


Conservatism and feminism: representations of women in Mafalda's Comic Strips /

Conservadorismo e feminismo: representações da mulher em tirinhas de Mafalda

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ABSTRACT

This work proposes an analysis about the discursive practices in Mafalda's comic strips, produced by the Argentinian graphic humorist Quino, which allow a reflection on the role of women in society, ideology and humor present in this process. The corpus of this work is composed of five strips by Mafalda taken from the book *Toda Mafalda* (2003). The work intends to understand the ideologies and representations of women in society in the selected corpus, and to analyze how humor builds meaning effects. The statements of the characters Raquel, Mafalda and Susanita will be addressed, who, despite maintaining a bond of friendship or kinship, have different discourses and ideologies. Some concepts such as discursive formation, feminism and machismo, the imaginary about women, as well as ideology, the sliding of meanings and metaphor were also worked on. It is important to point out that, even though they were produced in the 1960s and 1970s, Mafalda's comic strips were still relevant and current. In addition, the work allows for a reflection on the ideological family apparatus and its role in the reproduction/transformation of social relations. In the conclusions we discuss the problems of conceiving the ideological apparatus of the family from the point of view of sociological functionalism.

KEYWORDS: Discourse; Humor; Ideology; Mafalda; Women..

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RESUMO

Este trabalho propõe-se a analisar as práticas discursivas nas tirinhas de Mafalda, produzidas pelo humorista gráfico argentino Quino, que permitem uma reflexão acerca do papel da mulher na sociedade, da ideologia e do humor presentes nesse processo. O corpus deste trabalho é composto por cinco tirinhas de Mafalda retiradas do livro *Toda Mafalda* (2003). O trabalho pretende compreender as ideologias e representações da mulher na sociedade presentes no corpus selecionado, e analisar como o humor constrói efeitos de sentido. Serão abordados os enunciados das personagens Raquel, Mafalda e Susanita que, apesar de manterem um vínculo de amizade ou parentesco, possuem discursos e ideologias diferentes. A análise foi desenvolvida à luz da teoria e do método da Análise do discurso fundada por Michel Pêcheux. Alguns conceitos como o de formação discursiva, feminismo e machismo, do imaginário sobre a mulher, bem como a ideologia, o deslizamento de sentidos e a metáfora foram trabalhados também. É importante salientar que, mesmo sendo produzidas nos anos 1960 e 1970, as tirinhas de Mafalda não deixaram de ser relevantes e atuais. Além disso, o trabalho permite uma reflexão sobre o aparelho ideológico família e seu papel na reprodução/transformação das relações sociais. Nas conclusões discutimos os problemas de se conceber o aparelho ideológico família a partir do funcionalismo sociológico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso; Humor; Ideologia; Mafalda; Mulher.

1 Introduction

Mafalda's comic strips launched more than just fictional characters into the world: their statements have meaning effects on social, ideological, historical and cultural issues. Even though they have been produced from the 1960s and 1970s on, Mafalda's comic strips deal with subjects that are still on the agenda today, following a humorous pattern that presents criticism in an intelligent way.

Not only has it achieved success in its place of origin, Argentina, but Mafalda's comic strips also reached (yesterday and today) audiences in other countries, including Brazil. Works such as *Toda Mafalda*, (Quino 2003), among other books, are still read today, in addition to the comic strips. Quino¹ copes with several controversial topics, portraying political, social and cultural problems of the time through humor as a way of contesting current social values. The comic strips, despite being produced in the 1960s and 1970s, allow readers to connect situations from that time to the current context in which they live, in the middle of the 21st century. Therefore, the reading of the strips becomes current as well as the analysis proposed here relevant.

Moreover, jokes are a great source of material used in order “[...] to try to recognize (or) confirm several cultural and ideological manifestations of rooted values” (POSSENTI, 1988, p.25). Hence, according to the author, it is possible to say that Mafalda's comic strips are permeated by such manifestations, since they cope with various themes of this order. By combining verbal and

¹ Quino is Mafalda's author. In this work, we are going to talk about the characters, leaving aside for a moment the question of the author's role. However, we consider that there is a clutch (FIORIN, 2016) of the author in the characters. In this sense, Mafalda seems to express the author's point of view through the strips, since he is responsible for tying the text, for giving unity to the text (ORLANDI, 2002).

non-verbal language, Quino provides a polysemic language, open to failure, misunderstanding and countless interpretations.

Most of all, this work aims at analyzing Mafalda's discourses which involves a reflection on the position of women in society based on ideology and humor, supported by the theoretical framework of French Discourse Analysis (henceforth DA), what enables this work to develop in search of the effects of meaning related and their historical-social determinations. Moreover, it is intended to investigate the imaginary about women and the ideological and discursive positions of the characters, understanding language as a social production while taking into account the subject's exteriority.

2 Theoretical aspects

Above all, discourse analysis is a discipline of interpretation “[...] that puts interpretation into question” (ORLANDI, 2002, p. 25). The theoretical gesture of DA is to put reading “on hold” (ORLANDI, 2002, p. 25), once it questions certain approaches such as hermeneutics and content analysis. In relation to these approaches, DA enquires into the transparency of language, the idea of a truth behind the text, the idea of a message and, also, does not try to answer the question: “What did the author mean?” As language is not transparent and it is not possible to cross it with the eyes, given the opacity of the meanings, it is up to the analyst to “[...] understand how symbolic objects produce meanings” (ORLANDI, 2002, p. 26). This is why DA asks what effects of meaning a materiality can generate. The fact is that texts and other symbolic objects already carry an interpretation of reality, so the analyst must investigate the gestures of interpretation present there as evident and, therefore, realize: “There is no hidden truth behind the text. There are gestures of interpretation that constitute it and the analyst, with his device, must be able to understand it” (ORLANDI, 2002, p. 26).

As regards the effects of meanings, it is important to consider they are always embedded in an ideology. In this sense, Orlandi states (2002, p. 47) “[...] there is no subject without ideology”, so that ideology is constitutive of any discursive gesture.

At any rate, the texts are loaded with ideology and are permeated by representations. Here, it is intended to analyze the way women are portrayed in Mafalda's comics, the present

ideologies and the ideological positions assumed by the characters, as well as, their relationship with the discursive formations (DF) in the referred strips.

Besides, the ideological interpellation happens through the subject's identification with the DF once: "[...] the individual interpellation as the subject of his speech is carried out by the identification (of the subject) with the discursive formation that dominates him" (PÊCHEUX, 1995, p. 214). Consequently, it is plausible to ask: Are the characters² affiliated (identified with) or not to the present DFs? Do they question these DFs? In the classification established by Pêcheux (1995), can they be considered "good subjects" or "bad subjects"?

For that reason, Pêcheux (1995) elaborated three ways for the subject to relate to the discursive formation, namely: a) the identification in which the subject of enunciation assumes for himself all the values of the discursive formation, existing a total covering³ between the Universal Subject and the subject of enunciation (concept criticized by Pêcheux himself (1995) in annex III of Semantics and Discourse entitled "*There is only cause for what fails or the French political winter: the beginning of rectification*"); b) the counter-identification in which the subject is still identified with the DF that dominates him, although he makes local criticisms of it, refusing to change his position. This would be the bad guy; and, finally, c) the counter-identification in which the subject, when affected by new types of knowledge, no longer identifies with the DF that dominates him and changes his position. It means he starts to identify with another DF. According to Grigoletto:

[...] in this third modality, different from the first and the second, the subject, when relating to the subject-form that dominates him, produces a movement of disidentification, which means that he can break with the Discursive Formation he signed up and, consequently, he identifies with another DF and its respective subject-form (GRIGOLETTO, 2005, p. 3-4).

By analyzing how the discourse is materialized in the strips, this paper adopts the relationship that Pêcheux and Fuchs (1993) make between ideological formations and representations. For the intended work, this approach permits the understanding of meanings of

² An alternative to this approach, which deals with the characters' enunciation, would be to interpret how the author creates certain types/characters, resulting in certain effects of meaning, among which we highlight the criticism and the contestation of the protagonist's enunciations (Mafalda).

³ In "*There is only cause for what fails or the French political winter: the beginning of a rectification*", Pêcheux (1995) reviews this discussion and states that even full identification does not occur without resistance.

the imaginary about women and the positions they can occupy in today's society. On the relationship between ideological formations and representations, Pêcheux and Fuchs state:

We will speak of ideological formation to characterize an element [...] susceptible of intervening as a force in confrontation with other forces in the ideological conjuncture characteristic of a social formation at a given moment; in this way, each ideological formation constitutes a complex set of attitudes and representations that are neither 'individual' nor 'universal', but relate more or less directly to class positions in conflict with one another. We are, thus, led to place ourselves in the relationship between ideology and discourse (PÊCHEUX; FUCHS, 1993, p. 166).

As a result, when it is asked what the representations of women are and their role in society, one can understand the different imaginaries present in Mafalda's comic strips, as well as the positions taken (of the characters) that are always ideological. In this sense, it is relevant to ask: a) What is the criticism of the character Mafalda to the conservative and traditional role of women in society? b) What is her position in relation to this image? And c) What is the position of the other characters in relation to the conservative and traditional picture of woman?

3 Analysis of the corpus

In order to analyze the selected strips, it has been taken into account the verbal and non-verbal language. Especially, the statements of the following characters: Mafalda, Susanita and Raquel (Mafalda's mother) who, despite establishing some kind of affective bond amongst one another, whether of friendship or kinship, produces statements crossed by different ideologies, as it is shown below. Humor is also regarded in the interpretation of the meanings present in the strips. Particularly, this corpus consists of five comic strips from the book "*Toda Mafalda*" (QUINO, 2003), whose selection was carried out to enable reading, interpretation and analysis of questions about women's representation, as well as the positioning of the characters towards these representations. Furthermore, the corpus was selected based on the questions raised by the researchers because:

Currently, it is considered that the best way to address the question of the corpus constitution is to build discursive assemblies that obey criteria that derive from theoretical principles of discourse analysis, in view of the objectives of the analysis, and that allows reaching their understanding (ORLANDI, 2002, p. 63).

This way, there follows the first strip:

Figure 1



Source: Toda Mafalda. QUINO (2003, p. 217).

It is observed, in this strip, Mafalda and her thought bubbles which show different women doing several daily chores: sewing, cleaning the house, washing clothes; until, in the last drawing, it appears the summary of her thoughts: “Of course... The problem is that woman, instead of playing a role, has played a rag in the history of humanity” (QUINO, 2003, p. 217). Mafalda, in her speech, expresses a metaphor, or, a replacement from “role” to “rag” in order to define how the social position of women is seen in the history of humanity.

There is a metaphorical effect/slip of meaning here, which can be understood through the construction of paraphrases, for example, the passage “instead of” is decisive in this metaphor, meaning “to take one thing for another”:

“INSTEAD OF PLAYING A ROLE”⁴



“HAS PLAYED A **RAG**” (Bold by the author).

In this metaphor, a role slips to a rag. Orlandi (2002) states that there is no meaning without a metaphor. This way, it is understood that words do not have a meaning of their own, so they cannot be stuck to the literalness of themselves. Orlandi (2002, p.44) still brings the concept

⁴ Capital letters are used as in the comic strip.

of a metaphor as “[...] the taking of a word for another [...]. It basically means 'transference', establishing the way how words mean something.” Hence, metaphor is constitutive of meaning and contributes to the meaning of the text itself. The same way, its effect is decisive for the understanding and for the comic effect of the strip.

Mafalda sees devaluation in the way women are seen by society: a person who accumulates household chores for herself and, apparently, is only good at those. Also, she turns into a rag for routinely working so much inside the house while, consequently, performing the role of a rag, as opposed to the role of a protagonist in society.

Humor is, then, constituted at the end of the strip, which surprises readers, since they do not expect such an observation coming especially from a child, regarding the role women have been playing in society. Mafalda's speech and expressions refer to a reflection on the social roles of women, as well as they show the position she takes, in relation to not agreeing with what she ends up concluding in the last drawing.

Most of all, the meanings of women's imaginary, in today's society, remind of the sexual division of labor in which domestic tasks, and those of little social value, are assigned to them. In particular, the specific situation of women is highlighted in Federici (2017, p. 26):

While Marx examines the primitive accumulation from the point of view of the male wage-earning proletariat and the development of commodity production, I examine it from the point of view of the changes it introduced in the social position of women and in the production of labor power. Hence, my description of primitive accumulation includes a number of phenomena which are absent in Marx and which are, nevertheless, extremely important for capitalist accumulation. Among these phenomena are: i) the development of a new sexual division of labor; ii) the construction of a new patriarchal order, based on the exclusion of women from paid work and their subordination to men; iii) the mechanization of the proletarian body and its transformation, in the case of women, into a machine for the production of new workers.

Therefore, a woman who “plays a rag” (less than a role) in society is a well-adjusted (subjected) woman to the discourse of the social division of labor and the place established for her, in this context. This woman would be the good subject described by Pêcheux: one who identifies with the ideological formation in which she is inserted.

For Pêcheux and Althusser, ideology does not only consist of ideas, but of practices within a given ideological apparatus. In the same direction, Raquel's practices, as present in Mafalda's thought, indicate an unquestioned maintenance of ideology. On this, Althusser says:

[...] we will talk about acts embedded in practices. And we intend to point out that these practices are governed by rituals in which they are inscribed, within the material existence of an ideological apparatus, even if only in a small part of this apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a game in a sports club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc. (ALTHUSSER, 1999, p. 130).

Considering the family as an ideological apparatus (Althusser, 1999), the comic strips materialize the mother's image performing domestic tasks. Its own performance in everyday life sustains, through the exploited subject itself, the conditions of his exploitation. Mafalda's criticism and questioning both fit in as far as different discourses circulate within a state apparatus, which is the reason Pêcheux (1995, 1999) emphasizes that through the ISA (ideological state apparatus) is given the conditions for reproduction, but also for the transformation of social and economic formations.

There follows the next strip:

Figure 2



Source: Toda Mafalda. QUINO (2003, p. 298).

This strip begins with Mafalda watching her mother doing some household chores. It is visible from her facial expression the dissatisfaction she feels towards the reality in which her mother is inserted. When she decides to talk, and not just watch her mother, she asks if the ability to succeed or fail in life is hereditary. Furthermore, it is essential for such analysis to point out the importance of non-verbal language, as it represents an important part in the composition and production of the enunciations' meanings. In this sense, it is also observed that Mafalda's expression changes from discontent to questioning and, finally, to fright with the possibility of receiving a positive answer about what she asked her mother.

Here, the existence of theories that approach social reproduction (ALTHUSSER 1999; BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014) is highlighted in a way, that is, the "heredity" of social positions in

which, for example, the worker's son would occupy an equal or equivalent place to his father's. In this sense, there would be no social mobility or change, but only the maintenance of the current model for the next generation. Althusser (1999) addresses this issue of reproduction in the capitalist system as essential for maintaining the hegemony of the dominant class in detriment of the dominated class, for the survival of the capitalist system itself.

In other words, the family role within the conditions of capitalism is to reproduce labor relations, repeating the contradictions of previous generations. On top of that, biological (sexual) reproduction gives rise to new subjects tied to social positions from birth.

Interestingly, while Raquel reproduces the model of a desirable woman in capitalist society, identifying herself with this ideology and this ideological formation, as she builds herself in the expected values of the good subject, Mafalda is the materialized representation of contestation of social values women receive in capitalism, fitting in a critical relation to the ideology of reduction and subjection. However, this can put Mafalda, not in the position of a bad subject, or, the one who performs the criticism from within the same ideological position. On the contrary, there is a clash of positions indicating a lack of the character's identification in account for the sexist ideology from another position she assumes. The humor, in this case, is due to the fact that Mafalda, even as a child, shows real concerns about repeating the same role model of woman her mother plays, that is, if this were hereditary, the girl would be doomed to have the same life her mother does, which she herself criticizes. There is, therefore, a confusion between biological reproduction and the reproduction of labor forces. Notwithstanding, the subject, from an alienated position, is not able to be aware of the social forces that determine the reproduction of the workforce.

This way, through humor for fear of "heredity", the effect is to at least put her questioning in the distance, whether "the ability to succeed or fail in life is hereditary." Even so, doubt could open space for failure in the ritual, which is always set and reset, as a reproduction for those who know how to point out a possible different path for women (and men) in society. As Pêcheux used to say, not only are there reproductive forces within the ideological apparatuses, but also transforming ones, working on the possibilities of reproduction or transformation within a given apparatus.

In addition, with the advent of feminism, which is an ideology that permeates Mafalda's statements, there is the power to choose between being exclusively a housewife or preferring to have a profession, as well as choosing to marry or not, to have children or not. Hence, there is no single model to be followed nowadays as there used to be in the near past.

By and large, the feminist theory is very broad and has been around for a long time. As this paper's objective is not to provide an overview on this field, but to analyze Mafalda's comic strips, there briefly follows two comments on liberal feminism and anti-capitalist feminism.

For instance, in an interview with Alba Moraleda for the newspaper *El País*⁵, Federici answers the question: "Can you be a feminist and not be against capitalism?"

Answer: No. You cannot. Feminism is not a ladder for women to improve their position, to enter Wall Street; it is not a way for them to find a better place within capitalism. I am totally against this idea. Capitalism continually creates hierarchies, different forms of enslavement and inequalities. So, you cannot think on the basis that you can improve the lives of most women or men. Feminism is not just about improving the situation of women. It is about creating a world without inequality, without the exploitation of human labor which, in the case of women, becomes a double exploitation. (FEDERICI in an interview with Alba Moraleda. *El País*. 20 Mar. 2019. Available at: https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/20/mujeres/1553071085_109576.html)

On the same topic, Davis comments:

Since the rise of global capitalism and the ideologies associated with neoliberalism, it has become particularly important to identify the dangers of individualism. Progressive struggles – centered on racism, repression, poverty or other issues – are doomed to failure if they do not try to develop an awareness of the insidious promotion of capitalist individualism. (DAVIS, 2018, p.20)

Therefore, there is a feminism which presents itself as a breaking factor with the model of social reproduction perpetuated by capitalism. Nevertheless, it is possible to say that capitalism also promotes feminism, in the sense of greater family productivity, the use of equipment that makes domestic tasks less mortifying and frees up women's time. The point is that there is no

⁵ Original excerpt in Spanish: P. ¿Se puede ser feminista y no estar en contra del capitalismo?

R: No. No se puede. El feminismo no es una escalera para que la mujer mejore su posición, que entre en Wall Street, no es un camino para que encuentre un lugar mejor dentro del capitalismo. Soy completamente contraria a esta idea. El capitalismo crea continuamente jerarquías, formas diferentes de esclavización y desigualdades. Entonces, no se puede pensar que sobre esta base se pueda mejorar la vida de la mayoría de las mujeres, ni de los hombres. El feminismo no es solamente mejorar la situación de las mujeres, es crear un mundo sin desigualdad, sin la explotación del trabajo humano que, en el caso de las mujeres, se convierte en una doble explotación. Available in <https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/03/20/mujeres/1553071085_109576.html> Access on February 25th, 2022.

single feminism. The one addressed in this research is liberal feminism, which must be hegemonic, as it appears in the media, in the school apparatus, and so on.

Moving on to the analysis of the strip 3:

Figure 3



Source: Toda Mafalda. QUINO (2003, p. 306).

In this comic strip, the character Susanita is asking if Mafalda were crazy for, implicitly, having mentioned something about her having a profession, in opposition to being a housewife or taking care of her children and husband. From Susanita's expressions, which are observed through the strip's non-verbal language, she shows she does not agree with Mafalda's idea and, also, criticizes women, in general, who work outside the house, saying it is "men's things".

Susanita is one of Quino's characters who, unlike Mafalda, dreams of getting married, having children, taking care of the house, the children and her husband, so she is the stereotype of the conservative and traditional bourgeois woman, who is not autonomous, is submissive and wants to belong to a high social class. Therefore, she wishes to marry a rich man. The sexist ideology is very present in her speeches, as shown in the comic strip abovementioned.

Additionally, the successful internalization of the current sexist discourse of society, in which the good girl does not work outside the house, on the contrary, she marries, has children and takes care of both, indicates that Susanita identifies with this discursive formation. In such direction, she places herself as a good subject (Pêcheux, 1995), according to the traditional discourse about women's roles. At the same time, there happens a clash of positions, as she criticizes women who do this, calling them "effeminate", she subjects herself to the dominant ideology of machismo. The use of the signifier "effeminate", in this case, reveals there is a loss of femininity, which is characteristic of women, from the moment they start working in "men's things", that is to say, a woman is no longer seen as a woman once she does other works than the housework ones.

There is a common thought reinforced here, that is, a woman's place is inside the house taking care of it, the children and the husband, and this is something culturally constructed. Besides, machismo is rooted in our patriarchal society, in which the division of tasks into “men's things” and “women's things” is something stigmatized, and it occurs throughout the history of humanity. However, feminism arises so that there is a more egalitarian relationship between men and women, since the female sex is usually seen as inferior to the male one.

Hence, Susanita assumes the position of a subject who puts into practice the discourses crossed by the sexist ideology. By labeling women who work in “men's things” as “effeminate” and, in the previous drawing, saying that being a housewife and doing housework is what makes a woman a woman, she uses discursive formations in her enunciations that are influenced by the ideology to which she is subjected. For that matter, the meanings of what she says are also ideologically determined. For placing herself in a position of “covering with the universal subject of discourse”, Susanita is not capable of doubting or criticizing. Consequently, she reveals a strong conviction in it.

Without going any further into the matter, it is possible to allude that Susanita is criticizing certain ideals of the self (Freud, 2011), which are dear to Mafalda's position, such as “having a profession”, “being an engineer”, “being a doctor”, etc. As stated by Silveira (2010), the ego ideal is an ideological psychic instance (also treated by Freud (2011) as a superego in the text “*The ego and the id*”), representing the social in the psychic apparatus. This way, the critique of these ideals is an ideological one, coming from another ideological and discursive position, which supports other ideals of the self. Moreover, what is at stake here is the representation of what a woman ‘should be’. This ‘should-be’ reveals the super egoic aspect of ideology, insofar as it is not something the subject aspires to be, but something he must be, in other words, it is an imposition from the outside.

There follows the strip 4:

Figure 4



Source: Toda Mafalda. QUINO (2003, p. 174).

Initially, this strip shows Mafalda arriving home and Raquel, her mother, asking how it was at school that day. It also pictures Mafalda heading towards her mother, who is in the kitchen, walking along the house while seeing the household chores her mother had done while she was at school. Mafalda enthusiastically responds that she learned “a lot of new things”, which demonstrates her strive for knowledge and the change of condition it would mean to her.

Just as Raquel asks her how it was at school, Mafalda similarly replies with “how was it here in this den of routine?” It ends with such question from Mafalda to her mother, who holds an unhappy expression. On the whole, taking into consideration that speeches are not just single words, once they carry meanings, Orlandi explains (1987, p. 52), “[...] nothing in language is indifferent to meaning: the words, the construction, the order, the tone, the style.” Therefore, by using the expression “den of routine”, Mafalda expresses her veiled criticism, evoking the comic strip's humor.

More specifically, the so-called “den of routine” reminds of the fact that every day women have the same routine at home: cleaning, ironing, tidying, washing etc., and, due to these chores which takes up all their time, they miss the opportunity to get to know new things or new forms of existence as a subject, limiting their feminine role to a wife, mother and housewife only.

To a large extent, capitalism contributes to such reality, considering how it was when it started, that is, the figure of the housewife appeared as an unpaid and devalued job. Moreover, according to Davis (2016, p.214), the best adjectives to capture the essence of the domestic activities' nature are “invisible, repetitive, exhausting, unproductive and not creative”. Notwithstanding, it is the same range of qualities that Marx described for workers⁶ that is applied to women's domestic work.

⁶To deepen this discussion, in future works, we will try to address the difference between productive and unproductive labor in Marx.

Particularly, as regards the comics, Raquel is put in the place of the good subject, the one adapted to subjection, however, through speech, Mafalda is able to suspend this position for a moment, as it is seen in the mother's eyes. In this sense, the meanings brought by Mafalda have a staggering effect in the mother. Although this does not change anything, it is a small flaw in the ritual, which could allow a repositioning of the subject.

It is, hence, possible to realize that the family ISA does not live in a mere inert social reproduction, but within it pulsates the possibility of transformation, since the apparatuses are not homogeneous (neither ahistorical nor without contradictions). On the contrary, they gather the place of the clash of positions. About this, Pêcheux says:

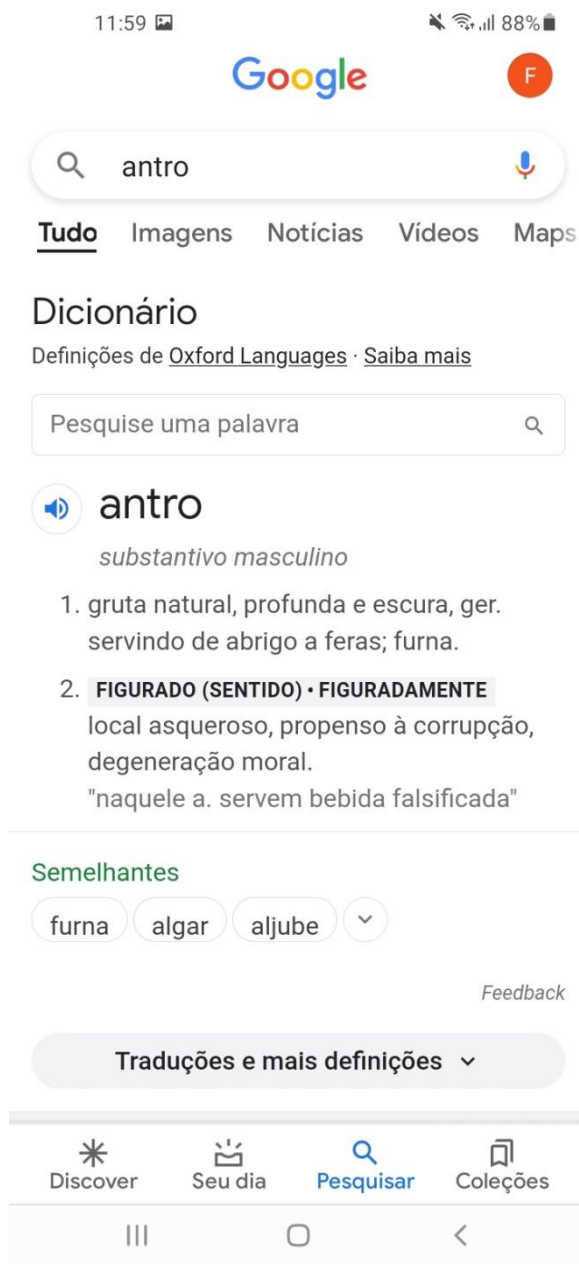
This generates a second error, twin of the first, which concerns the nature of this contradiction and opposes reproduction to transformation, just as inertia is opposed to movement: the idea that the reproduction of production relations does not require explanation, because they "work spontaneously", provided they are left alone, disregarding the flaws and imperfections of the "system", is an eternalizing and anti-dialectical illusion. (PÊCHEUX, 1999, p. 146)

By exploring a little the meanings of the term *den*⁷ on Google⁸, it is found the following (Img. 01):

Image 1: Meaning of *den*.

⁷ <<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=antro>>. Access on January 4th, 2022.

⁸Results for meanings on Google are provided by Oxford Languages, as shown in the image. See in the links: <<https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-pt/>> Access on February 24th, 2022
e <<https://support.google.com/websearch/answer/10106608?hl=pt-BR>> Access on February 24th, 2022.



Source: Google e Oxford Languages.

Furthermore, there are other paraphrases (Pêcheux and Fuchs, 1993) possible to be made from the term *den*, meaning *antrum*, in order to understand the matrix of meanings (Pêcheux and Fuchs, 1993) and the DF in which it is inserted, for instance:

Den of debauchery.

Den of thieves.

Den of prostitutes.

Den of despotism.

Den of routine (QUINO, 2003, p.174)

As a result, the paraphrases reflect the meanings of a disgusting, corrupt and degenerate place which seems to slide to the home itself, the place of the family per excellence. This way, the home, the place of the family which represents, in a traditional discourse, a place of moral virtues, gains a very negative meaning, due to its complementary term: routine. The home's routine, understood as means of reproduction and existence of the family in society, is seen as negative. As a consequence, the home would be a den of routine, or, something negative and to be avoided. To summarize, such discourse is of criticism of the family, the routine and the traditional view of home.

Figure 5



Source: Toda Mafalda. QUINO (2003, p. 228).

Once again, Mafalda is observing the household chores her mother performs every day: ironing, cleaning, washing, so she asks her mother what she would like to be if she lived. Since Mafalda has a discourse permeated by a feminist ideology, she resists the speeches which pre-define the place of women as housewife, mother and wife, as previously seen in the analysis of the other comic.

In this case, her question resembles a quite common question made at a young age about what one is going to be when he or she grows up, what mobilizes the interlocutor's discursive memory as well as the concept of said and unsaid. Therefore, when Mafalda poses her mother such question, there is a margin for interpretation involving the interlocutor's discursive memory, taking into account another discourse that has probably been said before.

Furthermore, between the lines of what Mafalda asks, it is also revealed a meaning that is not explicitly said by her, since "[...] between saying and not saying a whole space unfolds in

which the subject moves.” (ORLANDI), 1999, p. 85) In this sense, the girl, when relating domestic work to not living, shows she does not agree with the position in which her mother finds herself as a woman, who obeys the stereotype of the housewife.

Mafalda manifests her contesting side by addressing that this lifestyle is not a way of really living, on the other hand, it is traditionally an imposition of capitalism to women whose contribution to society lies in housework. For the character, life is not just about taking care of the house, the children and the husband. There are possibilities outside of that.

However, within the current capitalist discourse, the wife no longer needs to be just a housewife. She can work and take care of the house, face a triple shift, or, hire another woman (and here the machismo remains) to help with it while she works outside. Nowadays, the promotion of public schools, day care centers and products which make daily chores more easily to handle, such as washing machines, dishwashers, robots to sweep the house and other ones that facilitate cleaning bathrooms etc., in a way, allow women to have a triple journey.

In particular, the comics' humor comes from the game between language and the mother's expression, who did not expect that daughter's question. From the reader's point of view, there happens some sort of reflection on this condition of women in society sustained by capitalism, as it contributes to the workforce demanded by it. None the less, its sharp and acidic criticism allows the interlocutor to question whether there is really humor, or, the effects of meaning created are of another order. For instance, what kind of critique of female oppression is Mafalda identified with? With liberal feminism? With anti-capitalist feminism?

To conclude, it is possible to see, in these comic strips, a speech that women should have a job outside the house. Not only could she deal with washing, ironing, cooking and cleaning, but she could also reconcile one field with the other. This would be the liberal imaginary of the modern woman. Despite the fact that one can interpret, from Mafalda, a discourse against machismo, yet through the analyzed corpus, it is not definite to state whether it is a liberal discourse or of another type.

Final considerations

Taking into account the family as an ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1999), this paper has considered comic strips as chronicles of our time in which historicity appears, or, whose

meaning effects allow the reader to reflect on contemporary “domestic” practices that, in a conservative view, are women's tasks. For that reason, the ideological evidence of everyday practices is often placed/questioned in the comics.

When someone thinks of the family as an ISA, a place in which subjection takes place, meaning the interpellation of the individual into a subject, he or she needs to refuse, together with Pêcheux, the “functionalist” readings (PÊCHEUX, 1995, p. 296) of the ideological state apparatuses. Let's see:

[...] the 'ideological state apparatuses' were read [...] as a functionalist thesis, either to reproduce it or to condemn it. And some even today – despite all Althusser's rectifications, in which existence is simply not considered – goes to the end saying that 'Althusserianism' is a thought of the Order and the Master, which is instituted by a double circumscription: of History (enclosed in reproduction) and of the subject (reduced to an automaton who walks alone). (PÊCHEUX, 1995 p. 296-297)

What's more, in another text, Pêcheux and Fuchs point out:

The relations of production are, by no means, fixed in eternal repetition, as functionalist sociology claims. In reality, and insofar as production relations correspond to class relations, it is convenient to speak of reproduction-transformation of production relations. (PÊCHEUX; FUCHS, 1993, p. 237).

The aim of reading the quotes here is to point out that state apparatuses do not have the function of inculcating ideology, although it is within them inculcation occurs. Hence, the misinterpretation of Althusser's work would have two possible consequences, as stated by Pêcheux: a) considering positive the fact that the ISA are only places of social reproduction, and b) rejecting the Althusserian theory for seeing in it the subject's imprisonment.

In the analyzed strips, the representations and imaginaries about the woman cover both the traditional imaginary, in which she works exclusively at home doing household activities, such as, cooking, washing, ironing, etc., and the conception which contrasts with the traditional, that is, the woman who studies and has a profession, therefore, has a life. In this sense, Susanita and Mafalda's mother are identified with the first model, while Mafalda always questioning things, identifies with the second.

On top of that, humor in the comic strips serves as support for Mafalda's questioning, constituting points in which the ideological ritual can fragment and deconstruct the dominant discursive formation, leading to questioning and disidentification with the traditional representations

of women, allowing a subjective repositioning and the assumption of a new ideology about women and society.

In the final drawings of strips 1, 4 and 5, the character's face of disappointment shows through non-verbal language a significant indication of the deconstruction of the traditional discourse about women. This deconstruction allows meaning to migrate to other significant sites, so that, in humor, it is observed that deconstruction is accompanied by a possible migration to discursive formations' affiliations.

In strip 2, Mafalda's face of fear and her mother's disappointment indicate the malaise of the subjects' positions. In strip 3, Susanita's anger expresses the emphasis with which she defends her speech, which can be seen as satire, or an irony, in relation to her affiliation to traditional femininity ("Are you crazy I have a profession?", "To be a doctor, an engineer?").

In conclusion, humor allows a destabilization in discursive affiliations by bringing to the scene a contradictory and dialectical view of women within the family ISA, resulting in the fact that there is no faultless subjection and no impossibility of reviewing ideological affiliations.

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