

O TRATAMENTO AOS MUTANTES COMO ALEGORIA DA PATOLOGIZAÇÃO DE SUJEITOS DE GÊNEROS NÃO-INTELIGÍVEIS: UMA LEITURA A PARTIR DAS HQ DOS X-MEN

TRATAMIENTO DE MUTANTES COMO UNA ALEGORÍA DE LA PATOLOGIZACIÓN DE SUJETOS DE GÉNEROS NO INTELIGIBLES: UNA LECTURA DE LA HQ X-MEN

TREATMENT OF MUTANTS AS AN ALLEGORY OF THE PATHOLOGIZATION OF SUBJECTS OF NON-INTELLIGIBLE GENDERS: A READING FROM THE X-MEN HQ

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RESUMO: As personagens das histórias em quadrinhos têm ganhado notoriedade ao se transpor ao mundo do cinema e da TV, em especial os X-men. Com grande potencial de reproduzir percepções e concepções sobre os mais variados aspectos da vida humana, as HQ têm servido como pano de fundo para reflexões sobre questões socioculturais e morais. Tendo como fonte de pesquisa as edições de 1 a 6 do arco Superdotados da revista *Os Surpreendentes X-men*, relacionaremos a patologização dos mutantes da HQ como alegoria à patologização de minorias sexuais, oferecendo material para reflexão e trabalho pelo respeito à diversidade sexual. Entendendo a oferta de uma cura mutante como alegoria da cura gay, desvelaremos a alegoria subjacente na condição das personagens e sua luta contra a patologização da condição de mutante relacionando à mesma situação com os ditos gêneros não-inteligíveis.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gênero não-inteligível. Educação sexual. Diversidade sexual.

RESÚMEN: *Los personajes de las historietas han ganado notoriedad al trasponerse para el mundo del cine e de la televisión, en especial los X-men. Con gran potencial de reproducir percepciones y concepciones sobre los más distintos aspectos de la vida humana, las historietas han servido de puntapié para reflexiones sobre cuestiones socioculturales e morales. Teniendo como fuente de investigación la ediciones de 1 a 6 del arco Superdotados de la historieta Los*

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increíbles hombres X, relacionaremos la patologización de los mutantes de la historieta como alegoría a la patologización de las minorías sexuales, ofreciendo material para reflexión y trabajo para el respecto a la diversidad sexual. Comprendiendo la oferta de la cura mutante como alegoría a la cura gay, desvelaremos la alegoría subyacente en la condición de los personajes en su lucha contra la patologización de su condición de mutante relacionando a la situación de los sujetos de gêneros no-inteligibles.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Género no inteligible. Educación sexual. Diversidad sexual.

ABSTRACT: *The characters of the comics have gained notoriety by transcending to the world of movies and television, especially the X-men. With great potential to reproduce perceptions and conceptions about the most different aspects of human life, the comics have served as a background for a reflection on social, cultural and moral issues. Having as a source of research the editions of 1 to 6 of the super gifted arc of the comics The incredible X-men, we will relate the pathology of the mutants of the comics as an allegory to the pathologization of sexual minorities, offering material for reflection and work for the respect to sexual diversity. Understanding the offer of the mutant cure as an allegory to the gay cure, we will reveal the underlying allegory in the condition of the characters in their fight against the pathologization of their mutant status, relating to the situation of the subjects of non-intelligible genders.*

KEYWORDS: *Non-intelligible gender. Sexual education. Sexual diversity.*

Introduction

Comic books, according to Eisner (1989), constitute the main vehicle for sequential art and since its creation at the turn of the 20th century, they found a wide audience, being, in particular, part of the initial literary repertoire of most children and young people. The first comic strips emerged around 1934 and generally contained a collection of short works.

Modern comic book artists have been developing in their works the overlap between word and image and, according to Eisner (1989), they have achieved the successful hybridization between prose and image. This general configuration of comic books requires visual and verbal interpretive skills from the reader. This makes reading comics an activity of aesthetic perception and intellectual effort. According to Eisner:

In their simplest form, comics employ a series of repetitive images and recognizable symbols. When they are used time and time again to express similar ideas, they become a language - a literary form, if you will. And it is this disciplined application that creates the “grammar” of Sequential Art (EISNER, 1989, p. 8).⁵

⁵ Em sua forma mais simples, os quadrinhos empregam uma série de imagens repetitivas e símbolos reconhecíveis. Quando são usados vezes e vezes para expressar ideias similares, tornam-se uma linguagem - uma forma literária, se quiserem. E é essa aplicação disciplinada que cria a “gramática” da Arte Sequencial (EISNER, 1989, p. 8).

However, this attempt to bring comics closer to literature is sometimes criticized. Zeni (2014) tried to make this approximation, believing that it is a way for the recognition of comics as an autonomous and worthy art. However, the author recognizes that, in this attempt, he was devaluing the art that he so much intended to value. Comics are not literature any more than dance, theater and cinema are either. So, he came to the conclusion:

From a literary point of view, not only comics, but also cinema, dance and painting are deficient media, which cannot be valued as much as a novel or a poem. However, if we invert the perspective and look from comics to literature, we also realize that prose or poetry is incapable and incomplete in the face of comics, as images, visual onomatopoeia, pictures, gutters are missing (ZENI, 2014, p. 126).⁶

Using the concept of Ramos (2010), comics can be defined as a hyper genre, a great label that aggregates different other genres that have in common the use of the language of comics to compose a narrative text inserted in an interactional sociolinguistic context.

According to Margonari and Braga Jr. (2015), comics are an effective source of encouragement for reading and the development of reading competence, showing that their use in the classroom is extremely effective. Students who read comic books tend to perform better at school than those who do not read them, as these readings are consumed in a playful and natural way by students, without sometimes being imposed. The authors say that:

They are publications that are not expected to be involved in their daily study dynamics, mainly because they are entertainment products that contain a culture, often historically branded as “useless culture” and, for this reason, arousing interest in students. There is not much effort or convincing when asking someone to read a comic (or similar) (BRAGA JR.; MARGONARI, 2015, p. 1605).⁷

The first X-men story was released in 1963 in the comic book *Uncanny X-men* or, in Portuguese, *Fabulosos X-men* by Marvel Comics. The story of this group of heroes revolves around their struggle to defend a world that fears and hates them, simply because they are

⁶ Do ponto de vista literário, não apenas os quadrinhos, mas também o cinema, a dança e a pintura são mídias deficitárias, que não podem ser valorizadas tanto quanto um romance ou um poema. Porém, se invertemos a perspectiva e olharmos dos quadrinhos para a literatura, também percebemos que a prosa ou a poesia é incapaz e incompleta diante das histórias em quadrinhos, pois faltam as imagens, as onomatopoeias visuais, os quadros, sarjeta (ZENI, 2014, p. 126).

⁷ São publicações que eles não esperam que estejam envolvidas em suas dinâmicas diárias de estudo, principalmente porque são produtos de entretenimento que contêm uma cultura, muitas vezes tachada historicamente como “cultura inútil” e, por isso mesmo, despertadora de interesse no alunado. Não há muito esforço ou convencimento na hora de pedir a leitura de uma HQ (ou congênera) (BRAGA JR.; MARGONARI, 2015, p. 1605).

considered a threat because they are mutants. People born with powers due to genetic mutations, more specifically thanks to the so-called x gene. And this explains its origin:

Every day, mutants are born in increasing numbers and humanity's panic and paranoia are growing exponentially. Mutants are called aberrations, genetic monstrosities. They are humiliated, feared, offended, accused of stealing human jobs, eating human food and taking human spouses. However, they continue to emerge in cities, suburbs, deserts and jungles. They need teachers, people who will help them overcome their anger and teach them to use their strange skills responsibly. Under clouds of growing anti-mutant sentiment, Professor X created a safe haven at his Winchester mansion to train young people to use their unique genetic gifts for the enhancement of everyone. Hated and feared by humanity, these adventurous outcasts continue to perfect their strange powers while defending the world from mutants who take advantage of their abilities to subdue the human species (BEAZLEY; YOUNGQUIST; BRADY, 2005, p. 162).⁸

The mutants' powers usually manifest in adolescence and many end up being thrown out of the home by their families. In order to better deal with their condition as a mutant, Professor X, the most powerful telepath on the planet, welcomes young mutants into his home, offering them welcome and teaching, both academic and emotional.

In the universe of X-men there are some clashes that mutants have: one against mutants with a desire to subjugate humans and another against extraterrestrial threats of parallel dimensions that are threatening to humanity. However, there is a common enemy to mutants, namely, humans with the desire to eliminate mutants, considering them a fright to humanity.

Sensitive to the dramas experienced by mutants and seeing it as an allegory of the struggle of social minorities in real life, several researchers have been interested in seeing this condition of mutant as an allegory. By allegory we can understand a discourse that “makes one understand another or alludes to another, that speaks of one thing referring to another, - a language that hides another, a story that suggests another” (MOISÉS, 2004, p. 14). The allegory can use words, figures, people, images and animals to compose and make the other to whom it refers understand, thus facilitating the understanding of an idea.

⁸ Todos os dias, nascem mutantes em números cada vez maior e o pânico e a paranoia da humanidade crescem exponencialmente. Os Mutantes são chamados de aberrações, monstruosidades genéticas. São humilhados, temidos, ofendidos, acusados de roubar trabalhos humanos, comer alimentos humanos e tomar cônjuges humanos. No entanto, eles continuam emergindo nas cidades, subúrbios, desertos e selvas. Precisam de professores, pessoas que os ajudem a superar a ira e os ensinem a usar suas estranhas habilidades de forma responsável. Sob nuvens de um crescente sentimento antimutante, o professor X criou um abrigo seguro em sua mansão em Winchester, para treinar jovens a usarem seus dons genéticos únicos para o aprimoramento de todos. Odiados e temidos pela humanidade, esses párias aventureiros continuam a aperfeiçoar seus estranhos poderes enquanto defendem o mundo dos mutantes que tiram vantagens de suas capacidades para subjugar a espécie humana (BEAZLEY; YOUNGQUIST; BRADY, 2005, p. 162).

Campos (2016) understands the X-men as an allegory of the struggle for the human rights of blacks and states that the X-men tells the most mixed heroes' story ever seen to this date. The characters Professor Xavier and Magneto would have been inspired by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, respectively. Braga Jr (2015) shows that the creation of the X-men coincided with Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech in 1963 and there are similarities between his black integration discourse and that of mutant integration, and this, according to this author is due to the so-called "Marvel Method".

The comic book publisher Marvel Comics, from the 1960s, began to implement a character creation policy that favored elements of the contemporary "social" in its productions. The "Marvel Method", as it became known, consisted of merging elements of fiction and fantasy with the relevant social themes in public opinion, always with a mediating discourse full of subterfuge. The characters' traumatic, insecure and melodramatic personality, combined with the reproduction of contemporary social formations, would lead the stories to a notion of realism that, together with the growing investment in changing the structure of these characters' designs, would make their productions innovative, winning young readers and increasing sales (BRAGA JR, 2015, p. 132).⁹

The mutant cure in the X-Men comics universe has sparked discussions about how these heroes can be viewed as an allegory of minorities. The feature "*X-men - The last stand*" (2006) sparked discussions about the allegory of mutants as a figure of minorities in concrete society, especially those who also became targets of pathologization. Ilea (2009) relates the mutant cure of the film "*X-men - The Last Stand*" (2006) with the issue of physical disability. The author argues that the arguments for and against the mutant cure, as well as the desires of some mutants to undergo healing, can be related to those of the medical-social models about physical disability respectively. He says that in the

[...] social model, the problem is not physical. Society creates disability by placing labels, affirming and limiting options for some people. According to this premise, the society in which the disabled/mutants live is blamed for the difficulties they face. [...] In the medical model, disability (or the fact of being a mutant) is seen as an undesirable and painful condition that needs to be fixed. Medicine and science can provide cures and, thus, enable disabled people and

⁹ A editora de quadrinhos Marvel Comics a partir da década de 1960, começou a implementar uma política de criação de personagens que privilegiava elementos do "social" coetâneo em suas produções. O "Método Marvel", como ficou conhecido, consistia em mesclar elementos de ficção e fantasia a partir dos temas sociais relevantes na opinião pública, sempre com um discurso mediador repleto de subterfúgios. A personalidade traumática, insegura e melodramática dos personagens, aliadas às reproduções de formações sociais coetâneas levariam as histórias a uma noção de realismo que, aliada ao crescente investimento na mudança de estrutura dos desenhos destes personagens, tornariam suas produções inovadoras, conquistando jovens leitores e aumentando as vendas (BRAGA JR, 2015, p. 132).

mutants to enjoy all the freedoms that “normal” people have (ILEA, 2009, p. 168).¹⁰

Hopkins (2009) understands that the discussion about healing in a broader way, refers to what society deems normal and abnormal, that is, that it legitimizes through its posture on the issue. “Normal” here would be what is seen as natural. The desire for healing, manifested by some mutants in the Marvel universe, denotes the fact that they are social beings with a strong desire to belong to a group and acceptance of the society in which they are inserted, implying the search for common characteristics and their annulment as a mutant. The character Tempest has the power to control the climate and this does not affect her physical appearance, guaranteeing her the possibility of posing as “normal”. Thus, it is understandable that Tempest considers it absurd and even cowardly for a mutant to want to heal himself to be accepted into society. On the other hand, the mutant Beast, unlike Tempest, finds it understandable that some mutants seek a cure, as they understand that not everyone can deal with the fact that they are different, aberrations in the eyes of humans. The Beast himself has a mutation that makes his body furry and blue, with a bestial appearance, although his skills as strength, keen senses and agility are useful, he cannot pass for “normal”. This alludes to what Hopkins exposed when he says that this

[...] concept of “pass for” - pretending to be normal - is a real, important and well-documented life experience, lived by some homosexuals and light-skinned African-Americans. It is an experience that gives the abnormal (the term being used only as descriptive) the ability to be treated as normal, allowing them to confront or not their difference and adaptation (HOPKINS, 2009, p. 24).¹¹

In the bound edition of *Astonishing X-men: Gifted* launched in Brazil, an exchange of emails is revealed, in which the screenwriter Joss Whedow jokingly tells the Marvel's editor-in-chief at the time, if it was really necessary to speak of the “gay marathon”. As stated earlier, the Marvel method implies a broad appropriation of the concept of reproduction. This appropriation takes place on two fronts: the more abstract order, relating the historical-social

¹⁰ [...] modelo social, o problema não é físico. A sociedade cria a deficiência colocando rótulos, afirmando e limitando as opções para algumas pessoas. De acordo com essa premissa, a sociedade na qual vivem os deficientes/mutantes é culpada pelas dificuldades que eles enfrentam. [...] No modelo médico, a deficiência (ou o fato de ser mutante) é vista como uma condição indesejável e dolorosa que precisa ser consertada. A medicina e a ciência podem proporcionar curas e, assim, possibilitar que as pessoas deficientes e os mutantes desfrutem todas as liberdades que as pessoas “normais” têm (ILEA, 2009, p. 168).

¹¹ [...] conceito de “passar por” - fingir ser normal - é uma experiência de vida real, importante e bem documentada, vivida por alguns homossexuais e afro-americanos de pele clara. É uma experiência que dá ao anormal (o termo sendo usado apenas como descritivo) a habilidade de ser tratado como normal, permitindo-lhe confrontar ou não sua diferença e adaptação (HOPKINS, 2009, p. 24).

situations of contemporary life with a strong media appeal and, circumscribing, in the description of the stories, characters and plots; and the formal and imagery, relating the reproduction of traces of visual reality by drawings (BRAGA JR, 2015). If we situate this story with the historical moment in which it was launched, it will be noted that it coincides with the approval of gay marriage in 2004, in the state of Massachusetts in the USA, which became the first American state to legalize marriage between people of the same sex. It makes sense that discussions about homosexuality became heated at the time and then were transported in the form of allegory to the X-men 's comics, especially with regard to whether or not to consider homosexuality as a disease or something abnormal.

We chose to refer to all those who are not within the heterosexual norm as non-intelligible genders, a term used by Butler for bodies that are not in the heterosexual intelligibility matrix. Gender, according to Butler (2017), is a performative act that creates the masculine and feminine and generates the illusion of “substance”, of something that has always been there. Butler understands that there is no gender identity behind the acts, but that the identity is constituted through the act. In Butler's own words (2017, p. 56), “there is no gender identity behind gender expressions; this identity is performatively constituted, by the ‘expressions’ themselves taken as their results”.

The intelligible genders, according to Butler (2017, p. 43), "are those that, in a certain sense, establish and maintain relations of coherence and continuity between sex, gender, sexual practice and desire". The binary division of gender into male and female is required and regulated by the institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality, which would justify their complementarity.

Unintelligible genders, that is, those that break the coherence and continuity between sex, gender, sexual practice and desire, are considered less than human, vile and unintelligible. They are what Butler (2017) defines as:

The abject designates what has been expelled from the body, discarded as excrement, made literally "Other". It looks like an expulsion of foreign elements, but it is precisely through this expulsion that the stranger establishes himself. The construction of “not me” as an abject establishes the boundaries of the body, which are also the first contours of the subject (BUTLER, 2017, p. 230).¹²

¹² O abjeto designa aquilo que foi expelido do corpo, descartado como excremento, tornado literalmente “Outro”. Parece uma expulsão de elementos estranhos, mas é precisamente através dessa expulsão que o estranho se estabelece. A construção do “não eu” como abjeto estabelece as fronteiras do corpo, que são também os primeiros contornos do sujeito (BUTLER, 2017, p. 230).

According to Salih (2017), Butler's objective when theorizing about intelligible and non-intelligible genders is to trace the limits of discursive intelligibility in order to draw attention to how some identities and bodies matter and how others do not matter. The aim is to argue how intelligible gender identities are assumed through the violent rejection and exclusion of non-intelligible gender identities, that is, those that “do not count in the context of a heterosexual matrix, which has a particular interest in maintaining its own stability and consistency at the expense of 'other' identities” (SALIH, 2017, p. 107). Gender is a "body style", an act (or sequence of acts), a "strategy" to maintain the social structure, since those who do not "make" their gender correctly are punished by society.

Although this article focuses on the allegory of mutants with unintelligible genders, it is worth mentioning that Butler's concept of abject is not restricted to sex and heteronormativity, but to all those bodies whose lives are not considered lives and whose materialities are seen as “not important”, such as disabled people and refugees, for example (PRINZ, MEIJER, 2002). Thus, mutants can be considered as abject as those nonfiction groups that suffer rejection.

“Mutants are sick people”

Just as the possibility of curing the mutants of Marvel comics is presented, so it is in real society. The possibility of the so-called "gay cure", as it was known in the press, alludes to attempts to change the sexual orientation of a homosexual subject. The World Health Organization, since 1990, no longer considers homosexuality as a disease and the Federal Council of Psychology of Brazil, in 1999, published resolution 01/99¹³ which prohibits psychologists from offering treatments to alter the sexual orientation of homosexuals in conflict with their sexuality. In early 2018, resolution 01/18 was published with similar rules for the care of transgender people¹⁴. The two resolutions have in common that psychologists should not encourage prejudice or the pathologization of homosexuals and transgender people. Such norms have been the target of lawsuits and bills in Congress by members of conservative groups that defend the liberation of this type of practice, even without scientific proof of its effectiveness.¹⁵

¹³ Available at: https://site.cfp.org.br/wp-content/uploads/1999/03/resolucao1999_1.pdf. Access: 10 Mar. 2020.

¹⁴ Available at: http://site.cfp.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/resolucao_cfp_01_2018.pdf. Access: 10 Mar. 2020.

¹⁵ Available at: <http://politica.estadao.com.br/blogs/fausto-macedo/juiz-concede-liminar-que-permite-aplicacao-de-cura-gay-por-psicologos/>. Access: 10 Mar. 2020.

It is, therefore, a topic that is still current and that stimulates the concerns and questions of this article and made us question: why and for what cure non-intelligible genders? What makes certain institutions allowed to defend healing? What and who defines the boundary between sanity or disorder, or normality and abnormality?

Foucault, questions the genesis of the truth systems of knowledge and affirms that there are power relations in all systems of knowledge. For Foucault (1979), power produces knowledge, and its strength is due to the production of positive implications in the field of desire and knowledge. Power creates knowledge and reality in a strategic way, it is an exercise of relations that become concrete as technologies in a body (CARDOSO JR., 2006). The power relationship for Foucault (1995) is an action on actions.

It is a set of actions on possible actions; it operates on the field of possibility where the behavior of active subjects is inscribed; it incites, induces, deflects, facilitates or makes it more difficult, enlarges or limits, makes it more or less likely; in the limit, it coerces or prevents absolutely, but it is always a way of acting on one or more active subjects, and the extent to which they act or are susceptible to act (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 243).¹⁶

In the understanding of Dreyfus and Rabinow (1995), power is a set of open relationships, which are coordinated in irregular, unequal and mobile ways. Power is multidirectional, that is, the essence of power is not in domination, nor is restricted in State apparatus, as it goes through “the power relations existing between a man and a woman, the one who knows and the one who does not know, between parents and children” (FOUCAULT, 2005, p. 232). Let's analyze the scene below:

Figure 1 - Mutants react to the idea that there might be a cure¹⁷

¹⁶ Ele é um conjunto de ações sobre ações possíveis; ele opera sobre o campo de possibilidade onde se inscreve o comportamento dos sujeitos ativos; ele incita, induz, desvia, facilita ou torna mais difícil, amplia ou limita, torna mais ou menos provável; no limite, ele coage ou impede absolutamente, mas é sempre uma maneira de agir sobre um ou vários sujeitos ativos, e o quanto eles agem ou são suscetíveis de agir (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 243).

¹⁷ We read on the image: First, we must know if this is some sort of hoax. Discover who is this woman--/ Dra. Kavita Rao/ She is one of the greatest geneticists of our time. And do not tend to jest./ I do not know this corporation, the Benetch, but, if Dra. Rao says that she can revert the mutations, there is a good chance that she can./ Well then, I suppose we have to kill her.



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 48).

Figure 2 - Mutants talk about the consequences of mutant healing in society¹⁸



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 49).

¹⁸ We read on the comics: That woman called me a disease. You know how that make me feel? I can't ever retract my claws. They don't come inside./ She said that we are a disease./ She said that the mutant strain is a disease./ Do you think she know the difference?/ Do you think the government will know?/ If this "cure" really exists, they will make it official property. And then, they will take us in... Can't you see where this might lead?/ Of course. Assassination. Professor would be proud./ As always, your gullibility is not cute nor fun./ Suppose that is not the government that takes hold of it. Imagine that the anti-mutants extremists get it./ Or our new pal from the other world?/ Ord./ We must know more about this guy. He dragged us out for a reason./ Yeah, right before the good doctor came to public. Do you think it is a coincidence?

In the dialogue presented above, the mutants are discussing Dr. Rao's healing plan and its possible consequences for them in terms of personal and political rights. In their speeches, the daily power relations present in that context are expressed: medicine, the alien Ord (referred to as the 'new pal from the other world') and the anti-mutant extremists, who can sustain the functioning of the State, which becomes a concern secondary to Emma and Beast. Foucault (2005) claims to look at “everyday life, in relationships between the sexes, in families, between the mentally ill and the sensible, between the sick and the doctors” (p. 233) power relations, as these are examples of places where they ignite constantly. Power relations do not have total triumph and reversible domination, as they intertwine, power retreats, takes off and invests in other places and this is involved by its methods, its own technologies, as seen in the scene under analysis (FOUCAULT, 1979).

From the eighteenth century on, a new technology of power was born, normalizing detention, supported by dense surveillance and guided by discipline, in which the relationship of crime and punishment was given in a necessary and evident way. In its modern form, power is exercised in the domain of the norm, and not of the law, constituting individuality and nature. In other words, modern societies not only discipline, but also normalize, giving rise to a new system of surveillance, control by visibility and classification, hierarchization, qualification, setting limits and the need for diagnosis. In the comics below, the power relations in defining, diagnosing and normalizing who the mutants are in the medical discourse.

Figure 3 – The quality of mutants is compared to a disease and it can be cured¹⁹



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 32).

In this way, the norm can become a criterion for the division of subjects. This new power is based on constancy, discipline and anonymity, as in the case of anti-mutant extremists and the alien, for example. Any subject can activate it on the condition that he is in the position to do so and anyone can be under its mechanisms. Beast when talking about Dr. Rao's profession, illustrates this thought:

¹⁹ We read on the comic strip: “Mutants are not the next evolutive step”/ “Are not the end of humanity.”/ “The mutant gene is not but a disease.”/ “A corruption of helathy cellular activity.”/ “And now, finally...”/ We found a cure.

Figure 4 – Beast talk to Dr. Rao about her actions as a propagator of the mutant cure²⁰



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 55).

Figure 5 – Beast seeks more details on mutant cure²¹



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 56).

²⁰ We read on the comic strip: Did you thought I wouldn't try?/ You threw a bomb in a closed room, doctor, people will die because of what you did today./ And innocents will live on. With decent lives... and normal.

²¹ We read on the comic strip: Of course. I saw your exposure of your model girl./ Nice publicity you are getting from that. Well played./ I'm not playing, Dr. McCoy. There are people whose lives were destroyed by undesired mutations, and I will give my life to help them. Whatever you and your X-Men are planning, I do not--/ Kavita./ Stop./ I'm not here to discuss the ethics of your "mutant cure"./ And I'm not here to destroy you./ I just want to know if it works.

As stated by Dreyfus and Rabinow (1995, p. 214), normalization technologies "are an integral part of the creation, classification and systematic control of anomalies in the social body". Thus, just as the various institutions and their power relationships are intertwined in the adjectives and diagnosis of who the mutants are, the same is observed in our daily lives with regard to the cure of homosexuality. The power networks of some health and education professionals, of political and religious figures, of the press and of the State in our country, currently, seem to seek efforts in an attempt to define and establish knowledge about homosexuality aimed at its categorization as a disorder or illness that requires treatment or cure.

In the scene below, the alien Ord invades the Xavier Institute and, upon not meeting the X-men, decides to attack two teenage mutants, Wing and Armor, whom he found instead. After striking Armor, Ord goes after Wing, who has the power to fly and catches him in the air. Ord forcibly injects the mutant cure into Wing and leaves his message before releasing him toward the ground.

Figure 6 – Ord injects Wing with the mutant cure and tells him that the mutants will no longer be a threat²²



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 96).

²² We read on the comic strip: Gnnnaah!/ Now, you will give them a message./ Tell them that the mutant abomination will never be a threat to the Breakworld./ And that man was not made to fly.

In the phrase “And that man was not made to fly”, we can allegorically think about the coherence and continuity between sex, gender, desire and sexual practice that characterizes male and female in a heterosexual relationship, characteristic of intelligible genders. In this case, Ord's phrase allegorically represents that men were not “made” to relate sexually/affectionately to other men. In particular, the homophobic phrase repeated by religious fundamentalists that “God made women for men, and not men for men” (COENGA-OLIVEIRA, 2011) seems to be represented in this sentence. The very use of the word "abomination" refers to the Leviticus 18:22 of the Bible referenced by these religious: "You shall not lie with a man as with a woman; it is an abomination". "Flying" would be related to the act of sleeping with someone of the same sex, while it sounds like a transgression of what "human being" means. The image below shows more clearly what the creators of this story are saying allegorically through the mutants.

Figure 7 – The notion of mutant cure approaches gay cure²³



(*) O físico Julius Robert Oppenheimer (1904-1967) dirigiu o Projeto Manhattan, que desenvolveu a tecnologia das bombas atômicas jogadas em Hiroshima e Nagasaki em 1945. — Historiando Lopes

Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 117).

The association between the villainous Ord and those who deliver homophobic speeches based on religious fundamentalist discourse can be made here. According to Machado and

²³ We read on the comic strip: I will never authorize this kind of force. I do not want anyone to be harmed. That's the point./ Nothing but noble intentions... You Lady are a true Oppenheimer./ What comes next? Eliminate the gay gene?/ Homosexuality is no threat to human existence./ For sure we were watching different evangelic preachers. But, after all, where is the medical team?/ The world needs this cure, Ms. Frost. Nothing you can say or do will change that.

Prado (2012), as of the 19th century, the regulation of sexuality happened mainly through the church, which punished unwanted sexual behaviors, considered a crime or sin. Such acts were even punished with capital punishment in the years of the Holy Inquisition, in the past, and even today in some countries where extremism is present. Consequently, after the invention of heterosexuality and its establishment as a natural and unique healthy and correct identity experience, non-heterosexual behaviors went from crime and sin to disease. The punitive procedures from before have been replaced by others, as diseases must be treated. Modern science played a fundamental role in this paradigm shift. Scientists of that time, especially those who were “in medicine, physiology and psychology, were crucial in the construction of this new discourse, taking on a central role in the construction of the concepts and normalizations that affected sexual identities.” (MACHADO; PRADO, 2012, p. 38)

Modern science, based on the notion of universal truth, produced sophisticated discourses capable of regulating sexual roles and behaviors, hiding their ideological commitment to the moral values of a ruling class. Thus, these speeches were authorized to utter their beliefs as if they were truths, since the notion of truth in modern science is authorized to total certain aspects of reality, so that experiences that deviate from or deny their premises are disqualified or invalidated (MACHADO; PRADO, 2012, p. 37-38)²⁴

²⁴ A ciência moderna, fundamentada pela noção de verdade universal, produziu sofisticados discursos capazes de regular os papéis e comportamentos sexuais, ocultando seu comprometimento ideológico com os valores morais de uma classe dominante. Assim, estes discursos estavam autorizados a proferir suas crenças como se fossem verdades, uma vez que a noção de verdade na ciência moderna se autoriza a totalizar determinados aspectos da realidade, de modo que as experiências que se afastem ou neguem suas premissas são desqualificadas ou invalidadas (MACHADO; PRADO, 2012, p. 37-38)

Figure 8 – Mutants express their desire for mutant healing and thus become human²⁵



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 138).

Figure 9 – Beast is moved to hear from another mutant the need to be human²⁶



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 139).

In this scene, we see the speech of a mutant looking for a cure. One has no head and his face is on his stomach, another has extremely long arms and legs, and so on. Let us analyze the phrase said by the mutant in a blue gaseous form about his body and about the need to have a whole "body" in order to be "human". This is where we turn to Butler's (2017) ideas about

²⁵ We read on the comic strip: Where is it?/ Where is the cure?/ Do not shoot! They are civilians./ Enough waiting... Please.../ I need a body... A whole body...

²⁶ We read in the comic strip: I need to be human...

abject bodies. According to Salih (2017), Butler rejects the distinction between sex/gender and goes so far as to say that sex is gender. When accepting that the body cannot exist outside of the “gendered” discourse, one must “also admit that there is no body that is not, already and always, ‘genderified’”. This does not mean that there is no such thing as the material body, but that we can only apprehend this materiality through discourse (SALIH, 2017, p. 105).

The brand of the gender seems to “qualify” bodies as human bodies. For example, the fetus becomes humanized when the question “boy or girl” is answered based on the genitalia that appears on the ultrasound screen. Body images that do not fit into any of these genders are outside of what is recognized as “human”, and are expelled into the domain of the dehumanized and the abject, which puts the frontier on which the human himself establishes himself (BUTLER, 2017). The gaseous mutant, such as transvestites, transsexuals and intersexes, has a body that is not qualified as human, so he wants to have a body, since the current field of intelligibility does not include his body image as intelligible.

Let's analyze the images below:

Figure 10 – Beast rambles with Logan about his essence²⁷



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 73).

²⁷ We read in the comic strip: Don't push it, Logan! I will not leave you--/ I do not know what I am./ I used to have fingers. I had a mouth able to kiss, I've walked the streets and.../ Maybe this is the secondary stage of my mutation or maybe Cassandra Nova was correct./ Maybe I am involuting./ My mind is still sharp, but my instincts, my emotions.../ You know what is to lose control./ What am I supposed to do, Logan? Wait until I am rolling before the students while playing with a string ball?/ I am a human being!/ Wrong./ You are X-men.

Figure 11 – Logan talks about the danger of mutants wanting a cure²⁸



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 74).

In these scenes, it can be seen that Beast, like the gaseous mutant in the previous image, also feels in conflict with his bestial blue appearance. Therefore, his expression of conflict when he hears the mutant in a gaseous way saying that he needs a whole body to be human.

The ICD 10 has as its diagnostic category the so-called egodistonic sexual orientation. According to the World Health Organization (1993), it is a disorder in which the individual has no doubts about their identity and sexual orientation, but because of disorders associated with them, such as anxiety, depression and others, they wish for some reason change them.

According to Prado and Machado (2012), individuals who are inferiorized, internalize in the construction of their identities, negative social and psychological characteristics attributed to them, which ends up strengthening them even more and legitimizing the mechanisms and forms of prejudice that affect them. In the case of non-heterosexuality, this phenomenon is called internalized homophobia, which denotes how individual sufferings can have its origin in the social structures of prejudice. According to Porchat (2014, p. 16), it is constant in the speech of some homosexuals

[...] the suffering arising from the inadequacy between their anatomy, their gender, their desire and their sexual practice, an inadequacy that results from a predominance of heterosexuality - where these four items appear to be in agreement - within the world view manifested in society and, in large part, assimilated by the patient himself (PORCHAT, 2014, p. 16).²⁹

Thus, it is possible to understand that both mutants in this story and homosexuals and transsexuals in real life, due to the anguish felt due to the social prejudice suffered by them,

²⁸ We read on the comic strip: If a little slut in the freshman dorms want to get rid of her powers, I don't care. But a X-Men.../ If one of us jump out, it is the end./ It a seal of approval to every single mutant get in a line and get castrated./ And you know that.

²⁹ [...] o sofrimento advindo da inadequação entre sua anatomia, seu gênero, seu desejo e sua prática sexual, inadequação esta que resulta de uma predominância da heterossexualidade – onde esses quatro itens aparentam uma concordância – dentro da visão de mundo manifesta na sociedade e, em grande parte, assimilada pelo próprio paciente (PORCHAT, 2014, p. 16).

develop internal conflicts that lead them to seek ways to change what makes them targets of discrimination. And so, the structures of prejudice are strengthened.

The Federal Council of Psychology, when publishing resolution 01/99, understands that the suffering of non-heterosexual individuals is not due to their sexual orientation itself, but to the social structure that oppresses them. Thus, the conduct of psychologists towards egodistonic patients is oriented towards embracing this suffering and not offering “sexual reversal” or “gay cure” therapy. The X-men have this vision, understanding that mutation itself is not the cause of suffering, but the lack of welcome from society towards mutants in order to accept them and teach them how to deal with their abilities.

In the image below, Agent Brand responsible for a government agency that deals with extraterrestrials reveals to the X-men why Ord hates mutants and tried to eliminate them through healing. Ord considers mutants a threat to his planet, Breakworld, due to a prophecy that says that a mutant, probably an X-men, would be destined to destroy his homeland.

Figure 12 – Conversation about an alleged mutant threat³⁰



Source: Surpreendentes X-men (2008, p. 141).

³⁰ We read on the comic strip: The technologies of Breakworld include something that is translated as “shadows of time”/ They can see a partial version of the future. No visiting nor changing it, just seeing./ “They saw a world taken by chaos”/ “Calcined”./ “The Breakworld, soon to be dead. Utterly destroyed.”/ “By a mutant.”/ Probably a X-men.

Here we can observe the power relations that permeate Ord's anti-mutant feeling and its analogy with the oppression that affects non-intelligible genders in real life. Ord's struggle to heal/destroy mutants is related to the belief in the danger they pose to the survival of their world, which can also be interpreted as an attempt to maintain social order. In this sense, we can see, allegorically, how intelligible and non-intelligible genders, as political categories as well as power games and their maintenance, are represented in this history:

Limiting “gender identities” to just two or at least to “intelligible genders” would be a way of maintaining the social scene. The definition of gender is related to power. Gender is an effect of a discursive practice that, in turn, is an effect of a regulatory practice that has a certain objective. What would heterosexual hegemony claim to guarantee? The reproduction of the species? The reproduction of patriarchal power? (PORCHAT, 2014, p. 82).³¹

The government would have ethical and legal impasses if there was an attempt to eliminate mutants through genocide, so the diplomatic solution adopted was to pathologize the mutants and thus “cure” and control them, eliminating this threat to Breakworld. This same situation occurred in relation to non-intelligible genders.

In the comic in question, there is a confrontation with Ord and the research of the cure is destroyed and the matter has supposedly been closed, so far, in the comics that followed, leaving the doubt as to whether the cure was in fact definitive or that it only suppressed the mutants' power. In the feature film “*X-men: The Last Stand*”, which was based on the same story, in the final scene it is implied that the cure was perhaps not definitive, but that it only temporarily suppressed the mutation.

Final considerations

The discussions about the mutant cure that we seek to relate as an allegory of gay cure point to the following question: what needs to be cured? The mutant of your mutation or the society of its prejudice against mutants? It seems to be a similar question about physical disability in the medical x social model, raised by Ilea (2009) in her analysis of the film *X-men: The Last Stand*. These are the so-called non-intelligible genders, represented allegorically by mutants, who need to adapt to an intelligible gender ideal, or it is society that needs to review

³¹ Limitar as “identidades de gêneros” a apenas duas ou, ao menos, aos “gêneros inteligíveis” seria uma forma de manter o cenário social. A definição de gênero guarda relações com o poder. Gênero é um efeito de uma prática discursiva que, por sua vez, é efeito de uma prática reguladora que possui um determinado objetivo. O que a hegemonia heterossexual pretenderia garantir? A reprodução da espécie? A reprodução do poder patriarcal? (PORCHAT, 2014, p. 82).

the search for the apparent coherence between sex, gender, desire and sexual practice at the expense of creating exclusion and violence against certain bodies?

In the Comics, Dr. Rao, a scientist who defends the mutant cure, although she claims to have good intentions, shows how scientific discourse can be aligned with ideological positions of dominant classes. In this case, the actions strengthened the very social structures that caused the feeling of inadequacy and suffering of beings with their mutation and body. This is also evident in the fact that behind the scenes, Ord is involved in with the cure and has a special interest in neutralizing, in his words, the "mutant abomination", which he considers a threat to his world. In real life, with non-intelligible genders, this same situation is repeated: a discourse of good intentions about "helping" people in conflict with their sexuality to heal themselves, but which hides an ideological position aligned with an intelligible gender ideal.

This article aimed to explore the allegory of the pathologization of mutants with the pathologization of sexual minorities in real life, in order to offer subsidies for educators to work on this theme in the school environment, through a genre that is easily accessible and widely liked by children and teenagers. Comics, like superheroes, are already part of the daily lives of young people and adults and, in most cases, are consumed without being imposed on them. With regard to X-men, a discussion through their allegory with non-intelligible genders can reduce resistance to a deep reflection on the theme of prejudice and discrimination and promote respect for difference, a basic principle of Brazilian education. There is much to learn from the allegory of mutants and thus reflect on what, after all, it means to be "human".

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