

Mockery as an anti-feminist weapon: a conservative instrument wielded by libertarians

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ABSTRACT

In the 1960's, amid the countercultural rebellion, together with the struggle of North-American blacks for civil rights and with protests against the Vietnam War, emerges the women's rebellion. A new feminist setting is urged forward in the United States and in Europe, with a vivid expression in Brazil as well: those women deemed the separation between public and private, between personal and political a mystification, and insisted on the structural nature of domination expressed in the relations of quotidian life, a domination whose systematic nature appeared obscured, as if it were the product of personal situations. At that time, though Brazil was vexed in the mire of a military dictatorship, the outstanding endeavors of some – inspired in the countercultural ideals against the regime – made great strides in combating authoritarianism and promoting criticism of customs. Ridicule was their weapon, skillfully wielded by members of the journal *O Pasquim*. Paradoxically, however, the mordacity of many of the writers turned equally against the women who fought for their rights and who assumed attitudes considered inadequate according to the traditional femininity standards, and to the established relations between genders. The writers of the journal would ridicule the militants, making use of labels such as “masculine, ugly, flat-chested,” not to mention “depraved, promiscuous,” which earned them great repercussion. Such a pattern of behavior stems from the fear of relinquishing male predominance in gender power relations, evincing strong conservatism in contrast with attitudes seen as libertarian under other circumstances.

Key Words: feminism, gender relations, personal/political, mockery, conservatism.

Studies on mockery are tributaries of those of laughter, to which the contribution of Mikhail Bakhtin can be underscored. His work, inspired in Rabelais, emphasizes the positive, regenerating, creative significance of laughter, already present in ancient philosophical theories, culminating in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance with its utopian character directed against all forms of social hierarchy. Only after the rise of bourgeois society will the comical become an ideological weapon, with its moralizing and hierarchizing character as the defining feature of modern, bourgeois satire, distinguishing it from medieval and renaissance satire.²

On the other hand, Quentin Skinner, in a recent paper, aiming to show the link between Hobbes' philosophical conceptions and humanist culture in the Renaissance, also referring back to Antiquity, highlights the belief in using laughter as a powerful weapon in legal and political debates as one aspect of persuasive discourse theory. And the aspect that he points out, unlike

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² BAKHTIN, 1987.

Bakhtin's perspective, is discomfiture or embarrassment, citing Quintiliano in his *Institutio oratoria*, which propounds the use of laughter to destroy the dialectic adversaries:

[...] we can be successful by making our dialectic adversaries seem ridiculous, instigating laughter against them, thereby destroying their cause and persuading our audience to side with us.³

Skinner elaborates on Aristotle's references on mockery as "a gracious insult [...], the belittling of the other for fun," from which he concludes that Aristotle's suggestion is that the fun induced in mockery is always an expression of scorn, and that the sources of pleasure are "the ridiculous actions, utterances and people."⁴

Such an aspect deserves preferential space in this approach, given that the use of mockery such as the ridicule of women to buffer any possible impact caused by upsetting the balance of power between the sexes is commonplace and taken for granted. As early as Ancient Greece, such forms of expression already took place, among which the most noteworthy is revealed in the work of Aristophane, more precisely in the comedy *Assembly Women*, in which the conveyed message is that women's political participation could only amount to an object of laughter, a defamatory characteristic for men. Among the most famous examples of others who followed along this path in the 17th century is Molière, with his *The Ridiculous Precieuses*, mocking women, who, in his conception, were pretensely intellectualized. The French Revolution, whose great merit lies in having contributed to the recognition of human rights, contradictorily represented a retrocession for women in the many levels of participation. Despite the relevant role women played in institutionalizing the changes brought on by the movement, women are excluded from political and civic citizenship, and nature is resorted to as a justification for the diverse occupational character imposed on the two genders. After all, men and women do feature different physiologies, configuring an indication of this decision. So as to materialize such formulations, Deputy Chaumette opposes female participation in the Assembly on the grounds of such differences, which shows the use of irony for the purpose of ridiculing women's claims.⁵

Est-ce à nous? Nous a-t-elle donner des mamelles? A-t-elle assoupi nos muscles pour nous rendre propres aux soins de la hutte, du ménage?⁶

In the 19th century, still in France, it is impossible not to mention Honoré Daumier, famous caricaturist, radical republican and impassioned anti-feminist. Like the anarchist Proudhon, he manifests an irrational reaction to women participating outside the domestic setting, an issue in which republicans, monarchists and even socialists converged, a telling indication that gender contradictions covered all the different colors in the political and class spectrum. The posture upheld by Daumier can be assessed in the three series of his work: *Les Bas-Bleus* (1844), concerning intellectual women, mainly those who were learned; *Les Femmes Socialistes* (1849), concerning militant women, and *Les Divorceuses* (1848), regarding women who defended divorce.

In these works, Daumier is seen as an inflamed critic of women aspiring to any sort of public activity, or who are not traditionally feminine, or yet, who, in his opinion, neglected their domestic and maternal duties. He attacked the feminists as "women who would not resign to be women," making them the target of satirical laughter.⁷ Feminists, educated women and all those

³ SKINNER, 2002, p. 9.

⁴ SKINNER, 2002, p. 16 and 17.

⁵ I use irony as a literary trope which lends discourse a satirical character, according to Hayden WHITE, 1994, p. 31-32.

⁶ To whom has nature endowed domestic care? To us, by any chance? Did it give us breasts? Did it weaken our muscles that we might be made more suitable for domestic affairs? (Eleni VARIKAS, no date, p. 4).

⁷ DAUMIER, no date, p. 22; Janis BERGMAN-CARTORI, 1990.

who distanced themselves from the traditional feminine stereotype are contradictorily portrayed as ugly, the ultimate female sin, and as brutes, masculinized, and as their husbands' foes.

Such examples concerning the use of comical discourses and/or of wit as a weapon wielded to maintain feminine inferiority facilitate the contact with the struggle toward building gender roles, whereby battles obstinately re-start, or ebb and flow amid uncomfortable similarities and promising differences in relation to the past.⁸ By and large, I have urged forward into the trajectory of the second half of the 19th century, more precisely within 1870 and 1930, whereas in this text I will aim to examine the period within the late 1960's and the 1980's, mainly in Rio de Janeiro.

What marks this moment are the ebullience and the strong reaction against order and traditional moral. In the 1960's, amid the post-war prosperity, at the height of the Cold War, a significant part of the youth reacts against repression and ostensive control to which they consider themselves hostage. The deception with the values of the capitalist world as well as with the so-called socialist world was a mark to which, especially in the West, the ideas of Herbert Marcuse greatly contributed, and whose works, among them *Eros and Civilization*, became emblematic. Thus, the march toward a new world takes shape, toward a utopia which, having begun in the United States, later erupted with intensity in other parts of the world, such as France and Germany, but also in Latin America, and in the portion known as *real socialism*. It is the libertarian dream which is sought, by means of a new conception of politics and culture that conciliates social justice with freedom, art and life. In sum, the famous countercultural rebellion of the 1960's emerges, propounding a series of changes in the way of literary and artistic creation, of individual behavior, and of political action, a direct descendent of the *beat generation* in the 1950's with Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs at the lead. Looming from the height of this rebellion, amid the struggle of North-American blacks for civil rights and the protests against the Vietnam War, is yet another rebellion, namely, the rebellion of women. Hence a new setting for feminism breaks out in the United States and Europe, with vivid manifestations in Brazil. At the time, the country was vexed in a mire of a military dictatorship that had taken over power with the 1964 coup. Among the many modes of combat against the regime, the endeavor of some to oppose it by means of mockery stands out: for example, the alternative weekly journal *O Pasquim*, in those fateful "bullet-packed years."⁹ Most of its members, inspired in North-American counterculture, had turned away from the dogmatism of many Marxists, which characterized a suprapartisan, ideological plurality, opposing authoritarianism and criticizing mainstream customs.

Paradoxically, however, they jeopardized their libertarian proposal by assuming a misogynist posture, turning their wrath equally against women who had decidedly taken up the struggle for rights and/or who, in their quotidian, would take on attitudes considered inadequate to the established femininity and gender relation. Those women, in turn, much like in Virginia Woolf's reflections, denounced the separation between the public and the private, between the personal and the political as being a mystification, and insisted upon the structural nature of domination expressed in quotidian relations, whose systematic character appeared covert, as if it were a product of personal situations.¹⁰ Articulated to this clamor were manifestations against the permanence of the family's patriarchal standards of organization, in addition to demands that reinforced stereotypes for women, such as compulsory maternity, beauty standards, delicateness, etc. Set on demolishing taboos such as obligatory virginity for single women, they yearned for the absolute exaltation of their body and sexuality, and endeavored to overcome the traditional woman-mother conception. Hence, they underscored the issue of the sexualized woman, highlighting the issue of abortion and contraception. Moreover, a strong movement took place to combat violence against battered and threatened women. The struggle against *legitimate defense of honor* would mobilize women throughout Brazil in protest marches and demonstrations all the way to the Justice Tribunals.¹¹

⁸ Philippe ARIÈS, 1998, p. 153-176.

⁹ The first issue of d' *O Pasquim* is dated June 26, 1969.

¹⁰ VARIKAS, 1997.

¹¹ Suely Gomes COSTA, 2003, p. 20.

Against those women, the much feared “feminists,” the writers of *O Pasquim* would throw their darts. Old stereotypes are restored, among which ugliness, lesser intelligence or, inversely, the danger of this attribute, inconsequentiality, the tendency toward transgression, masculinity aiming to negatively identify those who aspired to roles considered innately male. Not few stories or articles in that journal registered such feminist “qualities,” which equates the counterculture libertarians to the misogynists of the past. In fact, to cast a discrediting gaze upon those who dared to threaten the traditional gender order was the ultimate goal. The reason is, according to Virginia Woolf,

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. [...] That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge.¹²

The images of radicalism, aggressiveness, masculinity attributed to those women can be seen in an article published by *O Pasquim* regarding the time when feminists invaded the office of *Ladies' Home Journal* editor

to protest against the wishy-washy image that the magazine conveys of the American woman. They smoked his cigars, they put their feet up on his desk, they blurted out insults, they demanded a special edition on orgasm, etc. etc. etc. and they used the men's room ...¹³

Following this was a frivolous remark, reinforcing the traditional male conception, which had nothing new to add, regarding the type of women – shapely and attractive – who would be welcome on the premises of that journal:

Hey, everybody, we here at *O Pasquim* are all the way in favor of feminism, as long as their representatives are as appealing as Tania Caldas or Marina Montini. Tarso has already ordered the widening of our restrooms and the installation of all sorts of fixtures. You can come any time. Welcome!

Another member of the journal under scrutiny with outstanding sensibility to class issues and fearless opposition to authoritarianism, could not conceal his conservatism.

In 1972 women will wear their hair long, loose or in a perm. Their purses will be huge, they will wear leather strap sandals, bright colored pantalons, psychedelic necklaces, bracelets and rings!

In 1972 women will wear wide, see-through shirts (gowns?) all laced or flowered. They will wear nail polish and flaunt lovely wide leather belts around the waist!

In cold weather they will wear long coats and high boots. In the summer, light blouses and body suits (no bra). All this because, in 1972, women will be able to achieve an age-old dream: to be just like men.¹⁴

They evinced, therefore, a belief in an essentialist perspective of what it meant to be male and female, in a moment of intense debates and of the conclusion as to the cultural connotation of roles and characteristics attributed to the two sexes. Not by chance, men and women, in this quintessential countercultural questioning, tended toward a style of dress that was interchangeable in terms of its male/female traits.

¹² WOOLF, 1993, p. 32.

¹³ Pedro Ferreti. “Let them in” (Podem vir). *O Pasquim*, n. 42, p. 30, April 14 through 17, 1970.

¹⁴ Henfil. “Previsão Mulher.” *O Pasquim*, n. 132, p. 20, January 11 through 17, 1972.

And more articles came in, aiming to stress in a most disrespectful manner, which roles would be more suitable for women ...

In Connecticut in the USA, dog licenses have the shape of a hydrant. Feminist organizations readily protested against the discrimination which that might represent against female dogs. *Well, women get complaining when we send them to the washing board, to the kitchen, to bed, places where they are made more useful, where they are less of a nuisance, and where they can use their heads more wisely*¹⁵ (emphasis added).

This same writer had previously delivered a commentary on a film festival directed by women, in London, in which he shows his prejudice against intellectualized women, marking his article with an offensive connotation in relation to some of them, resorting to references of sexuality, but in an indelicate manner. One of the directors, Susan Sontag, in his opinion, "looks like one of those northern girls, vaguely lesbian, that we would always run into in those 'vernissages' crazy to get laid by someone 'artistic.'" Another, the well known scholar Marguerite Duras "looks like one of those ladies dedicated to perverting children by writing children's plays with titles such as 'The Little Ant That Went to the Moon,' 'The Little Bunny That Got It Good,' etc."¹⁶

On yet another occasion, he states: "Hey, feminists: human rights in the first place. Later on, we might get around to your case, OK?"¹⁷ He thus unveils one of the reasons for his intolerance toward feminists, exposing his filiation to traditional leftist ideas; that is, once the problem of class inequality has been dealt with, other contradictions will be addressed in due time, an agenda that has not taken place historically, if one examines the trajectory of *real socialism*.

In a commentary on a series of stories that have been published by the magazine *Realidade* regarding what women thought of the Brazilian male, Millôr Fernandes, one of the top members of *O Pasquim* refers to feminists in a rude manner, identifying their emancipative struggle with the desire for mere sexual promiscuity: "for being emancipated and having been extraordinarily successful in their emancipation, women have decided that it is not enough to lay anyone they want (because what they call emancipation is, in general, to lay anyone you want) and they decided to lay philosophy."¹⁸

This renowned intellectual thus simplified one of the most complex issues for women at the time. Women were immersed in a culture in which they could not freely address their sexuality. To remain virgin while single and faithful in marriage was synonymous to feminine honor; an honor that implied the entire family, making up a sexually located concept, a form of violence that had become a source of other multiple forms of violence. Whereas men were encouraged to a free expression of their sexuality, a symbol of virility, to women this attitude was condemned, and it was up to women to repress any desire or impulses of this nature. Single women who yielded to losing their virginity would be shunned and, in an illegitimate relation, men were not expected to be made responsible for their acts, as it was women who should carry the burden of the consequences for their "mistakes." After all, "purity" was fundamental to the woman in that an unawareness of the body was a sign of high value, in a context whereby the image of the Virgin Mary was a standard for women. And so, abandoned women exposed their lives to hasty and uncouth abortive practices, some even doing away with the newly-born child in the more tragic situations. They became monsters in a culture nourished by the instinctive motherly love stereotype, "because untamable creatures, in all their rage, they love." Others who

¹⁵ Ivan Lessa. "Bitches, Unite!" (*Cadelas, uni-vos!*). *O Pasquim*, n. 345, p. 31, Feb. 6 through 12, 1976.

¹⁶ Ivan Lessa. "From London: Feminine Film Festival." *O Pasquim*, n. 26, p. 14, December 18 through 24, 1969.

¹⁷ Ivan Lessa. "A Matter of Priorities", *O Pasquim*, n. 345, p. 31, Feb. 6 through 12, 1976.

¹⁸ Millôr Fernandes. "Barbarelas." *O Pasquim*, n. 27, p. 2, Dec. 25 through 31, 1969.

dared to live their sexuality outside wedlock were assassinated in the name of “legitimate defense of honor.”¹⁹

In countercultural times, women find themselves before a series of transformations portrayed in *Nouvelle vague* films by Bergman, Goddard, Truffaut, Antonioni, whereby heroines decide their own destiny, not to mention the advent of the birth control pill in the 1960’s. In particular, those who frequented certain milieu – academic and artistic – began to assume the “quit being a virgin” as a rite of passage toward a higher stage. Like Annete Goldberg puts it, this was an avant-garde symbol and women who were bold enough would guarantee their access to a new group, relating sexually with their boyfriends or varying partners, assuming themselves as “libertarians.”²⁰

Yet this was an extremely painful step for most. Shame, fear, guilt were some of the inside feelings they experienced. Comprehensible, in the face of the values they inherited in their upbringing and in education, to which teen literature was added, especially the photo soap opera, namely, *Grande Hotel*, and M. Delly’s novels. Here, the reinforced female and male profiles will be characterized by the contrast between fragile, delicate, pure women and proud, strong, dominating men. The love/marriage binomial would characterize the man/woman relation, from which eroticism was either absent or camouflaged.²¹

Therefore, to assume one’s sexuality became a harrowing, if not devastating, decision for women, which did not sensitize Millôr, who would not miss a single chance to harass them.²² He even transcribed a passage from an interview with film-maker Roman Polanski, who states: “To say that women, on average, are less intelligent than men causes me great indignation, but it just so happens that it is true.”²³

By and large, the woman who thinks, speaks, writes, the woman who complains and who rebels is frustrated, ugly and very dangerous – a reality which not long ago was endorsed by physicians. To most of them, normal women were quite non-intelligent and some even upheld that those bestowed with a lot of intelligence and intense eroticism could become extremely dangerous, innate criminals. They are incapable of forbearance, of patience, of altruism, all of which are traits of maternity – women’s primordial role to which the entire biological and psychological organization of normal women are subordinated.²⁴

In the late 1960’s, as well as in the 1970’s, *O Pasquim*’s libertarians return to these old arguments, using the strategy of mockery to undermine women’s movements toward full citizenship, and expressing, in a manner similar to the misogynists prior to them, the fear of change that might threaten the traditional gender order. Age old stereotypes are resurrected, always stressing the imperative need for women to be beautiful, which would exempt them from other obligations. This is the tone of the news story on Monica Hirst’s debut (also a reporter with *Correio da Manhã*) as a *O Pasquim* humorist. “She is said to be very cute, so that there was no need to know how to write.”²⁵ In turn, in an interview with the actress Tonia Carrero, another quality was added, though there should be both: “Beauty and intelligence are two ingredients that, save rare exceptions, we require of women to be interviewed by *O Pasquim*.”²⁶ In 1973, Jaguar would state that as far as demanding women’s rights goes, he was more in favor of Brigitte Blair, an actress who was known for her figure, than of writer Rose Marie Muraro.²⁷ It is Jaguar himself who asks journalist Cidinha Campos if the “show” that she was promoting would be with Heloneida Studart, Rose Marie Muraro and Betty Friedan. To that she replied: “Not Betty Friedan. The ugly ones must pardon me, but I must say that beauty is essential.”

¹⁹ Rachel SOIHET, 1989, p. 338.

²⁰ GOLDBERG, 1987, p. 22-24.

²¹ Rosane Manhães PRADO, 1981, p. 24.

²² Millôr Fernandes. “Barbarelas.” *O Pasquim*, n. 27, p. 2, Dec. 25 through 31, 1969.

²³ Millôr Fernandes. “Oi, ô lib.” *O Pasquim*, n. 135, p. 22, Feb. 2 through 9, 1972.

²⁴ In this particular aspect, Françoise Parturier remembers Dr. Guillois, who, in 1904, in his *Étude médico-psychologique sur Olympe de Gouge*, concluded that women who participated in the French Revolution were hysterical (DAUMIER, no date, p. 20; Cesare LOMBROSO and Guglielmo FERRERO, 1896).

²⁵ Introduction to the feature “*Gente Nova*” (New People). *O Pasquim*, p. 24, Dec. 11 through 17, 1969.

²⁶ *O Pasquim*, p. 12, March 19 through 25, 1970.

²⁷ Jaguar. “They really want it” (*Querem Mesmo*). *O Pasquim*, n. 205, p. 26, June 5 through 11, 1973.

Likewise, other female interviewees have assumed a discourse that guarantees asymmetry between the genders, endorsing the prejudices regarding women, in particular, their intelligence. This is the case of Ester Vilar, an Argentinean married to a German philosopher, who evinces the most misogynist positions, to the point of a caricatural tone. She had just published a book that achieved very high sales, especially on account of her attacks against women at a time in which feminism was at its height ... In fact, Millôr Fernandes, who was known for never sparing the feminists, in reference to the book's success, asks her during the interview if the book "had been written with the intention of being successful, and not with a deep awareness that it contained a truth ...", given the author's daring claims in the book, among which that domestic work is extremely light, demanding two hours daily at most in West European countries and in the United States. Since most Brazilian housewives did not have access to the appliances available in those countries, the chores would require three hours. What makes matters worse, according to her, "is that women do nothing with the free time they have. When they get married, they quit thinking, they do not think any longer. [...] They become mere parasites."²⁸

According to Ester Vilar, no one but women is to blame for the unequal salaries between men and women, given that "they work during a short time in their lives and they will soon quit their jobs." When they fall in love, the first decision women make is to stop working, while men, in the same situation, "work even more than before," which explains why a boss will more likely hire a man than a woman, "because he knows the man will be a slave onto him and onto his system and onto his business."

Millôr takes advantage of the cooperativeness of his accomplice, regarding the criticism against women's aspirations, to bring up the alleged benefits that women intended to receive from the social system, in their demand for having three days off every month under the excuse of menstruation, which would add up to three years over a period of thirty years. She immediately supported him: "The days referring to menstruation are a myth. Some women do suffer in their periods, as a doctor, I know that. But most women do not suffer that much."

Esther Vilar reinforces women's disinterest toward a broader participation in society, even in Western Europe, where, contrary to what most believe, "they do not read the first page of a newspaper, they do not discuss politics." And she continues: "Once a woman marries, she does not have her own opinion, rather she repeats her husband's. She does not evince any interest for politics, and on election day, she will not know who to vote for."

She complains about the position women have attained, in which "they are unable to speak," given that "they are the great consumers in this world," and that would lead to great support from all the means of communication and publicity. She laments the exploitation to which women submit men, who, after marrying, "run up the highest bill ever, given that they will have to pay for the rest of their lives," to the point of ultimate vulgarity in stating that "when he goes with a prostitute, it is a lesser love because the price is higher."

Likewise, journalist Adalgisa Nery, though clear of the caricatural tone of the previous interview, evinces a critical position toward many female aspirations. Queried by Paulo Francis on what she thought about "one of the most debated issues in the world today [...], the issue of women's status in society, the so-called women's emancipation," Adalgisa replies: "I am against feminism, feminism is hideous. I think the woman complements the man," and wraps up by stating that together, they form a whole. She thus allows a glimpse into her equivocal view of feminism, as if it aimed to wage a "war between the sexes" and not to guarantee equality between them and to strive toward mutual respect and a better relationship.

Furthermore, she affirms that freedom for women would be extremely difficult to achieve. And following a complicated game of words concerning the difficulty of what being a woman entails, "because a woman must use liberty as an affirmation of her personality; given that personality is much more linked to experiencing life [...], one might have experienced life, but that is not experience," she concluded by saying that she, herself, had never felt the need for liberty. To that, Paulo Francis pointed out her peculiarity, given that her life was like the life of

²⁸ Interview with Esther Vilar. "Men want to be women's slaves" (*Os homens querem ser escravos das mulheres*). *O Pasquim*, n. 248, p. 5-7, April 2 through 8, 1974.

any man, having studied literature, politics and, also, built a family. As the debate unfolds between this intellectual and other members in that journal, such as Sergio Cabral and Fausto Wolff, especially concerning feminism, she underscores the Brazilian bourgeoisie's ignorance, particularly women's, as they are incapable of forming an opinion on reading a book and even when reading a newspaper. This is the reason why they cannot achieve emancipation, because, "if emancipation is to take place, if it is to be something objective, productive, there must be knowledge, not ignorance." This argument clearly reveals an unfaltering, overt and manifest attitude evinced by her peers as well as by the left-wing at that time, who deemed themselves above the ignorant mass, namely women, on whom the "lights" of knowledge should be shed, unleashing them from the ignorance in which they were mired, hence enabling them toward awareness and liberation. Returning to the interview, the theme of feminine homosexuality is brought up. Inquired as to how she regarded it, she immediately blurts out the anathema: "filthy."²⁹

Once again, this intellectual demonstrates strong opposition to women's struggle for emancipation; she is hostile to the ongoing discussions about the issue of gender equality. Hence the compliance of a woman to representations that guarantee male dominance, which historian Roger Chartier calls symbolic violence, that is, violence that is founded on the adhesion of the dominated to the categories underlying their very domination,³⁰ besides assuming a most reactionary position toward sexuality.

In fact, concerning feminine sexuality, disinformation abounds in the journal under scrutiny. Feminine passivity in the sexual relation is considered consecrated. Pedro Ferreti, discussing the issue, posits: "If women want to be like men, and considering that they are basically passive in sex, they will change sexes. I am not being critical toward lesbians. I am trying to expose a psychological and biological fact."³¹ Likewise, Paulo Francis cites Freud's conclusion on the anatomy as destiny, and ironizes an interview with Simone de Beauvoir, who states in a famous reflection that "one is not born woman, rather becomes woman. No biological, psychological, or economic factor will determine the role carried out by the female in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, an intermediary between the male and the eunuch, called the female." Such a citation is the reason for the derision aimed against the geniality of the foregoing intellectual, with Francis claiming to have understood Freud, despite his concision, unlike what happens with relation to Simone, because he says "there is a certain difference between men and women, determined by characteristics that are independent from what she calls civilization." Unless his forty years have been spent seeing things in a mirage, "seeing things that men have and women don't, and vice-versa."³²

Indeed, such widespread ignorance in regard to women is also present in an intellectual as highly erudite as Paulo Francis. That is, in the moment under scrutiny, he believed in the strict relation between biology and male/female features, oblivious to the discussions that had begun already to sever the bonds between them. At that moment, in the 1970's, the sociocultural sexual identities were underscored so as to show that gender was not the necessary effect of sex. What is observed not only in Francis but also in the others under scrutiny is a lack of knowledge that philosophic and medical thought, until the late 18th century to some or the late 16th century to others, was dominated by the conception concerning structural similarities between the female and the male body, that is, the unicity of the sexes. The predominant belief was in the homology of the genital organs, whose difference was thought to lie only in that what was apparent in men was concealed in women. That did not mean, however, that sexual indifferentiation in the natural order implied equality in the social order. "One sex, therefore, but

²⁹ Interview with Adalgisa Néri. *O Pasquim*, n.88, p. 14 and 15, March 11 through 17, 1971.

³⁰ In this sense, Roger Chartier emphasizes that to define the submission imposed on women as symbolic violence helps to understand how the domination relation – which is a historical, cultural and linguistically constructed relation – is always affirmed as a natural, radical, irreducible, universal difference. (CHARTIER, 1995, p. 42).

³¹ Pedro Ferreti. "Women" (*As Mulheres*). *O Pasquim*, n. 28, p. 22, Jan. 1, 1970.

³² Paulo Francis. "Entre a Bronca e o Buraco." *O Pasquim*, p. 30, July 29 through August 4, 1971.

two asymmetric sexes,” according to Colette St. Hilaire’s clear summary.³³ The acknowledgement of the differences between the male and the female body, identifying the specificity of the female body, gave way, however, to women being reduced to their reproductive function, posing new problems also buttressed by the beliefs of the intellectuals aforementioned. Now the acknowledged differences in the genitals would reinforce the “certainty” in the natural character of each sex’s natural occupation: the private sphere for women and the public sphere for men. The female body is used to negate any possibility for comparing men and women from the perspective of a common criterion for citizenship.³⁴

Another thorny issue, so to speak, linked to the above debate concerning the reduction of women to the uterus, regards the problematic of feminine intelligence, which is often brought to mention in the journal under scrutiny. Thus, Francis himself claims, in a mocking fashion, to have made a discovery, a term which is the very title of his story:

I am a candidate for the Nobel Prize in biology this year. I have discovered a young, pretty, normal, 28-year-old woman, who is intelligent and who works. And guess what? She is a virgin.³⁵

Furthermore, what the same writer has to say of the feminist leader Betty Friedan is that he finds her so intelligent that she does not even seem to be a woman. “Unlike Simone de Beauvoir, who seems to be a woman.”³⁶

A device thoroughly exploited by the *O Pasquim* members was the interview, which unfalteringly featured personalities from the artistic and intellectual circles, who, when properly provoked, would uphold the habitual misogynist utterances and views, quintessential of that journal. Erasmo Carlos states, when being interviewed, that it is unpleasant when “a woman has the habit of teaching us.” To him, “an intelligent woman will act stupid so that the man might feel that natural superiority.” He concluded by saying that every woman should study a little bit, although there was no need for women to go to college if they were not going to exercise the profession and, actually, they were just taking up vacancies of those who really needed to go to college. He added that

proof that women were inferior to men is that at wartime it is men who go. The great doctors, politicians, ball players, all are men. When a woman hears a noise in the dark, she asks to be hugged. She throws herself on the man.

And, to finalize, “the woman does not possess the man, rather she is possessed, so she is inferior,” which articulates two of the alleged feminine characteristics: sexual passivity and inferior intelligence, a proof of their inferiority.³⁷

Interviews containing this sort of assumptions were spurred by our libertarians. Jorge Ben takes a similar direction when, queried by Millôr Fernandes if he thought women should have exactly the same rights as men, he endorses the common sense perspective, in an offhanded contribution to undermine one of the most significant feminist demands in regard to the political character evinced in personal, intimate relations, marked by inequality, and justified in the name of the diverse nature between men and women.

Women cannot have the same rights as men. It is essential that they remain in roughly the same state in which they are. It is the woman, for example, who must be the cuckold; not the man. Of course. The idea that the woman was the queen of beauty and the man was the king of beasts is over. The

³³ ST. HILAIRE, 2000, p. 89; and Rachel SOIHET, 1997, p. 9.

³⁴ Thomas LAQUEUR, 1990, p. 38.

³⁵ Paulo FRANCIS, “Discovery” (*Descoberta*). *O Pasquim*, n. 213, p.23, July 31 through August 6, 1973.

³⁶ Paulo FRANCIS, “Francis X Friedan,” *O Pasquim*, n. 94, p. 7, April 22 through 28, 1971.

³⁷ Interview with Erasmo. *O Pasquim*, n. 28, p. 10, Jan. 1, 1970.

man is the man and the woman has to be his woman. It is impossible for the man to be faithful nowadays. I mean, c'mon,; it's amazing, isn't it? Now, it's obvious that the woman has to be faithful. You know, women don't like a sweet, perfect man.³⁸

The interview with singer Waldick Soriano evinces the same pattern. When inquired as to the rumor that he had a child in every city, he responds:

My dear, I am a man. A man! And I will tell you something very special right now: no wife must believe that a husband, when traveling, will be faithful to her, got that? The man will always have the need to have other women, got it? And if the other gets pregnant, it is not the man's fault, see? That is how we are: one serving the other.³⁹

On the other hand, Ruy Castro inveighed against Raquel Welch, claiming that she was part of

that team of women who had not yet had time to emancipate because they spent the whole time talking of emancipation and preaching against the male tendency to transform women into "objects." And since only the ugly women had any reason to not become "objects," the question was: did the doctors who designed Raquel's boobs forget to design for her an I.Q. above zero?⁴⁰

With this, he turned against her intellectual capacity, one reason being that she had refused to "get laid by one of the producers, and became shocked to death when one famous TV celebrity (her childhood idol) made a sweeping pass at her." Hence, women in *O Pasquim* were at the mercy of the misogynists' policing lookout, where, under the label of "humorism," ended up lampooning the attitudes of women endeavoring to delineate their rights. In truth, those who evinced such attitudes aimed to reconstruct the stereotypes of female subordination and domesticity. In addition, with regard to female intelligence, Flávio Moreira da Costa, in an essay in which he claims to be feminist, although feminists had refused interviewing him on the grounds he was male, reports his conversation with one of the pro figures in the movement taking place in Brazil, and does not miss the opportunity for some harassment ("pro figures" is just perfect because it remits to the slapsticks at *Atlantida*⁴¹). The referred feminist which he does not name was said to have acknowledged "that she did not write well, because she did not consider herself to be 'simply' a writer. 'I am a thinker' – she would tell me squinting her eyes behind her thick lenses." And his aggressive tone would continue: "Well, that was new to me: I thought thinkers in Brazil were only Dr. Corção and Nelson Barbante, who lived in Céu da Boca, near Buraco Quente in Mangueira."⁴²

The inexorable wrath of most of the journal's members was very clear in its resolve against authoritarianism in the scope of institutional politics and of the critical appraisal of customs, affirming its opposition against the hypocritical moralism of the middle social segments with regard to the minorities, in particular to women who dared to propose changes in gender relations. Even against a divorcist leader, Marina Fidelino, the weapons of one of the writers were wielded, which is quite unusual for a journal considered so transgressive. First of

³⁸ Interview with Jorge Bem. *O Pasquim*, n. 14, p. 10, Sept. 25, 1969.

³⁹ Interview with Waldick Soriano. *O Pasquim*, n. 155, p. 7, June 20 through 26, 1972.

⁴⁰ Ruy Castro. "Raquel is a Man" (*Raquel é homem*). *O Pasquim*, n. 31, p. 10, Jan. 22 through 28, 1970.

⁴¹ Brazilian filmmaking company which, at the time, produced comedies and musicals to parodize Hollywood productions.

⁴² Flávio Moreira da Costa "How and Why I Am and Am Not Feminist" (*Como e porque sou e não sou feminista*). *O Pasquim*, n. 314, p. 14, July 4 through 10, 1975.

all, Ms. Fidelino had committed the sin of being a “feminist leader,” “which is something that our fellow journalist, deputy Nelson Carneiro is not,” concluded the author of the story.⁴³

The arguments that D. Marina used in an interview regarding the irregularity in civil status for people who separated triggered mockery, even those offensive in the personal scope:

Madame Fidelino does not explain if she is married, single or loose, but, as a guess, she does not have a husband because she talks as if she was so sure about which ladies are available for conjugal commitment, that we easily get the message that there is a vacancy in her room.

And the mockery continues, even as to a position contrary to judicial decisions concerning abandoned women, in which ninety percent would not have any financial assistance. And in the face of D. Marina’s petition that separated women should form an association for obtaining legal divorce, our writer gives an appropriate tone to the essay as a whole:

“Is this the Society for Separated Women?”

“Yes, it is, sir.”

“I’ll take two for Saturday, please.”

The leader of the North American movement National Organization of Women, Betty Friedan came to Brazil in 1971 as an invitation by Editora Vozes, a publishing company, for the release of her book *A Mística Feminina (The Feminine Mystique)* released in the United States in 1963. The book denounces the evils against American women of a strong movement after World War II, propounded by many vehicles of communication such as films, publicity and even psychoanalysts’ offices, aiming to get women to quit their jobs and return to the home. Women, having been summoned to fill the increased demand for the female work force as men were drafted to World War II, would now be pressed to become prisoners of “a comfortable concentration camp,” that is, of the exclusive care of the home, children and of the husband. Friedan strives toward the recognition of feminine potentialities and the expansion of women’s spectrum of action. Women were to partake in occupations, social responsibility and political and economic life on equal terms with men, and not to be restricted to mere consumers of industrialized products. Likewise, they should be empowered with making decisions concerning their own bodies and their future, mainly with regard to maternity, which was not to be seen as an onus, a heavy burden they would have to carry, but rather as an option. On the other hand, her opposition also entailed the association of the woman to the image of sexual symbol, used as an instrument in commercials to advertise products and increase sales, and to the conception of the woman as merchandise, exposed in magazines such as the American *Playboy*.⁴⁴ Such transformations would benefit both men and women by promoting companionship in a relation where problems, joys, responsibilities and occupations are shared, instead of instigating the stiff task division that attributes domestic activities and child care exclusively to women, and the burden of supporting a family solely to men.⁴⁵

The interview with this feminist in *O Pasquim*, and the ensuing repercussions due to her alleged ugliness was remarkable... When Paulo Francis brings up the topic of some American feminists being excessively individualistic and their obsessive concern with sexual problems, Friedan defends a contrary position, highlighting feminism’s concern not only with issues specific to women alone. She underscores her close link to political movements that oppose the North American domination over other peoples, such as with the blacks’ struggle for their rights that was unfolding at that time in the United States:

⁴³ “Separated Women” (*Mulheres Separadas*) *O Pasquim*, n. 14, p. 3, Sept. 25 through Oct. 1, 1969.

⁴⁴ “Betty Friedan Is Here, and Men Are in Danger” (*Betty Friedan está aqui e o homem corre perigo*), *Diário da Noite*, April 16, 1971. Morning Edition, Section One, p. 10.

⁴⁵ “Betty Friedan: We Are Not Against Men” (*Nós não estamos contra os homens*). *Correio da Manhã*, April 14, 1971. Section One, p. 5; “Betty Friedan; Women in Power” (*Mulheres no poder*). *Correio da Manhã*, April 14, 1971. Attached Section, p. 1. See also Flávia Copio ESTEVES, 2002.

My definition of the woman, first as a person, means that I feel I should be responsible, as an American, and concerned, as an American, with repression not only within my country but also without, in Cambodia, Vietnam, etc, in the sense that this country, my country, is becoming a power of evil in the world. I must have a voice, not only as to what affects my body such as abortion, etc, but also with regard to war or peace, urban problems, oppression against blacks – because all of these problems are interrelated. Now, what if I don't have this voice? Like many women who have not liberated themselves? Then, the energy, the anger will strengthen and will be used by the fascists.⁴⁶

She is remarkably lucid in showing the correlation between women who remain aloof to the problems of the context in which they live and their support to the right, which earns her Paulo Francis' praise as he remembers the famous march of women, who took to the streets in support for the military coup of 1964: "Just ask our unloved women. Remember them? Marching, marching, marching, like sleepwalkers."⁴⁷

Still in the interview, before Millôr Fernandes' instigation that the women's movement had no objective, Friedan replies, explaining that feminism is an integral part of counterculture, reinstates its link with a whole, representing the liberation of both men and women:

The women's movement is only one part of a greater human revolution which is taking place in my country. In the present stage of this revolution, the woman is a very important part, but she this is not an ultimate end in itself.

This is an integral part of counterculture. In many colleges and in an absolutely male majority university in Berkeley, every where, I have spoken of this issue of liberation, not only of the woman but also of the man.⁴⁸

But her words did not echo positively with the famous interviewer, since Millôr himself, later on in February, 1972, highlights the following: "the pride of being considered a chauvinist pig, given that it was Betty Friedan in person who says so, and she is in person very poorly personated." To this, he added in 1974 in an interview with Esther Vilar that, contrary to Betty ("Fuck you! Fuck you!" she politely said in our interview two years ago) Esther Vilar is not one to brush aside. Nearing her forties, (though still on the younger side), blond, medium height, with a reasonable figure, a nice butt – woowa! What a precise description!⁴⁹

Once again, a woman is execrated, in the face of the worst flaw possible – and what flaw could be worse than physical ugliness, a question critically posed by Françoise Parturier? This is the very proof of error, of deviation, of monstrosity.⁵⁰

On the other hand, Millôr would continue to lash out at Brazilian feminists, publishing a cartoon in *Veja* magazine in 1972 showing Brazilian women suspended by puppets whose strings were controlled by the hands of a North American. This triggered the reaction of two Brazilian residents in York, the poet Rita Moreira and the filmmaker Norma Bahia Pontes. They worked for a New York television broadcasting station producing reports on the behavior of ethnic and social minorities. When on vacation in Rio de Janeiro, they personally brought their letters of protest to the office of *Opinião*, a weekly journal, where they were published in January, 1973 in the "Readers' Views" section.

⁴⁶ "Betty Friedan" *O Pasquim*, n. 94, April 22 through 28, 1971. This interview was also published in "Great Interviews in Pasquim" (*As grandes entrevistas do Pasquim*) (JAGUAR, 1976, p. 72).

⁴⁷ Paulo Francis "Francis X Friedan." *O Pasquim*, n. 94, p. 7, April 22 through 28, 1971.

⁴⁸ JAGUAR, 1976, p. 74.

⁴⁹ Interview with Esther Vilar. "Men Want to Be Slaves of Women" (*Os homens querem ser escravos das mulheres*). *O Pasquim*, n. 248, p. 5-7, April 2 through 8, 1974.

⁵⁰ PARTURIER, no date, p. 20.

Rita Moreira's letter fiercely criticized the foregoing author, endeavoring to clarify that the womens' movement in Brazil at the time was different from the North American feminism:

Millôr Fernandes is evil because he incarnates patriarchalism in its most brutal form. What the humorist claims to occur in his anti-feminist anecdote (Brazilian women being puppets in the hands of American women) has never happened here. Rather, what has actually taken place in Brazil was *feminine* conferences. [...] In America and in other developed centers where contradictions are permitted, *feminism*, which is not a conference but a movement, takes place with a number of factions and a common point: the oppression of women⁵¹ (emphasis given by the journal).

Despite the seriousness of the feminist arguments, feminists would continue to be targets for ridicule and lampoons, in the expectation that they would not react, or that they would do so with *savoir faire*, such as what is gleaned in Paulo Francis' observation, remembering Betty Friedan:

Betty does not know what humor is. She confuses what is said with what is a "joke." Humor is a critical reality, and not a lampoon. [...]. And humor, Betty, is still a form of mental sanity. Pity on the culture or the movement that is unable to laugh at itself. This way lies the firing squad.⁵²

Francis also seems to attempt to interpret such burlesque forms of presenting women engaged in a struggle for their rights as a meaningless activity of no significant consequence, aiming only to entertain the reading public. Actually, however, a perverse aspect is perceived in these insinuations, which leads me to categorize such enunciations as a mode of symbolic violence against women. This is because the reiteration of the comicalness in the approach toward women's demands tends to propagate an image that was widespread at the time, namely of feminists as masculinized, heavy as elephants, dangerous, ugly, witches... Images that clash with the constantly updated feminine ideal of beauty, sweetness, delicateness, patience, resignation, which has often led women to reject their insertion in feminism and even to combat it. Something apparently as harmless as a lampoon, a joke, or mockery is in effect configured as a form of violence, inoculating representations that aim to conserve the *status quo* by ridiculing movements that foster change in the roles played by women and men in society.

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⁵¹ Opinião, n. 12, p. 22, Jan. 22 through 29, 1973 (Rita Moreira's letter is cited in Annete GOLDBERG, 1987, p. 78). Note that the Center for Brazilian Women (*Centro da Mulher Brasileira*), which would formally be the first feminist organization in Brazil, at the time was founded during the "Research Week on the Role and Behavior of Brazilian Women" (*Semana de Pesquisas sobre o Papel e o Comportamento da Mulher Brasileira*) which took place from June 30 through July 6, 1975 at the Brazilian Press Association (*Associação Brasileira de Imprensa*) in Rio de Janeiro, sponsored by United Nations Organization, amid the commemoration of the International Women's Year.

⁵² Paulo Francis, "Francis X Friedan." *O Pasquim*, n. 94, p. 7, April 22 through 28, 1971.

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