

Critical humor: From cartoons to cinematographic animations



<https://doi.org/10.56238/chaandieducasc-038>

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LATTES: <https://lattes.cnpq.br/6249807525107752>

ABSTRACT

As the same written and visual expression of the critical humor of cartoons, fabulous animations emerged, which added movement and audio to film productions, and, due to the universal reach of cinema, has the potential to influence millions of people around the world, generating greater social

impact. The animations that opted for the language of critical humor formatted a new style of the fable genre, which, unlike the conventional one, does not lead the essence of their narratives to a beautiful and fair world, in which the princess or the hero predominate. However, it directs the viewer to a reality in which the narrative is based on irony or mockery, and which does not necessarily present a resolution to all the conflicts in the story, however it guarantees reflection on the topic.

Keywords: Critical humor, Animation, Cartoons, Movie, Fabulous genre.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is difficult not to smile in front of the cartoons and cartoons of Ziraldo Alves Pinto (1932), Laerte Coutinho (1951), Arnaldo Angeli Filho (1956), Maurício de Sousa (1935) and Chico Caruso (1949). As the greatest Brazilian cartoonists and cartoonists, they created narratives of everyday life and timeless circumstances, as well as unforgettable characters.

Before film productions, the publication of cartoons and cartoons, in newspapers, magazines and pamphlets, was the only channel of immediate social impact, in the approach to critical humor. This language was not repressed, but amplified by the movement acquired in film productions, especially fables.

The first perception that remains latent in the analysis of the critical content of animations is their similarity with the language, written and imagery, of cartoons and, especially, of cartoons, genres in which the aspects of critical humor are often related to the sociopolitical context, detached from standards of perfection and morals.

In animations, the predominant genre is fabular, but unconventional, while fables lead us to a beautiful and just world, in which we easily see ourselves in the role of the princess or the hero, critical humor directs us, simultaneously, to a reality in which irony or mockery predominates, that is, there is an action of valuing a situation that is intended to be devalued. As Brait (2014, p.64) explains, the production of irony is acquired by antiphrase, as there is a semantic inversion in the demonstration of illocutionary value.



1.1 COMMUNICATIONAL LANGUAGE IN CARTOONS AND CARTOONS

The aesthetic characteristics of the illustrations, by themselves, already produce a great dose of humor, as we can also identify in the cartoon, caricature of one or more characters is used to satirize an event, producing humor, in large part, because of the burlesque aspect of the image. And, it is this exaggeration in the strokes that portrays the very meaning of the French word *charge*, charge or cavalry.

Similarly, another artistic resource of a critical nature is the cartoon, from the English word *cartoon*, but which, unlike the cartoon, establishes a critique of events linked to temporality, that is, more ordinary situations in society. In this way, while the cartoon is the graphic expression of an artist's critical political-social vision of certain everyday situations, demonstrated through humor and satire, the cartoon mainly involves cases of a political nature that are known to the public.

We can say that both the cartoon and the cartoon are communicational languages of construction of meanings that use mainly the imagistic aspect, and that for the understanding of the language they illustrate it does not require the receiver to have a vast cultured knowledge, a notion of everyday events is enough. However, even a lay public in the social context will not be deprived of humour, since the images of cartoons and cartoons are already attractive enough to reach a large audience, which receives a package full of humour and with a high critical content.

As irony is provoked by matters of collective understanding, cartoonists and cartoonists tend to inspire their characters in the people who exert greater social influence, and as such, cause greater discomfort among those who occupy positions of power, which is why, in moments of censorship, publications become the first target in restrictions, as happened with the Brazilian newsletter *Pasquim*, in the 1970s. Founded in 1969 by Jaguar, Sérgio Cabral, Tarso de Castro and Ziraldo, the weekly became known for its strong opposition to the military regime, and became more politicized over the years. The print run of 20,000 copies a week reached 200,000 in the mid-1970s, always featuring texts, cartoons and political cartoons. Among the collaborators, the weekly had journalists, writers, cartoonists and artists from other areas, such as Millôr Fernandes, Prósperi, Claudius, Fortuna, Henfil, Paulo Francis, Ivan Lessa, Carlos Leonam, Sérgio Augusto, Ruy Castro, Fausto Wolf, Chico Buarque, Rubem Fonseca, Odete Lara, Gláuber Rocha and others. The newsroom was subject to prior censorship and several members were arrested during the 1970s.



Figure 1 - Ziraldo's cartoon in *O Pasquim* of January 14, 1971



Source: Resisting is Necessary Collection/IVH. Available at: <<http://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/Enough-the-Quibbler-to-Make-Laugh-and-Think>>. Accessed November 10, 2023.

Pasquim persisted into the 1970s as one of the most popular alternative newspapers in the country. Conceived by the cartoonist Jaguar to be a newspaper from the Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of Ipanema, more focused on behavioral humor, it progressively entered into more political themes, but always keeping the characteristics of a newspaper of satire and humor, as we can see in the cartoon by Ziraldo (1971), presented in Figure 1. The *Quibbler* ended in 1991, six years after the end of the dictatorship, in issue number 1072. The journal was then relaunched in 2002 and lasted until 2004 (Naliato, 2014).

Like the cartoons, the fabular animations of the critical humor style with socio-historical ties, also resort to the various imagistic strategies in the discourse to produce the comic and reflexive effects to which they are proposed, but to this are added resources of sound and movement. Numerous techniques can be employed in just one production, in which certain elements are more frequent or even more essential than others, but all contribute to the composition of the message.

The visual encodings provide greater comprehension than the verbal ones and aligned with the elaborated discourses, enhance the perception of the messages of the narratives, and, in the same way that with exaggeration the cartoonist manages to give greater emphasis to the striking aspects of the work he proposes to portray, it happens with the animations, because, at the same time that the distortions provoke humor and distance the drawing from reality, It is as if the endorphin breaks all rational limitations and grants greater transparency in the reflective field. But unlike fables, satisfaction does not occur through involvement in fairy stories or projections of heroic events. Irony ends up being a door for those who seek to escape the conventional, and thus, the grace of ridicule, to the detriment of more serious themes, causes a sense of relief and/or compensation.



1.2 FABULAR ANIMATIONS

Analogously, the cartoons, the narratives of the fabular animations of the critical humor style, to keep the viewer's attention and provoke greater comedy, also save the unusual for the end. The strategy is to surprise the spectator with the breaking of logic, causing a rupture in the expected. Surprise is an essential factor in this case, and subtlety is a great virtue.

The strategies of the use of the language of cartoons, cartoons and fabular animations of critical humor make constant use of polyphony, that is, of a multiplicity of voices between the characters or in the contextualization of the situation. It is an association of different images, discourses and a network of events, which sometimes dialogue with news, other films and even information. As Louis Marin states, "the texts change the image that crosses them in discourse" and "the transformation takes place in two senses: the image crosses the texts and changes them; crossed by it, the texts transform them" (MARIN, 1993, p.9).

The animation appears at the beginning of the history of cinema with a duration of only 3 minutes. It begins under the hands of cartoonist James Stuart Blackton, author and producer of the animated drawn film, entitled *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces*. It is a silent drawing, released in 1906, in the United States, whose narrative presents the funny faces of a couple that ages in the cutouts drawn from the animation and gain movement with the *stop motion* technique. In the sequence, other characters are traced, such as a clown, who, along with the image of a dog and other objects, produce funny scenes in the generation of movements, as we can see nos frames do filme, apresentados na Figure 2.

Figure 2 - Frames of Humorous Phases of Funny Faces, 1906 - 1st Drawn Animation - J. Stuart Blackton.



Source: Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHXzVufTX_8>. Access in: 02 nov.. 2023.

However, it was Paris, in August 1908, that received the first cinematographic presentation, *Fantasmagorie*, performed by cartoonist Émile Cohl, at the Théâtre du Gymnase Marie-Bell, which held 800 people, and was transformed into a cinema during the holidays. Unlike the current criteria for the minimum length of cinematographic titles, *Fantasmagorie* is a production that was only one minute and forty seconds long (Lucena Jr, 2002, p.20).



Figure 3 - Frames of *Fantasmagorie*, Émile Cohl, 1908.

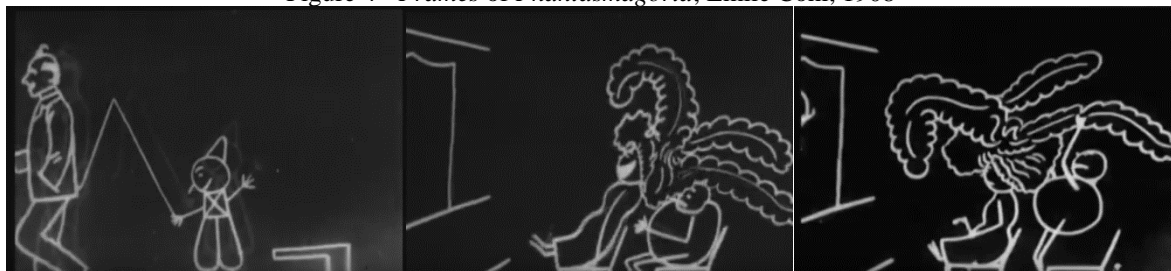


Source: Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1d28X0lkJ4>> Accessed: 02 nov. 2023.

As we can see in the frames of the animation itself, presented in Figure 3, the narrative presented a fictitious story, in which the protagonist, a clown with few features, who is drawn by the hands of the cartoonist in the narrative itself, co-stars with several other morphic objects arranged in the painting: caricatures of people, a hook, a flower, a box, a bottle, an elephant and a horse, among others.

Like cartoons, which extract humor from any situation, the first film productions greatly exploited this characteristic. When you see them, you feel as if the cartoons come to life with the movements on the screen. There is no requirement for factual mooring in the cartoons, which is why the humor in the *Fantasmagorie* scenes perpetuate to this day, as well as the critical aspect of the narrative. Let's see in the frames of the animation, shown in Figure 4, in which an executive can be fished by a clown and a woman with a voluminous hairstyle full of feathers sits calmly in the first pew of an auditorium, hindering the visibility of the espectador do banco de trás, que com toda tranquilidade começa a mexer nos cabelos da mulher.

Figure 4 - Frames of *Phantasmagoria*, Émile Cohl, 1908



Source: Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o1d28X0lkJ4>> Accessed: 02 nov. 2017

Like cartoons, animation uses critical humor and casual situations to win over the viewer, however, animations, unlike cartoons, do not focus only on specific circumstances of a time, culture and place, and therefore, their understanding has a longer shelf life.

Another impactful presentation, early in film history, was Winsor McCay's short film, *The Famous Cartoonist of the N.Y. Herald and his Moving Comics*, which is usually referred to simply as *Little Nemo*. It was directed by James Stuart Blackton and Winsor McCay and was released in 1911. McCay used his strips, which were published in New York newspapers, for animation.



Unlike the previous titles, before starting the minutes intended for the animation of the drawings, the film begins with the filming of the cartoonist and other characters, who interact in the first eight minutes of the film. Although they are small silent paintings, from the texts that are presented in the scenes and expressions, the narrative presents McCay announcing to his friends that he would create 4000 drawings that would move in a month. Then the cartoonist shows up with papers and barrels of ink. Next, he begins a metalinguistic demonstration of film production. In other words, the cartoonist begins to realize the artistic traits and elucidates the strategies used to produce the animation of images in the cinema, as we can see in the *frames* of *Little Nemo*, shown in Figure 5.

In the second image we see the cartoonist tracing and in the third the drawings take the form of characters.

Figure 5 - *Frames* from the beginning of the animation *Little Nemo* (1911), Winsor McCay, The Famous Cartoonist of the N.Y. Herald and His Moving Comics.



Source: Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=little+nemo+1911> Accessed on: 02 nov. 2023.

After presenting the technique of elaboration of the drawing, McCay demonstrates how the animation process occurs, as shown in the frames shown in Figure 6. In the first image, the number 1 is presented, pointing out that the first image is being arranged on a stand by the cartoonist, which is then replaced by another image with the phrase "watch me move".

Figure 6 - *Frames* the animation of *Little Nemo* (1911), Winsor McCay, The Famous Cartoonist of the N.Y. Herald and His Moving Comics.



Source: Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=little+nemo+1911>. Accessed on: 02 nov. 2023.

At the end of the animation, we see the third image shown in Figure 6, which shows the number 4000. Thus, if we divide 4000 images by the total animation time of 148 seconds, we can conclude



that in the *stop motion* technique, approximately 27 images per second were used to produce the movements.

Sociocultural aspects were also incorporated in the construction of the *ethos of the* characters and in the ambience of the narrative, which provokes humor with the grotesque features of the caricature of the African Imp, as well as with his appearance in the middle of the smoke of the Irishman's pipe. This effect caused by the smoke allegorically alludes to the steam of the slave ships that brought the slaves at that time.

Figure 7- Frames the animation of *Little Nemo* (1911), Winsor McCay, The Famous Cartoonist of the N.Y. Herald and His Moving Comics.



Source: Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=little+nemo+1911>. Accessed on: 02 Nov. 2023.

In Figure 7, we can see color frames from the *Little Nemo animation*, although the original edition was black and white. These frames feature the three main characters: the first is the African Imp, the second is the Anglo-Saxon Nemo, drawn as a nobleman, and the third is the image of the Irishman Flip, caricatured as a minstrel. It is noted that the continuity of the humor continues with a fight, when Imp smiles from Flip's robes and is answered with a punch. However, the conflict is placed as a casual circumstance, because throughout the narrative it is possible to observe that the characters remain close, even in the face of unfriendly situations. In a similar situation, there were a large number of Irish and Africans, sent as slaves to the New World between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as a large number of them, who after the industrial revolution were absorbed and began to act as workers and helpers in local industries and trades.

Also, observing the frames of the *animation Little Nemo, arranged in Figure 7*, we identify that Nemo appears in the middle of Imp and Flip, showing disagreement with the conflict between them, and then assumes a position of dominance over the forms of the two characters, occupying half of the duration of the animation. The figures are distorted while Nemo controls their forms, with the lifting and lowering movements of his arms, stretching or crushing the figures, as if he were responsible



for mediating a position of control and balance between the two characters, or perhaps between the representation of the two peoples.

Next, Nemo – which is Latin for nobody – draws a princess for him and settles on a throne inside the mouth of a dragon. Once again the notion of dominion becomes latent, as neither the princess nor the dragon has a choice, they simply serve Nemo's will. The dominance exercised by young Nemo may represent the power of the Americans in the new lands, the United States of America, also known at the time as the land of dreams, such as Nemo's Slumberland (LUCENA JR, 2002, p.30). In fact, what we see is the manifestation of the social and political power relations of the time being taken up by animation.

McCay also achieved prominence among the most famous animators of his time and received the representation of one of his most famous strips, the episodes of *Night of the Living Houses* in the documentary representation of images from the Louvre Museum, called in the narrative as *Sleepy Town*. The image of Little Nemo, shown in Figure 8, was the first comic book image to be incorporated into the Louvre's collection.

Figure 8- *Frames from the animation of Little Nemo* (1911), Winsor McCay, The Famous Cartoonist of the N.Y. Herald and His Moving Comics.



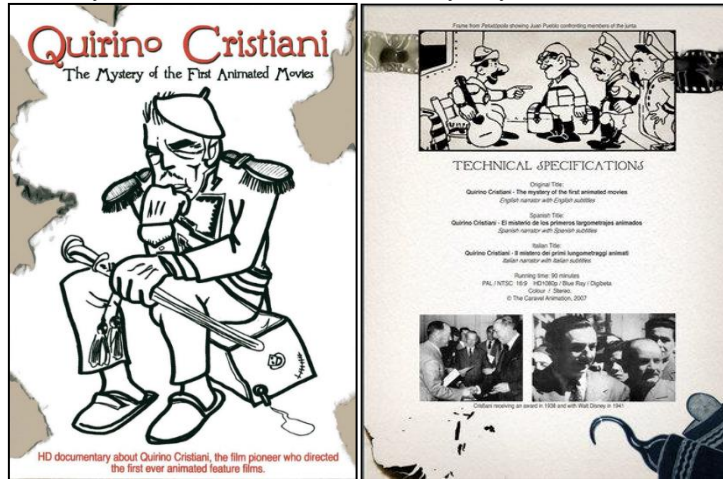
Source: - Winsor McCay, *Little Nemo*, 6 de fevereiro de 1910 - 140x87px, Louvre. Available in: <<https://archive.org/details/winsormccaythefamouscartoonistofthenyheraldandhismovingcomics>>. Acesso em 14 nov. 2023.

Maintaining the critical style of the first short films, the first animated feature film in the world was *El Apóstol*, released in 1917, as a silent film, produced and directed in black and white in Argentina, by Quirino Cristiani, cartoonist, director and animator nationalized Italian Argentine, precursor of animation in that country, is recognized among the great world animators.

The copies of the films were lost in an unexplained fire at the production company, so animator Gabriele Zucchelli directed the documentary entitled *Quirino Cristiani: The mystery of the first animated movies*, 2007, and as a result of the research she carried out on the history of the studio, she managed to recreate the look and the technique used, whose front and back copy of the cover of the documentary is presented in Figure 9.



Figure 9 - Documentary cover *Quirino Cristiani: The mystery of the first animated movies*, 2007.



Source: Available at: <<https://www.stoptrik.eu/quirino-cristiani-eng/>>. Accessed on: January 13, 2018.

However, in the midst of the political and social representatives of the time, while European countries faced conflicts in economic competition, disagreements in the colonial dispute and challenges in arms competition, Charlotte Reiniger (Figure 10), se tornou a primeira mulher a dirigir um filme de animação, *As Aventuras do Príncipe Achmed* (The Adventures of Prince Achmed, 1926).

Figure 10 - Charlotte Reiniger and her illustrations from *The Adventures of Prince Achmed*, 1926.



Source: Available in: <<http://www.animamundi.com.br/pt/blog/grandes-mulheres-da-animacao/>>. Accessed on 10 jan. 2018.

The production was carried out with the technique of silhouette animation (LUCENA JR, 2002, p.117), and she was responsible for introducing the conventional fabular style in cinematographic animations, which is also considered the oldest animated film based on several stories from *One Thousand and One Nights*. After that, the German director was also responsible for more than forty silhouette animations.



Figure 11 - Frames from *The Legend of Miragaia* (1931, António Cunhal and Raul F. Fonseca)

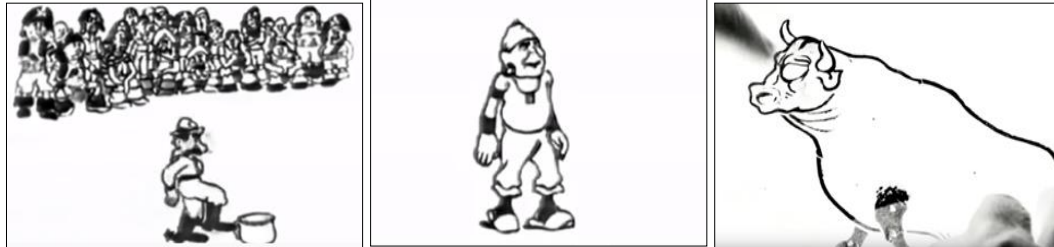


Source: Available at: < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh4A0-NFDrM>>. Accessed on 10 jul. 2023.

Reiniger had a peculiar art style in his animations, unlike other artists of the period from 1920 to 1930, the emotions of the characters did not occur through facial expressions, but through gestures. Inspired by her animation techniques, António Cunhal and Raul Faria da Fonseca released the first animated film made in Portugal, *The Legend of Miragaia* (1931), as we can see in the frames of Figure 11.

In 1931, Quirino brought to theaters his second Argentine animated film, *Peludópolis*, released with a soundtrack from the Vitaphone disc-based sound synchronization system, making the film generally regarded as the first animated feature film with sound. Currently the full movie is lost. Let's look at frames in Figure 12.

Figure 12 – Frames of *Peludópolis*, 1931, Quirino



Source: Available at: < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAS7uenh3nc>>. Accessed on 11 jul. 2023.

The resumption of the first two animated film titles, which had a great deal of critical humor: *El Apóstol* (1917) and *Peludópolis* (1931), as well as the first animated shorts that preceded them: *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906), *Fantasmagorie* (1908) and *Little Nemo* (1911), are of special importance for the focus of this work, since, like the fabular contemporary cinematographic animations of the critical humor style, these productions also contemplate characteristics of irony, often related to the socio-political and economic context of the time, which, as we have seen, are also pertinent to the cartoon and cartoon genres.

The profile of critical humor in narratives remained on the cinema screens of the twentieth century, mainly due to the long collection of film productions by the British Charles Spencer Chaplin, actor, director, producer, comedian, dancer, screenwriter, businessman, writer, comedian and musician. Chaplin gained worldwide prospection with silent and talkie films, notable for the use of critical humor



(CHAVES, 2001, p.02), among other films we highlight: *The Boy (1921)*, *In Search of Gold (1925)*, *The Circus (1928)*, *Modern Times (1936)*, *The Great Dictator (1940)* and *Limelight (1952)*. As well as for animated shorts, however, feature films followed other paths.

The beginning of the industrialization of animation did not receive the same encouragement from the press in relation to live-action cinema, but also faced the great challenge of having artists as pioneers, as they had to have solid knowledge in drawing and painting, and they also needed to make available quickly and cheaply a production, which, in addition to aesthetic beauty, could add the artistic expressiveness of the narrative and the characteristics necessary for a profitable business (Lucena Jr, 2002, p.61).

In 1928, Disney enters the market with the premiere of Mickey Mouse, which brings the synchronization between the images of the film and the sound, however, Disney's greatest impact on cinematographic productions was the consolidation of the fabular style in the narratives, with a certain dose of humor, but unrelated to socio-historical events, which was convenient for a time when the world mourned the losses of the first world war and was still experiencing conflicts which would later trigger a new period of war.

The dominance of the conventional fabular genre in the animation market in the last century can be explained by the fact that this model does not contest political and social issues, and does not bother the ruling class, thus even adding it to its list of admirers. The former leader of Germany, Adolf Hitler, for example, was a loyal spectator of Walt Disney animations, passionate about drawings of Snow White and Pinocchio, going so far as to copy the characters in comic books as a hobby. This statement is made by Norwegian historian William Hakvaag, director of the Lofoten War Museum: Norway¹.

Fables have a great power of distraction, as they lead us to the projection of a world where we can imagine ourselves as princesses, heroes, or any other character. With fantastic narratives, he projects us into an environment that we would like to be ours, because it awakens, both in the moment we watch and in what we remember the scenes, a feeling of perpetual enjoyment, much more attractive than reality, without rules and limits, although non-existent. It is a feeling of self-conviction that manifests itself in the mind of the spectator, who, unconsciously or consciously, tries to convince himself of being someone he is not, as Dostoevsky portrays in his work *Memories of the Underground* (2009).

But these are all golden dreams. Oh, tell me, who was the first to declare, to proclaim that man commits ignominy only because he is ignorant of his real interests, and that it would be enough to instruct him, to open his eyes to his true and normal interests, so that he would immediately cease to commit these ignominy, and become, at the same moment, kind and noble, because, Being instructed and understanding its real advantages, he would see in the good his own

¹ (Available at <<http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/PopArte/Hitler>>. Posted on 23 Feb 2019 2008)



interest, and it is known that no one is capable of acting consciously against him, and therefore, as it were, out of necessity, he would start to do good. (Dostoevsky, 2009, p. 7)

In moments of great social tension, self-deception is an internal facet of behavior that is very opportune so that life does not become unbearable and devoid of greater achievements. Self-deception is a typical feeling of human nature, with a view to one's own survival, even some of the simplest organisms seek to "deceive" the environment and other beings in order to survive. People sometimes even accept to live with undesirable circumstances, aiming at a greater goal, even if the conditions are not satisfactory.

This diversity of personalities is well worked out in cinematic narratives, especially in fables in which animals or objects are incorporated as characters. According to Bakhtin (2010, p.12), Dostoevsky worked with excellence on the nature of the human soul, exploring the most striking characteristics of the diversity of personalities, highlighting ideological, religious, nobility or villainy positions, tastes, quirks, kinks, weaknesses, eccentricities, mildness, violence, shyness and exhibitionism.

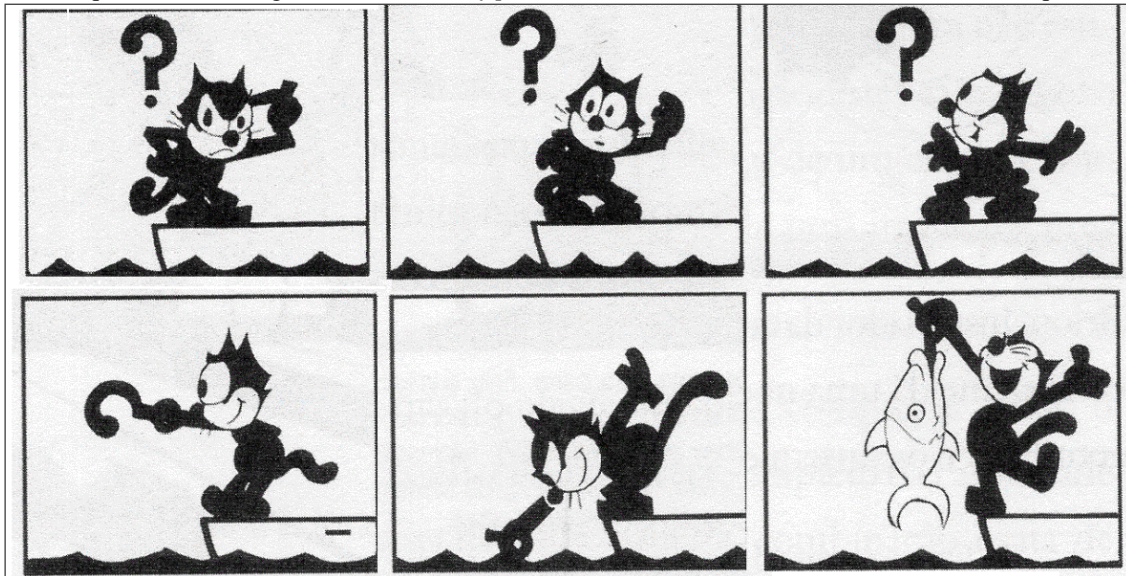
It is from the diversity of human characters that multiple voices arise, sometimes from the past, but which intersect with voices of the present and make their echoes propagate towards the future, generating from there the polyphonic and always open discourse. This, then, is the essence of polyphony, it consists in the multiplicity of voices that intersect without losing their individuality or merging, in which they remain in a continuous process of combination.

It is important to point out that for Bakhtin (2010, p.77), one of the great innovations of Dostoyevsky's literature was to affirm that the character's dialogue can also happen with his own consciousness, a resource that we can highlight was used in the animation, *Inside Out* (2015).

Other shorts occupied the screens during the early years of cinema, they were largely of *Felix the Cat* (Figure 13), which in comparison to the animations brought by Disney, seemed less expressive, in addition to being aesthetically simpler, did not have a continuity in the story.



Figure 13 - Sequence of drawings extracted from a *fipbook*, Otto Messmer. Collection of the Cinémathèque Québécoise



Source: (LUCENA, 2002, p.79)

Even the most famous character of that period, Felix the cat, would tend to exhaust his communication strategies – his personality, although elaborate, was structured around visual jokes in general, the movement was poor.

The animations of the 1920s, compared to those made by Winsor McCay, were of a much lower quality. The titles had few graphic resources, lacked a visual language with more elaborate resources of representation, in addition, they were made in precarious working conditions and in a hurry to meet the quantity needed by the market.

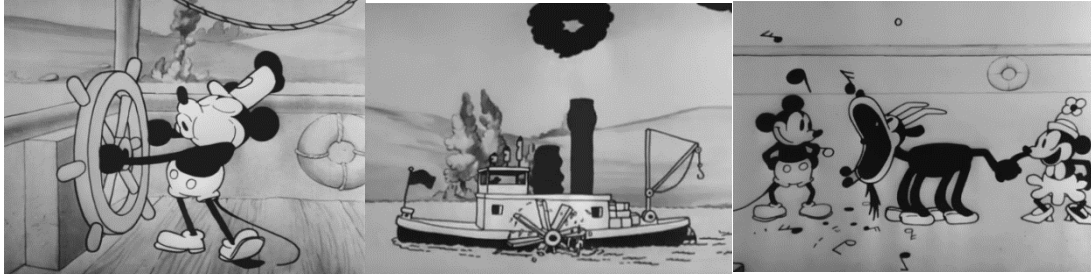
And it was in this context of animation that Disney arrived (LUCENA JR, 2002, p.99), a situation in which the issues of segmentation of narratives had little aesthetic expressiveness. Something unusual was also missing for the conquest of the spectator, ordinary circumstances only attract attention for restricted moments, very different from the fanciful proposals of the fabular world or the spicy attacks of satire. It was the lack of something different in the world of animation that opened the doors for Walt Disney.

[...] in an expression that became famous, Disney aimed to achieve, with animation, the 'illusion of life'. For him, the animated character had to act, to act convincingly; seem to think, breathe; to convince us that he is the bearer of a spirit. And in order to fully engage the audience, this character had to ultimately be inserted into a story. (Lucena, 2004, p.99).

His childhood as a farm boy, then his study at art school, in which he learned to know the technical and artistic rudiments of animation, contributed to Disney putting into practice his proposal of putting the illusion of life into animation.



Figure 14 - Frames from the movie *Steamboat Willie* (1928).



Source: Available at: <<http://videos.disney.com.br/ver/steamboat-willie-mickey-mouse-507955f4329269a7cf8364e0>>. Accessed: 20 dez. 2018.

Maintaining the humor, which was already characteristic of the first animated productions, Walt Disney's narratives conquered the market with several icons, among them Mickey Mouse (Figure 14), official mascot of The Walt Disney Company, which in 1928 introduced its first sound design with the release of *Steamboat Willie*.

But the search for overcoming was another differential of the company, as Walt Disney also released an animated short in the three-color process called Technicolor, *Flowers and Trees*, in 1932.

In 1937, Walt Disney released the first animated feature film in the United States, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which grossed \$8 million at the worldwide box office. Figure 15 shows some frames of the animation that was the first classic of Disney productions.

Figure 15 - Frames from the animation *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, 1937.



Available on the website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_IIfw-YaRI>. Accessed on November 12, 2023.

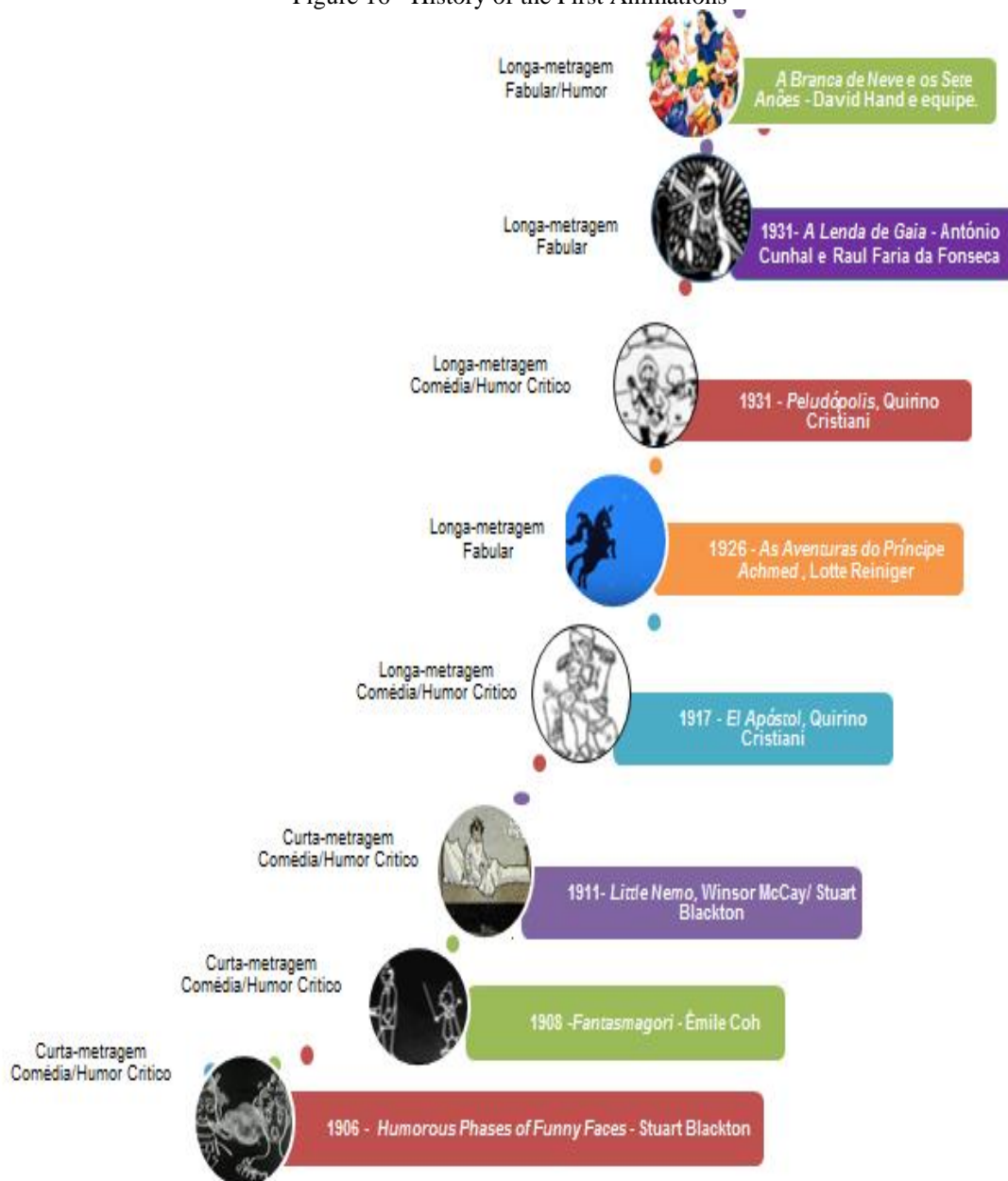
In the aftermath, Disney proceeded with the release of 39 more cinematic animation titles and 12 *live-action titles* in the twentieth century, thus consolidating the style of the animation market at the time. These achievements, in addition to the achievement of more than one hundred animated titles in the same century, gave him supremacy in the production and distribution of animated titles, as well as the solidification of the conventional fabular style of cinematic animations, many of them as versions of stories by the Brothers Grimm. Before the Second World War, while European countries faced conflicts in economic competition, disagreements in the colonial dispute and challenges in arms competition, the USA launched itself as the largest producer of animation and conquered the European consumer market, establishing a hegemony in audiovisual production throughout the West.



This prominence remains to this day, but in the 80s, they were favored by the conquest of a greater share of the market, since the Americans were pioneers in the discovery and large-scale distribution of personal computers and computer graphics software, contributing to the spectators knowing new paths to the fantastic world of magic.

In addition to the charm and humor offered to children, animations conquer adults with productions that break with the tradition that has enchanted generations of children since 1930, as it dialogues with contemporary uses and customs, and can even, due to the lack of absolute truths, present anti-heroes that captivate the public and become a reference, as we see in *Shrek* (2007, Dorling Kindersley).

Figure 16 - History of the First Animations



Source: Prepared by the author.



The release of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* marked the beginning of Disney's golden age, which dominated the twentieth century with the audiovisual production of American animated titles.

The effects of the war also affected the European film market and gave way to American productions conceived by Hollywood, which achieved the predominance of the American film market and the distribution of the titles to the European consumer market and to the West.

During and after the war periods, in the twentieth century, critical humor was maintained in cinema filming, especially by the productions of Charles S. Chaplin and short films released, but cinematographic animation took another direction, driven mainly by Disney productions.

In this scenario, where the emphasis was on the feature films of the conventional fabular genre, a fable of a different nature appeared in theaters. Taking advantage of the constant use of animals in the fabled narratives of the twentieth century, which marked the field of cinematographic productions, the Englishman George Orwell (1903-1950), pseudonym of Eric Arthur Blair, writer, journalist and political essayist, launched, in the format of a fable, *the book Animal Farm* (1945), which, under the direction of Batchelor and Halas, gave rise to the first British animated feature film. released in 1954, with the same title.

George Orwell was the author of several critical works, including the book *Down out In Paris and London* (1933) and *1984* (1949), one of the best-selling publications of the twentieth century . Two new *live-action versions* were released in cinemas: in 1984, directed by Michael Radford and in 1999, directed by Josh Stephenson.

As we can see, from the *frames of the* animation, presented in Figure 17, the fabular production had a very different character from the conventional standards of the genre, because in the ambiguous discourse of the narrative, alongside the innocent laughter, there also flows, for those who discern about the political context, the perception of the evident satire of the communist Soviet Union.



Figure 17 - Frames from the animation *Animal Farm*, 1954.



Source: Available on the website: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3EDynwWPZs>>. Accessed on November 10, 2017.

As Minois (2003) points out, humour is alternately sarcastic, taking the forms of irony and humour.

Studied with a magnifying glass for centuries, by all disciplines, laughter hides its mystery. Alternately aggressive, sarcastic, mocking, friendly, sardonic, angelic, taking the forms of irony, humor, burlesque, grotesque, he is multiform, ambivalent, ambiguous. It can express pure joy as well as vicious triumph, pride or sympathy." (MINOIS, 2003, p.14).

The film gained great worldwide projection at the time (Shaw, 2001, p.114), and at odds with the simplicity of the conventional fabular style narrative prevalent at the time, it stood out mainly for the characteristics of critical humor and the socio-political aspects added to the film's language.

Instead of the human representation occurring by the sweet Snow White, (Figure 15), who played with the animals, and in whose narrative the righteous always conquered evil, in *Animal Farm* the relationship between man and animals occurred under the violence of the whip and the relations of exploitation always remained under the weakest. as can be seen by looking at the illustration of the frames in Figure 17, the oppressor, who was initially the man, then becomes the pig who took power.

The construction of meanings developed in the narrative of *Animal Farm* shows that the film uses the characteristics of an animation, which we characterize as fabular cinematographic of the critical humor style, different from contemporary productions only by the specificities of the language.

The presentation of animations was encouraged in most countries of this historical period, as they took the focus off the intolerance of governments, at the time marked by the predominance of authoritarian and populist lines. According to the book *The Eclipse of Progressivism* (Siqueira; Milk; Uemura, 2010), which analyzes Latin countries in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, shows that Latin



America suffered a new political setback in these decades, mainly due to the suspension of the democratic order through military regimes.

[...] such as Bolivia with Evo Morales; Ecuador with Rafael Correa; Nicaragua with Daniel Ortega; Paraguay with Fernando Lugo and Venezuela with Hugo Chávez elected rulers with populist and authoritarian tendencies, against critics of freedom of markets and freedom of the press (Siqueira; Milk; Uemura, 2010).

On the other hand, the 1960s and 1970s were also the scene of many social and student protest movements, largely contesting the distribution of income, claiming the right of all to share in the wealth produced (Silva, 2005, p.1). It was a period in which doors were opened for new artistic manifestations.

Certainly, the growth of animations has also been favored by technological resources. In 1964 Hanna-Barbera started working with celluloid and then came Pixar, revolutionizing contemporary animation with computer graphics. New uses of *stop motions* have emerged and the production of 3D animation has elevated animations to places of increasing prominence. The new resources brought the improvement and harmonization of techniques that made possible new paths for all film production. The inspiration of directors and animators has been continuously expanded, as well as the list of animated film productions to reach the imagination of the public. (Fossatti, 2010, p. 11). The classic tales, for example, gained another visuality, and, from creations and reinterpretations of previously disclosed narratives, the playful, dreamlike, and fanciful aspects were enriched, taking the viewer to an infinity of magical and enchanted worlds.

According to the socio-political and cultural moment, productions can be influenced by communication styles that modify and/or diversify new productions, a significant milestone in the market happened with the emergence of digital resources. Digital animation, which predominates in today's productions, appeared in 1962, with Ivan Sutherland's optical pen, which allowed designers to use computers to create designs for automobiles, cities, and industrial products.

Figure 18 – Frames from the animated short *André and Wally B*, 1984, Lucas Filmes.



Source Available on website:< <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qha0kEeVl0>>. Accessed on 22 Aug. 2019.

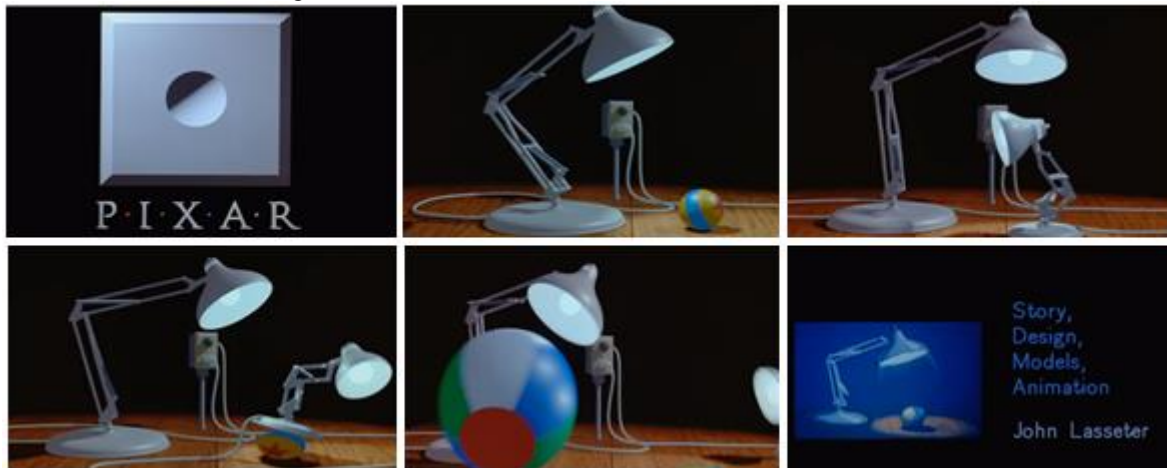
In February 1986, Animation Studios was born as a division of Lucas Films and was bought by Steve Jobs, who further boosted the company's development. In the same year, the company, which would later become Pixar, released the short film *Lux Jr* (Figure 18), which received an Oscar



nomination for Best Animated Short and first place at the Golden Gate Awards for Computer Generated Imagery (CGI). This was the beginning of a story of awards and public success.

Pixar has established itself as a solid animation company: it has won 28 Academy Awards, the famous Oscars, six Golden Globes and three Grammys, as well as many, many millions.

Figure 19 - Frames from the animation *Lux Jr*, 1986, Pixar.



Source: Available on the website: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4NPQ8mfKU0>>. Accessed on August 20, 2019.

In 1995, after years of losing money, Pixar released its first big box office hit, *Toy Story*, received nominations for Best Original Song and Best Screenplay, and a special award, the *Special Achievement Award*, given to John Lasseter for the development and inspiration applied to techniques that made the first animated feature possible. In 2006, Pixar is bought by Disney, with this, Steve Jobs becomes the largest shareholder of this company (REGO, 2016).

While films such as *Star Wars* (1977), *Terminator* (1984), *Independence Day* (1996), *Titanic* (1997), *Armageddon* (1998), *Godzilla* (1998) and *The Matrix* (1999), among others, used the resource of digital animation to create special effects, which brought fantasy closer and closer to the reality proposed by the narrative, other animators introduced real filming of landscapes in the composition of scenarios and real penguins, in order to establish more veracity to the scenes, such as the animation *Happy Feet* (Warner, 2000). And, the animation *Final Fantasy* (2001) by Hironobu Sakaguchi, which with the aim of achieving realism, through the photo-realistic animation technique, presents a setting and characters with an impressive veracity.

However, digital animation gained more traction after *Toy Story*, released in December 1995. The applied technology awarded a *Special Achievement Award* for animation, for the development and expressive application of the technique that, after all, made it possible to make films like this, which would come to be hailed as the first feature film made entirely by means of computer animation (LUCENA JR, 2002, p.429). Although the award mentions that the production was carried out entirely

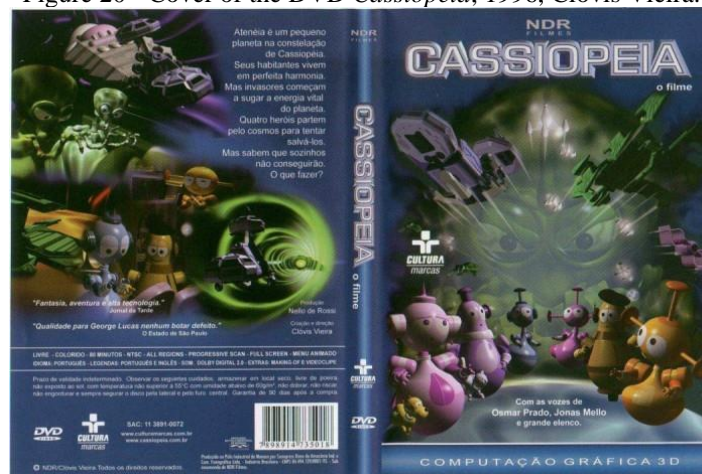


by computer animation, in fact images of clay molds made to characterize the heads of the characters were used, to then be digitized and assigned movement.

And in April 1996, the animation *Cassiopeia*, by *Clóvis Vieira*, which had been in production since 1992, was released by NDR Filmes. For the development of this feature film there was no process of digitization of molds, the development was entirely in digital computing. Under the general direction of animator Clóvis Vieira, three animation directors and eleven other animators, in January 1992 the production of "Cassiopeia" began. The characters and scenarios were defined with the use of basic geometric figures, developed in 17 486 DX2-66 microcomputers, and the first character model was made on a 386 SX of 20mhz.

For the elaboration of the characters and composition of the scenery of *Cassiopeia*, spheres, cubes and cylinders were used, which in addition to facilitating the rendering, also offered a unique art style for the feature film. The production was also marked by the fit of the colors, because even without textures they give an air of exclusivity to the film. (JR. CANDIDO, 2016). [...] Officially released on April 1, 1996, the film took four years to complete and cost R\$ 1.5 million. (FURTADO, 2013).

Figure 20 - Cover of the DVD *Cassiopeia*, 1996, Clóvis Vieira.



Source: Available on the website: <<http://www.arkade.com.br/retroarkade-cassiopeia-primeiro-longa-animacao-historia/>>. Accessed 24 out. 2023.

The path to other digital animations was open to other studios, in addition to Pixar, which was already producing the first shorts. The first to quickly join this new proposal were Dreamworks, Universal Pictures, Warner Bros. and Century Fox.

Before we get into the concepts of digital animation, it is worth mentioning that the first critical humor animation with a significant box office return in theaters was *Animal Farm*, 1954. Adapted from the literary work of the same name, which arose at a time of much political controversy, but also without globalization and with the high cost of production. After this, world cinema had to wait until the end of the twentieth century, 1998, to enjoy again an animation that explored critical humor in a feature-length narrative, *Antz*, released by Dreamworks Animation, under the direction of Eric Darnell



and Tim Johnson, in which the behaviors attributed to insects and the construction of the environment, With high doses of irony, they satirize political and social relations.

The approach of the new narratives contemplates a critical humor linked to historical events, opening the doors to a new style of cinematographic productions, now influenced by contemporary aspects, the multiplicity of voices and the aesthetic diversity of a globalized world updated by new technological resources.

With the impact caused by the advancement of technology and communication, the end of the twentieth century dawned with a new life expectancy, which began to gain strength in the face of a potential for transformation, quickly perceived and incorporated into the productions of cinematographic animations. And, the cinema released a feature film, *Animal Farm* (1954), which had a questioning narrative, seeking humor in the satire of circumstances that presented similarities with socio-historical events. But, due to the political context itself, it was a unique manifestation, rescued many years later by the animation *Formiguinhaz* (1998, Dreamworks). This film gave voice to reflections that denoted a new social profile, which, favored by the plurality and diversity of artistic expressions, built an ambience that distanced itself from the format maintained by the productions of Wall Disney, the flagship of the world market of the most watched animations in the twentieth century.

This innovative proposal, brought by Dreamworks in *Formiguinhaz* (1998), in addition to portraying the return of critical humor in feature films of cinematographic animations, linked to historical contexts, also signaled the end of the restraint in the expression of art and in the discourse of cinema, which had already been broken by some films, but which until then was far from the magic of animation in cinemas. From then on, feature-length animation would cease to be an icon of humor and leisure detached from reality, formatted to an illusory standard of society, and would begin to express political, social, and even documentary questions of history.

Thus, we perceive a rupture of the patterns of humor that predominated in the fabular animations of the twentieth century, a moment in which the voice of animations were dampened by the periods of war, post-war and repression. However, in order for us to see this relationship, it is necessary to distance ourselves a little, because, as Agamben (2009, p.59) states, we cannot let the lights of our century obscure our vision. "Only those who do not allow themselves to be blinded by the lights of the century and who are capable of distinguishing in them the part of the shadow, its intimate obscurity, can be called contemporary" (Agamben, 2009, p.63-64).

Contemporaneity is, therefore, a singular relationship with time itself, which adheres to it and, at the same time, distances itself from it. More precisely, it is this relationship with time that adheres to it, by means of a lag and an anachronism. [...] Those who coincide in an excessively absolute way with the epoch, who agree perfectly with it, are not contemporaries, because precisely for this reason they cannot see it, cannot keep their gaze fixed on it. (Agamben, 2009, p.59).



Some information can help to distance the look from analysis, among which the returns that animations are achieving at the box office, as well as why the *Despicable Me franchise*, which works with narratives of critical humor, is the greatest among animations.

The film rescues the past, transforming what was once old into new. Respecting the original meaning, new versions of titles that have achieved great box office are brought to the present day, what has already passed returns to everyday life.

As Linda Hutcheon writes, "the past really existed, but today we can only 'know' this past through its texts, and therein lies its link with the literary" (Hutcheon, 1991, p. 168). It is not directly concerned with demonstrating time and space, because the concern is focused on showing what is being represented and its meaning. It is a vision focused on heterogeneity, differences, and lack of concern with the general view of the world. The valorization of the unusual, the unpermitted, or even what is excluded and considered impure.

2 FINAL THOUGHTS

Current narratives privilege heterogeneity and difference, acting as liberating forces in the redefinition of cultural discourse. A scenario in which cinematographic animations seek to construct meanings in the proposals of a globalized world, which contemplates more complex themes and with a great dose of critical humor.

These productions provide a new form of expression of the cultivation of the imaginary, which, leveraged by digital resources, even impact our vision of reality. We identified a language that points to critical humor, but continues to preserve the magic of the fantastic world, the main attraction for children. On the other hand, by investing in more complex and intertextual themes, in the specificities of critical humor, they reflect similarities with socio-political and cultural themes and also dialogue with young people and adults. In these productions, concomitant with the revolution of the digitalization of animation, the questions about the notions of absolute truths, spaciousness, temporality and even references for analysis, gain space.

Conventional fabular animations progressively give way to narratives that bet on the production of critical humor linked to the representation of contexts that portray socio-historical circumstances. Unlike the twentieth century, in which the predominance of box office was Wall Disney Studios productions, in the last twenty-five years other studios have shared this market (Dreamworks Pictures, Illumination Entertainment/Universal Pictures, 20th Century Fox Animation/Blue Sky Studios and Pixar), producing titles whose specificities guarantee narratives that contemplate a new profile in the construction of meanings. in which the articulation of gestures and ambience introduce constant intertextual circumstances, which intentionally contribute to the construction of the message



According to the evidence made throughout the text, we verified how critical humor is present in the history of animations, influencing the production of narratives, whose comedy stimulates a critical look, which reflects the reality of a society that seeks greater speed, clarity and quality of information.



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