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**THE OBJECTIFICATION
OF ARISTOCRACY:
TRANSMEDIA
CONSUMPTION**

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Abstract: This article seeks to identify and discuss how recipients of *Downton Abbey* structured their speeches to present the way of life of the aristocrats in the series and in parallel in the *site: Downton Abbey at home*. We identified the discursive mechanisms employed - enunciative, thematic and figurative - that verify how the enunciatee accepts the simulacrum proposed in the scenes of ways of eating - breakfast and how they are appropriated by the advertising discourse with the objective of marketing products. The theoretical basis will be the Greimasian semiotics with deepening in the regimes of interactions in the apprehension and construction of meaning about figurativeness, identifying the themes, figures and the homologations between the content plane and the expression plane of the first season of the series. The results show the positive construction of the aristocracy, promoting values such as luxury and sophistication and the approximation of the fields of study of semiotics and consumption.

Keywords: Semiotics; Consumption; Transmedia; Advertising; *Downton Abbey*.

SEMIOTICS IN CONSUMPTION STUDIES

Advertising is one of the fields of study that is continually changing and the changes have allowed the creation and dissemination of products or services in a different way and with the active participation of the consumer public, which now has greater decision-making power, knowledge and creating the relationship you want with a brand. These constructions in consumer relations drive advertising professionals to be attentive and to develop strategies that adhere to this new reality in the face of what is available in the media to reach this new consumer. the actions of *product placement* (Balasubramanian, 1994), the new transmedia platforms (Jenkins,

2009) and *storytelling* (Salmon, 2007) are some of the examples of tools used by advertising and publicity to seduce the target audience and market the products of their client brands.

Semiotics as a discipline with scientific rigor has been dedicated to the studies of advertising and consumption since its beginning in the 60s. Its aim is to understand how meanings arise, develop and are maintained in the relationships between brands, products with the consumers. What are the meanings and life practices that advertising appropriates and propagates as a brand's discourse? How does this quest to be part of your audience's life?

The intended identification of the subject with products or brands is an integral part of the construction of the identity of both the consumer and the company. Hence the interactions of the order of intersubjectivity that are established aiming at a social relationship. We turn to Ana Claudia de Oliveira to elucidate the importance of semiotics in consumption studies:

[...] The theoretical and methodological contribution to the definition of the subject's identity is significant, based on the modes or ways of behaving, assuming attitudes when living life, whether this subject in question is an individual being, a social group, or a company, brand or product. (2017, p.442).

This article has as its theoretical foundation Greimasian semiotics both to approach the study of advertising as a semioticable object and as a method to analyze the advertising discourse on a transmedia platform, which was initially developed as an audiovisual series broadcast by open and cable television. The series: *Downton Abbey*, which presents a simulacrum of the British aristocracy, was launched in 2010 and made use of other transmedia platforms, having been active for 10 years. From the television series, channels of interaction were created on social networks: *Twitter*, *Facebook*, *Instagram* and *Pinterest*, in addition to broadcasting on pay

television stations, sale of *DVDs*, *site* for the commercialization of products from the series (furniture, decoration, jewelry and accessories), books about the series, about the cuisine of the series, art exhibition of the main scenarios of the series, transmission of seasons of the series in the services of *streaming* and, finally, the feature film, released in September 2019 and another in production in 2021, scheduled for release in 2022.

The media interest in the aristocracy and the royal family contributed to the development of the brand: *Downton Abbey*, from its launch to its permanence in the media across multiple platforms. The series was released in the country of origin in 2010, and in the United States and other European countries in 2011. In Brazil the series arrived in 2012. Let's see TABLE 1 below:

From this object of study, we selected the scenes of the ways of eating – breakfast from the first season, is the *corpus* of that study. In it, we will analyze under the light of semiotics the art of knowing how to eat, the appreciation of dishes, the fulfillment of the rites of the moment in the morning meals. Social, affective and relational exchanges and their connections. With this choice, we will figurativize the time in which the series takes place and its unfolding. We also observe that in *corpus* are the other ways of living, which justifies being elevated to the category of analysis of the totality, as it will allow dealing

with: accessories and jewelry of women's ways of dressing, furniture and decorative objects, style: *art nouveau*, inventions and facts of science, political events, leisure, entertainment, culture, employment/work and dreams of the social imagination.

The analysis focuses on figuration and thematization, with the figures of expression and content, in addition to the regimes of meaning and interaction of the narratives, based on the relationship between the brand and the consumer, observed in advertising discourses. Here we take the concept of generative paths of meaning, as explained by Greimas & Courtés:

By the expression generative path we designate the general economy of a semiotic (or just linguistic) theory, that is, the arrangement of its components in relation to one another, and this from the perspective of generation, that is, postulating that, since every semiotic object can be defined according to the mode of its production, the components that intervene in this process are articulated with each other according to a 'path' that goes from the simplest to the most complex, from the most abstract to the most concrete.(2013, p.232).

Based on this concept, Valdenise Martyniuk, in her joint work with Ana Claudia de Oliveira, details the three levels of the generative path of meaning:

The generative path of meaning is structured on three levels that, from the abstract to the

Exibição da Série					
Seasons	Ambiance	England	United States	Brazil	
1ª	7 episodes	1912-1916	2010	2011	2012
2ª	8 episodes + Christmas special	1916-1919	2011	2012	2013
3ª	8 episodes + Christmas special	1920-1921	2012	2013	2014
4ª	8 episodes + Christmas special	1922-1923	2013	2014	2015
5ª	8 episodes + Christmas special	1924-1925	2014	2015	2016
6ª	8 episodes + Christmas special	1925-1926	2015	2016	2017

TABLE 1: Seasons display *Downton Abbey*.

Source: author's production adapted from the series' DVDs.

concrete, constitute the text, opening up from oppositions to fundamental categories (which compact its axiology), into narratives (where subjects position themselves in actential roles and where establishes the contract of veridiction and narrative paths from the search for values in the syntax of the junction governed by procedures of operation and manipulation of various types that generate pathemic meaning effects) to discursivization (which allows us to see the figurative and thematic isotopies), concretizing the themes in the dimension of figurativeness with the plasticity of the arrangements that express it. This plane of content manifested by the plane of expression summons the syncretism of languages. (2017, p.140).

Therefore, the text is being constructed in relation to meaning in three levels of structuring, the discursive level where we will work on figurativization and thematization, in the narrative the regimes of interaction and meaning and in the fundamental the basic opposition and the semiotic square. According to Greimas & Courtés (2013, p. 400), the semiotic square must be understood as a visual representation of the logical articulation of a semantic category, whatever it may be, but being organized from an opposition (semantic component) such that A vs. B, filled with binary concepts.

In analyzing the plasticity of the scenes in *Downton Abbey*, we rely on the work developed by Ana Claudia de Oliveira, who led us to observe, detail and analyze the formants of the show's manifestation, which she defines as:

The formants, or the set of distinctive and pertinent traits, whether from the material dimension, whether from the chromatic dimension, whether from the eidetic dimension, or from the topological dimension, when combined, are called by these authors, following Hjelmslev, as *figures of expression and figures of content*. (1995, p. 4).

We can see how the levels of expression related to a semiotics of the visible include objects such as posters or paintings, however, figuration is not a simple ornamentation of things, it is this canvas of seeming whose virtue consists of opening a little and letting a glimpse, thanks or by way of because of its imperfection as a possibility of beyond (the meaning" (Greimas, 2002, p. 74). To account for the structuring of the "screen of opinion", we examined the figures of content and how they are manifested by the figures of expression. It is from these correlations that we will establish structuring isotopic reiterations of the categories that are approved by the category of content and the most comprehensive expression of the others raised. For this analytical construction, we will start from the constituent and constitutive formants of the visual and rhythmic audiovisual. Emphasizing that our analysis will not explore the sound of the series, but only its kinetic visuality. The visuality analysis planes that we will work on in this article are the eidetic, chromatic, topological and material planes.

Greimas adds the topological dimension to the level of expression of visual semiotics, which, in the author's opinion, is deeper than the others (light, chromaticism and eidetics). Despite making the plane of expression more complex, this idea is recovered by Oliveira, whose proposal is a methodological scheme with which "starting from the study of the icons manifested at the superficial level of expression, from the figures that manifest themselves at the intermediate level, we arrive at one goes to that of non-figurative traits, the formants, at the level of the deep structure of the plane of expression" (1995, p. 118). This is the point of interest to this study and which we illustrate below in TABLE 3 with some examples of how each of the dimensions of the analysis is organized.

From the understanding of the formants of

Dimension	Examples of phrases
Eidetic	Narrow vs. wide curved vs. Straight vertical vs. Horizontal
Chromatic	Light color vs. Dark color Cold Color vs. warm color Shadow vs. Light
Topological	Peripheral vs. Central Closed vs. Open
Figurative Material	Scenery objects
Kinetic	Frameworks

TABLE 2: Dimensions of the expression plane.

Source: Author's production adapted from Oliveira (2004).

the text, we were able to carry out the approval of the plane of expression and the plane of content, identifying the thematic isotopies that allowed the development of the semiotic square, visualizing the basic oppositions of the text of *Downton Abbey*. Floch elucidates the importance of the semiotic square for the apprehension of meaning.

The interest of the semiotic square clearly lies in the organization of a coherent cultural universe, even one that is not considered "rational". It allows the anticipation of both the paths that meaning can take and positions of meaning that are logically present, but not yet in force. Above all, the themes, images, concepts and expressions "positioned" in the semiotic square always exist in logical-semantic definitions. (2014, p. 30).

For the present article we will use this methodological arsenal to analyze the *corpus* reported in *Downton Abbey*, the series and its relationship with the sale of products on the site: *Downton Abbey at home*, also owned by Julian Fellowes, *Carnival Films* and of the agency: *Third Floor*. The site sells products in circulation in the series, such as furniture, decorative objects, jewelry and accessories. The series proposes a simulacrum of the representation of an aristocracy and generated an identification of the public with

its characters, situations and dramas presented as indicated by the audience indices, allowing the recipients to strategically articulate other communication products to consolidate the brand: *Downton Abbey* as a symbol of sophistication and luxury. An example of this articulation was the communication through the website, which sells the objects in circulation in the series. The series and its transformation as a media product aroused our interest to develop a scientific analysis of its representativeness and sociosemiotics provides a framework for us to analyze it and the circulating values in the series and the apprehension of this meaning allowed us to *Downton Abbey* become a consistent brand and strategically a transmedia platform.

In his discursive strategies of manipulation by temptation, the sender strategically produces an appreciation of objects manufactured with raw materials from the colonies, as part of the construction of the simulacrum of the aristocracy. By accepting the contract, the addressee, by adhesion, enters into conjunction with the values that circulate in the series, which means his acceptance of the discourse with that of the simulacrum of the aristocracy.

The recipient is modalized with the *wish to do* through the series, in his narrative

path he acquires competence to *know-how* when he becomes aware of the *site Downton Abbey at home* the series' social media: *to be able to do* when he can afford to buy. In the performance, he buys the product and through the possession he makes himself like the characters of the aristocracy. This purchase on the site takes place through the visualization of the products for sale organized by the information architecture stipulated by the sender, separated by rooms in the house by clicking on the button: "*Shop by room*". Once the product has been selected, the recipient sees the price and then can press the button: "*Buy now*", and you are then taken to the payment page, which can be done by card (in cash or in installments). Identifies your address and receives the product at home. These competences will lead the recipient to enter into conjunction with the object of value, the product chosen by him. It must be noted that if the recipient is not in conjunction with the values in circulation in the series, he does not understand the products on the site and the values that circulate there. What is put on sale becomes an emblematic sample of products that become valid for the whole, as postulates Ana Claudia de Oliveira:

Each one chooses the values that are dear to him, to invest them in objects and social practices. As the object of value only exists in the relationship with the subject, when it is converted into an object of its search, the paths of its acquisition become defined by the subject's own elections. With autonomy, the power of decision of each one is exercised, controlling the directions of the values and the senses. It would be, therefore, depending solely on their doing, the acquisition of competences that ensure the performance of intervention in society, in the forms of sociability, in the ways of their living life. (2004b, p. 153).

This sociability, interaction and consumption was made possible by technological development. As Oliveira says:

Thus, with a continued turn to the object that has been produced by digital advertising and television, by social networks, mobile telephony with greater access to navigation and the dynamic types of online interaction, the impacts of followers for corporations, products and brands, the phenomenon of the celebrity as a model social figure, multiplatforms and transmedia, transformations of buying and selling with the triumphant entry of electronic commerce. (2017, p. 709).

The possibility of acquiring an object of decoration or accessory that is part of the daily life of the aristocrats, which provides comfort and well-being to the characters, brings the viewer/internet user closer to a "reality", or rather, to the simulacrum of a reality of the aristocracy, allows you to feel that you are part of it, that you have the same training and the same tastes.

THE CONSUMPTION OF PLASTIC AND FILMIC ARRANGEMENTS

Julian Fellowes, author and producer of the series that is, in semiotic theory, called the sender, is endowed with a persuasive act to make believe, that is, he is endowed with an ability to make the recipient of the series accept the proposed simulacrum and that he (the addressee) "is part" of that represented royalty. The statement presents the aristocratic family Crawley, Robert (the Englishman with the title of Earl) and his wife Cora (American with a family fortune) who had 3 daughters, worried about the inheritance, since the fiancé of their eldest daughter Lady Mary rightful heir dies in shipwreck *Titanic* in 1912. The plot unfolds between mourning, discussions about the current legislation on inheritance and title succession, as at that time women did not have this right, formal presentation of the new heir, a lawyer who practiced his profession and lived in Manchester. The first season ends with the announcement of the start of

the First World War. The viewer/internet user called recipient and enunciatee, in turn, is endowed with an interpretive performance that evaluates what is proposed. We will now point out the semiotic elements of the scenes to identify how the plastic arrangement was structured and how it manifests itself.

In the first scene, the Countess is being served by her private maid, who passes her a cup of tea, wearing her black uniform, her hair tied in a bun that makes evident the formality existing in the house. Her uniform contrasts with the light green color of the wall in the background that makes the environment restful and pleasant. O'Brien looks up to hear what the Earl is telling his wife. The Countess holds her wooden tray with the breakfast she

has not yet been able to eat in her bed, between her embroidered linen blankets. By tradition, only married women can have breakfast in bed, single women and men must have breakfast in the breakfast room. The Countess can still be seen with her hair down, with her nightgown and silk robe embroidered in a cream color, almost the same shade as her blankets. The headboard and wallpaper in golden tones represent the richness of a noble's room. In the second scene, the maid has already left the room and the frame only presents the Countess in astonishment, upon learning that her daughter's fiancé heir is dead. The first two scenes are in medium shot, which establishes the relationship between the subjects and objects in the scene and the normal and frontal



Figure 1: Breakfast sequence of Cora Crawley, the Countess of Grantham, receiving news of the sinking of the Titanic and the death of the castle's heir.

Source: Capture of frames of *Universal Studios* (2010), author's production.

angle, intensifies the idea of equality between the character and the viewer, as this shot places them on the same level, the level from the eyes. The monochromatic tones and the horizontality of these scenes refer to stability, harmony and tranquility, and the golden tone in the decoration, power and prestige.

In the third scene, the Count is in the foreground with a worried expression, and the Countess in the background with both hands together, still in her unfocused bed, showing the worry and chaos that this news means. The Count's impeccable suit in dark colors, his waistcoat and tie: *ascot tie*, prepares you to assume your role as the powerful leader. These shades contrast with the light colors of the room's decor, the wooden four-poster bed, blankets, nightgown and silk robe in golden and beige tones, which show the elegance and power of the aristocratic family. The normal and frontal angle presents the dialogue between the two and the wide shot identifies where the scene is taking place and the relationship between subjects and objects and between subject and subject. We can identify as oppositions in these scenes serving vs. be served, which as a value represents wealth. Comfort is built as a theme based on the figuration presented.

The general plan provides for locating the plot in a one-story house significantly simpler than the castle, with a beige rug under the wooden table with five chairs, crystal glasses of juice and food on the table set. The wallpaper, with white arrangements on dark beige, contrasts with the stylish side table: *art nouveau* in mahogany wood, where a vase of green foliage rests and above a TABLE with a golden and wood frame, marks originality and coziness. The frontal and normal angle once again marks the equality between the characters and the viewers. The framing allows a double frame of the scene, the walls in the foreground and the window in the background with the wood painted in white and the transparent glass, allowing the view of the green of the garden, bringing freshness and relaxation to the scene. The formal attire and uniformed maid indicate that they belong to a favored class, but not as noble as the family that lives in the castle. Once again, the monochromatic earth tones and the horizontality of the scene refer to harmony, tranquility and connection with nature, which we can observe through the interpenetration of nature in the room through the windows.

After describing the plasticity of the scenes in the various statements about making

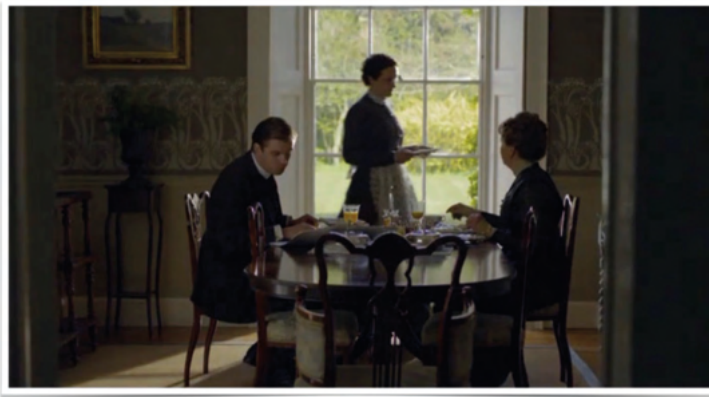


Figure 2: Breakfast of the new heir to the castle

Matthew Crawley in Manchester with his mother Isobel Crawley.

Source: Capture of frames of the *Universal Studios* (2010), author's production.

breakfast, we are faced with the recurrence of some figures that cover this theme and organize an articulation of figurativeness in what Greimas called isotopy. According to Greimas and Courtés (2013, p.276), isotopy “is defined as the recurrence of semantic categories, whether these are thematic (abstract) or figurative”.

In all the scenes presented there is a predominance of horizontality and monochromatic earth tones. Horizontality repropose the slow passage of time to tranquility and harmony and a living of observation of circumscribed life. The earthy monochromatic tones and the darker than light scenes present the reconnection with nature and ancestry, which carries sensations of comfort and coziness. As well as strengthens the family as owner of the land.

Another recurrence is the presence in all scenes of the normal angle, which creates effects of a sense of equality between the viewer and the actants, as they place them on the same level at eye level. The dialogues are structured by an interaction between the viewer and the characters, producing the effects of being face-to-face, which makes us believe that whoever is watching is positioned in the scene. The plans change between the general and the medium, both reveal types of interaction between actants and objects in each scene of the ways of eating – breakfast.

Other recurring objects are English porcelain that appear in nine scenes, solid oak wood, linen, silver, gold, servants, crystal and *art nouveau*, the Persian rug and, finally, the silk. The recurring outfits are formal, half tailcoat for men and dresses for women, informal attire appears only at breakfast in bed, and even so it consists of a nightgown and silk robe, these figurativize wealth, exclusivity, luxury, tradition, longevity and power.

It is pertinent to remember that we are analyzing the scenes from Landowski's

regimes of interaction and meaning. The French semiotician develops in regimes four types of models of narrativity, which Fiorin defines:

There is a regime governed by regularity; one, by chance; one, for non-regularity one, for non-causality. The first is called programming; the second chance (or accident); the third, adjustment and the fourth, manipulation. (Landowski, 2014, p. 8).

In the text we identify the programming and manipulation regimes. The utterance arranges the material, chromatic, topological and eidetic formants in bundles of figures to manipulate the addressee, making him believe that wealth, nobility and sophistication can be close to his way of life, the senses of food and, above all, convinces about an aristocracy that takes place in the English world. The seduction by the appreciation and positive image of the other makes the recipient desire the wealth, luxury and comfort of the aristocratic class. The program maintains the regularity of the serving ritual, with employees available and the elements of the table set (linen tablecloth, chandelier and silver cutlery, crystal goblets, English porcelain) maintain the stability and order of the ritual.

The recurring theme in all the scenes is luxury, which, according to the online dictionary Michaelis (2021), represents a lifestyle, as described: “A lifestyle characterized by excessive ostentation and spending on expensive consumer goods; splendor, refinement, sumptuousness. That which presents special comfort, which provides well-being”.

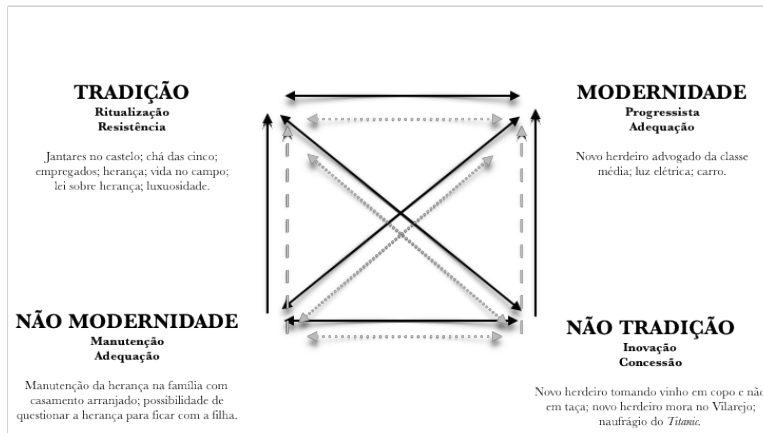
We then learn that the formants of the expression and content planes that build the meaning of the discourses are the following in table 3.

These elements that enter into the staging of the ways of eating – breakfast materialize the size and strength of the British Empire.

EXPRESSION	CONTENT	
Horizontality	Tranquility and harmony for having time to enjoy your ongoing course.	Life in the country of the landowners.
Earthy monochromatic tones	Comfort and coziness obtained from the rural economy	
Normal angle	Equality between character and viewer	Importance of material goods
Front angle	Dialogical interaction between character and viewer and between characters	
General and medium plan	Interaction between subjects and objects, between subjects and subjects and importance of the place of action	
English porcelain	Refinement and sophistication	Power of the British Empire (king and nobles)
Baccarat Crystal		
Solid Oak Wood	Cozy and Tradition	
Linen	Nobility and sophistication	
Silver	Wealth and power	
Gold		
Employees	Luxury and power	
<i>Art nouveau</i>	Luxury and originality in being of its time, as it is an art in fashion	
Persian carpet	Refinement and tradition	
Silk	Elegance and delicacy	

Table 3: Homologation between the expression plane and the content plane of Season 1.

Source: Author's production.



Scheme 1: Semiotic square of the base opposition season 1.

Source: author's production, adapted from Floch 2014.

Raw materials from its colonies are used to show the Empire's conquests and reaffirm its power to be the main world power. According to Ferguson (2004) in 1920 the British Empire dominated $\frac{1}{4}$ of the world population and almost 24% of the total land area, having colonies in North America, Canada, Africa, India, China, Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Jamaica, Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Caribbean, Guyana, among others. Giving visibility to raw materials and the objects made with them legitimizes the actions of the monarchy and its values supported by the subjects supporting the United Kingdom.

With this recurring theme and the values identified in this first season, we come to the basic opposition of *tradition vs. modernity* that will allow us to develop the semiotic square.

Only the scenes that appear in the products

sold on the site that make up the *corpus* of the work, *Downton Abbey at home*. We could observe that food is not the focus of the scenes, but the ritual of eating provided by the articulation of objects and people. The rites that are expensive, the protocols that show the ways of serving, the tray, the porcelain, the crystals, the silver, the linen. The posture and clothing for the meal, silk, gold, guide gestures and relationships. Another observation is in relation to the crossing of products sold in the scenes of the ways of eating, for example, for breakfast in the Countess's bed, the products on sale are the silk nightgown, and in the evening snack it is the crystal cup for serve dessert.

The products of *Downton Abbey* offered for sale on the website are based on the values in circulation in the series, so the



Figure 3: Products marketed in the breakfast-in-bed scenes in the castle and in the hall of the house in Manchester.

Source: Author's production adapted from frames from *Universal Studios* (2010) and from *site Downton Abbey at home* (2015).

consumer of these products “approaches” a distant “reality” when possessing such objects. The consumed object allows him to “feel” that he is part of the aristocracy (her simulacrum), that it can be served in his bed, experiencing the luxury of having time to have his breakfast calmly in the comfort of his home, with his robe of silk. A warm welcome for the contemporary soul, as most of them drink coffee outside the house, in bakeries, cafes or even in the office, without any glamor or tranquility. The bed on sale on the website costs £1,750.00 or R\$12,675.25, the silk robe £239.00 which corresponds to R\$1,731.00 and the bell £18.00 or R\$130.37. Another object for sale is the side table featured in the breakfast scene of the new heir and his mother in Manchester, served by the maid. The table is set and someone to serve you coats the object with warmth and comfort. The table is on sale for £699.00 or R\$5,062.85.

Strategies for the conquest and adhesion of the enunciatee permeate the

residential universe and family relationships at meal times, such as breakfast in the room and in bed, tea in the room in a comfortable armchair or at a table set in detail for dinner. These are moments that touch the day-to-day of the enunciatee. Elements relevant to wealth, good taste, sophistication and elegance are installed, figuratively represented by silver, gold, widely used, linen, wood, crystals, porcelain and jewelry.

Meals are treated as an event, planned, produced and orchestrated not only to be enjoyed by those who eat them, but to be shared (in the case of joint meals) or experienced (in the case of individual meals). The semiotic elements arranged in the scenes, people and objects, transform meals into experiences that enhance the subject’s senses, reinforcing its power of seduction over the recipient. The consumption of these products creates the simulacrum of proximity (Martyniuk, 2017) between the recipient and the aristocratic universe.

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