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Hybridising the Media's Corporate-Political Discourse through Rhetorical Strategies: An Analysis of *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* (Morales, 1971)

Abstract

This article presents a theoretical conceptualisation of the pervasiveness of mechanisms of economic and political power in modern media, as represented in José Ricardo Morales' play *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* (1971). This article focuses on two interconnected research questions: 1) What are the specific rhetorical strategies hybridising corporate-political discourse in the media that are represented by José Ricardo Morales in his play? 2) How do the rhetorical strategies and discourses represented in the play contribute to a new understanding of the impact of media intervention, both by corporate media and politicians, on audiences/readers today? This article critically analyses and discusses Morales's unique, oblique critical approach to the media, and the political and discursive challenges made in the play. These orientate contemporary sets of beliefs while re-signifying the material and symbolic configurations of the Western globalised social fabric. The analysis shows that the dramatic piece contains a predictive discourse in presenting the role of journalism, both defying national literary canons and anticipating several issues related to media intervention by corporate media and politicians in the 1970s, especially in the Chilean context.

Keywords

José Ricardo Morales, *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder*, Spanish Modern Theatre, cultural rhetoric, media manipulation.

1. Introduction

This article critically reflects on the pervasiveness of the mechanisms of economic and political power in modern media. To do this, it uses José Ricardo Morales' play *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* (1971)¹ as a case study to analyse and discuss the author's ideas about corporate-political discourses in the media throughout the 1970s, with a particular emphasis on the Chilean context. This article focuses on two interconnected

¹ The English translation title is: *How the Power of the News Give Us News About Power* (Cortés & Barrea-Marlyns, 2003). The original version of Morales' play can be found at <http://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/602/w3-article-86859.html>.

questions: 1) What are the specific rhetorical strategies hybridising corporate-political discourse in the media that are represented by José Ricardo Morales in his play? 2) How do the rhetorical strategies and discourses represented in the play contribute to a new understanding of the impact of media intervention, both by corporate media and politicians, on audiences/readers today? This article has traced the recurrent node of problematisation in Morales' works, specifically in the aforementioned play: the nature of the rhetorical strategies employed in the media resulting in a hybridisation of political and corporate discourse.

First, I will discuss relevant studies of television and ideology in order to set out the objectives of this article, considering the specific case of Chile. Second, I will discuss this article's theoretical and empirical contribution to agenda-setting theory. Finally, I will explain the commercial purpose of television and the use of emotions and feelings by politicians to persuade their audience.

2. José Ricardo Morales and his theatre

José Ricardo Morales (1915-2016) was a Spanish-Chilean playwright and writer who contributed to the professionalisation of theatre in Chile and established the tradition of the Humanistic Theatre. Morales' play *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* was published in Chile in 1971 by the Editorial Universitaria (a Chilean publishing house). In this dramatic work, he problematised and, in my view, anticipated social conflicts such as the emergence of totalitarian regimes, the negative impacts of globalisation, and the use of the media as a tool of manipulation by authoritarian regimes, among other topics. This political satire addresses the topic of the use of misinformation and media manipulation. More specifically, it develops the issue of the intertwined power between politicians and journalists to create false information to exercise absolute power (Del Valle, 2019). In this regard, I consider this play a valuable literary text to critically discuss the role of the media in the 1970s as well as their current impact on society, especially in the Chilean context.

Concerning the staging and reception of the play, the Ercilla Group theatre company presented it in Madrid in 1972 (its sole presentation). According to literary critics, this performance was well-received. The expert on Spanish literature Verónica Azcue (2014) argues that this presentation was mainly focused on Morales' capacity to reflect on language, the critical representation of a society that has lost language, and his connection to the avant-garde and the Theatre of the Absurd (p. 223). Notwithstanding, she adds that it suffered from censorship because of its political connotations despite not representing a specific place or country. It resulted in the authorisation of the play on the condition of censoring parts of the dialogue: "references of the text to an unconstitutional hereditary monarchy, to a president, called Francisco (referred to Francisco Franco), and to the manipulation of the news by the government were suppressed" (Azcue, 2014, p. 222. Translations are mine).

In addition to the above, Azcue (2014) notes that the reviewers' critics of this play positively argued that this dramatic work reflects on language and its connection to specific *avant-garde* trends. Moreover, she mentions that the literary critics Francisco García and José Monleón stressed the "critical approach of the play" when addressing its depiction of press and television interviews, the role of politicians in manipulating citizens, and its "exasperated testimony of society and the mechanisms that operate in it" (Azcue, 2014, p. 225. Translation is mine).

Morales' contribution to the problematisation of totalitarian governments and manipulation of the media is represented not only in this dramatic work but also in several other plays. *La Grieta* (The Crack) published in 1963, describes the manipulation of memory and personal identity taken by an authoritarian, repressive organisation (government). *Prohibida la reproducción* (Reproduction Forbidden) published in 1965, represents the issues of overpopulation and human massification. *La cosa humana* (The Human Thing) published in

1966, discusses the objectification of the human being sold to the marketplace (Cortés & Barrea-Marlys, 2003; Catalá-Carrasco, 2013; García-Manso, 2013; Morales, 2013).

In what follows, I will provide a synthesis of the play to get a picture of the problematisation of the media intervention by corporate media. In the play, the character of the Minister (El Ministro) is presented as a politician who uses television as a political tool to convince the audience to vote for him in the presidential elections. Moreover, there is also the character of the Journalist (El Periodista) who is helping the Minister to win the presidential election. Since the Minister is interested in the Journalist's capacity to manipulate the audience, they agree to work together for the candidacy to the presidency. In return, the Journalist would be named as the chronicler of the presidency. Then, the Minister wins the presidency. However, both are sent to prison for political fraud. Once they leave the prison, the Minister decides to remove the Journalist as chronicler. Finally, the Journalist gathers all the journalists and convinces them that he should be the next president, and so they need to overthrow the Minister's presidency, arguing that people who control the information must control the country.

3. Corporate-political discourse in the media: the case of television

From its inception, television has served as a tool for delivering messages and providing entertainment. However, it has been transformed into a reliable instrument for structuring society, which, in Bourdieu's words (2001), "offers, theoretically, the possibility of reaching everybody" (p. 245). As argued by Bonsu, Darmody and Parmentier (2010), television "has influenced the modes of thinking, social relations and perception of the others and themselves" and, in some cases, it is the leading way people access a reality (p. 93). Considering the above, politicians and corporate industry are essential in the structure of society on television, controlling the contents of the news, journalists, editors, and news directors, resulting in the control of the public agenda (McCombs & Gou, 2014). This control not only addresses what people consume but also how they perceive society. In other words, politicians and corporate industry intervene in the media in such a way that they may "influence or persuade to think or behave in a particular way" (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009, p. 625). The latter is usually known as the *agenda-setting model*, a theory developed by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, which argued that the media could influence what people think about some issues, influence what are held to be the essential topics of the day, and shape our perspective of the world according to their interests (Shaw, 1979; Dearing & Rogers, 1996). That is to say, the media influence on public opinion through the selection of information according to the establishment of the most critical issues of the day, and in terms of public perceptions of the specific aspects of those issues (McCombs & Gou, 2014, p. 257).

As outlined above, the media is affected by the formal and informal political and economic pressures resulting in a media entertainment industry, which in turn contribute to political and corporate interests influencing the audience's perceptions and consumption (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014). Accordingly, the agenda of the media is used as a specific strategy of political control in the public sphere (Green-Pedersen & Walgrave, 2014).

All in all, McCombs and Shaw (1972) demonstrated in their seminal empirical study that although the media does not influence what people think about a specific topic, it does impact the issues an audience must discuss, comment, and pay attention to. From this perspective emerged new theories on the part of communications researchers and political scientists, such as the accessibility bias theory, which offers a psychological explanation of how these effects of the media agenda occur. They questioned the media agenda process, arguing that individuals are capable of getting information from their long-term memory when making a judgment. As such, that theory can be interpreted as a mere mechanical response to the supposed effects of the media (Takeshita, 2005).

In general, these current researchers criticise the basic concept of agenda-setting, pointing out that it examines the influence of the media in public as a deliberated process rather than previous thought (Miller & Krosnick, 2000; Takeshita, 2005). Later, there emerged two fundamental types of research that have addressed some problems in the agenda-setting model. The first is the *Framing* research, which examines how the media cover an event by applying specific interpretative frameworks. The second is the *Second level agenda-setting* model, also known as *attribute agenda-setting* model, which states that agenda-setting effects occur at the attribute level of individual issues or other objects, such as political candidates. This *second-level* model indicates that the news media select some of its attributes to emphasise and ignore others, thereby impacting on or influencing the audience's perceptions of the news or issues (Takeshita, 2005). As a result, the agenda-setting theory has contributed to connecting several research areas (sociology, political science, psychology), advancing our understanding of the relationship between the mass media and public opinion. Undoubtedly, it is generally considered as complementary to other relevant theories in the field of journalism and communication.

4. A critical approach to the media's corporate-political discourse

Morales' play mainly focuses on the political intervention of private corporations and public institutions on television to reach high audience ratings. Furthermore, they use television (a TV quiz show) as a political space of reproduction of ideology, and for introducing commercial advertising to control people's choices and perceptions of consumer products. According to Valdivia (2014), this play describes and exemplifies briefly how the media "have become essential instruments at the service of power, which is hybridised with official institutions" (p. 99. Translation is mine). Concerning the beginning of the media industry, Turow (2009) notes that "the commercial introduction of television in the United States took place in 1946, after World War II" (p. 505). Moreover, he argues, "from the start, commercial television was tied to the companies that controlled radio (NBC, CBS, and ABC)." Turow (2009) also states that, by the early 1960s, companies changed the way they sold advertising on television from purchasing time of the programmes on television to structure them. Indeed, they use ratings to "decide which shows should stay, which should be dropped from the lineup and how much advertisers should pay to sell their products during breaks in the programs" (Turow, 2009, p. 507).

As stated above, Morales's play refers to this economic intervention in television in presenting advertising as a powerful influence on the media, both to protect their interests and to control (manipulate) the information given to the audience. An example is a dialogue between the characters of the Journalist and the Minister. This highlights the point that the media covers irrelevancies and propagates exaggerations in a TV quiz show, which is sponsored by the politicians and the dominant power that wishes to manipulate the viewers: "For fifteen years, for the unanimous agreement of the World Tree Organisation, we celebrate during these days... Tree Week! We commemorate long discussions to elect, among millions of topics, to the fifty-two topics corresponding to each week of the year" (Morales, 1971, p. 63).

Chile is of good examples of a country in which economic and political power have a particularly strong influence on both the private and public media. Therefore, it is worth considering the study of this exemplary case. What is more, it was precisely in Chile that Morales developed most of his theatrical work, including the play analysed in this article.

By far, Chile presented (and still presents) one of the most significant concentrations of media ownership in the world. One example is the *El Mercurio* Newspaper Company, which was the second most influential business in Chile in the 1970s, controlling fifty-eight public limited companies and seven regional newspapers (Lagos, 2009). Unlike the dual European system of public and private television for commercial purposes, television in Chile was commissioned to private and public universities (Porath & Mujica, 2011, p. 342). In the 1970s,

there were three television companies: Universidad Católica Televisión de Chile (Catholic University of Chile – Canal 13), Televisión Nacional de Chile (Chilean National Television – TVN), and Universidad de Chile. In the subsequent years, these channels adopted different strategies. The Canal 13 television channel developed different policy strategies against Salvador Allende's candidacy. The TVN public television channel, in turn, supported Allende's candidacy and his socialist political agenda. The Universidad de Chile television channel developed several Latin American cultural programs and later became independent from the University of Chile (Acuña *et al.*, 2007). At present, four free-to-air television channels, which account for 91% of the national audience and 87% of advertising investment, dominate television in Chile. They are the state-owned channel Televisión Nacional de Chile; Chilevisión, owned by Turner Group; Canal 13, owned by the billionaire Andróniko Luksic; and Mega, owned by Bethia Group (Díaz & Mellado, 2017). However, while television is heavily influenced by concentrations of economic and political power, it also played a vital role in the advent of democracy in Chile. As such, television established the political mediatisation bringing with it a widespread acceptance of politics in a modern democracy when it widely diffused the electoral campaign for the plebiscite (national referendum) in 1988, leading to the end of Pinochet's civic-military dictatorship in 1989. The media companies and politicians supported the referendum in order to be able to exercise influence on the next government, mainly by privatising the media and the mediatisation of politics through the centre-left coalition Concertación de Partidos por la Democracia (Coalition of Parties for Democracy) (Simón Salazar, 2018). Given all the matters covered by this section, it is worth reconsidering Morales' play, since it goes a long way in understanding the manipulation and concentration of the media that took place in Chile in the 1970s.

5. José Ricardo Morales' play: A critical analysis

The following section will highlight Morales' capacity to envisage the ensuing hybridisation of corporate and political discourse that affects the audience's perception of and consumption in society. In particular, it will focus on fundamental notions in the academic debate, such as the transformative role of television and the control of the public agenda by way of the character of the Journalist in several passages, who controls and manipulates the interviews and the TV program to make the viewers think that the Minister is the best candidate for president. Furthermore, the character of the Journalist sheds light on rhetorical strategies presented in media discourse. He highlights the role of emotions, feelings and affects in the media, which politicians use to manipulate, convince and control an audience, as well as the use of affects and sympathy to convince an undecided audience to support their candidacy (through political advertising).

5.1. Political and corporate power in the media

This extract of the play illustrates the political power relations in the media. It is demonstrated in the episode when the Journalist decides to run for the office of president once he was told that the president wanted to remove him from the role of the chronicler of the presidency. In his ambition to be elected president, the Journalist uses false information to convince his colleagues that it is "the time" for journalists to "govern:"

THE JOURNALIST: — Dear colleagues: this infamous document was censored (*Astonishment and silence*). It will not come to light (*He picks up the paper and tears it*). If the President assumes the role of the chronicler, a fortiori, I, the chronicler, must be the President [...] Let us make the facts fit the information and not the other way around! Is not it the known power of the media? Then, all the power of the media to power!

3: — Great!

5: — It is excellent! [...]

THE JOURNALIST: — This is the way it has always been ruled. And if it is so, it is up to us, the specialists in the news, to govern. Let us start with the news that the President has been removed, and that I will be appointed as the new President instead. Later, you will disseminate that our people in the country are happy, as shown in the statistics. Please, help me to achieve the agenda: the news first... and compulsorily good news (Morales, trans. 1971, pp. 91–92)².

This excerpt emphasises the Journalist's statement about his plan of entering office as president due to the impeachment of the previous one (the Minister). It indicates that the media is acting as a political institution choosing broadcasts to the citizens, which are inherently political because of the ability to influence political processes and outcomes. Furthermore, this extract shows the Journalist using the media as a political tool not only to elicit information but also to produce dominant modes of reception and knowing for attracting the audience.

Morales' play also reveals the Journalist's idea of manipulating information and producing false information with his colleagues in order to convince the viewers that he should be the next president. Here, the medium of the message in the press conference for the audience in the play is significant in terms of making it attractive and convincing. As manifested by Ekström (2002), media not only represents reality but also creates identification, thought and values (p. 264). Truth, then, is replaced by demonstrative arguments appealing to the viewers' emotions, such as the Journalist's exaggerated statement "all the power of the press to power," using the term "power" to stress the influence of the media on the government and citizenship. Therefore, this phrase exaggerates the control of the press, illustrating the Journalist's participation in the presidential elections after his dismissal as the chronicler of the president. In this context, we can establish that television influences what most of the viewers think when watching television (Bourdieu, 2001). The previous excerpt of the play connects with Bourdieu's ideas (2001) about television, in that it is a "powerful ideological tool" that shapes our understanding of reality through dramatisation and exaggeration in order to attract the audience (p. 248). Precisely this kind of shaping of the understanding of reality can be found in the Journalist's discourse informing his colleagues that, after assuming the presidency, they must disseminate the information by stating that "this country is enjoying the greatest joy in the world," arguing they could "show statistical testing" as evidence.

5.2. *The intertwined relationship between the media and the corporate industry*

Following this topic of political power in the media, Morales demonstrates the intertwined relationship between the media, politicians and the corporate sector presented in the political and corporate discourse of the character of the Journalist presenting a TV quiz show called *The Week of the Tree*. In particular, Morales represents in the TV program both the interest of the corporate industry in the media in inventing celebrations to present and, consequently, make people buy (be interested in) specific products, and the importance of politicians in the press when emphasising the *World Week Organisation*:

THE JOURNALIST: — Dear viewers: for fifteen years now, for the unanimous agreement of the World Week Organisation, we celebrate during these days Tree Week! Ah, and you remember those long discussions to elect, among many topics, the fifty-two celebrations corresponding to each week of the year [...] Tree Week! The tree! What is a tree! Are trees friends of human beings? Are the human beings enemies of the trees? Are trees friends of the soul? Or is there any worth in the tree? National Television is beginning a survey with prizes! (*Music. THE PASSER-BY arrives*) [...]

² The author of this article, Juan del Valle, translated this and all other extracts from *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* used here from Spanish to English.

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- THE JOURNALIST: — Sir! Cerolimpián with Perlancol, at the service of all households, and the National Television are greeting you, and they offer you a calypso blue vacuum-sweeper machine, four packages of Jauja candy, and six boxes of Cerolimpián with Perlancol, bleaching and beautifying substance if you just answer a question. Please, concentrate and answer. Sir, do you love trees? [...]
- THE PASSER-BY: — It is because of the wood. [Later in the play, it is known that the Passer-by is the Minister].
- THE JOURNALIST: — Your erudition is impressive. Are you an expert?
- THE JOURNALIST: — How can you explain it?
- THE PASSER-BY: — It is easy. First, the wood turns into the paper. Then, the paper, when you least expect it, turns into a book ...
- THE JOURNALIST: — Amazing! (*After a break*). Now I get it! The wood turns into the paper; the paper turns into books; the books shift into reading... However, which does reading turn into?
- THE PASSER-BY: — Who knows.
- THE JOURNALIST: — Great answer: Reading turns into knowledge [...] (Morales, trans. 1971, pp. 63-65).

In this extract, we can see that Morales is problematising the intertwined relationship between the media, politicians, and the corporate industry criticising the role of the media reproducing ideas that seem to have been previously arranged by the characters of the Journalist and the Minister. In addition to that, in the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (2009), Stephen Littlejohn and Karen Foss point to contemporary normative theories of the interactions of media in society. To form and maintain political systems, they “recognise that media have relationships not only with governments and citizens but also with customers, advertisers, and the many whose dealings they report” (p. 576). Furthermore, normative theories hold that when all of them assume this political-corporate relationship, the media should serve appropriately as a fourth estate in democracy (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). An example of this intertwined relationship can be found in the excerpt of the Journalist delivering the prize to the Minister, who was intentionally presented as a random participant in the TV quiz show.

Another example is the passage of the Journalist and the Minister organising an invented week (*Tree Week*) to make public information irrelevant, which is used to divert people's attention from serious issues and changes in the country. The previous extract manifests some ideas developed by Fairclough (2001), indicating that the irrelevant information is conducted by political and economic power in the media provoking a sort of “naturalization of institutional practices” (p. 33). In the play, it occurs when the characters of the Journalist and the Minister invented the celebration of the *Tree Week* pursuing political and corporate interests which are used as a mechanism of social control to legitimise and perpetuate existing power relations among them.

This play represents the use of distraction and false information in the media. In particular, this information is controlled by political and economic actors that construct their own stories and versions of the facts disseminated by the hegemonic newspapers. One vivid example is the use of false information by the media illustrated in the passage when the Journalist asks the participant (the Minister) about the origin of “readings” that are supposedly taken from the woods. The participant responds: “who knows.” The Journalist uses the term “knows” to emphasise that the participant is saying in response to the viewers that readings are converted into knowledge. Thus, Morales demonstrates the manipulation of the audience, projecting the image of the participant (the Minister) as a smart person. It seems that the reason for showing the Minister as such is to present him as a leader sufficiently capable of leading the country, as he was thinking of participating in the elections as a presidential candidate.

5.3. Interference of the journalists' ideology in the media

The play shows the journalists' ideology interfering in the media and, consequently, with the audience. In this context, the following excerpt shows, on the one hand, the media intervening in the government, which is represented by the character of the Journalist convincing his colleagues about his intention of becoming the president of the country. On the other hand, one can see the government intervening in the media, as in the case of the president forcing the journalists to read an official letter explaining the reasons for the dismissal of the Journalist as the chronicler of the government:

THE JOURNALIST: (*Full of anguish*). — I will confess!
1: — It will not be necessary. We know everything.
1: — We are the informers.
THE JOURNALIST: (*In fear*). — I will confess!
4: — It is too late.
5: — We are no longer interested in your confession.
3: — We were provided with the undoubted, unique, the official truth, the authentic information in advance, with the letterhead from the presidency.
4: — The document says (*He reads*). 'To the nation. The President lets you know that the official chronicler of the new Kingdom, mister Servando Conejero, was removed, as he was accused of including personal details in the objective and official truth. From now on, the President will assume as the chronicler of the Kingdom, on behalf of objectivity' (Morales, trans. 1971, pp. 90–92).

In this extract, Morales problematises not only the role of journalism in society but also the ideology involved in their practices, as in the case of the Journalist convincing his colleagues of supporting him to become the president of the country. Although journalism is not an ideology in itself but a profession, a journalist is an agent who produces and reproduces ideology. From this perspective, the ideological function of a journalist is both analysing the information and consulting sources to construct the news. There are many different definitions of "ideology" depending on the context in which it is used. In the field of media studies, Croteau and Hoynes (2014) argue that ideology can be understood as the "system of meanings that helps define and explain the world and that make value judgments about that world" (p. 159). Considering this, they argue it is possible to state that ideology in the media relates to the texts and images that define the ways of thinking which produce the social and cultural issues in society (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014). An example of the journalist manipulating the media can be found in the previous agreement between the Journalist and his colleagues to disseminate positive aspects of the country through the media in order to convince the audience they are the right people to rule the country.

In addition to the above, Morales problematises the importance that official statements broadcasted on television have in society, as demonstrated in the reading of the official letter from the presidency explaining the reasons for the dismissal of the Journalist as a chronicler of the president. Here, Morales establishes the vision that journalism imposes on the public, which is shaped by the specific interests of journalists in making a profit and/or earning a reputation among the general public (Bourdieu, 1998).

As an overview, in his dramatic piece, Morales predicts a constant changing in the political mediation of journalism. Rather than depending on political power and economic forces, it would become economically and symbolically influential in the political arena. In particular, he is undoubtedly conceiving of television as an instrument of communication that lacks autonomy and is aimed at gaining audience ratings. As Bourdieu argued (1998), television falls into the contradiction of creating social conditions in order to produce a specific type of work that is subject to market pressures, as is visibly demonstrated in the intervention of corporate industry in the media, especially in entertainment television. In his studies on the political economy of the media, Mosco (2009) points out that "the process of commodification

in communication involves transforming messages, ranging from bits of data to the systems of meaningful thought, into marketable products” (p. 133). As a result, Mosco (2009) points out that “communication is taken to be a special and particularly powerful commodity because, in addition to its ability to produce surplus value (thereby behaving like all other commodities), it contains symbols and images whose meaning helps to shape consciousness” (p. 124). Therefore, he concludes, the process of commodification involves media industries both for creating products containing ideology for advertisers and producing audiences (p. 137).

5.4. *The mutual dependency between politicians and the media*

Continuing with this topic of political and corporate power in the media, in the following extract from the play Morales reveals the mutual dependency between politicians and the media to manipulate and/or create information and then naturalise its structure make the corporate media be responsible for this on television:

THE JOURNALIST is seated in front of a table with a phone. He is writing on a typewriter. He interrupts himself. An interior monologue is heard through a speaker.

Food for thought: Why does the Minister of Culture want to become an unconstitutional hereditary President? Let us make the news [...]

He is frantically writing on his typewriter. Then, the phone rings. He listens and speaks. Yes. (*Pause*). Is it possible? (*Pause*). Are you asking me not to say anything? But this is the news of my life... (*Pause*). As you wish, director. I will not say anything [...]

The Journalist and the Minister are in jail.

THE MINISTER: — Prison always makes you stronger. [...] Have you ever heard about any prestigious journalist and opposition politician who has not enriched their service records by taking some months of rest? But I promise you...

THE JOURNALIST: — No. Do not promise me anything.

THE MINISTER: — Although I cannot promise you anything, I promise that as soon as we leave...

THE JOURNALIST: — I promised you to keep the secret about your presidential aspirations. I did not say anything. And here I am! Since I did not say anything about your projects, they accused me of accomplice and then put me in jail (Morales, trans. 1971, pp. 81-83).

This passage delves into the conscience of the Journalist. It can be seen in the Journalist's reaction against the sinister strategy of the Minister to influence the decision of the owners of the newspaper directly. It resulted in the censorship of the information about the Minister's decision to become an anti-constitutional hereditary president that the Journalist was about to report on the news. This situation determines the execution of absolute political pressure in order to avoid the circulation of the Minister's plan for convincing the citizens. In this context, Kumar (2006) states that the media emerge in “the arms of conservative and corporate interests” in terms of the concentration of ownership, where the media “instead of acting in the interests of the public, [...] advance the interests of political and economic elites” (p. 49). The media manipulation constitutes a sort of mutual dependency between journalists and politicians, which can be understood from an economic perspective where both are prepared to trade information and influence to increase profit. Likewise, Vliegthart and Skovsgaard (2017), in their study on media power among politicians and journalists, argue that “journalists want information and quotes from politicians for their stories, while politicians want (preferably positive) attention to getting their message across to voters and other political actors” (p. 89). In other words, politicians and journalists are fully aware of what they are doing and how they have to face the media intervention in interviews, press conferences, among others. Moreover, they conclude that currently “media coverage has become more important to politicians in order to gain support from the voters” (p. 85).

This political interview simulating a conversational style creates a fictional dialogue, whose typology and effective form is proposed and adopted by the authors, and characterises the conversation, especially the television interview (Velázquez, 1992). As a consequence, television seems to be determined by the advertising companies, but also by politicians who subsidise and control their agenda (Bourdieu, 1998, 2001), and vice versa as media also influence the political agenda (Vliegenthart & Skovsgaard, 2017).

Regarding this relationship between the government and the corporate media, Morales demonstrates in the play that the characters of the Minister and the Journalist are stuck in a particular situation where they support each other to be released from jail and succeed in their mission to make the Minister the president of the country. In this regard, it is essential to emphasise the idea of the government to convert the media into an institution that produces, reproduces and distributes knowledge that shapes perceptions and contributes to conveying the state of knowledge to the viewers (McQuail, 1987). Confirming this point, Morales highlights the episode when the Minister and the Journalist are planning to manipulate television to make the audience forget about corruption and, consequently, support their presidential candidacy. Furthermore, Morales ironically represents the nexus between the media and the political arena, problematising the lack of freedom, as clearly described in the passage when the Journalist states that they are going to be in jail forever. Morales's ideas can be compared to the argument of Van Aelst & Walgrave (2017) about the new scenario of political actors unable to democratically govern *without* a robust media presence, resulting in an influential politician's dependence on the media in terms of certain political information that is impossible for them to control unilaterally.

5.5. Affects and emotions used as strategies in media discourse

With regard to the rhetorical strategies used by politicians and corporate industry to control the agenda of the media, another important topic emerges in Morales' play: the use of emotions and feelings established as routines by politicians and corporate industry on television to manipulate the audience. According to Burkitt (2014), these affective routines construct and communicate a particular pattern of relationships between social groups. Moreover, Burkitt (2014) points out that "emotion is a response to how people are embedded in patterns of relationship, both to others and significant social and political events or situations, and this has an individual, biographical element to it which depends on people's prior relational affiliations and elements" (p. 24). That is, people agree with supporting politicians when they see that politicians share their own ideas and values on television, such as religion and ethnicity.

As can be seen in the following excerpt, Morales problematises the government's political intervention represented in the character of the Minister (who was first presented as an ordinary stroller randomly found in the forest) being surveyed in a TV quiz show, whose main topic is the commemoration of the *Week of the Tree*. The Minister's participation in the TV program corresponds to a political intervention on television, presenting him as a very kind and friendly politician in order to win more supporters for his presidential candidacy:

THE JOURNALIST: — I just wonder why you love trees...

THE PASSER-BY: — They are excellent. (*To the Journalist*). As they are excellent... I love them. I love them so much [...] I owe them my life... (*Feeling sad*).

THE JOURNALIST: (*Excited*) — Dear viewers: the journalists, when we least expect it, they come up with valuable human testimonies like the one moving us [...] (*To the passer-by*). Sir, be quiet and tell us why you owe the life to trees.

THE PASSER-BY: (*Sobbing*). — It is just... I am... I am... the Minister of agriculture... How do I make a living with no trees? Well, trees and some other vegetables like grasses and legumes. Besides, do not forget livestock and domestic birds... How does a Minister earn a living? And considering that you have nine children from the first marriage and seven from the second one [...]

**Hybridising the Media's Corporate-Political Discourse through Rhetorical Strategies:
An Analysis of *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* (Morales, 1971)**

THE JOURNALIST: — Mister Minister, my respects. (*With a slight tilt*). Dear viewers: by coincidence, the principal authority in this regard is here with us. Very proud, and thanks to the sponsorship of Cerolimpián with Perlancol, we dare to ask you, what is a tree?

THE MINISTER: (*Approaching one of the trees*). — This. This is a tree. Here you are. These are not only words but also facts (Morales, trans. 1971, pp. 67–69).

In this extract, the Minister is presented as a random individual who came up from the forest and agreed to participate in the TV quiz show organised for celebrating *Tree Week*. In this context, Morales problematises the use of emotions to convince the viewers of the Minister's kind intentions by his emphasis on his feeling of love for the trees. It is demonstrated in the Minister's use of phrases like "all the trees are excellent trees" or "I owe my life to the trees." It proves the previous arrangements made by the sponsors, the media, and the politicians. This political influence on television can also be connected to the concept of political advertising, which, according to Kaid (2004), is the process in which "candidates, parties, individuals, and groups promote themselves and their viewpoints through mass communication channels" (p. 156).

In this excerpt, the use of political advertising deals with the plan that the Journalist and the Minister carried out on television to promote the presidential campaign of the Minister, focusing on his capacity to respond to all the questions accurately. Furthermore, Morales represents in the character of the Minister the kinds of emotive assertions used by politicians in political campaigns when refusing to talk about personal issues, and in affirming that he knows everything about the trees, emphasising that he presents "actions, not words." Regarding emotions appearing on television, it is a kind of strategy used by politicians to distract and manipulate the viewers, resulting in an emphasis on situations and feelings on television to make the viewers sympathetic with politicians. According to Capelos (2013), emotions in political behaviour "are usually brief, distinct physical and mental reactions to particular stimuli that are considered consequential for the goals of the individual" (p. 41). Moreover, the importance of Capelos' study on emotional reactions by politicians is to understand the consequences they have in political decision-making. In this sense, she points out that recent studies show that "emotions have a significant impact on political judgments, starting from the style in which citizens process information, all the way to how political decisions are made" (Capelos, 2013, p. 43). To conclude, she states that there is experimental evidence that "anxious citizens engage in a critical examination of information and make those vote decisions based on candidate traits and issue considerations" (p. 43). Likewise, citizens (the audience) perceive politicians based on information about their personality or personal qualities, that is, evaluate them according to "motivational considerations" that reflect our preferences for a politician (Capelos, 2013, p. 45).

The television industry benefits from the emotions of the viewers in appealing to their fears, sensations, hopes, and using a visual medium to construct powerful meanings and eliciting emotional involvement. Consequently, as argued by Ekström (2002), television controls the time and structure to program the viewers' emotions and makes them be uncritical, turning the focus on the actions of the persons involved in the stories rather than the truth and the validity of statements (p. 264). Based on Williams' ideas on television (2004), it is also important to note here the commercial character of television when making TV programs for profit, with advertising becoming a cultural and political form of television that depends on the norms of a capitalist society selling a specific way of life, which is based on consumer goods generated by the dominant capitalist power.

In this scenario, Bonsu, Darmody and Parmentier (2010), in their study on the role played by emotions in increasing consumerism on television, argue that media corporations are "able to arouse consumer emotions and to render the emotional dimensions of work and leisure into service for corporate ends" (p. 91). Managing these emotions, they add, "has become such

an integral part of contemporary consumer culture and capitalism that television workers and audiences are trained to elicit the strongest possible emotions from their targets” (p. 91), as in the case of the Journalist emphasising the “valuable human testimony” before awarding the participant in the TV quiz show. For that reason, they conclude “this corporate strategy is located in the proven ability of the emotional to maintain a powerful grip on human realities and imagination” (p. 91). It can be found in Morales’ passage where the Journalist informs the audience that it was a “happy coincidence” that the participant is not an ordinary citizen, but the Minister, and just after he even intentionally mentions the sponsor “Cerolimpián con Perlancol” to connect for the audience the surprising revelation that the interviewed participant is the Minister with the sponsor.

6. Discussion: Confronting the media manipulation

Morales’ visionary play examined the development of private media companies, which has resulted today in the concentration of a few large media companies controlling the media ownership landscape, suppressing the emergence of alternative or independent media. This article discusses the media’s rhetorical strategies and links to corporate and political discourse. Moreover, it explores the use of the media by politicians as a political and ideological tool to manipulate information and disseminate power and influence, which is essential for the establishment of routinised and institutionalised norms on television. In line with this, Paletz and Entman (1981) argue that “the self-same media have the power to decide which issues will be brought before the public, the terms in which they will be presented, and who will participate, under what conditions, in the presentation” (p. 6). Likewise, the media use this power and influence to provide a unique voice that has been successfully generalised so that most of the audience does not think of it as a voice of the interests of the corporate and political entities which support the media (Croteau & Hoynes, 2014, p. 49). Another political and ideological tool used by politicians in the media is the representation of emotions and affects on television to get the audience’s sympathy for electoral purposes, as exemplified in the passage of the play when the character of the Minister uses emotional statements in order to be perceived as a ‘good politician’ and, consequently, engage people with politics.

In connection with the above, politicians and corporate industry have historically been increasingly aware of the necessity of the media to grab the readers and audience’s attention in order to attract them. Nonetheless, several social groups have emerged contrary to the capitalist practices of the media, which are appropriating information and communication spaces (Thomas, 2018). It has led to the implementation of several alternative and activist informative media that challenge the hegemonic media’s control of information and influence on people’s perception and consumption in politics and education, as well as among many other aspects of public life. This alternative media emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s, and has its roots in the rural sociology in the United States through the experiences of social change by activist media interested in new forms of information, especially in the technological field (Thomas, 2018). This contemporaneity confirms the parallel between the emergence of alternative media and the media control by corporations and politicians that Morales denounces in his dramatic work.

These new alternative media linked to populist and citizen media, aimed to both confront the hegemonic discourses by traditional media and promote democratic participation in the media (Barranquero & Rosique, 2014). One specific example is the development of the communication for social change, whose purpose was to adjust the communicative process to the necessities of local contexts and singularities of different cultures (Gumucio & Tufte, 2008; Barranquero & Rosique, 2014). As represented in this critical analysis of the play, post-World War II media manipulation, in the hands of the conservatives and commercial, corporate media, was confronted by the communication for the social change carried out by activist and social movements that established a new form of communication provided by the

new technological devices in the digital age (Gumucio & Tufte, 2008; Thomas, 2018). It has resulted in the active participation of empowered social movements that use the media to confront the dominant politics in capitalist societies, as illustrated in the different analyses of the play (Thomas, 2018).

7. Conclusions

This article critically analysed and discussed the journalists' intention of controlling the informational instruments of production and diffusion of information in order to use power relations on their behalf, as represented in José Ricardo Morales' play *Cómo el poder de las noticias nos da noticias del poder* (1971). In the play, Morales conceptualises political intervention in the media to control the population. The previous analyses show that the play contains a predictive discourse, presenting the role of journalism in both defying national literary canons and anticipating several issues related to media intervention by corporate media and politicians in the 1970s, especially in the Chilean context. In summary, this study critically discussed the following topics in several passages of the play: (1) Political and corporate power in the media; (2) The intertwined relationship between the media and the corporate industry; (3) The interference of the journalists' ideology in the media; (4) The mutual dependency between politicians and the media; and (5) The affects and emotions used as strategies in media discourse.

By using his universal dramatic language, Morales represented a political, philosophical and sociological conflict, denouncing the way the media serve the State and corporate world (Valdivia, 2011; Del Valle, 2019), as well as criticising the current role of journalism as a key element in the act of misinformation (Valdivia, 2014). Accordingly, Morales's critical approach to the political, discursive and media challenges has problematised recent media and communication theories. These theories are discussed in terms of the use of television as a manipulation strategy to influence Western society and to orientate a contemporary set of beliefs while re-signifying the material and symbolic configurations of the Western globalised social fabric.

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