everything/All of the  
time/Apathy's a tragedy/And boredom is a crime/Anything and everything/All of the  
time/Could I interest you in everything?/All of the time?/A little bit of everything/All of

the time/Apathy's a tragedy/And boredom is a crime/Anything and everything/All of the time

You know, it wasn't always like this

Not very long ago/Just before your time/Right before the towers fell, circa '99/This was catalogs/Travel blogs/A chat room or two/We set our sights and spent our nights Waiting/For you, you, insatiable you/Mommy let you use her iPad/You were barely two/And it did all the things/We designed it to do

Now look at you, oh

Look at you, you, you/Unstoppable, watchable/Your time is now/Your inside's out/Honey, how you grew/And if we stick together/Who knows what we'll do/It was always the plan/To put the world in your hand

Hahaha/Could I interest you in everything?/All of the time/A bit of everything/All of the time/Apathy's a tragedy/And boredom is a crime/Anything and everything/All of the time

Could I interest you in everything?/All of the time/A little bit of everything/All of the time/Apathy's a tragedy/And boredom is a crime/Anything and everything/And anything and everything/And anything and everything/And all of the time