GENDER, ANIMATION CURRICULUMS AND THE PRODUCTION OF COUNTERCONDUCT

GÊNERO, CURRÍCULOS DE ANIMAÇÃO E A PRODUÇÃO DE CONTRACONDUTAS

GÉNERO, CURRÍCULOS DE ANIMACIÓN Y LA PRODUCCIÓN DE CONTRACONDUCTA

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ABSTRACT: This article is based on Cultural Studies, Post-Critical Theories, Foucauldian, Curriculum and Gender studies. With that in mind, we aim to build an articulation between the curriculum present in the cartoon The Owl House and the production of gender-related counterconducts throught the analyzed scenes. We sought, through a state of the art, to locate what had already been produced about gender and cartoons and from what was found, we traced new routes that led us to choose The Owl House for analysis. With the cartoon defined, we used the filmography for analysis to choose the scenes to be analyzed, based on a dialogue with Judith Butler and other authors, we concluded that The Owl House questions the norms and inserts other subjects and different ways of existing.

KEYWORDS: Animation. Counterconducts. Curriculum. Cultural Studies. Gender.

RESUMO: Este artigo tem como base os Estudos Culturais, as Teorias Pós-Críticas, os estudos Foucaultianos, de Currículo e de Gênero. Com isso em mente, objetivamos construir uma articulação entre o currículo presente no desenho animado "A Casa Coruja" e a produção de contracondutas relacionadas a gênero através das cenas analisadas. Buscamos por meio de um estado da arte localizar o que já havia sido produzido sobre gênero e desenhos animados e a partir do que foi encontrado, traçamos novas rotas que nos levaram a escolher para análise o desenho animado A Casa Coruja. Com o produto audiovisual definido, utilizamos da filmografia para escolher as cenas a serem analisadas, a partir de um diálogo com Judith Butler e outros autores. Concluímos que A Casa Coruja questiona as normas e insere sujeitos outros e modos diversos de existir.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Animação. Contracondutas. Currículo. Estudos Culturais. Gênero.

RESUMEN: Este artículo está basado en los Estudios Culturales, las Teorías Poscríticas y los esdudios Foucaultianos, Curriculares y de Género. En ese sentido, pretendemos construir una articulación entre el currículo presente em lo dibujo animado La Casa Búho y la producción de contraconductas de género a través de las escenas analizadas. Buscamos a través de um estado del arte, ubicar lo que ya se había producido sobre género y dibujos animados, a partir de lo encotrado, trazamos nuevas rutas que nos llevaron a elegir lo dibujo La Casa Búho para el análisis. Con el dibujo definido, utilizamos la filmografía de análisis para elegir las escenas a analizar, a partir de un diálogo con Judith Butler y otros autores, concluímos que La Casa Búho cuestiona las normas e inserta otros sujetos y formas diferentes de existir.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Animación. Contraconductas. Currículum. Estudios Culturales. Género.

Introduction

The present work is inspired by Cultural Studies and post-critical theories of the curriculum, based on the interest in investigating the possibilities that cross cartoons and the understanding that the curriculum is a cultural artifact that can assume different forms and pedagogies, being present in several places besides the school (PARAÍSO, 2010). That said, Paraíso (2016, p. 408) points out that in curricula "resistance is the creation of possibilities, as it is an agency force that transforms and founds other and new relationships". Therefore, I understand the post-critical theories of the curriculum as a cradle for resistance and its possibilities, as these theories seek to cover cultural, racial, ethnic, gender and sexuality issues and rely on narratives that seek to insert historical and political placements in the curricula. involved in the conception of identities and differences linked to power relations. Therefore, through cultural studies and post-critical theories, we seek to expand the notion of curriculum beyond that present in the school, because, despite being an expressive device for the government, the school is not the only place that transmits forms of being and knowledge.

From the understandings of Hall (1992, 1997) and Kellner (2001, 2011) we observe the cultural revolutions and the explosion of media culture in the 20th century, in which media and technology now occupy positions of domination, since became the main means of communication and circulation of cultures and various cultural artifacts. In this way, we observe that the media culture crosses us from the contents disclosed in the media and that bring with them different discourses, often helping in the construction of our identities and what is socially accepted, because we are bombarded daily by this culture and by such speeches coming from the media.

When thinking about the media, we observe that "the dominant means of information and entertainment are a deep and often unnoticed source of cultural pedagogy" (KELLNER, 2001, p. 10, our translation). These are responsible for teaching us ways of being and subjectivation that reflect the values and beliefs present in society. Therefore, we understand that children and adolescents learn about ways of being a woman, a man, good or bad, moral or immoral beyond the school territory due to the explosions of images and sounds that are present outside the school.

This explosion of media culture contributed to the emergence of new research objects in Cultural Studies. Therefore, cultural artifacts can be an object for analysis, thus, artifacts such as the curriculum itself, cartoons, movies, music, television programs, books and others can be chosen for analysis from Cultural Studies (PARAÍSO, 2004).

In view of this, what was understood as a curriculum was modified from the debates on culture and society arising from Cultural Studies, thus, we understand culture as a production of social relations, as it is in the midst of power relations, which means the existence of a culture that is selected to be the "normal culture", while there are others that are left aside because they are not related to the groups that exercise power. So, the curriculum can be

> seen as a cultural practice, a practice of production and transmission of meanings; a space for representations of social and cultural groups [...] made up of cultures, of ways of understanding the social world, of producing and attributing meaning to it (PARAÍSO, 2004, p. 57, our translation).

In this way, we understand that other artifacts can produce and convey representations of certain social behaviors, so soap operas, movies, comics, cartoons, series and others can end up regulating us in some way (RAEL, 2020). In view of this, we understand that cartoons are widely circulated curricula, which carry different discourses and legitimize truths.

Cardoso (2016) states that the subjectivities seen in cartoons lead children to recognize themselves with the way of being present there, because, when covered by the constituent discourses of these subjectivities, the government of conduct is established around what is and what which is not considered a behavior of being a man or being a woman. Therefore, depending on the imposed demarcation, some children and adolescents will embrace such a discourse, while others will move away because they do not fit in with what that conduct preaches.

By understanding designs as curricula, we also understand them as constructs of gender norms. Therefore, we share the understanding of gender, such as Cardoso and Nascimento (2017, p. 251, our translation) as being

> a socio-historical-cultural construction, that is, beyond a biologically established condition through male or female sex. It is constituted in social relations when sexual characteristics gain meaning and representativeness, becoming an element of the historical process and may vary depending on the culture of the space where each subject is inserted.

When investigating cartoons, we can observe that they have different meanings. Because, Giroux (1998, p. 50, our translation) observes that "the individual and collective identities of children and young people are largely shaped, politically and pedagogically, in the popular visual culture of videogames, television, cinema [...]" and this becomes visible when we observe that there is a constant concern to control, monitor and build these children and young people, whether at school, in their forms of leisure, how they dress and how they interact

with each other, because, "we are all urged to remain in the territory of the gender to which we were assigned at birth" (LOURO, 2017, p. 77, our translation). From an early age, gender and sex regulatory norms are present in our lives and are continually repeated and reiterated to forge our bodies and compulsorily instill in them the heterosexual norm, which is considered normal (BUTLER, 2015).

Therefore, sex is seen as a "regulatory ideal", because, according to Butler (2015, p. 153-154, our translation) it

> not only works as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs, that is, every regulatory force manifests itself as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate, circulate, differentiate – the bodies she controls.

From the understanding of power through Foucault (2010), it is understood that it is not something that is centralized in a single person or group that exercises it over others, but that power is something that spreads and crosses the most diverse levels social. Still according to Foucault, power is not only repressive, but also productive, as it creates articulations between knowledge and power that act in the production of diverse subjects.

Power is also present in the curriculum and this is an environment of constant disputes, in which ways of being, of conducting and behaving are present, because in it are reproduced knowledge and meanings that make us what we are. In the curriculum field, government is understood as ways of conducting the conduct of oneself and others. Still according to Foucault's thought, where there is power there is also resistance, and due to this it is never outside power, thus, when we find ways to express ourselves to the point of breaking with the behavior of the governed, we refuse to being conducted in the same way as others and this "fight against the procedures put in place to lead others" was what Foucault (2008, p. 266) called counter-conduct.

Subjectivity is understood here as something that is produced "by different discourses, by power relations and by the relationships that the subject establishes with himself and with others" (SILVA; PARAÍSO, 2012, p. 4, our translation). Still according to Paraíso (2006, p. 101, our translation) the strategies and practices that lead individuals to "relate with themselves and with others as subjects of a certain type" are understood as modes of subjectivation and, in this process, it *is* established the government of subjects through subtle techniques.

De Melo (2020) understands that it is through these techniques that behaviors are shaped and established in the standards of the norm. Consequently, there are cartoons that reiterate the dominant norms of society through their conduct. However, there are also those who flee these

norms and propagate diversity by breaking standards, as they struggle to have other ways of being led and following paths that lead them to new paths and inventions.

According to Ellsworth (2001), every media product has addressing issues linked to it, and cartoons are no different. That said, it is necessary to understand how the addressing mode works, and according to the author, it is enough just to ask ourselves: who does this cartoon think you are? In this reflective exercise, it is possible to analyze how such curricula perceive diversity, desire specific genres and produce subjectivations of certain types. Because, like other media products, drawings are also made for someone and with some intention. They "challenge us to assume our place on the screen, so that we identify with some positions and dismiss others" (FABRIS, 2008, p. 118, our translation).

According to Silva (2008), when we understand that subjectivity is constructed from different social relationships, we are able to interrogate and observe how children and adolescents have been polished. In this context, is it interesting to analyze cartoons to find out which discourses on gender are present in them? Which subjects and identities are being formed, represented and produced by them? To whom are these drawings addressed? We need to understand that such media products are not just ludic entertainment, but are also the field of circulation of various representations, often not questioned, as these educational processes that occur from the drawings have "subtle and refined strategies of naturalization that need to be recognized and problematized" (MEYER, 2020, p. 19, our translation). Considering such questions, we propose as the main guiding objective: To analyze the cartoon as a curriculum that produces counter-conducts and other ways of being from the gender perspective.

Methodology

This is qualitative research that uses Cultural Studies and the freedom of post-critical methodologies to expand the cartoons addressed to children and youth, in order to investigate the curricula that they can externalize. Inspired by Paraíso (2014), we launched ourselves into the post-critical methodology because it is freer and allows flexibility that other methodologies would not allow, since research is driven by our questions, inquiries and the problems we formulate along the way. traversed in search of answers. However, it is important to remember that in post-critical methodologies, although we are always creating our own methodology, we can use already known investigative procedures and practices, but it is important to emphasize that we should not be trapped by these practices.

The research methodology is divided into two parts, the first being a state of the art, because, according to Romanowski and Ens (2006), this type of survey brings important contributions and systematizes what has already been produced in a given research area. Thus, serving our purpose of locating what has already been done and analyzed in the area of gender studies regarding cartoons. This search was carried out with the intention of excluding from the analysis stage the materials already used by other authors, since, when working with counter-conducts, we thought it would be interesting to bring cartoons that have not yet been analyzed to be discussed during the research.

The searches were carried out on the following platforms: Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations, Google Scholar, Portal de Periódicos da CAPES and Scientific Electronic Library Online and at the end of the searches we found a total of 14,362 texts, but, due to the descriptors and inclusion criteria, only 56 of these works were selected. The results of these searches can be seen in the table below:

Table 1 - Search results on platforms

Platforms Used	Texts Found	Reading of Abstracts	In-depth Reading	Excluded	Selected
BDTD	248	248	12	233	10
Google Scholar	13660	310	95	13620	40
Capes periodicals	446	446	5	441	5
SciELO	8	8	2	7	1
Total	14362	1012	114	14306	56

Source: Elaborated by the author

The high number of initial texts is due to the fact that even when selecting Gender Relations as a keyword in the search engines, many of the works found referred to the animation genre or to other literary genres.

To arrive at the results, we used the following pairs as descriptors: Gender Relations and Animations; Gender Relations and Cartoons and, finally, Gender Relations and Films. As inclusion criteria, we used: title, abstract or keyword that were related to the theme of gender relations and cartoons, or CVs. In addition, the texts should have been published within a period of 15 years and they should have free access. And, as an exclusion criterion, we used: duplicate publications, or that did not deal with gender relations, or that did not follow the inclusion criteria.

With the search completed, we began the analyzes themselves and the 56 texts were divided into three categories. Based on the descriptors that were used in their searches, at the

end of the analyses, we observed that, of the 56 works, only two resembled something like this research that is under development. The first being the dissertation entitled "Childhood in animated films: power, government and subjectivation of children" defended in 2008 by Maria Carolina da Silva, in which the author thinks of animated films as curricula and through her analyzes from the films *Toy Story* (1995), *Monster Inc.* (2001), *Finding Nemo* (2003) and *The Incredibles* (2004), questions what types of subjects are being formed by these curricula, as well as what subjectivities are present in these films, in addition to think about how childhood is placed in these cultural artifacts and how children's artifacts have been produced in the same way.

The other work found is the 2016 article entitled "Gender Relations, science and technology in the curriculum of animation films", by Lívia de Rezende Cardoso, in which the author sought to analyze the gender relations present in the films "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" (I and II) through the scientific-technological discourse and could observe the production of different positions of male and female subjects in science. We believe it is valid to say that both works were used as a reference and inspiration for the theme and development of this research.

With the works chosen and analyzed, we selected the cartoon *The Owl House* produced in 2020 by *Disney.* Below is the promotional poster for the drawing, in which we can see the three main characters: Luz, the human, Eda, the owl woman and King, the demon.

Figure 1 – Promotional Poster – The Owl House

Source: Reproduction/Disney

Filmography for Analysis is a methodology developed by Fabris (2008) which consists of the process of selecting the material for analysis based on the questioning of the research. through the state of the art. Then, the material is watched several times in order to create sheets for later selection of excerpts that will be used for the analyses. It was also used what Fischer (2002) discusses about the "media pedagogical device", a concept created from Foucault's concepts of "sexuality device" and "modes of subjectivation", allowing us to think about the way that the media operates in the production of subjects and subjectivities from the images, meanings and sounds present in cartoons.

We also share the idea of Fabris (2008) that cartoons and other media products should be seen beyond entertainment and pedagogical material, since they are systems of meaning and, while they entertain us, they develop pedagogies and teach us ways of life. The investigation that uses cartoons as empirical material is able to progress in different ways, since the analysis is based on the discourses, marks and meanings produced by them.

Still according to Fischer (2002), the pedagogical device of the media is discursive and non-discursive in a parallel way, because, in the same way that it produces discourses and knowledge, it is also a web of practices of production, transmission and consumption of television. open, cinema and streaming services that move towards the discourse of the self, and that aim at the production of knowledge about the subject and ways of being present in that society. In this way, we analyze the cartoon, *The Owl House* (2020), as a curriculum crossed

by discourses, which demand multiple gender subjectivities, which challenge norms and which address other ways of constituting oneself as subjects.

Development

Seeking to better present and contextualize *The Owl House* (2020), we thought of briefly introducing what the cartoon is about and some pertinent facts behind its creation. *The Owl House* was an American cartoon produced by *Disney* between the years 2020 and 2022 and had an age range of 10 years or more. It was created and directed by Dana Terrace, a 33-year-old bisexual woman and the fourth woman to produce an animated series for the company. In *The Owl House* (2020), we are invited to follow the adventures of Luz Noceda, the human who ends up going through a portal and ends up in the Boiling Islands, a fantasy land inhabited by witches and demons. The cartoon features several LGBTQIA+ characters, including the main character, Luz Noceda, who is the first bisexual protagonist to appear in a *Disney* cartoon. And also won the 2020 *Peabody Award – Stories that Matter,* for being responsible for creating an imaginary world that has become a space that welcomes and embraces *queer children*.

Next, we bring some glimpses of thoughts that came up with the drawing and what could be understood from them. In the first episode, entitled "A Lying Witch and a Guardian" we are introduced to Luz Noceda, a human teenager, the witch Eda and her demon King and the Scalded Isles, a magical dimension. From some situations that happen to Luz throughout the episode, we seek an initial dialogue with the author Judith Butler.

Luz Noceda ends up in the Boiling Islands for being a teenager who is considered weird and for being a student who causes discomfort to the other students at the school she attended in the human world. Soon, Luz was a student who deviated from the norm desired by the school, and her mother was called because the school's investments to produce a schooled and disciplined body were not working as desired (LOURO, 2015). Because of this, Luz's mother decides to send her to spend her summer vacation at Camp Reality Check, a camp where teenagers literally learn to think inside the box and think about things considered normal by society.

There's a scene where her mother is going to work and Luz is waiting for the bus to go to camp and it's in that short period of time that her favorite fantasy book is stolen by an owl and she follows her to an abandoned house and that's why Luz ends up on the Boiling Islands. Arriving on the Islands, Luz meets Eda and King and decides that he will help them recover a

powerful artifact from King, which was seized by the guards and is trapped inside the Conformatorium. An interesting point is that the name Conformatorium comes from the verb to conform, which according to the Portuguese Online Dictionary (CONFORMAR, 2023), means: to accommodate, submit to circumstances or something. Below we can see an image of the facade of the Conformatorium.

It is through the scenes that take place in the Conformatorium, described by the character Eda as "a place for those who are incorrect for society", that is, there is in this magical world a prison for beings who, in the eyes of society, are not correct and are outside. norms, and who therefore must be arrested to serve as an example and be conformed through forms of torture.

Figure 2 – The Conformatorium

Source: Playback/ *Disney+*

After infiltrating the Conformatorium, Luz and King find some prisoners, who were simply arrested for doing different things. Like the girl who liked to write fanfics about food in love with each other, a demon who liked to eat her eyes and the little conspiracy monster who spouts conspiracy theories wherever she goes. When listening to the reasons why the prisoners were arrested, Luz realizes that they were arrested simply because they were different, just like her, and therefore decides that she will release them.

In one of the scenes, the Guardian of Evil can be seen talking about torture being a lesson for these prisoners who are seen as weird and excluded, because there is no place for them to fit into the current norms of society, unless it is like form of regulation of what is considered different, abject, which must be punished, excluded and used as a way of reiterating the normal subject of society in the Boiling Islands.

Figure 3 – Montage with speeches by the character Guardian of Evil

Source: Elaborated by the author

Based on the understanding of Butler (2015, p. 154, our translation) that "bodies never completely conform to norms", since norms constantly need citations and acknowledgments for them to be exercised and due to this, we perceive their character performative, we think of the Conformatorium as a key piece for the materialization of bodies within the dominant norm of this world, since it has the power to reiterate the discourse considered normal based on regulations and constraints imposed on prisoners. It is here that we realize that the Conformatorium can be understood as the exclusionary matrix of the formation of subjects, since it is responsible for the production of abject beings that are not subjects, but something external that constitutes the subject (BUTLER, 2015). Therefore, according to Butler (2015, p. 155, our translation) prisoners are considered abject beings who inhabit the "inhospitable and uninhabitable zones of social life [...] of the subject is circumscribed".

Prisoners, these, who are there to serve as an example of what one should not be, being considered abject beings, since it is necessary to take into account that for the subject considered normal to exist, it is necessary to exclude other beings, since, "the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection" (BUTLER, 2015, p. 155, our translation).

After her encounter with the prisoners, Luz meets with Eda and asks why everyone is locked up just for being themselves and wonders why it's so bad to be weird and different. Scenes later, there is a fight in which Eda wins and escapes along with Luz and the King, but before that, she helps Luz free the "weirdos" who were trapped. After freeing everyone, Eda asks Luz to return to the human world because of the dangers of the Scalded Isles, but she

disobeys her when she sees that the prisoners, she helped free are still inside the Conformatorium.

When asked by Luz why they didn't leave, they are resigned to the situation and answer that it's because they don't fit into society and that's why they would be caught again, so there would be no point in running away. Upon hearing this, Luz decides to motivate them to rebel and be free, because being weird is not a justification for being arrested, in fact it is the weirdness that makes us the unique and amazing people that we are.

Figure 4 – Montage with speeches by the character Luz Noceda

Source: Elaborated by the author

Luz is not satisfied with the situation that is imposed on her and the other prisoners and decides to create a rebellion within the Conformatorium, since, according to her, no one should be imprisoned for being different, that it is okay to be strange and that weirdos should stay together, and because of that they stand against what is considered normal and fight to break free from the means of conduct imposed by the society of the Scheldt Isles. With the prisoners' rebellion and the victory over the Conformatorium guards, we observe that the character Luz and the prisoners can represent a "difference that does not want to be assimilated or tolerated, and, therefore, its form of action is much more transgressive and disturbing" (LOURO, 2016, p. 39, our translation).

Conclusion

Aiming to work cartoons as a curriculum that deals with gender and the production of counter-conducts, we seek to make it a place to affirm life and differences in a way that expands and shelters the lives considered "livable" and those considered "precarious" and, finally, being an escape territory (BUTLER, 2013; PARAÍSO; CALDEIRA, 2018). Due to the educational load present in cartoons, we share Fischer's (1997) thought that it is important to analyze the presence of the media in our daily lives due to the production and reproduction of beliefs and prejudices, which circulate in society through the media, often acting as pedagogical devices, because "the media builds, reinforces and multiplies their own statements, in tune or not with other discourses and instances of power" (FISCHER, 1997, p. 65, our translation), contributing to the creation of new realities and serving as a means of teaching about them.

When looking at the cartoon, it is clear that the lines of the characters question the current norms of society on the Uncharted Island. And that, despite not talking directly about gender, the scenes of the first episode can be thought of for this, by criticizing the current norms of demons. Since, when we think of the Conformatorium as excluding and its prisoners as abject beings, a connection can be made with the way in which gender is constructed, because, according to Butler (2015, p. 161, our translation): "the construction of gender acts through excluding means, so that the human is not only produced over and against the inhuman, but through a set of exclusions, of radical erasures [...]".

With that in mind, we observe that *The Owl House* is a cartoon that has a diversity of characters and representations and that, instead of excluding subjects, it seeks the insertion of other subjects, who previously would not have spaces in cartoons, creating a space for different and weird children and teenagers (we use the word weirdos, due to one of Luz's phrases being: "Weird people should stay together") are represented. That said, *The Owl House* thus comprises a curriculum, as it teaches in and through the media possibilities for the diversification of discourses on gender and sexuality to occur, generating visibility for different ways of being, loving and living (LOURO, 2008).

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