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**THEME: CONTEMPORARY SUBJETIVDADES**

**SUBTHEME: THE NEW STATUTE OF THE COMPLEX OF ÉDIPO DUE TO THE NEW MODALITIES OF  
RELATIONSHIP**

**MATERNITY AND ITS SUBJECTIVE NUANCES CONSTRUCTED IN  
CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S WRITING LITERATURE**

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The literary work, from its reception perspective, is interpreted in the relationship between the text composition and the reader, from this one's angle of identification, first of all, with the character, and next, with the narrator. This way, we thought in this chapter of configuration these effects, of the act of reading, of the reader and the character and of the reader and the narrator, having as an objective the focalization of the maternal attributes in fiction, and its contributions to the understanding of paternal and maternal roles in the identity acquisition, specially the sexual one.

## 1 Feminine identities

The child-reader's identification with the character Ana, from the book ***Ana de salto alto*** (Sérgio Caparelli) is possible, first of all, for the dialogic way that the narrative is constructed, and, as a result, by the position of the subject of the enunciation that the main character holds in the plot. Secondly, for this character's condition, in the construction of a feminine identity, at the same time, of its crossing from infant phase to adolescence.

The character's focalization prevails over the outer world; we would better say Ana's outer world comes from tie, with her unconscious desires.

This subjective representation of the character is effective as for the child-reader's identification with the character. As Didi-Huberman<sup>1</sup> shows, when we look, a threshold is opened inside of us, making us realize the unconscious nucleus of truth in fantasies.

Ana's identification process with the mother happens through the relationship of her fantasy with the feminine image, therefore, a speculative relationship, which happened in a primary phase (pre-Oedipus phase) of motherly identification. Ana creates , with her fantasy , a differential space (transitional object, according to Winnicott's theory<sup>2</sup>), between her and her mothering which at the same time she distances from her , she approaches in an identifying way the construction of her

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<sup>1</sup> DIDI-HUBERMAN, op. cit. p. 232

<sup>2</sup> WINNICOTT, D. W. **O brincar e a realidade**. Rio de Janeiro: Imago. 1975.

femininity ( theory of Freudian sexuality<sup>3</sup>). In the narrative, the mother leaves home, leaving Ana, free, to construct her fantasy. This separation, in the psychoanalytic theory, means her permission to Ana to differentiate herself and construct her identity as a woman.

The motherly subjectivities are visible by the narrator's identification with the adult reader. In this perspective, the picture of an unsatisfied mother is constructed (bad mother's category – Catherine Serrurier<sup>4</sup>) with these conditions, due to the paternal absence. Consequently, she entirely takes the care and responsibility on with the children. The father's social role is exclusively economic. Even the access to money happens through the mother's action, having in mind that the father is always traveling. In other words, the traditional social division of the space prevails, between the household space and the public space from the street. The first is taken up by the mother woman; the second lived by the man father.

The narrative in ***Bisa Bia Bisa Bel*** (Ana Maria Machado) is exemplary of the high level of polyphony constituted in the text, in which the narrator speaks with the character (Bakhtin), creating a dialogism in the interior of the narrative, among the outer and subjective voices of the characters.

The character Isabel's identification with the child-reader, is in the sense to recognize a feminine identity constituted by the language, in which the maternal heritage is inscribed in the subject; and from this tangle of voices that Isabel, as the subject of the affirmation of diversity settles down in the world of culture. Isabel

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<sup>3</sup> We developed it in Notes at the end of the text

symbolizes unfinishness and mystery. The mystery of the construction of a subjectivity that constructs itself in such an inner world that it cannot be totally symbolized. What demands from the subject symbolizing work. Isabel is a piece of hair in a human braid, equal and different of the others that are part of that braid. A piece of hair that creates its own history even recognizing the belongness in the braid totality of the feminine being in its subjectivity and the culture. All of this is what may instigate, in the reader, a work of pulsion symbolization. We are constructed by the language<sup>5</sup>. This word, come from the other, converses with Isabel, in the game of known/ unknown (according to repetition and of double compulsion, presented in chapter III), opening nucleus of truth to the subject.

The reader's identity with the narrator shows a good mother<sup>6</sup> and a mother that is good<sup>7</sup>. Isabel's mother is an apparently happy woman. The profession, maternity, and marriage are lived out of the tension that provokes in our contemporary culture. She is a good mother, because she creates a favorable separation and proximity environment with the daughter. At the same time, that she takes her free. Between the protection and support, and abandonment, Isabel walks on the real, imaginary, and symbolic world<sup>8</sup>

The work ***Tchau*** (Ligia Bojunga Nunes) should be considered in its polyphonic narrative too. The text brings in a balanced way, the orchestration of voices by the

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<sup>4</sup> SERRURIER, Catherine. **Elogio às mães más**. São Paulo: Summus. 1993

<sup>5</sup> LACAN, Jacques. Função e campo da fala e da linguagem em psicanálise. In: **Escritos**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar. 1998.

<sup>6</sup> SERRURIER, op. cit. ps. 117-134

<sup>7</sup> WINNICOTT, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> LACAN, Jacques. **O seminário: Livro I: Os escritos técnicos de Freud**. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar. 1986, os 89-151.

narrator, who has the power to carry out the narrative, but does not exhaust the characters, imposing on them its point of view. Because of this literary construction, the reader identifies himself with all the characters and with the narrator of this fictional universe, where new senses are realized.

The child-reader identification with the hero Rebeca is constructed by her balanced way, but also painful, of following all the separation process of her parents. As we already said, she is represented in an inverted way of the normally expected attitudes towards parental relationships. These inversions make Rebeca the hero of the story. It also brings a dimension of construction of the feminine identity, leaning identify way upon the mother features in order to distance from them. In this process, she approaches the paternal figure. (Freud's feminine sexuality theory)

The adult reader identification with the maternal character configured a mother that cannot accomplish her maternal function. The tie between the woman and the mother is shattered by the stronger inner voice, which shouts about her sexual and love desires. Thus, on the speech level, in the culture about maternity, this attitude represents a breach of constituted norms.

Ana, Bel and Rebeca, in the gender identity construction, go through painful experiences, as well as playful, in the separation with the mother, as a crucial condition to access the sexual identification (the minimum difference, in Maria Rita Khel's statement<sup>9</sup>. Varied are the mother's positions, which keep a relationship with

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<sup>9</sup> KHEL, Maria Rita. **A mínima diferença**: Masculino e feminino na cultura. Rio de Janeiro: Imago. 1996, ps. 21-28

the paternal presence or absence. As Rozsika Parker<sup>10</sup> shows, a father partially present incites much more hate, to the maternal ambivalence, than a father entirely absent. It is good to remember that Ana's mother's dissatisfaction was centralized by the real absence of the father taking care and with the responsibility with the children. On the one hand, the mother that forgoes this function getting rid of the children; on the other, the good mother like that one that, besides being a mother, multiply her identifications as a professional, wife etc. All of this comes to configure the tensions and ambivalences in the relationship between mothers and children.

## 2 Masculine identities

The book ***As muitas mães de Ariel*** may be characterized as a polyphonic narrative, where the narrator, as a third person, has its voice and points of view in a parallel way to the main character's voice. Let would us say that the dialogues among the main characters are focused, first of all, on the constitution of the subjectivities and, secondly, on the communication with the outer world.

The child-reader's identifications with the character Ariel are going to place it at the ambivalence of feeling between son-mother and mother-son game. This match will be won by the son when the mother allows him to get rid of her. In the meantime, during this process, many are the situations experienced by Ariel, in this swinging between getting lost from or separating from the mother. We believe that all Ariel's subjective positions, which go from good mother to the bad mother, arise as a

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<sup>10</sup> PARKER, Rozsika. ***A mãe dividida***: A experiência da ambivalência na maternidade. Rio de Janeiro: Record/Rosa dos tempos. 1997, p. 300.

consequence of the appearing in the family, of a younger sister. Lacan states<sup>11</sup> that this experience is crucial to the subject's history. Ariel's various mothers remind us of the various women that exist, principally those pointed out by Freud – love, death and seduction – that arise from the analyze of the tale ***Os três escrínios***<sup>12</sup>.

The adult reader's identification with the maternal character also happens in this ambivalence and at the subjective tensions between keeping and getting rid of supporting and protecting or letting the son enter the street world? Text does not bring a solution to it, suggesting its length in the maternal experience. If we ask about the conditions of making it subjective, we may observe those arisen from this woman division among taking care of the children, professional life, and the father's absence.

***E se mamãe não voltar para casa?*** (Henry Corrêa de Araújo) With this question, the author made his option about the narrative structure of the text. Analysts comment the social historical influences in the seventies that possibly motivated his choices. The fact is that, in the written of the work, a third person narration predominates, in which the narrator, even allowing the expression of other voices in the text, he makes his voice and his point of view predominant. We would say that, among all the stories that make up this work, this is the one that presents the polyphonic nature the least, it predominates the monological narrative kind.

The child-reader's identification with Carlinhos may be constructed from the problematic relationship between the child-character and the mother. Carlinhos

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<sup>11</sup> LACAN, Jacques. **Os complexos familiares na formação do indivíduo**. Rio de janeiro: Jorge Zahar. 1985.

realizes the mother's alienation and follows example of his father. The alienation, in which the mother is, as a consequence of television, makes the dream of making the son a doctor impossible, because it is closed and without communication with reality. The father's dream of having his son as soccer player is plausible because between them there is an identification relationship, since the son distances from the mother, he meets with the father.

We consider that the child-character's separation process from the mother is symbolized in the text by the mother's depreciation. A bad *mother* is how Carlinhos' mother is configured, in the sense that she cannot satisfactorily fulfill the maternal function. There is no doubt that her madness is arisen out of, besides the family economical poverty, the alienation from the mass media. At the end of the story, she does not come back home and the narrator leaves to the child-narrator the possibility of identification with the child-character, comprehending the mother's situation, at the same time he/she offers his/her supporting comforting her emotionally. Carlinhos' masculine identity is ensured by the symbolic separation, and thus he can come back home having conditions to live with his father.

Werner Zotz's text ***Mamãe é mulher do pai***, is also a construction where the polyphony predominates among the many voices in the text. The narrator creates an initial scene where the child catches his/her parents in a sexual relation. From it, the plot is developed. The scene becomes traumatic, as the child elaborates, from this outer scene, an inner one, that is, the fantasy of sexuality as an attack on the mother

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<sup>12</sup> FREUD, O tema dos três escrínios, 1913. In: Op. cit., vol., XII, ps. 315-325.



by the father. This fantasy may be thought as an elaboration of the pain of losing the mother to the father.

The child-reader's identification with the main character goes through all this process of separation from the mother and approaching to the father, as a condition of constitution of his sexual identity. A painful experience for this fiction child, at the moment he demanded an explanation about the mystery and his origin? Yes, in the meantime, there is a balanced relationship among familiar voices. The mother's voice goes moving away and the father's voice appears, fulfilling a function of making good the child's separation from the mother, as well as to show to the son his sexuality. The narrator does not individually name any of the characters, he just indicates them as the father, the mother, the son, that are indicative of functions at the parental relationship, of the primitive clan. This lead us to the Oedipus complex as a universal structure in the sexual identity formation.

The adult reader's identification with the narrator goes through the position adopted by the father and by the mother. The mother is a voice that, at this moment, express the father's voice, breaking up the fusing link with the son. This father's voice has the function of cutting off this link, creating in the child his incompleteness and allowing him to go in search of another woman that is not a mother. We can still observe, in this narrator's perspective, the transmission of a familiar situation, according to the standard of the traditional middle-class family, consisting of couple and children, from the marriage, as Regina Zilberman<sup>13</sup> shows.

Another situation with great emotional tension for the child is found in the work ***Mamãe trouxe um lobo para casa*** (Rosa Amanda Strauz). Its narrative also has the polyphonic form, according to Bakhtins's conception<sup>14</sup>, in which the narrator speaks with the character, both constituting two autonomous subjects.

The child-reader's identification with the main character shows us the child having to face a new situation in his life. This situation is the stepfather's presence that arrives by surprise at his home. From this sudden happening, the child develops a fantasy in which the stepfather is a wolf which wants to devour him/her, as well as his/her mother. The stepfather holds the position of showing that he can set himself up as an object of masculine identification for the child. He/she decided to accept this symbolic donation and, consequently, gets to go through this fantasy and accept that he/she is not the only object of love of the mother anymore, from what we have already analyzed, putting emphasis on Freud's theory of castration complex.

The adult's reader's identification with Levi, the only character named by the narrator, it still casts lights over the new condition of marriage in the contemporary society. The woman, also identified with the character mother, may be in a new situation, without the capability of other women that lived centuries before, and without the fear that the son will fail faced with the constitution of the sexual identity because of the paternal absence. It becomes clear that the narrator's intention was to point out another familiar condition and, still, to point out the level of difficulty for the child to go beyond such a change.

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<sup>13</sup> ZILBERMAN, Regina. **A literatura infantil na escola**. São Paulo: Global. 1998, p. 95.

The four analyzed stories show the child character in the crucial experience of the sexual identification constitution. They are painful difficult experiences, but lived autonomously, while subjects of the enunciation. This record, for psychoanalyses suppose a subject able to recognize himself/ herself as incomplete, and, from then, be able to desire.<sup>15</sup>

In the prospect of the maternal identifications, we notice varied positions, but that, in all of them, the separation from the son happens through the mother's other identifications, being the house, work or even the father. Only one case, in the process of separation from the mother happened because of the mother's madness. The paternal identifications stand out when the father has a more active role in the plot actions, and, with it, approaches more directly to the son's life. The most painful paternal condition is of that father who is a construction worker, constructing dreams but busy with a wife distant from reality and stuck in a psychic world.

### 3 Maternal identities

***Se as coisas fossem mães*** (Silvia Orthof) among all the works analyzed from the perspective of the sexual identities, it cannot be fit in this theoretical category. We observed about her a composition closer to the poetic. The poetic arrangements are going to get organized in logic, that we could say, kaleidoscopic, because of the maternal image multiplication, but obeying a determined law of nature, the sky does not conceive flowers, but stars.

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<sup>14</sup> BAKHTIN, Mikhail. **Problemas da poética de Dostoiévski**. Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitária. 1997.

<sup>15</sup> LAZNICK-PENOT, Marie-Christine. **Rumo à palavra**: Três crianças autistas em psicanálise. Rio de Janeiro: Escuta. 1997.

In this narrative, the maternity appears with a great possibility of creating a fabulous world, through the simple junction of beings. The mother is ambivalent and multiple, as multiple as the beings that can be created in the fantastic world of fantasy.

The child-reader is the only character. He/she can, with a lot of pleasure, in its playful sense, for fun, create a fantastic world of moon and stars, because, joining the words, learns a great many possibilities of senses. The child and the relationship with the mother, turning out from a combination between text and illustration, gets the child to imagine himself/herself also creating a magic text, in which the mothers could be invented and, therefore, controlled, playing with the words, to obtain pleasure, but also creating new senses, from a speech association of ideas. The language, already limited by the paternal law, in which the loss of object, separating it from the other, inserts it in the desire, makes arise the subject of the enunciation.

The poetic text, as well as the myth, transcend time and reality. Thus, the maternal images are ambivalent and multiple.

#### **4 Explaining the adult-reader's identification with the narrators**

The focus on the adult-reader's identification with the narrator's, in all analyzed stories, showed us a complex of relationships about the maternity, related to the familiar situation, to the sexuality, to the households space/public space and to those women's professional life. Observing the social conditions reflected on the literature intended for children, we would like to link these categories, previously mentioned, to

the historical condition of maternity. As it is about fiction, we do not consider that there is, in these stories, the mechanical reproduction of the society, however, we may find approximations, or still, ruptures with norms and social standards.

The characters Ana and Ariel live with parents in a similar situation as for the paternal absence. The father does not live next to the son/or the daughter. On the other hand, the woman lives principally directed to the house and to the accumulation of multiple jobs, as for the mother's responsibilities and as homemaker. This routine, according to Badinter<sup>16</sup>, it is only going to be altered in the XX century, during the birth of the feeling of the maternal love, at the same time as a social, biological and emotional value. Ana's mother is exclusively maternal, investing all her desire in taking care of the house and children. Although Ariel's mother keeps most of these social and cultural attributes of maternity, sets up the ambiguity of the double life. At the same time that she is responsible for the children, practices a professional life. This division between household chores and professional life, as Catherine Serrurier<sup>17</sup> shows, is a condition of the contemporary society. The character Bel also has a mother that lives this division, in the meantime differently from Ariel's mother, she does not experience a situation of conflict and unsatisfaction because she practices a profession that pleases her.

Carlinhos, from ***E se a mamãe não voltar para casa***, and the child from the work ***Mamãe é a mulher do pai*** also live with the parents. What brings them together is that they have a very close relationship with the fathers. Carlinhos's mother became

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<sup>16</sup> BADINTER, Elisabeth. **Um amor conquistado**: o mito do amor materno. Rio de Janeiro. Nova Fronteira. 1995.

<sup>17</sup> SERRURIER, op. cit., p. 77

an indifferent mother and distant from the son, as a result of her growing alienation, perhaps resulting from the social conditions of poverty and mass media. While the other child from the other work has a mother who is a dedicated wife. This familiar situation is the one that introduces with big characteristics the middleclass family, as well as its correspondence with Oedipus complex.

Rebeca's mother and Levi's wife are the characters that show ruptures of the model of the maternal condition and, principally, in what refers to the paradox between feminity and maternity. Since the Greek, in the V and VI centuries BC, according to what Dion Davi Macedo<sup>18</sup> shows, there is a separation between private space (*oikos*) and the public space (*polis*). The woman's, wife's and mother's space is limited to the *oikos*, while the *polis* is men's place, but also courtesan's that held a superior position to the wife.

The demonization of the feminine sexuality happens because of the Judeo-Christian religion. In Brazil, for the first years of the colonization, as Mary Del Piore<sup>19</sup> shows, the church speech demonizes the women that did apply their sexuality in the marriage and procreation. The model that they impose was of the holy mother that one that corresponded to the church and society ideals. According to Serrurier<sup>20</sup>, the ideal models remain still today: *of the perfect mother and of the virgin mother, to which the woman are incessantly linked, as to a rock whose peak would be inaccessible and on which they only manage to graze themselves.*

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<sup>18</sup> MACEDO, Dion Davi. **Do elogio à verdade**: Um estudo sobre a noção de Eros como intermediário no banquete de Platão. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS. 2001, ps. 132-140

<sup>19</sup> PRIORE, Mary Del. **Ao sul do corpo**: Condição feminina, maternidade e mentalidade no Brasil Colônia. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1995, ps. 43-67

<sup>20</sup> SERRURIER, op. cit., p. 68

The mothers in the texts *Tchau* and *Mamãe trouxe um lobo para casa* call into question the sexual repression, understood as a set of interdictions, permissions, norms, values, historically and culturally established rules, to control the sexuality practice<sup>21</sup>. Rebeca's mother is the cause of the separation of the couple, she will continue being the mother, but not the wife anymore. She abandons the daughter and the son, and is going to live her desires. The mother, in the second story, reverses, with her new marriage, the roles related to the space, showing her presence in the public life, while the husband is restricted to the household space, taking care of the son.

In short, in the analyses of the effects of the identification in both the child-reader with the characters, and of the adult-reader with the narrators, we take the chance to go beyond the text to search, through the fiction, what is not literature anymore, as Ana Cecilia Carvalho<sup>22</sup> shows us. In this pleasure and/or enjoyment of the text, according to Roland Barthes<sup>23</sup>, we discover cultural and psycho attributes on which the maternity is based in children's literary writing from the contemporary society.

We conclude that, the mother's images in the children's literature between the seventies and the nineties had developed in the representation of the plots. Initially, there was the multiple-mother's representation, from the point of view of the subjectivity, as well as from the diversity of roles. In the meantime, the maternal condition, was limited to the valorization of the marriage. The development of the representation of the stories happens principally in the separation of the wife from the mother. The woman-mother does not only represents the familiar space. She

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<sup>21</sup> CHAUI, Marilena. **Repressão sexual**: Essa nossa (dês)conhecida. São Paulo: Brasiliense. 1991, p. 9

<sup>22</sup> CARVALHO, op. cit., os. 59-68

<sup>23</sup> BARTHES, op. cit., p. 67.

goes beyond the cultural and historical determined boundaries, to live other conditions of maternity, with less pain, suffering and loneliness. The text show this development which the mother-woman has other identifications, which are not exclusively the maternity and taking care of the children, it was meaningful the performance of maternity while supporting function, but also of differentiating the bodies and desires. This represented situation reflects the cultural condition of the Brazilian society. In addition, is in this sense that we can visualize the subjectivation of new sets of problems of the same nature in the relationship between parents and children.