

Language, racism, power and carnivalization: a dialogic analysis of cartoons /

Linguagem, racismo, poder e carnavalização: uma análise dialógica de charges

*Niege da Rocha Guedes**

Professor of Portuguese Language at the Federal University of Agreste Pernambucano (UFAPE). Master in Letters from the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). PhD student in Language Sciences at the Catholic University of Pernambuco (Unicap).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8114-2355>

*Manoel Klebson de Andrade Oliveira***

Professor at the Higher Education Institute of Olinda (IESO). Master in Language Sciences from the Catholic University of Pernambuco (Unicap). Doctoral student in Language Sciences at the Catholic University of Pernambuco (Unicap).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5496-396X>

*Eduardo Barbuio****

Professor of English Language at the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (UFRPE). PhD in Linguistics from the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2891-0095>

*Diana Vasconcelos Lopes*****

Professor of English at the Federal University of Agreste Pernambucano (UFAPE). PhD in Linguistics from the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE).

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-31661170>

Received: 11 aug. 2022. **Approved:** 22 aug. 2022.

How to cite this article:

*

 niege.guedes@ufape.edu.br

**

 manoel.2021800089@unicap.br

 eduardo.barbuio@ufrpe.br

 diana.lopes@ufape.edu.br

GUEDES, Nieve Rocha. OLIVEIRA, Manoel Klebson Andadre. BARBUIO, Eduardo. LOPES, Diana Vasconcelos. Language, racism, power and carnivalization: a dialogic analysis of cartoons. *Revista Letras Raras*. Campina Grande, v. 11, n. 3, p. 73-92, oct. 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8152605>

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate language from a dialogical perspective, as an ideological phenomenon, as a social product and its relationship with those who hold power in social institutions, as it is conditioned by social organizations, which use it to fulfill their socio-ideological interests, presenting an order considered stable by society. We seek to show how some of these interests are questioned and how a new order in the cartoon genre is proposed based on carnivalesque language, which encourages the reader to reflect about its reality. Therefore, 02 cartoons were chosen at random, but which have in common the denunciations of social and racial injustices. We use notions from dialogic theory such as language, context, ideology, dialogic relations, enunciation and carnivalization. The analysis shows that the use of carnivalization makes evident the racism present in society, power relations and, at the same time, the injustices committed by those who hold power in society against minorities, prompting the reader to reflect about these issues and to stand for them.

KEYWORDS: Language; Power; Carnivalization; Racism; Cartoons.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é investigar a linguagem numa perspectiva dialógica, como fenômeno ideológico, enquanto produto social e sua relação com quem detém o poder nas instituições sociais, visto que ela é condicionada pelas organizações sociais, que a utilizam para realização dos seus interesses socioideológicos, apresentando uma ordem considerada estável pela sociedade. Buscamos mostrar como alguns desses interesses são questionados e como é proposta uma nova ordem no gênero charge a partir da linguagem carnavalesca, que incita o leitor a refletir sobre sua realidade. Para tanto, selecionamos duas charges que têm em comum denúncias de injustiças sociais e raciais. Como fundamento para a análise, utilizamos noções da teoria dialógica como linguagem, contexto, ideologia, relações dialógicas, enunciado e carnavalização. A análise mostra que o uso da carnavalização deixa evidente o racismo presente na sociedade, as relações de poder e, ao mesmo tempo, as injustiças cometidas por quem detém o poder na sociedade contra as minorias, instigando o leitor a refletir sobre essas questões e a se posicionar frente a elas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Linguagem; Poder; Carnavalização; Racismo; Charges.

1 Introduction

Language is essentially dialogical, alive in the social environment, and expresses values. The concrete utterance, for example, is full of evaluations. Volóchinov (2019 [1930]) has postulated that everything spoken is ideological, because it is impregnated by the opinions and evaluations of the speaker/listener, so there is no neutrality in discourse. Social interaction gives meaning to the utterance. The sum of experiences, of the experiences with the other, of the daily dialogues determines the linguistic choices and what will be uttered. Bakhtin (2015 [1934-1935]) stated that language is formed and lives in a dialogical environment, that is, in a climate of what has been already said and what has been responded, loaded with ideology, and developed in society.

In the course of this work, we will discuss how statements establish power relations in society, since they are ideological, expressing the values of each social sphere in which speakers are inserted. Furthermore, we will discuss the carnivalization of the cartoon genre, used to

denounce and criticize violence and social injustice, such as the marginalization of people of colour. This carnivalization, expressed in cartoons, in fact expresses a reflection on the social order in the real world, suggesting a paradigm contrary to the factual through criticism present in the genre of the cartoon. Carnavalesque language aims to instigate reflection on the reality experienced by readers, using irony and sarcasm. In addition, this genre denounces economic, social, and political issues considered normal for society, and thus proposes a new way of perceiving these issues.

This study, therefore, leads us to reflect on language in the broadest sense, as an ideological phenomenon, as a social product, in its relationship with power, since it is conditioned by social organization. This language can also question and criticize relations between unequal groups in society and attitudes used by those in power to remain in power. In the case of the cartoons analyzed, the oppression against black people is questioned. Through carnivalization, the cartoons propose a new way of living, different from the current one, and show how unfair and selective society is in the practice of justice.

2 Language and Power

Language has been an attractive topic for study from ancient times to the present day, ever since people became aware that their well-being depends on language; it can also be used to manipulate and keep in power those who are already in power. For this reason, when we talk about power and manipulation in this work, we believe that those in power superimpose their ideology and interests on others.

It is also important to point out that power is considered in this work as the central issue of every society, that is to say who is in charge and who obeys, who gets the privileges and who is abandoned and excluded, as Souza (2019) states. Moreover, this power is legitimized through the discourses of society's political, social, and economic structures, according to Almeida (2019). Returning to the question of language, it is conceived as event, as dialogue.

[Language] functions in different ways depending on the differentiated relation with the extraverbal and the horizon in which it is located or we place it in the reading, being fundamentally heterogeneous. In other words, the use of language units will make sense differently depending on situations, contexts, enunciators, and modes of reception (CUNHA, 2019a, p. 155).¹

¹ Translation by Mercês Carvalheira.

For Bakhtin (2016 [1979], p.44-45), "the word as well as the sentence acquire the ability to establish the speaker's responsive position when they become full utterances." Once determined by the context, these utterances elicit responses because they are framed and delimited by the alternation of the subjects of discourse, reflecting the extraverbal situation. The author points out that "both the word and the sentence as *units of language* are devoid of expressive intonation. If an isolated word is pronounced with expressive intonation, it is no longer a word, but a finished utterance expressed by a word" (emphasis added) (BAKHTIN, 2016 [1979], p. 49). It is the intonation that endows the word with meaning, because intonation is the most flexible and sensitive conductor of social relations. In this way, the utterance represents a social evaluation, as Volóchinov (2019 [1930]) argues.

Moreover, the word is a constantly active and changing medium of dialogic communication, "its life is in the passage from mouth to mouth, from one context to another, from one social group to another, from one generation to another" (BAKHTIN, 2018 [1963], p.232). For this reason, the word already comes to the speaker full of evaluations and voices of others, the author states.

Cunha (2019a) points out that words do not have fixed meanings, because they are subject to a variation of meanings, depending on the communicative situation, intonation, and context, among other factors that may interfere with the meaning. Moreover, the mode of reception also contributes to this variation, since "we do not perceive a discourse as it was produced, because we are singular 'subjects', and there is no coincidence between our backgrounds, affections, values" (CUNHA, 2019a, p. 155-156).

For Bakhtin (2015 [1934-1935]), words are pronounced differently depending on the situation of interaction, the social stratum of the speakers, as well as the socio-ideological and political day (for today and yesterday do not have a common language, argues the author). Bakhtin (2016 [1979]) also states that human attitude is a potential text and can only be understood in the dialogical context of one's own time.

With these ideas, the Russian philosopher presents us with the vision of social language, of dialogical and axiological character, and diverse, opposing the vision of a single language, "a theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization" (BAKHTIN, 2015 [1934-1935], p.39). Importantly, for Cunha (2019a, p.155), dialogue is seen in a very broad sense, "as a confrontation of ideas, constitutive of thought, of social and human knowledge, of understanding, of communication, and of human life."

According to Bakhtin (2015 [1934-1935]), the words of a language are not neutral, because they live and develop in discourse, which always varies in relation to its object. Thus, about the object, the concrete discourse (utterance) is already involved in evaluations, opinions, and accents of others, and enters this "dialogically agitated and tense milieu of others' discourses, evaluations, and accents" (BAKHTIN, 2015 [1934-1935], p.48), moving away from some, crossing with others, to form the foundation of the discourse.

The living utterance, which consciously arose at a given historical moment in a given social milieu, cannot but touch thousands of living dialogical lines wrapped by socio-ideological consciousness around a given object of utterance, cannot but be an active participant in the social dialogue. It is from this that he emerges, from that dialogue, as its continuity, as a replica, and not as if related to it apart (BAKHTIN, 2015 [1934-1935], p.49).²

Thus, the conception of the object of discourse is also dialogical. The speaker is not the first to talk about this object of his or her discourse, which inevitably becomes "a stage of encounter with opinions of immediate interlocutors [...] or with views, worldviews, currents, theories, etc." (BAKHTIN, 2016 [1979], p.61). However, not only the object, but all discourse, says Bakhtin (2015 [1934-1935], p.52), "is geared towards a response and cannot avoid the profound influence of the anticipatory responsive discourse," that is, it always responds to the utterances that preceded it.

What we see, based on the Russian philosopher's ideas, is that we speak from what has already been said, inserting our intentions, taking into account the context. In this way, when we introduce the words of the other in our speech, they are coated with something new, our understanding and our evaluation (BAKHTIN, 2018 [1963]). And although within the same utterance, the sentence is repeated, each time, it will be "a new part of the utterance, because it has changed its place and function in the fullness of the utterance" (BAKHTIN, 2016 [1979], p.79).

Moreover, our understanding is active, as we speak from rejoinders, which stem from the individual work of this interpretation with various re-accentuations. "Responsive interpretation is an essential force that participates in the formation of discourse, and is still an active interpretation, felt by the discourse as resistance or support that enrich it" (BAKHTIN, 2015 [1934-1935], p.54).

Thus, it is important to note that, through language, people become conscious and begin to act and position themselves about the world, revealing individual values and, at the same time, it is shared by social groups, which act based on this point of view. This is why language cannot

² Translation by Mercês Carvalheira.

be seen as something static, but rather as something in constant movement, which is transformed and renewed in every situation that is experienced. These situations are formed and influenced by the moment and the sociocultural process in which they are inserted.

In Bakhtin's (2016 [1979]) conception, the self is built in collaboration, that is, there is a complementarity of views, understandings, and sensibilities between the self and the other. The author's thought revolves around this axis of self and other, and the conception that life is lived at the boundaries between the particularity of our individual experience and the experience of others.

In the discussion about dialogism as constitutive of language, we understand that, in all situations, the context determines the construction and understanding of the discourse, because the historical and social issue is constitutive of the enunciation. In language, one finds "specific points of view about the world, forms of their verbalized understanding, specific concrete-semantic and axiological horizons" (BAKHTIN, 2015 [1934-1935], p.67).

Therefore, the word is ideological³ and, from this perspective, we believe that there will be situations in which, in relations, there will be a greater emphasis of power in the discourse of those who dominate and intend this power (the media, social institutions, etc.) to be recognized.

This type of discourse is called by Bakhtin (2015 [1934-1935]) authoritarian discourse, because it imposes itself on the receiver and does not merge with other discourses, it is only transmitted. For this reason, this type of discourse is not open, like the inwardly persuasive discourse, whose composition is half mine and half the other's, but is closed and is limited to "your word."

With regard to power, Almeida and Oliveira (2016, p.33) state that "words are one of the main instruments of power. Since they are ideological, they serve different communicative purposes, including, as an element of domination of the authorities over the less favoured. Cunha (2017) also points out that words "are the value judgments that determine what to speak, the selection of words and their distribution in the organization of the utterance" (CUNHA, 2017, p.97). From this perspective, we can state that the word is related to life, because it arises from the extraverbal situation and retains with it the closest bond, being "an ideological phenomenon par excellence" (VOLÓCHINOV, 2017 [1929], p.77). In this way, the word is oriented towards an addressee and this addressee exists in a clear social relationship with the speaking subject, who

³ In this paper, ideology is conceived as "the whole set of reflections and refractions in the human brain of social and natural activity, expressed and fixed by man in the word, in artistic and technical design, or in some other sign form" (VOLOCHINOV, 2019 [1930], p.243).

belongs to a specific generation, genre and class, and is someone with more or less power than the speaker, an interlocutor close to or distant from the speaker.

Depending on each context or communicative situation in which the speaker is inserted, the word will be chosen with a greater or lesser "degree of power", that is, adapted to the speaking situation. If it is an easily identifiable asymmetric situation, power will be more evident for the speaker who has greater socio-economic and cultural prestige. This is what happens, for example, in the texts disseminated by mainstream television and internet media, since they often decide which actors and situations will be presented to the public, what will be said about them and how it will be said, what (or who) should or should not be excluded. In an apparently symmetrical relationship, however, it is more difficult to identify this power relationship.

Once the relational and dialogical nature of discourse is evident, the process of power relations must be understood, since discourse is historically constructed and receives strong sociocultural influences that, if not critically understood, can be a powerful weapon of domination.

Human beings as socially constituted individuals are constructed by language. When there is no authentic community of interests, discourses determine the power relations and establish, in a way, the functioning of society. These discourses often circulate in the social media, such as the discourses of/in the press.

The discourses are constituted by sayings in constant interaction, some responding to others, in different genres, without being possible to separate the sources of this uninterrupted dialogue with the actual sayings, of previous times and of different domains (political, economic, cultural etc.). Some are marked and others are hidden in the enunciator's discourse (CUNHA, 2019b, p.54).⁴

Cartoons, for example, use carnivalesque language to dialogue with the factual and, at the same time, criticize and lead the interlocutor to reflect on a certain reality.

3 The Bakhtinian definition of "carnivalization" and the cartoons

In his study of carnivalization in literature, Bakhtin (2018 [1963]) argues for freedom over official discourse and monologic power, although there is a power relationship between discourses. When investigating popular comic literature in the period of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Bakhtin (2010 [1945]) stated that during the medieval period, comic acts, rites, and spectacles

⁴ Translation by Mercês Carvalheira.

occupied an important place in everyday life. They presented a change from the serious official worship forms and ceremonies of the church and feudal state and, at the same time

they offered an entirely different view of the world, of man, and of human relations, deliberately unofficial, outside the church and the state; they seemed to have constructed, alongside the official world, a second world and a second life to which the men of the Middle Ages belonged to a greater or lesser extent, and in which they lived on certain occasions. This created a kind of duality of the world, and we believe that, without taking this into account, neither the cultural consciousness of the Middle Ages nor Renaissance civilization could be understood (emphasis added) (BAKHTIN, 2010 [1945], p.04-05).⁵

With this, carnival, the author states, turns out to be the second life of the people, based on the principle of laughter, a heritage of the people that, unlike the official party,

was the triumph of a kind of temporary liberation from the dominant truth and the prevailing regime, of the temporary abolition of all hierarchical relations, privileges, rules, and taboos" (BAKHTIN, 2010 [1945], p.08).⁶

The Russian philosopher adds that this laughter is modified depending on the historical period in which it is inserted. During the Renaissance, for example, there is the flourishing of grotesque realism, referring to the "unfinishedness of existence" (BAKHTIN, 2010 [1945], p.28). In Romanticism, the laughter principle undergoes a transformation. Bakhtin (2010 [1945], p.33) says that "in the Romantic grotesque laughter is attenuated, and takes the form of humour, irony, and sarcasm. It ceases to be jocular and joyous."

In all these cases, however, the carnivalesque principle, according to Bakhtin (2018 [1963]), abolishes hierarchies, levels the classes, and creates another life, free from conventional rules and restrictions. During carnival, all that is marginalized and excluded, the insane, the scandalous, the random appropriates the centre, in a liberating explosion.

In this period, all barriers, all norms and prohibitions are temporarily suspended, and a new kind of communication is established, based on a free and familiar "contract". It is a period of joy of universal scope, directed at everything and everyone.

According to Bakhtin (2018 [1963]), one lives a life deviated from its usual order, without restrictions therefore, during carnival:

⁵ Translation by Mercês Carvalheira.

⁶ Idem

the hierarchical system and all related forms of fear, reverence, devotion, etiquette, etc., that is, everything that is determined by the hierarchical social inequality and by any other kind of inequality (including age inequality) among men (BAKHTIN, 2018 [1973], p.140), are abrogated first of all.⁷

From this idea, Bakhtin (2018 [1963]) presents four categories about inequality and freedom, the relations between things and their contradictions, represented in this carnival period by life, deviating from the usual order of what has been lived for millennia by the popular mass in Europe.

The first of these is the free contract between people. This distance is eliminated, there is no hierarchy; therefore, freed from any hierarchical power, behaviour, gestures, words, and relations between people are no longer determined by the logic of the non-carnavalesque everyday life.

Eccentricity is the second category presented by the author. It is related to the category of familiar contact and allows hidden aspects of human nature to be revealed and expressed.

Another category, related to familiarization, are the carnival *mésalliances*, in which everything (values, ideas, phenomena, and things) is extended to a free familiar relationship and, in this way, carnival brings together the high and the low, the great and the insignificant, among others.

Finally, the fourth category, which is related to the combination of the sacred and the profane, is the profanation formed by carnival sacrileges, carnival indecencies, carnival parodies of biblical texts, and the play with the symbol of power and other symbols.

These categories, Bakhtin (2018 [1963]) points out, are present in carnivalesque actions, since they indicate change and renewal, the displacement of life from its usual course, and the ambivalence present even in carnivalesque laughter.

Carnavalesque laughter, according to Bakhtin (2018 [1963], p.145), "is directed against the supreme, toward the change of powers and truths, toward the change of the universal order." Carnival laughter⁸ "belongs to the process of change, to the crisis itself" and expresses an opinion about the world.

⁷ Translation by Mercês Carvalheira.

⁸ Laughter will be treated here as "a type of discourse that establishes, instead of certainty, the possibility; instead of the unison, the ambivalent; instead of Manichaeism, the tension and the unstable element" (ALAVARCE, 2009, p.72). Thus, we will consider that laughter appears in the cartoons with the function of

In the various genres that circulate in society, among which the cartoon is included, this irreverence and the inversion of values is often defended by much of the economic elite as correct and better for society, through carnivalesque language, with which one criticizes, laughs, and demonstrates a need for change and renewal in society.

Regarding carnivalesque language, according to Bakhtin (2018 [1963]), it is inherently anarchizing and militates against the rigid systematization imposed by those in power. For the author, the ideological clash is located at the living center of discourse, whether in the form of an artistic text or an everyday conversation. In social discourse, each word is addressed to a specific interlocutor in a specific situation and is subject to distinct pronunciations, intonations, and allusions. The subjects, in turn, are engaged in the game of power, trapped in artificial hierarchies originating in political hegemonies and cultural oppressions.

Taking into consideration these questions about carnivalization, we can say that, in some genres, some authors criticize, ironically⁹ and sarcastically, discourses of those who are in a more privileged hierarchical or financial situation than others, that is, they use a language that corresponds to the carnivalesque language presented by the Russian author. Thus, the cartoonists, for example, highlight not only what is happening in society, but lead the readers to take a position a given situation.

As we analyse the meaning of the cartoons, it is important to note that, although the emphasis given by scholars, when working on text meanings, is almost always on the verbal, the image is fundamental to the construction of meanings. According to Dionisio (2006), image and word maintain an integrated relationship. With the advent of new technologies, new images, new layouts have been created and disseminated to a wide audience. Representation and images

questioning the certainties, the absolute truths, characterizing the carnivalesque laughter in them, that is, the freedom of laughter proposes a discussion about pre-established truths, giving rise to new possibilities of thought. Moreover, we will consider laughter as a political act of denunciation and never opposed to the serious, because, according to Bakhtin (2010, p.105), in the Renaissance, "true ambivalent and universal laughter does not refuse the serious, it purifies and completes it" and "prevents the serious from fixing itself and isolating itself from the unfinished integrity of everyday existence.

⁹ Importantly, according to Brait (2008), irony can be used as a dialogic mechanism of confrontation, defense, and argumentation. In addition, it assists in the unveiling of moral, cultural, and social values of a society. The author points out that irony is only realized when the producer of the irony seeks to draw the attention of the enunciatee in order to have his adherence. It is also relevant to stress that, in the Modern Age, the serious is presented as unfinished in Literature, "fruit of a problem presented whose answers are still under construction," as Calazans (2021, p.101) states, which may have opened space for irony, which, although linked to the comic discourse, is not necessarily funny.

reveal our relations with society and not just forms of expression for the dissemination of information.

Brait (2009) reinforces this idea when he states that, in certain texts, the articulation between verbal and visual elements forms an indissoluble whole. In these texts, according to the author, the verb-visibility is presented as constitutive, making it impossible to exclude either the verbal or the visual. In this case, the verbal and the visual participate with the same strength and importance in the construction of meaning.

With that, Brait (2013, p.44) calls attention to the importance of studies that involve the verbal-visual dimension of an utterance, because verbal and visual language play a constitutive role in the production of senses. According to the author, this had already been pointed out by Bakhtin and the Circle's studies; they brought contributions to a theory of language in general and not only to a theory of verbal language. Thus, verbal and visual sequences define the utterance as a verbal-visual whole, Brait (2013) postulates.

It is also worth noting that images are historical and dependent on technical and aesthetic variables that are part of the historical context of those who produced them and the different worldviews that exist in society, as Mauad (2004) states.

We realize, from these observations, the importance of taking into account the image linked to the verbal text, since non-verbal language is essential to the understanding of various genres. Moreover, the image also speaks for itself, through the colours and gestures of the characters. For this reason, the image is crucial for the proper interpretation of this genre.

To better observe what we have said, we have selected two cartoons that show how power relations in society are associated with colour, hierarchy, and socioeconomic power. These relations are mockingly questioned, and designed to lead the reader to think about the situation in which he or she is inserted and seek a change to that reality.

4 Analysis

The corpus of this paper is part of a larger research project on the denunciation of racism through the genre of cartoons. A random selection of cartoons published at a time when empirical data was being published showing violence against the black population. The methodological approach we adopted is based on Bakhtinian thought about the dialogic nature of language, ideology and carnivalization, as well as on the work of some theorists who have analysed the

verbal-visual dimension of language. The theoretical notions were defined by the corpus itself, since it is the corpus that raised them and, consequently, determined procedures for our discussions.

For this analysis, we selected two cartoons that showed how criticism of racism is present in an ironic and sarcastic way in this discursive genre, and how this problem is associated with colour and hierarchy. We examine how these relations are questioned, through a carnivalized language, leading the reader to reflect on the situation criticized by the cartoonist.

In the examples selected, the cartoons show poor black persons as the main victims of violence and, consequently, of the State, which is not responsible for their protection. In fact, this violence remains in society and, in almost every moment, we allow black people to be treated differently from white people, not allowing equality among all.

To understand the language in this genre, it is necessary to take into account the context and the medium of circulation in which it was published. Cartoon (1)¹⁰ was published on the ponte.org website on June 6, 2017, with the title "Blacks are the biggest victims of violence." It comes in a context in which the result of a study entitled "Atlas of Violence 2017: blacks and young people are the biggest victims¹¹" appeared on the CartaCapital website. The article highlights the Atlas of Violence 2017, released by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Ipea) and the Brazilian Public Safety Forum, which reveals that men, young people, blacks and people with low education are the main victims of violent deaths in the country. The black population corresponds to the majority (78.9%) of the 10% of individuals most likely to be homicide victims.

On the Exame magazine website, we also found a report: "Brazil had record homicides in 2017; blacks are the most affected"¹². In the year 2017, Brazil reached the highest rate of violent deaths in a decade, with 65,602 homicides recorded in the 26 states plus the Federal District. The figures are from the new edition of the Atlas of Violence, released in 2017, based on the Ministry of Health's System of Information released on mortality. Both Carta Capital and Exame publish data from the Atlas of Violence in Brazil.

Figure 1: Charge by Junião - ponte.org

¹⁰ Available at: <https://ponte.org/charge-negros-sao-as-maiores-vitimas-da-violencia/>. Accessed on: 08/23/2021.

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/sociedade/atlas-da-violencia-2017-negros-e-jovens-sao-as-maiores-vitimas/>. Accessed on: 08/23/2021.

¹² Available at: <https://exame.com/brasil/brasil-teve-recorde-de-homicidios-em-2017-negros-sao-os-mais-afetados/>. Accessed on: 08/23/2021.



Source: Ponte Journalism¹³

In this first cartoon, we observe through the image that the mothers apparently belong to the same social class (indicated by their simple clothes, the fact that both are not in a car and are probably going to work), but their speech reveals that they have different concerns. It is evident that these concerns are different because they are related to white and black people, who receive different treatment in society, something considered "common" for many people in Brazil, since, commonly, white people are seen as workers and black people as outcasts.

We can also observe that both the verbal and the visual are important for the understanding of the meaning of the text, and define the statement as a verbal-visual whole. Without the colours and without the words in the block above the image (which states that blacks are the biggest victims of violence) and the mothers' words (which show different concerns about their children) - we would not be able to understand the criticism made by the cartoonist. Furthermore, it is evident how the colour of the skin is a crucial factor in the experience of citizenship.

In view of this, we notice that carnivalization is present in the black mother's speech, because at the moment she says goodbye to her son, she asks him to return home alive from work, unlike the white-skinned mother's wish for her son. This highlights the irony of the life of people with different skin colours in the same society that the cartoonist thinks should treat everyone in a similar way, but it does not.

In this way, the cartoon illustrates the daily danger faced by a young black man. In a simple farewell from his mother, we find a tone of denunciation of what is expected to happen to the black population, being victimized and exterminated in the most absurd cases of prejudice. The cartoon, which ironically brings voices of denunciation against the less favoured, denounces a situation that

¹³ Negros são as maiores vítimas da violência = Blacks are the greatest victims of violence

Tchau, filho! Bom trabalho e volta logo para casa! = Bye, son! Have a good work and come home soon!

Tchau, filho! Bom trabalho e volta vivo! = Bye, son! Have a good work and come back alive!

does not favour black people. Despite laws and restrictions that criminalize racism, that are designed to protect a peaceful and respectful life in society, these prohibitions are violated daily.

The carnivalization that appears through irony as depicted in this cartoon, denounces the marginalization of some groups in society (in this instance, blacks), but tries to invert the social reality of this group, pointing out that there is an important segment of society that is marginalized, separated from other groups, excluded from society and persecuted by it. Irony, therefore, is used as a strategy by the cartoonist to promote subversion of the established "order", as well as an instrument of social criticism and denunciation of the injustices committed against blacks.

We realize that the carnivalization present in the cartoon genre allows the notion of a reversal of values, as image and word merge to show a reality, leading the reader to reflect on the factual and to a possible reaction, from an event, that may cause a change in this reality. In the case of cartoon 1, the cartoon depicts the different expectations of the mothers based on the colour of their sons and their experience with unequal treatment in society....

We also observe that, among the four categories present in carnival, the distance between people is eliminated, because the cartoonist's evaluative position is free from any hierarchical position and the usual order. The cartoonist denounces that different treatment of whites and blacks, and that this treatment probably comes from people who suffer from their position in the social hierarchy. In addition, we notice the presence of carnival *mésalliance* with the familiarization of values and ideas, based on the criticism of the attitudes of those who are hierarchically in power. We also understand that there is carnival eccentricity in the cartoon, since the cartoonist criticizes what is commonly accepted in society - black people suffer violence daily -, leading the reader to reflect on a possible change of the usual.

Regarding the carnivalesque laughter, which belongs to the process of change, we notice that this laughter appears as mockery, as irony, as a conception of world change. Through this irony, this criticism made in the cartoon, people become aware of the two worlds in which those who oppress and those who are oppressed - usually poor black people - live. In this way, the carnivalization present in the cartoon incites an awareness on the part of society to the injustices committed against blacks, from the moment society understands its reality.

The language present in the cartoon also highlights values present in society, through points of view. The oppressions of race are demonstrated and, with this, the cartoonist seeks to promote rapprochement between different actors in society for the survival of black people. It is clear the intention of the cartoonist is to criticize the injustices committed against blacks, at the

same time responding to the data concerning violence in the country, dialoguing with other social voices, which have the same concern when faced with this type of social atrocity. If language only makes sense when considered in the context in which it was produced, the verbal-visual enunciations of the cartoon clearly present the theme of violence that has become commonplace in citizens' daily lives.

Moreover, we observe that the cartoon has the purpose of commenting on and positioning itself in a condensed way with respect to contemporary facts and establishing the discursive relationship between events. In this case, although this cartoon (1) was published at a time when data on violence in Brazil were released, it addresses a theme that is still current in society, which leads us to believe that often, depending on the theme, cartoons are timeless and can serve in other contexts. In the case of racism, we see that nothing (or almost nothing) has changed over the years. This cartoon shows how the colour of the skin is a crucial factor in the experience of citizenship and in the problems for black and mixed race people in Brazil.

The dialogic relations with other discourses that demonstrate the atrocities against blacks are also present in cartoon (2).

Figure 2:



Source: <http://www.ccms.saude.gov.br/igualdaderacialnosus/charges.php#>

The cartoon (2) was published in 2010 on the website www.ccms.saude.gov.br and appears next to a report with news that the homicide rate of the black population was 35.9 for every 100 thousand blacks. The homicide rate of whites, on the other hand, was 15 for every 100 thousand whites in the same year. This site, a presentation on racial equality within SUS, has several posts against racism defending freedom and highlighting the chronology of the black movement in the world.

In this charge, the image depicts black people who are victims of violence, which is confirmed by what is written on the headstone along with the speech of the victim's wife who, along with her small children. It is a protest against the violent action of those who should have just

questioned the citizen (implying, by the word "interrogation", some level of police), but because he was black and poor, he was killed by those who ironically were supposed to protect him.

The image also depicts the half-naked, barefoot black children together with their mother, complementing the verbal text, which indicates the socioeconomic situation of the family. Once again, the reading of the visual-verb is essential to the understanding of the statement and refers us to a reality that is sarcastically presented in the cartoon.

The carnivalization is revealed through an irony that involves an inversion of what should occur in reality: the black citizen did not die in a robbery, something common in society, but died in an interrogation, probably carried out by those who should take care of his safety. In this way, the violence against black people is shown and criticized through the images and by what the characters say, since they portray the relationship between the oppressed, victims of constant violence, and the oppressors, who assume power in society: the white, the rich, and the institutions that make up the country, and even by their "equals", poor and black policemen.

Once again, we see that the carnivalization present in the cartoon genre allows for the notion of a reversal of values: image and word merge to sarcastically show a reality. This enables the reader to analyse reality and fight for change. In the case of charge (2), the change is related to the policemen's behaviour and the awareness of who the interrogating authorities are and how they should proceed with black and poor people.

We observe once again that, among the four categories present in carnival, the distance between people is eliminated, as the cartoonists position themselves axiologically, free from any hierarchical position and the usual order. The cartoonist denounces the actions of those who are hierarchically superior in society, in their cowardly actions and acts of violence against the poor black man because he feels superior. We also notice that carnival eccentricity is present in cartoon (2), as the author criticizes what is commonly accepted, leading the reader to reflect on a possible change of what is commonly accepted: police violence against the poor black man.

As far as carnival laughter is concerned, which belongs to the process of change, again this laughter appears as mockery, as irony, as a conception of world change: the humiliation of the one who humiliates the black is mocked, something usual in society, but which can and should be changed. Thus, from this irony, and from the criticism made in the cartoons, people become aware of the reality in which they live; moreover, the oppressor's authoritarian and prejudiced attitudes are denounced and criticized. Therefore, the carnivalization present in the cartoons provokes a reaction, an understanding of situations of injustice present in society.

Thus, we can say that the two cartoons dialogue by the tone of denunciation that they assume against the atrocities committed against black people. The tone is demonstrated by what the statements of the cartoon affirm, making evident the values expressed both in the cartoon and in the publications in general of the site in which it is found. We also note the dialogic line that reveals the anti-racist conscience of the Unified Health System (SUS), since the charge appeared in a moment of tension between the voices of the police authorities and the black population.

We also notice how power is legitimized through political, social and economic structures of society, since the action of the police force against blacks is evident, reinforcing the idea, in the two cartoons analysed here, that the subjects are engaged in the game of power, inserted in political hierarchies and social and cultural oppressions.

The purpose of cartoon (2) is to satirize and criticize police violence against black people, through verbal and visual means, inseparable from intonation, affect, and values, making it evident how the intonation helps us reflect on racism and its consequences. Again, we see how this verbal-visual relationship contributes to the understanding of the meaning of the text, which sarcastically highlights the reality of the poor black man in Brazil. This carnivalization, in fact, expresses a reflection on the order in the real world, suggesting an order contrary to the event criticized through intonation.

The language used in the cartoon, therefore, assumes a tone of denunciation against racism, since it is ideological. And even though the cartoonist is aware that policemen may treat in a different ways the people being questioned (because the position the police occupy justifies their actions, including an element of domination), the cartoonist uses carnivalesque language to reveal society's contradiction in accepting the policemen's attitude. Thus, the authors of the cartoons end up assuming a position that is inseparable from their ideologies and value judgments.

Final remarks

In the two cartoons analysed, we observe that even today blacks suffer some kind of violence from the police, or may suffer for being black, and not only for being poor. Besides the action against blacks, the cartoons denounce, through a carnivalesque, ironic and sarcastic language, the difference in treatment given by the police and other authorities to whites and to blacks.

Thus, injustice, cultural oppression, violence, and the day-to-day anguish of black people, among other things, are evidenced through verbal and visual language. This characterises carnivalesque language, since by exposing and criticizing situations of violence, it also indirectly claims a change in the social structure and the way it has built and maintains social and power relations among members of society.

One can see that, even though the State guarantees the rights of every citizen to education, health, and safety, clearly, for the black population, these rights are not assured, since they are the ones who suffer the most from the attitude of the authorities, who should take care that these rights are guaranteed.

We find in the cartoons analysed a satire of social and current situations that is designed to arouse public interest for discussion and action. In this way, the alarming situation of violence against the black population is made explicit and can contribute to the awareness of the political authorities and the entire population in general.

In this way, what is considered "normal" for society, such as police violence against black people, can be rethought. Through the carnivalesque language, one can militate against the power of the oppressor, and, at the same time, reveal the social injustices and the possibility of change, as seen in the reflections above. We can say, then, that the study of these injustices through the language of the cartoon is of fundamental importance to raise awareness of how some discourses are elaborated in favour of dominant groups in society and others to combat this domination.

This discourse in the cartoons is not randomly elaborated, it is a response to what has already been constructed as normality by the discourse of groups that are in a more favourable situation within the hierarchical and socioeconomic point of view in society. Therefore, it is necessary that we know how to interpret cartoons critically, without the naive idea that discourse is not endowed with intentionality, but that all of it is related to power, the power of those who dominate and those who want to continue dominating. In this case, the cartoons criticize the racist discourse and attitudes that are considered normal, but that generate violent attitudes against black people.

Above all, it is important that we be aware that this language associated with power can be deconstructed, through a carnivalesque language, for example, which denounces injustices, abolishes hierarchies, as well as defends freedom of expression, a dignified life, and equality among citizens, so that equality among citizens, so that society can think about these issues and about the possibility of building a more equal society for all, regardless of colour and race.

The carnival worldview "determines fundamental particularities and places image and word in a special relationship with reality," says Bakhtin (2018, p.122). The cartoon genre, therefore, in which image and word merge to show a reality using sarcasm, can lead the reader to reflection on the factual and to a possible reaction to an event, which will enable a change in the reality in which he is inserted.

CRediT
Acknowledgement: Not applicable.
Financing: Not applicable.
Conflicts of interest: The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
Ethical Approval: Not applicable..
Contributor Roles: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing –review & editing: GUEDES, Niedege Rocha. Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing –review & editing: OLIVEIRA, Manoel Klebson Andadre. Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing –review & editing: BARBUIO, Eduardo. Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing –review & editing: LOPES, Diana Vasconcelos.

Reference

ALAVARCE, Camila da Silva. *A ironia e suas refrações: um estudo sobre a dissonância na paródia e no riso*. São Paulo: Cultura Acadêmica, 2009.

ALMEIDA, J. M; OLIVEIRA, A. M. o poder da palavra: Linguagem, Ideologia e Educação. *Revista Húmus*. v. 6, n. 16, 2016. Disponível em: <http://www.periodicoeletronicos.ufma.br/index.php/revistahumus/article/view/4671#:~:text=A%20palavra%20pode%20ter%20diversos,a%20constru%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20da%20exist%C3%A2ncia%20humana>.

ALMEIDA, S. *Racismo estrutural*. São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro; Pólen, 2019.

BAKHTIN, M. *Teoria do romance I: a estilística*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2015 [1934-1935].

BAKHTIN, M. *A cultura popular na Idade Média: o contexto de François Rabelais*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2010 [1945].

BAKHTIN, M. *Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski*. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária, 2018 [1963].

BAKHTIN, M. *Os gêneros do discurso*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2016 [1979].

- BRAIT, B. *Ironia em perspectiva polifônica*. 2ª ed. Campina: Unicamp, 2008.
- BRAIT, Beth. *A palavra mandioca do verbal ao verbo-visual*. Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, v.1, n.1, p.142-160, 1º sem. 2009.
- BRAIT, Beth. *Olhar e ler: verbo-visualidade em perspectiva dialógica*. Bakhtiniana, São Paulo, 8 (2): 43-66, Jul./Dez. 2013.
- CALAZANS, Janaina de Holanda Costa. *O gênero das últimas questões: os quadrinhos de Mafalda e a menipeia*. 2021. Tese (Doutorado em Ciências da Linguagem). Universidade Católica de Pernambuco, Recife, 2021.
- CUNHA, D. A. C. Vozes e poder no telejornal: o funcionamento do discurso reportado no jornal nacional da rede globo. *Linha D'Água (Online)*, São Paulo, v. 30, n. 1, p. 89-114, jun. 2017. <http://www.revistas.usp.br/linhadagua/article/view/128319/133040>.
- CUNHA, D. A. C. Linguagem, diálogo, ponto de vista, interpretação: uma leitura de artigos de opinião. In: BRAIT, Beth; PISTORI, Maria Helena Cruz; FRANCELINO, Pedro Farias (orgs.). *Linguagem e conhecimento* (Bakhtin, Volóchinov, Medviédev). Campinas: Pontes Editores, 2019a. p.153-181.
- CUNHA, D. A. C. O outro no discurso: representação e circulação. In: DE PAULA L. e STAFUZZA G. *Círculo de Bakhtin: concepções em construção*. Campinas: Mercado de Letras, 2019b. p.53-78.
- DIONÍSIO, A. P. Gêneros multimodais e multiletramento. In: KARWOSKI, A. M.; GAYDECZKA, B.; & BRITO, K. S. (Orgs.). *Gêneros textuais: reflexões e ensino*. Rio de Janeiro: Lucerna, 2006.
- MAUAD, A. M. Fotografia e história: possibilidade de análise. In: CIAVATTA, M. & ALVES, Nilda (org.). *A leitura de imagens na pesquisa social: história, comunicação e educação*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2004.
- SOUZA, J. *A elite do atraso: da escravidão a Bolsonaro*. Rio de Janeiro: Estação Brasil, 2019.
- VOLOCHINOV, V. N. *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem. Problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem*. Tradução, notas e glossário Sheila Grillo e Ekaterina, Vólkova Américo. São Paulo, Editora 34, 2017 [1929].
- VOLOCHINOV, V. *A palavra na vida e a palavra na poesia: ensaios, artigos, resenhas e poemas*. Org., trad., ensaio introdutório e notas de Sheilla Grillo e Ekaterina Vólkova Américo – São Paulo: Editora 34, 2019 [1930].