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ARTICLES

Advertising Capitalism: A Critical Analysis of Early 20th Century LEMCO Trading Cards / *Capitalismo publicitário: uma análise crítica dos cartões promocionais de LEMCO do início do século XX*

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ABSTRACT
In this paper, I analyze a set of six trading cards belonging to Liebig's Extract of Meat Co. long-standing marketing campaign. The critical analysis of promotional texts produced at the turn of the 20th century offer meaningful insights on the discursive mechanisms that contributed to the hegemonization of bourgeois capitalism. Unlike other forms of advertising, trading cards are not rapidly discarded and forgotten; on the contrary, they can detach themselves from the advertised products to become part of popular discourses of mass instruction. As both products and producers of capitalist ideologies, ads are a privileged site of inscription of capitalism, and thus lend themselves to a critical analysis. My analysis shows how the selected texts draws on and textures the discourses of progress, inculcated as colonialist beliefs and triggering an actional chain whereby, even before they actually obtained the cards, capitalist actions and beliefs are enacted.
KEYWORDS: Advertising discourses; Critical discourse analysis; Liebig Extract of Meat Co.; Early 20th century trading cards; Spirit of capitalism

RESUMO
Neste artigo, analiso um conjunto de seis cartões comerciais pertencentes a uma duradoura campanha de marketing da Liebig Extract of Meat Co. A análise crítica dos textos promocionais produzidos na virada do século XX oferece insights significativos sobre os mecanismos discursivos que contribuíram para a hegemonização do capitalismo burguês. Diferentemente de outras formas de publicidade, os cartões comerciais não são rapidamente descartados e esquecidos; pelo contrário, eles podem se distanciar dos produtos anunciados para se tornar parte dos discursos populares de instrução em massa. Como produtos e produtores de ideologias capitalistas, os anúncios são um local privilegiado de inscrição do capitalismo e, portanto, se prestam a uma análise crítica. Minha análise mostra como os textos selecionados se baseiam e texturizam os discursos do progresso, impregnados como crenças colonialistas e desencadeando uma cadeia de ações pela qual, mesmo antes de realmente obterem os cartões, são promulgadas ações e crenças capitalistas.
PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discursos publicitários; Análise crítica do discurso; Extrato de Carne Liebig; Cartões promocionais do início do século XX; Espírito do capitalismo

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Presentation

The discourses of advertising deploy a strong cultural narrative on the possibility of a better life based on progress, efficiency and the value of the new (BLAKELY, 2011, p.686). The analysis of promotional texts produced at the turn of the 20th century contributes to understanding the discursive mechanisms that led to the hegemonization of the ideology of progress —the belief that human history was in ascent and that both human society and individuals were destined to be perfected by increasing scientific knowledge and technical control over nature (HOBSBAWM, 1996, pp.234-5).

Regardless of whether or not they address the economy directly, promotional materials offer invaluable information about the economic and social context in which they were produced.[1] As both products and producers of capitalist ideologies, they are a privileged site of inscription of the discourses of capitalism and can be productively analysed from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), to reveal ideological properties that may not be apparent to the intended users of the texts (HART, 2014, p.2).

In this paper I analyse *Matières prémiers III* (*M III*), a set of 1906 six trading cards for Liebig's Extract of Meat Factory (LEMCO) depicting the processes of harvesting exotic materials and crafting them into luxury artefacts.

LEMCO was founded in Uruguay in 1861 to produce Liebig's formula of *extractum carnis* in a huge industrial complex located on the margins of the Río Uruguay, with access to the port of what was to become Fray Bentos. According to a company prospectus of 1865, the factory could slaughter and process an average of 2500 cattle a day (ESTRADA, s.d.), with an anticipated production of 1 million pounds of meat extract in three years (BROCK, 1997). The extract was sent in bulk to England, where it underwent quality controls and was packaged and distributed throughout Europe and America. The factory employed between 1300 and 1400 workers, and like other industrial undertakings set up in colonial territories, it hired almost exclusively European staff for administrative and technical jobs, employing local labour for unskilled work. Nevertheless, in an agricultural country with a population of just over 1.150.000, the social, economic and cultural impact of this undertaking, especially in the Río Negro region, was incalculable.

[1] Lipschutz (2010, p.7) makes this point with regards to literature and film.

LEMCO promptly set out to market its product globally, deploying a wide-ranging campaign that included traditional ads in newspapers, testimonials by scientists and physicians in scientific journals, promotional activities such as cookery contests, and various items of ephemera, among them LEMCO's collectible trading cards, which became part of the company's marketing campaign in the mid-1800s (BROCK, 1997).

A key element in establishing LEM's brand was the *persona* of Justus von Liebig (1803-1873), whose image and signature figured prominently in LEMCO's labels and promotional texts. 19th century capitalism centred around the values and the *persona* of the bourgeois, and it was not uncommon for Victorian personalities to promote their commercial and legal interests by cashing in on the Romantic idea of the author-genius (RICHARDSON & THOMAS, 2012). Justus von Liebig had carefully cultivated his image not only as the best-known organic chemist of his time but also as a businessman, inventor, populariser of science and public personality involved in questionable sponsorships, well-publicised legal disputes over patents and other minor scandals (BLONDEL, 2007; BROCK,1997; FINLAY, 1992; JACKSON, 2008); in the late 19th century, not only Liebig's Extract of Meat but also Justus von Liebig were (literally) household names, linked in such a way that each one served to increase the popularity and prestige of the other long after von Liebig's death in 1873.

Promotional trading cards became increasingly popular in the second half of the 19th century as part of marketing campaigns for new products, mainly from the tobacco, cosmetic and nutrition industries. Printed in full colour using sophisticated techniques and designed by renowned artists, trading cards were appreciated collection items (LOOMIS, 1950), and rapidly became a significant part of popular culture. LEMCO's trading cards were issued between 1860 and 1974 in several languages, and were distributed throughout Europe and the United States of America, reaching in their heyday three million copies per card (HUND & PICKERING, 2013). The complete collection consists of around 1900 sets of 6 or 12 thematically-grouped images, most of them covering subjects of educational interest such as science, the arts, history, and geography, and were aimed at a large target audience in terms of socio-cultural and national identity (HANSEN, 2002).

By the turn of the 20th century, trading cards were considered effective as promotional materials (HUND & PICKERING, 2013, p.55); unlike most promotional

texts, which are promptly discarded and forgotten, trading cards were given a place in people's households, they were revisited every time a new item was added to the collection, used as sources of information and entertainment; thus detaching themselves from the connection with the product to become part of popular culture, recontextualising beliefs, practices and outcomes of other social institutions (LIPSCHUTZ, 2010, p.9). By attaching themselves to another discursive network, that of popular education (MITCHELL & REID-WALSH, 2005) Liebig's trading cards managed to exert a wide-ranging influence as legitimate sources of knowledge, becoming part of "the informal mass instruction of the new language of modernism" (HUND & PICKERING, 2013, p.55).

1 The "Spirit of Capitalism"

Problematizing definitions of capitalism,[2] exploring its origins and development,[3] or discussing the different approaches to its study,[4] would exceed the scope of this paper. Perhaps, as Latour (2014, online) insightfully suggests, capitalism is not even a thing in the world, but rather "a certain way of being affected when trying to think through this strange mixture of miseries and luxuries we encounter when trying to come to terms with the dizzying interplays of 'goods' and 'bads'."

Despite the growth enjoyed by *advanced* economies towards the end of the 19th century (FRIEDMAN, 2012, p.23), the contradictions of capitalism as an economic system present a challenge for all involved participants: wage-earners, alienated from the fruits of their labour, face a working life of subordination; capitalists "find themselves yoked to an interminable, insatiable process, which is utterly abstract and dissociated from the satisfaction of consumption needs, even of a luxury kind" (BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, 1999, p.7). In order to make the system tenable, it must be grounded on a

[2]The complexities and implications of such a definition are outlined in Chun (2017, p.7 and ff.), and explored in depth by Hodgson (2015).

[3]The origins of capitalism are traced back to the Renaissance (BRATTON & DENHAM, 2014; FRIEDEN, 2012; SCOTT, 2011), but it has been argued that there was capitalist activity already in Roman times (CHUN, 2017; FRIEDEN, 2012; TEMIN, 2006, p.137).

[4]The main theories of capitalism were first developed by the *classical triumvirate* (BRATTON & DENHAM, 2014, p.75 and ff.) of thinkers: Marx, Durkheim and Weber.

set of beliefs that would support compatible actions and predispositions; Boltanski & Chiapello (1999), following Max Weber, call this system a "spirit of capitalism."[5]

A spirit of capitalism legitimizes the brand of capitalism of a particular epoch to those committing to the capitalist process of accumulation, answering why: 1) it is a source of enthusiasm and stimulation, leading to a more enlightened, healthier and prosperous life; 2) it offers security for them and their children; and 3) it contributes to the common good and can be defended from accusations of injustice.

By means of (re)configurations of these discourses, a spirit of capitalism aims to blur the internal contradictions of the different versions of capitalism —be they social (KRIER AND WORRELL, 2017; PITTS, 2017), cultural (BELL, 1976; ILLOUZ, 1997), political (WOLFE, 1977), economic (GLYN, 1990; O'CONNOR, 1991), or ecological (FOSTER, 2002; WRIGHT & NYBERG, 2016)— incorporating external sources of justification to address criticism and further legitimize it.

Boltanski & Chiapello (2005) identify three spirits of capitalism: the first spirit, bourgeois capitalism, between the end of the 19th century and the 1930s; the second, between 1940 and 1970, and the third from the 1980s to date. Bourgeois capitalism, which concerns us in this paper, is characterized by "the vast and largely unregulated expansion of commodity production and related market and monetary networks," where the only valid objective is "the constant transformation of capital, plant and various purchases (raw materials, components, services, etc.) into output, of output into money, and of money into new investments" (BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, 2005, p.5). Stimulation is related to access to new consumer products, the impact of new means of communication, the geographical liberation they enable, and wage-labour. Security is related to bourgeois morality, combining the new economic tendencies with traditional domestic beliefs about the familial or patriarchal nature of relations with employees. Fairness has to do with the belief in progress, the future, science, technology, and the benefits of industry: "this amalgam of very different, even incompatible propensities and values […] underlay what

[5] "…the set of beliefs associated with the capitalist order that helps to justify this order and, by legitimating them, to sustain forms of action and predispositions compatible with it. These justifications, whether general or practical, local or global, expressed in terms of virtue or justice, support the performance of more or less unpleasant tasks and, more generally, adhesion to a lifestyle conducive to the capitalist order" (BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, 2005, p.16).

was to be denounced in the bourgeois spirit: its hypocrisy" (BOLTANSKI & CHIAPELLO, 2005, p.17).

2 The Discourse of Advertising

Bourgeois capitalism, ruled by an ethics of individual self-fulfilment and achievement (BECK, 2000) impacted on all the major institutions of the West, transforming them to promote the consumer as a new identity, contributing significantly to its creation (ROBBINS, 2014). Even though ads existed before the 19th century, towards the late 1890s, they underwent a communicative revolution (CIARLO, 2011, p.14) linked to the use of visual media.

Advertising (including promotional texts of different kinds) is a complex genre, whose communicative function goes beyond selling a product or service; ads "may also amuse, inform, misinform, worry or warn" (COOK, 1992, p.4); their ultimate aim is to influence people's attitudes, behaviours and lifestyle choices (DANESI, 2004), by combining three components: informational, persuasive and aesthetic (BARTHOLOMEW, 2007).[6] Ads are considered a parasitic genre, occurring within and imitating other discourses, resorting to linguistic, rhetorical, visual, and material resources from other genres (COOK, 1995; MATHESON, 2005; AMALANCEI, 2012; KOLL-STOBBE, 1994), which converge and blend in each particular advertisement. This hybrid statute of advertising has significant consequences in terms of how it is produced and received; by blurring genre-generated expectations, it allows for strategic manipulation by presenting obstacles both to the author (WICKE, 1998) and genre identification (TALBOT, 2007).

The connection between advertising and capitalism is so close that it has been conceptualized as Capitalist Realism,[7] fulfilling a similar ideological role to Social Realism in the USSR; even though advertising is not regulated or subsidised by the

[6]The purpose of the aesthetic element in ads is not merely to "gratify the eye" (UEYAMA, 2010, p.144), but rather to cultivate consumer desire, insofar as it is "not a preexisting emotion to be exposed, but rather was constructed in the exchange between consumers' imaginations and the realities they encountered" (UEYAMA, 2010, p.144).

[7]An inverted image of Socialist Realism, the dominant style in the Soviet Union in the first decades of the 20th century. For Schudson (1984, p.214) Capitalist Realism is a set of conventions linked "to the political economy whose values they celebrate and promote."

government, it is indeed official in that "the government tacitly gives approval and support, along with the rest of society, to unofficial expression" (SCHUDSON, 2000, p.219). In this sense, promotional texts lend themselves to critical analysis.

3 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches texts in relation to the social structures and processes within which they are produced, as well as to the context of those individuals or groups that construct meanings in their interactions with texts, focusing on questions related to power and ideology (WODAK & MEYER, 2009). *Discourse* refers both to the semiotic aspects of social practice (BERGSTRÖM *et al*., 2017, p.209), and to a tool for performing social practices and participating in their reproduction and transmission (JONES *et al*., 2015, p.4). In order to bring together the linguistic and social aspects of discourse, CDA considers three interrelated dimensions in a communicative event: text, discursive practice and sociocultural practice. Textual analysis is a descriptive process that focuses on the semiotic aspects of the communicative events; the analysis of discursive practice is an interpretive process, dealing with how the text is produced, distributed and consumed, and the analysis of discourse as sociocultural practice is an explanatory process, focused on the economic, political or cultural issues that surround the communicative event (FAIRCLOUGH, 2013).

4 Methodology

In this paper I analyze a set of six LEMCO trading cards, *Matières premières III* (*M III*), from 1906, the third in a series of three sets on the same subject, the two previous ones published in 1890 and 1892. Each card presents the *story* of a luxury artefact, with a focus on how and where the materials are harvested and how they are crafted. In consonance with the procedures of CDA, I have selected texts produced at the time of the emergence of a new discourse, conceptualized as the first spirit of capitalism, focusing on a small sample in order to develop a deeper and more detailed analysis.

To show how the selected text is part of a wider configuration of discourses that legitimize and promote the first "spirit of capitalism" both semiotically and materially, I

have followed Fairclough's (1992) model, which considers discourse in its three dimensions of text (the semiotic aspect of the text), discursive practice (the interface between the semiotic and the material aspects of the text) and sociocultural practice (its material effects), analysed in three stages.

The first stage involves a *semiotic description* of the selected text in terms of its *grammar*, from the multifunctional approach to meaning first developed by Halliday (1978) and adapted by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) for the analysis of images. My analysis considers representational aspects, particularly the depicted social actors, their attributes and locative circumstances; relational aspects, such size and colour of represented elements, and compositional aspects such as layout and contextualization of represented elements. I also focus on the relation between verbal and pictorial elements in the selected text. I do not develop the full description of the selected text here, but I do present its main elements insofar as they are relevant to my discussion in the Analysis and Discussion section.

The second stage of CDA focuses on text as *discourse practice*, the relation between its semiotic and material aspects, realized as genre, style and discourse (FAIRCLOUGH, 1995). *Genres* are constituted by ways of semiotically producing social life; my main interest lies in the specific features of trading cards. *Style* has to do with the semiotic construction of identities; I have discussed genre and style in previous sections of this paper, and I deal with the discourses involved in *M III* and the way in which they are textured together in the Analysis and Discussion section.

The third stage focuses on *socio-cultural practices*, i.e., the ways in which discourses are operationalized as actions and identities in social life. In the Conclusion I discuss how the discourses of the spirit of capitalism are both inculcated and enacted.

5 The selected text

The composition of an image organizes the narrative, establishing rhetorically meaningful relations between its parts (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2006, p.197). The selected texts are laid out as a triptych, depicting different stages in the production of a luxury item. The lateral panels depict workers involved in activities of harvesting the raw materials and crafting them, in two different kinds of settings: natural, open-air

environments (left) and indoors, in workshops (right); this difference is underscored by the use of a bright colour palette on the left and muted one on the right. The central panel, divided horizontally, shows the finished product in the top section and the company icon below. The image also includes verbal elements in the form of labels that appear above each panel, naming the *material* (centre) and concepts related to the activities represented in the side panels.

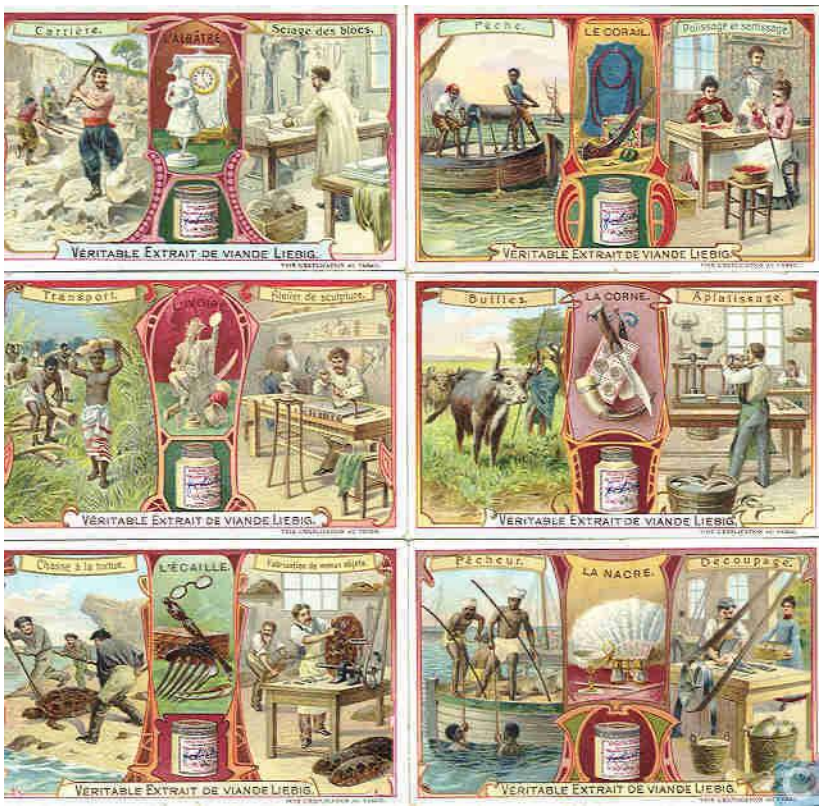

Figure 1- Matières Prémiers III *(Source: private collection)*

The producers resorted to representational and compositional strategies to foreground the represented workers: they are the only depicted human participants, and therefore meant to be understood as the key elements in the composition (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2006); they are agentivised participants (GEE, 2018), i.e., depicted as performing actions (in this case, harvesting materials and manufacturing artifacts), allowing the reader to identify them in terms of a social identity, that of workers. Finally, they occupy the largest area of the composition, indicating that they are the protagonists of the narrative.

6 Analysis and Discussion

As Locke (2004, p.5) points out, "ads are successful when they 'hit the spot' with the target audience; a successful ad appeals to a story or stories that its target audience habitually tells itself and is therefore sympathetic to." To fulfil its wider communicative purpose - convincing users to embrace capitalism and motivate them to action accordingly - the selected text must address the three dimensions of security, fairness and stimulation (CHIAPELLO & FAIRCLOUGH, 2003). The producers of *M III* do this by backgrounding elements that evoke the "pathological effects" (THOMPSON, 2017, p.37) of capitalism, introducing elements from previous orders, projections of a better state of affairs, which evoke well-established ideologies (DECIU, 2008, p.34); they recontextualise discourses already available to the audience and combine them strategically, guiding the reader towards the desired interpretation.

The *dimension of security* is expressed in the representation of work organization as a collaborative undertaking, with small groups of labourers working together in a peaceful environment, using adequate tools, following traditional methods. Workers are depicted as equals, with all the represented participants having similar clothing and implements, without any differences that might suggest hierarchical relations; in fact, hierarchically *superior* participants in the depicted work activities —i.e., those in charge of enforcing work— are omitted; this is particularly significant in the activities depicted in the left-side panels, where westerners in charge of enforcing labour would have played a significant role (CARIÑO & MONTEFORTE, 2009; MCCARTHY, 2008).

Zizek (1995, p.198) calls *ideological fantasies* "the discordance between what people are doing and what they think they are really doing"; even though *M III* depicts scenes of colonial exploitation, the reader is strategically guided away from making these connections. *La nacre*, for instance, shows pearl diving, which took place along the coasts of South-east Asia, Australia, and the Pacific (CARIÑO & MONTEFORTE, 2009, p.3). Specifically, it depicts naked diving, a common method of harvesting mother-of-pearl among the Australian aborigines (McCARTHY, 2008). This method involved *traditional apnea*, i.e., fishing without any diving equipment, with stone as ballast and fishermen using a bone clip or their fingers to equalise ear-pressure. They also had to carry a knife to defend themselves against shark attacks, a peril so common that fishing boats used to

employ *shark charmers*; the actual working conditions of divers in the 19th century varied "only in the harshness of their working conditions, which often bordered on cruelty. In general, they were poorly paid and underfed, kept in endless debt by merciless bosses, and always exposed to illness and risks" (CARIÑO & MONTEFORTE, 2009, p.54).

The producers of *M III* also resort to representational strategies to background the actual working conditions of the participants represented on the right-side panels: these workspaces depict a romanticized blend of late 19th century technologies and pre-industrial revolution cottage industry. As Frieden (2012, p.24) points out, "leaving colonialism aside, political rights were severely limited in the industrial world"; in fact, the working conditions of most modern workers - including LEM users - were a far cry from the small, labour-intensive workshops depicted on the right panels, which were disappearing by the time *M III* was published (DAUNTON, 2007).

The dimension of *fairness* of the first spirit of capitalism is based on the ideology of progress, the belief in historical evolution through stadia or stages of historical development (BAUMAN & BRIGGS, 2003; HOBSBAWM, 1996). By transforming spatial boundaries into chronological ones, "savages and cannibals in space were converted into primitives and exotic Orientals in time" (MIGNOLO, 1988, p.35), a move that involves (dis)placing some inhabitants as "living anachronisms, people who belonged in earlier times" (HINDESS, 2008, p.201). The "anthropologist's fantasy" (RIEDER, 2008, p.31) — the belief that "although we know that these people exist here and now, we also consider them to exist in the past— in fact, to be our own past," plays a key role in justifying the exploitation of the lands and inhabitants of the colonies.

The composition of the chromes, whose lateral panels are meant to be read from left to right, already suggests meanings related to "old" and "new," "before" and "after" (KRESS & VAN LEEUWEN, 2006), which taken at face value refer to the order in which the represented activities were carried out. However, other meanings are strategically introduced: participants on the left are represented in a natural setting, sharing the same habitat as the sources of the materials, even blending with it; they carry out their tasks using ancestral methods and tools (*La corne, L'albâtre*); or no tools at all (*L'ivoire)*. The tasks they carry out seem not to require specific skills: in *L'ivoir*e, the elephant tusks are already lying on the ground, ready to be picked up; in *L'écaille*, the turtles are on the surface, and seem an easy pray for the group of hunters. Even *La nacre*, which shows a

mechanical apparatus, does not depict the workers using it. In fact, some of these activities —such as fishing and hunting in exotic places, which appear in four out of the six cards in this set— would have been (some still are) considered relaxing activities, even hobbies for the bourgeois. In contrast, participants on the right are depicted in a workshop, wearing aprons or western clothes, surrounded by modern instruments and operating sophisticated machinery - i.e., represented as having access to new technologies and using them to create each artefact. The use of different palettes (bright colours to depict a tropical landscape and its inhabitants on the left, a muted palette for the indoors activities on the right) strengthens the contrast between *primitives* and *moderns*.

The labels that accompany an image serve to guide the readers' interpretation (BARTHES, 1978) by focusing their attention on specific elements. In *M III*, different criteria were used to label the right and left panels, further strengthening the difference between tasks carried out by *primitives* and by *modern* workers. The right-side labels consistently name the activities carried out by the workers with the depicted instruments, drawing attention to the worker's skillful use of technology: *sciage de bois* (sawing of blocks); *palissage et sertissage* (weaving and setting); *aplatissage* (flattening); *découpage* (cutting); and *taillage* (carving). Conversely, only two of the activities on the left - *chasse à la tortue* [turtle hunt] and *pêche* [fishing] - are explicitly mentioned - albeit without any reference to the way in which the tasks are carried out. On the left, labels name locations - *carrière* [quarry] - the sources of the *material* - *buffles* [buffaloes] - the participant carrying out the task - *pêcheur* [fisherman]. The case of *L'ivoire* is particularly interesting, since the label - *transport* [transportation] - refers to an activity only tangentially related to the obtention of ivory.

The *dimension of stimulation* is related to the positive impact of progress on people's lives and the promise of a more enlightened, healthier and prosperous life, with access to new consumer products, the impact of new means of communication made possible by scientific discoveries and their applications. Key aspects of the capitalist adventure are represented in *M III*. *Geographical liberation* is suggested by the images on the left panels, where blue skies, sunshine, lush vegetation and exotic fauna, suggest distant (for the target reader) places, new territories that had been annexed to colonial empires, and which had recently become known to the wider audience through exhibitions, textbooks, and public lectures. The *advantages of new technologies* are also

present in the instruments and machinery shown on the right-side panels, used to craft exotic materials into luxury items that belong in affluent modern western households. Finally, the icon of the advertised product, LEM, which holds the promise of nutritional meals for those who could not afford expensive sources of protein, suggests *the role of science* in the new capitalist society.

However, the central element of bourgeois capitalism, *the consumer*, is conspicuously absent in the selected text. Key human participants, actions and events related to the consumption of the artifacts depicted in the top central panels are strategically omitted. The main backgrounded participants are the bourgeois, the beneficiaries of the items represented in the top-central panel; they are "rich, millionaires, and they live the high life; their wealth allows them to own what others want, valuable objects, luxury items, upscale products" (BOLTANSKI & THEVENOT, 2006, p.195). Among these luxury items, valued for their quality and uniqueness (BOLTANSKI & THEVENOT, 2006), are the fans (*La Nacre*), spectacles (*L'écaille*), and figurines (*L'ivoire*, *L'albâtre*) that belong to a world where value is placed on the desire generated by consumer products (BOLTANSKI & THEVENOT, 2006). These artifacts are represented in such a way as to draw the reader's attention away from their consumption and consumers: they are decontextualized, i.e., shown outside the physical setting where they would be used —as part of someone's attire, or as part of a collection of similar artifacts in a bourgeois home— and they are not even named in the labels that accompany the image. In this way, the only protagonists of the narrative developed in each card are the workers and the activities involved in producing an item made with an exotic material: once the artefact is complete, the story ends. Even the labels that name each chrome draw the reader's attention away from the object itself and - consistently with the title of the series - towards the materials employed in crafting it.

Discourse *constructs* people by means of assumptions, for the most part stereotypical, about represented and interactive participants, facilitating relations of identification between both. Focusing on the composition of a text

> is one way of bringing attention to the reading positions 'inscribed' in texts. It also highlights the active reader's 'complicity' in producing meaning, by drawing attention to the resources that a reader needs to bring to a text in order to make sense of it (TALBOT, 2007, p.46).

The focus of *M III* on work and workers seems to strengthen the identification of the target audience as a member of this group, with the bourgeois being cast as *the Other*; however, an analysis of how representational elements are combined in the selected text reveals this is not the case. In fact, two different criteria - which can be broadly labeled social class (Workers and Bourgeois) and stage of development (Primitives and Moderns), are used to identify the depicted participants, who become involved in different relations depending on the dimension of the spirit of capitalism represented.

TEXTURING		
Dimension	*Relations of equality*	*Relations of inequality*
Fairness	Primitive Workers/ Modern Workers	Workers/Bourgeois
Security		Modern Workers/Primitive Workers
Stimulation	Modern workers/Bourgeois	Primitives/ Moderns

Table 1- Texturing

Whereas *security* is expressed by establishing a relation of symmetry between the Workers, represented as a homogeneous group as opposed to the (backgrounded) Bourgeois, and recontextualised as the patriarchal figure of a previous regime, *fairness* is constructed upon a relation of asymmetry between Primitive Workers and Modern Workers; *stimulation* is constructed upon a relation of asymmetry between the Primitives (represented on the left) and the Moderns - a group that includes Modern Workers and Bourgeois— who are represented as having access to the advantages of progress - technology in the case of the Workers, the artefacts in the case of the Bourgeois.

Conclusion

Communicative events are part of social and cultural events with economic, political, and social dimensions. The discourses of a spirit of capitalism are dialectically inculcated as identities or ways of being, and enacted as social practices, which are partly semiotic and partly extra-semiotic. As Robbins (2014, p.2) points out, "at some point in their lives, virtually everyone plays the roles of consumer, laborer, or capitalist": buying goods and services, working for wages, or investing in banks, pension plans, education,

etc., expecting to profit. These activities —all of which are *present* in the selected text— are part and parcel of "the capitalist society with which most of us are familiar and whose symbols, goods, and practices literally saturate our everyday lives as well as the cultural goods we consume" (LIPSCHUTZ, 2010, p.5). Materialised in texts such as Liebig's trading cards, the discourses of bourgeois capitalism involve their users in an actional chain triggered - even before they are actually *gifted* the card - by the purchase of a jar of LEM, the *original* act of consumption that gives place to other typically capitalist practices, particularly trading - exchanging, buying or selling the cards according to a value fixed by supply/demand - and collecting them[8], in a never-ending cycle since the completion of a set is only a small step towards completing the whole collection, an unlikely prospect as long as the company continues to issue new cards.

For some social actors, however, these practices involve luxury consumer items, shares and bonds of lucrative companies, and exotic artifacts collected in distant lands. For others, they involve tokens - in this case the trading cards, but also other forms of culture made available thanks to the possibilities of mechanical reproduction (BENJAMIN, 2007). This difference between those who consume the token and those who have access to the *real thing* is not questioned by the discourses of capitalism we have analysed in the selected text; on the contrary, the presence of the token hides the absence of the thing, strengthening the belief that in a capitalist regime *everyone* has access to the benefits of progress; since they were all "'white' by nature and belonged to an imagined racial community which overrode age, gender and social class" (HUND & PICKERING, 2013, p.10).

Other promotional discourses of the 19th century, particularly for soap and hygiene products, had already resorted to what Hund & Pickering (2013) call "commodity racism," radicalized representations that served both to generalize cultural stereotypes and to "assert ideological positions that are consolidated through specific economic and political interests" (HUND & PICKERING, 2013, p.12). By means of this version of racism, "the lower classes were granted membership in the master race and in this way they were definitively integrated in the realms of whiteness" (HUND & PICKERING,

[8]In fact, collection value is still a common strategy in advertising that targets children (LUSTED, 2010; PARDUN, 2013). The fact that the collection might never be completed —either because some cards were issued in very small numbers or because the company continued issuing new cards for decades— involve participants in an endless cycle of consumption.

2013, p.13). Thus, regardless of social class, *whites* —in this case those that belong to the Modern world— will acquire the central identity of capitalism, that of consumers. By blurring the difference between users —and therefore questions of class inequality— the discourses of bourgeois capitalism of *M III* are inculcated as a common identity, a *way of being* based on racial identification instead of social class. Racial identification was a central element for the consolidation of bourgeois capitalism, since "those who were not equipped with economic capital and whose cultural capital was limited by their social status, thus could leastwise accumulate racist symbolic capital" (HUND & PICKERING, 2013, p.59).

The colonialist practices that made LEMCO a profitable venture were frequent themes in the company's trading cards, promoting a whitewashed narrative (HUND & PICKERING, 2013) where Liebig's invention of LEM's formula converged with Giebert's *discovery* of Uruguay as a suitable environment for the production of LEM. However, the raw materials for Liebig's extract of meat were obtained by means of the same processes and relations depicted in *M III*; if the Meat Extract was produced in quite different contexts from the idealized workshops depicted in *M III*, so were the work environments of the vast majority of labourers at the beginning of the 20th century.

In this paper I set out to explore how the discourses of bourgeois capitalism are introduced in a set of LEMCO's trading cards. A critical analysis shows how early 20th century promotional texts which enjoyed vast popularity as educational tools can justify economic inequality and colonialist violence, concealing the subjection of western workers to the bourgeois by promoting a questionable racial identification whereby western workers were part of the privileged group of *masters*, the *whites* or colonisers that embodied progress.

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I hereby authorize *Bakhtiniana* to publish my paper entitled: Advertising capitalism: a critical analysis of early 20th century LEMCO trading cards.

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